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## **Press release**

# Helen Sear selected to represent Wales in solo presentation

# curated by Ffotogallery

Arts Council of Wales is delighted to announce that Helen Sear has been selected to represent **Cymru yn Fenis/Wales in Venice** at the **56th International Art Exhibition, the** **Venice Biennale** running from 9 May to 22 November 2015. Curated by Ffotogallery this will be the first time for Wales to present a solo exhibition by a female artist.

Known as one of Wales’ most significant contemporary artists, Helen Sear’s practice can be characterised by her exploration of the crossover between photography and fine art, her focus on the co-existence of the human, animal, and natural worlds.

With an exemplary track record for producing high quality, conceptually rigorous work, Helen Sear’s current work shows particular maturity and sophistication, seamlessly moving between expanded notions of photography, sculpture and video, with the artist exhibiting great command of different materials and production processes. These developments, coinciding with renewed interest in and critical acclaim for the artist’s work and profile internationally as well as in Wales, make this the perfect moment for Helen Sear to represent **Cymru yn Fenis/Wales in Venice**.

Helen Sear’s photographic practice has developed from a fine art background in performance, film and installation work in the 1980s and she continues to explore ideas of vision, touch and the representation of the nature of experience, combining drawing, lens-based media and digital technologies. Her work challenges accepted notions of photography as a documentary and creative medium.

Wales’ first ever female solo exhibition in Venice is led by Ffotogallery; the national development agency for photography and lens-based media in Wales, who will be working with Stuart Cameron, curator of Sear’s first major exhibition at Chapter Arts Cardiff and longstanding supporter of Helen Sear’s work. He has worked with a number of major artists, within Wales and internationally, to develop new work, most recently The Art Party Conference 2013.

Louise Wright, Commissioner for **Cymru yn Fenis/Wales in Venice** and Portfolio Manager for Visual Arts at the Arts Council of Wales said:

“We are very excited to be working with Helen Sear and Ffotogallery. **Cymru yn Fenis/Wales in Venice 2015** is a significant opportunity to develop and present new work at the world’s most prestigious international event for the Visual Arts.”

Helen Sear said:

“Having lived and worked in Wales since 1984, the opportunity to be part of Wales in Venice has been an ambition of mine for several years. The photographic image in art practice has never been so diverse or contested, and, with the acceleration of new digital technologies, the material presence of the image is now more than ever at stake.”

David Drake, Director Ffotogallery said:

“We are delighted with the news, for Ffotogallery has championed Helen Sear’s work over a number of years and witnessed many exciting developments in her practice. For **Cymru yn Fenis/Wales in Venice 2015** the artist will be creating a beguiling new body of work which is both rooted in the local and familiar landscapes of Wales, and also responding to the wider context of the Venice Biennale.”

Wales’s presence at Venice has been a vital part of the artistic calendar ever since the country first burst onto the International Biennale’s scene in 2003 with the exhibition, *Further*. Since then the Biennale has provided a superb platform for visual art from Wales, strengthening its international profile and reflecting back into Wales through exhibition tours and related initiatives such as the Invigilator Plus programme, educational resources and talks.

**Ends**

**For further information, please contact:**

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**Notes to Editors**

1. **Cymru yn Fenis/Wales in Venice** is commissioned and managed by the Arts Council of Wales and Wales Arts International with support and collaboration from the Welsh Government and [British Council](http://www.britishcouncil.org/new/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank%22%20%5Co%20%22%20British%20Council). Its selected by a call for proposals. Arts Council of Wales has commissioned artists to present at **Cymru yn Fenis/Wales in Venice** as a Collateral Event at the Venice Biennale since 2003, celebrating the best of emerging and established artists from Wales. Previous artists include Bedwyr Williams, Tim Davies and John Cale.

http://[www.walesvenicebiennale.org.uk](http://www.walesvenicebiennale.org.uk)

1. **Helen Sear** first moved to Wales in 1984 after completing an HDFA at the Slade School, University College London. Her photographs became widely known in the 1991 British Council exhibition, ***De-Composition: Constructed Photography in Britain***, which toured Latin America and Eastern Europe. Her work was included in the exhibition ***About Face*** at the Hayward Gallery, London in summer 2004 and ***La Mirada Reflexiva*** at the Espai D’Art Contemporani in Castellon Spain in 2005. Recent solo exhibitions include, ***Inside The View***, shown at Gallery Harmonia in Finland in 2006, g39 Cardiff who also published the bookwork ***Tale*** in 2009, ***Beyond The View***, Hoopers

Gallery London, Klompching Gallery New York and Bildkultur, Stuttgart, 2010-12. Ffotogallery published her first major monograph in 2012 ***Inside The View***.

GOST published the bookwork ***Brisées*** in 2013 which accompanied a major national tour ***Lure*** in the same year.

Forthcoming exhibitions include: Invited artist at the 5th edition of Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie en Gaspesié Canada. Summer 2014

http://[www.helensear.com](http://www.helensear.com)

1. **Ffotogallery** is the national development agency for photography and lens-based media in Wales. Its view is outward looking, with an exhibition programme featuring artists from Wales and the rest of the world. Ffotogallery seeks to widen its impact and influence through touring exhibitions, collaborations with other organisations and galleries, print and online publishing and an extensive education and outreach programme. Ffotogallery is a not for profit company limited by guarantee and a registered charity, in receipt of annual funding from Arts Council of Wales and Cardiff City Council.

[http://www.ffotogallery.org](http://www.ffotogallery.org/)

1. **Stuart Cameron** is an independent curator and Director of Crescent Arts, an artist-development organisation based in Scarborough, North Yorkshire, and funded by Arts Council England. He was Visual Arts Programmer at Chapter, Cardiff from 1987 to 1996. He facilitated major new work with artists including Cornelia Parker and Mona Hatoum – both of which were subsequently nominated for the Turner Prize. Recent projects with artists include Rushton Tyman’s ‘The Wild’, Keith Farquhar’s ‘In Domestos Chaos’ , Monica Ross’s ‘Anniversary’ and The Art Party Conference 2013 with Bob and Roberta Smith.
2. **Arts Council of Wales** is the country’s funding and development agency for the arts. Its vision is of a creative Wales where the arts are central to the life of the nation and to ensure that the contribution of the arts is recognised, valued and celebrated.

[http://www.artswales.org](http://www.artswales.org/)