

sales, service & engineered solutions





Museum of Making © Derby Museums



To Kill a Mockingbird. © Mark Brenner



Garden Studios. © Tom Rowland



Theatre Royal Drury Lane



Slingsby Place



Moulin Rouge. © Matt Crockett

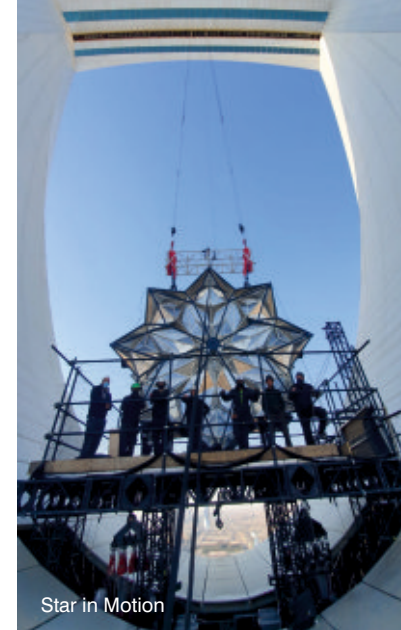


Sanctuary 2022. © Firefly Aerial Innovation18



# CONTENTS

Page 4	Theatre
Page 6	Museums & Galleries
Page 8	Engineering
Page 10	Significant Others
Page 12	Film & TV
Page 14	Sporting Events
Page 16	Servicing, Sales & Hire
Page 17	People & Resources
Page 18	Sustainability, The Circular Economy, Health & Safety





# THEATRE

Back to the Future. All images © Sean Ebsworth Barnes



The world of entertainment was rocked like never before by the Covid-19 pandemic. March 2020 saw theatres, not just in the UK, but across the globe go dark. What was intended to be a short closure to limit the spread of the virus, became a period of more than a year without musicals, plays and concerts.

As the industry emerged from extended hibernation, one of the first productions that returned was Back to the Future, the Musical. Unusual was originally contracted to supply all the rigging for the show's arrival at the Manchester Opera House. Opening on February 20th 2020, it enjoyed a very limited run before its forced closure. So, we were delighted to be contracted for its West End opening at the Adelphi Theatre.

It has since gone on to win a Best New Musical award at both the 2022 Oliviers and the What's On Stage 2022 Awards.

We were brought on board by Simon Marlow, who we've worked with on several projects, including Bat out of Hell the Musical and & Juliet. Unusual's role involved:

- Supplying all of the rigging for both the load in and the run of the show
- Producing the rigging schedule to co-ordinate all flown elements of the show and to keep track of the loads on to the building
- Designing bespoke grid diverts and drops for the show's various heavy counterweight flown pieces
- Ensuring that the heavy load was spread correctly across the grid
- Creating an environment encircling the audience in the form of giant circuit boards that extend into the auditorium
- Extending the proscenium so that the audience is almost enclosed by the circuits, ensuring LED lighting, speakers and wiring are all concealed
- Fabricating bespoke storage frames for the set that can be stored in the air when not in use

***"Back to the Future is a highly technical show and we knew from the start we'd need the best riggers to help us meet the demands...and Unusual fits the bill!"***

Simon Marlow, production manager,  
Back to the Future, the Musical







# MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

Rupture No 1: Blowtorching the Bitten Peach. Heather Phillipson at Tate Britain. All images © Tate



When it comes to rigging in museums and galleries, there's very little we haven't done. Whether its aircraft from World War 1, a series of sculptures by Anthony Gormley, a collection of Russian spacecrafts, or a set of giant festive snails. And while each exhibit is, in itself unique, so too are the rigging challenges that accompany them.

