

IKON

Exhibition Guide

Lucy Orta

Procession Banners

23 October 2018 — 20 January 2019

Ikon presents *Procession Banners* by British artist Lucy Orta, a selection of banners made by female residents of HMP Downview. These works are displayed for the first time at Medicine Bakery and Gallery – formerly the gallery of the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists – where it provides a unique context for the city's engagement with the history of suffrage.

Early in 2018 Orta began collaborating with HMP Downview residents as part of the *Making for Change* programme, established by London College of Fashion, University of the Arts London. Commissioned by Historic England as part of the *HerStories* campaign, the group designed 30 banners to mark 100 years since British women won the vote.

In 2016, many residents were transferred to HMP Downview after the closure of HMP Holloway, then the largest all-women prison in Europe, and the notorious site where over 1,000 suffragettes had been imprisoned during their struggle for the vote. Through workshops Orta collected testimonies about what it means to be a woman today, the power of the vote and our shared future. Seven banners were carried by student volunteers from London College of Fashion as part of *PROCESSIONS*, the mass march, which took place on Sunday 10 June 2018.

The weekly meetings in the Making for Change fashion manufacturing unit at HMP Downview brought together women from all ages, backgrounds, races and cultures. Sharing craft techniques provided a common creative environment, a neutral safe space, to reflect on what it means to be a woman today and our shared future. The banners reflect the power of a collective women's voice. Lucy Orta

Orta trained as a fashion-knitwear designer in the mid-1990s in Nottingham and co-founded Studio Orta with her partner, artist Jorge Orta, in 1992. Their work centres on social action and political provocation through a multidisciplinary, collaborative practice that often responds to the contemporary condition. For instance, with *Antarctica*, Studio Orta addressed issues of global warming and mass movement of people by offering citizenship through the 'Antarctica World Passport Delivery Bureau'. A radical political act, the project initiated tens of thousands of passport applications.

OrtaWater also considered the environment, raising awareness of the rapid consumption of natural resources. This project uncovers Orta's desire to produce work and collaborate with community or educational groups, in this case working with young researchers from Fabbrica in Treviso, Italy, to develop a series of interactive works exploring water purification, distribution and consumption.

During November 2018, Orta is the final artist-in-residence for Ikon's 2018 *Looping the Loop* programme, a three year project (2017-19) taking place on board *Slow Boat*, a converted narrowboat, and community spaces in Birmingham's Ladywood district. During her residency, Orta and MotherShip Projects join together with local communities to create a processional banner based on personal experiences. On Saturday 17 November, to mark the centenary of women's suffrage, Lucy Orta, MotherShip and students from Birmingham City University lead a procession through the streets of Birmingham headed by the finished banner.

Medicine Bakery & Gallery, 69 New Street, Birmingham B2 4DU. Please note Medicine Bakery is only accessible via a steep staircase.

Associated Events

Learning Social with Cathy Wade **Tuesday 30 October** **4.30pm-6.30pm – FREE** **Booking essential**

Art teachers, lecturers and students are invited to this seminar focusing on influential British educator Marion Richardson (1892–1946), who studied at Moseley School of Art and the Birmingham Municipal School of Arts and Crafts from 1908 to 1912, before working in residence at Winson Green and Holloway prisons under the influence of Margery Fry. Taking place in Lucy Orta's exhibition and led by artist Cathy Wade, Course Leader MA Arts in Education Practices, BCU, the session draws upon Richardson's personal papers in Birmingham City University's Art and Design Archive.

Please note Medicine is only accessible via a steep staircase. Presented as part of BCU's celebrations of 175 years at the heart of Birmingham life.

Pressing On **Saturday 17 November** **10.00am-12.30pm – FREE** **Booking essential, meet at Ikon Gallery**

To mark the centenary of women's suffrage, join a procession led by Lucy Orta, MotherShip and students from Birmingham City University, headed by a banner made by groups of women, representing their journey and experiences. The procession starts with a tour of Polly Apfelbaum's exhibition at Ikon, moves to Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery for an introduction to *Women Power Protest*, an Arts Council Collection National Partners exhibition, and ends with a visit to Lucy Orta's *Procession Banners* at Medicine Bakery and Gallery. Followed by tea, cake and conversation. Please note Medicine is only accessible via a steep staircase.

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

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