OPEN CALL FOR EXHIBITION PROPOSALS

THE BRITISH PAVILION AT THE 16TH VENICE ARCHITECTURE BIENNALE
26 MAY – 25 NOVEMBER 2018
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1. INTRODUCTION

This Open Call invites exhibition proposals for the British Pavilion at the 16th International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, which takes place from 26 May to 25 November 2018.

The British Council invites proposals from a curatorial team which can include architects, designers, curators, researchers, artists, critics and other collaborators, including cultural and educational institutions. Collectively, this team must have exhibition production and curatorial experience.

Selection will be via a two-stage process:

**Stage 1:** Initial expressions of interest will take the form of a short, illustrated concept statement. Proposals must be received by midnight on Monday, 7 August 2017.

**Stage 2:** Four teams will be invited to work up a fully developed exhibition concept, which will be presented to the selection panel. Final detailed proposals to be received by midnight on Tuesday, 12 September 2017.

The selection panel will select one team to work collaboratively with the British Council to develop the exhibition, the catalogue and associated programme of events. The British Council will support the curatorial team to manage the exhibition production.

2. THE 16TH INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURE EXHIBITION, LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

La Biennale di Venezia is the world’s most important cultural festival incorporating major international exhibitions on art, film, music, theatre and architecture. The architecture festival attracts a global audience of professionals, critics and the public.

The Artistic Directors for 2018, Yvonne Farrell and Shelly McNamara, Grafton Architects, have announced that the theme for the 16th International Architecture Exhibition is Freespace, focusing on ‘generosity, thoughtfulness and a desire to engage’. They have invited participants to ‘reveal the diversity, specificity and continuity in architecture based on people, place, time, history, to sustain the culture and relevance of architecture on this dynamic planet.’ See Appendix C for the full statement from the Artistic Directors, issued by La Biennale.

There are more than 65 national contributions to the Architecture Biennale. The British Pavilion exhibition represents an important opportunity to reflect on British contemporary architecture and contribute to international discussion and debate.
3. THE BRITISH PAVILION – OPEN CALL

3.1 Exhibition Theme

The British Council is seeking expressions of interest in the form of short concept proposals for the curatorial approach and visual language of the exhibition, in response to the 2018 Biennale theme, *Freespace*.

In June 2017, Farrell and McNamara invited participants and national pavilions to ‘reveal the diversity, specificity and continuity in architecture based on people, place, time, history, to sustain the culture and relevance of architecture on this dynamic planet.’ And stated: ‘We believe that everyone has the right to benefit from architecture. The role of architecture is to give shelter to our bodies, but also to lift our spirits. A beautiful wall forming a street edge gives pleasure to the passer-by, even if they never go inside.’

Paolo Barratta, President of La Biennale Fondazione, Venice announced: ‘...we continue our investigation into the relationship between architecture and civil society. To rediscover architecture means to renew a strong desire for the quality of the spaces where we live, which are a form of public wealth that needs to be constantly protected, renovated and created.’

For the British Pavilion we are seeking proposals that contribute an acute observation of contemporary British architecture and its relationship with the rest of the world.

Following on from the overarching Biennale theme of *Freespace*, we invite submissions that consider the Venice Architecture Biennale as a forum where ideas and concepts, as well as built works, are disseminated and exchanged. We ask that proposals submitted for the British Pavilion consider:

- how British architecture demonstrates ‘generosity and thoughtfulness’ towards its users, citizens and the public
- how the exhibition might explore the ‘power and beauty’ of architecture and its ability to be uplifting
- the fundamental capacity of architecture to ‘nurture and support meaningful contact’ between people and place
- how the team might explore architecture as an expression of culture, through site, materials and landscape

We are interested in proposals which explore how these ideas are expressed and communicated to a wide audience, alongside how they generate discussion between professionals and the public.

