

Delfina Foundation is delighted to announce London-based Studio Octopi and Cairo-based Shahira Fahmy Architects are the winning duo of an architecture competition for the expansion of the Foundation, which will make it the largest international artist residency provider in London when it re-opens in autumn 2013.

Delfina Foundation is currently located in a period townhouse near Buckingham Palace at 29 Catherine Place and will expand into the adjacent building at 31 Catherine Place, doubling its residency and exhibition space, totalling 4564 square feet.

Upholding its key mission of facilitating cultural exchange with the greater Middle East and North Africa region, Delfina Foundation launched an invited competition that promoted design collaboration between architects based in the UK and the greater Middle East. Nous Collective, a leading agency that engages architecture and design for branding, marketing and advertising projects, managed the competition. Studio Octopi and Shahira Fahmy Architects presented the winning proposal, which proposes to retain the domesticity of the two houses, exploring the notion of the hearth in a home.

Adopting the role of architect cum archaeologists, the two firms presented an environment which is layered and contextual: while peeling back the layers of ornamentation and finish to expose the period craftsmanship of the buildings, they opened up the two buildings to bring in more light and create 1650 square feet of exhibition and event space, as well as 8 bedrooms with flexible artist workspaces throughout the property. As the UK-based firm, Studio Octopi will lead the design development, construction documents, preparation of bid documents, planning applications, construction administration and oversight.

Founder, Delfina Entrecanales CBE: "It was essential that our ethos of creative exchange was also embedded in the architectural competition. The harmonious response by Studio Octopi, in collaboration with Shahira Fahmy Architects, reflected our philosophy best by creating spaces that are designed in dialogue with each other. We are pleased to have appointed Studio Octopi to work with us to create more residencies for international artists, curators and writers in the heart of London."

Studio Octopi: "The embodied history of a place is important to our studio's work as a whole. At Delfina Foundation we are proposing a playful exploration centred around the idea of the hearth as a 'homeplace' and 'place-maker'. Both Studio Octopi and Shahira Fahmy Architects are very excited at the possibility of fulfilling their collaboration at Delfina Foundation."

Shahira Fahmy: "In doing this merger between the two houses, we can preserve the essence of each house and not lose the atmosphere that makes the one...leaving traces of the voids from the old staircases that are not needed in the new scheme, allows the visual and perceptual connectivity of what makes the house and its layers present."



Studio Octopi and Shahira Fahmy Architects. Proposal for Delfina Foundation Extension. Visualisation Sectional View

Delfina Foundation

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Notes to editors

Delfina Foundation is an independent, non-profit foundation dedicated to facilitating artistic exchange and developing creative practice through residencies, partnerships and public programming, with a special focus on international collaborations with the greater Middle East & North Africa. Founded in 2007, Delfina Foundation is the successor to Delfina Studio Trust which supported over 400 artists over 20 years, including more than a dozen Turner Prize nominees. Delfina Foundation is developing the next generation of practitioners and has hosted nearly 100 artists, curators and writers from 18 different countries to date, partnering with institutions such as the Tate, ICA, V&A Museum, Frieze Art Fair Projects and the Chisenhale Gallery—to name a few.

Studio Octopi are an award winning architecture practice established in 2004 by Chris Romer-Lee and James Lowe. The practice primarily works in the residential, commercial and education sectors on special or unique projects that require an exceptional response to a challenging brief. Their work has been noted for its inventive construction detailing and bespoke designs. In 2010 the practice won an RIBA Award for a residential extension in North London. In 2011 Stratford Kiosks won a New London Award celebrating the capital's best projects.

Shahira Fahmy is an architect living and working in Cairo. Since 2005, Shahira H. Fahmy Architects has emerged as one of the most innovative design-focused practices in Middle East with projects ranging from large-scale urban and housing projects to interiors and product design. Her work strives to create a balance between new spatial concepts and existing context: culture, tradition, urban morphology and climate in the pursuit of a language that encompasses all fields of design.

Delfina Foundation's competition was managed by Nous Collaborative. Established in 2006, Nous works with clients to create the most innovative architectural solution to their branding and marketing needs, aligns clients with the best architect for building projects, and runs workshops to produce concepts and new ideas for clients. Past clients include Unilever, Campari, The Mayor of London, and Ocean Spray. Nous is also providing the engineering services for the project with sister company Nous Engineering.

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