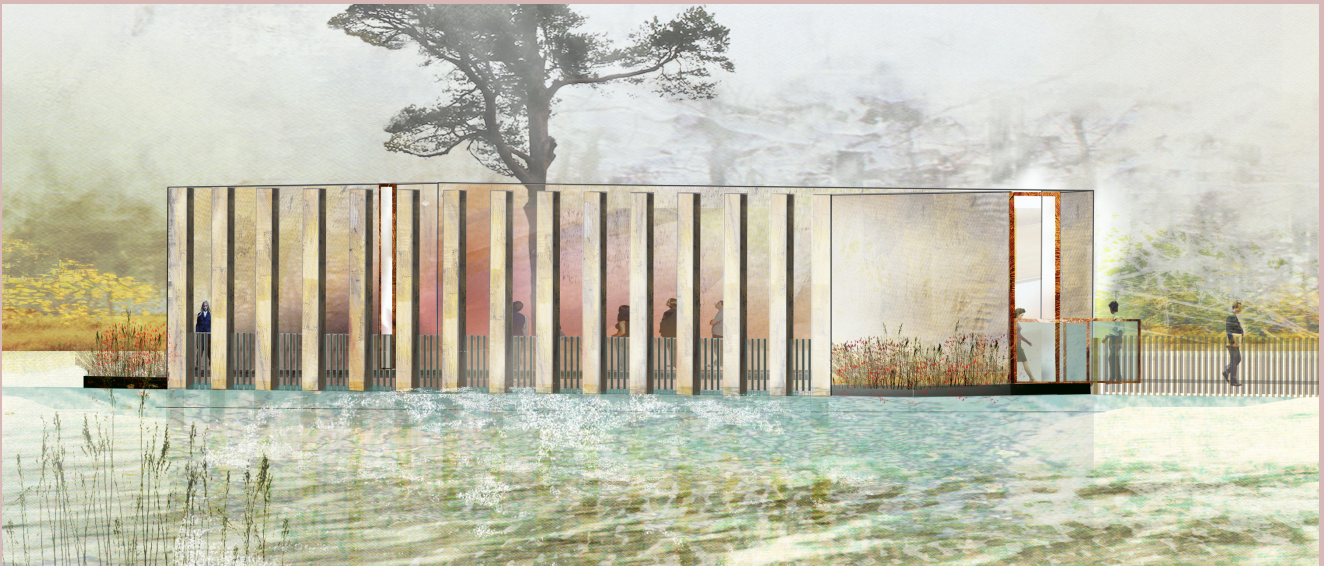




THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

UOA C13

ARCHITECTURE, BUILT
ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING



RESEARCHER

Lisa Mackenzie

OUTPUT TITLE

An t-Eilean (The Island)

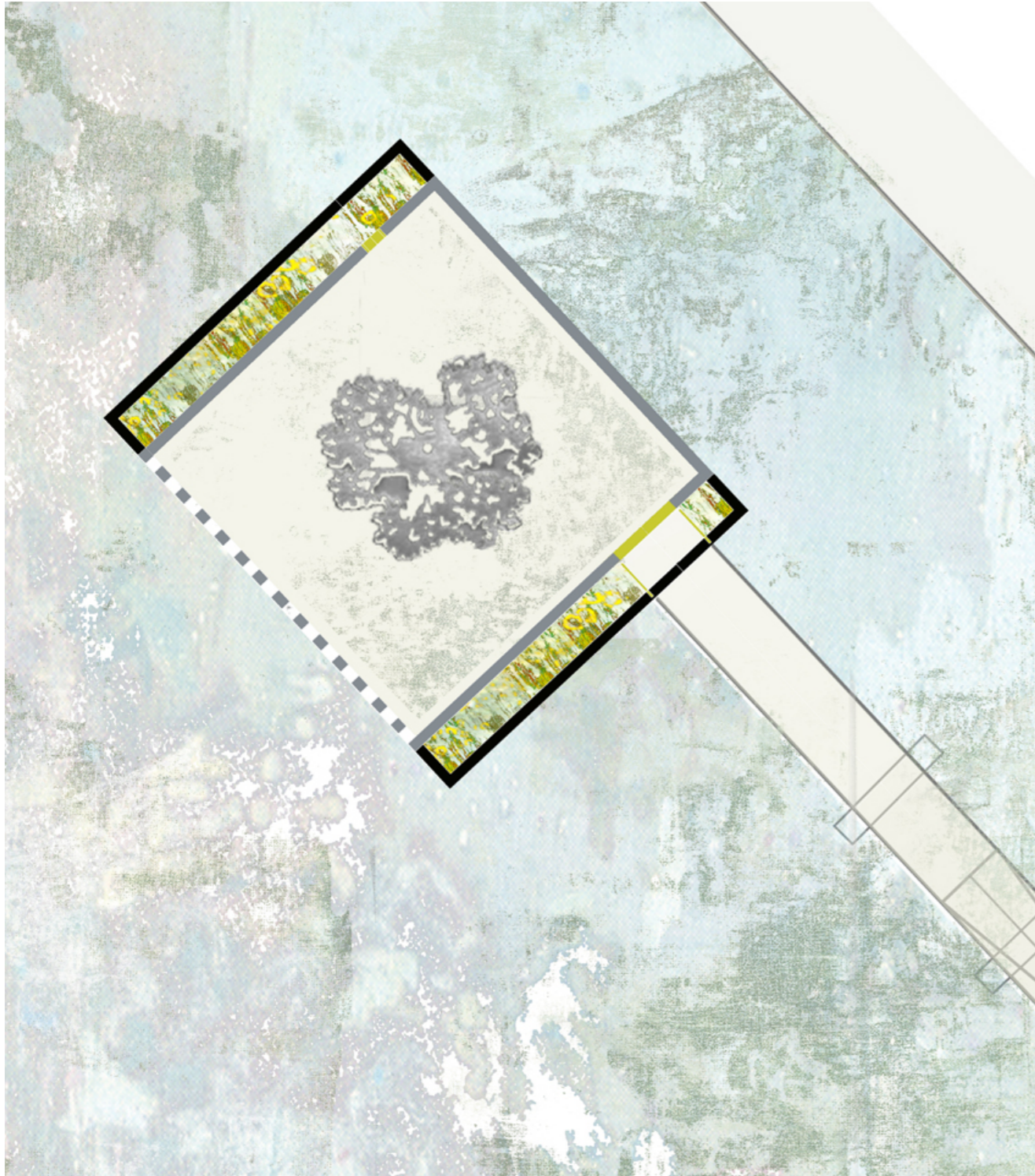
OUTPUT TYPE

Landscape Design

DATE

29 September 2014

FIG. 1
An t-Eilean illustrative plan view.
 Digital and hand drawing by
 Lisa Mackenzie.



