



Culture Ireland
Cultúr Éireann

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‘Losing Myself’ – Ireland’s entry at Venice International Architecture Biennale 2016

The Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Heather Humphreys TD, announces details of ‘Losing Myself’, Ireland’s exhibition at the 15th International Architecture Biennale Exhibition being launched in Venice today. Ireland’s exhibition at Venice is an initiative of Culture Ireland in partnership with the Arts Council.

The theme of the 2016 Biennale, ‘Reporting from the Front’, invites participants to report on how architecture can improve the quality of the built environment and consequently people’s quality of life. Commissioned and curated by Niall McLaughlin and Yeoryia Manolopoulou, Ireland’s entry for the 2016 exhibition ‘Losing Myself’ is inspired by the Orchard Day and Respite Centre in Blackrock, Dublin, which was commissioned by the Alzheimer Society of Ireland to provide flexible short-term care for people suffering from Alzheimer’s disease.

‘Losing Myself’ reflects the reality that dementia is one of the major ‘fronts’ facing society globally and draws on the idea that while architectural plans typically illustrate a fixed, coherent space, this can never be experienced by someone with Alzheimer’s disease, who can no longer fully orientate themselves in their environment.

Speaking about the exhibition, Minister Humphreys said:

Ireland’s exhibition in Venice ‘Losing Myself’ asks important questions as to how contemporary architecture can integrate design with healthcare needs. It also considers how frontline care issues like access, mobility, security, space and social interaction are addressed by architecture. As our population ages, dementia is becoming an increasingly challenging public health issue affecting thousands of families across the country, so I am sure this exhibition will strike a chord with many visitors.

The installation at Venice uses time-based projections to show how the Respite Centre is experienced by sixteen people over the course of a day and conveys how the overlapping, perhaps conflicting experiences of the Centre’s inhabitants challenge the notion of a building as a singular concept, and by extension, those architectural drawings that insist upon buildings as fixed and whole objects. ‘Losing Myself’ draws on the research of

neuroscientists, psychologists, health workers, philosophers and anthropologists, as well as on the experiences of people with dementia and their families.

According to Niall McLaughlin:

The 'front' that we have chosen to report on is that of the architect designing for dementia. The title of our project, 'Losing Myself' is, in part, drawn from the principle that architects have a responsibility in our designs to imagine the experiences of others. We have tried to develop a process of drawing through which we can imaginatively inhabit the minds of people with dementia, whose view of the world is not immediately clear to us. Our installation and the accompanying website, www.losingmyself.ie, seek to communicate the specific ways in which dementia might impair an individual's ability to navigate their environment, based upon our observations and our conversations with experts and people with personal experience of the condition.

The Venice International Architecture Exhibition is the world's most important international showcase for architecture, and Ireland's exhibition at Venice provides an unrivalled opportunity for an international audience to experience the range and vigour of Ireland's diverse architectural culture and the strength of Irish architectural practices and architects.

Audiences at home will have the chance to experience the 'Losing Myself' exhibition when it is adapted for an Arts Council supported national tour in 2017 on its return from Venice.

ENDS

Notes for Editors:

About Ireland at Venice

The Venice Biennale has, for over a century, been one of the most prestigious cultural organisations in the world. Dating back to 1895, when the first International Art Exhibition was held, the Biennale has consistently promoted new avant-garde artistic trends and organised international events promoting contemporary arts across various disciplines. The biennial international art and architecture exhibitions offer a unique opportunity for Ireland to showcase Irish talent to the world and enable Irish artists and architects, curators and commissioners, achieve international exposure and generate opportunities to present their work outside of Ireland.

The 15th International Architectural Exhibition which runs from 28 May to 27 November 2016, and directed by Chilean architect Alejandro Aravena, is based on the theme 'Reporting from the Front' which asks how contemporary architecture can improve real people's lives. The exhibition, which is one of the most significant events on the international arts calendar, typically attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors, curators and international programmers and presenters of contemporary arts.

Previous Irish architectural entries at the Venice Architecture Biennale include *Infra Eireann*, Gary A. Boyd and John McLaughlin (2014); *Shifting Ground*, heneghan peng, Elizabeth Francis and John McLaughlin, (2012); *of de Blacam and Meagher*, Tom de Paor, Peter Maybury, Alice Casey and Cian Deegan (2010); and *The Lives of Spaces*, Nathalie Weadick and Hugh Campbell (2008). Further information on past exhibitions is available at www.cultureireland.ie/venice/events

The Irish Pavilion will be based at *le Artiglierie dell' Arsenale* which will be open to the public in Venice from Saturday May 28. A preview for press and invited guests takes place on May 26 and 27.

BIOGRAPHY DETAILS

Niall McLaughlin, Commissioner

Niall McLaughlin was educated in Dublin and received his architectural qualifications from University College Dublin in 1984. He worked for Scott Tallon Walker in Dublin and London between 1984 and 1989. He established his own practice in London in 1990. Niall McLaughlin Architects design high quality modern buildings with a special emphasis on materials and detail. Niall won Young British Architect of the Year in 1998, he was one of the BBC Rising Stars in 2001 and his work represented Britain in a US exhibition Gritty Brits at the Carnegie Mellon Museum. His designs have won many awards in the UK, Ireland and the US, including RIAI Best Building in the Landscape, and the RIBA Stephen Lawrence Award for the Best Building under £1million, and he was on the Stirling Prize Shortlist in both 2013 and 2015. Niall is a professor of architecture at University College London; Lord Norman Foster visiting Professor of Architecture, Yale, 2015; visiting Professor University of California Los Angeles, 2012-2013; a Member of the Architectural Review Editorial Board and an Honorary Royal Designer of Industry. He was chair of the RIBA Awards Group from 2007 to 2009. He lives in London.

Yeoryia Manolopoulou, Curator

Yeoryia Manolopoulou is an architect, researcher and educator. She received her Diploma in Architecture at the National Technical University in Athens where she also worked with notable practices, including K. Moraitis Architects and D&T Biris Architects. She came to London in 1996 to complete a MArch (Distinction) and one of the first PhDs by Architectural Design at The Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL. Between 1999 and 2003 she co-run the design studio Tessera and in 2006, she co-founded AY Architects. In 2014, she was shortlisted for the Emerging Woman Architect of the Year Award, organised by The Architects' Journal. Yeoryia is Director of Architectural Research at The Bartlett, UCL. She is the author of Architectures of Chance (2013) and founding editor of the Bartlett Design Research Folios (2015).

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