

Houses of Parliament to undergo latex makeover in the name of art

A New York-artist, known for his technique of using high-tech latex, is set to showcase a new work in the Palace of Westminster.



MPs, peers and staff tried to access porn sites up to 800 times a day while at work in Parliament buildings. Photo: ALAMY

By Tim Walker

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The Houses of Parliament are generally regarded as a bastion of conservatism, and perhaps even – whisper it ever so gently – stuffiness. Still, Mandrake hears that the authorities are planning a daring excursion into the avant garde.

Jorge Otero-Pailos, the trendy New York-based artist-come-architect has been given permission to use Westminster Hall to produce a new work. He is renowned for his technique of slapping coats of high-tech latex on the walls of significant buildings. When the 40ft by 20ft pelt is peeled off, stripping off the dirt and pollution, it is hung as a representation of the property's history.

He calls the project *The Ethics of Dust* and he has already undertaken it – apparently without any lasting damage – at such historic buildings as Doge's Palace in Venice.

An intriguing note on a tender document titled "Cleaning and Repairs to South, East and West Interior Elevations of Westminster Hall" reveals that he has found his next site.

"The artist Jorge Otero-Pailos has approached the Project Team and requested involvement in the works to complete a piece whereby the arte mundit (latex) is retained, mounted and displayed to exhibit *The Ethics of Dust*," it states. "The artist's requirements have been included within the tender."

One question: will it save the taxpayer anything on the multi-million pound restoration bill that will soon be presented? The question has so far gone unanswered.

Garland's tribute

Patrick Garland, the distinguished man of the theatre who died earlier this year at the age of 78, was charged with directing the service of thanksgiving for Lord Olivier at Westminster Abbey.

Simon Callow will now be doing the honours for Garland at Chichester Cathedral on Sept 16 and it promises to be a lively affair. Alan Bennett, Garland's Oxford contemporary and frequent collaborator, will be doing a reading, as well as Patricia Routledge. Dame Eileen Atkins is expected, too. And a group of soul singers will be performing numbers from *Hair*, the risqué musical which Garland directed in Israel.

Intriguingly, Alexandra Bastedo, Garland's widow, tells me that she will be acquainting the congregation with "things that they didn't know about Patrick."

Slough, despond

Gary Goldsmith, the Duchess of Cambridge's uncle, may not have been joshing when he once suggested that he should be styled the "Duke of Slough".

After I reported how “his grace” had been complaining about “the level of customer service” at Hermes on Bond Street, he has now taken the gravest exception to “stropky barmen,” who, he has been telling his friends, have been doing little to lift his mood.

It seems he’s also experiencing problems living near Harley Street. He lately “walked into a poor chap who had a plastic cast on his leg – he yelped. I feel bad.”

Double act

As Denise Van Outen prepares to traverse the Great Wall of China for charity following her break-up from her husband Lee Mead, the pair are putting their differences behind them for the sake of Betsy, their three-year-old daughter.

“Lee is a fantastic father and he’s going to take time off work so he can look after her,” the *Tell Me On A Sunday* star, says. “I’m going to miss Betsy so much.

“So I’m going to pre-record video messages on Lee’s phone so he can play them to her every other day and say, ‘Mummy called when you were sleeping and she left you a message’.” Lee and Denise announced their separation in July after months of speculation.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10271709/Houses-of-Parliament-to-undergo-latex-makeover-in-the-name-of-art.html>