

# Stephen Friedman Gallery

Yorkshire Evening Post  
New sculpture planned as memorial to David Oluwale for Leeds 2023  
Mark Lavery  
29 December 2020



## New sculpture planned as memorial to David Oluwale for Leeds 2023

A new sculpture is planned in Leeds as a permanent memorial to a man who died more than 50 years ago after suffering a campaign of police harassment and brutality.



Image: Yinka Shonibare Photo: James Mollison

International artist Yinka Shonibare CBE is to create the new sculpture to honour David Oluwale. The sculpture is to be unveiled as part of Leeds 2023 - the city's landmark year of culture. It has been commissioned by the David Oluwale Memorial Association (DOMA) to honour the life of the British Nigerian and Leeds resident whose personal story inspired local people to create a lasting legacy to mark his life.

Mr Oluwale, whose body was pulled from the River Aire in the city in May 1969, was a homeless and mentally-ill man who had come to England from his native Nigeria in search of a better life.



Image: David Oluwale

Two police officers, Insp Geoffrey Ellerker and Sgt Kenneth Kitching, were charged with manslaughter, perjury and grievous bodily harm following Mr Oluwale's death. They were cleared of those charges in 1971 but convicted of assault, with Ellerker being jailed for three years and Kitching for 27 months.

Leeds City Council commissioned an independent review of Leeds's historic statues and monuments earlier this year amid calls from anti-racism campaigners for sculptures and other public artwork across the UK to better reflect themes such as diversity and inclusivity.

The review's findings were considered and accepted by the council's executive board in October.



Image: Representatives of the Nigerian Community Leeds Trio sing by the graveside of David Oluwale in Killingbeck Cemetery during an event of remembrance in April 2019 marking 50 years since his death. Picture Tony Johnson.

The review recommended the commissioning of more works of art that commemorate the diverse life and times of Leeds, and it is hoped that Yinka Shonibare's sculpture will underline the city's commitment to telling the story of all its residents, past and present. Shonibare's piece will be an important feature of a new park planned for Leeds city centre on the site of the former Tetley brewery, close to the River Aire. Developed by Vastint UK with work starting on site in 2021,

## Stephen Friedman Gallery

Yorkshire Evening Post

New sculpture planned as memorial to David Oluwale for Leeds 2023

Mark Lavery

29 December 2020

Aire Park will be the largest new city centre green space in the UK. Leeds City Council leader, Coun Judith Blake, said: "The tragic life and death of David Oluwale is a reminder of the giant strides that have been made by our city on diversity and inclusion over the last 50 years. "This sculpture promises to be a fitting tribute to David and should also be a source of inspiration and pride for the people who continue to work tirelessly to ensure Leeds is a place that offers a warm welcome to all.

"We must never forget the events, good and bad, that have helped mould modern-day Leeds, a city where differences are celebrated and communities join together in a spirit of positivity. The sculpture will be a thought-provoking addition to the new Aire Park and I very much look forward to seeing the project taking shape in the months and years to come."

This project has recently been awarded a development grant from Arts Council England, completing the funding jigsaw for Phase 1 which includes significant support from Leeds 2023, additional funding from Leeds Civic Trust and donations from private individuals and trusts.

Dr Emily Zobel Marshall from DOMA said: "The city of Leeds has a responsibility to acknowledge, learn from and take inspiration from the life and death of David and because of Leeds City Council and Leeds 2023 we are now able to progress ideas and plans we've worked over the last few years towards a permanent memorial for David."