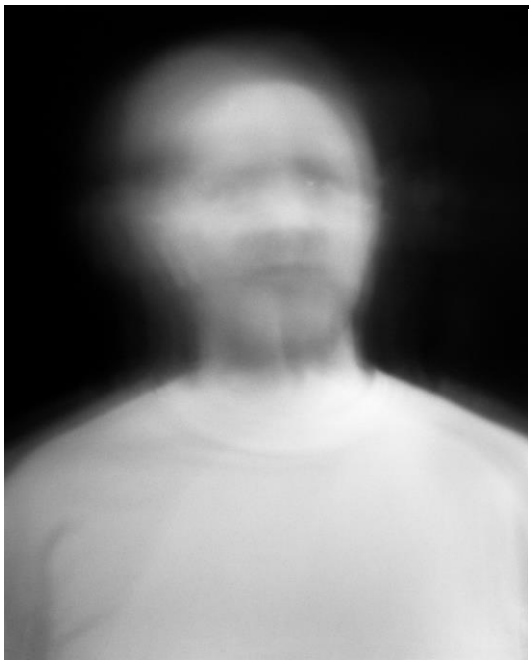
IKON

Ikon Gallery
1 Oozells Square, Brindleyplace, Birmingham B1 2HS
0121 248 0708 / www.ikon-gallery.org
Open Tuesday-Sunday & Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am-5pm / free entry
Registered charity no. 528892

Edmund Clark
In Place of Hate
6 December 2017 - 11 March 2018



Left to right: *In Place of Hate* (2017), images courtesy of Edmund Clark, Ikon and Flowers Gallery

As the pressures on Britain's prisons appear ever more regularly in the national news, Ikon presents an exhibition of work by British artist Edmund Clark, the culmination of a residency in Europe's only wholly therapeutic prison environment, HMP Grendon. Combining photography, video and installation, *In Place of Hate* explores ideas of visibility, representation, trauma and self-image, addressing how prisoners and the criminal justice system are perceived and discussed by the public, politicians and media in Britain today.

Established in 1962, Grendon's inmates must accept responsibility for their offence. They then exercise a degree of control over the day-to-day running of their lives, making a commitment to intensive group therapy and democratic decision-making, whilst holding each other to account. Through research and evaluation, evidence has demonstrated that Grendon has delivered lower levels of violence and disruption in prison, whilst reducing levels of reoffending after release.

Clark, an award winning artist with a longstanding interest in incarceration and its effects, has spent three years at Grendon. He has worked with prisoners, prison officers and therapeutic staff, immersed himself in the routines of the communities and taken part in the full wing therapy sessions that are a key element of life on each wing of the prison.

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The nature of Clark's subject matter (previous subjects include Guantanamo Bay, the CIA secret prison programme and the detention of terrorism suspects in England on control orders) means his work is shaped by his engagement with issues of censorship, security and control. At Grendon, as in other British prisons, he cannot make images that reveal the identity of the prisoners or details of the security infrastructure.

The result is a thoughtful and powerful immersive installation reflecting on how criminality and prisons are seen, or not seen, in contemporary Britain and evoking the experience of individuals engaged in the intense psychological panopticon of therapy at Grendon. Clark comments:

> *"Why we lock people up, how we do it and where we do it offer a profound insight into our society. This work has been shaped by the men, staff and the intense therapeutic processes and experiences at Grendon; and by the environment of the prison."*

Works include:

1.98 m² (2017) is an installation consisting of a lightbox the size of a cell at Grendon. Suspended between two sheets of clear perspex above the lightbox are flowers and leaves that have been cultivated or grown wild within the prison perimeter. Picked and pressed by the artist they have dried or rotted and become fragile over time. The light shining through them shows every vein, blemish and crease. It is the only light in the room.

My Shadow's Reflection (2017) is a five projector installation of three types of photograph: architectural images from around the prison; giant close ups of the plant matter pressed inside the prison and images of the men made with a pinhole camera. Standing before the camera in a group situation for exposures of six minutes, the men talk in response to questions about their personal and criminal narratives. As they talk and move their image becomes a troubling blur. The men then respond, sharing what they think the image means to them and the outside world. The images are projected onto and through the green sheets the men sleep between which the artist has suspended in the gallery space. These images and words also comprise a stand alone artist's book with the same title.