01 / STATEMENT

An t-Eilean (*The Island*, Gaelic) is an open-air, multi-purpose space (16 metres square) that occupies a central position in Inverness Campus for the University of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

The space unites sculpture, building, and garden to form a distinctive landscape. Visitors experience *An t'Eilean* as a floating courtyard open to the sky and the surrounding landscape and connected to the land by a timber boardwalk.

The project challenges scale and collapses normative design practices to unite architecture and landscape in ways that are subtle and sensitive to the rhythms of the days and seasons.

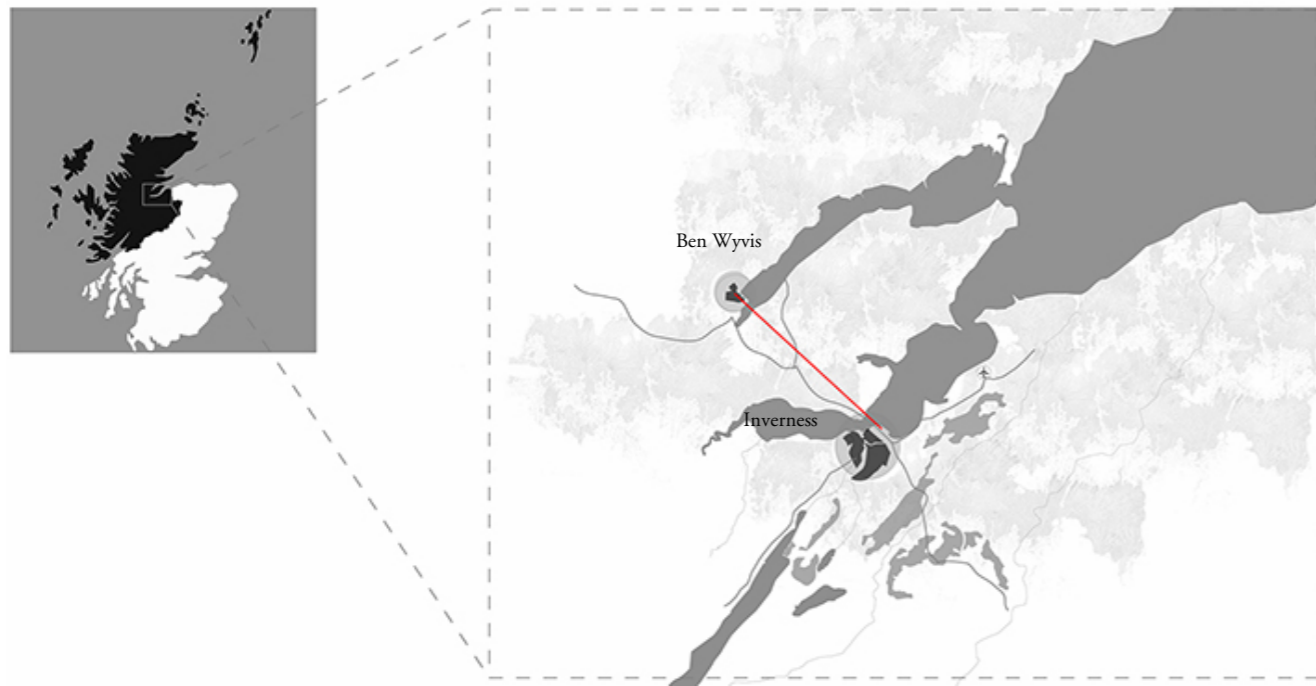
An t-Eilean is a built 'concept' and an interstice – a constructed translation of the designer's knowledge of theory and her landscape architectural practice.

Mackenzie worked with leading expert David Bennett on the concrete specification for *An t-Eilean*. The concrete mix uses a by-product from coal-fired power stations called Pulverised Fuel Ash (PFA), to promote material re-use in construction. The mix allows a range of surface finishes to manifest through the structure, capturing and animating different qualities of light and shadow through the space.

The project was presented and received input and approval from a wide range of stakeholders involved in the Campus development. The design was exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy in 2014 before its completion. Over 20,000 people viewed the designs of just ten architects, including MacKenzie, selected for the exhibition, which aimed to explore the relationship between architecture, art and landscape.

The design was awarded the Landscape Institute Scotland, Public Vote Prize in 2015. Mackenzie has been invited to talk about this project internationally to professional and educational groups in Amsterdam (2013), Xiamen (2016) and Oslo (2019).

FIG. 2
The site of Inverness Campus in its regional landscape, on the edge of Inverness and the edge of the Moray Firth with Ben Wyvis in the North. Photo and digital drawing by Lisa Mackenzie.



02 / RESEARCH DIMENSIONS

The masterplan was conceived to reinforce key relationships between Inverness and its surrounding landscape context. The mountain of Ben Wyvis in the North captures daily shifts in changing weather conditions.

These changes have become the subject of greetings between Invernesians (whereby 'hello' is often simply replaced by 'snow on the Ben'). Through the consultation process it was recognised that the presence of the Ben Wyvis on the horizon is very important to local people. It was also identified that many Invernesians feel that they have returned 'home' when they see water and the Moray Firth stretch out in front of them after a journey through the Cairngorms in the south or through the Black Isle in the north.

