

A View Of Venice

Chris Ofili may have been artist non grata for New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, but the creator of the elephant-dung *Holy Virgin Mary* enjoys full governmental approval in the U.K. Appointed the British representative at the 2003 Biennale di Venezia, he immediately enlisted architect David Adjaye of Adjaye/Associates to design the pavilion's interior.

Having met at the Royal College of Art, the two men went on to collaborate on Ofili's own residence and his most recent show at the Victoria Miro Gallery. Both are also children of African immigrants, a factor pivotal for the Venice pavilion, where Ofili's paintings of a black couple's love affair form the centerpiece of a sensual environment. Upending

the Victorian building's grandeur, Ofili and Adjaye suffused the space with the black, red, and green of Marcus Garvey's pan-African flag, then crowned the central dome with *Afro Kaleidoscope*, a massive glass installation. As Adjaye explains, "We turned the pavilion into a space for Chris's fiction, creating a romantic sense of journey."

The pavilion's rear room holds Ofili's peacock-feather renderings, laminated onto glass panels. Translucent on one side, semi-reflective on the other, the backlit drawings cast overlapping ghost versions on the carpeted floor. Awash in color and pattern, Adjaye says, an exhibition venue becomes a "passage between emotional states." —Marc Spiegler