SOMERSET HOUSE

On behalf of the Somerset House Trust, we are delighted to announce this competition to find an architect for a new multi-purpose auditorium and public space at Somerset House in central London.

A NEW VENUE IN THE HEART OF LONDON

Somerset House is London’s working arts centre built on historic foundations in the heart of the world’s most creative capital. It is a site that is overflowing with new ideas, creative businesses, fresh perspectives and a place for entertainment and experiment. It is also home to London’s largest and most exciting creative community, with hundreds of artists, thinkers, makers and creative business leaders, all hard at work, helping London and the world make sense of today through the arts and creativity.

Image: Owen Harvey
We now need to build on this energy and creativity to develop a new landmark space where artists can create, collaborate, perform, experiment and engage directly with each other and audiences at Somerset House; a purpose built auditorium that transforms a 1960s conference centre into a new, dynamic forum that is suited to the needs of artists and audiences today. It will be far larger than any of our existing indoor spaces, able to house ambitious installations, performance, music and live concerts but flexible enough to shrink to an intimate space for intense debates, talks, seminars and lectures. The contemporary and multi-purpose space will complement William Chambers’ eighteenth-century masterpiece and by connecting the New Wing and West Wing with the River Terrace above the Victoria Embankment, this development will create a whole new accessible public space, including opening up and making more prominent a number of key heritage features.

“Dedicated to backing newness, championing openness, nurturing creativity and empowering ideas, our cultural programme is ambitious in scope. We insist on relevance, but aren’t afraid of irreverence, and are as keen on entertainment as enrichment. We embrace the biggest issues of our times and are committed to oxygenating new work by emerging artists. Where else can you spend an hour ice-skating while listening to a specially commissioned sound piece by a cutting-edge artist?

“It is this creative tension—the way we harness our heritage, put the too-often overlooked on our central stage and use our neo-classical backdrop to showcase ground-breaking contemporary culture—that inspires our programme. Old and new, history and disruption, art and entertainment, high-tech and homemade, combined with the fact that we are home to a constantly shape-shifting working creative community: this is our point of difference. It is what we are proud of. And it is what makes the experience of visiting or working in Somerset House inspiring and energizing, urgent and exciting.”

— Jonathan Reekie, Director, Somerset House

Further information is available on the Somerset House website
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THE COMPETITION

This is a competition to find the right architects with the right skills and attitudes, with whom an amazing project can be created. It is not a competition to identify a design solution, this will be created through a collaborative design process with stakeholders, once the architect has been appointed.

The competition is being run as a 2-stage competition, generally following the OJEU Restricted Notice procedures.

Stage 1: Expressions of interest using the Standard Questionnaire
Stage 2: Shortlisting and Invitation to Tender

The competition is being managed on behalf of the Somerset House Trust by Colander Associates. This means that Colander is the point of contact for competitors and all communications must be channelled through us via the email address: somersethouse@colander.co.uk

THE CHALLENGE

This project marks a pivotal moment in the remarkable change that has taken place over the last twenty years, transforming Somerset House from a series of Government offices into a pioneering working arts centre and a groundbreaking cultural eco-system. The new venue will be a place where up to 700 people can see, hear and experience in different configurations work by all kinds of artists directly in the heart of London, with many thousands more enjoying it through live streaming, recording and online access. It will also be a venue that we can use for conferences and corporate events, an important part of the business model. Over the top of the new venue, there is a fantastic opportunity to create a new public space and bring to life a key part of the site’s history and heritage.

“This will utterly transform our public space into a new magical one at the heart of London by allowing people to stroll from the street to the river by our courtyard.”

— William Sieghart, Chairman, Somerset House Trust
In 2018, the Trust commissioned Purcell to undertake an initial feasibility study to look at how a larger performance space might be accommodated. This study identified that a new music-hall style space, with a wrap-around balcony on three sides and potential capacity for approximately 375 people seated or 700 standing, as well as a generous foyer space with ancillary support functions, could comfortably be placed in an area between the West Wing and the New Wing.

