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PRESS RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL WEDNESDAY 21 JULY 2021

NŪR, AN INSTALLATION AT FOLKESTONE MOSQUE, LAUNCHES AT FOLKESTONE TRIENNIAL

A colourful lantern in the courtyard of the Folkestone Mosque will be unveiled this week as part of the launch of the Creative Folkestone Triennial 2021 (22 July - 2 November 2021).

The installation, Nūr (which in Arabic means light, day, illumination, edification, clarity), is a collaborative project by architect Shahed Saleem, Malaysian artist Hoy Cheong Wong and Folkestone-based artist Simon Davenport.

It brings together three strands: social history, an artist installation and an architectural proposal, and it presents an experimental practice of collaborative community-based public art and urban regeneration.

Rising 10 metres tall, the pentagonal steel structure, fitted with colourful acrylic panels, will act as a beacon to draw local residents and Folkestone Triennial visitors to Folkestone Mosque.

Nūr follows Hoy Cheong Wong's installation of a temporary façade with minarets and arches to the Islamic Cultural Centre during the 2017 edition of the Folkestone Triennial, which spotlighted the centre and launched a creative dialogue with the mosque's community.

With financial support from Creative Folkestone, the three collaborators led an explorative and extensive dialogue with the mosque's congregation and its wider community through surveys, focus groups and workshops with men, women and children to gather their aspirations and ideas for enhancing this local cultural asset. This highlighted the practical issues to resolve, such as a constrained prayer hall, broken heating, poor ventilation and rising damp, and the need for larger gathering spaces, new wudhu (ablution) facilities and communal areas, including a kitchen and community hall. Briefings and feedback sessions were conducted to develop an architectural vision for the centre. Oral histories of the community and site history were collected.

Beyond this the dialogue identified a pride in the mosque's community and ignited an ambition to explore a narrative about intersections in diversity. Groups outside the mosque's community have taken an active role in the project, including the Kent Refugee Action Network, the local radio station, historian Sarah Hagues and photographer Andrew Aitchison.

Hoy Cheong Wong describes Nūr as, "the visual articulation of this ongoing experiment: incomplete and precarious; industrial and rustic; skeletal and sinewy in the day; a glowing lantern at night."

It also serves as a precursor to the lattice screen (mashrabiyya) envisaged as part of the future phase of the mosque's redevelopment.

A children's field trip and print workshop were programmed to develop motifs and patterns for the future mosque based on objects collected on the beach. The children's prints have inspired the designs which have been laser cut into the coloured acrylic panels fitted into the courtyard installation. They will have a permanent home adorning the interior of the redeveloped mosque.

The tower was fabricated and erected on site by Simon Davenport. It will remain on site until the close of the triennial in November. An outdoor exhibition documenting the history of the mosque, oral histories, and the proposed architectural vision for the future phase will be exhibited within the courtyard throughout the triennial.

Shahed Saleem said:

"For me, Nūr is about the value of collaboration with artists, designers and those communities who use and are invested in their buildings. It is also a continuation of my design endeavours exploring a contemporary Islamic architectural and visual language for Muslim diasporas. Personally, I am interested in trying to define a language which is rooted in lived experience and is meaningful and representative of British Muslims."

Lewis Biggs, Curator, Creative Folkestone Triennial, said:

"The role of artist is different from that of activist, social worker or cultural historian, although of course the same person may play all these roles. Art draws attention to something: it may uplift, anger or please the viewer, and it can bring about real change in the world by changing the way people think or feel. Creative Folkestone Triennial is proud to have been able to support Hoy Cheong Wong and Simon Davenport's artistic collaboration with Folkestone Islamic Cultural Centre over the past seven years (more recently with Shahed Saleem), and we see it as a shining example of the arts-led placemaking to which the charity is dedicated."

Press enquiries:

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Press kit:

You can download the press kit of images at this link (please respect the embargo until Wednesday 21 July):

<https://bit.ly/3exDSua>

Interviews:

Shahed Saleem, Hoy Cheong Wong and Simon Davenport will be available to meet by appointment on site at Folkestone Mosque during the preview Wednesday 21 July 3–6pm.

Panel discussion:

Join all three collaborators and panellists Faruk Miah and Shaheen Chowdhury for 'Intersections', a panel discussion about the making of Nūr, on Saturday 24 July 6:30pm at Folkestone Mosque.

creativefolkestone.org.uk/whats-on/intersections/

NOTES TO EDITORS

Project name:	Nūr
Location:	8a Foord Road South, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 1HJ
Authors:	Shahed Saleem, Hoy Cheong Wong, Simon Davenport
Client:	Creative Folkestone & Folkestone Mosque
Triennial dates	22 July - 2 November 2021
Opening times:	10am – 10pm

