The Bahamas Pavilion
Biennale Arte 2026

La Biennale di Venezia
61. Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte
Partecipazioni Nazionali

Pavilion of The Bahamas at the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia presents *In Another Man's Yard: John Beadle, Lavar Munroe, and the Spirit of (Posthumous) Collaboration*, curated by Dr. Krista Thompson

Marking the second presentation of The Bahamas at the International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia following a 13-year hiatus, the Pavilion is an intergenerational dialogue between Bahamian artists John Beadle (1964–2024) and Lavar Munroe (b. 1982). Both artists' practices are grounded in the visual and social traditions of The Bahamas and the broader African diaspora, engaging in themes of collaboration, commemoration, and material transformation.

Beadle was a revered figure within The Bahamas' artistic community and an inspiration to many, including Munroe. He was part of a community of makers who create costumes for Junkanoo, the centuries-old biannual national processional festival, which he described as 'the cultural bedrock of The Bahamas'. Junkanoo informed his commitment to collaborative artmaking and his use of discarded materials such as cardboard, as seen in works such as *Cuffed, Held in Check* (2018) and *Body Space III: Under Lock and Key* (2012). Through these materials and recurring motifs seen throughout the exhibition—dysfunctional oars, mobile houses, and concealed cutlasses—he drew attention to people, things, and artistic processes often disregarded. Munroe has similarly worked at the intersection of Junkanoo and contemporary art, often using discarded cardboard and abandoned Junkanoo costumes.

The exhibition foregrounds Junkanoo's memorial and spiritual dimensions - when a member of its community passes, performers gather to honor the deceased. The Pavilion commemorates Beadle through *No Matter How Dreary and Gray, We People of Flesh and Blood Would Rather Live Here, Than in Another Man's Yard* (2026), an 11-panel monumental painting by Munroe depicting a memorial procession, based on photographs by Bahamian photographer Jackson Petit. This work extends Munroe's broader engagement with spiritual practices developed through recent trips to Tanzania, Senegal, and Zimbabwe. The exhibition features distinct sections devoted to Beadle and Munroe alongside collaborative works from the *Jammin* series (in honour of Jackson Burnside III and Brent Malone) (2014), which Beadle produced with Antonius Roberts and Stan Burnside as part of the Junkanoo-based Jammin collective. *However Long the Night, the Dawn Will Break* (2026) is a posthumous collaboration that sees Munroe incorporate materials recovered from Beadle's studio after his passing, including sail material from Haitian sloops. Munroe began this practice to honor his late father, creating works based on unrealized plans he had to collaborate with him and using materials related to his profession as a parasail operator.

Resonating with Biennale Arte 2026's overarching theme, *In Minor Keys*, envisioned by the late Koyo Kouoh, which celebrates "*artists who work at the boundaries of form and whose practices can be thought of as intricate melodies to be heard both collectively and on their own terms,*" Thompson's curatorial approach offers a distinctly Bahamian interpretation of this sentiment. The Pavilion highlights Beadle's and Munroe's use of discarded materials and collaborative processes to call attention to the hidden, the undervalued, "the minor keys," in society and in the art world.

A catalogue published by Skira features contributions from Dr. Christian Campbell, Amanda Coulson, John Cox and Tandazani Dhlakama and Dr. Krista Thompson.

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The 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia runs from May 9 to November 22, 2026

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Location: San Trovaso Art Space, Fondamenta Nani, Dorsoduro 947, 30123 Venice (near Accademia and Zattere)

Exhibition credits

Commissioner: John Cox
Deputy Commissioner/Producer: Amanda Coulson
Curator: Krista Thompson
Exhibitors: John Beadle; Lavar Munroe

