

Search for the 'Real Birmingham Family' nears completion

- Search for family to be immortalised in new city-centre sculpture
- Exhibition of shortlisted families at BBC Birmingham, The Mailbox
- Project by Ikon and Turner Prize-winning artist Gillian Wearing

The three-year search for a family to be the 'face of Birmingham' is nearing completion with a new exhibition at the BBC's public space at The Mailbox, Birmingham, opening on 5 August.

A Real Birmingham Family is Ikon's ongoing project by Birmingham-born, Turner Prize winning artist Gillian Wearing: a quest to find, and immortalise in bronze, a 'real' Birmingham family.

During 2011 and 2012, residents of Birmingham were urged to nominate their families to be the face of Birmingham. No limits were placed on how the 21st century family might define itself, and nominations received include foster families, a group of friends and a single person.

From the many hundreds of families to choose from, a shortlist of four has been arrived at by a diverse panel of community, cultural and religious figures, including former Aston Villa footballer Ian Taylor, Birmingham Post Editor Stacey Barnfield and Brian Gambles, Chief Executive of the new Library of Birmingham.

Each shortlisted family is distinct, from an extended family of neighbours to a pair of sisters who are single mothers, representing a diverse range of social and cultural backgrounds.

These families form the core of a new exhibition, presented in the BBC Public Space at The Mailbox. Through self-styled vox pops and radio interviews with BBC Radio WM presenter Caroline Martin, the families talk about being from and living in Birmingham and their identity as a family.

The panel will then select one family to be the model for the new public sculpture, with the decision announced before the end of the exhibition.

The final sculpture, created in bronze, will be positioned in Centenary Square outside the new Library of Birmingham in 2014. A fundraising campaign to raise the £100,000 needed to realise the sculpture has just been launched.

Artist Gillian Wearing commented, “The project draws attention to the unsung and everyday, raising questions about civic identity and what constitutes a family today.”

The shortlisted families:

The Clarke Family



“This is my family! We can talk about anything together. We are very open, down to earth and we enjoy each other’s company. My mother is half Indian, my stepdad is Irish and my son is a perfect mix.” Kerry Clarke, aged 22.

The Clarke Family includes Kerry’s son, Cyden James Clarke, her mother Michelle and stepfather Kevin Robinson.

Michelle has another two daughters, Leanne and Billie, and Kerry is expecting a second child in the summer.

The Hay and Wooldridge Family



“We are two parents who have grown up in and around Birmingham, one black, one white, who met in Birmingham and who now have a beautiful mixed race daughter as the ultimate expression of our love for one another.” Rachel Wooldridge, aged 32.

Rachel and her partner Richard Hay have a daughter, Kaeliea Hay.

The Hancox and Treadwell Family



“We are neighbours, two separate families that have lived next door to one another for six years.

“Our children go to school together and are all quite close in age. During half-terms and weekends we all go on days out together to places such as the Think Tank, Dudley Zoo and Drayton Manor.

“We rely on each other a lot when we need to, for example, baby sitting and collecting kids from school. We are all very close and feel like one big family.”
Tonya Hancox, aged 31.

Tonya and husband Craig Hancox have three children, Nethaniel, Anna-Zara and Emily. Nichala Treadwell and her husband Mark also have three children, Benjamin, Chloe and Callum.

The Jones Family



“Our family is made up of myself and my happy little boy Kyan. I was born in Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham and have lived here all my life. Kyan was born in City Hospital and we enjoy exploring the city together.

“I have lived in many different areas of the city and have the typical brummie accent. I have so many memories of growing up here and many new ones which I have made with my little one.

“Being mixed race I feel more at home here as it’s so multicultural and as a result I believe the mixed race population in Brum will only increase.”

Roma Jones, aged 28.

Roma lives with her son, Kyan Ishaan Jones. The Jones family also includes Roma’s sister Emma and Emma’s son, Shaye Jones-Amin.

IKON

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Ikon Gallery is a registered charity no. 528892

Gillian Wearing

A Real Birmingham Family

BBC Public Space, The Mailbox, Birmingham B1 1AY

5 August – 8 September 2013

Open Monday-Saturday, 9.30am-5.30pm and Sunday, 11am-5pm.

FREE

Family Day at The Mailbox

Thursday 22 August, 1-4pm – FREE

Drop-in creative activities inspired by Ikon's project *A Real Birmingham Family*.

Suitable for all ages, children should be accompanied by an adult at all times. No need to book, stay as long as you like.

Donations to support the creation of Gillian Wearing's sculpture can be made at www.ikon-gallery.co.uk

Ends.

Note to Editors:

1. Gillian Wearing is a British artist, born in Birmingham in 1963. Emerging during the 1990s she was awarded the Turner Prize in 1997 and elected as a lifetime member of the Royal Academy of Arts, London in 2007. She was awarded the OBE in 2011.
2. The shortlist of four families was decided following discussion between the panel members on what constitutes a family: multiple generations, friendships, diversity as well as evidential links to Birmingham. Each member of the panel made a personal selection, that was then discussed by the group. The Judging Panel includes:

Stacey Barnfield, Editor, Birmingham Post & former Executive Editor,
Birmingham Mail

Brian Gambles, Chief Executive, Library of Birmingham Development Trust

Jonathan Gurling, Secretary, Birmingham Inter-Faith Forum

Ian Taylor, Club Ambassador, Aston Villa Football Club

Jonathan Watkins, Director, Ikon Gallery

Gillian Wearing, Artist

Liz Yardley, Professor, School of Sociology, Birmingham City University

Poppy Weldon, representative from the Ikon Youth Programme

Micaela Boas, Outset UK



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3. Ikon is open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am - 6pm. Admission is free.
4. Ikon Gallery is a registered charity and is supported using public funding from Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council.
5. £100,000 is needed to fund Gillian Wearing's bronze sculpture of *A Real Birmingham Family*. Those who donate £250 or more will automatically become a *Friend of the Family* and will be acknowledged in a published list of supporters. To donate please visit www.ikon-gallery.co.uk

For more information, high-res images and to arrange interviews please contact Helen Stallard on 0774 033 9604 or email h.stallard@ikon-gallery.co.uk