

Commissioned by



J O H N

LISTENING

ALL

NIGHT

TO

THE

RAIN

A K O M F R A H

British Council
Venice Fellowships Programme 2024

2024 Fellows Showcase

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A Train To Venice
Eye Suriyanon

suitcases squeaking across the floor, dragging at speed to make the next train
beepbeepbeep beepbeepbeep 30 seconds to go before it leaves
feet pitter patter, stomp stomp stomp, dashing, darting, tippy toes weaving through packed
luggages, bystanders’ gaze fixed on the illuminated board

A groan, a sigh, a wailing baby cry echoes sweeping overhead
overheard frustration and excitements, huffing, puffing — ready to depart
blurry mumbles stumbles onboard

Hmmmmmmmmmm tsk. tsk. tsksk. tsksk. tsksktsksktsksktsksktsk
tiny bolts clinking clanking holding for its dear life sprinkled above the droning engine
growling with hunger
crossing the borders
Whooooooooooooooooooooooooosh whooooooooosh whooooooooosh whooooooooosh
rhythmic metal dragon breathing whilst my eardrums thumbing like it’s somewhere where the
music is umtsys, umtsys, umtsys, umtsys, umtsys
but it’s 7AM right now

Flickering soft rays of morning light sliced across the carriage
painted green fields paralleled in frames, refreshing plein air
fighting against my heavy eyelids
They won.

zzzzzzZZZZZzzzzzzzzzz ZZZZZZZZZzzzzzzzzzzZZzzZZzzzzzzzz.

.
tsktsktsktsk tsktsk tsktsk tsk tsk tsk tsk tsk tsk

~ gentle bell jingle ~
stiamo ar ri van do a Venezia Santa Lucia

Once heavy greens turned to a light wash of blues
gliding across the sea towards the speck of brown
Brrrrrr, psst, psst, psst wheelless motors in the distance
screeching break halting to a stop.

the windchill bites the cheeks
yet excited faces everywhere; it is a new day after all.
delivery trolley bumping up the steps, footsteps, groups of school children

Voices, accents echo in the dome, blended muddled into murmurs
reflected, bounced, diffused together like
fiber filament spun into threads,
intertwined
as
o
n
e



Venice Fellowships Programme

British Council is proud to introduce our Venice Fellowships Programme, a scheme which activates and enriches our world-renowned exhibitions at the Venice Biennale. Alternating each year between a focus on art and architecture, the Biennale itself has long-standing international cultural significance. The presentations at the British Pavilion influence the future of contemporary culture at a global level.

Initiated in 2014, the aim of the Venice Fellowships Programme is to strengthen the British Pavilion as a space for ideas, innovation and research. Through the scheme, emerging UK creatives are given the opportunity to contribute to and support the Pavilion in Venice. The Fellows each spend a month in

Venice in groups of eight or nine individuals. As exhibition ambassadors, they engage visiting members of the public and expand the impact of the show. Alongside this practical role, they have the opportunity to develop their own research projects and use the Biennale as a platform for creative and international development. Through these contributions, Fellows elevate the Pavilion to an important reference point for universities and creative organisations around the world.



Listening All Night To The Rain

The 2024 monumental commission *Listening All Night To The Rain* by British artist John Akomfrah RA was a multi-layered exhibition that explored the themes that have featured throughout his work of the past four decades and his investigation of issues of contemporary life, such as memory, migration, racial injustice and climate change – with a renewed focus on the act of listening and the sonic.

“The exhibition is about trying to create a space where people can experience, understand and engage with questions of acoustemology: a sonic way of knowing and being in the world. This is at the core of the Pavilion – be it the ethics, the aesthetics, the problematics, the memories or the histories of listening. When you’re listening, you’re tuned into your

own dreams and ambitions, and to the stories that people tell, unearthing narratives. The key visual motif of the Pavilion – flooding – revisits concerns about climate change but uses the occasion of the approaching crises to encourage a re-thinking of our past. It’s a moment to take a detour through avenues of memory, suggesting paths perhaps not taken because we weren’t listening.” John Akomfrah

The scale and complexity of the exhibition presented exciting challenges for the Fellows in their role as invigilators: helping visitors navigate through the exhibition rooms, conducting their own independent research in order to answer questions and lead tours, and managing the responses of visitors to the sensitive themes in a thoughtful way.

“ I have friends who are previous Fellows and have always cited the experience as one of the best of their lives. I was thrilled when I had the opportunity to apply through my university, especially in the year of John Akomfrah; he is an artist of whom I have long been an admirer of and my PhD research aligns with the themes and presentation of his work.”

— 2024 FELLOW

2024 Fellows

In partnership with over forty UK higher education institutions and pioneering creative enterprises, British Council recruited, selected and supported sixty-six Fellows for the 2024 Venice Fellowships Programme.

The transformative potential of the programme for the individual was a key criterion in the selection of the Fellows. Each Fellow was at an early stage of a promising creative career: amongst the cohort were researchers, artists, curators, critics, public educators, philosophers, international relations scholars, climate activists, a peace negotiator and a data scientist. Over 65% of the cohort have previously faced barriers to the arts and economic opportunity due to race, class, homelessness, upbringing, disability, ethnicity, gender and/or nationality. The group hailed from over twenty nations: some were well-travelled; others had yet to leave the UK until their travel to Venice. All were connected to a UK-based institution or creative organisation.

Taking inspiration from the *Foreigners Everywhere* theme of the 60th International Art Exhibition, the Fellows came together to represent the UK at the Britain Pavilion and welcome international visitors to *Listening All Night To The Rain* in the spirit of collaboration and intercultural camaraderie.

As demonstrated by the profiles in this Yearbook, the research and creative areas of the Fellows parallel the work of John Akomfrah: some are artists working directly with sound and film; others are creating work with similar thematic ideas. As they invigilated the galleries and led visitor tours, the Fellows drew on their individual research areas to offer visitors unique, in-depth perspectives into Akomfrah's work.

"I had the opportunity to engage in a conversation with a visitor who was particularly interesting due to their background in technology and cultural engagement. This individual shared insights related to how technology intersects with

the arts, which resonated with my own research and creative interests. The tour group consisted of six people, and we had a meaningful discussion about the use of data in art installations and the role of technology in enhancing the cultural experience. The exchange of ideas was a highlight of my invigilation experience." — 2024 Fellow

Ahead of the residency months in Venice, Fellows participated in a seven-week Induction: this online series comprised of over eighteen hours of workshops, peer-led sessions, presentations from guest speakers and mentor groups. Designed to strengthen their network and build interpersonal skills, the Induction encouraged collaboration, with over 60% of Fellows actively contributing to and leading sessions. Alongside offering practical advice for the Venice month, the Induction sessions challenged the Fellows to consider how best to engage the visiting public within Akomfrah's immersive exhibition of multimedia and sound installations.

“ Induction training had many benefits as each session was different and informative. It was like a conference in which Fellows creatively presented their ideas and then held a good discussion with the other Fellows. It was a nice opportunity to meet diverse people from diverse cultures, sharing and listening each other. I learned a lot and developed as an individual through the sessions.”

— 2024 FELLOW



Alice Holmes
 Alkestid Sterjo
 Amy Townsend-Lowcock
 Anna Jane Houghton
 Anna Smith
 Bella Paxton
 Beth Elford
 Bukky Tijani
 Caitlin Magda Shepherd
 Caitlin McHugh
 Caterina Edrich
 Celeste MacLeod-Brown
 Danielle Hewitt
 Elyon Liu
 Emelia Hewitt
 Eye Suriyanon
 Freya Shi
 Hannah Hornby
 Hannah Kemp-Welch
 Harmeet Singh Rahal
 Isaac Gibson
 Isabella So
 Jack Fry
 Jill Chen
 Julia Fry
 Kelly Rappleye
 Laszlo Molnar
 Lezhi Crystal Zhang
 Lily Horton
 Lisa Ogun'
 Maria Sayoko Aoyama
 Marilyn Henderson
 Martha Dean
 Melanie Colbey

Michael Nash
 Mila Januszova
 Millicent Sanders
 Millie Nicholson
 Mrs Blues
 Naho Matsuda
 Nazima Rangwala Kalita
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 Sim Junaid
 Simone Marconi
 Simran Kaur Sanghera
 Sofia Maria Geraci
 Syeda Faiza Faiq Gelani
 Tahir Shah
 Thomas Gibbs
 Tonye Ekine
 Viktorie Březinová
 Youssef ElNahas

 Amber Potts, Cylena Simonds,
 Marcio Junji Sono,
 Carlos Ferrara and
 Mariam Osmani were also
 valued members of the 2024
 Venice Fellowships Programme.

INDUCTION PROGRAMME

28 FEBRUARY - 10 APRIL 2024

The Venice Induction programme was designed and facilitated with and for the 2024 Fellows and British Council by Becky Schutt

	PRE-INDUCTION MEETINGS & CONTRACTING	SESSION 1 THE SELF	SESSION 2 THE OTHER & LIVING IN VENICE	SESSION 3 TOGETHER & COLLABORATION	SESSION 4 THE PUBLIC & THE PAVILION	SESSION 5 THE PROJECTS & MENTORS	SESSION 6 LISTENING ALL NIGHT TO THE RAIN	SESSION 7 CARING & ADVENTURE	8 GROUPS ON THEIR WAY!
	I	— 28 FEB —	— 6 MAR —	— 13 MAR —	— 20 MAR —	— 27 MAR —	— 3 APR —	— 10 APR —	
2024 FELLOWS FACILITATORS		 POLY-VOCALITY & PLAY CAITLIN MCHUGH, TEESIDE UNIV	 MELODIES, MOVEMENT, MIGRATION HARMEET RAHAL, NEW CONTEMPORARIES	 COOKING & COLLABORATION MARIAM OSMANI, DURHAM UNIV		 THE CREATIVE PROCESS THOMAS GIBBS, ST ANDREWS UNIV	 CURATOR TARINI MALIK	 THE ART OF SELF-CARE CYLENA SIMONDS, ARTS UNIVERSITY PLYMOUTH	
		 THE POETRY OF MIGRANT IDENTITY SHANIECE MARTIN, COVENTRY UNIV	 ACTIVE LISTENING KELLY RAPPLEYE, GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART	 THE SOUNDS OF STORIES ISAAC GIBSON, QUEENS UNIVERSITY BELFAST SARC		 INTUITIVE WALKING JULIA FRY, OUTSIDE IN	 WELCOME COMMITTEE MARCIO JUNJI SONO, RAY SIMS, MRS. BLUES, ANNA JANE HOUGHTON, KELLY RAPPLEYE & LASZLO MOLANR	 ACCESS & SOUND HANNAH KEMP-WELCH, LONDON COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION	 CARE. EMOTIONS & THE BODY NELL HARDY, ARTS & HOMELESSNESS INTL
		 THE DATA OF SELF ALKESTID STERJO, UNIV. BRADFORD	 THE NATIONAL SELF JACK FRY, DURHAM UNIV						
2024 FELLOWS COMMENTATORS		 LASZLO MOLNAR, NAHO MATSUDA, VIKTORIE BREZINOVA & CELESTE MACLEOD-BROWN	 CARLOS FERRARA, BELLA PAXTON, YOUSSEF EINAHAS & ISABELLA SO	 MILLIE SANDERS, LISA OGUN', SIMONE MARCONI & RIZ ALI	 SABRINA SUDOL & MILLIE NICHOLSON	 TONYE EKINE & DANIELLE HEWITT		 SARA DOWNHAM-LOTTO, BUKKY TIJANI & SOFIA MARIA GERACI	
GUESTS		 SALMA MOHAMEDOSMAN MAGZOUB ABDELRAHMAN 2023 BRITISH COUNCIL VENICE FELLOW	 MATTEO SPIGA & MEGAN WILLOW HACK 2023 FELLOWS	 MARIE THERESE SHORTT GREETINGS: CULTURAL HIERARCHIES & TOUCH	2024 MENTORS: ANTONIA BECK LEO BURTIN BETH KNOWLES CASAS JOSEPH IJOYEMI LISON SABRINA MUSSET JOHN ORGAN SVETLANA PANOVA JULIET SIMPSON RICHARD WARING JEAN WAINWRIGHT		 TARINI MALIK SHANE AKEROYD ASSOCIATE CURATOR 2024 BRITISH PAVILION	 BEN STREET THE ART OF VENICE	 YOHAN SOLIS SAFEGUARDING, BRITISH COUNCIL
									 John Akomfrah and Tarini Malik with Group 1 in Venice

Sophie Lucas

Venice Programme and Partnerships Manager
(Fellowships Lead), British Council

It has been wonderful to work closely with our Partners and Fellows this year. The Fellows have each taken their own thoughtful approach to the complexities of John Akomfrah’s work and it is fascinating to see how these reflections have influenced their creative and research projects.

A personal highlight of this year was witnessing the Group 6 Fellows welcome the incoming Group 7 Fellows. After a full residency month, they were brimming with enthusiasm and confidence, excited to share knowledge and ideas about La Biennale, Venice and the commission. It was fascinating to hear their insights into the British Pavilion and the visiting public as part of their handover tour of *Listening All Night To The Rain*.

Bringing together a rich variety of interests and ideas, our cohort of sixty-six Fellows is now a thriving community of creativity and collaboration. Many are already working together on new projects and I am excited to see what the future holds for them all.

The role of our Partners is invaluable and I would like to thank them for their care and supervision of their Fellows. It has been a joy to collaborate with them and jointly witness the inspiring journey of the 2024 Fellows.



Sarah Boulter

Curator and Creative Producer, Venture Arts
(Sarah was also a Venice Fellow in 2017)

It was a huge pleasure for Venture Arts to be a Venice Fellowships Programme Partner in 2024. The project has been overwhelmingly positive and transformative for our artists, staff and wider supported studio networks. Michael and Emelia had an incredible month in Venice. They developed personally, professionally and artistically, interacting with visitors, colleagues, artists and art workers from all over the world. Experimenting and creating artwork for an entire month has been enormously impactful on their individual practices.

We commend the British Council for opening up the Venice Fellowships Programme and we worked closely with British Council and M+B Studio to make the process and experience more accessible. Michael and Emelia’s participation at Venice Biennale, in public

facing work, representing UK artists and rich cultural perspectives, will have increased visibility of learning disabled people in important roles at such prestigious events. We hope that such representation by neurodivergent artists in the most significant art show globally will help to drive real change in the art world.

Venture Arts’ experience with the Venice Fellowships Programme will not only open up opportunities for learning disabled people to work and travel to residencies internationally but also contribute to learning and to building a robust infrastructure in significant organisations like British Council and Venice Biennale to meaningfully support more neurodivergent artists in the future.

