

Laying foundations for extreme future

The world's first Festival of Extreme Building opens in Birmingham's Eastside on June 9.

Developed on land donated by Land Securities (Birmingham Alliance), and presented by Sozo Collective, the six-month exercise in design and experimental building will establish a so-called free zone.

This is where residents of Birmingham, private sector developers and local authorities can create structures and explore architectural ideas that will reflect their visions of what gives a city its magic.

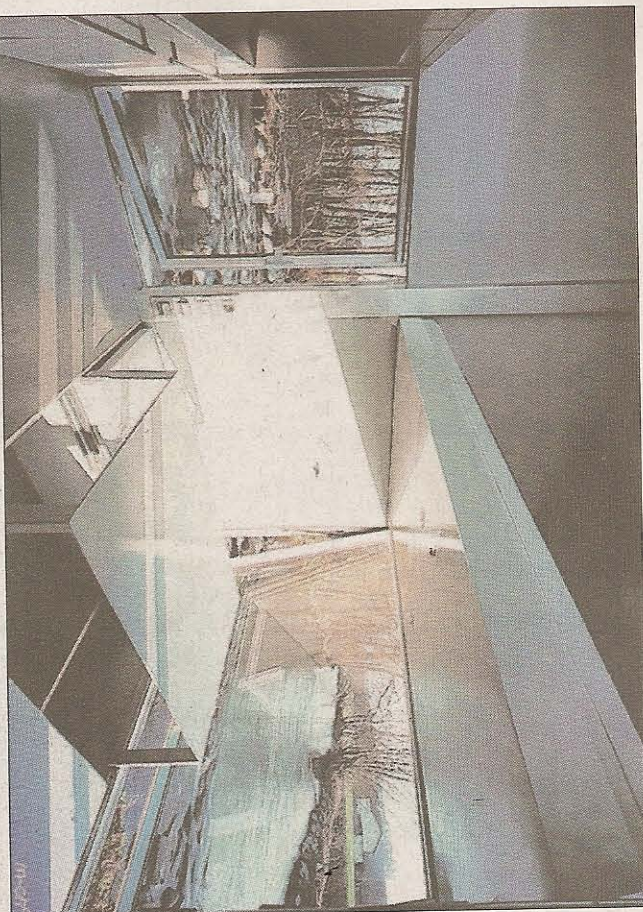
Festival curator and Sozo Collective director Dave Pollard is counting off the days until June 9.

"The festival aims to create a visible exhibition platform for the design aspirations of the citizens of Birmingham, working together with, and supported by, professional practitioners," he says.

"The result will be a temporary parallel city that captures a snapshot of the cultural landscape of Birmingham in 2007."

FXB will shine an international spotlight on the £6 billion regeneration of Birmingham's Eastside using artist-led processes, and a stream of internationally renowned architects and designers to engage and support residents during the evolution of their new urban environment.

The centre-piece of the festival will be the



UK's first appearance of Prof Richard Horden high-spec and ergonomically designed micro-compact home, which crosses the boundaries between art, architecture, sculpture and function.

Among the other works being installed is

a mobile fashion house designed by celebrated architect Will Alsop, and intended to inspire participants in their own design thinking.

Mr Pollard sees the FXB as the physical manifestation of the future aspirations of

key stakeholders operating in the flagship Eastside regeneration zone.

"This is an exciting opportunity to design and make amazing structures that will be exhibited in a highly visible location," he says. "Everyone is welcome to participate as a designer, constructor, or as casual audience members."

Dave Hodgson, marketing director of Marketing Birmingham, says: "The Festival of Extreme Buildings' successful approach to engaging local people with the macro level regeneration process sets it apart."

"The initiative is generating a lot of international interest in the project and the city."

"The perfect fusion of art, architecture, regeneration and social engagement is a superb example of Birmingham's diverse and avant-garde cultural offerings."

The project has successfully managed to attract significant commercial funding, with businesses keen to be associated with this unique initiative, and has brokered a unique range of co-operative partnerships to bring about a redefinition of what is meant by public space.

Success in its inaugural year could lead to a permanent home for some of the structures in Birmingham's proposed eight-acre Eastside Park.

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