



The Big Interview Elaine McDevitt

Designs on ourselves

The Design Week committee member tells Daragh Reddin about Dublin's burgeoning design culture

Dublin, Bilbao and Cape Town: on paper they might not have very much in common. But thanks to a commitment by residents of each to improve their respective cities, all three battled it out recently for the coveted title of World Design Capital 2014. The prestigious accolade is awarded every two years to cities that embrace design as a tool for urban renewal and help improve 'social, cultural and economic life'.

Last week, Cape Town became the fourth metropolis – and the first African one – to be awarded the title but Elaine McDevitt, operations director at The Institute Of Creative Advertising And Design and one of those behind Ireland's pitch, is unperturbed at losing out. 'Our submission, **Pivot Dublin**: Turn Design Inside Out, was considered a very close contender,' she explains. 'It focussed on how the world is at a pivot point and how we must adopt new approaches to how we live with one another. It also examined how Dubliners recognise the need to reshape our city and its place in the world.'

Despite being a runner-up, the ideas put forward as part of the project for urban rejuvenation are unlikely to fall by the wayside. Indeed for proof of the ongoing interest in Irish **innovation** it's worth checking out some of the events taking place in the capital as part of Design Week 2011, a celebration of new developments in the worlds of – among others – architecture, furniture and fashion.

'The festival has really gained momentum,' McDevitt explains, 'and now features almost 60 events taking

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SHOULDERING IT: Designer Una Burke (work, *Winged Shoulders* pictured top and left) is the keynote speaker at this year's Design Week organised by a voluntary group including organiser Elaine McDevitt (pictured left)

place across the country. The only tricky thing is there can be too much to fit in.'

While keynote speeches in previous years have been delivered by such luminaries as Habitat designer Tom Dixon and Red Or Dead co-founder Wayne Hemingway, this year that honour goes to one of our own: fashion designer Una Burke (tonight, Civic Offices Wood Quay, 7pm, free but advance booking essential) who's been making waves on both sides of the Atlantic with her head-turning conceptual creations.

'Burke's work has been worn by everyone from Christina Aguilera and Rihanna to, most famously, Lady Gaga,' McDevitt adds. 'She takes inspiration from observations on human behaviour and uses traditional leather-working skills to create large sculptural pieces and more accessible fashion accessories.'

There's a focus this year on the work of young Irish designers, not only in the annual ICAD Upstarts exhibition (Fri until Nov 10, ICAD, free) but in a number of smaller shows, while a series of lectures will put recent additions to Dublin's cityscape – the Aviva Stadium among them – under the spotlight (tonight until Fri, RIAI, 8 Merrion Square D2, 6pm, free).

Green-fingered Dubliners should pay a trip to the Recession-Prosperity garden in Ringsend, constructed in response to the economic downturn.

'The garden features native Irish plants and local building materials, companion planting and traditional Irish building methods. The garden shed harvests rainwater and the chicken coop is also a garden bench. DIY manuals are on hand for anyone inspired to rethink their own city gardens,' McDevitt enthuses.

While the city has transformed certain areas beyond recognition in the last ten years, McDevitt is reluctant to predict what changes will occur in the decade ahead. 'It's difficult to imagine how the cityscape might change and develop. What is clear though is how, although the boom gave us some beautiful buildings and urban spaces, the recession has brought about an upsurge in design events, exhibitions and showcases. Through initiatives like this, we can continue to highlight the importance of design in bringing about positive change. The only question Dubliners need ask is: "What event to go to next?"'

Design Week runs until Sat in venues countrywide. www.designweek.ie

DESIGN DUBLIN: Other events taking place as part of Design Week 2011

TALK James Gleick

In his book *Faster: The Acceleration Of Just About Everything*, the scientist examined the relationship between city living and the ever-increasing pace of 20th century life. His new work, *The Information*, analyses the history, evolution and future of information.

Thu, Science Gallery, Pearse St D2, 6pm, €6.

SHOWCASE The Malthouse Design Centre

Irish furniture design will be under the spotlight at The Malthouse Design Centre where 30 Irish artisans will be showcasing their work. The Malthouse

facilitates shared studio, exhibition and retail space with the purpose of supporting newly established and small scale furniture and product designers.

Until Sun, Malthouse Design Centre, Distillery Court, 537 North Circular Road D1.

TALK Matteo Alessi

Since the 1980s, Italian design house Alessi has been at the forefront of creating 'designer' objects that are functional and attention-grabbing, among them Philippe Starck's



iconic three-legged citrus squeezer and Michael Graves' bird-whistle kettle (pictured). Matteo Alessi, a scion of the great family, will discuss the design process.

Fri, Brown Thomas, 6pm, free.

EXHIBITION Design DIT

Work produced by graduates of the School Of Art, Design And Printing at DIT Mountjoy Square will be on display, featuring fine examples of contemporary furniture design, graphic design and printing.

Until Sat, The Complex, 18-21 Block C, Smithfield Square D7.