



Ikon Gallery

1 Oozells Square, Brindleyplace, Birmingham B1 2HS
0121 248 0708 / www.ikon-gallery.org
Ikon Gallery Limited trading as Ikon, registered charity no. 528892

Gillian Wearing

A Real Birmingham Family

Unveiling event 30 October 2014, 11.30am, with Gillian Wearing and the Jones family

A Real Birmingham Family is a project from Turner Prize-winning artist Gillian Wearing led by Ikon that has been over four years in the making. The completed sculpture will be unveiled on Thursday 30 October at 11.30am, outside the Library of Birmingham, in Centenary Square.

During 2011 and 2012, residents of Birmingham were urged to nominate their families to be the face of Birmingham. No limits were placed on how the 21st century family might define itself and nominations were received from hundreds of participants.

In 2013 the Jones family, consisting of two sisters Roma and Emma and their two sons Kyan and Shaye, were selected as *A Real Birmingham Family* by the artist and a diverse panel of community, cultural and religious figures. The selection was finalised following discussions between the panel members on what constitutes a Birmingham family: multiple generations, friendships and diversity as well as evidential links to the city.

Born in Birmingham, Wearing works across a wide range of media including photography, video, performance and sculpture, often drawing on social, personal and political sources to create a visual language that shows the many sides of contemporary life. Her work is characterised by an engagement with the lives of others and her own family history.

The concept for *A Real Birmingham Family* developed from a past project Wearing undertook in Italy, *A Typical Trentino Family* (2008), where a local family was selected to be immortalised in a bronze sculpture. During the process the artist worked with statisticians who gave her the break down of what the typical family in Trento consisted of; their definitions of a family were surprisingly wide-ranging and included one person living alone. Wearing found this an inclusive way of regarding family and applied it to the search in Birmingham. Wearing explains:

I really liked how Roma and Emma Jones spoke of their closeness as sisters and how they supported each other, it seemed a very strong bond, one of friendship and family, and the sculpture puts across that connectedness between them. A nuclear family is one reality but it is one of many and this work celebrates the idea that what constitutes a family should not be fixed.



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Stuart Tulloch, curator at Ikon, stated:

The variety of nominations to A Real Birmingham Family has shown to us that whilst the traditional, nuclear family may no longer be the norm, the ties that bind us together are as strong as ever. The sculpture will draw attention to the everyday and the unsung; a lasting memorial to the people of Birmingham who are the life-blood of our city.

To RSVP to the 30 October event, or for all other press enquiries, please contact Sophie Campos or Emma Gilhooly at Pelham Communications on 020 8969 3959 or email sophie@pelhamcommunications.com or emma@pelhamcommunications.com.

Notes to Editors

1. Ikon is a registered charity and is supported using public funding from Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council.
2. *A Real Birmingham Family* is funded by Birmingham City Council, Arts Council England and Ikon's Friends of the Family.
3. Gillian Wearing is a British artist, born in 1963. Emerging during the 1990s, she was awarded the Turner Prize in 1997 and elected as a lifetime member of the Royal Academy of Arts, London in 2007. She was awarded the OBE in 2011.
4. The Judging Panel included:
Stacey Barnfield, Editor, Birmingham Post
Micaela Boas, Outset Family
Brian Gambles, Chief Executive, Library of Birmingham Development Trust
Jonathan Gurling, Executive Secretary, Birmingham Faith Leaders' Group
Ian Taylor, Club Ambassador, Aston Villa Football Club
Jonathan Watkins, Director, Ikon
Gillian Wearing, Artist
Polly Welsby, Ikon Youth Programme
Dr. Elizabeth Yardley, School of Social Sciences, Birmingham City University
5. Donations towards *A Real Birmingham Family* can be made via Ikon's website www.ikon-gallery.org
6. Limited edition *A Real Birmingham Family* posters signed by the artist are available for £60, with proceeds going towards the funding of the project. <http://ikon-gallery.org/shop/exhibitions/gillian-wearing-a-real-birmingham-family/>

IKON 50

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7. Ikon is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2014. It has held numerous seminal exhibitions by artists including Martin Creed, Antony Gormley, Carmen Herrera, Julian Opie, Cornelia Parker and Dayanita Singh. It has played an instrumental role in launching the careers of many of the artists it has exhibited. Ikon's Director, Jonathan Watkins, continues to build upon this legacy in bringing new artists to the gallery and the UK as part of its 50th anniversary programme, collectively known as *Ikon 50*.

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Sample Images



The Jones family outside the new Library of Birmingham. Courtesy of Ikon