Pavilion of Australia
at the 15th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

One of Australia’s greatest cultural symbols - The Pool - will form the foundation of the Australian Exhibition at the Biennale Architettura 2016, which will run from May 28 to November 27 2016.

The exhibition, presented by the Australian Institute of Architects and curated by Amelia Holliday and Isabelle Toland (Aileen Sage Architects) with Michelle Tabet, uses the pool as a lens through which to explore Australian cultural identity.

The Australian Pavilion will be transformed through the use of light, scent, sound, reflection and perspective to create a series of perceptual illusions within a designed landscape. The exhibition will engage visitors through an immersive experience that will transport them poolside and evoke the pools of Australia in all their forms, be they natural or manmade, inland or coastal, temporary or permanent.

Eight prominent cultural leaders from various fields have been selected to share their personal stories, using the device of the pool as a platform to explore the relationship between architecture and Australian cultural identity. These include Olympic gold medal winning swimmers Ian Thorpe and Shane Gould, environmentalist and 2007 Australian of the Year Tim Flannery, fashion designers Romance Was Born, writer of best-selling book The Slap Christos Tsiolkas, winner of the 2012 Miles Franklin Prize Anna Funder, Indigenous art curator Hetti Perkins and Australian rock-musician Paul Kelly.

Each narrative touches on a different scale, from the scale of the body to the scale of the continent, and together all reveal the myriad meanings and impacts of the pool on Australian society; as a means to enable survival in an unforgiving landscape, to tame our environment, to provide spaces that facilitate direct contact with nature, to create democratic social spaces, but also spaces for healing racial and cultural division.

Through the description of events, experiences, histories or memories, the narratives presented collectively describe a powerful relationship between place and society, intrinsic to this year’s Biennale Architettura theme Reporting from the Front.
‘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 and transformation and refusal of the status quo.’

‘The Pool as an architectural device delimitates a social edge and a personal edge. It is this metaphorical and literal edge condition that we want to explore and share with the audience at Venice. The pool represents a condition of surplus and of scarcity in the same form, which makes it very interesting.’ the Creative Directors said.

The aim of the Australian Exhibition is to step outside the 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 about public space as a vital component to society and shows the many ways in which its public character is interpreted and occupied.

The new Australian Pavilion designed by Denton Corker Marshall opened in May 2015 for La Biennale Arte and will host its inaugural architecture exhibition for the Biennale Architettura 2016. The pavilion is the first to be built within the Giardini in the 21st century.

The Pool exhibition will be open for press previews during the Vernissage. For more information visit wp.architecture.com.au/venicebiennale

- Ends -

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**Notes to editors**
Commissioner: - Janet Holmes à Court

“’The Pool’ was selected by a committee of the Australian Institute of Architects from an open competition process chaired by Professor Paul Berkemeier, La Biennale di Venezia Committee Chair.

Australia’s attendance at the 15th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia is an initiative of the Australian Institute of Architects. The Institute has coordinated Australia’s presence at the International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di venezia since 2006. Australia’s previous exhibitions have attracted large audiences during the Architecture Biennale and on tour globally.

The 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, Stylecraft, Built, and Architecture Media. In addition, the Institute gratefully acknowledges the support given by the Australia Council for the Arts, our in kind supporters, Patrons, Donors and Network Venice practices.

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. To learn more about the Institute, visit: www.architecture.com.au
La Biennale di Venezia 2016

QUOTES

Embargoed until 8pm Wednesday 30 March

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

Quotes from *The Pool – Architecture, Culture and Identity in Australia*, the official publication of Australia’s Exhibition at the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale

**Janet Holmes a Court AC – Commissioner**

‘I am immensely proud to be involved with the 2016 International Architecture Biennale. This is the foremost event on the architectural calendar and a valuable opportunity to showcase the diverse, leading-edge work in which Australian architects are engaged.’

‘Resource, celebration, community, commemoration, leisure and lifeblood, the exhibition resonates powerfully with the Australian ethos.’

**Paul Berkemeier – Venice Biennale Committee Chair**

‘The Biennale is an opportunity to showcase Australian architecture internationally, and highlights the country’s varied expertise and burgeoning reputation for progressive architecture.

‘I congratulate the creative team...and all their collaborators for this accessible and playful approach to telling the story of architecture where life occurs.’”

**The Creative Team – Amelia Holliday and Isabelle Toland (Aileen Sage Architects) and Michelle Tabet**

‘This exhibition and publication considers the pool in Australian life and architecture through the reminiscences and anecdotes of many: from children to teachers, swimmers to onlookers, architects to their clients.’

‘By identifying the pools’ cultural importance to Australia, we are pushing for a more critical engagement with the civic and social value that underpins our work as architects. The power and breadth of these places should not be underestimated nor simply jettisoned as uneconomical. Architecture can and does have an impact that transcends conventional economic models.’

