

LONDON DESIGN FESTIVAL

The seventh London Design Festival kicked off with a rather lacklustre installation of Audi robots in Trafalgar Square by German-Swedish duo Kram/Weisshaar. But the mood picked up as the week went on and we found ourselves, as usual, drawn to the smaller, more independent events, showing off what London is best at: new talent

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Below and left
The Skyroom
is built in steel
with copper
mesh screens

Right
The structure
has a good
view of Renzo
Piano's Shard



NEW VENUE David Kohn Architects Skyroom at the Architecture Foundation

The Skyroom by David Kohn architects cranes its neck out over Tooley Street. A parasitic, temporary structure on top of the building part-occupied by the Architecture Foundation, it opened during the LDF with a party hosted by Icon magazine. The exhibition and event space, is delicately grafted onto the existing building with a light, white steel frame; a copper mesh facade wraps it in swirling moiré patterns. The arrangement is born not only from the restrictions imposed by the host building, but also a desire to maximise the views; from the Skyroom you can see Renzo Piano's Shard office tower, rapidly rising nearby, and the river Thames. Within the Skyroom's small plan there are a number of spaces that can be reconfigured depending on what it's being used for – a retracting ETFE pillow roof protects against the vicissitudes of the London weather.

"We wanted to demonstrate what's possible," says David Kohn. Even a small building like this isn't easy to achieve in somewhere as architecturally conservative as London, especially when it's so boldly grafted onto a historic structure. "As a young architect, it's rare to get to do a building in London with a facade," jokes Kohn. The Skyroom demonstrates how the existing city fabric can be extended and pushed to its full use. "There's the chance for it to be a great addition, rather than just an attraction," says Kohn, who would like the Skyroom to become a permanent addition to the building.