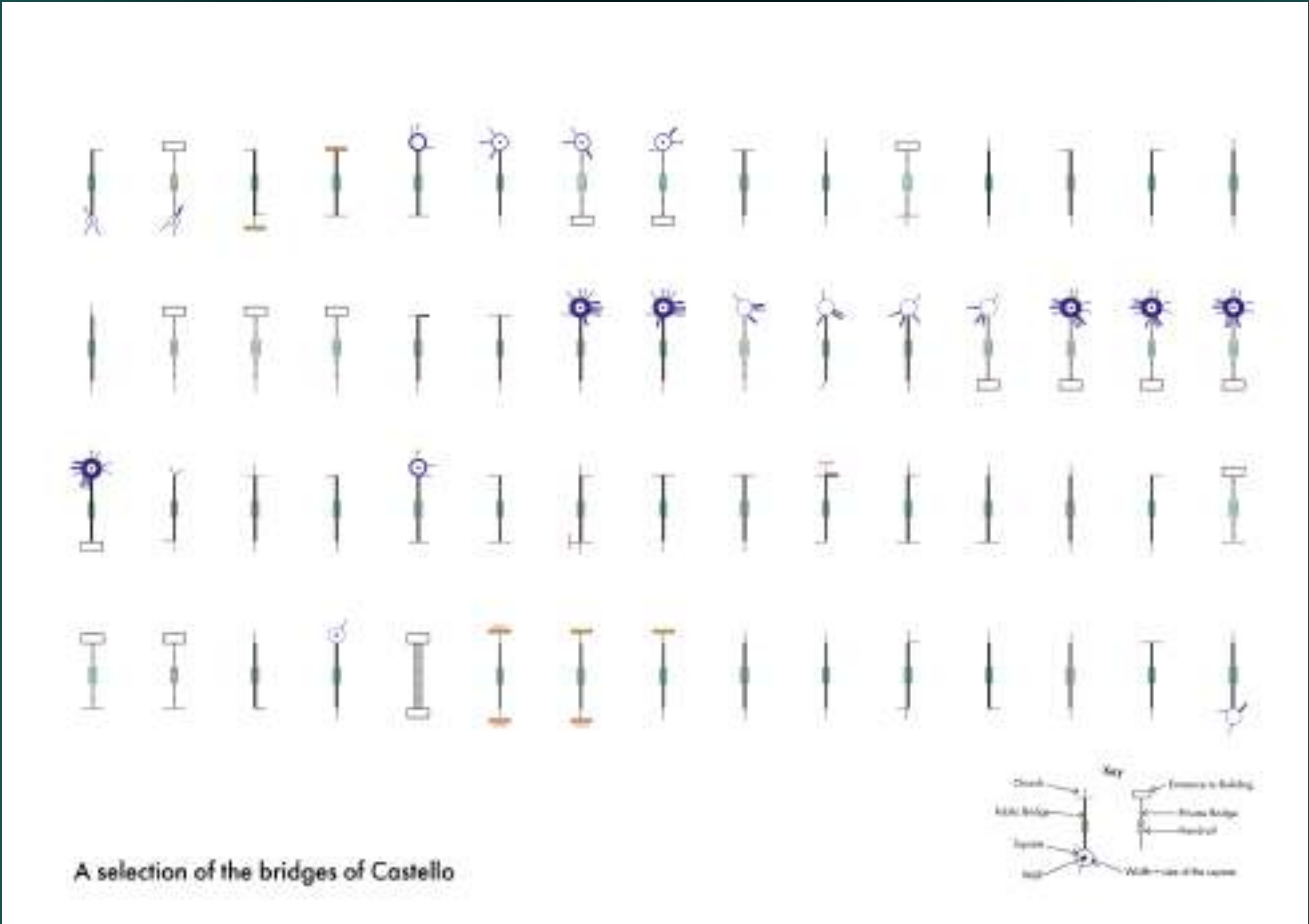
Liverpool School of Architecture

@aliceholmes

My time in Venice was centered around the Castello area, where I stayed, made many memories with other Fellows and commuted to the Biennale through. I started to notice the relationship between the bridges in this area and the adjacent public space, thus leading to my study which catalogues the bridges of Castello (an extract of which is here). The diagrammatic format was inspired by the work I had seen while exploring Venice and the exhibitions of the Biennale.

In addition to this, I wanted to learn more about the British Pavilion and have written a paper which looks at how the pavilions can be used

as tools for ‘soft power’ by their respected nations with a case study of the British Pavilion. This gave me a deeper understanding of the different forces at play which dictate the architecture, exhibitions and use of the spaces inside and outside the Pavilion. I would highly recommend anyone who is interested in the pavilions of the Biennale to take a look at the book ‘The Disquieted Muses: When La Biennale di Venezia meets history’.



University of Bradford

@Alkeo_St

Venice is a city of reflections—of light on water, of past and present, of those who walk its streets and those who watch them pass. My time in Venice was shaped by these reflections, not only in the literal sense but also through the people I encountered and the stories they carried with them. Each conversation, each fleeting interaction, felt like a glimpse into another perspective, another way of seeing the city.

As part of my residency at the British Pavilion, I found myself drawn to the idea of collective memory and shared experiences. *Venice Through Your Eyes* emerged as a concept centred on gathering fragments of personal encounters—snapshots of the city as seen through different lenses. The project aimed to weave together perspectives from locals, tourists, artists, and Fellows, capturing a mosaic of experiences that transcend any single viewpoint. The idea was simple yet powerful: to document Venice through the eyes of those who experience it in their own unique way.

Beyond the Pavilion, Venice itself became both a subject and a participant. The city's rhythm, its quiet canals and bustling piazzas, shaped my

reflections on observation and presence. There was an intimacy in standing still while the world moved around me—whether watching an artist lost in their sketchbook, a café owner arranging glasses in the morning light, or a traveller pausing on a bridge to take in the view.

The Venice Fellowships Programme was not just about invigilation; it was about engagement, about seeing and being seen. Conversations with visitors revealed unexpected insights, from discussions about art and heritage to moments of shared awe at the sheer beauty of the city. It was in these exchanges that the essence of *Venice Through Your Eyes* took form—not just in photographs but in the intangible connections formed through observation and dialogue.

Venice lingers in the mind long after departure. The way light shifts across its waters, the echoes of footsteps on stone, the quiet weight of history woven into every façade—these remain, shaping memory and perspective. My time in Venice was a reminder that seeing is never passive; it is an act of participation, an invitation to look deeper, to connect, and to reflect.



The Lowry

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During my time in Venice, I was keen to examine art around the city that shed light on how people of colour in Renaissance Venice were seen and understood by fellow Venetians. The aim of my project was to investigate stereotypes around Black bodies, and to take inspiration from *Listening All Night To The Rain* to create my own documentary-based performance.

Over the course of my residency month, I explored Venice's narrow streets and galleries in search of art representing people of colour. I took interest in representations created in the Renaissance era in addition to more recent artifacts depicting the so-called Venetian Moors.

Inside the Gallerie dell'Accademia, I discovered a stunning painting that featured a dark-skinned 'Moorish King' and his servant. This image stood in contrast to some of the troubling caricatures of Black people that I discovered on my walks through the city. The contrast between the imagery I encountered inspired me to centre my project around archive, and to explore how dominant narratives around race are upheld by certain historical objects, texts and artworks.

I took a personal and introspective approach to collecting archive for my project. I began by looking into my own family history, collating

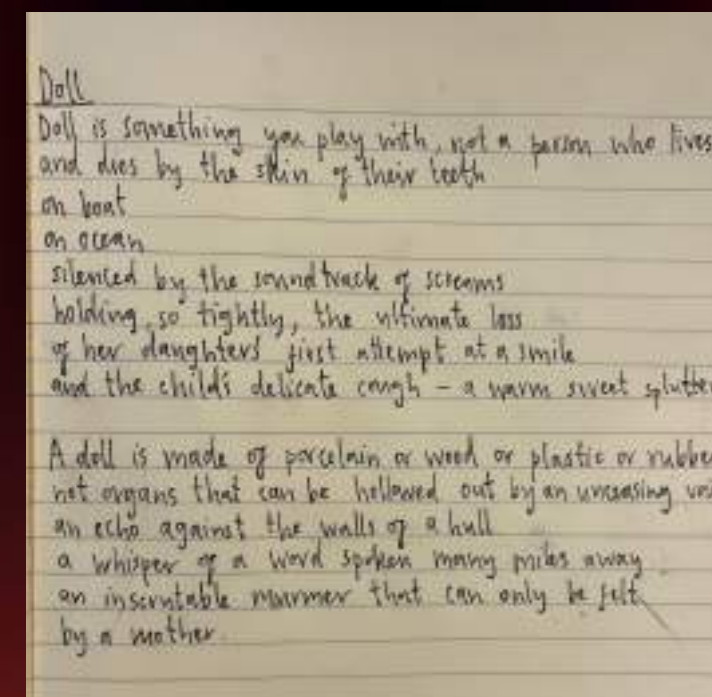
documents relating to my ancestors in Jamaica. Birth records, death records, and slave registers. I documented my journey of discovery through a series of poems, which capture my responses to witnessing – through archive – the horrors that my ancestors experienced at the hands of the transatlantic slave trade. Uncovering how mixed my ancestors were, I also sought out excerpts from literature that utilised derogatory 'tragic mulatto' stereotyping.

Since I arrived back in the UK, I have been developing a theatre piece that combines family archive, poetry and textual references to explore mixed race identities. With the support of The Lowry, I am in the process of applying for Arts Council funding for the project!

A strong focus of my multidisciplinary practice is resisting the colonial ideas that are implicit within traditional documentary filmmaking practices. Immersing myself in John Akomfrah's *Listening All Night To The Rain* as a gallery steward, was a truly invaluable experience. I have been inspired by John Akomfrah to embrace ambiguity and leave ample space in my theatre work for audiences to create their own meaning. With my creative research project, I hope to provide materials for the British public to reconstruct their understanding of British history and identity, such that they can include communities of colour.



Credit: Gallerie dell'Accademie, Venice



Liverpool John Moores University

annajanehoughton.com



Anna Jane Houghton, *Albertine (2024)*

Albertine (2024) is a filmic multi-channel sonic installation, installed atop a fruit and veg barge on the remaining portion of canal on Via Garibaldi, situated in the space between the Biennale's partner locations, the Giardini and the Arsenale. The barge is representative of both a carrier and a container and its physical placement grants the work a sense of liminality. Via Garibaldi is what is referred to as a 'rio tera', translating literally to a street that has been 'earthed-in'. Border line traces of the original canal can be found demarcated in the laying of the paving slabs, serving as a visual representation of the remnants of time that these sites are imbued with- a quality that *Albertine (2024)* seeks to conjure sonically.

Albertine (2024) utilises a series of spatial 'interviews' with the architecture of the British Pavilion and the remaining canal on Via Garibaldi, conducted via modified hydrophones and shortwave radio. Drawing on the theories of Italian inventor and physicist, Guglielmo Marconi, who speculated that 'no sound ever dies', rather it just decays beyond the point of detection by the human ear. These frequencies of our shared past which Marconi refers to, were picked up as static through DIY short-wave radio, allowing for a physical and bodily dialogue with the space, moving a long antenna, detecting an abstract yesterday around us, conversing with the 'voices' of our shared past. This ephemeral intangibility of the sonic and memory alike, is exemplified throughout the composition of Marcel Proust's *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu (1913)*, even the discrepancies over the translation of the

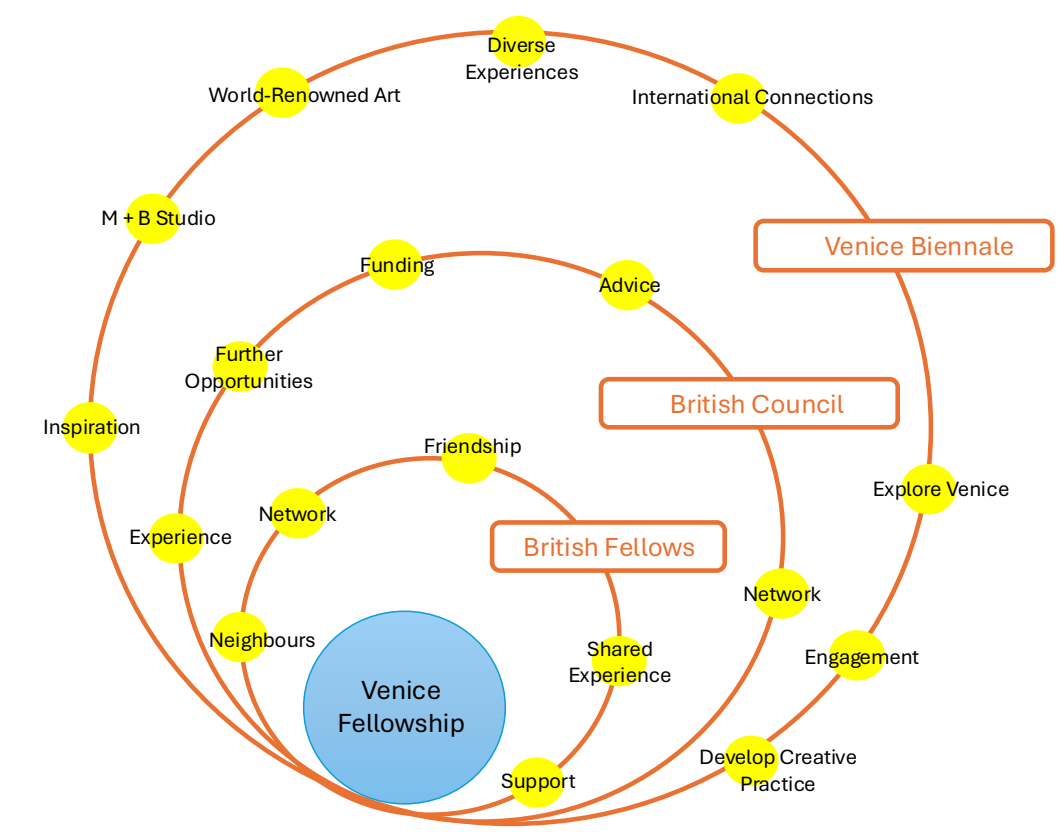
title, *In Search of Lost Time in favour of In Remembrance of Things Past*, the 'search' itself implies a palpability to its findings, as if one could encounter a past self on the piazza at San Marco and physically embrace them. Something 'lost' has the possibility of being found, whereas a simple 'remembrance' infers that the physicality contained within such thought is irrecoverable. It is the desire to contain in the combined theory of Proust and Marconi in which *Albertine* positions itself.

Titled in reference to Proust's love interest, *Albertine (2024)* is repeatedly referred to as a vessel, one which houses a spectral consciousness and the paradox of his passion: one can never wholly possess the mind of another or the sounds of a shared past. The objectification of *Albertine (2024)* as a Venetian glass vase is associative and metonymic, both Proustian tropes which envision *Albertine (2024)* as an 'obstacle, interposed between [him] and all things' because she for him is 'their container', a human membrane between the exterior world, her existence serving as a filter, as it was 'from her alone, as from a vase' that Proust could retrieve or accept information. Once that 'vase was shattered', he 'no longer [had] the courage to grasp things' (Proust, Pg 482, 1913). The thematic and filmic foundation of *Albertine (2024)* is one of entrapment, presenting an installation of the vibrational capture and re-staging of a time and place, allowing an audience to dwell in those realms for a while longer, granted a durational extension by way of the sonic.

Liverpool John Moores University



British Council
Venice Fellowship
Asset Map



Arts University Bournemouth

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My time in Venice was truly transformative, both personally and creatively.

I am fascinated by the human desire to impose order and control upon the earth, an inherently entropic environment. Each day, I observed an abundance of traces left from ecological shifts that are so obvious and prevalent in Venice, a city which is in constant battle with the realities of climate change. These traces varied from the orange rust covering railings to the restoration techniques and procedures in place to prevent flooding.

September was a particularly interesting month to experience Venice: the changes in weather and climate were stark, and so I experienced intense heat, humidity and rain (running from a bar in the most torrential rain I'd ever experienced; racing the floods home) In these moments I truly felt at the mercy of the environment.

My project outcome was inspired by two key elements: my personal experience of the physical effects of climate change and my focus of attention on the auditory experience of life, inspired by the extended time I spent with John Akomfrah's *Listening All Night To The Rain*.

On my return from Venice, I developed an installation made up of a steel sculpture and a sound piece. The sound piece consists of a recording of the rain hitting the sculpture when left outside in a storm, edited with audio clips I collected in Venice. Both the sound piece and the rusted drips upon the steel plates of the sculpture are traces within themselves, traces of a performance in nature, traces of our impact on the environment and traces of my memories of Venice.

University of Leicester

@elford.beth

Throughout my academic and professional journey, I have sought to foster greater understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural narratives. My MA dissertation focused on improving accessibility in UK museums for marginalised and diaspora communities, culminating in a dissertation that developed a qualitative framework for evaluating participant feedback. Venice provided a unique setting to develop this research.

