

Commissioned by



Geology

of

Britannic

Repair

• VENICE FELLOWSHIPS
PROGRAMME 2025

2025 FELLOWS SHOWCASE

07	The Brick That Was Repaired	71	Nahla H. Salkini
10	Venice Fellowships Programme	73	Pati Starzykowski
11	GBR – Geology of Britannic Repair	77	Rehema Kabare
15	2025 Fellows	79	Rhenua Ahimie
29	Amy Bradnock	81	Ricardo Marcus Burt
31	Anne Kimunguyi	83	Salimat Yéwándé Bakare
33	Ariel Zhang	85	Saudat Koguna
34	Aur Bleddyn	87	Sherry Muchina
35	Ayisha Saniya Ambalavan	89	Sofía Victoria Ramírez Sandoval
37	Beatriz María Castro Fernandez	93	Sophia Foster
39	Charlotte Brooks	95	Stella Lonie-Lewis
41	Cheyenne Booth	97	Tim Ingleby
43	Elvis Ramboh	99	Toby Berryman
45	Emily Groves	101	Tony Bulimu
47	James Lewis	103	Vanessa Ma
49	Jingmiao Ma	105	Vy Tsan
51	Judith Thursfield	107	Acknowledgements
53	Katarina Kemp		
55	Kizzy Rose Budd		
57	Klarissa Katz		
59	Lalia Saidy Khan		
61	Lauren Pohl		
63	Lilien Chidera Ezeugwu		
65	Lizzie Grinter		
67	Marlie Ewart-Biggs		
69	Matilde Senos		





THE BRICK THAT WAS REPAIRED.

One brick had begun to split, a hairline crack spreading like a fault through its surface. The salt and rain found their way in, softening its strength grain by grain. The wall around it held firm, but this one brick began to forget its purpose.

Then someone noticed. A mason, perhaps, or just a careful passer-by. The wound was cleaned, the fragments reset, a thin line of new mortar drawn like a promise. It wasn't replaced, only mended, allowed to stay.

Now the brick holds its scar with quiet pride. Under evening light, the repair catches the sun before the rest of the wall, as if to say: something broke here once, and was cared for.

Charlotte Brooks





“The 2025 British Pavilion at the Venice Architectural Biennale pioneered a new direction for what it means for a national pavilion exhibition on an international stage; it showcased not only innovative thinking about architecture’s role in our current world but also how cross-cultural and cross-border collaboration can propel creativity, innovation, and urgent dialogue on global challenges.

We are so proud that the British Council’s UK-Kenya collaboration was rewarded with the Special Mention by the Biennale jury with a special citation for the Venice Fellowships programme and that the Pavilion and wider programming has inspired so many intersectional conversations about decolonisation, decarbonisation and a more equitable future for all. It was an honour to meet so many of the 2025 Fellows and I can’t wait to see what positive legacy they create building on their experience in Venice.”

– SEVRA DAVIS
DIRECTOR OF ARCHITECTURE DESIGN
AND FASHION AT THE BRITISH COUNCIL AND
COMMISSIONER OF THE BRITISH PAVILION

VENICE FELLOWSHIPS PROGRAMME

British Council is proud to introduce the Venice Fellowships Programme, a scheme which activates and enriches our world-renowned exhibitions at the British Pavilion during La Biennale di Venezia. Alternating each year between a focus on art and architecture, La 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 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 La 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.

GBR – GEOLOGY OF BRITANNIC REPAIR

The 2025 commission aimed to examine the relationship between architecture and colonisation as parallel, interconnected systems. The exhibition's geographical, geological and conceptual focus stemmed from the British Pavilion's pivotal alignment along an axis that runs between Britain to the north-west, and Kenya and the Great Rift Valley to the south-east.

The exhibition, *GBR – Geology of Britannic Repair*, was a unique UK-Kenya collaboration between a multi-disciplinary team of curators: Kabage Karanja and Stella Mutegi of Nairobi-based architecture studio Cave_bureau;

UK-based curator and writer Owen Hopkins and academic Professor Kathryn Yusoff.

Emerging from the 'rift', the exhibition was made up of a series of installations by Cave_bureau, Mae-ling Lokko and Gustavo Crembil, Thandi Loewenson, and the Palestine Regeneration Team / PART (Yara Sharif, Nasser Golzari and Murray Fraser).

This year's commission was conceived as part of the British Council's UK/Kenya Season 2025, which celebrated the creative, cultural and educational links between the UK and Kenya.





“*GBR – Geology of Britannic Repair* aims to re-centre architecture’s fundamental relationship to geology, shifting how we see its past and present and re-orienting its future otherwise. With the Great Rift Valley as the exhibition’s geological and conceptual focus, we have brought together a series of installations that propose ‘other architectures’ defined by their relationship to the ground, their resistance to conventional, extractive ways of working, and that are resilient in the face of climate breakdown and social and political upheaval. Turning the British Pavilion inside out, we hope the exhibition will become a vital site for reimagining the relationship between architecture and the earth.”

- CURATORIAL TEAM

“The session with the curators at the Royal Geographical Society was a highlight: meeting them and getting to know their work before travelling to Venice helped me engage meaningfully with the exhibition. I was able to follow their research, attend their seminars, and build a sense of familiarity that deepened my learning. It also exposed me to different research practices that I hadn’t previously engaged with, which encouraged me to reflect on my own practice from new perspectives. In fact, this engagement has inspired me to start thinking about my next steps towards a PhD.”

- 2025 FELLOW



2025 FELLOWS

In partnership with twenty-four higher education institutions and creative organisations from the UK and Kenya, British Council recruited, selected and supported forty-five Fellows for the 2025 programme.

The Fellows came together to represent the UK and welcome visitors to *GBR - Geology of Britannic Repair* at the British Pavilion. Taking inspiration from the combined UK/Kenya commission, the Fellows approached the experience in a spirit of collaboration and intercultural camaraderie.

Reflecting the international scope of La Biennale, there were over twenty nationalities represented in the 2025 cohort of Fellows. In addition to offering conversations and tours in English, our Fellows welcomed visitors in a multitude of languages, including French, Hausa, Igbo, Malayalam, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Swahili, Vietnamese, Welsh, Yoruba and more. All Fellows were connected to an organisation in UK or Kenya.

As demonstrated by the profiles in this Yearbook, the research and creative areas of the Fellows varied: some had a background in architecture, whereas others were studying creative disciplines, including fine art, curating, cultural management, architectural stone carving, modern languages, animation and documentary photography. 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 the exhibition.

For the first time in the history of the Venice Fellowships Programme, British Council hosted international Fellows. In partnership with GoDown Arts Centre, Nairobi Now, and Shujaa Stories, four creative individuals from Kenya were selected to join the 2025 cohort.

The British Pavilion was awarded a *Special Mention as National Participation*: La Biennale Jury celebrated the dialogue between Great Britain and Kenya, and noted attempts to imagine a new relation between architecture and geology. The Jury also highlighted the Venice Fellowships Programme as 'a notable

initiative for knowledge exchange between the three countries: Venice, Great Britain and Kenya'.

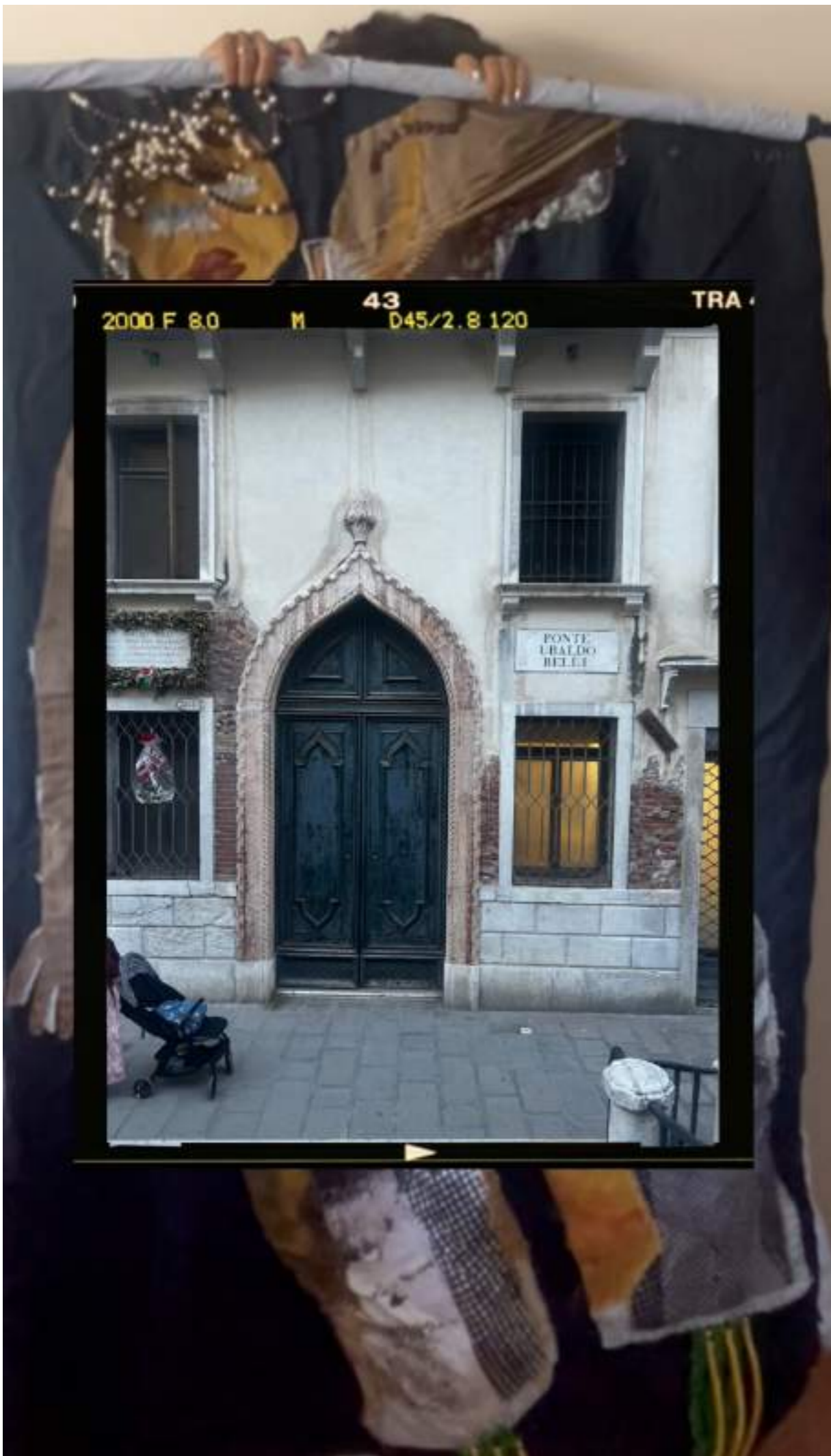
Ahead of the residency months in Venice, Fellows participated in a seven-week Induction: this online series comprised over eighteen hours of workshops, peer-led sessions, presentations from guest speakers and mentor groups. Designed to strengthen the network and build interpersonal skills, the Induction encouraged collaboration, with 77% of Fellows actively contributing to and leading sessions.

The Induction offered an integrated approach to ensure Fellows were well-prepared for international travel, invigilation and networking opportunities. Sessions led by guest speakers challenged the cohort to consider the complexities of public engagement within a global architecture exhibition, looking at academic dialogue, cultural communication, and accessibility.



“My strongest motivation was to explore and understand a new cultural space through the perspectives of others (fellow participants, visitors, and especially locals). I was drawn to the opportunity to engage with a global cultural event while immersing myself in the everyday rhythms, conversations, and contexts that shape the city beyond the Biennale.”

- 2025 FELLOW



“I enjoyed the challenge of working together with seven Fellows to form the team that led the Induction session for the curators; together we took it from the development phase to delivering the main activity. This tested me in various ways, like teamwork, leadership, confidence and articulation. Most of all, it gave me a chance to display my capabilities and potential.”

WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7
THE SELF	THE 'OTHER' & LIVING IN VENICE	TOGETHER & COLLABORATION	THE BRITISH PAVILION CURATORS	THE PUBLIC & THE PAVILION	ACCESS & CULTURAL DIPLOMACY	YOUR PROJECTS = CREATIVE PROCESS + PURPOSE + CONNECTION + PLACE
FELLOW SPEAKERS						
	<p>Klarissa Katz (Outside In) POSTCARD TO A STRANGER</p> <p>Salimat Yéwándé Bakare (HomeGrown Plus) 'THE OTHER' IN ARCHITECTURE Thatching Devon</p>	<p>Vy Tsan (SOAS) MATERIAL KINSHIP</p> <p>Judith Thursfield (Univ. Bradford) COLLABORATING IN A MEDICAL LAB</p> <p>Ricardo Marcus Burt (London Met) LEARNING FROM JAZZ</p> <p>Ariel Zhang (Univ. of Exeter) SOCIAL DANCING</p> <p>Matilde Senos (UAL LCC) ANIMATION</p> <p>Sherry Muchina (Shujaa Stories) FILM, COMMUNITY + COLLABORATION</p>	<p>Welcome committee: THE ITALIAN DINNER PARTY</p> <p>Tony Bulimu (Nairobi Now)</p> <p>Aur Bleddyn (Manchester Met)</p> <p>Vanessa Ma (UAL LCC)</p> <p>Lisa Vasileva (London Met)</p> <p>Rehema Kabare (Nairobi Now)</p> <p>Ricardo Marcus Burt (London Met)</p> <p>Salimat Yéwándé Bakare (HomeGrown Plus)</p> <p>Elvis Ramboh (Shujaa Stories)</p>	<p>Lalia Saidy Khan (Royal Academy of Arts) TALKING ABOUT ARCHITECTURE</p> <p>Emily Groves (Anglia Ruskin Univ.) BOREDOM</p> <p>Toby Berryman (Univ. of St Andrews) A CORNWALL SHOP <i>The Public & How to Handle Them</i></p> <p>Nahla H. Salkin (Univ. of Bradford) MALLS, SOUP KITCHEN, BARRISTAS: A PUBLIC LIFE</p>	<p>Sophia Foster (Univ. of Exeter) THE POETRY OF ACCESS</p>	<p>Myah Phelan (Univ. of Liverpool) VENICE INDUCTION DJ</p> <p>Abiola Hammed (Birmingham Univ.) RAISING NEW VOICES IN NIGERIA</p> <p>Tim Ingleby (Northumbria Univ.) THE CREATIVE PROCESS</p>
SMALL GROUP MODERATORS						
<p>Aur Bleddyn (Manchester Met)</p> <p>Stella Lonie-Lewis (Durham Univ.)</p> <p>Elvis Ramboh (Shujaa Stories)</p>	<p>Beatriz María Castro Fernandez (UAL)</p> <p>Lisa Vasileva (London Met)</p> <p>Lilien Ezeguwu (Kings College London)</p>	<p>Sofía Victoria Ramírez Sandoval (Kings College London)</p> <p>Marlie Ewart-Biggs (Durham Univ.)</p>	<p>Ayisha Saniya Ambalavan (Univ. of Leicester)</p> <p>Myah Phelan (Univ. of Liverpool)</p> <p>Pati Starzykowski (UCA)</p>	<p>Maya Davis (Birmingham City Univ.)</p>	<p>Harriette Moore (Northumbria Univ.)</p> <p>Rhenua Ahimie (Birmingham City Univ.)</p> <p>Amy Bradnoch (Durham Univ.)</p> <p>Lizzie Grinter (UCA)</p> <p>Katarina Kemp (Univ. of Southampton)</p>	<p>James Lewis (Birmingham City Univ.)</p> <p>Lauren Pohl (Univ. of Cardiff)</p>
SPECIAL GUESTS						
<p>Dr. Ben Street THINKING WITH VENICE</p>	<p>Dr. Marie Therese Shortt GREETINGS: CULTURAL HIERARCHIES & TOUCH</p> <p>Francesco D'Alessio Anna Purna Nativo, Francesca Vason LIVING IN VENICE</p>	<p>Matthew Payne British Council COLLABORATING TOWARD THE VENICE BIENNALE</p>	<p>SEVRA DAVIS, COMMISSIONER WITH CURATORS: Owen Hopkins Kabage Karanja Professor Kathryn Yusoff Stella Mutegi</p>	<p>A DAY IN THE LIFE AT THE PAVILION WITH ALUMNI Martha Dean, Rachel Hutchinson, Naho Matsuda, Caitlin McHugh Lisa Ogun', Vera Okodugha, Josh Smith</p>	<p>Sandra Chege British Council CULTURAL DIPLOMACY</p> <p>Sally Booth Olivia Hewkin Andrew Holland VocalEyes</p>	<p>Dr. Jennifer Dudley British Council + Alumna A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A PROJECT WITH VENICE ALUMNI Mrs. Blues, Ammani Hassan Hollands, Anna Jane Houghton, Celeste Macleod-Brown, Lisa Ogun', Freya Shi</p>

SOPHIE LUCAS
VENICE PROGRAMME AND PARTNERSHIPS MANAGER
(FELLOWSHIPS LEAD), BRITISH COUNCIL

Echoing the theme of the exhibition and inspired by the creative disciplines of individuals within the cohort, the Fellows developed a shared focus on materiality; this was a thread that wove through their discussions and interactions during the year.

