

Culture central

Covent Garden unveils groundbreaking digital art while celebrating 'The Nativity' this Christmas



Tradition and cutting-edge technology come together in Covent Garden this Christmas with a Nativity scene unlike any you've ever seen. In fact, even its creator, visual artist Martha Fiennes, will not know what to expect next, as her ever-changing ethereal, digital artwork has been coded to evolve and change in a random and unpredictable way.

While the West Piazza will sparkle with lights from the Christmas tree and in the East Piazza a 20ft topiary reindeer will stand proudly over festivities, this unique centrepiece will provide everyone visiting and working around Covent Garden with a chance to stop and contemplate the story of the birth of Christ. It's the story at the heart of Christmas, but in this Nativity scene it's never told the same way twice.

Visual artist Martha Fiennes is an award-winning director, whose films include the 1999 drama 'Onegin', starring her brother Ralph. Her company, SLOimage, has created a unique style that uses digital technology

to make a still image appear to 'come alive'.

With live actors and a high-tech film set, Fiennes has created a tableau of Mary, Joseph and Jesus, the Magi, angels and onlookers, within a digital painting. As visitors gaze on the work, the mesmerising image moves through many evolving states: day might fall into night, a subject might move, enter or leave the scene, or perhaps it might even begin to snow. These subtle but significant changes happen unpredictably, with a mysterious beauty that seems fitting for a subject that has captured the imagination of so many artists through the centuries, from medieval times to the Renaissance and onwards. The setting is fitting. In the north-east corner of Covent Garden market, in the shadow of the Royal Opera House, Fiennes's piece sits as a cultural work in its own right.

'The Nativity' was specially selected by Covent Garden London - who regularly take the opportunity to bring new experiences to the centre of the capital. 'Covent Garden is famous for its free world-class cultural activity, so it felt like the natural home to debut "The Nativity" to the public this Christmas,' says Fiennes.

The work will be unveiled on November 10 and exhibited on a large screen in the Piazza every day from 11am until 8pm, until January 2 2012.



Martha Fiennes

