

# Scotland + Venice

Review 2009 – 2017

This Review was commissioned by Creative Scotland and undertaken and written by Tessa Jackson OBE and Annabel Jackson Associates in 2017-18.

1	Executive Summary	3
2	Background to Review	9
3	Impact, Reach and Relevance	23
4	Delivery Model	36
5	Is Venice an International priority?	65
6	Other opportunities and Alternative International models	71
7	Conclusions and Recommendations	77
8	Acknowledgements	83

This Review is supported and informed by several reports, interviews and studies, that can be found in a separate Appendices document, published alongside this Review.

- Appendix 1: Documentary Review
- Appendix 2: Summary of the Project
- Appendix 3: Interviews with Contributing Artists
- Appendix 4: Interviews with Curators
- Appendix 5: Interviews with Producers
- Appendix 6: Survey of Invigilators
- Appendix 7: Invigilator Programme
- Appendix 8: Sector Survey
- Appendix 9: Audience Survey
- Appendix 10: Communications Focus Group
- Appendix 11: Key Points from Press and PR Debrief Documents
- Appendix 12: Budget and Cost Analysis
- Appendix 13: Benchmarking
- Appendix 14: International Thinking

# 1 Executive Summary

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Sworn / Campbell / Tompkins,  
Installation view. Commissioned and  
curated by The Common Guild for  
Scotland + Venice 2013. Photograph  
by Ruth Clark.

# Executive Summary

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Scotland + Venice was founded in 2003 to develop and promote the best contemporary art from Scotland on an international stage at the Venice Biennale. Seen as a strategic initiative, Scotland + Venice is delivered in partnership by Creative Scotland — formerly the Scottish Arts Council — the National Galleries of Scotland and British Council Scotland. Scotland + Venice aims to develop and promote the work of some of the country's leading artists and to raise the profile of Scotland as a dynamic and evolving international centre for the production, promotion and presentation of contemporary art. Since 2003 there have been eight editions of Scotland + Venice and these have formed part of the Art Biennale's Collateral Events programme. This Review looks in detail at the last five presentations from 2009 to 2017.

The Venice Biennale of International Art has grown exponentially over the last twenty years from 58 countries being represented in 1997, to 86 in 2017. It has become a focus of significant levels of activity, with additional exhibitions and collections appearing alongside the country pavilions and collateral events that make up the official Biennale. It is seen by many as the most international of biennales and remains the only biennial where its structure is predicated on county representation, complimenting its own curated exhibition.

The Biennale offers a context for national as well as international attention and offers considerable potential experiences and connections for artists, curators and galleries. It is also perceived as providing critical affirmation as well as development potential for visual arts infrastructures across the world.



Graham Fagan, Installation view. Commissioned and curated by Hospitalfield for Scotland + Venice 2015.  
Photograph by Ruth Clark.

## **The brief for this Review issued by Creative Scotland was to:**

- Identify the importance, reach and relevance of the Scotland + Venice project, to Scotland and its Visual Arts sector.
- Evaluate the delivery models and determine strengths and weaknesses.
- Establish whether Scotland + Venice is regarded as an international priority by and for the sector.
- Explore whether there are alternative models for delivering Scotland + Venice and whether these would achieve equivalent or better outcomes.
- Determine whether there are opportunities beyond Scotland + Venice for Creative Scotland and its partners, to strategically develop the international profile of the visual arts in Scotland.

## **The Review's methodology consisted of:**

- Conceptualisation, using a logic model which summarised the actions, intended outputs, outcomes and impacts, and the causal assumptions of Scotland + Venice.
- Review of appropriate policy documents and reports.
- Interviews with 14 representatives from partners (Creative Scotland, British Council and the National Galleries of Scotland).
- Interviews with all seven artists, 2009-17.
- Interviews with all five curators, 2009-17.
- Interviews with all three producers, 2009-17.
- Survey of 15 invigilators across the five editions, 2009-2017.
- Survey of the wider Visual Arts sector, with 79 respondents.
- Survey of audiences to Scotland + Venice 2017, with 445 responses.
- Interviews with three universities involved in the Invigilator Programme.
- Focus group with the partner media teams and Sutton PR.
- Future Focus group with those working in the visual arts in Scotland.
- Benchmarking of the participation in Venice of 2 other countries – Wales and New Zealand.
- Interviews with 14 national and international visual arts experts.
- Analysis of media debriefing documents.

# Findings

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**The Review revealed a consistently positive picture of the Scotland + Venice Visual Art Programme. Its Key Findings are:**

- Scotland + Venice is strongly consistent with partners' strategic objectives.
- All stakeholders believe that Scotland + Venice should continue to be a priority for the partners to invest in as part of their support for the Visual Arts sector in Scotland.
- The artists describe Scotland + Venice as well organised and with clear objectives. It provides both support and challenge, with sufficient freedom given to the realisation of ideas and the making of new work.
- Artists were reticent in attributing career successes to Venice alone, but all felt that their profile and connections in Scotland had been strengthened and their international profile had definitely been strengthened.
- Curators generally described Scotland + Venice as having more artistic control and prestige than other international shows.
- All of the curators and producers think that Scotland + Venice should continue to be a priority for the partners, except one who indicated it probably shouldn't be a priority for the partners.
- All invigilators said that Scotland + Venice helped them find work and/or develop their creative/artistic career.
- All invigilators said that Scotland + Venice impacted on their creative ambitions and outlook, with 87% saying this effect was to a large extent.
- 72% of respondents in response to a wider sector survey said that Scotland + Venice had an impact on them. 76% of respondents said that Scotland + Venice is important in raising the profile of Scottish contemporary art at home or abroad.
- 73% of sector respondents said that the Scotland + Venice initiative should continue to be a priority for the partners to invest in as part of their support for the Visual Arts sector in Scotland. 14% said that it should continue as long as it is properly funded and exploited. Only 13% of respondents said it shouldn't be a priority.
- Benchmarks (Wales and New Zealand) were broadly similar in many aspects except that the selection of artists, and in the case of Wales teams as well, were undertaken by advisory committees and higher priority was given to returning presentations.
- Comments emphasised the value of Scotland + Venice, but also the potential to get more out of it.
- 11 out of 14 national and international visual arts experts felt Scotland should continue to present at Venice and the same number felt it represented good use of public money.

# Conclusions

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- Scotland + Venice is important because of its international status, breadth of sectoral impact, uniqueness of approach, role in capacity building and through the partnerships that drive it.
- Scotland + Venice has had considerable direct impact on artists, curators, producers, and invigilators. It reaches a consistent audience in Venice and a variable audience in Scotland. Scotland + Venice also has a widely perceived impact on the perceived value and status of the contemporary visual arts in Scotland.
- Scotland + Venice has been designed in a flexible way that has ensured considerable relevance to the artistic and professional aims of those involved in the projects, as well as an ongoing relevance to the partners' strategic objectives.
- The model of Scotland + Venice has been broadly effective, although compared to the benchmarks, more could be made of the return presentation.
- There is a very strong voice from all stakeholders that Scotland + Venice should continue to be a priority for the partners' support to the Visual Arts sector.
- Ceasing to present in Venice would risk past investment, which is still accruing interest. There is potential for loss of awareness, profile and ambition.
- We have detailed evidence to support these conclusions, discussed in the main body of the Review, and presented in the survey reports in the appendices.



Sworn / Campbell / Tompkins. Installation view, Commissioned by The Common Guild for Scotland + Venice 2013. Photograph by Ruth Clark.

# Key Recommendations

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**This Review makes the following recommendations:**

- Scotland + Venice should continue to be a priority for the partners to invest in as part of their support for the Visual Arts sector in Scotland.
- The partners, in particular Creative Scotland, should re-consider whether a commitment in principle can be taken to support more than one edition of Scotland + Venice at a time, with appropriate caveats in place, in order to encourage development and extend planning horizons.
- The impact of Scotland + Venice could be enhanced by establishing a Scotland + Venice Strategic Planning Group to work in between editions on long term development and strategic positioning.
- Scotland + Venice would benefit from a stronger strategic policy context for international working.
- A central venue should be considered for use during each edition of the Biennale, to deliver better on Scotland + Venice's core objectives of 'high impact and visibility'.
- A greater priority should be given to the exhibition/project returning to Scotland, to strengthen the benefits for audience development of the contemporary visual arts and learning in the Visual Arts sector.
- The Invigilator Programme is seen as a significant success and provides considerable professional development opportunities but it would be strengthened by greater advance strategic planning and visibility.
- Greater strategic purpose could be given to the opening events held during the first days of Venice.
- The overall delivery of the project would benefit from a more formal handover from commissioning team to commissioning team after each edition.
- Marketing and PR could be targeted even more effectively and achieve better continuity.
- The evaluation of Scotland + Venice is an important process in strengthening and developing the project and should be carried out consistently at the end of each presentation.
- A more detailed set of recommendations is provided in Section 7.

## 2 Background to Review

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Rachel Maclean, Installation view  
'Spite Your Face'. Commissioned by  
Alchemy Film & Arts in partnership  
with Talbot Rice Gallery and the  
University of Edinburgh for Scotland  
+ Venice 2017. Photograph by  
Patrick Rafferty.

# Context

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In 2003 the Scottish Arts Council made an initial “three Biennale” commitment to Scotland + Venice, and an evaluation of these editions was undertaken by ABL Cultural Consulting in 2007/08. The evaluation concluded that the Venice Biennale remained the most significant international showcase for contemporary art; Scotland should continue to be represented there; and that the benefits/impact of the project were good value in relation to the investment of time and funds. ABL made a series of recommendations to strengthen the project and these informed the Scottish Arts Council’s approach to Scotland + Venice in 2009. In 2010 the Scottish Arts Council merged with Scottish Screen to form Creative Scotland.

# The Venice Biennale of International Art

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The Venice Biennale was established in 1895. It is the oldest and remains one of the most significant international platforms within the global art world. The Art and Architecture Biennales take place in alternate years and since 1998 have comprised three main elements:

- Exhibitions by National Pavilions, each with its own country appointed curator and project.
- The International Exhibition devised by a curator, selected by the Venice Biennale, sited in the Italian Pavilion in the Giardini and in the Cordiere at the Arsenale.
- The Biennale's Collateral Events programme, with events approved by the Biennale curator.

The Venice Biennale of International Art has grown exponentially from 58 countries being represented in 1997, to 86 in 2017. There are 29 historic country pavilions in the Giardini and in 2017, another 23 were housed nearby, in the complex set of historic naval buildings known as the Arsenale. A further 23 collateral events, including Scotland, took place in buildings, sites and ornate palazzi across the city. Some re-occupy the same space each time, while others move according to current needs and appropriateness. A range of further significant exhibitions take place in the city's many museums and cultural foundations, to capitalise on professional and public audiences. The Art Biennale now attracts more than 600,000 visitors between May and November and the four-day preview period draws some 24,000 international artists, curators, critics and collectors. Thus, it has become an important professional showcase as well as a platform for the public to see international contemporary art.

Other international biennials, triennials, quadrennials and quinquennials have been established around the world, but Venice remains the only one to structure itself on country representation, in addition to its own curated exhibition.

# Scotland + Venice and the British Pavilion

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The British Pavilion has represented England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland since 1909 and stands in the Giardini, close to other national pavilions such as France, Germany, Canada and Japan. As Scotland and Wales are part of the UK they do not qualify as National Pavilions, but instead form part of the Biennale's Collateral Events programme. This means they must source their own venues outside the main spaces of the Giardini and Arsenale. The only time a Scottish artist has been included in the British Pavilion was in 1978. Mark Boyle was invited and exhibited as The Boyle Family.

As well as Scotland + Venice, Wales has had a presence at the Biennale since 2003 and Northern Ireland was present from 2005 to 2009. Collaboration across these presentations has strengthened over time, with the British Council co-ordinating opportunities for joint marketing for the benefit of all presentations from the UK, whether country specific or more project based.

## Scotland + Venice Activity 2009 – 2017

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Scotland + Venice offers a significant opportunity for a selected artist or artists to produce and present original work. Experienced curators and/or visual arts organisations are invited to propose artists and work with the Scotland + Venice Steering Group partners to deliver 'an ambitious and imaginative project'. The partnership, with advisors, makes the selection of curators and artists. The curatorial model is designed to increase the international experience and profile of Scotland's curators, producers and arts organisations. In addition, the presentations in Venice are invigilated by students and recent graduates, who have the opportunity to experience La Biennale di Venezia and be exposed to international art practice from across the world.

### **The eight editions (2003-2017) of Scotland + Venice have involved:**

- 10 curators or curatorial teams.
- 44 artists.
- More than 120 Professional Development Programme (invigilation) participants.
- Partnerships with eight Further and Higher Education Institutions.
- 200,000 estimated attendances to the exhibitions in Venice.
- Exhibitions and events in Scotland.
- 15 years of partnership working and collaboration.
- In excess of £2.5 million investment.

# Policy Context

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**Scotland + Venice is strongly consistent with the partners' strategies, in particular:**

- Striving for excellence.
- Contributing to Scotland's distinctiveness, profile and reputation.
- Developing artists.
- Supporting international touring and showcasing.
- Enabling creative organisations to develop global markets.

Scotland + Venice makes a lower contribution to objectives around access, although the return presentations after Venice have the potential to broaden the reach for leading artists and benefit audiences. The location is consistent with the British Council's recent prioritisation of relationships with the European Union. Scotland + Venice has the scope to contribute to international exchange and dialogue, although the evaluation suggests that more could be done to capitalise on the opportunities.

**Creative Scotland's current 10-year Plan and shared vision for the arts, screen and creative industries in Scotland includes five ambitions, namely:**

- Excellence and experimentation across the arts, screen and creative industries are recognised and valued.
- Everyone can access and enjoy artistic and creative experiences.
- Places and quality of life are transformed through imagination, ambition and an understanding of the potential of creativity.
- Ideas are brought to life by a diverse, skilled and connected leadership and workforce.
- Scotland is a distinctive creative nation connected to the world.
- The Plan identifies three priorities for International working:
  - Deepening artistic and creative practice through international dialogue and exchange.
  - Supporting international touring and showcasing in Scotland to engage audiences and promote cultural understanding.
  - Supporting creative organisations and practitioners to access and develop relevant global markets.

**The Plan describes success as:**

- Artists and creative practitioners have opportunities to deepen their practice through international dialogue, exchange and collaboration.

- Excellent work from Scotland is widely promoted and enjoyed and effective partnership working enables new international opportunities and markets to emerge.
- Long-term relationships and partnerships are in place that maximise benefits and impact for artists, creative practitioners and audiences in Scotland and abroad.

**To help deliver these ambitions Creative Scotland has developed an internal framework for international working using four key themes to frame its approach:**

- **Import:** Scotland's audiences, communities and local economies experience the benefits of embracing high quality international experiences.
- **Export:** Scotland's creative organisations and businesses maximise the potential of international markets. Excellent, high quality work and products created in Scotland are widely promoted and enjoyed and effective partnership working enables new international opportunities and markets to emerge.
- **Cultural exchange:** Artists and creative practitioners have opportunities to deepen their practice through international dialogue, exchange and collaboration, broadening knowledge, insight, and innovation.
- **Cultural diplomacy:** Culture is proven to attract collaboration and strengthen political, economic, social and creative relationships across countries.



Graham Fagan. Commissioned and curated by Hospitalfield for Scotland + Venice 2015. Photograph by Maeve Redmond.

Further policy context is provided by the Scottish Government's International Framework which outlines four strategic international objectives for the country, its people, businesses and institutions. These are:

- Enhancing our global outlook.
- Strengthening our relationships and partnerships.
- Increasing our reputation and attractiveness.
- Engaging with the European Union.

The Scottish Government is due to publish a cultural strategy for Scotland.