The Bahamas Pavilion is organised by The Bahamas in Venice Committee (BVC), a sub-committee of the Friends of the Arts in The Bahamas (FAB) Foundation. The BVC comprises cultural leaders dedicated to advancing the nation's artistic legacy: Stan Burnside, Artist and Former Chairman of The National Art Gallery of The Bahamas (NAGB); John Cox, Chairman, NAGB / VP of Art and Culture, Baha Mar Resorts; Amanda Coulson, Former Executive Director, NAGB (2011–2021); Maelynn Ford, Executive Director, NAGB; Ryan Knowles, Maison Bahamas; and Vaughn Roberts, Deputy Chairman, NAGB. The Pavilion operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture and the Honourable Mario Bowleg, Minister of Youth, Sports, and Culture, with assistance from the Italian Honorary Consul to The Bahamas, Michelangela Vismara.

Commissioning support for *However Long the Night, the Dawn Will Break* is provided by VIA Art Fund.

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Bios

John Beadle (1964–2024), a painter, sculptor, and lifelong Junkanooer born in Nassau to Jamaican-Bahamian parents, combined traditional techniques with the found materials of Junkanoo —cardboard, wood, and salvaged objects—to create relief monuments and striking sculptural works. He addressed social issues, from migration to states of insecurity, in his work. He played a formative role across different artistic communities, having a central role in several artistic collectives, and paved the way for Munroe's generation. He received a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design before completing an MFA at Tyler School of Art, Temple University.

Lavar Munroe (b. 1982) an interdisciplinary artist from Grants Town, Nassau, works across mixed-media painting, cardboard sculpture, and drawing. He earned his BFA from the Savannah College of Art and Design and his MFA from Washington University in St. Louis. He also attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and has completed a postdoctoral fellowship. Represented by Monique Meloche Gallery (Chicago) and Larkin Durey (London), Munroe's work blends spirituality, mythology, and history to create a visual language steeped in African diasporic symbolism and cultural imagination. His mixed-media practice combines paint, airbrush, collage, ceramic, glass, feathers, cardboard, and other sacred objects to explore mythology, spirituality, and identity. His work was in the 56th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, curated by Okwui Enwezor in 2015.

Krista Thompson is the Mary Jane Crowe Professor of Art History at Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois and independent curator. Born in The Bahamas, she is the author of An Eye for the Tropics (2006) and Shine: The Visual Economy of Light in African Diasporic Aesthetic Practice (2015), recipient of the Charles Rufus Morey Award for distinguished book in the history of art from the College Art Association (2016). Thompson is curator and editor of Antonius Roberts: Art, Ecology, and Sacred Space and (with Claire Tancons) of En Mas': Carnival and Performance Art of the Caribbean (2015). In 2023, Thompson was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and is the recent recipient of a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship (2024-25).

John Cox, commissioner of the Bahamas Pavilion, is a Bahamian artist who has played a pivotal role in shaping Bahamian art culture as an educator, curator, and cultural activist, guided by a deep belief that strong platforms are central to the evolution of any thriving creative industry. He is also the founder of Popopstudios, a pivotal community-based artist cooperative that significantly shifted the direction of contemporary art in The Bahamas, nurturing both emerging and senior artists from 1999 to 2018. He currently serves as Vice President of Arts and Culture for the Baha Mar Resort, where he oversees The Current and Eccho — the resort's art center and gallery– and in 2023 he was appointed Chairman of the Board of Directors for the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas. He is also the Creative Director of the Fuze Caribbean Art Fair, an initiative dedicated to unifying contemporary art practices across the Caribbean region.

Amanda Coulson, deputy commissioner and producer of the Bahamas Pavilion, is the Founding Director of TERN, a gallery representing Bahamian and Caribbean artists internationally. As the Executive Director at The National Art Gallery of the Bahamas for a decade (2011-2021), a co-founder of the VOLTA art fairs and an art critic and writer, she has worn many hats and has experienced the art industry from many angles. She has led large scale productions in the Caribbean, USA and Europe, creating stellar exhibitions and performances. As an arts leader her core strengths lie in art strategy, developing partnerships with artists and institutions and bringing ideas to life.