An t-Eilean is positioned on a critical axial relationship between Ben Wyvis and Inverness Campus, drawing the mountain back into the fabric of the site scaled features and holding spatial form that attends to large scale landscape thresholds to the east and to the west (FIG 2).

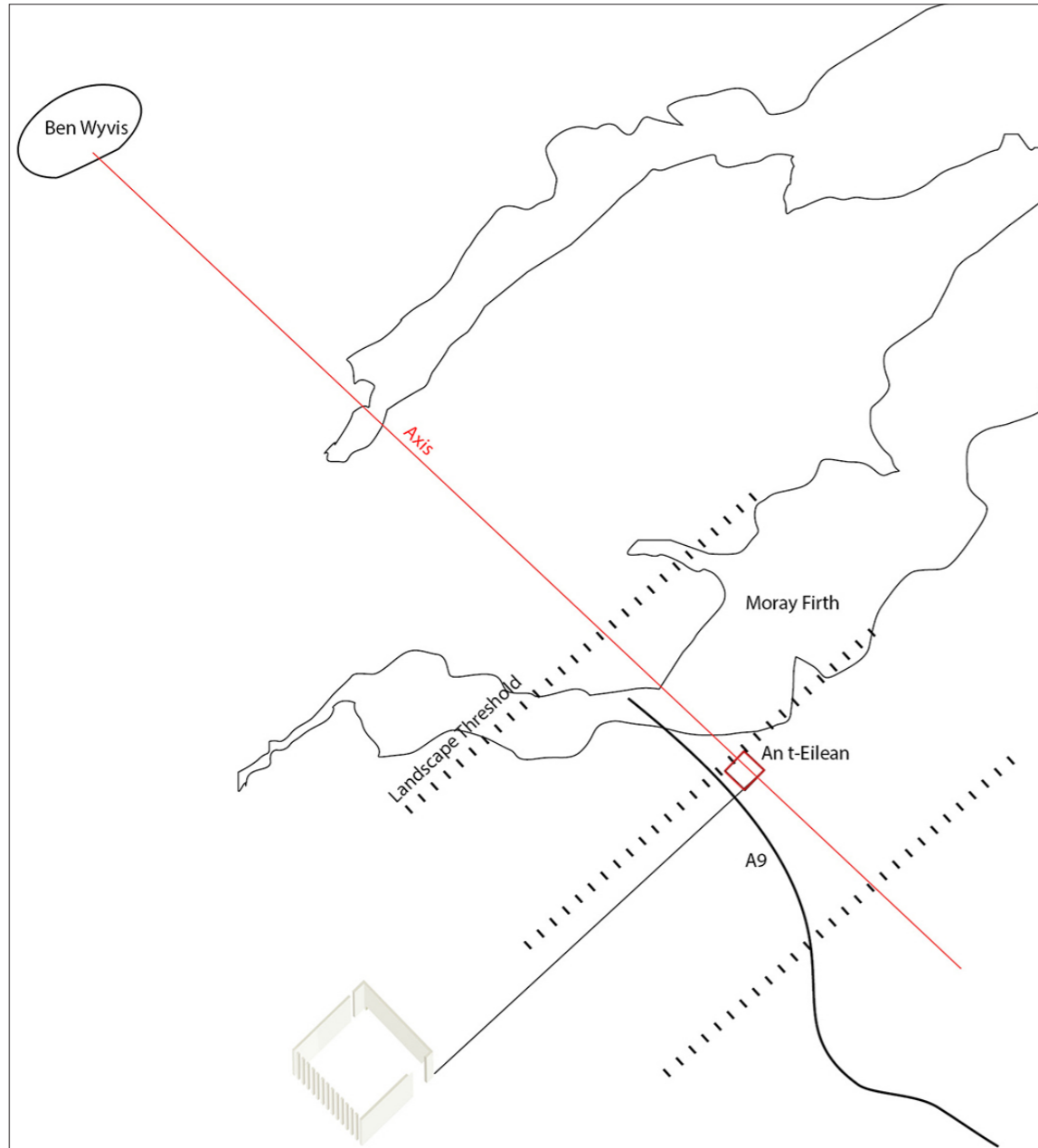


FIG. 3
An t-Eilean in position and on axis with Ben Wyvis in the North, sitting in a key location amongst large scale landscape thresholds formed in transitions between land and sky. Image by Lisa Mackenzie.