As an Exhibition Ambassador, I facilitated discussions around John Akomfrah’s *Listening All Night To The Rain*, a powerful meditation on migration, identity, and historical memory. Engaging with a diverse audience, I helped unpack the installation’s complex themes, fostering meaningful connections between the artwork and those experiencing it. This experience strengthened my public engagement skills and deepened my understanding of how art can bridge cultural divides.

Beyond invigilation, I used my time in Venice to inform my research and artistic practice. Through a workshop I led with our group and a questionnaire made available to everyone within the 2024 cohort and beyond, I gathered insights from a diverse audience on the barriers that people face within museum and gallery spaces. This hands-on research enabled me to refine thematic evaluation methods, capturing nuanced perspectives that directly informed my dissertation. These findings underscored the importance of participatory approaches in museum practice, something I now carry forward in my work.

As a practising artist, having an extended period to experience the Biennale was an incredibly inspiring opportunity. The scale and diversity of the exhibitions, from national pavilions to independent projects, provided a rich environment for reflection and creative exploration. Seeing the interplay of materials, techniques, and narratives across different artistic disciplines reinforced my own approaches to making and research. A particular highlight was encountering *Diego and I (1949)* in person - an artwork I had longed to see since childhood. Standing before a Frida Kahlo painting for the first time was profoundly moving, deepening my connection to her work and reaffirming my fascination with how personal histories manifest in artistic practice.

The layered history of Venice also shaped my reflections on space, memory, and access. Walking through its labyrinthine streets, I documented textures, architectural details, and moments of quiet reflection, considering how physical environments influence cultural narratives.

Looking ahead, the Venice Fellowships Programme reinforced my commitment to fostering inclusive social and spatial changes within museums and galleries. Whether through rethinking interpretive materials or advocating for more accessible exhibition design, I remain dedicated to making cultural institutions more equitable spaces for engagement and dialogue.



Cultural Reformation: Enhancing Inclusivity and Representation in UK Museums for Marginalised and Diaspora Communities



Masters in Art Gallery and Museum Studies

Supervisor: Professor Suzanne MacLeod

2024

Bethany-Rose Elford

Birmingham City University
@bukkytijani LinkedIn: Bukky Tijani

If I could sum up my experience in Venice, it would be with this quote: "Venice is a floating masterpiece where art, history, and cultures converge, painting a timeless portrait of human creativity and diversity." — Unknown

My time in Venice is one that I will never forget. I had the opportunity to experience art and culture that I had only ever read or heard about. Visiting the national pavilions felt like a beautifully curated crash course on different cultures I never knew I needed.

My research project was inspired by the theme of the Biennale, *Foreigners Everywhere*, and John Akomfrah’s *Listening All Night To The Rain*, which explored issues such as racial injustice, colonial legacies, diasporic identities, migration, and climate change. *Foreigners everywhere* is a concept that often reflects the experience of feeling like an outsider or being different due to factors such as cultural differences, language barriers, or simply not fitting into societal norms. However, despite these barriers, there is always the possibility of finding a sense of home wherever one may be.

In today's world, where immigration is at an all-time high and people migrate for various reasons, I was inspired to create a documentary focused on my time in Venice. I sought to explore the experiences of immigrants living in Venice—what it means to find home in a foreign place, and the role of family, traditions, community, and culture in shaping one’s sense of belonging.

Venice is not just a city filled with tourists but also home to people from different parts of the world. While living in Venice, I was fortunate to interview incredible immigrants from various continents who currently live in the city and have been there for several years. Our conversations revolved around the meaning of ‘home’, the beauty of living in Venice and experiencing different cultures, the struggles of finding a community, and the small but significant things that remind them of home. Additionally, I planned to put together a photography series capturing the soul of Venice—a bustling, tourist-filled city that embraces diversity, with its rich cultural heritage reflected in its colonial architecture, sculptures, and buildings.

After completing the documentary, I aim to share my project through a mini-exhibition at my university and with the British Council, serving as a reminder to celebrate and embrace cultural differences, migration, and the shared human experience of finding home.

As a Copywriter, Storyteller, and Media Production professional, my biggest takeaway from my Venice residency was the importance of immersing oneself in learning and being open to other cultures to tell powerful and meaningful stories. Storytelling has the potential to bridge cultural gaps, highlight diverse voices, and foster understanding across borders.

Oh, how we could make the world a better place through our stories...



UAL Decolonizing Arts Institute

caitlinshepherd.com

I had a wonderful time in Venice. I was able to take time from my full-time work as an artist-researcher, and immerse myself in the Biennale, in the labyrinth sandstone colours of Venice, and most importantly, meet other Fellows and show up for my practice.

During my time in Venice, I started a new blog called Body Matters, where I write about artistic forms of refusal, chaos, humour and

critique, the body and affect. I'm particularly interested in queer, precarious intersectional and revolting bodies. Bodies that refuse, rant and rage under the conditions of late capitalism. I write auto-theoretically, and about my everyday life, so expect matters of the heart and body, alongside intellectual musings. You can read and follow my blog at *Body Matters / Substack*



Teesside University

@__hold__



Credit to Venture Arts for the use of their studio and the British Council for the pavilion drawings.

My research engages with the uneven distribution of power at the Venice Biennale, shaped by access, production and positionality.

Whilst the Biennale setting is designed to foster cultural exchange and international discussion, the significance of what's showcased is heavily influenced by who can engage with it, amplifying its value through visitor numbers, publicity and media palatability. When barriers to entry exist, those who can overcome them hold disproportionate power in shaping the narrative and cultural significance. This raises the question of whether the Biennale functions as a self-serving infrastructure: something public-facing but not freely accessible to the public.

I wanted to explore what would happen if the power shifted back to the participants, whether that be artists or visitors, rather than sitting with the Biennale producers. This project explored the concept of navigating spaces that are neither designed for you nor created with your needs in mind. I wanted to visually explore the idea of radical intervention into the Biennale.

Inspired by Katya Buchatska's Best Wishes exhibition at the Ukrainian Pavilion, my project aimed to challenge conventional approaches to space and power. A workshop was designed to invite the participants to explore unconventional, absurd and often unrealistic ways of claiming and navigating space within the British Pavilion. Using creative prompts, the workshop encouraged a rethinking of power dynamics, the reclamation of a utonomy and the disruption of normative ways of thinking.

In collaboration with neurodiverse artists from Venture Arts, six powerful artworks were created through a mixture of collage and drawing. Each piece reflects the artists' individual interpretation of access, while using the safety of the workshop to collectively address various barriers they encounter. The resulting work encourages essential conversations on equity, power and accessibility using humour, absurdity and the unwillingness to accept what is considered conventional.

Birmingham City University

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*Documented, Yet Invisible
Medium: Brass Locket*

I am a British-Italian jewellery and objects artist exploring craft's role in social change. Through artistic and academic practice, I create works that provoke reflection on neurodiversity, identity, and belonging. My project responds to the Biennale's theme, *Foreigners Everywhere*, through a personal lens, navigating the contradictions of being a foreigner in both the UK and Italy. Despite my Italian roots, I have often felt "not Italian enough" while in the UK, where I was born. I remained legally foreign until age 12. The bureaucratic barriers my family faced — such as paying for citizenship in my birthplace — reflect a broader critique of identity and belonging.

Also informed by the 2017 Windrush scandal, which exposed the flaws of reducing identity to documentation, my project highlights the fragility of bureaucratic recognition. It questions whether legal documents alone define who we are and where we belong, interrogating nationality, citizenship, and exclusion to encourage dialogue on inclusion.

The locket is an interactive artwork, embodying the tension between belonging and alienation. It critiques the reduction of identity to biographical and biometric data—fingerprints, nationality, date of birth, home address—elements that define official identification yet fail to capture lived experience.

The data within the locket includes:

National Insurance number
Date of birth
Nationality (British Citizen)

Full name
Sex

A map of the UK and Italy (the countries I am a citizen of)
A face scan
A thumbprint

This data — typically used to legitimise a person's existence — becomes obscured through legible and illegible braille, stamping, engraving, etching, and casting. Much of it is hidden or unreadable, challenging the idea that such information alone defines identity.

Visually, the locket appears cold and impersonal, almost lifeless — despite containing the ‘essential’ markers of my identity, it still fails to reveal who I am. The most recognisable elements — my fingerprint and facial scan — are hidden, requiring the viewer to open and explore the piece. Yet, even then, the answers remain elusive.

The locket is not a functional ID, but a symbolic critique of how official systems define identity. It confronts the viewer, asking: “Is this all I am?”, challenging the notion that identity can be neatly categorised by data and exposing the inadequacy of these systems to capture a person’s identity.

By unsettling conventional ideas of documentation and belonging, this piece provokes reflection on power structures that determine identity, citizenship, and inclusion. In doing so, it contributes to a broader discourse on fairness, visibility, and the right to belong.

[The data included within the piece is deliberately false to protect my privacy.]

Glasgow School of Art

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Whilst in Venice, I curated a project loosely titled Pavilion via my curatorial initiative, Naive Set Arts. Responding to Scotland+Venice's absence at this year's Biennale, and reflecting on the shifting landscape of the Scottish arts scene in relation to funding and programming, I implemented a dematerialised curatorial methodology to disseminate works by Scotland-based artists across Venice during the Biennale.

Working closely with artists Ruari Knott, Luke Kelman, and Solomon Pawlyn to individually disseminate their artworks, alongside a larger group of emerging artists for a curated showcase of new film-based works from Scotland, the project became a practice-based element within my broader research. This research explores the paracuratorial, alternative modes of knowledge production,

and parallel programming as means to re-evaluate the position of artist-led activity in relation to institutional practice, and how curatorial models can be reimagined for more inclusive and sustainable cultural activity.

I collaborated with artists to commission works that could exist in a somewhat dematerialised format, requiring minimal space, funding, or the artists' physical presence. We utilised flyers and handout formats to share works, alongside projections and film mediums that could easily inhabit both institutional and non-institutional spaces. These works were disseminated across the whole city, including inside the British Pavilion. The on-site portion of the project culminated in a curated screening of new video works by emerging Scotland-based artists, hosted in the VIP space at the British Pavilion, and the project is still influencing my ongoing curatorial research.

D A N I E L E

University College London & Invisible Dust

Histories of Venice begin most often with the story of a group or groups of refugees fleeing 'barbarian' invasion of Roman towns on the mainland. Archaeological evidence however reveals a long history of human settlement amongst the marshy islands and waters of the lagoon. During my residency month, I travelled throughout the lagoon visiting islands from the moderately populated to the uninhabited. Throughout this time, I aimed to look back at Venice to consider how seeing it from within the lagoon might shift our perception of the

city. How might seeing Venice from the lagoon offer ways to engage with this more complex history of settlement?

Seeing Venice from the Lagoon, the nature of its fragility and the landscape which holds it becomes evident. What if visitors came to Venice to see it not only as the built city, the Serenissima, and a place of romantic decline; but as a complex and fragile ecology which the city we see is balanced upon and within?



H E W I T T

Anglia Ruskin University
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For my project, I wrote and illustrated a children's picture book titled *I Will Try Not to Worry About Moving Anymore*. Resonating with the Biennale's 2024 theme *Foreigners Everywhere*, this book tells the story of a young bear who had to move homes and learned to cherish life without feeling like a stranger everywhere. I understand that modern life often involves a lot of movement, and many children face situations similar to mine. I hope this book will comfort them and encourage them to cherish their current lives.

I hope to emphasise the unavoidable nature of moving in modern life and how to address this sense of drifting. The comforting aspect of my book lies in its message: no matter where you are, your home is truly your home. While a house may be rented, life itself is not, and each day without appreciation is a loss. I hope those who read this book will feel encouraged to embrace life's changes, make new friends, face loss bravely, and live each day to the fullest.



Venture Arts

I am an artist based at Venture Arts in Manchester with a focus on photography, illustration and textiles.

During my time in Venice, I expanded my photography practice to experiment with cyanotype, camera obscura and pinhole cameras. I fell in love with the city and its unique way of life that is shaped by water. My work is inspired by the everyday reflections and obscured hidden details of everyday life. Using black and white 35mm film I also aimed to further replicate the city’s historic charm.

Working at the Pavilion I was inspired by John Akomfrah’s *Listening All Night To The Rain* and have created my own Venice-based cantos series, which I have presented as a zine.

This zine of cantos captures my fascination with the water and the feeling of a city that is both timeless and constantly shifting. Through these photographs, I hope to share the beauty of the city and the quieter moments of everyday life.



SCAN

eyesuriyanon.com



Eye Suriyanon is a Thai sound artist based in Glasgow, Scotland. Her practice explores the intersection of power, language and a sense of belonging through collective voicing. The research conducted during the Venice Fellowships Programme is a continuation of *Singing The Alphabet* (2023) where visitors were introduced to the phonemes of vowel sounds in English and Thai through singing recall, to highlight the similarities of these languages through its sonorous identity, as a method of increasing mutual intelligibility. As of now, Eye is working on a new composition

with a local community choir to deliver a live performance later in the year.

Previous exhibitions include 'Glasgow International Festival' (2024), Glasgow, UK. 'Take Me Somewhere Festival' (2023), Tramway, Glasgow, UK. 'Interruption: Sounds' (2021), The Holden Gallery, Manchester, UK. 'mutual feelings' (2020), House of Conspiracy, Brisbane, AUS. 'Tremolo' (2017), The Royal Standard, Liverpool, UK and 'Club Big' (2017), HOME, Manchester, UK.

UAL Decolonising Arts Institute

@shiyufry



Photos were taken by my colleagues and visitors.

straniero was my work-hour performance while invigilating at the British Pavilion as an 'exhibition ambassador'. Interplaying with identity, representation, and language, the sash performs in two directions: both to the wearer and the viewer. It references the theme of the Venice Biennale this year, *Stranieri Ovunque – Foreigners Everywhere*, and also draws attention to the labor of invigilation that is often overlooked in contemporary art industry.

Logistically, I wear "straniero" because I am a foreigner in Italy (a British "ambassador"), but in the construct of the national pavilion of Britain I am still as foreign (was struggling to get a visa in London for being in Venice). A visitor's reaction to the sash enriches my performance where different assumptions/identities/knowledges are activated through our interactions (sometimes only in the air). When they ask me what it means, the sash also describes them; when they smile at it, they either understand Italian or are familiar with the theme of the Biennale. The label displays

differences but opens up to exchange - some of the conversations I had have quite inspired and moved me.

As an academic committed to the lessons and spirits of black studies, I have also held a tri-lingual reading workshop bringing John Akomfrah's references to the visitors. Series of poems and paragraphs from Su Dongpo, Édouard Glissant, Pauline Oliveros, bell hooks, Angela Davis, Stuart Hall, etc. are presented in Chinese, English, and Italian, open to be picked up and read. The workshop invites visitors to participate and embody the dynamics between sound, language, and knowledge in a public space imbued with sociocultural meanings.

After returning to London, I have been working on a review of the exhibition in connection with my Venice Fellowships Programme experience, which will soon be published with Afterall Research Centre.

University of the West of England

@hannahhornbyart hannahghornby.wixsite.com/my-site-3

I am a multidisciplinary artist working predominantly with text, sculpture and sound. During my residency in Venice, I worked on *Water Memories*, a writing project which investigates Venice’s relationship with the water, the history of the city’s construction and speculated about a Venice which may exist after submersion. I was inspired by the

rich history of the lagoon, the sappy algae encased river banks, palace steps, mythology and disproven scientific theories. The piece sits somewhere between truth and fiction not too dissimilar to the feelings I felt when immersed within the soundscapes which patterned the incredible film work of John Akomfrah.

