

IKON

Ikon Gallery
1 Oozells Square Brindleyplace
Birmingham B1 2HS
0121 248 0708 / ikon-gallery.org
free entry / donations welcome
Registered charity no. 528892

FOKA WOLF *WHY ARE WE STUCK IN HOSPITAL?*

7 – 19 March 2023

Ikon Gallery, The Exchange, Jack Arts billboards,
Birmingham



Foka Wolf, *Why Are We Stuck in Hospital?* (2023)

An impossible maze, with no beginning or end, forms the basis of a new gallery installation and inner-city billboard campaign by Birmingham artist [Foka Wolf](#). Produced by Ikon, *Why Are We Stuck in Hospital?* (7 – 19 March 2023), illustrates the invisibility of people with learning disabilities and/or autistic people in long-stay hospitals.

Known for his 'subvertisements', which parody corporate and political posters, Foka Wolf's interventions make us question our city's infrastructure and whether it is meeting the needs of our community.

"As we have come to expect from Foka Wolf, this new artwork is straight to the point. It challenges us to think for ourselves and act on behalf of our community. It's also graphic,

colourful and highly theatrical, shining a light on the creativity of the thousands of people incarcerated in hospital settings.” Linzi Stauvers, Acting Artistic Director, Education, Ikon

Comprising graphic design and declarative captions, Foka Wolf’s new posters responds to ***Why Are We Stuck in Hospital?*** – a project conducted by the [School of Social Policy](#) at the University of Birmingham in partnership with rights-based organisation [Changing Our Lives](#). The research raises awareness of the 2,000 people with learning disabilities and/or autistic people who live in hospital settings for long periods of time, often for many years and with no planned date to leave. Ikon’s exhibition coincides with the publication of policy guidelines based on the experiences of people with learning disabilities, their families and front-line staff.

“Some people might need a short spell in hospital in an absolute emergency - but no one should live in a hospital. We closed our previous asylums, but it’s a national scandal that so many people are still stuck in modern-day equivalents. This research and this exhibition try to amplify the voices of people with learning disabilities so that these are heard directly by the public.” Jon Glasby, ***Director*** of IMPACT (Improving Adult Care Together), Professor of Health and Social Care/NIHR School for Social Care Research Senior Fellow, University of Birmingham

Alongside Foka Wolf’s installation, Ikon hosts a display by Changing Our Lives based on their publication [Hospital to Home: Matthew’s Story](#) (2022). Problems at home and a lack of support with his autism led to Matthew being sectioned aged 17. He spent the next 16 years locked in hospital settings, away from family and deprived of his liberty. Now living happily in his own home, Matthew’s story is not only a testament to what can be achieved when the right support is put in place, but a poignant reflection on barriers and injustices experienced by thousands of other people trying to leave hospital.

“We are proud to be working with Ikon and Foka Wolf to shine a spotlight on the plight of people with learning disabilities and autistic people who find themselves trapped in hospital. The circumstances of these approximately 2000 individuals is invisible in mainstream media, with the exception of occasional human rights scandals that lead to little change, so when we had the opportunity to work with a subversive artist and a contemporary gallery, we were very excited. Although this is only a short exhibition, we hope that Foka Wolf’s following will continue to shine a light on this national scandal.”

Jayne Leeson MBE, Chief Executive Officer, Changing Our Lives

On Tuesday 7 March, Foka Wolf and Matthew launch the installation at Ikon Gallery (4.30-6pm) followed by an evening of free community talks and creative workshops - ***Who Cares?*** - at [The Exchange](#) (6-8pm), the former municipal bank in Centenary Square, Birmingham. The research project ***Why Are We Stuck in Hospital?*** also features in [A Place to Call Home](#), an exhibition and events programme at The Exchange, showcasing the University of Birmingham’s research themes of adult social care, homelessness and displacement of people.

Presented by Ikon and The Exchange, Foka Wolf's new artwork are also displayed on [Jack Arts](#) billboards in Birmingham's inner-city. The campaign runs 7 – 19 March with posters on [Floodgate Street](#) (B5 5SR), [Bradford Street](#) (B12 0QY), [York Road](#) (B14 7RZ) and [Bristol Road](#) (B29 6BJ). Spotted a *Why Are We Stuck in Hospital?* poster by Foka Wolf? Share with us at #ikongallery

Why Are We Stuck in Hospital? is funded by the [National Institute for Health and Care Research HS&DR programme](#).

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

Social Media Handles - Instagram, Twitter and Facebook: @ikongallery #IkonGallery @fokawolf @unibirmingham @Postive_Lives @changingourlives @BUILDHOLLYWOOD_@ace_midlands @BhamCityCouncil

Notes to Editors:

1. Foka Wolf has created his subversive art for over a decade, mixing serious social & political commentary with lots of humour. For the past five years, his satirical adverts have popped up in inner-city areas of Birmingham, London and Manchester. With a reputation for “brandalism”, Foka Wolf's posters address global issues of police brutality, climate change, corporate greed, workers' rights and the housing crisis. fokawolf.com
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 Education 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 Wednesday – Sunday, 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. The University of Birmingham is ranked amongst the world's top 100 institutions. Its work brings people from across the world to Birmingham, including researchers, teachers and more than 8,000 international students from over 150 countries. The School of Social Policy carries out high quality and relevant research, and uses this as a starting point to make a practical difference in the real world through teaching, professional training, policy advice and working with local communities.
birmingham.ac.uk/schools/social-policy
5. Changing Our Lives is a rights-based organisation which challenges social injustice and health inequalities. They work alongside disabled people and people with experience of mental health difficulties to make an ordinary life achievable for all. Their work is rooted in the social model of disability and the belief that no one is too disabled and no one's mental health is too complex to lead an 'ordinary life'.
changingourlives.org
6. The Exchange is the University of Birmingham's city centre venue in Centenary Square, Birmingham's 'civic heart' that is home to many of our city's most iconic locations such as the Library of Birmingham, the International Convention Centre, Symphony Hall and the REP theatre. The Exchange was constructed in the early 1930s and is of historic importance to the city of Birmingham as it was formerly the headquarters of the Birmingham Municipal Bank. The Exchange brings together the University's research, teaching and networks to create a place of curiosity, celebration, collaboration and change. Through free public exhibitions and community engagement programmes our ambition is to enable people from the city and wider region to get involved in the University's work to address the complex challenges of our time. birmingham.ac.uk/the-exchange
7. Jack Arts, part of the BUILDHOLLYWOOD family, are creative street advertising specialists – they love cities and believe they are the perfect place to promote the arts, generate conversation and spark meaningful change. Jack Arts specialise in creating inspiring street campaigns and experiences for the culture space. Working with galleries, exhibitions, publishers and many other institutions their specialist team understand the arts, the audience and the need to be creative; they believe city streets offer a unique canvas and context to showcase campaigns that connect with an informed and creative audience. buildhollywood.co.uk
8. 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

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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