

Tech firm brings Amsterdam skyscraper project to life

Mark Macaskill

Controversial plans to erect a cluster of skyscrapers within view of a world heritage site in Amsterdam have become reality after pioneering work by a Scots firm.

The prospect of a Manhattan-style skyline in a

corner of the Dutch capital – including a 125m-high tower that will be the tallest residential dwelling in the city – had provoked condemnation from conservation bodies.

The tide of opposition changed, however, after a computer simulation by

Luma, an Edinburgh-based tech firm, showed how the skyscrapers would not only look, but also how living and working in their shadow would “feel”. A virtual reality tour allowed people to “cycle” through the district, and it has been credited with winning over critics.

Several civic leaders in the Dutch capital, including Eric van der Burg, Amsterdam’s vice-mayor, believe the contribution of the Scots firm was instrumental in gaining planning approval.

Construction of the Sluisbuurt development, comprising 25 towers on

Zeeburgereiland, is expected to start in 2019. It will provide a mix of 5,500 luxury and affordable flats.

“The level of public opposition to this development was intense, and the debate was the fiercest I have ever encountered,” said Mirjana

Milanovic, the project’s chief designer who has 20 years’ experience in urban planning.

“The work by Luma was pivotal in convincing the public, council and heritage-defenders that we could be trusted.”

One concern was that two

of the tallest towers would be visible from the Dutch capital’s canal district – about two miles away – designated a world heritage site in 1996. The buildings will be 20m shorter than originally planned.

Kevin Archibald, director of Luma Interactive, said:

“Virtual reality is a brilliant way to accurately convey to the public and planners what this new part of Amsterdam will look and feel like. This powerful technology can make exciting new visions for the futures of our cities spring to life and ultimately help them become reality.”

Retracing hero’s frozen footsteps

An intrepid Scots PhD student has decided the best way to study the work of a legendary female documentary film maker is to mimic her life in the wilds of the Arctic

Julia Horton

An intrepid grandmother who spent years living with the Inuit in the Arctic to record their lives has inspired a fellow Scotswoman to head north in a bid to finally bring recognition of the work of the country’s female film directors.

Jenny Gilbertson, a former Glasgow teacher who became a pioneering film maker in the 1930s, spent most of her seventies living among the Canadian eskimos, as they were then known, documenting their lives for broadcasters including the BBC.

She made nearly 30 films including Jenny’s Dog Team Journey and Polar Bear Hunt, many of which are archived at the British Film Institute.

About half a century on, Dundee film maker Shona Main is preparing to journey to the same community after making contact with the Inuits who welcomed Gilbertson into their remote homes during the 1970s and featured in her unusual work.

Main, 47, who is doing the trip as part of a PhD exploring ethics in film making, has uncovered fascinating insights into Gilbertson’s Arctic life from diaries now kept at the National Library of Scotland.

She said: “I’m doing this in the style of Jenny Gilbertson, whose films were all based on the friendships she developed with people. I’ll revisit the people who were in her films and learnt, through her, to use the camera to film skidoos, or calling bingo. I want to see what their lives are like now, which will involve going hunting and eating with them as Jenny did. I have already been warned off walrus meat [by Jenny’s descriptions].

“But the whole point of my going and exploring Jenny’s work is so others can learn about it. Jenny [and other pioneering female film makers] put so much time and energy into their work. They were self-shot and had their own vision... but documentaries are still dominated by white men.

“We need different perspectives, from



women, people of colour and people with disabilities too.”

While Gilbertson stayed for almost a decade, Main will spend six months in the Arctic, flying out next June following Gilbertson’s route to Montreal, and on to Churchill and then Grise Fiord, in the far north.

Sarah Neely, a media and culture lecturer at Stirling University and PhD supervisor, said: “Jenny Gilbertson was intrepid [and] it still is quite a journey for Shona as well... The act of following in her [Gilbertson’s] footsteps as a film maker is a great way to revisit the significance of what she did in the 1970s.”

