



**The British Pavilion at the
13th Venice Architecture Biennale**

29 August – 25 November 2012

Introduction to brief

Venice Takeaway will present proposals for British architecture inspired by an ambitious global research project. The aim is to inject new ideas into the UK and create a platform for discussion about who and what makes great architecture.

This call for proposals is addressed to a broad section of people working in architecture and connected fields, and is intended to build on the UK's strengths in architectural research, writing and curating as well as design.

The British Council is seeking 10 architectural explorers, who are invited to propose topics and specific locations for research. Proposals will be based on their discoveries and research from around the world, and will reflect a 'gap' in UK practice. A series of expeditions to gather this material will take place in March and April 2012.

We aim to make an original and polemical contribution to the debate about British architecture, and to involve a wide range of people in the exhibition, website and ongoing discussion. We hope to bring the exhibition to the UK following the Biennale, and for the proposals presented to be championed at home.

Venice Takeaway will look at the culture of architecture: the relationships, policies and structures that lay the basis for it. Proposals might include an enlightened planning system; hybrid typologies; a national or regional architecture policy; a system of architect-clients; a school-building programme; a competition system; a school curriculum or an award. There are many possibilities.

The UK has no shortage of architectural talent, with a younger generation that is energetic and entrepreneurial. But we have a crisis of procurement: a culture of risk aversion; over-regulation; anti-development set against a background of low horizons and economic recession. British clients, whether in the public or private sector, tend to prefer 'value for money' to quality, experimentation and new ideas in buildings.

Venice Architecture Biennale is an opportunity to be inspired by architecture and alternative methods from around the world. It presents a great opportunity for the UK to learn from, and perhaps adopt, new ideas. In particular we think there is much to discover from places where rapid economic development, urbanisation and experimentation are taking place.

Venice Takeaway will build on the international networks established through schools of architecture and architects travelling to work and collaborate overseas. We firmly believe in the principle of international mobility, and in the importance of overseas students and architects being able to come to the UK to study, live and work.

The Exhibition and Website

Explorers will create the raw material for the exhibition via their research visits overseas. This will primarily be visual rather than based on text. Explorers' voices are key; their recorded information, collections, images, models, interests and ideas will shape the exhibition.

It is an exhibition of narratives, journeys and discoveries. The exhibition will make manifest the explorations undertaken. The frame of reference for our 'collection' is central.

Born Design has been appointed as exhibition designer and will work with the curators to present material as a cohesive whole. We aim to make an emporium - a place where a multitude of objects and ideas are displayed from around the world. The pavilion will not be a 'gallery' but an active market place of procurement and selling.

A website (www.venicetakeaway.com) linked to other digital networks will capture the broader context, with essays on the current state of British architecture; background on the project; detailed accounts of the research visit; and blogs contributed directly by each explorer. The website will allow all proposals submitted to be part of the project, even if they are not selected for the exhibition. It will also be a means to establish a legacy for the project and to influence the ongoing debate about architecture in the UK.

Who is eligible?

- The call for proposals is open to anyone who can demonstrate a connection to, and knowledge of architecture. You could be a practising architect, a student, curator, writer, journalist, or researcher (etc).
- We are particularly interested in hearing from architects who may have come across alternative methods in their work oversea. Architect Chris Wilkinson commented recently that the benefit of working in China is not primarily financial, but the freedom to experiment in a context of planning deregulation and an ambitious view of the future.
- We are also keen to hear from overseas students based in the UK, in order to gain from their insights into the British context compared with that of their home country.
- One of the aims is make proposals to change British architecture, therefore you should be able to show that you have knowledge of the UK context. You do not need to be a British citizen or to be resident in the UK.
- We are open to working with collectives and teams as well as individuals, but we have a limited budget for travel and accommodation.
- Your investigation could be connected to your practice or area of expertise, but we request that you do not suggest your own projects.

How to apply

Research visits will take place during March and April 2012 with travel expenses being covered up to a maximum of £2000 per explorer.

Your proposal should include ideas for subjects, locations and case studies. These could be ideas connected with design, the procurement of buildings, the role of the architect, construction, infrastructure, urbanism, housing, planning, culture and education, etc. Each explorer will uncover how and why something works, through interviews, observation and other forms of enquiry.

