

**OPEN CALL: THE
SHANE AKEROYD
ASSOCIATE
CURATOR OF THE
BRITISH PAVILION**

**THE BRITISH COUNCIL COMMISSION
AT THE 60TH INTERNATIONAL ART
EXHIBITION – LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA**

1. About the British Council

The British Council has been responsible for the British Pavilion at the International Art and Architecture Exhibitions of La Biennale di Venezia since 1937, showcasing the best of the UK's artists, architects, designers and curators. These exhibitions, and the British Council's Venice Fellowships initiative introduced in 2014, help make the British Pavilion a major platform for discussion about contemporary art and architecture.

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 80 million people directly and 791 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 an executive non-departmental public body. For more information on us please visit britishcouncil.org

2. The Invitation

The British Council is delighted to announce the opportunity for a curator to collaborate with British artist John Akomfrah RA on the development of his Commission for the 60th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, opening in Venice in April 2024. This role provides a unique platform for a curator with experience of commissioning new work and writing for a variety of audiences to take the next step in their career. They will represent Britain and the British Council through participation in an exceptional exhibition and its associated programme.

This role is not a full-time appointment, but the Curator must have the capacity to start in April 2023 and will complete their engagement in November 2024 when the exhibition closes in Venice.

A fee of up to £20,000 is offered for the role subject to confirmation of deliverables upon appointment, since two of the deliverables are optional. Suggested deliverables are outlined in part 6 below.

We particularly welcome and encourage applications from candidates who are under-represented in the Visual Arts sector.

Submissions must be received by **23:59 UK time on 19 March 2023**.

The application process has two stages:

Stage 1

Applications submitted via open call

Please use: <https://airtable.com/embed/shrwLpkt8GSaNRkyU> to complete the application form for this position. Please note, we recommend you keep a copy of your answers as you will not receive an automated copy of your response and if you leave the browser before the form is submitted, your application will not be saved.

Stage 2

Shortlisted candidates will be invited for interview with a panel comprising the British Council and artist.

Key dates

See Appendix A for a detailed timeline.

27 February 2023	Open Call Launched
10 March 2023	Deadline for clarification questions
19 March 2023	Deadline for applications
29 March 2023	Shortlisted candidates invited for interview
05 - 06 April 2023	Shortlisted candidates are interviewed
26 April 2023	Curator appointed
TBC May 2023	Press release announcing appointment

3. Who can apply

This opportunity is offered to contemporary visual arts curatorial professionals who are either independent or are working in or affiliated with organisations in the arts and creative sectors. You must be able to demonstrate strong curatorial experience but should also be at a stage in your career where you would benefit from the unique international exposure that a platform such as the Venice Biennale provides.

Experience of commissioning new work and working alongside artists as they develop their ideas is essential. You will be supported by experienced members of British Council staff in your relationship with the Artist, the Biennale, other stakeholders and the media. Media training will be offered as part of the programme. As a result of this opportunity, you will have:

- gained insights and knowledge of John Akomfrah's practice
- learnt about the Venice Biennale and the wider cultural ecology of Venice
- participated in a high-pressure media and stakeholder environment during opening week
- developed new public speaking and media skills and confidence

- increased your media profile and global contacts significantly
- learnt more about the cultural relations work of the British Council and the interplay of contemporary culture and national identity at the core of the Venice Biennale

4. About the artist



John Akomfrah at his London studio, 2016. © Jack Hems

In December 2022 John Akomfrah RA was selected to represent Great Britain at the 60th International Art Exhibition by the British Pavilion Selection committee:

Mariam Zulfiqar	Director, Artangel
Ekow Eshun	Curator and Editor-in-Chief Tank magazine
Melissa Appleton	Director of Programme Peak Cymru and de Appel Curatorial Fellow 2023
Kim McAleese	Director, Edinburgh Art Festival
Melanie Pocock	Acting Artistic Director, Exhibitions, Ikon
Khanyisile Mbongwa	Curator, Liverpool Biennial
Emma Ridgway	Chief Curator, Modern Art Oxford and Curator (Shane Akeroyd Associate Curator), British Pavilion, La Biennale di Venezia 2022.

