

VENICE 61ST INTERNATIONAL
ART EXHIBITION

FELLOWSHIPS

BRITISH
PAVILION PROGRAMME

Commissioned by



British Council is proud to introduce the Venice Fellowships Programme.

A key part of British Council's presence in Venice, the Venice Fellowships Programme offers a unique opportunity for emerging creatives and future leaders to represent the UK on an international level whilst broadening their perspective, making connections and developing their creative practice.

As exhibition ambassadors of '*Predicting History: Testing Translation*' (2026), the Fellows will engage visiting members of the public and create moments of intercultural dialogue and connection. They also have the opportunity to develop their own research and/or creative projects, hence using the Biennale as a platform for artistic, scholarly, and professional development. Through these contributions, often created in collaboration with one another, the Fellows elevate the British Pavilion to an important reference point for universities, artists, and creative organisations around the world.

In partnership with thirty-five UK Higher Education Institutions and pioneering creative enterprises, British Council is supporting sixty Fellows in 2026.

2026 Fellows

Ahmed Umer
Áine Crawford
Al Attala
Alzbeta Preissova
Amelia Laithwaite
Camille Serisier
Catriona Anderson
Chelsea Mildenhall
Clarke Reynolds
Connie Woods
Darcey Bateson
Dominika Jackowska
Ellen Gillett
Emilia Iris Sullivan
Emily Kirwan
Emma Andrews
Emma Mitchison
Emmanuel Odogwu
Gabriela Saenger Silva
Geneva Beckford

Gherdai Hassell
Gretchen Gao
Hanifah Sogbanmu
Helena McBurney
Indie Hansford
Ivy Chapman
Jameisha Prescod
James Wheeler
Jelena Sofronijevic
Jennifer Booth
Jessica Powrie
Jolie Fisher
Joshua Donkor
Kialy Tihngang
Kirsty Barlow
Lisa Risbec
Loren Herring
Lorna Doyle
Lubna Rages
Megan Bagnall

Mila Garcia
Mina Kyoleyan
Mobolaji Babalola
Oindrilla Sinha
Ronan Deane Donnachie
Ruby Walters
Saeed Hirad-Warsame
Silvia Paciaroni
Srushti Vishwanath Sabale
Sydney Alderman
Tara Lumley-Savile
Tara Okeke
Tina Wu
Tom Hardwick
Tulla Burnet
Vinita Gurjar
Yasaman Taheri
Yewande Adeniran
Yusuke Kuriki



2026 Programme Partners

In collaboration with thirty-five universities and arts organisations, and with our partner M+B Studio in Venice, the British Council is offering emerging creative professionals and students the opportunity to spend a month in Venice conducting independent research, mediating the British Pavilion exhibition, and fostering collaborative, intercultural connections.

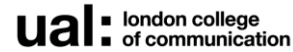
Each of our Programme Partners is committed to forging creative, academic and professional pathways for a more inclusive, representative and creative workforce. Collectively, and on the Venice stage, our shared efforts become even more powerful.

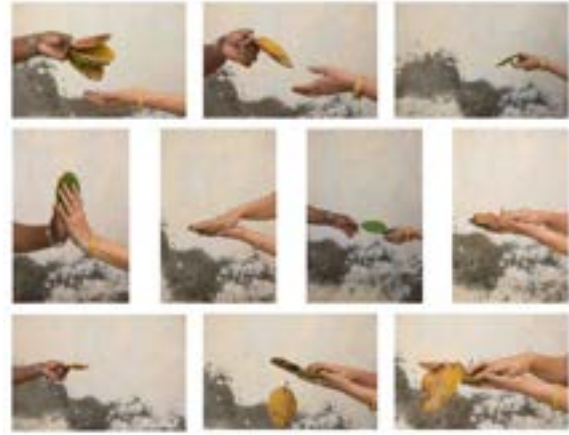
Artists' Collecting Society
Arts University Bournemouth
Arts University Plymouth
Axis
Birmingham City University
British Art Network
Durham University
Ealing Culture
HomeGrown Plus
King's College London
Liverpool John Moores University
London Metropolitan University

Lowry
Manchester Metropolitan University
Newcastle University
Northumbria University
NXT GEN
Outer Spaces
Outside In
SOAS
The Collective Makers
The Glasgow School of Art
UAL Decolonising Arts Institute
UAL London College of Communication

Ulster University
University College London
University for the Creative Arts
University of Exeter
University of Leicester
University of Southampton
University of St Andrews
University of Warwick
Unlimited
UWE Bristol
York St John University

2026 Programme Partners





I am a practicing visual artist from Pakistan, currently pursuing my Masters at UCA in Surrey, UK. Before this, I taught design at an IB school and worked as visiting faculty at my alma mater, BNU, where I completed my Bachelor's in Visual Arts. Alongside my academic roles, I have shown my work in a number of exhibitions and collaborative projects. In 2023, I founded a gallery/studio space focused on artist-led collaborations, where I have curated and organised several successful shows. This has strengthened my interest in curation and in activating spaces as an extension of my artistic practice.

I am keen to build a career that brings together art-making, exhibition development, and community engagement. The Fellowship interests me because it offers hands-on experience within a major international exhibition space, allowing me to understand its curatorial and operational processes, expand my network, and gain insight into how spaces and audiences can be brought into meaningful dialogue.

My proposal begins with a simple but revealing observation from research on Venice: bricks across the city are constantly replaced due to rising water levels, salt corrosion, and the slow wearing away of the built environment.

Old bricks, stained and eroded by Venice's tidal cycles, sit beside newer, cleaner bricks, forming an unintentional patchwork. This patchwork is not just structural; it is an archive. Each brick holds a trace of water, time, erosion, and repair, a record of a city continually negotiating its survival. I want to treat these bricks as an archive of displacement, repair, and the politics of who occupies space which resonant with Venice's environmental condition and the legacies of colonial movement. The replacement of bricks mirrors how people (historically colonisers, settlers, migrants, and today's waves of tourism) leave marks on a place. New and old bricks coexist uneasily, interrupting each other's pattern, a metaphor for cultural layering, reclamation, and contested ownership.

This concept aligns with Lubaina Himid's practice, who works through fragments, replacements, and re-stagings to address erased histories. Like her, I aim to use the material language of architecture to speak about belonging and historical presence, here through Venice's crumbling infrastructure. It also intersects with my own practice, which investigates cities in flux, demolition sites, and urban transformation. The brick archive either through photographs or a collection of traces, continues my exploration of "what remains when a city changes," now situated in Venice's layered history of trade, migration and its environmental fragility.

Ahmed Umer
MA Fine Art
UCA

@thatahmed



I am a multi-disciplinary artist specialising in sculpture, performance, and drawing. Within my academic practice, I am interested in intersectional feminist story telling in reference to the socio-political climate of domestic living in Belfast. Lubaina Himid's exhibition excites me because of how she uses her background in theatre design to create dialogues through her paintings and installations, which enable a complex sharing of the stories of underrepresented and silenced communities.

Alongside my studies, I am a Co-Director at Platform Arts, Belfast (see 3B.1) which has strengthened my understanding and appreciation for curating exhibitions and educational workshops for Belfast's local visual art scene.

The theme for La Biennale 2026 is In Minor Keys, which "invites listening to the persistent signals of earth and life, connecting to soul frequencies" and stands as a "collective score". The late curator Koyo Kouoh discussed ideas around prioritising the sensory input of the everyday in her curatorial text and invites these interactions among networks of people visiting.

Within my practice, I intuitively draw and write streams of consciousness based on everyday sensory inputs to create stories within a fictionalised world, which then evolve into sculptures and performances. I would like to develop this textual approach during Venice through collaborative conversations among other fellows and visitors of La Biennale. I would like to hear stories or memories from their own sensory experiences of the everyday from their own respective homes, or what home equates to them. I would like to know what images, smells, tastes, or sounds reoccur in these domestic memories and what has happened when this routine nostalgia is disrupted by new culture, language, people, and sensory inputs. Using these conversations, I plan to create a series of instinctive drawings and texts every day, diary like, that will interweave the diversity of interactions during this month.

I would also like to develop an audio video sensory element to coincide with these works by using recordings of sounds/frequencies/conversations and short video clips also recorded everyday from Venice that could overlap or live harmoniously beside similar recordings of Belfast, such as differences in the buildings but similarities in the memories of home.

Áine Crawford
BA Fine Art
Ulster University

@naked.wellyboots



My work is concerned with the personal and political effects of power relations. It has previously examined their intersections with cultural logic, agency, artmaking, and love. My passion and inspiration mostly comes from reading theory, which ranges from political to quantum.

Collections of connected ideas manifest as half cerebral, half visceral worlds beset by inequality and moral crises; functional mirrors which can be used as comparative tools to understand our own. Sometimes, my worlds tell stories which are interacted with as games, and will directly toy with a player's agency, prompting them to question their own real-world power or lack thereof.

My most recent work considers knowledge as power and desire as power, simultaneously employing code, paint and love to create landscapes, scenes and moments where power is totally in question.

I would like to develop a worldbuilding project inspired by the setting of Venice. It would at once focus on inequality in power relations between individuals and on inequality in the political power relations of wider society. The setting would be the layered city of Wenh (a name taken from the root word of Venice, meaning to strive, love, want) and the work would be made up of letters written and sent between characters in various locations across Wenh's unequal class structure.

I choose letters to include co-design and collaboration in the work. A letter is a record of connection between people; the same as the outcomes of this fellowship. Wenh is facing a crisis, and the letters, presented chronologically, will not only document its creeping slip into immense oblivion but function as records of the form the connections between its people took. The work will also, on a meta level, record mine and my fellows' experience of Venice, a city that is also facing erasure because of inequality. To achieve this, I'll take direct inspiration from my peers as people to create the characters in the work, and pull on their experiences in Venice to create parts of the narrative.

In terms of my wider interests this type of world is a natural next step in the written part of my practice, which for a long time examined the political effects of power but only recently has come to the more personal effects of it.

Al Attala
BA Fine Art
UWE

@jimpwimptons



I am passionate about bridging art and psychology to understand how people engage with different art forms and how aesthetic preferences are formed. My undergraduate research on music–colour synaesthesia examined how cross-modal perception between music and painting shapes aesthetic experience, revealing universal patterns in how people intuitively link sound and colour. Beyond research, I have pursued projects that explore art’s role as a catalyst for dialogue and reflection.

Serving as a juror for Giornate degli Autori at the 2020 Venice Film Festival and organising a panel on the attention economy at the 2024 Karlovy Vary International Film Festival deepened my engagement with the curatorial and educational dimensions of audio-visual art.

Ultimately, I see art as thriving through dialogue—between people and across sensory forms— a conviction I continue to explore through my experimental film practice.

During my residency in Venice, I would develop *Tuning In*, a project exploring how visitors perceive and respond to selected Biennale artworks through multiple senses. Focusing on one architectural space, one audio-visual installation, and one visual work, I would invite participants — artists, visitors, and other publics — to tune in to the colours, textures, sounds, and spatial atmospheres of the pieces, noticing what lingers after the encounter.

Rather than offering verbal interpretations, participants would respond through sketches, colour samples, gestures, sound recordings, and other sensory forms. Together, these would create a collective “multimodal profile” of each artwork — a layered record of how people experience it through perception and feeling rather than words. This participatory approach mirrors artistic practice in its intuitive and affective nature, positioning participants as cocreators rather than passive observers.

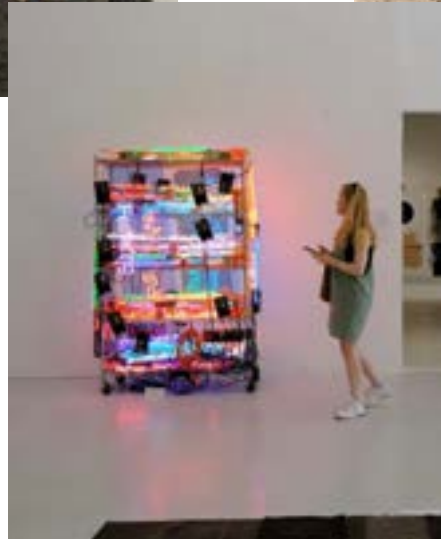
I would weave these responses into an experimental film that traces the multimodal profiles of the selected artworks, blending participants’ impressions with my own fieldnotes and experimental footage. The film would evoke fragments of the Biennale’s minor keys, exploring how art resonates beyond analytical or descriptive frameworks and inviting reflection on what it means to “understand” an artwork through sensory engagement.

Tuning In extends this year’s curatorial theme, In Minor Keys, by emphasising “tuning in rather than speaking for” the artworks. Building on my research in cross-modal perception and audience psychology, it uses experimental filmmaking to explore this topic beyond the limits of academic research, which often relies heavily on descriptive textual analysis. Ultimately, the project could strongly contribute to ongoing discussions on multimodal ways of experiencing and interpreting creative practice.

Alzbeta Preissova

UCL

@betty_pre



Amelia Laithwaite
BA History of Art
University of Warwick

I'm currently studying History of Art at the University of Warwick, including a module within Theatre and Performance, and applying from my term abroad in Venice! I have a particular interest in how heritage shapes our understanding of identity, and therefore have loved visiting the Biennale Giardini site in particular.

My last two summers I have spent working as a Warden at Buckingham Palace which has cemented my aspirations to work in the cultural sector, interacting with a working collection, and I am hoping to study heritage management at the next stage of my education. In my spare time I love to travel (this summer I was able to explore Japan and visit Himeji Castle which was a bucket list moment), enjoy country walks with my dog and visit exhibitions (my recent favourite was Anselm Kiefer's exhibition at the Ashmolean).

I will explore the Biennale's National Pavilions on the Giardini site as exhibition spaces where identity is communicated and performed, through the architecture of the buildings and the 2026 exhibitions.

I will place this exploration in dialogue with the Naoshima Art Project in Japan, which I was fortunate enough to visit in Summer 2025. Here art is displayed amongst residential and commercial spaces away from the grandeur of the Naoshima Art Museums, and becomes a part of the landscape of the island, similarly to the Biennale pavilions.

Both of these exhibition spaces have become a part of the identity of their locations, but how do they articulate this relationship to visitors? I aim to explore how contemporary art within site specific installation-based exhibitions articulate the different relationships between art, architecture and location.

I will achieve this by spending time on the Giardini site, and within a pavilion itself, allowing me to observe visitors moving through the space. I will work through note-taking, photography, and reflective writing via a process journal. The experience of being in the space would guide the form my project takes. I plan to reach out to the Naoshima Town Tourism Association to understand how they engage with visitor experiences, in order to fairly compare it with my experience in Venice. I also aim to engage with the volunteers working within the other national pavilions on the site.

This research grows from my broader interest in how cultural identity is communicated through environment; how art and architecture can shape our sense of belonging and connection.



