

Press Release: January 2021

ARNOLFINI ANNOUNCE REVISED 2021 HEALTH AND WELLBEING EXHIBITION PROGRAMME

Jo Spence : From Fairy Tales to Phototherapy

Photographs from The Hyman Collection
until end of May 2021

A Picture of Health

Women Photographers from The Hyman Collection
until end of May 2021



Jo Spence Only when I got to fifty did I realise I was Cinderella (03) 1984
In collaboration with Rosy Martin
All images by Jo Spence © The Jo Spence Memorial Archive,
Ryerson Image Centre, Toronto, Canada.



Heather Agyepong Wish You Were Here
Le Cake Walk 1. Rob This England

Arnolfini, Bristol's international centre of contemporary arts, has announced their revised post lockdown exhibition programme, as part of a focus on health and wellbeing.

Through to the end of May 2021, Arnolfini present a major retrospective of the work of photographer **Jo Spence** (1934 - 1992), drawn from The Hyman Collection, which is one of the most comprehensive collections of Spence's works in the world.

Spence has been an integral figure within photographic discourse from the 1970s onwards. Throughout her diverse projects she is well known for her highly politicised approach to photography and the representation of her own struggles with cancer. The exhibition *From Fairy Tales to Phototherapy* focuses on the intersection between arts, health and wellbeing, celebrating Spence's work as a photo therapist in which she used photography as a medium to address personal trauma, reflecting on key moments in her past. This is the first time that her thesis will be exhibited and published in its entirety. Entitled "*Fairy Tales and Photography, Or, Another Look At Cinderella*", this was a pivotal document, created at a crucial point in Spence's career. The exhibition will focus on the actual small-scale photographs that Spence used in her phototherapy sessions as well as the laminate panels that she used for her workshops and touring exhibitions.

From Fairy Tales to Phototherapy charts Spence's diagnosis and treatment for cancer, juxtaposing humour with inevitable challenging issues. Themes include Cinderella and Fairytales, Remodelling Photo History/Medical History, Childhood, Child and Parent Relationships, Libido/Sexuality/Marriage, The Grotesque.

Jo Spence: From Fairy Tales to Phototherapy is curated by Keiko Higashi, Engagement Producer at Arnolfini, with Dr. Frances Hatherley, writer, researcher and archivist at the Jo Spence Memorial Library Archive at Birkbeck, University of London.

RRB Photobooks have published a facsimile edition of Jo Spence's thesis '*Fairy Tales and Photography, Or, Another Look at Cinderella*', around some of the work featured in the exhibition.

Sitting alongside Spence's work is *A Picture of Health*, a group exhibition of contemporary women photographers from The Hyman Collection who have responded to subjects of health and wellbeing. Featuring autobiographical perspectives to social commentaries on the wider society, *A Picture of Health* is a timely exhibition as those throughout the world are united by the effects of the current global pandemic.

The exhibition, which is also planned to run until the end of May 2021, and its programme have been co-curated by creativeShift cic and Fresh Arts, Bristol's leading organisations, providing creative wellbeing activities, to adults who are experiencing or are vulnerable to, isolation and mental health challenges. *A Picture of Health* aims to de-stigmatise subjects around mental health and create an environment in which people can have open conversations about their wellbeing, whilst including the voices of local people with lived experiences of mental health.

The exhibition includes work by Heather Agyepong, Sonia Boyce, Eliza Hatch, Susan Hiller, Rose Finn-Kelcey, Anna Fox, Rosy Martin (in collaboration with Verity Welstead), Polly Penrose, Jo Spence, and Paloma Tendero, exploring a range of thematic concerns such as:

The Hidden Self: Responses to hidden disabilities, looking at the difference between what is seen on the outside compared with what we are experiencing on the inside.

Trauma: Looking at the physical and psychological effects of trauma, be it transgenerational or ongoing.

Environment: Artists responding to how the environment (the people and places we live in) affect our health and wellbeing.

Care: The important dynamics between carer and cared for.

