

Ikon Youth Programme: Slow Boat Launching Summer 2021



IYP fly-post *Slow Boat* with Birmingham artist Foka Wolf, September 2018

For ten years Ikon Youth Programme (IYP) has steered *Slow Boat* around the canals of the West Midlands and beyond. A converted narrow boat, it is a unique floating space for IYP, local communities and artists to make and experience art in a stimulating and creative environment.

With the support of Freelands Foundation, over the next three years (2021-2024) IYP will continue to navigate the waterways, collaborating with creative thinkers and makers to reimagine *Slow Boat* as a local art school. Set against the backdrop of funding cuts to arts education, we will expand the alternative curriculum offered by IYP, raising fundamental questions concerning the definition and relevance of art.

"Support from Freelands Foundation affirms our belief as young people that an alternative arts education is integral to our learning. We hope to generate new ways of thinking that will result in positive conversations with art schools, transforming social narratives and building on radical histories that reflect our everyday experiences. We are all looking forward to the future discourse around this project, including the changing space of Slow Boat; a space of provocation, a space of transformation, a space of us." Ikon Youth Programme, Birmingham

In the first year, members of IYP will be introduced to various histories, materials and processes, including painting, sculpting, printmaking, ceramics and glassblowing. Just as local art schools of the 19th & 20th Century provided formative educational experiences for artists, designers, educators and activists, we envisage *Slow Boat* playing this role for many more young people.

The *Slow Boat* Summer School 2021 Programme (July-August) involves a number of workshops with artist tutors:

John Yeadon's arts education started in the 1960s with a Pre-Diploma at Burnley Municipal College and School of Art, followed by Diploma at Hornsey College of Art and an MA from the Royal College of Art. A painter and printmaker, who has also worked in banner-making, theatre design, digital media and music, Yeadon taught members of the Blk Art Group at Coventry University, including Keith Piper with whom Yeadon has work in our current exhibition *A Very Special Place: Ikon in the 1990s*.
johnyeadon.com

With an MFA from Birmingham School of Art, **Betsy Bradley** is working towards her first major solo exhibition at Ikon, *Chasing Rainbows* (3 December 2021 – 13 February 2022). Bradley will run workshops for Coventry City's Council's *Through Care* service for looked after children and care leavers aged 12-25. Together with IYP they will produce a radical new design for *Slow Boat's* painted exterior.
betsy-bradley.co.uk

Monica Perez Vega has an MFA in Painting from Slade School of Fine Art, a studio at Old Print Works, Balsall Heath and teaches Art and Design Technology at Tudor Grange Academy Kinghurst, Birmingham. Her students will work with IYP to paint an adaptable flag for *Slow Boat* based on the work of Vega's former tutors, Lisa Milroy and Graham Gussin, included in *A Very Special Place: Ikon in the 1990s*.
monicaperezvega.com

In collaboration with the artist tutors, IYP will curate their own public events, including *Slow Boat's* launch (22 July), with a DJ set by **Saffiyah Khan**, former member of IYP and performer with seminal two-tone band *The Specials*. They will also organise public events with Celebrating Sanctuary for Ikon's fourth *Migrant Festival* (19 – 22 August) and film screenings with Flatpack Festival for the August bank holiday weekend (28 – 30 August).

"The removal of art from school curriculums has significantly influenced IYP which, since it began in 2010, has offered members an alternative to mainstream education and a means of creative expression. With the support of Freelands Foundation, we are able to expand Slow Boat's reach to communities and celebrate the radical history of the Arts and Crafts movement, the architecture of which lines the canals and underscores the diverse cultural ecology of the West Midlands." Linzi Stauvers, Head of Learning, Ikon


"We are delighted to support Slow Boat, and excited to see this innovative alternative art school get underway on the canals of Birmingham and the West Midlands. Ikon have long delivered exceptional art education programmes, and we hope this flagship project will continue to energise and enthuse young people in the Midlands to embrace the long tradition of making and creative practice in the region." Henry Ward, Creative Director, Freelands Foundation

For more information, high-res images and to request interviews please contact Rebecca Small or Laura Jaunzems on 0121 248 0708 or email r.small@ikon-gallery.org or l.jaunzems@ikon-gallery.org

Social Media - Instagram, Twitter and Facebook: @ikongallery #IkonGallery @FreelandsF Links: ikon-gallery.org freelandsfoundation.co.uk

Visiting Ikon: Entry is free. To book a ticket or for more information on current opening times and visiting guidelines please visit ikon-gallery.org

Notes to Editors:

1. 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. ikon-gallery.org
2.  **Freelands Foundation**
Freelands Foundation was set up in 2015 to give more people the chance to engage with and enjoy the arts in the UK, with a particular focus on education. The Foundation's ambition is to give everyone access to art education in the belief that it raises their aspirations and transforms their opportunities in life. freelandsfoundation.co.uk
3. For twelve years, Sandwell Council have leased Ikon the 72 feet narrow boat (*The Aaron Manby*) for Ikon Youth Programme to explore the local canal network

and dock for arts events and performances.

4. *The Migrant Festival* (19 - 22 August 2021) – a four day programme mixing visual art, music, film and performance, it celebrates the contribution made by refugees and migrants to Birmingham and the UK, whilst bearing witness to the hardships and sacrifices involved. The 2021 festival will comprise digital and live events including performances by musicians curated by Celebrating Sanctuary; our annual Soapbox event featuring quick-fire presentations from individuals and groups supporting migrants in the Midlands; and a day long symposium about the Blk Art Group and religion.
5. *A Very Special Place: Ikon in the 1990s* (18 June — 30 August 2021) is the fourth in a series of surveys of Ikon's artistic programme. It comprises work by 40 artists who featured in exhibitions at our venue in John Bright Street during 1990-1997, and at Ikon's current premises in Brindleyplace until 1999. Artists include Perminder Kaur, Adrian Piper, Keith Piper, Donald Rodney, Martha Rosler, Yinka Shonibare and Mark Wallinger.
6. Ikon Gallery is supported using public funding from Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council.
7. Arts Council England is the national development body for arts and culture across England, working to enrich people's lives. ACE support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to visual art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2018 and 2022, ACE will invest £1.45 billion of public money from government and an estimated £860 million from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. [artscouncil.org.uk](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk)



IYP take part in Ai Weiwei's *Fly the Flag*, marking the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, June 2019