Camille Serisier

PhD
UCA

camilleserisier.com

I am an artist and doctoral candidate at the University for the Creative Arts (UCA) researching inclusive forms of storytelling using drawing, performance, and photography. I believe stories have the power to enable positive social change. I create new stories that have been left out of the historical register and update older narratives. In participatory creative workshops I use storytelling to nurture agency and facilitate diverse authorship. And I collaborate with researchers to explore how creative engagements can amplify diverse voices.

My experience connects with several Fellowship Programme focus areas. My work in the visual arts as a collection's curator has helped me develop visitor engagement expertise, which is complemented by my work on participatory art and research projects. I have significant experience working in a range of educational settings, having lectured in Higher Education, Tutored in Further Education, and taught workshops for children and young adults.

I will create *'The Invigilation Diaries'*, a collection of drawings and texts, about the experience of invigilating Lubaina Himid's work at the British Pavilion in Venice. After each invigilation session, I will add text and drawings to a visual diary. I hope to collect humorous, bizarre, consistent and surprising comments made by British pavilion visitors in response to Lubaina Himid's work, Venice itself, and the experience of negotiating the Biennale. In the context of this shared experience, I am curious to see whether diverse international visitors to the British pavilion communicate any consistency of opinions. For example, will there be a connection to particular works, or agreement on creative trends across the Biennale.

I will invite my Fellowship cohort to co-analyse *'The Invigilation Diaries'* in a participatory workshop. Together we will consider my textual and visual accounts as an invigilator. I will ask if my accounts are consistent with their own. And invite them to contribute their own text or drawings to the *'The Invigilation Diaries'*, based on their observations and experiences of invigilating Lubaina Himid's exhibition at the British pavilion. The Biennale brings international audiences together to contemplate our differences and similarities.

After returning to the UK, I will create a digital publication of *'The Invigilation Diaries'* that will represent diverse identities and perspectives of the 61st Biennale, each a minor key in a larger melody.

This project links with my doctoral research, which explores visual journaling, as a way of recording, analysing, and communicating shared experience



Lubaina Himid's artistic and curatorial practice has been central to my art historical and curatorial research and was the focus of my undergraduate dissertation. I examined her practice as one engaged in a politics of refusal, critical fabulation, radical imagination, and hope that reimagines erased histories of the Black Diaspora within British culture and in the Eurocentric art historical canon. Her work revealed the potential of curatorial strategies as sites of intervention, capable of reimagining narratives and refusing dominant frameworks to generate spaces for overlooked experiences and histories. This research was a significant motivation for pursuing further study in curatorial practice and has shaped my aspirations to develop a career as a curator who critically engages with how art historical structures produce knowledge and reinforce erasures. Currently, I am interested in her exhibitions as performances, activated and completed by visitors sharing space across personal and political boundaries.

My project will consider the influence of opera and theatre in Himid's practice, understanding her exhibition as a performative site in which meaning is produced through encounter and negotiation. It will consider how her cut-outs and paintings are shaped by stage prompts, instructions, questions, poetry, and imagined narratives to reposition the visitor as participant. My proposed project is a small publication that will operate as both a response to and an extension of her exhibition as a performance and an ongoing activation of collective knowledge making.

While invigilating, I will maintain a daily observation log that will record gestures, murmurs, pauses, spatial rhythms, and moments of interaction between visitors and the work through short notes and sketches. These observations will map how Himid's theatrical cues and prompts operate within the space and expand into dialogue with Venice, with reference to her previous Venetian Maps series (1997) as a contextual prompt. Walking Venice will form part of this methodology where I will write reflections of moments where the exhibition resonates with its surroundings.

I will facilitate a workshop and interviews with Fellows, using Himid's questions, prompts, theatrical structures, and scripts as tools for collective reflection and creative response. They will be invited to reflect on how these encounters generated meaning for them in the exhibition and while exploring Venice. These conversations and encounters will be reflected on within the publication as a constellation of sketches, photographs, and written forms including letter writing, imagined dialogues, stage cues, short essays, and poetic fragments.

Catriona Anderson

MLitt Curatorial Practice (Contemporary Art) Glasgow School of Art

@catrionaanderson_



I am a final-year Fine Art student at Birmingham City University, working across performance, video, and installation to explore the tension between public persona and private experience. Drawing on digital culture, feminism and gender identity, my work blends sincerity and satire to invite reflection and confrontation. Performing my alter ego, Belle, in collaboration with Prayer Room Gallery allowed me to explore how we construct and perform different versions of ourselves under social and digital pressures.

Along with my practice, I work at Eastside Projects as a Gallery Assistant, where I have developed a strong passion for visitor engagement, exhibition interpretation and making contemporary art accessible. I enjoy helping audiences feel comfortable and confident in gallery spaces.

Having experienced the impact of underfunded art education, I'm passionate about creating opportunities for young people to access creativity, recently speaking at my former college to share my artistic journey and encourage others.

During the residency period, I would like to develop a project exploring identity, perception and personal struggles, particularly from the perspective of women and marginalised groups. Building on my current work with my alter ego, Belle, I have learnt what AI-generated imagery has been trained on and use as a method to explore how visual culture and digital systems influence identity and to examine the male and female gaze. My ongoing project, *belle.exe*, switches perspectives, creating a reflective and immersive experience for viewers.

I am developing an interactive installation using artificial grass as a surface linked to AI systems. Audio from the film, including distorted ASMR sounds, will play through wired headphones, encouraging people to physically and sensorially engage with the work and reflect on discomfort, observation and embodiment. I am also creating a zine documenting Belle, incorporating screenshots from the film and survey feedback collected from audiences at Night School.

I am inspired by Florentina Holzinger's *A Year without Summer* (2025), an artist showing in the 61st International Art Exhibition, who explores self-enhancement and the ethics of AI and robotics through performance and body art. In Venice, I hope to extend this project through collaboration with fellows, La Biennale participants and audiences, listening to diverse experiences to inform the work. This project sits within my broader research in identity, performance, AI, feminism and audience engagement, allowing me to experiment with interdisciplinary, socially engaged methods in an international context.

Chelsea Mildenhall

**BA Fine Art
Birmingham City University**

@bychelseamildenhall



I grew up in Somerset and have lived for five years in Glasgow, working as an artist, creative facilitator, and in a museum. My practice involves the process of gathering, using this to research, explore materiality and produce work that draws on humour, curiosity and instinctual making. I rely on untraditional art materials such as discarded objects, people watching, and list and diagram making, considering how these materials can be transformed through craft. Collected pieces are incorporated into the narratives of my drawings, short fiction writing, and sculptural installations. The stories are both imagined and an affirmation of real events which are stranger than fiction. It's a balance of optimism and my own wariness of accepted information. Previous work includes 'M&S Ghost Tour', making use of a disused department store for live performance, or 'Kernel of Truth', a film that explores my neighbour's friendship with the local squirrels. I find there is local, historical and personal relevance to the details uncovered in these environments.

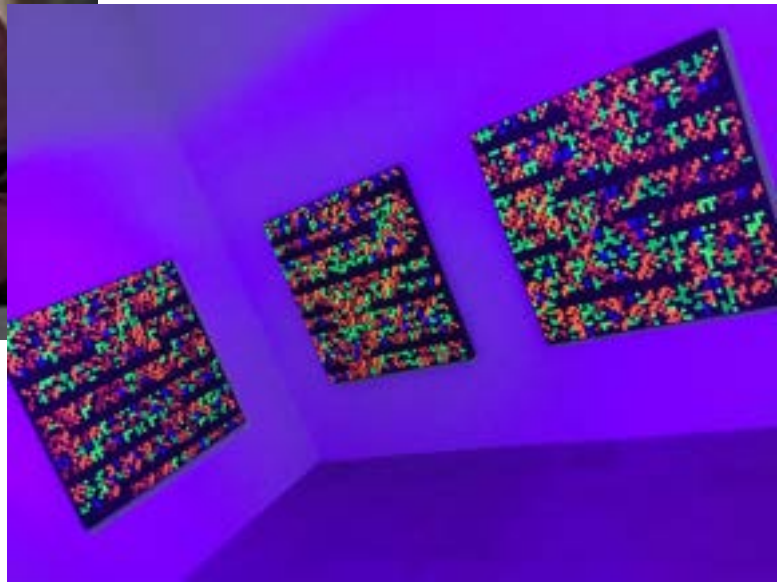
Whilst in Venice, I will work primarily in creative writing, drawing and video, to develop a short story that focuses on a reoccurring character in my work, 'Disposal Bag Lady'. She is the popular motif found on sanitary disposal bags in public toilets, notably on trains. I imagine her escaping a train toilet and arriving in Venice, this being difficult due to the impractical crinoline skirt she wears. I am interested in the links between clothing and social behaviour, particularly how this can be observed in institutional settings. The story will shift between past and present day, using my observations of public dressing within the city and amongst La Biennale's audience, to reflect upon social codes and barriers to access in institutions.

I would like to visit archives including the Palazzo Mocenigo's collection of textiles and costume, and the Lace Museum on Burano. I found that in 14th century Venice, sumptuary laws were placed onto men, in response to the popular trend for wearing brightly coloured tights that reflected the "Trousers Club" you belonged to. My writing process will be informed by archival research, drawing and social observation in Venice. Through sharing my developing work with the other fellows, I hope to have discussions about our experiences in Venice, and be inspired by conversations with the public and my peers. On return to Glasgow, I hope to share my work as a book of drawing and writing.

Connie Woods

Outer Spaces

@conniewg



I am a blind artist storyteller whose practice is rooted in education participation and accessibility. Working under the name Mr Dot, I use tactile media Braille and narrative to connect people of all ages and abilities with art and heritage. My passion lies in making creativity inclusive transforming museums galleries and public spaces into places where everyone can engage through touch and imagination.

I have collaborated with institutions that support Mr Dot's values from The Mary Rose Museum to The Commonwealth Games. Developing and pushing boundaries of what visual art can be echoes my daily life - by pushing the boundaries of the app *be my eyes*, I will be running the Brighton Marathon with complete strangers in my ears.

I bring that engagement from art to daily life. My mission is simple: make art a shared language of inclusion, discovery and possibility.

Postcard from Venice

I will develop a participatory project, a creative exploration of how people experience visual artworks without relying on sight. Each week invigilating at the British Pavilion I will engage visitors in short conversations about what they see hear and feel within Lubaina Himid's exhibition and Venice itself. Almost a travel document, these responses will be recorded as fragments of audio description, capturing the diverse voices, emotions and interpretations of international audiences.

Working collaboratively with other Fellows, I will collect and edit these sound recordings into an evolving soundscape that reflects how people from different cultures perceive the same artwork. That data will evolve as perceptions of art change. I will use these to create braille postcards in a '*wish you were here*' style.

Through touch, I want to explore Venice itself iconic images you would find on postcards but brailleize them into actual images pixelated of how I see Venice exploring what is landscape painting through words.

This project celebrates conversation as art co-creation as process and accessibility as innovation.

Postcard from Venice will stand as both a record of Venice and bridge toward a more inclusive way of engaging with the one of the world's most visual spaces.

Clarke Reynolds

Outside In

@mrdotofficial



As a student of Art History and English, for as long I could walk I've been creative; my grandmother ignited my love for painting which I continue to develop in works touching on themes of adolescence, femininity and differences in human perspectives.

I used to want to pursue a career in Fine Art but since studying Art History, I know that it's curation I would like to pursue; this would allow me to monopolise the impact of artworks on society with the synergy of different artists to provoke tangible betterment in the world through creativity.

Building on Himid's consideration of facets of female identities, my project will interrogate the facets of islander identities in relation to Kouoh's subject. I will use the Biennale's focus on island voices, Venice's history as previously an island nation, and my own identity as an islander to explore island identities and their relation to mainlands.

Having lived on the Isle of Man, after my family moved from Bermuda, islands define my own and my family's identity but it's since moving away from the Isle of Man that I've felt more connected to my islander nature; this Fellowship would allow me to research whether there is a universalising feature of islander identity or whether the beauty of 'islander' identity is its uniqueness. I would do this by analysing and comparing the pavilions of island nations, what they reflect about life in their nations and by comparing the location of Venice and the experience of life there to my own experiences on the Isle of Man.

Many academic disciplines discuss 'centre' and 'periphery' but rarely in relation to island and mainland; this project would fill this gap in existing scholarship in this discourse. Having spent time working in the Manx Museum, I know there is a growing sense of pride for Manx nationality and a project like this, linking my island to Venice, would sit nicely in the context of reasserting the Manx identity as a global nationality. This is relevant moreover to the entire British Isles; Britain is constituted of island identities, an understanding I am more conscious of now living closer to the Scottish isles. Thus, this project is pertinent to many identities and is worth conducting for what it could reveal about the nature of internal relations of the British Isles and islands.

Darcey Bateson
MA Hons Art History and English
University of St Andrews

@djb_fineart



I'm an interdisciplinary, neurodivergent artist working across animation, interactive technology, and participatory art. I create sensory, accessible installations using sound, light, touch, and movement, inviting curiosity, play, and connection. My work often explores themes of home, memory, and belonging.

I collaborate closely with communities, shaping projects through workshops and hands-on making. Storytelling and co-creation are central: the ideas and experiences of participants often guide the final work. Recent projects include animated murals, projection-mapped installations, digital theatre, and public art interventions, all designed to be inclusive and immersive.

Community engagement and accessibility are at the heart of my practice. I've led projects with organisations such as the National Museum of Scotland, V&A Dundee, Historic Environment Scotland, and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Through these experiences, I've learned to create spaces where people can explore, express themselves, and feel ownership of the work.

In Venice, I want to develop a small interactive project exploring how people experience place through sound, touch, and movement. The project would gather sensory impressions from visitors, Fellows, and people I meet around the city, sounds, textures, words, and moments of grounding or disorientation.

These contributions would feed into a responsive artwork, using projection mapping or interactive animation to visualise patterns inspired by these sensory experiences. The piece would explore Venice as a city not only seen, but felt and heard, reflecting neurodivergent ways of engaging with the world.

This project connects to my wider practice, which combines animation, interaction, and participatory storytelling. Venice, with its water, movement, and shifting perspectives, offers a unique context to experiment and expand my practice.

The project is inspired by Lubaina Himid's focus on storytelling and how people experience space. It would grow out of the environment and the people I meet, creating opportunities for collaboration, conversation, and shared experiences among Fellows and visitors.

The final outcome would be a small, achievable sensory sketch, intended as a prototype that could develop into larger installations once back in the UK.

Dominika Jackowska

Unlimited

dominikajackowska.com | [@doska.animation](https://twitter.com/doska.animation)



Ellen Gillett

MA Fine Art

Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton

ellengillett.com | [@ellengillett](https://twitter.com/ellengillett)

I am an artist and curator based in Southampton. I co-founded and run an artist collective called ZEST Collective, made up of 21 Southampton-based artists who deliver exhibitions, community workshops, and ambitious creative projects in the city. I co-curate our exhibitions and programme of events, build links with local diverse community groups, and produce artworks both collaboratively and independently alongside my fellow ZEST artists. My curatorial ethos is rooted in collaboration, inclusion, and play, prioritising playful engagement, lively and real connections with our exhibitions' audiences, and long-term, genuine relationships with the artistic and local diverse communities that our collective serves.

