



Press Release

Yorkshire Sculpture Park announces 2024 programme celebrating diversity and personal discovery.

YSP's 2024 programme is driven by international women artists, including the Ugandan artist **Leilah Babirye's** first museum solo exhibition, where she will showcase new work. Focusing on and celebrating themes of diversity, discovery and personal identity, the programme offers an exploration of the past, present and future of sculpture.

These themes will be amplified through the Park's public and learning programmes, supporting the wellbeing of people and planet, and contributing to the organisation's charitable mission in line with Arts Council England's Let's Create strategy. The 10 year strategy's aim is to ensure England is a country where creativity is valued and able to flourish, with every person given the chance to access high quality cultural experiences. YSP's championing of access and artistic diversity was recently recognised by judges of the 2023 Yorkshire Post Tourism Awards, who awarded it both the Tourist Attraction of the Year and the Cultural Attraction Award.

2024 highlights include an extensive exhibition of works by eminent artist **Bharti Kher**, who was born in the UK and now lives and works in the UK and India, and Ugandan/US artist **Leilah Babirye**. In different ways, both women explore topics of inequity and vulnerability due to gender or sexual identity, whilst celebrating female strength and substance. Babirye's work will be shown in the Chapel and Kher's in the Underground Gallery and outdoors.

In The Weston Gallery, YSP will present an archive exhibition of works by influential and much-admired 20th-century artist **Dame Elisabeth Frink** (1930 – 1993). An early supporter of YSP as the UK's national sculpture park, Frink's sculpture has been part of its collection for many years, a selection of which was included in a memorial exhibition in 1993.

Throughout the year, a programme of exceptional craft, printmaking and painting exhibitions by artists with international heritage now based in Yorkshire will open in YSP Centre:

Japanese-born, Huddersfield-based **Yukihiro Akama's** intricately carved wooden houses will be shown from 9 March. Collected worldwide, his exceptional artworks are beautifully made from single pieces of wood, inspired by real and imagined architecture to create unique houses, ranging in size from 4cm to 106cm in height.

In summer, York-based painter **Carol Douglas**, who began painting in her 60s and is inspired by everyday objects and people, presents a stunning new body of work. For the Christmas retail exhibition, printmaker **Sarah Kirby** will present a series of original linocuts inspired by landmarks and the landscape of YSP, made with oil-based inks to create a bold graphic quality.

Continuing a strong legacy in supporting artist development, four residencies continue this year: New Zealand artist **Deborah Rundle** will exhibit at YSP Centre in the autumn, reflecting on her time as artist in residence in 2022. **Astrid Butt**, 2023 Yorkshire Graduate Award recipient, and YSP / Laureate Fund Resident **Keisha Thompson** will both complete their residencies this year with public events. Joining the programme is visionary, multidisciplinary artist **Nwando Ebizie**, who undertakes her embedded residency this year.

Leilah Babirye – Obumu (Unity)
Chapel
23 March – 8 September 2024

Opening on Saturday 23 March 2024, Leilah Babirye's exhibition *Obumu (Unity)* features new sculptures made at YSP specifically for this exhibition, largely from materials found onsite.

"My work is basically using trash, giving it new life and making it beautiful. It is always influenced by where I am working, I will use whatever is there. That's why the work always looks different, because I'm not sure what I'll find. The wood I'm working with here is a soft wood, whereas in New York it's usually pine, which is a harder wood. This gives the sculptures a different feel and contributes to their different personalities."

Babirye spent the summer of 2023 at YSP making a clan of seven larger-than-life-size figures in wood and five coloured ceramics. Supported by YSP's technical team, the seven sculptures were carved using a chainsaw and chisels from a 200-year-old fallen beech tree at the Park.

