La Biennale di Venezia 2016
FACT SHEET

Australian Exhibition –*The Pool* by Aileen Sage Architects and Michelle Tabet

**OVERVIEW**

- The International Architecture Exhibition for la Biennale di Venezia – or Biennale Architettura – is widely considered to be the most prestigious international event on the architectural calendar.

- The Biennale is an essential international forum of celebration and debate about contemporary architectural practice, where countries present their nation’s approach to contemporary architecture and design.

- Australia’s attendance at the Biennale is an initiative of the Australian Institute of Architects since 2006.

- Through an open competition process, the Institute chose Isabelle Toland and Amelia Holliday (Aileen Sage Architects) with Michelle Tabet as the team to design and realise the 2016 Australian exhibition in Venice.

- Their winning exhibition, *The Pool*, is joyful, celebratory and accessible. It is also a setting for the sharing of stories, tales of personal and collective struggle, of community building, transformation and refusal of the status quo.

- Creating a water filled pool as the central focus of the exhibition, it will explore the relationship between architecture and Australian cultural identity.

- The project has inspired the sharing of stories collected around the pool. This has led to eight narratives about aspects of Australian cultural identity from high profile storytellers, including Olympians Shane Gould and Ian Thorpe; authors Anna Funder and Christos Tsiolkas; musician Paul Kelly; environmentalist Tim Flannery; fashion designers Romance Was Born; and Indigenous art curator Hetti Perkins.

- The Australian exhibition is supported by City of Sydney, NSW Government, Queensland Government, NT Government, Victorian Government, Austral Bricks, Smeg, Planned Cover, UNSW Built Environment, Aesop, Lend Lease, Built, and
Architecture Media.

- The Institute gratefully acknowledges the support given by the Australia Council for the Arts, in kind supporters, Patrons, Donors and Network Venice practices.

**THE VENICE ARCHITECTURE BIENNALE**

- The Venice Architecture Biennale is widely considered to be the most prestigious international event on the architectural calendar.

- It was established in 1980 and is held every alternate year to the Venice Art Biennale.

- The Biennale includes a number of exhibitions inside the Biennale Gardens and ‘Arsenale’ (an historical industrial site). The Biennale Gardens houses the National Pavilion buildings.

- The Biennale is an essential international forum of celebration and debate about contemporary architectural practice.

- In the nineteenth-century tradition of ‘world fairs’, countries present their nation’s approach to contemporary architecture and design.

**The Australian Institute of Architects**

- Australia’s exhibition at the Venice Architecture Biennale has been a major project of the Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) since 2006.

- Australian architecture is a major player in the global architectural industry and participating in the Biennale allows us to present our unique architectural talent and achievements to the world.

- This is an opportunity to showcase Australian architecture internationally, highlighting the country’s varied expertise and growing reputation for progressive architecture.

- Australia’s previous exhibitions have attracted large audiences during the Biennale and then gone on to tour globally.

- Australia’s participation in the Biennale is funded by the architecture industry, corporate companies and all levels of Government
• Isabelle Toland and Amelia Holliday (Aileen Sage Architects) with Michelle Tabet are the creative team who have been chosen to design and realise the 2016 Australian exhibition in Venice.

• Their project “The Pool” was selected by a committee of the Institute from an open competition process chaired by Professor Paul Berkemeier.

**Australian Pavilion**

• The Australian Pavilion is owned by the Australia Council for the Arts, who recently staged a design competition for the redesign.

• The re-design was supported by the Institute, however all operational aspects were managed solely by the Australia Council for the Arts.

• The new pavilion was designed by Denton Corker Marshall and has been completed for use in the 2015 Art Biennale. More details can be found at: venicebiennale.australiacouncil.gov.au.

**THE POOL EXHIBITION**

**The concept**

• Recognisably Australian, *The Pool* is joyful, celebratory and accessible. It is also a setting for the sharing of stories, tales of personal and collective struggle, of community building, transformation and refusal of the status quo.

• The creative directors are proposing to step outside of architect-to-architect discourse to show how a familiar, common object, the pool, is in fact pregnant with cultural significance, it is both artefact and catalyst of change.

• *The Pool* is a lens through which to explore the relationship between architecture and Australian cultural identity.

