

Arrivals:

Haffendi Anuar, Abdulrazaq Awofeso, Yhonnie Scarce, Salote Tawale and Osman Yousefzada
10 June – 29 August 2022



Left: Abdulrazaq Awofeso, *Skhothane* (2022). Right: Abdulrazaq Awofeso, *Makurube* (2022).
Images courtesy Ikon and the artist.

This exhibition at Ikon Gallery brings together work by five artists: Haffendi Anuar, Abdulrazaq Awofeso, Yhonnie Scarce, Salote Tawale and Osman Yousefzada (10 June – 29 August 2022). Each is a participant in Ikon's *Arrivals* programme, concerned with the international movement of people and ideas and organised to coincide with the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

On Ikon's first floor, Australian Aboriginal artist **Yhonnie Scarce** presents a major new suspended glass installation, *The Near Breeder* (2022). Born in Woomera, South Australia, Scarce belongs to the Kokatha and Nukunu peoples. Working with glass, she explores the political nature and aesthetic qualities of the material – in particular corresponding to the crystallisation of desert sand as a result of British nuclear tests during 1956-63 in Maralinga, formerly part of the Woomera Prohibited Area.

The Near Breeder comprises approximately 800 individually hand-blown glass shapes that resemble yams, a primordial vegetable in Aboriginal food and a symbol of the connection to "Country". Hanging from the ceiling, they evoke both an explosion and a cloud of inverted water drops, marking the many deaths resulting from nuclear testing. The work, produced at the University of Wolverhampton, is the culmination of Scarce's Ikon residency (2020-22), developed in partnership with TarraWarra Museum of Art and consultant curator Hetti Perkins. Scarce's concern for the environment is reflected in a simultaneous presentation at Palais de Tokyo - in collaboration with Ikon - as part of a group exhibition *Reclaim the Earth* (15 April – 4 September 2022).

Also on Ikon's first floor is the work of Fijian-Australian artist Salote Tawale and British-Afghan artist Osman Yousefzada as part of the UK/Australia Season 2021-22, the largest ever cultural exchange between the two nations. *Made in Birmingham/Made in Sydney* is a ground-breaking collaboration between Ikon in Birmingham and the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (MCA) in Sydney, through which Tawale and Yousefzada explore questions of identity and belonging via two new video artworks.

Salote Tawale's work *YOU, ME, ME, YOU* (2022) features footage made by the artist, family and friends; it is a montage of imagery that combines role-play, television reenactments, social media posts and an imaginary pop music video. Exploring themes of proximity, distance and friendship, this new work includes a cast of collaborators, from Tawale's relatives, to her artist friends, the queer community in Australia and a chosen family of individuals who have been brought together by diasporic contexts, living and working away from homelands. Re-performing aspects of their shared experiences, the participants depict the loneliness, comfort, inspiration and support found within these familial and friendship networks during a period of isolation and restriction due to COVID-19. Tawale's video is a dedication to these important relationships in all their forms and a celebration of how our differences can unite us during difficult times.

Following the success of his first moving image work, *Her Dreams Are Bigger* (2018), **Osman Yousefzada** returned to the subcontinent for the production of his new digital commission. Filmed in sites of ritual in Pakistan, *Spaces of Transcendence* (2022) is a story of environments, characters and gestures. Here a secret language and its repetition is deployed in accessing a space of transcendence where the needs of marginalised voices are fulfilled. Occupying centre ground, and recognised as vehicles of access to another realm or to the divine, are the Fakir/Yogi (Brides of God), the Khawaja Sara (a Transgender person) and the Feminine Male (distinct from a Khawaja Sara). Shrines/cemeteries, alams (pennon/flags), bathing rituals, hand and body movements and the dying of cloth and its fibres are the backdrop for this transformative magic.

The new works by Salote Tawale and Osman Yousefzada will launch online via Ikon and MCA websites.

Ikon's second floor is dedicated to a solo exhibition, *OUT OF FRAME*, by Nigerian artist **Abdulrazaq Awofeso**, who has recently arrived in Birmingham from Lagos. It comprises work made entirely from discarded wooden pallets. Widely used to transport goods around the world, this material forms a metaphor of human migration, as well as the artist's own frequent journeys between Nigeria, South Africa and Europe (a full press release on this exhibition is also available).

Lastly in Ikon's Tower Room we present the work of **Haffendi Anuar**, an artist from Malaysia, whose work spans sculpture, painting, installation and drawing. Based in both Kuala Lumpur and London, Anuar's experience of life between continents has led to an interest in using his creative practice to explore postcolonialism, architecture, ways of living and identity construction. This exhibition, titled *Rumah Berkaki (Legged House)*, brings together *Unit* (2021) - sculpture which explores the iconography of the kain pelikat, a colourful sarong worn by men across South and South-East Asia for centuries - and *Cobweb* (2021) - paintings which revise existing photographs from the artist's family albums and the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford.

