

# RA Royal Academy of Arts

In partnership with the Architects' Journal

Open Call

## Reimagining Mayfair: London's next cultural quarter?

### Introduction

The Royal Academy of Arts (RA) and the *Architects' Journal* (AJ) are launching an open call for multidisciplinary teams to present new ideas for the area of Mayfair to the north of the RA's Burlington Gardens building. In recent years the RA has developed detailed plans to restore and reconceive the interior spaces of its Burlington Gardens building, which is currently subject of a major, HLF-supported building project, beginning on-site in mid-2015. With this open call, the RA wishes to extend the focus beyond its walls and foster new ideas for the future of the surrounding area.

### The Brief

We are looking for bold new ideas for reimagining the area of Mayfair directly to the north of the RA's Burlington Gardens building. The area in focus is bounded by and includes Old Bond Street to the west, Clifford Street to the north, Savile Row to the east and Burlington Gardens to the south.

Laid out by Lord Burlington in the 1720s and 1730s, this area has had an enduring association with tailoring, private art galleries and, latterly, luxury shopping. In recent years, it has benefited from the rejuvenation of Regent Street and will be further affected by the impending arrival of the new Crossrail station at Bond Street. Meanwhile, the RA is renovating its Burlington Gardens building with new galleries, learning studio and the reinstatement of a lecture theatre. A 'link' bridge will, for the first time, allow public access across the whole RA site. The subsequent expansion of the RA's contemporary programmes will give the institution a new public face fronting the area to its immediate north.

Amid these present and future transformations, how might this area of Mayfair retain and develop a specific cultural identity and become London's next cultural quarter? In what ways can cultural activity act as a counterpoint to the area's strong commercial facets and help create a richer social mix? Can culture and commerce co-exist in this part of London in a way that is mutually beneficial?

We invite teams both to rethink the physical fabric of the public realm (including the Burlington Gardens 'forecourt', pedestrian and traffic flow) and offer ideas for innovative cultural and/or commercial programmes (e.g. markets, festivals, performances), which might happen at different times of day or days of the week. We would like teams take account of the area's rich history while also look to its future.

## The Process

We seek expressions of interest from multidisciplinary teams that include architects as well as non-architect designers, such as artists. Teams should consist of no more than five people, with a balance between different disciplines preferable.

We ask teams to submit portfolios of their past work along with a one-page covering letter that explains why they are interested in this initiative and offering a tentative outline of their approach.

Four teams will be selected as a result of this open call. They will then receive a detailed brief and be invited to work up ideas to be presented at a public event on Friday, 19 September 2014 in front of an expert panel of critics. The resulting ideas will be presented in a pop-up exhibition at the RA as part of Open House London (20 and 21 September).

The RA is seeking bold and fresh thinking rather than completely resolved ideas. Please note that this project is intended as a test-bed for new ideas and is not a competition or commission.

## Timeline

30 June	Deadline for submissions
w/c 7 July	Shortlisted teams informed and detailed brief circulated
August	Interim check-in with RA and AJ
19 September	Final presentation of ideas at public event
20–21 September	Work presented at the RA over Open House London

## Honoraria

The four selected teams will each receive an honorarium of £750, plus a fixed, one-off fee of £250 to assist with production costs for the pop-up exhibition.

## Submission Details

Should you wish to take part in the design workshop, please send a PDF of no more than ten pages with the below information:

- One-page covering letter explaining why you are interested in this initiative and offering a tentative outline of your approach
- Short biographies of team members – please indicate the lead architecture practice if applicable
- Examples of past work as deemed relevant. We also welcome submissions from students

Please send your submission to [architecture@royalacademy.org.uk](mailto:architecture@royalacademy.org.uk) by 6pm BST on 30 June 2014

## Questions

Please address any questions to [architecture@royalacademy.org.uk](mailto:architecture@royalacademy.org.uk)