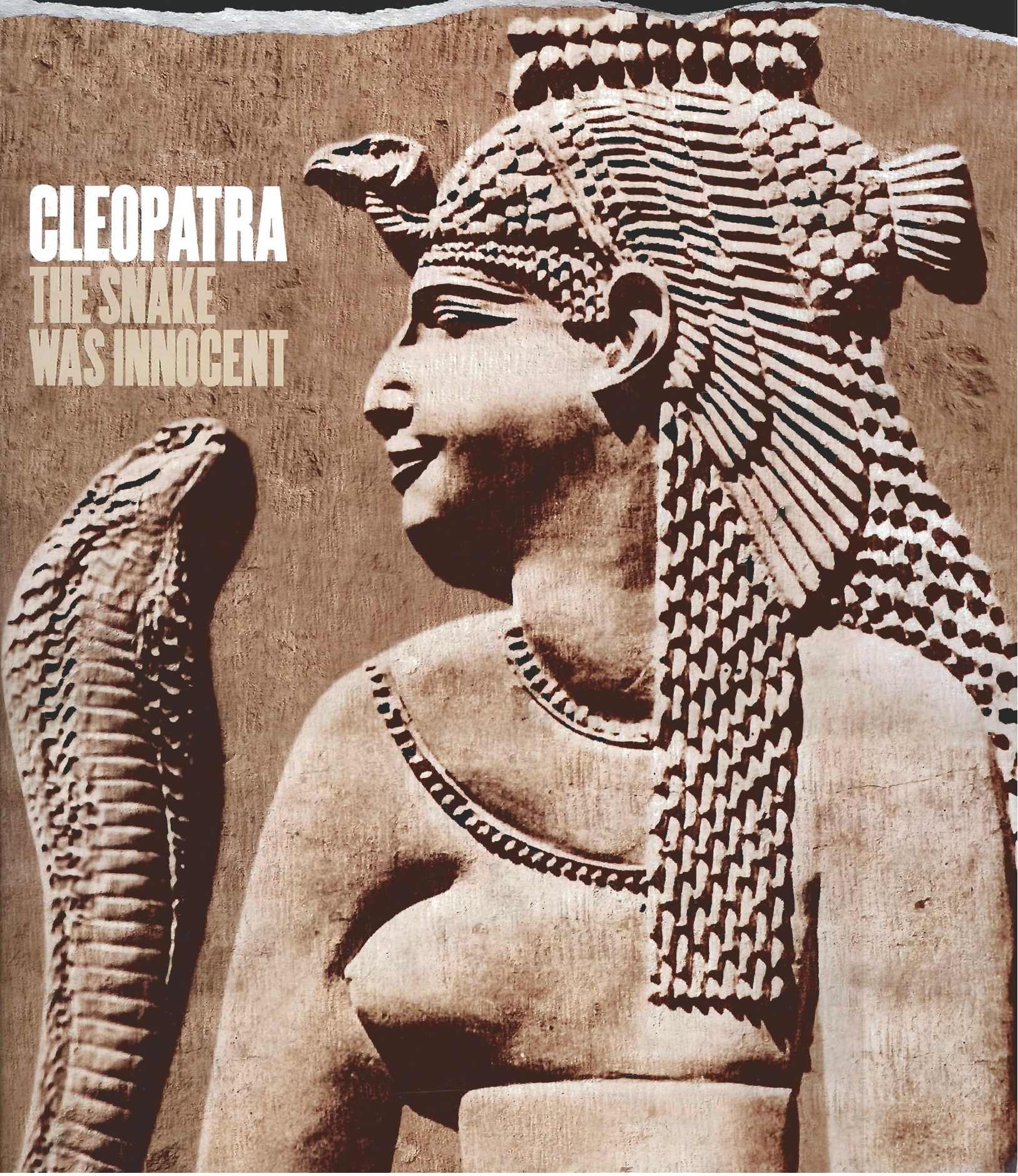


**FEATURING:** Danny Boyle, Richard Girling, plus captured on camera: 30 years of British youth culture

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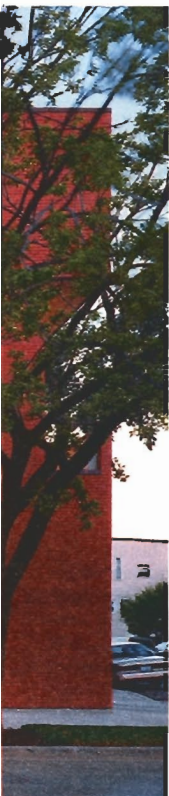
## CLEOPATRA THE SNAKE WAS INNOCENT











**"DiverseCity is about people": the Pfanner building by Zoka Zola, left, Liffey Boardwalk by Slobhan NI Eanailgh, top, and the London Eye by by Julia Barfield, above**

# chance

DiverseCity, the brainchild of Dublin-born Angela Brady, who heads Women in Architecture (WIA), is one of several initiatives promoted by AFC, WIA, the Society of Black Architects, and Archaos, the student body.

"DiverseCity is about people — women, ethnic minorities, students and the movers and shakers who stimulate diversity in architecture," says Brady. "It's not a whinge. We want to create role models for change within the profession."

