



Urban Plunge

11 Sep 2014–10 Jan 2015 at Roca London Gallery, London



Thames Baths Project, Visual of Thames Baths in detail at Blackfriars Bridge North Foreshore, visualiser 'Picture Plane'



Launching to coincide with the London Design Festival (13-21 September 2014), Urban Plunge explores both existing schemes and future visions for river swimming in the heart of our cities.

Commissioned by Roca London Gallery, it showcases international design and architectural projects that transform urban rivers into public leisure spaces, giving people an exciting new, water-level perspective on their metropolis.

Curator Jane Withers, a design consultant and co-founder of Wonderwater, has selected five key projects to illustrate architecture and design's role in radically changing river usage, challenging our attitude to the urban water environment.

Urban Plunge shows drawings, models and photography that document these projects, including Denmark's scheme to transform Copenhagen harbour from an industrial and transportation junction into the city's cultural and social centre. The sculptural Harbour Baths (Julien De Smedt Architects) have already proved an incredible success in bringing new life to the harbour area, while HOW | House of Water (Tredje Natur), is a visionary idea

for a new island for Copenhagen harbour dedicated to education about water and the environment.

Urban Plunge is showing two UK schemes, one for a series of permanent central London river bathing stations - Studio Octopi's Thames Baths - and the other, King's Cross Pond Club (Ooze & Marjetica Potrč), a temporary pool on the King's Cross development site opening this autumn that will create an enclave for public use in the private land under construction. The water will be purified through a natural process using wetland plants to create a refreshing and clean swimming experience only 15 minutes' walk from King's Cross station.

+POOL (Family New York & PlayLab), a floating swimming pool proposed for the middle of the East River, New York City, is already a phenomenal success story, having surpassed its Kickstarter fundraising target to create the world's first river water-filtering pool. In addition, the +POOL team has launched a Dashboard, in collaboration with Google Drive, a digital tool that will monitor New York's water quality on LIVE time. +POOL is scheduled to launch in 2016.

Capturing the zeitgeist for natural swimming experiences around the world, the projects reveal imaginative ways to enrich urban water experience and humanize our cities. They also act as a wake-up call to make us realize that what we flush down the toilet or pour down the drain impacts on our water environment and thus on the quality of urban life.

Jane Withers says: "I am delighted to see that companies like Roca are questioning our neglect of this most vital resource and championing a new water culture. The possibility to change city rivers, from undervalued thoroughfares to places where we can swim, offers amazing opportunities for new urban experiences and wellbeing, as the projects showcased in Urban Plunge demonstrate. Roca's We are Water Foundation and their support of public exhibitions and events like this can really bring awareness to influencers and those who can make a difference to the way we treat our water."

Roca London Gallery manager Eva Woode says: "We are very proud to be able to give this important global survey a platform. We are organizing several talks during the run of the exhibition that will enable people to hear how architects and designers are finding solutions to enable swimming in our cities. We hope that the exhibition will inspire people to think differently about water and that it will help contribute to finding ways of improving urban life."

Roca London Gallery

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Opening hours

Monday - Friday from 9.00am to 5.30pm
Saturday from 11.00am to 5.00pm
Every last Tuesday of the month open until 8pm

Related images

1 & 3 House of Water, Visual of House of Water (2014)

2 +Pool, +POOL, Architects: Family & PlayLab, Year: 2010-2016, Location: New York, NY, US

4 Kalvebod Waves, Bathers at the Kalvebod Waves, photographer Kasper Egeberg for Danish Architecture Centre (2013)

5 King's Cross Pond Club, Visual showing Kings Cross Pond Club, (2013)

6 Kalvebod Waves, Bathers at the Kalvebod Waves, photographer Kasper Egeberg for Danish Architecture Centre (2013)

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