Research Strategy

Inspiring Creative Research and Practice

The BSR was founded in 1901 and received its first Royal Charter in June 1912. Following the International Exhibition held in Rome in 1911, the site of the magnificent Edwin Lutyens-designed British Pavilion was loaned in perpetuity to the British nation by the Commune of Rome on condition it be used exclusively as a residential research centre and visual art and architecture academy to support British and Commonwealth scholars, architects and artists. It has fulfilled this function to the present day.

In 1951 the BSR was nominated as a strategic partner in the UK/Italy Cultural Convention that legislated for the reciprocal promotion of the intellectual, artistic and scientific activities of the respective nation states. In 2018, in the shadow of Brexit, the BSR is proud to continue that tradition as we work on authoring a renewed UK/Italy bilateral Memorandum of Understanding on cultural cooperation in conjunction with the British Embassy and British Council in Italy and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in the UK.

Our history is a distinguished one at the heart of Rome, a city that transcends its status as the capital of a nation. It is not only the city where the European Economic Community (EEC) was founded in 1957 with the signing of the Treaty of Rome, but also the home of a second nation state, the Vatican City, the headquarters of the transnational community of Roman Catholicism. In addition, it hosts the United Nations Rome-based Agencies (RBAs): the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP). In the field of cultural heritage management, Rome is home to the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) which in late 2017 joined forces with The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to address the mounting threat to cultural heritage worldwide. In the field of earth
science and environmental studies Rome hosts the European Space Agency Centre for Earth Observation (ESRIN). We have hosted and worked with all these agencies on subjects ranging from cultural heritage in war zones to climate change.

In addition, the BSR is a major partner in two international research institute networks, one of which it founded in the aftermath of WW2. The Unione Internazionale degli Istituti di Archeologia, Storia e Storia dell’Arte now comprises a consortium of 39 European and International research academies and institutes based in Rome. In addition, the BSR is the largest member of the UK’s international network of overseas research institutes, the British International Research Institutes (BIRIs), whose members span the Mediterranean basin, Africa and the Middle East.

Our committee members and consultants hold major positions as international advisers to the Italian Ministry of Culture (MIBACT), as well as leading major ERC and ESF projects. Our Library leads the URBiS consortium of 23 Rome-based European research institutes with over 2.5 million records. In Britain our leadership status is recognised with two former Faculty members recently appointed Chairs of sub-panels 15 and 29 for REF2021, and multiple Turner Prize winners have been drawn from the ranks of our recent visual art and architecture award-holders.

**Our Strategy**

The BSR’s research strategy is informed by our assessment of the contribution we make, and the value we can add, to the government’s strategic priorities in research and the creative sector as defined in the 2017 Higher Education and Research Act and Industrial Strategy White Paper. As an institution that has always combined research and practice, we believe we are ideally placed to deliver on the UK’s strategic priorities in research and innovation through our support and mentoring of the most talented scholars of the art, history and culture of the Mediterranean from prehistory to the present day, and of contemporary architects, artists and curators. Our current research themes include Rome: History, Place and Imagination; Landscapes and Urbanscapes; Conservation, Heritage Management and Sustainability; and Connectivity in the Mediterranean.

Our aim is to act as a catalyst for academic research and creative practice through engagement with Mediterranean, Italian and Rome-based international agencies to enhance connectivity, partnership and collaboration for UK and Commonwealth researchers and creative artists. We are looking to strengthen existing relationships and build further capacity within a European and International framework by ensuring continued access to international facilities and institutions. The BSR acts as a major research node in the UK’s overseas research infrastructure.

Our ambition is to secure enhanced resource to help mitigate the impact of Brexit on the visibility and international presence of the UK’s research and cultural sectors. We will act as a bridgehead to Italy, Europe and the Commonwealth. We will offer a gateway to sustain and further develop international collaboration in research, innovation and the creative industries. Our historic strength in the fields of Humanities and Social Sciences and Visual Art and Architecture means we have always worked as an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary institution engaging with a wide variety of media.

**Priorities**

- To continue to attract and transform the very best of the UK and Commonwealth’s early career academics and creative talents in an international context. As members of a vibrant
and non-hierarchical interdisciplinary residential community that promotes dialogue and experimentation in a supportive environment, we will provide them with the necessary resources and support throughout their careers.