DiverseCity opened in London a year ago. Since then it has travelled to Luxembourg, Boston, Los Angeles, Sydney, Auckland, Beijing and Zhengzhou in China, and Chicago before turning up on our doorstep. It is growing all the time as each city adds a chapter to the exhibition. Next year it will go to Athens, Seville, Bologna, Brussels, Paris and New York. The project will conclude with a symposium in London in 2006.

Each city was allowed to determine its own response to the theme of diversity. In London there was a call for submissions from architects having an equal opportunities policy in place. Each of the 40 contributions received was included in the exhibition. Brady shows St Catherine's Foyer, her design for homeless teenagers in Dublin's

Marrowbone Lane, which opened last spring.

There is work by Eva Jiricna, British architecture's sole female royal academician; Julia Barfield, who designed the London Eye; Sarah Wigglesworth, whose straw house in Islington, north London, is known across the globe; and C J Lim, who has yet to build but represented Britain at the recent Venice Biennale.

It is refreshing to discover unsung heroes and heroines, but the London chapter of DiverseCity is diminished by glaring omissions. There is no Zaha Hadid, Patty Hopkins, Amanda Levete of Future Systems, Farshid Moussavi of Foreign Office, Kathryn Findlay, Christine Hawley or David Adjaye, for example. Most were approached, says Brady.

There are notable absentees from other cities, too. Antoinette O'Neill, architecture specialist at the Arts Council, who curated the Dublin chapter of DiverseCity, thinks she knows why.

"The women I approached were reluctant to be singled out on the basis of gender," she says. "They didn't want to be classified as women architects. They didn't see it as central to their practice. They wanted to be assessed on the quality of their work."

It's a common reaction. The title of a

recent American book, *The Architect: Women in Contemporary Architecture*, was changed from *The Female Architect* in response to a request by the 33 featured architects not to be judged by their gender but by their work.

The gender balance among Irish architectural students is not dissimilar to Britain's: 40% female in 1999. So why has there been no demand here for an equality forum? Is it down to traditional complacency? Or is the result of a feelgood factor induced by the Celtic tiger? After all, when the economy prospers, architects are kept busy.

The answer may be that there has been a quiet revolution in the make up of the Irish profession in recent years. In 1989 women comprised a mere 8% of practising architects. The percentage doubled during the 1990s and currently stands at 25%. Fully half the new members admitted to membership of the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland in the past three years were women.

What's more, with one-third of all new members also being foreigners, ethnic diversity is a growing reality in the Irish architectural profession, even if it has not yet found its voice.

In a thought provoking but uneven exhibition that does little to enhance the reputation of architects as experts in visual communication, the Dublin chapter of DiverseCity stands out for its take on the theme and Origin's cool, coherent graphic design.

O'Neill has looked at diversity in three ways, which she calls From, Out and Dublin. It includes people who have diversified away from architecture into other careers, such as Joan O'Connor, project manager and former president of the architectural profession in Ireland, and the artist Tracy Staunton; architects who are working in other places and cultures, including Grafton Architects and Heneghan Peng; and architects whose work has contributed to the diversity or development of Dublin.

Elsewhere, many new faces present their work, unfortunately not all of it good. There are real delights, however, perhaps none greater than Croatian-born, London-educated Zoka Zola's first building: the Pfanner House, where she and her family live in Chicago. Subtle, sophisticated and wonderfully scaled, it was named house of the year in North America in 2003.

How did she do it? "I think it takes about 20 years to become an architect," she says, "but a love for architecture can help you endure."

And eventually transcend nationality, gender and race. And, if you're really lucky, time as well. □

*DiverseCity: Global Snowball continues at the Architecture Centre, Dublin, until January 28*

WWW

[www.diversecity-architects.com](http://www.diversecity-architects.com)  
Exhibition website

## Designer Ireland

### No 261: Gearoid O Conchubhair's musical chair

Classical musicians fear bad chairs. Not only are they uncomfortable during the long, unbroken hours spent in rehearsal, but poor ergonomics can lead to severe back pain, repetitive strain injury and, ultimately, impaired playing.

Industrial designer Gearoid O Conchubhair knows the multifaceted nature of orchestral seating design better than most. He has a PhD in it.

And after five years of research and consultation with 250 orchestras, he has not only written his thesis but also produced a chair — the EquaTilt.

Whereas many musicians' chairs tilt backwards, EquaTilt also moves forwards. As well as serving the posture of the musicians better, the tilt addresses the great design challenge by serving all members of an orchestra.

So the tilting action of the seat and the adjustable height of the chair ensure flexibility of use.

This extends to each sitter, as the way the chair raises the pelvis higher than the knees means its user has greater freedom of movement in their upper body.

It's a strange looking object.

As the seat and the musician's movement within it create stability and balance, the backrest plays a smaller role than normal and so appears relatively narrow.

There are some references to the context in which it will be used, for example, in the use of cherry wood, which is used for some musical instruments.

But in general, the EquaTilt appears as a machine for sitting (and playing) in rather than a fashionable interior object.

The flexible seat and height are configured so that the chair can fold up and be nested — an advantage in situations where a stage needs to be cleared quickly or an orchestra brings its own seating.

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