‘The lesson of *The Pool* is that architecture is felt and lived. It is evidence that Australian architects are creating culturally powerful public places, an architecture for many, not just the very few.’
Tim Flannery – The Giving of Life

‘The miracle of a billabong in Australia, that is the most amazing thing because it’s where the underground waters, under all that sand, come to the surface for a bit and even in the most difficult and adverse environments, they are maintained with pure water and are the focus of an enormous amount of life.’

Ian Thorpe – Bodies of Water

‘There is a real separation of the elite part of swimming from the more social side of it and I actually like the cross-over between the two, the sharing of public spaces. That happens at our council pools – where I mostly train. I enjoy seeing different people in that space with me.’

Romance was Born – Childhood Memories

‘There was nothing special about it, it was super suburban, it had one main pool and a kids’ pool and a diving pool – I had a lot of fun in the diving pool. They had two different heights. I was too scared to jump off the biggest diving board and I remember the first time I did it, it was a really big achievement. We had all of our school swimming carnivals there. I remember the feeling of going into a race, the adrenalin, and how nervous I was about competing. Everyone was yelling and screaming for their team colour, it was such a fun, spirited place.’

Christos Tsiolkas – Other Worlds

‘I think we are living in such an age of consumption and excess and the pool is still a marker of status. So, no, I don’t think it’s over, but I think the question of what is public space, the question of what communal space, is becoming increasingly important.’

‘Those suburban multicultural public pools, for me, represent a version of Australia that I am most comfortable with and that I think, is the version that I really would love to keep defending.’

‘All my favourite pools in this city – whether it’s Brunswick or Northcote, are full of life. They are full of kids jumping in and old women gently paddling in the water. It’s the conversations in the change rooms, it’s alive and I think that’s important. I think that will continue to be important for people.’

Anna Funder – Public Dreaming

‘Part of the ethos of the pool is that Olympic swimmers swim just metres away from the seniors having lessons and babies learning to be in water. I think that’s wonderful.’

‘I think the pool is really pivotal for a local community, like a public library. They are the pillars of a community.’
'But I was also fascinated with the idea that the pool was a place of creative contemplation or inspiration.'

**Hetti Perkins – Contested Space**

'The Freedom Ride was one of many political actions that Indigenous people took to defend their human rights in Australia. It attracted a lot of publicity and became this national news story and in doing so, it alerted people to what was happening in these communities. The Freedom Ride really woke up the complacency of Australia.'

'It’s kind of like a delicious vitamin pill – it tastes great and it makes you feel good and it makes you healthy. I think there should be a pool in every single remote Indigenous community in Australia.'

'Pools are really oases, psychologically as well as physically. We’re not only waging a war on racism, we’re also trying to deal with the effects of racism on communities and provide an oasis where people can forget the concerns of their daily lives.'

'What the Freedom Ride taught us is that you can’t be complacent. It wasn’t a "fix all"; you can’t go in there and immediately cure the disease of racism. The Freedom Ride alerted us to it and that was a very important step. Racism is deeply ingrained in many communities and for those young people it changed their vision, their aspirations.'

'I love the sound of water, the reflection, the play of light. The pool is like an art installation, the light, the sound, the visual appeal of it, the immersiveness of it. It has a powerful cultural significance.'

'Both communities [Maningrida and Kintore] decided that they would implement a ‘No School, No Pool’ rule which meant that any child that had been marked absent from school that day wasn’t allowed in the pool that afternoon. I can tell you: attendance rates are pretty good now.'

'A lot of my mob are a bit shy about going to a white fella place. They are wary of going into places that don’t feel like an Aboriginal place. The NCIE is our asset and we invite others to use it. It turned the tables. The ripple effect of the pool has made a big difference to Redfern.' – In reference to the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence which provides a community pool for the urban Aboriginal population in Redfern.

**Shane Gould – Theatre of Competition**

'Swimming pools are almost never going to be sustainable financially unless they are really well managed. But it is hard to account for the social value that a pool brings, so we often rely on financial accounting to determine the value of such social infrastructure.'

'_my legacy will be to reveal the richness in our banal interaction with the pool, and swimming and show how it continues to enrich Australian community and society.’
‘At the pool, teenagers learn how to relate and how to behave, children see old wrinkly people and young babies. It can really help people understand the community and the world.’

Paul Kelly – Deeper Water

‘It’s probably been said before but it’s the pool and the beach, they’re totally democratic spaces. All kinds of people go there, all kinds of bodies. The little groups, from one end to the other.’