The British Council published its global Arts Strategy in 2016. Developed in consultation with the UK Arts sector, it supports the organisation's ambition to double the scale of UK activity internationally, by partnering with or lending support to, more than 100,000 artists and organisations worldwide. It includes the following areas of focus:

- Arts for Social Change: creating safe spaces for culture, creative exploration and exchange.
- Sharing arts work with the world: creating new opportunities for artists and organisations to work internationally and introducing audiences around the world to the best of UK creativity.
- Capacity building: strengthening the arts sector worldwide by developing its capacity to innovate, to reach new audiences, to develop skills and support livelihoods.
- Fostering collaboration and networks.
- Policy and research.

The National Galleries of Scotland have a Corporate Plan that sets out ambitions for the period 2016-2020. 'Our vision is to develop the NGS as an ambitious international institution that sits at the heart of cultural life in Scotland and makes a significant contribution to the education, wellbeing, inspiration and enjoyment of the public.' To achieve this vision it has three long-term aims:

- To deliver world-class programmes, services and activities based around an outstanding permanent fine art collection and temporary exhibitions programme.
- To engage with wider and more diverse audiences by encouraging participation and providing and promoting opportunities for learning.
- To be a sustainable and efficient organisation.

# Scotland's Visual Arts sector

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**Scotland + Venice answers some of the needs identified in the recent review of the Visual Arts sector, in particular:**

- The interest in supporting innovation and diversifying art form practice.
- The need to provide professional development for people working in the sector.
- The need to help visual arts organisations reach their international aspirations.
- The desire to strengthen national and international connections.

In 2015/16 Creative Scotland, in partnership with the Scottish Contemporary Art Network (SCAN), undertook a Visual Arts sector Review. Conducted in two phases – Mapping the Visual Arts in Scotland and the Open Sessions and Roundtable Conversations, together with statistical analysis of funding and activity, the review investigated the key characteristics of the sector and compiled detailed information on the people, places, resources and relationships that underpin its achievements. It examined the sector's core strengths and identified the challenges that lie ahead. Actions were proposed that would enable development into the future. The Scotland + Venice Review draws upon this information and makes connections to appropriate priorities and challenges.

## **The research found that:**

- The majority of organisations delivering visual arts in Scotland are small in scale with few employees and personnel holding multiple roles.
- Artistic practice has diversified. Painting and drawing is down by 13% while other practices have been on the rise – film and video by 29%, performance by 27% and installation by 25%.
- Professional development is not guaranteed in employment and is usually self-funded.
- Exhibitions remain the key distribution channel for artists, but online activity is significant.
- There is considerable public interest in the visual arts with organisations reporting over 1.5 million attendances per year.
- 82% of organisations indicated that international work is important. Work includes one-off curated exhibitions (65%), conferences and seminars (57%), co-commissioned international projects (38%), touring exhibitions (19%) and international art fairs (11%).

The sector review concluded that “galleries and other visual arts organisations have a critical role to play in supporting and sustaining artists, creating opportunities for their work and their thinking, to impact upon people’s lives. Many organisations are working at the limits of their resources, unable to invest in the development and delivery of their creative programmes and in extending their public reach. Pressures are compounded by the fact that the Visual Arts sector is

heavily populated by organisations of a relatively small scale that have limited scope to invest in their development and to build their future, organisational resilience."

The review cited GENERATION (2014), a celebration of 25 years of contemporary art in Scotland, as an example of the sector's 'ambitious and connected leadership, effective co-ordination and communication, strong collaborations and partnership building', delivered with enhanced resources and investment. While the review emphasised the strength and reputation of Scotland's contemporary art and that those working in the visual arts were "extremely skilled, ambitious and resourceful", it also identified the following priorities:

- Leadership needed to be developed and effectively harnessed.
- Ambition and quality of work should be maintained and national and international connections strengthened to build on achievements to date.
- The exceptionally high levels of knowledge, expertise and energy that people bring to the sector needed to be recognised valued and supported.
- The financial position of artists and other creative individuals working as freelance and self-employed across the sector required improvement.
- The majority of organisations needed to be in a stronger financial position and enabled to explore new ways of working, to build longer term alliances and strategic partnerships that will build capacity, generate resilience and underpin future growth.
- The richness, value, reach and impact of the sector's work needed to be evidenced, with a view to promoting more widely the excellence and public impact of the experiences and opportunities that the sector generates.



Sworn / Campbell / Tompkins. Installation view, Commissioned by The Common Guild for Scotland + Venice 2013. Photograph by Ruth Clark.

# The Direction of Scotland + Venice

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A detailed analysis of the Open Call documents that the partners issue at the start of each new edition, seeking expressions of interest from experienced curators and/or visual arts organisations, shows incremental change in direction for the Scotland + Venice project. In particular, it seems that expectations of the project have been increasing.

## **In 2017 the partners expected the selected project to deliver the following:**

- A significant opportunity for the selected artist(s) to produce ambitious and original work, taking into account the particular challenges and opportunities of Venice and the wider context of the Biennale
- High impact and visibility within an extremely busy and ever-expanding Biennale with a good level of attendance that builds on previous Scotland + Venice presentations
- Strong critical and professional responses from within Scotland, the rest of the UK and internationally

## **Additionally – the partners will work with the selected individual/organisation to deliver:**

- High public and media profile, particularly within Scotland but also in the rest of the UK and internationally.
- An effective approach to managing the exhibition in Venice and providing a warm and informative welcome to all visitors.
- Audience development opportunities within Scotland that take a number of forms during the period of the Biennale and beyond.
- A series of professional development opportunities that build on the previous experience of Scotland + Venice and that sustain the partnerships established with Scotland's universities and colleges.
- Increased profile for the visual arts community in Scotland, making the most of the opportunity that Venice affords to increase professional interest in the artists and arts organisations that are permanently based here.

## **In 2015 the following expectations were added:**

- To complement the other British presentations (working closely with British Council and partners at the Welsh and British presentations).
- To make the strongest possible impact within this internationally significant context.

## **In both 2015 and 2017 additional clarification on ambition was set out as follows:**

- For the artist/s selected Venice provides a significant opportunity for the development and

presentation of new work.

- For the partners, Venice is an important project that helps to build Scotland's profile and reputation as an international centre for the visual arts.

**In 2013 the following was included in the Open Call documentation for the first time, with delivery expected to include:**

- Strong audience development/education opportunities beyond the presentation in Venice which may include a further presentation or re-configuration of the work within Scotland
- A commitment to delivering the project within agreed resources. The core budget is made up of cash and in-kind contributions from the Scotland and Venice partnership. Extending this core budget is an aspiration of the partners who will explore a number of ideas/ avenues including any that are brought forward by the curator/s appointed.

Since 2009 the Open Call process has sought to describe and clarify what is expected from the proposed project. These various shifts, in what Scotland + Venice partners expected successive editions to deliver, will be discussed later in the Review.

# Brief

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## Creative Scotland's brief for the Review was to:

- Identify the importance, reach and relevance of the Scotland + Venice project to Scotland and its Visual Arts sector.
- Evaluate the models undertaken to deliver Scotland + Venice, since it was initiated, determining the strengths and weaknesses of these models.
- Determine whether Scotland + Venice is regarded as a key international priority by and for the sector.
- Explore whether there are alternative models for delivering Scotland + Venice – artistically, financially and operationally – that would achieve equivalent or better outcomes.
- Determine whether there are opportunities beyond Scotland + Venice for Creative Scotland and partners to strategically develop the international profile of the visual arts in Scotland.



Graham Fagan, Installation view. Commissioned and curated by Hospitalfield for Scotland + Venice 2015.  
Photograph by Ruth Clark.

# Methodology

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## The methodology consisted of:

- Conceptualisation using a logic model which summarised the actions, intended outputs, outcomes and impacts, and the causal assumptions.
- Review of documents.
- Interviews with 14 representatives from partners (Creative Scotland, British Council, National Galleries of Scotland).
- Interviews with all seven artists, 2009-2017.
- Interviews with all five curators, 2009-2017.
- Interviews with all three producers, 2009-2017.
- Survey of 15 invigilators, across the five editions.
- Survey of the wider Visual Arts sector, with 79 respondents.
- Survey of audiences to Scotland + Venice 2017, with 445 responses.
- Interviews with three universities involved in the Invigilator Programme.
- Focus group with the partner media teams and Sutton PR.
- Future Focus group with those working in the visual arts in Scotland.
- Benchmarking of the participation of two other countries – Wales and New Zealand.
- Interviews with 14 national and international visual arts experts.
- Analysis of media debriefing documents.

The Review was limited by the availability of documentation, especially for earlier years. A logic model was created to help clarify theory of change, the intended outcomes and impact.

<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>OUTPUTS</b>	<b>OUTCOMES</b>	<b>IMPACT</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of new work</li> <li>• Exhibitions</li> <li>• Project funding and support</li> <li>• Events in Venice</li> <li>• Exhibitions and events in Scotland</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of artists</li> <li>• Number of curators</li> <li>• Number of producers</li> <li>• Number of visitors</li> <li>• Media coverage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Artists and creative practitioners are supported to innovate, develop their skills and knowledge, deepen their practice, sell work, widen their contacts and networks especially internationally, access opportunities to tour and showcase their work (e.g. residencies, talks, joint exhibitions, solo exhibitions), and reach new markets and audiences</li> <li>• Curators, producers, arts organisations and students deepen their practice / knowledge, widen their contacts and networks especially internationally, access opportunities to tour and showcase their work, increase their capacity to work internationally and reach new audiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stronger reputation for Scotland as a distinctive and creative nation connected to the world</li> <li>• Contribution to cultural strategy and cultural diplomacy</li> </ul>

### 3 Impact, Reach and Relevance

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Graham Fagan, Installation view.  
Commissioned and curated by  
Hospitalfield for Scotland + Venice  
2015. Photograph by Ruth Clark.

# Participating Artists

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Artists are first proposed by a curator who applies through an Open Call process to be selected (for more information on each edition and personnel see Appendix 3). Artists and curators are often known to each other before this process is initiated. The curatorial proposal and artist is discussed and chosen by the Steering Group partners (Creative Scotland, National Galleries of Scotland and British Council Scotland) along with two external advisors. Across the five editions most projects have focused on one artist; in 2013 three artists were proposed and selected.

All seven participating artists were generous with their time in contributing to the Review. The artists, in the main, provide a very positive description of Scotland + Venice.

## **Key findings were:**

- The artists describe Scotland + Venice as well organised and with clear objectives. It provides both support and challenge, with sufficient freedom given to the realisation of ideas and the opportunity to make new work.
- The Venice Art Biennale comes across as having a unique set of circumstances. Generally, the project provides a positive framework in relation to other international exhibitions, with more artistic control, resource, support and prestige being given.
- Other positive factors were identified as the size and reach of Venice as a showcase, the chance to have or grow an international profile together with the prospect of international curators and collectors seeing the work.
- Artists generally felt distant from the organising partners and closer to the curators. Two decided not to comment as they didn't feel they had a relationship with the partnership.
- A de-brief afterwards would have been beneficial.
- While broadly happy with the arrangements for media and publicity, three commented that the particularities of their practice were not reflected in the approach taken.
- Almost all artists felt Venice provides an important networking opportunity.
- Artists were reticent in attributing career successes to Venice alone, but all felt that their profile and connections in Scotland had been strengthened and their international profile had definitely been strengthened. Future activity included going on to show in other parts of Europe and America, having work shown more, as well as selling work.
- Artists were generally able to achieve their artistic ambitions for Scotland + Venice.
- Artists all felt that Scotland + Venice came at the right time in their careers.
- Artists reported no negative effects to taking part in Venice.
- Artists generally reported no barriers to taking up future opportunities
- Scotland + Venice met artists' expectations.

## **When they were asked what they would change about the project in the future, artists indicated that:**

- Greater lead in time should be given so that artists can prepare their work and themselves for the conditions of Venice.
- Marketing and publicity should have considered more creative approaches.
- A more permanent venue should be considered, while appreciating the value of giving artists the flexibility of being part of the team to choose.
- All the artists indicated that the project should continue to be a priority for the partners, to invest in as part of their support for the Visual Arts sector in Scotland. There was surprise that the future of Scotland + Venice was even being questioned.

## **Quotes from participating artists**

*"There are few projects where you have so much support."*

*"I have learnt through every part of the process."*

*"Being discursive was part of the ethos."*

*"It is a really good showcase for art in Scotland. Scotland has a great art scene and it is important to exhibit that internationally. It is really important for Scotland to be part of Venice. It is an invaluable experience; important to share a country's perspective; does need to be properly funded."*

*"For Scotland not to be seen would unfairly disadvantage Scottish artists as they wouldn't have the showcase other countries have."*

*"There is no international showcase that is comparable. It would seem like a loss of faith to stop."*

*"It is amazing what focusing on one artist achieves. It is never really one artist."*

*"Without question. It is crucial. Venice Biennale is so important in the world diary. The number of people who can see the exhibition. It is absolutely crucial. The people who see that and consider the work, and the knock-on effect, an appreciation of the quality of work that comes out of Scotland. How that reflects on institutions. It is essential."*

# Participating Curators and Producers

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All but one of the curators had applied through an Open Call process. All curators were staff members within existing visual arts organisations in Scotland (see Appendix 3 for a full list of projects and personnel). In 2017 the commissioning team involved an additional partner to support production and delivery.

The three producers all practice independently. For Venice they were either employed directly by the curator's organisation or by Creative Scotland. One producer worked on three Scotland + Venice editions.

All five curators and all three producers spent considerable time contributing to the Review. The positive aspects of being involved in the Scotland + Venice project for both curators and producers centred around:

- The importance of being able to participate in such a prestigious international platform.
- The level of support provided by the partnership on a regular basis.
- The unique opportunity that it provided for significant collaboration involving artists, organisations, freelance personnel, students and others.
- Opportunities to extend international working experience.
- The effect of strengthening profiles and connections, both within Scotland and internationally.

*"The monthly Steering Group meetings were positive with full participation from all the partners, much knowledge and expertise shared, and difficult problems often solved."*  
— Participating curator / producer

The weaknesses of Scotland + Venice and the partnership were described as:

- Lack of freedom expressed by some, with the Steering Group sometimes exerting too high a degree of control.
- Lack of clarity over the role of some of the partners, in part because of apparently different expectations from Steering Group members.
- Lack of an organised handover.
- Lack of a clear discussion about the exhibition returning to Scotland.
- Lack of time e.g. for production.
- Lack of clarity over the target audiences for specific elements of marketing and PR.
- Fragmented approach to the Invigilator Programme.

Notwithstanding these comments, four of the five curators said they achieved their curatorial vision for the project. All three producers indicated that the opportunity had surpassed their expectations.

- The impacts from Scotland + Venice were substantial:
- Generally Scotland + Venice offered more artistic control and prestige compared to other international shows.
- The curators and producers were similar to the artists, in emphasising the complex causality of new work opportunities, however, enhanced status was reported, with comments such as "It made you raise your game" and "It is important to have on your CV."
- Generally, curators and producers said that Scotland + Venice developed their skills in working internationally, although it is a platform like no other.
- All curators said that Scotland + Venice strengthened their organisation's profile in Scotland.
- Four out of the five curators said that Scotland + Venice worked for them as a networking opportunity, although there was regret at not having sufficient time or resource to really exploit the opportunities as time while in Venice was so focused on delivery.

Four of the curators said overall that Scotland + Venice was important or very important. Three said their expectations had been surpassed or met and two further indicated it had met most of their expectations. All producers indicated that having worked on Venice had strengthened their profiles and increased their connections.

**In terms of what both curators and producers would like to see changed or developed further, the following were identified:**

- More curatorial control and autonomy given to the commissioning organisation, without withdrawing the invaluable knowledge and support of the Steering Group structure.
- Greater lead in time to plan and realise the project.
- A budget increase – a realistic budget for a competitive platform where Scotland has to be seen to do things well.
- Retaining and passing on information and experience – “Venice is too important to be a training ground”.
- Supporting established artists as well as artists at an earlier stage of their career.
- More targeted marketing and PR, including appointing the external PR company earlier.
- Planning and deciding upon the return presentation, and whether appropriate, at an earlier stage.
- Strengthening the handover. “There has to be a way of sharing accumulated knowledge and experience.”