Criteria for selection

- We are looking for proposals that inject new ambitious ideas and attitudes about architecture, rather than reinforce existing ones;
- Principles that lie at the heart of Venice Takeaway are openness; internationalism; and mobility;
- We are particularly interested in ideas emerging from rapidly developing and urbanising societies;
- Ideas should reflect a ‘gap’ or weakness in British practice. For example, a topic for research might be an example of a country or city that commissions well-designed schools – an issue that is currently a hot topic of debate in the UK;
- Explorers will need to demonstrate why the example would be beneficial and new to the UK, but proposals do not need to be immediately realisable;
- We will consider a variety of proposals at different scales including ideas, policies, infrastructure as well as individual buildings;
- Examples should not be widely written about or well known – there should be an element of discovering and revealing new practice;
- Explorers will uncover how and why the example works, and conduct research in a variety of ways in order to convey the context and factors at play in the production of architecture. This will probably include interviews as well as observation and other forms of enquiry;
- We are looking for explorers who are able to make an original and creative contribution in terms of the presentation of their research.

What to send

1. Taking into account the criteria above, describe the project, idea or example you wish to explore:
 What is it?
 Where is it?
 Why would it be new or beneficial to the UK?
 How and when do you propose to travel there?
 (NB you must be available to travel in March/April 2012)
 Describe how you propose to document your discoveries?
2. Give an example of your recent work that demonstrates your skills in documenting and presenting ideas. Describe (using text and visual imagery) how you propose to document the example (please be imaginative and do not rely on text alone to convey the narrative).
3. Enclose a CV and your contact details.

Please post or deliver proposals to:

Kendall Martin-Robbins, ADF Department, Arts Group, British Council, 10 Spring Gardens, London SW1 A2BN to arrive by **10am on 28 February 2012**.

Selection process and what happens next

The British Pavilion advisory panel will select the research proposals and the curators will work with the explorers to plan their expeditions. We will work with local British Council offices and partners where possible.

Once commissioned, explorers will be given a kit and set of instructions to guide their expeditions, which will take place during March/April 2012.

Explorers will be asked to contribute to the Venice Takeaway blog, and to use other forms of social media to document their work. Following the expeditions, final material will be submitted to the British Council by **10am Monday 30 April 2012**.

Advisory Panel

Chair: Vicky Richardson, Director of Architecture, Design, Fashion at the British Council

David Anderson, Director General of the National Museum Wales

Ian Gilzean, Chief Architect, Scottish Executive

Penny Lewis, Course leader, Masters in Architecture, Robert Gordon University School of Architecture

Ciaran Mackel, Architect, Ard Mackel Architects

Fred Scott, Author, *On Altering Architecture*

Brett Steele, Director of the Architectural Association School of Architecture and AA Publications

Finn Williams, Founder of Common Office and Deputy Leader of Placemaking Team at Croydon Council

Terms

1. Successful applicants will be notified by Friday 9 March.
2. Explorers will enter into a contract with the British Council, which will require them to commit to the terms of the project: expeditions to take place in March/April, with final material being submitted by **10am on 30 April 2012**.
3. Explorers will grant the British Council permission to use their material in the exhibition and all materials related to the exhibition; and will agree not to reproduce that material in full in any other context until the end of the exhibition.
4. Each explorer or team will be paid an honorarium of £200. In addition, the British Council will cover travel/accommodation/subsistence up to a limit of £2000 per proposal.
5. The British Council is unable pay for explorers travel costs to attend the 13th Venice Biennale, but we will provide invitations and passes to attend the opening.

The British Council

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. We create international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and build trust between them worldwide. We work in over 100 countries in the arts, education and English and in 2010/11 we engaged face to face with 30 million people and reached 578 million. We have 6,800 staff worldwide. Our total turnover in 2010/11 was £693 million, of which our grant-in-aid from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was £190 million. The remainder was generated through trading activities such as English Language teaching. For every £1 of taxpayer money invested we earn £2.65 in additional income.

The British Council's commitment to the Venice Architecture Biennale illustrates the powerful contribution that the creative industries make to cultural relations. The British Council is responsible for the British Pavilion in Venice; showing British artists at the longest-running, most prestigious international art Biennial in the world: the Venice Biennale of Art. From 1991 the British Pavilion has also been home to architecture exhibitions in the alternate years to the art Biennale.

Project Team

Commissioner: Vicky Richardson, Director of Architecture, Design, Fashion at the British Council

Co-Curators: Vanessa Norwood, Head of Exhibitions at the AA; and Vicky Richardson

Exhibition designer: Born Design

Project manager (Italy): Caterina di Rienzo

Project assistants (UK): Kendall Martin-Robbins and Sylvie Taher

For further information please visit www.britishcouncil.org/venicebiennale or contact Kendall Martin-Robbins at the British Council – kendall.martinrobbins@britishcouncil.org
A pdf of this document is available at www.venicetakeaway.com