

July 11, 2011

James Strong

Chairman
Australia Council
372 Elizabeth Street
Surry Hills New South Wales 2010

Hi James

Hope you're well.

I'm writing to you because I'm very concerned that the closed competition for the new Australian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale will produce a building that is not in the spirit of the Australia Council, let alone Australia.

Not to get all policy about it, but the enabling Australia Council Act of 1975 states that the Australia Council is required to "foster the expression of a national identity by means of the arts."

To close the design competition to a cadre of hand picked architectural firms would be good thinking if we were a closed society like, oh, I don't know, China. (Closed competitions were favored by Albert Speer and Adolf Hitler. And look how that played out.)

Open competitions have produced Melbourne's Federation Square, Sydney Opera House, and, actually, Canberra.

Australia is not a closed society. We pride ourselves on being open and free. Why wouldn't we have an open and free design competition for the new pavilion?

Ideally an open competition where Australian artists and architects collaborated on new designs.

I collaborated with John Wardle Architects on Australia's lead entry in the "Now and When" exhibition at the last Venice Architecture Biennale. The Australian Institute of Architects invited architects to collaborate with artists, writers, economist, philosophers and more for an open and inclusive approach to what became the most successful Venice exhibition ever.

Why would we go backwards? Why would we limit the potential of the new pavilion?

Why not open it up to future?

Best

Stefano Boscutti

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