My visual art practice is video and installation-based and often employs animation and video photomontage techniques to explore themes of place and play. Since starting MA Fine Art at Winchester School of Art my practice is evolving in new exciting directions including performance and direct collaboration with other artists.

My project crowdsources phone-camera video footage from invigilators across the national pavilions, galleries and collateral spaces of the Biennale and spaces in Venice more generally. Using video photomontage techniques I will then transform the footage into video artworks that depict new, hybrid 'spaces' or configurations that capture familiar spaces and the experience of invigilation in new ways.

This project draws on a previous collaborative project, 'Overheads', where I made a continuous 'video ceiling' by asking artists (including Lubaina Himid) to send me a photograph of the ceiling above where they make their most creative work.

The new project aligns with my current practice's responsiveness to the locations I find myself in, and my focus on collaboration and connection with other artists. It builds on the new avenues of exploration I have been pursuing since starting my MA, where I have been experimentally capturing spaces on campus by filming in 6 directions and displaying a video "net" of each space.

I am interested in the ways in which developing and using such editing techniques on a 'first-take' basis can capture a new and playful sense of place or experience.

Every inch of Venice has been repeatedly photographed, painted, drawn, and captured across its entire history. I am excited by the idea of creating artworks that attempt to discover new ways of looking at Venice and capturing the distinct experience that invigilators have of a city that is so instantly recognisable and so often depicted in art, film and other disciplines.



I am in my third year of the Warwick Writing Programme. Outside of my studies, I enjoy writing reviews for theatre performances.

The Arts have always been closely interwoven with my own academic journey, and it is an honour to have had many of my proudest moments homed within the Creative Sector (e.g. my secondary school art-scholarship, my A-Levels in Art and Textiles respectively, and now my creative degree). Since the age of eighteen, I have worked in schools alongside my own studies. My time spent working in SEND education, that started as a way to save money for university, has in fact been one of the most formative experiences of my adult life. Linking accessibility with creative freedom, connecting with people of all ages and backgrounds through the Arts, has organically become one of the biggest focusses, and loves, of my life.

I would love to develop a project in the form of an anthology of creative essays accompanied by photography. The essays would be based on the personal experiences of other fellows and attendees, and the creative journeys that led to their attendance at the Venice Biennale. The final collection would be a display of community, transnational relationships and the power of the Arts as a channel for connection (both meta and physical). I would collect research through interviews as well as written submissions. The photography work would be a development of my own self-taught methods and would naturally be focused on the art at the Biennale, the people who take part in the project and Venice as a hub for the Arts.

As a final-year writing student, this would be a project situated at the very end of my learning and would be an outlet for creation as a (hopeful) graduate of the Warwick Writing Programme. I will incorporate every technique I have been taught over the last three years to produce work based on life experiences and shared passions.

lub

Ekphrastic writing is dwindling in popularity and readership. However, as a medium that transcends time and incorporates the attitudes of the viewer in their own time and space, it is a genre that I am keen to personally invest in through my own work. Even though art-based writing is not produced for the masses in today's popular market, its beauty is in the smaller community of readers.

Emilia Iris Sullivan

BA English Literature and Creative Writing
University of Warwick

@emartilia



Emily Kirwan
Northumbria University

I am passionate about immersive performance and experience design. I completed my PhD in May 2025 at Northumbria University, where I developed a framework for meaningful engagement in virtual reality dance performances, focusing on connection, empathy, and audience experiences. With a background spanning dance, digital media arts, and communication design, my work explores how immersive environments shape social and communicative experiences. I have presented internationally and published papers in performer/audience perception and virtual hybridity, and I aim to pursue a career in academic research and project coordination.

I propose to develop a small-scale research project exploring how visitors to the 61st International Art Exhibition experience moments of connection, resonance and interpretation within the British Pavilion. Building on my work on meaningful engagement in VR performance, the project would examine how audiences encounter contemporary artworks in a highly international, socially layered environment such as Venice, and how these encounters might foster communal or cross-cultural forms of understanding. Focusing on interactions between visitors, artworks, and mediators, the project will explore how emotion, interpretation, and embodied response are articulated in real time. Ultimately, it will produce a collaborative portrait of the Pavilion as felt, interpreted, and co-created by those who engage with it.

The project will adopt a collaborative, co-designed methodology, engaging Fellows, Pavilion staff, artists, and visitors through short conversational exchanges and reflective activities. It will capture cross-cultural engagement via physical and social prompts, recording both interpersonal encounters and written reflections. Rather than producing evaluative data, the aim is to cultivate a shared inquiry into how people experience art collectively, and how informal, horizontal learning emerges within exhibition spaces. Drawing on principles of collegiality and interdisciplinarity, participants will be invited to contribute co-reflections and micro-observations, shaping a dynamic, collective portrait of the Pavilion as a site of dialogue.

The project aligns closely with the context of La Biennale and Lubaina Himid's forthcoming 2026 commission, whose work often foregrounds storytelling, community and the politics of visibility. While entirely feasible alongside invigilation duties, the project would maintain a flexible structure that is adaptable to the invigilator work flow, allowing space for ongoing contributions and spontaneous experiences. By fostering collaborative reflection and shared inquiry, the project aims to illuminate the Pavilion as a space where inclusion, interdisciplinarity, and community-building are actively lived and experienced.



Emma Andrews

NXT GEN

@_emmaxandrews

I am a History of Art graduate with a strong interest in how exhibition formats shape cultural narratives and public engagement. Having attended the last two editions of the Venice Biennale, I've been fascinated by its dialogue between national identity, global exchange, and curatorial experimentation. My master's research focused on Black British art, including the work of Lubaina Himid, whose approach to storytelling, visibility, and space continues to influence my thinking about curatorial responsibility and interpretation.

Alongside my studies, I am also a practising artist and mural painter, which has deepened my appreciation for visual culture as both a maker and a researcher. I enjoy travelling, especially to encounter different artistic communities and exhibition contexts, and have written articles on the structure and politics of the Biennale and the social value of contemporary exhibition-making. I am passionate about visual art as a catalyst for dialogue, collaboration, and collective understanding.

During my Fellowship, I would like to extend my MA research exhibition project *The Black Aquatic: Myth, Memory, and Oceanic Futures*, which explored Rinaldo Walcott's theory of the 'Black Aquatic' and the complex relationship between Black identity, memory, and the sea. Venice, a city shaped by water, maritime exchange, and imperial histories, offers an ideal context for developing this research further.

I plan to undertake a micro-research project tracing how artists across the Biennale engage with water as a metaphor for migration, loss, mythology, and belonging. This will include conversations with Fellows, Pavilion visitors, and participants from other national pavilions, forming a collaborative "living archive" of reflections on how the sea is imagined across cultural and geographic contexts. This project sits directly within my broader academic interests in Black British art, curatorial practice, and postcolonial exhibition histories. It also continues my interest in how artists use water to negotiate visibility, storytelling, and reclamation; concerns that resonate strongly with Lubaina Himid's artistic and curatorial approach.

The Fellowship would allow me to test the early foundations of what I hope may eventually develop into a PhD research proposal, expanding the *Black Aquatic* framework to consider its transnational, curatorial, and exhibitionary dimensions.

Upon returning to the UK, I plan to present my findings through a short research paper and a public workshop. The project will present water as a connective language through which to reimagine identity, movement, and belonging in the global context of La Biennale.



My name is Emma Mitchison, and I'm an artist specialising in blown glass. My work is bold and expressive, often exploring how natural phenomena such as gravity or time can shape glass by relinquishing my control. I am especially interested in challenging the conventional expectations of blown glass as highly controlled and flawless.

Glass has a fascinating and rich history stretching back to 3100BC, with Venice playing a central role. Lubaina Himid's work encouraged me to examine the overlooked aspects of Venetian glass history.

Glassblowing is a team sport, most processes require the help of others. The inherent danger of it demands trust and reliance on others. I am excited to bring this collaborative spirit to the British Pavilion and to connect with others across international pavilions. Their diverse perspectives will challenge and support my growth as an artist.

Behind the seemingly innocent appearance of Venetian glass beads lies a history shadowed by violence and exploitation. Venice became the world's leading centre for glass bead manufacture between the 16th and 18th centuries, producing beads that British companies exchanged for captives as part of the transatlantic trade. By tracing their journey through British hands, I hope to bring light to an overlooked aspect of glass history and examine its connections to historic injustices. These beads are commonly called 'wound beads' for the way molten glass is wound around a rod during their making. The word 'wound' also means injury and reflects the harm woven into their history.

As a British glassmaker, I am aware that I approach this history from a position removed from the communities most affected. My aim is not to speak for them, but to critically examine the European structures and trade networks that enabled this history. I recognise the sensitivity of these topics and am committed to engaging with respect, humility, and openness to listen to others' experiences.

To research this topic I plan to contact the glass museum (Museo del Vetro) and study centre (Le Stanze del Vetro) to ask about trade beads in their collections. I will also visit studios across Venice and Murano to learn directly from glassmakers, and ask whether they know about the history of trade beads. By documenting beadmaking, conversations with practitioners and fellows, I hope to build a collaborative body of knowledge that sparks dialogue bringing these issues to light.

Emma Mitchison
BA Product Design and Craft
Manchester Metropolitan University

Emmamit.my.portfolio.com | [@emmamitchison_](https://www.instagram.com/emmamitchison_)



I'm Emmanuel Odogwu, a Lagos-born visual artist and curator driven by colour, storytelling, and the social value of culture. My practice explores the emotional complexities of Black identity, tranquility and my experience in my community through expressive acrylic painting and experimental exhibition-making.

Currently developing my curatorial voice at the University of Leicester, I'm passionate about audience engagement and collaborative learning. I'm particularly drawn to Venice and the British Pavilion's role within La Biennale, and inspired by Lubaina Himid's 2026 commission for its dialogue between history and contemporary practice. I hope to build a creative community that exchanges knowledge generously and grows together.

Currents of Connection: Co-Designing a Multisensory Map of Black Presence in Venice

While in Venice, I will develop a small-scale collaborative research project that explores how Black artists, cultural workers, and visitors experience the city and La Biennale. The project will take the form of a co-designed, multisensory "connection map", a living digital and physical map created with Fellow artists, participating Pavilion staff, and members of the public. Through short audio conversations, quick sketches, notes, and reflective prompts, participants will contribute moments that capture how they navigate Venice as creative practitioners. This collaborative mapping process reflects the values of camaraderie, generosity, and network-building.

The map will be connected to the 61st International Art Exhibition, Lubaina Himid's 2026 British Pavilion commission, and Venice's layered histories of trade, migration, and cultural exchange. It will remain dynamic throughout the month, growing through peer-to-peer contributions and encouraging interdisciplinary thinking.

This project expands my ongoing creative and academic interest in contemporary art, Black spatial experience, and museum/gallery interpretation. It will serve as the foundation for my Master's dissertation by examining how co-designed creative tools can reshape narratives of belonging within art institutions. On returning to the UK, I will continue developing the map with my community group transforming it into a participatory case study on collaborative knowledge-making in contemporary art practice.

Emmanuel Odogwu
MA Museum Studies
University of Leicester

@odogwutheartist



Gabriela Saenger Silva

PhD – Arts & Design

Liverpool John Moores University

@gabrielsaengersilva

I am a Brazilian-UK-based arts practitioner, educator, and researcher specialising in contemporary art biennials, art education, and socially engaged and decolonial art practices. I am a PhD and associate researcher at Exhibition Research Lab at Liverpool John Moores University with the thesis “Biennials as Educational Tools” (working title), participating in multiple conferences in Brazil, Germany, Sweden, Italy, and Poland.

I have worked in art institutions’ educational and public programmes, including Mercosul and Liverpool Biennials, where I devised and delivered experimental programs, including “The City Is a School”. I was a guest curator for Bienal de São Paulo and part of the collective community curatorial programme at the International Slavery Museum (National Museums of Liverpool). I am part of the urban environmental cooperative Scouse Flowerhouse, an associate researcher for the The Amazon Basin as Connecting Borderland and Para-Educational Study Group (HBFK, Hamburg).

During the residency, I would like to develop a small-scale research project exploring the narrative and material lives of objects within Venice’s exhibition history, with a particular focus on moments where craft, domestic labour, and overlooked cultural practices were presented but not fully recognised as artistic knowledge. This interest aligns closely with Lubaina Himid’s sustained engagement with materiality, making, and the politics of visibility, and with my own research into mediation, feminist perspectives, and situated forms of learning. The project would take the form of a “study-in-progress” that maps how certain practices, especially those associated with women’s work, care, or the domestic sphere, have been framed or marginalised within the Biennale’s archival trace.

My aim is to approach this research collaboratively: speaking with other Fellows, visitors, Pavilion staff, and practitioners encountered in Venice, inviting them to share their own objects, tools, or materials that hold personal or cultural significance. These contributions would help shape a collective reflection on how value is assigned and how artistic meaning is constructed across different contexts.

This project sits within my wider research interests in exhibition pedagogy, the social life of objects, and the intersections between material culture and lived experience. It also extends ongoing threads in my work around care, embodied knowledge, and the shifting thresholds between art and everyday making. The project intention is to remain modest and adaptive, allowing it to grow through conversation and encounter while flexible within the rhythm of invigilation and shared learning.



Geneva Beckford

PhD Exhibitions/Fine Art

Liverpool John Moores University

@genevalavern_phd

My academic journey from history to art history has shaped a research practice committed to equity and representation. During my master's, I uncovered the rich histories of Black women's exhibitions in Britain, beginning with the West Midlands, which inspired my doctoral focus on Black feminist theory in curatorial and institutional contexts. This work is not only scholarly but advocacy-driven: I aim to trace, document, and amplify overlooked curatorial legacies, ensuring they inform future cultural practice. Central to this is Lubaina Himid's pioneering role, now celebrated internationally, which underscores the urgency of inclusive narratives.

Beyond research, I actively seek collaborative opportunities to share knowledge and foster dialogue, believing that leadership in the arts means creating spaces for others to thrive. Through the Venice Fellowship, I hope to connect with global peers, expand networks, and translate research into impactful engagement that strengthens cultural understanding and social value.

During my residency in Venice, I would like to develop a research-led project titled *Resonant Legacies: Black Women's Exhibition Histories and Lubaina Himid's Pavilion*. This project will explore how Himid's 2026 Pavilion commission resonates with historical and contemporary curatorial practices by Black women in Britain.

