



La Biennale di Venezia

59. Esposizione  
Internazionale  
d'Arte  
Partecipazioni Nazionali



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**More details and exhibition title announced for Sir John Akomfrah RA at the British Pavilion, 60th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia**



Portrait of John Akomfrah. Photographer: Christian Cassiel  
© John Akomfrah; Courtesy Lisson Gallery

**The British Council is delighted to announce more details of John Akomfrah's commission for the British Pavilion, entitled *Listening All Night To The Rain*.**

*Listening All Night To The Rain* continues artist and filmmaker John Akomfrah's investigation into themes of memory, migration, racial injustice and climate change with a renewed focus on the act of listening and the sonic. The exhibition, conceived as a single installation with eight interlocking and overlapping multi-screen sound and time-based works, is seen as a manifesto that encourages the idea of listening as activism and positions various progressive theories of *acoustemology*: how new ways of becoming are rooted in different forms of listening. Encouraging visitors to experience the British Pavilion's 19th century neoclassical



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building in a different way, Akomfrah's commission interprets and transforms the fabric of the space in order to interrogate relics and monuments of colonial histories.

Open-ended in structure, the alliterative nature of the exhibition is reflective of the artist's abiding interest in non-linear forms of storytelling and collage. *Listening All Night To The Rain* repositions the role of art in its ability to write history in unexpected ways, forming both critical and poetic connections between different geographies and time periods.

John Akomfrah said:

*"Listening All Night To The Rain* alludes to the performative power that the sonic will hold in the Pavilion. The final ensemble of installations – iterations of acoustemology – detours back to questions of memory and of memorial but from a different vantage point, questioning the architectonics of the present and the spectres of the past, with the idea of listening as activism in mind. I sense that one can know the world – that you can find a name, an identity and a sense of belonging – via the sonic."

Tarini Malik, Shane Akeroyd Associate Curator of the British Pavilion said:

*"John Akomfrah's* landmark commission for this year's British Pavilion is true to his long-standing motivations as an artist in platforming voices from the global south and the experiences of diasporic people in Britain. Addressing vast and complex historical narratives that reveal and reposition our shared humanity, *Listening All Night To The Rain* is a testament to art's potential in challenging and enriching our perceptions of contemporary life."

Skinder Hundal, Global Director of Arts at the British Council and Commissioner of the British Pavilion said:

*"Listening All Night To The Rain* promises to be aesthetically brilliant, contextually rich and provocative. Akomfrah's immersive style has a mesmerising quality, reaching and touching the hearts and consciousness of audiences often unseen or unheard, which is fitting for this body of work that encourages the idea of listening as activism. I look forward to April when John's work is presented on the world art stage in Venice and beyond, thereafter".

For the first time, the British Council will work with partners on an expanded public programme of events and artistic responses to bring the themes of the British Pavilion to global audiences. This cross-disciplinary programme recognises Akomfrah's impact and influence on younger generations of artists and filmmakers to platform new voices and narratives. Throughout the run of the La Biennale di Venezia, it will connect audiences in the UK and beyond with stimulating and diverse international practice, encouraging a global dialogue around the most pressing issues of our time.



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The sponsors for *Listening All Night To The Rain* include returning headline partner Burberry, Richard Mille, Frieze and returning sponsor Christie's.

Art Fund is generously supporting the commission, along with a tour to bring *Listening All Night To The Rain* to venues and audiences across the UK. More details including locations for the UK tour will be confirmed in the coming months.

Support for the exhibition also comes from LG OLED, Kavadrat and UniFor.

The exhibition is also made possible through the support of Lisson Gallery.

Bloomberg are digital partners for the British Pavilion in 2024.

The British Council Patrons Board, chaired by Ebele Okobi, has seen a record number of individual patrons supporting this year's commission.

## **ENDS**

The British Council has been responsible for the British Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia since 1937, showcasing the best of the UK's artists, architects, designers and curators. These International Exhibitions, and the British Council's Venice Fellowships initiative introduced in 2016, help make the British Pavilion a major platform for discussion about contemporary art and architecture.

The British Council's Fellowship Scheme hosts 66 emerging arts professionals and students in Venice for a month throughout the run of the Biennale. During their time in Venice they invigilate the Pavilion alongside conducting independent research and fostering new international connections. For 2024, the British Council has partnered with 42 UK Higher Education Institutions and arts organisations with whom they are committed to creating inclusive and representative pathways for all into the Visual Arts Sector.

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **Exhibition details**

John Akomfrah's British Council Commission for the British Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia will run from 20 April – 24 November 2024. For more information visit <https://venicebiennale.britishcouncil.org/listening-all-night>

Preview: Wednesday 17 April to Friday 19 April, 10am-6pm



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The British Pavilion is commissioned by the British Council; please ensure you credit the British Council in all editorial features.

For news on the British Council  
commission: <https://venicebiennale.britishcouncil.org/>  
For British Council Venice press office updates:  
<https://venicebiennale.britishcouncil.org/press>

Follow updates on the #BritishPavilion via: Twitter, Facebook and Instagram

### **About John Akomfrah**

John Akomfrah RA (born 1957) lives and works in London. He is known for his immersive multi-channel film installations, which explore major issues including racial injustice, colonial legacies, diasporic identities, migration and climate change.

The London-based artist initially came to prominence in the early 1980s as part of the Black Audio Film Collective (BAFC), a collective founded in 1982. An early film by BAFC, titled *Handsworth Songs* (1986), explored the events around the 1985 riots in Birmingham and London. In recent years, Akomfrah's work has evolved into ambitious, multi-channel installations presented 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 the 58th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia with *Four Nocturnes*, commissioned for the inaugural Ghana Pavilion in 2019, and *Vertigo Sea* (2015) as part of the 56th International Art Exhibition, curated by Okwui Enwezor ('All the World's Futures').

### **About the British Pavilion**

Artists commissioned to represent Britain have included: Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, Ben Nicholson, Anthony Caro, Bridget Riley, Richard Long, Frank Auerbach, Barry Flanagan, Howard Hodgkin, Tony Cragg, Anish Kapoor, Richard Hamilton, Leon Kossoff, Rachel Whiteread, Gary Hume, Mark Wallinger, Chris Ofili, Gilbert & George, Tracey Emin, Steve McQueen, Mike Nelson, Jeremy Deller, Sarah Lucas, Phyllida Barlow, Cathy Wilkes and Sonia Boyce (2022).

### **About the Venice Fellowships**

The Venice Fellowships enable students and volunteers to spend a month in Venice during one of the world's most significant art and architecture biennales:  
[venicebiennale.britishcouncil.org/fellowship/how-apply](https://venicebiennale.britishcouncil.org/fellowship/how-apply)

### **About the British Council**

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We support peace and prosperity by building connections,



understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide. We do this through our work in arts and culture, education and the English language. We work with people in over 200 countries and territories and are on the ground in more than 100 countries. In 2021-22 we reached 650 million people.