We are asking for bold and imaginative proposals, which challenge conventional exhibition formats, encourage participation and offer a new experience of contemporary British architecture.
3.2. Who Should Apply

We are looking for a **team to lead on all curatorial aspects of the exhibition. The appointed curatorial team will work closely with the British Pavilion Commissioner and Project Manager to deliver the exhibition.** The team will include an architect and/or designer, and might also include researchers, curators, artists, critics, and teams from institutions and organisations. This curatorial team will be capable of:

- conducting research and developing an original vision and coherent curatorial narrative
- developing an integrated curatorial and design proposal for the exhibition, which might include plans for touring in the UK
- producing or sourcing all exhibition content including photography, installations, models, and written material
- producing detailed designs for the exhibition and working with a production team to build it
- writing exhibition text, including, but not limited to catalogue essays, leaflets and digital collateral
- working with the appointed graphic designer (see below)
- cooperating on the exhibition installation with the British Council team
- working within a set exhibition budget set by the British Council
- collaborating closely with the British Council on material for the exhibition such as a catalogue, public events programme and digital content

Whatever the composition of the team, there must be one nominated lead. The team also needs to demonstrate exhibition experience.

Applicants do not need to be British, but the lead should live or work in Britain and have a good working knowledge of contemporary British architecture.

3.3. Selection Criteria

The selection panel will judge proposals on the basis of:

- clarity of the proposal and the strength and imaginative quality of the concept
- lucidity of the theme and potential for subject matter and outcomes to be communicable, tangible and made visible
- the strength of the artistic and visual proposition and its capacity to be translated into a strong visual language within the landscape of the British Pavilion and in the wider context of the Biennale
• ability of the team to use the opportunity of the Biennale theme, FreeSpace, to develop content which adds to current discourse

• comprehension of contemporary British architecture and architectural exhibitions, nationally and internationally

• capacity and experience of communicating architecture in an exhibition format to critics and a wider public, and of developing audiences for architecture

• feasibility of the exhibition proposal being realised with the time and budget outlined

The British Council’s production budget is £100k. Exhibition proposals must be within this budget or indicate additional funding sources.

Proposals which include the possibility of touring the exhibition in the UK will be viewed favourably.

3.4. Proposals – development budgets

No fees are payable for developing the concept statement to be submitted at Stage 1.

Four teams nominated by the selection panel to proceed to Stage 2 will be paid an honorarium of £750 to cover detailed proposal development.

4. STAGE 1: EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

4.1 We are seeking expressions of interest in the form of short concept proposals for the exhibition.

This should comprise a brief concept statement that includes a written proposal and images or illustrations, which support the proposition and the exhibition concept.

The text should include:

• a clearly articulated synopsis of the topic or theme to be investigated and how it relates to FreeSpace

• overview of exhibition research, including method of investigation and anticipated findings. You should indicate how these findings will be conveyed in an interesting and unconventional way

• up to three images which illustrate how this vision will be communicated through an exhibition. These may be indicative or contextual and can be existing images or one generated specifically for the proposal

• a clear description of the team, the disciplines that will be involved and who will be the team lead

Proposals should be a maximum of three A4 pages including the completed application form. The proposal text should be no longer than 800 words and include no more than three images.
5. BACKGROUND – EXHIBITION PRODUCTION

5.1 British Pavilion

The exhibition will be hosted in the British Pavilion, a listed building opened originally as a tea house in 1897 in the Giardini. The exhibition space is on a single floor and consists of six galleries, including one central, larger space. Please note this constitutes the maximum space available with no obligation on applicants to fill the entire space with exhibition material. Further details of the pavilion can be found in section 10.2 of this brief, and in the plans and elevations in Appendix B below.

5.2 Exhibition Graphic Designer

The successful team is not required to include an exhibition graphic designer. However we would welcome suggestions of practices applicants wish to work with. The appointed graphic designer will be expected to work within the British Council brand guidelines.

5.3 Exhibition Outputs

In respect of all material to be used in the exhibition, the successful team will be expected to secure permissions to use material and clear any copyrighted material for required use.