All of the curators and producers think that Scotland + Venice should continue to be a priority for the partners bar one, who indicated it probably shouldn't. A caveat is that funding should not be at the expense of adequate levels of funding for the sector as a whole.

*“There is no better platform for both artists and organisations in terms of international exposure. It feels vitally important for Scotland to continue with this project, participating at the highest level on the international stage, and providing Scottish artists with an opportunity to work at a scale of ambition rarely possible in our domestic or commercial context. It gives young artists a clear point of aspiration and inspiration and Scotland’s participation in the Biennale is truly seen as the real highlight moment for Scotland’s creative output. I feel that Scotland + Venice matters to almost every arts practitioner in Scotland, even while it may be criticised by some, it always matters deeply.”*

*— Participating curator / producer*

# Participating Organisations

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The curators for Scotland + Venice have all been based in existing arts organisations. The organisations have differed in size and focus, ranging from Dundee Contemporary Arts (DCA), The Fruitmarket Gallery, The Common Guild, Hospitalfield and Alchemy Arts. Geographically based in different cities and regions of Scotland, the organisations became involved through the successful bid of the curator or director in the Open Call process.

All curators said that Scotland + Venice definitely strengthened their organisation's international profile.

*"Participating in this project significantly strengthened our profile in Scotland through its high visibility on the Scottish arts scene...Scotland + Venice was simply a brilliant opportunity to raise our domestic profile, and I believe it has opened out a host of new conversations for us with a range of people and organisations in Scotland. I find that people now know far better that we are here, what it is we do, what we are about and why our work matters."*

*-- Participating curator / producer*

Four of the five curators said that, overall, they received enough support and challenge from the Scotland + Venice partnership, although two curators said that Scotland + Venice distracted them from other tasks.

*"There seemed to be an assumption that applicant organisations already had sufficient funding and staffing infrastructures to absorb the additional work."*

*-- Participating curator / producer*

The partnership is keen that the project has a positive impact on the curatorial organisation and actively seeks to give the organisations as much profile and publicity as possible. Branding protocols are agreed at an early stage and effective design is a priority. This intention is not fully felt by the curators/producers interviewed. Commissioning teams felt that their organisations were not given full acknowledgement – for example, organisations do not appear on all publicity.

# Invigilator Programme

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The Invigilation Programme has been developed since 2009 to offer broad benefit and skill development to young people in the arts. Students and recent graduates are selected through a separate Open Call process and then given detailed induction and support before going to Venice. The programme is co-ordinated with universities and colleges across Scotland (see Appendix 3 for those involved), with added benefits being connections between universities, either by pairing invigilators from different institutions or having invigilators give presentations upon their return. Since 2015 the opportunity has had more formal remuneration attached and additional flexibility, in giving the young people some paid time to explore their own interests while in Venice. The programme is now substantially supported by the educational partners.

## **The impact on the invigilators (2009-2017) surveyed was substantial:**

- Almost all invigilators surveyed said that Scotland + Venice had made them more confident about their future.
- All invigilators said that Scotland + Venice helped them find work and/or develop their creative/artistic career.
- All invigilators said that Scotland + Venice impacted on their creative ambitions and outlook, with 87% saying this effect was to a large extent.

*"I was offered another job at the Biennale this year and it gave me the confidence to apply to other jobs in this sector." — Exhibition Assistant*

*"It exposed me to the most important international art event, which means I observed a large quantity of world-class art, artists, curators, and galleries and how they function. It exposed me to the same artwork daily in the space, allowing me to understand how artworks function in a space over time, how different people view it, how my own understanding of it changes. It taught me how important networks are in the building of a career, through insights into how the curator worked with the artists." — Exhibition Assistant*

*"To see Scottish artists represented at this international event was inspiring." — Exhibition Assistant*

*"The opportunity allowed me to think about art in a different way and probably guided me towards curation/curatorial practice." — Exhibition Assistant*

The curators and producers also support the Invigilators' Programme.

*"The Invigilators CPD programme is a real strength. We need to pull together the tutors, to ask how we could be more strategic. The Partner Steering Group needs to have a more strategic relationship with the colleges." — Participating curator*

Universities would like the strengths to be systematised by there being a long-term commitment and strategy for the programme. This would help to make the programme more visible and spread its benefits.

*"The whole programme is reinvented each time. There isn't a master document."*  
— University/College representative

*"Students have a coal face exposure to professionalism. Venice is the first time the students are exposed to what is inherent in developing an art practice. A lot of arts schools are still struggling to communicate that." — University/College representative*



Karla Black, Installation view. Curated by Fruitmarket Gallery for Scotland + Venice 2011. Photograph by Gautier Deblonde.

# Press and PR

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The key objectives of the Press and PR model were to achieve a high public profile of the Scotland + Venice project and its component parts to target Scottish, UK and international audiences – including project partners, artists, gallerists, curators, collectors and others – through extensive preview and review coverage across recognised international, UK national, national Scottish and local Scottish media (print, broadcast and online).

The contractor was required to create, implement, manage, monitor and evaluate a Press and PR campaign across three key stages of the project: pre-Biennale, Biennale opening week and throughout the Biennale.

## **The contractor was asked to fulfil these requirements by:**

- Creating a staggered, proactive Press and PR campaign focused on tailoring information to target media within long, medium and short lead times.
- Identifying and targeting approaches to international, UK national, national Scottish and local Scottish media (print, broadcast and online).
- Creating and delivering a staggered and targeted social media campaign, in collaboration with the project partners, which could include dedicated online content created with the involvement of the artist, to run across the social media platforms of Scotland + Venice and its partner organisations, throughout the life of the project.
- Issuing of information via multiple channels using partners and associated agencies to drive information to target media.
- Commissioning and distribution of images and press releases relating to the Project in general and areas of specific interest including the artist's approach to working practice; curator's approach to exhibition as well as associated professional development opportunities.
- Collaborating with the Project Producer, partners and associated agencies to create, place and regularly update copy, images, news stories and information on scotlandandvenice.com.
- Delivering an on-the-ground, pro-active and reactive Press and PR activity throughout the Biennale Preview week.

Media evaluations were discontinued in 2009. However, the PR company's sign off reports give the impression that media coverage has been substantial, high quality and positive. In order to maintain consistent data on the level and quality of media coverage, it is recommended that quantitative and qualitative media evaluations are carried out for every S+V presentation.

Creative Scotland provided website and social media statistics for 2015 and 2017, which show a slight drop in web activity and a large increase in Twitter engagement between the two years:

<b>Website Statistics</b>	<b>S+V 2015</b>	<b>S+V 2017</b>
Page views	21,727	20,083
Users	8,774	8,234
Sessions (visits)	11,117	10,853
Twitter Impressions	179,000	243,000

Creative Scotland concluded that: “there is a need to re-focus on driving traffic back to quality content on the main website.”



Sworn / Campbell / Tompkins. Installation view, Commissioned by The Common Guild for Scotland + Venice 2013.  
Photograph by Ruth Clark

# Engagement

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The audience numbers for Scotland + Venice have varied from 15k to 33k:

**2011:** 21,093

**2013:** 15,839

**2015:** 33,458

**2017:** 27,030

The partners have resisted having targets for audience numbers as what is possible varies so much depending on the venue, nature of the artwork and competing activity. Setting audience targets is seen as risking an assumption that each exhibition needs to be bigger than the one before. The partnership gives a high priority to ensuring the public who visit the presentations in Venice engage with the work and that their visit should be memorable and rewarding. This remains one of the project's core objectives.

In 2017 feedback was obtained from audiences in Venice using a paper survey. Views on the experience are extremely positive. 96% of visitors said the artwork was interesting and that the artwork was enhanced by the setting. 96% said it was memorable; 70% said the venue was well signed and 73% said the interpretation was helpful. 85% said that the exhibition made them want to know more about the artist's work; 85% said that the exhibition gave an impression that Scotland has a strong visual arts scene. 99% of respondents said that the exhibition assistants were helpful.

A similar survey was carried out in 2007 by ABL which showed the impact of the nature of the artwork: 76% of audience members spent less than 30 minutes at the exhibition compared to 30% for our survey. 87% of audience members didn't live in Venice compared to 92% for our survey; 58% of respondents had heard about the exhibition before attending, with the same figure for the 2017 survey.

# Views of the Visual Art sector

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An online survey was undertaken with the support of Scottish Contemporary Art Network, who sent the link to their members. 79 people replied, which is a good response rate for a survey of people who weren't involved directly. Comments emphasised the value of Scotland + Venice, but also the potential to get more out of it. There were a small number of comments saying that the investment should be increased or would be better placed elsewhere. The key points were:

- Awareness was high. 96% were aware of the Scotland + Venice programme and 72% had attended the Venice Biennale at some time.
- Engagement with the work was high. 82% of respondents said they had seen the work from the Scottish presentation. 65% said they had seen the Scottish presentations in follow up exhibitions.
- Experience of international working was moderately high. 63% of respondents said they have worked internationally in the last two years, especially on exhibitions.
- Impact was high. 72% of respondents said that Scotland + Venice had an impact on them.
- Support for Scotland + Venice was high. 76% of respondents said that Scotland + Venice is important in raising the profile of Scottish contemporary art at home or abroad.
- 73% of respondents said that the Scotland + Venice initiative should continue to be a priority for the partners to invest in as part of their support for the Visual Arts sector in Scotland.
- 14% said that it should continue as long as it is properly funded and exploited. Only 13% of respondents said it shouldn't be a priority.

*"Participation of Scotland in Venice is key for the contemporary Visual Arts sector. It allows organisations and artist/s selected, the incredible opportunity to exhibit on an international platform. The return show in Scotland also allows for growth of audience. This opportunity signifies trust in the Visual Arts sector in Scotland to take its place on an international stage and contribute something special." — Sector survey contribution*

*"I believe that there are many examples of partnerships, networks and developments that have happened because of attendance in some formal capacity at Venice. Not just for the official 'team' involved in the presentation but for the circle of wider guests/friends/other artists who attend opening events and are able to capitalise on that moment." — Sector survey contribution*

*"As Brexit looms this is a key platform of Scotland's commitment to participating at an international level in the EU." — Sector survey contribution*

*"If Scotland + Venice doesn't happen it makes a very negative statement about the value placed on the visual arts and culture in general in Scotland." — Sector survey contribution*

*"Yes – as long as it continues to evolve. This year feels like a particularly successful iteration – open, accessible, providing valuable opportunities for young people. There is so much more that could be done in terms of supporting/ diversifying the CPD side of the project but finally it feels as though we are heading in the right direction." — Sector survey contribution*

## 4 Delivery Model



Sworn / Campbell / Tompkins,  
Installation view. Commissioned and  
curated by The Common Guild for  
Scotland + Venice 2013. Photograph  
by Ruth Clark.

# Scotland + Venice Partnership

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In 2003 the Scottish Arts Council enabled an independent Scottish presence at the Venice Biennale. Aiming to complement the well-established British Pavilion, the project sat alongside the similarly conceived presentation from Wales. Scotland + Venice as a project was decided upon by the Scottish Arts Council in 2001, in response to changes flowing from devolution and in recognition of the impressive development and growing reputation of the visual arts in Scotland. The Scottish Arts Council took on the role of Commissioner and the first project was undertaken in close collaboration with the British Council. In 2005 the partnership was extended to include the National Galleries of Scotland.

The membership of the Scotland + Venice partnership has remained constant since, including the period of this Review (2009 – 2017). The Scottish Arts Council became Creative Scotland after merging with Scottish Screen in 2010, but key personnel have remained involved. Creative Scotland have continued to be the primary funder for the project, contributing a core amount of £350,000 to each cycle. They also take the lead in managing and directing the project, from running the Open Call process to briefing the new team and providing practical support. The National Galleries of Scotland and British Council Scotland contribute curatorial and project management expertise respectively, as well as important links to connections that support both the profile and delivery of each edition. Each partner also contributes in-kind support through the involvement of further staff members and in the past the National Galleries of Scotland has provided office space. Scotland + Venice is guided by a management group, the Steering Group, made up of representatives from the partners, with the selected curator and producer attending their monthly Steering Group meetings.

The partnership reflects the curatorial expertise of the National Galleries of Scotland and its interest in supporting the work of living artists, with the British Council's developed international networks and its interest in supporting cultural diplomacy. Creative Scotland is the public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries across all parts of Scotland and distributes funding from the Scottish Government and the National Lottery.

The role of each partner has developed over time. This has seen the National Galleries of Scotland exhibit the 2005 project at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh and curate the Venice exhibition in 2007. Increasingly the British Council (in London and Scotland) have taken a lead in enabling joined up marketing and promotion across the UK presentations in Venice.

**Partners as well as commissioning teams were asked to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the Scotland + Venice partnership. The strengths of the partnership are seen as:**

- The consistency in the membership of the three partners
- The knowledge and expertise of the partners, collectively and separately
- The dynamic between the partners and how the Steering Group comes together
- The depth of support offered to curatorial teams and artists

**Weaknesses were identified as:**

- Ambiguity about the specific expectations of two of the partners
- Lack of clarity in terms of roles and responsibilities across the Steering Group
- An imbalance as to what each partner contributes to the project
- Changing levels of expertise
- A tendency to over-control some aspects of the project

The partnership is identified as the obvious body to continue to develop Scotland + Venice. There is broad agreement, within the partners and with others surveyed, that all partners should continue to be involved and have much to contribute.

Creative Scotland, although a strategic development body that does not usually deliver arts activity, has by now accrued an enormous amount of practical knowledge and commissioning teams find its staff supportive and approachable. There is a lack of clarity as to what the National Galleries of Scotland both want from and bring to Scotland + Venice. This in part comes from a history where there was greater involvement (2005 – 2007) and is also linked to the discussion as to whether the exhibition or artwork should return to Scotland after Venice, and what their role in this should be. (For further discussion on this see, Section 5.7). British Council Scotland's contribution has been far more meaningful and better recognised when it has had a specialist visual arts role within the Steering Group. This has meant that connections and development support post-Venice, have been strengthened and been more strategic. Partners and commissioning teams have welcomed the gradual development in how the British Council has developed its role in supporting activity across the UK, in Venice. This has focused upon joint marketing as well as aspects of project coordination.

**When surveyed partners indicated that Scotland + Venice had delivered successfully, and cited the following as examples:**

- As a confident platform and brand for the visual arts of Scotland, providing creative opportunities, professional development prospects, and national as well as international visibility.
- The Open Call process had unlocked potential for a wide range of organisations and individuals across Scotland.
- The professional development Programme had been a demonstrable success, offering an immersive experience for those at the beginning of their careers.
- The measured and perceived impacts on and benefits to the Visual Arts sector more widely.

**Partners themselves were positive about the existing partnership and the project overall but were also aware of the opportunities not yet fulfilled. They identified that Scotland + Venice could develop further and build on impacts by:**

- Identifying how successive projects could act as a catalyst to the visual arts in Scotland in strengthening approaches to programming, collecting and promotion.
- Increasing awareness and visibility, with both arts professionals as well as audience members, through greater use of digital tools and platforms.
- Clarifying how the British Pavilion will develop in relation to other UK presentations.
- Maintaining and developing a media presence throughout the period of the Venice Biennale and afterwards.
- Identifying ways to connect up Scotland's international visual arts initiatives and maximise on strategic benefits.

**In addition, the partners acknowledged the following aspects as challenging:**

- Making financial commitments on a single edition only, in line with the Scottish Government's grant to Creative Scotland (see Section 5.12); as well as making necessary financial commitments early enough so that each project can be initiated and delivered in a timely way.
- Ensuring the partners have sufficient capacity on their staff teams, separately and collectively, to support and deliver each project.
- Identifying sufficient funds to safeguard the quality, reach and required development of each edition.
- Maintaining a trajectory of development and focusing upon the strategic positioning of Scotland + Venice beyond a two year delivery cycle.
- Identifying and raising new resources when two of the partners do not normally get involved in fundraising and the third is fundraising for its own programme and needs.

