

The 5th Seoul Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism 2025

Open Call

The 5th **Seoul Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism 2025** (hereinafter referred to as the 5th Seoul Biennale) is looking to appoint 10 creatives to participate in our 'Creative Communities' programme during the period March – October 2025.

Under the direction of **Thomas Heatherwick**, its General Director, this fifth edition of the Seoul Biennale will explore how to make buildings in Seoul *radically more human*. It aims to bring together citizens, creatives, developers, academics and politicians to debate how we make cities more joyful and engaging.

1. Theme of the 5th Seoul Biennale

Cities are the greatest monuments to our species. They are the greatest leap forward that civilisation ever made. They are what you see of us from space!

But today, many cities around the world have become ugly and expensive, scarred by an epidemic of loneliness. More and more people are turning away from city life and the togetherness it represents. This is a genuine crisis for humanity.

The way we design the outside of buildings is a huge part of the problem. It profoundly affects our mood, emotions and behaviour. The science is increasingly clear: boring, soulless buildings are bad for our minds, bad for our bodies, and bad for society.

Which is why we need a new approach to architecture. One that puts human emotion back centre stage.

Seoul itself is a creative powerhouse. Changing and evolving. Looking forwards with a confidence and ambition that many other cities lack. It has emerged from years of relentless development and today feels like a richer, softer, more dynamic place. There is now a dialogue of old and new that reflects people's fondness for tradition while embracing the future.

This makes it the perfect setting to escape from all the tired conventions of a traditional Biennale, locked away in a conference centre, and start a big conversation with the public as well as the professional community.

In 2025, we will be asking the whole city of Seoul two big questions: **How do the buildings in this city make you feel?** and **How can we make them more joyful and engaging?**

These two questions will drive a public dialogue exploring:

- **The impact of the outside of buildings on passers-by**
- **How buildings make us feel and the idea of emotion as a function of design**
- **The importance of visual complexity and the way it affects our health and wellbeing**
- **How to create buildings that are loved and last, instead of being constantly demolished and rebuilt**

We are now looking to appoint a team of 10 'creators' to collaborate with communities in Seoul, interpret these questions and ideas together, and produce an artwork that will be showcased during the Biennale from September to October 2025.

2. Creative Communities Project and the Hero Installation

At the heart of the 5th Seoul Biennale will be a monumental piece embodying the voices of the citizens of Seoul and the urban dreams of building creators around the world.

Envisioned as a large-scale *Jogakbo* tapestry, it will stitch together the experience and ideas of these citizens and creators into a giant installation posing two fundamental questions: One about the present. One about the future. And together, this will spark a global conversation about the design of the outside of buildings, and how this profoundly shapes all our lives.

The reason for creating a giant *Jogakbo* is that it is made from many different pieces of fabric from a multitude of different places. We see this as a perfect metaphor for the Biennale as well as a way to literally construct a major installation, intended to display and celebrate the diverse perspectives of Seoul's communities and creators in a way that has never been done before.

Each creator selected through this open call will collaborate with a community in Seoul, helping them to explore the physical fabric of their neighbourhood. Acting as facilitators, the creators will help communities creatively express how the buildings make them feel — what they love, what they would fight to save, and what leaves them feeling down or indifferent. This process will result in one representative artwork from each community which will then be joined together to create a spectacular, citizen-inspired installation.

The emotions and ideas of participant creators and communities will be woven together into a tapestry that imagines a future where buildings speak to us as individuals, improve our health and togetherness, and are fundamentally sustainable because people love and care for them. This will be a powerful, collective vision both for Seoul and for the future of cities all around the world.

3. Collaborating with communities

This process will include:

- **Engaging with Communities:** Creators may either work with physical communities from specific places both north and south of the river, including new apartment complexes, historic districts, and cultural minorities, or with communities of interest connected through a shared passion for food or music, for example. The aim of each dialogue is to capture and express people's perspectives on how the architecture of Seoul affects their emotions and experience, and how it could change in future to improve their lives. There is no specific guidance on the number of meetings and workshops required during the period of four months. This is for each creator and community to decide together.
- **Creating the artwork:** Creators and communities will create individual works that form part of the larger *Jogakbo tapestry*. These works will relate directly to the theme of the Biennale and how to make the outsides of buildings radically more human. They may reflect a mix of media, including text, visual art, photography and physical elements. Creators will follow guidelines provided by the Biennale design team to ensure consistency and affordability while retaining their own creative freedom to produce extraordinary work.

4. Who Can Apply?

We encourage applications from a full range of creators, regardless of background, age, or career, including but not limited to:

- Architects, contemporary artists, photographers & videographers, fashion designers, and other creatives. Any group or an individual can take part.
- Creators with direct experience of collaborating with communities, ideally already working with a community in Seoul: either a geographic community in a specific neighbourhood or with a community of interest.
- Those with skills in media such as fabric, digital art, mixed media or installations
- Creators active in their fields within the past 10 years

Please note that applications are open to Creators of any nationality residing in Korea who can communicate effectively with communities in Seoul.

5. Application Guidelines

Please submit **an *Expression of Interest (Eoi)* in both Korean and English**, including:

- Creator's CV [**free format**] and an introduction to the community you wish to collaborate with (either a physical community or a community of interest) [**Please use attached Appendix 1**]. Each community should comprise of a minimum of 10 people and a maximum of 100 who you anticipate being actively creatively involved in the project.
- A proposal describing briefly how you would go about the process of engaging with this community over a period of 4 months, and the type of artwork that you plan to create (for example, illustration, models, photography, maps, textile, graphics etc) . [**Please use attached Appendix 3**].
- Up to 6 images or videos showcasing relevant past work (maximum 100MB)
- A statement explaining the relevance of this work to the theme of the 5th Seoul Biennale, including the two questions referenced in Section 2 of this document: *How do the buildings in this city make you feel?* and *How can we make them more joyful and engaging?* [**Please use attached Appendix 2**].