1524

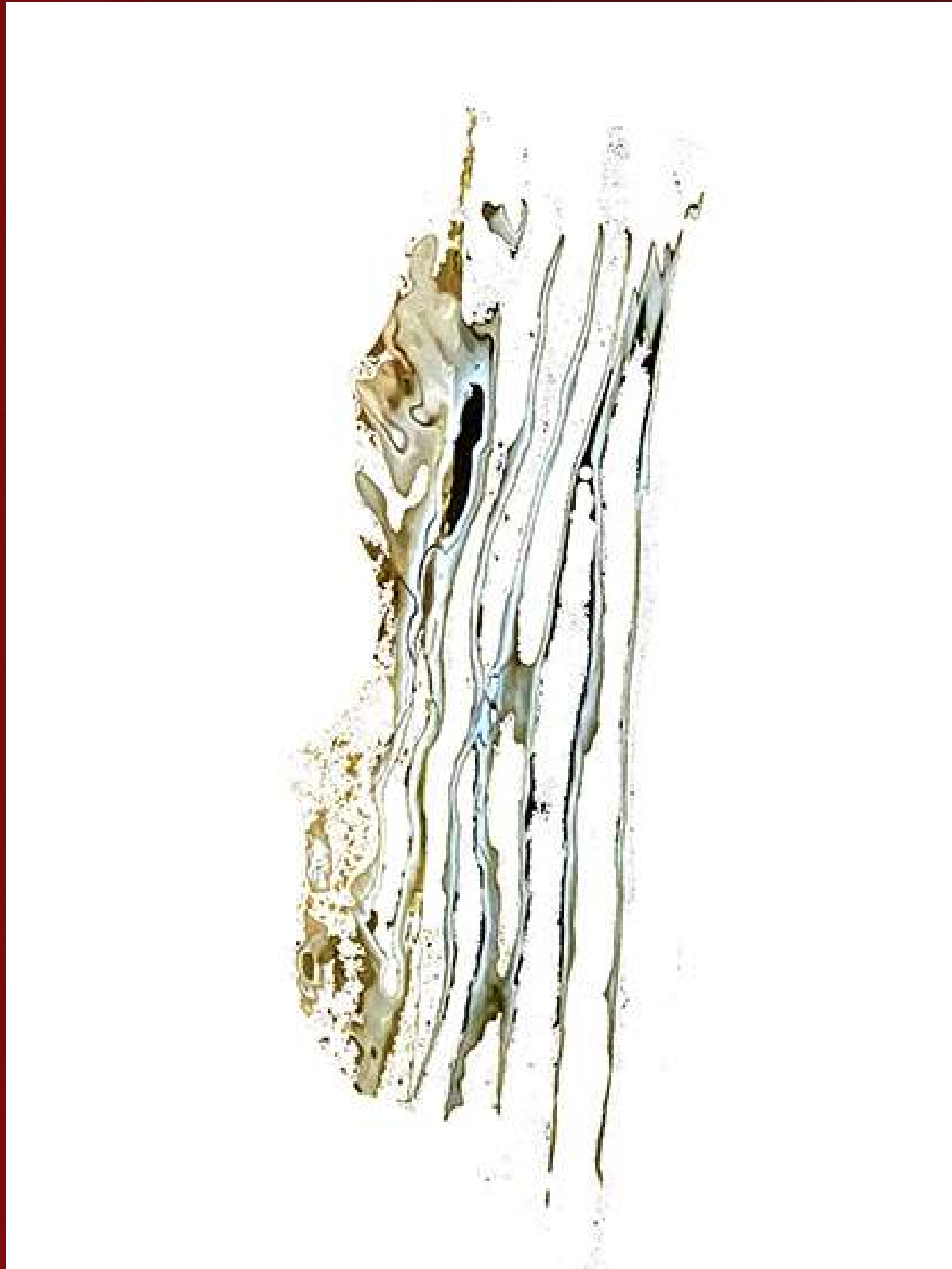
The water still holds the fingertips of hands which built the city.
The bodies and the skins of the Grecians and the Turks,
Slovenians, Persians and Jews.
From all over Christendom and beyond.
They sit within the contours of the waves.
The Venetian waves which dance to the sound of falling trees.
And the buildings which tiptoe across the wavering horizon.
The water remembers those who built the city on sand and mud.
The water tastes of their craftsmanship and their labour,
Of their stories and songs,
Sweat and broken skin,
Blood and hair follicles.
The water remembers and holds the weakened knees of those
who worked for its
construction.
They sit within the contours of the waves.
The waves which taste of their spirit and soul.
The Venetian waves which dance to the sound of falling trees.

1871

Thick,
And emerald,
And heavy,
And sappy to the touch.
Algae in dense layers crawls across marbled floors.
Pulling breath from the sun.
Suffocating,
Growing,
Encasing,
And encased;
In thick,
Moss like,
Dense,
Sappy layers.
Multiplying and,
Mixing with salt.
Stretching along the underbelly of the city.
Multiplying,
Growing and encasing.
Layers.
Across pretty paintings,
Sickly grandeur,
And ornate gold frames.

Thick,
And emerald,
And sappy to the touch.
Chewing on mortar.
Thick on the fallen trees.
Sap mixing with sap.
The stone which couldn’t run,
Encased,
And suffocating.
Gluey and
Thick and emerald.
Algae sits in the memories of the past,

Wavering between times.
Water particles hold history.
Algae traces the tides, the waves, the moons,
And the memories which rise and rise;
Rising above the palace steps,
Lapping against the boundaries of the city,
Flooding the squares and drowning the silk,
Until it's sopping and heavy and dense,
A time in which only the water can recount.



University of the Arts London
 London College of Communication
 @soundarthannah sound-art-hannah.com

Listening across the Biennale

For Adriano Pedrosa, the first Latin American and openly queer curator of the Biennale, 'amplifying marginalized voices' was central to his vision for the 60th edition.

As I explored each national pavilion, I searched for clues about how this 'amplification' was enacted. I noticed many references to listening within curatorial texts, and paid particular attention to who was listening, how they were listening, and in what contexts. I wondered what this *listening turn* might signify.

I compiled a review of works that engaged with this theme, reflecting on how listening might have influenced or been translated into

artworks. To explore these ideas further, I gathered quotations from curatorial texts and composed short poems using found phrases.

Listen to the Other (Italy)
 The voices I hear are ghosts (Cyprus)
 Echoing the words (unknown)
 Repeat after me (Poland)

Listening to her collaborators (Khalili)
 Lending an ear (Italy)
 Okará, or listening assembly (Brazil)
 A curatorial listening tour (Benin)

Singers in yellow jumpsuits (Czech Republic)
 Voices are picked out the air (Nigeria)
 Within a rural soundscape (South Africa)
Listening All Night To The Rain (Great Britain)



Cyprus



Czech Republic

New Contemporaries

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Surrounded by so much art from across the world, it was hard not to feel overwhelmed, but it also gave me the opportunity to lean into slowness — reflecting on my practice while discovering new work and meeting wonderful people.

The Venice Fellowships Programme was deeply relevant to my practice, particularly my interests in cyclical time. In Venice, I was researching smuggled histories and the role of the coast as timekeeper. As tides change, pieces of the past and future get smuggled into the present. I love the sea because of its unstable stillness — If you look at it for long enough, it starts revealing little secrets. Venice, as a city on water, became the perfect backdrop in helping me understand how history continuously washes up and recedes.

The Venice Fellowships Programme has directly impacted my current body of work, which I began developing shortly after returning to the UK. *Contraband Zindabad*, my first institutional solo exhibition at Flatland Projects in Bexhill-On-Sea, makes poetry out of bootlegged histories. This exhibition feels like a natural extension of what I learned during the 2024 Venice Fellowships Programme.

In John Akomfrah's work at the British Pavilion, water holds a memory that slips through the floodgates of the collapsing British Empire,

the climate crisis, and large-scale displacements across the world. *Listening All Night To The Rain* introduced me to acoustemology — the idea that sound acts as a way of knowing and existing within history. Every time a sound is listened to, a story is retold. This pushed me to further experiment with listening as a method, and I began collecting audio samples and field recordings (from Venice and beyond).

On my last day in Venice, I performed a sonic intervention at the British Pavilion — a live sound piece called *Azadi and Other Love Songs*. The performance was a response to John Akomfrah's work, looking at how bootlegs, remixes, and repetitions can carry radical histories into the present. I held my android phone speaker against the magnetic pickups of an electric guitar, and we listened through the amplifier as songs, field recordings and memories disappeared into each other.

The Biennale itself has also left a lasting impression on my practice. I'm very grateful to have seen work by some of my fav artists in person, including Salman Toor, Wael Shawky, Eimar Walshe and Aravani Art Project. And also a shout out to Ristorante Royal Punjab in Mestre for serving up the best mutton biryani in Europe.



Contraband Zindabad, 2024. Installation at Flatland Projects, (Photo by Phoebe Wingrove)



I S A A C

Queen's University Belfast

isaacgibson.co.uk

As a sound designer and recent PhD graduate from Queen's University Belfast, the Venice Fellowships Programme offered space to reflect on and expand two key areas of my work. One strand was building on my doctoral research into creative music-based interventions for palliative care. This included a project called *From My Perspective*, where I recorded and composed personalised 'Listening Experiences' based on life story interviews with hospice patients. These were presented in physical memory boxes, combining narrative, music, and sound design to support well-being, legacy, and connection for patients and families. The other strand was a more politically charged project exploring the sonification of violence – using sound to translate interviews, testimonies, and datasets related to lived experiences of violence into immersive works. The aim was to create affective, multi-sensory pieces that don't just inform but resonate and unsettle.

Venice became a site for developing both approaches. I spent time considering how sound holds and conveys personal and collective memory, how it can serve as a tool for care, and how it might amplify voices and stories that are often marginalised. The context of the Biennale made this kind of thinking feel both urgent and expansive. John Akomfrah's work was a useful touchstone – not in terms of content directly, but in how he uses layered media and poetic form to explore

complex historical and social themes. That approach helped sharpen my thinking about the emotional weight and formal possibilities of sound.

Beyond the work itself, the experience of being a Fellow was grounding and energising. I lived and worked with an inspiring group of peers, each of us bringing something different to the table. The conversations we had – whether in the Pavilion, over late dinners, or while visiting exhibitions – were as formative as anything else. There was a strong sense of mutual respect, care, and curiosity across the group that made the month feel collaborative in the best way.

And of course, there was Venice itself. Getting to train Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, running through the streets of Venice each morning, and finishing most days with a swim on Lido beach were all highlights for me. On a personal level, I made real friendships, felt proud sharing my work as part of one of the world's leading arts exhibitions, and soaked up the atmosphere of a city that demands your attention at every turn. The Venice Fellowships Programme gave me time, space, and new connections. It clarified the kind of work I want to make, and the kind of communities I want to build it with.

Venice itself was the backdrop – sometimes overwhelming, always unforgettable.

G I B S O N

Lowry
@issabellaso



My research focused on the response of national pavilion to the Biennale theme *Foreigners Everywhere* and how different diasporas were showcased. During my time in Venice, I interviewed eighteen international participants about their cherished food memories and rituals. These conversations revealed how shared stories and food create connections between strangers, leading to deeper relationships and enabling individuals to express their identities more authentically.

One particularly meaningful moment was making rice paper rolls with Fellow Groups 4 and 5. This culinary activity helped us get to

know each other better, with some participants trying the dish for the first time. It was exciting to share a food I grew up eating and see how it brought us closer together, bridging cultural differences through a simple shared experience.

My research delved into the nuanced representations of diaspora across the pavilions, exploring themes of belonging, migration, and cultural identity. The rice paper roll preparation became a microcosm of the broader cultural exchanges I was experiencing throughout the Venice Fellowships Programme.



Durham University

@jackcharlesfry_



To observe art in Venice is to be constantly confronted with the political context in which it was created. Venturing into a church to view Renaissance masterpieces means experiencing art within the context of the Catholic Church's ideology and power. Similarly, the Doge's Palace, with its gilded walls and ceilings covered in political, religious, and wartime iconography by Venetian masters, reveals the propagandistic nature of the art and the political narratives behind its commission.

As a Politics and International Relations student, I wanted to explore the intersection of art and the state, both historically in Venice and in the contemporary context of the Biennale. How is national identity portrayed at the Biennale, and is the international hierarchy of nation-states reflected there? I felt that both the architecture and the organisation of the Biennale directly embodied this hierarchy, with wealthier or colonial powers occupying larger, permanently established pavilions in the Giardini. I was particularly struck by the location of the Ukrainian and West Bank pavilions, tucked away down narrow side streets far from the Giardini - a physical embodiment of their subjugation.

Politics is omnipresent at the Biennale. The Israeli pavilion was closed until a ceasefire, the Brazilian pavilion included letters from foreign museums refusing to return Brazilian Indigenous communities' ancestral mantles, and Russia currently does not participate.

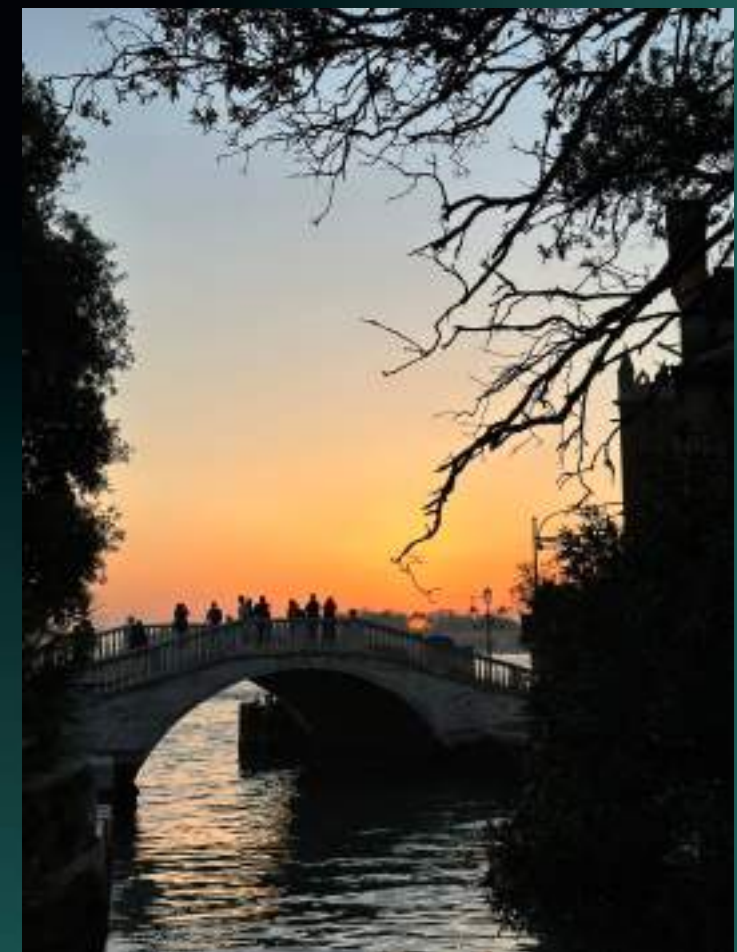
Meanwhile, government officials attended pavilions for tours and Fellows socialised at a communist bar. Moreover, with much of the world having experienced colonial rule, it was unsurprising that colonialism emerged as a dominant theme throughout the Biennale. But what struck me was how these political narratives were conveyed.

The art that moved me most was art that embodied the phrase, "The personal is political". The works that resonated most with me were those that offered visceral, tangible expressions of personal experience where the politics was intrinsic rather than didactic; it emerged naturally as a reflection of the artist's identity rather than serving as the central message.

This led me to question the role of art itself. Why do we, as humans, ascribe political power to art? Why do we censor it? Do we truly believe it can shape politics? At the same time, must art always carry political and social meaning? Can we not simply marvel at human mastery and finesse? Can art be a reprieve from, rather than a reflection of our times? More personally, how does art move us? Does it elicit empathy? And if so, can that empathy translate into activism?

