

Art, Displacement, and the Making of Modern London (London, 5-6 Nov 25)

Ben Uri Gallery and Museum 108a Boundary Road, St John's Wood, London, NW8 0RH, Nov 5-06, 2025

Ana-Maria Milčić

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

To attend please register on Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/metropolitan-crossings-art-displacement-and-the-making-of-modern-london-tickets-1786160216289>.

This symposium explores how exile, migration, and displacement shaped the artistic and cultural landscape of London between the 1930s and the 1970s. Across two days, the presentations will examine the diverse trajectories of artists who arrived from Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean, and consider how their experiences of immigration and cultural negotiation transformed British art. Themes include diasporic solidarities, the politics of mobility, activism, institution-building and the role of curators and collectors, identity erasure, female agency and rebellion, design, and the impact of memory, mental health, and trauma on artistic practice. The programme highlights London as both a contested and generative space for forging new artistic networks and forms of expression.

PROGRAMME

DAY 1 – Wednesday, 5 November 2025

09:00-09:45 | Gallery Opens / Coffee and Networking

09:45-10:00 | Opening Remarks and introduction to the Ben Uri Research Unit

Panel 1 – From China and the Philippines to London | starts at 10:00

Chair: Sophie Guo, The Courtauld Institute of Art

10:00 | Lu Zhang (Independent scholar) – “Mr. F. T. Cheng Hosted Us at China Restaurant”: Art, Food, and Diasporic Expression in 1930s London

10:20 | Luna Huang Ruomin (Independent scholar) – Identity, Assemblage and Space-making: Diasporic Chinese Art Institutions in London

10:40 | Anne-Grit Becker (University of Siegen) – Knives and Poems: David Medalla’s “space for people”

11:05-11:20 | Discussion

11:20–11:35 | Coffee Break

Panel 2 – Diasporic Negotiations and Cross-Cultural Solidarities (Part I) | starts at 11:35

Chair: Joy Onyejiako, SOAS/Ben Uri Gallery and Museum

11:35 | Basil Olton (Highgate Art School) – Curating Artistic Migration in East London

11:55 | Helena Cuss (Independent scholar) – Diasporic solidarities? Jewish refugee art dealers and Black Commonwealth artists in postwar London

12:15 | Sabo Kpade (Independent scholar and curator) – Uzo Egonu’s London: Displacement, Belonging, and Archival Entanglements in the Making of Modern Metropole

12:40–12:55 | Discussion

12:55–13:55 | Lunch Break

Panel 2 (cont.) – Diasporic Negotiations and Cross-Cultural Solidarities (Part II) | starts 13:55

Chair: Joy Onyejiako, SOAS/Ben Uri Gallery and Museum

13:55 | Liz Bruchet and Ming Tiampo (UCL and Carleton University) – Slade Overseas Students and Conjunctions of Global Activism

14:15 | Fabian Röderer Williams (University of Hamburg) – Going to Britain? Photographic Politics of West Indian Arrival

14:35 | Ed Kettleborough (University of Bristol) – Image in Revolt: Frank Bowling and Derek Boshier at the Grabowski Gallery

15:05–15:20 | Discussion

15:20–15:35 | Coffee Break

Panel 3 – London Between the Mediterranean and the Baltic | starts 15:35

Chair: Elena Konyushikhina, The Courtauld Institute of Art

15:35 | Michael Paraskos (Imperial College London) – The Inflected Migration of Stass Paraskos (cancelled)

15:55 | Andra Silapētere (Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art) – Latvian Exile Community in London: Contexts and Creative expressions

16:15 | Jelena Sofronijevic (Gray’s School of Art) – Sculpture and Solidarity: Petar Hadži Boškov in London, Bradford, and Skopje

16:40–16:55 | Discussion

16:55–17:05 | Coffee Break

Panel 4 – Geographies of Belonging from Iraq and Armenia | starts 17:05

Chair:

