

## Birmingham and Karachi artists unite for unique education project

Three artists from Birmingham will shortly travel to Karachi as part of a unique project led by Ikon Gallery linking artists and schools in the UK and Pakistan.

The trip, taking place in September 2013, follows an earlier visit, in May, of three Karachi artists to Birmingham schools. Together, the artists are using artistic activity as a tool to address particular educational issues, both here and in Pakistan.

The three Birmingham artists due to travel to Karachi are Bharti Patel, an actress and script developer; visual artist Shaheen Ahmed; and photographer Mahtab Hussain.

Mahtab has been working with a group of ten 14-15 year olds at Selly Park Technology College for Girls. He said, "The school is keen for the girls to improve their listening skills. We are working with a small, intimate group, and I am bringing my photographic practice and skills to critically discuss themes around heritage, identity and displacement. We are also looking at documentation and the idea of the family album, sharing personal stories."

"The girls are from mixed backgrounds, some are very confident at sharing ideas and others shy, but we're able to give them a nurturing journey where they each have time to talk – and listen! I am incredibly impressed at the standard in which they are working; they are absorbing ideas which are at degree level."

Mahtab continued, "It is very exciting to be travelling to Karachi in the autumn to work with the students over there. Some of the young people we will meet are from very difficult backgrounds, having experienced war in Afghanistan before moving to Pakistan. On the other hand, the artists we have worked with from Karachi tell me it is an amazing, vibrant place to be. As a British man of Pakistani heritage, it will be fascinating to go back to my 'homeland' to experience what life is really like, away from the images we consume in the media."

The Birmingham-based artists undertook several days of intense training with Pakistani artists in preparation for their time in schools. Upon arrival in Pakistan, they will work alongside Karachi-based architect Mariyam Iftikar, sculptor Sara Khan and ceramic artist Sarah Mahmood.

Emma Bowen, Ikon Learning Coordinator, commented that "this is a rare opportunity to exchange new ideas about creativity in our schools. We are finding ways to use art in the teaching of maths and science, which has a noticeable impact on the engagement levels of pupils."



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Ikon Gallery is a registered charity no. 528892

In addition to Selly Park Technology College For Girls, the artists have spent time with St George's Church of England Primary School in Ladywood; Osborne Primary School in Erdington; Wychall Primary School in Northfield and Chandos Primary School in Highgate.

The Artists in Creative Education project is the result of a collaboration between Ikon, CCE (Creativity, Culture and Education) in Newcastle upon Tyne, the Vasl Artists' Collective of Karachi and the British Council Pakistan.

A showcase of artwork emerging from the project will be shown at Ikon Gallery in autumn 2013.

**Ends.**

**Note to Editors:**

1. Ikon is open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am - 6pm. Admission is free.
2. Ikon Gallery is supported using public funding from Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council.
3. For more information, images and interviews please contact Helen Stallard on 0774 033 9604 or email [h.stallard@ikon-gallery.co.uk](mailto:h.stallard@ikon-gallery.co.uk)