IKON

Ikon Gallery, 1 Oozells Square, Brindleyplace, Birmingham B1 2HS
TEL. +44 (0) 121 248 0708 / FAX. +44 (0) 121 248 0709
WEBSITE. www.ikon-gallery.co.uk
Ikon Gallery is a registered charity no. 528892

Postcards From Japan – A Message From Tohoku Artists
15 February – 22 April 2012

Ikon presents *Postcards From Japan – A Message From Tohoku Artists*, an exhibition marking the first anniversary of the devastating earthquake and tsunami that hit north east Japan on 11 March 2011.

In the aftermath of the disaster, electronic means of communication largely failed, making the use of landlines, mobile phones and internet extremely difficult. The post office, however, was quickly up and running and in many cases the first opportunity to report news of survival to loved ones was by postcard.

Postcards From Japan – A Message From Tohoku Artists is a collection of A5 artwork postcards by 22 artists from north east Japan who, in the face of tragedy, give an insight into the grace and resilience of the Japanese spirit. It will be exhibited in Ikon's wooden stairwell, previously used for the presentation of recorded readings from On Kawara's *One Million Years*, a seminal work concerned with human vulnerability.

The postcards include *Leaves Painting: SUMI* (2011), a composition using gold, platinum and silver leaf by respected artist Hisashi Momose; his wife lost eight members of her family from three generations in the tsunami. Yoshitomo Saito lost his studio and all his video equipment, but his family survived. His *Building up Hope* (2011) shows the artist with his child, illustrating the desire for recovery in time for the next generation. Megumi Honda's *Tenshin 2011* (2011) is made of shells collected from the shore in her hometown of Higashi-Matsushima after the disaster. Her six-year-old nephew just escaped the tsunami, but saw many of his friends and neighbours drown.

The exhibition is curated by Kate Thomson and Hironori Katagiri, who were working in Tohoku when the earthquake struck. Together the pair have voluntarily organised international exhibitions and projects to support recovery in Tohoku, encouraging local artists and their communities, and developing international cultural links.

The curators also invite artists and poets, of any age or stage in their career, to send tangible messages of support to communities affected by the earthquake by making A5 size original artwork or poetry postcards. These works will feature in *Postcards to Japan*, an exhibition to tour Japan. For more information visit www.postcardproject.org

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A full colour catalogue is available from Ikon Shop, priced £5, with all profits going to support artists in Tohoku working on recovery projects in the regions hit by the tsunami.

Postcards From Japan – A Message From Tohoku Artists is supported by the Daiwa Anglo Japanese Foundation and The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation.

Associated Events

Meet the curators
Wednesday 15 February, 4–5pm – FREE
Café Ikon
Kate Thomson and Hironori Katagiri, curators of *Postcards From Japan* lead an informal discussion about the exhibition and their personal experiences and observations on the effect of the Japanese tsunami. They will also be signing copies of the catalogue. No need to book, just drop in. Join us afterwards at the opening of Ikon's new exhibitions (6-8pm).

One Year On
Artist workshop with Elizabeth Rowe
Sunday 11 March 2012, 1–4pm – FREE*
To mark the first anniversary of the Japanese tsunami, artist Elizabeth Rowe leads an afternoon of collage activity, giving visitors a chance to make their own creative response to this poignant date. Suitable for all ages. No need to book, just drop in.
*We will be collecting donations for the Japanese Red Cross.

Ends.

Note to Editors:

1. A selection of images is shown below.

2. Ikon is open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am - 6pm. Admission is free.

3. Ikon Gallery is a registered charity and receives core funding from Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council. Ikon Gallery Limited trading as Ikon. Registered address: 1 Oozells Square, Birmingham B1 2HS.

4. For more information, high-res images and to arrange an interview with the curator please contact Helen Stallard on 0774 033 9604 or email h.stallard@ikon-gallery.co.uk

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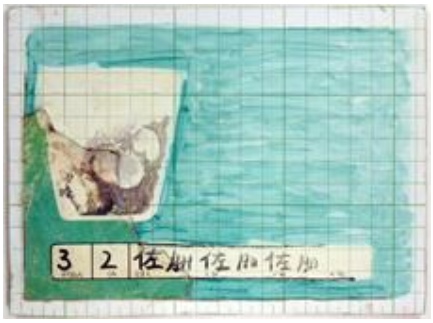

Fumiaki Aono (1968–), Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture
Repair/Extension—From a Fragment Collected in Miyako after the Tsunami, 2011
Fragment of a school book, acrylic paint, plywood, paper
5 3/4 x 8 1/4 in. (14.8 x 21 cm)

The artist's wife's home was damaged by the tsunami and he rescued a fragment of a school book from the debris in the area, blending truth and artifice to create something close to, but not the same as, the imagined original.

