

Aesthetica

Venice Biennale: British Contributions



The United Kingdom presents three exhibitions at this year's Venice Biennale, as the British Council joins forces with sister bodies in Scotland and Wales. In the British Pavilion, Phyllida Barlow (born 1944) will present a major solo exhibition of new work. Best known for her colossal sculptural projects, for more than five decades Barlow has employed a distinct vocabulary of inexpensive materials such as plywood, cardboard, plaster, cement, fabric and paint to create bold and expansive installations that confront the relationship between objects and the space that surrounds them, in an approach that is grounded in an anti-monumental tradition. Her exhibition will be the 21st solo presentation in the British Pavilion.

Representing Scotland, Rachel Maclean (born 1987) offers a major new film piece. Raising critical questions about identity, economy, society, connectivity and morality, Maclean's films combine traditional modes of theatre with technology and popular culture to create fantasy narratives possessing a unique and often disturbing vision. Playing all the characters in the films herself, whilst working on every detail of post-production, Maclean's creative process involves studio based green-screen techniques, custom prosthetics, costume, and voice actors. Her work is intellectually challenging and visually provocative and will be presented within a new space for Scotland + Venice: the dramatic church, Chiesa di Santa Caterina in Cannaregio. Originally established to uphold moral authority and political-religious power, this venue offers a new context for Maclean's work, to question notions of truth, conscience and power in the 21st century.

Turner Prize-nominated James Richards (born 1983) represents Cymru yn Fenis Wales in Venice. Richards' interest lies in the possibility of the personal amidst the chaos of mass media. He combines video, sound and still images to create installations and live events and makes use of an ever-growing bank of video material that includes fragments of cinema, works by other artists, stray camcorder footage, murky late-night TV images and archive research. His installations involve sculptural, cinematic, acoustic, musical and curatorial elements to create an extraordinary intensity. His Venice project is a new, site-responsive sound installation combined with a suite of additional works containing overlapping archival samples and musical extracts that are repeated or reworked into different forms.

UK at the 57th International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia; British Pavilion, Giardini di Castello, Venezia; Scotland + Venice, Chiesa di Santa Caterina, Fondamenta Santa Caterina, Venezia; Wales in Venice, Santa Maria Ausiliatrice, Venezia, 13 May - 26 November 2017, www.labiennale.org