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High-wire art: contemporary commissions to replace Olympic Rings in St Pancras
Lucy and Jorge Orta have been chosen to create the first monumental work to be suspended from the ceiling of the international train station



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The Ortas' work will replace the Olympic Rings suspended in St Pancras station
The English and French artistic duo Lucy and Jorge Orta have been chosen to kick off a major contemporary art commission in London. The artists are creating a gigantic installation for St Pancras International train station, which will greet visitors arriving in the city on Eurostar trains from Europe.

The Ortas' work, which will be unveiled in April 2013, will replace the Olympic Rings that were suspended from the ceiling in front of the station clock in the run-up to the London 2012 games.

The work will be visible from the entire Grand Terrace of the station and will be seen by up to 1 million visitors a week, according to a spokesman for the project.

Speaking to The Art Newspaper, Lucy Orta says the installation would be loosely inspired by the "Cloud" series of works she has made with her partner. These consist of sculptures built out of recycled water bottles and coated in resin, which deal with themes such as "water scarcity and the environment".

The new installation, which will be 20m wide and weigh around two tonnes, will be designed by the artists but built by a computer with the assistance of a team of engineers. "Instead of hands chopping away at a block of marble, we'll have the cutting knife attached to a computer which will carve the piece from a dense polystyrene material," Orta says.

"There are some figurative elements to the sculpture as well; we're using the latest technology to produce 3D scans of real people which will then be milled by the computer."

Describing the commission as "thrilling", Orta admits that the idea of her work being seen by so many people was also "terrifying". "We're very scared but you can't please everybody," she says. "We are trying to make the work as poetic as possible but without it being too esoteric. Hopefully the public will be able to get the message. It's up to us now artistically and aesthetically to get that balance right which is a challenge."

The sculpture will remain in situ for six months and will be followed by another temporary installation, also hung from the ceiling, in spring 2014. The goal is to have many site-specific works displayed in the station in coming years as part of a "Terrace Wires" project.

The Ortas were selected by a panel of judges which included the potter Edmund de Waal, the BBC journalist Evan Davies, and Nicola Shaw, the chief executive of of HS1 Ltd, the owners of St Pancras International, who are funding the project.