 

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 08.30 GMT ON MONDAY 9 APRIL 2018**

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**CATHY WILKES TO REPRESENT GREAT BRITAIN AT THE 58th INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION – LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA**

**The British Council is delighted to announce that Cathy Wilkes has been selected to represent Great Britain at the 58th International Art Exhibition** – **La Biennale di Venezia, presenting a major solo exhibition of new work opening on 11 May 2019 and running till 24 November 2019.**

Since the late 1990s, Glasgow-based Cathy Wilkes (b. 1966, Dundonald, Belfast) has built a considerable reputation for sculptural installations of profound and mysterious intensity, which often evoke interiors and places of loss. Cathy Wilkes insists on the private life of the artist, and questions how art can relate to human experience. Cathy Wilkes’s work is tender, intimate, autobiographical – yet universal, inspiring the writer Laura McLean-Ferris to describe Wilkes’s recent survey at MoMA PS1 in New York earlier this year as “this magnificent exhibition”.

The fierce integrity of her work is widely acknowledged, and, in 2016, she was awarded the inaugural Maria Lassnig Prize – a prestigious honour to recognise the achievements of mid-career artists.

To widen access to international working for UK visual arts professionals, the British Council has for the first time, created an opportunity for a UK-based mid-career curator to curate the British Pavilion. The British Council is delighted to announce that, following an open call selection process, Dr Zoe Whitley, Curator International Art, Tate, has been appointed to this position.

**Emma Dexter, British Council Director Visual Arts, Commissioner of the British Pavilion and Chair of the British Pavilion Selection Committee, said**: “The British Council is delighted that Cathy Wilkes has been selected to represent the UK at the Biennale Arte 2019. Cathy Wilkes’s distinctive and highly personal sculptural installations, evoking the rituals of daily life while alluding to existential questions at the core of human existence, will trigger complex new meanings and atmospherics within the grand domestic architecture of the British Pavilion. I am in no doubt that her exhibition will be a unique and powerful contribution to the Biennale Arte 2019. We are also really excited that Dr Zoe Whitley will be working alongside both the British Council and the artist to help bring this fascinating artist’s work to the global audience for La Biennale di Venezia.”

**Hugh Mulholland, Senior Curator at The Mac, Belfast and member of the British Pavilion Selection Committee, said**: “Cathy Wilkes is a deeply thoughtful artist; central to her practice is a desire to give voice to an inner world, to understand the human condition and to address an emotional deficit at the core of society, a preoccupation which could not be more apt for the current world order. Her presence at the Biennale Arte 2019 is a fitting acknowledgement of her considerable achievements to date.”

**Fiona Bradley, Director of The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh and member of the British Pavilion Selection Committee, said**: “I am pleased to have been part of this year’s Selection Committee and for Cathy Wilkes to be the selected artist. Cathy Wilkes’s work is eloquent and engaging, with an uncompromising visual intelligence that will reach across national borders to appeal to the many and diverse audiences for the Biennale Arte 2019.”

**Dr Zoe Whitley, Curator at Tate Modern and Curator of the British Pavilion at the Biennale Arte 2019 said**: “It’s a privilege and the most wonderful responsibility to be entrusted with curating the British Pavilion. I'm thrilled to collaborate with Cathy Wilkes and the British Council in such a unique capacity; to consider, to learn from and to convey the work of such a significant artist is an exciting challenge.”

**Amanda Catto, Head of Visual Arts, Creative Scotland, said**: “The Scotland + Venice partners – Creative Scotland, National Galleries of Scotland and British Council Scotland – are delighted to hear that Cathy Wilkes has been selected to represent Great Britain at the Biennale Arte 2019. Cathy Wilkes is a remarkable artist, making complex and emotionally powerful work.  This is a tremendous accolade for Cathy Wilkes and an affirmation of the exceptional quality of art making that is taking place in Scotland today.”

**Suzanne Lyle, Head of Visual Arts, Arts Council of Northern Ireland said:** “It is so delightful to have an artist of Cathy’s calibre, with a Northern Ireland connection, representing the UK at the Biennale Arte 2019. Her work and her role in Venice will be an inspiration to the rich seam of visual artists from these shores. The British Council’s selection of Cathy Wilkes’s work is recognition of her artistic excellence; it is well-deserved and we send her our heartfelt congratulations.”

**The 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, which is the foremost global presentation of visual art, will run from 11 May 2019 to 24 November 2019.**

The British Council has been responsible for the British Pavilion in Venice since 1937, showcasing the best of the UK's artists, architects, designers and curators. In 2014 the British Council created the Venice Fellowships programme to offer students, artists and architects the opportunity to spend a month at the Biennale conducting research alongside the exhibition.

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Please find the full press pack, including images here: venicebiennale.britishcouncil.org/press

**Updates online**
Follow updates on the #BritishPavilion2019, #UKinVenice2019

Twitter: @Brit\_VisualArts
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Find out more about the British Pavilion in Venice: venicebiennale.britishcouncil.org

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For out of hours media enquiries call 07469 375160.