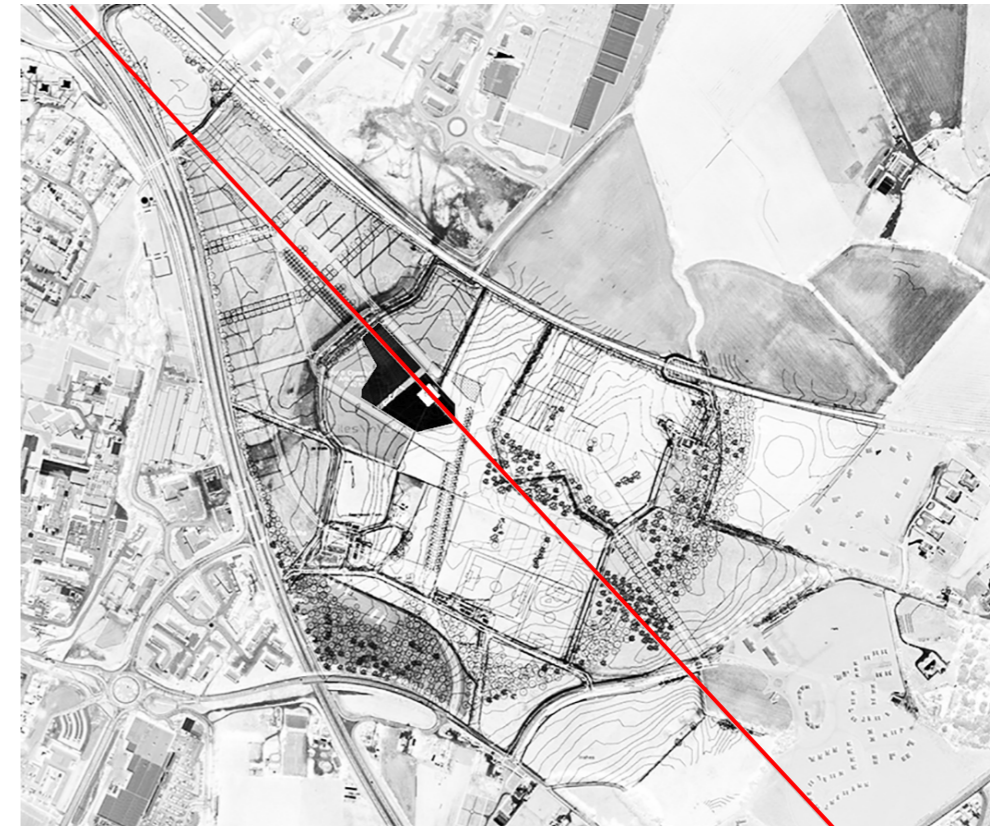


FIG. 4
An t-Eilean in position within the developing campus fabric, holding an alignment through the site. Image by Lisa Mackenzie.

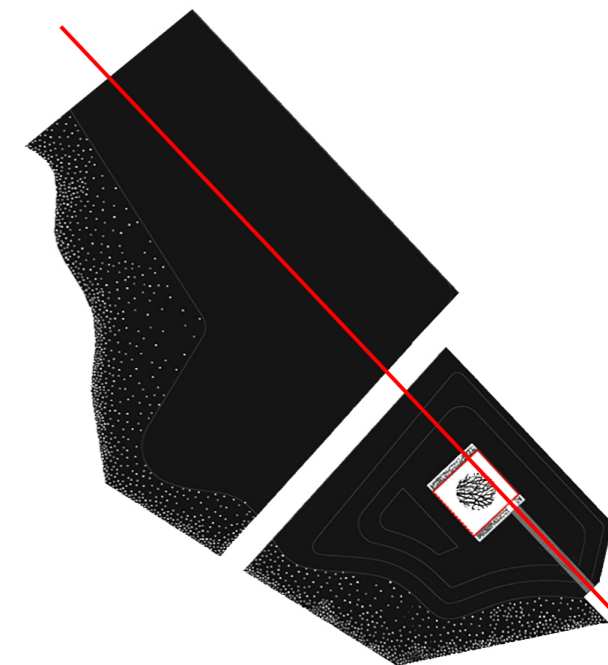


FIG. 5
An t-Eilean, the form of the work delineated in red within the central water body of the site. Image by Lisa Mackenzie.



FIG. 6
An t-Eilean (The Island), illustrative proposal drawing. View from Inverness College. Image by Lisa Mackenzie.

