

ZouZou Group - *door open* - 4 December 2019 – 23 February 2020



ZouZou Group. Damascus street, still from - *door open* - (2019)

This new video installation, - *door open* - (2014–2019), is by ZouZou Group, comprising two anonymous artists, one Syrian from Damascus, the other British, living in England.

The work comes from their ongoing dialogue, made possible (and frequently impossible) through online messaging and filesharing mobile phone video footage. Presented in Ikon's Tower Room, - *door open* - exposes the constraints and imbalances of working together across the boundary of a war zone and longstanding military dictatorship. Three screens speak to and across each other, exploring, interpreting and finally overcoming the many impediments to making the work.

Eleven impediments are listed as chapter headings, and indicate the near-impossibility of making the work while, implicitly, suggesting why it had, therefore, to be made. The kinds of confinement to which the Syrian artist is subjected quickly become clear as it is too dangerous for her to be seen filming with her phone, and so she resorts to shooting downwards or, alone in her small, walled backyard, upwards. The horizon – and its symbolic quality as an imagined future – cannot be represented.

In contrast, the British artist travels the world, apparently free to reveal what she sees from all perspectives but, as the credits make clear, the countries she visits are among the many somehow implicated in the continuing Syrian 'crisis'. Distortions of power and visibility become explicit in the work, and link to issues around artistic authority, translation and interpretation of experiences that are quite foreign from each other. Representing two independent female artists, – *door open* – is in the tradition of women's epistolary works, and challenges conventional Western prejudices about women from Muslim-majority countries. The exhibition is supported by Art Fund.

Please note the Tower Room is only accessible via a number of steps.

For more information, high-res images and to request interviews please contact Rebecca Small or Laura Jaunzems on 0121 248 0708 or email r.small@ikon-gallery.org or l.jaunzems@ikon-gallery.org

Social Media Handles -Instagram, Twitter and Facebook:
[@ikongallery](https://www.instagram.com/ikongallery) [#IkonGallery](https://twitter.com/ikongallery)

Links: ikon-gallery.org

Note to Editors:

1. Ikon exhibition opening: Wednesday 4 December, 6-8pm.
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 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

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. 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. artscouncil.org.uk



ZouZou Group. Assad, Putin & Nasrallah as market ephemera, on the Dover train, still from – *door open* – (2019)

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



ZouZou Group. Damascus street, still from – door open – (2019)



ZouZou Group. St Petersburg Station, still from – door open – (2019)