

Roger Hiorns

Ikon Gallery, 7 December 2016 – 5 March 2017



Roger Hiorns, *Untitled*, 2011. Jet engine and youth. Courtesy the artist and Ikon.

Ikon is proud to present a major exhibition of the Birmingham-born, international artist Roger Hiorns, whose influential work will show at the gallery from 7 December 2016 until 5 March 2017.

Through the transformation of materials and found objects, Hiorns focuses on various aspects of modern life, closely analysing what is assumed or taken for granted. He explains,

"You always have to think about materials and objects in terms of being malleable – you have to cut them off from what their established use is, to directly interfere with their world-ness, it becomes a process of human empowerment to re-use and re-propose the power of objects simply left lying in the street."

Jet engines often occur in Hiorns' work. By injecting a US military aircraft engine with anti-depressants, he toys with the possibility of affecting some kind of robotic nervous system, reflecting his ongoing interest in the anthropomorphism of machinery. In his *Youth* series (1999 to the present), the encounters between a jet engine and a naked young man suggest not only mysterious communion, but also melancholy. Ripped from the wing of an aeroplane, and partly dismantled, the engine is positioned like a remnant from classical antiquity, instilling awe as if

being contemplated at some point in the distant future when air travel as we now know it no longer exists.

Hiorns' field of jet engine dust (*Untitled*, 2008) is likewise philosophical. An aerial landscape when seen from a normal standing position – like a desiccated savannah – it is a *memento mori* for humanity as a whole, a reminder of what will ultimately become of us and all our modern achievements.

This exhibition will also include a new video work documenting *Untitled (a retrospective view of the pathway)*, an off-site project produced by Ikon in June 2016. It features choristers of St Philip's Cathedral Birmingham singing Evensong whilst lying on their backs on the floor of the nave, rather than standing to sing in stalls in front of the altar. A re-imagining of an ancient ritual, atomising a rigid formation, it exemplifies a restlessness with respect to a revered institution, part of an establishment that defines our society. Likewise he focuses his attention on the art world and has made numerous statements that articulate a certain scepticism:

"I believe that the artist's role is to move things on, to hold up a truthful mirror in order that progress might continue. Frankly I'm suspicious of many of my contemporaries who make work that simply reflects the desires of collectors: they're reinforcing the surfaces. I think I find artists fascinating in the same way I'm fascinated by how machines and systems function."

Hiorns has recently made paintings with copper sulphate. Delicate works of art, untouched by the artist, they are at once beautiful and problematising. There is a kind of instability embodied in them that epitomises his artistic practice as a whole. At Ikon the artist exhibits a very early pair of sulphate works, grown from brain matter. These pieces embody the hyper-vigilant fragility of the contemporary mind.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a publication, including an essay by writer and curator Ruth Noack.

For more information, high-res images and to request interviews please contact Emma Gilhooly or Milly Carter Hepplewhite at Pelham Communications on 020 8969 3959 or email emma@pelhamcommunications.com or milly@pelhamcommunications.com

Note to Editors:

1. Ikon exhibition opening: Wednesday 7 December, 6-8pm
2. Ikon is an internationally acclaimed contemporary art venue situated in central Birmingham. Established in 1964 by a group of artists, Ikon is an educational

charity and works to encourage public engagement with contemporary art through exhibiting new work in a context of debate and participation. The gallery programme features artists from around the world and a variety of media is represented, including sound, film, mixed media, photography, painting, sculpture and installation. Ikon's off-site programme develops dynamic relationships between art, artists and audiences outside the gallery. Projects vary enormously in scale, duration and location, challenging expectations of where art can be seen and by whom. Education is at the heart of Ikon's activities, stimulating public interest in and understanding of contemporary visual art. Through a variety of talks, tours, workshops and seminars, Ikon's Learning Team aims to build dynamic relationships with audiences, enabling visitors to engage with, discuss and reflect on contemporary art.

3. Ikon is open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am - 5pm. Admission is free.
4. For the latest news and events follow @ikongallery on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).
5. Ikon Gallery is supported using public funding from Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council.
6. Birmingham Cathedral was built in 1715 and became the cathedral for the Diocese of Birmingham in 1905. The cathedral is a rare example of English Baroque architecture, which is complimented by unique stained-glass windows. The Cathedral boasts an excellent choral tradition and regularly hosts musical, cultural and arts events. During 2015, St. Philip's celebrated its Tercentenary with a series of special events, pilgrimages, heritage education and mass participation arts events.
7. We are now working towards a summer 2018 launch for Roger Hiorns' Buried Aircraft. This re-scheduling gives us time needed to finalise plans for this ambitious project. In the meantime we will continue to raise funds for our work in the Ladywood district of Birmingham, using our canal boat as a hub for creative activity there. Our aim is to collaborate with the diverse communities in Ladywood to develop a programme of activity inspired by their cultural histories. This will be the latest iteration of our ongoing programme of artistic activity on canals, following the success of Black Country Voyages (2014-2017) and Slow Boat (2010-2013).