

The Lives of Spaces

Ireland's participation at the 11th International Architecture Exhibition

On the 12 September the Ambassador of Ireland, Sean O’Huiginn and Míchéal O Suilleabhain, Chairperson, Culture Ireland opened **‘The Lives of Spaces’** - Ireland’s participation at the 11th International Architecture Exhibition at the Palazzo Guistinian Lolin in Venice. The Irish entry to the Venice Architecture Biennale is a Culture Ireland initiative, in partnership with the Arts Council, sponsored by the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland and the Embassy of Ireland to Italy.

It marked the commencement of judging for the highly coveted ‘Golden Lion’ award, presented to the best national pavilion. **‘The Lives of Spaces’** is one of 65 national participations – a record number for the Venice Architecture Biennale.

Commissioners and curators the Irish Architecture Foundation (IAF) Director, Nathalie Weadick and co-commissioner and co-curator Dr. Hugh Campbell, Senior Lecturer in Architecture at UCD developed the theme of the exhibition and selected nine responses for inclusion at this key international showcase.

Speaking at the opening, O Suilleabhain said: *“Culture Ireland is proud to support Ireland's presentation at the Venice Architecture Biennale. The exhibition powerfully evokes the Irish experience of living within designed spaces, many of which are unique to Ireland. At the same time the quality and standard of the work ensures that it can take its place at the highest international level.”*

Claire Doyle, Head of Visual Arts at the Arts Council said: *“The Arts Council has been supporting architecture since 1951 and is proud to contribute ongoing support, assistance and encouragement to architects in order that they may fulfil their potential as creative artists. The nine pieces featured in this exhibition explore just how central a role space has in our society. In reflecting on the spatial in Irish life, they offer a challenging portrait both of what we are, and what we are becoming. We are very pleased to have been able to play our part in making this exhibition possible.”*

Eugene Downes, CEO, Culture Ireland said: *“Ireland's participation is a departure from more traditional formats: the exhibition examines the impact of space on our lives, and the key role that architecture plays in determining the effect of space. We are delighted to support the showcasing of Irish architecture as an art form.”*

Included in **'The Lives of Spaces'** are projects currently in design and construction, as well as examinations of existing spaces. The exhibition involves many new collaborations and experiments, which open up new ways of envisaging, designing and understanding space.

This exhibition's title, **The Lives of Spaces**, deliberately invites multiple interpretations, suggesting that, while spaces can contain many lives, they can equally live many lives themselves. The story of a space can be traced through its emergent life in design, its life in construction, its life in use and reuse, its life in individual and collective memory and its life within a culture. For each of the nine spaces explored in this exhibition, life is at a different stage. Some are still in various stages of design and construction, some are only beginning to be inhabited, while others have already accumulated long histories of occupation and, in one case, are about to fall finally out of use.

This exhibition proceeds from the modest proposition that the designed spaces which architects produce play a crucial role in supporting, shaping and framing our lives. The spaces chosen for inclusion are not precious, pristine places, removed from the ordinary business of life – they are right in the thick of it, providing accommodation for living, for working, for creative production, for institutional support, for education, for leisure, for collective action.

The exhibition seeks to communicate the specifics of spatial experience, focusing on how it feels to be in a space and on what effect that experience might have. In an attempt to get beyond the common abstract, distancing effect of traditional architectural displays of drawings and models, film is used as the primary medium. Film offers a vivid immediacy, a readily accessible language, and the capacity to incorporate time into the depiction of space. The exhibition consists of a series of filmic representations displayed in specially-designed armatures. Most display film on single or multiple LCD screens; some break film down into its constituent elements of sound, light and time.

Taken individually, each display has something of the condensed power of a short story. As with the best short stories, it is through the intense focus on the particular qualities of a particular space at a particular time, that much larger social and cultural themes are illuminated. Thus, taken cumulatively, what emerges is nothing less than a spatial portrait of Irish society. At the same time, the ideas and issues emerging from the exhibition have a more universal relevance and potency. **The Lives of Spaces** makes evident architecture's great central responsibility – the shaping of the spaces that in turn shape society – and its continued potency and vitality in fulfilling this role. In response to the current architectural culture, it offers what Anthony Vidler, in his introduction to the work, calls the '*recuperation without nostalgia of a modernity of experience.*' And in relation to the Biennale theme – ***Architecture Beyond Building*** – it asserts that architecture will always extend beyond building in its matchless capacity to embody, to embrace and to engender life.

P a r t i c i p a n t s

Hassett-Ducatez - The spatial character and the life in use of the recently opened Youth Centre in Tallaght will be investigated by Grainne Hassett.

Simon Walker & Patrick Lynch will document the life of Bóthar Buí, the West Cork holiday home of Robin and Dorothy Walker which, despite its modest sc

Drawing on their work on a series of cultural and civic spaces in regional centres, **McCullough Mulvin** will investigate the transition from space in design to space in use.

Gerry Cahill Architects will examine the changing use of sacred space in Ireland, focusing on the Mercy Convent in Cork Street.

Grafton Architects - are to present a film, which considers the relationship of interior space and city in two recent projects – the Università Luigi Bocconi in Milan and their office development for the OPW on Merrion Row in Dublin.

dePaor architects will show their proposed Picture Palace in Galway, focusing on the spatial journey from street to cinema.

TAKA - Cian Deegan and Alice Casey will use a series of domestic projects to consider the ritual character of home space.

Using linked sequences of perspective views **O'Donnell + Tuomey** will show the movement of light through the central space of An , Gael^oras, a cultural centre in Derry.

Dara McGrath in association with **Robinson McIlwaine** will present his stark photographs of the deconstruction of the Maze/Long Kesh prison, a space of iconic political significance.

The chosen venue for '**The Lives of Spaces**' is Palazzo Giustinian Lolin, a palace on the Gran Canal next to the Accademia Bridge. The scale, character and decoration of these typically Venetian rooms will provide a setting appropriate for the exhibition's theme. Furniture in the exhibition has been supplied as sponsorship by Arper, Italy.

The 11th International Architecture Exhibition will take place in Venice from 14 September - 23 November.

Venice Architecture Biennale

The Architecture section of the Venice Biennale was established in 1980, although a few exhibitions had taken place since 1975 within the Art section. Aaron Betsky, former director for six years of the Netherlands Architecture Institute (NAI) of Rotterdam, one of the most important architecture museums and centres in the world, and since last year Director of the Cincinnati Art Museum, will be the curator of the 11th International Architecture Exhibition: Out There. Architecture Beyond Building. www.labiennale.org/en/architecture/

The event will feature participants from more than 50 countries on four different continents and represents a vital opportunity to demonstrate the diversity, dynamism and richness of Irish architectural culture to a global audience.

Culture Ireland

Culture Ireland is the Irish State Agency that promotes the best of Ireland's arts and culture internationally and assists in the development of Ireland's international cultural relations. The organisation was established in 2005 by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and comprises a board of directors appointed by the Minister and an executive staff led by the Chief Executive. www.cultureireland.gov.ie

The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon

The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon is the national agency for funding, developing and promoting the arts in Ireland. www.arts council.ie

Irish Architecture Foundation

The IAF was initiated in 2005. Its role is to be a vibrant and passionate organisation that seeks to excite audiences about the cultural value of architecture. It is a focal point for people and organisations that wish to champion the power of architecture to transform lives. The annual funders of the IAF are the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin City Council, Office of Public Works and the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland. The IAF is supported by the Architectural Association of Ireland and the Irish Architectural Archive,

Embassy in Rome

www.architecturefoundation.ie

Culture Ireland

www.cultureireland.gov.ie