

IKON/60

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

START THE PRESS!

9 FEBRUARY – 21 APRIL 2024

IKON GALLERY



Flatbed printing press, Wolverhampton School of Art. Photo by Tod Jones. Image courtesy Ikon.

The centrepiece of *Start the Press!* is an antique, flatbed printing press from Wolverhampton School of Art, taking its position in the gallery as a form of occupation in the tradition of the student art-school sit-ins of the 1960s, and in response to the current challenging economic landscape. A cohort of West Midlands printmakers will operate the press: establishing a functioning printmaking workshop, producing original prints and filling the gallery walls as artwork is made in real time. Regional printmakers include Taiba Akhtar, Haseebah Ali, Simon Harris, Fae Kilburn, Karen McLean, Laura Onions, Satinder Parhar and Heather Peak.

Start the Press! also includes a display of printmaking, featuring artworks by Lubaina Himid, David Hockney, Yinka Shonibare and Catherine Yass loaned from the Jerwood Collection. In addition, Ikon shows a series of prints by artist Pamela Scott Wilkie who first exhibited at Ikon in 1966. With funding from Freelands Foundation, Ikon Youth Programme and other educational groups will be introduced to the printmaking processes preserved in regional art schools.

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

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Ikon was founded in 1964 by artist teachers at Birmingham School of Art who sought to make art accessible to all; in their manifesto, they wrote that 'Ikon is intended as an antithesis to exclusive art establishments and galleries.' In Ikon's 60th year, *Start the Press!* celebrates Ikon's history of creating opportunities for artists and audiences to make and engage with art through bringing the act of making into the gallery space.

Throughout the duration of the exhibition, eight regional printmakers will work with Ikon's audiences, education partners and community groups to make original prints using the flatbed press, including etchings and monoprints, filling the gallery walls as work is made in real time. The exhibition will focus on the industrial character of the press which was acquired by Wolverhampton School of Art in the 1960s; a decade that saw the organisers of protests and sit-ins utilise printmaking as a quick, low-cost and democratic medium for creating protest imagery, including during the student occupations at Hornsey College of Art and Wolverhampton. Like those involved in the protests of the 1960s, whose demands included adopting a more socially engaged curriculum, the printmakers involved with *Start the Press!* address a diverse range of social themes in their practices.

The new prints made during the exhibition will be accompanied by a display of works by celebrated contemporary printmakers, loaned from the Jerwood Collection. The selection of Lubaina Himid's hand-painted screenprint, *A Rake's Progress: Hole in her stocking (4)* (2022), acknowledges satire – an artistic genre born out of the ability to disseminate images rapidly through the popular press – as a means of protest and societal critique, nodding to Hogarth's *Rake* series. David Hockney's *Wooded Landscape* (1969) comes from the radical decade in which the artist attended art school and when Ikon was founded; its presence in the exhibition forms a vital connection to the period which informs the show as a whole. Yinka Shonibare's print, *Mayflower, All Flowers* (2020), collaged with Batik fabric, depicts the historic Mayflower voyage, tracing a line to colonial histories that played out through printed written and visual media as well as the textiles incorporated into the print. Catherine Yass' *Safety Last* (2011) is a series of eight etchings showing stills from the iconic silent comedy *Safety Last!* (1923) – Yass' work brings a new contemplation of the film's social themes.

A further display shows the work of artist Pamela Scott Wilkie, who first showed at Ikon in 1966. *Journey* is a series of silkscreen prints produced during an overland expedition to India made by the artist in 1972. Inspired by the landscapes and people of the countries she passed through, these prints were made en-route in makeshift studios, using the materials available wherever she found herself.

This exhibition is supported by Jerwood Foundation and Freelands Foundation.

About the local printmakers:

[Taiba Akhtar](#) is an artist and printmaker based in Birmingham. Her evolving interest in language and communication binds the spoken, written and the read. She is particularly intrigued within the intaglio field, surprised by the wonders of etching and the magical nature of engraving. Her visuals stem from time and the passing of time, entangling thoughts, feelings and actions.

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[Haseebah Ali](#) is a Birmingham-based artist and arts educator. Her work is centred around storytelling and conveying that through a visual language. As a printmaker, mainly working with relief print and intaglio, Ali enjoys weaving themes of her own Pakistani culture within her artwork, as well as highlighting humanitarian topics that need to be spoken about more.

[Simon Harris](#) is an artist and Senior Lecturer and Course Leader for BA (Hons) Fine Art at University of Wolverhampton. He was awarded his practice-based PhD: Deleuze and Painting: Re-thinking the Formal, in 2016. Harris' prints and paintings pursue a pictorial plane that has a relationship between printmaking, photography and painting, which references the cinematic surface as an abstracted image.