6. WORKING WITH THE BRITISH COUNCIL

6.1 The British Council and the Venice Architecture Biennale

The British Council is responsible for the British Pavilion in Venice. The Architecture Design Fashion team (ADF) specialises in exhibitions, seminars, workshops, collaborative projects and educational initiatives. Since 1991, the British Council has been responsible for commissioning and managing the production and installation of the exhibition at the British Pavilion during Venice Biennale.

6.2 British Pavilion Project Team

The British Council has a dedicated project team. The key personnel for Venice 2018 are:

- Director of Architecture Design Fashion – Sarah Mann (Commissioner)
- Programme Manager – Gwen Webber
- Exhibition Assistant – Jacob de Munnik
- Communications Manager – Kate Le Versha
- Senior Project Manager (start date November 2017)
The team will be supported by:

- Senior Press Officer – Mary Doherty
- British Pavilion Manager (Venice) – Caterina di Rienzo
- Venice Fellowships Programme Manager – Laura Broderick
- Head of Exhibitions – Gemma Hollington
- Touring Exhibitions Manager – Rohan Stephens

6.3 Venice Fellowships

The Fellowships programme was initiated in 2014 by the British Council to strengthen the British Pavilion contribution as a platform for ideas and research. Each year, the Fellowships provides a unique opportunity for up to 60 students and volunteers to spend a month in Venice, where they share their time between stewarding the British Pavilion exhibition and conducting research. Fellows choose one of several core themes, which are investigated through site-specific and archival research focused either on the exhibition, the Venice Biennale or Venice itself. Fellows are selected through British Council partner universities and organisations.

6.4 Press and Publicity

The British Council’s press and marketing team, working with a PR consultancy, will support the successful project. A focused and dedicated press campaign will be formulated in order to publicise the project to a wide range of publications, including UK and international specialist architecture and design press, as well as general media outlets.

The selected team will be required to agree to take part in the media campaign as required. The appointed team should feel comfortable speaking to international press.

6.5 Copyright

Any team entering the competition will be deemed to have given the British Council an irrevocable, royalty-free license to use and reproduce any image material provided for all purposes connected with promoting the exhibition. Original copyright holders of any images provided shall retain their copyright.

7. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Each application should comprise the following (three double-sided A4 pages in total):

- Application form (double-sided PDF provided via link below)
- Concept statement (max. two sides of A4, max. 800 words and up to three images)
- Biographies of each member of team (PDF, max. two sides of A4)
All submitted documents should be in English and clearly labelled with the project lead’s name. Applications should be filled out electromically, rather than by hand, submitted by email, and all documents should be in PDF format. The email submission, including all attached documents, should be a maximum of 5MB.

Send emails to venice.2018@britishcouncil.org by midnight on Monday, 7 August 2017.

Applicants must be available on Thursday, 14 September 2017 for interviews, if shortlisted.

8. SELECTION PROCESS

8.1 Competition Timeline

Stage 1
- 13 July: Open call for British Pavilion launched
- Midnight, 7 August: Applications due by email
- 8-10 August: Shortlisting by British Council
- 11 August: Unsuccessful applications notified
- 14 August: Selection panel meets
- 17 August: Shortlisted applicants notified and commence work on Stage 2 detailed proposal

Stage 2
- 12 September: Detailed proposal submission deadline
- 14 September: Presentations to selection panel
- 15 September: Unsuccessful teams notified
- w/c 25 September: Curatorial team announced

8.2 Enquiries

Should you have any questions as a result of reading this brief, please contact Jacob de Munnik at venice.2018@britishcouncil.org. All enquiries should be made by 21 July 2017.

Answers to questions will be published by 25 July 2017 on the British Council’s Architecture Design Fashion (ADF) website: www.design.britishcouncil.org.
8.3 Selection Panel

A selection panel chaired by the Director of ADF and British Pavilion Commissioner, Sarah Mann, will select the exhibition team through the open call. The British Council and selection panel are unable to give feedback on non-shortlisted proposals.