At the start of the Induction, one Fellow introduced the idea of a universal need for clay - both as a tool for self-expression and building community. In a later session, the curatorial team encouraged Fellows to interrogate the meaning behind materials selected for *GBR - Geology of Britannic Repair*. This analysis extended to the Pavilion building itself; in the second gallery, the curators chose to remove sections of the plastered wall to reveal the underlying brickwork.

It has been wonderful to see this focus spill into the individual creative projects. Many Fellows created work with their hands, carefully choosing materials that have specific links to Venice or *GBR - Geology of Britannic*

Repair. This naturally led to an environment of collaboration, with Fellows running art-making workshops on the Portico, inviting visitors to create reflective works, or leading interactive sessions with other Fellows during the Exchange Days.

It was very special to welcome the Kenya Fellows to the British Pavilion in May and we thank them for their thoughtful contributions and generosity of spirit. The UK/Kenya component of the Fellowships challenged us to look at the programme in new ways and set an exciting template for potential future expansion.

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



“I loved the session by Sophia Foster (Group 3 Fellow), exploring the poetry of access, particularly her focus on ekphrasis poetry. I don’t write poetry myself, but as a student of architecture, her approach opened up new ways of thinking about how I can engage with and represent space. Her insights have had a lasting impact on how I view architecture, not just as physical structures but as experiences and narratives that can be communicated creatively. This has influenced both my academic work and my professional perspective, encouraging a more poetic and layered understanding of architecture.”

SANDRA CHEGE
HEAD OF ARTS KENYA AND DIRECTOR, UK/KE
SEASON 2025

Having the Venice Architecture Biennale commission be part of the UK/Kenya Season challenged our imagination of what both things could be. Having the first commission be the nuanced and brilliant exhibition, *GBR - Geology of Britannic Repair*, catapulted us all into the unknown in ways that we will unravel for some time to come.

The work was honest, challenging, beautiful, and necessary. I am so glad we were able to adjust the Venice Fellowships Programme to ensure Kenyan-based creatives could be part

of this story. Reflecting deeply on what we make, who gets to see it, and how we present our work to the world has been a joy; realising that agency is a powerful thing.

I enjoyed being part of the Induction this year—the Fellows were thoughtful, present, and open on and off screen.

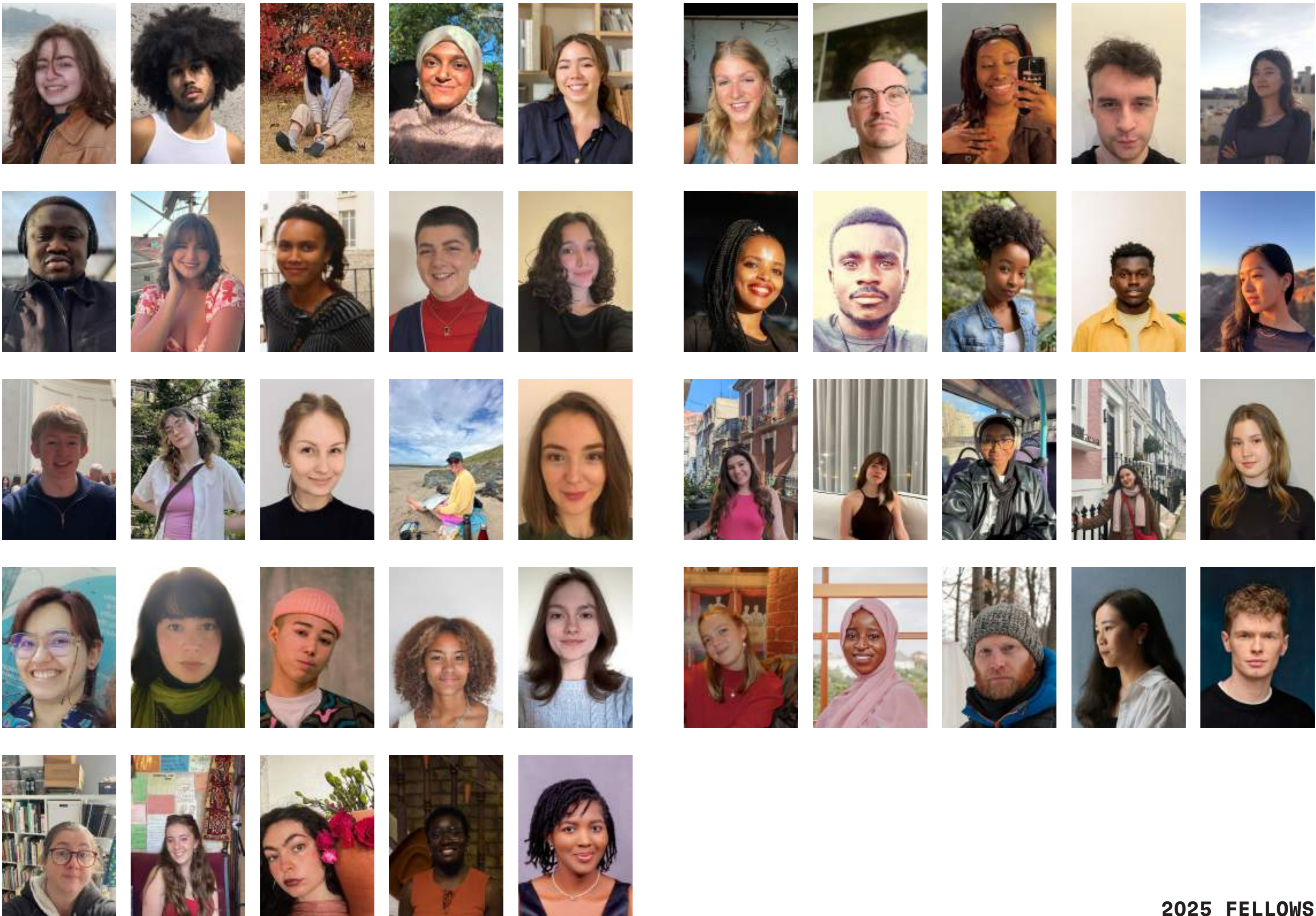
To the Fellows - Thank you for having me. I hope the journeys you have taken and the memories and skills shared stay with you all as you carve out your bold and beautiful paths.



Fellows Sherry Muchina, Rehema Kabare, Elvis Ramboh and Tony Bulimu with British Council (Tom Porter, Country Director Kenya and East Africa Cluster Lead; Rebecca Simor, Director Festivals and Seasons; Sandra Chege, Head of Arts, Kenya; Sevrá Davis, Director of Architecture Design and Fashion at the British Council and Commissioner of the British Pavilion)



Group 1 Fellows on the steps of the British Pavillion



2025 FELLOWS

2025

AMY BRADNOCK
ANNE KIMUNGUYI
ARIEL ZHANG
AUR BLEDDYN
AYISHA SANIYA AMBALAVAN
BEATRIZ MARÍA CASTRO FERNANDEZ
CHARLOTTE BROOKS
CHEYENNE BOOTH
ELVIS RAMBOH
EMILY GROVES
JAMES LEWIS
JINGMIAO MA
JUDITH THURSFIELD
KATARINA KEMP
KIZZY ROSE BUDD
KLARISSA KATZ
LALIA SAIDY KHAN
LAUREN POHL
LILIEN CHIDERA EZEUGWU
LIZZIE GRINTER
MARLIE EWART-BIGGS
MATILDE SENOS

MYAH PHELAN
NAHLA H. SALKINI
PATI STARZYKOWSKI
REHEMA KABARE
RHENUA AHIMIE
RICARDO MARCUS BURT
SALIMAT YÉWÁNDÉ BAKARE
SAUDAT KOGUNA
SHERRY MUCHINA
SOFÍA VICTORIA RAMÍREZ
SANDOVAL
SOPHIA FOSTER
STELLA LONIE-LEWIS
TIM INGLEBY
TOBY BERRYMAN
TONY BULIMU
VANESSA MA
VY TSAN

Abiola Akinpelu, Elizaveta Vasileva, Harriette Moore, Maya Rosie Ann Davis, Robin Ogle-Skan and Zack Mennell were also valued members of the 2025 Fellowships Programme.

fellows

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Upon arriving in Venice, I was immediately confronted by the complexity of its material existence, a city that is constantly in flux. Streams of tourists move rhythmically through the narrow streets, while water continuously presses against the city's edges, evidence of its gradual erosion. The walls and pathways seem to embody a temporality of endurance, holding within them the memories of those who once inhabited and walked these spaces. My initial intention was for my research to take a broader focus on the architectural materiality of Venice, considering how its structures change and degrade over time, whilst simultaneously preserved traces of their past.

However, the city's richness and intensity soon became overwhelming to approach as a whole, and my focus shifted towards a more localised and reflective observation of the days I spent within the British Pavilion. Here, I became attentive to how people navigated and interacted with the space. The exhibition was carefully curated, guiding visitors through a narrative progression, and I became increasingly interested in how these orchestrated pathways shaped both perception and interpretation. Equally, I began to notice how the materials present held their own agency, at times disrupting this path, and therefore interaction resulting in the reframing meaning within the works.

Moving beyond the conceptual meanings of the exhibition, I considered how material conditions influenced behaviour, how certain surfaces subtly directed movement, encouraged engagement, or invited sensory interaction. One installation that particularly captured my attention was the veil surrounding the Pavilion's exterior, composed of carbon clay spheres. The work resisted permanence, its surface continuously altered by weathering and environmental exposure. On rainy days, the black carbon would drip onto the porch, leaving traces of its presence. I became especially aware of its impermanence one afternoon while invigilating, when one of the clay spheres suddenly burst, releasing a sharp sound and a movement that disrupted the quiet stillness of the space. That moment vividly revealed the material's responsiveness and instability, its ability to act and transform sporadically.

The clay's capacity to change, react, and even rupture demonstrated its active participation in the unfolding of the work. For me, it became a tangible expression of continuous agency and connectedness; an instance where material and environment acted together in a process of becoming that altered my perception and interaction with the exhibit. This experience has since informed my artistic practice, reinforcing my interest in material as an active collaborator rather than a passive medium.

On returning home, I sought to translate these observations into ceramics forms, wanting to create a piece that embodied traces of movement and pathways across its surface, as a record of kinetic history. I intended to develop a form that was not fixed or singular, but composed of connected sections capable of shifting, bouncing, and interacting with a raw clay surface. Looking ahead, I intend to activate the piece, allowing these suspended elements to move continuously and strike against the clay surface. Over time, this motion will leave visible traces and eventually cause the structure to break. This process-driven approach introduces an evolving temporal dimension in which the sculpture's condition becomes inseparable from its gradual transformation. The clay participates in its own unfolding, marking, altering, and ultimately undoing itself.

Although this piece remains in its early stages, it represents an initial experiment to translate the material vitality I witnessed in Venice. Time constraints limited my ability to explore its full potential, this work stands as a maquette for future large-scale iterations sculptures that might exist in a continuous state of vibration or sound. Such movement would sustain the clay's tension and agency, inviting viewers to experience not only its changing surface but also the rhythms of interaction and decay that animate its form.



Clay Experimentation - Untitled, 2025



Material impressions

Homegrown Plus
@annekimunguyi

My third week in Venice, one image began to follow me. It was that of the view from the Portico of the Pavilion out towards the rest of the Giardini. My view here was in parts obstructed by a major installation draped over the building. A veil, made up of carbon and clay balls and red beads strung together, stretches from the roof of the building all around the front half of its exterior, down to the soil. Designed to invoke manyatta dwellings of the Maasai peoples in Kenya, the curators of the exhibition draw on W.E.B du Bois' 'double consciousness' neologism; that is, the duality characteristic to racialised people's experience perceiving themselves through their own eyes, and as 'the other' by an external gaze. They invite visitors to view the British Pavillion through this layered reference to indigenous and regenerative building practises, alongside their displacement via colonial conquest. Yet much of my time invigilating was spent looking through this veil outwards, to the rest of the Giardini and Venice itself.

The red beads caught my eye. Though produced in India, here they invoke their centrality in historical Murano glassblowing production, which exported them to English merchants to be used as a currency in the Atlantic Slave Trade. Today, they still wash up in Venice's canals, are dug up at archaeological sites in the US or Western Africa, or found in London's River Thames. A trip around Venice's lagoon to the Murano Glass Museum revealed nothing of the city's imbrication, and the ways in which this export sustained the Venetian economy for decades in the nineteenth century. Yet looking out towards the city through this veil of carbon, clay and glass, it is impossible not to think about.

My research thus culminated in an invocation to practise a 'double vision' outwards, rather than inwards. Where the curators intended a reading of the strategies of resistance that unfold across worlds rifted, I hoped to extend this provocation out through Venice. Drawing on my own research tracing the red Murano glass beads from a local product to a nefarious currency in the violent global history of the Atlantic Slave Trade, I staged a workshop for Fellows to apply this dual conceptualisation to the city. What assumptions did they have upon arrival in Venice? What revealed itself over time? How did the exhibitions engagement with ecological collapse and colonial conquest as intertwined, geological processes shape their experiences, inform their observations, and encourage their reflections on Venice as both a residential city and a home to the Biennale spectacle?

The conversations that ensued were personal, reflective, and ultimately constructive of multiple layers of meaning to a complex and evasive city.



Workshop presentation, August 2025



Workshop presentation, participants and wall, August 2025

University of Exeter
BA Liberal Arts
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Present and Grounded
A Movement Workshop

Walking around Venice, a literal floating city that is designed for movement. Where people historically only occupied ephemerally. In the 1600s sailors and merchants made this city a hedonistic playground. And in present day, it's a classic case of touristic gentrification.

During my month of residency, I was fascinated by how people interact with space. Whether that is an exhibition space, the piazza, or Venice as a whole. I find an ubiquitous spirit of absence; **absent of mind**.

How do you ground when all your surrounding is shifting. Both physically and metaphorically. In an age of overstimulation and constant change, social isolation is becoming a global epidemic. It's easy to slip into a state of unawareness and preoccupation.

My background in social dancing inspired me to think about dance connection and movement as more than just a recreational activity. How it can be incorporated to facilitate mindfulness and empathy.

I led *Present and Grounded*, a workshop that explores movement in space. Using principles of Kizomba, an Afro style partner dance, to facilitate the participant's connection with their own bodies, each other, and the space they occupy.

The workshop was hosted in the central room of the British Pavilion, the gallery was titled the *Earth Compass*. The room illustrates the cumulative CO2 emissions of each country since the Industrial Revolution, and the extractive relation between former imperial powers and former colonies. The choice to set this workshop here evokes reflection on how one can break free from the power dynamics imposed by existing systems and connect purely.

Many thanks to all who participated in the workshops, and special thanks to Robin, Tim, Vanessa and Abiola for capturing these moments.



Connection: Robin, 2025. Photo: Vanessa Ma



Present and Grounded, 2025. Photo: Tim Ingleby

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MA Contemporary Curating
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My project centred on the Welsh vernacular tradition of *Tŷ Unnos*, a form of architecture rooted in communal action, temporality, and resistance. I approached this tradition as a curatorial method to explore collective intelligence through site-specific research. During my time in Venice, I was fortunate to build a strong network of local residents who supported me in realising a one-night event shaped by my research. Given the original function of the *Tŷ Unnos*, as an act of resistance to housing precarity, the project evolved to explore local strategies of resilience in Venice. I invited residents to collaboratively construct a *Tŷ Unnos*, where each participant contributed a postcard offering a personal solution to the challenges of meeting personal needs on the island. From alternative ways of accessing music, to foraging for dinner, these contributions formed a collective house of resistance, reflecting both the spirit of the original Welsh tradition and the contemporary realities of Venice.



Tŷ Unnos, 2025, photo: Giulia Coluccello



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12th May 2025, Downing Street, London, UK
Keir Starmer, Immigration White Paper press conference (excerpt)
'Without strong migration rules, we risk becoming an island of strangers.'

12th May 2025, Alberoni, Venice, Italy
Fatimah Asghar, *If They Come For Us* (poetry excerpt)
*'They asked for a map, so I drew a line.
Cousins partitioned from cousins, mothers partitioned from child.'*

(De)Constructing Borders: An Island of Strangers

As a South Asian immigrant constantly on the move from the Middle East to India to the UK with English as my native tongue, I have long searched for a place to belong. In a fast-paced global era we are continuously redefining identity, nations, and community. Yet even amid such fluidity, far-right movements only grow louder.

