

# Exhibition Guide

**19 February – 21 April 2014**

**Jamal Penjweny**

***Saddam is Here***

**First Floor Galleries**

Iraqi-Kurdish artist Jamal Penjweny makes photographs and films that reflect his experiences from a war-torn childhood to life in modern-day Iraq. Born in 1981 in Sulaimaniya, he is self-taught and started his artistic career as a sculptor and painter, supporting himself by working as a shepherd and more recently, running Café 11 in his home town, a vital social space for artists, writers and musicians.

Central to the exhibition is the photographic series *Saddam is Here* (2009–2010), consisting of twelve images of ordinary Iraqi people, each holding a life-size picture of Saddam Hussein's face in front of their own, obscuring their individuality. As Penjweny says, "Saddam is here. Iraqi society cannot forget him even after his death because some of us still love him and the rest are still afraid of him ... His shadow is still following Iraqi society everywhere."

A short film *Another Life* (2010) follows Iraqis smuggling alcohol from Iraq to Iran. Its grainy mobile phone footage and editing is matter of fact and ultimately shocking, reflecting the stark choice facing Penjweny and other young men in the region, "I could have been a shepherd, a smuggler or a farmer. I was a shepherd ..."

Memories of childhood persist in *Iraq is Flying* (2006–2010). Penjweny says

"Jumping was my dream when I was a child. I wanted to fly ... to watch my house and the road from the sky and to see the entire city where I was born. When I was a child I used to jump with my friends for joy and happiness. But now ... we have all forgotten the beauty of the games we had in childhood. It seems that war has become part of our lives. Our children do not know peace ... Through my photos I try to erase the idea of war."

This exhibition is organised in collaboration with and supported by the Ruya Foundation for Contemporary Culture in Iraq.

A publication *Welcome to Iraq* accompanies the exhibition priced £20, featuring work by Penjweny and produced for the Iraqi pavilion at the 2013 Venice Biennale, curated by Ikon Director Jonathan Watkins.

**David Tremlett**

**3 Drawing Rooms**

**Second Floor Galleries**

**Exhibition continues to 21 April 2014**

British artist David Tremlett (born 1945) has a long history of drawing on walls and has created many site-specific works, including pieces for Tate Britain, the Pompidou Centre in Paris, chapels, embassies and historic buildings in Italy. He has made many journeys to the Americas, the Middle East, Europe and Asia, and enjoys the solitude of travel. These experiences are reflected in his drawings, influencing their colour and configuration. The vast installation here at Ikon alters our perception of the architecture it occupies.

The first room is based on observations of high-rise buildings and city landscapes Tremlett made whilst in Japan in 2011. Tokyo and Osaka in particular inspire the abstract geometry, creating "a sense of being overpowered by the big city". Tremlett draws

from the ceiling down and from the floor up. Darker areas consist of varnish mixed with graphite which is then polished to create a metallic finish. The reds and blues provide dramatic contrast and Tremlett and his team of assistants spent many days applying the pastel pigments by hand.

For the second room Tremlett has used black graphite grease, a residue from motor car engines that he describes as a "very sombre, strange, industrial material". Tremlett deliberately leaves traces from the process of application, including hand prints, on the wall. This is, according to the artist, "a transition space" between the two lighter rooms and there is a calculated use of perspectival drawing on the walls.

The third room is entitled *Pileup (drawing 2, Skolkovo)* and refers to an unrealised project for a Russian business studies institute in Skolkovo, designed by British architect David Adjaye. Here at Ikon Tremlett has created another version of this piece with forms that dramatically expand the way we see the space.

3 *Drawing Rooms* is supported by The Abbey Harris Mural Fund.

A newsheet publication accompanies the exhibition priced £1.

## **John Salt** ***Ikon Icons*** **Tower Room**

A presentation of paintings, prints and sculptures by the first artist ever to exhibit at Ikon in the 1960s. A pioneer of Photorealism, Salt's work reflects the influence of Pop and the US. Born in Birmingham, the city of car manufacturing, the automobile is an enduring subject that has, in Salt's words, "stayed with me, although it's evolved over the years".

John Salt is our *Ikon Icon* for the 1960s, to be followed by Ian Emes (1970s), Cornelia Parker (1980s), Yinka Shonibare (1990s) and Julian Opie (2000s).

The Tower Room is only accessible via a number of steps.

## **Graham Gussin** ***Spill*** **Off-site installation** **Fletchers Walk, Birmingham B3 3HJ**

*Spill* (1999) uses cinematic effects in order to deal with notions of threshold, appearance and threat. Gussin explains, "Fog and mist were, and still are, used in Hollywood productions to designate a shift in aspect – a movement from the natural to the supernatural. It is a hypnotic process yet threatening, acting like a narcotic."

**Visit the Resource Room where you can find a selection of books, audio and film.**

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