My aim is to create a reflective framework that connects archival research with lived visitor experiences, using the commission as a site for gathering responses and mapping conversations around representation, visibility, and institutional narratives. Using the Pavilion as a live site of encounter, the project will make use of observation and informal interviews to invite Biennale visitor responses. Offered here is opportunity to collaborate with staff and fellows in an effort to develop and test the suitability of approaches for collating visitor responses over the course of residency.

By engaging with Himid's commission and the Pavilion's audiences, I aim to test ideas about accessibility and interpretation while amplifying narratives that challenge dominant art historical frameworks.

This project builds directly on my doctoral research, which examines deployments of Black feminist thought within curatorial and institutional practice. It extends my commitment to uncovering and advocating for overlooked exhibition histories, situating them within an international context.

The Venice Fellowship offers a unique opportunity to merge research and public engagement, reinforcing my broader goal of creating inclusive cultural spaces and contributing to discourse on representation and visibility in global art histories.



Gherdai Hassell

Lowry

gherdaihassell.com

I am a multidisciplinary artist working across painting, collage, textiles, and site-specific installation. My practice explores identity, memory, diaspora, wellness, and the emotional and historical landscapes held within materials. Alongside my studio work, I am also the host of Art Affects, a podcast in conversation with artists, bridging the gap between art and wellbeing. I am also a public health researcher interested in how art supports wellbeing, nervous system capacity, and community repair.

I am passionate about visual art, curatorial thinking, and creating art experiences that invite viewers into deeper engagement, reflection, and connection. I am also interested in how audiences move through exhibitions, how they learn, and what allows them to feel seen, curious, or transformed.

Because of my background in public health engagement and community arts workshops in education, I understand the importance of the social value of art as transformation in our lives.

During the residency, I would like to develop the beginning of a texture/ water and textile documentation project.

Water Bodies, a project that looks at Rest, Repair, and the Textiles of Memory. The project will explore how water and textiles function as living archives of diaspora, emotional history, and wellbeing. I would like to collect small samples of water from different places in Venice and keep a texture swatch journal documenting the material's and textures I come across.

I'd like to host a small art and wellness workshop, for fellows using either cyanotype, light , slow stitching, mindful ink drawing, and grounding exercises to explore art making as a form of nervous system regulation. Textile swatches created by participants during the workshop will contribute to a larger, evolving community quilt, which can be expanded in a future project at The Lowry. In Manchester, participants will be invited to contribute swatches to this quilt, creating a living artwork that links local communities to Venice and the broader histories of textile production and labour in the city.

This project sits within my wider practice and research at the intersection of art, diaspora, textiles, and wellbeing. Influenced by Lubaina Himid and the late Koyo Kouoh, whose curatorial vision has informed my work, it also draws on my background in public health, exploring how creative processes support nervous system regulation and collective repair.

By connecting Venice's water, Manchester's canals, and community participation, the project creates a thread through shared experience



Driven by an interest in how visual art and curatorial strategies can create meaningful encounters between people and ideas, my current practice focuses on exhibition-making as a form of critical mediation, exploring how spatial design, interpretation, and storytelling can open up contemporary art to wider and more diverse audiences.

I am particularly drawn to architecture and performance-based practices, as they expand how we understand participation and the social value of culture. Outside my studies, I visit museums, document everyday scenes through photography, and research how visitors navigate exhibition spaces—habits that shape my approach to audience engagement.

I see the Venice Fellowships Programme as a unique opportunity to contribute to an international curatorial dialogue while developing a more socially attentive, research-informed practice.

For my residency project in Venice, I would like to investigate how spatial design within the British Pavilion shapes visitors' movement, perception, and emotional engagement. Tentatively titled "*Reading Space: Spatial Choreography and Visitor Navigation in the British Pavilion*," this project will focus on analysing circulation patterns, spatial thresholds, sightlines, and moments of pause. Through on-site mapping, photography of spatial conditions, and observational studies of how visitors inhabit and move through the Pavilion, I aim to understand how curatorial and architectural decisions construct a specific rhythm of encounter.

This project builds on my growing interest in exhibition spatiality and my previous hands-on experience in installation, exhibition preparation, and gallery invigilation at Fotografiska and SOOFA Art Space. Working closely with exhibition layouts and visitor flow has made me attentive to how small changes in lighting, object placement, or circulation routes significantly affect visitor experience. The Biennale's architectural and curatorial complexity offers a unique opportunity to study these dynamics in a highly international and comparative context.

Within the broader framework of my MA in Contemporary Curation, this research connects to my academic focus on how exhibitions choreograph relationships between bodies, narratives, and spaces. By examining the Pavilion through spatial analysis, I hope to contribute to developing more thoughtful, accessible and sensorially engaging exhibition environments. Ultimately, the project seeks to understand how spatial design becomes an active curatorial language that mediates meaning before a single text panel is read.

Gretchen Gao

MA Contemporary Curating

University of Southampton, Winchester School of Art



My name is Hanifah Sogbanmu (ha-nee-fah sho-ba-mu). I am an artist-curator, researcher, and cultural worker from northwest London. As a Black Muslim woman of Yoruba-Nigerian heritage, my practice is rooted in exploring how Black British and global majority artists shape British and international contemporary art. I work with intuitive, decolonial and re-indigenous approaches to living, making, and storytelling, using experimental writing, cultural production, visual arts and live programming to consider how art and design can honour the people, places, and practices that define our world.

I have a strong commitment to public engagement and extensive visitor experience expertise, with a particular interest in making cultural spaces, festivals and learning accessible to underrepresented communities. Alongside my curatorial work, I am developing my artistic practice across painting, drawing, printmaking and audio-visual projects, and I have a deep appreciation for film and performance. I aim to build meaningful, community-rooted creative experiences.

During my month in Venice, I propose to develop a postal art project in collaboration with Gambian-German artist-curator Khadea Santi, based in Edinburgh. Both emerging Black-British African women artists, we will use the day-to-day experience of the Fellowship and her ongoing musings, including invigilation at the British Pavilion and engagement with La Biennale's wider artistic ecosystem to inform a series of playful, tactile exchanges. Through sending and responding to prompts, materials, and festival ephemera via post, we will explore questions of identity, matrilineal cultural heritage, and feeling-based art-making.

This project foregrounds co-design, reciprocity, and interdisciplinarity: I will adopt the curator's perspective, while Khadea approaches the same prompts as an artist, allowing us to document and reflect on the event from contrasting geographical and professional contexts. Our correspondence will function as both process and product, creating a visual and conceptual archive that captures the vibrancy of Venice, the British Pavilion, and the Biennale experience.

The project aligns with my broader creative practice, which interrogates Eurocentric and capitalist structures within the cultural sector and seeks to make space for community-informed, relational art practices. I intend to engage with the Biennale's network of Fellows, practitioners, and potentially visitors in workshops that will explore collaborative knowledge-sharing and support the building of sustained creative networks.

Hanifah Sogbanmu

British Art Network

@studio.sog



I am a PhD student at King's College London working on female singers who lose their voices in nineteenth century fiction. I am also a writer for international theatre company, fish in a dress; I wrote the queer-feminist play *The City for Incurable Women*, which was critically acclaimed (★★★★ *The Guardian*, *The Stage*). I am passionate about considering female emancipatory voices through artistic media.

My PhD ties into the theme of voicing and voicelessness: one novel I consider is *Corinne* where the female protagonist travels around Italy and describes the architecture as 'permanent, continuous music'. This is an echo of Goethe's famous sentiment, 'architecture is a frozen moment of music'. Architecture is not just a backdrop but a crucial element in forming and maintaining women's artistic and political voices. Combining academic and artistic skills, I work at the intersection of literature, music, and architecture.

I will develop a research project called *Voices from "Woman-Country"* in collaboration with the Conservatorio Benedetto Marcello, the most renowned art conservatoire in Venice. In the nineteenth century, Italy was imagined by English women to be a haven for female artists, a "woman-country" (Lootens). I will interview students and teachers at the Conservatorio to understand the contemporary Venetian pedagogical approach to art and examine their archives to trace the lineage of women's artistic involvement.

The Conservatorio has previously worked with La Biennale and has one of the most important libraries in Italy. It stands adjacent to the Music Museum, which holds instruments, manuscripts and relics. I will take notes and photos of my findings and create a portfolio of nineteenth century female singers, composers, and musicians. I will engage with the Brazilian Pavilion which presents a piece that engages with voice loss, the Flemish Pavilion, whose exhibition includes a living musical sculpture, and the South Korean pavilion which creates a 'Liberation Space' filled with different voices. The British Pavilion will also be intrinsic to my project, as I will draw inspiration from Lubaina Himid's intersectional feminist approach.

This fits into my wider research interest of women who desired to make Italy a place of escape. Archival work in Venice gives me the opportunity to consider the real experience of women living in Venice.

Building on scholars who argue that women's voices *become* the architecture of Italy, I will consider the implications for the artistic and political voices of women.

Helena McBurney

PhD
Kings College London

@helenamcburney



Having completed my BA in Liberal Arts and Sciences (History of Art) and moved onto my MA in Curation, the interdisciplinary and communal value of visual art is integrated into every aspect of my life. My practice is centred on fostering the real-world application of art and education in everyday spaces, as well as in galleries and museums. This has included performing ekphrastic writing workshops in museums, conducting ecological and sensory art activities for schoolchildren, and volunteering with my local Youth Network to commission a portable, sustainable art-learning hub in collaboration with artists.

As a visual artist and photographer myself, I am deeply aware of how art shapes our relationships with other people, the world around us, and ourselves. I also write a student blog on important art and cultural events I am engaged in to share the social value of these fields beyond gallery spaces.

My project will document the historic Venetian cityscape through alternative creative mapping. This will involve printmaking using recycled kneadable erasers to create impressions from architectural details, brickwork, flora, and other material surfaces, assembled in a hand-made leporello book. These tactile impressions will enable an embodied form of environmental observation that resists traditional hierarchies of value. Instead, my project attends to the small, often overlooked surfaces where environmental change becomes visible. Alongside these prints, I intend to annotate conversations with people at the print sites, situational observations, and personal reflections, creating a dual pictorial and linguistic scape of the city bound to embodied experience. Through these conversations, I hope to draw attention to the lived environmental impacts Venetians and visitors describe, allowing their voices to become part of the map as part of a social body.

Using the leporello form, which is rooted in histories of travel, cross-cultural exchange, and artist fieldwork, I aim to foreground why Venice and the Biennale are culturally significant while remaining in conversation with the ecological concerns of international art festivals. This approach challenges colonial cartographic methods by foregrounding a sensory and relational experience rooted in presence.

The project aims to model practical material sustainability, embedding ecological awareness into the methodology of making. Through this process, I propose how artwork can be a form of micro-ecological documentation, preserving traces of erosion, plant growth, and social interaction to foster an empathetic connection between human narratives and Venice's vulnerable material environment.

Indie Hansford

MA Curation: Contemporary Art and Cultural Management
University of Exeter



I'm second-year Fine Arts student at Arts University Bournemouth. I am interested in dance and have been taking classes since I was a child. I enjoy the idea that all ideas can reach a peak in a single performance. This has influenced my artistic practice.

I love music of all kinds; it has a power to communicate in a way that escapes language. My current project explores authorship and sampling in jungle and hip-hop music. I explore how underground sound system cultures influence the mainstream. I am excited by the possibility of seeing the biennale, as the theme of *'In Minor Keys'* suggests a musical link.

I love meeting people; my work is mostly collaborative. I feel this allows my work to share multiple voices and viewpoints, contributing to ongoing cultural and social dialogue. I ran a textile-based project with the general public, generating conversations about culture and identity.

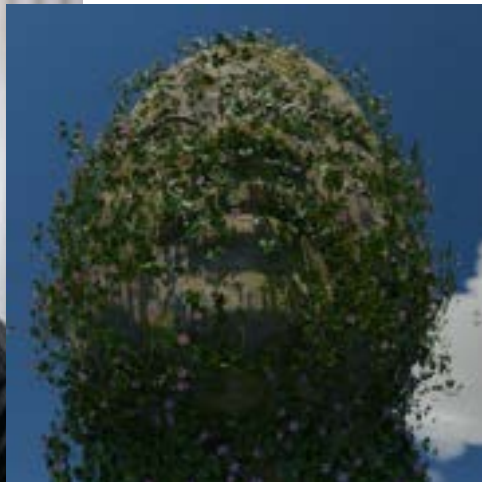
I am interested in language and this has motivated past projects, and I would like to continue the exploration of language in a less literal sense. The idea comes from the idea of spending a month in a country where I am not fluent in the language.

I am inspired by what can be conveyed beyond language, feelings which are created even when you have no idea what is being said. I think the idea of using language and conversation in my work too, would be especially interesting, as the north-east of Italy, including Venice, has its own underrepresented dialect.

Music is a language entirely of its own – transcending the need to understand the words, music creates corporeal responses and emotional feelings stirred in someone. Music and conversation are everywhere and are readily available to record. I would use these recordings to layer sounds of conversations I overhear, perhaps the sounds of the water in canals or unclear voices in a café, but at the forefront of the work, I hope to have music, which I consider to be the universal language. I would like to find a way to convey the feelings of a place and culture and immerse someone in that time and place without them ever having been there. If people were willing, and we were able to communicate beyond the potential language barriers, I would love to talk to local musicians, whether this be on the street as I encounter them or in local music venues.

Ivy Chapman
BA Fine Arts
Arts University Bournemouth

@ivychapman_



I am a multidisciplinary artist, journalist and writer from South London. My work is grounded in a research-based practice and explores the intersections of illness, disability, colonialism and black history. By combining moving image, photography and digital art with poetry and essay writing, my work reimagines how stories about health and illness can be archived in more experimental ways.

The elements of my practice connect with the visual arts, craft, social and cultural focus areas of the fellowship. For me, my arts practice centres the idea of connection in the production process, including connections between fellow artists, participants, nature, and history.

Added to my visual arts practice, I am also the founder of You Look Okay To Me, an online space for chronic illness. I am currently an associate artist at Forma and was selected for the Forbes 30 Under 30 List for Art & Culture in 2025

I plan to develop a project centred on the disabled and chronic illness community of Venice during my residency period.

When visiting Venice in the past as a disabled person, I noticed a lot of guidance for disabled tourists navigating the largely inaccessible city. The beautiful waterways, cobblestones, narrow walkways and frequent occurrence of stairs make it difficult for disabled bodies to enjoy Venice. While this guidance exists for tourists, I found limited information about disabled communities already living and navigating Venice.

My project will consist of connecting with disabled people living in Venice and conducting audio interviews about their experiences and lack of visibility, especially during the busy period of the biennale.