• *The Pool* is a distinctively Australian democratic and social space - a great leveller of difference.

**The exhibition**

• Creating a pool as the focal point in the space, the exhibition will at first seduce the senses, but it will also capture the imagination and intellect of those who choose to dive deeper, as we have throughout our research and development
process.

- The exhibition will be a multisensory experience referencing some of Australia’s most remarkable pool stories and places.
- The exhibition will feature a water-filled pool within the new exhibition space.
- The design uses light, scent, sound, reflection and perspective to engage the visitor and transport them poolside.
- The design is inspired by the language of Australian pools and the memories they evoke.

The narratives

- The project has inspired the sharing of stories of many Australians – all collected around the pool. This has led to eight narratives about aspects of Australian cultural identity, and eight high-profile storytellers.
- Storytellers include - Olympians Shane Gould and Ian Thorpe; authors Anna Funder and Christos Tsiolkas; musician Paul Kelly; environmentalist Tim Flannery; fashion designers Romance Was Born; and art curator Hetti Perkins.
- All are examples of myriad meanings and impacts of the pool on Australian society and collectively describe a powerful relationship between place and society, a relationship intrinsic to next year’s Biennale theme.

THE CREATIVE DIRECTORS

Amelia Holliday & Isabelle Toland (Aileen Sage Architects)

- Aileen Sage is the alter ego of Isabelle Aileen Toland and Amelia Sage Holliday.
- Established in 2013, the Sydney studio is one of Australia’s leading emerging architectural practices, recognised for their innovative approach to design.
- Working across different scales and typologies, the practice has developed a particular reputation for creative material strategies and unexpected collaborations.
- Aileen Sage is interested in how meaningful engagement can be encouraged between architecture and people of varied generations, backgrounds and cultures.
Recent projects include the new Sydney headquarters for the Federal Government initiative Artbank, public amenities for the City of Sydney and award winning houses.

Amelia is a graduate of the Architectural Association in London and the University of New South Wales. Isabelle is a graduate of the University of Sydney and has worked in both Australia and France including the Paris office of renowned Japanese architect Shigeru Ban.

Together they have taught design at the three schools of architecture in Sydney, and at the National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA).

Prior to establishing Aileen Sage they were employed at a number of internationally recognised practices including Neeson Murcutt Architects in Sydney where they worked together on a number of high profile projects including Prince Alfred Park Pool.

Amelia and Isabelle both love sharing the joy of the pool with their kids – each have young children they are currently teaching to swim.

Michelle Tabet

Michelle Tabet is an urbanist and director of her own boutique consultancy in Sydney.

From a background in urban planning, Michelle brings a strategic view to architectural debate, always focusing on the collective stories that define cities.

Michelle grew up in Paris and has degrees in political science and urban planning from University College London and Columbia University in New York City respectively.

Michelle has become a specialist in the field of project visioning and briefing for significant urban projects. She is an active contributor to media on architecture and cities.

Michelle’s project are complex urban regeneration opportunities such as the rebuild of Christchurch’s City Centre in New Zealand.

Michelle loves to lounge poolside rather than getting into the cold water.
THE POOL OF COLLABORATORS

Project Team
Creative Directors - Isabelle Toland, Amelia Holliday, Michelle Tabet
Creative Team Advisor - Olivia Hyde
Graphic Designer - Stephen Goddard / Project Two
Photographer - Brett Boardman
Sub-editor - Jeanne Carey
Lighting Designer - Nick Schlieper / Sydney Theatre Company
Assistant Lighting Designer - Sian James-Holland
Sound Artist, composer - Bree Van Reyk
Interview Editor - Kate Montague
Industrial Designer - Elliot Rich with the Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT)
Scent Artists - Lyn & Tony with Maison Balzac
Builder - David Lakes / Lochbuild
Engineering - Event Engineering
Pool Engineer - Livio Chiarot
Project Manager - Shelley Kemp

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The Australian Institute of Architects is the peak body for the architectural profession, representing 12,000 members across Australia and overseas. The Institute actively works to improve the quality of our built environment by promoting quality, responsible and sustainable design. Learn more about the Institute, log on to www.architecture.com.au.