



Candidates for the Director of the Architectural Association School of Architecture 2018

Presentations to the School Community

CONTENTS

Introduction	04
Candidates' Statements and Response to Set Questions	
Pippo Ciorra	06
Eva Franch i Gilabert	14
Robert Mull	22

Introduction

The Search Committee is delighted to present the shortlist for the position of AA Director.

There were 73 responses to the call for applications and an initial longlist of 26 candidates, of which 15 were selected for a first round of interviews. In the first round, there were candidates from Australia, North and South America, Europe, Asia and Africa. There were eight candidates in the second round; four men and four women.

At every stage of the process all candidates were assessed on their ability to meet the criteria set out in the job and role descriptions approved by the School Community.

The shortlisted candidates (in alphabetical order) are:

Pippo Ciorra: Senior Curator of MAXXI Architettura in Rome; an architect, critic and professor.

Eva Franch i Gilabert: Chief Curator and Executive Director of Storefront for Art and Architecture in New York; an architect, curator and educator.

Robert Mull: Head of Architecture and Design at the University of Brighton; an architect, educator, urbanist and activist.

All three candidates will address the AA School Community in a presentation and Q & A in the week commencing 19 February. This will be followed by an election where all current students, year-out students, academic and administrative staff, and members of Council will vote on their preferred candidate.

The following constituent members of the School Community are eligible to vote in the election of an AA Director:

All full-time registered students of the AA School

This classification includes students of the AA School undertaking mandatory practical training at Post-Part 1 level (normally between the 3rd and 4th year of full-time study in the AA Undergraduate School).

All members of staff (academic and administrative) in the employ of the AA on a contract of employment

This classification includes academic personnel engaged on a consultancy basis for a minimum of three continuous academic years;

This classification includes administrative personnel engaged on a casual contract basis in excess of one calendar year.

All serving members of Council

The AA is a participatory democracy. The Search Committee was composed of eight elected members from the AA School Community and three members appointed by the AA Council. The response to the Call for Applications was extremely positive and the Search Committee would like to extend our thanks to all applicants and the AA School Community for their support during the search process.

For further information please visit: search.aaschool.ac.uk

For further inquiries, please contact the AA Search Committee:
searchcommittee@aaschool.ac.uk



PIPPO CIORRA

Pippo Ciorra is an architect, critic and professor, who has served as a member of the editorial board of *Casabella* from 1996 to 2012. He collaborates with journals, reviews and national press and is the author of many essays and publications.

Since 2017, Pippo is founder and chief editor of the scholarly publication *Villard* journal published by Quodlibet and supported by the PhD school of IUAV. In 2011 he published an overview of the conditions of architecture in Italy, *Senza architettura, le ragioni per una crisi* (Laterza) and has published monographic studies on Ludovico Quaroni (Electa, 1989), Peter Eisenman (Electa, 1993), and then essays on museums, city, photography and contemporary Italian architecture.

Pippo teaches design and theory at SAAD (University of Camerino) and is the director of the international PhD program 'Villard d'Honnecourt' (IUAV). He has been visiting professor at the school of architecture of IUAV, Ohio State University and Cornell University. He is also a member of CICA (International Committee of Architectural Critics), advisor for the award 'Gold Medal of the Italian architecture' and former advisor for the Mies van der Rohe prize for architecture. He has also chaired or participated in juries for national and international competitions in the field of architecture, art and design.

After initially participating in the 1982 Biennale of Architecture, he was curator for the Corderie in the 5th Biennale di Architettura di Venezia and involved as curator in many other editions. In 2016, he was part of the jury for the XV Architecture Biennale in Venice. He has curated and designed exhibitions in Italy and abroad. Since 2009, he has been Senior Curator of MAXXI Architettura in Rome. Among his major exhibitions on contemporary architecture, *Re-cycle, Energy, Erasmus Effect, Food*.

In 2016 he co-curated the exhibition *The Japanese House: Architecture and Life After 1945*, which was exhibited at MAXXI, The Barbican in London and the MOMAT museum in Tokyo. *Piccole Utopie* is a traveling show on ten Italian architects. He curates the Italian branch of YAP, the MoMA PS1 international programme for young architects and the annual festival *Demanio Marittimo km.278*, a project that brings together 70/80 guests and large attendance every year on an Adriatic beach for a night-long marathon in a space designed by students.

Vision Statement

Premise

We are living in a time when architecture as a social discipline and the idea of the architect itself as an active agent of society are both facing threats and undergoing radical changes. The acceleration of hyper-capitalism on one hand and the expansion of the so-called culture industry on the other – together with survival instinct – push architecture graduates towards the very opposite roles of neutral agents of market processes or of mere theoretical / curatorial / artistic / technological producers. The space in between – once open to culturally conscious and socially sensitive professionals – is narrowing and becoming less and less accessible for young graduates. In many countries it is now a space mostly reserved for a privileged few, legitimised by XXL scale professionalism or some kind of surviving star system. This also affects the AA in many ways. I will recall only two of the many reasons. The first is the fact that the AA is the perfect inhabitant of that space in between. It is used to training professionals who are very successful in the market but at the same time are able to preserve the subversive, public role of architecture. The second is that while schools are put under extreme pressure by this polarisation, and are forced to question their historical position as guardians of that ‘third part’ role, the AA is in a phase of rethinking and redefinition, and therefore is poised to find the best way to react to such challenges.