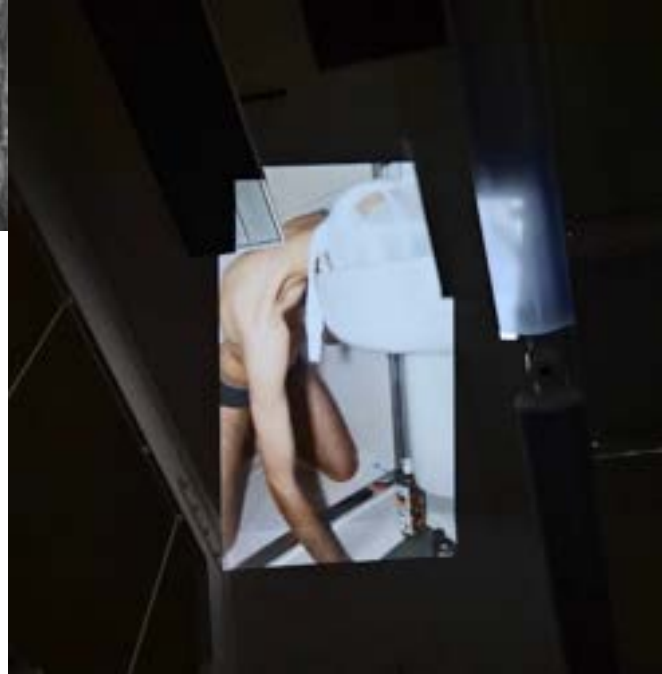
The core question of my project is 'Where are the disabled Venetians?'

This project sits within my ongoing practice and commitment to creatively archiving disabled experiences not only in the UK but across the globe. My practice constantly questions how disabled experiences change depending on geographic location, gender, race and cultural identity.

Jameisha Prescod

Unlimited

jameishaprescod.com | [@youlookokaytome](https://www.instagram.com/youlookokaytome)



I'm currently in my second year of Fine Art at Newcastle University, and I spend a lot of time in the dark depths of my basement studio. My current focus is to create a playground where my passions and personal goals meet my practice. I'm learning to sew, creating wearable art pieces that can be performed.

I've also been rediscovering my love for music. I've performed a lot for my camera, dressing as a marionette doll to play piano and sing. Performance comes very naturally to me, and it's exciting to explore how that can exist in new contexts - film, sound installations, live performance art. Narrative is really important to my art because it's a big part of how I learned to view the world. The ongoing story takes place in *'Basement World'*, where I play both the puppet master and the forgotten marionette, trying to find a spotlight.

I have two main ideas, which could amalgamate as time goes on and I find inspiration in experiencing Venice. There's a very clear link between my practice and Venetian culture through the significance of marionette theatre in Venice. 18th century Venice was the cultural capital of performance: from grand operas to puppet theatres in the homes of noble families. The Museum of Casa Galdoni houses a variety of 18th-century marionettes. I feel like this kind of face-to-face viewing would give me a new perspective on how I could consolidate my ideas and use them to create something more tangible.

Researching Lubaina Himid's oeuvre made me contemplate my own cultural, geographical identity, being born and raised in my hometown - a land-locked, white British echo chamber where rioters set fire to a hotel housing asylum seekers. I have a lot to appreciate about where I was raised but I also think it's important I overcome my geographical identity in some ways. Moving away and taking part in protests for the rights of asylum seekers feel like reconciliation.

Venice is such a melting pot of culture - a strange, geographical bubble where space is shared in a really unique way. If I received the opportunity to work here, I think I would feel really sentimental about heritage - of mine, the people around me, the chances that brought us all together. I think I could find a way to combine these points of investigation. After all, Venetian marionette theatre emulated everyday life.

James Wheeler
BA Fine Art
Newcastle University



I am a producer, curator, writer, and researcher, working at the intersections of cultural history, politics, and the arts. 'My independent curatorial projects include the exhibitions Invasion Ecology (2024), SEEDLINGS: Diasporic Imaginaries, with Travelling Gallery (2025), and Can We Stop Killing Each Other? at the Sainsbury Centre (2025-2026), and I produce EMPIRE LINES, a podcast which uncovers the unexpected flows of empires through art. I am also pursuing a practice-based PhD with Gray's School of Art, curating exhibitions of Balkan and Yugoslavian/diasporic artists in British art collections.

Much of my research centres on pluralising representations of Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe (CESEE)/diaspora communities and cultures, particularly from the Balkans and Yugoslavia, and more constructive, contemporary histories of non-alignment. More widely, I seek to platform lived experiences and perspectives often marginalised or excluded from representation, especially in anti-colonial and environmental activism.

I work to make complex ideas accessible, not simple.

During this Fellowship, I intend to develop my research into Jagoda Buić (1930-2022), a monumental fibre artist and sculptor who worked across contexts including Yugoslavia (present-day Croatia), France, and Italy. Jagoda's work featured in the Venice Biennale in 1968, 1970, and 2001, and she represented Yugoslavia at the 13th São Paulo Biennial in 1975, where she was awarded the Grand Prix Itamaraty. In these same years, beyond Brazil, Jagoda simultaneously constructed 'environments' in Edinburgh, Dublin, Belfast, Paris, Lausanne, and other places. Fifty years later, very little about these exhibitions - or the connections between them - is presently available for publics to access. Through my own curatorial and writing practices, I seek to redress this absence by similarly working across and constellating archives, collections, and communities.

This research strongly relates to Lubaina's work with textiles, theatre, and set design, her commitment to platforming fellow artist women, and interest in port cities as meeting points. I look forward to learning more about Jagoda's connection with Venice, a city where she lived, worked, and ultimately, passed. This will involve visiting the former International Centre of Arts and Costume, where she studied in the 1950s, the galleries and spaces of her exhibitions, and her former places of residence - one of which inaugurates in 2026. I hope to have the opportunity to meet more of those who knew her in life.

I am interested in opportunities to exhibit existing works and archive materials, along with new findings from my Fellowship in Venice - with and within one of Jagoda's own communities.

Jelena Sofronijevic
HomeGrown Plus

@empirelinespodcast | jelsofron.com



I'm a working-class, disabled artist based in South Yorkshire, UK, working across lens-based media, performance and materially responsive installation. Grounded in lived experience of long-term illness and recovery, and in the environmental health histories of rural Lincolnshire (including pesticide exposure), my work examines stigma, "spoilt identity" and the politics of care; how post-disease bodies are seen, managed, medicalised and erased. Using auto-ethnography and embedded research, I gather images, objects and testimonies and translate them into installations that hold humour and grief, play and discomfort. I work with resonant materials such as gelatin/jelly, chalk, powders and medical-imaging aesthetics; jelly casting has become a key sculptural language to challenge norms of beauty, sexuality and health. I also poach clinical technologies through 3D self-portraiture and scanning. Socially engaged, trauma-informed collaboration and shared authorship are central to my practice.

I propose creating a daily photographic and material documentation practice exploring Venice's relationship with water, ephemerality, and preservation themes central to both Venice's identity and Himid's work on forgotten histories. Each day, I'll photograph traces of water's impact on the city's architecture, surfaces, and artworks at La Biennale, collecting small samples of materials where permitted (pigments, sands, salts). These will inform experimental jelly casting tests exploring how ephemeral materials can hold memory.

I'll collaborate with other Fellows and visiting artists, inviting them to contribute observations about visibility, decay, and resilience in Venice creating a collective archive of perspectives.

This fieldwork directly develops my ongoing investigation into ephemeral casting materials and how the body holds memory after disease. As a disabled artist who developed reproductive cancers and non-Hodgkin lymphoma from agricultural pesticide exposure, my practice explores impermanence objects designed to degrade, mirroring how disease reshapes us.

Himid's focus on marginalised histories resonates deeply: just as Venice's foundations are slowly eroded yet culturally preserved, working-class disabled bodies and health narratives exist in tension between bodily degradation and the urgent need to document and remember. This Venice fieldwork will generate material knowledge, photographic documentation, material samples, collaborative conversations that I'll translate into new accessible casting experiments back in the UK.

Jennifer Booth

Unlimited

pooka.carbonmade.com | [@jobofoto1066](https://www.instagram.com/jobofoto1066)



Jessica Powrie
BA History
Durham University

I am currently an Undergraduate history student with a particular interest in Indigenous art and art history. This interest motivated me to apply to the University of Calgary for my Year Abroad, where I am studying at present. During my time in Calgary, I have had the privilege of learning from Elders about the concept of Survivance; the history of Indigenous people in Canada and the importance of Reconciliation.

Beyond my studies, I have explored how art can serve as a powerful medium for education and collaborative storytelling. As someone who is deeply committed to widening access to the arts and ensuring that marginalised groups are represented, this experience has been especially meaningful and interesting to me. In the next stage of my academic and professional journey, I aspire to work UNESCO, where I hope to combine my passion for cultural diversity with my interest in history and the arts.

When researching the theme 'in minor keys', I was particularly intrigued by the concept of alternative frequencies and art as something that can be fortifying and nourishing. This led to me explore the theme of quiet resilience through alternative narratives.

I approached this concept through the lens of art as a tool for preserving traditions and safeguarding cultural continuity. Therefore, the focus of my project will be quiet resilience and cultural preservation through artwork and in everyday life. I intend to investigate how these themes are presented in Lubaina Himid's work, focussing on how she depicts marginalised histories and figures, and uses discarded furniture and everyday objects. Highlighting the intersection between everyday practices and the wider preservation of cultural narratives. I also intend to investigate how these themes present themselves in day-to-day life by researching the work of Murano glass makers. I hope to conduct interviews with contemporary glassworkers and other creatives about their insights into art as a tool for cultural perseverance. My final project will consist of a portfolio of photographs of artwork and everyday examples of quiet resistance accompanied by interview transcripts, and a reflective essay detailing what I have learned and how my perspectives have changed.

My dissertation will centre around indigenous survivance, particularly how indigenous peoples used artwork to preserve collective memory. Engaging with history in an interdisciplinary manner will equip me with a nuanced understanding of the past by exposing insights that may be invisible if examined from one perspective.



I'm an artist whose work revolves around stories of migration, diaspora and cultural amalgamation. This interest stems from my mixed-race upbringing with English and Ghanaian family.

I love learning about different cultures and languages and questioning how this can help shape people's view of the world. I explore these ideas through my paintings which draw on both traditional European painting techniques and West African storytelling.

I was fortunate enough to spend a year studying at the Accademia di belle Arti Venezia in 2019 which played a significant role in shaping my artwork. Both through the opportunity to learn traditional oil painting techniques, alongside the chance to see masterpieces in the flesh by the likes of Tintoretto and Titian.

2019 was also my first experience of the Venice Biennale which left an unforgettable impression and introduced me to contemporary artists - like Njideka Akunyili Crosby - whose work continues to inspire me.

I would love to develop a project that examines and questions how our cultural backgrounds influence the way we see, understand and ultimately connect to artwork.

My hope would be to observe colleagues and members of the public as they engage with artworks around the Biennale and create a series of small drawings and notebooks alongside short interviews wherever possible capturing intimate quiet moments of observation and the internal feelings that the works provoke.

This project would also be partially inspired by a book called the Sovereignty of Quiet by Kevin Everoid Quashie that explores the idea of our internal quiet spaces, the inner worlds that are known only to us. I would love to take this concept and apply it within the Biennale.

My hope is that this project can be a starting point, encouraging small moments of collaboration and insights into people's different cultural approaches to engaging with and making art work. I want to explore what people are drawn to and the specific moments of connection within that. This would also be a fitting project within the overall theme of the 61st Biennale "In Minor Keys". Breaking down dominant narratives and stereotypical view points and instead focusing on individual's personal and internal experiences.

This would be something that I could develop beyond the Fellowship and take into my practice. Insights into some of the things that trigger moments of connection with different people and ideas about how I can create this within my own work.

Joshua Donkor
Artists Collecting Society

joshuadonkorart.co.uk



I am a Glasgow-based Cameroonian-British artist and researcher, primarily working in moving image, but also in sculpture, textiles, performance and writing. My practice questions how identities are constructed, misremembered and reimagined, particularly in the context of the asymmetric relationship between Europe and West Africa.

In my films I build elaborate handmade sets, costumes and props, and collaborate with designers and performers to create immersive visual worlds that question colonial narratives and explore Blackness, queerness and Britishness. My work uses humour, critical fabulation and learnings from Afro-presentist thinking to speak critically, but accessibly. It draws on the darkly idiosyncratic humour of Nollywood, the spellbinding arcs of high fantasy and speculative fiction, and the uncanniness of Western mass-media aesthetics to invite viewers into conversations about memory, identity and structural absurdities.

I will start research for a new work of artists' film with the working title '*Not My Miengu!*'. It's a farcical exploration of the colonial splitting of Cameroon, my own Cameroonian-British heritage, and the transatlantic migratory journeys many African-descended people have historically made and do contemporarily make, using Jengu - mermaid-like water spirits venerated by Cameroon's Sawa people - as a symbol of duality and fractured identity. The plucky titular Miengu will journey between Cameroon, Hollywood, and Paris, pursuing fame, fortune, and love in a series of musical numbers inspired by Technicolor cinema.

The Jengu myth, which celebrates powerful Black African mermaids, contrasts with the racist backlash Halle Bailey faced after being cast as Ariel in Disney's 2023 *Little Mermaid* remake. This (almost) laughable hostility towards a completely fictional character is rooted in long histories of anti-Blackness that still shape society today.

As nationalism hardens borders and identities, '*Not My Miengu!*' will use humour, fantasy, and beauty to push back against these tides. During the Fellowship, I want my research process to be collaborative, connecting with other Fellows, practitioners across La Biennale, and members of the public from across the globe to exchange stories, imagery, and cultural perspectives that might inform the film's narrative and worldbuilding. I hope to build interdisciplinary dialogue and lasting networks spanning both Venice and the UK, nurturing a spirit of collective imagination that reflects the various histo-geographic mutations of mermaid myths.

This project feels particularly relevant to Venice, a city shaped by maritime lore, migration, and imperial entanglements, making it an ideal site for shared exploration and collaborative myth-making.

Kialy Tihngang

The Collective Makers

@kialytihngang



I am an immersive environment designer whose practice centres on the transformative power of sensory experience. I trained in theatre design out of a desire to work across disciplines after first experiencing the visceral beauty of theatre at Lowry. I remain interested in how sound, light and spatial composition can influence an audience's internal state.

My work spans theatre, festivals and live events, collaborating with a broad range of creatives to build experiences that feel alive and shared. Recently, my practice has evolved to focus on sensory-calming environments for neurodiverse individuals. As an autistic artist, I understand how sensory design can soothe, overwhelm or liberate, and this lived experience drives my research. I'm interested in how thoughtfully crafted spaces can reduce overstimulation, offer refuge and support meaningful connection. I feel most aligned with my purpose when bringing diverse perspectives together to shape immersive, emotionally resonant environments that leave audiences changed.

