

Exhibition Guide

Salote Tawale
Osman Yousefzada
Yhonnie Scarce

10 June – 29 August 2022
First Floor Galleries

This exhibition is part of Ikon's *Arrivals* programme for Summer 2022, concerned with the international movement of people and ideas and organised to coincide with the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Gallery 1



1. Salote Tawale
YOU, ME, ME, YOU (2022)
Three channel video installation, colour, sound
6:58 minutes
Courtesy the artist

Salote Tawale's work *YOU, ME, ME, YOU (2022)* 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, the three channel video includes a cast of collaborators from Tawale's relatives, friends and queer communities in Australia. Members have been brought together through 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 the Covid-19 pandemic. 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.

In painting directly on the walls, Tawale disrupts the gallery's architecture, making it her own space. The diamond shape refers to her grandmother's weavings from the pandanus plant, traditionally used to create mats for ceremony, cooking and sleeping in iTaukei (indigenous Fijian) culture.

From her perspective as an iTaukei settler, living on unceded territories, in colonial Australia, 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 is an Associate Lecturer at the University of Sydney.

Gallery 2



2. Osman Yousefzada

***Spaces of Transcendence* (2022)**

Three channel video, colour, sound

12:46 minutes

Courtesy the artist

Spaces of Transcendence (2022) is a story of environments, characters and gestures. Set in the Makli Necropolis in the Sindh province of Pakistan, it reimagines the 14th century burial ground as a site of Sufi science fiction. The complex geometry of the three-channel film is derived from the sandstone architecture of the burial ground, carved with a myriad of Muslim, Hindu and Persian motifs. Connecting the worlds of the living and the dead, the site contains a secret language, protected by the wrapped figures carrying *alams* (pennons/flags) and requiring a marginalised voice to decode it.

Divine access is granted by the *khawaja sara* (a term that encompasses all gender variant identities) whose ritualised bathing in milk and repetition, of the hand and the head, leads to spiritual ecstasy.

The circular sounds of singing bowls and solar activity are carried in the whorl of a shell and the whirl of dyeing cloth, opening portals onto Sufi cosmology and consciousness. *Spaces of Transcendence* calls forth an Islamic Futurism that promises to free the oppressed from social and political realities.

Osman Yousefzada is a British artist of Pakistani heritage. His interdisciplinary art practice 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.

Gallery 3



3. Yhonnie Scarce

***The Near Breeder* (2022)**

Glass installation

Courtesy the artist and *THIS IS NO FANTASY*

Australian Aboriginal artist Yhonnie Scarce presents a major new suspended glass installation, *The Near Breeder* (2022) – the sixth in a series of ‘clouds’ created since 2015. Each cloud takes the form of a British atmospheric nuclear test conducted in south Australia during the 1950s and 1960s.

It is almost seventy years since a pair of nuclear bombs, Totem I and II, were detonated at Emu Field, a sandstone plateau in the Great Victoria Desert. Using a photograph of the Totem I test, Scarce cut off the top half of the fallout cloud and inverted it.

The resulting shape informs the schema for *The Near Breeder*, which comprises approximately 600 hand blown glass forms that resemble yams, a staple food for Aboriginal people. The tests had a lasting impact on the Aboriginal community, with many members missing and their ancestral lands contaminated with residual radiation.

After the Emu Field tests, a permanent site was established at Maralinga, which became part of the vast Woomera Prohibited Area (WPA). The nuclear tests that occurred between 1956-63 caused the crystallisation of the desert sand; a phenomenon that Scarce references in her glass practice. The green and black colours of the yams refer to the diversity of the native vegetable, as well as the pieces of glass that litter her local landscape. Born ten years after the last test in the WPA, Scarce belongs to the Kokatha and Nukunu peoples. In previous glass projects, she has addressed the high number of infant deaths that occurred during and after the British nuclear programme.

