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HUFFPOST CULTURE

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We Don't Just Build Buildings: The Importance of Public Art in London

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Despite our growing number of skyscrapers, luxury homes or world-class arenas, the centre of London is so much more than a collection of buildings.

Be it offices, parks, shopping centres or even transport hubs, London is known for making art an integral part of the city's design, and attitude. We use it to elevate buildings and neighbourhoods to destinations.

St Pancras International is London's gateway to Europe. For many visitors arriving on Eurostar trains from the continent into the heart of central London it is also their first opportunity to experience what the UK has to offer. With its scale, history, and architectural excellence, we have a commitment to - no, make that an obsession with - enriching their experience of the UK.



That is why we decided to launch Terrace Wires - a new scheme that ensures we are bringing the strongest contemporary art to one of London's most loved locations. St Pancras International is already the home a number of pieces of work but the overwhelming response we had to the Olympic Rings which hung above the Grand Terrace for about 18 months running up to the London 2012 Olympics last year made us realise the potential for that space. The Terrace Wires makes use of the equipment we used to suspend the gigantic Olympic Rings from the roof of the station and builds on their success.

Last year artists, realising the huge value of the location and its power to inspire, responded to our request for ideas and last month we unveiled the first piece in the Terrace Wires series. Like the Turbine Hall or Fourth Plinth we will change the art

every year. For the first piece in the series, the expert judges and I were unanimous in our choice of: Cloud: Meteoros, designed by celebrated sculptor and British-born artist Lucy Orta and her husband Jorge.

Inspired by the history and grandeur of the station itself, Lucy and Jorge Orta designed Cloud: Meteoros to unite people inside the station with the world outside. Much like a Greek Agora - a meeting place - the cloud hovers above the buzz at St Pancras, with the figures resting on top echoing passengers waiting on the platforms below.

At 15m wide, three metres high and three metres deep, the installation makes a lasting impact on all visitors and we expect more than 48 million at St Pancras International this year. Already, that impact can be sensed in the station. From regular visitors to new arrivals, the urge to look up is so powerful. People respond in a variety of ways - talking to their friends about

what they are seeing, standing to reflect, sharing photos and tweets on the internet.

Some people ask why we are doing this. My response? While we aim to preserve the historic beauty of St Pancras International, we also want to avoid the mummification of a Grade I listed building. London and Britain are about more than just heritage. Our station will always embody that juxtaposition of old and new: be it art, music, technology or retail.

St Pancras is a microcosm of what visitors to Britain can expect - a wonderful blend of the old and the cutting edge; the whimsical and the prosaic. Our nation's commitment to art is one of the many things which make Britain great.

www.terracewires.com