

## Bill Woodrow Richard Deacon *We Thought About It A Lot, and other shared drawings*

15 September — 21 November 2021



Left: Bill Woodrow and Richard Deacon, *RIVER DEEP* (2019). Ink, oil stick, paint, paper. 210 x 150 cms. Courtesy the artists.  
Right: Bill Woodrow and Richard Deacon, *I CAN'T STAND THE RAIN* (2019). Paint, collage, ink, paper. 150 x 185 cms. Courtesy the artists.

Ikon is pleased to present *We Thought About It A Lot, and other shared drawings*, a selection of collaborative works by acclaimed British artists Bill Woodrow and Richard Deacon. Making “shared sculptures” together since 1990, on this occasion they reveal their “shared drawings” for the first time. Resulting from a process of back-and-forth exchange during 2019-20, they are manifestations of the two artists surprising and responding to each other; sometimes alone whilst making individual contributions, at other times sharing the same space. Drawn gestures, as opposed to sculptural assemblage – capturing thoughts that occur momentarily – they convey a rare smartness and imagination.

Ostensibly two dimensional, these new works become layered through a range of techniques including collage, frottage, and drawing in pencil or pen and ink. Figurative motifs are combined with abstract configurations leading to aesthetic results that are edgily compelling. In *SHROUD* (2020), a piece of fabric imprinted with the iconic portrait of Che Guevara is cornered by a

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constellation of contrasting bold, graphic shapes realised in paint, oil stick and graphite. Here, the artistic conversation between Deacon and Woodrow is seemingly evident, whereas other works present more holistic compositions; *I CAN'T STAND THE RAIN* (2019), for example, is a colourful interplay of paint, collage and ink that covers the entire surface.

The authorship of individual contributions is deliberately not revealed, as Woodrow explains:

... we agreed not to say which bits had been made by which person. People were very adamant that they knew, but, by and large, they were wrong. Richard is predominantly an artist who works in the abstract. My work is generally figurative in some form or other, and what has been interesting is the way that the figurative and abstract, without saying who does what, have come together and produced this sort of third area. And as an exercise it does influence and come back into your own work. Working in a team expands your vocabulary and so now you have extra things you can use.

By working in this way, Woodrow and Deacon are continually absorbing, re-energising each other and reviewing their own artistic practices. The title of the exhibition is taken from one of the works in which hands are seen spelling out the words “we thought about it a lot” in sign language. At once this is a reference to the collaborative process, which the artists describe as one of “total trust”, and a more philosophical tendency, shared. Deacon elaborates on the combined artistic identity found in the works:

I think ‘shared’ makes things threefold, bringing sculpture (or drawing) into the relationship alongside our individual identities. I am very intrigued by our creation of an artist, ‘Woodrow/Deacon’, who has a career and an existence independent of either of us.

The exhibition is accompanied by the book *Bill Woodrow & Richard Deacon, A Democratic Process: Shared Sculptures and Drawings*, with an introductory essay by writer and curator Jon Wood. Published by Anomie, 2021.

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

Social Media - Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook: @ikongallery #IkonGallery  
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Links: [ikon-gallery.org](http://ikon-gallery.org)  
[billwoodrow.com](http://billwoodrow.com)  
[richarddeacon.net](http://richarddeacon.net)

## Note to Editors:

1. Bill Woodrow (b. 1948) and Richard Deacon (b. 1949) are both based in the UK and are Royal Academicians. They have respectively had international solo museum exhibitions and participated in global art biennials. Woodrow's work is held in numerous public collections including British Museum, London; Kunsthaus, Zürich; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh; Tate, London; and Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Similarly, Deacon's works are held in the collections of the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid; Fondazione Prada, Milan; Hirshorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Tate, London, among others.
2. \*Please note all dates are subject to change, in particular as a result of Government announcements relating to the Covid-19 pandemic.
3. 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)
4. Ikon Gallery is supported using public funding from Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council. For the latest news and events follow [@ikongallery](https://twitter.com/ikongallery) on [Twitter](https://www.facebook.com/ikongallery), [Facebook](https://www.instagram.com/ikongallery) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/ikongallery).
5. 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)