Tasks

Within this frame the next director has three main tasks for this mandate: first, to consolidate the school’s financial and administrative status as a full scale educational institution; second, to confirm and expand its authority and appeal in the global scene by reshaping the features that produce such appeal and authority; and third, to review and adjust its training, research and especially the communication bodies in order to achieve the aforementioned tasks.

Strategies:

- Besides completing the necessary process related to accreditation and degree awarding, the school should engage in an effort to redefine the geography of its funding sources, opening itself up to more private funders, to grant application processes in the UK, within and around the EU and to those run by international agencies. The school has great assets in terms of urban architecture knowledge, technology, sensibility to landscape value and fabrication. To be awarded with funds, the most important criteria is to be able to create links between the research production of the school and the research tasks of our time.
- The school should engage in reviewing the contents and concepts that define its identity.

Today the AA's identity is still benefiting from an idea of experimentation strongly rooted in the search for 'originality'. It is very likely that originality will not be the central issue for the XXI Century idea of experimentation. Possibly it will have to do with a more intense attitude to technology, philosophy, commons, environment, art, politics and policies, and immateriality. Most of these issues are already strongly present in the life of the school. An effort has to be made to expand them and to set a new paradigm, to understand how they nourish an idea of 'progressive' architecture.

- There is also a third aspect a new director will have to focus on: a number of symbolic actions which have to support the school's profile and reputation. They have to do with the cultural attitude of the school, the place the AA wants to occupy in the search for a future for architecture, and the tools it wants to develop to practice such a search and share it with the global scene.

More practically I would suggest:

1. **to start a new habit**, that is an open and public meeting taking place at the end of the Spring semester, where the school invites a number of leading thinkers from various disciplines to meet the AA community and contribute in setting tasks – teaching and research – for the following year. Without touching the autonomy of units and teachers, this would help to fuel dialogue and identify unifying elements in the school's direction.
2. **to redesign the communication of the school's production and achievements**. That is to focus on the production of exhibitions and other media that can circulate the specificity and quality of the school locally and globally.
3. **to work for the development of a more established research department**, which can on the one hand contribute to the search for partners and collaborations and on the other feed the 'communication' actions in the field of publishing, exhibiting and conference organisation.

What in your mind makes the AA unique and what core elements of the School do you see as inherent and critical for the AA to retain?

In my opinion, what makes the AA unique is its vocation to form graduates able to preserve a strongly radical, theory-oriented approach and at the same time possessing the tools required to effectively compete in an increasingly selective global professional market. The core elements that allowed the School to retain such a 'paradoxical' feature consistently all along its recent history are: the plurality of approaches offered by the teaching staff and visiting critics; the restless curiosity about the most innovative contributions to architecture thinking and design approaches; its 'natural' attitude to be a 'citizen of the world' by mixing cultures and legacies; and the mosaic of facilities and activities that complete the teaching core commitment of the school, such as exhibitions, publishing, conferences and labs with state-of-the-art equipment. The variety of outcomes and contributions is clearly a product of the unit system, which must be maintained and made even more robust. The keen interest in architectural innovation is nurtured by the school's lively and accurate selection of visiting critics and young tutors. Already very well managed in the recent history of the school, this activity could be made even more open and oriented towards emerging research avenues. The openness of the school is certified by the diversity and variety in the body of students and staff. However, since the world makes this challenge increasingly difficult to face – Brexit being only one example – the AA should continue developing strategies to attract international students (Europeans included). It should also guarantee access to outstanding students who cannot easily afford expensive tuition fees. Programmes – such as exhibitions, lectures, publishing – completing what the school can offer beyond its pedagogical commitment have a strong tradition at the AA, but are also a delicate element of its life. They have to be relaunched, strengthened and supported as another essential 'testimonial' of the AA in the world.

The AA consists of a variety of different models and methods of teaching architecture. From the open studios of First Year and the unit system of the Intermediate and Diploma Schools, to a team-based approach in the Graduate School and individual research at the PhD level, what is your attitude towards this plurality? And what changes do you intend to implement, if any, to the current pedagogical approach?

As I wrote above, I think that the AA's plurality is to be preserved for the sake of the school. In particular, I am convinced that both the unit system and the variety of the four levels of education are strong assets. I do not think the first phase of a new directorship should introduce significant changes to the curriculum. However, improvements could be made in the Graduate school and in the PhD programme. Referring to the latter, efforts could be devoted to increase its visibility to the academic community and to better integrate it within global research platforms. However, I do not think that the next step to be taken is to modify the format of the curriculum. I would rather create a small number of additional programmes aiming at corroborating the existing pedagogical layout. My first proposal is to set up an annual event hosting an open discussion on the tasks of the school. Experts from other disciplines would be invited, tutors would have the chance to make their approaches visible, to confront, and to discuss tasks. This event would help both the school's inner community and the larger community of architects to understand the work of the AA. My second proposal is to incentivise all the components of the school's community to work together to create a more organised research framework. If reputation is obviously the currency the AA cannot live without, research is another crucial asset that a school has to develop. Only through research can the school find its place in the world of ideas and education, get prepared to compete for grants and alliances, and enter important networks. The third 'side' proposal is to work on school communication through exhibitions and publications. I think we can only learn from the quality of the publications produced by the school in the last forty years. The Director should work to secure a similarly successful future to this programme. The same applies to the exhibitions' programme, which could be improved to regain momentum and communication power.

