

27 August 2013

## The Jones family named ‘A Real Birmingham Family’

- Two sisters - single parents with two sons - chosen to be the face of Birmingham
- The Jones family will be immortalised in a new city-centre sculpture
- Project by Ikon and Turner Prize-winning artist Gillian Wearing

Two sisters and their children have been chosen to be immortalised into a new city-centre sculpture by Turner Prize-winning artist Gillian Wearing. The statue, which will be unveiled outside the new Library of Birmingham in 2014, is the centrepiece of *A Real Birmingham Family*, a three year project led by Ikon which asks what it means to be a family today.

Roma and her sister Emma, along with their sons Kyan Ishann Jones and Shaye-Jones Amin, have been chosen from a shortlist of four families by a diverse panel of community, cultural and religious figures. A total of 372 families nominated themselves to be part of the project.

The Jones family said, “Our family is made up of two sisters who are single parents that support each other and play a major part in each other’s life. We have lived in Birmingham all of our lives, in many different areas across the city.

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

Upon being told they had been selected to be the subject of the sculpture they said: “We feel truly amazed and honoured to be chosen to represent what it means to be a family in Birmingham. We feel it highlights that family is an indestructible bond between people that is universal and it doesn’t matter how it is made up or what it looks like.”

The announcement of the chosen family is a milestone in Ikon’s *A Real Birmingham Family* project, which has been three years in the making.

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 21<sup>st</sup> century family might define itself, and nominations received include foster families, a group of friends and a single person. Ikon took its *A Real Birmingham Family* roadshow around the city, to the Pallasades Shopping Centre, Handsworth Carnival, mac birmingham and Northfield, amongst other places, in the search for nominees.

From this mass of nominations, the judging panel agreed a shortlist of just four families in the spring of 2013, who form the core of an exhibition currently presented in the BBC Birmingham Public Space at The Mailbox. In short films the families talk about being from and living in Birmingham and their identity as a family. These interviews were also used by the panel to inform their final decision of the winning family.

Stuart Tulloch, Curator, Ikon, said: “In the end it was a unanimous decision to select the Jones family. Their story is compelling and says much about contemporary Birmingham: two mixed-race sisters, both single-parents with happy, lively young boys, who identify themselves strongly with the city of their birth. The variety of nominations to *A Real Birmingham Family* has shown to us that whilst the traditional, nuclear family may no longer be the norm, the ties that bind us together are as strong as ever.”

Tulloch continued: “The bronze sculpture of the Jones family will take its place in Centenary Square near statues of kings and industrial pioneers. In-so-doing, we draw attention to the everyday and the unsung, a lasting memorial to the people of Birmingham who are the life-blood of our city.”

The sculpture of the Jones family, created by Gillian Wearing, will be positioned 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. Donations can be made via Ikon’s website [www.ikon-gallery.co.uk](http://www.ikon-gallery.co.uk)

## Ends.

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

**Micaela Boas**, Outset UK

**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

# IKON

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Ikon Gallery is a registered charity no. 528892

**Gillian Wearing**, Artist

**Poppy Weldon**, representative from the Ikon Youth Programme

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

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](http://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](mailto:h.stallard@ikon-gallery.co.uk)