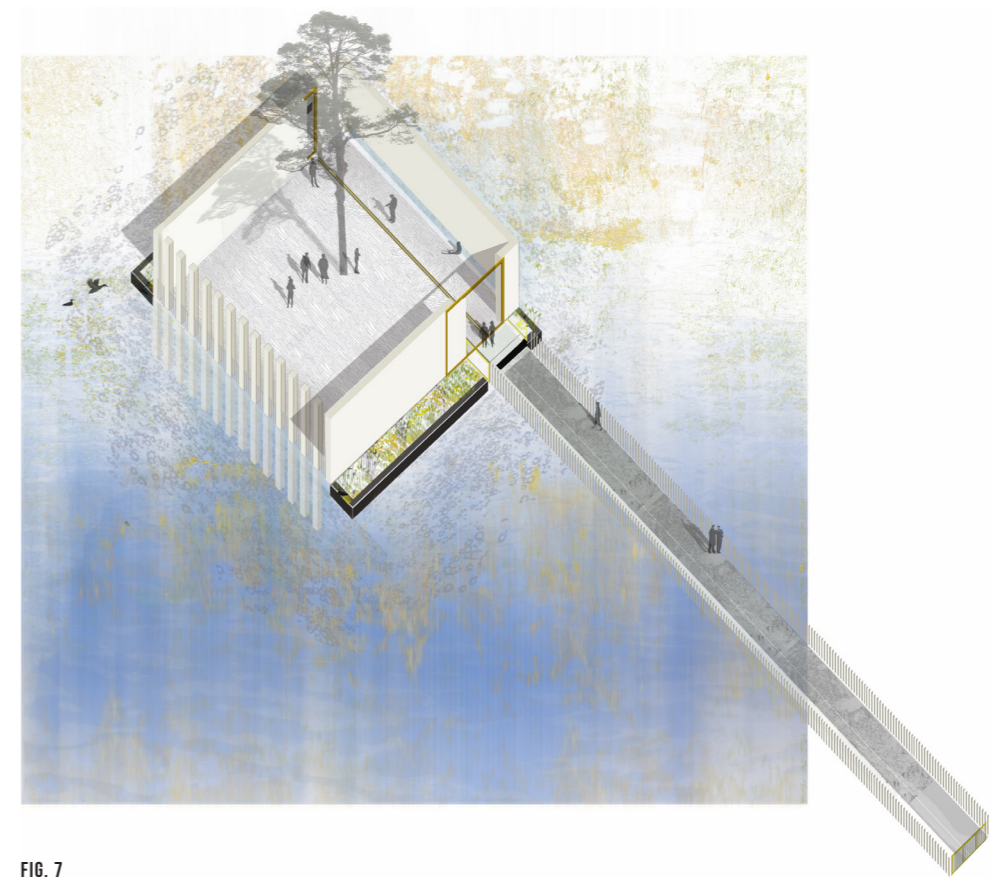
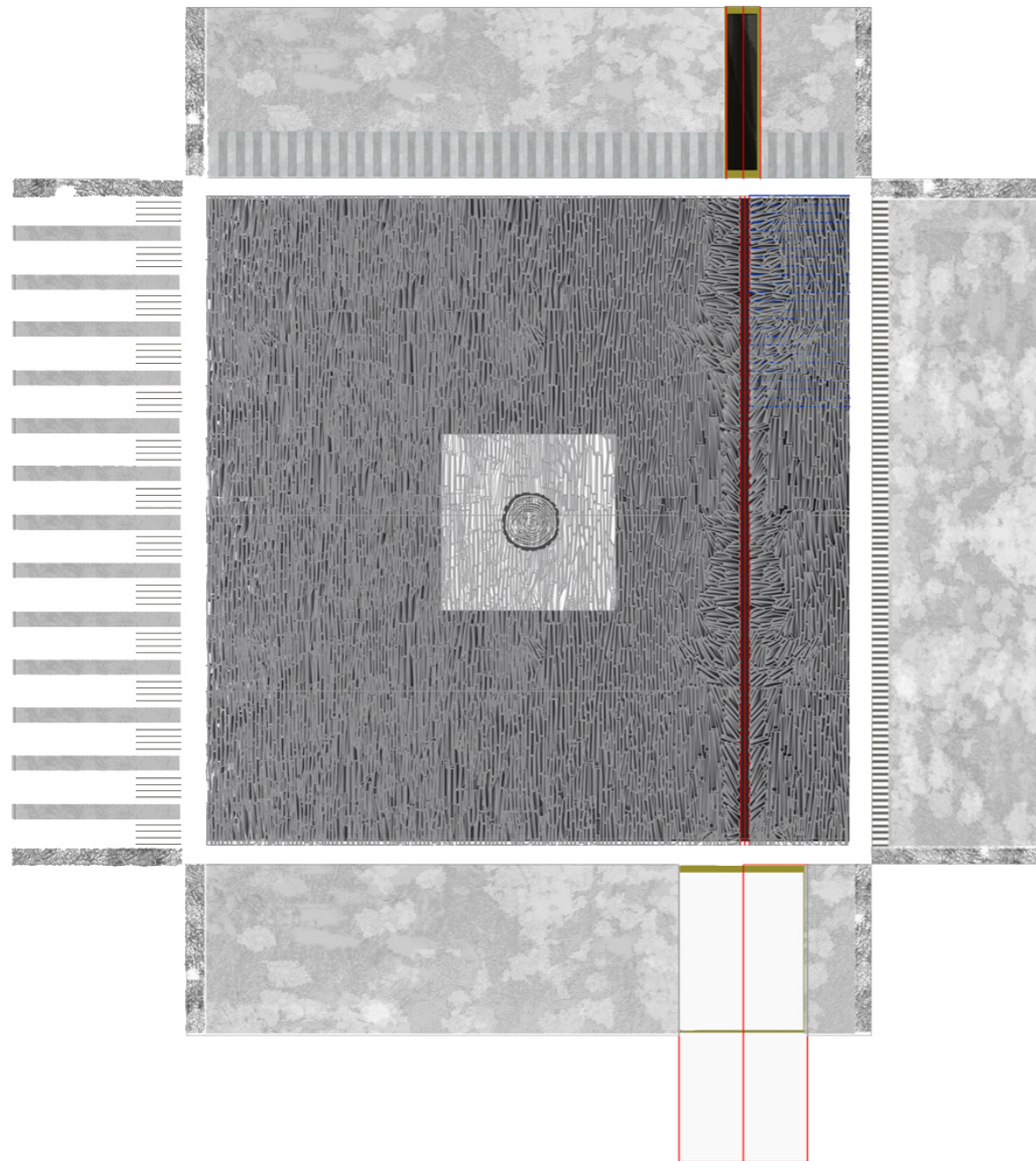


FIG. 7
An t-Eilean, axonometric proposal to Highlands and Islands Enterprise (not to scale). Digital and hand drawing by Lisa Mackenzie.

FIG. 8
Illustrative plan view, with the walls 'folded down' to communicate the key spatial relationships within the space. Digital and hand drawing by Lisa Mackenzie.



03 / ORIGINALITY

Educational campuses are usually designed by arranging buildings with a predisposition towards an architectural programme.

This means that in current practices of design at this scale landscape is conceived of as a way to provide an attractive setting for buildings.

The project masterplan (co-designed and supervised by Mackenzie before the inception of *An t-Eilean*) took a landscape-led approach, whereby the form, structure and context of the existing landscape underpin key compositional innovations. *An t-Eilean* collapses normative design practices to unite architecture and landscape in ways that are subtle and sensitive to the rhythms of the days and seasons.

As a single commission, *An t'Eilean* consolidates the principles led by Mackenzie in the site-wide masterplan into a significant gathering space.

FIG. 9
Proposal drawing for the north wall elevation. Digital and hand drawing by Lisa Mackenzie.