Artist Heather Phillipson's commission, *Rupture No 1: Blowtorching the Bitten Peach* won rave reviews during its stint at Tate Britain's Duveen Gallery. Unusual Rigging was brought on board to handle the rigging for the commission, having worked with Tate Britain on a number of complex artist projects. The opening was delayed by more than a year due to the pandemic, with the disruption and financial hit that the museums sector took as a result of lockdown, resulting in a more constrained budget. Unusual came on board as an in-kind supporter of the commission. Led by Sam Carter, the team:

- Conducted all meetings virtually until installation, working solely from three artist impressions of the work – no plans – just pictures
- Devised a way to transport 24m long cloths to the museum safely
- Put up ground supports for the red cloths that formed a significant part of the exhibit
- Attached rigging points to the steel roof trusses above the glass ceiling
- Installed various other infrastructure, such as supports for the lighting, and the hanging of lights, nets, bathtubs and tiny bugs, to reference but a few items
- Supplied all the wire for the suspension of these objects from the grid
- Engineered and supplied bespoke suspension brackets for the ladder beams
- Dressed the suspension wires with hemp rope to make them appear to be from some 'other era'
- Worked with the artist to help problem solve and develop her ideas

*“Unusual is experienced in working around our audiences and with the limitations of the building, but with COVID and the subsequent delays and restrictions, they – (and the whole team) had to adapt to a very different way of working”*

Linsey Young, Tate Britain's Curator of Contemporary Art



Heather Phillipson at Tate Britain



Heather Phillipson at Tate Britain



Heather Phillipson at Tate Britain



Heather Phillipson at Tate Britain





# ENGINEERING

Theatre Royal Drury Lane. © Andy Paradise



Transforming theatres is one of the most privileged aspects of our work. To get behind the scenes (and the floors, and the roofs) of some of the most beautiful, listed buildings in the country, is an honour.

One of our greatest achievements is at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Following three years of project management and a further two of site attendance, the splendid, Grade 1 listed Georgian venue, has been re-imagined as an all-day stylish destination with one of London's greatest auditoriums at its heart.

Contracted by LW Theatres and project managed by Unusual's Mike Goodwin, the team:

- Worked on initial design concepts through to approvals with the LW Theatre Project Design Team
- Co-ordinated with the principal contractors (Gardner & Theobalds Ltd) and the diverse subcontractors during the construction period, through to handover
- Worked with Dorothea Restorations and David Willmore of Theatre Research, to remove the historic stage machinery – a project with national significance
- Demolished the sub stage equipment, removed all existing fly tower works including, the old grid, galleries, cross over and counterweight fly system
- Demolished and removed the existing fire curtain (the Iron) and drencher system, via a 25m<sup>2</sup> flown crash deck, suspended from the roof trusses
- Strengthened roof trusses and replaced the timber grid, to achieve an imposed load capacity of 200 tonnes UDL across a new steel grid
- Enabled the system to accommodate up to 100 counterweight sets, capable of supporting 1t per set. Remodelled the entire stage house above stage level, including design, fabrication, installation of a new steel grid, three new galleries and stair access to all levels including the grid
- Designed and fabricated the new fire curtain, capable of withstanding 30kg/m<sup>2</sup> pressure differential and provide a 60 minute fire barrier that falls in less than 30 seconds
- Installed 60:off, 4-line, 500kg sets, all double purchase, commencing downstage of the proscenium, increasing to 67 sets over the duration of the contract
- Installed 10:off, 4-line 500kg secondary sets, all double purchase

*“Unusual Rigging's contribution sat at the heart of the project both in delivery and result. The success of the refurbished stagehouse is largely down to their understanding, planning and execution which will be enjoyed by productions for many years to come.”*

Dan Watkins, Property & Projects Director, LW Theatres



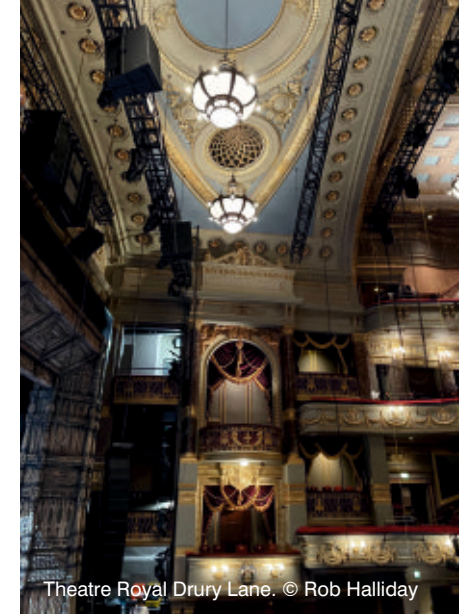
Theatre Royal Drury Lane. © Rob Halliday



