

## COOKE LATHAM GALLERY

### OSMAN YOUSEFZADA CV

Osman Yousefzada is a Birmingham-born British interdisciplinary artist and writer, engaging with the representation, rupture and reimagining of the migration experience. He works across textile, sculpture, moving image, installation, garment making and performance, referring to the socio-political issues of today. Yousefzada's practice is led by modes of storytelling, merging ethno-autobiography with fiction and ritual.

Yousefzada is a research practitioner at the Royal College of Art, London and a visiting fellow at Cambridge University. He is also a Visiting Professor of Interdisciplinary Practice at Birmingham School of Art, BCU. His work has been shown at notable international institutions including: Tate Modern, Whitechapel Gallery, London; Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; Wapping Project, London; Cincinnati Art Museum, Ohio; Ringling Museum, Florida; Lahore Museum, Pakistan; Design Museum, London; Lahore Biennale, Pakistan; and Dhaka Art Summit, Bangladesh.

Yousefzada's practice has been described as "defiant", where the participating bodies throughout his work are presented as part objects that refuse to identify or conform. Most recently, his series of solo interventions titled *What Is Seen & What Is Not* was shown at the Victoria and Albert Museum in South Kensington, London. Across three site-specific works, this commission responded to the 75th anniversary of Pakistan independence and explored themes of displacement, movement, migration, and climate change. In April 2025 Yousefzada's exhibited *Welcome! A Palazzo for Immigrants* at the Palazzo Franchetti, presented by the Fondazione Berengo & V&A in conjunction with the 60<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale. In May 2025, Yousefzada was invited to prelude Bradford City of Culture 2025 with *Where it Began* at Cartwright Hall

His first book, *The Go-Between* (2022), is a memoir through the eyes of a child growing up in a closed Immigrant community in Birmingham central England. A hidden world opens up, revealing layers of female and male spaces. Segregated worlds, hostile environments, racialised labour, competing masculinities in search of a place to belong. The book was long-listed for the Polari Prize, winning the Biographers Club, Slightly Foxed prize and reviewed by Stephen Fry as "one of the greatest childhood memoirs of our time".

### Education

Royal College of Art, Practice-Led research PHD in Archival Absence and Sculpture (ABD)  
University of Cambridge, MPhil Development Studies  
SOAS – South Asian Studies / Anthropology  
CSM – Foundation in Art & Design

### Solo Exhibitions + Projects

2025 *Arrivals*, Islamic Biennale, Saudi Biennale Foundation, Jeddah  
2024/25 *When Will We Be Good Enough?*, The Box, Plymouth Museums  
2024 *Welcome! A Palazzo for Immigrants*, Presented by Fondazione Berengo & V&A at the Palazzo Franchetti in conjunction with the 60<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale  
2024 *Where it Began*, Cartwright Hall, A prelude to the Bradford City of Culture 2025  
2024 *Possession I*, Cartwright Hall, Lister Park, Public Sculpture  
2023 *Queer Feet*, Charleston Firle, Sussex Modern  
2023 *Embodiments of Memory*, British Ceramics Biennale, Potteries Museum, Stoke on Trent  
2023 *Rituals & Spells*, Cromwell Place

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- 2022 *What is Seen and What is Not*, Victoria & Albert Museum, London
- 2021 *Infinity Pattern 1*, Ikon Gallery, & Selfridges Birmingham, *Canvas Installation over the iconic Future Systems building*
- 2018 *Being Somewhere Else*, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham,
- 2018 *Migrant Festival*, Ikon Gallery, curation of its inaugural annual Migrant Festival
- 2013–2019 The Collective (a zine) - Editor & Publisher. A Collaborative Journal/ Zine inviting various creatives, artists, writers to contribute over a particular theme - from curator Hans Ulrich Obrist, Nicola Lees to Stella Bottai. Collaborative artists have included Anthea Hamilton, Celia Hempton to Prem Sahib
- 2008–2019 OSMAN – Durational project fashion design project, working with international stores and clients, including Beyonce and Lady Gaga.