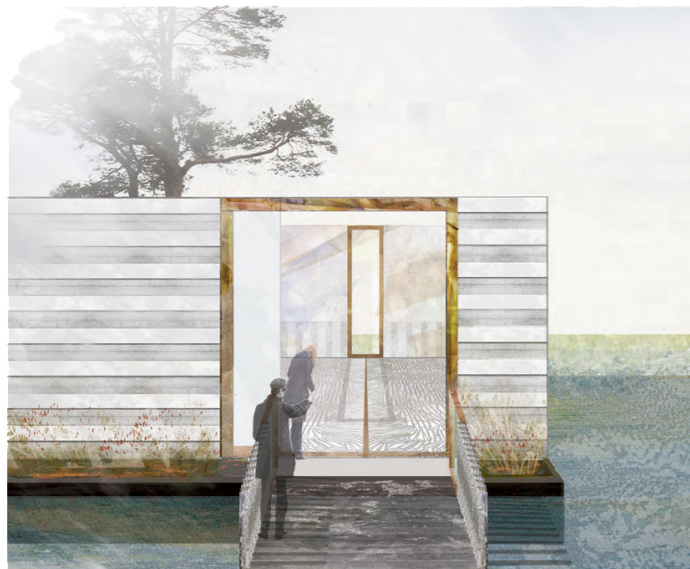
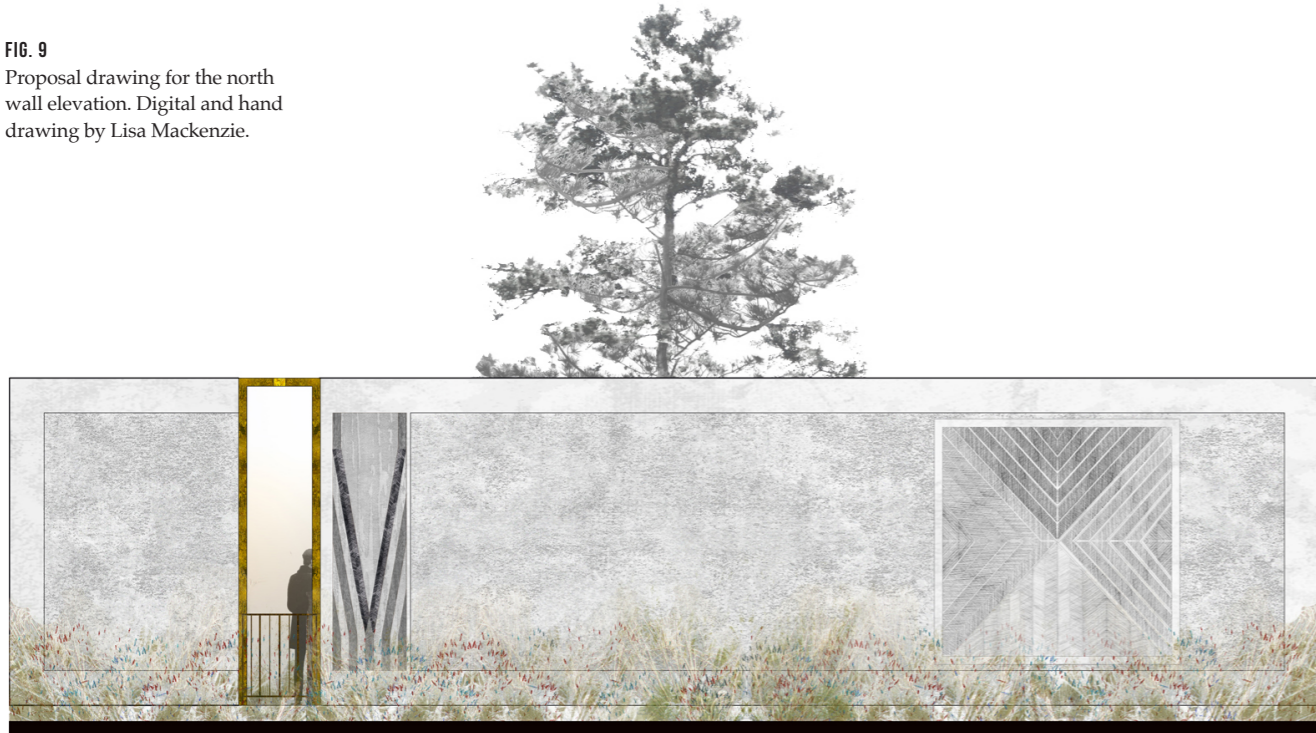


FIG. 10
Proposal drawing for the south wall elevation. Digital and hand drawing by Lisa Mackenzie.

FIGS. 11 & 12
Key threshold elements being fabricated in the bronze foundry in Leeds. Photos by Lisa Mackenzie.



FIG. 13
An t-Eilean, view from the south
'through' the axis to the north.
Lisa Mackenzie, 2016. Photo
by Gillian Hayes.