Repeating a previous call for a retrospective of the work of Gilbertson and her fellow pioneers, Neely agreed that women making documentaries, past and present, were still largely unsung and sometimes wrongly dismissed as “amateurs”.

GETTY IMAGES



Main, top left, will relive the experiences of Gilbertson, left, who spent most of her seventies living with the Inuit in the Arctic

Gilbertson, who died in 1990, was about 30 and had completed her teacher training when she was inspired in 1931 to buy a camera and go to Shetland to make documentaries after a friend showed her a film he had made.

She produced a series of films

including Peat From Hillside to Home, documenting crofting life, which she showed to fellow Scots pioneer John Grierson – now dubbed the father of British documentary – who went on to buy five of her documentaries. His sisters Ruby and Marion Grierson also made

films but received far less recognition or credit. Peat from Hillside to Home and films by the Grierson sisters are among a programme being screened next Sunday celebrating Scotland’s female pioneers of documentary film making at Dunoon Film Festival.

Hockney’s digital art inspired by techie sister

Richard Brooks
Arts Editor

David Hockney is known for using his iPad, iPhone and digital camera for his art. But it was his older sister Margaret who helped him with technology – even though she first used a computer in her mid-sixties.

In memoirs to be released this week she writes that in 2000, when her brother was living most of the year with her in Bridlington, East Yorkshire, he started painting Garrowby Hill. “I took close-up photos of sections of his painting with my digital camera and printed them. He was interested in this way of using the camera.”

Then, in 2004, she adds: “We got talking Photoshop... I showed him how it had vastly improved. Before long he was painting portraits with a Wacom pad and pen directly into Photoshop on the computer.”

Margaret, 82, a former nurse, has created her own art form, “scannergraphs”, in which she scans her subjects to look like fine ink drawings. One, of an octopus bought at a fishmonger, was shown at the Royal Academy’s summer exhibition in 2005.

My Mother Is Not Your Mother is published this week by Salts Mill



Digital art made by Margaret

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Glasgow eyes bus scrappage scheme

Jason Allardyce

While the UK government considers a targeted scrappage scheme to take polluting cars off the road, the SNP administration in Holyrood is being asked to look at doing the same with dirty buses to tackle air pollution.

With data showing older diesel buses among the worst offenders for health-threatening nitrogen oxide pollution, SNP-run Glasgow city council suggests Nicola Sturgeon could look at the step when Scotland’s first low-emission zone (LEZ) is set up in the city next year.

The council has warned that bus firms could ultimately lose their operating licences if they run dirty buses through the restricted area when the zone comes into operation as the city aims to cut from 300 the



number of premature deaths caused by pollution.

But with bus operators braced for heavy costs – put by Strathclyde Partnership for Transport in the region of £10-17m – a scrappage scheme might ease the pain as an incentive to take heavily polluting vehicles out of service.

Operators claim the LEZ could lead to higher fares and cause more congestion with passengers reverting to cars

instead, while bus company McGill’s has threatened legal action.

The LEZ will require bus companies to buy new buses meeting the cleanest Euro 6 rating for nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and particulates, or retrofit existing buses to reduce emissions.

Richard Dixon, director of Friends of the Earth Scotland, wants ministers to build on the Scottish government’s green bus fund, which it said is effectively a scrappage scheme helping operators acquire cleaner vehicles or retrofit old ones.

“The Scottish government should explore ways to support bus operators to upgrade dirty old fleets to tackle the menace of air pollution. Their green bus fund has already successfully helped fund more than 300



lower carbon vehicles right across the country. This scheme should be expanded to prioritise Glasgow and to funding retrofitting cleaner engines to existing buses where that is possible,” he said.

A Transport Scotland

spokeswoman said the government is consulting with the bus industry regarding incentives and “will listen carefully to any proposals put forward”. The Scottish government has previously announced £1.6m towards a bus retrofit

Glasgow will have Scotland’s first low-emission zone next year, which could see polluting buses targeted

programme to support making the existing fleet compliant with low-emission zones.

Its green bus fund has awarded £16.2m, resulting in 362 new low carbon emission buses within the Scottish fleet.



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