Running alongside *A Picture of Health* is **an Artist's film programme, 'Look at this skin... it keeps changing'**, documenting a range of experiences of wellness, recovery, and ageing by artists including Anna Fox, Helen Petts, Vicky Smith and Bristol based mental health charity, Many Minds.

Arnolfini hopes to reopen post lockdown with both exhibitions to run through to the end of May 2021. Admission to the exhibitions is free and bookable in advance at www.arnolfini.org.uk and via socials @ArnolfiniArts.

Arnolfini has teamed up with Bristol-based **Rising Arts Agency**, a community of young creatives aged 16 – 30 at all stages of their careers, to present both exhibitions as filmed walkthroughs which are now available online at arnolfini.org.uk/whatson-category/arnolfini-online

Arnolfini's Winter 2021 Programme Funders:

With thanks for their support to:

Art Fund_



Sponsor, A Picture of Health:



- ends -

For further information please contact Sara Blair
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Additional images:

Jo Spence : From Fairy Tales to Phototherapy

Photographs from The Hyman Collection

<https://bit.ly/2IIQrpd>

A Picture of Health

Women Photographers from The Hyman Collection

<https://bit.ly/3IIUO24>

Twitter / Facebook / Instagram / www.arnolfini.org.uk

LISTINGS

Jo Spence : From Fairy Tales to Phototherapy

Photographs from The Hyman Collection

until end May 2021

Drawn from one of the most comprehensive collections of Jo Spence's works in the world, ***From Fairy Tales to Phototherapy*** focuses on the intersection between arts, health and wellbeing, celebrating her work as a photo therapist in which she used photography as a medium to address personal trauma, reflecting on key moments in her past.

Arnolfini, 16 Narrow Quay, Bristol BS1 4QA www.arnolfini.org.uk 0117 917 2300

@ArnolfiniArts #APictureOfHealth #HymanCollection #JoSpence

A Picture of Health

Women Photographers from The Hyman Collection

until end May 2021

A group exhibition of contemporary women photographers featuring autobiographical perspectives and social commentaries on the wider society, that aims to de-stigmatise subjects around mental health and create an environment in which people can have open conversations about their wellbeing. ***A Picture of Health*** includes work by Heather Agyepong, Sonia Boyce, Eliza Hatch, Susan Hiller, Rose Finn-Kelcey, Anna Fox, Rosy Martin (in collaboration with Verity Welstead), Polly Penrose, Jo Spence, and Paloma Tendero.

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@ArnolfiniArts #APictureOfHealth #HymanCollection

NOTES TO EDITORS

About The Hyman Collection

The Hyman Collection is the private collection of Claire and James Hyman, which began in 1996 and consists of over three thousand artworks, from across the world, in a variety of media.

In the last fifteen years the collection has focused on international photography, from its origins to the present. In particular, the Hyman Collection seeks to support and promote British photography through acquisitions, commissions, loans and philanthropy. The collection includes artists working in photography as well as documentary, historic and contemporary photographs. It has an equal number of works by male and female artists and seeks, especially, to support the work of contemporary women photographers. In 2020 The Hyman Foundation was set up to support photography in Britain through a variety of philanthropic ventures.

About Jo Spence

Jo Spence (1934 - 1992) started her career assisting commercial photographers before quickly establishing her own agency specialising in weddings, family portraiture and actor portfolios. Her early experiences led her to an acute understanding of the mechanics of photography from the practical to more theoretical considerations. The early seventies saw Spence's work shift towards a more interrogative and critical documentary mode which articulated a desire to create photographs that run counter to the idealised imagery offered by advertising.

Alongside a prolific photographic practice, Spence maintained a career as an educator, writer, organiser and broadcaster. For Spence, photography should be informative, and it should be noted that her emergence as a photographer paralleled an increasingly politicised art world.

Following a diagnosis with breast cancer **much of Spence's** subsequent work was a response to her treatment by the medical establishment and her attempt to navigate its authority through alternative therapies.

In 1984, alongside Rosy Martin, Spence developed 'Photo-Therapy', adopting techniques from co-counselling to invert the traditional relationship between the photographer and the subject. If historically the subject had little control over their own representation, Photo-Therapy shifts this dynamic enabling them to act out personal narratives and claim agency for their own biography.