For more information, high-res images and to request interviews please contact Rebecca Small or Muskeen Liddar on 0121 248 0708 or email r.small@ikon-gallery.org or m.liddar@ikon-gallery.org

Social Media - Instagram, Twitter and Facebook: @ikongallery #IkonGallery
Links: ikon-gallery.org;

Note to Editors:

1. Yhonnie Scarce's work illuminates the ongoing effects of colonialisation on Aboriginal people, in particular the forced removal and relocation of Aboriginal people from their homelands. Family history is central to Scarce's work, drawing on the strength of her ancestors, she offers herself as a conduit, sharing their significant stories from the past. Scarce has exhibited widely both in Australia and internationally including at the 55th Venice Biennale collateral exhibition *Personal Structures* 2013, the 19th Biennale of Sydney 2014, Galway Art Centre, Ireland 2016, Harvard Art Museum, Massachusetts 2016, Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Museum, Virginia, USA 2012, MOCADA Museum, Brooklyn, New York 2011. thisisnofantasy.com/artist/yhonnie-scarce
2. From the perspective as a Fijian/Australian heritage woman, living on unceded territories, Salote Tawale explores the identity of the individual with collective systems. Examining through self-performance, Tawale draws on her personal experiences of race, class, ethnicity and gender formed by growing up in

suburban Australia. Tawale has exhibited widely internationally, including Art Society, Calgary, Canada; Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, Australia; Banff Centre, Alberta, Canada; Mangere Art Centre, Auckland; Murray Art Museum, Albury, Australia; Modern Art Oxford, UK; Para Site, Hong Kong; Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Perth, Australia; and Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia. Tawale is an Associate Lecturer of Screen Arts at the University of Sydney, Australia. salotetawale.com

3. Osman Yousefzada has an interdisciplinary artistic 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, co-commissioned by Ikon he wrapped the iconic Selfridges Birmingham 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). osmanstudio.com
4. Recent exhibitions by Abdulrazaq Awofeso include Dakar Biennale (2016), STEVENSON, Cape Town (2016), Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil (2017–18), MAXXI, the National Museum of 21st Century Arts Rome (2018), and Museum Arnhem (2020).
5. Haffendi Anuar is a multidisciplinary artist living and working between Malaysia and UK. He was the joint winner for the first outdoor sculpture commission for the Battersea power station development in partnership with the Cass Sculpture Foundation in 2017 and was the recipient of the Vivien Leigh 2020 award from the Ashmolean Museum. haffendianuar.net
6. Ikon is an internationally acclaimed contemporary art venue situated in central Birmingham. Established in 1964 by a group of artists, Ikon is an educational charity and works to encourage public engagement with contemporary art through exhibiting new work in a context of debate and participation. The gallery programme features artists from around the world and a variety of media is represented, including sound, film, mixed media, photography, painting, sculpture and installation. Ikon's off-site programme develops dynamic relationships between art, artists and audiences outside the gallery. Projects vary enormously in scale, duration and location, challenging expectations of where art can be seen and by whom. Education is at the heart of Ikon's activities, stimulating public interest in and understanding of contemporary visual art. Through a variety of talks, tours, workshops and seminars, Ikon's Learning Team aims to build dynamic relationships with audiences, enabling

visitors to engage with, discuss and reflect on contemporary art. ikon-gallery.org

7. Ikon Gallery is supported using public funding from Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council.
8. The Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (MCA) is Australia's leading contemporary art museum dedicated to exhibiting, collecting and interpreting the work of living artists. The MCA is located on one of the world's most spectacular sites on the edge of Sydney Harbour at Tallawoladah, on the traditional lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. The Museum presents exhibitions and learning programmes that engage a broad and diverse public. The [MCA Collection](https://www.mca.com.au/) contains over 4000 works by Australian artists with a sustained commitment to works by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. <https://www.mca.com.au/>
9. The UK/Australia Season 2021-22 is a joint initiative by the British Council and the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Season highlights the breadth of partnership between Australia and the UK and aims to deepen and extend cultural connections. The Season started in September 2021 and concluded in March 2022 in Australia and will conclude in December 2022 in the UK. The theme '*Who Are We Now?*' reflects on our history, explores our current relationship, and imagines our future together. The Season features programming for all ages and celebrates the diversity of cultures and languages in both countries. It emphasises Australia's First Nations voices, enables cultural exchange with Wales, Scotland, England and Northern Ireland, and the diverse societies that have emerged in both Australia and the UK through migration. ukaustaliaseason.com
10. Arts Council England is the national development body for arts and culture across England, working to enrich people's lives. ACE support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to visual art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2018 and 2022, ACE will invest £1.45 billion of public money from government and an estimated £860 million from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. artscouncil.org.uk