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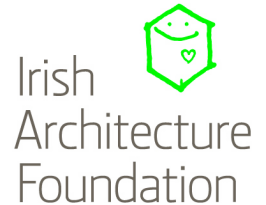
***SubUrban to SuperRural:* Ireland's most ambitious Architectural Biennale show ever heads to Venice**

Ireland's most daring and ambitious entry yet for the Venice Architectural Biennale is being packed and shipped this weekend in preparation of its presentation at the prestigious international event. The 10th International Architectural Exhibition, which takes place from September 10 to November 19 2006 in Venice, Italy, features participants from 50 countries on four different continents.

€140,000, over 42% of the total budget, has been secured from Culture Ireland, the Irish State Agency established by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism in 2005 to promote the best of Ireland's arts and culture internationally. Minister John O'Donoghue commented today *'The Venice Biennale is the world's foremost showcase for architecture and I am delighted that we have been able to support Ireland's best young architects in presenting their work, and showcasing Ireland, to such a large international audience.'* The project has also received support from the Arts Council, the RIAI [Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland] and Tegral, as well as core sponsorship from the Devey Group, one of Ireland's leading developers, currently developing Grand Canal Square in Dublin's Docklands with a performance space by Daniel Libeskind and a hotel by Mateus Aires Associados framing a new square designed by Martha Schwartz.

Presenting a group show for the first time, Ireland has responded to the 2006 Venice Architectural Biennale theme *'Cities, architecture and society'* with an exploration of Irish people's obsession with the land and the motor car. *'SubUrban to SuperRural'* is an ambitious project that asked nine architectural practices to look ahead at the next 25 years at our preoccupation with living on the edge [SubUrban] or beyond [SuperRural] the city's hold, and to arrive at some predictions and possible solutions for the next generation.

Seaside holiday villages that are only visible when occupied, floating cities complete with shopping and leisure cities and an efficient railway infrastructure that will halve



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the commuting time across the country are just some of the new and innovative ideas to emerge from the nine Irish architectural practices involved.

Culture Ireland nominated the Irish Architecture Foundation as commissioners of Ireland's participation in this year's Biennale. FKL architects were appointed last winter to curate the Irish entry, following an open call for proposals. The Foundation's Shane O'Toole, who was also Ireland's Commissioner for the 2004 Biennale, asks: *"What might an alternative Ireland look like in 2030? Architects are not soothsayers, but somebody needs to fill the visionary vacuum and illustrate some of the characteristics of success that should mark our society a generation hence,"* says O'Toole. *"Nine architects of the generation who will shape our children's Ireland have spent the spring and summer fleshing out a series of projects and scenarios that offer different glimpses of that future. Scenarios are not predictions, however. They are stories built around methodically constructed plots. Their real importance lies in the conversations they spark and the decisions they inform. The show FKL has created for Venice is intended to offer plenty of food for thought and to spark debate here at home among the general public,"* he said.

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EDITOR'S NOTES

SubUrban to SuperRural

Commissioner: Shane O'Toole for the Irish Architecture Foundation

Deputy Commissioner: Ciarán Ó Gaora

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

Exhibitors: Boyd Cody Architects, Bucholz | McEvoy Architects, dePaor architects, FKL architects, Henchion+Reuter Architects, heneghan.peng.architects, MacGabhann Architects, ODOS architects, dominic stevens architect.

Contributing Writers: Constantin Gurgiev, Frank McDonald

Film: Jennifer Keegan

One third of all the homes in Ireland have been built since 1995, 80% of them outside the major urban centres. Most of these homes sit on their own piece of land, with gardens to front and rear. Owning your own home is a reality for 80% of Irish citizens: the private house is an immensely successful, free-market consumer product, fuelled by our constitutional protection of the rights of private property, our innate desire to live on the land, our national obsession with the car and a deficit of infrastructure, integrated planning and political will unequalled in the developed world.

The singular solution to housing throughout the island has resulted in sub-urban sprawl - a vast, mono-functional organism that is choking our urban centres, devastating the countryside and atomising our traditional sense of community. It is not uncommon to spend 15-20 hours per week commuting, inevitably by car. In little over a decade, the Emerald Isle, with the sixth lowest population density in the EU, has become a case study in extreme suburbanisation.

Ireland's population is projected to grow by up to 38% by 2030 and the government's primary strategic infrastructural response has been to propose yet more roads. In the midst of this rush for more of the same, the absence of any accepted alternative expectations presents a rare freedom to re-imagine Ireland's future at a time of immense change and evolution within society. Are there new models for development that have been overlooked?

Accepting the reality of road-based infrastructure and low-density housing, can Ireland evolve new conditions in which to live? Conditions offering variety, social integration and environmental sustainability? Can we learn to value land again for its intrinsic qualities and not simply as a site for more houses? Can we create a new condition that is not a pale, less-than-urban condition but a ruddy hybrid of the rural and the urban, something more-than-rural - a SuperRural condition?

The emerging generation of Irish architects has been given the challenge to test this paradigm shift through research and the formulation of specific projects that imagine

and illustrate a vision of how our SubUrban island can evolve into a SuperRural one between now and 2030.

- Michelle Fagan, Paul Kelly and Gary Lysaght FKL architects

For more information, see:

www.architecturefoundation.ie (goes live end of August)

www.cultureireland.gov.ie

www.labiennale.org

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