For Scarce, it is important that *The Near Breeder* is being exhibited in Birmingham where the first theoretical mechanism for the detonation of an atomic bomb was designed during World War II. In 1940, a memorandum was published by the expatriate German-Jewish physicists Otto Frisch and Rudolf Peierls while working for the Australian physicist Mark Oliphant at the University of Birmingham. They continued to promote the use of the atomic bomb in the US and were instrumental in establishing the Manhattan Project, ultimately leading towards its development at Maralinga.

In conducting her research in archives in Birmingham and Cambridge, Scarce has uncovered early propaganda around nuclear energy. The title of the installation, *The Near Breeder*, refers to the early nuclear reactors that were mistaken as a source of renewable energy. Scarce aims to expose the historic secrets of the British nuclear programme in south Australia, while dispelling the current myth of nuclear power as controllable, clean energy.

Hanging from the ceiling, the yams evoke both an explosion and a cloud of inverted water drops, marking the many deaths resulting from nuclear testing. For Scarce, each yam commemorates a missing “old person” from her Aboriginal community. Their presence can be sensed through the phenomenological effects of the installation, including the shadows that appear and disappear throughout the day. It was essential for Scarce to communicate this to staff, students and alumni who blew the glass in the specialist workshops at Wolverhampton School of Art. For Scarce, community practice is critical to the memorial work, which is contingent on the sharing of knowledge and lived experience.

The Near Breeder has been commissioned 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).

First Floor



3. Yhonnie Scarce
***The Near Breeder* (2022)**

Gallery 3



2. Osman Yousefzada
***Spaces of Transcendence* (2022)**

Gallery 2



1. Salote Tawale
***YOU, ME, ME, YOU* (2022)**

Gallery 1

Entrance

Salote Tawale

YOU, ME, ME, YOU (2022)

Special thanks to: Sidney McMahan, Nei Vilisi, Sarah Rodigari, Lil Colgan, Xanthe Dobbie, Random cats in a pusher and their owner, Elisa Tawale, Margaret Tawale, Ruth McDougall, Samia Sayed, Anastasia Zaravinos, Priya Panchalingam, EO Gill, Seini Taumoepeau, Garden Reflexxx, Leo Borero, Bec Stegh, Hayley Forward, Kate Britton, and Stuart.

Commissioned by Ikon and the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (MCA) as part of *Made in Birmingham/Made in Sydney*.

Osman Yousefzada

Spaces of Transcendence (2022)

Director: Osman Yousefzada

Producer: Shahrukh Waheed

DOP: Nadir Siddiqui

Assistant camera: Anas Siddiqui

Sound design: Jack Jelfs

Editor: Husain Qaizar

Cast: Bindiya Rana, Tamana, Sapna and Natasha

Special thanks to:
Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy

Commissioned by Ikon and the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (MCA) as part of *Made in Birmingham/Made in Sydney*.

Yhonnie Scarce

The Near Breeder (2022)

Special thanks to: Simon Eccles, (Technical Demonstrator in Glass, Wolverhampton School of Art), Morgan Stockton, Suraya Meah, Madeline Cosier and Madeleine Hughes.

Made in Birmingham/Made in Sydney and *The Near Breeder* are supported by the UK/Australia Season Patrons, the Australian Government, the British Council, and Creative Partnerships Australia through the Australian Cultural Fund as part of the UK/Australia Season 2021-22.



Off-site

Hew Locke: [*Foreign Exchange*](#)

14 June – 15 August 2022

Foreign Exchange by artist Hew Locke is a new temporary piece of public art which reimagines Birmingham's city-centre sculpture of Queen Victoria. Presented by Birmingham 2022 Festival and commissioned by Ikon.

Event

The Migrant Festival

14 – 17 July 2022

Ikon presents the fourth annual Migrant Festival – a four day programme mixing visual art, music, film and performance. The festival celebrates the contribution made by refugees and migrants to Birmingham and the UK, and highlights the migrant stories of artists in Ikon's programme, including Abdulrazaq Awofeso and Osman Yousefzada.

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Free entry, donations welcome

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