



Writtle Calling

A radio station at the forgotten home of British broadcasting takes its cues from the temporary architecture of the Essex landscape

NEW

Above
The form of the transmitting arm is based on a gatepost

Writtle Calling/2 Emma Toc is a temporary radio station designed by Post-Works, the art and architectural practice founded by Melissa Appleton and Matthew Butcher. For a week in September, the station, set in the grounds of Writtle College in Essex, broadcast recordings by writers and artists including Marina Warner and Edwin Burdis and an evening of live performances organised by London radio station Resonance FM. But, unlike most pop-up ventures, the radio station had an association with the site and was long in the planning.

Butcher and Appleton built a small pavilion for the London Festival of Architecture in 2008. The college's craftsman in residence was intrigued by the pavilion's timber structure, Butcher explains, and they started talking to the landscape design department about possible projects. Once discussions were underway, Butcher discovered that "British broadcasting had started in the grounds of Writtle College, and we got very excited."

In 1922, Marconi engineers had taken over an old army hut and, under the call sign

2EmmaToc, broadcast every Tuesday evening. The hut is now in Chelmsford Museum and Post-Works took its form as a starting point. They also paid close attention to the landscape, driving through the area "taking photos out of the car because we were interested in this idea of where the edge of London was", Butcher says. These photographs, which focused on temporary architectures such as caravan parks and barns in particular, were then turned into silhouettes. Post-Works based its 3D model on what Butcher calls "a surrealist collage" of all the silhouettes so that, for instance, the transmitting arm of the station was also a gatepost. The hut was constructed from softwood and the exterior clad in weatherboard and the stand for the transmitting arm was made from an old railway sweeper.

Post-Works is best known for its gallery and set design, and Butcher says, "This is the first, non-theoretical work that engaged not only with ideas of performance but also with a context and site quite directly. The pavilion had that desire to resonate, but this is the first thing that really had multiple layers to it."