

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

Young Birmingham Artists *Ikon artists from the 1960s*

Ikon off-site at Medicine Bakery & Gallery
11 July – 19 August 2018



Pamela Scott Wilkie, *Journey: Shiraz* (1972). Silk screen print.

Young Birmingham Artists: Ikon artists from the 1960s (11 July – 19 August 2018) is an exhibition of work by the artists who founded Ikon in 1964. Then in their 20s and early 30s, they published a prospectus that reflected their youthful idealism, describing Ikon as “an antithesis to exclusive art establishments and galleries ... formed because of the need for an accessible place where the exchange of visual ideas can become a familiar reality.” Those who are still with us, now in their 70s and 80s, encourage us to continue in this same vein, combining artistic excellence with openness.

Before exhibiting in their first dedicated venue, an octagonal glass-walled kiosk in Birmingham’s Bull Ring, Ikon’s founder artists showed their work at the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists on New Street. This beautiful Victorian interior now has

a new lease of life, relaunched as the Medicine Bakery & Gallery, and it is very fitting that the first exhibition here should celebrate the achievements of those once 'young Birmingham artists'.

John Salt was the first to exhibit at Ikon with collaged abstractions such as *Silver Ghost* (1965) derived from landscapes, preceding the photorealist work for which he is best known. A similarly major shift in style was evident in the work of Robert Groves, as painterly scenes of North Africa and India gave way to icon-like rectangles of gold-leaf and other precious metals. Pamela Scott Wilkie's series of silk screen prints titled *Journey* (1972) evolved out of the serendipity of real experience; colour-dominated prints inspired by the artist's travels in Asia. In stark contrast, Jesse Bruton's artistic practice involved a restricted palette of black and white in works such as *Turnabout* (1967-1969) - painted endeavours to embody the experience of driving through the British countryside.

Through a variety of styles, Ikon artists conveyed their awareness of a wider conversation about art and its place in contemporary life, and sometimes their work referred to more general cultural trends. Sylvani Merilion focused on the scientific achievements of the sixties, especially space exploration, in her paintings and more sculptural works whilst Dinah Prentice was more attuned to concrete poetry, exploring the possibilities of meaning and visual effect in fragmented typeface. Trevor Denning's work such as *Large Mouth* (1966) was a wonderful hybrid of surrealism and pop with distinctly Freudian connotations. At the time of Ikon's inauguration, David Prentice was deriving inspiration from domestic subject matter, particularly concerned with translating his children's experiences from their own points of view; his later paintings became increasingly minimal, with large fields of overlapping grids on plain grounds. Likewise Peter Berry developed an essentialist aesthetic that manifested itself in sculpture as well as painting.

This presentation of work at Medicine Bakery & Gallery chimes with the original principles, as Ikon was first conceived of as a "gallery without walls", with a programme of touring exhibitions, pitched up in various locations ranging from post offices to car showrooms. Today Ikon continues to engage a wide range of audiences with exhibitions and events off-site - asserting the continuity between art and everyday life - and recent projects have taken place at Perrott's Folly, an 18th century tower in Birmingham's Ladywood district, St Philip's Cathedral near Colmore Row and Steelhouse Lane Lock-up. Meanwhile Ikon's *Slow Boat* navigates the local canal network, providing a unique floating venue, whilst further afield our exhibitions tour nationally and internationally.

As Ikon goes from strength to strength we remain mindful of our origins; this exhibition is at once an expression of gratitude to those who started the gallery and illustrates a remarkable chapter in the art history of Birmingham.

Full list of *Young Birmingham Artists*:

Peter Berry, Jesse Bruton, Trevor Denning, Robert Groves, Sylvani Merilion, David Prentice, Dinah Prentice, John Salt and Pamela Scott Wilkie.

Medicine Bakery & Gallery, 69 New Street, Birmingham B2 4DU. Open Wednesday-Sunday, 9am-6pm, free entry. Please note Medicine Bakery is only accessible via a steep staircase.

