

Ahead of the Curve

Kia Utzon-Frank and Fay McCaul unveil 'Curved Twist' for Collect Open



On **2–6 February 2017**, Collect will see the arrival in the **Saatchi Gallery** of an eye-catching and immersive new installation created by multifaceted designer **Kia Utzon-Frank** and textile artist **Fay McCaul** – both graduates of the Royal College of Art. Selected by the Crafts Council to appear at the international art fair, their gallery-filling piece **Curved Twist** is a monumental colour-changing screen that combines both designers' expertise to create an immersive, interactive and entirely new expression of art, craft and design innovation.

The mechanism behind Curved Twist is Utzon Frank's patented Louver Twisting Comb™ – aka the KUFtwist – a cordless shutter system comprising individually adjustable slats that allow the user to open or close them to create bespoke patterns of light and shadow.

The remarkable shimmering rainbow effect of the installation, however, is down to McCaul. The designer specialises in creating hand-knitted textiles that make use of light-generating or reactive materials to make fabrics that generate different colours and patterns depending on the movement of the fabric and the perspective of the viewer.

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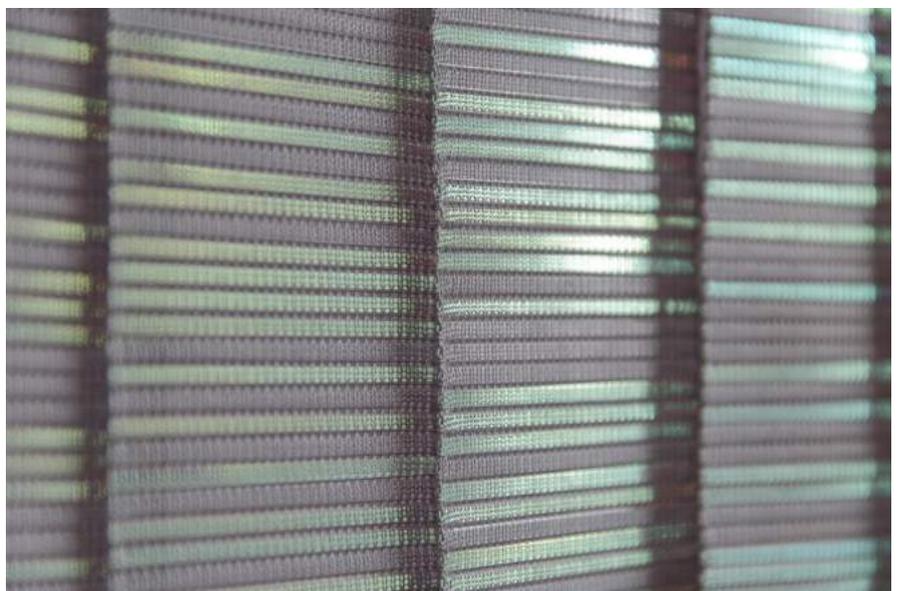
'We both seek to forge a unique path by creating work that has integral lighting effects and interacts with the viewer. We want the audience to become involved with the piece and the play of light and pattern that will reflect throughout the space.'

Kia Utzon-Frank & Fay McCaul, Curved Twist designers

To create Curved Twist, McCaul has knitted a series of 42 Italian cotton ribbons (8cm x 250cm), each housing 484 laser-cut acrylic rods, coated in light-reactive dichroic film and inserted by hand into specially knitted pockets. With 2,904 rows of cotton per slat, McCaul has had to manually knit 121,968 rows and pockets for 20,328 rods – making Curved Twist one of the most demanding and spectacular pieces of her career.

Combining McCaul's astonishing fabric with Utzon-Frank's adapted mechanism has resulted in a vast curved screen more than 3m long and 2.5m tall that will dominate the gallery space. Curved Twist is an ever-changing iridescent rainbow display that gallery visitors can manipulate using sliding plastic modules that 'twist' the slat. These modules – and the cladding of the overall structure – are made from a striking silver-speckled material created from recycled yoghurt pots by **Smile Plastics**.

Infinitely configurable, shifting as viewers change their angle and manipulate the slats to create their own pattern, the kaleidoscope of light and colour created by Curved Twist is never the same twice. Collect visitors will be free to play with the installation as they wish; tweaking and shifting the slats, following the curve into the enclosed space at the end until they are effectively 'inside' the installation – it's not so much an artwork as a means for anybody visiting Collect Open to create their own.



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Notes for editors

About Kia Utzon-Frank

Kia Utzon-Frank is a product designer, jewellery maker and inventor, Kia Utzon-Frank studied as a goldsmith, silversmith and metalworker at the Royal College of Art. With a strong architectural and sculptural thread running through her work, Kia earned an Innovation RCA fellowship for her pioneering shutter system, the Louver Twisting Comb – an ingenious mechanism that uses twisting modules and flexible louvers to create a fully configurable screen with both aesthetic and industrial applications. In May 2016, she launched her multidisciplinary design brand KUFstudios, which comprises the diverse strands of her creative work, including KUFtwist, KUFjewellery, KUFcakes, KUFstring, KUFstuff and KUFideas – her unique concept-development method.

kufstudios.com | [@kiautzonfrank](https://twitter.com/kiautzonfrank) | kufstudios

About Fay McCaul

London-based textile designer Fay McCaul is a graduate of the Royal College of Art who specialises in mixing modern materials with traditional knitting techniques. Using iridescent acrylic and fibre optics, her studio creates intricately designed large-scale textile wall-coverings, partitions and installations that react to light and movement, as well as unusual lighting and tapestries. Her work is found in residential, commercial and hospitality environments, and can also be customised to match client brands or meet specific aesthetic needs. Since founding her studio in 2012, Fay has showcased her creations in the UK and internationally – her exhibitions have included Decorex International, Clerkenwell Design Week and Design Days Dubai.

faymccaul.com | [@FayMcCaul](https://twitter.com/FayMcCaul) | faymccaul

Q&A with Fay McCaul



How did you come to work in textile design?

