CVAN London and Brent Emerging Curators warmly welcome

SEAD - NSEAD London and South East Art & Design Teachers Network

Date:
Saturday 5 December 2026

Times:
10:30am - 3:30pm

Venue:
Willesden Gallery, The Library, Willesden Green Library

Tube:
Willesden Green Underground is 10 minutes walk

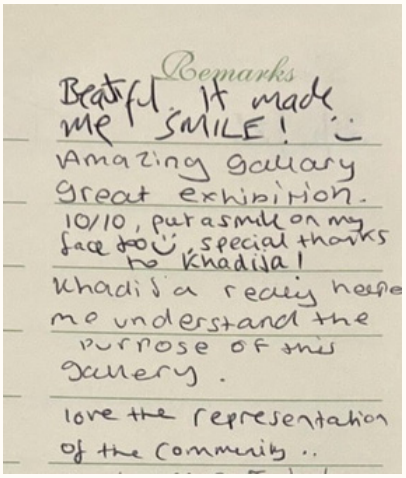
Access:
The Library is fully accessible

Quiet:
Quiet rooms for contemplation are available

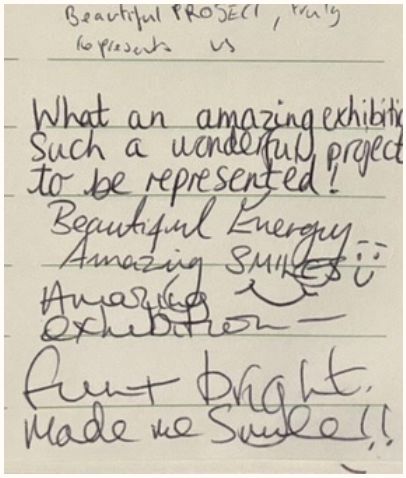
Refreshments:
Teas, coffees and snacks will be provided. There are no lunch facilities. There are many cafes & supermarkets locally.

Programme:

Activating public library spaces as a locus for engagement with contemporary art.







10: 15 Arrive, register and drinks.

10:30 Welcome and Introductions - Andy & Ged
Associate Professor Andy Ash, President of NSEAD · Ged Gast, Trade Union Adviser NSEAD, Education Consultant

10:50 An introduction to CVAN London from Director Dr Jo Townshend

11:00 Meet the artist Kay Rufai, project founder of SMILEing Boys and SMILEing Girls. An artist-led tour of the exhibition, sharing the stories and mission behind the exhibition, and exploring meaningful ways for teachers and curators in attendance to engage with the work.

12:30 Lunch

1:30 Meet Brent Emerging Curators, the trainees who have taken over Willesden Gallery as part of an innovative initiative led by CVAN London and Brent Council. This year's cohort is exploring Curating Practice: With the gallery space in close proximity to the children's library, the programme pays attention to children as artists, makers, curators, co-creators and audiences in its use of language, imagery, themes, creative learning and participation. Hear about the programme, share pedagogies and practice, explore ways to collaborate and engage with their 2027 Government Art Collection exhibition - HOME. This will be the first time the selected works from the collection will be publicly accessible in Brent.

3:15 Reflections, and next steps

3:30 Thanks and close

The exhibition shares its SMILEing message across Brent on digital screens along the iconic Olympic Way, at the base of Wembley Stadium. See the map for more details.





London Contemporary Visual Arts Network (CVAN London) is a free-to-access research-led, sector support and advocacy network for artists, arts professionals, art galleries, studios and art schools. We are often situated in community settings, and sometimes in residence with members across the city. All London boroughs are represented in our membership. CVAN London delivers peer-to-peer networking events, professional development training, knowledge exchange and artist-centred research. We engage in multidisciplinary research to develop sustainable ways to care for our people, places, and environment and evidence the value of the arts, not only by economics but in relational terms. Our annual London Visual Arts Review is co-created by member organisations, and this informs our advocacy and research-led programme of Equality, Education, Sustainability and Data Matters.

Willesden Gallery at The Library at Willesden Green is a welcoming public gallery space at the heart of Brent's cultural community. The gallery presents a year-round programme of contemporary exhibitions, events and creative learning activities, providing opportunities for artists, curators and local communities to connect, collaborate and engage with visual arts. As part of a vibrant civic hub, the gallery sits alongside one of London's busiest public libraries, creating unique opportunities for participation, learning and cultural exchange across generations.

The Emerging Curators Programme is an exciting training programme in partnership by CVAN London and Brent Council to equip emerging curators with the essential skills to curate creative learning and exhibitions at the Willesden Gallery, located within The Library at Willesden Green. The programme provides emerging curators with bursaries to participate in a comprehensive training programme providing hands-on experience of curation, creative learning, resource management, communications, networking and community engagement. We are proudly delivering Emerging Curators in partnership with the Government Art Collection, UCL IOE Professor Andy Ash, President of NSEAD, ActionSpace, Wembley Park, Najia Bagi, Chahine Felahi, and community organisations, with more to be announced.

Established in 1899, the **Government Art Collection (GAC)** promotes British art, culture and creativity through displays in government buildings across the UK and in more than 125 countries worldwide. Its works are seen by hundreds of thousands of visitors annually, making a powerful contribution to cultural diplomacy. Through an extensive public engagement programme, the GAC brings artworks into the heart of communities and works with UK and international partners to support creative exchange and skills development for young people.



Kay Rufai, artist and project founder

Kay Rufai is a photographer, poet, filmmaker, author and mental health researcher. He is the founder of the internationally acclaimed S.M.I.L.E- ing Boys Project and now includes a S.M.I.L.E-ing Girls Project to reflect the distinct and intersectional experiences of Black girls. In 2021, Rufai became the UK's first Artist in Residence with a police force. Over the past 10 years, his work has reached communities across the UK, USA, Brazil, Ethiopia, Bhutan, Scandinavia, Nigeria and Colombia. His award-winning, research-led programmes and exhibitions have received national and international recognition, with his work featured by The Guardian, Channel 5 News and the BBC.



The S.M.I.L.E-ing Boys and S.M.I.L.E-ing Girls project has engaged more than 5,000 Black children and young people across 12 London boroughs. The project is creating spaces in which they can be seen, heard, celebrated and empowered to tell their own stories.

> ***"No children are inherently 'anything'. It is up to adults to provide safe spaces which enable growth."***
>
> Kay Rufai

Exhibition map



WEMBLEY PARK DIGITAL EXHIBITION

Wembley Park, London
From 20 October 2026.
Digital artworks will be displayed on digital screens (totems) across Wembley Park.

1. Olympic Way North (VMS totem)
2. Olympic Way South (VMS totem)
3. White Horse Square (VMS totem)

Exact totem locations and participation are subject to confirmation.

THE GALLERY WILLESDEN GREEN LIBRARY

95 High Road, London NW10 2SF
20 October – 6 December 2026

Celebration Reception:
Tuesday 20 October, 5-7 pm
The Gallery is open during library opening hours. Free entry. Everyone is welcome.

TRAVELLING BETWEEN THE EXHIBITIONS

Take the Jubilee line between Willesden Green and Wembley Park.

Journey time: – 25 minutes (trains every 4–6 minutes).