In the event that the selection panel is unable to identify an outright winner or winners, the right is reserved not to appoint, to reissue the brief, or extend the time period for applications.

9. APPOINTMENT

The successful team will work closely with the British Council’s commissioning team.

The British Council will expect to sign a contract with the lead applicant, to whom an honorarium will be paid. Please note that the exhibition team may be expected to travel to Venice in advance of the exhibition to meet with pavilion patrons, British Pavilion Manager and the Biennale organisers.

9.1 Honorarium

The successful lead applicant will be paid an honorarium grant of £20,000. This is to cover fees for all members of the exhibition team, and the lead applicant will be responsible for distributing the fee among the team.

The successful applicant will be issued with 50% of the grant immediately upon appointment, with the remaining 50% payable upon the exhibition opening.

10. ABOUT THE BRITISH COUNCIL AND THE BRITISH PAVILION

10.1 The British Council

The British Council is the UK’s international organisation for cultural relations. We build engagement and trust for the UK through the exchange of knowledge and ideas between people worldwide.

The British Council’s global arts team works with the best of British creative talent to develop innovative, high-quality events and collaborations that link thousands of artists and cultural institutions around the world, drawing them into a closer relationship with the UK.

The Architecture Design Fashion department develops exhibitions, seminars, workshops, collaborative projects, educational initiatives and specialists’ visits to the UK in conjunction with our colleagues and partners in over 100 countries. We also promote on British architecture, design and fashion across the globe.
10.2 British Pavilion at the Venice Biennale

The British Pavilion is a listed building, originally built in 1897 as the tea-room for the public gardens. It consists of six galleries, five of which are of a relatively domestic scale. The central gallery measures 10 x 11 metres, with a ceiling height of 7.8 metres (to the top of the central dome). There is top lighting in the five principal galleries. The back gallery is lit by full-height windows looking out onto a side canal of the Grand Canal. In 2005, air-conditioning and track lighting were installed throughout the Pavilion (see Appendix B for pavilion plans and elevations).

Since 1937 the British Council has been responsible for the British Pavilion. Exhibitions have included the highest calibre of British artists, for example, Henry Moore, Lucian Freud, Anish Kapoor, Mike Nelson and Jeremy Deller. The British Pavilion is one of the oldest buildings in the Giardini, where the main hub of the Biennale is held, alongside more than 32 other national pavilions.

Since 1991 the British Council has also commissioned the British entry to the Architecture Biennale which takes places in alternate years to the Art Biennale. Since its inception, the Biennale has given a vital international platform to architectural practice and the key issues of society and space that are implicit. The British Pavilion at the Architecture Biennale aims to create debate that both challenges and influences the future of British architecture.

In 2010 muf architecture/art presented an exhibition Villa Frankenstein, while in 2012 the British Pavilion hosted Venice Takeaway, which presented the work of 10 architectural teams examining work from around the world. In 2014 Fat Architecture and Crimson Architectural Historians curated A Clockwork Jerusalem, which explored how the international influences of Modernism became mixed with long standing British sensibilities. In 2016 a multi-disciplinary team proposed new models for living in Home Economics. Each exhibition is accompanied by a public events programme.

For further details about the British Pavilion, please visit: https://venicebiennale.britishcouncil.org/

For further details about the architecture exhibitions at the British Pavilion, please visit: http://design.britishcouncil.org/venice-biennale/

APPENDICES

A. Application form: bit.ly/2018VeniceApp

B. The British Pavilion – plans, elevations and site (see below)

C. Statement from La Biennale di Venezia (see below)
B. BRITISH PAVILION PLANS, SECTIONS AND SITE PLAN

On the following pages you will find:

- Plans and elevations of the British Pavilion
- Site plan of the Giardini locating the British Pavilion and neighbouring national pavilions
SITE PLAN OF GIARDINI – LOCATING THE BRITISH PAVILION
C. LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA 2018
STATEMENT BY YVONNE FARRELL AND SHELLEY MCNAMARA

Freespace

_Freespace_ describes a generosity of spirit and a sense of humanity at the core of architecture’s agenda, focusing on the quality of space itself.