Oresteia (2017) is a film showing a form of psychodrama episode, one of the main creative therapies in the prison, in which the masked men act out events from their past under guidance. Working with Aeschylus' trilogy of Greek tragedies *The Oresteia*, and made in collaboration with Grendon's psychodrama staff, the film draws parallels between the accepted high culture of the acts of trauma, revenge and justice witnessed in Aeschylus' plays, and that of the men's own personal and criminal lives. The work explores the process of catharsis, a central component of Greek tragedy, by asking the men to identify with the roles of perpetrator, victim or witness; members of the psychodrama staff play the parts of Aeschylus' characters - Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, Iphigenia, Orestes and the Chorus. In the gallery the film is shown on three monitors placed on a circle of the blue chairs seen in the film; the same chairs and configuration that the men and staff use during group therapy.

Creative interventions made by the men on prints of their pinhole images by writing, drawing, painting or other means, are included in the exhibition together with extracts of text from their responses.

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Ikon director, Jonathan Watkins, comments:

> *"Our residency programme with HMP Grendon was informed by a belief that the arts can be an especially effective way of engaging with offenders who feel alienated from mainstream education and employment, in order to break the vicious circle of offending. The current high level of criminal reoffending signifies that our penal system as a whole is not working. Clark's longstanding interest in incarceration and its effects means he is exceptionally well placed to understand the complexities of Grendon, the men and the staff who inhabit it – this is reflected in the power and poignancy of the works on display."*

The exhibition is accompanied by two publications, an exhibition catalogue and an artist's book. *In Place of Hate* is presented in partnership with HM Prison Grendon and the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust.

Edmund Clark, *In Place of Hate* (2017), image courtesy of Edmund Clark, Ikon and Flowers Gallery

Biographical note:

Edmund Clark is an award-winning artist whose work links history, politics and representation, through a combination of photography, film, found material and installation. It has been acquired for national and international collections including the National Portrait Gallery, the Imperial War Museum and the National Media Museum in Britain, the George Eastman House Museum in America, and the Fotomuseum, Winterthur in Switzerland. Awards include an International Center of Photography Infinity Award, the Royal Photographic Society Hood Medal for outstanding photography for public service and the British Journal of Photography International Photography Award. His work has very recently been the subject of a major solo exhibition, *Edmund Clark: War of Terror*, at the Imperial War Museum, London, from 28 July 2016 to 28 August 2017. Clark is represented by Flowers Gallery.

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

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Social Media Handles:
Instagram, Twitter and Facebook: @ikongallery #IkonGallery #EdmundClark #InPlaceofHate

Note to Editors:

1. Ikon exhibition opening: 6 December 2017

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. www.ikon-gallery.org

3. Edmund Clark is an award-winning artist whose work links history, politics and representation. His work has dealt with issues of detention and imprisonment in a variety of contexts. Clark has exhibited widely, including major solo museum exhibitions at the Imperial War Museum (London and Zephyr), Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen (Mannheim), and his work has been acquired for national and international collections including the National Portrait Gallery, the Imperial War Museum and the National Media Museum (London). Awards include the Royal Photographic Society Hood Medal for outstanding photography for public service.

4. Ikon is open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am - 5pm. Admission is free. Ikon Gallery is supported using public funding from Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council. For the latest news and events follow @ikongallery on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

5. Located in Buckinghamshire, UK, and established in 1962, HMP Grendon is the only prison in Europe to operate wholly as a therapeutic community. Inmates voluntarily apply and exercise a degree of control over the day-to-day running of their lives, making a commitment to intensive group therapy and accountability to each other.

6. Ikon's Artist in Residence programme runs in partnership with HMP Grendon, the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust and Edmund Clark. Established in 2015, and culminating in the exhibition at Ikon, the four-year programme develops public discourse about prisons, rehabilitation and criminality. Integral to the artist's research and art work, undertaken during the residency, will be practical opportunities for offenders to work alongside a professional artist assisting them in their own creative endeavours. The arts are seen as an especially effective way of engaging with offenders who feel alienated from mainstream education and employment.

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