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1 | landscape and legend

The myths and legends of rural Scotland are the inspiration for a fascinating art and landscape exhibition showing this month.

The designs stem from research by artist and architect Allistair Burt, who wrote to local papers across Scotland last year asking people for tales of local folklore.

Inspiration also came from a postgraduate trip around Scotland with an air hostess trolley, when Burt and his associate designer from Hole In My Pocket – the website that acts as a forum from their work – collected tales from people they met along the way.

Burt said: "We decided to take the trolley on a road trip to St Kilda, and we exchanged bottles of wine for the stories people told us."

Among the most striking of the resulting designs is the piece pictured above. Set on the shores of Loch Lomond is a series of pillars that appear to step down into the waters of the loch.

Another work, inspired by the Caithness tale of the jealous mermaid of Murkle, consists of a glass walkway set just above water level, which leads to a glass staircase set into the loch in a glass box. Inside the box is a pedestal where storytellers can tell their tales.

The mermaid of Murkle fell in love with a local fisherman and gave him riches from the depths of the loch. When he betrayed her by giving the gifts to human women, she chained him in an underwater chamber.

Unfortunately, many of the responses collected about myths and legends were stolen during a previous exhibition.

But Burt intends to continue the folklore project. He said: "The work is still attracting interest, and people clearly enjoy Scottish history. I would like to thank everybody who wrote to me."

The storyteller exhibition runs at the Intermedia Gallery, Glasgow until 22 May. For more information visit www.holeinmypocket.com
Corrina Thomson



Opening your mind to new ideas from un-
sources and finding inspiration in unexpec-
corners of the news highlights for May

persp

3 | from Siberia with love

A \$40bn plan to divert some of Sib-
mightiest rivers down to the former
republics of central Asia is being re-
by Russian scientists.

Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan – the
region's two biggest cotton-growing
have the highest per capita water
consumption in the world. And the
– once the world's fourth-largest in-
is now a desiccated, salty wilderness.

Diverting the rivers would solve the
water shortage in the central Asian area
replenish water levels in the Aral Sea.

The hugely ambitious scheme would
roughly equivalent to irrigating Mexico
the North American Great Lakes, and
involve construction of a 2,500km canal
southwards from the confluence of the
Ob and Irtysh to the rivers Amudarya
Syrdarya near the Aral Sea.

2 | Shephard retrospective

The first ever retrospective of the life and
work of Peter Shephard (1913–2002) will
be available to buy from 10 May.

Although he was one of the leading
architects, landscape architects and planners
of the post-war era, Shephard's contribution
to the landscape profession has often been
undervalued.

The new publication, edited by Annabel
Downs, attempts to redress the balance by
presenting a range of previously unpublished
documentary evidence and over 100 black
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Mermaid legend to rise again in Glasgow gallery

by CORRINA THOMSON

CAITHNESS legends are to feature in an art and landscape design exhibition in a Glasgow gallery this spring.

The work stems from research by artist and architect Allistair Burt, who wrote to local papers across Scotland last year asking people for tales of local myths and legends.

His letter prompted a large response – and, of the 60 people who replied, six were from Caithness.

Mr Burt used the stories to design landscape architecture features, one of which is set at a loch in the county and inspired by the tale of the jealous mermaid of Murkle.

Mr Burt, who studied architecture at Strathclyde University, used the work inspired by the folk tales as part of a postgraduate project. He explained that the inspiration had come from a trip round Scotland last year with an air hostess trolley, which was then used to create an exhibition in Rotterdam.

During the trip, many people talked to Mr Burt and his associate designer at Hole in My Pocket (www.holeinmypocket.com) which is a forum for their work.

Mr Burt said: "We decided to take the trolley on a road trip with bottles of wine, trying to get to St Kilda, and we exchanged the wine for stories that people told us."

The trip included Thurso, Scrabster and Orkney, where the pair became stranded at the Ring of Brodgar with the large trolley. They managed to walk for miles to a bus stop and, although they made it there in time, the passing bus didn't stop to pick them up.

However, he said: "We found that the

people up in the Highlands were much more willing to help us than in Glasgow. Virgin Trains didn't even let us on board with the trolley."

Mr Burt said many of the responses he received about myths and legends were stolen during an exhibition.