### Group Shows

- 2025 *Ablutions*, Tate Modern, Tanks
- 2024 *Drawing Room Biennale*
- 2023 *More Immigrants Please*, Artichoke, Public Gallery
- 2023 *Like Paradise*, Claridges Art Space, curated by Ekow Eshun
- 2023 *New Contemporaries*, Camden Art Centre, London
- 2023 *A New Dawn, A New Day*, Art Bomb Factory, Foundation, London
- 2023 *Sculpture*, Vadehra Art Gallery, Delhi
- 2023 *An Immigrants room of her own*, Whitechapel Gallery, Life is More Important than Art
- 2023 *One That Includes Myth*, Goodman Gallery, London, fellow artists, *El Anatsui, Ghada Amer, Yee I Lee and Johanna Unzueta*
- 2023 *Alea iacta est*, curated by Milovan Farronato, Vistamare, Milan. Fellow artists, *Anthea Hamilton, Celia Hempton, Goshka Macuga, Eddie Peake, Prem Sahib, Lucy Mckenzie, Mariya Loboda, Christodoulos Panayiotou*
- 2022 *Spaces of Transcendence*, Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney
- 2022 *Glassstress*, Berengo Studio -- Group Show including, Tony Cragg and Ai Wei Wei
- 2021 RELAY – Teatro Piccolo, Venice Architecture Biennale 2021
- 2020 *Her Dreams are Bigger*, Whitechapel Gallery, London
- 2020 *Sound Symposium (Performative Costumes for Haroon Mirza)*
- 2020 *A Rich Tapestry*, Curated by Jonathan Watkins & Ayesha Khalid, *Haus Claus (No Exit)* – Lahore Biennale, Pakistan
- 2020 *A belief is not a belief, because the truth is unbelievable*. A Collaborative work with Haroon Mirza. An Opera at the Gadhafi Stadium in Lahore.
- 2019 *Nightfall*, Mendes Wood, Brussels. A group show curated by artist Erika Verzutti, Milovan Farronato, Fernanda Brenner
- 2018 *Volcano Extravaganza*, Stromboli Island, Italy, Collaborative Performance with Cecilia Bengolea and Haroon Mirza
- 2018 *Total Antastrophe, Volcano Extravaganza*, Dhaka Art Summit – Bangladesh. Group show curated by Runa Islam and Milovan Farronato
- 2018 *The Fabric of India*, Cincinnati Art Museum, Ohio, USA
- 2017 *The Fabric of India*, Ringling Museum, Florida, USA
- 2013 *The Wedding Dresses 1775 – 2014*, V&A Museum, London
- 2011-12 *Reconstruction*  
British Council Show  
Lahore Museum, Pakistan

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- Central State Museum, Almaty
- Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi
- Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka
- 2008 Design Museum, Designs of the Year
- 2005 Film + Fiction, Jerwood Show
- The Wapping Project

### Recent Highlights

- 2024 The Courtauld Institute of Art, UAL, Member of 'Migrations' Research Cluster
- 2022 – 25 University of Cambridge, Visiting Fellow Jesus College
- 2024 Whitechapel Gallery, Member of Ethics Committee
- 2023 BCU, School of Art, Visiting Professor of Interdisciplinary Practice
- 2022 The Go-Between by Osman Yousefzada, Published by Canongate  
*Guardians top 50 books of 2022, Long listed for the Polari Writing Prize*  
*Shortlisted and Winner of the Slightly Foxed / Biographers Club first Memoir Prize*
- 2021 BCU, Doctor of University (Honorary Award) in recognition of contributions to the fields of Art & Design

### Residencies

- 2025 Artist in Residence, Jesus College, Cambridge University
- 2021 – 23 Royal College of Art, UK, Artist in Residence, Sculpture Studios
- 2022 Indus School of Art & Architecture, Pakistan, Artist in Residence, Textiles Department
- 2020 Birmingham School of Art, UK, Artist in Residence, Print Making Studio

### Public and Notable Private Collections

- V&A
- Kiran Nadir Museum
- Mittal Collection
- Nicoletta Fiorucci Foundation & Collection
- Potteries Museum, Stoke on Trent
- Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery
- National Museum Scotland
- Biennale Foundation, Saudi Arabia

