

Press Release Friday September 8, 2006

SubUrban to SuperRural: **Irish take over Venice for opening of ‘Irish Exhibition at Venice Arcitectural Biennale’**



Close to 200 Irish architects, media and supporters have descended upon Venice to attend the official opening of ‘SubUrban to SuperRural’, Ireland’s entry at the prestigious Venice Biennale 10th International Architecture exhibition 2006. With the exception of the Italians, the French and the British, the Irish contingent is estimated to be the largest national presence at this year’s architectural extravaganza.

Irish guests packed into the centrally located Italian Pavillion where the Irish exhibition is placed were joined by international media, other exhibiting architects and the overall Director of the 2006 Venice Biennale 10th International Architecture Exhibition, Richard Burdett, at the official opening this afternoon by the Irish Ambassador to Italy, Sean Ó hÚiginn.

Curated by FKL Architects for the Irish Architecture Foundation and supported by Culture Ireland, the Arts Council, the Devey Group, the RIAI and Tegral, Ireland’s exhibition in the 2006 Venice Architectural Biennale features nine projects and scenarios that imagine and illustrate a vision of how our SubUrban island can evolve into a ‘SuperRural’ one between now and 2030.

Speaking at the very well-attended launch, the Ambassador welcomed the significant Irish contingent to Venice. *“This extraordinary event has been made possible by the support of many organisations, including the Irish State through Culture Ireland, and we are delighted to be present and view these important visions of Ireland’s young architects for the future of our country”.*

Irish Commissioner Shane O’Toole, who presided over this afternoon’s launch, noted *“The Venice Biennale is sometimes seen as an exotic day out for the world of architecture, but Ricky Burdett’s theme of ‘Cities, Architecture and Society’ makes a radical connection between architects, people and politicians and provides an opportunity for architects to influence real policy change. These visions have been generated, but architects must be joined by the rest of society to turn them into actions”.*

SUPPORTED BY

Architectural Association of Ireland. The Arts Council/An Comhairle Ealaíon. Department of the Environment. Heritage and Local

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President of the RIAI, James Pike, added “*This project is just the beginning. The RIAI will bring 250 architects to Venice in November to discuss the better planning of Ireland over the next 15 years - and to have that discussion take place in the context of these cutting-edge visions for cities world-wide.*”

SubUrban to SuperRural: Ireland at the Venice Biennale 10th International Architecture Exhibition runs until November 19th 2006.

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To coincide with the opening of Ireland’s entry in the Padiglione Italia, Giardini di Castello, Venice, a special section of the Irish Architecture Foundation’s website has been created: www.architecturefoundation.ie.

Online Press Room: www.architecturefoundation.ie/vb06/press.html

EDITORS' NOTES

***SubUrban to Super-Rural:* Ireland at the Venice Biennale 10th International Architecture Exhibition**

Nine Projects By Nine Architectural Practices

Boyd Cody Architects: 26+1

A vast, ex-bogland landscape, as big as greater Dublin, which would be equivalent to the 16th-largest county in the Republic and currently has a population of 0 (versus 1.2m for Dublin), will come free in the midlands Boora Complex by 2030. What would you do, faced with future food and energy shortages, with a new county if you could start from scratch?

Bucholz McEvoy Architects: Learning Landscape

A mapping of 19c/20c national schools in the midlands and the work of the Land Commission prompted two thoughts - that big moves can transform the landscape and the life it supports; and everybody lives an urban life now. As Ireland's future lies within a global economy, trading on ideas (which we haven't managed to date), can we invent a 'learning landscape' - something as powerful as Singapore but where, instead of living in skyscrapers, people can continue to live on the land while contributing to the global knowledge economy?

dePaor architects: tall-house

At current levels of output (20,000 per annum, on average), 500,000 new one-off houses will be built in the landscape between now and 2030, consuming 250,000 acres and a road frontage equivalent to 4 times the coastline of Ireland that would take 10 days to drive past. It's just not sustainable, so why not change the planning laws to ban all footprint extension outside urban areas as and from 2006? From now on, you can only build up or down - not out. Development pressure soon leads to demolition of bungalows and the development of new typologies - tall-houses - that curiously look not dissimilar to the tower-houses of old.

FKL architects: Hinterland

Develop the hinterlands of the national motorway network planned under Transport 21 for housing, so that everybody can live sustainably in the country but still work in town. Individual plots of 1.5 hectares within 3.3km of the motorway would support a house, vegetables and bio-fuel crops to support a local car culture that links to hubs, whence people commute to towns by bus on a motorway/dual carriageway QBC.

Henchion+Reuter Architects: Demographics

If the 1.6m population increase expected by 2030 were concentrated strictly within a 'penta-zone' linking Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Sligo and Belfast, it could support high-speed trains, similar to those currently in Denmark, that would 'shrink' Ireland - travel time from Dublin to Sligo would go from 3h20m to 48 minutes!

Heneghan.peng.architects: ElastiCity

Dublin-London is the world's second busiest air route. Short-haul flights are fuel-inefficient and may not be viable by 2030. Using oil-rig technology, build a bridge from Rosslare to Fishguard: high-speed trains travel Dublin-London in 2.5 hours and on to Paris. The power of this 'magnet' turns Dublin into an elastic, stretched city along the Irish Sea, instead of a blob spreading out over the midlands.

MacGabhann Architects: Tideaways

Holiday homes are killing the Golden Goose of tourism. Tideaways, based on an analysis of the Rundale system, includes seasonal homes in the sea on a pontoon that are towed into derelict Donegal harbours for winter storage and hillside 'sinkable' houses on a hydraulic system, linked to the pontoon, that rise and fall with the tides. When nobody's at home, the empty sinkable house collapses on its hydraulic ram, disappearing from sight into the ground. Its grass roof becomes part of the landscape you can walk over.

dominic stevens architects: Fluidcity

The Shannon-Erne River system can support a population of 240,000 (compared to the 80,000 of Limerick, Athlone, Rooskey and Carrick today). People live in the countryside, facing the river. Much like the travelling cinema bus today, a river-borne caravanserai arrives once a week, bringing the city to your doorstep...

ODOS architects: Vertical Sprawl

A cautionary tale, told in the form of a comic book from 2030, of what happens when horizontal suburban expansion is no longer possible. In 2030, the sky is the limit...

The Irish participation at the 2006 Venice Architectural Biennale also features *Detached*, a short film by Jennifer Keegan (4m20s), shot on the outskirts of Tallaght.

The accompanying catalogue features essays by Frank McDonald and Constantin Gurdgiev.

Commissioner: Shane O'Toole, Irish Architecture Foundation

Deputy Commissioner: Ciarán ÓGaora

Curators: FKL architects (Michelle Fagan, Paul Kelly, Gary Lysaght)

Exhibitors: Boyd Cody Architects, Bucholz McEvoy Architects, dePaor, FKL Architects, Henschion+Reuter Architects, heneghan.peng.architects, MacGabhann Architects, ODOS Architects, Dominic Stevens Architect.

Contributing Writers: Constantin Gurdgiev, Frank McDonald

Film: Jennifer Keegan

Websites: www.architecturefoundation.ie
www.cultureireland.gov.ie
www.labiennale.org

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