

IKON

Exhibition Guide

Forward: New Art from Birmingham
23 January — 24 March 2019

Now, more than ever, Birmingham's artistic community is thriving. *Forward: New Art from Birmingham* is a group exhibition, including work by artists living and working in this city, which highlights a depth and vitality of practice. Taking place at Medicine, the former gallery space of the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists, from which sprang the young generation that founded Ikon more than 50 years ago, it could not be more in keeping with their progressive ethos, still informing our artistic programme to this day.

Ken Banks

Ken Banks lays out the seen and the obscure, mapping connections across random works. His paintings feature coincidences, combining unrelated aspects that lead to unforeseen relationships. The movement in his work documents an energy that is connected to everything. His work does not reference recognisable form, rather the results are abstracted to the extent that meaning and interpretation are shifted.

Famina Bi

Famina Bi deals with pattern and form, bringing Muslim women to the forefront of society using different mediums and processes. She celebrates diversity and belonging through her intricate visual language as well as challenging stereotypes and misconceptions.

Betsy Bradley

Betsy Bradley investigates the material outcome of impulsive gesture. She regards her practice as an evolving entity that exists in a continual state of flux. Paint behaves as an extension of her body and mind, embodying a dialogue between thought and action. A playful relationship with materials gives a

flexibility that challenges traditional notions of painting whilst celebrating its specificity.

Tereza Bušková

Tereza Bušková's artistic identity has changed since 2009. She became a parent and the intimate fertility rituals explored in her work became enriched with motherhood. These screenprints were made alongside a video titled *Spring Equinox*, detailing the first time the artist stepped outside of a studio space into Ratíškovice a village in Moravia, where women proudly wear their folklore costumes to Sunday church service. There, Bušková was taken into the core of the local residents' lives and with curiosity and passion closely observed their Easter rituals, which are reinterpreted in a tableaux vivant.

Leah Carless

An installation of two floor based sculptures that probe the relationship between abstraction and figuration through a sculptural and personal narrative. The material properties of the work are an attempt to establish a feminine materiality that disrupts traditional hierarchies. The works explore the sensual through gestures and traces of their own making.

Chris Clinton

Sourcing novelty dartboards from internet auction sites, Chris Clinton unwraps the coiled paper before reforming the object to reveal colourful concentric circles and geometric patterns. References to Hollywood films, comic books, cartoons or consumer brands, visible in the original image, are completely destroyed in the re-wrapping process, reminding us of the fleeting lifespan of kitsch items.

Anna Katarzyna Domejko

The work emblematises a fictional, collective and imaginary decision. Everyone enters the imagined place of the Big Toe Nail Tribe where a new and improved reality has been changed and normalised due to the redesign of everyday items. The work uses leverage to increase the potential of collective, modern agreements and its relevance to the fruits of our labour, accommodation and safety.

Mark Essen

The handmade bricks in display here take their name 'utopia' from a brick made by the Aldridge brick and tile company, Walsall, during the 19th century. The clay used in these bricks comes from the same quarry. Bricks are used in hundreds of ways but in this work they are arranged to make a chimney - an architectural structure in which controlled combustion could be seen to represent the end of an object.

Andrew Gillespie

Often transforming images and objects through a range of deliberate gestures, Andrew Gillespie explores the fixity of things. For this work, a print from his 2017 exhibition *Sinkhole* has been rescaled and re-contextualised. Once a multiple screen print, discarded on the floor, now a large scale PVC banner, the work continues Gillespie's interest in the status and longevity of artworks.

Kurt Hickson

Kurt Hickson is a mixed media artist who combines found objects with the vocabulary of painting to explore ideas of taste, tradition and progression. Whilst he embraces retro art practices, Hickson confronts the so-called 'death of painting' with a playful DIY approach to making by revamping the conventions of abstract painting with modern materials and experimental methods of production. Shifting between styles, Hickson explores the act, process and materiality of painting as it battles a world of commercial images, new media art forms and its own historical baggage.

Fred Hubble

This work explores our understanding of 'seasons' in the context of climate change. *Snō fōl* (2017) takes its name from the pronunciation of 'snowfall' in English. The phonetic title gives the work an otherness associated with various languages. Snow becomes a way to play with the temporality of performance and seasonality within arts practice. In this film we see the seemingly futile act of trying to save a tree weighed down by snow.

Dion Kitson

Today's news is tomorrow's chip paper. Not anymore. That was back then when things were different to now. Do you remember the time before that thing happened? When Prince William was in the West Midlands or when that pub in Dudley was demolished? Neither do I. Whatever happened to that Ferris wheel?

Joanne Masding

Joanne Masding makes work to address how histories are authored through objects, how worth is attributed and ownership assigned, and how these labels translate to a digital, reproducible world. *New Rehang (series 1)* (2016) uses pages from *The British Museum* catalogue as a way to access tangible versions of inaccessible things; that can be felt, eaten, moved, ruined and known rather than known about. This cheap, portable item offers a way to stick hands and body inside the process of the museum and its proliferation of replicas.

