

Press release

British Council unveils new exhibition by Cathy Wilkes at 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

The British Council is delighted to unveil a brand-*new* body of work by artist Cathy Wilkes for the British Pavilion at this year's 58th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia.

Wilkes' exhibition for the Biennale Arte 2019 is bathed in natural Venetian daylight. The unadorned architecture of the British Pavilion provides the setting for an interconnected series of floor-bound sculptural installations, paintings and prints.

Through the measured process of creating her works, Wilkes experiments with all kinds of media and materials, and collects treasures and ingredients. Production - or what we see in the end - is the accumulation of all of these constituent parts. Her work recalls inchoate visions of interiors and places of loss, and meditates on the nature of love and the coexistence of life and death.

Her work also shows the disappearance and dematerialisation of life and the absence and anonymity of the author. Her works, which are all Untitled, render us all non-initiates; together we have equal capacity.

Emma Dexter, Commissioner of the British Pavilion and Director of Visual Arts at the British Council, says about the artist:

“The selection committee chose Cathy Wilkes for the fierce integrity of her work, alongside her growing international following. Her distinctive and highly personal sculptural installations evoke everyday rituals, while alluding to existential questions at the core of human existence, triggering complex new meanings and atmospherics within the grand domestic architecture of the British Pavilion.”

The exhibition was curated by Dr Zoe Whitley, Senior Curator at Hayward Gallery, Southbank Centre. Dr Whitley is the first open-call curator to be selected by the British Council to work alongside the artist on a British Pavilion exhibition, presenting a significant international opportunity for mid-career curators. About Cathy Wilkes, Dr Whitley says:

“Working with Cathy Wilkes has been enlightening. I respect her uncompromising vision as an artist even more profoundly, having witnessed the creation of this ambitious and deeply

felt body of work as it was taking shape. With an acute sensitivity to colour, composition and object placement, Cathy has truly transformed the British Pavilion.”

An illustrated book has been produced in partnership with HENI to coincide with the opening of the exhibition, designed by Yvonne Quirnbach and including texts by Cathy Wilkes and Dr Zoe Whitley.

Biography and selected exhibitions

Cathy Wilkes (b. 1966, Dundonald, Belfast, lives and works in Glasgow, UK) graduated with a BA from The Glasgow School of Art in 1988, and completed her MFA at the University of Ulster, Belfast in 1992.

Wilkes has produced an outstanding and unique body of work spanning 25 years, she is widely acknowledged as one of the most influential artists working in the UK today. She will represent Britain at the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia in 2019.

In 2016, she was the inaugural recipient of the Maria Lassnig Prize and presented the largest solo exhibition of her work to date at MoMA PS1, New York (2017-2018).

Selected solo exhibitions include: Yale Union, Portland (2018); MoMA PS1, New York (2017-2018); Xavier Hufkens, Brussels (2017); The Modern Institute, Glasgow (2016); Tate Liverpool, touring to LENTOS Kunstmuseum, Linz and Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach (2015 - 2016); Tramway, Glasgow (2014); Xavier Hufkens, Brussels (2013); The Modern Institute, Glasgow (2012); 'I Give You All My Money', The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, Chicago (2012); Gesellschaft Für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremen (2011); Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (2011); Kunstverein München e.V., Munich (2011); Aspen Art Museum, Aspen (2011); and 'Mummy's Here', Studio Voltaire, London (2009).

Wilkes was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2008. She represented Scotland in the 51st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia in 2005 as part of the exhibition 'Selective Memory', and was featured in 'The Encyclopedic Palace', the 55th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia's central exhibition in 2013.

Selected group exhibitions include: 'A Slight Ache', Chapter, Cardiff (2018); 'FOOD - Ecologies of the Everyday', the 13th Fellbach Triennial of Small-Scale Sculpture, Fellbach (2016); 'Mommy', Yale Union, Portland (2015); 'The Great Mother' (curated by Massimiliano Gioni) Palazzo Reale, Milan (2015); 'The Human Factor', The Hayward Gallery, London (2014); 'The Encyclopedic Palace', 55th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia, Venice (2013); 'Studio 58: Women Artists in Glasgow Since WWII', Mackintosh Museum, The Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow (2012); 'Abstract Resistance', Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis (2010); 'Selective Memory', Scotland + Venice, 51st International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia, Venice (2005); 'Selective Memory' was subsequently exhibited at Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh (2005).

