

# Watch the Kelpies here!

✘ The Kelpies are almost ready for their public, and now there is a film to show off the building process.

Created by the award-winning Edinburgh filmmaker, Walid Salhab, the striking time-lapse/stop-motion film captures the four-month construction phase of Andy Scott's Kelpies structures which form the centrepiece of the £43 million Helix land transformational project between Falkirk and Grangemouth, funded via a partnership between The Big Lottery Fund, Falkirk Council and Scottish Canals.

Often dubbed 'Mr Kinetic', Walid Salhab, a media practice lecturer at Queen Margaret University, captivated international audiences with his spectacular portrayal of Edinburgh in winter when he released Kinetic Edinburgh II. His suite of dynamic kinetic films has achieved millions of hits on social media. Contracted by the Helix to produce the film, Walid is the only filmmaker to have had access to the complete build phase of the momentous Kelpies structures – thereby visually documenting a period in Scotland's history. It is believed that his unique portrayal of The Kelpies will capture the attention of a global audience putting Falkirk on the international tourist map.

Walid and his technical support partner, Bill Annua, spent months on the construction site using a unique combination of hand-held, slides, tracks and static cameras to capture the build. A 1000 hours of filming and editing went into creating the final seven minute film. Over 120,000 photos were taken with 12,000 making it into the final cut. The result is a fascinating mechanical portrayal of the build phase followed by a mesmerising portrayal of the finished Kelpies in all their glory.

Walid explained: Shooting stop-motion/time-lapse photography

involves taking actual photos to create the illusion of movement, rather than using film or video. It's a painstaking, complicated process with a very low success rate, in that much of the footage is discarded. The Kelpies are built in a very unique way. There are no text books to refer to for shooting in this environment and we therefore had to develop and apply a totally new filming technique.

"What makes the film different from most time-lapses of new buildings is the significant movement of the camera within the construction site while the build was taking place. The building team also had to accommodate the camera movements within their assembly plans and we had a lot of health and safety issues to deal with on a daily basis. One tiny clip – for example – the adding of the horse's jaw – could take up to eight hours to film."

Walid continued: "The construction phase was the most challenging to capture as there are no second chances. We therefore had to double the amount of filming to cover any camera failures. It was almost a 24-hour process with editing necessary every night following filming to ensure that there were no technical issues. If you didn't get it right, you couldn't go back and film it again!"

One of the key elements of The Kelpies is their capacity to reflect light. Walid explained: "Andy Scott has crafted beautiful structures which reflect their environment. The second part of the film celebrates the majestic nature of the completed Kelpies. Kelpies are supposed to be 'shape-shifters'. These sculptures do indeed have a mystical quality about them as well as a tremendous capacity to reflect the sunset, clouds and moon. Their position between Falkirk and Grangemouth often results in a very distinctive backdrop of changing skies – enhancing their unique quality."

Audiences will be surprised to learn that no special effects have been used in the film. Walid said: "Absolute minimum

colouring is used. We wanted the final result to be as genuine as possible to demonstrate the true reflective nature of the metal structures. Ninety-five percent of the camera movement was achieved by re-positioning the camera on a tripod manually – inch by inch and foot by foot. The film is like a Persian carpet – stitched together by hand, frame-by-frame.”

Walid concluded: “I was privileged to have unlimited access to these magnificent monuments. I’ve spent many amazing hours during the daytime and in the dead of night trying to capture their changing qualities. Filming The Kelpies has been the most difficult but most rewarding experience of my life. I hope that the film will now encourage other photographers, filmmakers and visitors from all over the world to visit Falkirk and experience the brilliance of Andy Scott’s Kelpies.”

Construction work on The Kelpies structures began in June, 2013 and has been undertaken by Yorkshire-based SH Structures. Each Kelpie weighs 300 tonnes and contains 3,000 metres of steel tubing and 17,000 component parts. The steel was fabricated in Yorkshire and transported to Falkirk where the seven-man SH Structures team painstakingly pieced the structures together using sophisticated 3D modelling software.

Councillor Adrian Mahoney, Falkirk Council’s spokesperson for Culture, Leisure and Tourism, said: “The Kelpies have already attracted international attention and put the whole Helix project on the worldwide map. This terrific new film by Walid Salhab brings a dramatic new dimension to the project and will play an important role in promoting both The Kelpies and the Helix at home and abroad.

“The wider Helix initiative is already providing another major tourist attraction for central Scotland and helping build the growing tourism economy of the Falkirk Council area.

“Experts are predicting hundreds of thousands of visitors

annually. The Kelpies – easily seen from the main M9 motorway and vantage points around Falkirk district – will be a key part of that attraction and look absolutely stunning.”