



Applied Arts Pavilion Special Project at Biennale Arte 2026
A collaboration between
La Biennale di Venezia and Victoria and Albert Museum, London

La Biennale di Venezia and the V&A, London
present:

Gala Porras-Kim

by Koyo Kouoh

Sale d'Armi A, Arsenale
9 May – 22 November 2026

The collaboration between **La Biennale di Venezia** and the **Victoria and Albert Museum** in London, this year in its **tenth edition**, made possible the **Special Project** of the **Applied Arts Pavilion** hosted in the Sale d'Armi of the Arsenale, jointly organised by the two institutions. The artist selected by Curator Koyo Kouoh is **Gala Porras-Kim**.

Gala Porras-Kim's artistic practice (Bogotá, 1984) unfolds within the complex terrain where cultural artefacts, museum institutions, and classificatory systems intersect to determine their place in history. The project conceived for the Applied Arts Pavilion brings together **drawings, sculptures, and videos, reflecting her ongoing research into the dynamics of conservation and the processes** through which figures such as conservators and curators help define **the meaning and function of cultural heritage objects**. In the artist's work, these processes appear as both productive and destructive: in the attempt to preserve, what is being conserved is inevitably transformed. Her practice thus invites us to reflect on how museum knowledge is never neutral, but is deeply entangled with institutional apparatuses, state interests, and forms of private patronage. Conservation interventions themselves, aimed at filling in or reconstructing what has been lost, become acts charged with epistemological implications, capable of redefining not only the objects themselves, but also the narratives that accompany them.

The "ten agents of deterioration" – a framework developed by museum conservators to categorise the major causes of damage to objects in collections – provides the project's

conceptual anchor. One of these agents is “dissociation”: a term that describes how objects fall into obscurity within the museum itself through the loss of information, catalogue indices or contextualising data. A crucial consideration for Porras-Kim is the dissociation institutions cause when they disregard the spiritual or practical utility of objects. Probing these aspects of damage and reconstruction within collections allows us to speculate on processes of meaning-making while better understanding the social pasts and futures of cultural heritage.

Gala Porras-Kim lives and works in Los Angeles and London. Her work considers the complex relationship between cultural artifacts and the conventions governing their collection, conservation, display and taxonomy. By revealing overlapping areas in institutional collections, where items are classified as either information, science or art, she questions the conceptual frameworks and individual choices that inform our reading and presentation of objects as works of art. The resulting work – spanning drawing, sculpture and installation – offers poetic, provocative and spiritual forms of engagement with the ideas and beliefs that shape our histories. Porras-Kim has had solo exhibitions at Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver (2024); Leeum Museum of Art, Seoul (2023); Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul (2023); Fowler Museum, Los Angeles (2023); Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Sevilla (2023); Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City (2023); Gasworks, London (2022); Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis (2022); among others. She has participated in numerous group shows, including the Liverpool Biennial (2023); 34th Bienal de São Paulo (2021); 13th Gwangju Biennale (2021); Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2021, 2017), and Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2021). She was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship in 2025.

«La Biennale di Venezia and the Victoria and Albert Museum renew their collaboration following the format introduced in 2016, whereby the curatorship of the Applied Arts Pavilion is entrusted to the Director of Visual Arts department and a curator appointed by the London museum on the occasion of the Biennale International Architecture Exhibition. For the Biennale Arte, Koyo Kouoh identified Gala Porras-Kim as the artist whose sensibility is best suited to engaging with the temporalities inherent to the applied arts. The project begins with a central question: what happens to an artefact when it is separated from its context, when it is transported across cultures, through time and space? At the core of Porras-Kim’s research lies the notion of dissociation, understood both as the loss of data and memory within collections, and as the consequence of a deeper separation that removes objects from their original spiritual, ritual, or social function. Far from being a neutral or static space, the museum emerges instead as a site of ongoing negotiation, where heritage remains subject to material and symbolic dynamics that continuously reshape its identity. Through the work presented, Porras-Kim highlights how every act of care can generate new poetics, new visual configurations, and new forms of knowledge. Even so-called “agents of deterioration” may produce a double outcome: they can create opportunities for the preservation and revaluation of artworks, while – remaining faithful to Friedrich Nietzsche’s gnoseological method, the “pathos of distance” – also opening up further layers of understanding for the viewer.»

Pietrangelo Buttafuoco, *President of the Fondazione La Biennale di Venezia*

«The V&A is delighted to collaborate with Gala Porras-Kim on this year’s Applied Arts Pavilion, our 10th Special Project with La Biennale di Venezia. Porras-Kim’s installation examines how museum practices – conservation, classification, and

reconstruction – actively shape the objects they aim to preserve. By foregrounding the traces of intervention, from reconstructed textile patterns to the gestures of conservators at work, she reveals the creative and ethical decisions embedded in custodianship. Porras-Kim expands conventional ideas of damage and dissociation, inviting us to consider how objects change when removed from their intended contexts. Her work reminds us that museums are not static repositories, but sites where material histories continue to evolve.»

Sir Tristram Hunt, *Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum*

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