Shahed Saleem is an architect and writer and founder of Makespace, a London based architecture studio. He also teaches architecture at the University of Westminster. His work explores the architecture of migrant and diaspora communities, and in particular their relationship to notions of heritage, belonging and nationhood. His book 'The British Mosque' was commissioned by English Heritage and published by Historic England in 2018. Saleem co-curated 'Three British Mosques' at the V&A Pavilion of Applied Arts which is currently on display at the Venice Architecture Biennale until 21 November 2021. Recent projects at Makespace include Shahporan Mosque, Hackney Road, London (2014) and Aberdeen Mosque, Aberdeen (2018). He has won a commendation in the RIBA President's Medal for Research 2018, an Historic England Angel Award commendation, and his design work has been nominated for the V&A Jameel Prize 2013 and the Aga Khan Award for Architecture 2016.

makespace.co.uk

Hoy Cheong Wong was born in Georgetown, Malaysia. He is a visual artist, educator and community worker. Working in a wide range of visual media, Wong addresses concerns about identity and indigeneity, the retrieval of marginalised narratives, migration and globalisation; and the slipperiness that lies between fact and fiction, past and present.

guggenheim.org/artwork/artist/wong-hoy-cheong

Simon Davenport is a sculptor, filmmaker and builder based in Folkestone. At the centre of his practice lies a fascination with the enormity of human existence. His work derives its aesthetic from a wide range of influences including film, music, literature and philosophy

simondavenport.info/Simon_Davenport/Simon_Davenport___Artist.html

Creative Folkestone Triennial is one of the most ambitious exhibitions of contemporary art outside the gallery context presented in the UK. The seaside town of Folkestone on the south-east coast of England has no publicly subsidised art gallery, so artists are invited to use the town as their 'canvas', utilising public spaces to create striking new art that reflects issues affecting both the town and the wider world. Inaugurated in 2008, the Triennial takes place every three years, and is one of the five key projects of Creative Folkestone. Artists commissioned to take part in previous Triennials include Lubaina Himid, Bob and Roberta Smith, Cornelia Parker, Tracey Emin, Jeremy Deller, Martin Creed, Richard Wilson, Yoko Ono, Pablo Bronstein, Andy Goldsworthy and Michael Sailstorfer. The Triennial was visited by 135,000 people in 2014 and this increased to 150,000 people in 2017. For the 2014 edition, the Triennial began a significant public programme which included some 18,000 learners, over 70 schools and 50 community groups; in 2017, this comprehensive programme was developed to 202 talks, tours, workshops and conferences through a schools and community programme, as well as a further and higher education programme. .

creativefolkestone.org.uk/folkestone-triennial

South East Kent Islamic Cultural Centre (Folkestone Mosque) was founded in 1989 by Messrs MeahMonirul-Alom, Abdul Aziz, Nurul Islam Mahbub, Bajloor Rashid MBE, the late Babu Miah and the late Moynur Rashid. Like many mosques around the country, South East Kent Islamic Cultural Centre ('SEKICC') was originally formed by Bangladeshi restaurateurs looking to bring together the local Muslim community by establishing a dedicated place of worship to practice their faith.

folkestonemosque.com

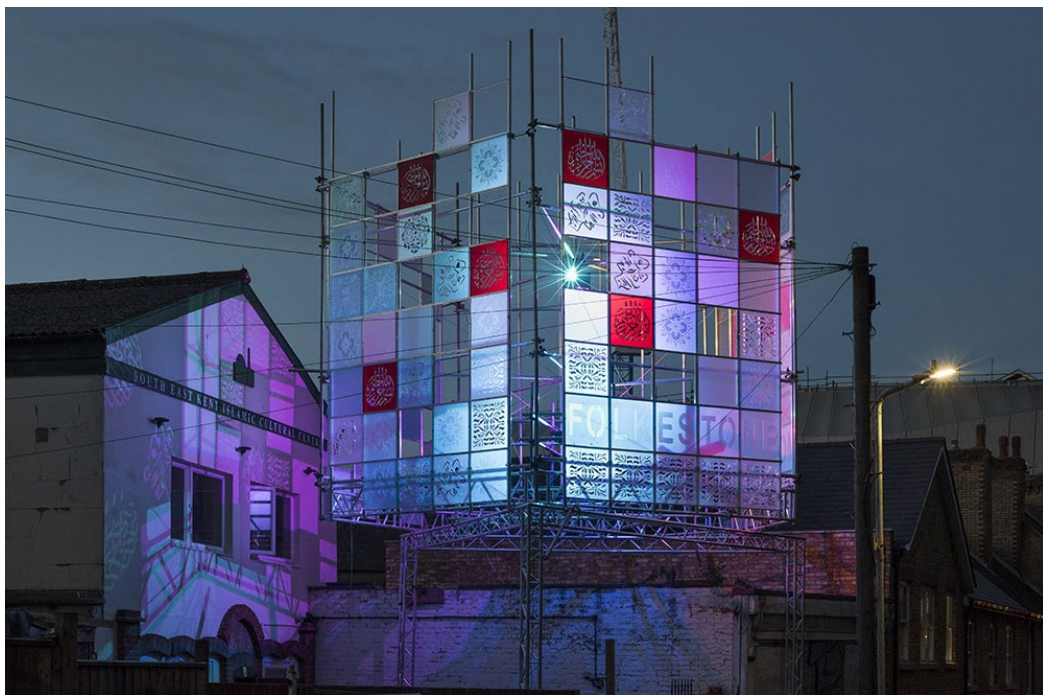


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