

IKON

Ikon Programme – 2017-2018

Ikon Gallery

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Ikon Gallery Limited trading as Ikon, registered charity no. 528892

Jean Painlevé

15 March – 4 June 2017



Promotional postcard for the jhp brand, 1936. © Archives Jean Painlevé, Paris

Ikon presents the first UK exhibition of work by Jean Painlevé (1902 – 1989). His cinematographic and photographic portraits of octopi, lobsters or starfish were at the centre of the surrealist and avant-garde movement of the 1920s and praised by Fernand Leger, Alexander Calder or Luis Bunuel among others.

Throughout his career, which spans the 20th century, Jean Painlevé defended the documentary style and science films, in an output of more than 200 shorts.

His ground-breaking aesthetic, irreverence and unique humour, as well as innovative filming technique and commitment to serious scientific observation, have allowed the work to remain relevant and still influential today.

Oliver Beer

15 March – 4 June 2017



Oliver Beer, *Tristan Ensemble* (2015). Live sound installation based on tuning the harmonics of antiquities from the collection of Robert Wilson. Installation view, Watermill Center, New York. Image © the artist

British artist Oliver Beer returns to Ikon for the first time since 2011 to provide audiences with an opportunity to encounter his new and recent work within the context of a judicious survey.

Oliver Beer interrogates at once the physical properties and emotional value of objects, with a paradoxical emphasis on emptiness and absence. The notion of “negative space” is key - whereby a balance is struck between occupied and unoccupied space - so the viewer is confronted with what is, literally, not there. A number of recent works have involved a selection of vessels - ceramic and otherwise - to create idiosyncratic musical instruments as installations. The empty space within each vessel has its own musical note at which it resonates, and so contributes to a symphony of natural frequencies, with microphones feeding back into looping sound systems.

A new work, commissioned by Ikon, *I Wan'na be Like You* (2016) is a “re-animation” of a scene from Walt Disney's *Jungle Book*. 2,500 local school children, from early years until the age of 13, were invited to join in, drawing film stills in order of their age, so that the animation becomes increasingly “grown up”. Frame by frame the scribbles of infants progressively give way to the increasingly lucid drawings of children and then adolescents. Thus Oliver Beer touches on the inexorable passage of time - through a time-based medium - in order to encourage a consideration of what it is like to be human.

Sidney Nolan

10 June – 3 September 2017



Sidney Nolan, *Seasons in Hell* (1982). Spray on canvas
© Sidney Nolan Trust



Sir Sidney Nolan, *Illuminations* (1982). Spray on canvas.
© Sidney Nolan Trust

Sidney Nolan (1917 - 1992), one of the most important Australian artists of the twentieth century, lived his last years on the Welsh-Midlands border. To mark the centenary of his birth, in collaboration with The Sidney Nolan Trust, Ikon brings to light a selection of extraordinary paintings dating from the 1980s.

Made with spray paint on canvas, the works include a number of large portraits of individuals Nolan identified with, such as Arthur Rimbaud, Francis Bacon, Vincent van Gogh, Francisco Goya, Benjamin Britten and Brett Whiteley. Rimbaud was a key figure, according to artist-writer Elwyn Lynn who explains that Nolan became enthralled by the way in which the poet had been "*possessed by creativeness, had grown obsessed by its processes and immersed himself in both its central and peripheral demands*". These fugitive portraits are thus projections as much as likenesses.

Sheela Gowda

16 June – 3 September 2017



Sheela Gowda, *That Is No Lie* (2015). Installation Perez Museum, Miami. Fabric, hair rope, string, metal. Image courtesy Perez Museum, Miami

Born in Bhadravati, India in 1957, Gowda studied Painting at the Royal College of Art during the 1980s under the eminent British figurative artist Peter de Francia. Her practice subsequently developed to include installations in more abstracted configurations. As a response to the political situation in the early 90's, Gowda's work became more material based, whilst eschewing didacticism.

A new work in Ikon's exhibition sees the artist source sheets of flattened metal drums - often used to transport tree resin or oil - to recycle into 'Bandlis': metal bowls, used extensively in the Indian construction industry to carry concrete slurry, sand and other building materials. Each sheet is cut by hand into 8 circular parts that are then pressed in hand-operated machines into shallow bowls. The process itself yields forms that the artist foregrounds.

"The Bandli, however humble its connotations, belongs to the best of Indian design, and as a tool it says a lot about society. It could, for example, never be a European tool. In Europe the wheelbarrow, the counter tool to the Bandli - speaks about how to stress the limits of manpower, however dependent of the person pushing it. Bandli and wheelbarrow have two completely different concepts of efficiency. The wheelbarrow is more like a basic machine simulating a mule, while the Bandli seems to grow together with the worker lifting it on her head.

Obviously a Bandli has to remain small, it seems to be more at peace with possibilities and natural efficiency of any human anatomy, and it can be so because there is an abundance of anatomically normal people waiting to be employed. Its form already tells that human labour is available easily and that the concept of time here allows many small steps instead of a few big ones. The Bandli is the needle's eye through which the substance of even high-rise buildings of Bengaluru has passed."

Käthe Kollwitz

13 September – 26 November 2017



Käthe Kollwitz, *Woman with Dead Child*, 1903, soft ground etching. The Henry Barber Trust ©The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham

Käthe Kollwitz (née Schmidt, 1867–1945) was one of the leading artists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, notable for the emotional power of her drawing, printmaking and later sculpture. This exhibition focuses on around forty works from the British Museum's remarkable print collection, alongside material drawn from other UK public collections. The exhibition highlights the importance of Kollwitz's work and celebrates the enduring impact of her powerful and affecting images.

