

steel bearings laid down in oil on its surface. At first they are perceived as being in a static radial formation, but on closer inspection there is an occasional movement – the bearings are slowly moving, one by one, rearranging and re-positioning themselves into an infinite “drawing in progress”.

The idea of drawing as a record of physical movement through space is studied in a new series on paper, employing traditional materials such as ink and acrylic paint on heavyweight watercolour paper, combined with a non-traditional way of drawing – using a bicycle as the line-making device. Speed, gravity, space, equilibrium, painterly accidents, mechanical vehicle and artistic control come in to play on these vertical, large-scale and minimalistic drawings/monotypes.

Thus ideas of movement, in its pure kinetic state or as a trace of movement that has already happened, are developed through the artist’s work. His new installation at the beginning of the exhibition, made especially for Ikon, involves an upside-down video projection of a ride through forested landscape and a mass of metal rods (tripods) painted white and arranged on a high gloss black floor. It combines viewers’ movements through the space and formal density to result in a controlled environment that is immediately disorienting. However, as with the *Illuminator* works and *White Noise*, any illusion is dispelled through careful scrutiny. Consistently Kempinas is playing a smart aesthetic game, sharing something that is as wonderful as it is real.

## Sara Barker

Sara Barker’s 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.

Barker (b. 1980) studied art history and painting in Glasgow, and 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 she 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, more generally, 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.

## Philippine Hamen

### ***For The Man Who Wouldn't Get Up – Hommage to David Lodge***

French designer Philippine Hamen (b. 1986) presents a new hybrid piece of furniture in Ikon’s Tower Room. It is inspired by David Lodge’s short story, *The Man Who Wouldn't Get Up* (first published in 1966), about a man who is tired of getting up every morning to live the same joyless life, day after day, until one morning he decides to stay where he is.

Hamen has made a ‘lounger desk’ for Lodge’s character and in a sense for the writer whose imagination conceived him. With an appropriate ergonomic structure, including a ‘face hole’ usually found in massage tables, it enables the user to read or work lying face down and thereby questions the long-held association of verticality with the activity of work, whereas horizontality is mostly associated with idleness.

## Associated Events

### David Lodge and Philippine Hamen in conversation

Saturday 8 October 2016, 4.30–7pm

£8 per person, £6.40 concessions

Ikon Gallery and Studio Theatre

Library of Birmingham, Centenary Square

Broad Street, Birmingham B1 2ND

Booking essential

Designer Philippine Hamen and writer David Lodge discuss Hamen's work *For The Man Who Wouldn't Get Up* – Hommage to David Lodge at an event chaired by arts journalist Rosie Goldsmith. The event begins at 4.30pm at Ikon Gallery with a drinks reception and special viewing of the current exhibitions, followed by the talk at 6pm at the Library of Birmingham. To book visit [www.birminghamliteraturefestival.org](http://www.birminghamliteraturefestival.org) or call 0121 245 4455.

### Artist's Talk – Sara Barker

Wednesday 2 November, 6–7.30pm – FREE  
Booking essential

Join Artist Sara Barker in conversation with Jonathan Watkins, Ikon Director, about her life and work, including the inspiration behind her current Ikon exhibition. Book online at [www.ikon-gallery.org](http://www.ikon-gallery.org) or call Ikon on 0121 248 0708.

## Exhibition Supporters

Žilvinas Kempinas' exhibition is organised in collaboration with Galerija Vartai and is supported by the Lithuanian Council for Culture.

Sara Barker's exhibition is supported by The Henry Moore Foundation and Creative Scotland.

Philippine Hamen's exhibition is supported by Fluxus Art Projects.

### Find out more

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

If you have any questions about the exhibition please ask the Information Assistants in the gallery.

### Stay in touch

Subscribe to our e-bulletin at [www.ikon-gallery.org](http://www.ikon-gallery.org) and find us on    [ikongallery](https://www.instagram.com/ikongallery)

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

Open Tuesday – Sunday  
and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am–5pm  
Free entry, donations welcome

# IKON

## Exhibition Guide

23 September – 27 November 2016

### Žilvinas Kempinas

#### Sara Barker

#### Philippine Hamen

There is a strong sculptural tendency in Ikon's current programme, with a literary twist. Sara Barker's exhibition, on the second floor, combines sculpture, painting and drawing to convey her interest in the way space occurs to us in the mind, in both stories and memories, as much as in three-dimensional reality.

Meanwhile, in the Tower Room, we present a 'lounger desk' by French artist Philippine Hamen inspired by David Lodge's short story, *The Man Who Wouldn't Get Up*. Here an inert object embodies the cautionary tale of a man who has lost his love of life to the extent that he can no longer elevate himself from a horizontal position.

Žilvinas Kempinas' exhibition, on the other hand, is a very animated installation, with moving objects and imagery, matching the movement of visitors – upright and active – thus exemplifying the artist's understanding of time as a "sculpting" material.

### Žilvinas Kempinas

New York-based Lithuanian artist Žilvinas Kempinas (b. 1969) makes work that is elemental, representing and embodying natural phenomena such as light and the movement of air. It involves unprecious everyday objects and materials such as unwound videotape, which appeals to him not only as an 'abstraction' of moving imagery, but also because of its distinct physical qualities:

*[It is ...] super light, thin enough to visually disappear if looked at from one side, an easily recognisable material, flexible and durable. Videotape is also inexpensive. It's a container of visual information, a data carrier, but you can perceive it like an abstract line. It is a mass-produced banal industrial material, but it can appear sensual and seductive at the same time.*

Videotape is both message and medium in Kempinas' installation, *White Noise* (2007). Involving countless lengths of tape stretched horizontally wall-to-wall, agitated by ventilator fans, it suggests static from a vast un-tuned television screen. The sound of the fans and fluttering tape heighten an illusion which is simultaneously undermined by closer inspection.

Such tension, between first impression and reality, and the dramatic changes that occur through a shifting viewpoint are not uncommon in Kempinas' work. In other ways *White Noise* provides a key to understanding the exhibition. Literally tied into Ikon's exhibition space with parallel lengths of tape, it exemplifies the importance of architectural context for the artist – sometimes inspiring the production of work, always affecting our reading of it – and his resistance to any idea of a self-contained, discreet artistic experience.

Shown alongside *White Noise* are seven works from Kempinas' *Illuminator* series (2015). From a distance they resemble surfaces of a full moon – a bright sphere in a dark sky – but are in fact circles of flat rough wall, lit along their perimeters. *Bearings* (2015), on the other hand, is a floor-based black box-like object with thousands of small



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