Cathy Wilkes would like to thank The Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow and Xavier Hufkens, Brussels.

About Dr Zoe Whitley

Dr Zoe Whitley is Senior Curator at the Hayward Gallery, Southbank Centre, London. Prior to her role at the Hayward, she was Curator, International Art, at Tate Modern, where she co-curated the exhibition *Soul of a Nation*. Whitley has curated works by Jenny Holzer, Lubaina Himid and Isaac Julien, among others, and in 2013 conceived the exhibition *The Shadows Took Shape* in collaboration with the Studio Museum Harlem. Following an open call issued by the British Council, she is the first mid-career curator attached to the British Pavilion for the International Art Exhibition at La Biennale di Venezia.

Acknowledgements

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Commissioned by the British Council for the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, 2019. This presentation has been made possible through collaboration with The Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Full press pack, including images here: [link to follow](#)

Dates

The 58th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia opens to the public
11 May – 24 November 2019

Follow updates on the **#BritishPavilion** via: [TWITTER](#) and [INSTAGRAM](#)

For media enquiries regarding the British Council's commission for the British Pavilion at the 58th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia please contact:

Hayley Willis, Senior Media Officer, Arts: +44 (0) 203 285 3781/ +44 (0)7542 268184
hayley.willis@britishcouncil.org

EXHIBITION DETAILS

The British Pavilion is managed by the British Council Visual Arts Department.
Commissioner: Emma Dexter, Director of Visual Arts at British Council

For latest news on the commission: www.britishcouncil.org/visualarts

twitter.com/Brit_VisualArts

facebook.com/Arts.BritishCouncil

For British Council press office updates: twitter.com/@PressBritish

Address: British Pavilion, Giardini di Castello 30122

Exhibition dates: 11 May – 24 Nov 2019

Opening times: 10am-6pm Tuesday to Sunday. Closed on Mondays.

Vaporetto: Giardini

About the British Council

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We work with over 100 countries in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Last year we reached over 75 million people directly and 758 million people overall including online, broadcasts and publications. We make a positive contribution to the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. Founded in 1934 we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body. We receive 15 per cent core funding grant from the UK government.

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The British Council works in partnership with Arts Council of Wales and Creative Scotland to present the very best artistic and curatorial practice from the UK at La Biennale di Venezia. Across our presentations, we seek to broaden the international reach of our work, strengthen our professional networks, champion diversity and promote best practice in terms of accessibility and policies of inclusion.

The British Council supports *Scotland + Venice* and *Wales in Venice* at the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia.

Members of the British Pavilion Selection Committee For 2019

The British Council appoints a committee of leading arts professionals from across the UK to select the British representation for the Biennale Arte every two years. The British Pavilion selection committee for 2019:

- David A. Bailey, Director, International Curators Forum
- Anne Barlow, Artistic Director, Tate St Ives
- Fiona Bradley, Director, Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh
- Katy Freer, Exhibitions Officer, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea
- Martin Herbert, Writer and Critic
- Melanie Keen, Director, Iniva
- Hugh Mulholland, Senior Curator, The Mac, Belfast
- Sarah Munro, Director, BALTIC Centre of Contemporary Art, Gateshead
- Joe Scotland, Director, Studio Voltaire, London

Artists representing Britain have included: Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, Ben Nicholson, Anthony Caro, Bridget Riley, Chris Ofili, Richard Long, Frank Auerbach, Howard Hodgkin, Barry Flanagan, Anish Kapoor, Richard Hamilton, Rachel Whiteread, Leon Kossoff, Gary Hume, Mark Wallinger, Gilbert & George, Tracey Emin, Steve McQueen, Mike Nelson, Jeremy Deller, Sarah Lucas, and Phyllida Barlow (2017).

A full list of the artists who have represented Britain and descriptions of their work is available here: <https://venicebiennale.britishcouncil.org/history>

For further information please visit www.britishcouncil.org/venicebiennale