

THE MIGRANT FESTIVAL 2023 17 AUGUST – 3 SEPTEMBER



Left: Vanley Burke. Centre: Maryam Wahid photographed by John Boaz.
Right: Ayesha Jones. Photographer: Mandip Singh Seehra.

For five years, Ikon has produced The Migrant Festival, a free annual event that celebrates Birmingham, UK, as a city of migration, sanctuary and refuge. From 17 August – 3 September 2023, this year's festival features projects by three Birmingham photographers – Vanley Burke, Ayesha Jones and Maryam Wahid – who are collaborating with inner-city communities to share their stories of migration. The festival also includes artists' talks, music events by Celebrating Sanctuary Birmingham and a family workshop.

Vanley Burke, *A Gift to Birmingham*, 3 July – 16 September 2023, The Exchange, Birmingham

Education is central to Vanley Burke's exhibition *A Gift to Birmingham*, which showcases portraits of members of Migrant Voice commissioned by University of Birmingham. Organised by Ikon and presented at The Exchange, the former municipal bank in Centenary Square, Birmingham (3 July – 16 September 2023), *A Gift to Birmingham* has previously toured community venues in Aston, Handsworth and Smethwick, alongside free resources for Birmingham educators to address diversity through teaching practice. To date, over

three hundred children have used the activity packs, which include critical questions and creative exercises, to consider subjects of race, language, culture and religion – allowing learners to express their own identities.

Ayesha Jones, *Leave A Light In My Room*, 17 – 20 August 2023, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

Birmingham-born artist Ayesha Jones documents journeys of migration, motherhood and living with health issues, through photography and film. For her exhibition ***Leave A Light In My Room***, at Ikon Gallery (17 – 20 August 2023), Jones has been commissioned by Birmingham Hospice and Ikon to take photographs of, and document conversations with, the Erdington Asian Group, north Birmingham. Supported by hospice staff, Jones' photography workshops have provided a space for community members to discuss issues of ageing and dying well. This exhibition forms part of Birmingham City Council's Compassionate City project, which aims to normalise conversations around death, dying and loss.

Maryam Wahid, *Dreams of Brum*, 31 August – 3 September 2023, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

Themes of loss, memory, displacement, identity and migration run through the artistic practice of Birmingham-based photographer Maryam Wahid. With a focus on the maternal home, Wahid highlights inherited objects and domestic archives as aids for storytelling and learning about cultural heritage. Ikon presents ***Dreams of Brum***, an exhibition of Wahid's photographic portraits (31 August – 3 September 2023), taken at Handsworth Library during a series of creative community workshops with printmaker Haseebah Ali. Maryam Wahid's exhibition tours to Handsworth Library throughout autumn and winter 2023.

Events

- **Thursday 17 August**, 3-4pm. Celebrating Sanctuary Birmingham presents live music by Chinese singer Yijia Tu.
- **Thursday 31 August**, 3-4pm. Celebrating Sanctuary Birmingham presents live music by Tala Tarang, a tabla and harp duet with Mendi Singh and Eleanor Turner. These events take place at Ikon Gallery.
- **Wednesday 23 August**, 6-7pm. Vanley Burke is in conversation with Dr Reza Gholami, Deputy Director of the Centre for Research in Race and Education, University of Birmingham, about his artistic practice and photographing Birmingham's diverse communities to inform a more inclusive and engaging education in schools around themes of diversity, belonging and equality. This event takes place at The Exchange, Centenary Square.
- **Friday 1 September**, 2-3pm. Ayesha Jones and Maryam Wahid are in conversation with Nicola Shipley, Director, GRAIN Projects, on how photography can be used as a tool for addressing difficult subjects. This event take place at Ikon Gallery.
- **Saturday 2 September**, 11am-3pm. Family Saturday. This event takes place at The Exchange, Centenary Square.

All events are free, donations welcome. Please visit ikon-gallery.org for full details.

A Gift to Birmingham was commissioned as part of the 'Non-formal Intercommunal Education in Birmingham (NICE-B)' project, led by Dr Reza Gholami, Deputy Director of the Centre for Research in Race and Education, University of Birmingham. Ayesha Jones' exhibition ***Leave A Light In My Room*** is organised in partnership with Birmingham Hospice and is supported by Birmingham City Council. Maryam Wahid's exhibition ***Dreams of Brum*** is organised in partnership with Handsworth Library and is supported by Birmingham City Council's Cultural Development Service.

For more information, press appointments, high-res images and to request interviews please contact Rebecca Small by email r.small@ikon-gallery.org or call Ikon on 0121 248 0708.