These are the central themes I have been exploring in the short film I'm currently editing, which I filmed whilst in Venice.

University for the Creative Arts



Outside In juliafry.com

I never imagined Venice to have much in the way of trees so I was pleasantly surprised to find a White Poplar tree that called to me to create a connection. My artistic practice has always been intuition-led and recently I began training as a shamanic practitioner. My project idea was to go on intuitive walks to find ‘dead’ space in which to sing, rattle and drum to the spirits to welcome them back. I was open to seeing what kinds of connections might be possible. The project involved me meeting my self-consciousness head on so I could take my shamanic drum to the White Poplar tree to rattle and drum to it (nearly) every day. The rhythmic beat of the drum was hypnotic and very quickly eased my fear of judgement. Sometimes, people stopped to film or listen. Someone tried to give me money. Another said, “Grazie for the music”. Occasionally someone would ask me about the drumming and we’d have a conversation in which I’d get to know them a little. I connected with one Venetian on Instagram in this way.

As I immersed myself in living in Venice, I felt my connection with the water begin to change from deeply fearful to loving respect, and I worked on an intuitive painting as this relationship developed. I felt the healing power

of this living entity that let me know there are no ‘dead’ spaces in Venice. My project changed as I spent time invigilating and noticing the effects on my body of the dissonant sounds and painful images recording humans’ traumatic handling of each other and the world in John Akomfrah’s work. I wondered about the provision of spaces for invigilation staff to express emotions creatively immediately after being with the work (and this is something I’m working on in my solo exhibition). I created a shamanic rattle from materials I had to hand and then invited other Fellows to a workshop at the White Poplar tree. Two came and we connected, sharing what we’d learnt about ourselves in Venice as we made and decorated rattles. We set intentions to let go of something and to embrace something, and rattled together, walking around the tree. We all felt a shift within ourselves as we rattled. I recently learned from one Fellow that at my workshop they found the confidence to approach a charity to create and deliver workshops for neurodivergent people to express themselves creatively. I am reminded that impact is not measured by immediate contact and can ripple out. I am deeply grateful for my Venice experience.



Glasgow School of Art

@k3llyc0le

I expanded on my curatorial PhD research, examining the poetics of place and cultural memory in contemporary British moving image art. I was excited to support *Listening All Night To The Rain*, an exhibition that turns to water as a vessel for stories and histories of diaspora and migration within Britain's cultural identity.

I used curatorial site writing and architectural research to trace spatial and social relationships surrounding Akomfrah's installation and its diasporic geographies, the Biennale and its expanded sites, and the wider space of Venice as both a mythical imaginary and a lived, constructed zone of mass tourism, hydrology and labour.

Venice's watery ways of life and the theme of *Foreigners Everywhere*, resonated with my curatorial research on water, place, memory, and image-making. I explored the construction of islandness and boundedness in the Venetian lagoon, where an urban island was built on shifting sand dunes. Edouard Glissant's concept of 'archipelagic thinking' challenges Western notions of islandness and instead views water as a terrain of relation and navigation between places and people. Reading Venice's tidal zones and watery edges, I found that concepts of centre and periphery dissolve, uncovering a fluid, interconnected archipelago shaped by dynamic flows of people, ideas, ecologies and cultures.

In *Listening All Night to the Rain*, Akomfrah immerses you in watery environments to consider water as a material archive, holding unspoken stories of migration, diaspora and exile. He offers water as an alternative way to view history, as a collective flow, where past and present co-exist. The exhibition calls on us to listen to water for the lessons of climate

colonialism and ecocide, and for the flows of resistance and repair.

Sometimes the Giardini can feel like an island in itself, with the national pavilion structure reproducing outmoded geopolitical dynamics and exclusions. I found powerful alternative voices at collateral exhibitions across Venice highlighting counter-hegemonic narratives and reimagining national boundaries. Standouts included Côte d'Ivoire's *The Blue Note* emphasizing Pan-Africanism and sonic diasporas, Nigeria *Imaginary* presenting a cultural club in post-independence Nigeria as a departure point, and *SOUTH WEST BANK* showcasing the work of Palestinian artists in and around the southern West Bank and offering urgent insights into enduring struggles.

Being in Venice introduced me to different approaches to research-led curating, exploring the politics of water and place in the context of climate change. A highlight was a tour of TBA-21 Academy's Ocean Space exhibition, *Re-Stor(y)ing Oceania*, featuring powerful site-specific commissions by Indigenous artists from the Pacific, Latai Taumoepeau and Elisapeta Hinemoa Heta. Their reflections on Tonga and Māori cultures, alongside *Climate Crisis and Cultural Loss* (2021–2024) showcasing Professor Ute Meta Bauer's research on climate crisis and cultural loss, created a thought-provoking space that will influence my work moving forward.

Fellows' projects collecting stories of migration and food, and hydrological recordings of Venice, opened new avenues to consider how water holds stories of journeying, labour and ecology that are often absent from the tourist gaze of the city.



London Metropolitan University



My first intention, in my first vision, was to investigate in my work the immensely complex and sometimes turbulent relation between humans and nature, particularly with a view towards humanity's relentless abuse of the natural environment and its shared fate with it. My inquiry looked beyond the immediate threats posed to humanity through such abuse and delved deeper into a darker, less convenient reality: nature's unjust suffering, an existence crisis that puts at peril the future of our planet in its totality.

Yet, days into my presence in Venice, I reached a stark realization: Venice's most critical challenge is not, as oftentimes understood, its most renowned affliction, Acqua Alta, but its unregulated expansion of tourism to unsustainable scales. It is at its heart a cause of near all Venice's most widespread ills today.

Acknowledging both urgency and severity of such an issue, I could not resist altering my focus. That a dissertation, I resolved, would best serve to dissect and analyse the factors responsible for such a fragile state, I could not deny.

In my inquiry, I explore Venice's most significant catalysts for change, including European airline deregulation and long-term repercussions of the Marshall Plan, through to Venice's housing market's radical overhauls—all of them profoundly changing Venice's citizens' lives.

To conduct such an inquiry, I adopted a specialist path: psychogeography, a field that intertwines psychology and geography in an inquiry into how urban spaces shape humans' feelings, thinking, and behaviour. A fundamental aspect of psychogeography is the practice of walking: purposeless wandering, drifting through a city, allowing its spaces to shape perception and reflection. Nowhere is such an approach more apt than in Venice, whose sole permissible overland form of transportation is walking, and whose act of getting about is therefore an act of discovery in and of itself. My time in Venice was invaluable in shaping this dissertation.

Thanks to my residency month, I was able to acquire first-hand information that, in any other instance, I could have acquired only through secondary sources. I documented the city and its surrounding islands through countless photographs and videos, and interviewed native-born and long-term living, citizens and residents, respectively, of Venice. All these first-hand experiences imparted a level of reality and depth to my work that could not have been achieved in any other way. By taking an unorthodox path, I hope to have shed new light from a fresh perspective, onto Venice's current crises and stressed even deeper its urgency for immediate, not delayed, action.

London College of Communication

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@crystalacheung



Vessel sketch from observation, Venice, September 2024. Venetian Glass Vessels



Vessel sketch from observation, Venice, September 2024. Venetian Glass Vessels

“Spending One Month in Venice is Magical!”
How the Venice Fellowships Programme
Impacted My Current PhD Research

(Excerpt from my Venice Reflection)

As a PhD student researching eco-social justice and object-based learning, my time in Venice was far more than simply a visually stimulating experience, it was invaluable for my current practice-based research. The residency allowed me to explore Venetian glass and reflect on the intersections of eco-social justice and object-based learning, which lie at the heart of my work. Venice provided an immersive engagement with objects, forms, materials, and spaces that significantly influenced my thinking about research and design. The month encouraged me to slow down, absorb my surroundings, and immerse myself

in exhibitions, galleries, and museums. I observed and sketched vessels in museum collections, participated in a glass-blowing class, and revisited the Arsenale and Giardini exhibitions to engage further.

Getting lost in labyrinthine alleys, riding the vaporetti, and having informal conversations with both locals and visitors was incredible. Discussions about art, architecture, culture, and tradition, sometimes over a glass of prosecco, offered a unique lens for reflecting on my research. The diverse cohort of Fellows, pavilion staff, international artists, and local Venetians deepened my appreciation of Venice as a site of global cultural exchange. This experience expanded my conceptualization of objectness, the form and function of vessels, and the way objects interact with their environments and cultural contexts.

York St. John University

@l__horton



20/10/2024

Clouded sky. Clear sky. Day sky. Night sky. Grey sky. Blue sky.

I often wondered what it would be like. The sky from a different place. Would it be the same or would it be different?

It felt the same to begin with. And it is the same in a sense. But then you spend more time with it and you realise that it acts differently. You begin to notice how it is different. Things that you might not realise or notice if you only look very occasionally and you don't have much time to spend contemplating it.

It is different. It is something that I have realised slowly, unknowingly, unconsciously the more time I have spent observing.

I wonder if it is noticeable to anyone else? Of all these people here from all over the world, with their own skies from their own places – does anyone else notice that this sky is different? Most people don't come here to look at the sky. Most people only seem to see the sky when the sun is setting and the colours spread over the horizon. Most people are probably not here for long enough to notice a difference. But I wonder if some people do.

Arts & Homelessness International

Even as a writer, I struggle to find the words to convey my sentiments and overall reflections of my experience of being a Fellow in Venice, the city-of-love. This was an experience that I can attest to shaping my creative future and impacting on my life skill sets in the most dynamic way.

The experience and role surpassed my presumptions: having the honour of greeting, directing and contributing to a visitor experience for an international audiences at an immensely impressive exhibition that mainly had me proud to be British; the almost overwhelming mass of inspiring international arts crammed into one month; the delicacies of fine food (even the cheap ones!); witnessing the city-of-love culture where 80-year-olds walk hand-in-hand and openly show affection in public; living like a Venetian in an apartment I came to affectionately dub 'The Cube' on a Calle where neighbours tentatively but eventually embraced me into their neighbourhood; riding the bus 'with no wheels'; attending the city's splendid annual cultural events; the opportunity to work and socialize with an amazing and fun group of people; taking in the glorious sun and walking the most amount of miles I have ever done in a single month in my entire life, despite my mobility disability; having just a gelato for supper... and more...

My project was based on gathering true stories of Venetian immigrants and 'performing' them in a Headphone Verbatim Theatre production called *FROM OVERSEAS TO ON THE SEAS* under my upcoming brand name of *No Qualms Productions* at Arts & Homelessness International's third summit. Although it initially seemed as though I wouldn't be able to obtain them, four immigrants honoured me with their unique stories (one of them in Italian!), enlightening their emotional journeys to finding home and feeling never being able to attain that, despite their love for the city. There was much learning from this project, sitting under the umbrella of homelessness in a sense of 'insecure home' definitions. Doing the project has enabled me in the direction of international collaborations, as overcoming even the challenge of language has given me competences of such barriers.

Additionally, engaging with such a diverse number of international visitors to the Pavilion has me expand on my social skills.

I have grown.



Arts University Bournemouth

@mariaoyamart

My experience as a Fellow was invaluable towards my personal growth and the development of my practice. Although I have invigilated in galleries before, the diverse range of people I interacted with working at the British Pavilion is something I am unsure I will experience again. It was incredibly special to spend so much time with the work of John Akomfrah and see how my relationship to the work developed over time. Familiarizing myself with his work has sparked my interest in archival footage and sound, which I am now currently pursuing in a video art residency with VegaPunk and international video art platform VisualContainerTV.

I came to the residency month with a vague idea of what shape my project will embody, and allowed myself to first experience the people, place, and artwork that surrounded me. As I visited various pavilions, I realised I

was particularly interested in the position of the invigilator, and the certain distance one is required to uphold to be both present and invisible. I began to visit exhibitions to speak to invigilators, listening to their experience of the work they stood beside day in, day out. My project hence developed into the form of a network built through mail correspondence between pavilions, both within and outside the bounds of the Giardini and Arsenale. Whilst I was unable to coordinate the sending of mail during my time at Venice, this is a project I wish to continue now that Fellows and invigilators aren't able to interact within walking distance.

Beyond the project and invigilating, my experience of Venice was just incredible. From meeting creatives based in Venice, indulging in Venetian cuisine and attending the film festival, this experience has undoubtedly shaped my practice and person.



Mail project - Contribution to my project by Elyon Liu!

Outside In @marilyn.henderson.art

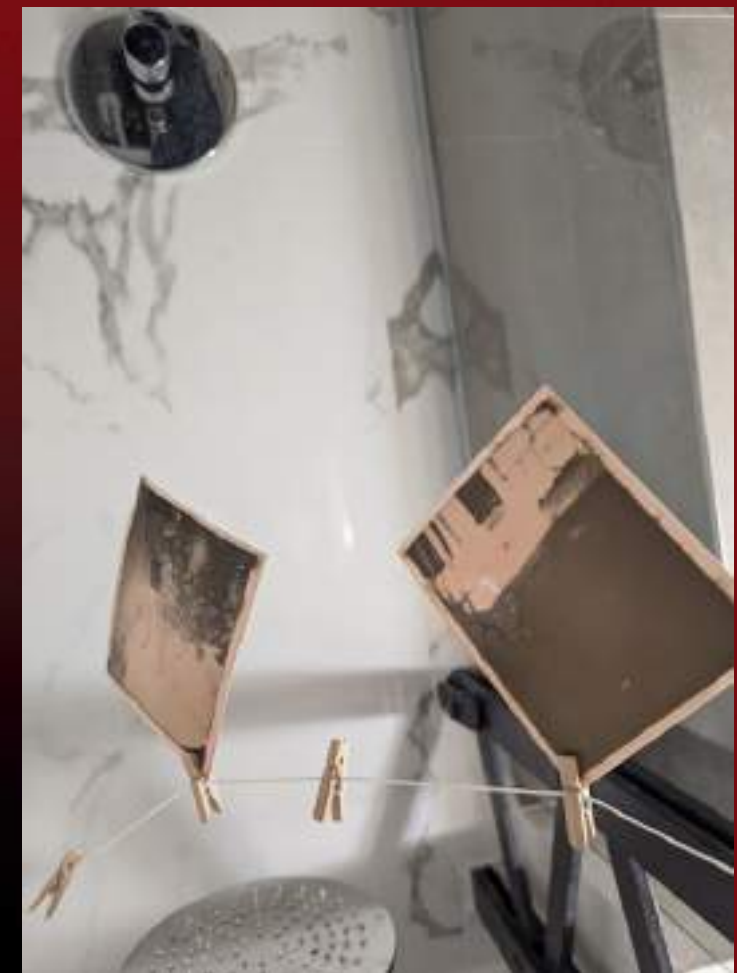
I was delighted to be awarded the Venice Fellowship through Outside In, and I joined the final cohort heading out in November. The wait between the training and my eventual arrival in Venice felt like such a long time, but the experience was worth it.

Working as an invigilator at the British Pavilion was an incredible opportunity to immerse myself in the exhibition, engage in thought-provoking conversations with visitors and fellows, and even lead tours.

My personal research centred on the effects of over-tourism on Venice and ways to be a more eco-sensitive tourist. I interviewed a local resident, which gave me an invaluable insight into the impact of tourism on Venetian lives. The city's graffiti, often expressing frustration

with overtourism, captured my attention, so I began documenting it with Polaroids. I experimented with pinhole photography using eco-friendly developers and fixers made from coffee and salt. Through trial and error, I produced some decent prints... and some terrible ones! The images show my prints drying, an image made with my Pinsta camera, and me out and about with my kit.

I plan to compile my research into a zine. Additionally, I aim to connect my research with UK organisations by conducting a series of workshops at a primary school, sharing my Venice experiences and making zines with the pupils. I'll also present my findings to Outside In and other artists through workshops and Share Art talks.