I studied mixed-media textile design at Leeds University before completing an MA in constructed textiles at RCA; my specialism was knitted textiles. I graduated in 2010 and founded my studio in 2012.

What draws you to knitting in particular?

By juxtaposing traditional knitting techniques with modern materials and technology, I am trying to change the perceptions of a popular home craft. Knitting has become fashionable but still has dowdy connotations, it is such an interesting technique and I am fascinated by what you can do with it structurally. By knitting with something unexpected, I'm trying to change people's notion of knitting.

Where are you based and how does that influence your work?

I'm London based and grew up here. Access to amazing galleries, fabric and material shops has inspired and influenced my work. Unusual materials are easy to source and have encouraged experimentation in my work.

What sort of things inspire you?

Geometric and Islamic patterns, stained glass, artists that use metallic finishes in their work such as Gustav Klimt. Imagery or photographs of reflection and light. I've always been drawn to light and lighting design and my practice started by trying to literally knit with light. I found ways

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of knitting electroluminescent wire, fibre optics, etc. From this I developed a second strand to my work by trying to introduce integral lighting effects into my knitting without using technology. The best way to achieve this was by working with materials that shimmer and reflect naturally. It is something that has become inherent to my work ever since. Essentially, I'm quite like a magpie – instantly drawn to shiny, sparkling things.

You predominantly work on interiors projects, was this a conscious decision?

I always wanted to create work for interiors. I've always been inspired by lighting and textiles and wanted to find ways to combine both of these fields within my work. I have done a fashion collaboration before but it just doesn't interest me as much. I like creating beautiful objects and artworks that create ambience or effect within a space rather than on the body.

How did you first come across Kia's work?

I've been wanting to apply my textiles to something different for quite some time and my housemate (who was in the same year as Kia at RCA) introduced me to Kia's work.

What are you most excited about by being part of Collect?

I feel honoured to have been selected by the Crafts Council and really glad to be affiliated with them. It's also exciting to be exhibiting at such a renowned venue as the Saatchi Gallery.

Q&A with Kia Utzon-Frank



What are you most looking forward to and what do you hope to achieve with the installation at Collect?

I can't wait to see the finished piece and show it. We have designed a completely new type of ribbon using Fay's knitting method, which makes it possible to scale up the louvers and use different, rigid materials. Showing at Saatchi is a huge opportunity to get in contact with future clients and possible manufacturers of the system and I hope this will connect us with someone that can make it into a finished product.

How did the collaboration between you and Fay come about?

Fay contacted me after her flatmate, whom I used to study with at RCA, had shown her my work. We met for a coffee and within less than an hour we had designed the new ribbon and decided to apply for Collect. Fay did some successful tests and on our second meeting we decided on the shape and materials for the screen and got some sketches made. We work seamlessly together and have a shared interest in exploring materials and new techniques and we both want to engage the viewer in our finished work, as well as in the processes that lead us there.

Collect is the 'leading international art fair for contemporary objects' and is most often associated with craft, how do you view your work sitting in this sphere?

Both Fay and I are makers and do as much as we can with our hands. This doesn't mean we're rejecting 'modern tools' like laser cutters and CNC milling which play a big role in the making of our piece. We want to change people's perception of craft, which is often associated with

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ceramics and chunky jewellery. There's a shift towards breaking down boundaries between categories like art, design and crafts and we both work in all of these fields. Innovation happens where different fields meet and new ideas can emerge. I am constantly going into areas I know nothing about. By doing that you've not been taught 'the rules' and are therefore not afraid of breaking them. You also have to ask a lot of questions and talk to experts in that area and, when you know nothing, you end up talking up to people, which makes them share much more of their knowledge than if they see you as a competitor.

You've been working on KUFtwist since your degree at the RCA, and this year you secured the patent – where would you like to see KUFtwist in the future?

Everywhere! I want to see it as a new window blinds system, room dividers, façade systems, as bespoke installations and art pieces and in applications I do not yet know about. There are so many uses for this system; I am extremely keen on getting it off the ground.

What else can we expect from you in 2017?

There's quite a lot going on. I am launching an afternoon tea concept with KUFcakes with 155 Bar & Kitchen at Clerkenwell London in February as well as some other restaurants. The cakes will be bespoke for the occasion and the ingredients and designs will match the teas or cocktails accompanying them. I just launched a new line within KUFcakes, a Danish treat called Flødeboller, and I will work on the branding and getting it on the market early next year. These will also make an appearance at the afternoon teas. I am going to be doing more idea development consultancy and I am currently in conversation with some industry giants that are planning some structural changes in their organisations. I'll continue doing paper sculpture workshops too, so look out for those.

I really want to focus on the projects that I have started so far, but who knows what will pop up. I kinda hope I won't get any new ideas for a while...

Curved Twist by Kia Utzon-Frank and Fay McCaul is available to view throughout Collect Open at the Saatchi Gallery, King's Road, London SW3 on 2 – 6 February 2017. For more details, images and interviews with Kia and Fay, please contact Jodi on jodi@zetteler.co.uk or call 07910 705147
