

## On Kawara, *One Million Years (Reading)*

### Venice Biennale 2017

Oratorio di San Ludovico, Dorsoduro

9 May – 30 July 2017

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Above: On Kawara *One Million Years* (detail).

On Kawara's *One Million Years (Reading)* is an installation taking place at the Venice Biennale 2017 between 9 May and 30 July. It involves volunteers gathered from Italy and beyond reading from *One Million Years*, two sets of volumes produced by the artist that list dates one million years into the future and one million years into the past. Their dedications are "For all those who have lived and died" (Past) and "For the last one" (Future).

Through their actions the readers are engaged in a meditation on the nature of time. This theme is central to Kawara's work overall, including Date Paintings of the Today series (1966 – 2013), telegrams with their simple message "*I am still alive*" (1970 - 2000) and daily postcards announcing when he got up after waking (*I Got Up*, 1968- 1979).

The readings are spoken in English alternating between a male and female narrator, each date followed by the next. The readers are drawn from local residents, visitors to the Biennale and other tourists who have the opportunity to volunteer for sessions of either 60 or 120 minutes. Currently volunteers are being sought and bookings can be made through Elisa Genna at: [volunteersKawara@gmail.com](mailto:volunteersKawara@gmail.com)

The venue for this manifestation of *One Million Years (Reading)*, the Oratorio di San Ludovico, Dorsoduro, could not be more suitable, being an ancient religious building with wonderful acoustics designed for the utterance of human voice. The matter-of-factness of the reading is foiled there by the presence of an altarpiece, consecrated and symbolic of eternal life.

# IKON

Ikon Gallery  
1 Oozells Square, Brindleyplace, Birmingham B1 2HS  
0121 248 0708 / [www.ikon-gallery.org](http://www.ikon-gallery.org)  
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In this vein, Venice itself could not be more fitting as a location for the work. Its fragility and beauty, caught between the sea and sky, is often associated with the transience of human life.

A booklet accompanies the exhibition with an introduction by Ikon Director Jonathan Watkins. Available from Ikon's online shop [www.ikon-gallery.org/shop](http://www.ikon-gallery.org/shop). Visitors can also download an app, made in collaboration with ARTiMBCAR, which features extra content, images, essays and audio about On Kawara's *One Million Years (Reading)*. This is available via Apple's App Store and by searching for 'Biennale Ikon'.

## On Kawara

Born in Japan, living and working for most of his life in New York, On Kawara (29,771 days) was one of the most important artists of his generation, making paintings, drawings, books and recordings. A comprehensive overview of his work, *On Kawara—Silence*, was held at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 2015 and he previously showed as part of the 'International Tendencies' project at the Venice Biennale in 1976. Kawara's work has also been included in numerous conceptual art surveys from the seminal *Information* show at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, (1970) to *1965-1975: Reconsidering the Object of Art* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1995-96). He has also been the subject of solo exhibitions at prominent institutions worldwide, including the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas (2008), Ikon (2002 and 2006), the Dia Center for the Arts, New York (1993) and the Centre Pompidou, Paris (1977).

## Ikon Icona

Co-organisers of *One Million Years (Reading)* in Venice, Ikon and Nuova Icona share a commitment to making innovative contemporary art accessible to the general public. This project marks their third exhibition at the Oratorio (also including Grace Ndiritu and Nastio Mosquito) and marks the launch of a fundraising campaign for Ikon Icona, a Venice-based collaboration that will result in the development of a new artistic programme of exhibitions, artists' residencies and learning initiatives, centred on the Oratorio di San Ludovico.

For more information, high-res images and to request interviews please contact Emma Gilhooly or Milly Carter Hepplewhite at Pelham Communications on 020 8969 3959 or email [emma@pelhamcommunications.com](mailto:emma@pelhamcommunications.com) or [milly@pelhamcommunications.com](mailto:milly@pelhamcommunications.com)

ENDS

## Social Media Handles:

Instagram, Twitter and Facebook: @ikongallery #IkonGallery

## Note to Editors:

**Exhibition Dates:** 9 May – 30 July 2017

**Location:** Oratorio di San Ludovico, Calle dei Vecchi, Dorsoduro 2552, Venice

**Vaporetto:** S. Basilio

**Opening Hours:** Tuesday – Sunday (Open on Monday 15 May)

9 - 14 May, 11am-7pm

15 May - 30 July, 3pm– 7pm

**Opening receptions:** Wednesday 10 May, 5pm

1. This exhibition is curated by Jonathan Watkins, Director of Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK.
2. 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](http://www.ikon-gallery.org)
3. Nuova Icona is a non-profit cultural organisation dedicated to the support and promotion of contemporary visual arts. Under the direction of Vittorio Urbani, Nuova Icona helps artists to develop and realise a diverse range of projects often through collaboration. Founded in Venice in 1993, the organisation has mounted over 200 exhibitions including multiple national pavilions at the Venice Biennale. [www.nuovaicona.org](http://www.nuovaicona.org)
4. Ikon has worked with ARTiMBARC to develop an app for this presentation of On Kawara's *One Million Years (Reading)*. The app provides visitors with extra content, images, essays and audio enabling a larger number of visitors to discover and learn about the artist. You can download it by visiting Apple's App Store and searching for '*Biennale Ikon*'. At present, the app is not compatible with Android devices.

ARTiMBARC is a digital platform that provides bespoke apps for cultural organisations to unlock extra layers of content and support dialogue with audiences. Audio visual narratives will enrich the visitor experience as well as providing basic information on the project, artist and location. ARTiMBARC was founded in 2017 by entrepreneur and philanthropist Julie-Anne Ugglà, curator Sigrid Kirk and entrepreneur Oliver Flynn.

5. Kawara's *Pure Consciousness* (1998), is due to go on show in Skulptur Projekte Münster in 2017. The work consists of seven monochrome canvases inscribed by the date of their creation in white letters, which have been displayed in kindergarten classrooms around the world.

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