

DELFINA FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES REOPENING OF EXPANDED BUILDING IN JANUARY 2014

In January 2014, Delfina Foundation will reopen its doors to unveil a major expansion, designed by Studio Octopi and Shahira Fahmy Architects, making it the largest artist residency provider in London. The £1.4m redevelopment will double the residency capacity, increasing the number of residents at one time from four to eight, as well as creating 1,650 square feet of additional exhibition and event space. Currently located at 29 Catherine Place in an Edwardian townhouse in Victoria, the Foundation will expand into the adjacent building, giving it a combined area total of 4,564 square feet.



Sectional view of redevelopment
Courtesy of Studio Octopi

Award-winning architects Studio Octopi and Cairo-based Shahira Fahmy Architects were selected as finalists for an architecture competition held by Delfina Foundation and Nous Collaborative in July 2012. In keeping with the Foundation's key mission of facilitating cultural exchange with the greater Middle East and North Africa region, the competition promoted a design partnership between architects based in the UK and the greater Middle East. Whilst the original concept was a collaboration between both firms, Studio Octopi has led the development and overseen the construction.

Adhering to one of the core concepts of the Foundation's history as a provider of 'homes' for artists, the architects have retained the domesticity of the two houses, exploring the significance of the hearth in a home. Across cultures and throughout history, the hearth has been an integral part of a household, becoming synonymous with notions of domesticity, and placemaking. Fireplaces are kept in their entirety on the lower floors, and the recesses and hearth stones are retained in the artists' private spaces.

The designs also set out to maintain the juxtaposition of public and private spaces. The introduction of glazed panels in the floors and walls allow for their integration. Diagonal views across the buildings and through the floors expose the Foundation's ecosystem at work, as well as opening up the two buildings and bringing in more light throughout the space. With flexible artist workspaces throughout, the five-storey property boasts an expansive gallery / workshop space on the lower ground floor; reception, dining area and kitchen on the ground level; offices and library on the first, whilst the residents' quarters occupy the two top floors.

Adopting the role of architect cum archaeologists, Studio Octopi have created an environment which is unassuming, layered and contextual, while peeling back the layers of ornamentation and finish to expose the period craftsmanship of the buildings. New insertions are made with a light and considered touch, while detailing is discrete and at times whimsical. Brickwork to the reveals of the new openings is left exposed and overhead concrete lintels retained in their natural state. By leaving materials in their raw state, a reminder of the building's beginnings is introduced. A sense of permanence is imbued

Delfina Foundation

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in the two townhouses, linking the present with the past and consequently looking ahead into the building's exciting future.

Director, Aaron Cezar: "We are thrilled by the transformation which Studio Octopi and Shahira Fahmy envisioned for Delfina Foundation. The expansion creates a home for artistic research, production and exhibition that will be unparalleled in London, while maintaining the intimacy of engagement that has been central to our work with artists, curators, and communities. More so, the conceptual design has the notion of conviviality at its core, creating a space for encounter and exchange. Over the course of the last eight months, it has been a pleasure to work with Studio Octopi and our contractor City Interiors to realise our ambitious development. We are very excited to open our doors again."

Studio Octopi: "The Delfina Foundation team has been an empowering client. Their vision for the future of the Foundation has enabled us to work in a unique way. The scheme aims to act as a palimpsest, to retain the integrity and character of the existing buildings while simultaneously creating a series of spaces for residents, staff and visitors to use and enjoy. The building process has been a true collaboration between the client, design team and contractor with experimentation and flexibility at the forefront of this process. We are very proud of what has been achieved and have the Foundation to thank for this."

Notes to Editors:

Founded by renowned arts patron Delfina Entrecanales CBE in 2007, **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. In January 2014, Delfina Foundation will expand into London's largest international residency programme, also broadening its geographical remit beyond the greater Middle East. As part of the expansion, the Foundation will launch a new theme-based residency model around seasonal programmes, during which time artists, curators and thinkers will be invited or selected via open calls for applications, to discuss and explore salient issues in contemporary art and culture. Delfina Foundation has hosted over 100 artists, curators and writers in residence from 20 different countries to date, partnering with institutions such as Tate Modern, ICA, V&A Museum, Frieze Art Fair Projects, Art Dubai and Chisenhale Gallery.

Studio Octopi is establishing itself as one of the UK's leading emerging architectural practices. It grew through a series of small private residential commissions, and in more recent years has undertaken a number of high profile projects, such as the refurbishment of Saatchi & Saatchi's interior, and the Thames Baths Projects.

Studio Octopi works across the commercial, public and private sectors, and has won a series of accolades including the RIBA London Award in 2010 for its extension of a Victorian London terrace, Park Avenue South. Soon after, its Stratford Kiosks project received a 'New London Award' which celebrates London's best architectural achievements.

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Shahira Fahmy is the founder and director of **Shahira Fahmy Architects**. The practice was established in Cairo in 2005, in the same year that Shahira was awarded the Bibliotheca Alexandrina Young Architect Award. Amongst other honours, Shahira Fahmy Architects was awarded the Green Good Design Award by the Chicago Athenaeum in 2010, and was the first Egyptian practice to take part in Salone Satellite, Milan Design Week (2007).

Shahira's work ranges from architecture and masterplanning to product design and exhibition curation, often in collaboration with other firms. Such collaborations have included: the new campus for the American University in Cairo (2005) and the Ahmed Bahaa El-Din Cultural Center (2010).

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