The artist describes being guided by the wood itself, sketching the initial forms directly onto the sectioned tree for carving. Once carved, the figures are refined and their surfaces sanded to highlight the grains of the tree. The sculptures are then burned a deep black, then burned a deep black, the charring once used to make the works 'disappear' but which is now a gesture of celebrating their beauty. Details of the sculptures are treated with a blowtorch before the surfaces are carefully waxed to acknowledge the skin of the piece and the tree from which it came.

The final stage is one Babirye calls 'taking the girls to the salon', in which found elements complete the sculptures, including bicycle chains, nails and copper from a dismantled boiler, as well as redundant stainless steel tea pots.



Leilah Babirye, 'Nakalanzi from the Kuchu Nsenene (Grasshopper) Clan', 2023. © Leilah Babirye. Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London and New York. Photo © Jean Vong.



Leilah Babirye, 2022. Courtesy the artist, Stephen Friedman Gallery, London and New York, and Gordon Robichaux, New York. Photo © Mark Hartman

At YSP Babirye also made five large ceramic portrait-sculptures, each with its own personality. They are created from coiled clay and boldly shaped into fundamental forms in which traces of the artist's strong hands and fingers can be seen, before being fired and heavily coated with dense glazes that on firing contribute to the sculptures' earthy, elemental power. Together the works will make a robust, rich statement in YSP's Chapel, built in 1744, around the same time that the beech tree began to grow. Painterly glazes contrast with chiselled, roughly-textured woodwork and metal objects associated with the art of blacksmithing. The artworks become a congregation that celebrates community in all its forms in this beautiful and contemplative space, which has witnessed key moments in now-forgotten lives for centuries.

Babirye frequently uses traditional African masks to explore the diversity of LGBTQIA+ identities, assembling them from ceramics, metal and hand-carved wood; lustrous, painterly glazes are juxtaposed with chiselled, roughly-textured woodwork and metal objects associated with the art of blacksmithing. This will be her first solo museum show in the world. It is a highly appropriate setting, given that Babirye was inspired as a student by the work of Yorkshire-born Henry Moore, whose work is on continual display in the grounds of YSP.

Babirye's practice originally began as activism, as a gay woman in her home country of Uganda, where being gay is illegal and risks the death penalty. Babirye's use of discarded materials references the prejudiced slang for a gay person in the Luganda language – 'abasiyazi' – which is the part of the sugarcane husk that is rubbish, thrown out. Her practice integrates her own unique approach to making art with her culture and heritage and long-standing sculpture traditions such as mask making. Babirye acknowledged during her residence at YSP that she began to make art from real pain but now she feels blessed by the process and results of creativity.

Babirye was born in 1985 in Kampala, Uganda. She lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. She studied art at Makerere University in Kampala (2007–2010) and participated in the Fire Island Artist Residency (2015). In 2018, the artist was granted asylum in the US and presented her first solo show at Gordon Robichaux, New York. Her second opened in October 2020 and the gallery also hosted a pop-up exhibition of Babirye's work in Los Angeles, California in February 2022. Stephen Friedman Gallery hosted her first solo show in the UK and Europe in June 2021.

Supported by Stephen Friedman Gallery.

Bharti Kher
Underground Gallery and outdoors
22 June 2024 – 27 April 2025

Headlining YSP's 2024 programme is a major exhibition by one of the world's leading contemporary artists, Bharti Kher. In her most extensive UK museum presentation to date, curated across the Underground Gallery and surrounding gardens, Kher centres the female body through sculpture. Addressing timely political issues around identity and gender, she reframes the perspective and position of women from her own experience.

This powerful group of works spans 2000-23, including 4 significant outdoor bronze sculptures. Through her work, Kher considers the roles of women in society and culture and she assigns them a place, questioning the different lenses through which identity is viewed.



Bharti Kher, *Ancestor (detail)*, 2022. © Bharti Kher.
Courtesy the artist, Hauser & Wirth and Public Art
Fund. Photo © Guillaume Ziccarelli.