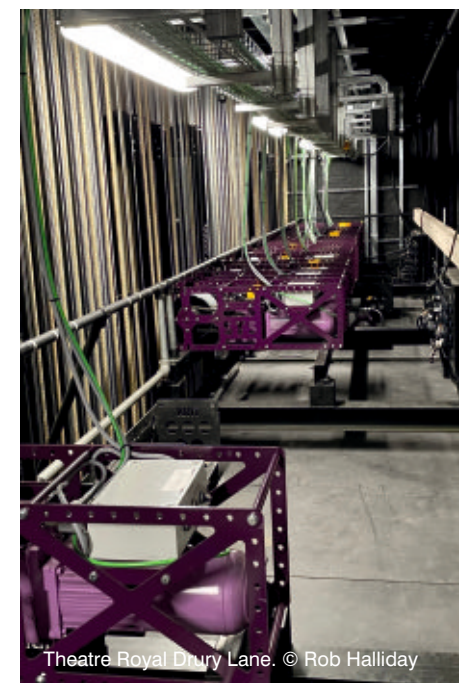
Theatre Royal Drury Lane. © Philip Vile



Theatre Royal Drury Lane. © Rob Halliday



Theatre Royal Drury Lane. © Rob Halliday



Theatre Royal Drury Lane. © Rob Halliday





# SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

Star in Motion



We are renowned for turning unusual, unexpected, and altogether off the wall ideas, into reality. We felt that events, installations and 'one-offs' that don't quite fit into any specific category, deserved a page of their own. 'Significant Others' are projects that break the mould. We are extremely lucky to work on some unique things – and Noor Riyadh really does stand out as one of those 'wow' moments.

This project saw us work with Balich Worldwide Shows and renowned lighting designer Koert Vermeulen, on an installation entitled Star in Motion. The installation – a shining star, suspended from the top of the famous Kingdom Tower more than 300m in the air, was the centrepiece for Noor Riyadh – a new citywide annual festival of light and art.

We were asked to hang the lighting feature within the space at the top of the building. As part of Unusual's role on this project we:

- Worked in conjunction with BWS's technical director Ollie Green and structural engineer Rasti Bartek from Cundall, to quickly and efficiently design and fabricate heavy duty bracketry
- Navigated Brexit supply chain issues, to source a load monitoring system from JCM
- Relied on pictures and drawings of the venue, as the pandemic prevented site visits prior to installation
- Lifted the 5.5 tonne 'star' temporarily, using Liftket chain hoists, then transferred the load onto its permanent suspension points – 4-off Dyneema Rope (80mm diameter)
- Tensioned the star down to stop it swaying in the wind. This was achieved via an additional 2-off – Dyneema Rope connected to 2-off – 16:1 Tirfor assemblies, giving a total of 50 tonne in tension, to stop the star swaying in the wind
- Built a working platform to ensure that all crew had a stable place from which to work. This was constructed with a double height handrail and debris netting
- Completed load in on schedule, where it remained until the end of the festival, at which point the working platform was reinstated, for the installation to be taken down

*"I've known Unusual Rigging for 20 years now, and I've worked with them on several projects and needless to say, they never disappoint! Knowing that they would be a part of the Star In Motion project, I was confident that they would deliver the result I wished for. With their expertise and efficiency, Unusual was able to put the c. 6 tonne piece of art up in the air and respect all the security measures."*

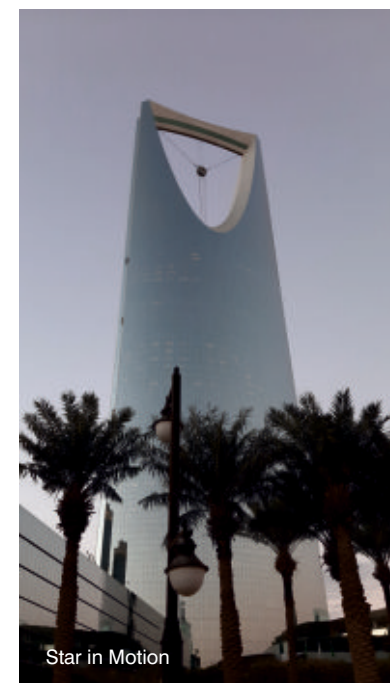
Koert Vermeulen, Principal Designer, ACTLD