Please download the attached *Expression of Interest (Eoi)* Form for your reference.

Creators may participate either as individuals or as collective groups. For collective group participation, the application form must be submitted under the name of the group's representative. Additionally, a separate consent form, signed by all group members, must also be included. The representative is considered duly authorized to act on behalf of the group concerning qualifications, participation intent, and agreement to the Open Call rules. In the event of any legal disputes, the representative will assume full responsibility, and the Seoul Metropolitan Government, as the host, will not be held liable under any circumstances.

6. Submission process and timeline

- Open Call and Submission period: December 23, 2024 – February 02, 2025, 11:59 am KST
- Q&A: Inquiries until January 31, 2025, 09:00 am (KST)
- Screening period: February 3, 2025 - February 27, 2025

- Results announced: February 28, 2025

This schedule may be subject to change.

If you have any questions or inquiries regarding application, please contact us at sbau2025@gmail.com

The selection process will include two review points during which Thomas Heatherwick, as General Director, holds the ultimate decision-making authority, seeking advice from the Seoul Metropolitan Government, as the host of the Seoul Biennale. Shortlisted creators will be invited to a Zoom meeting to discuss their approach and vision.

Contracts will be issued following the announcement of the results, with selected creators working on a 4-month project from March to 30 June, as well as being involved in the opening of the 5th Seoul Biennale itself in September 2025.

Final Submission Guidelines (June 2025)

By June 30, 2025, creators must submit a final artwork that aligns with the 5th Seoul Biennale theme and contributes to the Hero Installation, our large-scale *Jogakbo*.

Your submission should include:

1. **The primary artwork**, which can be in various media, such as text, visual art, photography, sculpture, installation, or performance.
2. **A text explaining the artwork** (within a single page, provided separately in both Korean and English), describing the concept, creative process, and relevance to the theme.
3. **Documentation of the artwork**, including:
 - A primary high-quality digital image suitable for large-scale printing (10m x 10m at 200–300 DPI).
 - 2–3 additional digital images (in dimensions of 3m x 2m, 5m x 2m, or 3m x 3m at 150 DPI).
4. **Optionally, a physical artwork**, such as a painting, installation, or physical collage that matches specific dimensions, is weatherproof, and includes a fabric backing for installation.

Please note: Adjustments to the proportions and dimensions may be made in collaboration with Heatherwick Studio to ensure each of the artworks contributes cohesively to the whole installation.

7. Fees and Support

- Each selected creator will receive a total of **20,000,000 KRW (inclusive of VAT and other fees) upon signing the Agreement, in accordance with its terms**. The payment is payable in two installments: one at the project midpoint and one upon completion.
- Fees shall be fixed regardless of how the Creators work with Communities on each project, and no other monies will be paid to the creators.
- This fee includes all community engagement costs and shall be deemed sufficient to cover all expenses associated with the process (i.e. design, venues, materials, travel, food, production and delivery of physical works etc)

- The selected Creators are responsible for spending and managing the budget at their discretion.
- Technical support and resources, such as access to workshop venues or materials, are the responsibility of the creator.

8. Follow-up Agreements

- The selected Creators will sign a relevant Agreement with the Seoul Metropolitan Government
- The General Director may request development of the artwork and images to relate as closely as possible to the theme of the 5th Seoul Biennale.

9. Copyright

- **All works submitted shall be based on original ideas and shall not violate a person's copyright.**

All responsibilities for infringing on a third party's copyrights shall be borne by the Creators. In the case it is discovered that a selected work infringes on a third party's copyrights, the relevant status may be cancelled.

In the case a selected work is discovered to be associated with fraudulent (violation of copyrights) use of an award-winning work in another competition, a third party's creative work or his/her name, the selection shall be cancelled and the award certificate and money rescinded.

- **Creators and communities grant the Seoul Metropolitan Government full rights to use all deliverables(works, images, writings, materials, etc) for the purpose of executing tasks regarding the 5th Seoul Biennale.**

For all deliverables submitted to the Seoul Metropolitan Government(SMG) for the planning, implementation, and performance regarding the Seoul Biennale, copyright remains with the individual contributors, including the Creators and communities. The SMG may use the deliverables for purposes of the Seoul Biennale, such as promotion, documentation, and publications, including the right to create derivative works at no cost. This usage shall include proper copyright attribution, and shall not shall not infringe upon the moral rights of the Creators.

10. Other matters

Participants shall mark their consent to their participation in the open call in their application sheet. Failure to mark it will make their submission of work null and void.

Any disadvantages arising from incorrect contact information, such as phone numbers or email addresses, submitted during the application process are the responsibility of the creators and communities.

Any applicable taxes and fees regarding the payment are the responsibility of the recipient.

11. How to Apply

Applications must be submitted through the 5th Seoul Biennale email: sbau2025@gmail.com.
The deadline for submissions is **February 02, 2025, 11:59 am (KST)**.

For more details and application instructions, visit: [**seoulbiennale.org**](http://seoulbiennale.org)

This is an exceptional opportunity to contribute to a global debate about the future of building design and how to make cities radically more joyful and human.