

# IKON

## Exhibition Guide

6 July – 11 September 2016

**Jesse Bruton**

**Kan Xuan**

**Patrick Killoran**

***Observation Deck (Birmingham)***

**Pamela Scott Wilkie**

***Journey***

These exhibitions are each, in different ways, about journeys. Jesse Bruton, one of Ikon's founding artists, was preoccupied by the nature of travel as was his contemporary Pamela Scott Wilkie, who first showed at Ikon in 1966. Visitors encounter her *Journey* series of silk screen prints on the walls of our tower staircase and Café Opus at Ikon.

Patrick Killoran's *Observation Deck (Birmingham)* is literally transporting. A sliding platform in our Tower Room, it takes people out of the gallery building, head and shoulders first, to see the world afresh from a different point of view. And last but not least the video work by renowned Chinese artist Kan Xuan has been described by writer Lu Leiping, as "[living] in the stories she finds and the feelings she experiences. The searching itself is a kind of journey, a kind of chance encounter where she discovers new worlds and meets with universes of feeling."

**Jesse Bruton**  
**First Floor Galleries**

*From an interview with Jonathan Watkins, Ikon Director, 2004*

The starting point for my work was mostly landscape, urban and rural, my involvement and response to it. The Spanish landscapes made after leaving art college, the Dutch townscapes of the early sixties, the Welsh mountain and Pembrokeshire coastal landscapes and the 'road' paintings of the sixties. The intensity of the American Abstract Expressionists especially Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko impressed me and had an influence. All the landscapes were responses to being or having been in a particular place. They were painted sometime after the experience, working from the drawings, perhaps referring to photographs.

From the early sixties, I worked in what could be described as black and white. It seemed more appropriate to what I was concerned with in the landscapes the paintings derived from. Colour would have been a distraction. It was an intentional limitation although in fact both oil and powder colour, especially earth colours, were often added to vary the quality of black. Sometimes I leached the oil from the paint or added pigment to achieve the desired effect. I worked in oil on canvas mostly using a palette knife like a trowel, pressuring a response from the canvas, moving the paint, building up, simplifying, paring down from something initially complex.

My last paintings came from the experience of driving long distances. They are not about destinations; rather they about being on the way, the concentration on the ribbon of the road winding away from you, the anticipation of what's ahead, the peripheral awareness of what's being passed and left behind. The thinning out and broadening of the 'road' line, the transition from dark to light was to convey the sense, the feel of driving. I was intent on translating the experience onto canvas.

**Kan Xuan**  
**Second Floor Galleries**

*From interviews with Lu Leiping, Zhang Zheng and Karen Smith*

Looking back over my work thus far, the vast majority of it features either inanimate objects or age-old landscapes. But whether it be a cup, a Buddha statue, or a pile of goods ... all of it has the same background in common; our crowded, chaotic society and the events and states of everyday life that occur within it. My hope is to confront it all head-on (life, as it is right now). I want to find a way to express an encounter with and perception of a kind of “happening” inside of everyday life.

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Objects or landscape, I am willing to spend a lot of time confronting them and immersing myself in them, delightfully and peacefully. They could be remote or close, actual or abstract. They appear or disappear in the light. My position and awareness exist in the rhythm of the videos, static or mobile. The changes of rhythm come from deep inside me, free, resolute and happy.

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I love being in the state of playing a game; I love the seriousness of a game too. That is what I always want: every time I am making a piece, I want it to maintain both the rigour and the fun of the game state.

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The narratives of my works are sometimes contradictory, sometimes overlapping. The overlaps also generate contradictions, just like two pieces of glass stuck together by water, fragile yet inseparable. Our judgement, experience and memories work in similar ways; contradictions are complemented by memories, and so are the overlaps. The contradictions or overlaps in my works derive from personal experiences and [considering things from different] angles. They come naturally.

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Behind each and every action there is a secret; it is the same with an object: there is something you can feel, but you cannot quite judge what it is. There are always two or three little details or insights inside of a secret. The actual action that is happening is the movement from outside in, that state of tension and alertness in each moment that it is taking place. Actions expose us and our emotions.

