

## EXHIBITION GUIDE

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# FRIENDS IN LOVE AND WAR L'ÉLOGE DES MEILLEUR·ES ENNEMI·ES

2 OCTOBER 2024 – 23 FEBRUARY 2025

Ikon and macLYON present works by over twenty artists from the British Council Collection and macLYON that explore the meaning and role of friendship in contemporary life.

### Artists

Kenneth Armitage, Sonia Boyce, Tereza Bušková, Pogus Caesar, Patrick Caulfield, Jimmie Durham, Tracey Emin, Marie-Anita Gaube, Lola Gonzàlez, Emma Hart, Lubaina Himid, Géraldine Kosiak, Delaine Le Bas, Markéta Luskacová, Rachel Maclean, Goshka Macuga, Madame Yevonde, Gordon Matta-Clark, Hetain Patel, Paula Rego, Luke Routledge, Niek van de Steeg, Francis Upritchard, Fabien Verschaere, Gillian Wearing, Bedwyr Williams, Rose Wylie and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye

### Curators

Marilou Laneuville, Head of Exhibitions and Publications, macLYON  
Melanie Pocock, Artistic Director (Exhibitions), Ikon

## INTRODUCTION

Curated collaboratively, the exhibition considers friendship as a fundamental human relationship that is essential to wellbeing and society. Taking place in the partner cities of Birmingham and Lyon, it reflects on the nature of diplomatic friendships and how regional capitals and cultural organisations can create new ways of living and working together in a post-Brexit climate.

On the **First Floor**, works from the **British Council Collection** explore childhood friendship and our desire for companionship throughout adult life. Artists **Patrick Caulfield**, **Sonia Boyce** and **Lynette Yiadom-Boakye** evoke how friends alleviate loneliness and shape our sense of self. Painting, print and sculpture by **Kenneth Armitage**, **Tracey Emin**, **Lubaina Himid** and **Rose Wylie** recall how inspiration from friends helps us overcome adversity. Films by **Hetai Patel** and **Rachel Maclean** perform the harmony and conflict in unions which are rooted in shared interests and respect.

Protruding from a brick wall at the top of the **glass stairwell** is ***Pepsi and Shirley (2017)***, a visual pun on the fizzy drinks brand and 1980s British pop duo by artist **Emma Hart**. On the **Second Floor**, works from the collection of **macLYON** and **artists with longstanding connections to Birmingham and Lyon** show kinship and solidarity across cultures and generations. Artists **Luke Routledge** and **Fabien Verschaere** imagine friends travelling through fictional worlds in search of healing. Films by **Tereza Bušková** and **Gordon Matta-Clark** and photography by **Pogus Caesar** convey the importance of community and friendship in transcending cultural and political divides. In the last room, visitors are invited to take a seat at **Niek van de Steeg's *Structure de correction, table de débat (c. 2000)*** and record their reflections on the nature of friendship.

In **Ikon's reception**, a mural by **Fabien Verschaere** creates a sprawling landscape of characters whose contrasting personalities make them 'best enemies' – a duality that lies at the heart of our most challenging and rewarding friendships.

This exhibition is supported by the British Council and is presented as part of **UK/France Spotlight on Culture 2024 *Together We Imagine***, with additional support from Fluxus Art Projects and Birmingham City University. It is presented as part of Ikon's 60th anniversary year.

## TEXT PANELS

Find out more by reading the text panels next to each artwork.

## FREE DIGITAL GUIDE

Discover more about the exhibition with our free digital guide on Bloomberg Connects, the arts and culture app.



## EXHIBITION CATALOGUE. £20

The full-colour catalogue features texts and illustrations of artworks in the exhibition alongside letters by co-curators Marilou Laneuville and Melanie Pocock that reflect on philosophical ideas and dynamics of friendship and a new text by Camille Toffoli, author of *S'engager en amitié* (2023). Published by macLYON, Ikon and Bernard Chauveau Édition. Texts in English and French.

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   @ikongallery

Open Tuesday–Sunday, 11am–5pm

Free entry, donations welcome

Ikon Gallery, Brindleyplace,  
Birmingham, B1 2HS  
0121 248 0708 / [ikon-gallery.org](http://ikon-gallery.org)

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Ikon is a charity that depends on the generosity of visitors, patrons and businesses. Support us today and help keep Ikon free for everyone.

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For more information visit [ikon-gallery.org/support](http://ikon-gallery.org/support)

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