**Going forward the Review recommends that the partners separately, and the Steering Group collectively, should undertake the following:**

- Re-state the overall project's aims and objectives in relation to their own reasons for being involved.
- Review the roles, responsibilities and contributions to Scotland + Venice.
- Clarify the resources each partner can provide including funding (cash and in-kind), staff support and expertise, as well as any other areas of support (such as office accommodation).
- Re-consider whether a commitment in principle can be taken to support more than one edition of Scotland + Venice at a time, with the necessary caveats, in order to encourage development and extend planning horizons.
- Consider where the commissioning teams could have more autonomy.

# Selection Process

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In August 2008 the Scotland + Venice partnership – the Scottish Arts Council, National Galleries of Scotland and British Council Scotland invited Dundee Contemporary Arts to curate the next edition (2009) – a solo presentation of new work by Martin Boyce, to mark DCA's 10th anniversary. Previously in 2003 and 2005, and from 2011 onwards an Open Call process has been in place for each cycle, changing and evolving over the period. Notes of interest are sought from 'experienced curators and/or visual arts organisations' who will work with the Steering Group partners 'to produce an ambitious and imaginative project'.

In submitting to the Open Call, the curator proposes the artist and the final selection of the artist and team is made by the partners supported by two external advisors. Producers have been either employed direct by the curator's organisation or by Creative Scotland. In 2009 and 2011 the producer was contracted to the Scottish Arts Council / Creative Scotland for two editions and then in 2013 the Common Guild contracted the same producer for a third time. Since then the role has been advertised each time and contracted to the arts organisation.

## **The Open Call process has been developed over the years and its perceived strengths are:**

- Opportunity to clarify partners' expectations in an iterative fashion.
- Generally straightforward nature of the procedures.
- Increasingly robust and well communicated process.
- Strategic approach to selecting an artist at the right time in their career.

## **Curators and producers see the weaknesses of the process as:**

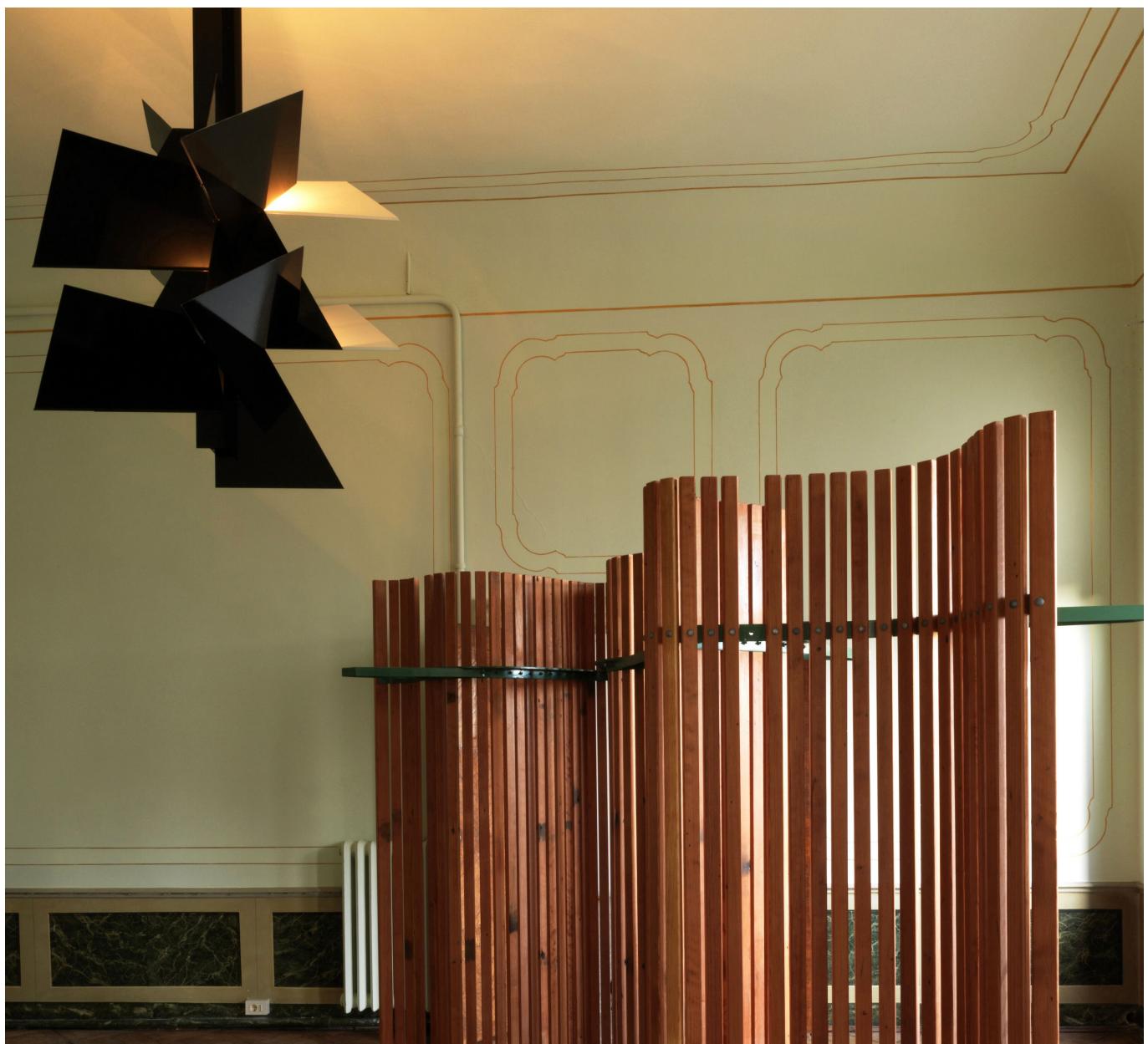
- The lack of information from previous editions, the lack of budget information, sometimes inconsistent advice – "Selectors seem to have different agendas".
- The time frame for the process – the need for it to start earlier.
- The lack of knowledge of the selection process and "some partners seemed too risk averse."

Notwithstanding these reservations, the principle of the Open Call suited the way the majority of curators wanted to work.

The identification of a producer – the person who takes on a considerable amount of responsibility for supporting the artist, organising the production of their work and its installation in Venice – was in some cases less satisfactory. Again, practice has developed over the last 10 years but both curators and producers felt there were clear benefits to the producer being selected and contracted by the curator's organisation. It was sometimes felt that the partners had too much influence over who was eventually selected. All saw that it was important for the producer to be a member of the delivery team and not be seen in some respects outside it or working for the partners, leading to the possibility of confusion and tension.

**In relation to the Open Call and appointment of commissioning team members, the Review recommends:**

- The Open Call process should be continued, with the interview process and panel membership clearly communicated in advance.
- Consideration should be given to external panel members supporting the selection process.
- The description of the overall process of selecting for Venice should be more widely communicated across the Visual Arts sector in Scotland to dispel misapprehension, including that the panel is made up of the three partners and two external advisors.
- The appointment of the producer should continue to be under the aegis of the managing organisation and curator and employed by them for the project.



Martin Boyce, Installation view. Curated by Dundee Contemporary Arts (DCA) for Scotland + Venice 2009.  
Photograph by Gilmar Ribeiro.

# Commissioning Teams

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There have been five commissioning teams (curator, producer and organisation) appointed, one for each edition. The curator and artist are jointly selected by the Steering Group partners and their advisors. As has already been indicated the method for appointing the producer has varied over time.

The teams have had different characteristics, relating to both the individuals concerned and to the size and description of the organisation the curator is part of. There has been a good geographical spread with organisations such as Hospitalfield and Alchemy Arts being based outside the central belt. Each team has worked well together, commissioning new work, making sure it is produced to a high quality, supporting the artist, identifying the venue, installing the exhibition, developing the Invigilator Programme with partners, initiating print connected to the artistic content, devising the marketing plan and organising delivery with the partners, managing the long run of the exhibition in Venice and, becoming ambassadors for Scotland + Venice as well as for their own project, along with a myriad of other responsibilities.

## **Key findings regarding the commissioning teams centred on:**

- Strong evidence of creative ideas, organisational capabilities as well as energetic determination and enthusiasm that was displayed for each edition.
- Scotland + Venice has been developed incrementally by each team who has worked within an existing framework, designed both by the Venice Biennale and by the partners in Scotland; teams sometimes pushed for change and at other times defended their autonomy to make their own artistic and organisational decisions.

There is unanimity in the need for a more formal handover or induction process with documented information. While there was recognition of the time and commitment Creative Scotland staff give to talking through Scotland + Venice in all its complexity, all commissioning teams identified a need to build on the knowledge and expertise of one team to another to ensure awareness regarding costs, routes to realisation including transportation, licensing processes and other information that could be referred to at different times of project development. Handover notes should detail the practical elements of each project's history as well as the most recent team's experiences. Curatorial and production teams also felt receiving media reports and evaluation would have been valuable. There is a strong view that there should not be a 'reinventing of the wheel' every time.

"There was a lot of assumption we knew what the project was and how to do it." To address some of the weaknesses in the handover process, the 2015 and 2017 teams produced a handover document. This will now be compiled with copies of all key contracts, contact lists, timeline and budget reconciliation, as well as advice on each stage of the project. Scotland + Venice is a significant opportunity for both individuals as well as their organisations to develop professionally, deepen their understanding of working internationally and extend their contacts and networks. The initiative has always had a capacity building purpose, as much for

individuals and organisations, as for the Visual Arts sector in Scotland. This very positive aspect is also accompanied by levels of pressure and scrutiny that are unique to delivering activity at the Venice Biennale. As the Visual Arts sector Review highlighted most of Scotland's visual arts organisations are managed by small teams where capacity remains a concern. In taking on the organisation of Venice it is important for those directly involved as much as those who continue to programme and develop organisations back home, to receive the appropriate levels of support.

**The Review recommends the Steering Committee partnership, for future editions should ensure that:**

- There is a full debrief of the project and a report is written up by the commissioning team, in addition to the short End of Project Monitoring Report required by Creative Scotland.
- All contracts, marketing print and press and PR material is compiled by the commissioning team for the project's institutional history as well as for future practical use by the next team.
- A set of briefing documents, containing the above elements, is provided to each new commissioning team.

# Venue and Its Selection

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Scotland + Venice has occupied six different buildings since its first appearance as a Collateral Event at the Venice Biennale in 2003. It has moved between five different districts in the city (2005 took place in both San Polo and Castello) and it has used Palazzo Pisani, Cannaregio three times (2009, 2011 and 2013). The rationale for using different spaces is based on selecting a venue that best suits the project and the work of the artist. After being selected, the commissioning team and artist go to Venice to look at the options identified by a locally based company of architects and project managers, M + B Studio. In the main this process has worked well and the artists appreciate being involved in the selection of the space.

Until 2013 the chosen space was leased from June to November; from 2015, this has been extended by a further month (i.e. from May), following an announcement by the Biennale to extend presentation dates. The lease is one of two of the highest cost items in the Scotland + Venice budget (for more detail of costs see Appendix 13).

The changing location means that during the opening days curators and the art world, and afterwards more diverse audiences, need to find ‘Scotland’. Some of the chosen venues have been easier to locate and more central than others. Some have offered better facilities such as improved disabled access, accommodation and organisational space. A new venue was sought in 2015 to ensure good disabled access and this remains a vital consideration going forward.

*“The venue is often too far away or too obscure to main biennale activities.”*  
— Sector survey contributor

Securing an appropriate and central space has become highly competitive and instances of gazumping appear to be on the rise. Some countries such as Luxembourg return to the same building each time. Wales has been able to secure the same venue on a short lease for each edition since 2011. In the Benchmarking research Cymru yn Fenis Wales in Venice was clear that they would not feel it appropriate to house an artistic project in the wrong venue. In previous years a site on the Giudecca had been considered too far away from the Giardini and the Arsenale. Successively artists have continued to be interested in responding to their current building – Santa Maria Ausiliatrice, Castello, situated at the end of Via Garibaldi, close to both the Giardini and Arsenale. They commented that ultimately their project, within its building, was focused upon showcasing the best from Wales, while making an impact in terms of profile and media. Similarly, Creative New Zealand felt the positioning of their Pavilion in relation to other Biennale activity was an important consideration. In 2017 they took a space in the Arsenale, alongside other national pavilions.

Scotland + Venice’s approach of letting the commissioning team and artist identify the venue has the advantage of flexibility but artists generally feel a more permanent venue should be considered. Amongst those who have worked on the project in other capacities, some believe the current approach is appropriate and others feel a more fixed venue would improve Scotland’s profile and audiences. As will be discussed later in this Report (Section 5.11 and 5.12)

the issue of longer term funding for Scotland + Venice is cited as one reason why a more regular venue is not secured for each edition, yet it should be noted that other countries return to the same venue while having to operate under this same limitation.

*"The location is very important and being central has a cost."*

*"It would be wise to keep a venue for a length of time. Visibility of venue is very important."*

*"I think we need to be bolder and make the investment into the Arsenale or in permanent premises very close. It would be far better value longer term, would reduce a lot of the work and stress (and cost) in the seeking premises each year and would maximise the benefits – i.e. the art world would know where to find us."*

In later sections of this Review it is worth noting the profile and audiences the Benchmarking partners have been able to achieve. The Review re-examines the choice of venue in Section 5.11 and makes its recommendations at that point.



Karla Black, Installation view. Curated by Fruitmarket Gallery for Scotland + Venice 2011. Photograph by Gautier Deblonde.

# The Exhibition / Project in Venice

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As has been briefly outlined in Section 3, until 2013 Scotland + Venice asked artists and commissioning teams to deliver ‘an ambitious and imaginative exhibition’. For the last two editions the partnership has requested notes of interest from those ‘who will work with us to produce an ambitious and imaginative project’. The change of wording may seem modest but in the visual arts the words ‘exhibition’ and ‘project’ provide very different opportunities. The former has a recognised meaning of displaying a selection of artworks in a gallery, museum or appropriate presenting space, while ‘project’ denotes a far looser description, in the way an artist might both conceive and present work, in whatever form, to an audience. This is notwithstanding that further into the Open Call particulars for 2015 and 2017, managing ‘the exhibition’ is referred to.

It is not for this Review to compare or contrast the artwork in the different exhibitions, other than to say that critical response and audience feedback have been positive. However, in a Future Focus group discussion held as part of the Review as well as individual consultative meetings, a range of sector professionals based both in Scotland as well as internationally, voiced opinions that the Venice Biennale offered ‘an outdated model’ and in its totality rarely gave rise to curatorially inspired exhibitions. There was a perception that Scotland + Venice placed ‘too many restrictions’ on what could be proposed and what would be considered, in terms of the exhibition. Strong views were expressed by the Future Focus group that Scotland’s project needed to be revived and that the partnership should consider what was actually happening in the country’s visual arts, as there seemed to be a disconnect.

In Venice, Future Focus group members felt, it was important for a country to express what made it different, and as they saw it, the Biennale offered an opportunity to present an exciting and ambitious project devised by an artist, rather than a presentation of a body of work. This ‘project’ approach might lead to engagement with the city, rather than a building, as well as audiences in quite a different way. There was also confidence that Scotland’s brand and its international reputation for the visual arts would further support the ‘project’ approach. Developing exhibitions had encouraged a focus on organisations and there was a desire by the Future Focus group to give the opportunity back to the artist, who would propose and be selected on their ideas as well as their work. Connection with a curator could take place later.

In testing out this proposition with visual arts professionals at home and abroad, contributors doubted whether artists’ projects would get noticed in the over-crowded environment of activity in Venice. They were sceptical that a project, not necessarily presented in a building, would gain the profile desired, provide critical focus and bring return to the wider visual art community in Scotland. They felt the Venice Biennale did not offer the appropriate context for artists’ projects and that the exhibition model should be maintained.

Currently the Open Call process mentions ‘project’ but does not follow up on the concept. Ultimately success would lie with the ideas behind, and the realisation of, any project. As the Visual Arts sector Review has documented, there has been a clear diversification in artistic practice. It is important that the physical manifestations of Scotland + Venice reflect the country’s different approaches to artistic practice and its qualities, as well as different forms of production.