John Akomfrah RA initially came to prominence in the early 1980s as part of the Black Audio Film Collective (BAFC), a group of seven artists founded in 1982. The BAFC's first film was Handsworth Songs (1986) which explored the events around the 1985 riots in Birmingham and

London. In recent years, his multichannel video works have evolved into ambitious, multi-screen installations shown in galleries and museums worldwide. In 2017, he won the Artes Mundi prize, the UK’s biggest award for international art. He has previously participated in La Biennale di Venezia with his piece Four Nocturnes, commissioned for the inaugural Ghana Pavilion in 2019.

On accepting the British Council commission, John Akomfrah said:

'It is a huge privilege and an honour to be asked to represent the UK at the 60th Venice Biennale – it is without a doubt one of the most exciting opportunities that an artist can be presented with. I see this invitation as recognition of, and a platform for all those I have collaborated with over the decades, and who continue to make my work possible. I'm grateful to be given a moment to explore the complex history and significance of this institution and the nation it represents, as well as its architectural home in Venice – with all the stories it has told and will continue to.'

5. Working with the British Council

The British Council’s work in Venice aims to support and encourage collaboration, dialogue and exchange between the UK and the international art sector. Reporting to the Commissioner, the successful applicant will work closely with the British Council’s commissioning team to support delivery of the exhibition, interpretation content and associated public engagement and promotional activities in London and Venice. The Commissioner will have responsibility for final sign-off for all the associate curator’s deliverables.

The British Council is here to support the selected artist and associate curator and help realise the vision for the project. To do this, the British Council’s core Venice team provides support for marketing, PR, project management, programming, production and logistics.

The British Council’s communications team will run a focused and dedicated integrated campaign to publicise the project to a wide range of media, including national outlets from the UK and the international arts media.

6. Deliverables

Suggested deliverables and the timing of these will be approximately as follows:

Period	Deliverables
April – December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend an agreed schedule of team meetings online and occasionally at the British Council office in London Attend two (two-day) recce trips to the British Pavilion in Venice with the British Council team and the artist Organise preparatory conversations and developing exhibition narratives with the artist Write exhibition interpretation materials including for the exhibition guide and graphics and slide decks on the exhibition narrative for internal and external stakeholders

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend fundraising events to help garner support for the exhibition and associated programme among British Council external stakeholders, including patrons. • Collaborate with the British Council Venice team to develop a public programme of events, talks and other engagement activity in relation to the artist's proposal and exhibition • Attend media launches, press conferences and interviews. This requires availability for select media interviews and events before launch • <i>Optional deliverable: Write a 10-15,000 word contribution for a catalogue of the exhibition (to be confirmed on appointment)</i> • <i>Optional deliverable: Contribute to creative discussions with the artist on the development of the British Pavilion commission (to be confirmed on appointment).</i>
January – June 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the films made by British Council to promote the exhibition • Contribute to the Fellowship programme by speaking about the exhibition content and curatorial process at their induction/training days both in the UK and Venice • Undertake at least one further visit to the Pavilion during artist installation to support the artist and British Council Venice team. • Attend the Biennale opening week in Venice to support the British Council's opening events and official receptions by speaking publicly at events, promoting the exhibition to the press, leading tours for external partners and key stakeholders including government representatives and take part in all associated programming including communications • Attend fundraising events to help garner support for the exhibition and associated programme among British Council external stakeholders, including patrons.
July – December 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present a follow up on-line session with all fellows towards the end of the exhibition to reflect on the exhibition, its reception and your own learning and professional development that has resulted from this opportunity • Take part in lessons learned and feedback meetings after the exhibition's closure in November, and submit a written report on your experiences and what you have learned and gained from the experience • Attend fundraising events to help garner support for the exhibition and associated programme among British Council external stakeholders, including patrons.
After December 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the event that the exhibition tours after the presentation in Venice, you will not play an active role in the tour, but you may be engaged separately by the respective tour venues to deliver talks or take part in events as required.

7. Payment Schedule

The successful applicant will be expected to sign a contract with the British Council and will receive a Fee of **up to £20,000 (subject to confirmation of deliverables on appointment)**. This fee is to cover the time and work required to meet the Deliverables. It will be paid in the following instalments.

Payment date	Deliverable	Payment
Payment 1: July 2023	Delivery of exhibition concept narrative (25%)	Up to £5,000
Payment 2: January 2024	Delivery of interpretation texts (25%)	Up to £5,000
Payment 3: May 2024	Opening of exhibition to public (25%)	Up to £5,000
Payment 4: November 2024	Completion and closure of exhibition (25%)	Up to £5,000
Total		Up to £20,000

Travel expenses, including flights, hotels and subsistence, will be organised and paid for by the British Council.

