

IKON

IKON ANNOUNCES 2025 EXHIBITION & EDUCATION PROGRAMMES.

Ikon, Birmingham's internationally acclaimed contemporary art gallery, announces its exhibition and education programmes for 2025. Established as an artists-led alternative space in the Bullring in 1964, Ikon remains free for everyone and committed to showcasing the very best of British and international art.

Exhibition Programme

In Spring 2025, Ikon presents solo exhibitions by artists **Mahtab Hussain** and **Htein Lin**. The former focuses on Birmingham's Muslim communities, documenting diversity and addressing surveillance culture; the latter manifests individual and artistic freedom against a backdrop of political repression. In the Summer, the gallery exhibits the vibrant and colourful work of Korean artist **Seulgi Lee**, alongside **Thread the Loom**, a show dedicated to weaving, organised in partnership with the Textile Design department at Birmingham City University. The Autumn/Winter programme features the first major survey of Guyanese-British artist **Donald Locke**, organised in collaboration with Spike Island, Bristol and Camden Art Centre, London.

Education Programme

Ikon's **BCU Tuesdays** partnership with Birmingham City University enables the gallery to open to the public every Tuesday for a year, providing opportunities for outreach with regional secondary schools. This complements programmes of **Creative Education**, with school, college and university partners, and **Creative Health**, informing policy development at Birmingham City Council's Public Health Division. With renewed funding from Freelands Foundation for three years (2024-2027), **Ikon Youth Programme** (IYP) continues to activate a converted narrowboat, *Slow Boat*, as an alternative art school. Ikon's **Art in Prisons** programme sees the development of artistic practice within dedicated studio spaces at HMP Grendon, supported by the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust for another three years (2024-2026), and HMP Spring Hill, funded by the Rothschild Foundation (2025).

For more information, press visits, high-res images and to request interviews please contact:

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IKON EXHIBITION PROGRAMME

MAHTAB HUSSAIN

WHAT DID YOU WANT TO SEE?

20 MARCH – 1 JUNE 2025

IKON GALLERY



Mahtab Hussain, *Faizal Islam Masjid, Birmingham* (2024).
From the series *What Did You Want To See?* (2024). Courtesy Mahtab Hussain.

British artist Mahtab Hussain explores the fine line between photographic documentation and surveillance culture, addressing the intelligence sites established by the media and the state to monitor the Muslim community in Britain.

Commissioned by Ikon and Photoworks, the exhibition features new work, including Hussain's systematic documentation of 160 Birmingham mosques, revealing the diversity of mosque architecture; portraits of Birmingham residents which highlight the city's vibrant Muslim community; a communal space within the gallery aimed at fostering inclusion and intercultural dialogue; and the artist's installation *What Did You Want To See?* which simulates a space under surveillance.

This exhibition is supported by the John Feeney Charitable Trust and Freelands Foundation.

HTEIN LIN
20 MARCH – 1 JUNE 2025
IKON GALLERY



Htein Lin, *Sitting at Iron Gate* (2002) from the series 000235 (1998-2004). © Courtesy the artist.

A solo exhibition by Htein Lin, a multi-disciplinary artist from Myanmar.

Evoking his lifelong commitment to documenting human experience in difficult times, it shows a comprehensive selection of the artist's paintings made while he was a political prisoner from 1998 to 2004 on prison uniforms and found textile, alongside drawing, sculpture, video and new work.

A key element of Htein Lin's project for Ikon includes artworks made with residents of HMP Grendon in Buckinghamshire. An off-site exhibition at the prison (1 – 22 May), includes portraits of prison residents and soap block sculptures inspired by the artist's carving technique. The display follows workshops developed in collaboration with current HMP Grendon artist-in-residence Simon J. Harris, and explores subjects, materials and tools synonymous with prison art in Britain and Myanmar.

This exhibition is supported by the British Council through the Connections Through Culture grants programme and ai. gallery.