It also demonstrated that in creating the new venue, a new, open public space could be made at the courtyard level, connecting to the River Terrace at the south end and creating an opportunity to foreground part of the site’s heritage, once known as West Street, originally a lane that gave access to the river from the Strand. West Street was formerly known as Duchy Lane and William Chambers, Somerset House’s architect, built a terrace of houses for the Admiralty Commissioners on its west side; in the middle of the 19th Century these were incorporated into Somerset House’s New Wing by James Pennethorne.
The feasibility study is the foundation for this competition, which is looking for an architectural practice to design and help deliver the Trust’s vision for this new initiative.

The total project cost is expected to be in the region of £50m. As with most major arts capital projects, the project will depend on a capital fundraising programme and the new designs are expected to play an integral part in this effort.

Broadly speaking the Trust is hoping to appoint the architect by the end of this year and, subject to funding, could open the venue in late 2024.
THE ROLE OF DESIGN

It is refreshing to see how innovation and design have been allowed to play an integral part in Somerset House's journey through time; new design interventions have been inserted with confidence and alacrity as it has morphed from one use to another. The staircases throughout the building are a particular example, each is special in its own right, each pushes the technical boundaries of the era in which it was constructed and each delights visitors, with dramatic and playful journeys through three-dimensions. Examples below show the Nelson Stairs in the South Wing and, the most recent example in the West Wing, a wonderful circular stair for the 21st Century, designed by Eva Jiricna.

Image: James Britain

Image: Peter Cook
True to its history, design will be central to the success of the new spaces that are now proposed at Somerset House – both indoor and outdoor.
There are a few guiding principles that will need to be considered…

- **Design excellence**
The design of the new venue, must be exceptional, in every way, building on the rich tradition of the existing buildings: practical, efficient, acoustically excellent, robust and fit for purpose but also uplifting, distinct, inventive, noteworthy and reputation-building. It must exude perfection and confidence without being exclusive, over-elaborate or self-serving. It must act as a draw in its own right, adding to the design quality of a venue that is already well placed in this regard. Because of the limited exterior elevations, the character of the new venue will be determined significantly through the design character and feel of the interior spaces.

- **Visibility**
The new venue will be sited on land that drops away towards the river, enabling a new, open public space at the same level as the main Edmond J. Safra Fountain Court to flow over the top of it. The entrances into the new building will be located in this public space and will play an important role in signposting its existence.

- **Porosity and transparency**
Connections between the old and the new, and in particular, between the inside and the outside must be fluid, redefining the meaning of ‘public space’ and the relationships between artists, performers and the public. Above all else the new spaces must be welcoming.

- **Context**
The exterior challenges will be complex and contextual because of the location within a Grade 1, historic building. In particular, the views over the new public space and the entrances will need to be sensitively handled. This does not mean that the new building and the new public space should be deferential, rather that they will need to complement the surroundings, signalling a new use for a modern venue.

- **Adaptability**
Somerset House offers a hugely varied and eclectic arts and cultural programme that underpins its growing importance to London’s creative scene. The new venue – and the new open space – must be readily adaptable to a variety of uses, both formal and informal. Collaboration, active participation and artist-led curation will be encouraged, as will experimentation and inclusivity. It is expected that resident and other artists will be asked to contribute to the brief development for the new venue and the architectural practice will be expected to work collaboratively, to ensure that the design ideas that are generated, capture the energy and requirements of those that will use each of the spaces.

- **Functionality**
The design of the new building must not be overbearing. It must act as a robust backdrop or stage set for the people, the artworks and performances within it. It should not expect to take centre stage itself. The practical technicalities that underpin a successful performance venue and its support functions are numerous, and the design of the building must enable rather than hinder the rich, rugged and ever-moving activities within. The need for clear service routes, simple access, intuitive control systems, robust finishes that have been elegantly detailed and, of course, flexibility cannot be underestimated.
• **Sustainability**
  This project must be sustainable: socially, economically and environmentally.
  • Social sustainability will require a building that offers places for people to gather, meet and linger; to entertain and be entertained; to explore and enjoy. To be successful, it will need to engender a timeless sense of civic pride that reflects the diversity of the performers and visitors alike.
  • Economic sustainability will require robust designs that are cost effective to build and easy to manage and maintain, flexible to operate and able to adapt to future uses with ease.
  • Environmental sustainability will be most effective if it is built into the design from the outset, balancing the need for modern day services with natural ventilation and natural light; reducing embodied carbon; facilitating closed loop recycling and waste management; encouraging circular economies and sustainable energy sources.