Star in Motion



Star in Motion



Star in Motion





# FILM & TV

Garden Studios. All images © Tom Rowland



As a design house, we believe in arriving at the best solution for all our clients, without compromise. Over the years, the 'tricks' of the stage, have been identified as being particularly useful in other sectors too – not least the worlds of film, TV, and live broadcast. While our work on TV shows like *Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway*, BBC's *It's Not Rocket Science* and *I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out Of Here* is well known, we have also made significant inroads in working directly with film and TV studios, supporting their rigging needs.

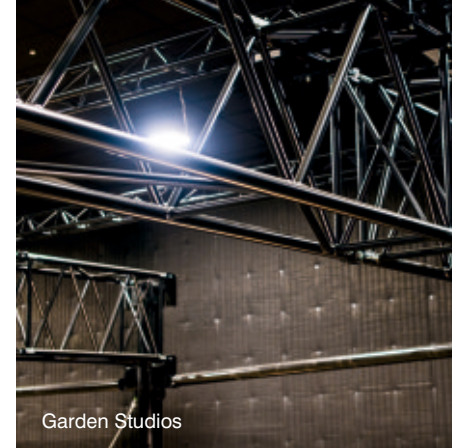
Garden Studios is a technically advanced film production complex, designed specifically to support both today's latest production technologies, and decades of future innovation. Its Iris Campus, situated beside London's Grand Union Canal, is home to three sound stages, totalling over 40,000 sq. ft. Unusual Rigging was brought on board by the studio's Richard Phillips and consultant David Godfrey, to design and build three superstructure grids, given the existing building on the Iris Campus had insufficient load capacity.

As part of this project we:

- Worked with the client to design a suitable lighting grid structure that would support heavy loads, without compromising a building structure that was never designed for this purpose
- Devised a self-supporting structure inside the envelope of the building, with bespoke steel lets, jumbo truss beams and triangular truss perms
- Designed and installed a self-supporting superstructure and perms, with loading capacity of up to 40 tonnes for sound stage 1, which has a total area of 2,170 m<sup>2</sup>
- Designed and installed a self-supporting superstructure and perms, with loading capacity of up to 24 tonnes for sound stage 2, which has a total area of 1,091 m<sup>2</sup>
- Designed and installed a self-supporting superstructure and perms, with loading capacity of up to 20 tonnes for sound stage 3, which has a total area of 486 m<sup>2</sup>

*"Unusual was a complete pleasure to deal with throughout – their entertainment experience shone through, with their willingness and ability to work around supply problems, client issues and access challenges, enabling us to open the shiny new stages to our first clients on time."*

Rich Phillips, CTO, Garden Studios







# SPORTING EVENTS

Tokyo 2020



In the decade since we worked on London 2012, our involvement in the sporting arena has flourished. Our presence in Sochi, Rio, Pyeongchang Tokyo and Beijing has seen us responsible for specialist infrastructure, necessary to facilitate the more spectacular elements of broadcast coverage, such as overhead cable camera systems. Each Games seems to present new and different challenges, as each host country requires adaptation to very differing business and operational constraints, competing to put on a bigger, better event than its predecessor. This is something we're used to and relish. But never before have we had the challenge of two such events, almost back-to-back.