Additional

‘We wanted the building to reflect the Olympic Games. We wanted something that would look like an athlete in the sense that it would be taut and have tension about it.’ – Peter McIntyre, 2015

‘The City of Sydney invests in social infrastructure such as pools because we understand that more and more of our life is going to be lived in public. Providing public, accessible facilities as the backdrop for community experiences is one of the ways in which we are tackling affordability, in a city where real estate pressures are real and felt by all. The pool, just like the library, becomes part of a suite of amenities that everyone enjoys.’ – Monica Barone, CEO City of Sydney, 2015.

‘Within their communities, pools are great levellers of difference. They can be many things to many people; from the youth to the elderly, wealthy or disadvantaged, fit or infirm; pools can be equally spaces of leisure or fitness, inspiration or release.’ – Creative Directors, 2015

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MEDIA RELEASE
30 March 2016

The Pool – ready to make waves at the Biennale Architettura 2016

The Creative Directors of Australia’s exhibition at the Biennale Architettura 2016 have offered Australians a first look at The Pool ahead of the international event in Venice, Italy, which runs from 28 May to 27 November.

The Pool: Architecture, Culture and Identity in Australia is the companion publication for Australia’s highly anticipated contribution to the Biennale Architettura 2016, curated by Aileen Sage Architects (Isabelle Toland and Amelia Holliday) with Michelle Tabet.

The book explores the Australian affinity with the pool, and was unveiled at Icebergs Dining Room and Bar in Sydney on Wednesday 30 March by the Creative Directors, who were joined by Olympian Ian Thorpe, author Anna Funder and Indigenous art curator Hetti Perkins, who all feature in the book.

Designed to offer a richer experience of the exhibition, the book explores the relationship between architecture and Australian cultural identity through personal anecdotes about one of our country’s most significant public spaces.

Eight prominent Australians have shared their pool stories: Thorpe, Funder and Perkins were joined by Olympian Shane Gould, environmentalist Tim Flannery, fashion designers Romance was Born, author Christos Tsiolkas and musician Paul Kelly.

‘This publication is a compendium of our research and the stories our process revealed. We designed it to be accessible, visually appealing but also intimate in tone. While it should work as a standalone publication, we also wanted it to give visitors to the exhibition a deeper and more meaningful engagement with the themes we’re exploring,’ the Creative Directors said.

‘The pool is revealed through the featured accounts as a vital force in Australian life, not only as the setting for childhood memories, but also as the stage for impressive sporting feats that fuel the nation’s pride. A backdrop to many significant events in our communities, the pool is also a deeply contested space in the history of Australia, that has highlighted racial discrimination and social disadvantage,’ they added.

Speaking at the launch, Ian Thorpe, who contributed to the book and is also a supporter of the project, noted ‘Australians have a very particular relationship with water, which is shown in many different ways through the pool as an important social space in our country. The Creative Team has done an amazing job at capturing that essence in this book’.

Background

La Biennale di Venezia or Biennale Architettura 2016 is widely considered the most important international event on the architectural calendar.

Australia’s 2016 exhibition, presented by the Australian Institute of Architects and curated by Aileen Sage Architects (Isabelle Toland and Amelia Holliday) with Michelle Tabet, uses the pool as a lens through which to explore Australian cultural identity.

The Australian Pavilion will be transformed through the use of light, scent, sound, reflection and perspective to create a series of perceptual illusions within a designed landscape. The exhibition will engage visitors through an immersive experience that will transport them poolside and evoke the pools of Australia in all their forms: natural or manmade, inland or coastal, temporary or permanent.

The aim of the Australian Exhibition is to step outside the 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 about public space as a vital component to society and shows the many ways in which its public character is interpreted and occupied.

The 2016 La Biennale di Venezia sees the inaugural architecture exhibition in the new Australian Pavilion designed by Denton Corker Marshall, which opened in May 2015. The new pavilion is the first to be built within the Giardini in the 21st century.

For more information on Australia’s participation in the 2016 La Biennale di Venezia visit wp.architecture.com.au/venicebiennale

NOTES TO EDITORS:

High res images are available for download from Google Drive. Images must be credited correctly and are only approved for use in articles relating to Australia’s exhibition at the Biennale Architettura 2016.

Australia’s attendance at the 15th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia is an initiative of the Australian Institute of Architects. The Institute has coordinated Australia’s presence at the Mostra di Architettura at the La Biennale di Venezia since 2006. Australia’s previous exhibitions have attracted large audiences during the La Biennale di Venezia and on tour globally.

The 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, Stylecraft, Built, and Architecture Media. In addition, the Institute gratefully acknowledges the support given by the Australia Council for the Arts, our in kind supporters, Patrons, Donors and Network Venice practices.

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MEDIA RELEASE

Anerle-aneme chair to be unveiled poolside in Sydney.

The Anerle-aneme chair will be launched during the official preview of Australia’s Exhibition in the 2016 Venice Architectural Biennale, at Icebergs Dining Room and Bar, Bondi Beach on Wednesday March 30.

