

# IKON

## Exhibition Guide

13 May – 12 July 2015

**Pavel Büchler**  
**(Honest) Work**  
**First and Second Floor Galleries**  
**and Tower Room**

Czech-born, UK based artist Pavel Büchler uses found objects, images, audio recordings, photographs and texts in order to reveal strangeness in everyday life. Many of his works make reference to art history, philosophy or literature. This exhibition explores Büchler's ongoing interest in the fallibility of language, gaps in communication and words as objects, and includes quotations from writers such as Samuel Beckett, Franz Kafka, Karl Marx and Ludwig Wittgenstein.

The following interview with the artist was made at Ikon, May 2015:

**Please tell us about the title for the exhibition, (Honest) Work.**

Work or labour has a heroic status in our society, we hear the phrase 'hard working families' all the time ... The word 'Honest' is in parenthesis because that is my challenge ... it's a question really, what type of 'work' is the production of art?

**Your use of found objects has been described as creating 'semantic short circuits'. How important are the titles for these works?**

These are not so much found objects, the objects find me. Art is a discovery, not an invention so the titles are observations more than anything.

**How have you used readymade texts and words as objects at Ikon?**

The passage from Samuel Beckett for *Inside Watt* (2015) was an inspiring text that offered a range of possibilities. It reflected that sense of movement in an enclosed space. In fact the space activates the text. The automatic doors at the entrance to Ikon open and shut and there is the suggestion of a trap. They are both threatening and non-threatening. The movement of the doors makes it non-legible. The situation both subverts and activates the text.

**How is this idea of non-legible text continued elsewhere in the exhibition?**

The series *Idle Thoughts* are genuine diary entries, made almost daily since 2003, one page per month and reproduced several times in various publications. The over-writing frustrates efforts to read it. There are thousands of hours of writing in there but the work appears like a number of drawings. It is open-ended and incomplete and there is space for two more entries that will be completed during the exhibition in May and June.

**The Castle is a sound installation which has been shown elsewhere. How is the version at Ikon different?**

This is a survey exhibition so in a way it is a compilation of all the previous versions since 2005 which were adapted for each context with the language of that country. Most of it is in German and English, but there are also some parts in Czech and Mandarin. Incidentally *The Castle* by Kafka was the first Western novel ever to be translated into Chinese.

**What is the appeal of using obsolete technology?**

I am particularly interested in the evolution of language technology, from the letterpress to the typewriter to Google Translate. It's not about nostalgia, many

of these technologies have their own limitations or a practical uselessness now. For example, letterpress is the only language technology that does not enable you to say everything you may want. *Honest Work* is a set of prints that show the limits of that technology, as the set I used had letters missing. In contrast, for the Karl Marx quote I used a complete set of nineteenth century type with a particular letter frequency that was calculated by Samuel Morse at that time and is still of interest to computer programmers today.

### **What other themes are you exploring in this exhibition?**

There are several strands, or rather echoes here. There are references to primary and secondary colours, bodily movement (*Inside Watt*), and eye movement, with the references to experiments by Soviet psychologist A. L. Yarbus during the 1950s and 1960s in the series *Observational Drawings (Yarbus Rorschach)* (2007). There is also the film of the test launch of a warhead (*Trident*, 2006) where the un-synchronised cameras mimic the wandering eye movement during the act of looking. Really, I am seeing what the works do if left to their own devices.

Pavel Büchler, May 2015

This exhibition is supported by The Henry Moore Foundation and is accompanied by a publication, including texts by Austrian philosopher Robert Pfaller and Jonathan Watkins, Ikon Director.

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## **Associated Events**

### **Artist's Talk – Pavel Büchler**

**Wednesday 24 June, 6.30–8pm – FREE**

Join artist Pavel Büchler as he discusses his life and work, including the inspiration behind his current Ikon exhibition. Places are free but should be booked. Visit [www.ikon-gallery.org](http://www.ikon-gallery.org) to book online or call Ikon on 0121 248 0708.

### **Book Club**

**Tuesday 9 June and Tuesday 7 July**

**6.30–8pm**

**£4 per person**

Ikon's Book Club explores *The Castle* by Franz Kafka in the light of Pavel Büchler's exhibition. The June session is led by William J Dodd, Emeritus Professor of Modern German Studies, University of Birmingham, and the July session, led by artist and writer Jamie Sutcliffe, focuses on the 'artist's book' as a medium, drawing widely upon examples of twentieth century art and experimental literature. *The Castle* is available at a special price from Ikon Shop. Places are limited and booking is essential. Please book online or call Ikon Shop on 0121 248 0711.

**Visit the Resource Room where you can find a selection of books, audio and film.**

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Ikon Gallery

Brindleyplace, Birmingham B1 2HS

0121 248 0708

[www.ikon-gallery.org](http://www.ikon-gallery.org)



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