

EXHIBITION GUIDE

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START THE PRESS!

9 FEBRUARY – 21 APRIL 2024

Start the Press! is a celebration of contemporary printmaking and the crucial role of art schools in preserving traditional printing processes. At the exhibition's heart is an antique, flatbed printing press from Wolverhampton School of Art. Ikon has invited a cohort of West Midlands printmakers to make new work in the gallery space, transforming it into a functioning studio. Original prints fill the gallery walls during the exhibition run, as artwork is made in real time.

The intaglio printing press takes its position in the gallery as a form of occupation in the tradition of art-school student sit-ins. In 1968, students across the country occupied art schools in protest, demanding a fairer, more equitable curriculum in the context of social movements around the globe.

In Ikon's 60th year, *Start the Press!* honours the radical spirit of the gallery's founders, bringing the act of making into the gallery for all to see. Ikon was founded in 1964, by a group of artist-educators associated with Birmingham School of Art who sought to make art accessible to all. In their founding prospectus they wrote: "Ikon is intended as an antithesis to exclusive art establishments and galleries ... [it] has been formed because of the need for an accessible place where the exchange of visual ideas can become a familiar reality."

IKON/60

Wednesday–Sunday, 11am–5pm
Free entry, donations welcome

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Accompanying the newly commissioned prints is a display of contemporary printmaking masterpieces loaned from the Jerwood Collection; prints by the original generation of artists who exhibited at Ikon; and a newly-commissioned print by Stirchley Printworks, celebrating Ikon's 60th anniversary, available to buy from Ikon Shop.

With funding from Freelands Foundation and Saintbury Trust, Ikon Youth Programme and other educational groups will be introduced to the printmaking processes preserved in regional art schools.

Dr Simon Harris, Wolverhampton School of Art, has provided artistic and technical advice for *Start the Press!*

1. David Prentice, *Flamsteed* (1967)

Silkscreen print

David Prentice founded Ikon with fellow artists Jesse Bruton, Robert Groves and Sylvani Merilion in 1964. *Flamsteed* was offered as a ten-shilling print during the exhibition *Ikon Collection* (1967), in support of the gallery's policy of encouraging 'affordable' modern art. The mustard-coloured ink is often found in print media from the 1960s, while the geometric design recalls much of the printed materials from Ikon's earliest years, held today in its archive.

2. James Turner, *IKON 60* (2024)

Silkscreen print

This new print by James Turner, founder of Stirchley Printworks, celebrates Ikon as a product of the 1960s. Echoing the mustard hues of David Prentice's work and drawing inspiration from Ikon's archive, the artwork takes shapes from the magnificent brutalist building of Wolverhampton School of Art, which opened in 1969.

3. Lubaina Himid

A Rake's Progress Hole in her Stocking (4) (2022)

Screenprint in Charbonnel etching ink with hand-painting in acrylic on Arches Watercolour 640 gsm paper. Made in collaboration with master printer Magda Stawarska.

Jerwood Collection

In this work, Lubaina Himid has enlarged a detail from William Hogarth's suite of etchings: *A Rake's Progress* (1735). Hogarth's satirical series, reproduced in the popular press, followed the journey of a young man or 'rake': a cautionary tale on the dangers of indulging in life's excesses. Himid transforms the detail through a wash of bright, contrasting colours, with hand-painted stripes atop the printed image. The tiny cross-hatchings of Hogarth's print, too small to make out in detail in the original, here form a magnified lattice of markings.

4. David Hockney

A Wooded Landscape (1969)

Etching and aquatint

Jerwood Collection

This landscape is from David Hockney's series of illustrations for fairytales by the Brothers Grimm. The graphic marks of the grass in the foreground contrast with the intricate grid underpinning the landscape and the fluid undulations of the hills rendered through aquatint; an intaglio printmaking technique that produces tonal effects by using acid on the etching plate, creating areas that hold the ink. The print was made at the culmination of a radical decade in which the artist attended art school.

5. Yinka Shonibare

***Mayflower, All Flowers* (2020)**

Relief print with woodblock and fabric collage on Somerset

Tub Sized Satin 410gsm paper

Jerwood Collection

For this work, Yinka Shonibare combines Batik fabric, one of his signature materials, with a process of woodblock printing: the fabric is visible through windows cut into the paper of the print.

Mayflower, All Flowers depicts the 17th-century ship which transported colonisers from England to the 'New World'.

Printmaking was instrumental in mapping territories and disseminating text and image in the colonial era. Shonibare traces a line to the imperial histories that played out through printed written and visual media as well as the textiles incorporated into the print.

6. Intaglio printing press

Mid-19th century

Wolverhampton School of Art

Manufactured in Germany (then Prussia) during the 19th century, it is thought the intaglio press was acquired by the British Admiralty to print nautical charts. In 1800, the Hydrographic Office began producing charts sized double elephant on copper plates, engraved in reverse and inked, with the excess ink wiped from the surface before printing, to leave clear lines.

The press was acquired by Wolverhampton School of Art in 1970 and has been in continuous use by students ever since. It is used in the School to preserve traditional intaglio printmaking processes and is a vital tool in passing skills onto new generations of artists.

7. Printmaking Studio

A functioning printmaking studio that will be occupied by eight West Midlands printmakers to make new works for *Start the Press!* including:

Dr Simon Harris (9 – 11 February)

Laura Onions (Gathering Press) (15 – 17 February)

Taiba Akhtar (22 – 24 February)

Haseebah Ali (29 February – 3 March)

Fae Kilburn (14, 16 – 17 March)

Satinder Parhar (21 – 23 March)

Heather Peak (28 – 30 March)

Karen McLean (4 – 6 April)

8. Newly commissioned prints from the Printmaking Studio

Work will be installed gradually over the weeks of the exhibition.

