



Applied Arts Pavilion Special Project Biennale Architettura 2021

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

Three British Mosques

Sale d'Armi A, Arsenale
22 May – 21 November 2021

La Biennale di Venezia and the V&A present *Three 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 cultural dialogue with different histories merging and presenting new opportunities for our urban fabric to evolve. Designed and in many cases built by its users, the mosque has given Britain an entirely new form of architecture.

Dr Christopher Turner and Dr Ella Kilgallon, Curators of the 2021 Pavilion of Applied Arts, said: 'Shahed Saleem has carried out a comprehensive study of the history of the British mosque and has also designed several. 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. As new-build mosques replace these ad-hoc structures, this form of community-led design is being lost. The V&A's pavilion is an attempt to record and celebrate this stage of mosque-making 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 *Three 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 Applied Arts Pavilion Special Project has been made possible thanks to lead support from Volkswagen Group and donors to the Venice Architecture Biennale Fund in memory of Dr Martin Roth

THE IMAGES may be downloaded at the following link:

<http://ftp.labiennale.org> | Username: biennale2021 | Password: biennale2021

or alternatively from pressimages.vam.ac.uk

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Official hashtags:

#BiennaleArchitettura2021 #HowWillWeLiveTogether #BritishMosques

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

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. Chaired by Roberto Cicutto, La Biennale, stands at the forefront of research and promotion of new contemporary art trends, organizing 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.

Lead Support from 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.