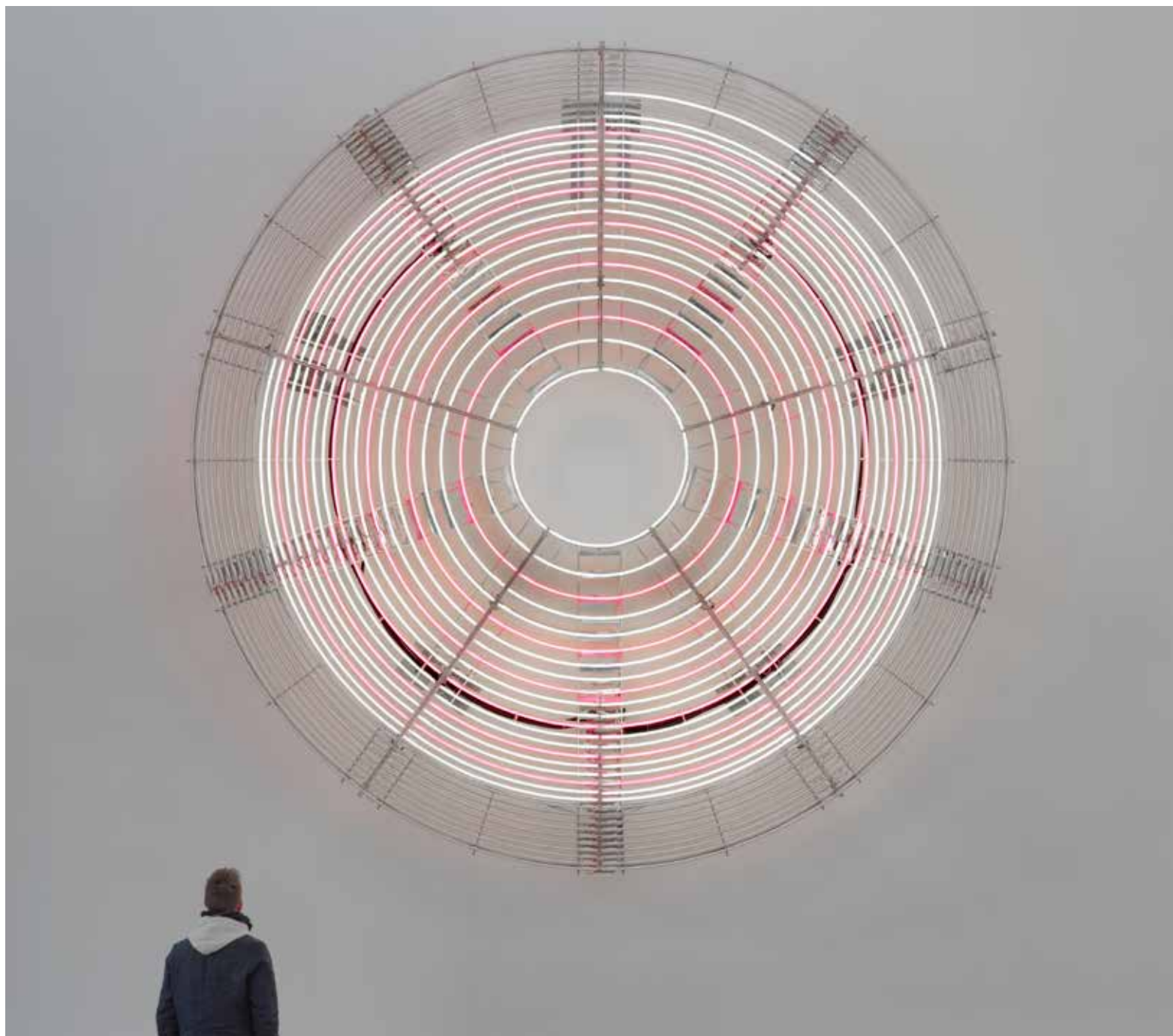


BILLIONAIRE



THE CULTURE ISSUE

A RETURN TO SEEING IN PERSON

COVER • Down a mind-bending rabbit hole with Carsten Höller
ARCHITECTURE • Sir David Adjaye on giving back through design

INSTITUTIONS • The Medicis celebrate three-and-a-half centuries of art patronage
TRAVEL • Why the magical Lithuanian capital Vilnius deserves a spot on your bucket list

FUTURE-PROOFING • Nature's unlikely ally in the fight against climate change
SOCIAL • Start-up activist Nachson Mimran on bringing philanthropy to the jet-set

OPINIONS

In each issue we ask three thought leaders to share their opinion on the same question. This issue: what is your favourite city for architecture, and why?



