



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

News Release

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Illuminated art inspired by archives lights up library with letters

An intriguing phrase written in hundreds of light bulbs is enriching a University's collection of public art on campus.

The illuminated sculpture was created by Turner Prize-nominated artist Nathan Coley. It reads: The Basic Material is not the Word but the Letter – also the name of the piece.

Installed in the University of Edinburgh's Main Library, the new public artwork is the result of a three-year partnership between the Glasgow-based artist and the University's Centre for Research Collections.

Best known for his illuminated text works, Nathan Coley was inspired by the Main Library building itself, and worked with University staff to delve into its collections for inspiration.

The exact meaning of the chosen phrase – which was found in manuscripts in the University's archive – is open to the interpretation of those viewing it.

The new sculpture is part of celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the Main Library at George Square. It will also form part of the University's self-guided public art trail, which offers a different way of looking at art across campus.

Nathan Coley said: "I see the work as a new site-specific sculpture for the foyer of the Main Library – a building full of books, words, ideas and students. A sculpture using words – words from the library, words from within the building where the artwork now sits."

Neil Lebeter, Art Collections Curator at the University of Edinburgh, said: "This is an exciting new addition to the University that adds to the uniqueness of our campus. The work is the result of a long relationship with Nathan Coley, and it is fitting that we unveil the eye-catching artwork 50 years after the Main Library was built."

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