

THIS IS AN AMAZING STORY.

Ten years ago an individual blessed with the name of Randy Klinger held a vision for a creative arts centre, the first centre for excellence in the visual arts in Moray. Its purpose would be to promote visual arts, education and exhibitions, drawn from the world's greatest collections. At the outset, Randy had no land, no money and no help, but at the end of May 2008 (and £950,000 later) the Centre's main gallery space was officially opened.

Probably the UK's (possibly Europe's) first carbon-neutral purpose built art centre, Moray Art Centre is a service-based social enterprise, whose aims are to question, explore and find the highest beauty of our time. As Klinger says "Through exhibitions of great works of art, that many people would never otherwise have access to, and through lectures, seminars and workshops in this innovative and inspiring centre, the people of Moray will be able to engage with art in its many forms. The aim being to raise their curiosity and inspire them to an appreciation of art and the significance of beauty in their own lives."

Not only has Moray Art Centre begun to accomplish this within the first 10 months of operation, it has also completed the construction of the centre on time, on spec and on budget. The centre's vision was so inspiring that even the building contractors, Ivan Russell Construction Ltd of Elgin, donated £10,000 to their own client! In total, the £1,080,000 project has raised over £980,000 for capital and revenue funds, with over 55% of the funding coming from private individuals inspired by the centre's vision.

In addition to artistic goals, another aim for the centre was to be the first 100% carbon-neutral civic building in Scotland and this has been achieved too. The building's heating is provided by the use of on-site Geothermal heat pumps and a heat storage system and the Centre's solar photovoltaic roof panels produce enough electricity to be able to export some of it back to the national grid. Additionally, passive solar building design and high-level insulation a deliver further substantial benefits.

The Centre has also accomplished further goals. The Centre's main gallery space is now completed to international museum-quality level, such that the centre is now able to borrow works of art from the National Collections. The first major exhibition, entitled 'John Byrne', in May 2008 included works coming from the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh, Paisley Museum & Galleries and Glasgow Museums and from the private collection of Billy Connolly.

Since opening to the public in July 2007 over 14,000 people have visited the Centre either to see exhibitions or take a class. The centre is continuing to expand and diversify its programme of classes and events to attract a wide cross-section of society. With more classes being added the Centre is able to employ more and more local artists thus supporting Moray's rich artistic population who so often leave to work in the big cities.

Moray Art Centre is now strengthening its position as an innovative art centre by creating many novel programmes such as apprenticeship for young people, master-classes, international exhibition programmes, international cultural exchanges, retooling for older people, etc. The Centre has built up relations with over 20 educational partner groups and provided tailored made courses and outreach programmes for clients. Recently major companies such as Lifescan are now participating in bespoke co-operate training with incredible results and in partnership with Boath House Hotel the Centre runs a programme of exclusive art holidays.

Moray Art Centre has achieved a great deal in a very short time and one man's dream will now secure Moray's first visual art centre as a legacy for Moray and beyond.