

EXHIBITION GUIDE

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DION KITSON RUE BRITANNIA

10 MAY – 8 SEPTEMBER 2024

Ikon presents the first major solo exhibition by British artist Dion Kitson entitled *Rue Britannia*, an exhibition of sculpture, video and installation. Alongside is an ambitious off-site commission, *Silver Lining*, an artistic intervention at the JW Evans Silver Factory, under the custodianship of English Heritage, in Birmingham's historic Jewellery Quarter.

Kitson grew up in Dudley in the heart of the Black Country and studied at Birmingham School of Art. Incisive, enterprising and laced with sharp wit, Kitson's artistic practice dissects British class and identity, reshaping its visual hallmarks and traditions across sculpture, installation, film and found objects. Kitson's work is both playful and provocative, providing a candid account of the everyday.

Please note this exhibition contains adult language.

The visual environment of Kitson's exhibition at Ikon draws on the artist's experience of growing up in Dudley, a market town which prides itself as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution and, as such, is replete with ruination – a metaphor for the wider state of British towns. The architectural installation *Council House of Kitson* (2024) [5] recreates both the pebble dashed façade and interior of his father's house. Protruding from the pebble dash exterior is *Sky's The Limit* (2024) [6], a satellite

dish with a bird's nest perched on the end of the antenna with cigarette butts in the place of chirruping chicks. Inside *Council House of Kitson*, the artist presents a film work (2012-2024) [7] shot on home video over many years of his father caring for a sick baby bird. Opposite this space is Kitson's work */// Communication* (2024) [2], an uncanny 3D-printed engineer kneeling at a BT Openreach greenbox. This sculptural installation makes visible the often overlooked everyday worker.

In contrast with the large-scale pebble dash installation, *Ode to Rubbish Mountain* (2023) [4] is a miniature recreation of the iconic landfill pile in Brierley Hill, finally removed in 2016 after a 5-year local battle. It is also an ode to the train model-making hobbyists, subverted to document local authority affairs. Accompanying the model, Kitson displays a newspaper cutting documenting the frenzy created by the waste and its clearance.

Kitson's lifelong fascination with the British royal family comes to expression in the work *Still Life* (2024), a mannequin of a young Prince [16]. Facing the floor, the figure is genuinely haunting, taking its form as a collective memory made corporeal.

Kitson brings the staple of the British pub into the gallery space as visitors can play on a pool table [9] with cues adapted to resemble the domestic mop and broom (2024) [10-11]. Surrounding the pool table are a series of prints (2024) [12-15] made from bus stop windows on an antique intaglio press.

Waiting (2024) [19] presents the base of a found trampoline displayed on a wall, making an association between the Argentine-Italian artist Lucio Fontana (1899-1968), who would cut into his canvases, and Kitson's experience of finding a broken trampoline in his neighbour's garden. This work demonstrates his ability to see beauty in the banal.

A school table with rulers laid out like a music box plays the tune of *Rule, Britannia!* (2023-2024) [20] on a loop – signalling the swansong of empire.

No Place Like Home (2024) [17] references a key touchstone for Kitson, the 1900 children's novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and the 1939 American musical fantasy film. Suspended from telegraph wire, the ruby red slippers gesture towards urban folklore, where shoes placed in this way are rumoured to have hidden meanings pertaining to gangs or the drug trade.

A large-text transcript of the film *Birdman* (2012-2024) is available - please ask an Information Assistant.

***Silver Lining* at JW Evans Silver Factory**

Through *Silver Lining*, an off-site commission for English Heritage, Kitson honours a lost industrial past, utilising new technologies to create sculptural interventions in a former silver factory, celebrating the history and popular culture of Birmingham and the Black Country.

In 2008, English Heritage acquired the JW Evans Silver Factory in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter which began as a cottage industry in 1881. The workshops are preserved in situ, containing thousands of dies for the manufacture of silverware; the entire factory's working equipment; and the workers' ephemera, magazines and posters.

