

Beat Streuli

New Street

21 November 2012 – 3 February 2013

Ikon presents photography, video and digital projections by acclaimed Swiss artist Beat Streuli. A kind of portraiture of urban life, his work contains close-up images of people, often captured unawares as they negotiate city streets. In the midst of abstract city details, their faces, gestures and looks engage us in unremarkable, everyday drama.

It cannot be emphasised enough how refreshing it was when Beat Streuli emerged as an artist, internationally, during the 1990s, and this exhibition demonstrates his continuing importance. His images of people from all walks of life create an informal street-wise reflection of our lives and times, characterised by cultural diversity: against blurred but distinct backdrops of variously built environments we see smart-casual Euro types alongside Arabic women in hijabs, Indian women wrapped in saris, Hispanic teenagers in t-shirts and caps walking past Afro-American girls with braids. Everyone is purposeful, talking into mobile phones, waiting at traffic lights or crossing the street, taking photos, chatting with friends. Whilst the images are of different people in different places, together they reflect a globalised culture with a cosmopolitan mix, especially relevant for Birmingham.

Ikon's entire first floor will be wallpapered by huge images drawn from Streuli's extensive archive, capturing human moments in cities such as Sydney, Brussels, New York, São Paulo, Guangzhou and Cape Town. The individuals we see make up a pictorial crowd that envelops the viewer. It complements perfectly the slide and video installation which features thousands of snapshots taken in Castellón (Spain) and Birmingham this summer. The rich and varied demographic that they capture points towards a complex globalised future, with resulting questions of who we are and where we go as human beings.

This exhibition is a culmination of Ikon's ongoing relationship with Beat Streuli, which began with his participation in group shows (2000 and 2001) and subsequent off-site projects (2003, 2010), all of which involved work made by the artist in Birmingham.

This exhibition, produced in collaboration with EACC Castellón, is supported by Pro Helvetia, the Swiss Cultural Fund, the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation and Mirage Associates. A catalogue, approx 400pp, illustrates recent work and includes a text by writer and cultural theorist Sadie Plant.

Ends.

Note to Editors:

1. Private View on Wednesday 21 November, 12-8pm.
2. A selection of images is shown below.
3. Ikon is open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am - 6pm. Admission is free.
4. 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.

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



Beat Streuli
Photograph from series Brussels
2005-6
Courtesy the artist



Beat Streuli
Photograph from series Amman
2008
Courtesy the artist

Cont.

IKON

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Ikon Gallery is a registered charity no. 528892



Beat Streuli
Photograph from series Manhattan
2009
Courtesy the artist



Beat Streuli
Photograph from series St.
Petersburg 2010
Courtesy the artist



Beat Streuli
Photograph from series Queens, NY
2010
Courtesy the artist



Beat Streuli
Image from the Birmingham 2012
series

Digital projection, variable
dimensions, 2012

Courtesy the artist