SEULGI LEE
25 JUNE – 7 SEPTEMBER 2025
IKON GALLERY



Seulgi Lee, *SLOW WATER*, exhibition view, Incheon Art Platform (2021).
Image courtesy the artist and Incheon Art Platform.

Born in Seoul and living in Paris since 1992, Seulgi Lee's artwork is shaped by the use of colour, gesture, simple yet elegant forms and performance.

Intrigued by the relationships between language systems, form and function in traditional crafts, Lee has developed a unique sculptural vocabulary, in which she often combines conceptual approaches with artisanal methods. For her first solo exhibition in the UK, Lee presents an ongoing series and new pieces commissioned by Ikon. The artist is represented by Gallery Hyundai, Seoul, and Galerie Jousse Entreprise, Paris.

This exhibition is supported by lead supporter Bagri Foundation, with further support from ai. gallery and Korea Artist Prize Promotion Fund.

THREAD THE LOOM

25 JUNE – 7 SEPTEMBER 2025
IKON GALLERY



AVL Studio Dobby loom, Birmingham City University (2024). Image courtesy Ikon. Photo by Tegen Kimbley.

Ikon celebrates the medium of weaving by bringing an AVL Studio Dobby loom on-site to the gallery and activating it through a series of micro-residencies with West Midlands weavers and artists.

Combining the tradition of hand weaving and computer-aided design, and organised in partnership with the Textile Design department at Birmingham City University (BCU), the exhibition sees the weavers and artists experiment with materials and structures to create textiles that speak to the past in defining a sustainable future.

The interdisciplinary nature of textile design, which intersects with biology, material and environmental science, is explored through an exhibition that considers the expanded role of textiles in contemporary art. Importantly it champions a 'learning by doing' approach, where education and community groups can observe, engage with and participate in the construction of simple-to-complex textile compositions.

DONALD LOCKE
1 OCTOBER 2025 – 22 FEBRUARY 2026
IKON GALLERY



Donald Locke *Plantation Series X/1* (1973) Ceramic, steel, vinyl, formica 32 x 25.5 x 28 cm, 12 5/8 x 10 x 11 in.
Courtesy Estate of Donald Locke and Alison Jacques, London. © Estate of Donald Locke. Photo: Michael Brzezinski.

The first major survey of Guyanese-British artist Donald Locke (1930 – 2010).

Born and raised in Guyana, Locke moved to the UK in 1954 as part of the Windrush Generation. The exhibition includes early ceramics inspired by natural forms and the human body, and larger scale paintings and sculptures exploring issues around history and identity.

Organised in collaboration with Spike Island, Bristol and Camden Art Centre, London and supported by The Ampersand Foundation, Henry Moore Foundation and Paul Mellon Centre.

IKON EDUCATION PROGRAMME

ART IN PRISONS

ART AT HMP GRENDON, 2024 – 2026



Simon Harris at HMP Grendon. Image courtesy Ikon. Photo by James Latunji-Cockbill.

Ikon continues to produce Art at HMP Grendon, its artist residency and dedicated studio space in a therapeutic prison in Buckinghamshire, for another three years (2024 – 2026). The residency has been generously funded by the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust since 2010 and managed by Ikon since 2014. Simon Harris, artist and printmaker has commenced an 18-month residency during which he is working with community members to produce new work which will be showcased at HMP Grendon and Ikon Gallery.

ART AT HMP SPRING HILL, 2024 – 2025



Every Prison Should Be An Art School (2023). Photograph by Dean Kelland.

Ikon has announced a new artist residency funded by the Rothschild Foundation in partnership with HMP Spring Hill, Buckinghamshire. The gallery will establish an art studio within the grounds of the prison which will enable a professional artist and group of prisoners to explore creative practice through weekly workshops in an art school-inspired setting. With a focus on the development of artistic expression and technical skills – in painting, printmaking, photography, sculpture and textiles – the project complements the prison’s education scheme in supporting health, wellbeing and transition into the workplace.