Working Title: Quiet Cartographies: Mapping Stillness in Venice

During my month in Venice, I plan to develop a project exploring the experience of quietness within the city. Coming from Manchester—a place I know intimately—I am interested in how a new, international urban environment might reveal unfamiliar or unexpected forms of stillness, refuge, and sensory calm enriching my current understanding of quietness in Manchester. Venice, with its labyrinthine Calli, hidden courtyards, gardens, and waterside spaces, offers a unique landscape for this inquiry.

The project will involve:

- **Locating and documenting quiet pockets** throughout Venice through drawing, sound recording and photography.
- **Creating small, temporary “Quiet Boundaries”** in public spaces—simple performative gestures that invite passers-by to sit within a marked area and experience a moment of calm.
- **Engaging visitors and locals in conversation**, asking: What does quiet mean to you? Where do you find peace in this city? Does the space reside inside the body?
- **Collaborating with other Fellows** to reflect on sensory experience, spatial design and the themes of the Biennale.
- **Final Workshop** with other Fellows exploring finding your own quiet in response to what I have learnt over the month.

This project sits at the heart of my creative practice, deepening my research into sensory-calming environments and the importance of refuge for neurodiverse people. It also resonates directly with the Venice Biennale themes of overlooked narratives and “minor” modes of being, quietness and exploring the emotional and sensory experience in art.

Kirsty Barlow

Lowry

@kirstybarlow__design/



I'm a visual artist working across different mediums, making immersive installations with found, collected, and crafted materials. I've had quite a winding route to my current practice! Starting as a filmmaker and photographer and moving into creative facilitation in mental health for 10 years. After a break due to chronic illness, I went back to university two years ago to do an MA. I now work part-time in an archive, which I find endlessly fascinating and influences my practice.

In my work I'm drawn to where the archive meets embodied practice, where structured, ordered systems collide with the messy, nonlinear processes of thought, emotion, memory and personal narrative. My work is sculptural in the expanded sense. I make spaces, installations with sound and film, with objects spilling and places to rest and reflect. Living with chronic illness and being neurodivergent shapes how I think about space, comfort, and care.

I'm drawn to Venice for its atmosphere, that sense of in-between where water, light and history shift. It feels like a city of thresholds and memory, mirroring the fragments, gestures and in-between-spaces that run through my work. During the residency, I will explore how gestures of care, world-building and archiving overlap, through small, sensory acts of observation and response.

My work focuses on fragments, memory and incidental archives, the things we keep and the gestures that protect or preserve. I am exploring gesture through new work, informed by research into Ketty La Rocca, who featured in the 1972 Biennale.

I plan to make small interventions, arranging, wrapping, collecting sounds and fragments as ways of listening to the city's atmosphere. I will visit the Biennale Archive and ARCHiVe Digital to connect institutional and embodied archival practices, and through time at the British Pavilion, observe how emotion, intimacy and care are communicated through curatorial choices, particularly in response to Koyo Kouoh's In Minor Keys theme and Lubaina Himid's work.

The project will unfold through shared conversations with other Fellows and Biennale visitors, gathering reflections and gestures that form a collective archive of care. Reflective writing will accompany these actions, gathering what can't be held materially.

This project deepens my ongoing enquiry into how care, memory and material trace intersect. It will expand my research into the body as an archive and the gestures that hold emotion, strengthening connections between my reflective, material practice and wider conversations about preservation, tenderness and creative archiving.

Lisa Risbec

Axis

lisarisbec.co.uk | [@lisarisbec](https://www.instagram.com/lisarisbec)



I think of myself as a social and adventurous person. In my free time I volunteer with the Rona Sailing Project as a watch leader, teaching young people how to sail. During the summer we sailed from France to Scotland participating in the Tall Ships race. Interacting with fellow sailors from all over the world and watching the girls grow in confidence was one of the most rewarding things I have ever done. Despite not being able to communicate fully, the friendships I made with other sailors were some of the most valuable and intimate relationships I've experienced. Placing people in strange spaces, ones severed from everyday life, creates a judgement free and welcoming community. The multitude of cultures connected by the ocean is an invaluable source of inspiration within my creative process, an easy feeling to refer back to when stuck.

Venice sits upon wooden piles, secured by soft mud, balancing just on the cusp of the seas' clemency. Canals veins to fuel the city. Iambic tides swallow and release it. We as a species have a tendency to exploit each other and nature. The city is an example of a symbiotic, intimate relationship hardly seen within the western world: one between the Earth and Humans that is easily forgotten.

While in Venice I plan to explore this relationship, to continue studying connections of the human and inhuman and where it leads us as a species. What does it mean to be human in a self created ecosystem of division? With the stage of the city and connections I make with my peers and visitors I hope to start to answer this question.

Questions on how connections situate us as human regularly return within my work. I have explored familial relationships and how distance in time and location manipulate them. Learning that they are not as malleable as I had feared. Currently I am investigating the perceived monstrosity of the feminine body through my personal connection to the ocean and its power of embodiment, with the base of my theory coming from Astrida Neimanis' book *Bodies of Water*. This project is leading me to question further than my own body and experience, pushing me to think about the human species and our involvement within the Earth's watery biology. Where better to study this than a city whose blood is saline?

Loren Herring
BA Fine Art
Arts University Plymouth



I'm a queer artist from South Wales, currently in my second year studying Fine Art at AUB. Frequent hobbies of mine include walks in the countryside or on the beach and sea swimming. I also run weekly yoga sessions with my friend on campus which gives me a sense of community.

I predominantly make art centered around identity and my focus currently is sculptural installation but I also work with mediums such as photography, video, performance, and paint. History is another interest of mine so I undertake a lot of research for most of my ideas.

Furthermore, I'm passionate about collaboration, so all of my university projects so far have involved my peers in some way.

The 61st Venice Biennale is titled In Minor Keys, it's grounded in the belief that artists are key interpreters of the social condition, it speaks of discordant narratives and the hope that can be found through the sorrow. In relation to this, my project would aim to unearth and celebrate the untold queer stories and intimate worlds of Venice. Gaining inspiration from the ideas of Lubaina Himid, in particular, her exhibition Meticulous Observations and Naming the Money that delved deep into Toussant L'Ouverture's life and black slavery in the 18th and 19th century.

In her work, Lubaina aims to showcase the hidden histories of black communities and I would aim to do similar for the LGBTQ+ community in Venice. My research on the 'queer scene' in Venice reveals an underrepresented group and under documented part of history. I would intertwine queer histories, for example, the 'queer revelry' that took place in the 16th Century Carnival of Venice, with my modern queer experience of Venice during my residency. This project will culminate in a series of video/audio interviews, photography, written documentation and sculpture when in Venice. However, collaboration with like-minded Fellows would be an exciting opportunity that would shape my research project as we share our skills, cultures and experiences.

Currently, I am focused on building an installation/performance piece that represents a space of freedom for the queer community. My research project is connected to this as I will explore similar contexts of the queer experience, through the lens of Venice.

Lorna Doyle
BA Fine Art
Arts University Bournemouth

@lornadoyle_art



Lubna Rages

MA Curating Cultures
SOAS

lubnarages.wordpress.com | @lubnarx

I am an MA Curating Cultures student at SOAS with a background in Art History from the American University of Beirut, and my work centres on creating accessible, research-led encounters with art. Growing in Libya and studying in Lebanon shaped my interest in postcolonial theory, modernities in the Middle East/North Africa, and the cultural narratives often missing from dominant art histories.

Alongside roles at the Sursock Museum, Barjeel Art Foundation, and the Dalloul Art Foundation, I founded Bayt Elfunoun, a local arts initiative in Libya supporting art education through workshops and informal public programmes. This experience strengthened my commitment to collaborative, inclusive, and socially grounded curatorial practice.

Across my work, I value interdisciplinary exchange and meaningful visitor engagement, and I see curating as a form of cultural mediation; building relationships between communities, histories, and contemporary creative practice.

During my residency, I propose to develop *Echoes Across the Sea*, a small-scale, dematerialized curatorial project centered on Libyan and wider North African artistic memory. The project responds directly to the 61st International Art Exhibition's theme *In Minor Keys*, which foregrounds quiet registers, relational practices, and overlooked narratives. I will gather short reflections, conversations, and creative fragments from Fellows, Biennale practitioners, and visitors that speak to Libya's cultural histories, Mediterranean movement, and the complex relationship between the Maghreb and Venice. These may take the form of written notes, audio snippets, or small printed cards referencing Libyan/Italian artists, maritime routes between Libya and Venice, and everyday forms of cultural memory shaped by displacement or belonging. The project is grounded in co-design and collaboration, inviting participants to share their own "minor histories" of the sea, mobility, or identity. These dispersed contributions will form a living, publicly accessible micro-archive circulating through Venice's shared spaces.

The project grows directly from my wider research on North African art histories, postcolonial theory, and Mediterranean modernities. My work through Bayt Elfunoun, has shown me how fragile archives and informal cultural networks shape artistic life in contexts marked by political instability. Developing this project in Venice—historically entangled with North Africa through trade, empire, and the Mediterranean—allows me to explore these transregional links through practice-based research. This dematerialized, collaborative approach continues my interest in creating accessible, community-centered curatorial models that connect Libyan cultural narratives to broader global conversations



I work at the intersection of performance, curating, and research, exploring how cultural institutions are shaped not only by artworks and architecture, but by bodies, relationships, and invisible labour. My background as a contemporary dancer continues to inform how I think—treating research as choreography: attentive to experience, movement, and sensitivity.

Currently undertaking an MRes in Exhibition Studies at Central Saint Martins, my research focusses on queer temporality, embodied and sensory experience, and everyday infrastructures of culture: gestures, conversations, maintenance, invigilation, and other overlooked forms of labour that sit outside dominant colonial and capitalist value systems. I'm also interested in the politics of emerging technologies—how digital systems reproduce extractive modes of exhibition-making, but may also offer alternative frameworks for thinking about labour, visibility, and power.

Outside formal work, I'm drawn to walking, observing, and collecting unnoticed details—habits that shape how I research, listen, and engage with artistic environments.

During the residency, I would like to develop a research project exploring the overlooked infrastructures that shape the Venice Biennale, with a focus on labour, gesture, and informal knowledge. The project will examine how the Biennale is sustained not only by curatorial decisions and architectural space, but by daily routines, emotional labour, and unspoken communication shared between those who work within it.

Rather than approaching this as documentation, the project will build on my practice of embodied research: walking, observing, listening, and collaborating with invigilators, cleaners, maintenance teams, and hospitality workers. Venice runs on invisible bodies, yet institutional storytelling glorifies artists, pavilions, and national identity — not those who maintain the infrastructures that allow them to function.

I am interested in what is exchanged in passing: repeated instructions, overheard remarks, navigational shortcuts, rhythms of movement, and forms of coordination that rarely enter archives or catalogues. These traces will be gathered as field notes, gestural notation, and short fragments of writing—remaining lightweight, attending to the anecdotal, and responsive to the pace of the residency.

This project sits within my broader research into embodied knowledge, temporality, and decolonial practices, particularly how institutions value certain forms of labour and interpretation. Venice—with its layered histories, spectacle, tourism, and choreography of people—is an ideal site for expanding this research. Lubaina Himid's commission, with its commitment to reframing erased histories and labour, offers a meaningful conceptual anchor. Ultimately, the project will serve as a lived inquiry into what—and who—makes exhibitions possible.

Meg Bagnall

MRes Art: Exhibition Studies
UAL Decolonising Arts Institute

@meg.r.b



Mina Kyoleyán
MA Contemporary Curating
Manchester Metropolitan University

@minakyoleyán | @minakyoleyán_art

I am an emerging curator with a strong academic foundation in Art History and I am currently completing a Master's degree in Contemporary Curating. My academic focus centers on cross-cultural relations and the ways in which cultural exchange shapes and enriches societies.

In my curatorial practice, I am passionate about audience engagement. I am drawn to exhibition-making that encourages visitors to uncover hidden layers of meaning within artworks and narratives. My current research explores emotional states such as loneliness, estrangement, melancholy, and quiet reflection, that Koyo Kouoh's vision for the 61st International Art Exhibition describes as operating in "minor keys." More specifically, I am interested in how these emotions can be activated through immersive curatorial environments that invite visitors to experience and resonate with these conditions, rather than simply observe what is exhibited.

The conceptual framework reflects my curatorial research on estrangement, mobility, and identity formation. Current global conditions, where borders appear increasingly fluid yet belonging feels less secure, provide a key context. Many young people move across countries with ease, yet the sense of "home" remains fragmented or provisional. Echoes of Absence addresses this tension by creating a platform, where such experiences are recorded and made visible.

Participants will be invited to submit short written responses, sound fragments, or small visual notes that articulate moments of uncertainty, distance from place, or the search for meaningful connection. To further my curatorial research, I will analyse documents and artworks from Venice that reflect the city's long-standing role as a centre of cross-national exchange. This approach draws on my art historical interest in cross-cultural encounters and supports my current academic research on the lack of sense of belonging as a condition that has existed for centuries.

The gathered materials will form a continuously expanding archive created by people who are willingly far from their homes in search for their place in the world. The shared experiences by the participants will form an exhibition that prioritises reflection and offers a structure where they can recognise the commonality of their experiences.

The project is in close conversation with Koyo Kouoh's Biennale vision, which calls for the visibility of emotions related to "minor keys." Echoes of Absence reflects the search for belonging as a quiet, yet widespread contemporary issue. It creates a reflective archive in which contemporary dislocation is linked to historical experiences.



Mobolaji Babalola

MA Interior Design
London Metropolitan University

@bfixedit_

I am a mechanical engineer, set designer and builder studying MA Interior Design at London Metropolitan University. I have a passion for storytelling, particularly illuminating the lives of black women across the diaspora. Living across Nigeria, the UK and the USA has enriched my perspective on blackness and womanhood and how they are experienced across different contexts. I extend this to my work by referencing these aspects of my identity.

The vibrancy of colours in Nigeria, the appreciation for theatre in the UK and the drive for social and cultural change in the USA. As an immigrant who recently received citizenship, I experience a disconnect with family and my original country that I fill by collecting objects and trinkets that spark a sense of home. I wish to explore how we create belonging through material culture and how these practices speak to identity.

My project explores how immigrants create home, identity and form a new sense of culture through collected objects. This connects to Lubaina Himid's work, which uses storytelling and historical research to preserve overlooked narratives and challenge dominant histories about Black figures, particularly Black women, in the West.

During my month in Venice, I will document and analyse the homemaking practices of Fellows and Venice's local and migrant communities. I will conduct informal interviews with other Fellows about their meaningful objects, creating a shared archive of experiences. Venice, as a city built on migration, trade and cultural exchange, provides the perfect backdrop to explore how we create belonging in unfamiliar places. I will connect with creative practitioners at La Biennale and participating pavilions to understand how different cultural backgrounds influence our relationships with objects and space.

Using photography, sketches and written documentation, I will create a visual research archive. Drawing on Sherry Turkle's concept of evocative objects and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's research, I will analyse how objects function as bridges between past and present.

