

## *Faster Than Ever*

4 December 2020 – 2 May 2021



Left: Kate Groobey, *Give Me What I Want* (2018). Video. Courtesy the artist.

Right: Grace Ndiritu, *The Nightingale* (2003). Video. Courtesy the artist.

Ikon announces the forthcoming group show *Faster Than Ever* - an exhibition invented out of necessity in response to the challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. Involving around 30 artists from across the world, *Faster Than Ever* is an exercise in capitalising on chance, making the most of incongruity and happy accidents.

Participating artists include Giovanni Anselmo, Thomas Bewick, Julie Brook, Pavel Büchler, Alice Cattaneo, Lee Bul, Edmund Clark, Martin Creed, Kate Groobey, Graham Gussin, Arturo Herrera, Carmen Herrera, On Kawara, Lutz and Guggisberg, Haroon Mirza, Ivan Morison, Nástio Mosquito, Grace Ndiritu, Timur Novikov, Cornelia Parker, Navin Rawanchaikul, Noguchi Rika, Savage, Shimabuku, Dayanita Singh, Bosco Sodi, Nancy Spero, Beat Streuli, David Theobald and Gillian Wearing.

In light of logistical difficulties in the current landscape, Ikon has departed from the advertised programme to curate a group exhibition from artworks it has accumulated over time. Though not a collecting institution, Ikon houses an extraordinary range of paintings, sculptures and photographs, as well as the many films, sound pieces and wall drawings held as digital files. With the permission of the participating artists, these works are released back into the galleries in a combination and context that were never initially envisioned. Here, propositions that inform Ikon's activity shine through; above all, the continuity between artistic experience and everyday life.

Moving imagery fills the entirety of Ikon's first floor. Seminal early works by Grace Ndiritu and Nástio Mosquito – smart and arresting in their social critique – are presented alongside Beat Streuli's *Pallasades* (2001), a video commissioned by Ikon to convey Birmingham's cultural diversity. Nearby, Japanese artist

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Shimabuku's silent film of a sunrise in Seoul is like an epiphany, particularly pertinent at this time, an eccentric celebration of the natural world. Likewise, a sense of euphoria is elicited in *Sounds and Colours in Ivan Morison's Garden* (2002), in which the artist tends to his allotment unashamedly naked in bucolic bliss.

In the upstairs galleries, large scale photographs by Dayanita Singh and Noguchi Rika reflect a fascination with human behaviour and ordinary strangeness, also exemplified by Thomas Bewick's woodcut engravings, or "tale-pieces", printed two centuries previously. A number of these are shown in combination with wooden book dummies by Swiss artists Lutz and Guggisberg, inspired by Ikon's Bewick exhibition in 2009. Their sense of fun is shared by Kate Groobey, whose video vignettes are Dionysian in their communication of the "pure pleasure" she feels in the company of her female partner. A silkscreen print by Nancy Spero adjacent, commissioned by Ikon in 1998 which sees a female duo leaping and dancing across the picture plane, is similarly feminist and optimistic.

The finale of the exhibition is marked by a combination of work by Martin Creed and On Kawara. Both artists have been subject to major solo exhibitions at Ikon, characterised by an emphasis on repetition as an existentialist strategy - a stylistic minimalism that foils the unfathomable complexity of what it means to be human. In Ikon's Tower Room, the Turner Prize-winning installation *Work No. 160* (2001), otherwise known as *The lights going on and off*, plays with our sense of space and time, whilst On Kawara's *One Million Years (Reading)* returns to Ikon's wooden staircase. Leading to the exit, a recording of men and women reading sequences of dates far into the past and into the future offers a philosophical moment of reflection.

In essence, *Faster Than Ever* is an analogy for the improvisation, the "making do and getting by", that frames the way we navigate the world. Jonathan Watkins, Ikon Director, explains:

"During these extraordinary times – which call for extraordinary measures – we could not be more aware of the diversions and U-turns required, taking us through unfamiliar landscapes. This exhibition accentuates the positive, highlighting what is possible in the midst of uncertainty. Ikon is an art gallery that has always been fast on its feet, now moving faster than ever."

For more information, high-res images and to request interviews please contact Milly Carter Hepplewhite and Emma Gilhooly on 020 8969 3959 or email [milly@pelhamcommunications.com](mailto:milly@pelhamcommunications.com) and [emma@pelhamcommunications.com](mailto:emma@pelhamcommunications.com)

Social Media Handles:

Instagram, Twitter and Facebook:

@ikongallery #IkonGallery #FasterThanEver

Links:

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

Note to Editors:

1. 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.

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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)

2. Admission to Ikon Gallery is free. For opening times and the latest news and events visit [ikon-gallery.org](http://ikon-gallery.org) and follow @ikongallery on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). Ikon is supported using public funding from Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council.
3. 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](http://artscouncil.org.uk)