



## **Applied Arts Pavilion Special Project Biennale Architettura 2020**

**organised thanks to the collaboration between  
La Biennale di Venezia and Victoria & Albert Museum, London  
for the fifth consecutive year**

### **British Mosques**

Sale d'Armi A, Arsenale  
23 May – 29 November 2020

La Biennale di Venezia and the V&A present *British Mosques*. Responding to the theme *How will we live together?* set by Lebanese architect Hashim Sarkis, this display marks the fifth year of the V&A's collaboration with La Biennale di Venezia and will explore contemporary multiculturalism through three adapted mosque spaces in London.

Collaborating with author and architect Shahed Saleem, the pavilion looks at the self-built and often undocumented world of adapted mosques. Three case studies will examine the Brick Lane mosque, a former Protestant chapel then Synagogue; Old Kent Road mosque housed in a former pub; and Harrow Central mosque, a purpose-built space that sits next door to the converted terraced house it used to occupy. The pavilion will be carpeted, as in a mosque, and these stories will be explored through 3D architectural reconstructions, filmed interviews and photographs.

Islam is a highly portable religion and in Britain any group can start a mosque, without appeal or approval from a higher religious authority. Most mosques have been created through the adaptation of existing buildings, which range from houses, shops, cinemas, pubs and other former places of worship. Often communities actively fundraise in the aspiration of building new mosques on these sites to better meet their community's needs.

The first mosque in Britain was created in 1889 by adapting a terraced house in Liverpool, and there are now 1,800 mosques across the country. The history of the mosque in Britain is one of two-way integration with different cultures merging and presenting new opportunities for our urban fabric to evolve, without one culture being required to be like or assimilate into the other.

Dr Christopher Turner and Dr Ella Kilgallon, Curators of the 2020 Pavilion of Applied Arts, said: 'Shahed Saleem has done a comprehensive study of the history of the British mosque and has designed several of these buildings. The V&A has worked with him to explore three different case studies that illuminate stories of immigration, identity, and community aspiration. Most mosques in Britain are grass-roots, crowd-sourced, community projects that exemplify creative reuse. These ad-hoc structures are often lost as communities fundraise for the new-build projects that replace them, which has led to a renaissance of mosque building in Britain.'

Dr Tristram Hunt, Director of the V&A said: 'Ever since the emergence of the first mosque in Britain in 1889 - created within a terraced house in Liverpool – Islam has generated an entirely new architecture for Britain. For the 17th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, the V&A presents *British Mosques*, an exploration of the creative and cultural exchange that makes contemporary Britain so dynamic. We are proud to continue our innovative relationship with La Biennale di Venezia with this display'.

**THE IMAGES** may be downloaded at the following link:

<http://ftp.labiennale.org> | Username: biennale2020 | Password: biennale2020

or alternatively from [pressimages.vam.ac.uk](http://pressimages.vam.ac.uk)

## **CONTACTS**

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## **Social networks:**

**Facebook:** La Biennale di Venezia | **Twitter:** @la\_Biennale | **Instagram:** labiennale |

**Youtube:** BiennaleChannel

**Facebook:** victoriaandalbertmuseum | **Twitter:** @V\_and\_A | **Instagram:** vamuseum |

**Pinterest:** vamuseum

## **Official hashtags:**

**#BiennaleArchitettura2020**

**#HowWillWeLiveTogether**

**#BritishMosques**

## **Notes to editors**

### **V&A's Department for Design, Architecture and Digital**

The Department for Design, Architecture and Digital promotes the study of contemporary design and architecture and its impact on society. It also stimulates new modes of collection, curation and public engagement. The department is responsible for the V&A's Rapid Response Gallery, which displays items collected as evidence of social, political and economic change, forming a permanent legacy of objects that represent the world we live in today. As the home of the national collection of architecture, the V&A holds monumental plastercasts, largescale architectural fragments and entire historic rooms as well as models, drawings and sketchbooks by major British and international architects.

### **V&A**

The V&A is the world's leading museum of art, design and performance with collections unrivalled in their scope and diversity. It was established to make works of art available to all and to inspire designers and manufacturers. Today, the V&A's collections, which span over 5,000 years of human creativity in virtually every medium and from many parts of the world, continue to intrigue, inspire and inform. [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)

### **La Biennale di Venezia**

La Biennale di Venezia was founded in 1895 and is now one of the most famous and prestigious cultural organizations in the world. Paolo Baratta has been its President since 2008 and before that from 1998 to 2001. La Biennale, who stands at the forefront of research and promotion of new contemporary art trends, organizes exhibitions and research in all its specific departments: Arts (1895), Architecture (1980), Cinema (1932), Dance (1999), Music (1930), and Theatre (1934). Its history is documented at the Historical Archives of Contemporary Arts (ASAC) that has been completely renovated in recent years. The International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia has been recognized as the world leader in contemporary art exhibitions and has also been recognised as the best in the world.

### **Volkswagen Group**

Comprising twelve brands, the Volkswagen Group is one of the world's largest producers of cars, trucks, buses and other systems for the mobility sector. The Group is fully committed to its corporate social responsibility, which includes substantial support for forward-looking initiatives within the field of culture and the arts, two fundamental elements of a dynamic society. Volkswagen strives to enable as many people as possible to interact with culture and thus inspire their creativity. Working together with partners, Volkswagen is oriented towards encouraging a cross-generational debate with the arts and culture, which encompasses new technological potential and changing social needs.

This exhibition is supported by **Volkswagen Group**