

Sara Barker

23 September – 27 November 2016



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metamorphosis of friends

disappeared subtle structures, 2016 (detail)

Aluminium sheet, steel rod and bar, perspex, brass rod, automotive paint

Courtesy the artist; Mary Mary, Glasgow; carlier | gebauer, Berlin; The Approach, London. Photo: Max Slaven

Ikon, in collaboration with The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, presents a major exhibition by Glasgow-based artist Sara Barker. Her artistic practice operates on the boundary between sculpture, painting and drawing, delicately tracing lines in space. Incorporating rods of steel and aluminium, sheets of glass and painted sections, Barker's artworks are sometimes wall based, sometimes floor based - and sometimes moving from floor to wall and back again - reflecting her interest in how space may exist in the mind, in stories and in memories.

Sara Barker (born 1980) studied art history and painting in Glasgow, and that city presented her with opportunities early in her artistic career to exhibit work at Mary Mary, at an early incarnation of the gallery in a domestic setting, and Transmission. Since then

she has developed her practice through solo and group exhibitions across the UK and internationally, as well as public commissions, with each new work building on the discoveries of the last. For this exhibition Barker presents existing installations as well as a new work made especially for Ikon.

Barker's working process begins with painting, either on canvas or sheets of metal, with a colour palette that often speaks of the outdoors – the blues and greys of sky and sea and the greens of the natural world. At times only certain parts of each painting have interested Barker and consequently she has cut into them, reducing them to narrow strips which are then removed from their original flat context and combined with other painted surfaces, metal rods and strips to make three dimensional structures.

metamorphosis of friends disappeared subtle structures (2016) is one such work, an assemblage of 3D painted lines; a slight form that occupies space, but also describes and contains it. Barker's structures outline, inhabit and create not only one space but several shifting spaces, their lines and planes moving over each other as the viewer walks towards, away and around them. They seek connections both imagined and real, reminiscent of pictures or window frames, of figures, of furniture, of places we know or would like to. Other recent works such as *the letters F & M are characters* (2016) are more substantial, constructed of full frames and expansive planes rather than narrow strips, however they are similarly deconstructed and in these works negative has become positive.

Of her work, Sara Barker explains:

“I try to create disorienting sculptural collages, reliefs, at once compressing three dimensions to image, and creating optical illusions of space out of flat paintings, using surface to reflect, fragment, confuse and distort the path of the metal lineage.

All I've ever really wanted my work to do, physically and emotionally, is reverberate with people, be powerful, which is probably why I make sculpture at all. It's that human physicality that is sort of looming, that is bigger than you. You have to be in it, or surrounded by it, or overwhelmed by it.”

The link with language and literature is key to Barker's artistic practice – when a writer describes a place, whether imagined or remembered, that space opens up in the mind of the reader, so too with art. Barker explains: “Often I draw on female writers like Gertrude Stein, Doris Lessing, Virginia Woolf, who write about their own creative space. I always felt that space was a metaphor for creative freedom and was something I wanted to make work about.” The importance of writing and reading as well as looking and making

is reflected in the titles Barker uses, yet another layer through which she describes and creates a spatial situation.

The exhibition is supported by The Henry Moore Foundation and Creative Scotland.

A catalogue accompanies the exhibition, priced £20, produced in collaboration with The Fruitmarket Gallery, including new writing from curator and writer Katharine Stout and novelist Ali Smith. Available from Ikon Shop or online at www.ikon-gallery.org

Sara Barker has also created a very limited series of unique works – these gestural brass pieces are available from Ikon Shop, price on application. Please call Ikon Shop on 0121 248 0711 for more information.

Social Media Handles:

Instagram, Twitter and Facebook: @ikongallery #IkonGallery #SaraBarker

Note to Editors:

1. Ikon exhibition opening: Friday 23 September, 6-8pm.
2. Sara Barker was born in Manchester in 1980, she studied at Glasgow School of Art and lives and works in Glasgow. Previous solo exhibitions include *for myself and strangers*, Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow (2014); *I become almost a shadow*, carlier | gebauer, Berlin (2014); *The subtle knife*, with Ryder Architecture, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead (2013); *THE THINGS THAT ARE SOLID, ABSORBED AND STILL*, Mary Mary, Glasgow (2013); *Woman at a Window*, Stuart Shave | Modern Art London (2012); *Images*, Mary Mary, Glasgow (2010); and *FOUR*, Dublin (2009).
3. Ikon is an internationally acclaimed contemporary art venue situated in central Birmingham. Established in 1964 by a group of artists, Ikon is an educational charity and works to encourage public engagement with contemporary art through exhibiting new work in a context of debate and participation. The gallery programme features artists from around the world and a variety of media is represented, including sound, film, mixed media, photography, painting, sculpture and installation. Ikon's off-site programme develops dynamic relationships between art, artists and audiences outside the gallery. Projects vary enormously in scale, duration and location, challenging expectations of where art can be seen and by whom. Education is at the heart of Ikon's activities, stimulating public interest in and understanding of contemporary visual art. Through a variety of talks, tours, workshops and seminars, Ikon's Learning Team aims to build dynamic relationships with audiences, enabling visitors to engage with, discuss and reflect on contemporary art. www.ikon-gallery.org
4. Ikon is open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am - 5pm. Admission is free. Ikon Gallery is supported using public funding from Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council. For the latest news and events follow @ikongallery on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/ikongallery), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/ikongallery) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/ikongallery).
5. For more information or high-res images please contact Rebecca Small or Emily Luxford at Ikon on 0121 248 0708 or email r.small@ikon-gallery.org or e.luxford@ikon-gallery.org

Ikon Gallery, 1 Oozells Square, Brindleyplace, Birmingham B1 2HS
0121 248 0708 / www.ikon-gallery.org Open Tuesday-Sunday, 11am-5pm / free entry
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Continued overleaf



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