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Glastonbury: the designers, artists and fabricators who help to wow the crowds.

By Emily Jenkinson

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Boots has run out of wet wipes. Millets has sold out of wellies. Excitement levels are at fever pitch. Oh yes, it's that time of the year again: Glastonbury. But it's not just Stevie Wonder, Muse and Faithless who are set to impress the crowds at Worthy farm this weekend; a host of designers, artists, lighting specialists, art directors, producers and fabricators will also make a mark with their multi-media installations and art displays providing a fantastical backdrop to the weekend's performances.

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It's all part of the fun, according to Brighton craftsman, Will Archer, who specialises in bespoke furniture such as coffee tables or storage solutions, but this year, has been commissioned to construct his first installation for Glastonbury. "I like a challenge," he says, "I tend to steer away from the bog standard jobs."

The installation, a podium designed by up and coming designer Je, which will form the centre piece for Shangri La, formerly the travellers' field and Lost Vagueness, is certainly far from bog standard. "It's called Graviton, which is meant to represent dark matter," explains Will, "it's all multi-tiered, every piece is a triangle, and it makes a pyramid at the top."

It has taken five and a half tonnes of timber to build and Will has built the entire thing as a flat-pack from his workshop in Lewis. "I've had to build it in my mind as a kit, so tomorrow [Tues] will be the first time that I see it."

The main challenge he says, has been "getting the geometric shape to work correctly - a millimetre here can be a foot somewhere else in mistake terms," but he hasn't been too fazed, pointing out that it's "just a piece of furniture on a big scale."

The festival today is certainly big with hundreds of thousands of people, the biggest acts and the best performers all clamouring to come. It follows that it should also have the most captivating art and why, this year, in recognition of Glastonbury's position as an artistic hub, the Arts Council England has provided funding to integrate five new contemporary art commissions, which will also feature in the Shangri La area of the festival.

The five artists picked include: Tom Wilkinson, whose kinetic sculptures draw inspiration from astronomy and metaphysics; Jim and Max Woodall from CutUp Collective, who incorporate film, collage and installation in their re-ordering of the urban landscape; Squidsoup, an open group of collaborators who combine sound, physical space and visual systems; Shephard Fairey, an American contemporary artist, graphic designer, and illustrator who emerged from the skateboarding scene; and The Darkroom, a motion graphics and visual art studio that creates content for live video performance and multi-media environments.

It's not just high end artists, whose work can be seen at Glastonbury this year. In a first for the festival, Shangri-La has opened up the field to include a number of public pieces. These were picked from entries to the Build a Palace from Pallets competition in which festival-goers responded to a design brief that would let them build their own homes or 'Shacks' on site over the course of the weekend.

The winning entries are fairly diverse, including one from a chartered surveyor, who will build a Tardis (like the Tardis of Dr Who) out of lego; a tube stop, created by a TFL Underground Worker (yes, really); and one from a Teeside designer, who will create The Osoletorium - a shack complete with furniture made out of recycled everyday items, and steel from the mothballed Corus Teesside Cast Products.

If that all sounds a little hectic, some night-time relief can be found over in the Love Field, where artist Patrick Beveridge and architectural design outfit, Matteblak, have created, the SPHERE, a suspended, moon-like light sculpture created from Corian® - a material usually found on kitchen work surfaces.

Glastonbury "looks quite crazy with mental art installations and choo trains sticking out of hotels, but this," says Alex Stevens, director of Matteblak and project manager of the SPHERE, "is just a pure hemisphere of perfection and purity. It's a different focus to everything else."

Whatever you're doing - dancing or taking it easy - Glastonbury's 40th anniversary looks set to be a good one with more visual inspiration and entertainment than you can shake a welly boot at.

Meanwhile, for those who haven't got tickets, um, well, there are few words of comfort - maybe next year?

Emily Jenkinson is interiors writer for furniture and interior design website mydeco.com.

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