from Audéoud to Zhao Bandi

from Audéoud to

Fabienne Audéoud and John Russell

David Brinkworth

Marc Camille Chaimowicz

David Cunningham

Adam Dade and Sonia Hanney

Brian Duffy

Alicia Framis

Katharina Grosse

Graham Gussin, with Mark Lockett

Anthony Howell, with Jennifer Smith and Lorna Stewart

Ann Veronica Janssens

Patrick Killoran

Kelly Mark

Ivan Morison

Hayley Newman

Cornelia Parker

Susan Phillipsz

Paul Ramirez Jonas

Paul Rooney

Amikam Toren

Rikuo Ueda

Wolfgang Weileder

Chris Taylor and Craig Wood

Zhao Bandi

Zhao Bandi

Foreword

This is the second publication documenting projects in Ikon's off-site programme. Taking place during 2002–2004, characteristically each conveys an unpreciousness about art, encouraging an understanding of the continuity between artistic experience and everything else.

The off-site programme is the result of much support and many partnerships, as acknowledged elsewhere in these pages. Two organisations deserve special thanks, namely our core funders, Birmingham City Council and Arts Council England, West Midlands, the latter particularly as without their dedicated funding this publication would not have been possible. And above all, we take this opportunity to express our admiration for all the artists involved, from A to Z, from beginning to end.

Jonathan Watkins
Director

Bringing art to life

At the edge of Birmingham's Chinese Quarter two small bronze plaques are set into the ground. Polished by the feet of those who pass by unaware, they quietly mark the anniversary of Cornelia Parker's spectacular firework display of March 2000, an event that relaunched a 16th Century Chinese meteorite back into space and inaugurated the offsite programme that Ikon Gallery has coordinated over the last five years. Largely based within the city, but also reaching further afield, the programme has involved some fifty-five artists who have developed over sixty individual projects, often in collaboration with local inhabitants. Situated in a wide range of places, from architectural landmarks that resonate with the cities industrial past to more transitory, solitary spaces such as hotel rooms and taxi cabs or from civic spaces to busy shopping centres and the pages of the Birmingham Post, the presence of art has been gradually seeping into everyday urban experience.

For an institution to operate beyond the confines of its physical space is by no means a new idea. In 1948, the Arts Council organised an open air sculpture exhibition in London's Battersea Park, an event regarded as pioneering at that time. Today, a plethora of off-site activity increasingly accompanies major biennials across the globe. Though hugely ambitious, biennial programmes usually have a brief lifespan of a few months every couple of years, and projects outdoors are all too often presented as a side show to the main event or as a spectacular marketing splash. Similarly, the short term use of exterior spaces is a habitual practice of institutions promoting a new building, only for activity to retreat inside the shell of the gallery once it is complete. Arguably more deeply engaged in dialogue with a small international audience of arts professionals than a place's own inhabitants, the longer-term meaning and value of such programmes is questionable. By contrast, Ikon's programme has proceeded, slowly and deliberately, as an ongoing and ever expanding conversation between the institution, its audience, artists, the city and its residents. The only consistent off-site programme, parallel to a gallery programme, of its kind in the country, it crucially proposes a temporally extended engagement that resists the breakneck velocity of contemporary life.

In spite of this sustained commitment the programme does not insist upon a direct response to or engagement with a particular place, community group or situation. No manifesto is imposed; individuals with different backgrounds, experiences and points of view are simply invited to express something of the world as they see it. This is not to negate the programme's grounding within the city of Birmingham, but rather an attempt to avoid any limitation upon the parameters of an artist's research, and to resist any conventional, generalised or limiting response to what the city was, is and might become. Instead, the productive friction and creative possibilities that lie between an individual's voice and the context within which it is presented is given space to breathe. The prevalence of works that exist in solitary spaces or, as with Patrick Killoran's *Lost and Found*, that are directly geared towards an individual encounter, also suggests an alternative to the notion of public art as that which addresses a mass or seeks consensus. To talk of a coherent, single public or community is a nonsense in any modern city, but there are few places of which this could be more true than Birmingham, whose population comprises a complex mix of ethnic groups and second or third generation settlers whose emerging cultures and traditions are developing in the space between historically antagonistic societies. No work of art can hope to address comprehensively such an

environment, nor would a single artist be likely to try, but a wide ranging programme in constant evolution is perhaps the most appropriate response.