Commissioned for the exhibition, the Anerle-aneme chair is designed by central Australian based designer Elliat Rich and hand made by an Aboriginal owned business – The Centre for Appropriate Technology Ltd (CAT).

Anerle-aneme means ‘sit a little while’ in the Arrernte language of central Australia. Designed for outdoor resilience, the chair captures the unique colours of this landscape; the vibrant blue of the sky, the ochre of the earth, the soft green vegetation and the shimmering silver grey of heat refracting light. It is a perfect poolside addition for Australia’s new pavilion in Venice.

The launch of the Anerle-aneme chair is the story of a successful collaboration between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and between creative and technical expertise. It is also a recognition of the inspiration emanating from remote Australia, a place both central to our land and identity yet too often peripheral in our knowledge and imagination.

The chair brings together the stories and skills of central Australia. It is a testimony to meeting the challenge of constraints with a bold design vision and an ethical process.
Elliat Rich, designer.

The Anerle-aneme chair highlights what can be achieved through creative partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Our staff have gained skills and confidence and our innovation will be demonstrated to an international audience. Centre for Appropriate Technology CEO, Steve Rogers.

The Anerle-aneme chair is a key part of our exhibition in Venice. It is part of the poolside experience in and around the Australian pavilion as a place to sit and listen to the stories we have collected about the pool. It is a beautiful, simple and robust design that we feel particularly proud to be bringing to Venice for people to enjoy and admire as an incredible representation of Australian design, talent and skills.
Isabelle Toland, one of the Exhibition Creative Directors.

The Australian exhibition, The Pool – Architecture, Culture and Identity in Australia, is curated by Amelia Holliday and Isabelle Toland (Aileen Sage Architects) and Michelle Tabet, and managed by the Australian Institute of Architects.

The exhibition, The Pool – Architecture, Culture and Identity in Australia, is seen as a launch pad to provide a global showcase for the product. The chair will continue production as a furniture piece in its own right. It can be purchased directly through the Centre for Appropriate Technology Ltd. (www.cat.org.au).
MEDIA RELEASE
21 April 2015

Making a splash – creative team selected for 2016 Venice Biennale

One of Australia’s great cultural symbols will form the foundation of the Australian Exhibition at the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale with the successful proposal announced at events in Sydney and Melbourne tonight.

*The Pool* by Aileen Sage and Michelle Tabet was chosen by the Australian Institute of Architects’ Venice Biennale Committee for its ‘incisive interest in the connections between landscape, culture and architecture as observed through the frame of a singular architectural and landscape typology’.

Visitors will be transported poolside through an immersive multi-sensory experience within the new Denton Corker Marshall-designed pavilion. Light, scent, sound, reflection and perspective will create a series of perceptual illusions, bringing to Venice a suggestion of a particular Australian architectural condition.

Some of Australia’s most remarkable pools – be they natural or manmade, inland or coastal, temporary or permanent – will also be profiled as part of the exhibition.

‘From pools of necessity to the pools of excess, the pool is a key architectural device, a memory and also a setting. It has the unique ability to evoke both the sacred and the profane and also aptly represents a distinctively Australian democratic and social space – a great leveller of difference,’ the Creative Directors said.

Aileen Sage is a Sydney based architectural practice founded by Isabelle Toland and Amelia Holliday. The pair teamed up with Michelle Tabet, an urban strategist heading up her own boutique consulting practice, to develop the winning concept. The Creative Directors have also assembled an extended pool of cross-disciplinary collaborators to inform, refine and complement their skills and technical knowledge including Senior Advisor, Olivia Hyde.

Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore congratulated the team on their success.

‘I am delighted that this talented team of female architects and specialists will represent Australia at the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale. I have no doubt that Isabelle, Amelia, Michelle and Olivia will deliver an impressive entry for this prestigious event.

‘Isabelle and Amelia have already made an invaluable contribution to Sydney’s public architecture through their work with Neeson Murcutt Architects on our award-winning Prince Alfred Park and Pool and we are excited to have this project showcased internationally as part of the exhibition,’ Ms Moore said.
The 2016 Biennale sees the inaugural architecture exhibition in the new Australian Pavilion, which opens in May 2015. The new pavilion will attract considerable attention for its design, and for the fact that it is the first pavilion to be built within the Giardini in the 21st century.

For more information on Australia’s participation in the 2016 Venice Biennale visit wp.architecture.com.au/venicebiennale

NOTES TO EDITORS:

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Images must be credited.

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The exhibition is supported by City of Sydney, Austral Bricks, Smeg, Café di Stasio and Architecture Media. In addition, the Institute gratefully acknowledges the support given by the Australia Council for the Arts.

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