Niccolò Barattieri di San Pietro

The art, architecture and design in Florence surprises me not because of the rarity, but because of the sheer amount of history there is to uncover around every corner.

We cannot forget it is the birthplace of the Renaissance that gave us geniuses such as Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and Brunelleschi. Brunelleschi's Florence cathedral is still considered the most symmetrically perfect dome to ever have been created.

While meandering around the streets of Florence, every corner is filled with buildings of incredible architectural importance that have stood the test of time and still inform architecture today.

If Florence was taken as the blueprint for modern-day architecture, we would all be living in a more beautiful world.

Niccolò Barattieri di San Pietro is chief executive officer of London developer Northacre.



Katherine Pooley

I travelled to St. Petersburg a few years ago with my young sons, husband and (unstoppably curious) father and, from the moment I arrived, I was blown away by this incredible city.

It has much more of a European feel than other Russian cities, but the overall vibe is still unmistakably and evocatively Russian. The plasterwork and panelling I viewed in the Peterhof Palace were quite incredible, and the formal gardens and staggered fountains must be second only to Versailles. Known as the 'Venice of the north', its beautiful buildings are reflected in the canals that meander through this exquisitely unusual city.

The incredible contrast between the intricately crafted, historical, architecture, and a stark Soviet, rather brutalist, contemporary aesthetic is quite extraordinary. Russia is such an incredibly unusual destination; so culturally rich and yet at the same time so unlike the rest of Europe.

When I dream myself back to St. Petersburg, I imagine myself back in the Pavilion Hall of the Hermitage, with my two sons, mesmerised by the sublime craftsmanship of Catherine the Great's golden peacock clock.

Katherine Pooley is an award-winning interior designer.



John Kapon

One of my favourite cities for its food-and-wine scene, Copenhagen is also filled with a balance of classic and modern art and architecture.

The contemporary buildings that have been constructed more recently somehow manage to blend in perfectly with the historic buildings and ancient palaces. Distinctive design can be found just by strolling around the streets.

The Danish themselves are very inventive, and that goes for the food, as well as the design, culture and architecture. There's really nowhere else where you can see form and function come together so seamlessly. Just a few examples are the ski slope created on the top of an energy plant, the colourful houses and the canal, the architectural wonder of a bridge that transports cyclists across the harbour, and solar panels replacing tiled roofs all around the city.

It's a striking destination from the moment you arrive. I highly recommend you let it surprise you.

John Kapon is chairman of Acker Wines.



Sicilian Soul

At the meeting point of the Ionian, Mediterranean and Tyrrhenian seas lies Sicily, a land of crystal-clear coves, mystical salt marshes and dark volcanic craters. Long a Mecca for the literati, great writers from Tennessee Williams to DH Lawrence, Truman Capote and Henry Faulkner have converged on its shores for inspiration. On the rocky east coast set on high cliffs is medieval Taormina, and here the Belmond Grand Hotel Timeo offers restorative views of the Bay of Naxos, the shimmering coast and Etna's smoking peak. The pool is set among jasmine and wild flowers, while the gardens, lined with palms, cypresses and roses, beckon for late-afternoon strolls.