M A R T H A

Winchester School of Art
University of Southampton
@marthagracedean.art

Spending a month in Venice was one of the most surreal, informative, happiest times in my life. Over the four weeks, I experienced Venice in numerous ways: as an artist, student, tourist, invigilator, gelateria reviewer, runner. Months later, I am still painting Venice and my studio walls are filled with my observations and visual research.

D E A N

M E L A N I E

Newcastle University



I lost my phone the day I left Venice.
These are the place I think it could be...



C O L B E Y

Venture Arts

venturearts.org/artists/michael-nash/



I loved staying in Venice for a month in October 2024, supported by Venture Arts. During my residency, I worked as a Fellow at the British Pavilion at Venice Biennale, and made my own work too. I experimented with digital artwork forms more deeply (After Effects, Procreate, Indesign), mapped routes all over Venice, did pinhole photography, drawing by eye and sound recording. I recreated historical artist interpretations of Venice and contemporary biennale artworks in my own style, made a personalised accessible guide to Venice in digital and print.

I also loved learning the language, eating the food, watching Venezia FC and immersing myself in Venice. I also collaborated with

We Are Here Venice and Italian artist Claudio Beorchia on his Laguna Dei Cippi project in Sant'Erasmus, focusing on tracking long term environmental shifts in the lagoon.

I have learnt that doing new things is exciting and worthwhile. My practice has become more interesting & I feel confident. I met so many people from all over the world and I talked to them every day. Since I came back I have made a book and an interactive version of it for exhibition. I can't wait to visit Venice again.

[Interactive book](#)

Manchester Metropolitan University

@mila__januszova

Venice, With Love: Echoes of the Lagoon

Venice is a city of thresholds—between land and water, permanence and erosion, presence and disappearance. *Venice, With Love* embraced this liminality as both method and resistance, rejecting the notion that cultural memory is static or that art must be fixed to hold meaning.

At its heart were cyanotype workshops at the British Pavilion—ephemeral acts of imprinting that disrupted the extractive nature of cultural tourism. In a city where visitors are expected to consume, not contribute, these workshops offered an alternative: creation as exchange, not transaction. Fellows and the public gathered under the Venetian sun, layering seaweed, shells, and leaves onto paper, exposing them to light. These deep Prussian blue imprints defied invisibility. They weren't souvenirs but transmissions—traces of presence carried beyond Venice, refusing to be confined to a single place.

A collective cyanotype fabric, created with Fellows, became a living archive of collaboration. Layered with overlapping gestures, it held the residue of hands and histories pressed together, mirroring Venice itself—a city shaped by shared labour, contested ownership, and endless transformation. Like the Festa del Bocolo, where roses are exchanged as fleeting acts of remembrance, *Venice, With Love* honoured the

radical act of passing something on—whether a skill, a story, or an image exposed to light.

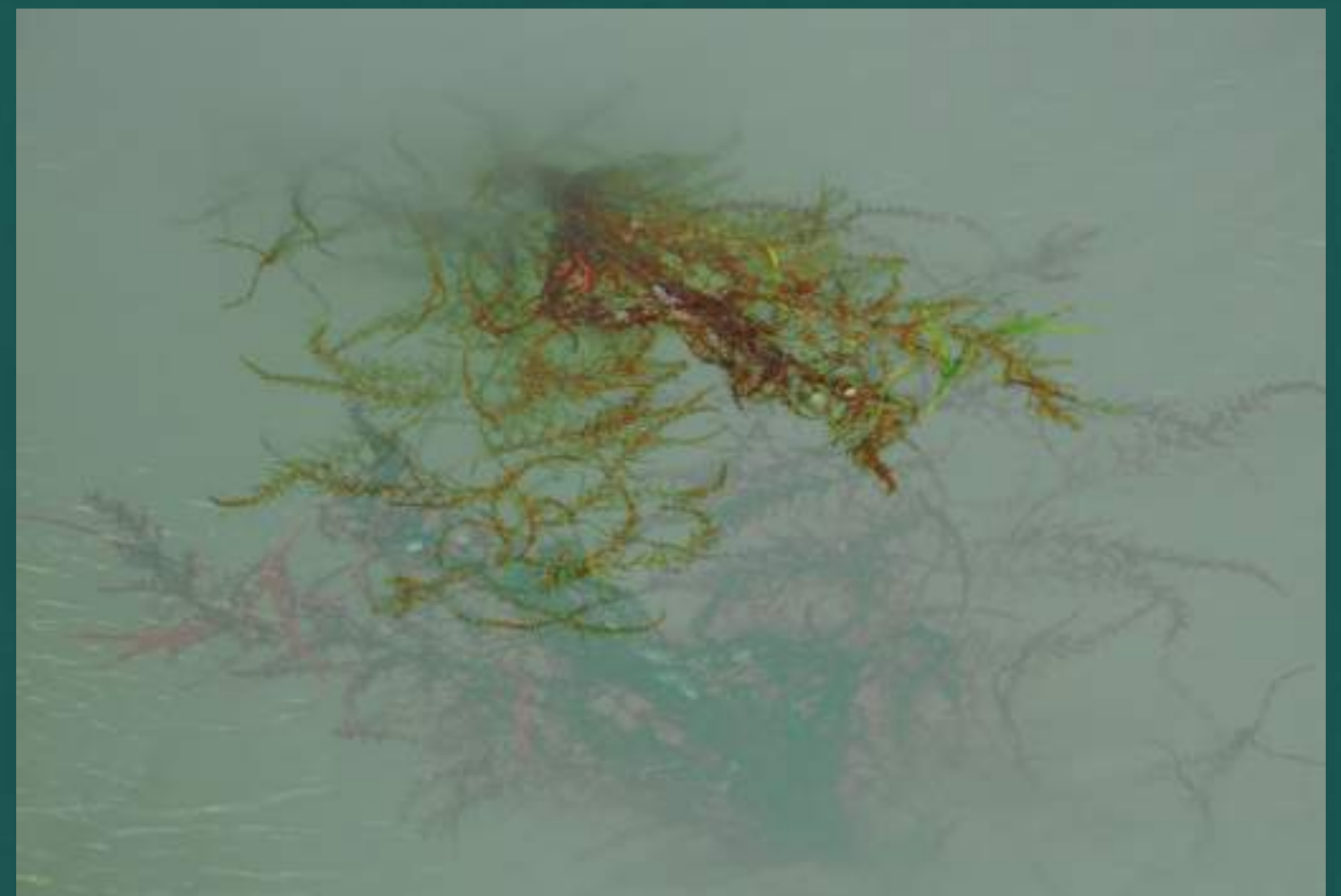
The photographic series *Floating Red* paralleled this theme, capturing seaweed drifting through canals as a metaphor for cultural adaptation—fluid, unanchored, yet impossible to erase. Just as cyanotype reinterprets found materials through exposure, this series questioned how cultural identity survives, resists, and is reimagined.

But *Venice, With Love* was not a documentation of place—it was an intervention. It insisted that impermanence is not erasure, that cultural presence is an ongoing act. It asked:

- Who has the right to leave a mark?
- How do we resist the passive consumption of place?
- Can shared acts of creation forge community in transient environments?
- What traces do we leave behind—not just as artists, but as people passing through?

This project was not about permanence, but about resilience—the radical act of creating together in a world that erases, erodes, and forgets. Venice, With Love leaves behind no monuments, only echoes—a reminder that even in the most transient spaces, we shape and are shaped in return.

Venice teaches that nothing is permanent—not stone, not memory, not even the ground beneath our feet.



Mila Januszova, *Floating Red*



Mila Januszova, *Duotone Cyanotype Digital Prints* from workshop held at the British Pavilion on May 11th 2024

M I L L I C E N T

Bradford City Of Culture 2025

@millicentsanders millicentsanders.com/venice

I spent the month of June collecting colours—the colours of walls, roofs, and window sills. Church doors, boat hulls, dried-out ropes, and glossy painted posts. I imagined that Venice would seem blue. Water creeps through into every view but Venice is not blue, it is peach. Peach and faded.

Terracotta tiles, sun-beaten blush walls with dusty pink bricks, mauve paving stones, rose glass street lamps, glowing orange Aperol. Every evening the clouds filled with a fluorescent peach and every ripple on the lagoon glistened pink and orange hues.



S A N D E R S

Newcastle University

@millnicholsonart

As a landscape painter, I am drawn to the way human touch transforms space into place, how it is charged with political, cultural and personal meaning. The painting process is a cathartic experience, which transforms these places once again into tangible, mouldable snapshots. Venice represents a highly concentrated version of the notion of place; its rich history and culture crammed on to a series of slowly sinking islands. I was fascinated with how La Biennale would contend with this; whether it would draw on the local community or provide a spectacle for vast swathes of tourists. For me, Venice was always going to be a spectacle, symbolising the centre of the Western art world, in contrast to the periphery of North East England that I am used to.

The pilgrimage made by creatives from across the world to the Biennale is reflected in the 2024 theme: *Stranieri Ovunque - Foreigners Everywhere*, demonstrating the significance of globalisation to the city and the exhibitions. It reminded me (in wording only) of the immigration debate in Britain and racial tensions in my native Teesside, and my instincts to draw comparisons ran throughout my time in Venice.

I arrived in Venice at night, and the deadly-still streets again invoked a popular vision of my hometown; static, and stuck in the past.

In the daylight I was struck by the number of day-tourists and the feeling that no one lived on the island anymore, until I found out where to look. The silent night was fractured by lively bars down hidden alleyways; locals speaking Venetian dialect from their windows, and church-ran street festivals. Though experiencing these events as an outsider, they proved that the community was thriving, and protecting its culture from the homogenisation of mass tourism.

John Akomfrah's *Listening All Night To The Rain* changed my perspective on the city and my hometown. The exhibition references Jacques Benveniste's theory that water retains memories; a proposition that is more redolent in the floating city than anywhere else. The canals of Venice carry the hidden history of the city, flowing past unsuspecting visitors. This gave me hope for Teesside, where our strong local identity is closely tied to, and perhaps now carried by, the water.

My project culminated in a series of paintings capturing an obscured vision of Venice in motion, and an artist book based on my sketches, photos and writings from the Venice Fellowships Programme. My experiences in Venice continue to inform my practice and my exploration of the fragmented, lively communities of 'static' places.



Rifondazione Comunista, acrylic on canvas



Artist book

London Metropolitan University

@_mrsblues



Born as Maurane Gadeau (Côte d'Ivoire), Mrs. Blues is a multidisciplinary artist who develops a jazzistic practice aiming towards emotional freedom. Working across mixed media, installation, performance and music, her research draws upon ideas of healing, patterns, publics and spaces.

In Venice, my objective was to document, evaluate and compare my thoughts and discoveries. As I relied on learnings from my Master in Public Art & Performatives Practices, I was particularly interested in visitors' experience in the British pavilion as well as the Giardini and Arsenale.

Some visitors were regulars, others were first-timers (like two siblings who were travelling by foot and could not have missed the Biennale on their trip!)

Looking at the choreography of people in the space, I noticed they would often move when potential triggering images appeared on screens, enter the exhibition intrigued and leave shaken.

I interviewed visitors, focusing on those who seemed particularly engaged with the exhibition or uncertain about it. I made a selection of quotes with their feedback from which I was able to challenge my own perception and unfold new understandings of the artist's work and the Biennale itself.

Inspired by a memory of my father teaching me about the importance of pauses in jazz and music composition, I have created *Take A Beat*, a participatory multi-sensory installation encouraging visitors to engage in a somatic experience, while listening to the meditative audio piece playing vocal harmonies and scatting inspired by West African dialects.

Influenced by John Akomfrah's concept of acoustemology, which understands the world primarily through sound, my project experiments with patterns as a visual language, behaviors, and melodies or movements in spaces, to question how to develop specific methods for public art experiences, approaching ritual in non-religious contexts. It also opens up transcultural dialogues fed through the public responses.

I lived in Venice for an additional three weeks to help artist, Marina Moreno, in her exhibition *We All Come From Somewhere* at Fondazione Marta Czok, where I was introduced to broader audiences, along with locals. I have developed a particular relationship with Venice: I am planning to develop creative ideas and definitely visit more Biennales in the future.

The Venice Fellowships Programme offered an opportunity to reflect on my practice and visualise where I could take it forward.



N

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H

O

Northumbria University

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I'm a visual artist and work part-time as a researcher in the Art and Design department of Newcastle University. During my time in Venice, I spent a lot of time exploring the unique ecosystems of the city. I conducted research through participating in sound walks, visiting various historic sites and natural history museums, connecting with the local researchers and artists that engage with the topic and always looking out for the plants and animals that you can spot in the city.

The unique position and history of Venice has always intersected urban life with the water and its wonderful marine wildlife. With its incredible beauty and its fragile state looking into the future – Venice is a place that can appear almost too dreamy, too slippery to grasp.

While invigilating *Listening All Night To The Rain*, I drew parallels with the themes in John Akomfrah's work: the effects of climate

change on Venice and the surrounding lagoons, rising waters, dangerous flooding and climate migration that has brought many people to Venice and the wider Veneto region in the recent years. In my last week in Venice, I met the local Venetian drainage worker who in 2021 first discovered dolphins in the Giudecca canal in Venice. This extremely rare sighting of an endangered species so close to the city, inspired a moment of hope to a lot of people in the very difficult time at the height of the global pandemic. I am touched and fascinated by the collective imagination and hope attached to a school of Venetian dolphins, and want to take it as a starting point to examine the current and future state of the climate crisis and its entanglement with climate migration further. I am planning to go back to Venice as soon as I can, ideally during the spring season when the cuttlefish migrate and dolphins divert their usual routes to chase the young cuttlefish in the lagoons and as it happens this is also the time when the Biennale opens its many doors.

M

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Northumbria University

“Perhaps I am afraid of losing Venice all at once, if I speak of it, or perhaps, speaking of other cities, I have already lost it, little by little. ...the people who move through the streets are all strangers.” – Italo Calvino

I really loved this year’s theme of *Foreigners Everywhere* which could be meant to express a concept linked to the current circumstances in which the crisis of subjectivity merges with the crisis of politics and its legitimacy of representation. As Claire Fontaine underlines - we know everything about every current emergency, every problem (from climate to geopolitical, from work to political representation questions), but we don’t know how to solve them.

My background in Visual Arts and my current PhD studies enriched my experience at this year’s Biennale, which was truly unforgettable. The work of John Akomfrah has greatly inspired my practice. His exploration of cultural studies of colonialism, post-colonialism and social inequality resonates with my PhD project, which investigates the communal riots in Gujarat, India, which, in 2002, I confronted and survived. These events have left lasting scars that are still evident in the structure of the city’s development.

I dedicated the research element of the Venice Fellowships Programme to researching the notion of Venetian mask. The use of Venetian masks, deeply rooted in the Carnival of Venice, resonates powerfully with the themes of home and memory explored in the Venice Biennale’s *Foreigners Everywhere*. These masks symbolize the act of hiding in plain sight, allowing

individuals to obscure their identities and societal constraints. This act of concealment can be seen as a metaphor for the complexities of belonging in a world marked by globalization and cultural exchange.

As an artist, I use masks to convey creativity and skill while exploring the broader narrative of identity. Masks allow for an examination of belonging, revealing how our identities are influenced by physical spaces, memories, and experiences. Wearing a mask can evoke liberation, enabling individuals to step beyond societal norms. By embracing the duality of the mask, artists can challenge traditional notions of identity, illustrating that home is not a fixed place but a collection of memories and experiences that transcend borders. Masks become a canvas for expressing the dynamic interplay between personal and cultural narratives. My work, as part of an ongoing project, invites deeper reflection on interconnectedness. The Venetian masks and the exploration of home at the Biennale encourage us to consider the complexities of identity and belonging. While we may hide behind masks, our shared experiences and cultural narratives create a rich tapestry that connects us all.