Bharti Kher, *Strange Attractor*, 2021. © Bharti Kher. Courtesy the artist and Nature Morte. Photo © Jeetin Sharma

Her rich practice transforms materials including glass, wood, bronze, plaster, neon, and resin, together with found objects that hold strong specific cultural associations, such as saris, bindis and bangles.

Kher achieved a worldwide reputation through her mythical characters that blur boundaries between humankind and nature. She breaks apart conventions and objects, stripping away familiar associations to discover expansive possibilities through a process of rupturing, reassembling, and rewriting.

This major exhibition celebrates Kher's extraordinary sculptures of women, representing different approaches and periods of her career. She presents woman as mother, sex worker, monster, warrior, and deity, often hybridised with gods and animals:

Strange Attractor (2021) is part-ape-part-woman, harnessing primal, shamanistic energy. The pivotal *Sari Women* series is represented by *Benazir* (2017–21), with five holes in its body that reference Benazir Bhutto's assassination by shooting. *Six Women* (2013–2015) comprises plaster body casts of sex workers from Kolkata: intimate portraits that consider ideas around skin, memory, transaction, and exchange.

Alongside figurative works, abstract sculptures imply the body through its absence. The *Deaf Room* (2001-12) is a chamber of glass bricks created by melting 10 tonnes of glass bangles and makes a powerful statement on the silence of the female voice that speaks louder than words.

Kher (b.1969) grew up in the UK and has lived between London and New Delhi, India since 1993. She studied Art and Design at Middlesex Polytechnic, London, and received a BA in Painting at Newcastle Polytechnic. Kher has described herself as an 'outsider' in both the UK and India. Embedding this approach, she creates works which defy a single location or time. An eminent international artist, Kher's work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions worldwide.

Supported by Henry Moore Foundation, the Bharti Kher Supporters' Circle, the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, Delhi, RMZ Foundation, Hauser & Wirth, Nature Morte, Perrotin and The Girlfriend Fund.

Yukihiro Akama – Basho no Kankaku – A Sense of Place

YSP Centre

9 March – 30 June 2024

A display of 55 works, *Basho no Kankaku – A Sense of Place* is Akama's largest exhibition to date.

It will showcase a new collection of beautiful, intricately carved wooden houses of various sizes – from just 4cm (slightly bigger than a 50p piece) up to 106cm – alongside a series of architectural technical drawings and mini prints. All works will be for sale, with prices ranging from £135 to £9,500.

Working from a furniture maker's workshop in Huddersfield, Akama is surrounded by the natural world. There, he creates these singular houses, carving each one from a single piece of wood. He draws on his experience as a joiner, through which he has refined his skills and techniques in woodworking. Each piece is given a unique appearance and takes between 3 hours and 3 days to complete. For this latest collection, commissioned by YSP, Akama has developed a method of colouring the wood using iron acetate solution. The solution is painted onto the wood which reacts with the tannins to create a beautiful ebonised finish.



Yukihiro Akama, *Houses*, 2023. Courtesy the artist. Photo © Red Photography, courtesy Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

The wood often dictates the starting point for the designs, with the knots or grain guiding where he cuts and carves. Gradually they take on the appearance of a house – often low and long, or tall with stilt-like legs and large roofs, sometimes cantilevered out. Delicate and intricate detailing of clay render and pebbles minimally decorate and enhance the surfaces, adding to the overall effect of how precarious man-made structures can be and the now transient and perilous nature of so many people's lives. Inspiration comes from many sources for these fantastic creations, but much comes from Japanese temples and shrines and particularly from Jomon-era ruins; the shapes, textures and surfaces used in this period of 4,000 years ago.

Akama is an architectural technician by training, having studied architecture at Tohoku University of Art and Design, in Yamagata, Japan. When living in Japan, Akama designed a house for a plot of land he owned, rich in native Japanese trees with wild fruits and mushrooms. He aims to capture a sense of place in his work, creating houses that belong in woodland forest settings – quiet and rural. In 2011, he and his family moved to the UK, drawn to Yorkshire due to its landscape and natural surroundings.