Keir Starmer's phrase - "an island of strangers" - echoed through my mind mid-month in Venice. The city itself, built by immigrants and now a tourist hotspot, favours people from around the globe. This became the setting for my project, *(De)Constructing Borders, a Discourse on Homeland: An Island of Strangers*. Through it, I explored how borders - both physical and conceptual - are drawn, contested, and dismantled through individual experiences.

This work began as a response to the Venice Biennale's national pavilion system - a framework that stages identity through nations, even as artists and curators continually resist such definitions. Using henna, a pigment that travels across cultures and fades over time, I invited strangers to participate in a simple, intimate act: "Using henna, draw what you feel or imagine from your partner's story - on their hand." Each design became a temporary map of belonging, shaped through shared narratives and conversations around the question: "What does homeland mean to you?"

This work also responds to the wider Biennale theme of *Intelligens* - understood as a form of knowledge sharing that opens space for empathy and challenges prejudice. It invites us to rethink how we understand one another, moving towards a more cohesive and compassionate community. The UK-Kenya Pavilion embodied this spirit beautifully.

Throughout my residency, the conversations I shared with Fellows from around the world became integral to this process. Their insights and openness transformed the project into a living exchange of ideas. I am deeply grateful to the Fellows in Group 1 and to M+B Studio for their participation.

This work forms part of my broader MA dissertation, *Framing the Nations: A Mono-Ethnocultural Representation of National Identity in Global Exhibitions*, which examines how cultural institutions construct national identities and the politics of representation. The project later evolved into a zine - a collage of henna prints, photographs, and fragments of conversation - assembled as a form of visual poetry exploring transient identity and collective memory. (The book is available on my website.)



MARÍA CASTRO FERNANDEZ

UAL, London College of Communication
 MA Illustration and Visual Media
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Still Women

Exploring women and space. Women at peace, in tranquility, enclosed, but not confined.

In this project, I explored a visual language that was born from sitting in the Pavilion chair. These illustrations emerged from a mental state that shifted from frustration to calmness, and finally to admiration for stillness and the act of doing nothing.



University of Liverpool
 Master of Architecture (MArch)
 @cb.archfolio

Venetian Threads: Letters from the Wall

My research has traced Venice through its most overlooked material: the brick. Each brick in the city carries a layered story of extraction, trade, craft, and repair acting as both a fragment of architecture and a witness to history. By walking the city, I've assembled a speculative archive of ten bricks, each tied to a place and a narrative: the brick that was borrowed, the brick that remembers or the brick that doesn't belong.

This project explores how Venice's walls embody global entanglements, from colonial trade routes to local repair practices. Alongside material histories, I've examined the hidden carbon legacies of bricks: the clay dug, the wood burned in kilns, the ships that carried surplus loads, and the mortars patched centuries later.

The work takes form as letters from the wall; a collection of fragments that blend storytelling, climate research, and architectural heritage. Rather than treating bricks as static, they whisper stories of survival, displacement, and repair.

What do these modest objects reveal about the politics of building, the urgency of climate change, and the fragile, enduring fabric of Venice?



The Brick That Remembers, Jewish Ghetto 2025



The Brick That Was Repaired, 2025



The Brick That Crumbled, Giudecca 2025)



The Brick That Doesn't Belong, Santa Maria della Salute 2025

EXAMPLE OF RESEARCH

Carbon Label: The Brick That Was Repaired
 Location: Associazione Culturale Spiazzi, Castello, Venice
 Estimated date of original production: early-to-mid 19th century.
 Repaired with local lime mortar in situ
 Type: Handmade, low-fired clay brick



Carbon life-cycle stage	Description	Emissions (kg CO ₂ e)
A1-A3	Original extraction, firing, and shaping (historic low-tech kiln)	~0.45
C1-C4	Disposal avoided due to repair	-0.10
B4	Repair impact (lime mortar, no transport)	+0.05
Total Net Estimate	<i>Repaired rather than replaced</i>	~0.40
Avoided replacement (modern brick estimate)	~0.55	
Net carbon saving by repair	~0.15 kg CO ₂ e per brick	

“ ... they are **storytellers**... of a complex past that is layered in oppression, resilience and liberation.”

from 'red brick by blue brick' installation at the British Pavilion

CHEYENNE BOOTH

University of St Andrews
 Master of Arts (Honours) Art History and Social Anthropology
[linkedin.com/in/cheyenne-booth](https://www.linkedin.com/in/cheyenne-booth)

My story of Venice is a story of return. My first trip was with my parents in February 2014, right in the middle of the Carnival. I was completely entranced with the floating city, the labyrinth of streets and the beautiful costumes emerging at every corner. I remember getting lost with my mom, the fear I felt of never finding our way out, but also the excitement in the adventure.

This time round, I felt all the same feelings. I felt incredibly lost, but instead of sticking to Google Maps, I let myself get lost, get carried by my intuition, see where it takes me. It's a wonderful way of exploring the city, partly because of the things you discover, but also because you forget how to find your way back. After a month of living in Venice, I gained an understanding of where I was and was able to trace back my steps to find these hidden gems. Being able to live in Venice for a month is such an interesting experience: you cease to be a tourist but are far from becoming a local. You pick up the language, the *vaporetto* etiquette, find yourself being recognised by the staff of your favourite pizzeria, and yet your time there feels so brief.

I had many memorable experiences, but one that has resonated with me the most happened on a bench in the Giardini overlooking the canal. An older man was sitting where I would usually take my lunch and rather than turn away, I decided to ask whether I could sit beside him. He was a journalist who had been coming to La Biennale since his youth. He went from sneaking over the fence to steal a glance to being invited for press days to report on the exhibitions. I asked him many questions, even more about Venice, and though I couldn't get much out of him, one thing he said stuck with me.

“Venice clings to you... Or maybe you cling to her. I keep coming back, even if I don't plan on it.”

And I sincerely hope I will.



In Venice, 2014



In Venice, 2025

Shujaa Stories

@elvis.rambo

@OneElofatime

Tales of a City

The non finito approach

The initial idea I had for this project was to use oils. I ended up executing most of it in charcoal on toned paper, a choice that gave the pieces a unique rendering of tonal depth.

The inherent warmth of the toned paper acts as a mid-tone, against which I have deployed stark contrasts of white and black charcoal. The monochromatic palette focuses the viewer's attention entirely on **form, light, and texture.**

The subjects in these works are rendered in deep, velvety black, grounding the composition which pops uniformly with the background. Conversely, the brilliant white highlights define the minute details of the forms, catching the light and creating a 3D effect.

The deliberate *non finito* effect that you get looking at the works is meant to encapsulate the relational dynamics forged during this UK/Kenya season: an ever growing affection and connectivity with other Fellows, the Venetians and the social spaces we lived in.



Study



Università IUAV di Venezia



Vaporetto

Anglia Ruskin University (Cambridge School of Art)
 MA Children's Book Illustration
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My creative project, *Interactions at the Venice Biennale*, is a collection of sketches, paintings and illustrations that capture the sense of place of Venice, and my experience of living there and working at the Biennale in May 2025. During the Fellowships Programme, I learned how important my sketchbook is to my artistic practice, and how the images I capture from life become the basis for my illustrative storytelling.

During my MA, we drew outside in different locations; these skills became crucial for drawing in Venice, where I was often uncomfortable in crowds and tight spaces. With a sketchbook in hand however, I forgot my anxieties and the experience became more enjoyable. Drawing on the vaporetto quickly became my favourite part of the day, and I would hop on at any stop, drawing in my pocket sketchbook until we reached the end of the line.

As the month progressed, Venice became more familiar through my drawings, and I began to get a sense of place and a deeper understanding of the different versions of the city. For example, there is the main 'tourist route' through the city, and a few streets over is the quieter, quicker route to work or to school. Drawing onsite at the British Pavilion was another experience altogether: the visitors became the focus, and capturing the way that individuals communicate with their body language and their hands was the story. I made a series of zines dedicated to hands: hands holding hands, hands holding glasses (one lady held 3 pairs of glasses in one hand!), hands telling stories... Sharing the excitement of the Biennale and learning from the exhibitions and visitors was incredibly special, and I remember each interaction through my drawings.

Most importantly, I learned how my sketchbook practice fits with narrative: drawing daily helps me gather important moments, and studying a place over time attunes my artistic eye to the stories that exist just beneath the surface. Looking back through my observational drawings, I notice narratives I might not have seen at the time, had I not drawn them. These stories feel more authentic and emotive, because they are based in the truth of observation, and of experiencing that exact moment in time. I carry this new understanding into my picture-book work; with a sketchbook in my pocket and eyes open to the stories all around.

Emily's project will be exhibited as a solo exhibition titled 'Interactions at the Venice Biennale' at Galeri Caernarfon, Wales (July - December 2025).



Building Cultural Bridges: Preservation and Sustainability

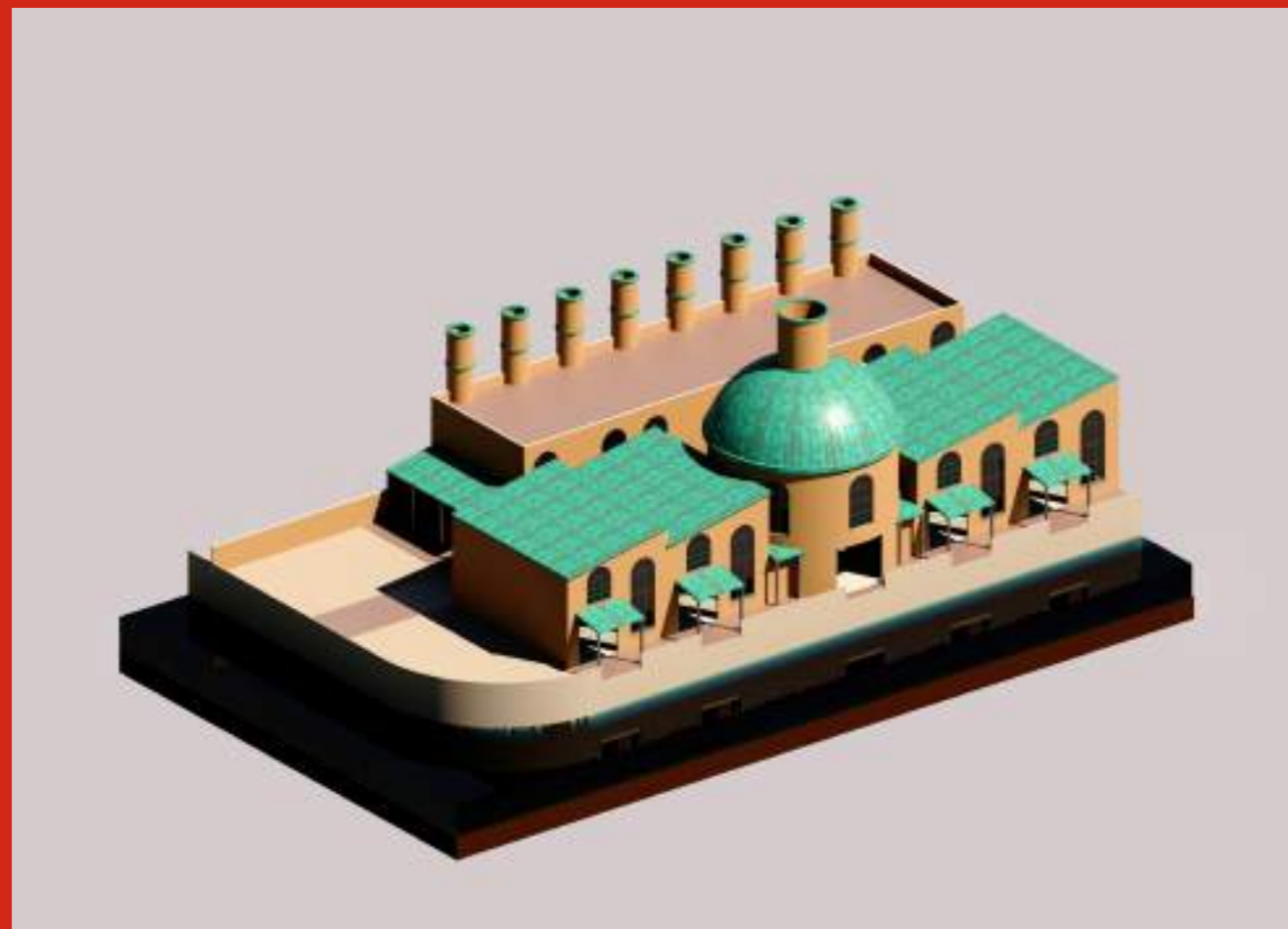
For my research I explored the relationship between heritage and sustainability in both Birmingham and Venice. To help understand this complex relationship I undertook both primary and secondary research which investigated architectural narratives, urban structure, and identities. To support this research, I used several parallel case studies, examples include but are not limited to:

- BCU STEAMhouse (Birmingham) x IUAV Cotton Mill (Venice)
- BT Tower (Birmingham) x St. Mark's Campanile (Venice)
- HS2 Curzon Street Station (Birmingham) x The Arsenale (Venice)

The dual perspective of these two cities is then combined into a singular perspective, for a conceptual model titled *Birnizia ~ A City between Water and Fire*. Conceptually the city is between two worlds, the water and fluidity of Venice, and the fire and momentum of Birmingham. The concept model leverages my research and discoveries to create a hybrid cityscape that is a fusion of aspects of Birmingham and Venice. This helped to define a framework for a design project: a historic factory that is being renovated, in line with Birnizia's design principles, to create a multipurpose creative and residential space. This is a project I'm still actively working on and is currently in the concept phase.



Concept Model Sketches



Design Concept

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 MA Contemporary Curating
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Elastic Space Artistic Elucidation

Elastic Space uses the physics of elasticity as a poetic metaphor to explore how cultural identity is stretched, compressed, and reshaped through movement. Centering on the cyclical journey of *dwelling* — *leaving* — *returning*, it weaves a visual language that dissolves essentialist notions of belonging into fluid, evolving forms.

On velvet-black canvases, photographic fragments of Venetian architecture fuse with flowing pigments, gold and silver leaf, mother-of-pearl, and gemstone splashes. These hybrid surfaces stage a dialogue between material elasticity and cultural resilience: gemstone streams folding like rubber creases, gold leaf stretching like fabric across arches. In these rebounding wrinkles — gems congealing in wall fissures, stones sliding along window frames — memory itself bends and reforms, shaped by the pressures of migration and adaptation.

Time and space also warp. Sharp photographic facades collide with the slow diffusion of paint, creating temporal folds where physical departure intertwines with psychological memory. Soft gradients blur boundaries, evoking identities that refuse to stay fixed, dissolving certainty into layered fragments of experience.

Sensitivity becomes visible through translucent membranes — semi-transparent layers where pigments and metals meet, where gondola silver merges with violet-green minerals. These delicate intersections symbolize a “third space” of transformation, a living interface that resists closure and celebrates heterogeneity.

Anchored in the real geographies of Venice yet reaching beyond them, *Elastic Space* visualizes identity as an elastic field — never static, always responsive. Excess layers spill beyond the edges, gemstone rivers overflow their channels, and gold mist drifts outward, revealing identity not as a destination but a continuous becoming. Between the discipline of dwelling, the rupture of leaving, and the tension of return, cultural identity breathes — sensitive, fluid, and in motion — *a journeying state* that expands and contracts with every encounter.



Elastic Space, 2025

University of Bradford
 BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science Apprenticeship
 @judith_thursfield

During my time in Venice I explored the city by following the routes taken by Ralph Rumney (1934-2002) as part of the psychogeographic survey he made in 1957. His exploration of the city used the idea of the *derivé* - to wander an area with no idea of what would be encountered and to really focus on the route that was being taken. This approach felt especially fitting for Venice as there are many unexplored alleyways and back-streets that some visitors may never see.

While on each *derivé*, I looked for shapes, marks, compositions and textures that could be used in textile artwork. Photographs were taken on each route and the found ideas transcribed to a notebook, which then became reference points for this project. These shapes were then used to form a stitched record of the details found and from this work some small quilted items were made.

