

Press Release

## *Seeing the Unseen* *Photographs and films by Harold E. Edgerton*

21 July – 5 September 2010  
Unit 39-40, The Pallasades Shopping Centre,  
Birmingham

Ikon presents *Seeing the Unseen*, a revisit of the gallery's 1976 exhibition of high-speed photographs by the pioneering American scientist and photographer Dr Harold E. Edgerton (1906-1990). Forming part of Ikon's retrospective of the 1970s *It Could Happen To You*, this presentation takes place in Birmingham's Pallasades Shopping Centre, in a shop unit just a few doors away from Ikon's home during that decade.

The 1976 exhibition formed Edgerton's first solo presentation in Europe, and was conceived as a collaborative effort between Geoffrey Holt and John R. Myers, then both lecturers in fine art and photography at Stourbridge College of Art. Their aim was to draw attention to the breadth of work created by of 'one of the masters of the optical unconscious' which had, until that point, been largely neglected by the art world.

Edgerton's invention in the 1930s of a high-speed photographic process based on rapid, stroboscopic instances of light or 'flash' was a catalytic event in the history of photography, science and art. Using this method, his images revealed in great detail aspects of reality hitherto invisible to the naked eye. As Institute Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Edgerton made great strides in reconnaissance photography during the Second World War and later became the first to photograph test explosions of atomic weaponry. It is, however, the hands-on experimentation of 'real world' phenomena for which he is best remembered.

Edgerton's remarkable multiple-flash pictures of tennis players, golfers and divers such as *Swirls and Eddies of a Tennis Stroke* (1939) break down intricate movements into singular moments. Other images appear to stop time: *Milk-Drop Coronet* (1957) illustrates the perfect crown formed by a drop of milk hitting a hard surface, whilst *Cutting the Card Quickly* (1964) shows a .30 calibre bullet, travelling 2800 feet per second, slicing a king of diamonds into two pieces. The startling *Bullet and Apple* (1964) portrays the explosion of an apple pierced by the bullet, moments before its total disintegration.



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Ikon Gallery is a registered charity no. 528892

Edgerton's film *Seeing the Unseen* (1939) is shown alongside his photographs plus an archive of correspondence, technical papers and printed materials relating to the 1976 exhibition.

This exhibition is organised in collaboration with Birmingham Central Library.

## Events

### *Stopping Time in Stourbridge*

Sunday 8 August, 2pm – FREE

The Pallasades Shopping Centre

Pete James, Head of Photography, Central Library Birmingham talks about the Pallasades exhibition and the photo-historical context through which Ikon's 1976 Harold E. Edgerton exhibition came about. Refreshments are provided. Places are free but should be reserved by calling Ikon on 0121 248 0708.

### *Aspects of Edgerton*

Sunday 22 August, 2pm - FREE

The Pallasades Shopping Centre

An event with Jonathan Shaw, photographer and Associate Head of Media & Communication, Coventry University and artist Trevor Appleson. The speakers discuss the influence of Edwaerd Muybridge and Harold Edgerton's photography on their recent work. Refreshments are provided. Places are free but should be reserved by calling Ikon on 0121 248 0708.

**Ends.**

## Note to Editors:

1. Press Preview, Tuesday 20 July 2010, 12-8pm
2. *Harold E. Edgerton: Seeing the Unseen*, Unit 39-40 (next door to Peacocks) at The Pallasades Shopping Centre. Open 12-5pm Tuesday-Saturday and 12-4pm Sunday. Free entry. The Pallasades is situated in the City Centre, above Birmingham New Street Station. For directions visit [www.thepallasades.co.uk](http://www.thepallasades.co.uk)
3. Ikon is open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am - 6pm. Free entry.

4. Ikon Gallery is a registered charity and receives core funding from Birmingham City Council and Arts Council West Midlands.
5. A selection of images is shown below.
6. For more information and images please contact Helen Stallard, Press and PR Consultant, on 0774 033 9604 or [h.stallard@ikon-gallery.co.uk](mailto:h.stallard@ikon-gallery.co.uk)