Unprecedented in modern times, Tokyo 2020 was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Rescheduled for summer 2021 and running straight into preparations for the Beijing 2022 Winter Games, Unusual managed the two events as one project - planning logistics to ensure both events were serviced without compromise. Across both events Unusual:

- Designed, installed and maintained the infrastructure for more than 60 overhead installations, across the sporting venues
- Recruited local structural engineering professionals and technical interpreters to obtain design approvals and building control permissions in the host countries
- Fabricated and flat packed engineering solutions in UK, for assembly and installation in the host country
- Planned, prepared and shipped 38 shipping containers of equipment from Bugbrooke
- Took a team of up to 20 riggers to Tokyo and Beijing
- Recruited and worked with local partner companies in Tokyo and Beijing, to deliver engineering and construction services
- Installed various structures from 100m towers for cable camera systems, to small truss arrays in venues for overhead robotic cameras
- Included major engineering installations, for example a tower and gantry on top of an existing steel arched bridge
- Created a bespoke design for a cable camera support, located on the roof of a 100m high apartment block
- Installed major structures in mountain venues for the Winter Games, including a 200m tower supported truss, set on a 27 degree slope
- Worked in conditions that varied from +40° in Tokyo to -30° in Beijing



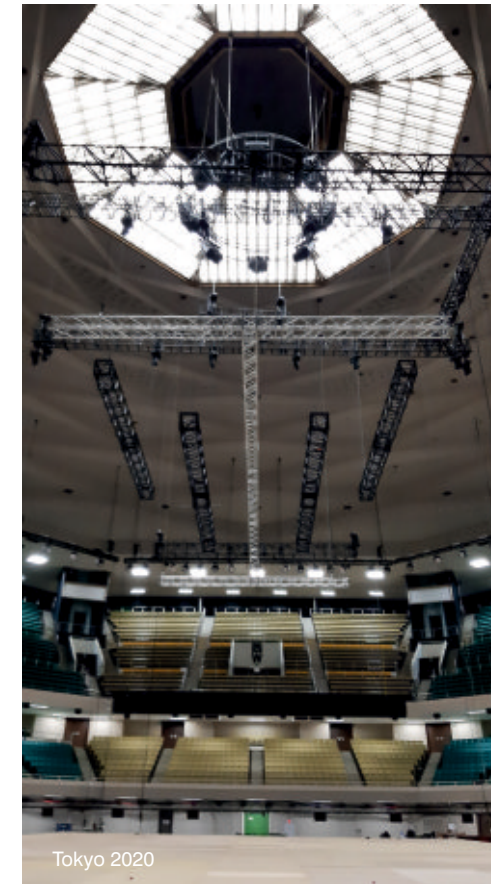
Tokyo 2020



Tokyo 2020



Tokyo 2020

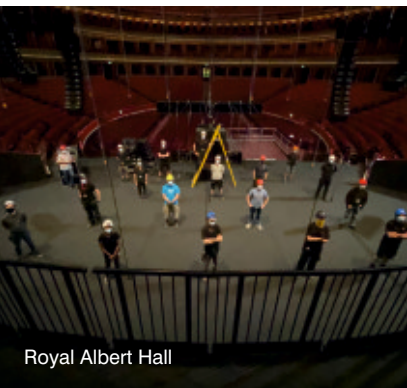


Tokyo 2020

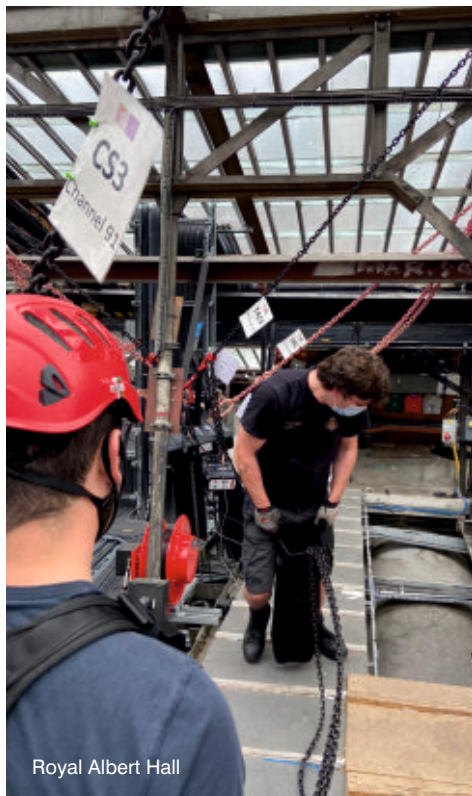




Royal Albert Hall



Royal Albert Hall



Royal Albert Hall

# SERVICING, SALES & HIRE

If the past few years has taught us anything, it's the importance of always being one step ahead of the game. And when it comes to keeping on top of servicing and inspecting your equipment, this is vital.