This project fits with my MA in Interior Design where I am learning to apply research to design problems. I want to use the knowledge of others to drive my design choices when designing for briefs involving people, like music videos or photoshoots. Understanding how people in Venice use objects to build identity and belonging will inform how I create immersive environments that tell overlooked stories. This month will help me develop research methods for future design projects.



Oindrilla Sinha

MA User Experience Design

UAL London College of Communication

I am a UX designer and artist from India, passionate about exploring how people experience the world differently. My work spans designing for both digital and physical experiences. During my MA in User Experience Design at UAL, I've embraced experimental approaches: working with materials, movement, accessibility and sensory experiences, to ask questions like, "why does what we're designing matter?" These explorations have deepened my understanding of human behavior and the ways context shapes perception.

As a brown South Asian woman with a bachelor's degree in social science, I am particularly drawn to decolonized approaches to design, considering cultural, social, and embodied perspectives in both technological and physical spaces. My interests aligns closely with the Venice Biennale 2026's themes of reimagining human connection and collective experience, inspiring me to contribute to projects that foreground empathy, cultural plurality, and the transformative power of creative practices.

My project will investigate how sensory experiences, with touch, rhythm, and spatial awareness, operate as a universal language for cultivating empathy and connection within multicultural contexts. The Venice Biennale, as a globally convergent site of movement and encounter, offers a compelling setting to observe how people communicate through gesture, attention, and presence. I aim to study subtle, intentional movements that signal intimacy and collective awareness: how strangers pause together before an artwork, negotiate spatial boundaries, or experience fleeting moments of shared attunement. Central to this inquiry is an interest in how non-verbal, sensory communication enables belonging across linguistic and cultural divides.

I plan to draw inspiration from artists who explore the sensory and spatial dimensions of connection, translating emotion and proximity into embodied experience. I'm mainly drawn to Lubaina Himid's work, particularly her explorations of identity, memory, and belonging through sound, performance, and materiality. I also plan to study pavilions such as the Philippines' Sea of Love: A History of Movement, Belgium's It Never SSSST, and Luxembourg's explorations of bodily space, which approach intimacy, migration, and shared emotion through the body and environment.

My practice lies at the intersection of sensory and experience design, shaped by the experimental pedagogy of the UX Design programme at UAL, where I work across materiality, movement, and spatial interaction. As a South Asian practitioner living in London, I'm acutely aware of the subtle emotional negotiations that emerge in multicultural environments. These lived experiences inform my inquiry into how sensory design can bridge difference and foster collective understanding.



I am an Afro-Caribbean-Scottish creative, with a long-established passion for creating unique human-led experiences and connecting different cultures and communities. I believe strongly in the power of human interaction, and I strive every day to build a global, multicultural community where we can all embrace and celebrate our uniqueness, and express ourselves in a safe and supportive environment.

Through contemporary methods of primary research, I will draw comparisons between the history of Venice and my hometown of Greenock, as well as my ancestral origins of the West Indies, highlighting the complex and often conflicting nature of being a post-colonial descendant within civilisations that profited from empire and the slave trade. I will challenge the biased leanings and misinformation which is commonplace within predominantly white Western narratives, with the intention of positively promoting the reclamation of our identities and roles in shaping great civilisations, as persons of colour.

I plan to collaborate with my fellow creatives to work towards realising a series of physical works and publications that explore these themes, with a specific focus on Venetian maritime heritage and how human migration and resultant multiculturalism has influenced modern-day Venice – a cultural and creative heartbeat of Central Europe. Having previously visited Venice, with this project as the catalyst, I always intended to return, as I was deeply moved and inspired by the city's past, present, and future dynamics. As a young creative on the cusp of my breakthrough, I was awe-struck upon visiting the Biennale, the Uffizi and the Guggenheim collection, feeling incredibly lucky to witness such a vast array of artistic masterpieces in person.

As a working-class creative who has worked extremely hard to be where I am today, I am positive that this truly life-changing opportunity will serve as the next step in launching my artistic career and is one which I would grasp with both hands, and be forever grateful for.

Ronan Deane Donnachie

BA Fine Art Photography
Glasgow School of Art

ronandeanedonnachie.uk



Ruby Walters

BA Art History and Visual Culture University of Exeter

@rj_portfolio23

I am passionate about the visual arts and currently study Art History and Visual Culture at the University of Exeter. Before university, I completed an Art and Design Foundation Diploma, developing my own practice, exploring different mediums and discovering a love for figurative painting. Though my focus is now primarily academic, I continue to sketch and paint as a way to observe and understand the world, which sustains my creative and observational skills.

In 2025, I was selected for the university's Pathways to Arts, Culture and Heritage programme, undertaking an internship with Somerset Art Works, gaining experience in arts administration, workshop facilitation and public engagement. I volunteer at Phoenix Arts Centre, Exeter and Victoria Art Gallery, Bath, deepening my understanding of audience engagement and accessibility. These experiences have strengthened my aspiration to work within the public arts sector, championing creativity, inclusion and the visibility of underrepresented voices, particularly women artists.

In her Great Women Artists interview, Himid said, '[my] work doesn't come alive until people are bringing their own lives to the room, bringing their own stories to my story... even though it looks like a very passive thing, the way that people perambulate around the white cube... they absolutely are performers, within the play, either backstage or front-stage of whatever play or performance I've set up.' Working within the British Pavilion is a unique opportunity to be in the front row for this 'play' and I would aim to capture the experience and be part of the conversation through my own work.

During my month in Venice, I would develop a visual and written field study documenting my experiences. Inspired by Lubaina Himid's use of narrative and theatre, I would create a mixed-media portfolio combining sketches, collected materials and reflective writing to capture how visitors engage with the exhibition and the space.

This project builds on both my academic studies and my creative practice. By observing and recording audience interactions with the artworks, I aim to explore how art, space and storytelling intersect to create shared experiences. The portfolio would serve as a layered, reflective artefact, recording the Biennale and the British Pavilion as a site of global artistic exchange and demonstrating how Himid's work develops and sustains a conversation with her audience. My goal is to create a meaningful record that communicates the energy, dialogue and learning that occurs when art is experienced collectively.



Saeed Hiran Warsame

Ealing Council

I am a media producer and cultural organiser whose work centres on community storytelling and accessible creative experiences. Through DIAXPORA, a peer-led collective and registered CIC, I focus on amplifying neurodiverse and diasporic voices. Our platform DIAXPORA.FM uses immersive audio, sound design, and sensory-aware curation to make cultural spaces feel welcoming and representative. My recent project, DIAXPORA's Guide to Autism, explored how sound can challenge stigma and open new forms of understanding.

Alongside this, I worked as part of the media and production team for New Gen Festival, coordinating tech teams and documenting youth-led cultural programming. This experience strengthened my commitment to visitor engagement and creative environments that empower emerging communities.

During my residency month, I would like to develop a project titled "Echoes of Belonging: A Co-Designed Audio-Poetry Map of the Biennale." The project would invite Fellows, Pavilion staff, visiting artists, and members of the public to collaborate in creating short audio or written poetic reflections inspired by the British Pavilion, Lubaina Himid's 2026 commission, and their own experience of Venice. Using simple prompts rooted in accessibility and sensory awareness, contributors would co-design an evolving "map" of voices — a collective reflection exploring belonging, identity, and cultural encounter within La Biennale.

The project would prioritise co-design, collaboration, generosity, and interdisciplinary practice, blending sound, poetry, oral history, and visitor engagement. It would be lightweight and realistic within the Fellowship's time structure, with contributions gathered informally throughout invigilation hours and peer interactions.

This project builds directly on my work with DIAXPORA, where I centre community-led storytelling, neurodiverse perspectives, and accessible creative expression. My recent move into poetry has expanded my approach to narrative and listening, making this project a natural extension of my creative and research interests.

"Echoes of Belonging" would create a bridge between Venice and UK-based communities by forming a collaborative archive that I would later develop with DIAXPORA participants. On returning, I would host a small workshop or listening event, inviting my community to respond, add their own "echoes," and shape the final public-facing piece. The project's value lies in its reciprocity — offering an accessible creative entry point for visitors in Venice while generating a shared cultural conversation that continues meaningfully back in the UK.



Silvia Paciaroni
PhD Philosophy
King's College London

@silviapaciaroni

I am a Philosophy PhD student exploring the relationship between art and knowledge, with a view to explicating art's social and educational value. My project focuses on art's cognitive value, especially how art can communicate the artist's worldview. I am interested in how artists express diverse experiences through their practice, and how that can educate audiences in topics like equality, identity, and our relationship to the world.

Because I believe the arts are essential to a rich and meaningful life, I am passionate about promoting free and accessible audience engagement with them. I have worked particularly in the visual arts. At the National Portrait Gallery in London, I helped visitors navigate the exhibitions. I have also written articles for CasildART, a company showcasing contemporary Black art. For over two years, I have been editor and contributor at Oxford Public Philosophy, whose mission is to make philosophy accessible to all.

Inspired by the themes of *In Minor Keys* aforementioned, my project will curate a series of case studies across the Exhibition exemplifying the idea that artists can communicate a worldview through their work. I will focus on one work per week: the work of Lubaina Himid and her representation of the Black experience, Turkey's Nilbar Güres, whose "poetic universes" explore identity and gender, India's indigenous art and Iceland's Ásta Fanney Sigurðardóttir and her work invoking spiritual dimensions.

The project will take the form of a series of accessible articles that can spark reflections on the educational power of art and its impact on social change. The articles will take the shape of a philosophical, reflective journal including descriptions of selected works, interpretations, and insights from both artists and visitors. It will be presented as a co-created collaboration between myself, my multiple interlocutors, and the artworks themselves, and will document the ephemeral community produced by the Biennale.

By reflecting on art as both the meeting point between artist and audience and as a vehicle for knowledge, I will analyse how artists from different cultures use their practice to communicate their perspectives. This is especially relevant to my research as I am investigating how artworks can express worldviews, and how art can offer a distinctive kind of understanding, such as what it means for someone *to be in the world*. These case studies will be essential in strengthening my argument that art can uniquely communicate someone's way of being in the world.



I am a textile and surface design student from India, currently studying my master's at Birmingham City University. I come from a strong art background, and I have always been passionate about textiles, craft traditions, and how storytelling can be expressed through material and surface.

My work combines drawing, weaving, printing, and fabric manipulation. I am especially interested in how traditional craft practices, such as Banarasi weaving and block printing, can be understood in a contemporary context. I believe that culture, craft, and design carry deep social and educational value, and they help people connect with history, memory, and identity.

I also enjoy creating work that engages visitors emotionally through texture, colour, and narrative. I am excited about the Venice Biennale Fellowship because it connects art, culture, education, and public engagement areas that inspire me and shape my practice.

During my month in Venice, I would like to develop a small research-based creative project called "*Threads of Conversations*." The idea is to collect short visual and written responses from visitors, artists, and Fellows about how they experience the British Pavilion and the wider Biennale. These responses could be quick drawings, word associations, colour choices, or small emotional impressions. I will carry a small sketchbook and simple materials so that people can easily participate.

I will then translate these shared responses into a series of textile-inspired visual maps or patterns that reflect collective experience like a woven structure where every person adds a "thread." This project values co-design, collaboration, and cross-cultural exchange. It allows me to connect with the Venice community, other Fellows, Biennale visitors, and people from different disciplines in a simple but meaningful way.

This project connects strongly to my academic and creative practice, which focuses on storytelling through textiles, community memory, and how people emotionally respond to material and space. My previous work with Banarasi weaving, block printing, and sketch-based textiles often explores how individual stories can be combined into a shared narrative.

I feel the Biennale is a global meeting point, and this project will help me understand how audiences engage with contemporary art and how emotions can be captured through visual language. After returning to the UK, I hope to share these collective "threads" with my BCU community and develop them further into a collaborative textile piece or workshop.

Srushti Sabale
MA Fashion & Textile Design
Birmingham City University



Sydney Alderman
BA Fine Art
London Metropolitan University

@Sydney.janea



A life of chronic illness shapes my practice, and view of the world, being attuned to what is unseen. Which is why Lubaina Himid's work resonates strongly with me in its quest to uncover marginalized histories. I am fascinated by how Himid's work speaks to a relationship between a physical item and its potential to perform. My own work has recently transformed into a blend of performative and interactive sculpture.

Spending weekends training in the Sea Cadets, and taking part in weeklong voyages, taught me early on how shared responsibility can bind a community together. Every weekend I met new people, environments and situations. These experiences nurtured my confidence and collaborative spirit, qualities I hope to bring to and grow within this fellowship.

The chance to take part in an international cultural exhibition will be invaluable to inspire my practice and find my place within the art world, where I hope to pursue meaningful a career.

My proposal is to respond to the Biennale's theme, "In Minor Keys", by exploring the unspoken struggle of accessibility within the architectural spaces of Venice. I will create temporary, site-specific obstructions that translate invisible architectural barriers into visible interruptions.

As an able-bodied presenting individual, living with chronic illness, my struggle with architecture sits between visibility and invisibility, an ongoing tension in my work. Venice, whose history and beauty are inseparable from its barriers, becomes a living case study for this.

I will re-imagine Venice through this lens by photographically documenting the interventions. Meanwhile, I will be speaking with fellows, visitors and practitioners about their experiences of exclusion and inviting them to reinterpret or remake these installations. How people navigate or resist the work will shape its social value, their reactions become part of the research. The project echoes Lubaina Himid's attention to invisible issues and the political charge of the subtle. It will be interesting to observe how the work initiates conversations about access, perhaps evolving into a durational, obstacle course, asking the audience to experience them physically.

This project extends the core of my practice, which examines how invisible disabilities shape our relationship to the world and the body as an unreliable vessel. Venice provides a rare opportunity to move this inquiry from the studio into a complex, public, and historically charged environment. I hope this work evolves performatively in some way as I have discussed and I can continue this evolution on return to the UK.



I am an emerging creative practitioner and recent MA Photojournalism and Documentary Photography graduate with a passion for socially engaged visual culture, collaborative learning, and community engagement. Through founding Najma Collective, a collaborative platform for creative fundraising initiatives, I have led projects that bring together fundraising, design, and exhibition curation, while building partnerships with organisations such as ActionAid. My MA practice included producing a photobook exploring Indo-Caribbean heritage and the history of indentured labour, curating public exhibitions, and carrying out image research and spatial design. I have long been inspired by Lubaina Himid's practice, particularly the ways her work creatively sheds light on colonial history and slavery—an influence I aim to reflect in my own commitment to uncovering marginalised narratives.

Inspired by Lubaina Himid's work addressing racism, colonial histories, and climate change, I propose a photography and participatory storytelling project with the migrant choir Voci dal Mondo in Mestre, Venice's mainland borough. The choir brings together Bangladeshi, West African, and Chinese migrants, alongside Venetian families navigating urban displacement and the city's "Disneyfication." Through documenting rehearsals, performances, and community life, I aim to explore how climate change, migration, and historical legacies intersect in this often-overlooked part of Venice.