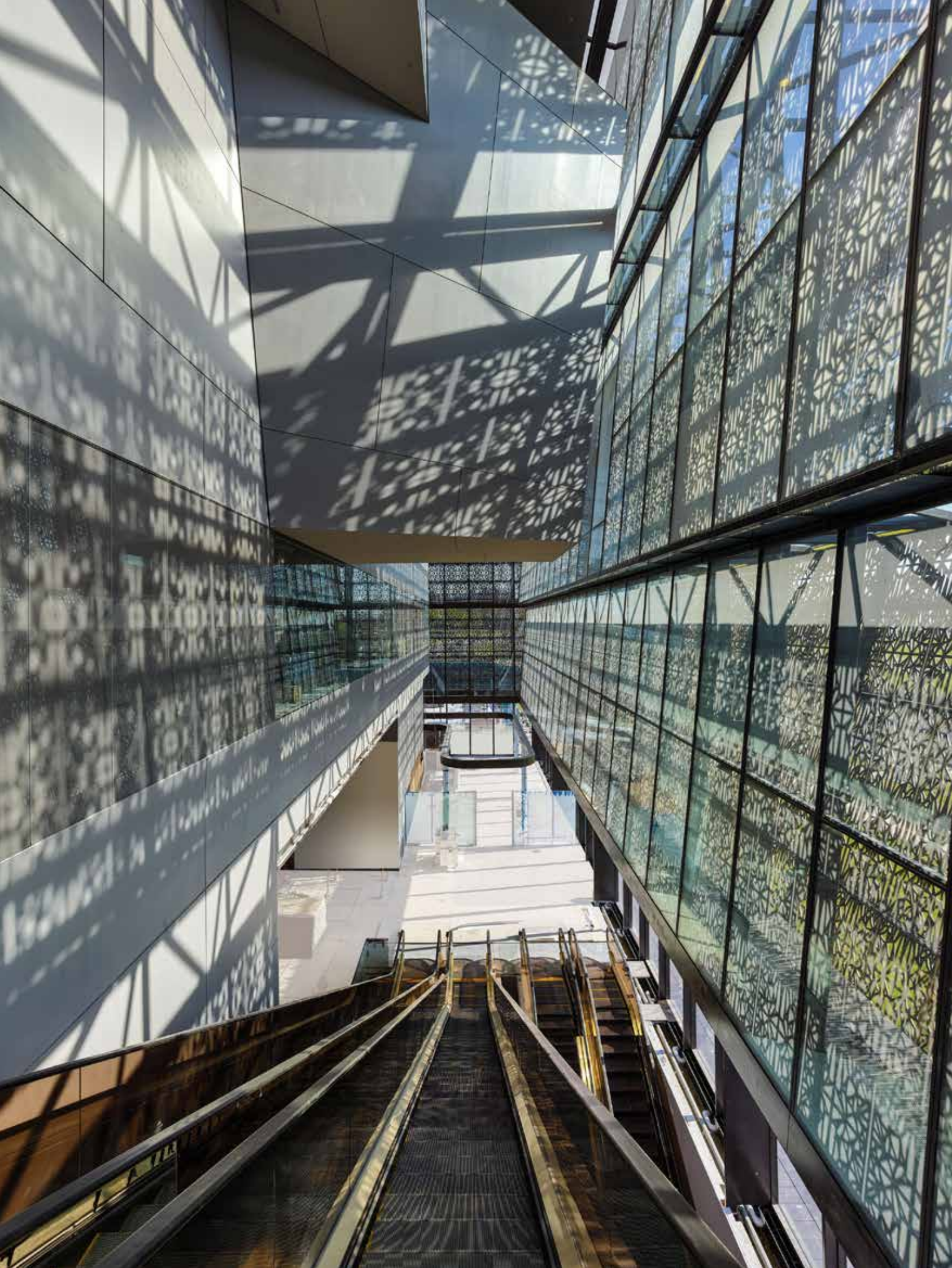
A Monumental Career

Sir David Adjaye infuses his artistic sensibilities with an ethos for community-driven projects.

by Daniel Nash

One of the leading architects of his generation, Sir David Adjaye is known for not only his visionary design but also his social responsibility as an architect, partly inspired by the impact of growing up with a younger brother who was wheelchair-bound. Born in 1960's Tanzania, the son of a Ghanaian diplomat, he grew up between various countries in Africa and the Middle East before settling in London as a teenager. He earned a degree in architecture from the Royal College of Art and shortly afterwards set up his own firm, Adjaye Associates, in 2000.





“I like the idea that every generation adds something to a city to show what they believe in and lessons learned, so that other generations learn from it.” — Sir David Adjaye

Public projects became his speciality, like the Nobel Peace Centre, built up from an old train station in Oslo, or the Stephen Lawrence Centre in Lewisham, London, to at once commemorate the architectural student who was murdered in 1993, and drive conversations that hope to shape race and social justice.

