

# IKON

## The role of the artist in public life

A panel discussion presented as part of the UK/ Australia Season

Wednesday 30 March 2022, 6 - 7.15pm

Free, donations welcome

This event brings together four artists, [Vanley Burke](#), [De'Anne Crooks](#), [Linda Stupart](#) and [Osman Yousefzada](#) with differing artistic practices and approaches to artmaking with community and for community. Moderated by John Eng Kiet Bloomfield, Senior Programme Curator, Wysing Arts Centre, the talk also reflects on the ways artists consider public within their practice both pre-pandemic and in a post-pandemic era.

In partnership with the [Museum of Contemporary Art \(MCA\)](#) and supported by [The British Council](#).

### Artist biographies

Often described as the 'Godfather of Black British Photography', **Vanley Burke's** iconic images have captured an evolving cultural landscape and social change, stimulating debate in the UK over the past four decades. His body of work represents possibly the largest photographic record of the Caribbean Diaspora in Britain and, as an avid collector, Burke continues to connect histories through his archive housed at the Library of Birmingham.

Burke's 2015 solo exhibition involved the relocation of his archive from his flat in Nechells, in inner-city Birmingham, to Ikon. Selections of his photographs have recently featured in; *Get Up, Stand Up Now: Generations of Black Creative Pioneers*, Somerset House (2019); *Hyper-possible: Coventry Biennial* (2021), Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, (2021); *Life Between Islands: Caribbean-British Art 1950s–Now* Tate Britain (until 3 April 2022).

This event coincides with Ikon's showcase of photographic documentation of migrant communities in Birmingham, taken by Burke in collaboration with Migrant Voice and University of Birmingham. *A Gift to Birmingham* is open 23 March – 3 April, free entry.

**De'Anne Crooks** is a multidisciplinary artist and educator with a practice centred on themes of intimacy, Blackness and politicised identities. Written within their moving image and performance works are the monologues often heard in the Black Pentecostal church. Crooks used the space of their residency at The New Art Gallery Walsall (2021-2022), to implement radical listening for an exchange of memories and folklore. In their educational work, they confront western models of teaching and learning, offering their art as a tool for conversation within hostile spaces.

Alongside Crooks' role as a Black Hole Club artist, they have used commissions for the Film and Video Umbrella, Vivid Projects and The Barber Institute of Fine Arts as opportunities to experiment with filmmaking, performance and writing. Exhibiting in London, Glasgow and the Midlands, Crooks aims "to speak more conversationally, with rather than at an audience, in the rhythm of my (their) feelings" (Stuart Hall).

**Osman Yousefzada** has a multidisciplinary practice that revolves around modes of storytelling, merging autobiography with fiction and ritual. His work is concerned with the representation and rupture of migrational experience and makes reference to socio-political issues. These themes are explored through moving image, installation and text works, sculpture, garment making and performance.

Yousefzada had his first solo exhibition, *Being Somewhere Else*, at Ikon in 2018. In 2021, he wrapped the iconic Selfridges building in *Infinity Pattern 1*, a bold pink and black tessellated design. His formative experiences are explored in his book, *The Go Between*, (Canongate, 2022) opening a window onto a closed migrant community in the 80s and 90s. The world is seen through Osman's eyes as a child: his own devout Pakistani/Afghan Pashtun community, with its divide between the world of men and women, living cheek-by-jowl with parallel migrant communities.

**Linda Stupart** is an artist, writer and educator from Cape Town, South Africa, currently working in Birmingham, UK. They are interested in the possibilities for writing and making discrete grounded encounters with different kinds of bodies (of knowledge, objects, affect as well as corporeal bodies) to think through less alienated ways of living and thinking together. This emerges from the encounters of feminist art, postcolonial, ecological, queer and affect theory as well as embodied and object-based critical institutional encounters.

Their current work consists predominately of writing, performance, film and sculpture, and engages with queer theory, science fiction, environmental crises, magic, language, desire and revenge. They have recently exhibited at Lisson Gallery, Raven Row, Tate, IMT, Matt's Gallery and The Showroom in London; as well as Transmission in Glasgow, DISTRICT in Berlin, Kunstverein Dusseldorf, Kunstraum Niederösterreich in Vienna and Syndicate in Cologne.

They recently produced *All Us Girls Have been Dead for so Long* with Carl Gent for the ICA London; a play about climate change, queer sex and Ecco the Dolphin. Alongside Gent, and with Kelechi Anachua, they made and then, a harrowing, a large-scale exhibition at Wysing Arts Centre (2021).

Chair

**John Eng Kiet Bloomfield** is Senior Programmes Curator at Wysing Arts Centre. He joined Wysing in July 2016 and works on the organisation's programme, including residencies, exhibitions, events, partnership projects, an annual music festival and digital projects. At Wysing, he has curated the exhibitions *and then, a harrowing*, *All His Ghosts Must Do My Bidding*, *more of an avalanche*, *Warm Worlds and Otherwise* and *All Channels Open*.

Bloomfield also manages the Syllabus programme, a collaboratively produced alternative learning programme that supports ten artists each year. Before Wysing, Bloomfield was an editor at Black Dog Publishing alongside which he worked as a freelance curator, developing exhibitions and projects for Arcadia Missa, Flat Time House, MOT International and Tate. Bloomfield has worked for the British Film Institute and Rich Mix, London and has also worked for the artist Isaac Julien.

Bloomfield has an MA in Film Studies from UCL, London. He lives in Birmingham.

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SEASON  
2021–22



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