**The Review recommends the following in respect of the type of activity that could be supported:**

- The Steering Group partners should clarify the meaning and scope of the words ‘project’ and ‘exhibition’ as set out in its current set of deliverables.
- The Open Call process should communicate clearly that ‘projects’ will be considered, and in relation to the same set of deliverables as proposed for exhibitions in a venue.
- In considering ‘project’ proposals the partnership should reassure itself that any proposal has the strength, ambition and unique quality to deliver in relation to the particular challenges and opportunities of Venice.

# Opening and VIP Events in Venice

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Scotland + Venice presentations have had several different forms of opening event/celebration over the years including a press view, a private view and a dinner for artist, team, partners and those who have supported the project, as well as other collaborators. Sometimes there will be a reception or lunch if a minister from the Scottish Government visits and is involved in the formal opening ceremony.

These events are important for launching the project, thanking contributors, attracting media attention, reiterating the importance of Scotland + Venice, expressing confidence in the visual arts of Scotland, attracting professionals from elsewhere in the world, and exploiting the soft power of diplomacy.

However, like many other launch and hospitality events during the opening week of the Venice Biennale, there could be more strategic planning as to what the different opportunities are for, and who should be invited. One of the international experts spoke of the need to create a ‘rumour’ around Scotland’s presentation in order to harness the ‘visibility economy’. Simon Denny and New Zealand achieved this in 2015 by having a presence at the airport. Naturally it is a time for Scotland and key participants to celebrate, but better co-ordination of invitation lists would lead to a greater number of international curators, museum directors, art critics and other visual arts professionals to experience Scotland + Venice and feel included. Assuming the data protection issues can be resolved, Scotland + Venice would benefit from establishing its own database.

*“No one invested time into the VIP invite list – this needs resolving as it is a missed opportunity.” — Participating curator/producer*

*“People were reluctant to share contacts.”*  
— Participating curator/producer

*“We were told you can have the names but not the contract details. The data is a bit confusing.”*  
— Participating curator/producer

## The Review recommends:

- The Steering Group partners and commissioning team should clarify the strategic purpose of each opening event, and where responsibility lies for compiling the invitation lists.
- Greater consideration should be given to how international curators can be encouraged to visit Scotland + Venice.
- A central as well as a segmented invitation list (for different events) should be compiled some 4 – 5 months before the start of opening events.

- The Steering Group partners and commissioning team should review the value of activity and contacts made, as part of the debriefing process – to ensure events are designed and delivered effectively, there is a central record of who attended and identification started of who should be invited to the next edition.
- Creative Scotland should initiate a wider discussion as to how initiatives such as Scotland + Venice, Glasgow International, the Edinburgh Art Festival and other international visual arts events can share contact details and identify opportunities to develop and maintain new international contacts.



Sworn / Campbell / Tompkins. Commissioned by The Common Guild for Scotland + Venice 2013. Photograph by Claire McCrory.

# Follow up Activity in Scotland

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Over the last 10 years there has been a range of activity that has come back to Scotland after Venice. This has included the exhibitions No Reflections at DCA, Dundee with the work by Martin Boyce (2009 – 2010) and Come into the Garden, and forget about the War at Hospitalfield, Arbroath (2016) with the work by Graham Fagen. Karla Black had a show at Glasgow's Gallery of Modern Art as part of Glasgow International in 2012 so it was not thought appropriate to re-stage her Venice show. Duncan Campbell, Corin Sworn and Hayley Tompkins all had shows at The Common Guild, Glasgow as part of GENERATION (2014) and there have been public events and artists' talks at Hospitalfield and the National Galleries of Scotland (2015) in relation to Graham Fagen's presentation in Venice. In addition, Fagen has been supported by British Council Scotland since Venice and he has been both approached and initiated a number of exhibitions of his work resulting in the following shows – Inverness Museum and Art Gallery (2016), CGP London with Matt's Gallery, London (2016) and the National Gallery of Jamaica (2017). He also recently showed The Slave's Lament, made for Venice, at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh, at An Tobar Gallery, Comar, Mull as well as at Irvine Townhouse, Ayrshire (2017).

Rachel Maclean's work Spite Your Face will be presented at Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh (24 February – 5 May 2018) as well as at Chapter, Cardiff (Oct 2018 – Jan 2019). This is the first time there has been an exchange of artists after Venice between Scotland and Wales, with James Richards and Music for the gift initiated by Chapter, due to travel to the Collective Gallery, Edinburgh. These post Venice presentations have been supported by Art Fund.

Hitherto what might return to Scotland (e.g. exhibitions and events) has had no fixed status in the preparations for the Scotland + Venice project and its budget. It has never been included per se in the list of deliverables set out during the Open Call process – although commissioning teams are asked to deliver 'audience development opportunities within Scotland' during 'the period of the Biennale and beyond'. There is reticence from partners for this to be made more specific owing to lack of budgets, yet artists, commissioning teams as well as those in the sector in Scotland and internationally question why there is not a more formal opportunity during the Scotland + Venice development process, to discuss what might return to Scotland, and if appropriate, how this might be organised and funded. Graham Fagen's inclusion in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery's programme, recently, was not planned until long after his involvement in Venice.

*"Where does the project come back to? It should come back to the National Galleries of Scotland as a principle. We need to consider what comes back to Scotland early on in the project."*

The benefits of there being a trace of Scotland + Venice, in Scotland, have come up repeatedly during the Review and are understood by the partners. It has been linked to the following opportunities:

- A further way of developing audiences for contemporary art in Scotland
- An important occasion to build public awareness of Scotland + Venice
- The chance for curators from the UK and internationally, who did not go to Venice, to see the work
- A further chance for both professionals and the public to see the work
- A way of engaging younger audiences and schools
- An increase in value for money.

65% of respondents to the sector survey indicated that they had seen the work in the follow-up exhibitions in Scotland. 72% said that Scotland + Venice had an impact on them. More generally 63% indicated that Scotland + Venice raises the status of the visual arts in Scotland. 39% of respondents said that the project strengthened connections in the Scottish Visual Arts sector. Comments emphasised the value of Scotland + Venice, but also the outstanding potential to maximise on the benefits. 76% of respondents said that Scotland + Venice is important in raising the profile of Scottish contemporary art at home or abroad. "Important internationally but maybe more could be done to make links between Venice and Scotland."

During the Review's Benchmarking exercise, Creative New Zealand indicated that some form of presentation is always organised back home after Venice. The body that takes lead responsibility for the New Zealand Pavilion does not commit funds for the 'home' exhibition and it is not a given as to where the work might be shown, but a review of their own Venice activity had highlighted the need to focus more attention on developing the national audience and the understanding of the Venice Biennale as a critical platform for New Zealand art. It also suggested that 'home' exhibitions might assist with generating more support from patrons and the procurement of sponsorship. Lisa Reihana's work at the 2017 Biennale will be shown by their partner the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington.

Arad Research's report 'The value and impact of Wales' presence at the Venice Biennale for the Visual Arts sector in Wales', published in 2016, made a recommendation that in order 'to engage the general public with Cymru yn Fenis / Wales in Venice and provide a wider benefit for Wales', the process 'should be linked to an improved touring infrastructure and partnerships with galleries in Wales, to ensure work created for Cymru yn Fenis / Wales in Venice is shown in Wales.' Similarly, it has been seen that the impact and momentum generated by Cymru yn Fenis / Wales in Venice is an opportunity to broaden the appeal of the visual arts and improve the audience base in Wales through promoting wider engagement.

*"Having a presentation here in Scotland is really important in sharing the experience with others who can't travel. The creative potential of mediating that experience is one of the most exciting aspects and opportunities - e.g. involving teachers; opening up the curriculum, dialogue - has huge scope for engagement and widening discussion and understanding on what artists do, funders do, why they do it etc." — Sector survey contribution*

In the sector survey a small percentage of voices questioned the importance and relevance of Scotland + Venice because of the low profile of work in Scotland. "It has very little impact in Scotland so it's relatively unimportant."

In a press release, Stephen Deuchar, Director of the Art Fund has said: "The Venice Biennale is one of the most significant events in the art world calendar, but not everyone gets a chance to visit it for themselves. Art Fund always tries to facilitate the greatest possible access to art so we're very pleased to be bringing both Rachel Maclean's and James Richards' Venice exhibitions to UK audiences in Cardiff and Edinburgh, where we hope they'll be widely enjoyed."

The range of statements on Scotland + Venice's impact within Scotland suggest that more could be achieved. Whether the works or exhibition should return to Scotland needs a better process of investigation. The current practice seems to consist of discussions that are informal, somewhat ad hoc and snag too early on the need for additional resources.

### **The Review recommends:**

- The Steering Group partners, together with the artist and commissioning team, should hold formal discussions early in the planning process, to decide whether a presentation in Scotland should be embarked upon and what form this should take.
- The National Galleries of Scotland should explore how to support a post Venice presentation in Scotland and how it could connect to initiatives such as their six-part series of exhibitions entitled NOW, (that 'bring together the best contemporary art being made in Scotland with work by leading international artists').
- When 'Spite Your Face' returns to the Talbot Rice Gallery, audience research should be undertaken to establish the value of work returning to Scotland and for the findings to be fed into the next Scotland + Venice discussions in 2018.



Karla Black, Installation view. Curated by Fruitmarket Gallery for Scotland + Venice 2011. Photograph by Gautier Deblonde.

# Delivery of Media and PR

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In 2009 the delivery of Media and PR for Scotland + Venice was undertaken by communication professionals in Creative Scotland and the commissioning arts organisation, Dundee Contemporary Arts. In 2011 the commissioning arts organisation The Fruitmarket Gallery took on Sutton PR to deliver the campaign. From 2013 – 2017 a brief was advertised each time and awarded to Sutton PR, a cultural communications company with offices in London, New York and Hong Kong.

The overall budget in 2017 was just under £30,000. Marketing is budgeted separately c. £20,000 in 2017. (For more details on costs see Appendix 13). This includes design, print, website, advertising and exhibition interpretation panels. Creative Scotland has more recently sought to increase the budget for Media, PR and Marketing by allocating additional funds or through bringing design in-house. The downside of this has been that some other internal design work had to be contracted out.

**The Review brought together communication personnel from the partnership and Sutton PR and the Focus Group discussion reflected upon the following:**

- Scotland + Venice communications objectives and brief were clear.
- Scotland + Venice is the best process in relation to 10 other contracts Sutton PR has for Venice, “There is a real consistency and confidence in the partnership. The time frame is sensible and logical. There is a lot of partner engagement.”
- Digital communications were added into the brief, where before it had been an after-thought.
- The main client has become Creative Scotland which streamlines reporting.

A press pack and a London launch were organised jointly across the UK presentations. This has encouraged journalists and visitors to see the different exhibitions. The British Council has an overall objective to support UK partners in Venice and has introduced a visitor survey to see if this form of cross promotion was successful. Another advantage identified in linking the exhibitions is that the British Pavilion tends to showcase more established artists, and the less established artists who are usually chosen for Scotland + Venice give a complementary message and a special appeal for younger audiences.

**The Focus Group identified a number of weaknesses in terms of Media and PR, namely:**

- Digital communication was added to the brief without increasing the budget.
- Certain elements of the communications strategy were not specified – target audiences, key messages, calls to action, etc.
- The communications contract lasts for just nine months, which might be appropriate for print media but is less appropriate for social media.
- Content could be better coordinated.

- Expertise and levels of resource vary from year to year depending on the chosen commissioning teams.
- As mentioned above, handovers have been weak.
- The Communications Sub-group lacks consistent attendance from all partners, except for Creative Scotland.

Creative Scotland is now documenting what has been carried out and lessons learnt. Overall, the Focus Group thought it was not easy to measure the performance of the media team because what was possible depended on the venue and location, nature of the artwork, preferences of the artist and competition from other countries. It was easy for messaging to get lost in Venice.

### **However, lessons learnt included:**

- Coordinating social media is challenging owing to the number of people involved.
- Communications objectives can only be finalised once the artist and artwork are known.
- Digital communications need different benchmarks that are more about the journey and the relationship than the number of people who engaged.
- The Communications campaign would have a longer life if there was an archive.

The British Council is creating an archive for the British Pavilion and with it a strategy to mine the archive, such as having blogs or articles about what has happened since the exhibition, or content concerning wider connections and meaning. Creative Scotland has not had the budget to undertake the same yet.

In addition, the Review has also considered opinions from partners and participants. Participating artists commented positively on the organisation of the media and publicity; their main criticism was that the PR agency didn't seem to understand the work. In contrast only one curator was happy with the arrangements for media and publicity. The challenges were identified as follows:

- Unclear agendas – “It was difficult to get the balance right between political, strategic and artistic objectives” “Media and publicity needed greater clarity of roles and responsibilities. The media company needs to know the arts organisation is a partner too.” “I felt the PR company was working for the partnership rather than for the artist and the show.”
- Lack of social media – “The PR team were a pleasure to work with and we had some great conversations. But they were definitely weak in terms of their understanding and engagement with social media (the thing that really drives audiences these days).”
- Style of approach – “In general, I felt the approach to PR was a little out of date and would benefit from some fresh new thinking. It is no longer just articles in the press that drive actual people to go to exhibitions. It might be interesting to split the tender into two parts – one for Press/TV/Radio and one for Social Media?”

## In considering the many opinions expressed the Review recommends:

- The Communications Sub-group should be given greater priority by all the partners, with clear roles and responsibilities apportioned.
- The Media and PR budget should be reviewed and increased to ensure advertising and social media is handled more consistently and over a longer period of time; all partners should look to contributing to marketing, media and PR for Scotland + Venice.
- The length of the PR contract should be reviewed; a longer contract would provide better support for the communications strategy and holistic support for artists and curators.
- The Steering Group partners should ensure that in appointing a PR company, all of its team are conversant with discussing the complexities of contemporary art.
- The Steering Group partners should discuss with the appointed PR company what the appropriate balance is in delivering the Communications strategy, between political and artistic objectives.
- The Steering Group partners should find a way to compile an outward facing archive of Scotland + Venice, to better promote activity, successes and benefits.



Graham Fagan, Installation view. Commissioned and curated by Hospitalfield for Scotland + Venice 2015.  
Photograph by Ruth Clark.

# External Partnerships and Delivery

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Besides the partnerships already described in this report, Scotland + Venice depends on a number of additional partners for the successful delivery of each edition. These include:

- The Scottish Government
- Fondazione La Biennale di Venezia
- Eight Universities and further Education Colleges from across Scotland
- M + B Studio, Venice

Support from politicians including the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs and different departments of the Scottish Government, characterised overall by an arm's length approach, has continued over the last 10 years.

The Fondazione La Biennale di Venezia agree all the Collateral Events and keep control over how these are profiled and publicised in Venice. Scotland + Venice pays a registration fee each time to the Fondazione, in 2017 this was 20,000 Euros plus tax (c. £18,500). Contact with the Fondazione takes place concerning practical issues, but seldom around strategic issues that affect all Collateral Events.

The eight Universities and Further Education Colleges are partners in every sense of the word, supporting the Invigilator Programme financially (c. £47,000 in 2017) as well as organisationally. (See Appendix 13 for further details.) They are Borders College; City of Glasgow College; Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, University of Dundee; Dundee and Angus College; Edinburgh College of Art, University of Edinburgh; Glasgow School of Art; Gray's School of Art, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen and Moray School of Art, University of the Highlands and Islands.

M + B Studios have worked with Scotland + Venice since 2003. As architects and project managers they provide site identification and venue advice, technical support for the exhibition and contractual guidance. Commissioning teams continue to value their assistance.

For each edition there are other individuals and organisations who provide expertise and support for aspects of Scotland + Venice. On occasion other artists are involved including those involved in other art forms. As new work is commissioned each time, manufacturers and producers get involved. Audio-visual, film, sound and image companies also collaborate.

Finally, funders and financial supporters have contributed to elements of each Scotland + Venice. Some like Outset Scotland have contributed since 2009. (For further details see Appendix 13.)