• **Accessibility and openness**
  It goes without saying that the new building and public space must be accessible to all, offering self-policing, safe environments and democratic public spaces that encourage informal and formal social interaction. It must act as a draw, encouraging people to enjoy the public areas whether they are attending an event or simply hanging out.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WINNING PRACTICE

The Trust is looking for an architect that can lead a team of diverse consultants and collectively generate confident and forward-looking designs that tap into the spirit of Somerset House, its creative community and its vibrant offer. At the same time, it must demonstrate respect for the history of the site in the context of the Trust’s modern cultural and commercial aspirations.

The Trust is committed to building a diverse and inclusive community, reflecting the diversity of our society. It aims to ensure that the diversity of all its staff – including volunteers and trustees – its creative community and its suppliers, reflects our society as fully as possible. Any appointed consultants will be expected to adhere to these values.

The project will require both gravitas and experience alongside radical thinking and persuasive ideas.
STAGE 1: SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

STANDARD QUESTIONNAIRE
This competition is being run in accordance with the OJEU Restricted Notice procedures.

Therefore, any competitor wishing to be considered for this project, will need to submit a Standard Questionnaire (SQ) as outlined in the OJEU Regulations. The standard Selection Questionnaire is structured in 3 separate parts:

1. Part 1 covers the basic information about the competitor, such as the contact details, trade memberships, details of parent companies, group bidding and so on.
2. Part 2 covers a self-declaration regarding whether or not any listed exclusion grounds apply.
3. Part 3 covers a self-declaration regarding economic and financial standing as well as information about the practice’s technical and professional capacity; the Modern Slavery Act; insurance and apprentices. Please note that referees given in this section will only be approached if a competitor is shortlisted.

The proforma for the SQ can be found in the side-bar of this web page.

In addition to the completed standard SQ document, competitors are asked to provide the following:

COVER SHEET
A single A4 side cover sheet that outlines:
• Contact person: name, phone and email address
• Name of the organisation submitting this expression of interest, address, phone, website.
• If more than one organisation is included in this submission, please provide the name and website address for each.
• Confirmation that the team is paying a living wage to all employees
• No more than 300 words summarising why this team is right for this project.

DESIGN QUALITY
No more than six A4 sides of concise and pertinent text, supported by appropriate images, addressing the following:
• Why this architectural team has the creative talent that will be required for a project of this nature, embracing the practical, the collaborative and the aesthetic design aspirations set out for the project.
• This architectural team’s knowledge of, and commitment to, innovation in sustainable developments of this type, looking at long term social, environmental and economic sustainability.
• This architectural team’s ability to deliver both innovation and the highest possible long-term value to clients, while working within fixed budget and time constraints.

DESIGN DELIVERY
No more than six A4 sides addressing the following:
• The individual skills and expertise offered by this architectural team and why this is relevant to this project, including information about the key individuals who would lead this project, the role they would take and why they have been selected for this project.
• An explanation of how you would expect to work on this project, illustrated with an organogram, which should include the client, key stakeholders and other potential consultants that you think will be required. Please make sure that it clearly shows the roles taken by each of the key players in your team and, if your team comprises more than one architectural practice, how they will work together on this project.
STAGE 1: SUBMISSION FORMAT AND DELIVERY ADDRESS

Submissions must be emailed in pdf format to somersethouse@colander.co.uk. Please note that email attachments will not be acceptable if files are larger than 5MB, so we recommend using WeTransfer or the equivalent, if this is the case.

