

Filling the visionary

What might an alternative Ireland look like in 2030? That's the starting point for Ireland's ambitious entry for the Venice Architectural Biennale next month. The theme is "Cities, Architecture and Society" and Ireland is presenting a group show for the first time, an exploration of Irish people's obsession with the land and the car. The exhibits are being packed and shipped this weekend before being presented at the international exhibition.

Seaside holiday villages that are visible only when occupied, floating facilities with shopping and leisure cities and an efficient railway infrastructure that will halve the commuting time across the country are some of the innovative ideas presented in the project "SubUrban to SuperRural".

Nine architectural practices - Boyd Cody Architects, Bucholz|McEvoy Architects, dePaor Architects, FKL Architects, Henchion+Reuter Architects, heneghan.peng.architects, MacGabhann Architects, ODOS Architects and Dominic Stevens - were asked to look ahead 25 years at our preoccupation with living on the edge [SubUrban] or beyond [SuperRural] the city's hold, with predictions and possible solutions for the next generation.

"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 architect Shane O'Toole of the Irish Architecture Foundation, nominated by Culture Ireland to commission our participation in the Biennale. "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



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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.

FKL curated the Irish entry last winter, following an open call for proposals. Some €140,000, or 42 per cent of the total budget for the Irish entry in Venice is from Culture Ireland. The Arts Council, the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI) and the private development sector have also contributed.

The Biennale, which runs from September 10th to November 19th, features participants from 50 countries.