[Fae Kilburn](#) is a Midlands based artist and arts facilitator. She uses a variety of printmaking techniques including monoprint, silkscreen, collagraph and etching. Kilburn's work is inspired by history, identity and disability, often including or referring to the lived experiences of other disabled people in her work; this becomes a collaboration of their narrative and her artwork. Creating disability awareness is an important part of Kilburn's practice.

[Karen McLean](#) is a Birmingham-based artist who grew up in Trinidad. Her artistic practice continues to be informed by the history, culture and folklore of the Caribbean and its inter-connections with the UK. McLean has worked with sound, moving image and installations that incorporate a wide variety of evocative and symbolic materials such as sugar, blue soap, wood, beading, wallpaper and hessian bags.

[Laura Onions](#) is an artist based in Wolverhampton. Her work addresses ideas of place and placemaking from an educational and feminist perspective. Onions' artwork grows from context-specific and archival research resulting in a wide variety of forms including print-based objects, painting, writing and workshopping. Most recently this has taken the form of *Gathering Press*, a roving screen-printing unit which she travels with to different locations to explore the role of print as a collective tool and resource.

[Satinder Parhar](#) was introduced to printmaking at the age of 16, and has developed his printmaking skills throughout his artistic career. Parhar went on to complete a BA (Hons) in Fine Art at the University of Wolverhampton, followed by an MA degree. He specialises in producing large scale dry-point prints, which explore the concept of interstitial spaces.

[Heather Peak](#) is an artist who has established an ambitious collaborative practice over the past twenty years, which draws together visual art, architecture and social practice. She is best known for her work as one half of artist duo Heather Peak and Ivan Morison. In May 2023 Heather Peak became Artistic Director/ CEO of DASH, a Disabled led visual arts charity which creates opportunities for Disabled artists to develop their creative practice. She trained as printmaker and has in recent years returned to printmaking for her solo practice.

For more information, press appointments, 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 @ace_national @aceagrams @ace_midlands @bhamcitycouncil
@wlv_soa @taibaart @haseebah_prints @sijharris @faekilburn @ljonions @satinder_parhar_art
@morison_studio @jerwoodcollection @freelandsfoundation

Notes to Editors:

1. **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
2. **Ikon** is open Wednesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am-5pm. Free entry, donations welcome. Ikon is supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England, and Birmingham City Council.
3. **Wolverhampton School of Art** has been at the centre of the city's creative and industrial strategy since the 1850s when their first purpose-built art school was commissioned. Their iconic home was opened by Charles Wheeler in October 1970 and has dominated the Wolverhampton skyline ever since. Students on the art, design and screen-based courses join a creative, practice led community in which they find the time, space and resources to gain high level skills as makers and learn to understand the historical and contemporary scope of their subject. Socially engaged and community arts practice is core to their history and vision and the Wolverhampton School of Art has a long tradition of working with industry, civic and community partners. wlv.ac.uk/schools-and-institutes/faculty-of-arts-business-and-social-sciences/wolverhampton-school-of-art
4. **Jerwood Foundation** was established in 1977 by Alan Grieve, CBE for John Jerwood. In 1991, after Jerwood's death, Alan Grieve became chairman of the Foundation which to date has donated over £110 million to support the arts in the UK. In 2023 the Foundation merged with Jerwood Charity (Jerwood Arts) and at this time Alan Grieve was appointed Chairman Emeritus and Rupert Tyler was appointed Chairman. To find out more about Jerwood Foundation, visit jerwood.org
5. **Freelands Foundation** believes art is central to a broad and balanced education, and a right for everyone. The Foundation is driven by a conviction in the vital role of learning and making to foster creativity, resilience, criticality and problem-solving that empowers and equips us for the future. It champions the symbiotic relationship between teaching, learning and making art, and encourage artists to teach and view teaching as an artistic practice. It values life-long learning as integral to artists' work, enabling collaborative

relationships with teachers, schools and universities with galleries and museums.

freelandsfoundation.co.uk

6. **Arts Council England** is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in Let's Create that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. From 2023 to 2026 we will invest over £440 million of public money from Government and an estimated £93 million from The National Lottery each year to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. artscouncil.org.uk
Following the Covid-19 crisis, the Arts Council developed a £160 million Emergency Response Package, with nearly 90% coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. We are also one of the bodies responsible for administering the Government's unprecedented Culture Recovery Fund of which we delivered over £1 billion to the sector in grants and loans. Find out more at www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19.
7. **Birmingham City Council** is the local government body responsible for the governance of the City of Birmingham, UK. It is the most populated local council area in the United Kingdom (excluding counties) with 101 elected councillors representing over one million people, in 69 wards. The council headquarters are at the Council House, Victoria Square in the heart of the city centre. The council is responsible for running nearly all local services, with the exception of those run by joint boards. For more information visit www.birmingham.gov.uk



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