



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### ***What if...?/Scotland***

**Shared hopes, dreams and wishes for the future of the places where we live**

**Scotland + Venice commission by 7N Architects and Architecture & Design Scotland to debut at V&A Dundee**

**Exhibition dates: Sat 22 May – Sun 21 Nov 2021**  
**Free museum entry. Book now: [www.vam.ac.uk/dundee](http://www.vam.ac.uk/dundee)**

**Media Preview date: 21 May 2021**

The [Scotland + Venice](#) partnership is delighted to announce that the exhibition ***What if...?/Scotland***, designed to be staged in Venice as part of the 17th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, will now open at [V&A Dundee](#) on Saturday 22 May and run until Sunday 21 November 2021.

Premiering in Scotland for the first time due to the pandemic but still enabling a wide audience to engage with *What if...? / Scotland*, the work will be shown 'at home' this year rather than in Venice, Italy. It will also be available online for international audiences and those unable to visit Dundee this year.

Produced by award winning Edinburgh based architecture and design practice [7N Architects](#) (7N) in partnership with [Architecture & Design Scotland](#), *What if...? / Scotland* responds to the Biennale's theme [How will we live together?](#), seeking to re-engage the civic role of design professionals by asking communities from across Scotland to share their hopes and dreams for the future of the places they call home.

At the start of 2020 and prior to the first nationwide lockdown, 7N paired 25 people from 5 places: **Wester Hailes** in Edinburgh, **Paisley** in Renfrewshire, **Annan** in Dumfries and Galloway, **Elgin** in Morayshire, and **Lerwick** in Shetland – with 25 designers, architects, and artists – to share their hopes, dreams or wishes for the future of the place where they live.

The architects and designers then used these wishes to begin exploring ideas in response to the community challenges being faced presented in the exhibitions. Visitors to the exhibition at V&A Dundee can add their own wish to a growing "Cloud of Dreams" setting out their hopes and dreams for their places.

This collaborative process has also been captured in a series of short films forming the narrative focus of the exhibition. The stories of each place, as told by its citizens and set within the rich and varied landscapes of rural and urban Scotland, are presented in an immersive environment designed for reflection and inspiration. These will be available online for audiences to engage with as well as on exhibition at V & A Dundee.

The exhibition at V&A Dundee will also engage with museum visitors about what they want the city of Dundee to look and feel like in the future, working together with designers, architects, and citizens throughout the duration of the show.

**Project lead, Ewan Anderson of 7N Architects** said: "If the past year has shown us anything, it is the importance of community and the Biennale Architettura 2021's theme '*How will we live together?*' is more salient than ever.

"With *What if...?/Scotland*, we really wanted to encourage collaborative thinking between designers and communities to demonstrate how community-led, grassroots engagement can stimulate big ideas from conversations about people's wishes for the future of their places - how will we live together? what if...? what does the future of your place look like? what if you could change it?

"What if...? is an open question that can and has stimulated fantastic and energetic discussion, debate and creative thinking within the communities we have worked together with across Scotland; and pointed towards ways in which we can make meaningful and positive change.

"In the face of a changing and uncertain climate, it's vital that conversation and participation and ambitious ideas are prioritised when we design our collective future."

**Jim MacDonald, Chief Executive of Architecture and Design**

**Scotland** said: "Everyone is influenced and affected by the decisions involving the design of our places - good design that involves collaboration can empower communities and supports wellbeing.

"7N has a long history of working collaboratively with communities to get the best outcomes for the people who will live and work there, and they have used this experience to create this project. The themes, wishes and dreams explored in *What if...?/Scotland* demonstrate the creativity that comes from communities working with architects and designers to create positive change."

On behalf of the **Scotland + Venice partnership, Chair, Amanda**

**Catto** commented: "Over the last year we have all had to adjust to living differently and have come to realise what we value most dearly about the spaces and places that surround us.