This brief overview of partners cannot do justice to the importance of what they contribute. Some are paid, others pay in. Yet their support contributes to Scotland + Venice and the visual arts in Scotland in ways that otherwise might get lost or not happen.

### The Review recommends:

- Steering Group partners discuss with Further and Higher Education partners a long-term commitment to strategic development for the Invigilators Programme in order to extend its benefits and increase its visibility.



Martin Boyce, Installation view. Curated by Dundee Contemporary Arts (DCA) for Scotland + Venice 2009.  
Photograph by Gilmar Ribeiro.

# Benchmarking Considerations

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The Benchmarking exercise carried out with information from the Arts Council of Wales and Creative New Zealand suggests that all three country presentations have broadly similar aims and objectives. The Collateral Event and Pavilion Commissioners are a member of the Arts Council of Wales and the ex-Chair of Creative New Zealand, respectively. Each country has a consistent record of participation although New Zealand did not go to Venice in 2007. All consider the Biennale to be an opportunity for the artist to make new work but New Zealand also considers including existing work. The Open Call processes are comparable, although there have been varying histories. The selection process for Cymru yn Fenis / Wales in Venice is carried out by an Advisory Committee, chaired by a member of the Arts Council, a minimum of two external National Advisers and representatives from Artes Mundi and the National Museum Wales. New Zealand too has an External Advisory panel which includes the Commissioner and a recommendation is then made to Creative New Zealand.

Since 2013 the organisation in Wales proposing the artist has had to demonstrate that it can deliver the project but also support the development of the sector more widely. For Wales the post Venice exhibition tour is confirmed well in advance, and with New Zealand the Venice presentation always returns to one of its institutional museum partners.

Both Wales and New Zealand are very interested in their audiences back home. Wales has structured itself so the work tours more widely and New Zealand recognises Venice is a long way away, so building awareness and pride in its presentations has been a priority. Both see Venice as integral to growing wider interest in the contemporary visual arts. For the sector, Wales has found that its participating organisations/galleries have benefitted from making new international contacts, some leading to financial support from international foundations for other elements of their programmes.

Cymru yn Fenis / Wales in Venice receives its core grant from the Arts Council of Wales, and Creative New Zealand also provides core funding. However, New Zealand not only has the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa as a key partner (since 2009), but it also benefits from the New Zealand at Venice Patron group. The group started to establish itself in 2001 and has been important in lobbying for country representation at Venice. They are an independent body that supports the overall Venice project, and sometimes in addition they will support the artist. In 2017, c.150 patrons attended the Biennale, having donated some 27.5% of the presentation's overall budget.

All three countries engage press/PR companies. For Wales this resulted in a substantial increase in media coverage from 2013 compared to earlier years, and it continues to invest in this way. Creative New Zealand has now chosen to operate from the Arsenale, a more expensive option, but it guarantees a higher profile and footfall. Their media attention in 2017 has also been high.

The commissioning bodies for Wales and New Zealand cited identical challenges for the future, that of resources in terms of time and money, yet both are extremely positive in terms of the benefits of participating in Venice – for artists, their Visual Arts sectors, profile and developing audiences.

## The Review recommends:

- The Scotland + Venice partnership should reflect particularly on Wales' and New Zealand's approach to the selection of the curator and artist, the way the touring of work after Venice is achieved, and how additional financial support could be developed. For further benchmark information see Appendix 14.



Graham Fagan, Installation view. Commissioned and curated by Hospitalfield for Scotland + Venice 2015. Photograph by Ruth Clark.

# Does The Model Work?

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Some of the main components of the model are clearly successful, including the Open Call process, how the commissioning teams work and the Invigilator Programme. The overall project has extended many people's experience of working internationally, both directly as well as indirectly. The focus on one artist has worked well but those consulted feel the curatorial proposition and selection should remain open to other approaches, such as the one taken by The Common Guild in 2013. When asked, few professionals feel Venice has altered or challenged curatorial practices and approaches back in Scotland.

While understandably no one wanted to directly attribute inclusion in Scotland + Venice as a way of securing future career opportunities and successes, there is an irrefutable link between the two. Since 2009 four artists, who are either Scottish or are based in Scotland, have won the Turner Prize (Richard Wright (2009), Susan Philipsz (2010), Martin Boyce (2011) and Duncan Campbell (2014). A further five artists have been nominated (Lucy Skaer (2009), Karla Black (2011), David Shrigley (2013), Ciara Phillips (2014) and Rosalind Nashashibi (2017). Of these nine artists, five have been included in editions of Scotland + Venice prior to their involvement in the Turner Prize. By any account, this illustrates not only the creative talent of the individuals concerned, but also the health of Scotland's Visual Arts sector and the considerable foundations that Scottish art schools provide. There are many other signifiers of success for artists but as the evaluation process has shown, artists post Venice have continued to develop their practice, gone on to win other accolades, been offered a wide number of opportunities in both Scotland and internationally, and been supported to continue to make new work through commissions as well as sales (see Appendix 4 for further details).

One of the main areas that both curators and producers raised as problematic was the insufficient lead-in time from selection and approval of the project, to opening in Venice. This is governed by when Creative Scotland learns of its own funding levels from the Scottish Government. Scotland's decision to commit financially to Venice runs considerably later than in other countries. Both the British and New Zealand Pavilions start their open call processes in November. Scotland only concludes its process in April or May of the following year. Sometimes this leaves less than a year for commissioning and preparations to take place. Commissioning teams have also commented that the scope and size of the project budget sometimes takes too long to be agreed. Further discussion of the decision timetable and whether Scotland + Venice has appropriate budget is discussed in the next section (Section 5.12).

The Invigilator Programme developed with a network of Further and Higher Education institutions across Scotland is rightly seen as a significant success. Its support for participating students and recently graduated artists, who have been able to experience and increase their awareness of international contemporary art, has delivered immediate benefits and will continue to feed back into the sector over the coming years. Invigilators have been able to develop a shared community with peers from across Scotland, as well as build connections with artists and curators in other countries.

The Review concludes that the Visual Arts sector in Scotland has benefited from the project through the involvement of a wide range of individuals and organisations, not simply those selected to present, curate and produce. The project raises ambition, develops awareness, skills and experience in working internationally and generates learning. No one seems overly keen to have a more permanent team to curate and deliver Scotland + Venice, except those who are involved externally in delivery of media and PR.

In the core aims of the project, the importance of audiences is described in a variety of ways. Scotland + Venice is expected to deliver 'high impact and visibility', 'a good level of attendance', 'strong critical and professional responses from within Scotland, the rest of the UK and internationally' and 'audience development opportunities within Scotland... during the period of the Biennale and beyond'. There is also a stated intention 'to increase professional interest in the artists and arts organisations' in Scotland.

Benchmarking research shows both a similar (fluctuating but slowly increasing) and different (exponential growth) audience profiles for the three country participations investigated:

	<b>2011</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2017</b>
<b>Scotland</b>	21,093	15,839	33,458	27,030
<b>Wales</b>	29,889	22,610	28,839	31,168
<b>New Zealand</b>	40,014	218,000	173,996	615,168*

Audience levels set out above are all for exhibitions in venues outside the main sites of the Giardini and Arsenale, except for one\*. New Zealand moved into the Arsenale for 2017. Owing to the existence of the UK Pavilion in the Giardini, neither Scotland or Wales can be included in the Arsenale. Wales has remained in the same building for all four editions, even though this is renegotiated for each edition with the city of Venice. New Zealand's participation comprised two exhibitions in 2009 as well as 2015, and its venues in 2013 and 2015 were both central and easy to find.

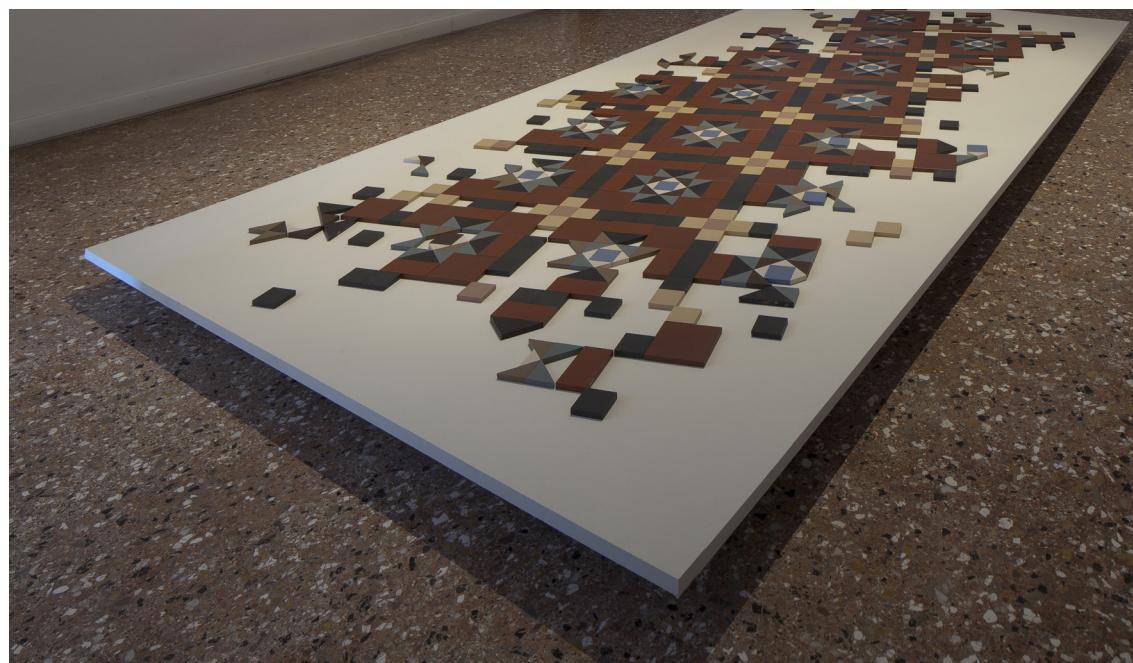
These figures do put some pressure on Scotland + Venice to decide how best to deliver its core aims of 'high impact and visibility' and to return to the question of whether a more central venue should be used and reoccupied each time. The venue used in 2015 was the most central to date, with all of the buildings 2009 – 17 being in the Cannaregio district, in the North of Venice's main island. Partners' view that short term funding (ie. on an edition by edition basis, see Section 5.12) must mean that a regular venue cannot be secured, is not borne out by other countries' experiences. While short term funding will necessarily limit the length of lease Creative Scotland can commit to, other countries have returned to venues as in fact Scotland did for some years, on short term leases. However, the partners need to weigh up how the choice of venue is decided and to what degree positioning in Venice, in relation to the majority of art biennale activity, is a priority. It is clear that ensuring professionals visit Scotland + Venice, and audience numbers are strong, is a major consideration.

The countries in the Benchmarking exercise made comment as to venues being secured ‘for their central location’ and ‘close relationship with the work’. The national and international experts were united in describing space and location as being absolutely critical. While they acknowledged it was positive to give artists and curators the choice, they felt this was the wrong priority in relation to Venice and a regular venue should be found to ensure greater visibility.

Returning to the related subject of exhibition or project, Scotland + Venice will only deliver ‘high impact and visibility’, greater audience levels and positive critical responses if the art itself is original, high quality and delivered in a way that engages and questions. Greater freedom for artists and curators to propose projects as much as exhibitions, will in some professionals’ minds encourage a revivification of this part of the model. The majority of the national and international professionals questioned felt Venice was a very difficult context for site-specific or roving artists’ projects and that an exhibition model was preferable. A hybrid model of performance and exhibition was workable but would still need a clearly identifiable site.

### **The Review recommends:**

- The model for Scotland + Venice should be maintained but with changes and improvements adopted, in order to maximise impact and increase profile.
- The Steering Group partners should re-consider their adherence to the principle of the venue being selected afresh for each edition, and, whether it is compatible with the successful delivery of the project’s aims and objectives.
- The Steering Group partners should maintain the inclusion of two external advisors to assist in the selection of artist(s) and commissioning teams and establish a Strategic Planning Group with external members to support the long-term strategic development of Scotland + Venice and encourage greater professional investment in the project longer term.



Sworn / Campbell / Tompkins. Installation view, Commissioned by The Common Guild for Scotland + Venice 2013. Photograph by Ruth Clark.

# Costs and Value for Money

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Scotland + Venice's single largest financial supporter is Creative Scotland. For 2017 its contribution came from National Lottery funding which is permitted as benefits of the project are intended to come back to Scotland. In previous years the project was funded through Government Grant in Aid.

The initial timetable of whether Scotland will participate in the next edition of Venice is currently governed by Creative Scotland's funding cycle. For several years the Scottish Government has informed Creative Scotland of its grant in December, after it has heard of its own block grant from the UK Government. Creative Scotland then considers its position along with the amount that it is likely to receive through its proportion of Lottery funds. Its Board does not finalise the overall arts budget until February/March but tries to take advance decisions in January on activity where commitments need to be made to ensure they happen. Scotland + Venice is usually one such project.

Currently the Scottish Government agrees an annual budget for all that it does. It could give two-year budgets, but recently uncertainty over its block grant from the UK Government and what its tax generating powers will yield, has led to only one year settlements being confirmed. Creative Scotland has also been experiencing declining income from the National Lottery, 14% down in 2016/17 and the trend is continuing. National Lottery funds constitute 18% of the 2015-18 Regular Funding budget so with this type of decline it has indicated 'it is unrealistic to allocate funds in a similar way in future.' It is predicting that the overall budget available to support Regular Funding 2018-21 will continue to be challenging, resulting in a lower overall budget and fewer Regularly Funded Organisations. Therefore, the question has to be posed as to how this will affect Scotland + Venice.

The costs for Scotland + Venice are set out in summary in Appendix 13. The highest cost items are for the fees and expenses to artists and commissioning teams, the production of new work, venue hire and exhibition and invigilation costs. Costs from 2011 to 2017 have increased over time but most expenditure items are comparable. Preferences in artistic matters can mean resource is spent on different elements, for example where a publication is proposed or not deemed necessary. The nature of the artwork can also change some figures, for example when film equipment replaces transportation costs of work. Marketing, media and PR costs in 2017 appear low in relation to previous years.

Income elements similarly change except for Creative Scotland's core grant remaining at £350,000 for each edition, 2011 – 2017. Their additional contributions toward marketing, media and PR have been discussed in Section 5.1. The contribution to the budget from Higher Education Institutions and Further Education Colleges has enabled since 2015 for the invigilators to be paid and for the overall programme to be run in partnership more professionally. The education partners have contributed since 2009 but they now provide a more realistic 'match' to the actual costs involved in this aspect of the programme. Trust and Foundation income is modest but Creative Scotland and British Council Scotland are not fundraising organisations. Those grants that are present have been applied for, in the main, by commissioning teams. Support in-kind is also secured sometimes by the teams.

The two benchmarks have budgets that are in the same broad scale as Scotland. Cymru yn Fenis / Wales in Venice used to receive £400,000 from the Arts Council of Wales, but due to overall cuts this now stands at £375,000. Creative New Zealand provides 700,000 NZ\$ or the equivalent of c.£361,000 per edition. With Creative Scotland's additional support for PR and marketing in recent years, its total contribution comes in at £363,700 in 2015 and £357,000 in 2017. Total expenditure for Wales was £404,715 including touring the exhibition with the cost in 2017 estimated at c.£406,000 also including a tour. The New Zealand Pavilion in 2017 cost in the region of £582,000 and significant additional support came from the not for profit patrons' organisation (described in Section 5.10) that contributed 27.5% of the budget.

The Review has established that economic investment has led to both artistic as well economic benefits for individuals, organisations and in the development of the international profile of Scotland. National and international experts expressed the view that Scotland + Venice offered good value for money. The budget is clearly constrained as PR and marketing have had to be added in and core funding has remained the same for 10 years. The rate of exchange in 2017 was cited as an additional pressure.

Some felt there were financial constraints on production of the work, with significant amounts of the budget needing to go towards costs in Venice. The commissioning teams would like to see curators/organisations receiving a more specific fee for their role in delivering Scotland + Venice. Since 2013 funds have been provided to the organisations but this is seen as replacement costs in respect of staff time. Teams have questioned whether these funds are sufficient. "The resource needs to change depending on the capacity of the organisations. Small organisations should be commissioned. That is a really important part of Scotland's ecology."

