

Albanian-Italian artist **Erdiola Kanda Mustafaj** selected for  
year-long Hidden Narratives Residency



The Italian Cultural Institute in London, Photoworks, and the Royal Geographical Society are pleased to announce that artist **Erdiola Kanda Mustafaj** has been selected as the recipient of the Hidden Narratives Residency, during which she will spend a year immersing herself in the historic Collections of the Royal Geographical Society and engaging with materials in relation to the environment and the humanitarian. Erdiola will present her work to the public and peers at [Summit Photo](#) - an interactive forum exploring how photography and filmmaking can confront climate change, poverty, conflict, and other ecological and human issues, held at the Society from 17-19 July.

The Hidden Narratives Residency is a partnership between Photoworks, The Royal Geographical Society and the Italian Cultural Institute in London, focussed on developing archive residencies and programmes for Italian photographers to access career-defining opportunities.

**Hidden Narratives Jury 2026 included:**

**Rocco Venezia** artist, curator, and educator

**Jamie Owen** Curator of Photography, Royal Geographical Society

**Maria Teresa De Palma** Cultural Attaché at the Italian Cultural Institute in London

**Louise Fedotov-Clements** Director of Photoworks

**Danit Ariel** Curator at Photoworks

Erdiola's research lies at the intersection of memory, displacement and the politics of image-making. In this residency, Erdiola will bring the archive into conversation with her project *Pasqyra e Lendes*, Albanian for *sommarium* or literally *mirror of matter*. The work is a longform photographic project centred on the displaced figure where the residency will support in expanding her research inquiry into how landscape is constructed through the act of looking. Working within the Royal Geographical Society's Collections will enable the artist to build a conceptual thread toward a broader meditation on belonging, and the possibility of constructing new visual narrations from the ruins of an inherited gaze. With poetic attention to politics, she meditates on the notion of the living archive and diaspora not as a fixed condition but as a transitional shifting space, one shaped by the tension between collective history and intimate memory.

Throughout the course of the residency, Erdiola will have 3 separate research and presentation visits to the UK, to spend time at the Royal Geographical Society archive, working with the archive team, including mentoring from Photoworks. She will give a talk to share work and research in progress at [Summit Photo 2026](#) (17-19 July), with the final presentations taking place during Summit Photo 2027.

The Royal Geographical Society's Collections hold over half a million original photographs, negatives and lantern slides, including some of the very earliest geographic photography dating back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and the advent of the photographic medium, which combined encapsulates the study of Geography over the past two centuries. This collection includes artefacts of Western colonial acts, as well as sincere scientific and personal observations of diverse physical and human habitats. These works, intermeshed with manuscript and cartographic outputs also held in the Collection, tell a wonderfully rich story of our world through a particularly formative period.

**Hidden Narrative awarded artist 2026:**

Erdiola Kanda Mustafaj

**Hidden Narratives 2026 shortlisted artists:**

Sara Palmieri, Giorgio Di Noto

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Erdiola Kanda Mustafaj

**Biography** – Erdiola Kanda Mustafaj is an Albanian/Italian multi-disciplinary artist based in Paris, working across photography, video installation and sound. Born in Albania, she moved to Italy at the age of seven. She graduated from the Bauer School of Photography in Milan in 2019 and has since built a practice that weaves together the personal and the political, drawing on private archives and collective memory to examine the intellectual and political history of her homeland. Her work has been exhibited across Europe and Albania. Solo exhibitions include Kunst-im-kreuzgang in Bielefeld (Germany, 2025) and the Italian Cultural Institute in Stockholm (Sweden, 2026). Group exhibitions at the Marubi National Museum of Photography (Shkodër, 2025), Art Explora x Vila 31 (Tirana, 2025), Luigi Ghirri Prize for Giovane Fotografia Italiana (Reggio Emilia, 2025), Ardhje Prize at Zeta Gallery (Tirana, 2024) and Rencontres de la jeune photographie internationale at Villa Pérochon (Niort, 2022).

### **About Photoworks**

Photoworks is the UK's leading development organisation for photography. We champion photography for everyone and are an international platform, global in reach, that has provided opportunities for artists and audiences since 1995. Our programme brings new experiences to audiences and opens up innovative ways to encounter photography, including the Photoworks Festival (next festival 2026). Photoworks is a registered charity and the only organisation with a national remit for photography in the UK. Our work is supported by public funding through Arts Council England's National Portfolio. In 2025, Photoworks celebrated its 30th anniversary. [www.photoworks.org.uk](http://www.photoworks.org.uk)

### **About the Italian Cultural Institute**

The Italian Cultural Institute in London, part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, is the official Italian government body promoting Italian language and culture

in England and Wales. It organises cultural events, exhibitions, and language courses, fosters academic, scientific, and artistic collaboration between Italy and the UK, and supports initiatives that strengthen cultural ties. The Institute also provides information on Italian cultural life and works with local institutions and communities to deepen understanding and appreciation of Italy's heritage. <https://iiclondra.esteri.it/en/>

### **About The Royal Geographical Society**

The Royal Geographical Society is a learned society, professional body and registered charity with over 14,000 members that has been dedicated to the advancement of geography and geographical science since its formation in 1830. Today, we deliver this mission by developing, supporting, and promoting geographical education, research, expeditions and fieldwork, and professional practice, as well as by advocating on behalf of the discipline. Our broad public and cultural engagement programmes, alongside our historic Collections of over two million items spanning 500 years of geographical exploration, support our aim to foster an understanding and informed enjoyment of the world we live in. Everyone with an enthusiasm for geography, travel and exploration is welcome to join us. Find out more about the Society at [rgs.org](https://rgs.org).

## **SUMMIT PHOTO 2026**

17-19 JULY

### **About Summit Photo**

Summit Photo 2026 is an interactive forum bringing together photographers, journalists, filmmakers, artists and activists together with the public to reflect and debate on the importance of visual media to the global issues, movements, and challenges they have documented throughout their careers. Attendees will hear from some of today's foremost storytellers on climate change, conservation, conflict, migration, poverty and pollution, such as James Balog, Mandy Barker, Simon Townsley, Areeba Hamid, and Bertie Gregory, on how visual media can scale up change from an individual to global level and inspire tangible action to protect our ecosystems, people and future. Summit Photo is presented by the Royal Geographical Society in partnership with the Royal Photographic Society and Photoworks, supported by official sponsor Rolex. The event takes place at the Royal Geographical Society from 17-19 July. Further details and booking can be found [here](#).