

IKON

Ikon Gallery, 1 Oozells Square, Brindleyplace, Birmingham
B1 2HS
TEL. +44 (0) 121 248 0708 / FAX. +44 (0) 121 248 0709
WEBSITE. www.ikon-gallery.co.uk
Ikon Gallery is a registered charity no. 528892

Press Release

This Could Happen To You: Ikon in the 1970s

21 July – 5 September 2010

Ikon presents *This Could Happen To You: Ikon in the 1970s*. The second chapter in the story of Ikon, the exhibition surveys the gallery's programme from 1970-1978 and follows the 1960s survey *Some of the best things in life happen accidentally* (2004). The works of 32 artists will be displayed throughout Ikon's Brindleyplace galleries, augmented by other installations at Ikon Eastside and Birmingham's Pallasades shopping centre.

In 1970 Ikon transferred from an octagonal glass kiosk in Birmingham's Bullring to a larger, basement premises in Swallow Street. Two years later it moved again, occupying a shop unit in the West Court of the Birmingham Shopping Centre (now known as the Pallasades), next door to Habitat and an army and navy recruitment office; here it became the unintended target for terrorist bombers in 1974, resulting in considerable damage to the gallery's entrance.

As elsewhere during the 1970s, Birmingham was lively with student sit-ins, strikes, counter-cultural collectives, union unrest and popular demonstrations. Within this context, Ikon developed from being an artist-run space featuring work by founder artists, their colleagues and acquaintances, to having a greater level of engagement nationally. Director Simon Chapman (1972-8), Gallery Manager Jeanette Koch (1970-5) and Curator Richard Stokes (1975-9) created a programme reflecting distinct artistic tastes, in turn informed by burning issues that were then preoccupying the (western) art world overall.

Political commitment was important to many who felt that the crises being played out in Vietnam and Northern Ireland could not be ignored in artistic practice, reflected at Ikon by Stuart Brisley's performance *You Know it Makes Sense (with reference to allegations made against the British Army in Ulster concerning torture)* (1972). Feminism and gay rights were urgent, and so too race and class discrimination. Alexis Hunter's slide projection *Domestic Warfare* (1979), Anne Pullinger's felt banners (*Tatlin Banner*, 1975) celebrating the Bolshevik Revolution and participatory works by John Dugger and David Medalla all point to shifts in artistic practice, where activism took place through then unconventional means of expression.

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Painting was becoming polarised between realism and abstraction, the latter arising particularly out of an assertion of truth to materials. Major exhibitions by Peter Sedgley, Jeremy Moon and Barrie Cook were presented; particularly notable was that of John Walker. Birmingham born and Britain's representative at the 1972 Venice Biennale, he was the first to show at the West Court gallery, where he produced in situ large chalk drawings on blackboards. Setting the tone for the direction to come Chapman remembers, "It was of course a greater risk for him as it was for Ikon, but it was a risk we felt appropriate." For *This Could Happen to you* Walker will make a new large-scale chalk drawing, again in situ.

Of the figurative work on display, 1970s' urban life informed Ikon's programme: David Hepher's paintings such as *The Newly Decorated Doors of No.21 and No.23* (1973) make a deadpan response to the house-proud lifestyles of those living in ubiquitous Victorian terrace houses; Tim Mara's deft silk-screen prints of interior scenes meanwhile provide intriguing insights into the psychology, values and aspirations of the residents. Much of the painting shown was derived from photographic imagery, from existentialist depictions of New Town public space by Boyd and Evans to the photo-realism of Americana by John Salt. Animation too made an early appearance with a film and individual 'cells' by Ian Emes, the artist who went on to forge a brilliant career visualising the music of Pink Floyd.

Off-site and special events include a symposium, *If you remember it...* 24-25 July, focusing on the legacy of the 1970s with panellists drawn from exhibiting artists and other commentators. Composer Howard Skempton will develop a series of music performances, *September Songs*, during the weekend of 11-12 September. These will include his open score works from the 1970s and newly composed pieces, with a selection of artworks from the exhibition providing a backdrop. At the Pallasades, Ikon presents *Seeing the Unseen: Photographs and films by Harold E. Edgerton*, an exhibition of pioneering photography and film in a shop unit near to Ikon's 1970s home.

At Ikon Eastside, there will be a recreation of *This Could Happen To You* by Jolyon Laycock. An audio-visual installation, it conveys the apocalyptic dread and paranoia of the decade. Two versions of the work were originally shown at Ikon in 1971 and 1974.

A catalogue will accompany the exhibition, fully illustrated, containing entries on each artist and texts by Simon Chapman and Jonathan Watkins, Ikon's current director.

Ends.

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Note to Editors:

1. Press Preview, Tuesday 20 July 2010, 12-8pm
2. Symposium *If you remember it...*, 24-25 July, Ikon Gallery. Places are free but should be booked by calling Ikon on 0121 248 0708.
3. Howard Skempton *September Songs*, 11-12 September, Ikon Gallery. Free entry.
4. *Seeing the Unseen: Photographs and films by Harold E. Edgerton*, Unit 39-40, Pallasades shopping centre, Birmingham, 21 July – 5 September. Open 11-6 Tuesday-Saturday, 11-5 Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays. Free entry.
5. Jolyon Laycock, *This Could Happen To You*, 11-12 September. Ikon Eastside, 183 Fazeley Street, Digbeth, Birmingham B5 5SE. Free entry.
6. Ikon is open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am - 6pm. Free entry.
7. Ikon Gallery is a registered charity and receives core funding from Birmingham City Council and Arts Council West Midlands.
8. A selection of images is shown below.
9. For more information and images please contact Helen Stallard, Press and PR Consultant, on 0774 033 9604 or h.stallard@ikon-gallery.co.uk

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John Salt
Pink Trailer with Plymouth,
1974
Airbrushed acrylic on
canvas
Courtesy of
Wolverhampton Arts &
Heritage. Purchased with
assistance from the
Victoria & Albert Museum
Purchase Grant Fund.



Tim Mara
The Stage and Television
Today
Screenprint, 1975
Edition 40
91x117cm
Courtesy of Alice and Emily
Mara and Flowers London



Ian Emes
French Window, 1973
Video still
Courtesy of the artist