**Patrick Killoran**  
**Observation Deck (Birmingham)**  
**Tower Room, Second Floor**

*Please note the Tower Room is only accessible via a number of steps and this installation is not suitable for children under 10.*

Visitors are invited to Ikon's Tower Room where they can recline on a horizontal platform and slide partially out a window of the building. By pushing the participant's head and shoulders out of a second floor window, Killoran plays with our instinctive sense of vulnerability while at the same time activating a heightened awareness of our body's precise location in time and space.

Public space and the role of participation in contemporary art informed by social practice are essential elements of Killoran's work. *Observation Deck (Birmingham)*, remains an incomplete artwork until the audience participates. By simply repositioning what is readily available to the visitor, Killoran's artistic intervention operates as a minimal gesture of contextualisation as experience.

*Observation Deck (Queens)* was exhibited for the first time at PS1 in New York nearly 20 years ago, and has had a number of iterations since. Each installation of the work is a reminder of John Ruskin's insight that the sky is also historical. The singularity of the piece is determined by the quality of the sky at the moment it is experienced.

**Pamela Scott Wilkie**  
**Journey**  
**Tower staircase and Café Opus at Ikon**

*Please note a section of this exhibition is only accessible via a number of steps.*

*Journey* depicts parts of the world that had resonance with Pamela Scott Wilkie's aesthetic adventure from the beginning of her artistic career. Now, more than forty years later, it's extraordinary how fresh the work still seems, conveying such vital enthusiasm and curiosity.

Jonathan Watkins, Ikon Director, 2004.

British artist Pamela Scott Wilkie creates work that evolves out of the serendipity of real experience, travel and the unfolding adventure of journeys. *Journey* is a series of hand-pulled silk screen prints Wilkie made during an overland expedition to India in 1970, via Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nepal. Inspired by the landscapes and people of the countries she passed through, these prints were made in a makeshift studio in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, using the materials available. Arts Council England gave support for a touring exhibition in 1997 and it is now in private and public collections including the V&A.

A set of artist's proofs, this *Journey* series has been generously donated to Ikon by the artist.

## Associated Events

### Artist's Talk – Kan Xuan

**Thursday 7 July, 6–7.30pm – FREE**

#### Booking essential

Join artist Kan Xuan in conversation with Professor Jiang Jiehong, Founder and Director of the Centre for Chinese Visual Arts, Birmingham City University, about her life and work, including the inspiration behind her current Ikon exhibition.

### Jesse Bruton and Pamela Scott Wilkie in conversation with Jonathan Watkins

**Thursday 8 September, 6–7.30pm – FREE**

#### Booking essential

An opportunity to hear artists Jesse Bruton and Pamela Scott Wilkie in conversation with Jonathan Watkins, Ikon Director. They discuss their exhibitions, their memories of the early years of Ikon and a shared interest in journeys, often inspiring their work.

Both events can be booked online at [www.ikon-gallery.org](http://www.ikon-gallery.org). Alternatively please call Ikon on 0121 248 0708.

When booking for a free event please consider making a donation. Ikon is a charity and your support helps us with everything we do.

The Jesse Bruton and Kan Xuan exhibitions are accompanied by Ikon catalogues. Visit Ikon's online shop at [www.ikon-gallery.org](http://www.ikon-gallery.org) for the full range of catalogues and limited editions.

Jesse Bruton's exhibition is supported by the Mill Dam Trust and David Owen.

Kan Xuan's exhibition is supported by Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins/Habana and W. Wing Yip and Brothers Foundation.

Kan Xuan's artist's talk is supported by Faculty of Arts, Design and Media, Birmingham City University.

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

**If you have any questions about the exhibition please ask the Information Assistants in the gallery.**

### Stay in touch

Subscribe to our e-bulletin at [www.ikon-gallery.org](http://www.ikon-gallery.org) and find us on    [ikongallery](https://www.instagram.com/ikongallery)

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Open Tuesday – Sunday  
and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am–5pm  
Free entry, donations welcome