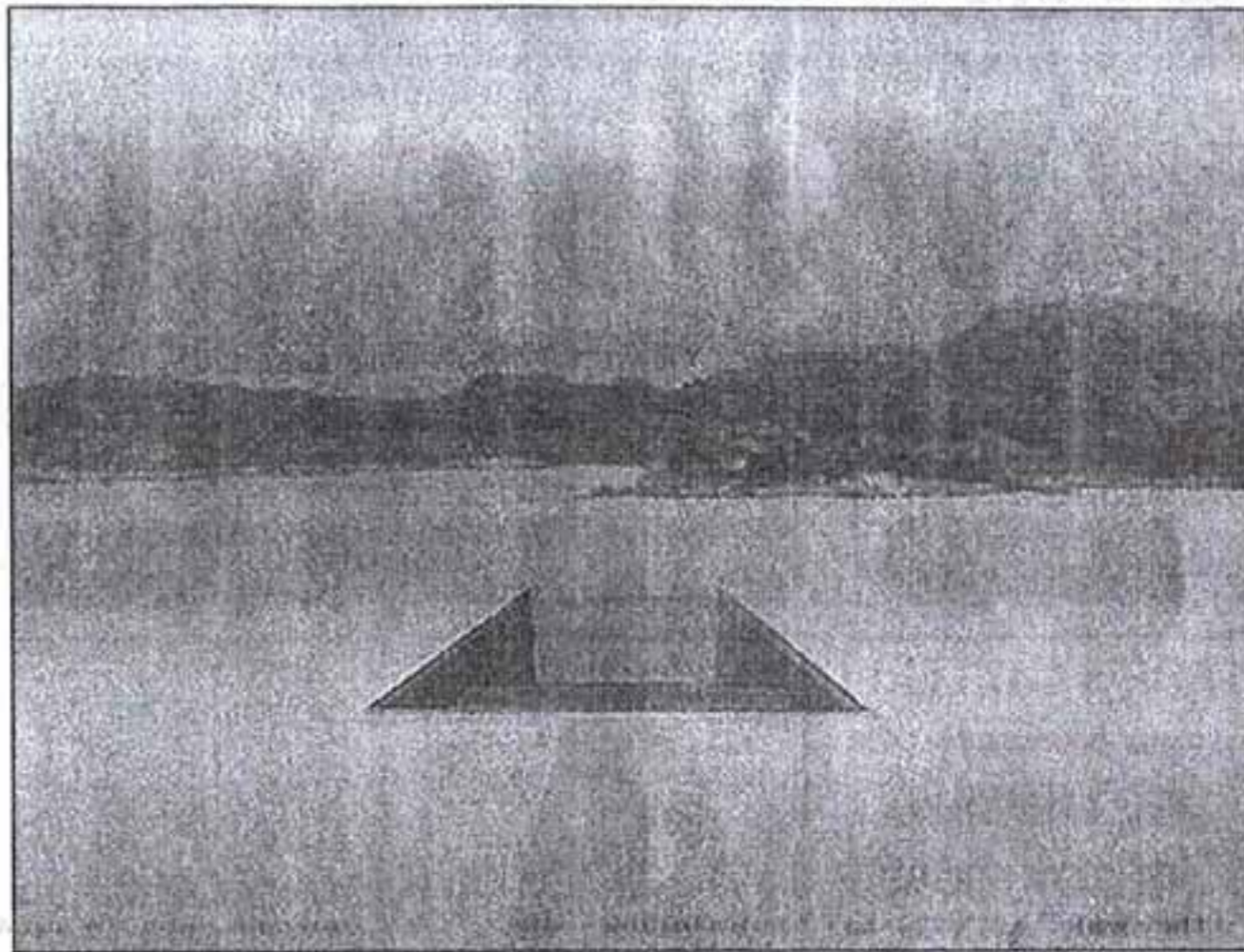
He explained: "Somebody took the shoe box they were in but there must have been about half a dozen letters from Caithness. There were 60 in total from around Scotland, and the North and the Highlands gave much better responses. The ones from the Glasgow area were kind of modern tales, urban myths, rather than stories about fairies and witches.

"I would like to thank everybody who wrote to me, I have been generously helped by people and they have been very kind.

"The response has been really good – there were so many people around the country and the world who replied. There was a guy in Illinois who told a lot of stories about Sutherland and a girl in Canada who told me about different things to do with the west coast.

"Most of the responses that I actually used [in the postgraduate work] were stolen, which is quite annoying."

Mr Burt went on to say that people have continued to write to him with more tales, even though his original request for stories was made a year ago. Scottish fiction writer Alan Temperley has also been contacted about Mr Burt's work following his appeal for



A computer-generated image of Allistair Burt's glass walkway design inspired by the tale of the jealous mermaid of Murkle.

myths and legends.

He said that he would continue the myths work because it has gained such a momentum.

Mr Burt said: "I'm going to continue it because it has developed to a position where it is getting more and more interest, and people are clearly interested in Scottish history.

"I don't think I'll have much of a choice about whether to carry it on. There are a lot of other things that I have thought about and not designed and I would like to make drawings of them. I would like to get at least one of the designs built."

Hole in My Pocket has also worked on exhibitions at The Lighthouse, an architecture and design museum in Glasgow, a hidden architectural treasure trail in the city, and various other projects. The storyteller project, which includes the jealous mermaid of Murkle, will open at the Intermedia Gallery, Glasgow, on April 29 and run until May 22. Mr Burt is considering taking the exhibition to other venues.

The jealous mermaid of Murkle scheme consists of a glass walkway set just above the water level in a loch, which leads to a glass staircase set into the loch in a glass box. Inside the box is a pedestal where storytellers can tell their tales.

The tale that inspired the work is about a mermaid who lived in the loch and fell in love with a local fisherman. She gave him riches from the depths of the loch but he then gave the lavish gifts to human women.

Under a pretext of showing the man where the riches were stored under the water, the mermaid led the fisherman into the loch and took him to a chamber that contained all the treasures ever lost in the Pentland Firth.

The man gazed greedily at the treasures while the mermaid sang sweetly to him until he fell asleep.

On waking, he found that she had chained him to the floor with gold fetters. The story tells that he remains there to this day, guarded by the mermaid.

a bizarre journey taken around Scotland, which explores a range of issues including island food deliveries, the Skye Bridge conspiracy, internet university degrees, mobile phone obsessed eight-year-olds and the folklore of St Kilda.

It started in January last year when they initiated a project exploring ideas of mobility and sustainability in contemporary Scotland and set off on a voyage to exchange stories with the people they met, armed only with an air hostess trolley full of wine. These stories were then stored in the empty wine bottles and, at the journey's end, thrown into the sea. Their goal was to reach the island of St Kilda and your only way of finding out whether they made it or not, is to head to the exhibition.

*Intermedia Gallery, Glasgow
(0141-552 2540), until Saturday*

CAMILLA PIA

SEANCHAIDH

Hole In My Pocket are a Glasgow-based duo involved in a number of diverse projects within the realm of art and architecture since early 2002. This exhibition of their most recent work features, among others, a display documenting