

Advocate's Close development wins architectural award



A redevelopment of the historic Advocate's Close designed by Morgan McDonnell Architecture has been awarded the RIAS Andrew Doolan Best Building in Scotland Award for 2014.

The award was presented at a ceremony at the National Museum of Scotland (Doolan Award 2011) by the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, Ms Fiona Hyslop MSP with Mrs Margaret Doolan Hon FRIAS (the late Andrew Doolan's mother).

This year's ceremony was also one of reflection and remembrance, following the death of the judging chair, Professor Andy MacMillan OBE FRIAS, who died suddenly during the Awards visits.

RIAS President, Iain Connelly commented:

"Andy was a great architect, an educator of international renown and one of the finest human beings it has been my privilege to know. His influence on generations of students at the Mackintosh School of Architecture and in the many other institutions where he taught, was immense.

"Andy will be remembered as someone who lived life to the full, who inspired all those he taught and all those who encountered him, as an individual of enormous talent, tremendous enthusiasm and irrepressible fun. Andy's legacy is the hugely improved built environment of Scotland wrought by his own hand and those of successive generations of his students. He will forever be missed."

The winner of this year's RIAS Andrew Doolan Best Building in

Scotland Award receives a gold medal cast by internationally renowned Scottish Goldsmith, James Brent Ward and a cheque for £25,000. This makes it the richest architectural prize in the UK and one of the most significant awards in Europe. The award is generously supported by the late Andrew Doolan's family and by The Scottish Government.

Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop, said:

"I am delighted that the Scottish Government is again supporting the RIAS Andrew Doolan Award for Best Building in Scotland. The shortlist for the Award showcases the talent that exists within the Scottish architectural community.

The promotion of great architecture helps to raise the profile of good design, to encourage public debate on quality, and to act as a spur for excellence.

Advocate's Close exemplifies the highest standards of place-making providing a vibrant new quarter in the heart of Edinburgh's Old Town and is a worthy winner of this year's RIAS Andrew Doolan award."



The full judges' citation for the winning project reads:

"Intricately woven into the fabric of the upper Old Town, this development encompasses nine listed buildings. Combining commercial units, a restaurant, offices and a bar/bistro with serviced apartments, the development brings new vibrancy to this precious but previously neglected area of the World Heritage Site.

Externally, closed off pends and passageways have been reopened to enhance the pedestrian connections through the site. However contemporary additions, in both their materials and form, are aesthetically "stood off" from the historic

original fabric and easily differentiated both close to and in more distant views. Internal treatments are respectful. Inappropriate sub-divisions, accreted over the decades have been removed and upper storeys reinstated.

The intricacy of the site acquisition process and the complexity of the three dimensional diagram that bridges two closes between the High Street, Cockburn Street and Market Street, with a fall of almost nine storeys from top to bottom, is remarkable. However it is the care and deliberation with which contemporary and historic have been brought together that is most deserving of praise.

The architects and their enlightened client sought to rehabilitate a collection of historic buildings, characteristic of a unique setting. They have brought new life into an area which had previously been passed by.”

The building was selected from a strong shortlist of thirteen projects which represented a comprehensive range of building types.

The Edinburgh Reporter visited the development in February this year and our video gives you an idea of the Old Town Apartments which are an integral part of the development of apartments, offices and restaurants.