In 1990, after returning from work commitments abroad, Spence was diagnosed with leukaemia, an illness that would claim her life in 1992. Up until her final moments Spence was still probing at the potential of photography to articulate the 'unrepresentable'.

Her practice illustrates a way to connect her own intimacies and traumas to a broader public discourse. Affirmation, for Spence was about visibility and autonomy - to say what you want to, when you want to.

About Arnolfini

Woven into the fabric of Bristol since 1961, Arnolfini is a pioneer of interdisciplinary contemporary arts, presenting an ambitious, eclectic programme of visual art, performance, dance, film and music, carefully curated to appeal to a broad audience.

Housed in a prominent Grade II listed, accessible building on Bristol's harbourside, Arnolfini is an inspiring public space for contemporary arts and learning, greeting over half a million visitors each year and offering an innovative, inclusive and engaging experience for all.

An internationally renowned institution, throughout its history Arnolfini's programme has welcomed artists from a wide variety of cultures and backgrounds, supporting and developing their work, investigating their influences and aspirations.

Arnolfini has long-standing relationships with a variety of partners and celebrates the heritage and wide-reaching impact of the organisation through sharing a 60-year archive of exhibition slides, publications and artist book collection.

In 2019, Arnolfini relaunched its major exhibition programme with Still I Rise: Feminism, Gender and Resistance Act 3 and continues to build on the multicultural, diverse and inclusive ethos that has prevailed since its inception.

Arnolfini remains at the heart of the Bristol community, always mindful of founding director **Jeremy Rees' principle to 'Enjoy Yourself', inviting everyone to join in. www.arnolfini.org.uk**

About UWE Bristol

The University of the West of England (UWE Bristol) has a global and inclusive outlook, with approximately 30,000 students and strong industry networks and connections with over 1,000 employers. Research at UWE Bristol focuses on real world problems and the University plays a pivotal role in the regional economy. With over £300 million invested in infrastructure, buildings and facilities across all Campuses, UWE Bristol is creating a place for learning that is innovative, ambitious, connected, enabling and inclusive. UWE Bristol is ranked 28th in the Guardian university league table, as well as 11th in the UK for student satisfaction, and has recently been awarded the highest possible rating in the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) 2018, achieving GOLD Standard. www.uwe.ac.uk

About Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. By 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. Between 2018 and 2022, we will invest £1.45 billion of public money from government and an estimated £860 million from the National Lottery to help deliver this vision. www.artscouncil.org.uk

About Ashley Clinton Barker-Mills Trust

Arnolfini Gallery is supported by a linked charity, the Ashley Clinton Barker Mills Trust (ACBMT). Arnolfini founders Jeremy and Annabel Rees were first introduced to the artists and benefactors Peter and Caroline Barker-Mill in 1963, by the London gallerist Lesley Waddington. It was a fortuitous meeting that was the catalyst in allowing Arnolfini to develop from a small volunteer-run private gallery into a major international arts centre. **The Trust's principle object is to 'support' Arnolfini and it does this primarily by making** annual grants from the income earned on its investments to make quarterly payments. It has also been able to make small fund one- off capital grants to help the Arnolfini transition to its current financial model. www.arnolfini.org.uk/about/ashley-clinton-barker-mills-trust

About the Art Fund

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. It provides millions of pounds every year to help museums to acquire and share works of art across the UK, further the professional development of their curators, and inspire more people to visit and enjoy their public programmes. Art Fund is independently funded, supported by the 159,000 members who buy the National Art Pass, who enjoy free entry to over 240 museums, galleries and historic places, 50% off major exhibitions, and receive Art Quarterly magazine. Art Fund also supports museums through its annual prize, Art Fund Museum of the Year, which was won by St. Fagans National Museum of History, Cardiff, in 2019, and through a range of digital platforms. www.artfund.org/

About Stowe Family Law LLP

Stowe Family Law proudly maintain a strong record of achieving success for clients in Bristol. They are delighted to be supporting Arnolfini as they enter their 60th anniversary year in the heart of the city. www.stowefamilylaw.co.uk/offices/bristol/