

Metropolitan Crossings (London, 5–6 Nov 25)

Ben Uri Gallery and Museum, London, Nov 5–06, 2025

Deadline: Jul 31, 2025

Ben Uri Research Unit

Metropolitan Crossings: Art, Displacement, and the Making of Modern London, 1930s–1970s.

Symposium at Ben Uri Gallery and Museum, London 5–6 November 2025.

To mark the English-language launch of Burcu Dogramaci's *Exile London: Metropolis, Modernity and Artistic Emigration* (*Exil London. Metropole, Moderne und künstlerische Emigration*), the Ben Uri Research Unit invites proposals for a two-day symposium exploring the intersections of exile, migration, and modern visual culture in mid-twentieth-century London.

The symposium takes as its chronological frame the period from the 1930s to the 1970s, beginning with the forced journeys of Jewish artists fleeing Nazism in Central Europe and concluding with the postcolonial routes taken by Caribbean artists associated with the Windrush generation and the scandalous aftermath of their reception and treatment in Britain. These decades witnessed a transformation of London into a heterogeneous and contested cultural space, shaped by successive waves of displacement: artists escaping fascism, communism, and state repression; individuals uprooted by the disintegration of empire; and migrants whose arrival was later constrained or criminalised by restrictive legislation, notably the Commonwealth Immigrants Acts of 1962 and 1968.

Despite these difficulties, London's evolving metropolitan landscape became a crucible for new artistic identities and alliances. While the city offered refuge and professional opportunities, it was also marked by surveillance, exclusion, and institutional barriers. This symposium aims to investigate how the experience of forced and voluntary migration shaped artistic production, and how émigré, refugee, and postcolonial artists intervened in and expanded the visual field of British art.

We are particularly interested in the emergence of transnational networks and solidarities—connections forged between artists from geographically distant regions who found themselves in shared proximity through displacement. The symposium seeks to interrogate these relational geographies of exile and the cultural politics they produced, attending to both visible contributions and the persistent archival silences surrounding migrant and diasporic artists.

We invite proposals on immigrant, exiled, or displaced artists in London that engage with, but are not limited to, the following themes:

- Diasporic communities and cross-cultural collaborations and solidarities among displaced artists in London.

- Artistic responses to exile, internment, and political persecution.
- The aesthetics and politics of displacement in visual practice.
- The impact of immigration policy on artists' mobility, careers, and forms of expression.
- Colonial and postcolonial routes to the metropole and their artistic consequences.
- Institutional responses to migrant and refugee artists: inclusion, solidarity, erasure, resistance.
- Memory, trauma, and materiality in the work of displaced artists.
- Case studies of émigré artists in London in stateless contexts.
- Mental health and exile: how displacement trauma and institutionalisation shaped artistic practice and visibility.
- Curating and archiving artistic migration: historiographic and methodological challenges.

We welcome interdisciplinary approaches and particularly encourage contributions from underrepresented scholars and practitioners.

Please submit a 300-word abstract and 100-word biography to the Ben Uri Research Unit at (anam@benuri.org) by 31 July 2025 with the subject line 'Metropolitan Crossings'. Each paper will be 20 minutes in length. The symposium will be held on 5–6 November 2025 at Ben Uri Gallery and Museum. Acceptance will be communicated promptly following the submission deadline.

Reference:

CFP: Metropolitan Crossings (London, 5-6 Nov 25). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 16, 2025 (accessed Dec 16, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/49517>>.