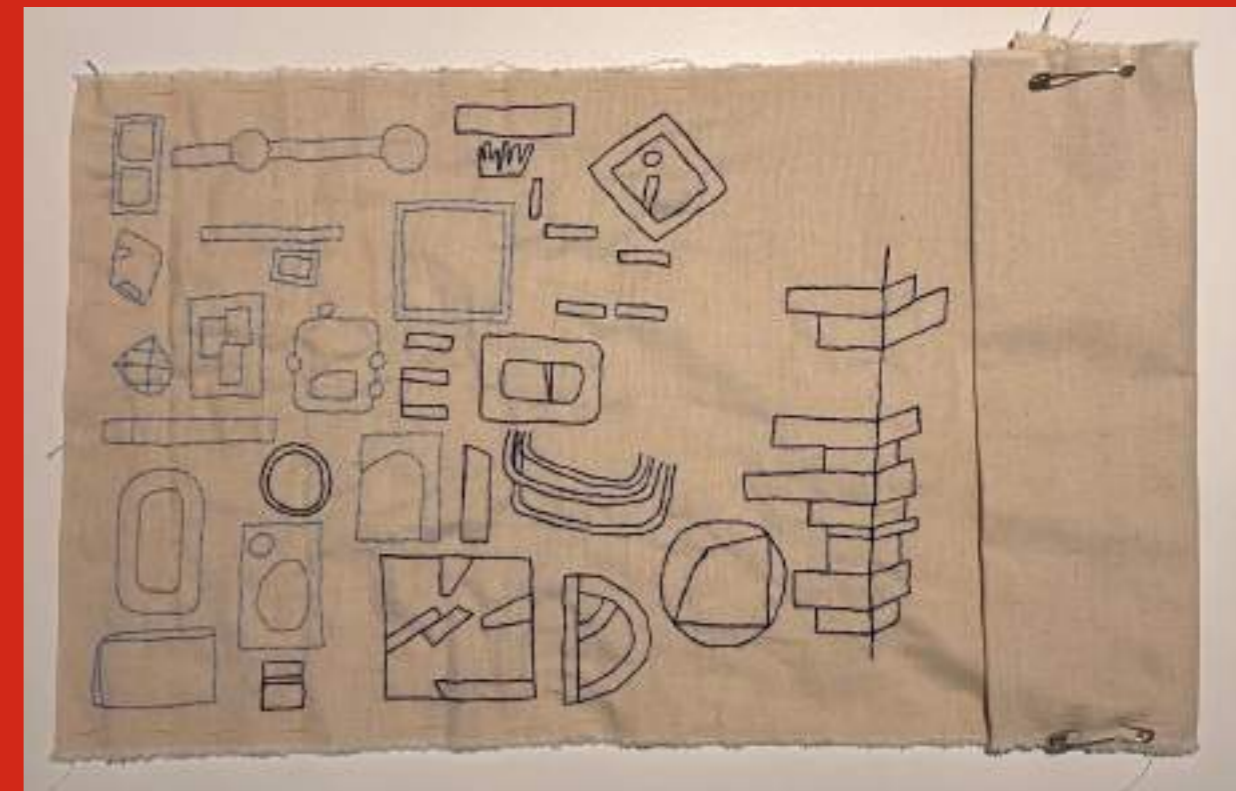
I took the quilted pieces back out into Venice to photograph them on location, thereby giving the found shapes back to the city.



Found shapes 24th August 2025



Quilted objects on location, 20th September 2025



Stitched Sketchbook 12th September 2025)

University of Southampton – Winchester School of Art
BA Fine Art
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What happens to a city when what sustains it is also what is simultaneously killing it?

The Airbnb epidemic is a worldwide phenomenon coming hand in hand with over-tourism, rising costs of living, and degradation of local communities. Venice is sustained via tourism and tourism alone, but what happens to a city when people cannot easily thrive? During my month in Venice, I endeavoured to speak directly with members of the Venice community: from church volunteers to activist photographers to book sellers. I strove to understand what it is like living in a challenging situation that is now facing most cities and towns of outstanding beauty today.

While epithets for Venice often include general homages to its architecture, art, and invitation, many of the artists working in the tourist industry used phrases such as 'brutal' or 'compromising'; many spoke of the moral compromise they face when making a living selling to tourists, whilst feeling the need to express their upset at the overtourism through their art.

In a city that perpetually celebrates its past whilst simultaneously presenting the world's leading innovations in its pavilions, where do the contemporary artists of Venice fit in? How do you create and live in a place designed for you to only stay a fleeting weekend?

Venice has a community of determined individuals who love and care for the city, who choose to fight to stay despite the financial strains, and who help young people find housing. However, many spoke of the accepted reality of never being able to earn enough to live where they grew up.

My interviews were largely unstructured in order to let the conversation flow freely, and I allowed my interviewees to guide me towards topics they felt particularly passionately about regarding their city. My sample pool was small and focused; I did not attempt to cover the entirety of the Venetian population. I have collated these interviews and accompanied them with my own paintings and the potential ideas we conversed about for change.

These images are taken at local events that I was lucky enough to attend and participate in. I chose not to photograph my interviewees as I will paint them from memory, using their words to shape and distort their image in my mind. Some contributed realistic ideas, others less so. I plan to use the paintings to draw attention to these issues, and hope to accompany the work with actionable plans.



re-imagining souvenirs

During my residency month, I researched the idea of the souvenir and its relationship to the handmade and craft industries. Souvenirs, as objects, act as tangible markers of particular experiences or places. In *On Longing*, Susan Stewart describes the souvenir as an object that marks not the lived experience of the maker, but the “secondhand” experience of its possessor. In this way, the experience of the souvenir object lies outside the body; it is completely detached from the material and embodied processes of making.

Souvenirs often operate as narrative abstractions: as “things” that make an experience or location that is not for sale, sellable. The labour of the maker is obscured, and these objects are appropriated from their cultural contexts, entering the sphere of private domestic space as evocations of past experiences.

As a craftsperson, I wanted to explore whether it might be possible to make a different kind of souvenir. A souvenir where the body’s experience of place is foundational, where the author is also the owner and one which resists the capitalist extraction and cultural imperialism so closely tied to tourism.

I began by using clay as a medium to register the surface textures of Venice, creating ink imprints from these clay impressions. By capturing traces of place, I sought to evoke the more tactile and textural qualities of a city so often reduced to its aesthetic image.

This process later extended into a participatory workshop at the UK/Kenya commissioned exhibition at the British Pavilion in Venice. Participants were invited to use clay to record and collect surface textures from the Pavilion building and its surroundings. These clay impressions were then inked and stamped onto paper, forming a shared collage of *textural souvenirs*. The resulting document functions as a record of an experience at the Pavilion.

The clay used during the workshop has since been recycled and transformed into a vessel, materialising the traces of collective touch, place, and experience into a *re-imagined souvenir*.



Group 3 and 4 Fellows, Workshop, 2025



Souvenir, 2025



Texture Diary, 2025



Group 3 and 4 Fellows, Workshop, 2025

Outside In
Architectural Stone Carving - City & Guilds of London
Art School
@klarissakatzart

During my time in Venice, I wanted to engage in a deep listening practice where my artistic response holistically approached my environment, its context and my occupation within it.

On my daily walks through the grounds of La Biennale, I was struck by the sound of the cicada and thought constantly about its permeating the exhibition. Meditating on their cry, these insects became a powerful symbol of normalisation, the unseen and markers of change.

This led to the realisation of another influencing feature on my research – votive art. I’m interested in the potential of votive practices to enable and sustain ethical consideration (therefore having potential toward meaningful action) and found inspiration in the churches and museums of Venice. I wanted to materialise desire for change in the form of social sculpture, and after some time developing a workshop using materials recycled from the exhibition, I invited visitors to take the creative process of votive-making as ritual and to carry a promise to positive action in the memory of that experience within themselves on leaving their votive behind in the Giardini.



Workshop Clay, Raison D'Etire, 25th August 2025



Votive Workshop, 25th August 2025, Photo Credit Nahla Salkini



Sketch Cicada, 14th August 2025

Bure Ni Kilio Pasipo Sikio

(It's useless to cry when there is no one listening)

-
 We are suspended
 On a breath

Thin
 Tight
 Rope

Miraculous

We are suspended
 Turbulent metal birds
 Tearing through the weightlessness of faith
 With dull knowledge

As apparitions
 We carry a drum that
 Heaves and bleeds
 Black blood
 Dripping through
 Red beads

The ground palpitates
 A lagoon of pomegranate seeds
 Crushed under pearly whites
 Untold stories burst sweet
 And from that mouth
 A hand retrieves
 Marwe & Persephone

We are suspended

I heard it described as
 A hair caught in the throat
 Wound onto a spool
 Wider than my arm's
 Breadth
 Trying to convince me
 That I cannot hold you

Miraculous

That we could choose to forget
 That we are

Suspended together
 Floating
 Islands and bridges

What separates us is
 A fear of drowning in
 Disturbed reflections
 Distracted from the consequence

Of our rippling effects

The bell tower is keeling
Calling a swarm
Hollow chest cavity
I rasp against my breast
To find
An instrument without instrument

Climbing

I try to cry out
Our bodies close like
A shiver of flies

I choose cicada
Full of desire
I find my heartbeat with yours in
The deafening hush

Suspended

Together

saying

Listen
(Elea)
Listen
(Elea)
Listen
(Elea)

Quiet.

Before the summer forgets us.

Klarissa Katz

LALIA SAIDY KHAN

Royal Academy of Arts
@lalia_again

When planning an exhibition, one can only predict how visitors might act within the spaces, and therefore include signage based on predictions. Watching people interact with the artworks at the Pavilion inspired the creation of my “Unofficial Rulebook”. Taking precedent from the two signs outside the exhibition entrance, the rulebook presents a series of guidelines based on actual observations in the spaces. The tone is somewhat tongue-in-cheek, reflecting the sometimes humorous actions of exhibition visitors. I imagine that the Fellows could have collaborated to make a long list of rules passed along from group to group on the handover days. I wanted to capture the unique perspective that I got of the exhibition whilst sitting in the spaces during my shifts.



Cardiff University
Masters of Architecture (MArch)
@lauren_pohl1

I am an Architecture student interested in urban design and how historic fabrics can adapt to new pressures. During my Venice Fellowships Programme, I set out to study Venice as a city shaped entirely by walking and the contrasting ways it is experienced by locals and tourists. My research combined on-site observation, sketching, and quantitative recording of how people move, pause, and interact across five distinct typologies: *corte*, *sotoportego*, *calle*, *campiello*, and commercial spine.

Inspired by Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* and Marco Polo's imagined portraits of Venice, I developed two poetic personas of the city: *Salute*, the Venice of the temporary visitor, and *Manente*, the Venice of the steady local life. These texts, paired with a collage of images, explore how movement, perspective, and belonging shape the city's identity.

In *Salute*, Venice is a theatre of wonder, with streets that dazzle, and a city that folds back into mystery once the visitor departs. In *Manente*, Venice is quieter, its beauty revealed through routine and a rhythm only known to those who stay. By tracing these dual perspectives, my project reflects on how Venice holds both spectacle and intimacy, performance and permanence. The poems and collages ask how cities are imagined, remembered, and lived differently depending on who walks their streets.

The Fellowships allowed me to merge creative writing with visual practice, using the city itself as both subject and collaborator. I documented how locals and visitors occupied these spaces differently. Morning counts revealed *corti* and residential *calli* as anchors of routine, groceries, greetings, bin collection, while by midday, tourist flows transformed the same streets into sites of hesitation, photography, or spectacle. Narrow passages like *sotoportegos* compressed thousands of bodies into moments of encounter, while *campielli* opened into sunlit pauses around cisterns. Commercial presence shifted rhythm entirely, from local bakery queues at dawn to restaurant terraces by noon.

By comparing these observations with urban design theory (Gehl's categories of necessary/optional/social activity, Cullen's serial vision, Lynch's legibility), I explored how typology itself, width, enclosure, edge activity, microclimate, conditions behaviour beyond what abstract models like space syntax predict. The data showed that even streets with similar configurational "integration" values produced very different social outcomes, depending on their form and affordances, a theme that I will be analysing in my university dissertation.

This project became a dialogue between numbers and narratives: counts of footsteps and pauses, and the imagined voices of the city itself. I have interrogated how urban form shapes experience, and how Venice continues to hold both the temporary and the enduring within its labyrinth of streets.



King's College London
 MPhil/PhD in Creative Economy
 @lilienezeugwu

I had always admired Venice from afar; its quiet magic, its floating architecture, and its stubborn defiance of time got me longing for the day I would finally walk its narrow streets/alleyways, waterfronts and cross its ancient bridges. And so when the opportunity to visit came, and I was selected for the Venice Fellowships Programme, I felt both grateful and exhilarated.

Before travelling, I had mapped out two creative projects to anchor my stay. The first was a documentary film titled *Threads of Heritage: A Dialogue Between Africa and Venice*, exploring endangered cultures and the lessons Venice offers about heritage conservation. The second was an exhibition built around the idea that our cultural heritage can inspire pathways to sustainability, inclusivity, and resilience. Both projects were sparked by questions I carried with me: What can we learn from a city that has preserved itself against all odds? How can African cultural traditions contribute to global conversations about conservation?

But Venice, as I soon learned, has a mind entirely of its own. It invited me deeper than I had planned to go, into its stories, its forgotten corners, its archives of stone and water. Every day revealed something unexpected. I found myself collecting more data than I planned for my project; I gathered new ideas, unexpected connections, and additional threads that demanded to be followed. Venice gave me more work than I was prepared for, but also more inspiration than I could have imagined.

I am still developing my projects, along with the new discoveries Venice gifted me, and my expected completion date is January 2026. The process is richer, more layered, and more challenging than I anticipated, and for that I am grateful.

My time in Venice was unforgettable. The city offered me more adventures, more questions, more hidden gems, more surprises, more history, more laughter, more peace, more splashes, more of everything. I left with a full heart and a fuller notebook, and I cannot wait to return again and again, to my Venetian dream.



University for the Creative Arts
 BA (Hons) Architecture
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 linktr.ee/lizziegrinter

“If we want our world to be a more beautiful, kind and fair place then shouldn’t our activism be more beautiful, kind and fair?” (Corbett, 2017)

I have been carrying out a research project into Craftivism and the culture of domestic crafts in Venice and internationally. Craftivism is a form of ‘gentle protest’ rooted in collaboration, mindfulness and empathy aiming to create meaningful change. Using traditional techniques and unwanted textiles, my aim was to collaborate with the Fellows and visitors to the British Pavilion to craft a ‘woven wall’: an insulating piece addressing social and environmental issues.

The UK–Kenya collaborative commission at the La Biennale, also celebrating traditional techniques and material reuse, was a relevant setting for my project. I researched a centuries-old crafting technique that repurposes fabrics into a ‘Rag Rug’. Once common in mining areas within the UK and associated with poverty, this accessible technique brought neighbours, friends and families together to warm their homes.

I workshopped a simplified version of ‘rag rugging’ with Fellows and visitors, using scrap materials donated by the Fellows. The personal histories of the fabrics enriched the work’s meaning. Participants crafted their own pieces or continued work started by others, contributing to a shared textile without pressure for neatness or uniformity.

There was very positive interest in the workshop, with many participants sharing family memories of rag rugging and other crafts. I asked individuals to reflect on their connection to crafts and ways of practising a circular economy.

“This is more than just a craft, it’s a way to build community around an inclusive practice that can be replicated anywhere for anyone.” (Workshop participant, 2025)

I have since joined the pieces from the workshops together; my next step will be to work with a homeless/refugee charity and explore the possibility of applying this method to insulate tents or temporary accommodation. I aim to donate the finished textile as a prototype of a socially and environmentally conscious insulation that could be replicated in other communities.



Visitor Workshop, British Pavilion Portico, 2025



Collaborative Textile, 2025

Durham University
BA Visual Arts and Film

I am deeply passionate about my Ugandan heritage as half of my family is from there so I was especially excited when I heard about the British Pavilion's connection to Kenya for this year's commission.

My original plan for my project was to focus on architectural spaces that I have a connection to, particularly salons that are so crucial to life as a girl in East Africa. When thinking about hair and identity, I was inspired by the workshops that other Fellows in my cohort hosted at the Pavilion: in Klarissa's workshop, I made a braid out of clay; at Lizzie's workshop, I contributed to the shared weaving of a rug. Learning from my other Fellows and identifying important forms of self-expression has led me to focus on the positioning of African and Black women in photography over the years and how over time they have made it out of the colonized stereotypes.



London College of Communication
 MA Animation
 masenos.com
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A Trip To Town

My work as an animator is based on experimentation and, and during my MA I took the opportunity to experiment with more mediums and with the idea of breaking the boundaries of the screen. The resulting project from this experimentation was an interactive installation presenting animation in different forms, from projections to hologram-like devices. I wanted to keep looking into animation-based interactive installations, so for this Fellowship, I made a small prototype, which can be seen via the QR code or this link (www.youtube.com/watch?v=v1VbZq_xyUo)

The concept for A Trip To Town is based on group play. Visitors would place little figurines on a playing board, which would trigger an animation of the corresponding character to appear as a projection on a wall. The characters do and interact with different things depending on where they are placed on the board. It's a concept rooted in interpersonal connection and light-hearted play and interactions, and connected to the overall theme of La Biennale 2025 as "intelligens" can be split into two words: "inter", and "legere" which means "to collect", "to gather" or "to pick out words" (to speak). I had a lot of fun designing and animating the little characters!

Once placed on the board, the characters appear within an environment based on the many public squares scattered around Venice. I loved wandering around the island and finding these little squares, which were usually small commercial hubs or quiet corners, where I'd stop and take a moment to breathe. The squares felt like the perfect reference for the environment where these little characters would walk around and interact.