The AA is known to be participatory democracy. How do you plan to initiate and engage with the School Community in order to maintain an open and transparent dialogue with all constituencies including academic and administrative staff, council and the student body?

I was aware of the AA's participatory democracy and I am getting more familiar with it now. Such an organisation requires a deep engagement on the part of both the management and the Director. I think a Director has three ways of developing an 'open and transparent' dialogue with the whole body of the school. The more obvious is the appropriate use of the institutionalised spaces of governance – such as meetings, written documents and the highest possible degree of transparency. However, this is often not enough and should be carried over in two additional ways. The first one is related to the proposal I mentioned above of an annual meeting where all the constituencies and members of the school would have the chance to express their views. Such a format may burgeon into smaller and more 'local' meetings, where the Director would have the chance to develop an informal and productive exchange with staff. What I have in mind are the informal brainstorming meetings, which usually take place in many museums to fuel problem-solving and to stimulate a debate among different departments. Another way for the Director to remain close to the School Community is to participate in its day-to-day life, by teaching some classes, having direct exchanges with students, and eventually contributing to some research. The success of this strategy would depend very much on the specific personality of the Director and her/his attitude to time management, but I consider it as a great opportunity.

How do you feel that your previous professional experience has prepared you for the role of AA Director and how would these positively affect the AA?

I built my career moving back and forth between teaching and writing, from design to organisational duties, from curating to setting up educational and research programmes. In all these roles my final aim has always been to have some – however small – impact on the architectural scene. The media I used (from texts to design studios, from theory classes to exhibitions) changed but the will and consciousness of belonging to the academic community was always present. In the 1970s (as a student) and in the 1980s, I had the chance to spend nearly 100% of my time in schools (IUAV, Ohio State, Camerino). At that time universities were the leading engine of innovation, research, a sense of the future and urban consciousness. Therefore I had the opportunity to learn from and work with very diverse students and academic communities. In the following decade I sensed that museums and cultural institutions were moving towards the centre of the battlefield. I was attracted to them. I first committed to exhibition design and then to curating. Eventually when I was appointed Senior Curator of MAXXI Architettura, I put aside my professional activity. I think it is now time to bring back cultural power to schools. All along I have been founding (and funding) programmes and leading co-operative groups. In 1999, I co-founded a 'clandestine' travelling school ('Villard'), which still exists. In 2004, I launched the International PhD programme in Venice (with ETSAM, TU Delft, Paris Belleville), funded by the EU. At MAXXI I co-manage a team of people from different backgrounds producing 12-14 exhibitions per year with a very limited budget. Recently, I became the director of an international research programme on co-existence and living space funded by the German Government and called 'Housing the Human'. My whole career has developed in fields similar to those of the AA. Therefore I strongly believe the school would benefit from my experience of looking at problems from different points of view: both conceptual and the pragmatic, as an institutional figure and as an academic, as an activist and an analyst.



EVA FRANCH i GILABERT

Eva Franch is an architect, curator, educator and lecturer of experimental forms of art and architectural practice, who specialises in the making of alternative architecture histories and futures.

Since 2010, Franch is the Chief Curator and Executive Director of Storefront for Art and Architecture in New York. In 2014, Franch, with the project *OfficeUS*, an experimental office for the production of history, ideas and work, was selected by the US State Department to represent the US at the XIV Venice Architecture Biennale. Franch is currently professor at The Cooper Union School of Architecture.

Franch has taught at Columbia University GSAPP, the IUAV University of Venice, SUNY Buffalo, and Rice University SOA. In 2004, she founded her solo practice OAAA (Office of Architectural Affairs). She has received numerous awards, and her work has been exhibited internationally including FAD Barcelona, the Venice Architecture Biennale, and the Shenzhen Architecture Biennale, among others. She has curated national and international projects including *OUT*, the 2014 Arquia Proxima biennial competition and *Borders*, the 2011 Think Space concept competition programme.

At Storefront, some of her recent projects include *Architecture Conflicts*, *Letters to the Mayor*, *World Wide Storefront*, the *Competition of Competitions*, *Storefront TV*, the *Storefront International Series*, and the publication series *Manifesto*. Exhibitions include *Sharing Models; Measure; POP: Protocols, Obsessions, Positions; Aesthetics-Anesthetics; Past Futures, Present, Futures; No Shame: Storefront for Sale; and Beings*. Her latest initiative, the New York Architecture Book Fair, will be presented in 2018.

Franch has lectured internationally on art, architecture and the importance of alternative practices in the construction and understanding of public life at more than fifty educational and cultural institutions around the globe. Franch has been a member of international juries and nominating and advisory boards including the Hong Kong Design Trust, Ideas City, +Pool and the YAP PS1-MoMA in New York. Franch's work has appeared in the form of articles or interviews in journals, newspapers and publications worldwide. Recent publications by Franch include *Agenda* (2014), *Atlas* (2015) and *Manual* (2017) published by Lars Muller as part of *OfficeUS*. Upcoming publications include *The Book of Architecture Books* and *Letters to the Mayor*.

Vision Statement

More than a school, throughout its history the Architectural Association has been the referent – when not the origin – for the production of relevant forms of inquiry, discourse and radical practice in architecture schools, cultural institutions and architecture firms worldwide.

