

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

BCU TUESDAYS, 2024-2025



Left: Professor David Mba, Vice-Chancellor, Birmingham City University and Ian Hyde, Chief Executive Officer, Ikon. Photo courtesy Ikon. Photo by Johnathan Williams. Right: Ikon Gallery. Photo by Tod Jones.

Ikon is pleased to announce an innovative new partnership with Birmingham City University (BCU) which enables the gallery to open on Tuesdays for a year (October 2024 – September 2025). With *BCU Tuesdays*, visitors can enjoy an additional day of free entry to Ikon's exhibitions, starting with the current show *Friends in Love and War - L'Éloge des meilleur-es ennemi-es*.

Ikon, now in its 60th year, was founded in 1964 by a group of artist teachers from Birmingham School of Art at Birmingham City University (BCU). The gallery now welcomes over 200,000 visitors annually, remains free for everyone and works to address key social issues whilst championing arts education and social mobility.

On *BCU Tuesdays*, Ikon hosts gallery visits from education groups including BCU and regional schools and colleges. Ikon will also facilitate free *BCU Explore Days*, delivered by BCU Art Design and Media staff to introduce Key Stage 4 and 5 students to the creative industries. In Summer 2025 Ikon and BCU will co-produce a Creative Careers Fair, showcasing professional development and employment opportunities within the West Midlands' arts and cultural sector.

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BCU has a rich and proud history in Birmingham, stretching back to 1843. With the objective of realising the enormous potential that exists in the city, the University recently launched its new strategy – ‘Rooted in Birmingham, Reaching Beyond’ – that aims to inspire, nurture and unite communities across the West Midlands. Through innovative partnerships and collaboration projects, it will also seek to provide opportunities for young people to learn, grow and thrive.

“Ikon is renowned for its creative energy, so we are delighted to be partnering with such an inspirational and forward-thinking institution to engage and inspire people across the city and region. We see this collaboration as a fantastic opportunity to awaken the interest in talented young people to pursue study opportunities in arts and culture - and, as a university that produces more creative graduates than any other in the West Midlands, BCU is ideally placed to help those students follow their passion. I am a big believer in the power of the creative industries – and this collaboration with Ikon will be transformative, not just for the sector but for the many people who experience it. I’m extremely excited to see how impactful BCU Tuesdays can be, and I’d like to thank Ikon for their vision and can-do spirit.” Professor David Mba, Vice-Chancellor, Birmingham City University

“Ikon’s contemporary relevance is defined by its audience, with a high proportion of young people, 53% aged 16 to 34, visiting the gallery annually. We recognise that this younger audience is key to Ikon’s future and our new partnership with BCU will create more training and employment opportunities to futureproof the creative industries. Ikon is 60 years old now, and we’re focused on developing the workforce that will lead the gallery towards its centenary.”

Ian Hyde, Chief Executive Officer, Ikon

Ikon is committed to supporting the next generation of cultural workers, encouraging skills development and providing job opportunities. The gallery offers training and employment to a number of students and graduates as: Information Assistants (IAs), with 12-month contracts in the Front of House team, covering key areas of the gallery’s operation and public programme; freelance Artist Educators, delivering activities for children and young people at the gallery and in the classroom; freelance Art Technicians, installing exhibitions at the gallery and off-site; and Artists exhibiting in the gallery, most recently [Sally Butcher](#), [Exodus Crooks](#), [Jaskirt Dhaliwal-Boora](#) and [Dion Kitson](#).

After graduating with a BA (Hons) in Visual Communication from Birmingham City University, [Haseebah Ali](#) started working at Ikon as an IA, before working in the Education Team in schools, including the *Creative Connections* consortium of regional primary schools, and on board *Slow Boat*, the home of Ikon Youth Programme (IYP) for participants aged 16-21 funded by Freelands Foundation. In 2024, Ali was one of eight printmakers, alongside fellow BCU alumni [Taiba Akhtar](#), producing and exhibiting work as part of Ikon’s exhibition [Start the Press!](#)

“As a BCU graduate I remember my lecturers mentioning Ikon Gallery’s exhibitions as a great way to see contemporary art, which prompted my visit for the first time as a new student. It was my exposure to seeing national and international artists and artwork whilst still being in the city that fired my own practice. It’s spaces like these that are so important to preserve as they inspire the new generation of creatives in Birmingham and the wider region, as well as allowing access

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without the financial barriers that stop young people from seeing contemporary art. I love the concept of BCU Tuesdays as they're providing a space for creative education to flourish as well as helping to bridge the gap between arts organisations and academic institutions."

Haseebah Ali, artist and BCU alumni

Ikon's exhibition programme 2025

Ikon's current exhibition *Friends in Love and War - L'Éloge des meilleur-es ennemi-es* runs to 23 February and presents works by over twenty artists from the British Council Collection and macLYON that explore the theme of friendship. 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 artist Donald Locke, organised in collaboration with Spike Island, Bristol and Camden Art Centre, London.

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 @MyBCU @ace_national @aceagrams @ace_midlands @bhamcitycouncil

Notes to Editors:

1. **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. The four artists officially listed as the founders of Ikon – [Jesse Bruton](#), [Robert Groves](#), [Sylvani Merilion](#) and [David Prentice](#) – were joined by several others – [Peter Berry](#), [Trevor Denning](#), [Dinah Prentice](#) and [John Salt](#). 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. ikon-gallery.org
2. **Ikon** is open Tuesday – 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.

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3. From art, accounting and architecture to midwifery, media and mechanical engineering, **Birmingham City University (BCU)** transforms the lives of its students by offering a wide range of contemporary and flexible courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level. Home to the award-winning School of Jewellery, the internationally renowned Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and the innovative business incubator STEAMhouse, BCU has a history stretching back to 1843. It is also focused on the future, with its new strategy – ‘Rooted in Birmingham, Reaching Beyond’ – committed to the regeneration of the city and to enhancing communities across the West Midlands. bcu.ac.uk
4. **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
5. **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