Submissions should comprise:
- Cover sheet
- Completed SQ
- Response to the design capability questions
- Response to the design delivery questions

Please note that additional pages must not be included in the submission. So, no extra cover sheets or divider pages are allowed.

It is the competitor’s responsibility to ensure that its complete submission arrives before submission deadline of 12noon on 11 September 2019. Late deliveries will not be accepted. Equally, it is each competitor’s responsibility to ensure that its submission has been received. Email acknowledgement will be sent to the named contact person confirming that their submission has been received; if an email is not forthcoming, then competitors should assume that their submission has not arrived.

STAGE 1 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

All teams that enter this competition will be assessed against two criteria:
1. 70% of the marks: Design Quality
2. 30% of the marks: Design Delivery

Each criterion will be scored out of 100 as follows:
- 0-10 Poor response, does not meet the requirements
- 10-40 Average response, meets some requirements
- 40-60 Good response, meets most requirements
- 60-75 Good response, meets all requirements with added value for some
- 75-90 Very good response, meets all requirements with significant added value for some
- 90-100 Excellent and exceptional response that exceeds all requirements

The scores will be aggregated to give a percentage mark on a 70:30 ratio, whereby 70% is determined by the marks allocated to Design Quality and 30% by the marks allocated to Design Delivery – no further weighting will be applied.
DESIGN QUALITY

70% of the marks will be allocated to Design Quality, taking into account:

- Demonstrable design flair and ingenuity, appropriate to delivering a project of exceptional design quality
- Approach to and/or experience of designing performance venues
- Approach to and/or experience of place making in a public venue
- Approach to and/or experience of working in an historic urban environment, respecting the heritage of the surrounding context
- Approach to and/or experience of sustainability issues, both in the delivery of projects and in the completed projects themselves.

DESIGN DELIVERY

30% of the marks will be allocated to Design Delivery, taking into account:

- Appropriate skills and/or experience in the architectural team and the appropriateness of the individual players put forward for this project
- Approach to teamwork
- Approach to and/or experience of working collaboratively with clients, stakeholders and other consultants
- Cost and time management
- Ability to deliver services to a project in central London

Please note that it will not be possible to give detailed feedback to teams that are not shortlisted.

QUERIES

Competitors must not contact the Somerset House Trust or any other stakeholders when considering whether to enter the competition, or to help with the submission itself. Instead, any queries should be sent to somersethouse@colander.co.uk no later than 02 August 2019.

Responses to the queries that we receive will be posted on the competition website by 12 August 2019.

Competitors are requested to keep an eye on the competition website, as this is where any updates to the competition process will be posted.

SHORTLISTING

It is expected that between six and seven architectural teams will be shortlisted to take part in interviews and explain their Design Philosophy for the project; no more than five competitors will then be invited to attend a charrette with key stakeholders, to submit a Design Delivery statement and submit a tender.

A briefing session will be held with the shortlisted architectural teams, the date of this session will be added to the website in due course.

Detailed requirements for the Stage 2 submission will be given to the shortlisted architectural teams. However, the OJEU regulations stipulate that the Stage 2 requirements are outlined in this open call.
STAGE 2: BRIEFING INFORMATION

A briefing session will be held with the shortlisted architectural teams, the date of this session will be added to the website in due course.

In addition, shortlisted teams will be issued with the following information:
- A pre-feasibility study, completed in early 2019
- A scope of work
- A scope of services
- The proposed project programme
- The proposed project budget
- The proposed form of contract
- A proforma on which to submit a fee proposal

STAGE 2: DESIGN PHILOSOPHY AND INTERVIEWS

Shortlisted architectural teams will be asked to explain their Design Philosophy and attend an interview with the Jury Panel.

The Jury Panel will not be looking for project specific design solutions; rather it will be hoping to understand the principles inherent in each architectural team’s design approach and understand the quality of design thinking behind that approach.

Each team will be asked to respond to the following challenge:

‘Designed for today’s audiences and creatives, Somerset House is a place where art and culture are imagined, made and experienced. As architects, if the new venue and public space are to help Somerset House in its mission, what are the guiding principles that you would wish to explore?’