Over the last decade and as a result of new forms of communication, omnipresent market forces and increased global mobility, cultural and educational institutions around the globe have undergone a process of homogenisation. Identities have become brands, citizens have become consumers, and the sense of historical responsibility and radical playfulness within educational and cultural institutions has languished. Architects and architecture institutions have either become too satisfied with commonplace formulations such as sustainability, participation and bottom-up practices, or too hermetic with self-proclaimed avant-gardism and meta-discursive narrative with an aesthetic devoid of any social or political currency. However, contemporary events within our global context have to be felt as undeniably urgent and historical. The challenges that we all face today as global citizens and as architects are growing in scale and complexity. We are in more need of new vectors of desire and action than ever. Today, the Architectural Association has the opportunity, and also the responsibility, to articulate what architecture can contribute to the world we live in, and to redefine what the education of an architect should be and can be.

I believe that architecture is the discipline with the privilege and duty to articulate the different desires and realities of society in a specific moment in time. Architecture has the ability to bring together the social, the economic, the political and the technological in a project of collective aspiration. But more importantly, architecture is the discipline that understands society as a whole, being able to advocate for those who are unable to sit down at the decision-making table. Architecture sits for all.

However, many within our field will affirm that architecture has been in crisis. That we are the last ones at the decision-making tables. That we are the last ones to inspire and to move people. That we are the last ones to engage with the most pressing issues affecting the planet today. That we are the last ones at almost everything, and mostly because, historically speaking, architecture has been slow, very slow, and that we live in a time that works in seconds, in instant gratifications, in tweets.

Architecture might be in crisis; architecture education might be in crisis, cultural institutions might be in crisis. Yet it is in moments of crisis that opportunities for redefinition emerge. I

believe the AA is ready to contribute back to a world that needs references about the social, political, technological and material agency that architects are able to produce within the built environment.

What is architecturally urgent today? How do we move towards our future? By producing historiographies capable of giving disciplinary foundations to historically disempowered narratives. By enabling innovative forms of research and design that engage with an increasingly complex world with ever-changing conflicts. By testing labour structures and forms of practice within a global and digital context. By igniting forms of activism, radical engagement and political agency within our field. By pioneering processes of design and material production in relation to rapidly evolving digital design disciplines. And by envisioning transversal platforms capable of enabling new collectivities, new forms of assembly and knowledge transfer.

Over the last decade, together with a team of collaborators, critics, and agents, I have produced an exuberance of cultural and pedagogical experiments. Going beyond geographical, ideological and disciplinary boundaries, I have tested ideas, formats and methods beyond comfortable arenas and lineages associated to specific individuals, agendas or aesthetics. With the associated successes and failures of experiments, strategic and incisive forms of knowledge have been produced. Focusing on architecture's power and agency to unveil power structures and to affect our built environment, my work as an architect and educator is to make evident the important role that architecture plays within culture, knowledge production and the development of our societies.

I believe in schools and cultural institutions that are anti-institutional even when being one, that act as cultural forums and civic platforms, and that believe in the importance of constantly redefining how we want to live together. Beyond regulating predefined domains of expertise, the AA has been a space for speculation, friction and resistance. With a highly calibrated relationship between rigour and madness, the AA has been a hotbed for architectural experimentation, and should continue to be.

The challenges facing the future of the AA are complex, and significant. The AA community must come together and build a shared vision to take the AA into its future. While these words may offer glimpses of a possible horizon, they must be read as steps towards creating a space of conversation, discussion and convergence.

What in your mind makes the AA unique and what core elements of the School do you see as inherent and critical for the AA to retain?

There are very few organisations in the world that act as cultural forums and that have the mission to push the boundaries and the status quo of architecture. The AA is one of them.

A democratic imperative, a spirit of independence and experimentation, and a will to excellence, are the three most valuable assets that the school carries. While one might be able to point to the bar, the bookstore, the unit system, the international body of students, the restaurant or the domestic scale of the school's home as some of its most distinctive and significant elements, the essence of the AA is an idea: an idea that defines democracy as a relentless process; independence as an indefatigable journey in the quest for alternatives; and excellence as a project to be constantly redefined, constructed and produced. The fact that the students, the members, the faculty, the council and the staff have been able to keep this idea alive is something to be celebrated and recognised.

Throughout its history the AA has contributed to the architectural collective imaginary through the work of its students, faculty, staff and directors, but also through seminal exhibitions, publications and public programmes. Empowering students and faculty to produce research and work that resonates and redefines the most pressing challenges within our society; producing exhibitions and works of radical spatial practice able to engage with architecture's history, and most importantly, its future; and enabling critical debates and mechanisms to communicate and challenge oneself and the entire architecture community, are all agendas embedded within the ethos of the school that should be retained.

The AA is a human edifice that, in conjunction with its material and spatial network – from its body of publications to the city of London, to Hooke Park, to each location of the Visiting School, to Bedford Square – has produced memorable forums for critical discussion and radical engagement. The AA possesses an unparalleled combination of rigour and madness, one that should be nourished and cultivated in order to continue to defy the limits of the possible – and the impossible – and to position the school at the forefront of architectural debates and contemporary culture.

The AA consists of a variety of different models and methods of teaching architecture. From the open studios of First Year and the unit system of the Intermediate and Diploma Schools, to a team-based approach in the Graduate School and individual research at the PhD level, what is your attitude towards this plurality? And what changes do you intend to implement, if any, to the current pedagogical approach?

