

The Aerodrome

An exhibition dedicated to the memory of Michael Stanley

12 June – 8 September 2019



Michael Stanley

This exhibition is dedicated to the memory of Michael Stanley, Curator of Ikon before becoming Director of Milton Keynes Gallery and then Modern Art Oxford, who died tragically in 2012. Co-curated with David Austen and George Shaw and structured loosely on Rex Warner's 1941 war-time novel *The Aerodrome*, a book that made a great impression on Stanley, it includes many of the artists he worked with.

Stanley was born and brought up in the industrial town of Widnes, Cheshire. His early experience of art came because, as he explained in 2010, "I was brought up in a strong Roman Catholic family, so seeing art in churches was inevitable, though in most services I'd be distracted and draw a detail of the Station of the Cross or something on the back of the hymn sheet." Tate and the Walker Art Gallery, nearby in Liverpool, were formative influences, and at the age of seventeen he won a scholarship to the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art in Oxford, where he worked in many media, including Super 8 film, as well as bronze and recycled materials, and his degree show in 1995 was highly acclaimed.

A number of freelance curatorial projects subsequently led to Stanley's appointment as Curator of Art at Compton Verney in 2000. The two year stint at Ikon, 2002-04, saw him getting into his curatorial stride before he flourished as Director at Milton Keynes and Oxford - 2004-09 and 2009-12, respectively - putting a distinctly imaginative and ambitious stamp on the artistic programmes of both. Stanley was held in great affection by colleagues and artists, who regarded him as one of their own. Jenny Saville, for example, whose first solo show in a British public gallery took place at MAO in the year of his death, described Stanley as someone who "wasn't scared of history or of being radical. He was as likely to be enthusing about working with a sculptor in his nineties, [as] raising funds to facilitate a young filmmakers' vision. His poetic sensibility, combined with a can-do attitude where everything's possible, is what made him so magnetic and convincing."

Warner's *Aerodrome*, written during World War 2, is an allegorical novel whose young hero is faced with the disintegration of certainties about his loved ones and with a choice between the earthy, animalistic life of his home village and the pure, efficient, emotionally detached life of an airman. Its dystopian vision was very influential on writers such as Orwell, Burgess and Ballard. In fact it is full of the imagery we think of now as Ballardian: modern dystopias, bleak man-made landscapes and the psychological effects of technological, social or environmental developments. And in light of current affairs world-wide, including the rise of terrorism, listening secret states and drone warfare – symptomatic variously of a serious challenge to the democracy we too often take for granted - a rereading of Warner's book, as the point of departure for such an exhibition, could not be more timely.

Artists: Phillip Allen / Polly Apfelbaum / David Austen / Karla Black / Simon & Tom Bloor / Boyd & Evans / Marcel Broodthaers / Marcus Coates / Nathan Coley / Phil Collins / John Constable / Michael Craig-Martin / Abraham Cruzvillegas / Shezad Dawood / Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane / dRMM Architects / Alec Finlay / Anya Gallaccio / John Gerrard / Siobhán Hapaska / Roger Hiorns / Lonnie Holley / Thomas Houseago / Langlands & Bell / Elizabeth Magill / Aleksandra Mir / Jean-Luc Moulène / Paul Nash / Hayley Newman / Adrian Paci / Susan Philipsz / Paul Ramírez Jonas / Kristian Ryokan / Michael Sailstorfer / Jenny Saville / George Shaw / Michael Stanley / Linder Sterling / Graham Sutherland / Phoebe Unwin / Wolfgang Weileder / Cathy Wilkes / Stephen Willats / Keith Wilson / Richard Woods / Gilberto Zorio

The exhibition is supported by The Ampersand Foundation, Gagosian, Henry Moore Foundation, Modern Art Oxford, Outset Contemporary Art Fund and Thomas Dane Gallery. Thanks also to Michael Stanley's family for unstinting generosity.

For more information, high-res images and to request interviews please contact Emily Luxford or Sam Newman on 0121 248 0708 or email e.luxford@ikon-gallery.org or s.newman@ikon-gallery.org.

Social Media Handles:

Instagram, Twitter and Facebook:
[@ikongallery](#) [#IkonGallery](#) [#TheAerodrome](#)

Links: ikon-gallery.org

Note to Editors:

1. Ikon exhibition opening: Wednesday 12 June, 6-8pm.
2. The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue published by Ikon and Modern Art Oxford, featuring essays by artists David Austen, George Shaw, Carrie Stanley and Jonathan Watkins, Director, Ikon.
3. Ikon is working with artist Carrie Stanley and campaigner Angela Samata to use Ikon's *Slow Boat* as a space to share resources, generate discussion and lead creative activity that addresses family bereavement. If you have experience of bereavement, or are involved with a charity supporting the bereavement of children and young people, please contact Ikon's Learning Team on learning@ikon-gallery.org, for more information on programmed activity.
4. 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. [Ikon-gallery.org](http://ikon-gallery.org)
5. 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](#).
6. Arts Council England is the national development body for arts and culture across England, working to enrich people's lives. ACE support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to visual art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2018 and 2022, ACE will invest £1.45 billion of public money from government and an estimated £860 million from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. arts council.org.uk

IKON

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



David Austen, *Fallen Man* (2013), Oil on flax canvas, 168x152.5 cm. Courtesy the artist

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John Constable, Study of Clouds (1822), Oil on paper, 48 x 59 cm,
Image © The Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.
Presented by Sir E. Farquhar Buzzard, Bt, 1933
LO2742.1 WA1933.7

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Aleksandra Mir, *Plane Landing* (2003), Compton Verney. Courtesy the artist

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Adrian Paci, *Per Speculum* (2006), Film. Courtesy the artist.

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George Shaw, *Scenes from The Passion: The New Star* (2002), Humbrol enamel on board, 167.64 x 152.9cm.
Private Collection, London. Image: Anthony Wilkinson Gallery, London and © George Shaw.