The response to this challenge will be considered in two ways:
- Three A2 boards,
- An interview with the Jury Panel to explore the submitted responses to the challenge.

The first two boards should include sketches and diagrams to demonstrate that the team has understood the challenges and the opportunities inherent in this project, referencing, as appropriate, the issues highlighted above:
- Design excellence
- Visibility
- Porosity and transparency
- Context
- Adaptability
- Functionality
- Sustainability
- Accessibility and openness
- Also, any other issues that the team would like to raise.
The third board should comprise an image or sketch that captures the spirit and character of the spaces that the team would like to create at Somerset House. Please note that this is not a request for a design solution.

The judging criteria at this stage will focus on the quality of design thinking and communication; detailed criteria will be given to the shortlisted architectural teams.

Shortlisted architectural teams will be asked to provide the names of other consultants for this project, including engineers, landscape architects and acousticians. This is for information only and will not be used in the evaluation process.

STAGE 2: CHARRETTE AND INVITATION TO TENDER

No more than five competitors will be invited to submit a tender. These will be asked to provide two distinct pieces of work:

- Design Delivery statement
- Fees

They will also be asked to attend a charrette/workshop to present their Design Philosophy at Somerset House.

Subject to funding, it is the intention to appoint the winning architect to undertake RIBA Stages 1 to 7. The judging criteria at this stage will focus on the quality of the service provided, the ability of the architectural team to interface with the client and stakeholders, and the fee. Detailed criteria will be given to the shortlisted practices.

The fee submission will be submitted in a sealed envelope, separate from the rest of the submission, so that the qualitative assessment can be undertaken before fees are considered. In addition, day rates will be requested.

HONORARIA

Each competitor that is shortlisted to take part in Stage 2 will be offered an honorarium as a contribution to expenses, of £2,000 + VAT, payable on receipt of a compliant submission.

JURY PANEL

The jury panel for this competition will be chaired by Jonathan Reekie, the Director of Somerset House, and include Brian Eno and Paul Goswell, both Trustees of Somerset House Trust, as well as a number of their external advisors, including Sarah Gaventa, Director of Illuminated River Foundation. Julia Barfield will be the independent Architectural Advisor. Any changes or additions to this panel will be posted on the competition website.
KEY PROGRAMME DATES

STAGE 1
22.07.19  Competition launch
02.08.19  Deadline for any queries about this competition
11.09.19  Deadline for receipt of Stage 1 submissions
25.09.19  Announcement of the shortlisted teams

STAGE 2
TBA  Site visit and briefing session
25.10.19  Deadline for receipt of Design Philosophy boards
05.11.19  Interviews with Jury Panel
22.11.19  Deadline for receipt of Design Delivery statement and fee proposal
04.12.19  Charrette with Jury Panel and other stakeholders
It is the intention to select a winner before the year end.

COPYRIGHT

The ownership of copyright of all ideas submitted as part of this competition will be in accordance with the Copyright, Designs & Patent Act 1988.

PUBLICITY

There will be publicity associated with this competition as it progresses. In particular there may be public interest around the Stage 2 shortlisting and the Stage 2 charrette. Stage 2 submissions will be used in publicity to announce the competition winner. By entering the competition, competitors acknowledge this fact, and freely consent to their submissions being used for this purpose.

DISQUALIFICATION

Any submission will be excluded from the competition if:
- It is received after the submission deadlines
- In the opinion of the Jury Panel, it does not fulfil the requirements of the brief
- A competitor improperly attempts to influence the decision
- Any of the mandatory requirements of the competition brief and conditions are disregarded.

THE SMALL PRINT

While the information contained in this document is believed to be correct at the time of issue, neither the Somerset House Trust nor its advisors make any warranty or representation (express or implied) with respect to such information; nor will they accept any liability for its accuracy, adequacy or completeness.

Colander Associates has taken all reasonable efforts to ensure that the information included is accurate, however, it cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies or inconsistencies.
VERSIONS OF THIS BRIEF

V02  Photo credits added.