

## Ikon celebrates 20 years in Brindleyplace



Ikon Gallery. Photo: Handover Agency.

Ikon opens its new exhibitions on 21 March 2018, exactly 20 years to the day since the gallery doors were first opened to the public in Brindleyplace on 21 March 1998.

The iconic neo-gothic former school on Oozells Square is a Grade II listed building and was a focal point of the Brindleyplace development in the early 1990s. At this time Ikon, founded in the early 1960s, was outgrowing its current home in John Bright Street. By moving to Oozells Street School it returned the building to its original heritage as a place of learning and inspiration.

Funded by one of the first National Lottery capital grants, the conversion preserved the outside shell of the Victorian school, rebuilt the tower to its original design and added a glass-encased scenic lift and stairway. What were once large linked classrooms are spacious galleries showcasing the best in international contemporary art. Ikon stands as a focus for Oozells Square, welcoming over 130,000 visitors every year, with free entry for all.

Ikon has made its mark on Brindleyplace in many ways – showcasing artists' work from all around the world, both in the gallery and in the squares of the Brindleyplace estate. Unique events have included sausage dogs in Oozells Square, Reverend Billy preaching against capitalism and a giant cityscape made out of clay. Ikon also houses an independent shop, stocking local authors and makers, and Yorks Café, serving speciality coffee and delicious lunches. Lastly Ikon's *Slow Boat* frequently moors in Brindleyplace – a floating resource for artists, community groups and Ikon Youth Programme.

*"We are delighted to celebrate 20 years in Brindleyplace. As one of the very first tenants on the estate, Ikon Gallery has witnessed the changing environment, seeing new buildings rise up around our Grade II listed schoolhouse. Over the last twenty years, Ikon has welcomed millions of visitors to the gallery, worked with artists from all over the world and introduced contemporary art to generations of visitors.*

*We also welcome the forthcoming changes to the area with the transformation of Paradise, the redevelopment of Centenary Square, the metro tram extending along Broad Street and new neighbours including HSBC UK and HMRC. The area continues to grow from strength to strength and Ikon looks forward to the new partnerships and opportunities that will arise from these new developments."*

Ian Hyde, Deputy Director, Ikon

This year, Ikon's programme includes a major survey of work by Haroon Mirza, a revelation of new sculptures by Langlands & Bell, a riot of colour thanks to Polly Apfelbaum, an improvised installation by Rie Nakajima (with a little help from her musical friends), a judicious survey of paintings by extraordinary Czech artist Vladimír Kokolia, and the long-awaited return to Ikon of Francis Alÿs.

Ikon is a charity and we are marking this anniversary with a special fundraising campaign - please donate £20, or whatever you can give, to support our next 20 years. You can donate in a number of ways – in person at the gallery, online at [ikon-gallery.org/support](http://ikon-gallery.org/support), text IKON20 £20 to 70070 or call Ikon Shop on 0121 248 0711. With your support we could host more landmark exhibitions, welcome more schools and showcase more artists.

## 20 facts. Did you know?

1. Ikon in Brindleyplace was formally opened in March 1998 by then Ladywood MP Clare Short.
2. Over 2.6 million members of the public have visited Ikon during its time in Brindleyplace.
3. Ikon has the only singing lift in Birmingham – *Work #409* (2005) by Martin Creed, performed by Ex Cathedra.
4. In 2019 Ikon's Director, Jonathan Watkins, celebrates 20 years of leadership at the gallery.
5. If you walk from Ikon to Central Square in Brindleyplace you will notice some special resin bricks in the pavement *This is Not Another Story* (2005) by artist Richard Deacon.
6. Did you know sheep have been spotted in Brindleyplace? In 2001, *My aunt's sheep* (1997) by artist Julian Opie were displayed in Oozells Square.
7. It's not every day that you see 47 Daschunds in Brindleyplace. In 2012 Ikon and Fierce Festival presented Bennett Miller's *Dachshund U.N* in Brindleyplace. A large-scale architectural installation and performance work that examined the role of the United Nations – where all 47 of the international delegates were live dachshunds or 'sausage dogs'.
8. Ikon *Slow Boat* is a converted narrow boat measuring 72 feet in length.
9. Ikon hosted *Chicks on Speed* (a band from Berlin), who performed on the roof of the Royal Bank of Scotland before it opened – inspired by the last Beatles concert.
10. In 2012, Ikon looked like it was under siege! During Bedwyr Williams' exhibition visitors to Ikon were greeted by *Ikon Under Siege* (2012), which transformed the gallery's entrance with piles of sandbags and taped-up windows, invoking a moment of bombardment or a wartime siege; a comment on the recent funding cuts experienced by a number of arts organisations.
11. The Oozells Street School building originally included a tower designed to draw in fresh air for Victorian children. The tower was demolished in the 1970s.

due to being unsafe and then rebuilt during the construction - it uses a resin based timber effect material so we don't need to get up there to paint it, thankfully!

12. The building was once a place where you could get your car taxed and a theatrical store in the late 1960s.
13. Transforming the building into Ikon cost £3.7m which was funded by one of the first National Lottery capital grants.
14. Ikon is a charity and welcomes over 130,000 visitors each year. If 20% of our visitors made a donation of £20 we would raise over half a million pounds for our artistic and learning programmes.
15. Want to support Ikon and its future? You can become an Ikon Patron for just £21 per month.
16. Ikon Shop is the only independent book shop in the centre of Birmingham.
17. Independent café, Yorks roast their own speciality coffee.
18. There used to be a large school hall extension at the rear of the building which was removed in the 1990s
19. The slate plinth surrounding Ikon Gallery was designed by British artist Tania Kovats – setting the building apart from its surroundings.
20. Architects Levitt Bernstein Associates converted the old school into a gallery. The architects turned one building into two; preserving the outside shell of the Victorian school and putting an entirely new, steel-framed gallery inside - a total of 440 square metres of gallery space.

For more information, high-res images and to request interviews please contact Rebecca Small or Emily Luxford on 0121 248 0708 or email [r.small@ikon-gallery.org](mailto:r.small@ikon-gallery.org) or [e.luxford@ikon-gallery.org](mailto:e.luxford@ikon-gallery.org)

Social Media Handles:

Instagram, Twitter and Facebook: @ikongallery #IkonGallery #langlandsandbell

Note 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, 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](http://www.ikon-gallery.org)
2. 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](#).

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Ikon Shop



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*Ikon Slow Boat*



Yorks Bakery Café at Ikon



Exterior of Ikon



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Julian Opie, *My aunt's sheep* (2001)



Bennett Miller's *Dachshund U.N.*, Brindleyplace (2012)



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Ikon Gallery pre development. Image courtesy Birmingham Post



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