04 / RIGOUR



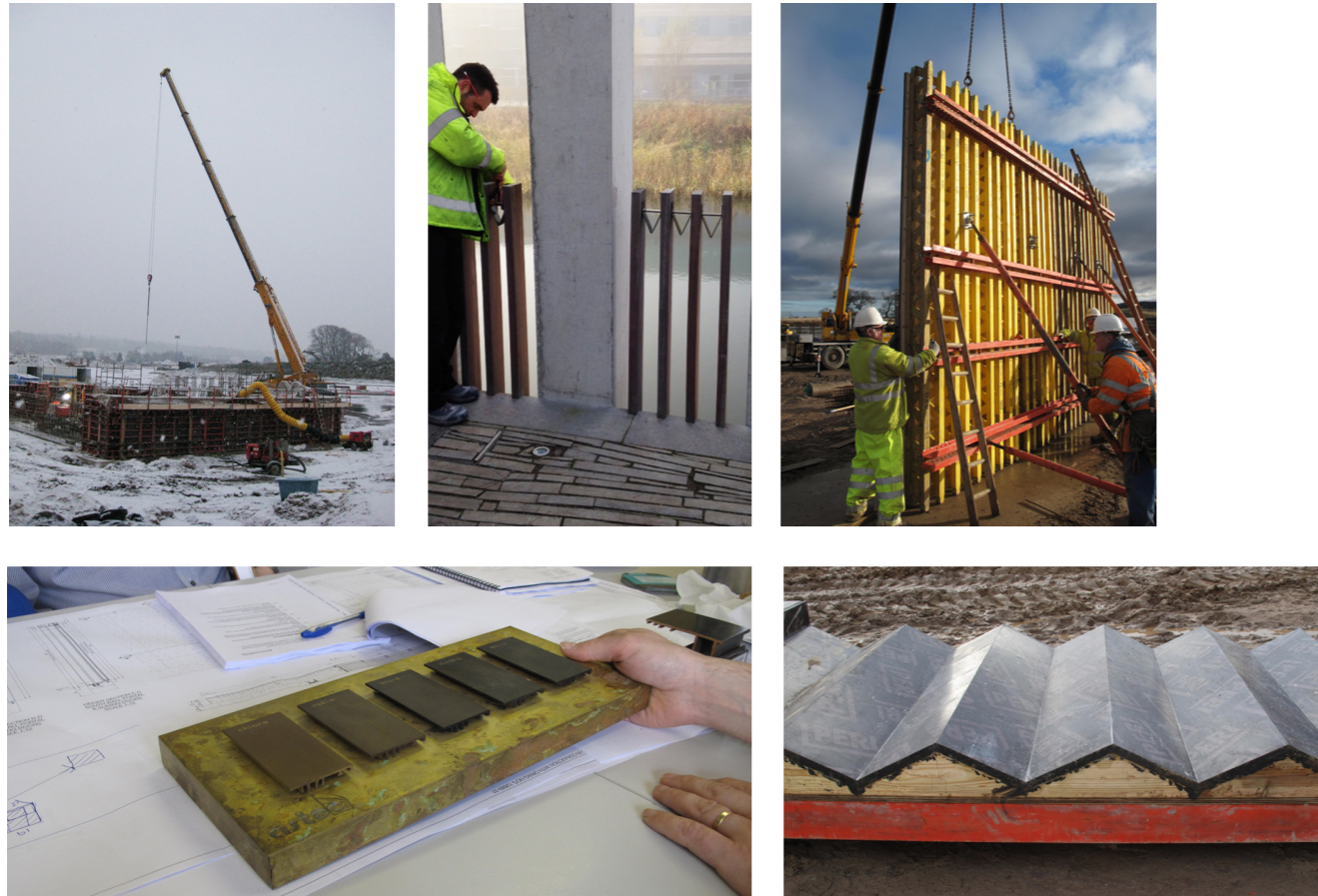
FIG. 14
The Island Gallery under construction in 2014, showing the concrete 'pleating' on the north wall and the splintered Caithness stone floor under construction. Photo Lisa Mackenzie.

This design was conceived to address a gap between theory and practice in imagining new typologies for external space that:

- Collapse both landscape and architectural disciplinary preoccupations in the design of space.
- Form a rupture in the normal practices of spatial delineation, delimitation and space ownership (public/private).
- Actualise a space that is both theoretically and physically open, so that new forms of discourse and knowledge construction can take place within it, but hold relevance beyond it.

Mackenzie worked closely with a local stakeholder board to surface key associations between people, place and landscape. Conversations centred upon creating a significant landscape and context specific identity for the future site. Open discourse as to the meaning of the work and its resultant form allowed Mackenzie to refine the design from the first stages of its conception right through to its implementation on site.

Mackenzie worked with leading expert David Bennett on the concrete specification for *An t'Eilean*. The concrete mix uses a by-product from coal-fired power stations called Pulverised Fuel Ash (PFA), to promote material re-use in construction. The mix allows a range of surface finishes to manifest through the structure, capturing and animating different qualities of light and shadow through the space.



FIGS. 15-19
 From top left:
 Concrete trial panels being erected on site.
 Bronze brackets being fixed to the guard rail.
 Wall pours taking place in situ.
 Selecting the bronze finish at review of patination in Leeds.
 Concrete 'pleat' test panel with resin faced plywood.
 Photos Lisa Mackenzie.



FIG. 20
 Examining the concrete finish after the trial panels have been poured.
 Photo courtesy of Graham Doig, Site Engineer.



FIG. 21
 Mackenzie with the design team on site. Photo courtesy of Graham Doig, Site Engineer.

FIG. 22
The internal space with the heavy bronze entrance door in the background. Photo courtesy of Gillian Hayes.



FIG. 23
Internal view of the cantilevered east wall. Photo courtesy of Gillian Hayes.



05 / SIGNIFICANCE

Since its completion in 2015 *An t'Eilean* has been used as a space of contemplation, a space for music and a space for exhibiting art.

Students of Inverness College often use *An t'Eilean* as a setting to show their work.

The project was presented and received input and approval from a wide range of stakeholders involved in the Campus development.

The design was selected and exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy in the annual art and architecture show for Scotland in 2014 before its completion. Over 20,000 people viewed the designs of just ten architects, including Mackenzie, selected for the exhibition, which aimed to explore the relationship between architecture, art and landscape.

The design was awarded the Landscape Institute Scotland, Public Vote Prize in 2015. Mackenzie has been invited to talk about this project internationally to professional and educational groups in Amsterdam, 2013, Xiamen, 2016 and Oslo, 2019. See Appendix, page 31.



FIG. 24
Internal view including the 'pleated benches' also designed by Mackenzie to mirror the proportions of the north wall. The weathering and patination of bronze work in harmony. Photo courtesy of Gillian Hayes.

FIG. 25
An t-Eilean with marginal wetland
planting in the foreground. Photo
courtesy of Gillian Hayes.



FIG. 26

Mackenzie waited for 6 months for a large oak tree to come down in a storm. This timber was used to make two 'pleated' benches, also designed by Mackenzie, for the space. Photo Lisa Mackenzie.



FIG. 27
The north portal, cast in bronze.
Photo Lisa Mackenzie.



FIG. 28
The Scots pine in the central space
with temporary support guys.
Photo Lisa Mackenzie.



FIG. 29
The pleated timber benches
were constructed from solid
oak and pick up on the dimensions
of the concrete pleating on
the north wall. Photo courtesy
of Dougal Black.