8. Application process and submission requirements

The open call application is a two-stage process.

Stage 1: Applications submitted via open call by 23:59 UK time 19 March 2023

Stage 2: Shortlisted candidates interviewed by a selection panel between 05 and 06 April 2023

Please use the online form at <https://airtable.com/embed/shrwLpkt8GSaNRkyU> to submit your application.

Eligibility

You must meet all three of the following criteria to be considered for this position.

1. You should live and/or work in Britain. You do not need to have been born in the UK.
2. You must be the Curator for the British Pavilion in Venice only. You cannot perform any other role within the Venice Biennale's 60th edition such as working for other National Participations or Collateral Events in Venice.
3. (a) We welcome applications from curators both employed by organisations and those working independently but you must be able to take time away from other commitments to fulfil the work of the Associate Curator.

(b) If you are invited to interview, you should provide a letter of support from your current employer(s) if applicable, confirming you will be given appropriate time off work for this work.

Selection Criteria

The shortlisting process to determine who will be called to interview will be based on scoring applications against the criteria below and will be carried out by the British Council. Due to the volume of submissions, we will be unable to give feedback to applicants.

If your application is eligible, your CV, examples of published work and personal statement will be awarded points as follows:

Selection Criteria	Points (out of 100)	Evaluation of:
Significant curatorial experience and an excellent knowledge of contemporary British art	20	CV
Experience of working with and collaborating with artists on commissions of new work	20	CV
Experience of writing about contemporary art for a wide range of audiences (three examples of written work from public platforms or published materials to be submitted as part of online application)	15	Online application
Experience of public speaking such as media interviews, panel discussions, curator led tours for stakeholders, along with an existing social media profile which you are confident to use for the Associate Curator role as per agreed guidelines	15	CV
What interests and excites you about working alongside John Akomfrah RA for the 60th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia? Please highlight those aspects of John Akomfrah's practice and career that present the greatest opportunity for developing your curatorial practice	20	Online application
How will you ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are promoted through the British Pavilion in accordance with the Purpose and Values of the British Council?	10	Online application

Shortlisted applicants will be advised of the structure and format of the interview

9. Background

La Biennale di Venezia

With up to 500,000 international visitors each year, the Venice Biennale is one of the longest running cultural festivals in the world. It is renowned for setting new global trends and launching the international careers of many pioneering artists and architects. The Biennale presents an unparalleled opportunity for international cultural and political networking, and offers a unique platform, bringing together leading artists and curators from around the world. It is a remarkable opportunity to demonstrate the UK's strength in art and architecture.

For more information about La Biennale di Venezia, visit: www.labiennale.org/en

The International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia is the foremost global presentation of visual art, with an unrivalled international reputation for excellence in the sector. The artist representing Great Britain in 2024 is John Akomfrah RA. Find out more about the British Pavilion and our previous exhibitions: www.britishcouncil.org/venicebiennale

With over 500,000 international visitors each year, the Venice Biennale is one of the longest running cultural festivals in the world. The Venice Biennale (La Biennale di Venezia) is renowned for setting new global trends and launching the international careers of many pioneering artists and architects. The Biennale presents an unparalleled opportunity for international cultural networking, and offers a unique platform, bringing together leading artists, architects and curators from around the world. It is a remarkable opportunity to demonstrate the UK's strength in art and architecture. At the British Pavilion, we commission ground-breaking new projects, promoting the best of British visual arts and architecture.

The International Art Exhibition is the oldest regular contemporary art exposition in the world and inclusion in the Biennale can have a substantial impact on an artist's international career. Being selected to represent the UK at the Venice Biennale offers an artist the opportunity to display their work on this hugely prestigious platform alongside other national representations from across the globe. The Venice Biennale also appoints a guest curator for each Art Biennale to curate a major international exhibition organised around an overarching theme. That exhibition combined with the national pavilion exhibitions form the main component of the official Biennale, which attracts significant critical attention from arts professionals, the media and visitors.