What do we stand for? How does each studio, unit and research project contribute to a larger discussion within our field and society at large? This is one of the most urgent tasks within the pedagogical context at the AA and within the architecture field.

Today, it is of seminal urgency to understand the underlying philosophical and ethical agendas, the technological developments and implications, and the local and global consequences of the work developed within any pedagogical experiment. To articulate each obsession into a position within the cultural, social and political contexts implies an effort of synthesis and critical reflection.

The school's multiple pedagogical methods have been designed for and tailored to different stages of learning and knowledge production. The school's multiplicity has allowed for different research agendas to be developed independently or in parallel to the ongoing conversations produced within the public programme of exhibitions, symposiums and publications. While the existing pedagogical approach is a great basis and foundation for the education of an architect – which the ongoing positive reports from the TDAP process confirm – there is a need to produce transversal forms of engagement that bring together the different forms of expertise, research niches and intellectual conversations occurring within the school, throughout the expanded AA community, and among broader cultural contexts.

The AA, with its intellectual wealth and legacy of radical debates, is strategically situated to produce pedagogical mechanisms to challenge ideas and projects while simultaneously providing a space of protection and intellectual development. To position the AA as a leader in the production of relevant agendas and debates might start by simply producing a global digital archive platform for research topics that conglomerates the investigations of architects, PhD candidates, students and researchers worldwide from inside and outside the AA Community.

It is absolutely crucial to continue to consolidate the current pedagogical structure and obtain the necessary tools – TDAP – to continue making the staff and the student body the most diverse and incisive community of architects as is possible. Yet to identify relevant conflicts and agendas, to produce research clusters and platforms, to enable productive disagreements and forums, to laugh, and to share, are immediate agendas on the horizon.

The AA is known to be participatory democracy. How do you plan to initiate and engage with the School Community in order to maintain an open and transparent dialogue with all constituencies including academic and administrative staff, council and the student body?

To envision new forms of governance has been at the forefront of contemporary social and political movements worldwide. Civic forums, and the aesthetics of participation have been used, abused and too often fail to produce genuine public debate and engagement. Management teams, with the rigidity embedded within administrative structures, often fail to convey the full spectrum of issues involving the communities that they represent. Parties and informal gatherings are filled with visceral opinions, yet often followed by gaps in memory. However, all these models of community engagement fulfil highly important roles within the development, articulation, transmission and execution of ideas within a community. I am passionate about them all.

Every single member of the AA Community is a creative force behind the making of the organisation. In the process of obtaining TDAP, the AA has produced a robust structure of governance, accountability and communication between the different constituencies of the AA Community. Understanding the roles and the fiduciary responsibilities of each community member is paramount to the success of shared forms of governance.

Either as individuals, collectives or as representatives of the Student Forum, the Academic Board, the Council, the SMT, the UMC, the GMC, the Visiting School, the Teaching Committee, the PhD Committee or any ad-hoc committee needed to address the important issues driving the life of the AA Community, every single member should rest assured of my total commitment to ignite a productive forum for debate, discussion and action, where problems, solutions and desires can be articulated easily and effectively.

Student evaluations, surveys, peer reviews, staff and academic reviews and guidance, are all essential parts of the personal and intellectual growth of the school community and should be implemented as part of the creative processes of the school's human edifice and community building.

Operational transparency – not literal and not phenomenal – is one of the most important agendas of our time and I am fully committed to encouraging honest and direct conversation, participatory processes, and student and staff activism.

How do you feel that your previous professional experience has prepared you for the role of AA Director and how would these positively affect the AA?

Since 2010 I have been at the helm of Storefront for Art and Architecture, an organisation that at its core carries the same spirit of independence, irreverence, experimentation and agitation as the AA.

Storefront's mission to advance innovative and critical ideas that contribute to the design of cities, territories and public life by providing alternative platforms for dialogue and collaboration across disciplinary, geographic and ideological boundaries, is akin to that which has kept the AA at the forefront of architecture's culture and knowledge production.

As the Chief Curator of Storefront I have directed the public programme of exhibitions, events, competitions, publications and projects; as the Executive Director I have overseen its strategic development, membership and fundraising activities. This has allowed me to understand the complexities behind a vision, yet the importance of having one.

In seven years I have doubled the institution's budget by diversifying its sources of income, obtaining grants from government and private foundations, and partnering with individuals and companies for individual and corporate funding. Together with a team comprised of staff, volunteers, council members, advisory boards, members, colleagues, critics and allies, I have managed to remain incisive and independent, and to further the mission of the organisation in New York and around the world.

Working collaboratively with countless creative minds, I have built a robust international network of individuals and collectives interested in the redefinition of our built environment. From poets and politicians to hackers, engineers, philosophers and artists, I have worked with a broad range of experts always with the agenda to understand how architecture participates in larger conversations within our contemporary culture.

Over the last decade I have taught and lectured at more than fifty cultural institutions and architecture schools worldwide. This has afforded me a strategic position from which to assess and examine a wide range of methodologies, pedagogies and research models. In my role as a teacher, I have enjoyed the pleasures of developing ideas with students and enabling the unique ideas that emerge within and throughout each generation that is always looking for a new definition of our future.