_Freespace_ focuses on architecture’s ability to provide free and additional spatial gifts to those who use it and on its ability to address the unspoken wishes of strangers.

_Freespace_ celebrates architecture’s capacity to find additional and unexpected generosity in each project - even within the most private, defensive, exclusive or commercially restricted conditions.

_Freespace_ provides the opportunity to emphasise nature’s free gifts of light - sunlight and moonlight, air, gravity, materials - natural and man-made resources.

_Freespace_ encourages reviewing ways of thinking, new ways of seeing the world, of inventing solutions where architecture provides for the well-being and dignity of each citizen of this fragile planet.

_Freespace_ can be a space for opportunity, a democratic space, un-programmed and free for uses not yet conceived. There is an exchange between people and buildings that happens, even if not intended or designed, so buildings themselves find ways of sharing and engaging with people over time, long after the architect has left the scene. Architecture has an active as well as a passive life.

_Freespace_ encompasses freedom to imagine, the free space of time and memory, binding past, present and future together, building on inherited cultural layers, weaving the archaic with the contemporary.

With the theme of _Freespace_, the Biennale Architettura 2018 will present for public scrutiny examples, proposals, elements - built or unbuilt - of work that exemplifies essential qualities of architecture which include the modulation, richness and materiality of surface; the orchestration and sequencing of movement, revealing the embodied power and beauty of architecture.

The exhibition will have a spatial, physical presence of a scale and quality, which will impact on the visitor, communicating architecture’s complex spatial nature.

The exhibition invites emotional and intellectual engagement of the many who come to the Biennale in order to understand architecture more fully, to stimulate discussion on core architectural values and to celebrate architecture’s proven and enduring contribution to humanity.

When Jørn Utzon thinks about a concrete and tiled seat at the entrance of Can Lis, Majorca, it is moulded perfectly to the human body for comfort and pleasure. Spatially, it is a ‘word’ of greeting, of welcome.

Angelo Mangiarotti ‘says’ the same thing at the entrance to 24 Via Quadronno, Milan where a gently sloping path, with a seat at the entrance threshold ‘holds’ you and welcomes you home from the city.

Lina Bo Bardi raised the museum of modern art in Sao Paolo in order to make a ‘belvedere’ for the citizens to overlook the city.
The Medici Palace in Florence represents power and wealth but the stone seat which forms part of the solid façade almost turns the building inside out. The solid wall becomes the enclosing wall of the public space. What is solid seems outward looking and generous.

We believe that everyone has the right to benefit from architecture. The role of architecture is to give shelter to our bodies and to lift our spirits. A beautiful wall forming a street edge gives pleasure to the passer-by, even if they never go inside. So too does a glimpse into a courtyard through an archway; or a place to lean against in the shade or a recess which offers protection from the wind and rain.

We are interested in going beyond the visual, emphasizing the role of architecture in the choreography of daily life.

We see the earth as Client. This brings with it long-lasting responsibilities. Architecture is the play of light, sun, shade, moon, air, wind, gravity in ways that reveal the mysteries of the world. All of these resources are free.

It is examples of generosity and thoughtfulness in architecture throughout the world that will be celebrated in the 16th International Architecture Exhibition. We believe these qualities sustain the fundamental capacity of architecture to nurture and support meaningful contact between people and place. We focus our attention on these qualities because we consider that intrinsic to them are optimism and continuity. Architecture that embodies these qualities and does so with generosity and a desire for exchange is what we call Freespace.

We invite all participants and every national pavilion to bring to Venice their Freespace, so together we may reveal the diversity, specificity and continuity in architecture based on people, place, time, history, to sustain the culture and relevance of architecture on this dynamic planet.»

“A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in”, Greek Proverb.

—ENDS—

For more information about Grafton Architects, please visit: www.graftonarchitects.ie

For more information about La Biennale di Venezia, please visit: www.labiennale.org