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British Council Fellows selected from Northumbria University for Venice Biennale

A University PhD student as well as a Senior Research Fellow from Northumbria University have been awarded British Council Venice Fellowships, representing the UK on an international level at the 2024 Venice Biennale.

Through Northumbria's partnership with the British Council, successful fellows Nazima Rangwala Kalita and Naho Matsuda will each spend a month in the floating city during [the world's most important art biennale](#), alongside

other creative students and professionals from 40 UK Higher Education Institutions.



Nazima Rangwala Kalita, Visual and Material Culture PhD student



Naho Matsuda, Senior Research Fellow from Northumbria's School of Design

During their visit they will spend half of their time as ambassadors at the British Pavilion, which will be showcasing the work of [British artist Sir John Akomfrah](#). Nazima and Naho will be responsible for ensuring the exhibitions are accessible to the public, answering questions about the artwork and gathering feedback about how it was interpreted.

They will spend the rest of their time developing their own independent research or creative project, inspired by Venice and the wider topics surrounding the Biennale, for example examining the complexities of being a foreigner in a globalized world.

Attracting up to 60,000 international visitors, the Venice Biennale brings together the world's top curators and artists. It is renowned for setting global trends and launching the careers of pioneering artists and architects around the world.

This year's event, which is now open and will run until November, will focus on themes including politics and contemporary cultural and social issues through performances, sculptures, and installations. Themed 'Foreigners Everywhere', it will explore the profound concerns of climate justice and its relationship with international mobility, migration, and intercultural exchange.

Nazima, who is currently undertaking a PhD in [Visual and Material Culture](#), explains: "The work of artist Sir John Akomfrah has inspired my project, *The Art of Hiding in Plain Sight: Appearance, Disappearance and Re-appearance in the City*. It will examine diasporic communities that need not be divided.

"I will be working with Venetian masks which have long been associated with the Carnival of Venice. In this context the Venetian mask becomes a powerful symbol of hiding in plain sight by obscuring a person's face to shed their societal constraints and experience a sense of liberation. I will be using the masks as a means of artistic expression, allowing me to showcase my creativity and skill while fulfilling the practical purpose of concealment.

"I'm looking forward to working alongside the other fellows and having the opportunity to gain multiple perspectives on my research project, whilst making further industry connections and developing my creative practice."

Naho Matsuda, a Senior Research Fellow from Northumbria's School of Design who works with the [Interaction Research Studio](#) based at the University's London campus added: "My project involves researching the community and culture of Gondoliers in Venice, exploring the idealised dream of Venice and how it intersects with the reality of the actual city and its workers. In a previous project, I explored diasporic identities and ideas of world-building through the work routine of a Filipino Gondolier in a

Venetian-inspired shopping mall in Doha, Qatar.



Naho Matsuda's previous work, Songs Without Words

“The research and work for my new project will look at these themes from the seemingly opposite perspective - from the ‘real’ Venice with its traditional Gondoliers. I aim to work closely with the community of Gondoliers and create a new work based on my research and the stories I collect. I’m interested in the idea of migration, ‘people in boats’, traditional regulations on who and how people can become gondoliers, and when those realities intersect with a tourist’s romantic dream of what Venice is or should be.”

Mary Krell, Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor in Arts, Design and Social Sciences at Northumbria University said: “We are so proud of Northumbria’s partnership with the British Council and that two incredibly talented individuals from the University have been awarded fellowships at this year’s biennale. The programme is a unique opportunity for our students to represent the UK on an international level and enrich world-renowned exhibitions. It is a fantastic experience for them to be a part of.

“When Nazima and Naho return, they will share their insights from the biennale as well as their research projects, with other PhD students at Northumbria. We can’t wait to see how their projects unfold and how Venice inspires their work.”

The Venice Biennale is now open and will run up until Sunday 24 November,

showcasing mini exhibitions from 85 nations.

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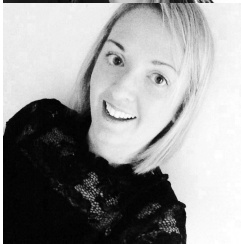


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