ROBERT MULL

Robert Mull was a student at the AA, was a member of NATO (Narrative Architecture Today) and taught at the AA first in the Intermediate School and then in Diploma Unit 10 until 1999. In 2000 he became head of the then UNL School of Architecture and in 2010 led the bringing together of two faculties to form The Cass (Sir John Cass Faculty of Art, Architecture and Design) known affectionately as the 'Aldgate Bauhaus' where he was both Dean and Director of Architecture and founding tutor to the Free Unit until 2016.

Robert has taught widely, holding visiting professorships in Vienna and Innsbruck. In 2012 he co-founded the Moscow School of Architecture (MARCH) where he is honorary Professor. He has also helped architecture schools to evolve and reform: in Seoul, Africa and Sweden and now in the Ukraine and Brighton.

After the Cass, Robert was appointed as Professor of Architecture and Design and Head of School at the University of Brighton and as the Director of Innovation at London-based urban design practice Publica. He is also currently visiting Professor at Umeå University, Sweden.

In May 2016, Robert co-curated the AF's 'Papers' festival at the Barbican Centre documenting the art, culture and architecture of the refugee crises and also curated two exhibitions about the Calais Jungle in the foyer of the Royal Festival Hall. Robert was co-curator of the 'Rip it Up and Start Again' series and helped initiate the 'Turncoats' and 'Twins' debates. Recently Robert has collaborated with Alexander Brodsky for Drawing Matter's 'Sheds' at Hauser and Wirth, Somerset and has co-curated the 'Art as Labour' programme at Nikola Lenivets outside Moscow.

Robert is a trustee of the Architecture Foundation and of the London School of Architecture; he is a former member of AA Council and former head of the body representing UK schools of architecture. He is an active researcher and has overseen research with a particular emphasis on design and practice as research and has judged many research and design awards.

Robert is currently running the Global Free Unit with international educational, NGO and institutional partners focusing on live projects within the refugee crisis and disadvantaged communities and other institutions such as prisons, schools and arts organisations. Last week saw the launch of the new union supporting architecture workers and students of which Robert is a co-founder.

Vision Statement

Dear Search Committee

You ask for a vision:

'If the AA did not exist would we need to invent it'? I asked this question at a recent AA staff and council workshop. There was a long silence and then talk of past radicalism, its unique position in architectural education and nostalgia. It was moving – but unconvincing. In fact, I felt angry. As someone who has struggled for change under the most challenging circumstances how could this great institution with so much privilege and freedom not seem to know what to do with it?

So, for me the future of the AA is not just about vision but about values, duties and responsibilities and the tough mechanisms necessary to deliver them. Because if the AA does not evolve, it risks being side-lined – with little impact on or a part to play in addressing the pressing aesthetic, social, political and environmental realities of our local and global culture. If this is the case then my answer is no, the AA does not deserve to exist.

The AA's freedom and independence is so valuable – not least because if TDAP or the appointment of a new Director goes wrong, then the AA risks giving this, its greatest asset, away. But the freedom I am interested in is not a half-remembered 20th century idea of creative radicalism but a freedom that results in the bravery and independence to change things for the better without self-interest or slavery to any one educational orthodoxy or source of funding.

If the AA is to maintain its freedom and privilege, I will argue that this comes with the responsibility to use this as agency to the benefit of a far greater section of local and global society: to look outwards and to judge ourselves not by the internal logic of the international architectural community but by our impact on others and on society more generally. In a real sense, the AA must be turned inside out. The vitality of its staff and students can be shared, tested and applied more widely whilst others are invited in, thus creating a responsible and generous institution defined not by its boundaries but by its permeability.

This AA has the ability to lead. It can become the conscience of the discipline: creative, provocative, strident, campaigning but also caring and generous. This AA is needed as it reflects values based on common purpose, collaboration and debate rather than competition and individuality. Values that reflect the collaborative nature of contemporary practice and the values of a younger generation disenfranchised by the carelessness of ours. But none of these ambitions are credible without a firm understanding of the mechanisms of delivering it. Creative institutional change is hard; I know this first hand. Forming The Cass, helping to found new schools in Seoul and Moscow and now in the Ukraine and Brighton and helping others from Sweden to Africa to reform and evolve; these are the projects that have educated me. But I have also learnt from other contexts. My own 'Free Unit' has taught me to give students greater autonomy and to help them to mobilise their own beliefs and life experience rather than rely on the codified values of any one unit, school or professional orthodoxy. My involvement with Publica has confirmed my belief that the AA must re-engage with London and use London as its extended campus and my work within the European refugee crises has shown me that the AA has a duty to extend its international reach by engaging with areas of deprivation and political change locally and worldwide.

Critically my work with some of the most underprivileged students has convinced me that the AA has a unique opportunity to develop alternative forms of academic delivery and new courses that meet the evolving needs of all students. Including using the potential of the association and alumni to provide practice-based routes to qualification. And my involvement with practice has taught me that we must match student's bravery and creativity with the hard skills necessary to be caring citizens and effective professionals if they are to have stable careers and real impact.

But there is hard operational work required and some tough choices.