All too often the small task of picking up a phone to arrange a service, keeps falling to the bottom of the to do pile. So, at Unusual, if you've bought or hired kit from us, we've made it our responsibility to contact you when it's time to make the necessary arrangements.

Once inspection has been completed, all information is brought up to date on a customer portal, creating a record and identifying any remedial action that may be required. Everything is digitalised and long correspondence trails are a thing of the past.

We are happy to maintain and inspect all permanently installed equipment – whether it was purchased from us or not.

Unusual is proud to be the sales and service partner for several manufacturers and suppliers, including Doughty, Liftket, Eurotruss and Rope Assemblies. We work with companies whose ethos and dedication to outstanding quality products and customer service, reflects our own. Liftket is the world leader in the development of electric chain hoists, while the Doughty name is synonymous with reliable, well-made clamps, pantographs, studio rails and modular rigging systems, to mention just a small selection of what they offer.



# PEOPLE & RESOURCES

We are absolutely confident that our staff are the best the UK has to offer. All our people have the necessary industry qualifications, years of experience and established skill-sets. This allows them to deliver the Unusual service under the highest international safety standards.

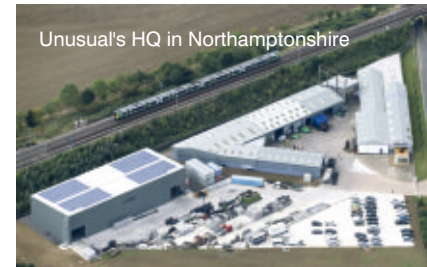
By ensuring that our team possesses internationally recognised qualifications, we can provide assurance to our customers that regardless of how big or how challenging the project, and where in the world it's taking place, we will always meet the technical and engineering demands while complying with the strictest legislation.

Each of our riggers is in possession of Level 2 Rigging Certificates or higher and are fully trained in equipment handling too.

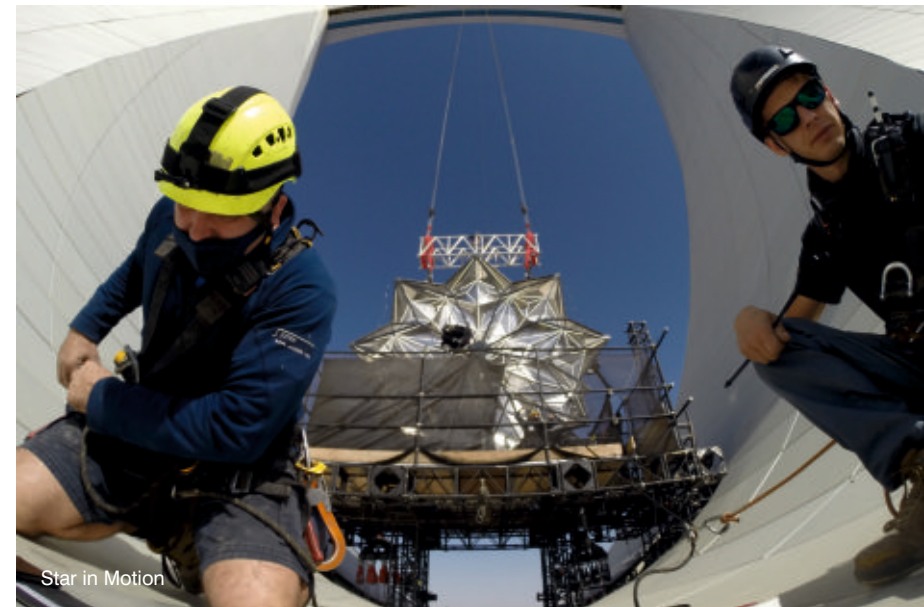
At Unusual we have a massive resource base:

- Over 11km worth of aluminium trussing
- 4000 electric chain hoists
- 2000 automation cables and distro units
- 1000s of items of varied rigging equipment
- Steel wire rope manufacturing for standards stock and bespoke trussing steels

With so much equipment to hand, we've successfully implemented an asset tracking software system, *Kinetic*, so we know where all our kit is at any one time, which allows us to keep on top of everything. Kinetic uses RFID tagging which enables us to keep accurate records, not just of where it is, but when it's due its next service and inspection. It also keeps historical records of the manufacturers' declarations of conformity, ensuring 100% traceability of the products' material mix, the manufacturing conformity standards and the durability of the product, including its component parts.



