

Jonathan Watkins named Global Thinker of 2013 by *Foreign Policy*

Ikon Director Jonathan Watkins has been named one of *Foreign Policy's* Global Thinkers of 2013 for his work as Curator of the Pavilion of Iraq at the 55th Venice Biennale.

Jonathan Watkins was selected by *Foreign Policy* 'for displaying Iraq's soul and grace to the world' alongside Tamara Chalabi, Chairwoman of the Ruya Foundation for Contemporary Culture in Iraq who commissioned the pavilion.

The fifth annual special issue featuring *Foreign Policy's* '100 Leading Global Thinkers' was published this December. Each autumn, *Foreign Policy's* editors compile a list of people who, over the past year, have made a measurable difference in politics, business, technology, the arts, the sciences, and more.

In the exhibition, titled *Welcome to Iraq*, Watkins presented the work of 11 contemporary artists all resident in Iraq. Working across a wide range of media, including photography, drawing, painting, video, installation, sculpture, and textiles, they represented two generations of artists from across the country. Watkins travelled across Iraq with Chalabi to find these artists. Working with researchers and experts from within the country, they hosted education events and visited artists in their homes and studios.

Referring to the cultural scene in present day Iraq, *Foreign Policy* noted, 'though that culture may still be finding its footing, the Biennale pavilion, which garnered positive reviews and significant media attention, helped it take a major step forward by introducing it to the world.'

Ikon is holding the first museum solo exhibition of Iraqi-Kurdish artist Jamal Penjweny from 19 February – 21 April 2014. Penjweny was one of the artists included in the pavilion. Watkins will continue his work in Iraq through his role as an Advisory Board Member of Ruya Foundation for Contemporary Culture in Iraq.

Notes to Editors

1. Ikon Gallery is a registered charity and is funded using public funds from Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council.
2. For more information, high-res images and to arrange an interview with the curator please contact Helen Stallard on 0774 033 9604 or email h.stallard@ikon-gallery.org

IKON

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Ikon Gallery is a registered charity no. 528892

Sample Images



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Jamal Penjweny, Saddam is Here, Photographs, 2010



Jonathan Watkins in Iraq