The project will be co-designed with choir members and could also involve collaboration with other Venice Fellows. Workshops and photographic sessions will invite participants to contribute reflections, stories, and creative responses, producing a visual anthology that foregrounds voices, agency, and shared authorship. I will share the documentation directly with choir members throughout the process, ensuring their perspectives shape the work. I hope my multilingual skills in Arabic, Spanish, French, and developing Italian will also support inclusive engagement and cross-cultural dialogue.

This project builds on my MA research into Indo-Caribbean heritage, colonial histories, and socially-engaged visual culture, extending these interests internationally while engaging with climate-driven migration and racialized social inequalities.

Tara Lumley-Savile

MA Photojournalism and Documentary Photography
UAL London College of Communication

@taralumleyy



Growing up in Taipei, a city shaped by its own lagoon history, has made me sensitive to how water-based geographies influence cultural and artistic ecosystems - a perspective that informs my approach to Venice.

My long-term practice of oil painting first guided me into the world of visual art and developed the sensitivity that underpins how I observe and interpret artistic forms today.

During my internship at Hong-Gah Museum in Taipei, working closely with artists and curators and conducting interviews nurtured a deeper care for how institutions shape visitor experience and how artistic practices circulate across different cultural contexts. It also strengthened my interest in using writing and photography to observe and interpret cultural environments. These experiences have shaped my interest in the intersections of place, ecology, and artistic practice, which align closely with the Fellowship's emphasis on visual art and collaborative engagement.

My project is to create a contemporary "isolario" — a contemporary "island book". Historically, isolarii were hybrid books that emerged in the Mediterranean world, especially in Florence and Venice, between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. They combined maps, local descriptions, travel accounts and encyclopedic ordering, using one island after another as a way to understand the world. They were both the product of a growing geographical curiosity and devices that further stimulated the reader's curiosity about the world.

What draws me to this form is its curiosity-driven way of looking. Moving from Taiwan to the UK and now to Venice, I feel that my life has always unfolded between different "island conditions". It was never having everything figured out that allowed me to keep starting over, but rather a curiosity that made me willing to enter unfamiliar languages, cities and relationships. In Venice, I want to work with handwriting, routes, images, moments of staying, and first-hand observation to create my own contemporary isolario: a life-map that keeps expanding as long as I keep moving.

Tina Wu
MA Museum Studies
University of Leicester

@tinawu_9.20 / @http._.ccw



I am a trans, queer and neurodivergent artist living in Leeds. As a very creatively driven person, my hobbies include many crafts such as weaving, knitting, printing, jewellery-making, graphic design, drag performance and engraving. I also run events in Leeds with a focus on creating inclusive spaces for connection and creative collaboration that are tailored to the needs of my local queer community, so I am interested in exploring how I can facilitate engagement through a range of situations and activities.

My artistic research interrogates the material frameworks of knowledge, exploring hand-weaving as an alternative mode of documentation that opposes the conventions of Western knowledge and the velocity of information in the Digital Age. The Biennale theme, In Minor Keys, is very significant to my creative practice, which adopts textile processes usually dismissed as artisanal and decorative, and values an Indigenous model of knowledge as terrestrial, subjective, affective, and sensory.

Inspired by ideas of decolonising knowledge, uncovering silenced narratives and inhabiting in-between spaces in the work of Koyo Kouoh and Lubaina Himid, I would like to develop my use of weaving as a mode of documenting that opposes the conventions of Western knowledge, re-privileges the language of materials, finds value in the overlooked, and acknowledges the significance of textile as a site of cultural memory and knowledge. This would involve discovering and documenting the material environment of Venice using my established methods of physically weaving with, around or through found objects and fixed features, as well as a new approach of creating woven forms or weaving drafts based on my sensory experiences of an environment. For these methods I would study and take inspiration from the textile collections and traditional weaving practices in Venice. I would also collaborate with other Fellows to consider how our different mediums and processes can be explored as resistant modes of documentation and examine how these different languages diverge and coalesce when responding to the same site.

In the wider context of my research into resistant approaches to knowledge, this project would serve as a distinct case study for the durational documentation of a new location, but also as a space to reconsider my general practice removed from my normal routine and environment, allowing for a renewed and more open perspective that would help me to escape convention and be more immersed in my work, so that I can return with new insights and ideas.

Tom Hardwick
MA Fine Art
York St John University

@tom.hrdwick



I'm Scottish/Danish and I grew up in Kenya. I am an artist with a Foundation Diploma in Art & Design from City & Guilds of London Art School, and am now studying Art History at the University of St Andrews.

This week alone I studied Critical Race Theory in one class, and 12th century French Gothic architecture in another. These are elements that often feel difficult to connect and yet are deeply emmeshed. It's such questions of identity and converging themes that I find most interesting in both my ongoing creative practice and academic studies: how art can bridge such divides to create shared conversations, reconciling so many different parts into a singular whole?

It's this power of art to form windows into and between seemingly disparate lives to reveal connections that were always there that I hope my future life in the arts can continue to probe.

My current creative practice explores what it means to feel at home – how spaces shape identity and the commonality we can all find across this through familiar everyday moments. My ongoing *Window Series* examines the curiosity we feel towards the lives of others and the spaces they inhabit through the windows I pass, photograph and study. By reinterpreting these images, be that through print, drawing, installation or video, I explore how we can inhabit someone else's idea of home through a shared nostalgia that transcends the walls and domestic spaces of our homes.

In Venice, I'd like to expand this project into a new chapter that responds to the city's unique tension between permanence and transience – a historic environment lived in by modern people, a rich local culture and tradition yet constantly reshaped by millions of tourists each year. I plan to explore the city through its windows: observing, documenting, and reflecting on how residents and visitors exist within shared spaces. Grounded in observation, unfolding through walking, photographing, sketching – the projects flexible, process-led nature is well suited to balance alongside invigilation. Such allowance for change also accounts for conversations along the way, whether from my peers or the strangers whose spaces I seek to explore.

This project sits within my wider interest in how art can transcend the boundaries we often impose onto ourselves. Venice offers an ideal setting to examine belonging in a city simultaneously lived-in and looked-at – an echo of my ongoing exploration of identity through place.

Tulla Burnet
MA Art History
University of St Andrews

tullaburnet_art | @tullaburnet



I am a Fine Art student at Newcastle University, originally from Jaipur, India, working across painting, drawing, and material-based practices, often extending into curation and participatory work. My practice is rooted in an exploration of memory, migration, and the shifting nature of identity, drawing from mythology, personal histories, and the lived experiences of women across cultures.

Through my work, I am interested in how stories are carried, translated, and reimagined as they move between geographies, languages, and bodies. I approach making as both an intuitive and research-led process, allowing materials, conversations, and environments to shape and disrupt the direction of my work. My experience working within galleries, exhibitions, and public-facing roles has also informed a strong interest in audience engagement and the ways in which art can create dialogue beyond the studio.

I often gather fragments from lived encounters, conversations, and observations, which are then translated into layered visual and textual forms. These fragments become a way of navigating in-betweenness: between cultures, identities, and temporalities.

Rather than presenting fixed outcomes, I am interested in creating evolving bodies of work that remain open, porous, and shaped by interaction that offers viewers not just an image, but an experience of connection, reflection, and recognition.

For this project "*Echoes Between Water*", I bring a research-led and dialogue-driven approach, positioning people, and place not as subjects, but as active collaborators within the work. I will be developing an evolving body of work that gathers fragments of conversations, fleeting encounters, and lived observations, translating them into layered visual and textual forms.

These fragments are not treated as fixed narratives, but as shifting traces, allowing meaning to remain open, unstable, and in flux. The work unfolds as an ongoing archive of voices, impressions, and sensorial experiences, shaped in real time through interaction and presence.

What I ultimately present is not a singular outcome, but a porous and accumulative space—an attempt to hold the fluid, often intangible experience of existing between cultures, geographies, and narratives, where identity is continuously negotiated, remembered, and reimagined.

Vinita Gurjar
BA Fine Art
Newcastle University

@vinitaskasanaart



I am a PhD candidate in Italian Studies at the School of Modern Languages and Cultures at Durham University. My research explores how contemporary Mediterranean women writers from both the Eastern and Western shores of the Mediterranean redefine motherhood and womanhood as shared, transregional, and transcultural experiences. I examine how their matrifocal narratives function as forms of sociocultural resistance, expanding notions of identity and creativity.

Although my work focuses on literary texts, I consistently engage with visual tropes and signifiers embedded within them. Growing up in Iran, surrounded by the visual storytelling traditions of miniature painting and calligraphy, I developed a deep fascination with the interplay between image and word. My father's storytelling—drawing on *The Thousand and One Nights*—and early visits to art galleries taught me that art can nurture the imagination. I aim to bring this intercultural and feminist perspective to the Venice Fellowships community, exploring how art and literature can foster collective understanding across cultures.

During my residency, I propose to develop a project titled *Water and Word: Mapping Feminine Narrative and Womanhood in Venice*. This project examines how women—artists, writers, and residents, both local and with migrant backgrounds—share stories about their identities in a city shaped by layered cultural and artistic influences. Through brief interviews guided by the question, “How does living and creating in Venice shape the way you see yourself as a woman and as an artist?”, I will collect personal narratives that reflect the city's influence on women's sense of self and creativity.

Alongside these conversations, I will photograph Venice's bridges, courtyards, and waterways as visual metaphors for connection, transition, and transformation. This project extends my doctoral research on contemporary women writers who depict subversive forms of motherhood and feminine memory, translating these textual explorations into lived, intercultural experience.

I am particularly inspired by Lubaina Himid's practice of transforming overlooked histories into spatial and participatory narratives. Her work demonstrates that storytelling is not only written but also embodied and shared. By combining literary and visual approaches, *Water and Word* seeks to create an interdisciplinary dialogue between scholarship, art, and everyday feminine experience in Venice.

Yasaman Taheri

PhD Italian Studies (Modern Languages and Cultures)
Durham University

[linkedin.com/in/yasaman-taheri1994literature](https://www.linkedin.com/in/yasaman-taheri1994literature)



I am a multidisciplinary artist, writer, filmmaker, mentor and academic whose practice moves fluidly across sound, visual culture and community education. I explore the cultural and social value of the “everyday,” often through visual-anthropological experimentation that bridges visual art, performance and cultural storytelling. My filmmaking has screened at the Turner Gallery, Darkroom Festival, UNTHINKABLE and unda, celebrating the strange, tender quirks of Britain and the Nigerian Diaspora.

I have performed and presented work at the Barbican, V&A, Somerset House and Whitechapel Gallery, with international gigs from Estonia to Berlin. These experiences reflect my research into how audiences engage with culture across different spaces and how artistic environments shape learning and accessibility. My passions connect directly to the Fellowship’s focus on visual art, performance, education, visitor engagement and culture’s wider social value. This is what I would like to expand on during the fellowship.

"Ephemeral Cartographies" will be an experimental exploration of urban and social textures through sound, text, and installation. During the residency, the project will capture the rhythms, gestures, and everyday interactions of the city - its human and spatial ecologies - translating them into layered audio-visual sketches that foreground impermanence, chance encounters, and overlooked narratives. A central component involves disrupting conventional mappings of gallery space, challenging hierarchical arrangements, and inviting reflection on visibility, presence, and absence. Combining field recordings, text fragments, pre-colonial style visual mapping through cloth weaving, and sculptural interventions using everyday objects, the work creates an investigative environment in which physical and social geographies are interrogated.

Embedded in my PhD in Anthropology, this project furthers my research on spatial relations and power dynamics within creative spheres, and how cultural infrastructures mediate visibility, accessibility, and hierarchies. During the residency, I will engage with the Biennale's national pavilions - including British and Nigerian - to interrogate how colonial histories and national narratives shape art, representation, and identity. Disability and access will be central, exploring who is present, who is rendered invisible, and how social structures govern participation.

Drawing on Lubaina Himid’s work on social movements, the Black body, and cultural storytelling, *"Ephemeral Cartographies"* extends my visual-anthropological practice internationally, fostering reflection on cultural memory, representation, and the politics of space in dialogue with the Biennale theme “In Minor Keys.” Venice - with its dense urban fabric, uneven accessibility, and layered histories, becomes both laboratory and collaborator, shaping the creative and research outcomes.

Yewande Adeniran

MRes in Anthropology
UCL

[linkedin.com/in/yasaman-taheri1994literature](https://www.linkedin.com/in/yasaman-taheri1994literature)



Yusuke Kuriki

MA Fine Art

UAL Decolonising the Arts Institute



Growing up in Japan, I often felt pressure to fit into what was considered “normal.” Yet my grandmother, who migrated from Korea during its wartime colonisation, carried a quieter history. The food she cooked, the metal chopsticks she insisted on, the rituals she kept—these gestures revealed how everyday objects hold memory. Because she never explained their meaning, I learned that understanding requires attentiveness; we must lean in, notice, and listen. This shaped my sensitivity to the subtle registers that *In Minor Keys* invites us to attune to.

Now an MA Fine Art candidate at UAL Central Saint Martins, I work across sculpture, painting, and multisensory installation to explore latent histories, agency, and relational presence of materials. I’m passionate about public-facing creative work and art’s social value as a space for shared reflection. The Venice Fellowships Programme aligns deeply with my ethos, and I’m thrilled to contribute to its collaborative environment.

During my residency, I will develop two interconnected research projects responding to *In Minor Keys*. I am inspired by Lubaina Himid’s approach of “inner listening,” paying attention to subtle, persistent elements within history. Similarly, I hope to experiment with attentive approaches in my own research. My research will explore Venice’s material double life: the visible versus the quiet. The first project focuses on Venetian glass, celebrated as a symbol of luxury and beauty yet carrying entangled histories of labor and trade. Through fieldwork in Murano, archival research, and observation of interactions with glass, I will trace how the material bears memory and power, exploring how clarity can conceal structures of production and desire. The second project extends this inquiry into the relationship between Venice’s tourist islands and the mainland.

By comparing architectural fragments, industrial residues, and oral histories from residents, I will explore parallels between the island of spectacle and the grounded mainland, where everyday life and subtle histories persist beyond the gaze of tourism. These inquiries will be documented in creative forms — including drawing, painting, photography, audio, video, field notes, and archival collections — and will inform a series of research-driven artworks produced after returning to the UK. Collaboration and community engagement are central: by working with Fellows, La Biennale practitioners, and local residents, I hope to foster inclusion, shared creativity, and a more reflective, attentive way of being in the world.

- ❖ **Sophie Lucas**
Venice Partnerships & Programme Manager (Programme Lead)
sophie.lucas@britishcouncil.org
- ❖ **Becky Schutt**
Induction Facilitator
becky@businessclass.events
- ❖ venicebiennale.britishcouncil.org/fellowship