I'm very excited to keep working on this! I'm currently writing a pitch for funding, so that I can develop the prototype, making a bigger board, more figurines, and expand it into an installation using a small room and projectors that cover all the walls, surrounding the audience with this environment and the characters they choose to play with.



A Trip To Town, 2025

University of Bradford
Master of Pharmacy (MPharm)
nahla.sa1013@gmail.com

“When you leave your culture behind you can then see how it limited your mind and thinking.”

Mula (Glass artist)

“Earth remembers everything, we exist temporarily. Venice will sink one day.”

Simo (Vintage jewellery shop owner)

“Hope is a discipline.”

Klarissa (Venice Fellow and stone carving student)

“Chi lascia la strada vecchia per quella nuova sa quell oche lascia ma non sa quell oche trova.”

Suzzanna (recent graduate)

“Critique your life to gain perspective.”

Hanna (German traveller)

“This is Italy, you can smoke anywhere.”

Anna

“Kill me, shoot me, I don't care.”

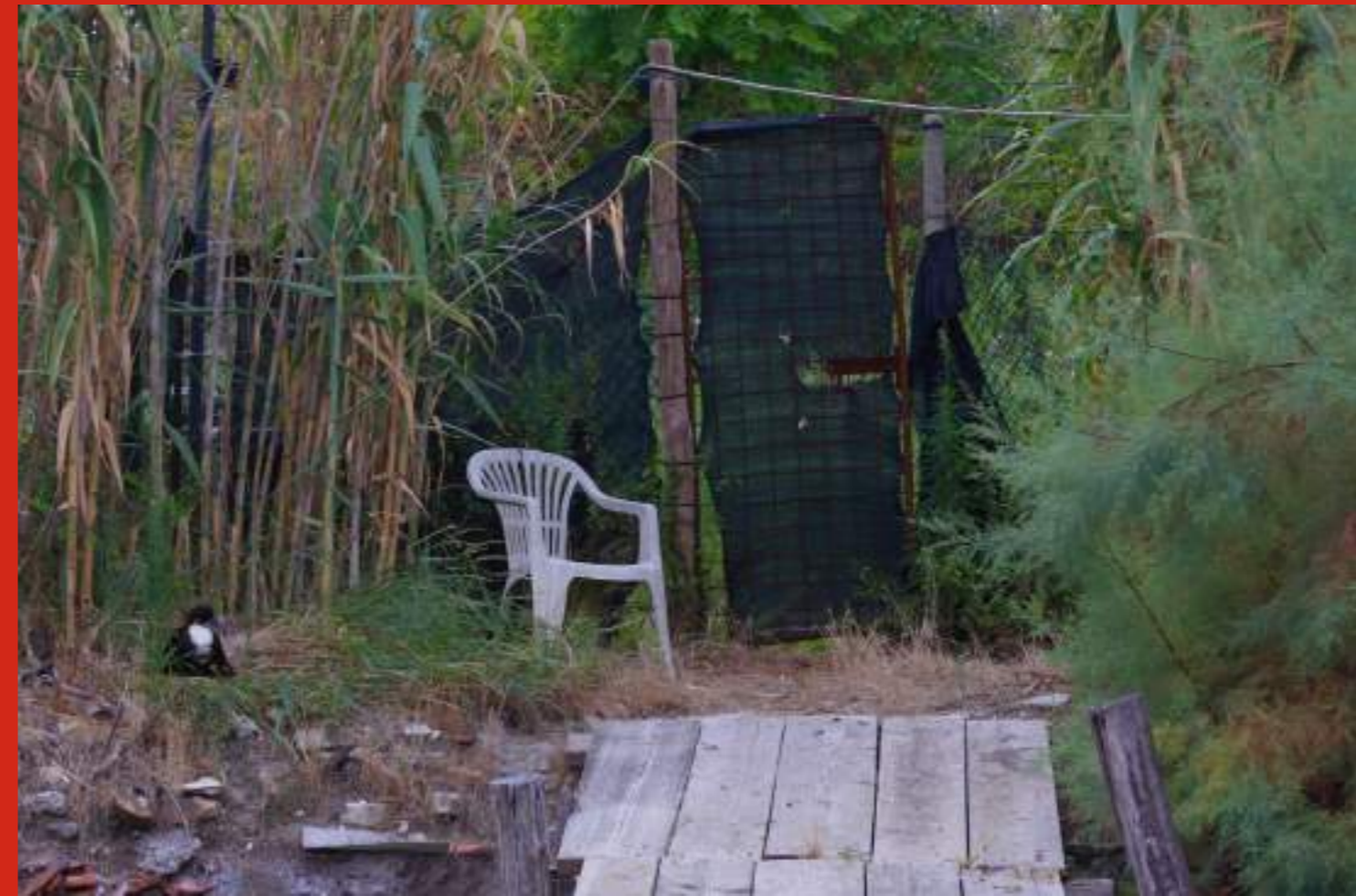
Jasmina (Intern from Latvia Pavilion)

“Immagina un gringio blue. Immagine un blue grigio. Confronta.”

Stephan (French artist)

“I am not at all where I intended or imagined I'd be in my life.”

Valerie (teacher and climate activist)



University for the Creative Arts, Canterbury
 PhD School of Design and Architecture
linktr.ee/mothermatter
 @mother_matter

During my residency month, I explored overlooked more-than-human agencies within the lagoon's complex geography. My initial proposal to develop clay-based tiles mitigating *acqua alta* while supporting ruderal plant growth felt extractive after early fieldwork and outreach. Instead, I adopted the *dérive* method of the early Situationists: a psychogeographic drift guided by atmospheric and emotional cues rather than predetermined routes. This became a way to operationalise chance, mirroring the adaptive logic of the ruderal species themselves.

Through these drifts, I produced a collage-cartography of Venice, an embodied map of stochastic discovery revealing invisible ecologies and affective geographies. Over forty ruderal species were documented, not as isolated specimens but as indicators of urban metabolism. Edible plants such as shepherd's purse, dandelion, and samphire were mapped as potential food sources. Halophytes in abandoned docks were traced as emergent biodiversity corridors, while wall-dwellers like ivy-leaved toadflax mapped microclimates and material decay. Alongside botanical observations, I recorded sensory layers like shade, breeze, and heat, portraying the city's fragile ecology.

In parallel, I conducted a photographic inquiry into invisible labour in Venice, *Lavori in Corso*. This visual fieldwork traced maintenance and repair practices—scaffolding, dredging, and cleaning performed largely out of sight of the tourist gaze. By capturing these transient gestures and provisional architectures, the work made visible the human and non-human labour sustaining the city's delicate equilibrium.

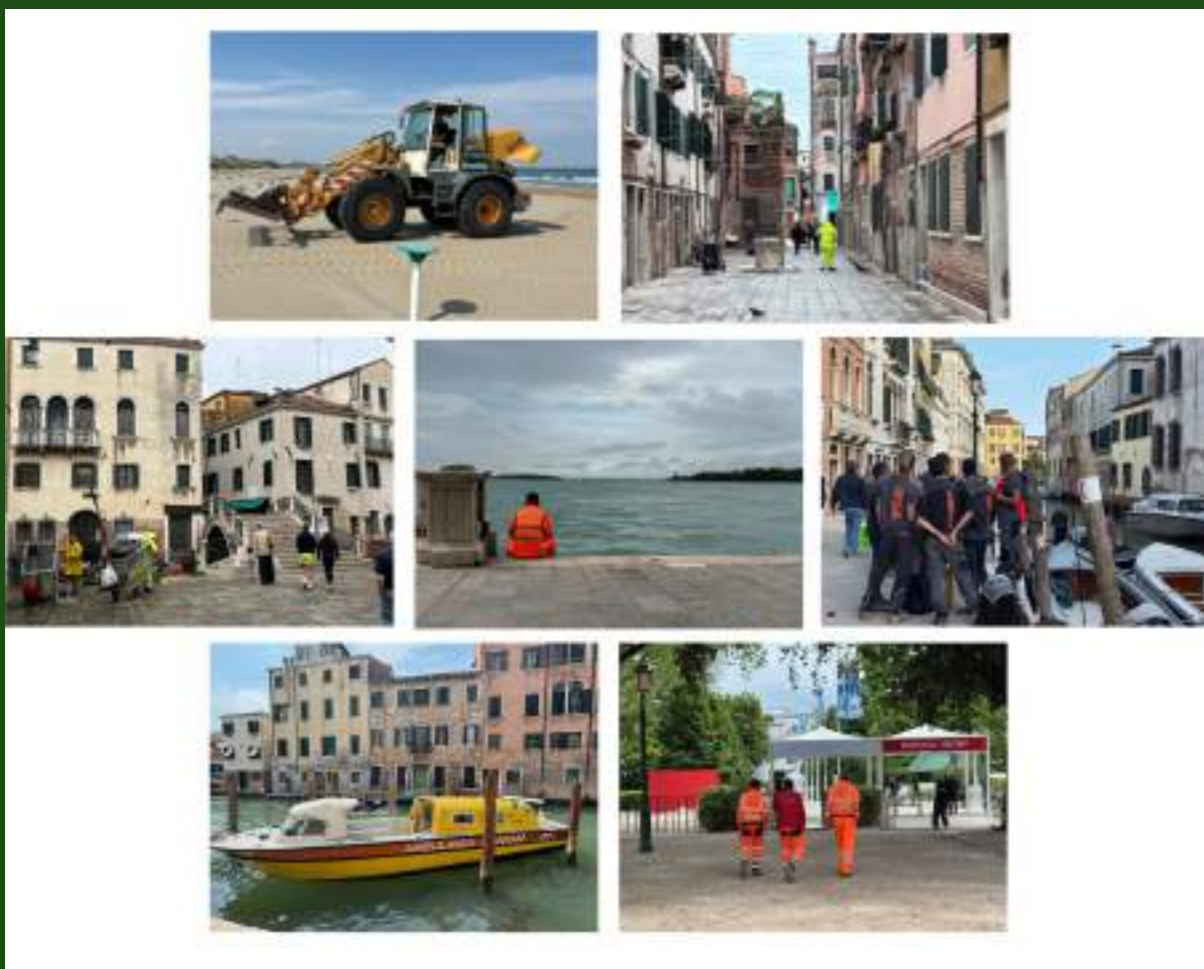
My focus later shifted to pigeons, whose urban existence parallels that of weeds. Both inhabit illegitimate niches, their presence marked as disorder and targeted by biopolitical regimes of purification. This recognition culminated in *The Manifesto in Defence of Pigeonisation*, a performative intervention at Porta Garibaldi inviting participants to form a cross-species alliance through acts of affinity, mimicry, and propagation.

Together, these works transformed observation into co-production, revealing weeds, pigeons, and workers as auditors of urban ideology—life forms and forces that expose the contradictions of purity, maintenance, and control. The fellowship became a living inquiry into coexistence, resilience, and the politics of human and more-than-human urbanism, asking *what holds what* in times of precarity.



La Dérive as Ruderal Counter-Mapping in Venice. May 2025.
 Composite image: Pati Starzykowski, 2025

The practice of la *dérive*, an unplanned journey through a landscape as a counter-mapping tactic of overlaying other aspects of experience to deconstruct the idea of an absolute space.



Lavori in Corso (2025)

A photographic research into invisible labour in Venice.



Documentation of the opening of Padiglione dei Piccioni: Pigeon Pavilion, for the Manifesto in Difesa della Piccionizzazione (Manifesto in Defense of Pigeonisation). Porta Garibaldi, Venice. May 2025. Composite image: Pati Starzykowski.

The Pigeon Pavilion/ Padiglione dei Piccioni (2025)

Link to manifesto: youtu.be/Rp_S2g935kQ?si=T_4jtSboz8mKw5QJ



Nairobi Now
[linkedin.com/in/rehema-kabare](https://www.linkedin.com/in/rehema-kabare)
rehemakabare.com

*Construction Materials as Agents of Social and Cultural Experiences:
 A Thought from Venice to Nairobi*

This project maps the invisible agency of construction materials as mediators of social equity and cultural memory. It frames materiality not as a passive backdrop but as an active participant in shaping climate resilience, economic mobility, and gendered experience.

The work began in Venice, where the city itself became the primary source of finding. Navigating its labyrinth of canals and alleys revealed a world where materials - trachyte and water - directly condition the atmosphere, both environmentally and emotionally. The approach of "getting lost" established curiosity as a primary research tool, challenging the fixed nature of conventional research and proposing instead a lived, sensory mode of inquiry.

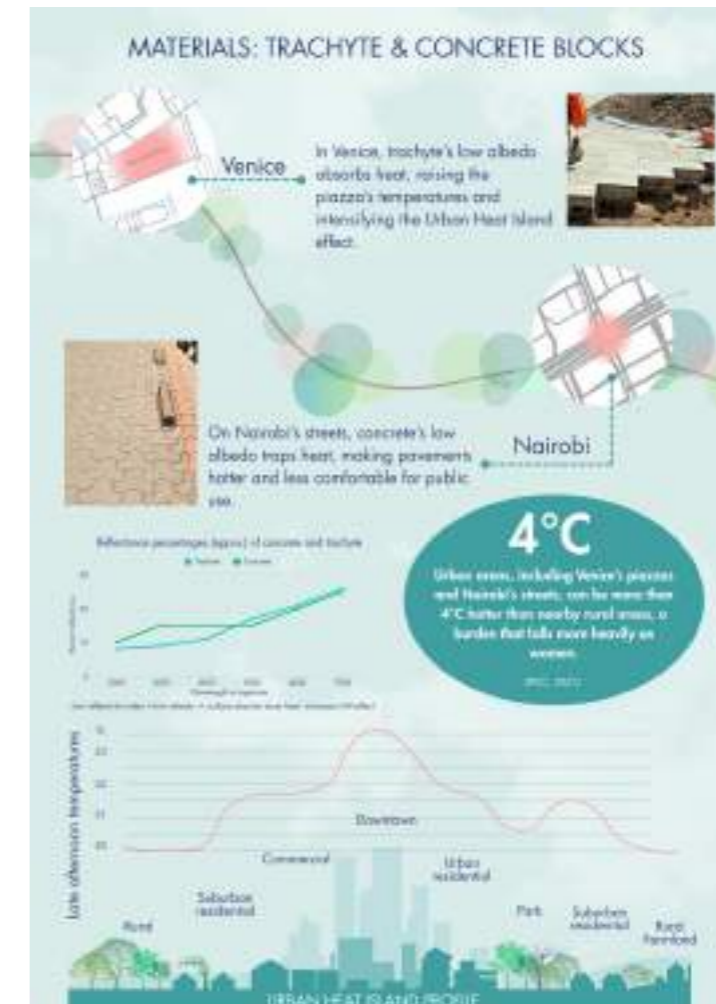
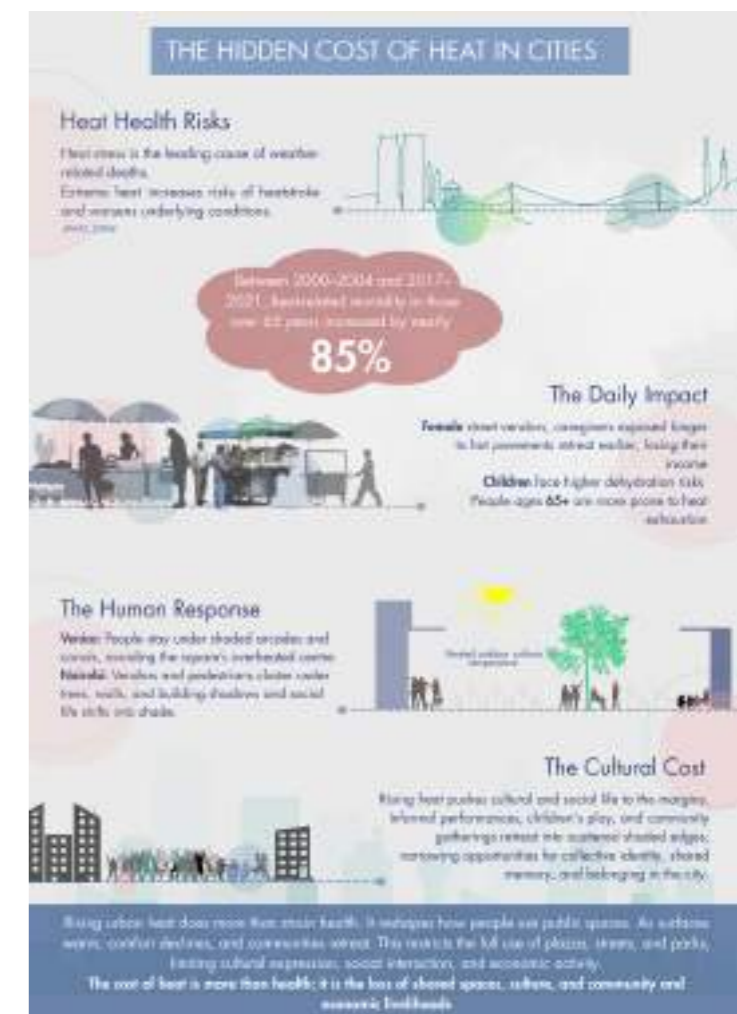
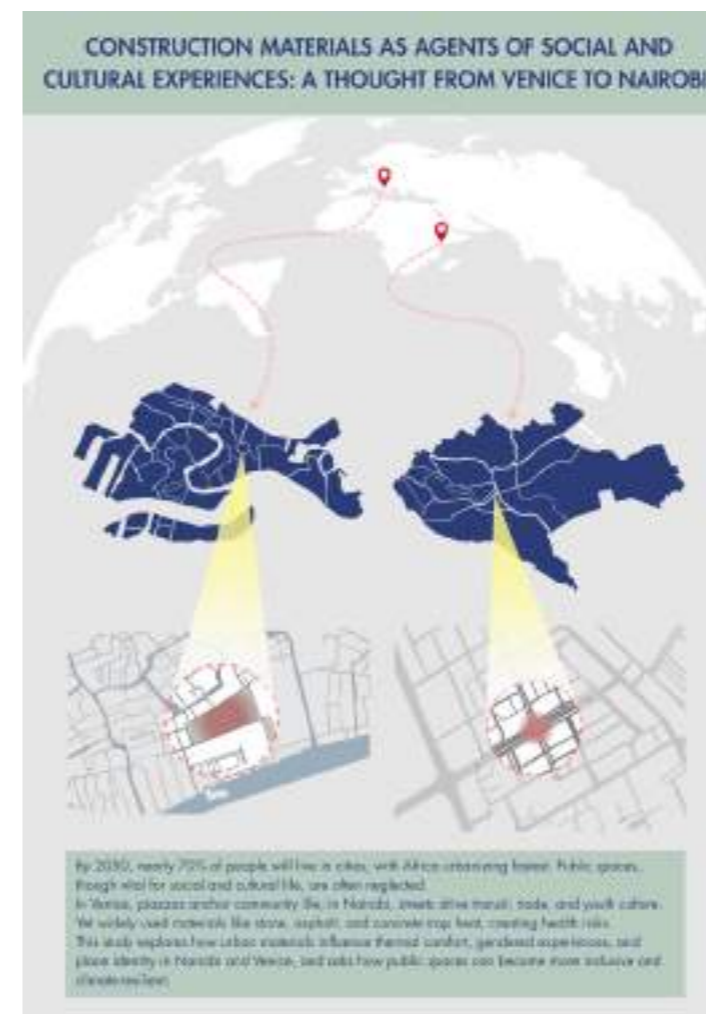
The same method was carried into Nairobi, where material choices manifest as matters of justice. Here, impermeable concrete pavements with low albedo become thermal traps, intensifying urban heat. This phenomenon is made visible not as an abstract climatic data point, but through its human consequences: the wilting of market goods, the diminished earnings of women vendors, and the restriction of public social life. The research visualizes how heat, engineered by material selection, silently enforces urban inequality.

