

## Statement LOLA Landscape Architects and Bureau Bas Smets

Karlsruhe, November 20 2024

Dear Schelling Foundation, dear jurors, dear ladies and gentlemen,

We are honoured to be nominated for this award and thank the Schelling Foundation for inviting us here today. The ceremony is a moment we've been preparing for and looking forward to. And now that moment has arrived, but the controversy casts a shadow over what should have been a celebration of the wonderful profession of landscape architecture.

LOLA Landscape Architects and Bureau Bas Smets represent two of three practices nominated for the Schelling Architecture Prize Award 2024. James Bridle was the only nominee for the prize for Architectural Theory. Two days before the ceremony, we were informed that the Schelling Foundation had decided to withdraw James nomination after learning that James Bridle had signed an online petition supporting a boycott of Israeli cultural institutions. This has led to an uproar and questions about our position as nominees. The following statement is our response.

We regret the decision to withdraw the Architectural Theory Prize. And we believe that James Bridle has every right to express themselves in private and in public, and yes, the Schelling Foundation has the right to give the award to whomever it wishes. However, we believe in the value of an architecture prize that recognises the quality of work and its impact on the profession and the wider public. Architects and artists, and especially theorists, should be encouraged to engage in political activity, not be disqualified for doing so.

An award is a platform to encourage dialogue and bring people together to discuss different ways of looking at the world. In this case, the focus of this year's prize was on the state of our environment, climate adaptation and how we might live in the cities of the future. Important issues on which James Bridle has an original and powerful voice, as the Schelling Foundation has recognised by awarding them this prize.

In 1992, Werner Durth was the first winner of the Schelling Prize for Theory. He examined the role and moral position of architects who worked under the Nazi regime, including Erich Schelling. This self-examination by the Schelling Foundation was a bold and courageous decision to come to terms with the past. A kind of courage and openness to dialogue that we need in this day and age.

With regard to freedom of expression, we are facing a situation where now people censor themselves or cancel others for fear of retribution or repercussions. We do not believe in such restrictions and blockades, because the challenges facing our societies are global. We can discuss the quality of governance in different parts of the world, but is democracy not also at stake in Europe at the moment?

Both LOLA and BBS work globally and believe that in almost any context and at any time, landscape architects can make a meaningful contribution by engaging in open dialogue with other cultures. Dialogue is very important, especially with those with whom we disagree. We believe that landscape architecture is about caring for the whole planet, with all its challenges and complexities, transcending national boundaries and cultural differences.

In the past LOLA worked simultaneously on a project for the Beracha Foundation in Be'ersheva, and several projects for UN Habitat in Gaza. BBS has worked in the middle east and has lectured at universities in Jeruzalem and Tel Aviv. Those were challenging combinations, but it led to a meaningful dialogue, and landscape design for both cultures and contexts. A dialogue that we believe should not be avoided, but faced head on.

And that is why we are here today. You will see a movie of 10 minutes showcasing our reflection on our studios and works, with an optimistic and progressive approach to the challenges of our planet facing a climate.

Thank you on behalf of both our offices,

LOLA landscape Architects and Bureau Bas Smets