It might be thought odd, given the longevity of the programme, that there are few visible traces of it in the city at any given moment. A smudge of fading paint lingers on the uncompromisingly Brutalist facade of Birmingham's Central Library, a faint reminder of Katharina Grosse's intoxicating riff on colour that challenged the grey winter months of late 2002/3. Yet in spite of their physical absence, a great number of those works included within the programme have a strangely assertive presence for those who saw them. It's impossible to walk past the library without recalling Grosse's extraordinary, defiant mural, or to traverse Centenary Square without images of Wolfgang Weileder's monumental yet always incomplete performance *house-birmingham* snapping into view. Many projects embraced by the programme are of a slight or ephemeral nature: sound and performance, perhaps the most transient of media, are very much in evidence yet similarly succeed in maintaining an impact after the fact. So how might we account for this persistence? Certainly, steering clear of permanence avoids the risk of devaluation through over-familiarity, but this doesn't sufficiently explain the enduring quality of many of these works. A poignant observation made by curator and critic Ralph Rugoff might be nearer the mark. Writing on the history of minimal and ephemeral practices he remarked, 'whether visible or not, works of art ultimately come to life only in our imaginations, in the unseen museums we carry within us'.[1]

His comment points towards the latent potential of works of art, the insights they offer, the thoughts they trigger in otherwise idle moments, and critically, the creative role played by the viewer. What it also suggests is a cumulative process that develops into something more expansive than the experience of a single work of art. Defying the erasure of their material substance, the works included in this volume have dissolved into peoples' imaginations with a slow burn intensity. Over time they offer a series of concentrated moments that are extended through a gradual unfolding of the many poetic associations that connect them to each other as well as our own lives. Meaning emerges through the progression of the programme, as it gradually delineates areas of interest, makes sudden detours through new ground, doubles back to reanimate or reinterpret.

Public art programmes are often promoted or defended as an attempt to improve the image of a place, to raise its aspirations and ambitions. Ultimately our image of any place is determined by our own identity and the degree to which we see that reflected by our surroundings. Negotiating our relationship with the city, evoking both its concrete reality and imaginative possibility, Ikon's off-site programme forms points of connection. It articulates a sense of place that can't be collapsed into language, nor condensed into a single image a place that, like those who live in it, is contradictory, distinct, irreducible and constantly changing. Through the ongoing, and imaginative, rather than literal encounter of one work with another, the programme's productive, generative potential accumulates, within the countless unseen museums of the city.