"Repair is a tool for architecture that can also be used to mend past trauma or harm."
 Kabage Karanja, Cave_Bureau

Guided by the principle of architectural repair, the project investigates how material choices can mend social and climatic harm. Through sensory documentation, field observation, and critical mapping, pavements are re-framed as social infrastructure.

The project stages a dialogue between the trachyte of San Marco, Venice, holding centuries of footfall, and the concrete of Kenyatta Avenue, Nairobi, performing in the subtropical climate. Though divided by geographies, the two materials share similar social consequences. These initial observations were shared at a *Conversation + Exhibition* with 72 Nairobi stakeholders, transforming a theoretical framework into a shared catalog of lived material concerns.

Venice offered a compass that pointed inward, toward curiosity. This work argues that the same tool, recalibrated, is what our cities now need. It calls for a design consciousness guided not by abstracted efficiency, but by lived experience, a means for social justice as influenced by the surfaces beneath our feet.



On her return to Nairobi from Venice, Rehema hosted a day-long event to reflect and discuss her Venice project. Titled 'A Conversation + Exhibition: Space, Gender & Climate through Materiality', the event included panel discussions, networking sessions, immersive exchanges and storytelling sessions.



RHENUA AHIMIE

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Venice: A Living Archive of Sound and Memory

Immersed in the city's layered acoustics, from the lapping of canals to echoing footsteps and fragments of conversation, I began to see Venice as a living archive, a city that remembers through sound. My research examined how its architecture, people, and water together create an ever-changing sonic landscape that invites reflection on fragility, resilience, and transformation.

The final outcome will be a digital interactive work that blends film, sound, and spatial storytelling. It translates this idea into an immersive online experience where visitors navigate a stylised digital Venice, moving between the surface city and its submerged ruins. The navigation is guided not only by visuals but also by sound. As users move through canals and streets, they encounter layers of field recordings, underwater resonances, interviews, and fragments of my own memories of Venice, each revealing traces of emotion and history embedded within the city's architecture.

An accompanying short film introduces this world through the voices of locals, intimate reflections, and soundscapes captured while exploring the city. Together, these elements form an evolving digital archive, a poetic exploration of how Venice continues to remember itself through sound.

Ultimately, this project reimagines Venice as a living organism of memory and resonance, proposing that listening can become an act of preservation. Through sound, the city's past, present, and uncertain future find new ways to speak.

"To listen is to remember; to remember is to inhabit the city"



London Metropolitan University
BA Fashion Textiles
@ricardomarcusburt

Follow the Noise is an ongoing exploration of the way sound moves across borders. How it shapes communities, buildings, and cultural memory. My time at the British Pavilion opened up questions around colonisation, architecture, and the invisible lines that sound crosses through effortlessly. I kept thinking about the buildings that once stood silent, long before they ever held the voices and vibrations that now echo through and against them.

In Venice, I spent my days documenting buskers and street musicians. People who were sometimes asked to move along, yet whose music carried traditions far older than the walls surrounding them. Many were playing American and European jazz, music born of struggle and survival, whilst the stone structures around them stood still and unchanged. Those moments underscored the contrast: architecture rooted in history, sound constantly evolving, refusing to be contained.

The concept behind *Follow the Noise* and the large-scale flag I created comes from weaving together fabrication, textile design, and the iconography of music. Instruments, performers, monumental buildings, national symbols and the identity of Venice itself. All coming together under the idea that sound has no borders. Music moves in every direction. It connects us to pre-colonial rhythms, to the lineage of jazz and its syncopation shaped by slave hymns, to stories of resistance, liberation, and collective memory. These messages continue to travel, played and replayed around the world.

What became clear to me during this project is that sound cannot be controlled. For a month, I simply followed it. Letting each day, each encounter, each feeling guide where I went and what I found. That act of listening, of moving with the noise rather than against it, has become not just the premise of the work but a way of living.



HomeGrown Plus

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GBR: Gathering Beyond Racism

I arrived in Venice carrying a question:
how do we inhabit repair when the ground itself remembers rupture?
The House as Archive: Memory, Geography, and Repair began as a study of spatial justice
a meditation on how space holds power,
how architecture, in its deafening silence, shelters inequality.
I wanted to think through the house
as witness,
as a vessel of Yorùbá memory,
as map of belonging,
as question of repair.
To read architecture as language
to let the room, the wall, the courtyard speak back
to what empire tries to forget.

But even as I listened inward,
the world outside was already speaking
its fractures loud and unignorable.
From Gaza to Sudan to Congo,
we are witnessing the afterlives of empire made visible again:
violence written into land and borders,
sustained by the same colonial logics
that built the foundations of museums and pavilions alike.
I could no longer remain still...

In my third week in Venice,
far-right marches erupted across the UK,
chanting fear beneath the flag of 'Great Britain.'
I watched from across the water
body divided by distance,
mind tethered to violences that refuse to stay elsewhere.
As a Black Muslim woman, a migrant, and a fellow of the British Pavilion,
I could not separate the politics of space from the politics of survival.
How could I speak of repair
while silence itself remained an architecture?
So I shifted.

I began again, this time in resistance.
I transformed my space within the Pavilion into a ground for gathering
a counter-gesture titled GBR: Gathering Beyond Racism.
The same initials that mark 'Great Britain' became a rupture,
a refusal,
a redefinition.

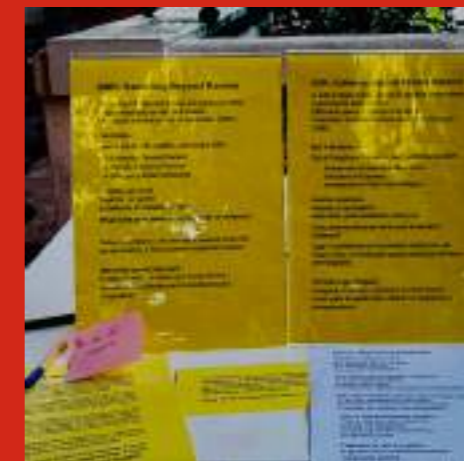
I invited visitors to write, to think, to resist with me
through words that mirrored and collided:

BORDER / BELONGING
REPAIR / RESISTANCE
SOLIDARITY / STRUGGLE
FREEDOM / FEAR
JUSTICE / JOY
MIGRATION / HOME
VOICE / SILENCE
CARE / POWER
HOPE / FUTURE

Each pairing traced a geometry of tension
between belonging and refusal,
between the home we inherit and the world we remake.
The wall became a living form
built from care, from confrontation, from breath.
Upon it, GBR:Gathering Beyond Racism emerged:
not as protest alone,
but as practice
a living repair made through relation.

and I stood there,
among strangers and sentences,
watching language take shape.
each word a hand raised,
each silence a boundary breached.
and in that breath,
we gathered
beyond racism,
beyond fascism,
beyond fear,
beyond the lie of neutrality.

GBR: Gathering Beyond Racism...



University of Bradford

Resilient Foundations: Bridging Venice and African Coastal Communities

During my month in Venice, I explored how Venice's centuries-old water management systems compare to Makoko's water systems in Nigeria, and how architecture adapts to life on water.

My project *Resilient Foundations* examined the parallels between Venice's canal systems and Makoko's stilt and floating architecture in Lagos. I aimed to understand how architectural designs adapt to flooding, water damage and how these methods inspire sustainable responses globally.

In Venice, I examined how the structures are designed to resist water, by on-site observation, photography and research. Many of Venice's historic buildings were built on thousands of wooden piles driven deep into the lagoon bed; these piles harden over time to create a rock-solid base. To maintain the Venetian buildings, water resistant coatings, lime-based plaster, and regular maintenance are employed to seal cracks and slow water infiltration, which reduces permanent structural damage from salt and moisture. The ground floors and canal facades are made of Istrian stone, a dense, water-resistant stone that can withstand continuous contact to water.

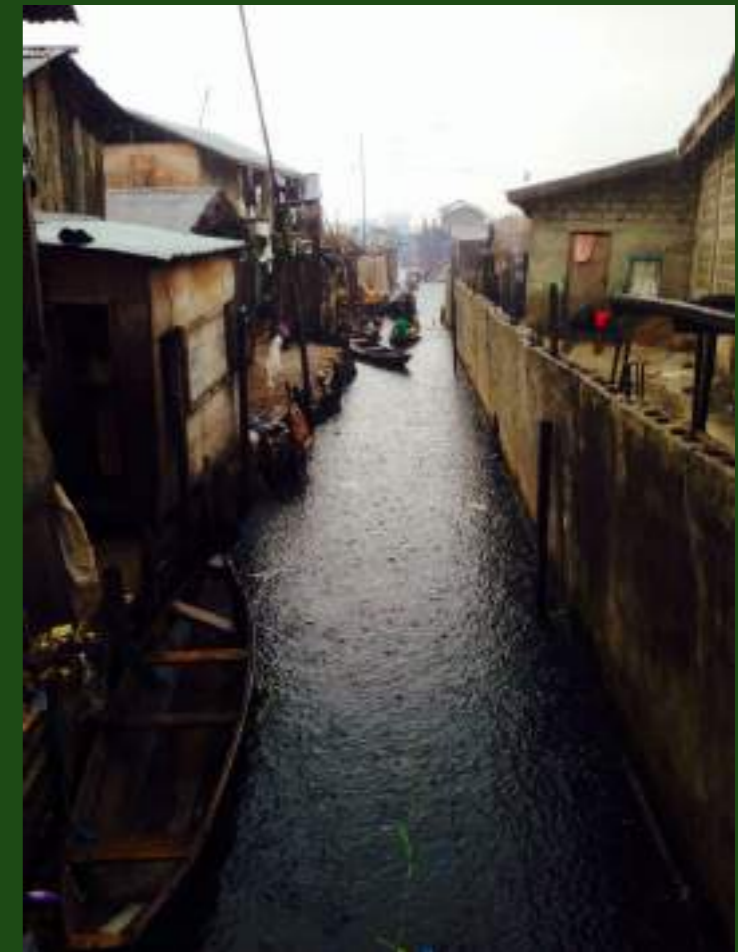
In the coastal community of Makoko Lagos in Nigeria - often called the 'Venice of Africa' - residents live on wooden stilts and floating structures. With its origins as a fishing village dating from the eighteenth century, the conservation of Makoko's structures relies on local knowledge and craftsmanship passed down through generations. Makoko resists water damage by building its structures on stilts with houses elevated above the waterline, as well as using locally sourced materials such as timber and bamboo, which are suitable for the wet environment. In recent times, projects, such as the Makoko Floating School, use floating platforms made from recycled plastic barrels to support buildings.

Whilst Venice and Makoko are both communities surrounded by water, they are vastly different in their resources. Both, however, share an understanding of and need for resilience. Venice relies on centuries of engineering to protect its historic architecture. In contrast, Makoko heavily depends on locally available materials and collective maintenance to survive regular flooding. I believe if increases in financing the maintenance of Makoko's structures is secured, they can adapt the architectural ingenuity that makes Venice resilient. This could create long lasting, sustainable solutions that strengthens their homes and future.

My time in Venice taught me how structures adapt to life with the water, making it a unique and inspiring place to live in. While researching about Makoko taught me how communities preserved homes with resourceful innovations, this project helped me understand how different cultures face similar challenges and respond with equally innovative strategies. I now have a deeper appreciation and understanding of how resilience in architecture is not only about engineering solutions but also creativity, adaptation and community strength.



Venice, Italy



Makoko, Nigeria

Shujaa Stories
@sherry_muchinak

Color, Craft & Community: Architecture as Cultural Memory from Venice to Lamu

Through photography and reflection, I explore how physical spaces become vessels of cultural identity. In Venice, the dialogue between water and architecture tells a story of endurance and adaptation, façades weathered by time, passageways shaped by necessity, and reflections that hold memory like a mirror.

The narrow streets and canals reminded me of Lamu, Kenya, where homes are built in close proximity, their intimacy offering both protection and connection. Though one city moves on water and the other on sand, both share an unspoken rhythm, a way of living shaped by climate, craft, and community.

The Venetian façades, with their textured walls and quiet symmetry, echo Lamu's carved doors, each a marker of pride, history, and belonging. Across these distant coasts, architecture becomes autobiography, a silent but eloquent story of people, place, and time.

This project invites viewers to see architecture not just as shelter, but as a living archive, a map of how we remember, adapt, and continue to build meaning across generations and geographies.



Quiet Defiance
 A tide hums beneath painted walls, whispers of beauty built in borrowed time.



Liquid Street
 A ribbon of water, soft and slow, winding between walls that remember - a lullaby of stone and silence.



Rhythm Between Walls
 Narrow by design, these streets offered protection, nurtured connection and moved to the quiet rhythm of survival.



Color As Compass
In the thickest fog, color became compass, each hue a home, each colour, a quiet flag of belonging



Thresholds
Where land meets water, footsteps replace tides. Each crossing feels like a quiet rehearsal of survival - the rhythm of life flowing between walls and time.



Anchored Silence
Between reflection and decay, the city holds its breath. The gondola waits - not idle, but listening - to the soft conversations between water, stone, and time.

Between the walls of Lamu and the waters of Venice, I found the poetry of connection.

