

Venice Art Biennale 2019: Steward-Research Fellowships



The British Council is inviting applications for Steward-Research Fellowships to take place during the Venice Art Biennale 2019.

The Venice Fellowships programme is a unique opportunity for students, graduates and researchers to spend a month in Venice during the world's most important art and architecture biennales.

Successful candidates will spend a maximum of 30 days in Venice (with the exception of the first group who attend for a few days more over vernissage). They will participate for approximately three days per week as an invigilator in the British Pavilion with the remaining time used for study and research in response to ideas within *May You Live in Interesting Times* and/or The British Pavilion's exhibition of Cathy Wilkes.

BACKGROUND – THE VENICE BIENNALE

The 58th International Art Exhibition will run from **11 May to 24 November 2019** (8 to 10 May for the preview, with the first group of Fellows arriving for induction on Sunday 5 May).

Established in 1895, the Biennale Foundation is one of the most prestigious cultural institutions in the world and attracts an attendance today of over 300,000 visitors to its annual events. The Biennale takes place in two official sites in Venice: the Arsenale, which hosts the international exhibition, and the Giardini di Castello in the east of the city, which houses the national pavilions including the British Pavilion.

The 2019 Venice Biennale curator Ralph Rugoff has announced the title, ***May You Live in Interesting Times***. Titled after a counterfeit curse, Rugoff suggests that the exhibition will not have a theme per se, but will highlight a general approach to making art and a view of art's social function as embracing both pleasure and critical thinking.

“The exhibition takes seriously art’s potential as a method for looking into things we do not already know – things that may be off-limits, under-the-radar, or otherwise inaccessible. It will highlight artworks that explore the

interconnectedness of diverse phenomena, and that convey an affinity with the idea that everything connects with everything else.” (Please see the [Curatorial Statement](#) separately for full details).

BACKGROUND – CATHY WILKES



Cathy Wilkes, 'Untitled', 2012, mixed media. Image courtesy of MoMA PS1, photo by Pablo Enriquez

Artist Cathy Wilkes has been selected to represent Great Britain at the Art Biennale, with a major solo exhibition of new work at the British Pavilion curated by Zoe Whitley.

“First it is necessary to make an imaginative effort which runs contrary to the whole contemporary trend of the art world: it is necessary to see works of art as freed from all the mystique which is attached to them as property objects. It then becomes possible to see them as testimony to the process of their own making instead of as products; to see them in terms of action instead of finished achievement. The question: what went into the making of this? supersedes the collector’s question of: what is this?” – John Berger in ‘Success and Failure of Picasso’

“In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art” – Susan Sontag in ‘Against Interpretation’

Since the late 1990s, Glasgow-based Cathy Wilkes has built a considerable reputation for sculptural installations of profound and mysterious intensity, which often evoke interiors and places of loss and engage indirectly with open themes including empathy, care, grief and class. Cathy Wilkes insists on the private life of the artist, and questions how art can relate to human experience. Cathy Wilkes’s work is tender, intimate, autobiographical – yet universal. The fierce integrity of her work is widely acknowledged, and, in 2016, she was awarded the inaugural Maria Lassnig Prize – a prestigious honour to recognise the achievements of mid-career artists.

Wilkes is a respected artist who shuns conventional explanations of her work as well as standard gallery interpretation. What are the possibilities to bridge the gap between allowing the art to ‘speak for itself’ and answering questions the art will raise? What are the ways to privilege seeing and feeling above explaining and telling? And how can we explore the universal impulse to make?

The British Council is inviting creative and academic responses across disciplines which engage with these types of questions thrown up by both Cathy Wilkes’ work or broader Biennale themes.

VENICE STEWARD-RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS

For the Venice Art Biennale 2019 the British Council, in partnership with art and architecture schools and institutions from across the UK and internationally, is organising the fifth Venice Fellowships Programme. (Further details can be found in the pdf brochure [Venice Fellowships](#)).

Students, graduates and researchers from Programme Partners will be entitled to apply for one of 60-70 Steward-Research Fellowships provided they meet specific eligibility conditions laid out by the Venice Fellowships Partner institutions (see below).