- To increase our capacity for both research and practice through an ambitious multi-million-pound building programme (New Master Plan), which will create additional capacity for library and archive resources, new studio and exhibition spaces, a special collections facility and additional capacity in the residency.

- To secure increased strategic investment in support of our infrastructure and the full range of our planned activities considering the UKRI Landscape Review and the additional £2bn Research and Development funding due by 2020. Currently only c. 47% of our c. £2m annual income comes from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) via the British Academy.

- To secure UKRI acknowledgement of the interrelationship between our humanities and social science research and our visual art and architecture research and practice in the awarding and administration of funds. Given the restrictions placed on the use of our grant by the BA, government funding to date has had to be used exclusively for humanities and social science activity, with no support for our work in the creative and curatorial sector.

- To secure, in collaboration with the BIRI network of international research institutes, analogue status to ensure equity of treatment in terms of accessing competitive research funding on a par with comparable consortia of UK-based research institutes, such as the School for Advanced Studies, University of London. Historically we have been declared ineligible to apply to UK Research Councils for research funding with Principal Investigator status, and this has limited our ability to develop new research projects and collaborations.

Activity/Delivery

- We will work to offer opportunities to the very best UK and Commonwealth talent through expanding our competitive fellowship programmes and through extending our collaboration with UK-based Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs) in terms of training in skills and methods and of international PhD student placement opportunities.

- We will work to showcase the best of UK and Commonwealth talent through a dynamic programme of public events, lectures, conferences, exhibitions, workshops, installations and performances, all of which we will relay through social media platforms and in conjunction with partner UK agencies in Italy.

- We will work to mentor that talent through mobilising our extensive alumni base, which is drawn from a broad range of sector leaders in academia, the cultural industries and museum and gallery sector, and the diplomatic and political realms.

- We will work to increase our bilateral activity as a broker in the Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums sector (GLAM) between cultural partners in Italy and the UK (e.g. Tate, National Gallery, British Library, National Portrait Gallery, V&A, British Museum, National
Archive, and cognate institutions in Italy: MAXXI, Cinecittà, BNCR, Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione (ICCD), Biblioteca Vaticana.

- We will work to provide a unique European platform for the work of UK HEIs across the humanities and social sciences, as well as help them more effectively broker targeted research programmes such as the Open World Research Initiative (OWRI) and the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), establishing dialogue with Rome-based global and European agencies such as the RBAs and ESRIN.

- We will work to host seminars and conferences that bring other UK institutions in Rome together with researchers and representatives of UK and Italian-based HEIs and NGOs working on issues of migration, interfaith dialogue, radicalisation and integration, peace and conflict resolution (e.g. HM Embassy to Holy See, Venerable English College in Rome, Anglican Centre in Rome).

- We will work to extend our existing co-operation and collaboration with Italian national cultural agencies concerned with the curation and conservation of cultural heritage both in Italy and elsewhere in the Mediterranean: Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione ed il Restauro (ISCR) and Istituto Centrale per il Restauro e la Conservazione del Patrimonio Archivistico e Librario (ICRCPAL).

- We will work to maintain our pre-eminence as innovators and leaders in the URBiS consortium of Roman research libraries by expanding our digital platform for archival and special collections material in conjunction with existing partners such as the Getty Research Institute, Packard Humanities Institute and King’s College London.

- We will work to maintain and enhance our international pre-eminence in the field of archaeological research, global fieldwork and European grant capture, helping build key new collaborations with European and international research institutions.

- We will work with the British Council to establish a UK/Italy visual arts, architecture and design collaboration involving the BSR, Venice Biennale, and Italy and UK City of Culture programmes.

- We will work to publish and disseminate our research and practice as widely as possible to ensure its impact through our partnership with Cambridge University Press, both in the journal *Papers of the British School at Rome* and the *British School at Rome Studies* series, in addition to traditional and social media channels.

This research strategy will be reviewed annually at both BSR advisory committees and approved by the BSR’s Council. Specific research themes are being reviewed considering this strategy statement.

Stephen J. Milner

*Director* 9 March 2018