

Rana Begum x Webb Yates New installation for London Festival of Architecture confronts the politics of borders



No.1387 Fence (2024), Switzerland, by Rana Begum with Webb Yates.

No.1616 Fence (2026)
Powder-coated fence
H 1200 x W240 x D100

Due to be unveiled on 18 June during the London Festival of Architecture, a new sculptural installation by artist Rana Begum with engineering practice Webb Yates confronts the contemporary politics of borders with a poetic reflection on fencing.

No.1616 Fence (2026) is a monumental new installation that plays with a material paradox, challenging the physical infrastructure of privatisation, surveillance and anti-immigration politics.

Poetic material choices

Standing outside the iconic Space House in central London, the installation is built from industrial, powder-coated mesh: a material that both closes off physical access

while remaining entirely visually open. The inherent transparency and porosity of the mesh allows the city to poke through, creating a fluid visual dialogue with the surrounding site.

“By using fencing material, it is impossible not to make connotations with the act of creating barriers, or cordoning off land which is exclusive to some and inaccessible to others. Yet the mesh form also allows for some dialogue with its surroundings – creating a new framework through which things can be seen anew.”

– Rana Begum, artist

The choice of a loud, distinctive red cuts through the visual noise of the busy central London environment, acting as a warning sign that invites passersby to stop in their tracks. The white and grey mineral and concrete material of Space House makes for a more austere setting for the work, it is dramatic in an urban way, with architectural pattern and sky as the backdrop.

From certain angles, the material overlaps into a dense, aggressive patch of solid red; from others, it slims down into a crisp line or almost entirely disappears, letting the surrounding architecture and sky take over. A continuation of a 2024 installation created during a residency in Verbier, Switzerland, this new installation responds directly to its austere, urban setting by Space House. Notably, the work scales upward, an extreme verticality mirroring the surrounding city architecture.

Circular engineering

The installation is completely modular and assembled entirely from off-the-shelf commercial components. And it sits on borrowed Albion stone, a pale British stone which nods towards the history of nearby buildings and echoing the surrounding neutral tones. After the festival, the piece can be easily disassembled, with all materials being able to be reused once again.

“Webb Yates has designed a lot of pavilions – yet the idea of all this material ending up in a skip horrifies me. To change this, we design in a way where we can simply order standard components for delivery that morning and construct them on site, and once the festival is over, disassemble them to be used again.”

– Steve Webb, co-founder Webb Yates

A longstanding collaboration

No.1616 Fence represents the latest chapter in a long-standing, organic collaboration between Rana Begum and Steve Webb, defined by a playful back-and-forth between artistic vision and structural ingenuity. Both take inspiration from related issues of material, environment and context, blurring the lines between the conventions of art and engineering.

Notes to editors

Credits

Designers: Rana Begum, Webb Yates

Collaborators: BLOQ, Space House, Albion Stone, Setworks

With thanks to: Zetteler and Kate MacGarry, London

Rana Begum

Born in Bangladesh in 1977, Rana Begum lives and works in London. Through her refined language of Minimalist abstraction, Begum blurs the boundaries between sculpture, painting and architecture. Her visual language draws from the urban landscape as well as geometric patterns from traditional Islamic art and architecture. Light is fundamental to her process. Begum's works absorb and reflect varied densities of light to produce an experience for the viewer that is both temporal and sensorial.

ranabegum.com

Webb Yates

Webb Yates Engineers is a multidisciplinary engineering practice comprising structural, civil, mechanical, electrical, and public health engineers. With offices in London and Birmingham, they work with a diverse range of design teams and clients to realise intelligent and adventurous projects of all scales. Central to its philosophy is an enjoyment of the collaborative creative process. It is this desire for unbounded collaboration, together with the broad-ranging interests of the team that has cultivated our multidisciplinary offer.

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