The Open Call information in 2017 stated, 'While it is an aspiration of the partners to grow the core budget all proposals need to demonstrate that they are achievable within these resources and/or show how other funding will be secured.' There is an expectation that some additional finding will be sought and secured but the lead-in time to exhibition opening is not sufficient for more significant fundraising.

This Review was not asked to look at where Scotland + Venice might generate funds from in the future, but the Visual Arts Sector Review noted – 'Skills, expertise and connections are needed if the sector is to be in a position to increase self-generated income and new investment from public and private sources.' As has previously been stated Creative Scotland and British Council Scotland do not see themselves as fundraising bodies and the National Galleries of Scotland feel there is a conflict of interest with the need to raise money for other parts of its programme. However, in order for a number of recommendations in this Review to be achieved, it is critical that resources are increased to be realistic.

### **The Review recommends:**

- The partners should identify and commit to cash and in-kind resources for Scotland + Venice, 2019 at the earliest opportunity; a core budget of £360,000 is recommended where it was £350,000 in 2017.
- The partners should devise during 2018/19 a realistic plan for how Scotland + Venice will be funded in future years.

## 5 Is Venice an International Priority?



Karla Black, Installation view.  
Curated by Fruitmarket Gallery for  
Scotland + Venice 2011. Photograph  
by Gautier Deblonde.

# Overview

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The last 10 years have seen significant change in the visual arts in both Scotland and internationally. Two examples include the Edinburgh Art Festival and Glasgow International.

The Edinburgh Art Festival, established in 2004, has grown in ambition and now attracts over 250,000 visitors to 30 exhibitions and 53 sites (2017). It is the UK's largest visual arts festival and develops its own national and international projects and commissions, as well as providing a significant marketing umbrella for galleries, museums and initiatives across the city. Glasgow International, established in 2005, has become a biennial platform that supports and collaborates with locally-based artists and arts organisations, and also commissions new work by artists working internationally. It aims to extend the arts experience across the city and its communities, by showing work in non-traditional spaces as well as in museums and galleries. Both have contributed to Scotland's critical discourse with international contemporary art.

Another marker took place in 2015, when the Turner Prize was presented and awarded in Scotland. "Given how many artists from Glasgow have made up the Turner Prize shortlists over recent years, it is great to have the Prize on show in Tramway...", said Dr Penelope Curtis, former Director, Tate Britain.

In October 2012, the founding of the International Biennial Association (IBA) was just one acknowledgement of how many countries and cities have decided to establish some kind of international platform for the presentation of their own artists alongside those from elsewhere. Now over 220 biennials, triennials, quadrennials and quinquenials exist.

With this increase in international platforms, more individual opportunities and the rise of organisational aspiration, does the Venice Biennale remain a priority?

# British Pavilion / Collateral Event

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The relationship between the British Pavilion and Scotland + Venice as a Collateral Event, undoubtedly affects the priority that should be given to Venice Biennale (for a factual description of the two see Section 3.3). In the eyes of the Fondazione La Biennale di Venezia, the political reality is that Scotland will continue with the same status for the foreseeable future. Scotland will not be able to occupy space in the Arsenale and its artists will not be considered for the various Golden Lion Prizes for – Lifetime Achievement, Best Young Artist and Best Pavilion, on or off site. It is assumed that the Best Artist of the international exhibition could be awarded, but the artist would be seen to be British rather than Scottish. These prizes are prestigious and proposed by either the appointed international curator or an international jury of five, selected by the Fondazione. In all instances, just being considered means far greater international exposure. Many of the national and international experts expressed the view that being a collateral event can in fact offer a more interesting position to work from than a national pavilion.

The British Council who are the Commissioners for the British Pavilion, have just announced a change to their process. They are inviting UK-based curators, who work within a not-profit UK arts organisation, to apply to curate the British Pavilion in 2019. This is the first time that such a curatorial opportunity has been attached to the British Pavilion. As in previous years, the selection of the artist will remain the decision of the British Council's Venice Selection Committee. The successful curator will be asked to sit in on the selection meeting to observe the process. To ensure complete clarity the British Council are writing to Committee members to re-affirm that previous representation by artists at the Collateral Events of Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland 'will not disbar any artist from being selected to show at the British Pavilion'. A perception exists within Scotland's Visual Arts sector that this has not always been the case.

While this change in process will be welcomed, the method for selecting artists to represent Britain remains the same. The Venice Selection Committee in recent years has included individuals who are based in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland but there is still concern as to the degree artists based outside London are considered. Only one Scottish artist has ever been shown at the British Pavilion (1978). In addition, visual arts professionals north of the border suggest that some artists based in Scotland do not want to be included in Scotland + Venice as they are waiting for the opportunity to show in the British Pavilion. The recent announcement that artist Cathy Wilkes, who lives in Glasgow, has been selected for the British Pavilion in 2019 might change the debate and offer some new opportunities in the potential tie-up with Scotland + Venice.

Over recent years there have been other discussions in the sector. Should the British Pavilion operate more like the Nordic Pavilion, a space that is a collaboration between Sweden, Norway and Finland? For the period 2017 – 2021 the art in the Nordic Pavilion will be presented as a joint project, where the three countries will be seen on equal terms. No one seems to back the idea to have artists from the devolved countries in the UK take turns, thus having a Scottish artist(s) in the British Pavilion, but only once every eight years. Some raise the question as to what would happen if a Scottish artist was selected for the British Pavilion. Many working in the visual arts in Scotland feel that would give the sector two bites of the cherry, and, managing the combined profiles of both Scotland + Venice and the UK Pavilion would become a positive challenge.

While the British Council's Arts Strategy was published in 2016, a Visual Arts Strategy is currently being written by the Arts team in London. A UK Strategy is also under development and will become a partner document to the British Council's Art and Education Strategies. Its purpose is to confirm the key ambitions for the devolved countries and it is likely to re-affirm that the British Council sees its role as the cultural relations organisation for the whole of the UK.

British Council Scotland remains an important partner in Scotland + Venice. They work with their Arts team in London to deliver activity, with and for Scotland as well as the UK in Venice. Due to pressure on resources there is now almost no dedicated art form expertise based in the devolved countries. They are acutely aware that new ways will need to be found so that partnerships, such as Scotland + Venice, are not diminished in the future by lack of specialist expertise. They remain committed to working on Scotland + Venice and evolving the way they work with the other two partners.



Graham Fagan, Installation view. Commissioned and curated by Hospitalfield for Scotland + Venice 2015. Photograph by Ruth Clark.

# Venice as part of Creative Scotland's International Strategy

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Creative Scotland does not currently have a published International Strategy. Its international ambitions are expressed broadly in its 10 year plan. It has been working on its international framework and continues to support international activity through regular funding to organisations such as festivals, touring companies and visual arts organisations, as well as through Open Project Funding and Targeted Funding. Scotland + Venice receives its funding support through this latter route.

Scotland + Venice connects strongly in its activities to Creative Scotland's international priorities and its commitment to capacity building, the development of networks, the sharing of practice and the knowledge and opportunities that come from cultural exchange. Scotland + Venice also helps to create a bridge between Scotland and international marketplaces for artists.

During Creative Scotland's Visual Arts sector Review, international working was held to be very important by 40% of respondents and important or of some importance by another 40%. Additionally, 30% of respondents stated their work had international reach. During participant interviews for this Review, international working was often referred to as even more important post Brexit.

With Creative Scotland supporting initiatives, often in partnership with British Council Scotland, such as Glasgow International, the Edinburgh Art Festival and Momentum (Edinburgh Festivals' International Delegate Programme), it focuses on its international framework priorities of 'import' and 'export'. Its Sector Review noted the importance of creating 'significant moments' that draw national and international attention to the visual arts in Scotland, and how in 'attracting a range of international critics, curators and collectors they strengthen existing international relationships and stimulate new opportunities.' It has long been argued that developing a sustainable international profile and reputation only works if those significant moments and opportunities take place abroad as well as at home.

The Venice Biennale remains the only international platform that is predicated on country representation, where national representatives can select and promote their artists in a non-commercial, high level and critically charged context. There is a degree of control, even if the platform is crowded and noisy. While many experienced international curators are critical of the Venice Biennale for what it fails to do, or the ways in which it fails to develop, it continues to be one of the most international and most visible contemporary art initiatives that exists. Interviews with a range of national and international experts have confirmed these views.

*"Scotland can't afford not to be at Venice even though it is a fairly jaded model."*  
— Participating curator / producer

*"There are other biennales. But none of them might have as great an impact as Venice."*  
— Sector survey contributor

**The Review recommends that:**

- Creative Scotland should publish an International Strategy in order that Scotland + Venice (and other internationally focused activities) can work within and be supported by, a strong and well communicated policy context.

## 6 Other Opportunities and Alternative International Models

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Martin Boyce, Installation view.  
Curated by Dundee Contemporary  
Arts (DCA) for Scotland + Venice  
2009. Photograph by Gilmar Ribeiro.

# Future Opportunities

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This Review cites examples and recommendations as to alternative models and future opportunities for delivering Scotland + Venice, in terms of its artistic structuring, operationally and in terms of how the funding is deployed or raised. They have all been linked to the possibility of achieving a stronger and more strategic Scotland + Venice. The Benchmarking exercise provides a number of useful tried and tested examples.

The determination with which Wales and New Zealand have linked Venice to what happens back home is compelling. Furthermore, in the case of New Zealand particularly, the example of developing strong advocates and supporters who not only sponsor Venice but then feed into the strengthening of the domestic Visual Arts sector, through commissioning artists and buying their work, has yet to be realised in Scotland. These links were also described as important opportunities by the national and international experts questioned.

There is a small but energetic commercial gallery scene in both Glasgow and Edinburgh; their artists have been selected for Venice and they have supported a number of presentations. Yet as the work from Venice does not necessarily come back to Scotland, there is no strategic building of audiences, whether the wider public, or individuals who would develop into advocates and purchasers of contemporary visual art. This opportunity need not conflict with the National Galleries of Scotland's own collecting circle, or indeed participating organisations' Friends and supporter groups. Designed thoughtfully, strategic links and sector developments could be unlocked to benefit the visual arts ecology more widely.

Venice takes place every two years. There is a real opportunity for the partners and others to engage with it both intellectually and practically, not in a stop-start way but more continually, connecting it to ongoing cultural and visual arts strategies in Scotland as well as internationally. Attention to intellectual discourse is as important as practical discussion and pragmatic decision making. The partners can set these connections in motion and then encourage others in both the not for profit and more commercial worlds to assist in developing them further. Consideration should therefore be given to establishing a Scotland + Venice Strategic Planning Group, made up of Steering Group as well as external members so that aspects and prospects for long term strategic development could be considered. Better continuity would be built and opportunities harnessed. It would also begin to broaden who feels invested in Venice, whether artists, curators, audience members or collectors, rather than leave this to a small number of people based in the partner organisations.

In establishing this Group, partners will wish to consider how it operates separately to the Steering Group and the latter group's direct support of the selection process of artists and commissioning teams. It would make sense to define the purpose and membership of the Strategic Planning Group so that it does not become focused upon immediate issues of practical delivery.

Instead, this forward-looking group could set out and agree development goals with Steering Group partners so that a range of long-term challenges are surmounted. These might include as previously discussed but not be limited to – capacity in the partner organisations, future funding models, use of digital media to expand the impact of the project, etc.

This last opportunity seems obvious at this point in Scotland + Venice's development; digital spaces can be used for critical discourse, for widening knowledge and awareness, as well as for strengthening profile and presence. The British Council Arts team have recognised that an archive would provide greater content and prolong interest. Scotland + Venice certainly needs a stronger web presence and it now has so much content to draw upon. In addition, and for example, QR (Quick Response) codes have for a few years enabled interpretation and given access to more information. In the way of technology other tools may be more appropriate, such as NFC (Near Field Communication) and Snap tags, to bridge the gap between the physical and virtual worlds. How can Scotland + Venice, through its partners in Higher Education, expand and extend the experience of the artwork and its presentations in Venice, in ways that help it deliver even more for the visual arts in Scotland.

The Strategic Planning Group should also ensure ready access to detailed international knowledge regarding the strengths and weaknesses of Venice compared to other platforms and those individuals who can help Scotland + Venice to network more effectively.

**The Review recommends that:**

- The partners should explore thoroughly and support the establishment of an independent Venice patrons' organisation.
- The impact of Scotland + Venice should be enhanced by establishing a Scotland + Venice Strategic Planning Group to work on long term development and strategic positioning.
- Creative Scotland should investigate working with a Higher Education partner, so that Scotland + Venice can take advantage of the digital space.

# Alternative international models and platforms

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The Venice Biennale, for some who were interviewed, is becoming less important. Its critical credibility is lower than it used to be, and the influence of the market has become extremely powerful. Many commented upon how it has become a more significant focus for collectors and patrons. Furthermore, it is a showcase for a particular kind of practice that does not suit all artists. Yet few alternative models or platforms were suggested during the Review process. The roster of significant international biennials such as but not limited to Sao Paulo (the second oldest established in 1951), Sydney, Istanbul, Shanghai, Dak'Art, or roving Manifesta, and quinquennials such as Documenta, all provide significant opportunities for artists and help to develop their careers.

Each of these platforms has its own character and context. The critical discourse that surrounds them is often more developed as it relates to a specific history and environment, politically and culturally. Venice is sometimes so international and large as to provide a less specific platform, other than the intrinsic power of the history and standing of the Biennale. Evaluation of the impact and significance of other biennials is harder to source, as none provide a focus for a particular country and the discussion of its artistic practice. Venice is unusual as a catalyst in capturing energy and enthusiasm and generating a sense of ownership in the exhibitions presented. Other biennials are concentrated around a curatorial proposition and a smaller appointed team who select a single list of artists, however large. This can generate excitement for artists and from audiences but offers little possibility for strategic involvement by outside parties, particularly country-focused arts development agencies.

International art fairs are another context from which artists can obviously benefit but whether it is Art Basel Hong Kong or Art Basel Miami, both art and artists are swept along by unpredictable market forces and a degree of unreality as to where power and control lies. National and international experts felt that while art fairs might give moments of focus to a particular artist, they do not provide overviews or a sense of what is happening in a particular place or country.

Comments suggest that Scotland + Venice partners will need to keep an eye on the horizon as other opportunities gain position and profile. During the Review, participating in and experiencing other platforms was seen as positive in terms of not having to negotiate the obstacles of a Collateral Event. Making sure artists can participate in Yokohama Triennial or Berlin Biennial, may offer more of a level playing field and produce benefits with much smaller amounts of money. As with Venice, impact and success depend partly on the strength of the curator at any one particular time. A strong show will provide a better opportunity. Yet for visibility replacement there isn't necessarily a viable alternative to Venice. Contributors argued that Scotland's art needs to be internationalised in a variety of ways. No specific alternatives displace Venice, even national and international experts were shy of listing alternatives. All were united in indicating that the partners should enable and encourage those in Scotland's Visual Arts sector to experience a range of platforms in tandem with Venice.

In the Benchmarking exercise the Arts Council of Wales noted that not all artists would benefit from going to Venice and taking part in alternative platforms might achieve more. Wales Arts International is its international arm and it administers an International Opportunities Fund, for Wales based art practitioners and organisations to research and participate in projects with overseas partners. Creative New Zealand runs an International Art Fair Fund to support dealer galleries to reach offshore markets, an International Presentation Fund for activity that results from specific initiatives managed by its international team, and, a New Work to Asia Fund that supports the development of new work for presentation in targeted territories in Asia.

The suggestion of establishing an international fund to support amongst other things, the production of work intended for international exhibitions or other biennials and to encourage curators to visit Scotland, was frequently voiced. Creative Scotland and British Council Scotland have certainly supported the latter activity but how strategic these invitations have been and how they have been linked up to other international platforms such as Glasgow International is difficult to trace. Research indicates that only 11% of Momentum's 2015 post-August survey engaged directly with the visual arts through the Edinburgh Art Festival.