The exhibition is organised in partnership between Ikon and the British Museum and is accompanied by a fully illustrated publication.

Sofia Hultén

13 September – 26 November 2017



Sofia Hultén, *Altered Fates*, (2013) Videostill. All images courtesy the artist, VG Bildkunst Bonn, Daniel Marzona Gallery, Galerie Nordenhake Stockholm, RaebervonStenglin

Organised in collaboration with Museum Tinguely, Basel, this is the most comprehensive exhibition to date of work by Berlin-based artist Sofia Hultén (b.1972 Stockholm).

Through a combination of sculptures, photographs and films, Hultén conveys an ongoing preoccupation with the material world and how we navigate it through time. With an engaging thoughtfulness, Hultén's work exemplifies her conviction that *"everything is in flux and that change is always possible."* She develops philosophical propositions out of stuff found on the streets, or unwanted object things, thrown away, reinforcing the idea of looking twice at what is all-too-often taken for granted. There is humour in this absurdism and a political connotation in her assertive resistance to preciousness, but above all, for Hultén, it is a question of communicating *"how she sees objects ... as [a] whirling mass of 'What could I be?', 'What have I been?', 'What is inherent within me?'. Inside every particle there's the potential for an incredible amount of energy."*

Thomas Bock

6 December 2017 – 4 March 2018



Thomas Bock (1790– 1855), *Mathinna*, 1842, Watercolour, Collection: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, presented by J H Clark, 1951

This is the first exhibition dedicated to the work of Thomas Bock (c.1793 - 1855) since 1991, and the first ever outside of Australia.

Bock was one of the most important artists working in Australia during the colonial years. Born in Birmingham (UK), he trained as an engraver and miniature painter. In 1823 he was **found guilty of “administering concoctions of certain herbs ... with the intent to cause miscarriage”** and was sentenced to transportation for fourteen years. Bock arrived in Hobart, Australia, the following year, where he was quickly pressed into service as a convict artist, engraving bank notes, illustrations for a local almanac, cheques, commercial stationery and so on. An early commission was a number of portraits of captured bushrangers, before and after execution by hanging, including the notorious cannibal Alexander Pearce.

The exhibition presents a selection of drawings, paintings and photographs that demonstrate both his technical skill and sensitivity to a wide range of subject matter. Bock’s portraits of Tasmanian Aborigines, fellow criminals, free settlers in Hobart Town, as well as nudes, landscapes and everyday scenes, provide a touching insight into his domestic life.

The exhibition is organised in partnership between Ikon and the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart, 2016

Edmund Clark

6 December 2017 – 4 March 2018



Edmund Clark *HMP Grendon* (2016) © Edmund Clark

The current high level of criminal re-offending signifies an intrinsic failure in Britain's penal system. It is Ikon's conviction 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.

Edmund Clark has been Ikon's artist-in-residence (2014-17) at Britain's only therapeutic prison, HMP Grendon in Buckinghamshire. An artist with a longstanding interest in the incarceration and its effects, this exhibition showcases the body of work he has developed in response to the prison and helping to facilitate the prisoners' own creative output. The work explores HMP Grendon as an environment and a process, as well as a place of incarceration, which is the result of Clark's familiarity and engagement with the prisoners, prison officers and staff's daily routine. The works raise important questions about ideas of representation, self-image, trauma and panopticism.

Ikon Off-Site – 2017-2018

Artist in Residence at HMP Grendon

2014-2017



Edmund Clark *HMP Grendon* (2016) © Edmund Clark

Ikon is working in partnership with HMP Grendon, Buckinghamshire, the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust and artist Edmund Clark over a three-year programme to develop a public discourse about prisons, rehabilitation and criminality in light of growing evidence that the arts can offer transformational experiences in offenders' lives. The project culminates in a publication and exhibition at Ikon in 2017.

On Kawara

Venice Biennale 2017

13 May – 26 November 2017



Installation view, On Kawara One Million Years, David Zwirner, New York, 2009 Courtesy David Zwirner, New York London.
Photo Cathy Carver

On Kawara's *One Million Years (Reading)* is a durational performance for the first three months of the Biennale di Venezia, 2017. The venue, the Oratorio di San Ludovico, Dorsoduro, is an old ecclesiastic building dedicated to the spoken word, and so could not be more suitable.

One Millions Years (Past and Future) are works with which the medium of typewritten text enters the realm of the sublime. With 20,000 pages, 500 years per page, one stretches backwards from the year in which it was made (1969) and the other forwards (from 1980), **dedicated respectively to "all who have lived and died" and to " the last one"**. In 1993, Kawara transferred *One Million Years* from an exclusively written form to live readings and recordings, with one male and one female reader alternating. Each new reading continues in numerical order from the previous session. Dates are always read in English by readers born in the country where the reading is taking place.

Notes to Editors

1. 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 and 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.
2. Ikon is open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am-5pm. Free entry.
3. For the latest news and events follow @ikongallery on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).
4. Ikon Gallery is supported using public funding by Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council.
5. For more information and high-res images please contact Sam Skillings or Emily Luxford at Ikon on 0121 248 0708 or email s.skillings@ikon-gallery.org or e.luxford@ikon-gallery.org