### Selected Quotes on Recent V&A solo

#### Ekow Eshun – Writer & Curator

*'With When Will We Be Good Enough? Yousefzada opens new territory in the discourse on colonialism and its afterlife. He offers a vision of a concatenated present, where power and capital and the urge to extract and dominate continue to operate along the same trade routes as in previous eras, and with the same destructive force.'*

#### Hammad Nasar –Writer & Curator

*"In that summer light I could see the structures of hope underpinning Yousefzada's interventions at the V&A. The artist's choreography of objects, structures and stories weaving together elements from multiple disciplines*

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*and geographies to show us how belonging can be claimed and enacted; not as tub-thumping, flag-waving polemic, but as graceful leaps of the artistic imagination. It makes visible the entangled histories whose acknowledgment is foundational to any efforts for collective, and more hopeful futures."*

### Catherine Ince –Former Chief Curator V&A East

*"Everything starts at home. What Osman Yousefzada achieves with What is Seen and What is Not, is a powerful reminder of the fertile creative landscape that the idea of home offers, wherever and however that may be."*

### Grant Watson – Curator of Bahaus Imaginista

*"The politics of gender is paramount here and there is a fascination with gendered spaces, the presence of women, their appearance and personality, communicated through textiles, as well as their position in society."*

### Caroline Roux, Financial Times

*"A Migrants Tale, Laid Bare... More than a thousand young Londoners from the South Asian diaspora crowded into the museum. A banner of brilliantly embroidered paisley – the textile pattern of ancient Indo-Iranian origin so utterly co-opted by the British – fluttered by the lake in the Madejski courtyard. It signalled a glittering welcome."*

### Professor Jaspar Joseph-Lester, Head of Sculpture RCA

*"These small cast forms might be thought of as anti-Christo in that they refuse to be defined by the material objects that they appear to conceal. It is not so much what is covered but rather the act of concealing that gives Osman's sculptures a political charge – that is in direct contrast to the grand gestures that characterise the image spaces of Christo and Jeanne Claude's wrappings. The ephemerality of Osman's wrapped objects is fixed and made permanent, not through the mutation of object into image, but rather the transmutation of domestic objects into sculptural form."*

### Quddus Mirza, Critic & Curator, Pakistan Times

*"Yousefzada has created these familiar pieces, with motifs and insertions of colonial gates from the undivided India; those imperceptible barriers and uninviting elevations. Now in Yousefzada's installations, the once mighty colonial edifices and peasants' humble possessions embrace, in the minimal and sublime language of Piet Mondrian."*

### Recent Selected Publications - Press

Financial Times – A Migrants Tale Laid Bare

<https://www.ft.com/content/56e5192e-b259-4637-af94-c5520478b2d6>

Studio International – Opening Doors for others people is key to what I do

<https://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/osman-yousefzada-interview-opening-doors-for-other-people-is-key-to-what-i-do>

Sculpture Magazine – Looking back to go forward

<https://sculpturemagazine.art/looking-back-to-go-forward-a-conversation-with-osman-yousefzada/>

Another Magazine – A powerful new exhibition explores the migrant experience.

<https://www.anothermag.com/art-photography/14255/osman-yousefzada-s-powerful-new-exhibition-explores-the-migrant-experience>

Guardian - It can't be ignored: Osman Yousefzada on his gigantic artwork

<https://www.theguardian.com>

Artsy – 10 Rising British Artists to Watch

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<https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-10-rising-british-artists-watch-years-new-contemporaries>

Timeout – 9 Amazing artists you have to see at Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2024

<https://www.timeout.com/london/news/nine-amazing-artists-you-have-to-see-at-bloomberg-new-contemporaries-2024-011824>

Evening Standard – Life is More Important than Art

<https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/exhibitions/life-is-more-important-than-art-whitechapel-gallery-review-james-baldwin-b1087520.html>

[rdian.com/artanddesign/2021/jul/26/it-cant-be-ignored-osman-yousefzada-on-his-gigantic-artwork](https://www.artanddesign.com/2021/jul/26/it-cant-be-ignored-osman-yousefzada-on-his-gigantic-artwork)