IKON YOUTH PROGRAMME

SLOW BOAT

2024 – 2027



Ikon Youth Programme and artist Dylan Fox on *Slow Boat* (2024). Image courtesy Ikon.

With renewed funding from Freelands Foundation for three years (2024-2027), Ikon Youth Programme (IYP) continues to activate a converted narrowboat as an alternative art school.

The group of young people, aged 16-21, has developed a regional route which explores the rich art school heritage of Birmingham and the West Midlands. Each year, *Slow Boat* travels 150 miles of canal network, with annual stop offs in Walsall, Wolverhampton, Tipton, Stourbridge, Smethwick and Coventry. In 2025, IYP will take *Slow Boat* to Stoke-on-Trent in partnership with GRAIN Projects.

Slow Boat was created in response to Ikon Youth Programme's request for 'a space of their own' through which they could produce and present their version of contemporary art as it intersects with popular culture and political activism. Against a backdrop of growing social media usage, IYP has collaborated with other youth groups to channel their voices, alleviate anxieties and raise awareness of justice issues.

CREATIVE EDUCATION



Primary school storytelling session led by Birmingham City University PGCE students (2024). Image courtesy Ikon.

Ikon's BCU Tuesdays partnership with Birmingham City University enables the gallery to open to the public every Tuesday for a year, providing opportunities for outreach with regional secondary schools. The *Creative Connections* consortium sees fifteen regional primary schools exhibit their work at Ikon. Ten Black Country secondary schools and colleges partner with Ikon and Arts Connect for *Contemporary Art in the Classroom*. Ikon also places three photographers in Birmingham secondary schools and colleges, addressing educational issues in innovative and impactful ways, supported by University of Birmingham's School of Education.

CREATIVE HEALTH



Jaskirt Dhaliwal-Boora, *Jane lying down* (2024). Image courtesy the artist.

Throughout 2025, Ikon continues to engage artists, academics, charity partners and community members in contributing an evidence base to inform Birmingham City Council's Public Health policy development. By placing artists in community settings, we have produced artworks that raise awareness of structural inequalities and behavioural factors impacting our physical and mental health. Topics include ageing and dying well; diversity in infant feeding; and the impact of green spaces on our wellbeing. The results of the community collaborations are incredibly moving, revealing the intersection between art and lived experience.

FUNDING

Ikon is a registered charity and is supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England, and Birmingham City Council. These core grants cover the gallery's running costs, enabling Ikon to provide free entry. The exhibition and education programmes, and off-site projects across the city, are primarily paid for through fundraising activity. Ikon raises money through venue hire, Ikon shop, trusts and foundations, corporate patrons and sponsors, international funding sources and the generosity of those visitors and supporters who make a donation.



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



MAJOR PARTNERS 2025

ai. gallery, Art Fund, The Ampersand Foundation, Birmingham City Council, Birmingham City University, British Council, Camden Art Centre, William A Cadbury Charitable Trust, Deutsche Bank, John Feeney Charitable Trust, Freelands Foundation, Frieze, GRAIN Projects, Henry Moore Foundation, Korea Artist Prize Promotion Fund, Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust, Paul Mellon Centre, Photoworks, HM Prison and Probation Service, Rothschild Foundation, Spike Island, University of Birmingham.

SECTOR PARTNERS

PLUS TATE aims to support the development of the visual arts across the UK, and to foster a climate where exchange and partnership can flourish. Joining together to exchange ideas, knowledge, skills and resources, as well as programmes and collections, the Plus Tate partners, along with and facilitated by Tate, broaden and deepen engagement in modern and contemporary art across the country.

CULTURE CENTRAL is a collective voice and development agency for culture and the creative industries in Birmingham and the wider region. Culture Central is committed to developing and leading projects, alongside other leadership bodies in the city region, that have the potential for a positive impact on the sector and on the region.

