

Press Release: November 2021

## POLLY BRADEN | HOLDING THE BABY

*A portrait of the strength and resilience of single parent families facing austerity.*

Exhibition dates 19 February to 29 May 2022 – end date to be confirmed early 2022



Barbeline and Elijah, *Holding the Baby* 2021 by Polly Braden. Courtesy of the artist. All rights reserved.

In February 2022 Arnolfini will be sharing *Holding the Baby*, an exhibition of new photographic work by artist Polly Braden, creating an intimate, participatory portrait of the strength and resilience of single parent families with the challenges they face.

Originally created by Museum of the Home, London (and curated by Sinéad McCarthy), this final instalment of the series (following shows in London and Liverpool) brings **Braden's poignant photography to Bristol**. Exploring just some of the many stories captured along the way, the Bristol version includes participants from the city, transforming national politics into a local concern.

Inspired by a United Nations report by poverty expert Philip Alston in 2019, which stated that single parents have been hardest hit by austerity measures in the UK, Braden has been working with a number of single parents over the last two years, including Fran, Jahanara, Charmaine, Aaron, Barbeline, Caroline, Gemma, Carike and their families to represent each of their stories photographically; encapsulating their sense of adventure, optimism, creativity, ambition and resilience that transcends, the often difficult, situations faced.

Their intimate stories are accompanied by revealing and tender excerpts from interviews with the women conducted by journalist Sally Williams, alongside reflective words from a wider group of single parents instigated by writer Claire-Louise Bennet, and data from statistician Rob Minto outlining the daunting reality of what it means to be a single parent in the UK today.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a pop-up version at Baraka Café in Easton, Bristol. Dates to be confirmed.

The project has collaborated with selected public institutions and partners including Museum of the Home, The Idea Store, Whitechapel; Mildmay Library, Islington, The Hive, Shropshire, Liverpool Libraries and Baraka Community Café.

The project has received funding from Arts Council England and Grain and is a part of Behind The Door, a collaboration between Museum of the Home and the **London Homelessness Collective**. It has been supported by:

Gingerbread, a charity supporting single parent families to live secure, happy and fulfilling lives, offering information, support and advice about contact, maintenance and benefits.

CPAG (Child Poverty Action Group) who work on behalf of the more than one in four children in the UK growing up in poverty.

Polly Braden | Holding the Baby will be open Tuesday to Sunday, 11am to 6pm each week, entry is free and will be bookable in advance via [arnolfini.org.uk](http://arnolfini.org.uk).

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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/PollyBradenArnolfini>

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

## LISTINGS

### Polly Braden | *Holding the Baby*

19 February to 29 May 2022

Arnolfini, 16 Narrow Quay, Bristol BS1 4QA 0117 917 2300 [arnolfini.org.uk](http://arnolfini.org.uk) @ArnolfiniArts

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

*Holding the Baby* is an exhibition of new photographic work by artist Polly Braden, creating a portrait of the strength and resilience of single parent families facing austerity. With help from charities, law firms, community hubs, and arts and women's organisations, Braden has been working with a number of single parents (several based in Bristol) over the last two years to represent each of their stories. The collaborative photographs, encapsulate the families' sense of adventure, optimism, creativity, ambition and resilience that transcends, the often difficult, situations faced.

[arnolfini.org.uk/whatson/polly-braden/](http://arnolfini.org.uk/whatson/polly-braden/)

#PollyBraden #HoldingTheBaby #Arnolfini

Images here: <https://bit.ly/PollyBradenArnolfini>

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### About Polly Braden

Polly Braden is a documentary photographer whose work features an ongoing conversation between the people she photographs and the environment in which they find themselves. Highlighting the small, often unconscious gestures of her subjects, Braden particularly enjoys long-term, in-depth collaborations that in turn lends her photographs a unique, quiet intimacy. Braden has produced a large body of work that includes solo exhibitions and magazine features, but most recently three books: [London's Square Mile: A Secret City](#) with text by historian David Kynaston (2019), [Out of the Shadows: The Untold Story of People with Autism or Learning Disabilities](#) (2018) alongside the writer Sally Williams and [Adventures in the Lea Valley](#) (2016). She works on long-term, self-initiated projects, as well as commissions for international publications. Her book [China Between](#), is published by Dewi Lewis, 2010, a selection of her work from China is included in the book [Street Photography Now](#) published by Thames and Hudson 2010. In recent years she has collaborated with

journalists to produce extended photo-essays in the UK, the Middle East, Morocco, Kenya and China. Her photography has appeared in The Guardian, [The Saturday Telegraph](#) magazine, [Foto8](#), Portfolio, ICON, [Photoworks](#) & [Frieze](#).

Braden teaches regularly at The University of Westminster and London College of Communication (LCC). She taught photography at Xiamen University during a residency at the CEAC (Chinese European Art Centre) and at Kunming University during a residency at 943 studio. She is a winner of the Jerwood Photography Prize, 2003 and The Guardian Young Photographer of the Year, 2002. She has exhibited at venues internationally including the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) 2005, the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago 2006, Format International Photography Festival 2011, The Museum of London 2011, Krakow Photomonth, Alias, 2011, Minnie Weisz Gallery 2011, London festival of Photography 2011, London Gallery West, 2009, and the Hua Gallery, London 2012. She is winner of the Joanna Drew Bursary 2013 and is nominated by [Hundred Heroines 2020](#).

### **About Museum of the Home**

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## 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 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)