9. Pamela Scott Wilkie

***Journey* (1970)**

Hand-pulled screenprints

Pamela Scott Wilkie's *Journey* was first shown at Ikon Gallery in 1972. She writes: "The inspiration for this series... was helping to drive a Land Rover to Asia in 1970. After crossing the Bosphorous [Strait] the route took us through the rugged mountains of Eastern Turkey, one of the vast deserts in southern Iran, remote areas of Northern Afghanistan and into Asia through the Khyber Pass... After arriving in Pakistan I set up an improvised studio in Rawalpindi where we were based for several months. I'd brought some basic equipment with me and used intensely pigmented Swiss oil-based letterpress inks which I was able to buy from a local printer. I designed each image so it could stand on its own and I also loosely made them as a sequence so that when they're seen together this gives a feeling of the road trip's progress."

10. Catherine Yass

Safety Last (2011)

Set of eight colour etchings on paper

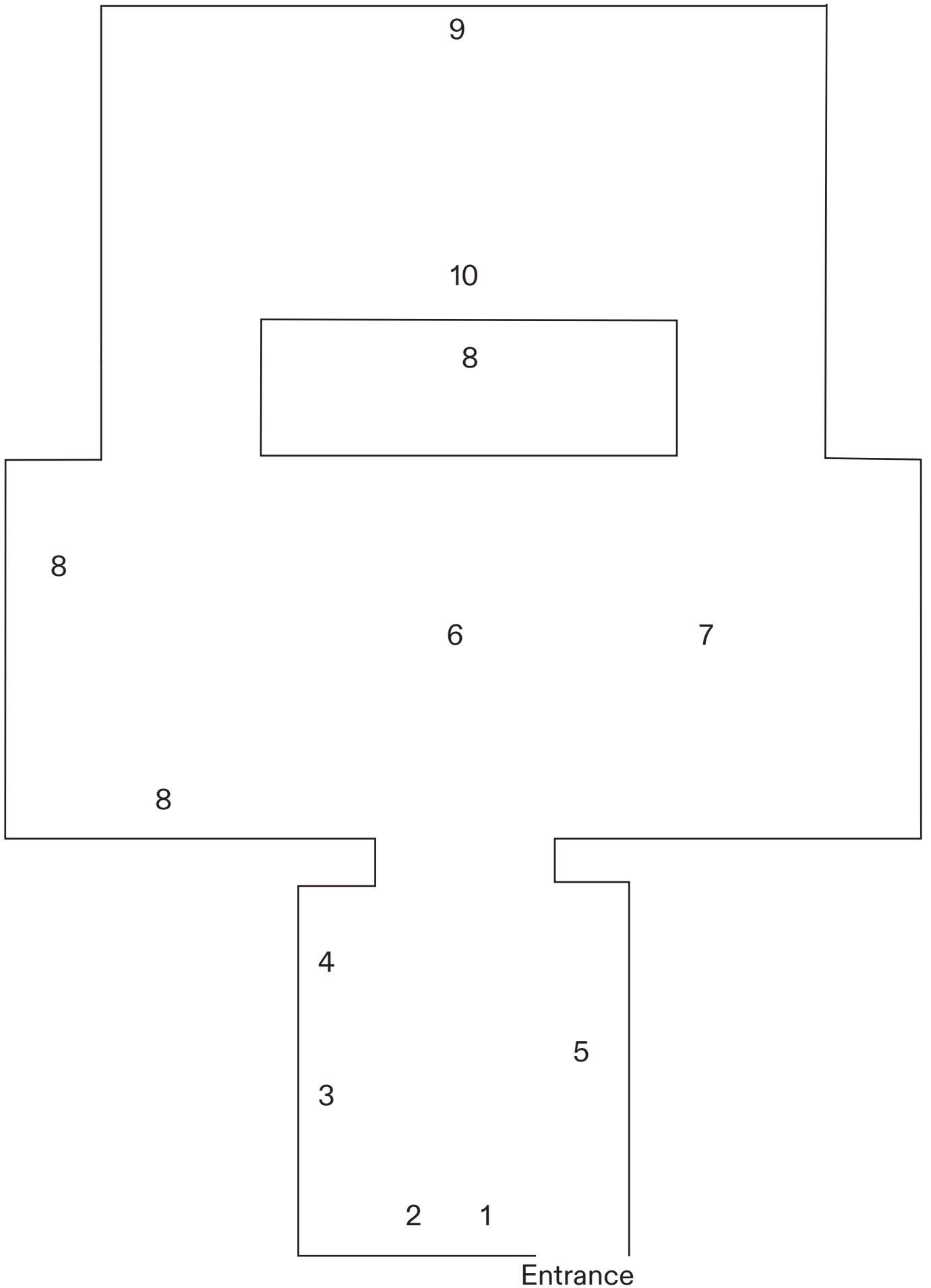
Jerwood Collection

The 1923 silent comedy *Safety Last*, starring Harold Lloyd, provides the source imagery of Catherine Yass' prints. The sequence of stills that Yass refers to is taken from a moment where the hero, played by Lloyd, hangs from a tall building, reversing time by forcing the hands of a clock backwards, while a crowd looks on in awe. Yass' prints draw a parallel between print and cinematic media. Both printmaking and filmmaking involve the creation of a new image through radical interventions or damage to a negative: in printmaking, through carving or etching into a plate, and in cinema through light scorching the surface of film.

This exhibition and education programme is supported by Freelands Foundation, Jerwood Foundation, The Saintbury Trust, University of Birmingham and University of Wolverhampton.

Start the Press! is presented as part of Ikon's 60th anniversary year.

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