Arts Newspaper - The World's largest Canvas

<https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/that-s-a-wrap-artist-osman-yousefzada-envelops-selfridges-department-store-in-a-giant-canvas>

Artist Newspaper – From the Margins to the forefront

<https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2024/05/07/from-the-margins-to-the-forefront-osman-yousefzada-wraps-queen-victoria-statue-in-fabric-for-new-show-in-bradford>

Frieze – Gold in Motion – Osman Yousefzada & Klimt

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/ClrgzCTLP0H/?igsh=eJJobTlpczB5OHUy>

BBC London – Mike McKenzie interviews John Akomfrah, Yinka Shonibare and Osman Yousefzada

(IPlayer / link on request)

BBC – Artist wraps statues for new exhibition in City

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c2qvl456l16o>

CNN – It's a meeting of worlds, Bringing the Immigrant Experience to the English Country House

<https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/13/style/osman-yousefzada-queer-feet-charleston/index.html>

Euronews – Artist Osman Yousefzada wraps statues in new Bradford show

<https://www.euronews.com/culture/2024/05/09/where-it-began-artist-osman-yousefzada-kicks-off-countdown-to-bradford-uk-city-of-culture->

Stirworld – Frames Homes as a Site of Dreaming

<https://www.stirworld.com/see-features-osman-yousefzada-frames-home-as-a-site-for-dreaming>

Recessed Space – Osman Yousefzada's Palazzo for Immigrants

<https://recessed.space/00202-Osman-Yousefzada-Palazzo-for-Immigrants-Venice>

Guardian / Observer Magazine - Grief & Loss

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2023/feb/12/osman-yousefzada-on-the-death-of-his-mother>

### Published Catalogues / Monographs / Chapters

- 2023 Life is More Important than Art, That is Why Art is Important, Whitechapel Gallery, Essay  
On An Immigrants room of her own.
- 2023 Conversations of Calais, An essay contribution titled 'Where do you really come from?'  
*Other writers in this Migration / Refugee series include Ai Wei Wei Published by Welbeck*
- 2022 What is Seen & What is Not – Solo V&A & Gommer Press Catalogue/ Monograph on Osman  
Yousefzada show, with Essays including from Hammad Nasar, Grant Watson, Catherine Ince,  
Professor Jaspar Joseph-Lester.  
<https://www.vam.ac.uk/shop/books/ceramics-glass-metalwork-sculpture/what-is-seen-and-what-is-not-164685.html>
- 2022 'The Go Between' by Osman Yousefzada published by Canongate London. A memoir through the  
eyes of a child growing up in a closed migrant community in central England. An opening of a  
hidden world. Layered stories of female and male spaces, hostile environments, racial labour and  
alternative masculinities.

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2018 Being Somewhere Else – Ikon Gallery Catalogue/Monograph on Osman Yousefzada solo show.  
Contributions from Jonathon Watkins, Diana Campbell Betancourt and Emily King

### Teaching

Visiting Professor of Interdisciplinary Practice, MA Fine Art, BCU – Birmingham School of Art

Visiting Lecturer at Royal College of Art, MRes + MA Sculpture ongoing

Visiting Fellow – Jesus College, Cambridge University

Guest Lecturer – CSM, London, Newcastle School of Arts & Culture

### Panel Talks / Lectures / Activism

Osman Yousefzada has given lectures and participated on panel talks at the: Venice Architecture Biennale, BBC Radio 4, BBC Radio 3, Whitechapel Gallery, Royal College of Art, Central St Martins, Ikon Gallery, Facebook, Sky Arts, Sky News, BCU Birmingham School of Art, Newcastle University, Hays Literary Festival, British Council, Alternative Art Fair, Ubud Writers Festival - Bali, Edinburgh Literary Festival, Cambridge Literary Festival, Oxford Literary Festival, Lahore Literary Festival - Pakistan, Indus School of Art & Architecture - Pakistan, Bradford Literary Festival, Borris festival of Ideas - Ireland, Charleston Literary Festival, The Courtauld.