Here he has pursued an alternative lifestyle and career, responding to an overwhelming need to work with his hands as a maker. His first solo UK show took place in 2013, and this is his second solo show at YSP.

Yorkshire Artspace: Maker Showcase
YSP Centre
15 April – 6 October 2024

YSP and Yorkshire Artspace have collaborated to showcase work by 17 exceptional makers in YSP Centre, spanning contemporary ceramics, silversmithing, jewellery and leather work. Each maker taking part, including Janet Barnes, Chris Boland, Jennie Gill, Francisca Onumah, Helena Russell (pictured right) and Hanne Westegaard (pictured left) is renowned for their individual specialism, working with galleries and outlets across the UK and internationally. All work will be for sale.

Yorkshire Artspace is one of the largest creative communities in the UK, providing studio space for around 170 practising artists and makers across two sites in Sheffield City Centre. With a shared passion for the production and promotion of contemporary craft and highlighting the wealth of skill and craftsmanship available within our region, this showcase is an exciting opportunity to support this community of skilled makers.



Carol Douglas - Actually I Can
YSP Centre
13 July – 27 October 2024

In the summer, YSP will present a body of work by painter Carol Douglas, who is based in York.

Douglas paints with acrylics, applying it with rollers rather than the traditional paint brush, building up layer after layer in a palette of warm greys, browns and mustards. Her alluring paintings depict household objects and people in domestic settings, inspired by her experiences of everyday life.

Enrolling onto an art foundation course at York College in her 60s after having a very successful career as a sociologist and community worker, Douglas excelled and developed her personal style. Now in her 70s, she has exhibited in several galleries in the UK and her work is collected worldwide.



Carol Douglas, *Oranges*, 2022. Image © Andrea Gilpin, courtesy Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

Elisabeth Frink: Natural Connection

The Weston and outdoors

20 July 2024 – 23 February 2025

The career of Dame Elisabeth Frink (1930-1993) has in recent years been reappraised and her significant contribution to British art is widely acknowledged. Frink had a warm relationship with YSP, which included her open-air retrospective in 1983. A major exhibition had been in the planning when she passed away, resulting in a poignant memorial in 1993, and her work has regularly been shown in the open air since. Frink's late son, Lin Jammet, arranged for 200 works to enter the YSP collection, comprising larger-than-life-size bronze figures, watercolours, domestic-scale bronzes and related plasters as well as personal artefacts such as her studio sitters' chair. The selection illustrates his mother's deep understanding of different aspects of humanity in relation with animals – both natural and domesticated.

This exhibition is drawn from the YSP collection: bronzes, plasters and works on paper in the Weston Gallery share different aspects of Frink's exceptional output as well as insight into her process. The artist made sculptures by first creating a metal or wood armature, which she built up with layers of plaster before shaping them through carving and chiselling. These models would then be cast in bronze, retaining the raw vitality of the artist's hand. Two of her key subjects were dogs and horses, noble animals humbled by labour or injured as unwilling participants in warfare. These are shown in the gallery alongside beautiful lithographs that reflect the artist's care for the natural world including native British species such as hares, badgers and kestrels. Also on display is a series of etchings representing ancient Greek myths – a salutary reminder of the repeated histories, habits and tragedies of our species.



Frink was one of the post-war British artists who reflected lived experience of warfare and throughout her life she had nightmares of black wings beating around her. She was left with a deep understanding of the complexities of man, our capacity for evil and the ways it can be masked.

She made many sculptures of male figures which often embodied a conflict between strength and vulnerability. This is embodied by the three Riace figures shown in the open air, inspired by two fifth-century BCE Greek statues known as the Riace Warriors.

She was both intrigued and repelled by these symbols of violence and explained that the painted masks are “a way of showing that their beauty in a sense hides what they are up to”. Also in the open air is the iconic sculpture of Judas who for Frink embodied the frailties of human behaviour and the violence of its consequences.