Successful candidates will spend approximately 30 days (including an on-site induction day / handover with Fellows), in Venice as part of a group of up to ten individuals responsible for stewarding the British Pavilion and conducting a dedicated research or creative project.

STEWARD-INVIGILATION

The British Council owns the British Pavilion in Venice, commissions the exhibitions for the art and architecture biennales, and has responsibility for maintaining the building and safeguarding exhibitions.

For the duration of the Biennale we entrust safeguarding the exhibition to the care of the stewards, supervised at long distance by the British Council in London, and by the British Pavilion Head Stewards in Venice.

For approximately three to four days of the week, fellows will work on a rota system to steward the pavilion and engage visitors with the exhibition, with the remaining days dedicated to research.

STUDY-RESEARCH

The Venice Fellowships have been established to enrich the British Pavilion exhibition through research and discussion, and to extend its impact beyond Venice. Ralph Rugoff defined his vision for the Biennale as an experience of deep involvement, absorption, creative learning and discussion, and the Fellowships will play a key role in responding to this call.

Successful candidates will spend three to four days per week undertaking individual research projects. We anticipate research projects to tie in with ideas within 'May Your Live in Interesting Times' and/or The British Pavilion's exhibition of Cathy Wilkes.

Fellows will devise a research or creative project proposal in advance of their travel to Venice, in consultation with their partner institutions, to be presented and discussed with the British Council and peers at the induction school in February 2019. In consultation with their partner institution, some candidates may wish to use this study opportunity to contribute to academic work, such as an existing project or a dissertation – although there is no obligation to do so.

Whilst in Venice, Fellows will discuss how their research has evolved during a midway discussion with their peers, and are encouraged to continue to speak with their institution contacts and take up further opportunities for learning through activities in Venice.

The research is intended to be cumulative and to contribute to an evolving programme of responses to the Biennale exhibition. The British Council encourages Fellows and their partner institutions to communicate and present their projects when they return.

TIMING & LOGISTICS

The Biennale opens with Pre-Preview on 7 May, and with Vernissage on 8, 9 and 10 May. The exhibition is open to the general public from 11 May until 24 November 2019.

Successful applicants will be responsible for making their own travel and accommodation arrangements.

Fellows will receive a grant of £1,600 to cover travel, accommodation and living costs while in Venice, and to support their research. This grant is funded by their institution, with delivery of the programme by the British Council.

The group dates are as follows:

<u>Group 1</u> May/June	5 May – 5 June
<u>Group 2</u> June/July	5 June – 3 July
<u>Group 3</u> July/August	3 July – 1 August
<u>Group 4</u> August	1 August – 29 August
<u>Group 5</u> September	29 August – 28 September
<u>Group 6</u> September/ October	28 September – 26 October
<u>Group 7</u> October/ November	26 October – 24 November

**Please note the dates may shift a few days either side once we confirm teams and arrangements. Exact dates will be confirmed when successful candidates are appointed and agreements issued in early 2019.*

INDUCTION

All selected candidates will attend an induction course in London on **26 and 27 February 2019**.

Fellows will receive a programme of talks and workshops to provide training in:

- The curatorial programme for *Cathy Wilkes*
- Stewarding duties at the pavilion
- Access
- Communications and interpretation

- Research skills and programming
- Practicalities of living and working in Venice

Fellows will also have the opportunity to discuss their research project proposals with their peers and British Council team, and to hear from 2018 Fellows about their experience and research.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The following list is a draft, but gives an indication of the role and responsibilities involved:

Stewarding

- Invigilating the Pavilion – moving between internal and external spaces
- Welcoming visitors and handing out guides and information
- Taking an active role in engaging public and professional visitors with the exhibition including leading tours
- Assisting with delivery of events in the public programme if required
- Condition reporting exhibits and installations
- Reporting to the British Pavilion Head Stewards and London office
- Light cleaning and general upkeep of the Pavilion
- Liaising with Venice Biennale staff, caretaker and cleaners
- Capturing audience feedback
- Monitoring visitor numbers
- Facilitating access via chairlift and audio descriptive guide
- Representing the British Council in Venice with the utmost professionalism
- Any other duties as required