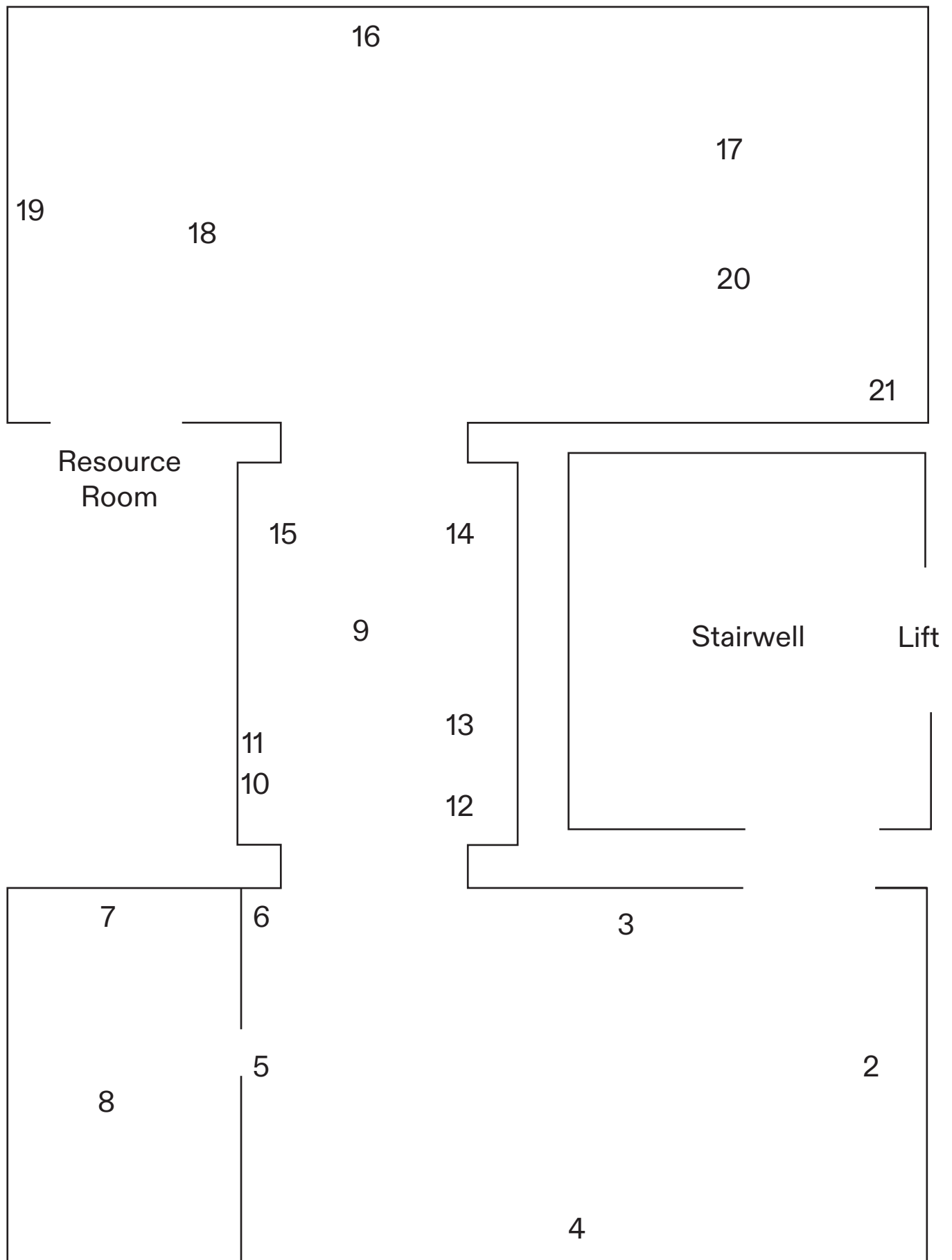
Tours of JW Evans Silver Factory are available to book, for more information visit ikon-gallery.org.

JW Evans, 54-57 Albion Street, Birmingham, B1 3EA

This exhibition is supported by English Heritage, The Foundation Foundation and Ikon Investment Fund.

It is presented as part of Ikon's 60th anniversary year.

SECOND FLOOR



1. You can find *Bankroll* (2020) in Ikon's reception.

LIST OF WORKS

1. *Bankroll* (2020)
Pebble dash bin
2. *Ill Communication* (2024)
3D printed sculpture,
mannequin, green BT street
cabinet
3. *Break* (2022)
Cigarettes in a clock
4. *Ode To Rubbish Mountain*
(2011-2023)
Scale model, newspaper
article and looped
footage from BBC Midlands
Today
5. *Council House of Kitson*
(2024)
Pebble dash façade and
interior space
6. *Sky's The Limit* (2024)
Satellite dish, bird's nest,
cigarette butts
7. *Birdman* (2012-2024)
Home movie footage looped
8. *Take Back Control* (2024)
Easy chair, rhinestones
9. *Winner Stays On* (2024)
English pool table
10. *Mop* (2024)
Pool cue, mop head
11. *Broom* (2024)
Pool cue, broom head
12. *After Hogarth, There is a
Detention* (2024)
Dry point etching
13. *Sod's Law* (2024)
Dry point etching
14. *Smoke the Reefer in the
Corner* (2024)
Dry point etching
15. *Artist Signatures* (2024)
Dry point etching
16. *Still Life* (2024)
3D printed sculpture,
mannequin
17. *No Place Like Home* (2024)
Telegraph wire, red shoes
18. *Like Father Like Son* (1999-
2024)
Shakespeare fishing box,
Dion fishing box, fish,
net
19. *Waiting* (2024)
Found trampoline
20. *Rule Britannia!* (2024)
Kinetic sculpture with rulers
and school table
21. *Half English (Ode to George
Shaw)* (2024)
Found Union Flag

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