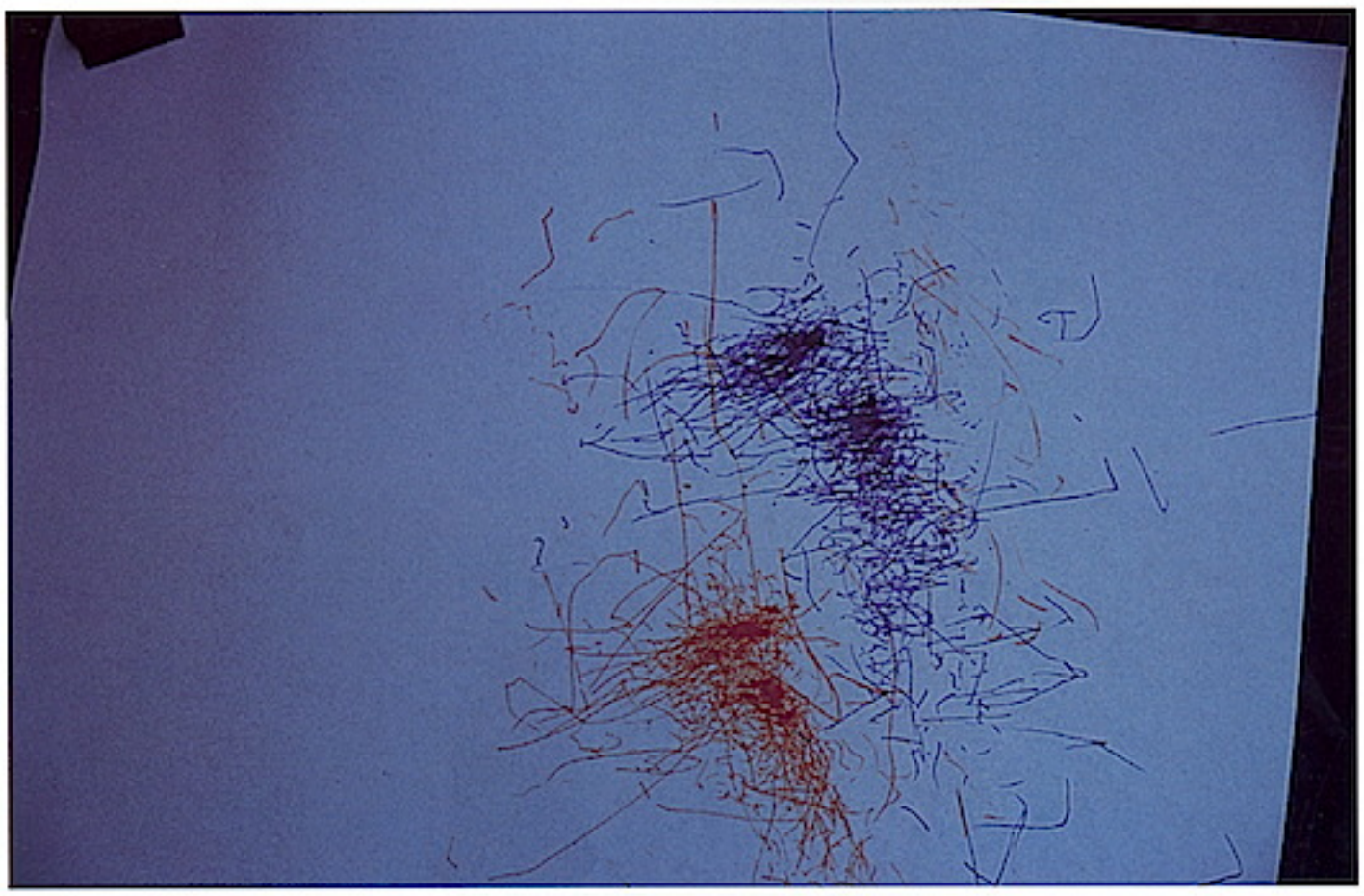
Helen Legg
Curator (Off-site Programme)

1. Ralph Rugoff, 'Touched by Your Presence', *frieze*, January/February, pp. 84–89

Rikuo Ueda

Wind Drawing
Throughout the West Midlands
5 – 14 June 2002

During a ten-day residency in June 2002, Japanese artist Rikuo Ueda made countless 'wind drawings' in and around Birmingham. These were the result of the wind moving the branches of trees and various Heath Robinson-esque mechanical devices, made from fishing rods, string, clips and stones, attached to pens and pencils poised over pieces of paper. The results were abstract, often resembling doodles symptomatic of some pathological repetitive condition, but the fact was they were graphic traces of meteorological forces. This was not some belated hippy project. Rather it exemplified an edginess arising out of the fact that humanity cannot leave nature alone, and vice versa.



From Audéoud to Zhao Bandi

Selected Ikon Off-site Projects 2002–2004

Ikon Gallery 2005

ISBN 1-904864-13-9

Ikon Gallery
1 Oozells Square, Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2HS
http://www.ikon-gallery.co.uk
E art@ikon-gallery.co.uk
T +44 (0)121 248 0708
F +44 (0)121 248 0709
Registered charity no: 528892

Edited by Helen Legg and Jonathan Watkins
Design by Herman Lelie
Typesetting by Stefania Bonelli
Photography by Rory Buckland, Adam Dade and Sonia Hanney, Ming de Nasty, Katharina Grosse, Deborah Kermode, Patrick Killoran, Gary Kirkham, Paul Rooney, Chris Webb, Wolfgang Weileder
Printed by Dexter Graphics, London
Distributed by Cornerhouse Publications
70 Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 5NH
tel +44 (0)161 200 1503
fax +44 (0)161 200 1504
publications@cornerhouse.org

Ikon gratefully acknowledges financial assistance from Arts Council England, West Midlands and Birmingham City Council.

Cover: Ann Veronica Janssens, *Red, Blue*, 2002