Hironori Katagiri, Edinburgh, Scotland, and Iwate, Iwate Prefecture
Black Sun (1958–), 2011
Swedish black granite
5 3/4 x 8 1/4 in. (14.8 x 21 cm)

Hironori Katagiri and his British wife Kate Thomson were working in Iwate when the earthquake hit. Since then they have been working voluntarily on a series of exhibitions and projects to support recovery in Tohoku through the arts.

Katagiri's work looks for pure abstract form, finding the essence of philosophical concepts that concern us all and creating space to contemplate the world and our place in it.

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	Megumi Honda (1972–), Tono, Iwate Prefecture *Tenshin 2011*, 2011 Shells collected from Higashi-Matsushima, paper 5 3/4 x 8 1/4 in. (14.8 x 21 cm) Honda collected these shells from the shore in her hometown of Higashi-Matsushima after the tsunami. Her six-year-old nephew just escaped the tsunami, but saw many of his friends and neighbours drown.
	Kate Thomson (1961–), Edinburgh, Scotland, and Iwate, Iwate Prefecture *Under the Same Sky*, 2011 Collage of inkjet prints on paper 5 3/4 x 8 1/4 in. (14.8 x 21 cm) The artist was working with her husband Hironori Katagiri at their sculpture studio in Iwate when the earthquake hit. While they were anxiously waiting for news of family and friends on the coast, Takuya Okada, another artist who shares their studio, received a postcard from his parents saying they were alive and well. Inspired by the uplifting effect of this postcard, Thomson invited artists from around the world to send "Postcards to Japan." She and her husband then invited Tohoku-based artists to make *Postcards From Japan* as an international sister touring project. *Under the Same Sky* is a collage of photographs taken from the air during several trips to and from Japan since the disaster.
	Hisashi Momose (1941–), Morioka, Iwate Prefecture *Leaves Painting: SUMI*, 2011 Mixed media

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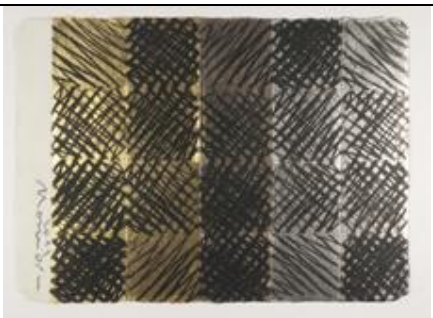
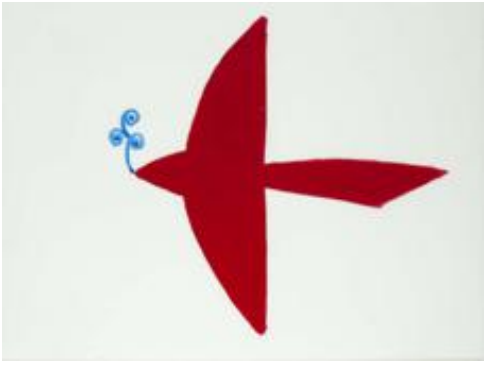
	5 3/4 x 8 1/4 in. (14.8 x 21 cm) Momose, one of northern Japan's most highly respected artists, created this composition using materials including gold, platinum, and silver leaf. His wife lost eight members of her family from three generations in the tsunami.
	Shinichi Mori (1947–), Morioka, Iwate Prefecture *Spring*, 2011 Inkjet print on paper 5 3/4 x 8 1/4 in. (14.8 x 21 cm) This print, made in 2011, is a detail printed from a negative Mori took in Rikuzen Takada in 1975. This spring, the mayor and townspeople of Rikuzen Takada organized a huge cherry-blossom-viewing party and invited musicians from all over Japan to join them under the trees on a hill overlooking their devastated city.
	Yoshitomo Saito (1976–), Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture *Building Up Hope*, 2011 35 mm film mount, inkjet print on paper 5 3/4 x 8 1/4 in. (14.8 x 21 cm) Saito lost his studio and all his video equipment, but his family survived. This photograph shows him with his child, illustrating the desire for recovery in time for the next generation.
	Shigenobu Yoshida (1958–), Iwaki, Fukushima Prefecture *Light Bird*, 2011 Acrylic on acrylic board 5 3/4 x 8 1/4 in. (14.8 x 21 cm) Best known for his video and light installations, for this exhibition Yoshida decided to make a simple strong symbolic message: The Dove of Peace returning with hope after the flood, its outstretched wings

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	seeming to echo a crescent section of the Japanese flag.