**Notes to Editors**

**About Cathy Wilkes**

Cathy Wilkes (b. 1966, Dundonald, Belfast, lives and works in Glasgow, UK) graduated with a BA from The Glasgow School of Art in 1988, and completed her MFA at the University of Ulster, Belfast in 1992.

Wilkes has produced an outstanding and unique body of work spanning 25 years, she is widely acknowledged as one of the most influential artists working in the UK today.

In 2016, she was the inaugural recipient of the Maria Lassnig Prize and presented the largest solo exhibition of her work to date at MoMA PS1, New York (2017-2018).

Selected solo exhibitions include: The Modern Institute, Glasgow (2016); Tate Liverpool, touring to LENTOS Kunstmuseum, Linz and Museum Abteiberg, Möenchengladbach (2015 - 2016); Tramway, Glasgow (2014); The Modern Institute, Glasgow (2012); ‘I Give You All My Money’, The Renaissance Society, University of Chicago, Chicago (2012); Gesellschaft Fur Aktuelle Kunst, Bremen (2011); Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (2011); Kunstverein, Munich (2011); Aspen Art Museum, Aspen (2011); and ‘Mummy’s Here’, Studio Voltaire, London (2009).

Wilkes was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2008. She represented Scotland in the Biennale Arte 2005 as part of the exhibition ‘Selective Memory’, and was featured in ‘The Encyclopedic Palace’, part of the Biennale Arte 2013, Venice.

Selected recent group exhibitions include: 13th Fellbach Triennial of Small-Scale Sculpture, Fellbach (2016); ‘The Great Mother’, Palazzo Reale, Milan (2015); ‘The Human Factor’, The Hayward Gallery, London (2014); ‘The Encyclopedic Palace’, Biennale Arte 2013, Venice; ‘Studio 58: Women Artists in Glasgow Since WWII’, Mackintosh Museum, The Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow (2012); and ‘Abstract Resistance’, Walker Arts Centre, Minneapolis (2010).

**About Dr Zoe Whitley**

Dr Zoe Whitley is Curator, International Art at Tate Modern. She recently co-curated the acclaimed exhibition *Soul of a Nation.* Prior to joining Tate, she was a Curator at the V&A, having also curated exhibitions in the USA and South Africa.

**About the British Council**

The British Council is the UK’s international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We work with over 100 countries in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Last year we reached over 65 million people directly and 731 million people overall including online, broadcasts and publications. We make a positive contribution to the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. Founded in 1934 we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body. We receive 15 per cent core funding grant from the UK government. [britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)

**About the British Council at the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale Di Venezia**

The British Council appoints a committee of leading arts professionals from across the UK to select the British representation for the Biennale Arte every two years. For further information please visit [www.britishcouncil.org/venicebiennale](http://www.britishcouncil.org/venicebiennale)

**Members of the British Pavilion Selection Committee for 2019**:

* Hugh Mulholland, Senior Curator, The Mac, Belfast
* Fiona Bradley, Director, Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh
* Sarah Munro, Director, BALTIC Centre of Contemporary Art, Gateshead
* David A. Bailey, Director, International Curators Forum
* Joe Scotland, Director, Studio Voltaire, London
* Katy Freer, Exhibitions Officer, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea
* Anne Barlow, Artistic Director, Tate St Ives
* Martin Herbert, Writer and Critic
* Melanie Keen, Director, Iniva

**Members of the British Pavilion Curator Selection Panel for 2019:**

* Chair: Emma Dexter, Director Visual Arts, British Council
* Gemma Hollington, Director Exhibitions, Visual Arts, British Council
* Sara Black, Senior Project Manager Venice, British Council
* David A. Bailey, Director, International Curators Forum

The British Council has commissioned artists to represent Britain at the Venice Biennale to celebrate the best of emerging and established British art since 1937. Artists representing Britain have included Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, Ben Nicholson, Anthony Caro, Bridget Riley, Richard Long, Frank Auerbach, Howard Hodgkin, Barry Flanagan, Anish Kapoor, Richard Hamilton, Rachel Whiteread, Leon Kossoff, Gary Hume, Mark Wallinger, Gilbert & George, Tracey Emin, Steve McQueen, Mike Nelson, Jeremy Deller, Sarah Lucas and Phyllida Barlow.

**About Creative Scotland**

Creative Scotland is the public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries across all parts of Scotland on behalf of everyone who lives, works or visits here.  We enable people and organisations to work in and experience the arts, screen and creative industries in Scotland by helping others to develop great ideas and bring them to life.  We distribute funding provided by the Scottish Government and the National Lottery. For further information about Creative Scotland please visit [www.creativescotland.com](http://www.creativescotland.com/).  Follow us @creativescots and[www.facebook.com/CreativeScotland](http://www.facebook.com/CreativeScotland)

**About The Arts Council of Northern Ireland**

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is the lead development agency for the arts in Northern Ireland. It is the main support for artists and art organisations throughout the region, offering a broad range of funding opportunities through its Exchequer and National Lottery funding streams.