Elisabeth Frink, *Warrior* 1963. Photo © Frink Estate, courtesy Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

Dame Elisabeth Frink CH DBE RA was a leading figure in British sculpture during the second half of the twentieth century. She spent her childhood living near a military airbase during the Second World War, which had a great impact on her world view and artwork. She studied at the Guildford School of Art and Chelsea School of Art and was part of a postwar group of British sculptors described as the Geometry of Fear school.



Elisabeth Frink, *Lying Down Horse* 1978
Photo © Frink Estate, courtesy Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

Sarah Kirby
YSP Centre
9 November 2024 – 22 February 2025

Working from her garden studio in Leicester, Sarah Kirby is a linocut printmaker. She uses oil-based inks to create original prints with a bold graphic quality that are inspired by public spaces, buildings, gardening, plants and trees.

During 2024 Kirby will be visiting YSP through the seasons to document her favourite walking routes and landmarks. She will be drawing and taking photographs, discovering different species of trees, and finding new views, from which she will create a new body of work inspired by the unique features of the Park.

Growing up next door to Cambridge University Botanic Gardens, Kirby's father was a plant physiologist who taught her the joys of gardening and inspired her to explore and interact with the nature. She has spent her life building up knowledge about the future of nature, contemplating the existence of nature for people, plants, the future, the security of food production, and the preservation of trees and wooded areas. She graduated from West Surrey College of Art and Design with a BA in Fine Art, followed by an MA in Museum and Gallery Studies from City University, London. She also later achieved an MA from Nottingham Trent in Fine Art.



Sarah Kirby, *YSP Chapel*, 2023. Image © the artist,
Photographed by Christopher Large, courtesy Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

Deborah Rundle
YSP Centre
Autumn 2024

Following her residency in 2022, Deborah Rundle will share work created as a result her research at YSP. The focus of her time in Yorkshire was an investigation into the intriguing history of Ann Ellis, who in 1875 led a group of 9,000 weavers on strike action in Dewsbury, just eight miles from YSP. Rundle visited sites of interest including textile mills and working-class history museums and collections and will exhibit a display of work made in response to her research.

Supported by philanthropists Sigrid and Stephen Kirk, and in partnership with Te Tuhi in Auckland, New Zealand,



Keisha Thompson – YSP/Laureate Fund Residency

Keisha Thompson is the recipient of the YSP/Laureate Fund Residency supported by the T. S. Eliot Foundation, made possible by YSP Trustee and Poet Laureate, Simon Armitage.

Throughout her residency, Keisha has focused on a triangle of themes – mathematics, identity and nature-connectedness, thinking specifically about the resonances between natural hair and the YSP landscape. In September 2023 Keisha celebrated World Afro Day with a weekend of events at YSP; in January 2024 she will perform with the Light Organ; and in March she will conclude her residency with a final performance in James Turrell's *Deer Shelter Skyspace*.

As well as being a writer, performance artist and producer, Keisha was the first Black woman, first Mancunian and the youngest person to be Artistic Director/CEO of Contact Theatre in Manchester.

Keisha Thompson. Photo © Elmi Ali, courtesy Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

Nwando Ebizie, Embedded Residency 2024-25

Nwando Ebizie is a visionary, multidisciplinary artist, whose work transcends genre and form. She challenges audiences to question their perceived realities through art personas, experimental theatre, neuroscience, music and African diasporic ritualistic dance. Carving out her own strand of Afrofuturism, she combines research into the neuroscience of perception (inspired by her own neurodiversity) and an obsession with science fiction with a ritualistic live art practice.

The artist will spend a month at YSP researching and developing potential artistic outcomes for presentation in 2025. Ebizie's work includes an immersive sensory environment *Distorted Constellations*, her pop persona Lady Vendredi (a blaxploitation heroine from another dimension) and the building of her long-term operatic experience, *Hildegard: Visions*. This award-winning work has toured internationally.

