



Archive photo of mining structures



Fixed Cloud Over Coniston Old Man 1875 by John Ruskin

Hayatsu Architects is working with Grizedale Arts in partnership with Central Saint Martins (University of Arts London) for Coniston Coppermines Copper Project and The Road Project for The Ruskin Museum.

Hayatsu Architects has designed and built two timber structures with 27 post-graduate architecture students from Central Saint Martins over the 2017 summer workshop. The structures consist of an information kiosk, which tells the story of the heritage Coniston copper mines and will be situated in front of the Ruskin Museum, and a community bread oven, to be used by local people for the village table events which take place at the Coniston Institute. The prefabricated timber structures will be transported and installed on site in October 2017, clad in handcrafted copper shingles and charred timber roofing made in collaboration with local community groups.

The project is part of a larger overarching archaeological restoration and interpretation project funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund. Reaching back over 400 years, the Coniston Copper Mines and Penny Rigg Mill sites spread across 57 hectares in the south west of the Lake District National Park below The Old Man of Coniston. The underground mines in the valley date back to the 16th century. At its peak in the 19th century, Coppermines Valley employed around 600 people in the extraction, preparation and transportation of copper ore. The Heritage Lottery funding focuses on conserving over 150 items through repair, stabilisation and reconstruction works across ten different structures at the two sites. This heritage project draws on and engages local people in the local history, impact and interpretation of the Coppermines through out with volunteering opportunities. The project will be documented and shared for the benefit of the local community and visitors, providing a new insight into the rich mining history of the south Lakes.

An integral part of the project is The Road, a community engagement and interpretation project centred around the Ruskin Museum and Coniston Institute. The reference for the project comes from an initiative by John Ruskin in 1874 to build a road connecting the Lakes to Hinkley, Oxford, where Ruskin was teaching. It was intended as educational for his students and introduce them to the idea of labour through labour, whilst at the same time creating a useful resource of health, educational and environmental benefit for the communities connected by this road. Students that took part went on to become some of the most significant social reformers the Victorian period, and also included notable figures such as Oscar Wilde. The road remains in a half-finished state to this day.

The Road project at Coniston aims to re-visit the ethos of Ruskin's project, creating new amenity to connect the community with the institute and museum and with the heritage landscape of the Coppermines valley beyond. A new space for education, community cohesion and heritage, the

project will be a celebration of the 200th anniversary of Ruskin's birth and the 140th anniversary of Ruskin's move to Coniston and his involvement with the village and copper industry.

The project will draw on the copper working school that Ruskin and his followers established in 1879 at the Coniston Institute, which went on to become the highly influential Keswick School of Industrial Design. The Institute became a focus for local workers' education in art, design and craft in copper working, lace making and woodcarving. The Road will likewise engage local people in the design and construction of the project, working alongside established craft workers and historians and MA Architecture students from Central Saint Martins led by Takeshi Hayatsu from Hayatsu Architects, involving local people in the process of making and creating a sense of co-ownership of the final built elements and spaces.

The Road project continues to 2019, and will involve further participatory building projects and events. The kiosk and oven are the first elements of the project and announce the intention to turn the museum and institute outwards through the step-by-step transformation of the road in front into public realm amenity space. This new public thoroughfare will serve to connect Coniston village to the Copper Mines walking route through a series of interventions to include the resurfacing of the road in handmade tiles and pedestrian elements such as signage, lighting and furnitures. The project ambition is for small manufacturing and making to take place directly on site and turn this place into a place of production once again. These elements together will form a pedestrian route and make possible external social use on the doorstep of the museum and institute, bringing existing activities and events outside and making room for new possibilities.

The Heritage Lottery Fund project and The Road are partnerships between the Lake District National Park, land owners, Ruskin Museum, YHA Coniston, Grizedale Arts, Central Saint Martins University of Arts London and Cumbria Amenity Trust Mining History Society.

The larch timber was generously donated by the Scottish sawmill and timber distributor James Jones & Sons from their sustainably harvested forests in Scotland.