Unusual's HQ in Northamptonshire







Alan Jacobi on Unusual's solar panelled roof

# SUSTAINABILITY, THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY, HEALTH & SAFETY

It may seem like the buzzword of the moment, but sustainability has been on our agenda for years. We are committed to running on renewables, the principles of resource recovery and re-manufacture. We believe our drive to close the material loop via RFID and bespoke ICT software, sets us apart within our industry.

Our efforts in applying circular economic innovations throughout our business, have led to us being highly commended by the Young Global Leaders of the World Economic Forum and selected as finalists in the WEF 'The Circulars 2017' awards scheme, under the SME category.

Our Integrated Management System brings together the Quality Management System, Environmental Management Systems and Health and Safety Management Systems and manages them as one. Our QMS ensures that we do what we need to, in ensuring our products or services satisfy clients' requirements in a consistent way, whilst learning from problems that arise and use this feedback loop to continually improve our business. EMS manages the environmental risks of the business, including compliance with appropriate laws and minimising our environmental impact. OHSMS ensures we have control over and knowledge of, all hazards resulting from normal operations and abnormal situations, while continually improving our performance.

We are externally audited by SGS against the internationally recognised standards ISO 9001 (QMS), ISO 14001 (EMS) and ISO 45001 (OHSMS). This is something that clients are increasingly asking for. We are incredibly proud of our achievement and recognise the positive impact it has on our tender process, and in helping us stand out within our industry.







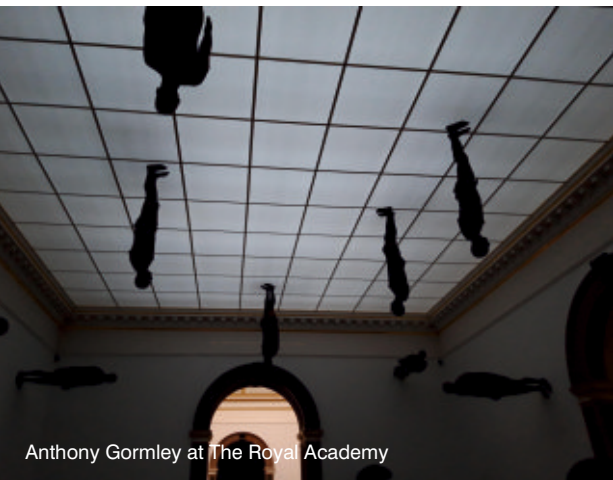
Cinderella. © Tristram Kenton



Fashioning Masculinities, V&A



Women Making History. © Matthew Andrews



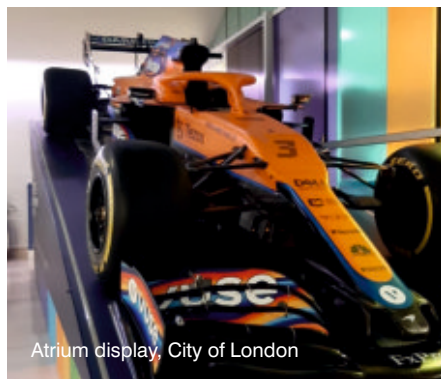
Anthony Gormley at The Royal Academy



Hairspray. © Tristram Kenton



I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out Of Here.

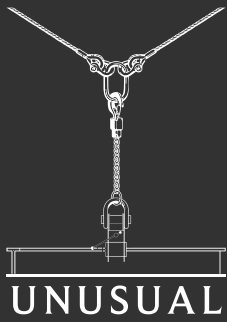


Atrium display, City of London



The Prince Of Egypt. © Tristram Kenton RET©DWA LLC.





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