

# IKON

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

## Langlands & Bell

### *Internet Giants : Masters of the Universe*

21 March – 10 June 2018



IT'S NOT AN  
EXPERIMENT  
IF YOU  
KNOW IT'S  
GOING TO  
WORK

Langlands & Bell, *Icon (Jeff Bezos)*, diptych (2018). Digital C type print mounted on aluminium and acrylic. Courtesy the artists.

Ikon presents an exhibition of new work by British artists Ben Langlands and Nikki Bell, marking the 40<sup>th</sup> year of their artistic partnership. Ben Langlands (born 1955) and Nikki Bell (born 1959) met while studying Fine Art at Middlesex Polytechnic, London, and have worked collaboratively since 1978.

Featuring the new iconic architecture of the global technology companies such as Apple, Facebook, Alibaba and Google, the exhibition includes a new series of relief sculptures, installations, digital animations and portraits that explore the increasingly profound influence they have on our lives in the age of 'Big Data'.

*"Nearly all of our art explores human social and cultural relationships, from the personal to the political, through architecture and the coded structures of communication and exchange that surround us. We see architecture as the most tangible and enduring record of the way we live. The internet giants continue to grow exponentially, becoming ever more powerful by the day, and exercising an increasingly profound influence over our lives. They are reshaping the cultures, politics and economies of societies all over the world comprehensively." Langlands & Bell*

At first sight the futuristic appearances of the new headquarters of the internet giants characterise the digital age: flagships for voyages of discovery in virtual worlds, whose campuses seamlessly translated from computer screens convey a complexity of attitudes and values in keeping with a brave new world. Yet the designs often rely for their impact and power on ancient typologies. Will the new Apple Headquarters in California designed by Norman Foster - a vast circular building nicknamed "The Spaceship" with a circumference of one mile - rival the Colosseum or Stonehenge?

The artist-duo often work from plans and architectural drawings they research online – including buildings that are yet to be completed. A new Ikon commission, *Google, Charleston East* (2018) is a huge model of Google's new global HQ under construction at Mountain View in California. In some senses Langlands & Bell's artistic practice resembles the extreme neoclassicism of revolutionary French architects, such as Étienne-Louis Boullée and Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, less concerned with the actuality of bricks and mortar than with the expression of ideas. Langlands & Bell explain:

*As with the cathedrals of the middle ages, the baroque palaces and gardens of the enlightenment, and the factories and railway stations of the industrial revolution, one of the things we are exploring is whether the new architecture of the internet giants is era defining – the architecture of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.*

A monumental new wall painting, *Your Thoughts Construct Patterns Like Scaffolding In Your Mind* (2018), is based on a quote by Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple, and is produced in collaboration with Birmingham-based street artist Dan Newso. The exhibition also includes a series of portraits of the 'Masters of the Universe', founders and CEOs of the Internet Giants including Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos, Sergey Brin and Steve Jobs appearing as religious icons for the digital age accompanied by their own words: "I'm trying to make the world a more open place" (Mark Zuckerberg).

The exhibition is accompanied by a new signed artists' print, *Apple, Sunny Vale* 2018 in a limited edition of 40, priced £200 and a fully illustrated catalogue, with an essay by architectural historian and critic Professor Anthony Vidler and an interview with the artists by curator and art historian Dr Hans-Michael Herzog.

The exhibition is supported by Glenn Howells Architects.



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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 #langlandsandbell

### **Links**

[www.ikon-gallery.org](http://www.ikon-gallery.org)

[www.langlandsandbell.com](http://www.langlandsandbell.com)

Note to Editors:

1. Ikon exhibition opening: Wednesday 21 March.
2. Langlands & Bell's recent solo exhibitions include *Infinite Loop*, Alan Cristea Gallery, London (2017). Recent group exhibitions include *Eclectic: The Julie & Robert Breckman Collection*, Victoria & Albert Museum, London (2017), *Summer Exhibition – International Artistic Duos*, The Royal Academy, London, (2016); *Seeing Round Corners*, Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK (2016). *Beauty < Immortality* a new permanent installation at Piccadilly Circus Underground Station, London opened in November 2016. Langlands & Bell will also be exhibiting in *Powerful Tides : 400 Years of Chatham and the Sea*, Chatham Historic Dockyard, Kent, 22 March – 17 June, 2018 [www.langlandsandbell.com](http://www.langlandsandbell.com)
3. 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)
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](#).



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Langlands & Bell, *Alibaba, Hangzhou* (2018) (detail). Acrylic, Dibond, MDF, card, paint, lacquer.  
104cm x 104cm x 8cm. Photo Peter White. Courtesy the artists.



Langlands & Bell, *Apple, Sunny Vale* (2017). Acrylic, Dibond, MDF, card, paint, lacquer.  
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YOUR THOUGHTS  
CONSTRUCT PATTERNS  
LIKE SCAFFOLDING  
IN YOUR MIND

Langlands & Bell, *Your Thoughts Construct Patterns Like Scaffolding In Your Mind* (2018). Water soluble house paint. 3.66m x 5.42m. Courtesy the artists.



Langlands & Bell. Photo: Bran Symondson. Courtesy the artists.