During the seven months of the Biennale, Venice becomes a showcase for international contemporary art, with a large audience visiting the official Biennale as well as a host of complementary exhibitions and collateral events across the city. This audience consists of curators, artists, leaders of global museums, collectors, gallerists, journalists, critics and a diverse public audience. Association with the Biennale brings huge international exposure to artists – creating new global audiences, platforms and opportunities for them and their work. The British Pavilion is an exceptional platform for highlighting the innovation, ingenuity and diversity of the British contemporary art scene.

The British Council has owned and managed the British Pavilion in Venice since 1937, over the years showing the work of an incredible range of internationally renowned artists and architects such as: Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Anish Kapoor, Richard Rogers, Rachel Whiteread,

Chris Ofili, Zaha Hadid, Steve McQueen, Sarah Lucas, Phyllida Barlow, Cathy Wilkes and Sonia Boyce OBE RA. As owner of the British Pavilion, the British Council commissions an artist or architect to present an exhibition in the pavilion each year and manages its delivery and display.

For more information about La Biennale di Venezia, visit: www.labiennale.org/en

The British Pavilion



The Commission will be shown at the British Pavilion which is located in the Giardini, the main site for the national presentations of the Venice Biennale. The British Council has been responsible for the British Pavilion since 1937 and is renowned for commissioning ground-breaking projects of the highest calibre, promoting the best of British visual art and architecture.

The British Pavilion is a listed building, which means we are not permitted to undertake extensive structural alterations. Originally built as the tea-room for the public gardens, it dates from 1897 and consists of six galleries, five of which are of a relatively domestic scale.

Find out more about the British Pavilion and our previous exhibitions:

www.britishcouncil.org/venicebiennale

10. Venice Fellowships

The Fellowships programme was initiated in 2014 by the British Council to strengthen the British Pavilion as a platform for ideas and research. Each year, the Fellowships provide a unique opportunity for up to 60 students and young people to gain invaluable experience over a month at the British Pavilion. Fellows use their time in Venice to undertake their own research programme and help us to steward the pavilion to ensure works and visitors are protected and to encourage audience engagement. Fellows are selected through British Council partner universities and organisations. For more information, please visit:

www.venicebiennale.britishcouncil.org/fellowship

11. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The British Council has a strong commitment to equality, inclusion and diversity. We are a disability confident employer and aim to create opportunities and reduce barriers for everyone, particularly under-represented groups. The Associate Curator will support the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion are promoted through the British Pavilion.

12. Clarification Questions

Should you have any clarification questions about the nomination process and the Commission, please contact us at british.pavilion@britishcouncil.org. All enquiries should be made by **10 March 2023**. The British Council will aim to respond to questions that are made before this deadline, within 2 working days.

13. Resources

For more information about the British Pavilion's previous exhibitions and Venice Fellowships initiative, visit: www.britishcouncil.org/venicebiennale

For more information about the Venice Biennale, visit: www.labiennale.org/en

ENDS

Appendix A

Associate Curator Timeline

Open call for British Pavilion Venice 2024 Curator goes live	27 February 2023
Deadline for clarification questions	10 March 2023
Open call for British Pavilion Venice 2024 Curator closes	19 March 2023
Advise candidates of interview dates	29 March 2023
Curator interviews – with Artist	05-06 April 2023
Curator appointment offered	14 April 2023
Curator in position	26 April 2023
2024 British Pavilion Curator announcement press release	May 2023 TBC
Recce trip to Venice with Artist and British Council	May 2023 TBC
Exhibition concept shared by artist	TBC May/June 2023
Exhibition narrative and slide deck provided to British Council by Associate Curator	TBC May/June 2023
Development of pavilion production plans	June-September 2023
Second Recce trip to Venice (for pavilion production planning)	TBC August 2023
Begin selection of contractors for pavilion production	TBC September 2023
Fabricators, installers, suppliers appointed	TBC November 2023
Third recce trip to Venice	TBC Jan/Feb 2024
Exhibition installation	04 - 22 March 2024
Exhibition installation completed	22 March 2024
Exhibition installation photography	25 March 2024
Filming Artist and Curator in the British Pavilion for British Council promotional film	26-27 March 2024
Press preview day in Venice	16 April 2024
Pre-Opening Week (access to invited guests)	17 - 19 April 2024
Official British Pavilion opening (Ribbon cutting)	17 April 2024



British Pavilion Stakeholders Opening Reception	17 April 2024
Golden Lion Award Ceremony	20 April 2024
Open to public	20 April - 24 November 2024
Deinstallation	25 November - 13 December 2024