

**John Myers**

*Middle England*

**30 November 2011 – 5 February 2012**

Ikon presents the first major exhibition by John Myers (b. Bradford, UK, 1944), comprising photographs made throughout the early 1970s including *Middle England* (1970-1974), a selection of portraits of individuals and families living in and around Stourbridge and the Black Country. Myers' approach is documentary in style, concerned with taste, of the self-perceptions and aspirations of his subjects and the spaces they occupy, as well as of the artist himself.

Myers was a Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at Stourbridge College from 1969, during which time he made a series of portraits of people known to him, taken in locations within walking distance of his home. Myers used a Gandolfi plate camera set on a tripod with a dark viewing cloth, prompting a sense of occasion in his subjects and the results are remarkable. Subjects are at once self-conscious and seemingly at home, pointed up as specimens of humanity yet touching and sympathetic. These are the portraits of *Middle England*, acclaimed at the time by international photography journals such as *CAMERA* and *Ten:8* and exhibited in major survey exhibitions such as *Serpentine Photography* in 1973.

In addition, Myers made typological studies of TV sets and a series of *Boring landscapes*, the latter alternatively entitled *Landscapes without incident*. For these, all made in and around the Stourbridge area, Myers made a concerted effort to reject the 'value added' approach to photography that was a powerful force at the time. The *Boring landscapes* contain no hidden story; this is the urban scene without the distraction of the human figure or any implied narrative. The viewpoint is at eye level, suggesting a possibility that the viewer is the first person to encounter *Dual Carriageway* (1974) or *Lift Doors at Waitrose* (1975). The ten photographs of televisions (1973) similarly convey a sense of novelty, encouraging our careful look at the overlooked.

Capturing the ordinary with flat light in a deadpan style, Myers' images are not simply documents of the West Midlands in the early 1970s but rather are knowingly generic, a backdrop to the mundane, the everyday. They represent a distinctly British brand of New Topographic photography.

Ten portraits from John Myers' *Middle England* series will be displayed in frames on hoardings surrounding the Library of Birmingham, outside the Birmingham Rep, for the duration of the exhibition.

# 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](http://www.ikon-gallery.co.uk)  
Ikon Gallery is a registered charity no. 528892

The exhibition will be accompanied by an illustrated catalogue with essays by Paul Lewis and Eugenie Shinkle. It is presented in collaboration with Birmingham Library and Archive Services.

**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](mailto:h.stallard@ikon-gallery.co.uk)

## John Myers Sample Images



*Girl in Hood (1973)*

Photograph from the series *Middle England*

John Myers

Courtesy the artist



*Louise (1975)*

Photograph from the series *Middle England*

John Myers

Courtesy the artist

*Peter Olley, Jessie and Eve (1973)*

Photograph from the series *Middle England*

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Santa Claus at Tesco's (1972)

Photograph from the series *Middle England*

John Myers

Courtesy the artist

*Television No 3* (1973)

John Myers

Courtesy the artist

*Television No 9* (1973)

John Myers

Courtesy the artist

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