



Northumbria University Interior Architecture graduates Khalil Abdulrahman and Amber Morley.

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Northumbria Architecture showcased at the Venice Biennale

Interior Architecture graduates from Northumbria University have presented their innovative solutions to addressing today's global housing challenges on an international stage as part of the 2025 Venice Biennale.

As a celebration of art and architecture, the Biennale is regarded as the world's most prestigious and recognised architecture exhibition. It attracts around half a million visitors to Venice and explores themes of politics, as well as contemporary cultural and social issues through an exhibition and

installations within a series of Pavilions occupied by countries from across the globe.

Northumbria [Interior Architecture](#) graduates Amber Morley and Khalil Abdulrahman have recently returned from a trip to the Biennale where they were selected to present their final year projects within the Austrian Pavilion as part of a collaborative multi-university initiative connecting institutions from across Europe called [Unconventional Affordable Housing \(UAH!\)](#).

The UAH! network of Schools of Architecture aims to explore unconventional housing solutions through a shared 'research by design' methodology, enabling students and academics to collectively address the housing crisis in innovative ways. Italy's Politecnico di Milano, Università degli Studi di Trieste and Politecnico di Bari are all part of the network along with Universität Innsbruck in Austria, Portugal's FAUP - Universidade do Porto, Universidade Lusófona Porto, Universidade de Coimbra, and IST - Universidade de Lisboa, and now Northumbria University.

Before graduating this summer, final year Interior Architecture students at Northumbria were set a design brief to develop proposals for the reconfiguration and adaptation of an historic building in heart of Newcastle City Centre into modern living spaces in response to the challenge set by the UAH! network.

For Amber, who plans to continue her studies at Northumbria in January on the [Postgraduate Certificate in Interior Architecture](#) programme, the project was an opportunity to look at ways of meeting the housing needs of an aging population. Her design "Fragments of the Past" was based around developing a community living environment for elderly residents to help address the issue of loneliness.

Amber, who spent time in Melbourne and Switzerland during a study abroad year within her degree, said taking part in the Venice Biennale was an unforgettable experience.

"I was honoured to be selected, together with Khalil, by UAH! and my programme to represent Northumbria University Interior Architecture at the Venice Biennale," she explained. "It was fascinating to take part in Unconventional Affordable Housing (UAH!) convention, collaborating with other European universities to rethink housing. The research network focuses

on developing affordable and adaptable solutions to the housing crisis through adaptive reuse projects. I was so proud to present my work within the Austrian Pavilion and to see it showcased alongside that of my talented peers. I can't wait to continue my studies at Northumbria and build on all the knowledge and experience I have gained from this opportunity."

Khalil, who described representing Northumbria as a "huge honour", was able to use his own experiences of being displaced due to conflict as a child, and settling in the North East with his Kurdish Syrian family, to inform his design. "Co-Living Newcastle" proposes the creation of co-living spaces for those rebuilding their lives in a new country with careful consideration for the individual needs and language requirements of different family dynamics, from multi-generational living to single parent families.

Speaking about his time in Venice, Khalil added: "It was an incredible experience to exchange perspectives and see our work showcased alongside inspiring projects from students across Europe, all addressing today's urgent housing challenges in innovative ways. I explored new approaches to affordable housing and had the opportunity to share my ideas with an international audience, something I am very grateful for."

[Experiential learning](#) is a cornerstone of Northumbria's strategy to power an inclusive economy – helping to place graduates in highly skilled jobs across the North East and beyond. The University has built a strong reputation for working with industry partners to offer high-quality, real-world learning experiences that enhance career opportunities – especially for students from backgrounds without ready access to professional networks.



Left to right, pictured in Northumbria University's Architecture studios in advance of the trip to the Venice Biennale are Paul Ring, Amber Morley, Francesca Lanz, Andrea Couture, Khalil Abdulrahman with Marta Avena from Politecnico di Milano and the UAH! project team.

[Paul Ring](#), Associate Professor and Head of Subject for Architecture at Northumbria said: "For Northumbria Architecture to be involved in the Biennale is hugely significant, I would describe it as a career defining opportunity for our students. In total, we were able to have eight student projects exhibited at the Austrian Pavilion in Venice, with Amber and Khalil selected to present their work in person. It was a pleasure to support them on behalf of Interior Architecture and Northumbria.

"Each of the universities involved contributed unique regional and cultural contexts, fostering an exchange of ideas that reflect both local challenges and global trends. This collective approach highlights the potential for cross-border solutions to issues of affordability, adaptability, and inclusivity in housing. Huge thanks must go to our colleagues in the UAH! Network and to the staff who have driven this project forward – Assistant Professors [Andrea Couture](#) and [Francesca Lanz](#)."

Andrea, who is the [BA Interior Architecture](#) Programme Leader, added: "We are immensely proud of this achievement and the learning experience this has provided for our students. Interior Architecture has a proud history of live projects and enriching the student experience. To be part of the Venice Biennale is a significant achievement for Northumbria. The students

presented with confidence and gave a great account of their ideas and design maturity. The work from all of our students was really well received at the Biennale.”

As part of Northumbria’s partnership with the British Council, two PhD researchers from the University – [Tim Ingleby and Harriette Moore](#) – [were awarded Venice Fellowships](#) earlier this year, giving them the opportunity to spend a month at the Venice Biennale to represent the UK within the British Pavilion.

Discover more about the [School of Architecture and Built Environment](#) at Northumbria University.

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