

# HAROLD OFFEH: WE CAME HERE



© Van Gogh House London, 2022

Open Wed - Sun  
12-6pm  
For tickets, visit  
[vangoghhouse.co.uk](http://vangoghhouse.co.uk)

87 Hackford Road  
SW9 0RE  
🚶 Stockwell/Oval  
[vangoghhouse.co.uk](http://vangoghhouse.co.uk)  
[@vangoghlondon](https://twitter.com/vangoghlondon)

## 8 September-18 December 2022

Van Gogh House presents *We Came Here*, a sound and sculptural installation and sculptural work by artist Harold Offeh that draws on ideas of migration, place and lived history. The exhibition is the second in a new annual commissioning programme at Van Gogh House that launched in 2021 with *Life and its most trivial particulars* by Brian Griffiths and Frank Kent.

*We Came Here* will manifest as a conversation across a century; between 20-year old Vincent Van Gogh who in 1873 had just arrived in Stockwell; and 20-year old Olive Morris, a Jamaican-born, Brixton-based community leader, who in 1972 was campaigning for feminist, black and squatters' rights. The imagined dialogue between artist and activist will explore their shared and divergent experiences of London, social justice and the development of personal and socio-political consciousness. In other audio testimonies drawn from historic archives, more young migrants to Brixton and Lambeth will tell their stories.

On arrival at Van Gogh House, visitors will be greeted by young guides who are migrant through lived experience or by heritage. As the visitors move through the house, they will encounter sculptures in the form of large-scale map pins that can be used to sit on to listen to the sound works. The map pins can be reconfigured, and moved from room to room, alluding to the sticking of a pin on a map to document a visited place. The As well as connecting the listening posts, the act of sitting on

the pins facilitates conversation between visitors, and with the guides, and interaction with the historical material in the house.

Exploring the life of the twenty-year old Vincent Van Gogh during his tenure at Hackford Road, Offeh became intrigued by the idea of the artist as a 'migrant' in London. During a three-month residency at Van Gogh House in 2021, Offeh investigated Lambeth Archives, Black Cultural Archives and other historical sources researching the history of immigration to Stockwell and Brixton since Van Gogh left London over a century ago. *We Came Here* builds on these stories and narratives, mapping on the perspectives of young migrants arriving in contemporary London, to build an idiosyncratic collection of accounts across generations.

Livia Wang, Creative Director at Van Gogh House said, "It is rare that Van Gogh is looked at through the lens of being a migrant. Instead, he is written about, and identifies himself as a traveller and a cosmopolitan. Harold's line of enquiry has already brought up many questions of what it means to be a stranger in a city, and how this experience is shaped, perceived and documented. I am excited to see what stories he will uncover".

Harold Offeh works in a range of media including performance, video, photography, learning and social arts practice. He is interested in the space created by the inhabiting or embodying of histories

often using humour to confront the viewer with historical narratives and contemporary culture. He has exhibited widely in the UK and internationally including at Tate Britain and Tate Modern, South London Gallery, Kettle's Yard, Wysing Art Centre, Studio Museum Harlem, MAC VAL, Kunsthal Charlottenborg and Art Tower Mito.

Van Gogh House has been owned and managed by the Wang family since 2012. A 7-year restoration project completed in 2019 led by Creative Director Livia Wang has established a new centre for the production and presentation of contemporary art, and a working domestic space sensitive to the history and heritage of the building. The family also run San Mei Gallery in south London, an independent space for contemporary art, committed to research-led, educational and collaborative exchanges.

ENDS

For interview requests, images and further information, please contact Janette Scott Arts PR on [janette@janettescottartspr.com](mailto:janette@janettescottartspr.com) or +44(0)7966 486156.

#### NOTES TO EDITORS

We Came Here by Harold Offeh, 8 September 2022 – 18 December 2022, Van Gogh House, 87 Hackford Road, London SW9 ORE.

Open Wednesday – Sunday, 12:00 – 6:00pm.

Tickets £7.50 full price, £4 concessions (16-25, Students, OAP, Unemployed, Disabled), £3.75 Art Fund members, free for under 18s, Museums Association and ICOM members.

Private tours led by the Community Engagement Guides are available for group bookings with discounts for charities and community organisations.

For further information [www.vangoghhouse.co.uk](http://www.vangoghhouse.co.uk)

#### About the artist:

Harold Offeh is an artist working in a range of media including performance, video, photography, learning and social arts practice. Offeh is interested in the space created by the inhabiting or embodying of histories. He employs humour as a means to confront the viewer with historical narratives and contemporary culture.

He has exhibited widely in the UK and internationally including Tate Britain and Tate Modern, South London Gallery, Turf Projects, London, Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, Wysing Art Centre, Studio Museum Harlem, New York, MAC VAL, France, Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Denmark and Art Tower Mito, Japan.

He studied Critical Fine Art Practice at The University of Brighton, MA Fine Art Photography at the Royal College of Art and recently completed a PhD by practice exploring the activation of Black Album covers through durational performance. He lives in Cambridge and works in London, UK. He is currently a tutor in MA Contemporary Art Practice at the Royal College of Art.

[www.haroldoffeh.com](http://www.haroldoffeh.com)

## About Van Gogh House:

Van Gogh House in south London opened in 2019, presenting a programme of exhibitions, residencies, outreach and education projects, talks and events. It also holds an archive of over 200 artefacts found during the 7-year conservation of the building. Established as a site of creative production, Van Gogh House is dedicated to celebrating stories drawn from its historic interiors whilst making space for new narratives.

Saskia Olde Wolbers was the first contemporary artist to present work at Van Gogh House (2011, 2015 and 2019). From April 2021 to March 2022 posters were commissioned for the front window of Van Gogh House, created by artists Brighid Lowe, Madeleine Pledge, Lesley Sharpe, Allison Katz, Jordan Baseman, Ye Funa, Katrina Palmer, Aisha Farr & Will Harris, Rosa-Johan Uddoh, Gray Wielebinski, Tom Lovelace and FeiFei Zhou. The house is also home to a growing list of permanent interventions including Pigment Timeline by Jo

Volley, a wall work of every pigment Van Gogh used during his lifetime.

Otherwise known as 87 Hackford Road, the end of terrace house is a privately owned Grade II listed Georgian residential building in Stockwell. It gains its name from its most famous tenant, the painter Vincent Van Gogh, who lived there aged 20 for a year from 1873-74 whilst he worked as an art dealer in Covent Garden. In 1971, local postman and painter Paul Chalcroft undertook extensive research and discovered that the house had been Van Gogh's London home. It was semi-derelict when the Wang family acquired it in 2012, with the ambition of transforming it into a cultural venue. Art and heritage specialist, and Creative Director of Van Gogh House, Livia Wang, led on its restoration to a working domestic space and centre for the production and presentation of contemporary art and design.

[www.vangoghhouse.co.uk](http://www.vangoghhouse.co.uk)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Public programme to be announced.

September - December: Guided tours of the house run on the last weekend of the month.



For a editable text copy of this press release, interview requests, images and further information, please contact Janette Scott Arts PR on:  
[janette@janettescottartspr.com](mailto:janette@janettescottartspr.com) or  
+44(0)7966 486156.

More information, upcoming events and ticket booking are available at:  
[www.vangoghhouse.co.uk](http://www.vangoghhouse.co.uk)  
Follow us: [@vangoghlondon](https://www.instagram.com/vangoghlondon)  
See also: [www.sanmeigallery.com](http://www.sanmeigallery.com) | [@sanmeigallery](https://www.instagram.com/sanmeigallery)