

## ROBERT ZHAO RENHUI ARTIST'S RESIDENCY: WIGWELL LODGE, DERBYSHIRE. APRIL – JUNE 2025.



Left: Robert Zhao Renhui, Courtesy of the artist and ShanghART Gallery. Right: Robert Zhao Renhui, *Shard 39* (2025). Archival pigment print, 100cm x 100cm. Courtesy of the artist and ShanghART Gallery.

Ikon and The Ampersand Foundation are pleased to announce an artist's residency with Robert Zhao Renhui at Wigwell Lodge, Derbyshire.

Running from April to June 2025, Robert Zhao Renhui's residency will see him develop new work, expand his artistic research and explore local history. Zhao (b. 1983, Singapore) is a multi-disciplinary artist whose work examines the relationship between humans and nature. Based in Singapore, he is the founder of the Institute of Critical Zoologists, which explores how human perception shapes our relationship with nature. His recent work spans multiple cities, including Seoul, Tokyo, Hong Kong and various locations in India, where he investigates the co-existence of animals with urban development. Working across video, photography and installation, Zhao prompts reflection on how human influence has shaped – and continues to shape – natural ecosystems and history. Zhao's new work will feature in a future exhibition at Ikon Gallery.

*"During my residency in Derbyshire, I will focus on the presence of introduced species, particularly the Chinese water deer and Indian muntjac, within the British landscape. By conducting field research in natural reserves, estates and areas where these deer have established themselves, I will document their behaviours, interactions with native wildlife and the ecosystems they now inhabit. I will also examine historical records, museum collections and archival materials to trace their*

*introduction and the motivations behind their relocation. Engaging with local ecologists, conservationists and hunters, I will gather perspectives on how these species are perceived today – whether as welcomed inhabitants, ecological threats, or something in between. Using photography, video and writing, I aim to construct a visual and conceptual narrative that mirrors my research in Asia, reversing the trajectory of colonial-era species movement to understand its lasting consequences.” Robert Zhao Renhui*

Wigwell Lodge is a property in Derbyshire, owned by The Ampersand Foundation since 2018. Situated in the countryside thirty minutes from Derby, the Lodge is conceived as a residency space for reflection and production, hosting artists and curators as well as academics and writers, giving them an opportunity to explore and discover the cultural and natural heritage of the Midlands region. Recent residencies have been organised in collaboration with Photoworks for lens-based artists; the Association for Art History for researchers and academics; and Wirksworth Festival for artists making work for the festival.

*“We are honoured to welcome Robert Zhao Renhui as the new Ikon resident at Wigwell Lodge, and our first international resident. The global research connections Ikon and Robert will make through this residency within the Derbyshire countryside are rich, timely, and contribute a welcome new dimension to our programme of support for visual artists developing their practice.”*

Flor Souto, Director, The Ampersand Foundation

This artist residency is generously supported by The Ampersand Foundation.

**For more information, press appointments, high-res images and to request interviews please contact Rebecca Small by email [r.small@ikon-gallery.org](mailto:r.small@ikon-gallery.org) or call Ikon on 0121 248 0708.**

Social Media: [@ikongallery](https://www.instagram.com/ikongallery) [#ikonGallery](https://www.instagram.com/ikonGallery) [@robert\\_zhao](https://www.instagram.com/robert_zhao) [@ampersandfoundation](https://www.instagram.com/ampersandfoundation) [@wigwell\\_lodge](https://www.instagram.com/wigwell_lodge) [@ace\\_national](https://www.instagram.com/ace_national) [@aceagrams](https://www.instagram.com/aceagrams) [@ace\\_midlands](https://www.instagram.com/ace_midlands)

## **Notes to Editors:**

1. **Robert Zhao Renhui** received a BA from Camberwell College of Arts and an MA from the London College of Communication, both in Photography. His work has been exhibited in the Busan Biennale (2020), Singapore Biennale (2019), 9<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Queensland, Australia (2018), Jakarta Biennale (2017), 7<sup>th</sup> Moscow Biennale, Russia (2017), 20<sup>th</sup> Sydney Biennale (2016), and Les Rencontres d’Arles, France (2015), among others. Recent solo exhibitions include *The Nature Museum*, commissioned by Singapore International Festival of Arts (SIFA), and *The Bizarre Honour*, realised for OH! Open House, both in 2017. He has undertaken residencies at the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, and Kadist Art Foundation, San Francisco, and Fukuoka Art Museum, Japan. He was awarded the Young Artist Award by the National Arts Council, Singapore (2010) and was a finalist of the Hugo Boss Asia Art Award (2017) and the 12<sup>th</sup> Benesse Art Prize (2019). Most recently, he represented Singapore at the 2024 Venice Art Biennale with Curator Haeju Kim.

- Ikon** is an internationally acclaimed contemporary art gallery, situated in Birmingham's city centre. Established in 1964 by a group of artists, Ikon celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> 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 international and local artists working in a variety of media, 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](http://ikon-gallery.org)
- 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.
- The Ampersand Foundation** was founded in 2011 by businessman, collector and philanthropist Jack Kirkland to support the visual arts. The Foundation supports high-quality exhibitions and projects, provided they are free to the public at least one day per week. It also supports public collection expansion, art education projects and artists residencies. The Foundation is focused mainly on supporting institutions and projects within the UK. [theampersandfoundation.com](http://theampersandfoundation.com)
- 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](http://artscouncil.org.uk)