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 or e.luxford@ikon-gallery.org

Social Media Handles:

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

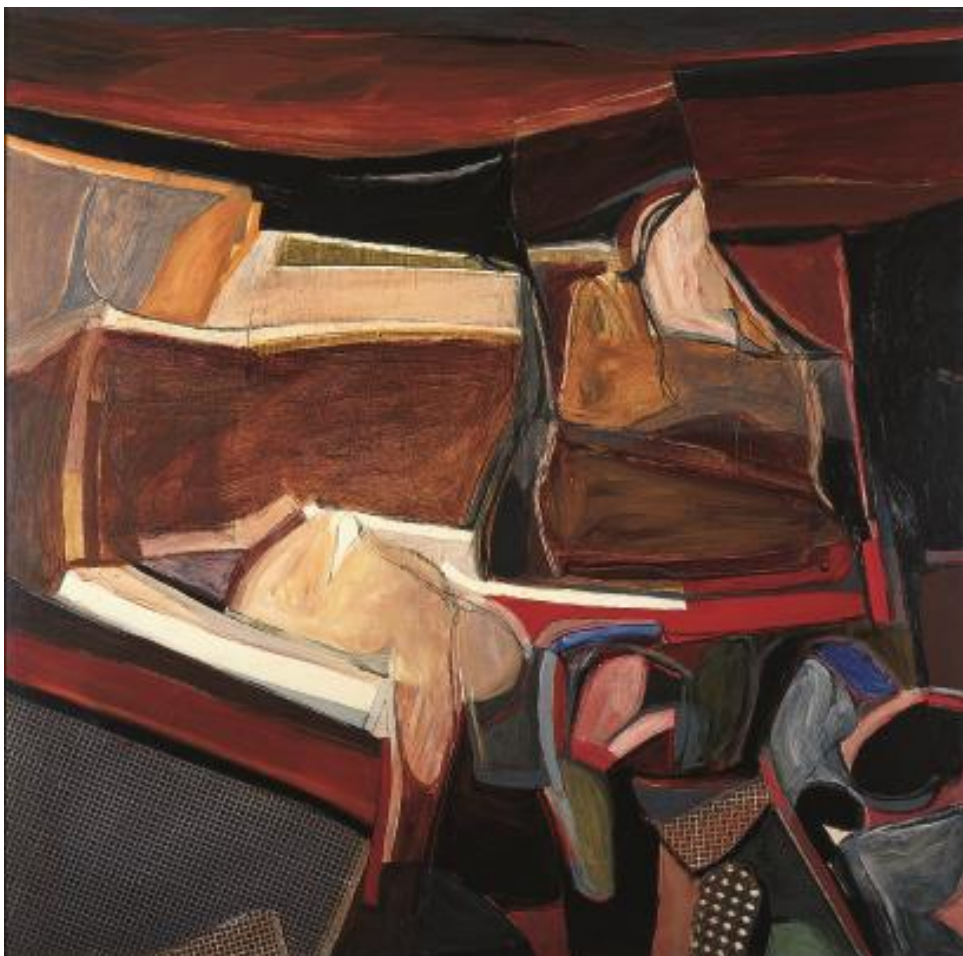
Links: ikon-gallery.org medicinebakery.co.uk

Note to Editors:

1. Ikon exhibition opening: *Young Birmingham Artists: Ikon artists from the 1960s*, Thursday 12 July, 6-8pm. Medicine Bakery & Gallery, 69 New Street, Birmingham B2 4DU.
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, 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. 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](#).
4. Medicine was born out of a discovery of abandoned space, of new possibilities and an inquisitive quality for creating something vital and diverse. An artisan bakery and kitchen, café and gallery, which is rooted in its heritage in both Birmingham and Wolverhampton, Medicine represents a new format of social space. It finds its niche through a carefully curated menu of ethical products, whilst offering a daily fix of cultural inspiration in an environment which promotes a debate about art and culture.

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David Prentice, *Wifely Beginning* (1962). Oil on board, courtesy Kate Prentice

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John Salt, *Silver Ghost* (c.1965). Painting and collage. Courtesy Ikon.

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Jesse Bruton, *Turnabout* (1967-1968). Oil on canvas. Courtesy Ikon.



Trevor Denning, *Large Mouth* (1966). Acrylic on board, courtesy Charlotte Denning.