

Press Release: May 2021

ARNOLFINI'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING EXHIBITION PROGRAMME

Jo Spence : From Fairy Tales to Phototherapy | Photographs from The Hyman Collection
18 May to 20 June 2021

A Picture of Health | Women Photographers from The Hyman Collection
18 May to 13 June 2021



Jo Spence | *Remodelling Photo History (Realization)* 1982
In collaboration with Terry Dennett
All images by Jo Spence © The Jo Spence Memorial Archive,
Ryerson Image Centre, Toronto, Canada.



Heather Agyepong | *Wish You Were Here*
5. Le Cake Walk : F.U.B.U 2020
© Heather Agyepong
Courtesy The Hyman Collection

A Picture of Health | *Look at This Skin,....It Keeps Changing* | 18 May to 20 June 2021

Defiant I Stand for a Cause That's My Own That Sometimes I Don't Understand

A Biography of Yearly Self-Portraits by ron | 18 May to 18 July 2021

Exquisite Corpse | 18 May to 18 July 2021



Poleaxed
courtesy of Helen Petts and LUX, London



ron | *20 Years and More, Always a Struggle.*
Thousands of Pills, Hundreds of Blood Tests,
All For a Condition I Never Had
courtesy of the artist



Exquisite Corpse
creativeShift CIC

Arnolfini, Bristol's international centre of contemporary arts, plans to reopen from Tuesday 18 May, with an extension of their exhibition programme focusing on health and wellbeing.

Through to 20 June 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. This exhibition originally opened in December 2020 but was seen by a smaller than anticipated audience due to the subsequent covid winter lockdown.

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 focuses 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.

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 was also forced to close prematurely due to the covid winter lockdown, now runs until 13 June 2021. Its accompanying programme has 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.

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, 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 Verity Standen with Bristol based mental health charity, Many Minds.

As a continuation of the collaboration with creativeShift CIC, there are two exhibitions in the Light Studio at Arnolfini.

Defiant I Stand for a Cause That's My Own That Sometimes I Don't Understand | A Biography of Yearly Self-Portraits by ron charts a seven year period of extreme turmoil and challenge experienced by the artist. In her own words and through her powerful paintings, **ron** describes the physical and emotional impact that this time had on her mental health and wellbeing. **ron** was part of *A Picture of Health* focus group, offering her valuable experience and perspectives of mental health to shape the exhibition having been referred to creativeShift CIC's **Arts on Referral groups** in 2018.

Exquisite Corpse was developed in response to the isolation and mental wellbeing challenges experienced by participants during covid lockdowns as a way to keep people connected through collaborative creativity. Each participant started by drawing, painting or collaging a head and sent that back. Once all had been received, **they were covered with a 'No Peeking'** sign on it and posted on to another participant. This continued for four rounds, concluding

with the feet, the results of which are now on display at Arnolfini as well as being online. The project was made possible through a successful joint application between creativeShift CIC and Fresh Arts to Arts Council England.

Admission to all exhibitions is free and bookable in advance at www.arnolfini.org.uk and via socials @ArnolfiniArts. For those unable to visit Arnolfini in person, each exhibition may be viewed online on at www.arnolfini.org.uk.

Arnolfini's Programme Funders:

With thanks for their support to:

Art Fund_



Sponsor, A Picture of Health:



- ends -

For further information please contact Sara Blair
sara.blair@arnolfini.org.uk 0117 440 9711

Jo Spence **images here**

A Picture of Health **images here**

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

LISTINGS

Jo Spence : From Fairy Tales to Phototherapy

Photographs from The Hyman Collection

18 May to 20 June 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.org.uk/whatson/jo-spence 0117 917 2300

@ArnolfiniArts #APictureOfHealth #HymanCollection #JoSpence

images [here](#)

A Picture of Health

Women Photographers from The Hyman Collection

18 May to 13 June 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.

arnolfini.org.uk/whatson/a-picture-of-health 0117 917 2300

@ArnolfiniArts #APictureOfHealth #HymanCollection

images [here](#)

A Picture of Health | Look At This Skin...It Keeps Changing

18 May to 13 June 2021

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

Thursday to Sunday, 12pm to 5pm, bookable in advance. Free.

A programme of artist films exploring wellness, recovery and ageing. Selected to accompany *A Picture of Health* with films from Helen Petts, Anna Fox, Vicky Smith and Verity Standen with Many Minds Bristol.

arnolfini.org.uk/whatson/look-at-this-skin-it-keeps-changing/

@ArnolfiniArts #APictureOfHealth #LookAtThisSkinItKeepsChanging

images: [here](#)

Defiant I stand for a cause that's my own that sometimes I don't understand | A Biography of yearly self-portraits by ron

18 May to 18 July 2021

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

Tuesday to Sunday, 11am to 6pm, bookable in advance. Free

Online and physically when Arnolfini Galleries reopen from 18 May 2021

This is a selection of self-portraits that artist, ron produced over a seven year period of extreme turmoil and challenges. From multiple operations and misdiagnosis, she found the determination to pour these experiences into her art. In her own words and through her powerful paintings; ron describes the physical and emotional impact that this time has had on her mental health and wellbeing.

arnolfini.org.uk/whatson/defiant-i-stand/

Images: [here](#)

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 / 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.**

About RRB Photobooks

RRB Photobooks is a Bristol based publisher and bookseller, specialising in British documentary work. RRB are delighted to have published **a facsimile edition of Jo Spence's thesis 'Fairy Tales and Photography, Or, Another Look at Cinderella'** to coincide with the exhibition at Arnolfini Bristol. Accompanying the facsimile is an essay booklet by Frances Hatherley, with an introduction by Marina Warner, which contextualises the thesis for today's audience.

About The Hyman Foundation

The Hyman Foundation (Charity Commission No. 1190955) aims to promote and advance education in and appreciation of photography in Britain in all its diversity. The Foundations

seeks to support the work of contemporary artists, fund research and scholarship, and address issues of legacy and the preservation of archives. To serve these aims, the Foundation is creating a series of funded grants and projects. These include grants with a focus on young artists and women working in photography; research grants for art historical scholarship; projects working with older artists to help preserve, archive and digitize photographic work for future heritage. The Foundation will also provide mentoring for younger and mid-career artists to advise on their careers, consider legacy issues, and to encourage best practice for archiving their work. The Foundation also plans to establish and maintain an archive, collection and library of historical and contemporary photographs, and will embark on partnerships with other arts and educational organizations, including Universities, to provide a hub for British photography past, present and future.

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.

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.

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.

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 in their 60th anniversary year in the heart of the city.