If the AA is to become more sustainable and accessible then it must diversify and expand its sources of income, develop a professional research infrastructure, develop a projects capacity to support live projects and paid consultancy and expand its capacity to deliver short courses, CPD and consider supporting and ultimately validating international partners. It also needs to be recognised that the AA's current shape, size, form and economic model represents just one set of priorities and can be changed to reflect new values. In particular, the relationship between the cost of infrastructure and the level of fees needs to be challenged. TDAP has a key role to play in the AA's future. But my experience at the front line of higher education has shown me that degree awarding powers also represent a risk. The UK higher education system is riven with ideological and political intent and unstable. In joining this system, the Director needs the experience and bravery to insist that the system works for the AA and that the AA is not cowed by it. TEF, REF the implications of the OFS and a host of other responsibilities and duties must be used and challenged. Rather than being brow beaten by the system the AA has the power and I would suggest duty to influence the system for the better.

Finally, a word about how I work. I lead by empowering and trusting others, always assuming they are waving but helping and supporting if they are drowning. I try to lead by example teaching, researching, debating, making and teasing. From a foundation student to the most elevated practitioner, I am interested in them and how their life experience, beliefs and skills can be mobilised to their benefit and for the wider good. My product is people and through them, architecture, cities, institutions and infrastructure.

I have my own obsessions, hopes and yes prejudices and I am not shy to share them but I see them as one part of an archipelago of diverse positions. I value plurality and foster diversity but also know that in the face of pressing social, environment and human issues that we must also define, articulate and defend common values and beliefs.

The AA now has a vital role to play as an engaged, permeable, brave, crusading and caring institution. And it has a duty to use its unique freedoms to the benefit of all.

The issues are urgent and time is short.

I would be honoured to help.

Yours sincerely,
Robert

Professor Robert Mull

What in your mind makes the AA unique and what core elements of the School do you see as inherent and critical for the AA to retain?

The AA's strengths are subtle. The AA is a combination of restless histories, great people, ambitious students and seemingly anachronistic structures and forms of governance all safeguarded by the special role and agency of the school community. There are external forces that want to tidy this up, codify and rationalise it. They are wrong and they can be dangerous.

But this ecosystem is not what makes the AA special. What makes the AA unique is what it enables.

At its best the AA harbours a collective bravery played out in a diverse and anarchic ways.

At its best the AA generates a collective suspension of disbelief that nurtures invention. And at its very best it achieves a form of magic realism where the most adventurous and playful strategies impact on tough problems and change the nature of architectural culture and through it the wider society the AA is a part of and serves.

But this AA is at a crucial moment in its history and this AA is at risk and needs to be safeguarded.

TDAP presents great opportunities but also risks and must be shaped to reinforce the particularity and independence of the AA rather than erode it. And it has to be understood that there is a huge challenge ahead to ensure that the AA has a secure and sustainable future that can protect and extend that delicate ecosystem and the magic it can create.

The AA consists of a variety of different models and methods of teaching architecture. From the open studios of First Year and the unit system of the Intermediate and Diploma Schools, to a team-based approach in the Graduate School and individual research at the PhD level, what is your attitude towards this plurality? And what changes do you intend to implement, if any, to the current pedagogical approach?

I value the pluralism of the AA's academic structures but there are ways they can be strengthened and crucially made more accessible.

Here are some of my starting points:

I would explore different economies and forms of academic delivery to promote wider access to the AA by reducing costs for those who wish to take alternative routes. This would include practice-based routes to qualification delivered in partnership with the association and alumni. I would also consider accelerated courses using the whole calendar year and slower part-time courses based on acquiring

credits rather than completing a year. It would include situated learning where students are embedded in 'live project classrooms,' benefiting from reduced costs that come with each context whilst being useful and engaged.

I would explore federal models where the AA partners, barter and shares with other institutions to provide more choice to students and greater specialist support whilst reducing infrastructure costs and fees thereby widening student access to the AA. I would use the opportunity presented by TDAP to expand access to the AA via strengthened foundation and access courses.

I would support and strengthen the Graduate School by expanding the range of courses on offer and by developing a strong research infrastructure that supports bids and provides funding. I would also use the opportunity presented by TDAP and the UK awards framework to achieve greater integration between the master's courses and the Diploma School to allow students to achieve a specialist masters award in parallel with their diploma and RIBA Part 2.

I would expand the AA's international network beyond the very successful Visiting Schools to include partnerships, validations and satellites which expand student choice and mobility and provide different fee structures and wider access to the AA.

I would place an emphasis on practices that teach, teachers who practise and a school itself that practises. I would develop a professional projects office (an RIBA chartered practice) that supports staff and students to carry out live projects, practice based research and consultancy and that can support recent graduates as they establish practices, compete for work and build.

I would safeguard and extend analogue and digital making at all scales and work hard to realise Hooke Park's full potential.

I would strengthen the teaching of hard professional, economic and technical skills to empower and give confidence in practice.

I would endorse the strong history and theory teaching and link it closely to the school's research activities.

I would radically expand the AA's programme of short courses, CPD and training and integrate elements of it into the curriculum whilst generating additional income.

And last but not least the unit system, which is the aspect of the AA (and Boyarsky's) legacy that I have been proud to draw on. I have introduced or continued unit systems in the schools I have been part of; The Cass had ninety units altogether, teaching students across all its subject areas, from fine art to

furniture design. But there are ways the system can evolve and be humanised; in my own teaching in the 'Free Unit', I have adjusted the balance of power to give students control and agency in their projects and bring them closer to their future forms of practice. This is an important conversation that I would like to bring to the AA.