Nwando Ebizie, Photo courtesy the artist.



Astrid Butt, YSP Yorkshire Graduate Award 2023



Astrid Butt. Photo © Astrid Butt, courtesy of Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

Astrid Butt uses animal-human hybrid characters to explore womanhood and domestication. She is currently studying for her Master's degree in Fine Art at the University of Leeds and her work utilises the grotesque and surreal to express female anxieties, with a particular focus on generational trauma and the terrors of the body.

The artist's work takes on a feminist perspective, which she uses to discuss sensitive topics, such as motherhood, domestic abuse and sexual assault. She recently produced a 10-minute short film "*Bird Diaries*" where the central hybrid woman-bird character laments over her relationships with men, women and her own body.

Butt is inspired by the works of Cecelia Condit and Marianna Simnett, both film and performance artists who work with themes of womanhood and the body. Books by Ottessa Moshfegh have also been a significant inspiration, best known for her grotesque and unlikable female characters.

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Download images at ysp.org.uk/press

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Open Tuesday - Sunday. Closed on Mondays (excluding school and Bank Holidays) and 24–25 December.

Book tickets at ysp.org.uk

Social media

Instagram and Twitter: @YSPsculpture

Facebook: @YorkshireSculpturePark

LinkedIn: Yorkshire Sculpture Park

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About Yorkshire Sculpture Park

Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) is the leading international centre for modern and contemporary sculpture. Welcoming around 380,000 visitors each year, YSP is an independent charitable trust and registered museum situated in the 500-acre, 18th-century Bretton Hall estate in West and South Yorkshire.

Founded in 1977 by Sir Peter Murray CBE and since 2022 led by Clare Lilley, YSP is the largest sculpture park of its kind in Europe. It is the only place in Europe to see Barbara Hepworth's *The Family of Man* in its entirety, alongside a significant collection of sculpture, including bronzes by Henry Moore, important pieces by Phyllida Barlow, Roger Hiorns, Damien Hirst, Hemali Bhuta and Ai Weiwei, and site-specific works by Katrina Palmer, Andy Goldsworthy, Alfredo Jaar, David Nash, Sean Scully and James Turrell.

YSP mounts a year-round temporary exhibitions programme including some of the world's leading artists across six indoor galleries and the outdoors. Highlights include exhibitions by Fiona Banner, Anthony Caro, Tony Cragg, Leonardo Drew, Robert Indiana, Amar Kanwar, KAWS, Joan Miró, Henry Moore, Lindsey Mendick, Annie Morris, Giuseppe Penone, Jaume Plensa, Ursula von Rydingsvard, Sean Scully, Yinka Shonibare CBE, Chiharu Shiota, David Smith, Joana Vasconcelos, Bill Viola and Erwin Wurm.

Across its 47-year history, YSP has worked with over 1,000 artists from more than 40 countries, on varied projects from short-term residencies to major surveys. YSP supports artists at vital stages in their careers and is rare in having the accommodation, workshops and expertise to enable open-ended and risk-taking practice, giving artists space, time and support to think and to develop new ideas.

Over this time, YSP has sought to ignite, nurture and sustain interest in and debate around contemporary art and sculpture, especially with those for whom art participation is not habitual or familiar. It enables open access to art, situations and ideas, and continues to re-evaluate and expand the approach to considering art's role and relevance in society. Supporting 40,000 people each year through YSP's learning programme, this innovative work develops ability, confidence and life aspiration in participants.

YSP's core work is made possible by investment from Arts Council England, Wakefield Council, the Liz and Terry Bramall Foundation and Sakurako and William Fisher through the Sakana Foundation. YSP was named Art Fund Museum of the Year in 2014 and awarded VisitEngland's gold accolade in 2021-22 for an outstanding visitor attraction.

YSP was also awarded the 2023 Visitor Attraction of the Year and Cultural Attraction of the Year in the Yorkshire Post Tourism Awards.



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