17:05 | Alisha O’Brien-Coker (Tate Britain) – Beyond Babylon: Exploring and cross-comparing the artistic production of Dia al-Azzawi and Walid Siti between 1970s and 1980s

17:25 | Alyson Wharton-Durgaryan (University of Lincoln) – An Armenian Exodus: The Absence of Armenians in Shaping the Post-War London Market

17:50–18:00 | Discussion

18:00 | Drinks at Ben Uri Gallery and Museum

DAY 2 – Thursday, 6 November 2025

09:00–10:00 | Gallery Opens / Coffee and Networking

Screening: Designing from Home (Harriet Atkinson and Sue Breakell)

Panel 5 – Women, Exile, and Trauma in Artistic Practice (Part I) | starts 10:00

Chair: Shaul Bar-Haim, University of Essex

10:00 | Marina Vinnik (Bauhaus University Weimar) – Otti Berger: Exile in London 1937, Silence and Untranslated Success

10:20 | Sarah MacDougall (Ben Uri Gallery and Museum) – “Almost Forgotten Today”: Katerina Wilczynski – Mapping Migration and the Mechanisms of Erasure)

10:40 | Ana-Maria Milčić (Ben Uri Research Unit/Austrian Academy of Science) – Sublimation and Subversion in Exile: Gertrude Elias and the Critique of British Psychiatry (discussion to follow after end of panel)

11:05–11:15 | Coffee Break

Panel 5 (cont.) – Women, Exile, and Trauma in Artistic Practice (Part II) | starts 11:15

Chair: Shaul Bar-Haim, University of Essex

11:20 | Natalia Mali (Independent scholar) – Unseen Women: Exile, Trauma, and Gender in the Art of Motesiczky and Carrington

11:40 | Rachel Dickson (Ben Uri Research Unit) – Unseen Women: Exile, Trauma, and Gender in the Art of Halina Korn and the Polish Network for Mental Health Patients in Postwar London

12:05–12:25 | Discussion

12:25–13:15 | Lunch Break

Panel 6 – Archives, Homes, and Artistic Recovery | starts 13:15

Chair: Claudia Treacher, independent scholar

13:15 | Harriet Atkinson and Sue Breakell (University of Brighton)– ‘Designing from Home’: the negotiation of identity and communities for designer FHK Henrion (1914-1990)

13:35 | Valeria Carullo (Royal Institute of British Architects) – The Circle 1943–68

14:00–14:10 | Discussion

14:10–14:25 | Coffee Break

Panel 7 – Jewish Women and Networks of Migration | starts 14:25

Chair: Fran Lloyd, Kingston University

14:25 | Cai Lyons (Independent scholar) – A Flair for Catching Hedgerow Genius: Lea Bondi Jaray, St. George’s Gallery, and the Transnational Networks of Post-War London

14:45 | Isobel Muir (Tate Britain) – ‘Art for the People’? An examination of the response of the ‘Modern Painters of To-Day’ exhibition at the Laing Art Gallery, April 1942, curated by Lillian Browse

(5 min break)

15:10 | Monica Bohm-Duchen (Insiders/Outsiders) – Dorothy Bohm, London Street Photographer: 'Not Just a City but a World'

15:30 | Emily Fuggle (Queen Mary/Ben Uri Gallery and Museum) – Becoming 'one of the most important and vital organisations in the Jewish community' : quantifying public programmes at the Ben Uri

15:55–16:15| Discussion

16:15–16:30 | Coffee Break

Book Launch

16:30–17:30 | Burcu Dogramaci, London Exile. Metropolis, Modernity, and Artistic Migration (Leuven University Press, 2025) with introduction by Ana-Maria Milčić, David Glasser and Mirjam Truwant.

Reference:

CONF: Art, Displacement, and the Making of Modern London (London, 5-6 Nov 25). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 11, 2025 (accessed Apr 7, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/50863>>.