Social Media Handles - Instagram, Twitter and Facebook:

@ikongallery #IkonGallery @unibirmingham @brumshospice @vanleyburke
@vanleyburkecentre @ayesha_jones @WahidMaryam @maryamwb @celsanifest
@grainphotohub @ace_national @aceagrams @ace_midlands @bhamcitycouncil

Notes to Editors:

1. **Vanley Burke** (b. 1951) is often described as the 'Godfather of Black British Photography': an artist, photographer and curator whose archive, surveying the Black British experience, is held at the Library of Birmingham. His exhibition, ***At Home with Vanley Burke***, took place at Ikon Gallery in 2015. Arriving in Britain in 1965, Burke has documented the experience of black people in the UK for over 45 years, producing what is regarded to be the greatest photographic record of African Caribbean people in post-war Britain. ***A Gift to Birmingham*** was previously exhibited at Ikon Gallery in March-April 2022.
2. **Ayesha Jones** (b. 1990) is an artist based in the West Midlands. She works predominantly with photography and film and is interested in art as a catalyst for growth, healing and social impact. Jones' work has been exhibited nationally and internationally and she has won awards, including Magnum Photos and The Photography Show's 30 under 30 international award, Portrait of Britain (2022 and 2023) and Decade of Change. Jones' solo exhibition ***Motherland*** was exhibited as part of Coventry City of Culture 2021. She uses her family lineage as a mixed heritage person, to highlight the interconnected workings of identity, humanity, nature and all things. ayeshajones.co.uk
3. **Maryam Wahid** (b. 1995) is a Birmingham-based artist who uses the medium of photography to explore identity, womanhood, memory, migration, home and belonging. Wahid's current exhibition, ***Zaibunnisa***, is at Impressions Gallery, Bradford (8 April – 1 July 2023). Wahid has won multiple awards, including the ***Portrait of Britain*** by British Journal of

Photography, and been a recipient of numerous commissions from Arts Council England and British Council. She was also a judge for several art competitions, including *Hold Still* at the National Portrait Gallery. Wahid's work has been exhibited nationally and internationally at venues such as Midlands Arts Centre, Ffotogallery (Wales) and Museum of Gdańsk, Poland. maryamwahid.com

4. **Celebrating Sanctuary Birmingham** works through the arts to celebrate and raise awareness of the contributions that refugees make to Birmingham and more widely the UK. They work collaboratively with artists in exile and local communities to build relationships, share cultural identities and provide opportunities for artists to perform, network and develop their careers in Birmingham. Their events celebrate the tradition of offering sanctuary in the UK to those fleeing persecution, affirming the message that sanctuary is a human right. Celebrating Sanctuary Birmingham are committed to promoting and showcasing the very best artistic practice from artists originating from or connected to areas of conflict, turmoil and/or unrest. Their programme seeks to highlight the positive impact arts can make in transforming people's lives. celebrating-sanctuary.org.uk
5. Ikon's first **Migrant Festival** took place in 2018 and was co-curated by artist and designer Osman Yousefzada, to coincide with his first solo exhibition, *Being Somewhere Else*. In 2019 the festival took place during Hew Locke's exhibition *Here's the Thing* and included a key-note talk between the artist and Rt Hon David Lammy MP. Osman Yousefzada's major public art installation *Infinity Pattern 1* at Selfridges Birmingham, hosted the 2021 festival. The 2022 festival was part of Ikon's **Arrivals** programme, organised to coincide with the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. ikon-gallery.org/the-migrant-festival-2022
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** is open Wednesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am-5pm. Free entry, donations welcome. Ikon is supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England, and Birmingham City Council.
8. **The Exchange** is the University of Birmingham's city centre venue in Centenary Square, Birmingham's 'civic heart' that is home to many of our city's most iconic locations such as the Library of Birmingham, the International Convention Centre, Symphony Hall and the REP theatre. The Exchange was constructed in the early 1930s and is of historic importance to the city of Birmingham as it was formerly the headquarters of the Birmingham Municipal Bank. The Exchange brings together the University's research, teaching and networks to

create a place of curiosity, celebration, collaboration and change. Through free public exhibitions and community engagement programmes our ambition is to enable people from the city and wider region to get involved in the University's work to address the complex challenges of our time. birmingham.ac.uk/the-exchange

9. In March 2023, Birmingham St Mary's Hospice and John Taylor Hospice rebranded as **Birmingham Hospice**. The new name and unique identity celebrates a special 157-year heritage of care in the city, while supporting the charity to grow and reach even more people. Its mission is, and always will be, to help people from all communities access the care of their choice at the end of life. birminghamhospice.org.uk
10. **Handsworth Library** is located on Soho Road, Birmingham. Built in 1878 as the council house and public library for Handsworth Borough Council, it is a Grade II listed building. birmingham.gov.uk/handsworth-library
11. **Arts Council England** is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in Let's Create that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. From 2023 to 2026 we will invest over £440 million of public money from Government and an estimated £93 million from The National Lottery each year to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. www.artscouncil.org.uk.

Following the Covid-19 crisis, the Arts Council developed a £160 million Emergency Response Package, with nearly 90% coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. We are also one of the bodies responsible for administering the Government's unprecedented Culture Recovery Fund of which we delivered over £1 billion to the sector in grants and loans. Find out more at www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19.

12. **Birmingham City Council** is the local government body responsible for the governance of the City of Birmingham, UK. It is the most populated local council area in the United Kingdom (excluding counties) with 101 elected councillors representing over one million people, in 69 wards. The council headquarters are at the Council House, Victoria Square in the heart of the city centre. The council is responsible for running nearly all local services, with the exception of those run by joint boards. For more information visit www.birmingham.gov.uk