INDIVIDUAL PATRONS

Paul Aston; Lulu Badr; Simon Chapman; François Chrétien; John Davenport; Victoria Denning; Robert Goddard; John Hayes; Ian Hyde; Jeanette Koch; David Lodge; Oliver Longmore; Tom Merilion; Stephen Pallister; Jasmin Pelham; Jonathan Seville; Jonathan Wearing; and those who wish to remain anonymous.

CORPORATE PATRONS

Deutsche Bank; Elonex; Howells

IKON TEAM



Left to Right: Melanie Pocock, Artistic Director (Exhibitions); Linzi Stauvers, Artistic Director (Education) and Ian Hyde, Chief Executive Officer. Image courtesy Ikon. Photo by Ayesha Jones.

The Senior Leadership Team comprises Ian Hyde, Chief Executive Officer; Melanie Pocock, Artistic Director (Exhibitions); and Linzi Stauvers, Artistic Director (Education).

They are supported by the rest of the senior management team: Julie Nicholls, Head of Finance; Rebecca Small, Head of Communications.

IKON BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Interim Chair: Lee Brocklehurst, Accountant, Quantuma Advisory LLP

Rachel Chiu, Head of Business Development, Spring Housing Association; **John Cloughton**, Former Chief Master, King Edward's School, Birmingham; **Councillor Jayne Francis**, Cabinet Member for Housing & Homelessness, Birmingham City Council; **Samuel Jones**, Head of Strategy and Governance, Tate; **James Leo**, Solicitor, The Wilkes Partnership LLP; **Harminder Randhawa**, Accountant, Jaguar Land Rover; **Sandeep Shambi**, Architect, Partner at Howells; **Nick Smith**, CEO, Elonex; **Liam Smyth**, Project Implementation Manager, The UK National Commission for UNESCO.

IMAGES

Please contact the team for high res images and captions:

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. **Ikon Gallery**, 1 Oozells Square, Brindleyplace, Birmingham B1 2HS. 0121 248 0708 / ikon-gallery.org Open Tuesday-Sunday & Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am-5pm. Free entry, donations welcome. Ikon Gallery Limited trading as Ikon. Registered charity no. 528892.
2. **Ikon** is an internationally acclaimed contemporary art gallery, situated in Birmingham's city centre. Established in 1964 by a group of artists, Ikon celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2024. It is an educational charity with free entry for all, 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. Ikon aims to build dynamic relationships with audiences, enabling visitors to engage with, discuss and reflect on contemporary art.
3. Ikon's first home was in a glass-sided kiosk in the Bullring shopping centre, a 'gallery without walls'. Since then, Ikon has had a number of venues around the city centre and in 1998 moved to its current premises in Brindleyplace, converting a Victorian school building into a contemporary art gallery. Ikon now welcomes over 200,000 visitors a year. From a humble start, Ikon has grown to establish a worldwide reputation as one of the most international art institutions in the UK. In recent years, exhibiting artists have hailed from Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, Australia and Sweden, in addition to homegrown talent including Vanley Burke, Ayesha Jones, Farwa Moledina, Maryam Wahid and Foka Wolf. Ikon has played a key role in the development of many artistic careers – Hurvin Anderson, Antony Gormley, Carmen Herrera, Beatriz Milhazes and Cornelia Parker all had important exhibitions here.
 4. **Ikon Shop** is Birmingham's only specialist art bookshop, stocking a range of books, cards, artists' limited editions, magazines and gifts. All profits from Ikon Shop support Ikon Gallery's charitable artistic and educational programme. shop.ikon-gallery.org
 5. Ikon is supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England, and Birmingham City Council.
 6. **Arts Council England** is the national development agency for creativity and culture. ACE have set out their strategic vision in *Let's Create* that by 2030 they want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. From 2023 to 2026 ACE will invest over £467 million of public money from Government and an estimated £250 million from The National Lottery each year to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. artscouncil.org.uk
 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 birmingham.gov.uk
 8. Please note all dates and details are subject to change, for up to date information and high-res images please contact Pelham Communications or Ikon.