Venice appears as an enchanting, timeless city, evoking a sense of fantasy. During my initial visit, the unique atmosphere inspired me to create a video that narrates my experience of the city. My artistic journey commenced with sketches made throughout my 30-day stay, during which I also crafted a ‘Tasbih’ consisting of 30 paper beads to accompany my daily writing practice.

Arts & Homelessness International

@nellhardyactor @responseabilitytheatre

@RATheatre ratheatre.bsky.social

My project explored how to portray the experience of displacement from a child's point of view, stemming from work I have done with a research project into the development impacts of living in temporary accommodation for children under the age of 5. At this stage, we were specifically looking into the experiences of migrant and asylum seeking children. A limitation of traditional research methods is that the information we receive about children's experiences typically has to come from parents or professional adults in the lives of the children, rather than from the children themselves, as they do not have the words to tell researchers how they are experiencing the world around them. As a theatre-maker, I was curious to see how visual and multimedia artists explored the theme *Foreigners Everywhere* as a route into abstract forms of expression that would allow me to embody the medical, social and educational themes that were emerging from the research, without trying naturalistically to represent a child.

An unexpected joy for me was seeing how children responded to the artworks I visited: I hadn't anticipated how many families would visit the Biennale, and the experience of seeing how differently children respond to sensory stimuli to adults was an initial route in to how I might try to give an adult audience a child's eye view. A number of the pavilions contained work that was inspired by a child's perspective, or integrated childlike play into their communication of the experience of displacement, which was also helpful. Simply living surrounded by water somewhere where I did not comfortably speak the language created a sense of uncertainty and noticeable difference in the amount of energy needed to complete simple tasks, that fed into concepts of connections between sentences, images and sounds taking differing amounts of time, and causing communicative differences, in ways that echoed what many of the interviewees in the research project discussed.



King’s College London

Finding Joy in the Collective.

During my time in Venice, I encountered overwhelming moments of frustration due to the weight of microaggressions and oppression that come with being a Black, Disabled Woman.

And yet, the images tell a different story.

They reflect joy and safety held within the stillness. The beauty of the city often stood in stark contrast to the struggles I faced navigating inaccessible spaces. Much like the tranquillity that lingers when observing the lagoon amidst the restless waves, I found similar comforts in my community through this fellowship.



Lagoon Statue - A boat sailing across the open Venetian lagoon on a sunny day, with a view of distant islands. At the centre lies the Monument to the Partisan Woman almost submerged in water.



Group 8 - A smiley group of five people posing together with a wooden shelf of teacups and ceramics behind them.



Masks - A colourful display of decorated Venetian masks through a store window showcasing glitter, feathers, and traditional carnival designs.



Entrance - Golden and bronze statues of tall figures in black swimsuits stand beneath a large tree. In its shade is a building with parasols and the Venetian lagoon in the background.

Outer Spaces

rachelhutchisonart.square.site

[@rachelhutchison.art](https://www.instagram.com/rachelhutchison.art)

My time in Venice was wonderful, purposeful, and gifted me with a renewed sense of being really P*ssed Off.

This frustration isn't directed at the experience itself, but at the systemic underfunding, undervaluing of the arts and the lack of accessible opportunities like it. The Venice Fellowships Programme is one in a million, and fewer than one in ten arts workers in the UK come from working-class roots (Healy, 2024).

To stand in such a prestigious space and unapologetically take up space as myself was profoundly validating, especially as an artist who has picked up a few disproportionately represented labels along the way: Scottish, neurodivergent, queer, working class.

Despite the immense pride I feel for completing the Venice Fellowships Programme, the realities of returning home were sobering. Without an officiating lanyard around our necks, artists face an ongoing battle to feel acknowledged for the skills and experiences we bring to the table. The lack of accessible opportunities like this Venice Fellowships Programme remains a pressing issue, but instead of panicking, I'm organising my contribution to a more sustainable arts ecology.

A year on from my Venice experience, my own Cultural and Artistic Exchange initiative titled *Auld Artelier* has emerged. Inspired

by my research project, with the aim of connecting pairs of artists through residencies in their respective twin towns as a bridge to understanding one another, especially post-Brexit. Initially I will be focusing on Scotland but hope that with collaboration *Auld Artelier* can grow, I welcome anyone who is interested!

My research project involved me sharing my artistic method with my fellows. My painting practice is very much one of my therapeutic tools, it's a way of collaborating with my subconscious emotional experiences before I've even recognised or found a narrative for them. I interviewed my fellows inviting them to reflect on how they categorise and explain their own emotional experiences. With a vast variety of backgrounds and cultures, it was beautiful to find similarities and equally differences in the ways in which we categorise and process our shared human experience of emotions. The preliminary results of this research can be seen on my Instagram (@rachelhutchison.art), where I shared a voice clip representing overlapping audio snippets from these interviews.

I'd like to thank my partner organisation Outer Spaces who have supported me through the Venice Fellowships Programme and as an early career artist by supplying free studio spaces around Scotland.



The Scottish National Flower isn't native to the land, it most likely immigrated from Europe.

London College of Communication

University of the Arts London

@sisterr_ray raysims.cargo.site

dirty-fkn-laundry.tumblr.com/ Pw: aftertheecstasy



Venice is a city full of water you can't swim in:

one of the first things I wrote down when I arrived.

A shopping list:

Aubergines
Washing up liquid
Tomatoes
Mozzarella

A note on Assumption of the Virgin by Titian, explained to me by Sabrina:

Triptychs - divided into three - start in the real and ascend into abstraction
Real > something real that you've never seen > chaos

How it felt:

Our flat, by the universities, and waking every day to parades for graduating students with laurel leaves on their head. Later in the month, when I missed my own graduation back in London, my friends bought me my own laurel crown and we had drinks in the gardens on Sant'Elena.

Clothes, cooked by the sun, weeks looking out for laundry lines until everyone started taking photos of them for me anyway. Strange to think about laundry all day in theory and then come home to do it, to hang my own clothes out of the window.

Looking into windows and wondering who lived there. Remembering people probably watched me scurry down the street to my flat and wondered where I was going. When my mum visited I bumped into 3 people I knew in one day and I realised that I was, truly, living on an island. Melting into the island and suddenly knowing my entire walk home.

I found laundry that looked like flowers, laundry that looked like flags, lines and lines of towels and blankets that floated in the sky like clouds. And then, quietly, a household hung out to dry: dressing gowns, underwear, a mix of shapes and sizes for each person at home. Leaning into my voyeuristic side – the July heat will do that to you. Leaving and knowing I was tied to Venice forever by a washing line.

Touchstones
rizaliart.com

Dear Venice,

I think of you often. Though our time together was short, the impact you had on me was greater than you can imagine. You let me in, bringing my ignorant English tendencies all in the name of art.

I set out to understand how art can be fluid, temporal whilst making sure we make these clustered spaces for our own community. I did this by taking space in your community. I came to you with questions, heavy as tides. Seeking answers amongst your slow-tidal waters and walls. I walked your Biennale with eyes wide. Champagne pressed and sipped against lips, watched the world decide who was seen, and who was left behind.

I walked across your bridges, past your barricades, learning of stories beyond paintings and films, from objects suspended in time.

Listening to memories held between strangers and whispers shared beside canals. I knew at that moment - art is more than what we frame. It is what we carry, what we share, what we let spill into the streets we call our home. Venice, I came to you searching for Rochdale. For a way to take some lessons home. It was in your quiet corners I found home from home. Where artists gathered on grumbling walls, in stories pressed fingers to heart. In the spaces where community is not curated, but simply exists. Simply breathes.

Now, I've returned home, still holding your echoes close. Longing for your knowledge and secrets daily. Carrying your light and our questions. But I'm learning, perhaps it is not what we build, but who is invited in.

Yours always,

Riz.

University of Exeter

@sabrinasadol



My research project, *Che Bateo?* investigates the mental health of Venetians, under the premise that it would be difficult to live there due to overtourism, noise pollution, and climate change. The project consisted of a series of interviews, as well as sound recordings which became a musique concrète composition.

Many Venetians view over-tourism as a more prominent issue than climate change. The rise of Airbnb is making Venice unliveable for its residents, with many describing Venice as being treated like an amusement park. While the city benefits from tourism financially, the city is suffering as its authenticity and residents disappear. With the scorching summer heat and winter rains, the changing ecosystem of the lagoon, and the floods, Venetians are constantly

aware of the impacts of climate change. In 2019, there was a major flood and the effects of climate change started to be taken more seriously as MOSE barriers were installed to mitigate flooding.

Ultimately, many interviewees stated that they try not to think about the future of Venice as it feels out of their control and makes them anxious. Over-tourism and climate change are at the forefront of daily life for Venetians, and both have negative impacts on their mental health. The musique concrète composition I created examines a variety of sounds created by tourists and nature to understand the effects overtourism, noise pollution, and climate change have on the daily life of Venetians.



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My time in Venice was truly inspirational and the opportunity to spend an entire month surrounded by so much art and culture was incredible. Being part of a group made the month feel less daunting and gave me the confidence to experience Venice in its rawest form.

My practice is largely influenced by storytelling and the connections we have to folklore. I spent the first six months of the year studying in Bergen, Norway and through conversations with classmates, learnt that the figures from Norwegian folklore continued to influence the way they behave. This deep connection between folklore and teaching became a driving force in my research project.

The main ideas for my project were fuelled by my interest in the teachings of folklore and how it differs from place to place. Participating

in the Venice Fellowships Programme helped me to make connections with those in my group and the other pavilions. I asked them to tell me about a character from their childhood that taught them some kind of lesson and to create a sketch of what they look like/their interpretation of them. I requested that the drawings were rough and of the first image in their minds. It was interesting to learn about the figures they recalled and to see the teachings present within them as adults. Integrating my research project with social hangouts made collecting the material more enjoyable.

Since leaving Venice, I have begun to transform these images into small ceramic figures. I have continued to collect these sketches since returning to the UK. It is my intention to continue to collate these figures and display them as a collective memory bank.



University of Bradford
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Friends Everywhere was a continuation of my ongoing practice-based research for Arts Lab exploring the value of visual art in building peaceful communities.

Responding to the *Foreigners Everywhere* theme, my project - through participatory, collaborative creative practice - explored what is important in people's lives, and the extent to which art might play a role in bringing us together through shared concerns over the big questions in life.

The workshops took place on the outdoor exit platform of *Listening All Night to the Rain* which received up to five thousand visitors daily. This provided the perfect captive audience of art lovers eager to get stuck in to participatory reflection and making. Preaching to the converted somewhat, the outcomes were nevertheless affirming. The world is an interesting mix of hearts full of love and wonder, and hearts contracted by hate and fear.

The project consisted of 3 themed workshops spread over 3 weeks:

Does art matter to you? If so, why?

What matters to you?

Pattern me crazy! Making and Reflecting: takeaways from *Listening all Night to the Rain*.

Participants were invited to write or draw their responses to these themes over the top of discarded and pre-cut papers from previous workshops. They then added their piece, placing it wherever felt right to them, to the large patchwork made up of everyone's contributions. I have arranged the written responses into poems. As an observer remarked, 'it appears that what most people find important are the very things that are lacking in the world at the moment.'

Friends Everywhere turned out to be a win-win-win: an opportunity for hands-on art making engagement for Biennale visitors, ordinarily only exposed to viewing other people's art; an effective form of exhibition feedback and evaluation for British Pavilion staff; a chance for me to build my workshop experience with an entirely new demographic. With the resulting collaboratively-created artwork, I now have some interesting material to work with in the studio - a fourth win!

Thank you British Council. Thank you University of Bradford. Thank you John Akomfrah. And thank you Venice!



Does Art Matter to You, workshop held at the British Pavilion, October 2024

Coventry University
@darknessbeforethelight

I'm Shaniece Martin, a director, poet, writer and spoken-word artist who creates original poetry that is written and performed. My aim is to create a space within my work to voice the journey of my belonging and my identity as a woman of dual heritage (British and South Asian descent).

During my residency month, I created a 10-minute video that included various shots encompassing the theme of diaspora and water. The video has shots of myself wearing a banner around Venice with the word 'Straniero' in Italian, which translates to 'Foreigner' in English, this banner was left in the staff room by another Fellow, Freya Shi. The video also includes short snippets of water around Venice, from the streams of the Grand Canal to the waves on the shore at Lido. The video's narrative is carried by an audio of water intertwined with a spoken word piece written by myself. I was inspired by the ideas of *Listening All Night To The Rain*, especially the idea of water as a body of memory.

Below is a snippet of my spoken word piece from my project:

'To listen all night to the rain is to hear the past come trickling down, each droplet signifying an

ancestral voice, an ancestral tear, to listen is to acknowledge each pain and person of the past, of my past, of my lineage. But eventually the rain begins to pour, and I feel overwhelmed torn between listening and putting my hands over my ears, torn between watching from inside or standing amongst the water. I prefer to listen to the sea, to hear the waves crashing at my feet, between my toes and the tide, the past and present meet, the border, the boundary between past and present becomes blurred. But I know that one day my voice will be found in the sea amongst my ancestors, the sea harnesses my lineage, and I can hear it echoing back at me. I look out to the sea and wonder about my ancestors, ancestral homelands, how they crossed borders and boundaries, entire oceans and continents for my feet to land in this spot in the sand, each grain a sacrifice I'm stood upon, each one got me to right here. I am the generational immigrant at the shore, longing to bring voices from the sea to life, to summon them to my present so that they can find their way to the future. I look out to the boat thinking of my ancestors, thinking how they are the most precious cargo of all, they fled partition and colonialism only to be labelled foreigner at the shore of a country that had taken their homeland, had taken my ancestral homeland.'



Proposition

@venturinomal sienavm.com



Nonna



Ancestral Waters, Woven Threads

Movement encapsulated my time in Venice. My aim was to weave together stories and a collection of my experiences based on my Italian heritage. Textiles and fabric have been key tools used in my work and were handed down by the women in my family. My Nonna's migration story from Italy to England was the basis to explore 'otherness' in one's own 'motherland'.

As stories go they are threads of broken memories and feelings. My intention was to recreate a tapestry made by Nonna, what I found instead through this experience was connection, fluidity and how the vehicle of motion creates stories.

The theme of *Foreigners Everywhere* rushed through the winding islands of Venice, on boats, by foot and by shadow. I recorded the movements of people chatting, their footsteps and the shadows as they moved around - fleeting but lingering.

The stories and connections I shared with my other fellows in my group led to an exhibition called *Unexpected Encounters* which we displayed at the Plymouth Art Weekender in October 2024. I exhibited five pieces representing the connection between the fluidity of the body and mind that arise when unpicking memories and emotions.

The Venice Fellowships Programme was an all-encompassing experience that created a foundation for my research for my ongoing practice, parts of which I am still unpicking and weaving together in my own personal tapestry.

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King's College London



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"I felt defective, at fault.
I could hear my mom's voice in the water falling madly to the ground.
It didn't make me sleep.
She stared at me from a bright spot within a raindrop.
Time stood still.

I could barely see a ¼ of her.
Then, her legs from behind.
A hand.

She dissolved softly."



Looking For a Self I Am No Longer, 2024, mp3, headphones, wood, elastic bands, pillow, cords

S I M O N E

University of the West of England

@simone.marconi_

My work takes the form of time-based installations, sculptures, writing, and interventions. I blend industrial and instinctive approaches to assemble new life into natural and manmade discarded materials. The work walks the worn tightrope between tangible and fictional, inviting the audience to delve into the emotional complexities of our times.

In Venice, I analysed the figure of the castaway, who, compelled to set out on a stormy journey by outside forces, does not choose to land but is forced to. Taking nature as the shipwrecked subject, I explored forced connections between artificial and natural, especially between the water within Venice's urban landscape and humans. Whether manufactured or not, elements rejected by the sea and the city stimulated a reflection on how discomfort is often employed to construct fictitious narratives.