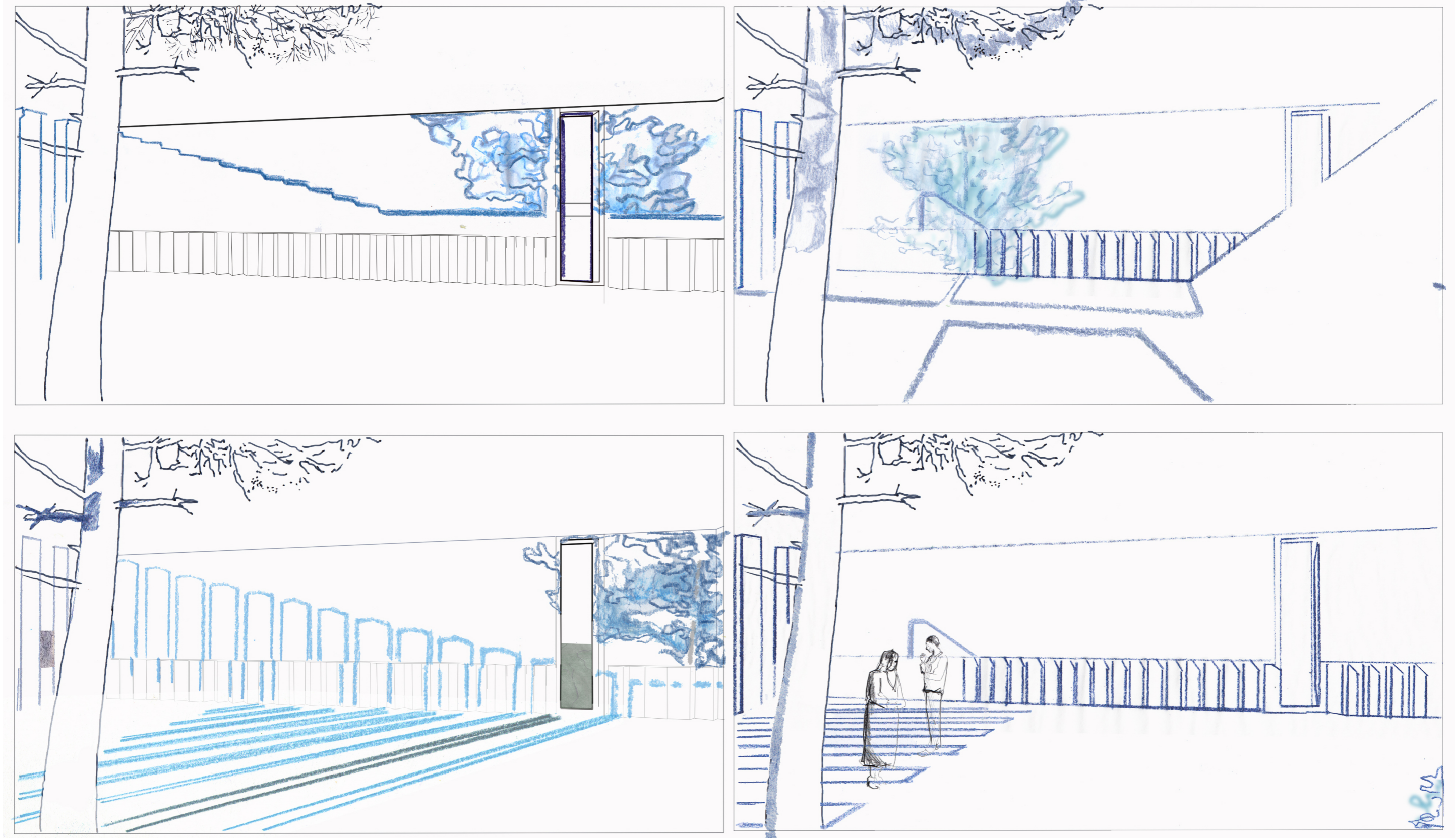


FIG. 30
Sunlight and Shadow images through time.
Clockwise from top left: December 11am, September 8am,
December 12pm, September 2pm
Credit: Lisa Mackenzie

06 / APPENDIX

Project details

Landscape Architect/Designer
Lisa Mackenzie

Client
Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Stakeholders
Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Inverness College, University of the Highlands and Islands, Scottish Agricultural College, Scotland's Rural University College and NHS Highland.

Completion
The Campus opened to the public on 16 May 2015

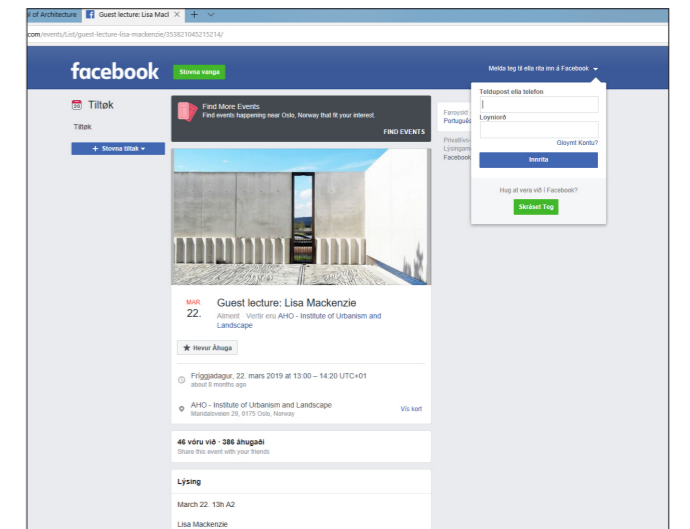
Project Costs
£375,000.00

Collaborators

Structural Engineering
*Tim Heatherington, AED Design
Fairhurst Engineers, Edinburgh*

Contractor
Morgan Sindall, Drawn Metal (bronzework)

Specialist Consultant
David Bennett (concrete)



FIGS. 31–33

Clockwise from top left:

Highlands and Islands Enterprise use *An t-Eilean* to publicise Inverness Campus on a huge billboard erected on the A9 motorway, 2016.

Mackenzie presenting the *An t-Eilean* project at a conference on *Water in Cities*, Xiamen, China, 2016.

Facebook advert for a guest lecture at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design, March 2019, where Mackenzie's lecture presented *An t-Eilean*.



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