Research or Creative Project

- Attend both days of London Induction School in February 2019 and share initial research ideas
- A month prior to your departure for Venice, submit a research project summary setting out what you would like to research and how you will achieve your objectives within the circa 14 days available for study. (Please note, this brief should not be written as part of this application as this will develop once appointed)
- In Venice, undertake a short piece of site-specific or archival research that responds to the themes outlined above
- Share an updated research project outline midway through your time in Venice - this will be shared with your institution
- Exercise due care and attention when using archives, libraries, or any other facilities made available to you within the Fellowship Programme
- Where the invigilation rota allows, attend any lectures and talks arranged within the Programme
- Within one month of your return, submit a short (maximum 500 words) written and illustrated essay detailing your research, findings and conclusions. Other formats of research presentation are encouraged – particularly for creative projects - but should be discussed and agreed in advance with the British Council team
- Disseminate the results of your Fellowship widely, ensuring you, your institution, peers and wider public achieve the maximum benefit of the Fellowship

APPLICATION CRITERIA

This opportunity will suit reliable and organised candidates who are good communicators. Your role will be as part of a self-sufficient team. Stewards are responsible for the care of the pavilion and the installation on a daily basis and must be confident in this task. Applications should demonstrate that candidates have high levels of initiative and problem solving.

Candidates should also demonstrate an ability to respond to the Biennale exhibition and develop creative and engaging projects. Successful applicants will have an active interest in art and culture, and in gaining experience of exhibition work and public programming.

Some knowledge of Italian and other foreign languages is desirable but not essential.

Candidates must be ready to participate in invigilation hours (10.00 – 18.00 daily), for up to three to four days a week. The Biennale (Giardini and Arsenale) is closed on the majority of Mondays.

Applicants should indicate which months they are available to travel to Venice, also stating, where appropriate, their order of preference. The final decision on timing rests with the British Council.

Candidates should convincingly demonstrate their suitability with reference to the responsibilities and criteria outlined above, and also demonstrate their interest in Cathy Wilkes and the Biennale.

Successful candidates will act in the capacity as Steward-Research Fellows, ambassadors of their respective institutions, and of the British Council.

WHO CAN APPLY?

Fellowships are open to students that are currently studying at one of the Venice Fellowships 2018 partner institutions. Some institutions may open the opportunity to recent graduates and linked researchers, or artists and creatives involved in one of their programmes.

No application can be accepted by the British Council without prior approval by a valid Partner institution.

SELECTION PROCESS

The Partner institution will in the first instance check all applications received for eligibility and forward shortlisted nominations to the British Council.

The British Council will interview shortlisted candidates. The majority of interviews will take place in London between 10 December 2018 and 12 January 2019 (on-site at the British Council for residents within 2 hours from London and over Skype outside of London 2 hour radius). Should you be selected for interview you will receive at least 5 days advance notification.

The decision of the British Council is final. Successful applicants will be notified by early January 2019.

HOW TO APPLY

To apply for a position please send to your institution partnering with the British Council on this programme, a completed application form and a one-page CV (standard text format not image-led).

Closing date for applications to your institution is 10pm on **Sunday 9th December 2018**.

If you have any questions relating to the Fellowship Programme or application process, please either speak directly with your institution contact in the first instance, or email:

Genevieve Marciniak, Venice Fellowship Programme Manager at the British Council
E: genevieve.marciniak@britishcouncil.org

Key Documents for Reference

Venice Fellowships Brochure 2019

British Council Press Release announcing Cathy Wilkes as artist

2019 Biennale Curatorial Statement by Ralph Rugoff

Venice Fellowships Application Form 2019

Useful Websites

<https://design.britishcouncil.org>

www.britishcouncil.org/arts

www.britishcouncil.org/venicebiennale

<http://www.labiennale.org/en>