Billionaire sat down with the award-winning British-Ghanaian architect after his latest project, a decanter he designed for an 80-year-old whisky from Gordon and MacPhail, the oldest Single Malt Scotch whisky ever bottled, sold for HKD1.5 million (US\$192,788) in October. Auction proceeds, via Sotheby's Hong Kong, were donated to local Scottish charity Trees for Life, whose mission is to rewild the Caledonian forest.

Billionaire: You are well known for the social aspects of your work: building monuments, hospitals and often doing pro bono work. Why is this important to you?

Sir David Adjaye: It's one thing to craft a building but if it is not transforming the lives of most, it's limited; it's inspirational but it's limited.

What does design mean to you?

Since opening my office I've been committed to democratising high design, it should serve as an edifying agenda for everyone. I think design should be for everyone and should be everywhere. I separate design from luxury in its traditional sense; just because it is made from marble and gold does not mean it is good design. Critical thinking that is brought to something that really aims to make an experience of the user measurably better: that is design.

Why do you like designing memorials and monuments, such as the Cherry Groce Memorial Pavilion and the UK Holocaust Memorial?

I think memorials are one of those fantastic elements of cities. A great city is always celebrating and according monumental and influential moments. Since the beginning of the 21st century, with the advent of the internet, we've almost forgotten that culture. For me, it is an assault on the physical world in terms of the sense of renewal. The city itself also needs renewal as different generations and values come through, and monuments are part of our understanding of cities. I like the idea that every generation adds something visible to a city to show what they believe in and the lessons learned, so that other generations can learn from it.



Top and Middle: Behind the scenes at Glencairn Crystal and at Wardour Workshops.

Top: Craftsmen from Glencairn Crystal Studio cutting the glass decanter. Middle: Cask 340 from Gordon & MacPhail, which cradled the world's oldest single-malt Scotch whisky for 80 years. Adjaye's oak pavilion sat on a traditional craftsmen's bench at Wardour Workshop, alongside English oak struts with hand-cut tenons.



“I separate design from luxury in its traditional sense; just because it is made from marble and gold does not mean it is good design.”
— Sir David Adjaye



The auction will raise funds for Trees for Life, whose mission is to rewild the Caledonian Forest.

“I’m a workaholic and obsessive. Nothing gets done without me. I’m at the beginning of every project and maintain the relationship until the work is delivered.” — Sir David Adjaye

Which of your projects are you proudest of?

It’s like choosing between children! I love each project, even when it’s very mundane. The Smithsonian in Washington DC [Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, a US\$540m, 29,000 square metre museum completed in 2016] was so long overdue; it was such a unique project as it was a museum and also a memorial to the horrors of slavery and so many lost lives. It also celebrates the achievements of so many descendants of slaves and what they add to the country called America. People go in and they say, ‘oh my god, I thought I knew the story but I didn’t’.

With a team of 200 in your studio in London, how hands-on are you?

I’m a workaholic and obsessive. Nothing gets done without me. I’m at the beginning of every project and maintain the relationship until the work is delivered.

How did the whisky decanter project come about?

The team from Gordon & MacPhail approached me and, fortunately, I love whisky. When I came to make the decanter, I’m an architect, so I approached it like a small building. I call it the Tempietto, ‘little temple’. There’s the idea you could keep it as a desirable, tactile object, forever and keep it as an ornament. It is inspired by whisky: everything starts with oak, and this design pays tribute to the role oak plays in transforming liquid into an elixir with almost magical properties. After conceptualisation, the barrel took about a year to perfect. We needed to invent a new hinge for this opening mechanism that would allow this magic trick of opening and letting go and it not slamming shut. Then there were dozens of glass-blowing experiments: all these insane things I asked people to do such as blowing a cube of glass. It was amazing; so many firsts.

What has the pandemic meant for you?

The reduction of flying has been an extraordinary benefit, as I have spent much more time with my wife and children at our home in Ghana, along with the introduction of this medium, Zoom, that means I can work more from home. There are great things about work-life balance that we’ve all learned. ◇