Farwa Moledina

Not Your Fantasy (2018) is a series of textile prints concerned with re-appropriating and reclaiming imagery of Muslim women. The aim of the work is to unveil the voyeuristic tradition of Western male painters, whilst inviting viewers to question the prevalence of Orientalism in current society. It is embroidered with the words "Not Your Fantasy" and patterned with fragments of Ingres' *La Grande Odalisque*, which has been criticised for its appropriation and sexualisation of Eastern culture.

Brian J Morrison

Mesomorph (2017) is one of a series of sculptural objects informed by William Herbert Sheldon's pseudoscientific theory of Somatotypes, which aims to define three basic body shapes. The work draws aesthetic inspiration from American minimalist sculpture and painting of the 1960s, whilst directly opposing many of the conceptual values it adhered to. Interested in the body's role in the production of art, Morrison has used a labourious and repetitive physical process to transform the object's surface.

Suzi Osborn

At Paradise Circus Osborn imagines Robinson, Patrick Keiller's fictional wanderer travelling the length of Birmingham's inner ring road in search of the heart of the metropolis, discovering a concrete island at its centre.

Separated by artificial lakes and forested traffic islands where a latter-day Crusoe could have found comfortable refuge. The Eden Olympia Complex, Supercannes, J.G. Ballard.

Antonio Roberts

Roberts' practices explore what ownership and authorship mean in an age impacted by digital technology. *data.set* (2016) investigates what happens when we choose to represent social data beyond the confines of a traditional spreadsheet. Rather than showing datasets on digital exclusion and adult internet usage, Roberts has chosen to represent its bytes visually. Blocks of colour replace tabular or text-file formats, offering a different perspective. Produced with the support of the Open Data Institute.

Emily Scarrott

This installation initially responds to Scarrott's childhood memory of a male friend finding a magic worm outside Ikon Gallery. The worms are suspended out of reach of the public, recreating the frustration born from not being able to interact with them. In an art world preoccupied with the domination of the white male artist, the worms act as phallic images which embarrass their potential owners. A single worm is disposable and unremarkable, but hundreds of them become unavoidable.

Larissa E Shaw

Soundtrack for Dancing Vibrissae and Other Soft Shore Things (2019)

Emily Sparkes

I Run to You (2019) considers painting in relation to the internet by utilising images, gestures, and text and allowing them to coexist as they might appear on a screen. What is the potential of painting in an era defined by memes? Kermit the Frog might offer a response in declaring, "but that's none of my business".

Kate Spence

Reflecting on the occasions they were raped in nightclub toilets, the question is posed to the offenders:

*Does your mother know you f*cked people like me in nasty toilets when she brings your toast in the morning?*

The audience find themselves drifting above the artist's body in this looped 360 film. It is a meditation to share an intimate trauma, returning to the ghosts of the past in an attempt to reclaim lost parts of the self.

Ally Standing

Dynasty Court Tower (2018) is a photograph of an external feature of a residential block in the Central Mid-Levels of Hong Kong. The building boasts luxury fittings such as 'televisions within mirrors' as well as amenities such as a landscaped tropical garden and golf simulator. Such opulence illustrates the division present in Hong Kong: in the current housing crisis, some 200,000 of the city's poorest residents are living in 15 sq ft cages known as 'coffin homes'. The colourful yet faded tiles and visible structural elements are architecturally typical of this city; a labyrinthine and layered metropolis, shifting between dystopia and utopia, and whose contradictions and complexities manifest themselves in the urban fabric.

Sarah Taylor Silverwood

Sarah Taylor Silverwood is a visual artist with a practice rooted in drawing and language, used as material to produce publications, animations and installation works. *F.U. Vessels* (2018) are ceramic heads embedded with screens showing hand drawn animation. The forms and motifs of the vessels reference animation style sheets from major studios. These sheets are used to standardise the appearance and gestures of characters, emphasising identity and continuity. The animations, brought to life by the vessels, explore the inscription of female difference in language and culture.

Katharine Wade

Katharine Wade is a graphic designer and creative producer. Through illustration and design, Wade has helped deliver artistic projects such as *Minerval Market* (2016) and Coventry City's first *Biennial of Contemporary Art* (2017). Here, Wade has designed the *Forward* coat of arms, a playful image that captures the spirit of Birmingham's artists, for whom hands-on creativity and collaboration abounds. Wade's work is inclusive, always working with other makers and producers and thriving on communicating with as wide an audience as possible.

Emily Warner

Situation Unchanged (2016) is a filmed work combining artist-research, sculpture and site-specific performance. Drawing on archival material and written accounts of philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, the film portrays a quest for fundamental truth and betterment. A criteria for good design - defined by Wittgenstein - inspires the sculptural aesthetics, and a compilation of excerpts form a script illustrating obsessive endeavours. Performed in Linz, Austria where Wittgenstein studied, and devised as part of the cultural project *Goodbye Wittgenstein*, the work responds to the early text *Notes on Logic* which he dictated during a trip to Birmingham in 1913.

Rafal Zar

I want (2016)

Medicine Bakery and Gallery, 69 New Street,
Birmingham B2 4DU

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accessible via a steep staircase**

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Ikon Gallery
Brindleyplace, Birmingham B1 2HS
0121 248 0708
ikon-gallery.org

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