

# Manchester International Festival unveils line-up featuring a Zaha Hadid-designed venue

By Gina Lovett

A walk-through haunted house, an intimate chamber-music hall and a pyramid structure made of light have been unveiled as part of the line-up for this year's £10m Manchester International Festival.

Although this year's programme features design stars including architect Zaha Hadid and lighting specialist Paul Normandale – and the festival has the creative support of graphic design legend Peter Saville and curator Hans Ulrich Obrist – design has not been a conscious part of the programme mix, according to festival director Alex Poots.

"Our interest in design comes from artists whose work touches on that area. That, by default, makes us interested [in design]," Poots says, in relation to the artist selection criteria. "We're very much about exploring who is an interesting artist at the top of their game – be it Kanye West or Peter Saville. I have got an

eye on ending up with a wider range of areas of culture, but we're not about starting with sections that need to be filled up," he adds.

Productions, as well as their promotional graphics, have been conceived by the roll-call of artists that make up this year's bill. "The artist is king. Even the look for each production starts with the artist. For example, with *Felt Like a Kiss*, [BBC film-maker Adam] Curtis found an old 1950s image and we went from there," says Poots.

Manchester consultancy Music, which has produced the marketing collateral for the event and pulled together the promotional graphics for individual productions, is ensuring coherence across the MIF brand.

Music creative director David Simpson says, "It's not a commercial way of working and that's the beauty of it. Each show has its own life beyond anything that any of us doos.



What we're doing is polling the brand and making sure it does its job. It could be easy for the festival to become invisible and get lost in other stuff going on."

Saville, creative director for the city of Manchester, has created the identity for this year's festival with German artist Gustav Metzger. The latter's *Falling Trees* project heavily inspires the branding, with a ghostly tree silhouette forming the background for typographer Paul Barnes' letterpress type. Performance art and theatre design collective Punchdrunk,

which has worked on productions including *The Masque of the Red Death*, is currently leading a 'huge design brief' for *Felt Like a Kiss*, a walk-through haunted house that tells the story of America's rise and fall through the golden age of pop and beyond, according to Poots.

The project, which is being led by film-maker Curtis, will see Punchdrunk transform a disused building into a production across five floors, blending music with documentary footage.

Another of the design

highlights, says Poots, is Hadid's design (pictured) for an intimate chamber-music space to be installed at the Manchester Art Gallery throughout the festival. The 'sonically and visually perfect environment' will host soloists who will perform the work of Bach to a 150-strong audience.

Lighting designer and producer Normandale is working with Mercury Music Prize-winning band Antony and the Johnsons to transform the Manchester Camerata, with a 'pyramidal structural light environment in which the show will exist'.

## MANCHESTER INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

- The Manchester International Festival runs from 2-19 July
- For further details, visit [www.mif.co.uk](http://www.mif.co.uk)



Very has created the identity for new independent financial and economic consulting group Variant Perception. According to the consultancy, the logo represents the different angles and perspectives with which Variant Perception will view financial information and figures. The business will launch this July with a website, which has also been designed by Very.

## Together creates brand guidelines for the Gruffalo character



Together has created the brand style guide for children's book character the Gruffalo, which is ten years old this year.

The first Gruffalo book, *The Gruffalo*, written by Julia Donaldson and illustrated by German illustrator Axel Scheffler, was published in 1999, and was followed in 2004 by *The Gruffalo's Child*.

The book has been translated into 40 languages and also inspired a stage show.

An animated Gruffalo film will premiere this Christmas, and Together was appointed to create brand guidelines ahead of the launch of a merchandising programme in the autumn, says brand planner Emily Penny.

The consultancy was appointed following a four-way pitch in 2008 by licence holder Magic Light Pictures. Together had previously worked with

Magic Light Pictures on other projects.

Penny says Together's task was to identify and develop a set of brand assets that could be used in various contexts, including developing a Gruffalo logo, colour palette and strict guidance on use of imagery.

Penny says, "Imagination and involvement are a huge part of the storybook, so it is important for the brand to have those same values. We intend the

brand to stand out as a quality proposition that's also fun."

Heidi Lightfoot, director of Together, says, "We needed to capture the essence of the original book and artwork. Scheffler's illustrations are wonderfully rich and detailed, and the characters have a fantastic presence."

"The style guide provides a framework to ensure that we keep the magic, while at the same time creating a



Wonderland WPA has created the branding and packaging for new soya, dairy-free cheese products from Pure. The consultancy created the original branding for Pure's dairy-free spreads in 2007. The products will hit the shelves in Tesco on 30 March.