SOFÍA VICTORIA RAMÍREZ SANDOVAL

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Venezia a piedi a colori

Colour Walks, or 'Walking on Colour,' foster connection and bridge gaps with one's environment – in this case, with Venice. This method, attributed to American author and artist William S. Burroughs, who used it to spark inspiration, is a useful tool for familiarising yourself with a new place. During my first week in Venice, I consistently walked on colour and found myself memorising the city's complicated routes through the colourful items that caught my attention. By alternating colours, patterns emerged, answering a central question: *What makes Venice Venetian?*

- Street signs are white
- House numbers are red
- Street posts are green
- Windows tend to be green
- Graffiti is often green or red
- Restaurant signs are frequently red on a white background
- Blue is the rarest colour to find
- Locals wear green leaf wreaths on their heads for graduation
- White, green and red often appear together
- Graffiti tends to be political
- Flags are not limited to hotels and embassies; many homes display flags (including those of Palestine and ANTIFA)

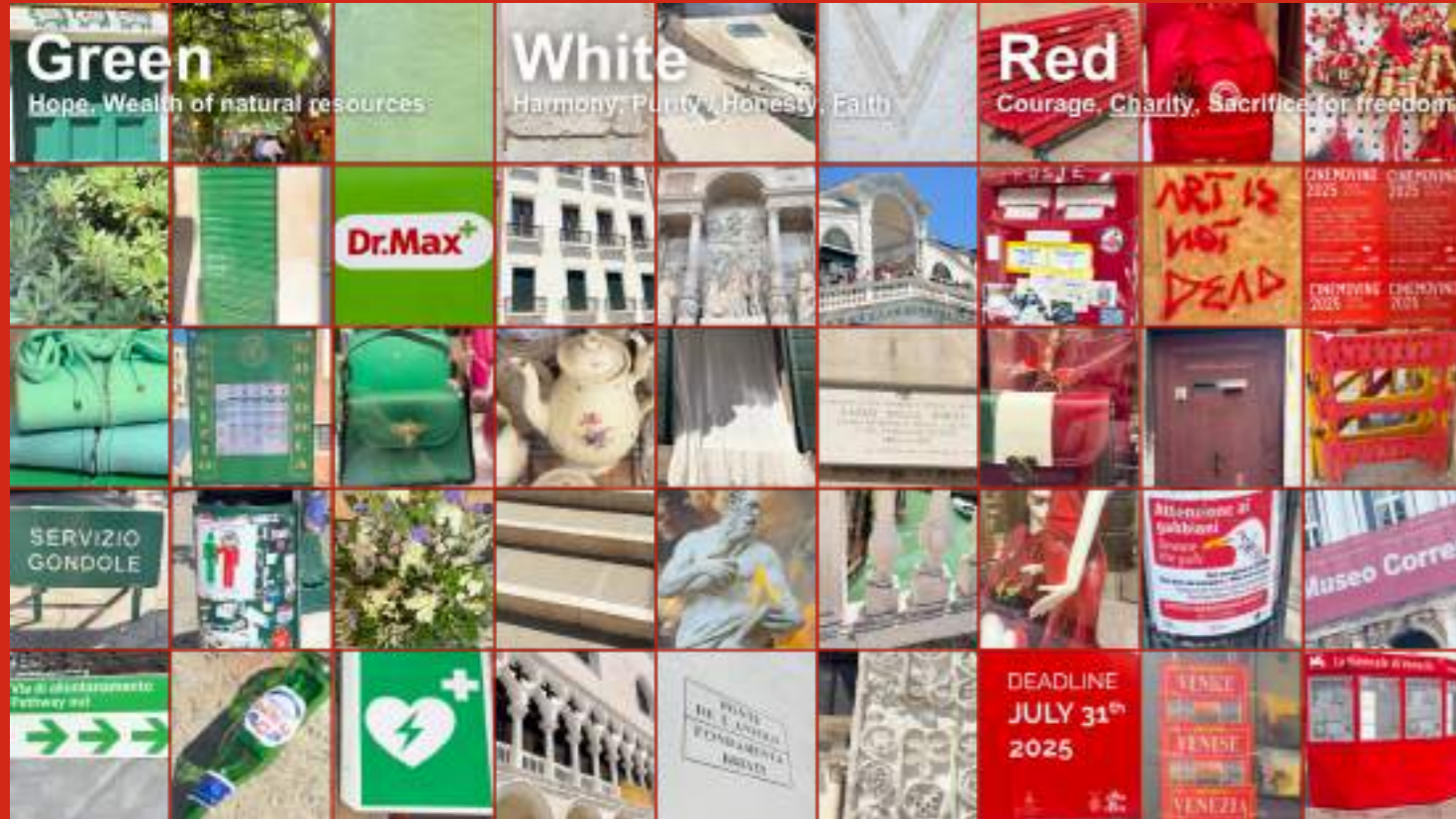
I led a workshop about Colour Walks as starting points for creating Venice-inspired works, building on the notion that colours can serve as a 'port of entry' for artists¹. Fellows were invited to walk on a colour during a tour of the Giardini, capturing photographs or videos of single-hued objects. I personally favoured videos, finding that they conveyed the city's distinctive sense of motion..

Given that La Biennale is a nationally defined space, colours were assigned based on the participant's ranking of different national values. These values corresponded to colours drawn from the flags of the nationalities present in the British Pavilion: British, Kenyan, Italian, American, Irish, Nigerian, Mexican, Costa Rican, Argentinian and Albanian. Flags were particularly relevant to the Colour Walk workshop for their semiotic use of colour and form to convey meaning².

The resulting spectrum of colourful images revealed the diversity of values, perspectives, backgrounds and experiences that enrich the British Pavilion. This diasporic, cross-cultural, and transnational participation echoes the theme of this year's Architecture Exhibition, *Intelligens*, which explores collective responses to climate change and other global processes.

¹Burroughs, W. S. (1960). Interview with Brion Gysin, Prague Writers' Festival, 04 February 2008. Available at: <https://www.pwf.cz/en/archives/interviews/453.html?rocnik=2007>

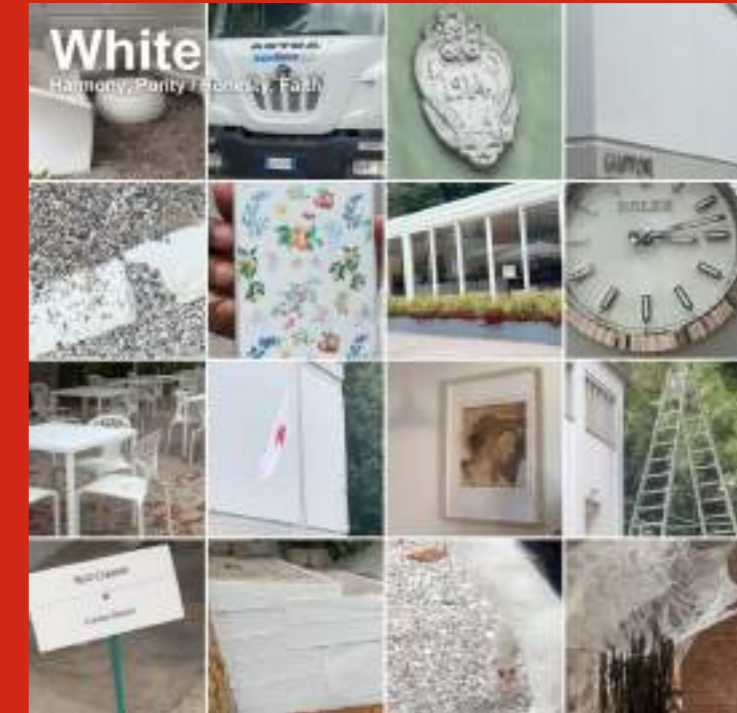
²Leone, M. (2021). The Semiotics of Flags. In: Wagner, A., Marusek, S. (eds) *Flags, Color, and the Legal Narrative. Law and Visual Jurisprudence*, vol 1. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32865-8_3



Venice Colour Walks, 2025. Photos by Sofia Victoria Ramirez Sandoval



Red Workshop Results, 2025. Photos by James Lewis and Stella Lonie-Lewis



White Workshop Results, 2025. Photos by Rhenua Ahimie, Sophia Foster and Nahla Salkini



Blue Workshop Results, 2025. Photos by Charlotte Brooks and Lauren Pohl



Green Workshop Results, 2025. Photos by Katarina Kemp, Kizzy Budd, Klarissa Katz and Lalia Saidy Khan

University of Exeter
 MA Curation: Contemporary Art and Cultural Management
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My writing that emerged from my time in Venice elaborates on poetic themes that I've been interested in since I was a preteen. I always used poetry to grapple with my own wants, fears, and understandings of reality. Formally, I integrated organic imagery and references to art history to craft poems that were visual, meditative, and exposed a shy vulnerability.

This collection follows my relationship with a siren who appears in the Venetian canals, a metaphorical exploration of how much independent existence my poetry has from me as it's poet/lifegiver. I began thinking about this relationship when reading Ursula K Le Guin's *Lavinia* and filtered my personal speculations about the novel through the lens of my anxieties and desires around being a "valid" creative. Being in an arts-fuelled space made me really consider how the relationships artists/viewers and the art itself are constructed, the nuances, and the life they take on independently.

Redentore

I've never prayed before but went on the pilgrimage path this afternoon to
 honour the passing of the plague
*(I think that might be a lie because I've tried before, in old European churches
 and basilicas and all, but I've decided
 I'll baptise myself here, so this time can be the first time)*

I wore black just for it to burn my upper breast
 I crossed the bridge just to trip up over its makeshift unions

ahead of me was a blurred Giudecca
 cloud's palms
 above
 below
 teal seas
 so warm it must be guaranteed God is watching

I've never prayed but my ancestors have so it felt natural
 or maybe the candle smoke
 touched our all minds, made it easy to speak

does the creator care to make me a creator?

later that evening a friend goes,
 "she's a real poet,"
 without ever reading a drop of my words,
 and while watching the fireworks, I got a mosquito bite
 explosions against my eyes/skin

so again, I prayed

you get too many poems out of me

sometimes

love is possible
 in three days

but that's just a metaphor we once bore witness to

*I might know who I am
 but I struggle with surrender*

let's reconfigure the sea, then,

drop
 breath into my
 rib, until she manifests—
 look up through the
 wishbone

*take me with you,
 ephemeral riptide,*

the canals are streams of sewage but of
 viridian texture
 safe to slip in toes

*might ruin the
 Roman sandal
 risk lacerating the
 Achilles heel*

is it you?
 that mouth, gnawing
 toothlessly at

my vulnerability?

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I am a Modern Languages and Cultures student, specialising in French and Italian. Alongside my academic work, I am also a musician and composer, with experience in piano, saxophone, and guitar. My interest lies in the connections between languages, music, and culture, and this shaped the project I undertook during my time in Venice as part of the Venice Fellowships Programme.

My initial idea was to compose a piece of music exploring the themes of La Biennale 2025, particularly its focus on *'repair, restitution, and renewal'*, while drawing inspiration from the fusion of Kenyan and British musical traditions. However, without access to instruments or resources in Venice, my project shifted direction. Instead of composing directly, I explored the city as a soundscape.

I paid attention to how each *sestiere* carried its own atmosphere, from the bustle of the streets to the ringing of church bells. La Biennale itself became a site of listening, a polyphony of cultures and voices. I recorded sounds around me: the incessant churring of cicadas in the August heat, the hourly chimes of the bell towers, the gentle swell of water in the canals, and the resonances within other pavilions. These sounds shifted continually, reflecting the living rhythm of the city. One particularly striking moment occurred during a shift in the Pavilion when a thunderstorm broke out: the cicadas fell silent, and the drumming of rain on the roof captured the drama and unpredictability of Venice's soundscape. From these recordings, I have begun shaping a musical journey through the Giardini, transforming my listening experiences into a composition that reflects the *'pluralism of voices'* at La Biennale and the city itself.

Moving forward, I will continue writing my composition and hope to showcase it during Durham's Global Week. For my final-year thesis, I intend to focus on Venice, exploring how female artists have been represented and how they have practiced in the city. I am deeply grateful for this experience and look forward to returning to Venice one day to reflect on the inspiring time I spent there.



Northumbria University
Doctoral Studies by Practice Research (PhD)

Craft and the Squeri

I spent my month in Venice exploring its few remaining *squeri* – the small boatyards where traditional lagoon craft such as gondolas are made and repaired. I have chosen to illustrate here one of my research projects initiated using the wealth of material collected: a record of the activities of the highly *skilled squerarioli* (carpenters) at work in the form of a cycle of sculptural reliefs.

These reliefs are informed by those undertaken by the great Venetian neoclassical sculptor Antonio Canova. The residency month enabled me to visit the Gallerie d'Italia in Milan, Gypsotheca Canoviana in Possagno, and the Museo Correr in Venice. Experiencing many of Canova's *basso-rilievo* first-hand deepened my appreciation of his techniques and working methods. A close reading of his relief works - particularly the cycle depicting the death of Socrates has guided the composition, proportion and layering of my own works.

Much of the preparatory works for Canova's sculptures was carried out by apprentices, with the master himself adding the finishing touches by candlelight as works by Plato and Aristotle were read aloud. In my own practice, I have developed innovative digital crafting methods to assist me in translating my two-dimensional recordings into three-dimensional forms. The finishing stages will be executed by hand – though the presence of candles and Greek philosophy remains, for now, undecided.



Squero - Uncertainty Map, 2025



Squero Sculptural Reliefs, 2025



Fabrication Prototype, 2025. Photo credit Eve Hartley



Squero Sculptural Relief 03, 2025

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Home [on Film]

home.
“a dwelling place” (OED, 2025)

Whether it was La Biennale President, Pietrangelo Buttafuoco, who kindly and rather spontaneously welcomed me into his office, the polite refusal of an elderly bin-woman who knocked on my door each and every day, or some very generous words of encouragement from Willem Dafoe (yes, seriously), my project was ultimately about the people of Venice, as seen through my own lens. With a trusty (or not so trusty in low-light, as I later discovered) Kodak 35MM disposable camera in-hand, I wandered across Venice to speak to locals and photograph them, each holding a sign bearing the word ‘home’ handwritten in their native language.

In the wake of the Venetian *anti-turisti* movement and drawing upon my own status as a lifelong resident within a tourist-hotspot, I had long felt a certain kinship towards a community which was swiftly disappearing (and yet so highly sought after) in the face of rampant over tourism and the commodification of perceived ‘identity’. Thus, whether a greengrocer or a glassblower, all these people shared the very same ‘home’ and many of the same issues, in an effectively sinking society. In a city once ruled by Doges and Emperors, this feeling of home (and all the complications that come with it) remains the great leveller.

With thanks to *Corin, Giovanni, Michele, Andrea, Renzo, Lia, Cristina, Sergio, Marica, Tides, Luc-Francois, Carlo, Stefano, Michele, David, Beatrice, Alessandra, Michela, Giulia, Elisabetta, Artem, Andrea, Paolo, Pietrangelo, Patrizio, Anna, Chris, Saverio, Pietro, Marcello, Alex, Michele, Hillary, Andrea, Michela, Carlo, and Matteo* (in that order). Frankly, my project would not have been the same without the support and willingness to contribute of these real Venetian subjects.



home [on film] venezia bts, June 2025. Photo credit Tim Ingleby



patrizio. sant'erasmo., June 2025



michele. fondamenta s. felice., June 2025

TONY BULIMU

Nairobi Now
@a.bulimu

At first when I heard of Venice, I reminisced of all the movies I watched that had been filmed there.

I still remember the first overhead sight when the plane was descending to land. And there I thought to myself, *we are in Italy!*

Getting to Venice itself, I was greeted by the charm of its vigorous and intense colour and liveliness. I doubt there are many places where you arrive by boat. The feeling of getting to a place by boat just makes you remember all those movie scenes when the newlyweds finally head over to their honeymoon place.

I met some amazing people just on my second day, best of whom were the other Fellows, M+B Studio and the British Council team.

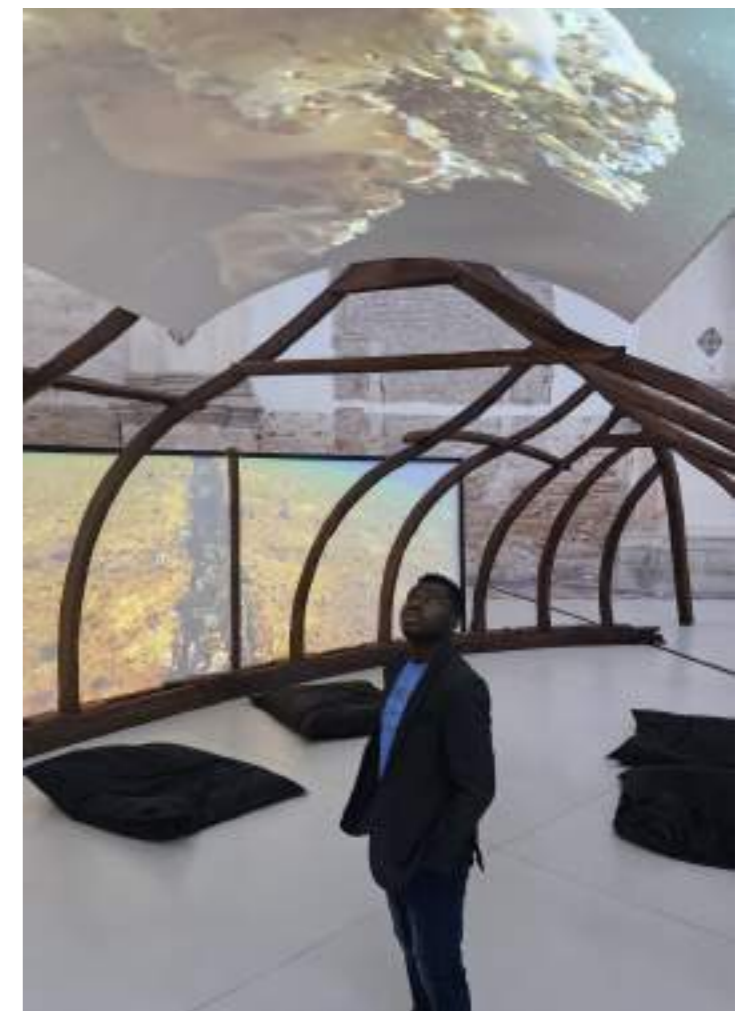
From the food to the views and from the people to the memories, a couple of months later and Venice still feels like a lifetime. Each day feeling like a new year! I learnt so much in one month that would have taken years to gather!