"*What if...?/Scotland* explores the hopes and dreams of five communities across Scotland as they imagine the future of the place that they call home. While we can't stage the exhibition in Venice due to Covid-19, we're delighted that our

partnership with V&A Dundee will give us the opportunity to welcome visitors to the city and to reach out to UK and international audiences online.”

**Leonie Bell, Director, V&A Dundee** said: “We are delighted to be working in partnership with Scotland + Venice to host *What if...?/Scotland* at V&A Dundee. *What if...?/Scotland* tells a story of hope, it celebrates the richness of places across Scotland and demonstrates the value of bringing people and architects together to generate ideas about how design can support aspiration and ambition.

“*What if...?/Scotland* is more than an exhibition, it offers a space to reflect and will spark local and international conversations about what matters, and what if architects and designers, with citizens and residents, brought their expertise together to transform and reimagine the future.

“As V&A Dundee develops its new role as Scotland’s centre for design we will be increasingly working in partnership with individuals and organisations across Scotland, and I am delighted that we are able to work with the Scotland + Venice Partnership to host the exhibition *What if...?/Scotland* in Dundee.”

**Culture Secretary Fiona Hyslop** said: “I’m delighted that the *What if...?/Scotland* exhibition will now be presented at the V&A Dundee.

“The ideas in the exhibition express the hopes and dreams for the future from five diverse communities from across the country. The project is also relevant to Scotland’s response to Covid-19 which sees localism and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods as major components of our green recovery and features strongly in our Programme for Government published in September 2020.

“V&A Dundee and its new role as Scotland’s centre for design is well placed to work with the Scotland + Venice partners to ensure that the exhibition and its supporting programme is presented in an inspiring and meaningful way to engage local, Scotland wide and international audiences and networks.”

All visitors now need to book free tickets to enter V&A Dundee, as part of the essential steps to keep visitors safe and to ensure physical distancing. Those free tickets can be booked at [www.vam.ac.uk/dundee](http://www.vam.ac.uk/dundee)

Ends

#### **Notes to Editors:**

**1. [Scotland + Venice](#)** provides architects and artists based in Scotland with a valuable platform to showcase their work on the international stage at the Venice Biennale and is a partnership between Creative Scotland, British Council Scotland, National Galleries of Scotland, Architecture and Design Scotland and the Scottish Government.

#### **Keep up to date:**

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[www.scotlandandvenice.com](http://www.scotlandandvenice.com)

**2. 7N Architects** is an Edinburgh based design practice specialising in generating innovative ideas that make better places through transformational change. The practice is focused on unlocking the full potential of places, spaces and buildings by bringing together architecture, urban design, landscape and master-planning in an integrated approach to placemaking.

The practice's approach is embodied in their award winning projects, ranging from city strategies to buildings and public spaces, including the Glasgow City Centre Strategy and Avenues concept, the University of Glasgow Campus, the Fountainbridge and Western Harbour masterplans in Edinburgh, the Knab project in Lerwick, the Fraser Avenue regeneration in Inverkeithing, the Michelin Innovation Parc in Dundee, and the Town Centre Toolkit and community engagement Charrettes throughout Scotland for the Scottish Government.

The origin of the *What If?* initiative is a self-initiated study by 7N on the practice's home city of Edinburgh. This was a collection of ideas and propositions aimed at questioning, stimulating and inspiring positive change within the city to stimulate discussion, debate and expansive thinking on how it can be a better place for all of its citizens.

**3.** As Scotland's design museum, **V&A Dundee** tells a global story, investigating the international importance of design alongside presenting Scotland's outstanding design achievements.

V&A Dundee features world-class exhibitions alongside the permanent Scottish Design Galleries, and a changing programme of commissions, events and activities.

The new museum has been delivered by Design Dundee Ltd, founded by the Victoria and Albert Museum – the world's leading museum of art, design and performance – Dundee City Council, the University of Dundee, Abertay University and Scottish Enterprise.

From 1 May 2021 V&A Dundee is open 10.00 to 17.00, Thursday to Monday.

[www.vam.ac.uk/dundee](http://www.vam.ac.uk/dundee)

@VADundee

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