There is no lack of alternative international platforms and opportunities. Each month new initiatives are created. The priority is that these other opportunities can be identified and developed by artists, curators and organisations from across Scotland.

*"We are always interested in developing strategic international partnerships rather than one offs, with a longer life. It is the cumulative effect that is so important. Just going once would be pointless. We have built up a base, what is next?" — Scotland + Venice partner*

### **The Review recommends that:**

- Creative Scotland should clarify how its International Strategy will be delivered and should aim to set aside funds for international working.
- Creative Scotland and British Council Scotland should examine how strategic its invitations to curators to visit Scotland have been for the Visual Arts sector and find ways to improve connections between the international platforms within Scotland.
- The National Galleries of Scotland should identify ways in which its own international working can benefit Scotland's contemporary artists and visual arts organisations more strategically.

# Future Thinking

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This Review has been written at a time of great uncertainty because of funding reviews of all three partners and Brexit. It is possible that Brexit will make the Venice Biennale even more important, as a way of working in and connecting with the rest of Europe, but these uncertainties remain.

There are two further areas of uncertainty which the partners should continue to monitor. First, regards how Scotland + Venice is funded in future years. While a full investigation of this has been outside the brief of the Review, interviews touched upon other possible models, including that adopted by New Zealand with its establishment of a patrons' scheme and one being explored by the Nordic countries.

Second, while interviewees tended to see Venice as still the best platform for establishing profile, developing ambition, building capacity, offering international networking and providing peer feedback, this situation might change in the future. Overall, the main priority is to make the best of the opportunities by being strategic and inclusive. These opportunities will change and encompass possibilities that were not known at the time of this Review. The recommended Scotland + Venice Strategic Planning Group, (see Section 7.1) could continue to assess whether Venice offers Scotland the most appropriate opportunities, while it simultaneously provides dynamic leadership and design to the initiative as a whole.

As the Review process has found, Scotland + Venice has achieved a great deal over the last 10 years. Partners have been wise not to make the presentations define the national or become focused upon national achievement. While a country's confidence in terms of the visual arts, should not rest on Venice alone, Scotland's participation is acknowledged as the country being serious about development, delivery and support. The Venice Biennale continues to have real value and pull, offering Scotland a truly international platform to show what is going on and what its artists are capable of.

*"It might be useful to use a sporting analogy – would you not want your elite to compete? It has got to be done – it generates a lot of soft power. Scotland is seen as a creative nation, aspirational, enterprising – you don't want to lose this." — International Expert*

## 7 Conculsions and Recomendations

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Rachel Maclean, Installation view  
'Spite Your Face'. Commissioned by  
Alchemy Film & Arts in partnership  
with Talbot Rice Gallery and the  
University of Edinburgh for Scotland  
+ Venice 2017. Photograph by  
Patrick Rafferty.

# Conclusions

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Scotland + Venice is important because of its status internationally, breadth of sectoral impact, uniqueness of approach, role in capacity building and in the partnerships that have been established.

Scotland + Venice has had considerable direct impact on artists, curators, producers, invigilators. It reaches a consistent audience in Venice and a variable audience in Scotland. Scotland + Venice also has a widely perceived impact on the perceived value and status of the contemporary visual arts in Scotland.

Scotland + Venice has been designed in a flexible way that has ensured considerable relevance to the artistic and professional aims of those involved in the projects, as well as an ongoing relevance to the partners' strategic objectives.

The model of Scotland + Venice has been broadly effective, although compared to benchmarks, more could be made of the return presentation.

There is a very strong voice from all stakeholders and experts that Scotland + Venice should continue to be a priority for the partners' support to the Visual Arts sector.

We have detailed evidence to support these conclusions, discussed in the text above, and presented in the survey reports in the appendices.

# Recommendations

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The Review's Recommendations have been divided into two groups – those that are connected to the strategic development and positioning of the project, and those that are focused upon practical delivery. Details of these Recommendations and the reasoning for them can be found in the appropriate sections of the report given in brackets.

## **Recommendations to improve the Strategic Development of Scotland + Venice**

**Scotland + Venice should continue to be a priority for the partners to invest in as part of their support for the Visual Arts sector in Scotland. (see overall report)**

The partners should clarify:

- Their objectives individually and collectively, as well as their roles and responsibilities
- The resources each partner can provide including funding (cash and in-kind), staff support and expertise as well as any other areas of support (such as office accommodation).
- Whether a commitment in principle can be taken to support more than one edition of Scotland + Venice at a time, with the necessary caveats, in order to improve development and extend planning horizons.
- Support for establishing a Scotland + Venice Strategic Planning Group to work in between editions on long term development and strategic positioning.
- Where commissioning teams could have more autonomy.

**Scotland + Venice should continue to be financially supported with public funding for the next 3 editions (2018 – 2023) or until after its next full evaluation. (see overall report including section 2, and page 37)**

This could be achieved through partners:

- Identifying and committing to cash and in-kind resources at the earliest opportunity for 2019; a core budget of £360,000 is recommended where it was £350,000 in 2017.
- Devising over 2018/19 a realistic plan for how Scotland + Venice will be funded and where partnership support will come from in future years.
- Exploring thoroughly and supporting the establishment of an independent Venice patrons' organisation.

**Partners should ensure Scotland + Venice has a strong strategic policy context to respond and contribute to. (see page 12, and pages 67-70)**

This could be achieved through:

- Creative Scotland publishing an International Strategy and how it will be delivered through the targeting of funds for international working.
- British Council publishing its Visual Arts Strategy and clarifying how UK in Venice and the British Pavilion will operate in the longer term, and how it will support Scotland + Venice with specialist advice.
- The National Galleries of Scotland identifying the context for its own international working, how this relates to the development of the contemporary visual arts in Scotland and how Scotland + Venice can support this.

**Scotland + Venice should consider negotiating a central venue to be used for each edition of the Biennale. (see pages 44-45, and 58-62)**

This can be achieved through partners:

- Re-considering the approach of selecting a different venue each edition and considering whether this aligns with the project's aims of delivering 'high impact and visibility', 'a good level of attendance', 'strong critical and professional responses'.

**Scotland + Venice should give greater priority to the exhibition/project returning to Scotland. (see pages 50-52)**

This could be achieved by:

- The partners, together with the artist(s) and commissioning teams, holding formal discussions early in the planning process, to decide whether the presentation should return to Scotland.
- The National Galleries of Scotland exploring how to support Venice presentations in Scotland and how these could connect to their other initiatives.
- Considering how both Wales and New Zealand see a home presentation as achieving greater support for the overall project and contributing to their strategies of developing audiences.
- Conducting audience research when Spite Your Face returns to the Talbot Rice Gallery to establish the value of work returning to Scotland, and the research being fed into the next Scotland + Venice discussions in 2018.

**The partners should maximise on the impact of Scotland + Venice. (see overall report including section 3, 4, and 5)**

This could be achieved through:

- Creative Scotland partnering with a Higher Education partner to investigate how Scotland + Venice can be developed to take advantage of the digital space.
- Establishing an outward facing archive to better provide reflections and promote activity, successes and benefits.

## **Recommendations to improve and develop the practical delivery of Scotland + Venice**

**Scotland + Venice should maintain and improve the Open Call process for identifying artists, curators and producers. (see pages 40-43)**

This can be achieved through:

- Communicating more clearly the interview process and selection panel (partners and two external advisors) in Open Call details.
- Communicating the overall selection process more widely to the sector across Scotland.
- Ensuring the appointment of the producer remains under the aegis of the commissioning team's organisation.

**Scotland + Venice should host opening events that have greater strategic purpose. (see pages 48-49)**

This can be achieved through:

- Considering how international curators can be encouraged to visit Scotland + Venice.
- Partners and commissioning teams clarifying the purpose of each opening event, and lead responsibility for its organisation.
- Compiling central as well as segmented invitation lists some 4 – 5 months before the Venice Biennale opens.
- Evaluating the value of each opening event and contacts made, as part of the end of project debrief, and creating an institutional record and central list of who attended and who should be invited to the next edition.
- Creative Scotland initiating a wider discussion as to how initiatives such as Scotland + Venice, Glasgow International, the Edinburgh Art Festival and other international visual arts events can share contact details and identify opportunities to develop and maintain new international contacts.
- Creative Scotland and British Council Scotland examining how strategic its invitations to visit Scotland have been for the Visual Arts sector and in doing so identify ways of improving connections between the international initiatives within Scotland.

**Creative Scotland should strengthen the handover of Scotland + Venice to new commissioning teams. (see pages 26-29, and pages 42-43)**

This could be achieved through:

- Convening a debriefing session at the end of the project and documenting key points.
- Collecting together copies of all contracts, marketing print, press and PR material for future teams and an organisational trace.
- Compiling a set of briefing documents to be given to each new commissioning team.

## **Creative Scotland should improve the targeting and continuity of marketing and PR for Scotland + Venice. (see pages 24-28, and 32-33, and 53-55)**

This could be achieved by:

- Asking partners to increase their priority to the Communications Sub-group and strengthening its function by having a clear statement of roles and responsibilities.
- Asking the partners to review and contribute to the Marketing and PR budget ensuring advertising and social media is handled more consistently over the period of the project.
- Considering whether a longer contract would provide better support for the communications strategy and holistic support for artists and curators, and whether the social media contract should be separate.
- Ensuring that the appointed PR company and its team are conversant with discussing the complexities of contemporary art, a clear and appropriate balance is agreed between political and artistic objectives and contributions across partners are fair.

## **Creative Scotland should strengthen the strategic planning and visibility of the Invigilator Programme. (see pages 30-31, and 56-57)**

This could be achieved through:

- Partners discussing with Further and Higher Education partners a long-term commitment and strategy for the programme.
- Continuing the tracking of interns that was carried out for this evaluation.
- Working with the British Council to maximise professional opportunities for the artists and commissioning teams after Venice.

## **The partners should strengthen the evaluation of Scotland + Venice. (see pages 34-35, and 50-52, and 58-62)**

This could be achieved through:

- Creative Scotland asking the PR contractor to produce statistics on media coverage and reach, using a standard format.
- Creative Scotland organising an independent debrief with the artist and commissioning team towards the end of the exhibition and documenting it, in addition to the short End of Project Monitoring Report required by Creative Scotland.
- Ensuring audience research is carried out at future Scottish presentations into the quality of experience and impact on Scotland's Visual Arts sector and audiences.

## 8 Acknowledgements

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A number of appendices to this report, setting out the detailed research undertaken as part of the Review, are published on the Creative Scotland website [www.creativescotland.com](http://www.creativescotland.com). Any enquiries can be sent to Alastair Evans, Head of Knowledge and Research at Creative Scotland [alastair.evans@creativescotland.com](mailto:alastair.evans@creativescotland.com).

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Anne Diack	Sir Nicholas Serota	
Tom Eccles	Karen Shaw	
Juliana Engberg	Ian Stevenson	
Charles Esche	Corin Sworn	
Alastair Evans	Cerys Thomas	

la Biennale di Venezia

56. Esposizione  
Internazionale  
d'Arte  
Eventi Collaterali

# *Spite Your Face*



*Scotland*  
+ *Venice*  
*Rachel Maclean*

Chiesa Santa Caterina  
Fondamenta Santa Caterina, Cannaregio 30131

Vaporetto: Ca D'Oro & Fondamento Nove

13 May – 26 November 2017

Tuesday – Sunday, martedì – domenica 10am – 6pm

Free Admission/ingresso gratuito

[scotlandandvenice.com](http://scotlandandvenice.com)  
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Curated by: Alchemy Film and Arts in  
partnership  
with Talbot Rice Gallery and the University  
of Edinburgh





# Scotland Venice<sup>mmxiii</sup>

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Tuesday to Sunday 10am – 6pm  
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55. Esposizione  
Internazionale  
d'Arte  
Eventi collaterali

Palazzo Pisani (S. Marina)

Calle de le Erbe, Cannaregio 6103  
Nearest vaporetto: Rialto or  
S. Zaccaria or Fondamente Nove

# Sworn Campbell Tompkins



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Scotland



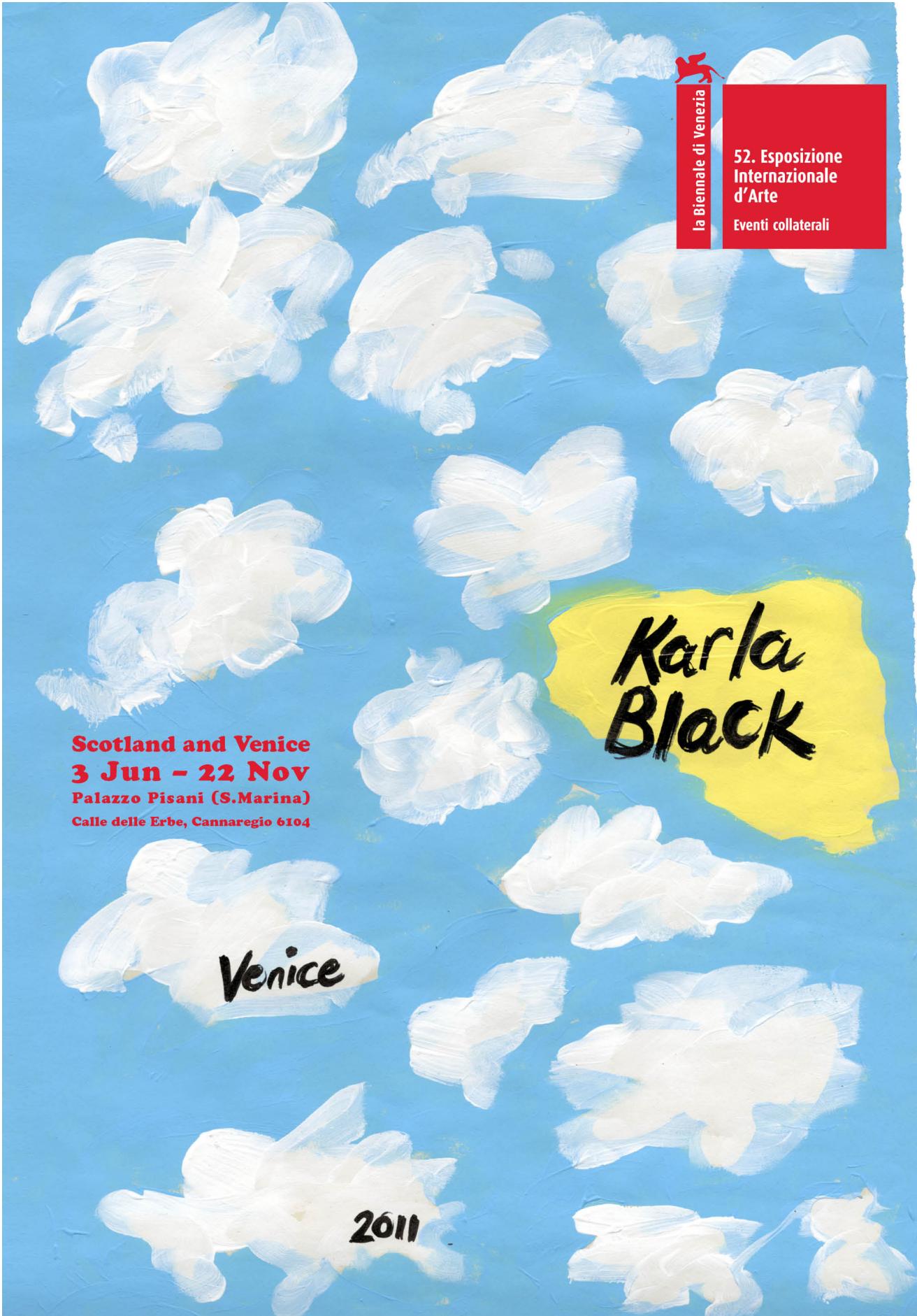
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# Scotland and Venice

## Martin Boyce, *No Reflections*

Curated by Dundee Contemporary Arts