Over the past year, I have been concerned with combining my physical practice with text-based work and sound. I have been experimenting with writing as a fluid, sculptural phenomenon to reflect on dialectical confusion and its active nature within history. After the my residency in Venice, I began constructing habitats for text-based work, whether recorded, inscribed, or sculpted, to live in. I am building archetypes of salvation, such as huts, rafts, or parachutes, as hostile environments for the writing to be experienced and absorbed in the first

person. These archetypes set up spaces that are independent, absolute in themselves, and are metaphors for resistance and survival - architectural archetypes between the physical and the conceptual space.

The project is inspired by the words of Palma Bucarelli (1969), who, to present Pino Pascali's work, wrote: *"Who can say that the game cancels the tragedy of existence? When you are in the game you have to play, and necessity is not freedom."*

In *Looking for a Self I Am No Longer*, there is an interplay between the coiled shape of the hut, operating as a container, and the wrapping, spiral and jarring quality of the audio function as an introspection facilitator. The audience is encouraged to enter the hut and externalise in an equally specific place and time, emphasising dangerous gestures of attraction towards the unknown. The listener is enabled to face vital questions: is it dangerous to leave home? Will I be able to return home as a winner if I move away from it now? Will I be able to be alone with myself?

Audio link: https://soundcloud.com/simone-marconi-299081300/looking-for-a-self-i-am-no-longer?si=211efb16b17e44c7a933ae0fa189c33f&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing

M A R C O N I

University of Exeter

@filmofadeadgirl

Working at the Biennale, particularly within the British Pavilion, was an experience that deepened my engagement with film, poetry, and the complexities of personal and cultural identity.

Listening All Night To The Rain resonated profoundly with me, its meditative rhythms and archival fragments mirroring my internal dialogues on grief, memory, and the weight of inherited histories. The broader landscape of Venice's exhibitions, including Jean Cocteau's striking showcase at the Guggenheim, furthered my reflections on art as both a vessel and a rupture—how it preserves, distorts, and reshapes the narratives of our existences.

At the heart of my time in Venice was an inquiry into identity: the uneasy negotiation between being Punjabi, British, or something beyond those definitions entirely. My grief intertwined with a quiet but persistent shame regarding my relationship with my religion, raising questions about who I am and who I allow myself to be. Poetry and film became tools of expression and excavation—means to navigate these tensions, to externalise what often feels ineffable. A week before my residency month, I immersed myself in the Venice Film Festival, an experience that sharpened my understanding of artistic endurance. I witnessed filmmakers fighting to have their work seen, their voices heard. This perseverance, their relentless drive to carve space for their stories, inspired me to reconsider my creative practice. What does

it mean to represent something—an identity, an experience, a feeling—on screen? How does film, like poetry, hold space for contradiction, longing, and the unresolved? These were the questions I carried with me throughout my time at the Biennale, shaping not only my engagement with the art around me but the way I continue to see myself within it.



Silver Bangle

I was just a nobody, living with this faith,
But the more I grew, the more I felt the need
To break free from this path that from a very young age I was told to lead.
I chose to lust after books I wasn't supposed to read,
Like Tolstoy, Kant - I remember Keun too -
I feel myself slipping away with time and space,
please tell me you do too.

I would give my heart and soul for this to be easier,
going on to live life no longer as a people pleaser.
Without any shackles, I felt I could be free,
For I had never known what believing in a God really means.

But soon I found out, the cost of my own will -
The cost of my peace of mind and the overwhelming medical bills.
What should this cost me?
I took off my silver bangle at once to write my will,
It annoys me how it's never quiet.
Stainless steel,
The jingling and rattling, murmuring and shackling.
Silver linings they tell me,
Come in the form of a prayer,
A tradition or reminiscence, oh how about we just call it irrational -

As this should've been a journey of enlightenment,
And I find myself here,
in an early grave.
What should this cost me?

Simran Kaur Sanghera

Manchester Metropolitan University

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Traces of a familial past

her history lives on in my hands

even if my pinch of salt will never taste the same
as hers.

Embodied memories are cooked into terracotta
terrain

and grouted onto her kitchen walls

facilitating rituals of care of which she taught
me.

I am the fig tree in my back garden

finally baring fruit and plentiful

acclimatised to British climate, to the point
where I become a tourist in my own home.

I carry and transport these memories like
souvenirs

a gifted truth which I display proudly

but my version of authenticity will never
translate the same as hers.

My broken biliguallity combines my truth with
my familial past

I treat them like she would objects in her home

preserving and curating our memories to cherish
them for the future.

Tracci di un passatu familiari

a storia d'idda continua a viviri ni ma manu

anchi si u ma pizzicu di sali nun avrà mai u
stessu sapuri di chiddu d'idda

Ricordi arraccamati viennu cucinati su terreni
d'argilla

e cimintati n'capu i mura da so' cucina

aiutannu i rituali d'amuri ca m'insigna'.

Iu sugnu a macchia di ficu du ma iardinu

ca finalmente itta' frutti n'abbunanza

abituata o tiempu n'glisi o puntu ca addivintavu
turista na ma stessa casa.

Puortu e traspuortu sti ricordi cuomu souvenir

na dota di virità' ca miettu in vista cu orgogliu

Anchi si a versioni di autenticità' mia nun sarà
mai a stessa da so'.

I ma du lingui uncinu a ma virità' cu ma passatu
familiari

i trattu cuomu idda trattassi così da so' casa

sarbannu e curannu i nuostri ricordi pi amalli
nill'abbiniri.



S Y E D A F A I Z A

Teesside University

@faizagelani

I was fully immersed in Venice's cultural and environmental landscape while there as a Fellow, gathering observations, writings, videos, colours, and patterns. My creation of a new body of creative work, in which I explored and reinterpreted the themes of John Akomfrah's practice within the distinctive setting of Venice, was shaped by this immersive research experience. As a multidisciplinary artist and curator, my research went beyond simple observation. In response to Venice's historical narratives, changing identity, and complicated relationship with water, I actively documented the city's visual and sensory elements. An original piece of art reflecting the meeting point of Akomfrah's cinematic language with Venice's fragile cultural and environmental existence was created from the research findings and creative responses.

I developed a series of workshops in Middlesbrough after I returned to the UK, interacting with a diverse community to share my research and imaginative interpretations. These workshops resonated with the topics I studied in Venice by offering a forum for discussion on migration, identity, displacement, and environmental change. Participants interacted with the conceptual and visual components of my research through interactive sessions, promoting a collaborative atmosphere for artistic exchange and storytelling. This project has resulted in the creation of an exhibition that will feature

both the original work created during my time in Venice and my creative process. The exhibition will invite viewers to explore the common themes of water, identity, and memory as it functions as a curatorial reflection on the relationship of art, history, and current discourse.

To broaden the project's audience and enable remote engagement with the research and artistic results, I am also creating an interactive digital platform. This project is in line with my continued dedication to encouraging interdisciplinary partnerships and elevating marginalised stories in modern art. This project not only adds to the conversation about Akomfrah's work but also creates new dialogues between historical and contemporary concerns by fusing my curatorial practice with artistic research and community engagement, guaranteeing a lasting impact that extends beyond the fellowship.

The echo of the unseen

"Some stories remain unheard, floating like dust until light bends just so. A woman traces her past, displaced and rewritten. Shadows of the past press against memory, dissolving like footprints in saltwater. Art becomes the vessel, asking the question, "What have you lost?" What is still unknown? Looking itself is a form of memory."



F A I Q G E L A N I

T A H I R

Bradford City of Culture 2025

@1TShah



Dear Venice, The City of Hope.
I woke up in a new world, somewhat familiar but then also completely new. Unfamiliar accents whispered into my ears, colourful streets blessed my eyes, and sweet gelato kissed my lips. I found myself in Venice the floating city, with your canals, bridges, beautiful

architecture, you float, you are the city that floats. You remind artists to continue no matter what, to be buoyant during turbulent times, to defy gravity when life weighs you down, to slip, slide, waft, and hope. You, Venice, remind us artists, to float, your remind us to hope.

S H A H

University of St Andrews

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I am not an artist. I am a person impacted by art.

I call my practice 'creative overhearing', you might call it nosiness. I spent a month in Venice eavesdropping on hundreds of people, mainly tourists. I mapped their speech onto the canals they walked past. Meanings emerge from the juxtapositions necessitated by the natural and manmade layout of Venice's canals. Discussions of fine art clash against screaming children, vain teenagers, and inane chatter. The question underlying the work is which conversation Venice wants to be a part of.

It is no coincidence that most of the quotes are in English. Venice is suffering from an intellectual invasion, without which it could not survive. I recognise this phenomenon because my university town, St Andrews, is undergoing the same process. Rich, educated people are swamping these medieval towns, pushing locals out and rents up. They are attracted by artistic and intellectual hubs, a university and a biennale, galleries, laboratories, and churches. However, we've come too far to expel these intellectual migrants. Both communities

have restructured their economies around this annual movement of people. Remove the university from St Andrews and the town would collapse, stop people visiting Venice and you'd be left with a decaying skeleton.

In the piece, visitors' words run along the canals like water. The canals are the arteries of the living organism we call 'Venice,' but the canals are not Venice. Nobody lives in the canals. People come to see the canals, but Venice itself lies on the shoreside, in the blank spaces of my map, where hidden pathways twist and turn. It is this absence that is speaking in my work.

I don't pretend to have answers to the questions my work poses but I am continuing to ask them with a collaborative project in St Andrews, where I am recording other people's overheard conversations, and mapping them onto our own streets.

The irony of me – an intellectual immigrant in both places – telling you this is not lost on me. That's why my own poetry appears mixed into my map. We are all part of the problem, and my artwork is about holding space for that fact.

The Collective Makers

@wherestonye @thecollectivemakers



Venice is truly a city like no other. Its floating buildings, intricate engravings, linen swaying from balconies, and small bridges create an atmosphere that feels both timeless and deeply inspiring. Walking through its narrow streets and along the canals, I found myself in constant awe. The city itself feels like a living canvas, rich with history, storytelling, and artistic expression.

Being part of the Venice Fellowships Programme was a transformative experience that gave me newfound confidence in my work.

Originally, my project in Venice focused on the influence of masks in contemporary art and the impact of African masks on modern artistic movements. However, as often happens with creative journeys, my focus shifted. I became captivated by the people who shape Venice: local artisans, vendors, and everyday Venetians who give the city its pulse. While I didn't have time to explore public archives as planned, this shift led to something even more exciting: a rediscovery of Venetian craftsmanship, the influence of local painters, and a new direction for my upcoming exhibition.

As part of this evolving body of work, I am now collaborating with Millie Sanders to create a mask that extends my artistic practice. I am also working with Anna Jane Houghton towards an exhibition that will incorporate these themes and discoveries.

Beyond the Biennale, my experience was enriched by my host, Sergio Baldan, a Venetian historian and author. Despite our language barrier, we connected through Google

Translate as he guided me through historical monuments and churches, introducing me to the works of local painters like Tintoretto. He provided invaluable insight into Venice's evolving landscape, its sinking foundations, and how these transformations have influenced artistic movements over time. His knowledge expanded my appreciation for Venetian artistry and its deep historical connections, offering a new lens through which to view my own work.

One of the biggest takeaways from this experience was the realization of how crucial it is for artists to immerse themselves in global art gatherings like the Biennale. These events are not just about viewing art—they are vital spaces for networking, collaboration, and professional growth. The Biennale brings together artists, curators, collectors, researchers, and institutions, all with a shared purpose of fostering connections and creative exchanges. However, not every artist has the means or access to attend, despite being equally deserving. More funding, sponsorships, and organizational support are necessary to ensure broader inclusion in these spaces.

The Venice Fellowships Programme provided me with an incredible opportunity, but it was up to me to maximize it. My time in Venice was not just about creating; it was about rethinking my process, embracing new influences, and laying the groundwork for future projects.

University for the Creative Arts

The Business School for the Creative Industries

@viktoriebrezinova

My time in Venice made me significantly more attuned to our nature and the climate crisis than ever before. Having graduated with a global communications degree and journalism, I deeply understand the impactful role of mass communication in mediating global issues. As a creative, I imagined producing an awareness campaign built on my climate research in Venice. However, my initial idea did not seem natural, and I had to take a step back to focus on what felt right. My temporary Venetian life allowed me to break out of the systematic world we live in as I found myself exploring the pure emotions brought by the simplicity of local life – a sense of belonging, the happiness and joy of my inner child but also unsatisfied frustration and summertime blues – that led me to start an intimate project at the intersection of art, ecology, empathy and research.

I chose to capture the fragile beauty of Venice against the phenomenon of climate change, presenting the complex ecological threat to the Lagoon's heritage, infrastructure and the local ecosystems (both living and static) that cannot speak up for themselves in the discourse of climate change — as opposed to an opportunity for our society to become actively involved in preserving the site from potential eco-disaster.

Inspired by *Listening All Night To The Rain*, I explored a variety of impactful means of facilitating higher awareness, engagement of broader networks and ecological empathy, pinpointing the extreme fragility of the heritage site. My research was heavily influenced by interviews conducted with local stakeholders, as well as personal sentiments of hopelessness, loneliness and isolation despite the overcrowded conditions and vibrant northeastern Italian culture.

My artistic inspiration comes from Plato's Atlantis, the fictional civilisation once submerged in the sea, punished for its greed and twisted morals. I aim to highlight the parallels between the literal work of the gradual ethical degradation of human society and the current existential crisis of our planet, caused by humanity's corruption, harming the global environment through extensive consumerism, exploitation of natural resources, unethical environmental practices, and biodiversity loss.



Static Blooming

University for the Creative Arts
@youssefelnahas

Rising sea levels caused by climate change are a fast-approaching global crisis that will cause irreversible damage to coastal areas around the world and force communities to uproot their lives and relocate to a new environment completely foreign to their ways of life. The issue directly resonates with the 2024 Biennale’s theme, *Foreigners Everywhere*, with the city of Venice being perhaps the most famous example of an area under direct threat.

Submerged City raises awareness of rising sea levels and their threat to coastal communities around the world, including Venice and the Egyptian Nile Delta. It consists of a series

of Polaroid photographs taken of landmarks around the island. These images were then submerged for up to two months in containers filled with water collected from the Nile Delta and the Egyptian Mediterranean, dried, scanned and enlarged. The length of time each Polaroid was kept submerged corresponds to the elevation of the depicted landmark and, by extension, its vulnerability to rising waters. Liberated from the instant and precise nature of conventional photography, the ‘decayed’ results of this aleatory process invite us to contemplate the impermanence of the human-built environment and our own relationship with nature.



Pavilion of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Giardini della Biennale / 175cm above sea level



Self Portrait as the Mediterranean Sea



Gondolas near San Marco Square / 85cm above sea level



Venezia Santa Lucia train station / 130cm above sea level

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“ Spending an extended period in Venice allowed me to engage deeply with art, research, and the city itself. From facilitating discussions at the British Pavilion to exploring the vast number of exhibitions on display, every encounter shaped my understanding of accessibility, curation, and artistic practice. This experience reaffirmed my commitment to fostering inclusive cultural spaces and reminded me of the transformative power of art to connect, challenge, and inspire.”

— BETH ELFORD

“ Engaging with John Akomfrah’s work reshaped my perspective; I was particularly influenced by the way he seamlessly weaves narration and poetry into his storytelling. His ability to layer historical narratives from the Windrush generation to the Korean and Vietnamese wars into immersive cinematic installations challenged me to rethink my approach. It encouraged me to push beyond traditional media, embrace multi-layered storytelling, and explore a deeper engagement with history in my own artistic practice.”

— TONYE EKINE