And of course I would share with you my longstanding commitment to working in areas of deprivation and social change and the teaching strategies I have developed to do so.

These starting points I would bring to the conversation outlined below.

The AA is known to be a participatory democracy. How do you plan to initiate and engage with the School Community in order to maintain an open and transparent dialogue with all constituencies including academic and administrative staff, council and the student body?

I try to lead by empowering and trusting; I am interested in your experiences, beliefs and skills and how they can be used to your benefit and to the good of the school and wider global society. I do not like needless hierarchy and I favour plain speaking and direct action over jargon and obscuration. I would be present and curious, attending crits and lectures, leading events and talking rather than typing. And I would teach, in my case as a unit tutor, and be open to the same challenge and insecurities as every other teacher and student.

My priority if elected would be the immediate and ambitious conversation that so many have asked for, a debate that respects plurality but also does the hard work of defining and defending common values and beliefs. The role of the Director in this is to be background and foreground, to be strident and quiet, to be opinionated but mostly to listen and from then on, to match the collective will of the entire school community to tough mechanisms and timescales.

This internal conversation must go hand in hand in with the reinvigoration of the AA's cultural, exhibitions and publications programme; these are important mechanisms by which dialogue takes place, inviting in diverse and challenging voices whilst better sharing the achievements of the school. The AA as an independent centre of gravity for architectural debate in London and beyond partnering and sharing with multiple others in response to the cultural, social and political change taking place beyond Bedford Square.

Part of this will be the development of a formal research culture and environment focussing and refining the research of the school and testing it against external benchmarks.

How do you feel that your previous professional experience has prepared you for the role of AA Director and how would these positively affect the AA?

At the risk of the very nostalgia I have criticised earlier, I have been you: AA student, unit tutor, external examiner and council member. I have made AA publications, made exhibitions, pitched for students and almost failed thanks to Jim Stirling. But I have also been able to look across from elsewhere and envy the AA its independence and freedom. So I think I understand and feel deep affection for the AA - but it's a tough love.

And toughness is important and I have had to acquire it in the most exacting of academic and professional contexts.

I have led and helped form schools of art, architecture and design, internationally and in the UK. By prioritising belief rather than expediency, I have been able to navigate the relationship between infrastructure costs, personnel and fees to the benefit of students and staff.

I have detailed knowledge of the UK Higher education and professional context and know how to adapt its parameters to make space for freedom and creativity. I also know how to resist and when to say no.

I've created and nurtured school cultures through academic structures, cultural programmes, publications, research, situated learning, live projects, consultancy and activism and I've worked with great architects to redesign and deliver the spaces we learn in.

In all of this I think I have won the friendship and trust of a vast local and global community of students, emergent and established practitioners, academics and institutions. But also the marginalised and those currently excluded from this conversation. I would like to share both communities with you and ask that you reach out to them.

And finally and above all I'm a teacher and I understand all that you are experiencing and the precious significance of the time you are investing at the AA.

If elected I would bring this experience to bear on the AA to help and support everyone in the school community confident that the AA has a role to play now more vital than at any moment in its history as a creative, engaged, permeable, brave, crusading and caring institution. And a duty to use its unique freedoms to the benefit of all.

PRESENTATION SCHEDULE

Director of the Architectural Association School of Architecture

Tuesday 20th – ROBERT MULL

10.00 – 10.45 Tour of the AA with Search Committee

10.45 – 11.15 Breakfast with Council and Interim Director: Front Members' Room

11.30 – 12.00 Coffee with SMT: Front Members' Room

12.00 – 12.45 Lunch / candidate preparation time

13.00 – 14.30 Candidate presentation and Q&A session, moderated by Search Committee

14.30 – 15.30 Meet the students, facilitated by Student Forum

16.00 – 17.00 Meet academic staff, moderated by Search Committee

17.00 – 18.00 Meet admin staff, moderated by Search Committee

Wednesday 21st – PIPPO CIORRA

(schedule altered to avoid clash with Academic Board meeting)

10.00 – 10.45 Tour of the AA with Search Committee

10.45 – 11.15 Breakfast with Council and Interim Director: Front Members' Room

11.30 – 12.00 Coffee with SMT: Front Members' Room

12:15 – 13.15 Meet admin staff, moderated by Search Committee

13.15 – 14:00 Lunch / candidate preparation time

14.15 – 15.45 Candidate presentation and Q&A session, moderated by Search Committee

15.45 – 16.45 Meet the students, facilitated by Student Forum

17.00 – 18.00 Meet academic staff, moderated by Search Committee

Thursday 22nd – EVA FRANCH i GILABERT

10.00 – 10.45 Tour of the AA with Search Committee

10.45 – 11.15 Breakfast with Council and Interim Director: Front Members' Room

11.30 – 12.00 Coffee with SMT: Front Members' Room

12.00 – 12.45 Lunch / candidate preparation time

13.00 – 14.30 Candidate presentation and Q&A session, moderated by Search Committee

14.30 – 15.30 Meet the students, facilitated by Student Forum

16.00 – 17.00 Meet academic staff, moderated by Search Committee

17.00 – 18.00 Meet admin staff, moderated by Search Committee

All meetings take place in the Lecture Hall, overflow to Barrel Vault and Canteen unless otherwise stated

Candidates for the Director of the Architectural Association School of Architecture 2018

Presentations to the School Community