The smiles and sounds still linger within me. Sometimes I sit and breathe and mentally I'm still back there. I thought I'd never love a place like I love Kenya.

The city that feels like a painting, Venice!



andrea and michela. murano., June 2025



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 @vanessaaaama / @_fab_a_scene_

Laws of the Surface

STRAPPA QUI.

Tear here.

Each wall in Venice carries instructions — some official, some accidental. Carved decrees, rusted nameplates, pasted bills, hand-painted bans: layers of administration and weather performing the slow bureaucracy of survival.

This project begins with those surfaces.

LEGGE / LAW — the text etched in stone, warning, guiding, reminding.

SOGLIA / THRESHOLD — the shutters, grilles, and nets mediating air and privacy.

CONFINI / BOUNDARY — the narrow lanes that fold and unfold space.

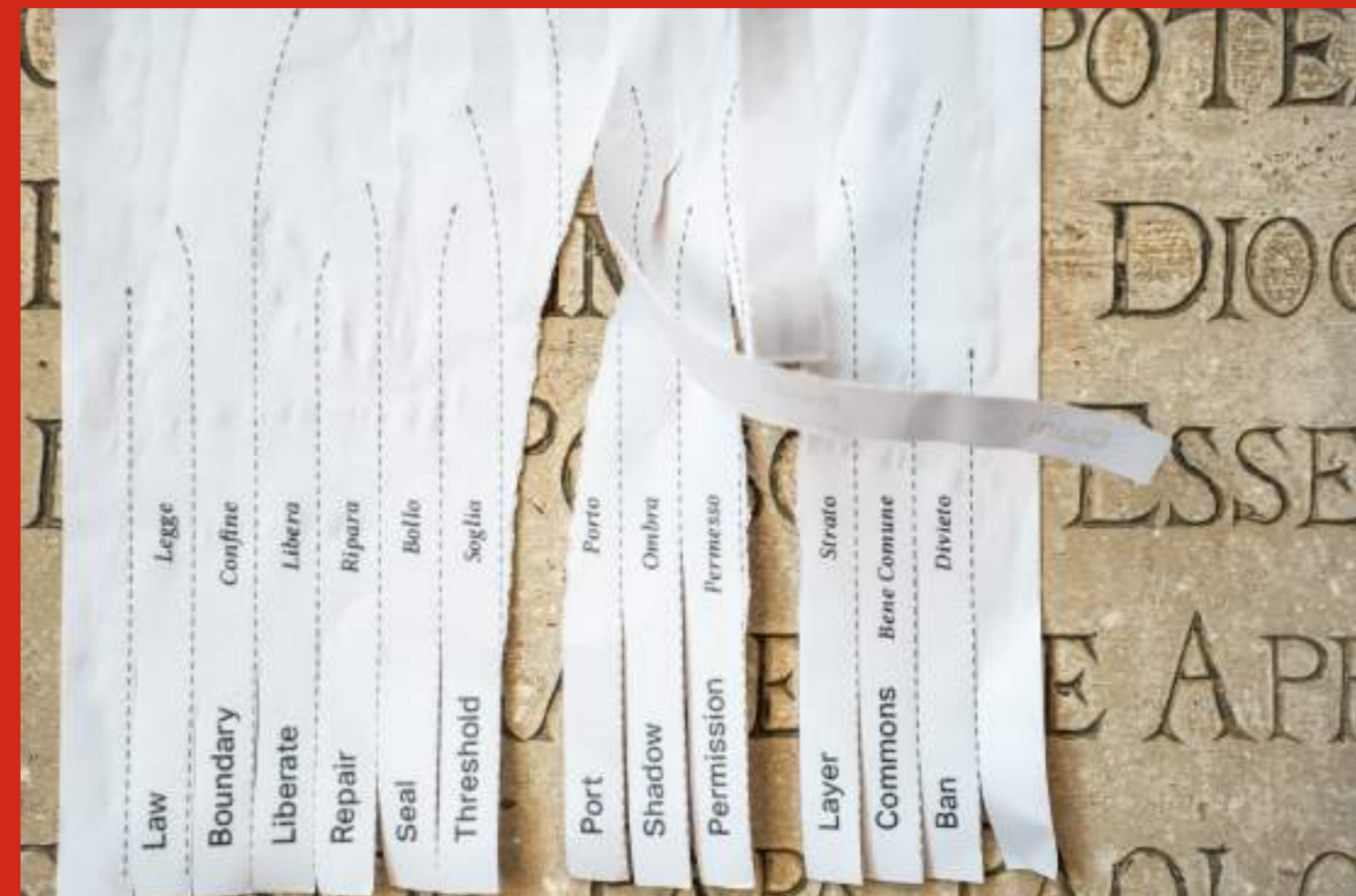
RIPARARE / REPAIR — the plaster patch, the salt bloom, the unspoken maintenance.

COMUNE / COMMON — the public notice board where everyone overwrites everyone else.

Laws of the Surface reads the city as an open file, where rules are printed, peeled, replaced, and repaired on the same sheet of stone. Through photographs and small interventions, it traces how bureaucracy becomes tactile: governance written in mineral, law performed through maintenance.

In a month of fieldwork across the islands, observation replaced travel; repetition replaced novelty. Each espresso, each vaporetto ride, each poster seen twice became data — the routine of “living” as method.

The research extends the Pavilion's *GBR - Geology of Britannic Repair* by treating repair not as restoration but as inscription: a way of writing care into matter. The next phase will compile these fragments — photos, field notes, traces of text — into a zine that asks, quietly, what else we can learn from the surfaces that govern us.



What is the territory of an exhibition?

In the first room of *GBR - Geology Of Britannic Repair*, we sat on benches where others sat the year prior to see Ghanaian-British artist John Akomfrah's *Listening All Night To The Rain*. The benches have now been repainted an earthen red and pushed to the edges of the central gallery of the British Pavilion. We sit on these benches and face a central impluvium structure with a raised drum made from Maasai cotton. The walls of this 'Earth Compass' room are marked in all directions by keloid 'scars', which index national carbon emissions, and the open door of the Pavilion faces London.

Looking outwards towards London, we see through a 'Veil of Carbon and Clay' made of agricultural waste from India and clay from Kenya. The red glass beads between the carbon briquettes and clay spheres were mass-produced in India and exported to Kenya for quotidian uses before being acquired by the Pavilion's curatorial team to be exhibited in Venice. They recall the glass beads from the Venetian island of Murano and their historical use as an imperial currency. One of the exhibition's curator, Kabage Karanja, tells me the carbon footprint of importing the glass beads from Kenya was less than commissioning Murano glass, given the energy needed to ignite kilns in Venice.

On the hot, rainy days of August, while invigilating the Pavilion from the portico, I watch the earthen beads get washed away and slowly lose their mass. The charcoal residue is quite good for the plants which grow below the Pavilion, enriching the soil with new minerals. I hear that the veil will either travel to the UK after La Biennale for another exhibition or might return to the earth in Venice or Kenya.

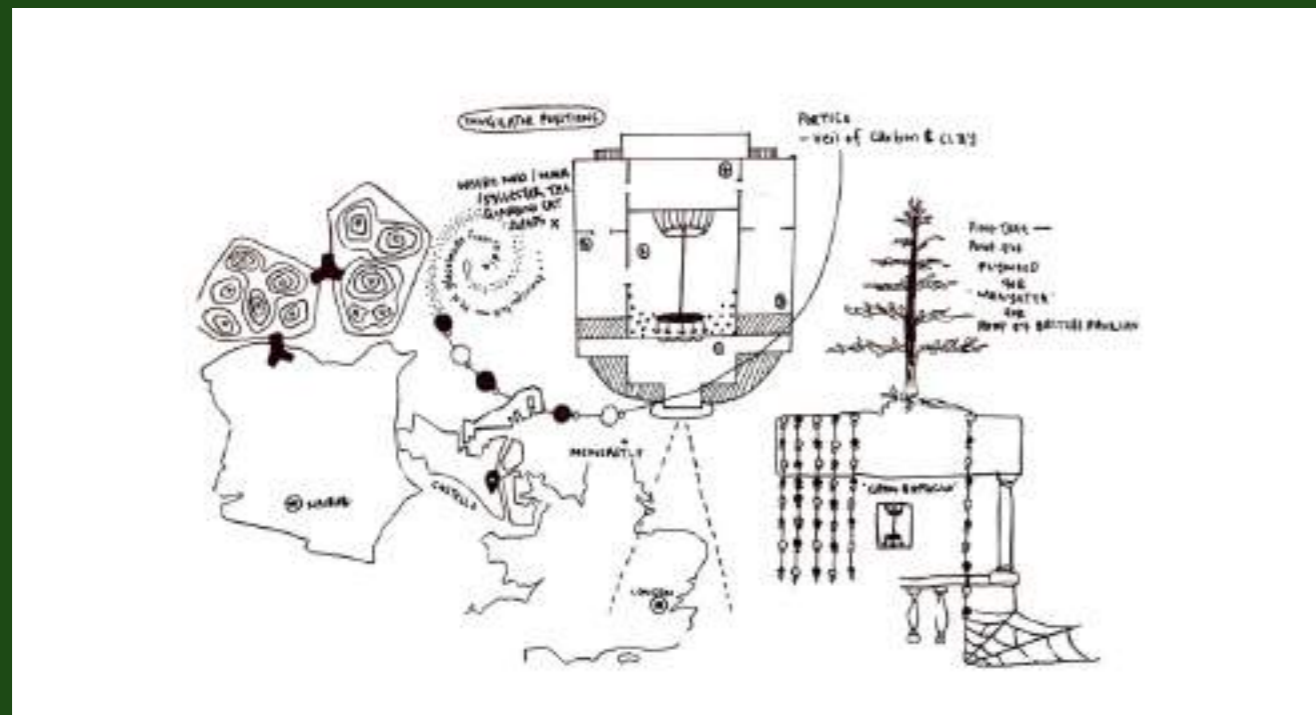
Redirecting the imperial practice of mapmaking, I think about the territory of this exhibition. Firstly, through its material origins and distribution after deinstallation, then within the people who have experienced it and continue to transmit its ideas and the possibilities of decolonial repair.



veil of carbon and clay



return to the earth progress



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Northumbria University, Outside In, Royal Academy of Arts, Shujaa Stories, SOAS, UAL London College of Communication, University for the Creative Arts, University of Bradford, University of Exeter, University of Leicester, University of Liverpool, University of Southampton, University of St Andrews



“The Venice Fellowships Programme was a rare and valuable opportunity to slow down and think critically about my practice in a city that constantly prompts reflection. It offered not just time and space to research, but also a community of peers and mentors who challenged and enriched my thinking. I’ve come away with new a deep love and appreciation for Venice. I'm looking for ways to go back already!”

- 2025 FELLOW



“Coming from a background rooted in visual storytelling, event production, and cultural education, I saw the Venice Fellowships Programme as an opportunity to immerse myself in a global artistic environment while reflecting on and representing Kenyan narratives. I wanted to grow both creatively and professionally — and return home with new insights that would enhance my work through platforms like Shujaa Stories and Timeless Groove Productions.

Personally, it was also a chance to reclaim my gaze as an artist, to reflect, heal, and reconnect with the deeper purpose behind my creative practice.”

- 2025 FELLOW

“I met an Architecture PhD student from Romania who engaged with me during my workshop on the portico. We ended up chatting for almost an hour and realised we had very similar passions/interests. From there, she invited me to contribute to a publication she’s working on — which means I’ll soon be a published author! It was such an unexpected and exciting connection that came directly out of the Fellowships experience.”

- 2025 FELLOW



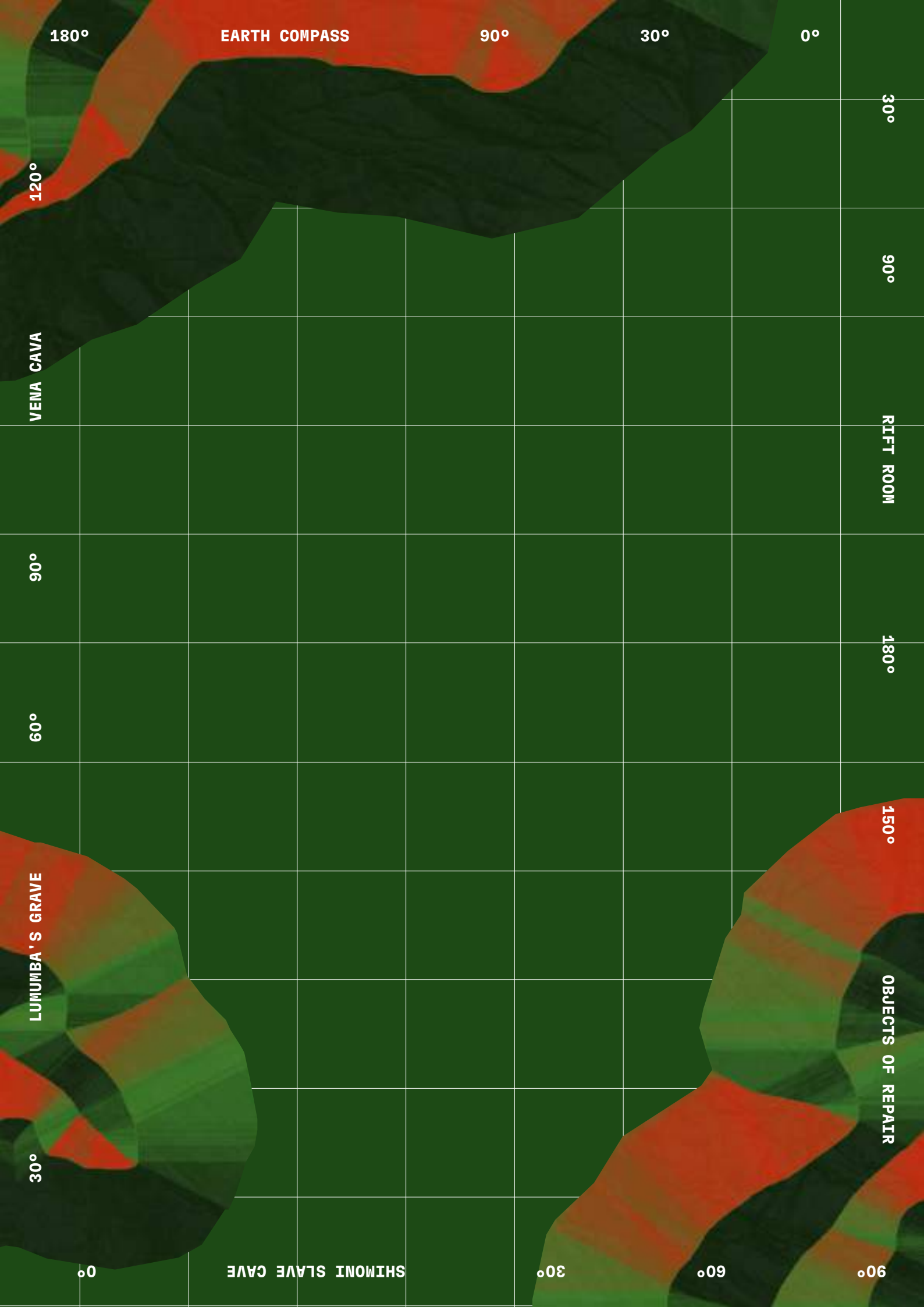




“You don’t have a home until you leave it and then, when you have left it, you never can go back.”

- JAMES BALDWIN





EARTH COMPASS

180°

90°

30°

0°

30°

90°

RIFT ROOM

180°

150°

OBJECTS OF REPAIR

90°

60°

30°

SHIMONI SLAVE CAVE

0°

LUMUMBA'S GRAVE

30°

60°

90°

VENA CAVA

120°