

Press Release: August 2021

COMING UP FOR AIR: STEPHEN GILL – A RETROSPECTIVE  
16 OCTOBER 2021 – 16 JANUARY 2022



From *The Pillar* 2015 – 2019 © Stephen Gill

In Autumn 2021 Arnolfini will celebrate over thirty years of extraordinary practice from Bristol-born photographer Stephen Gill, drawing together new previously un-exhibited work – including his latest series *Please Notify the Sun* – alongside works from other iconic series including *Hackney Flowers*, *Buried*, *Talking to Ants*, *Night Procession*, *Pigeons*, *Coexistence* and *Coming up for Air*.

Also featuring the first UK presentation of images from award winning photographic series and book *The Pillar*, **the exhibition will explore Gill's** rich sense of place, leading us through the flea markets and towpaths of Hackney Wick in London, to his current rural surroundings amidst the Swedish countryside.

Creating numerous distinct bodies of work, Gill – **described as a ‘documentarist’, ‘anthropologist’ and ‘dazzling visual poet’** – has built his photographic career upon an ethos of experimentation. **Eschewing a signature style in order to adapt both his creative and technical approach to the subject at hand, has led to alchemical ‘experiments’** including photographic burials, floral collage, in-camera photograms and submerging work within a watery world.

**Informed by the artist’s own extensive and meticulously ordered archive, the exhibition provides a portal into Gill’s unique world, one in which the** very constraints of photography are turned upon their head and strangely poeticised. Exploring this vast resource, artist proofs, original photo books and archival material, are displayed alongside prints, selected by the artist, highlighting the often unseen poetics of urban and rural environments.

**Stephen Gill is curated by Stephen Gill and Arnolfini’s Executive Director Gary Topp, and forms part of Arnolfini’s 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary programme, celebrating its past, present and future, as well as the inaugural Bristol Photo Festival.**

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For further information please contact Sara Blair [sara.blair@arnolfini.org.uk](mailto:sara.blair@arnolfini.org.uk)

Additional images are available **here** <https://bit.ly/StephenGillArnolfini>

Twitter / Facebook / Instagram / [www.arnolfini.org.uk](http://www.arnolfini.org.uk)

## LISTINGS

**Coming up for Air: Stephen Gill – A Retrospective**

**16 October 2021 to 16 January 2022**

Celebrating thirty years of extraordinary practice, Bristol-born photographer Stephen Gill, draws together new previously un-exhibited alongside works from his iconic back catalogue, with the first UK presentation of images from award winning photographic series and book *The Pillar*. The exhibition explores **Gill’s rich sense of place, leading** through the flea markets and towpaths of Hackney Wick in London, to his current rural surroundings amidst the Swedish countryside.

**Arnolfini, 16 Narrow Quay, Bristol BS1 4QA 0117 917 2300**

**Link to images:** <https://bit.ly/StephenGillArnolfini>

@arnolfiniarts Instagram @stephen\_gill\_

#StephenGill #ArnolfiniArts #NobodyBooks #ThePillar #ComingupforAir

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### About Stephen Gill

Stephen Gill (b. 1971) in Bristol, UK, became interested in photography in early childhood - thanks to encouragement from his father - an interest in insects and an initial obsession with collecting bits of pond life to inspect under his microscope. As a child he enrolled **on his first photography course at Bristol's Watershed, photographing the streets and cityscapes** around him and was further inspired by the exhibition Graffiti Art in Bristol at Arnolfini in 1985.

Gill's **photographs are held in various private and public collections** around the world and have also been exhibited at many international galleries and museums including the National Portrait Gallery, The Victoria and Albert Museum, The Museum of London, Agnes B, Victoria Miro Gallery, Christophe Guye Gallery, Sprengel Museum, Tate, **Centre National de l'audiovisual, Galerie Zur Stockeregg**, Archive of Modern Conflict, **Gun Gallery, The Photographers' Gallery, Palais des Beaux Arts, Leighton House** Museum and Haus Der Kunst. Gill has had solo shows in festivals including **Recontres d'Arles, The Toronto photography festival** and *Festival Images* – Vevey and PHotoEspaña. [www.stephengill.co.uk](http://www.stephengill.co.uk)

Gill has self-published numerous award-winning photo books such as *Invisible*, *Hackney Wick*, *Warming Down*, *A Series of Disappointments*, *Archaeology in Reverse*, *Hackney Flowers*, *Buried*, *Off Ground*, *Coming up for Air*, *B-Sides*, *Trinidad 44 Photographs*, *A Book of Birds*, *Outside In*, *Coexistence*, *Hackney Kisses*, *Pigeons*, *Best Before End*, *Talking to Ants*, and most recently *The Pillar*, which won the Les Rencontres de la Photographie author book award. [www.nobodybooks.com](http://www.nobodybooks.com)

## 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](http://www.arnolfini.org.uk)

## About Bristol Photo Festival

**Bristol Photo Festival** is a new and innovative city-wide festival that celebrates the power and diversity of photography. It will produce national, international solo and group exhibitions. Talks, events, workshops and training will run through a partnership model of collaboration through all the key photography, visual arts and cultural venues in the city and the region. [www.bristolphotofestival.org](http://www.bristolphotofestival.org)

## 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.arnolfini.org.uk/about/ashley-clinton-barker-mills-trust)