

Spike Island

LARGE PRINT EXHIBITION GUIDE

HOWARDENA PINDELL

A NEW LANGUAGE

18 FEBRUARY TO 21 MAY 2023

Howardena Pindell is an artist, activist, curator and teacher. After graduating from Yale University in the late 1960s, Pindell moved to New York City. Throughout her long and active career, which spans over sixty years, Pindell has challenged and expanded the definition of abstract painting. Experimenting with materials such as glitter, talcum powder and perfume, she makes intricate and thought-provoking works that engage with the social and political issues of her time.

The exhibition begins with a selection of paintings and works on paper from the 1970s that map the development of Pindell's distinctive, process-driven abstraction. In these early works, the artist adopts the language of minimalism

to create complex and sumptuous surfaces through laborious working processes such as hole-punching, spraying, cutting, sewing and numbering.

From the 1980s onwards, this abstract language is coupled with more personal and political works that often incorporate text into their surfaces to deal with subjects including slavery, violence against Black and indigenous people, the lasting effects of imperialism, the AIDS pandemic and the climate crisis.

Alongside paintings and works on paper, the exhibition includes the videos *Free, White and 21* (1980) and *Rope/Fire/Water* (2020). These works tackle the pervasiveness of racial inequality, drawing on Pindell's own experiences, as well as on historical data relating to segregation, discrimination and race-based violence in the United States.

The exhibition takes its title from an essay written by Pindell in the 1980s, in which she calls for a “new language” for people of colour in the arts – one “which empowers us

and does not cause us to participate in our own disenfranchisement.” Please be aware that works in this exhibition feature images and descriptions of racial violence, including lynching. Our gallery team are available if you have any concerns or would like to discuss the work.

Image: Howardena Pindell, *Plankton Lace #1* (detail) (2020). Mixed media on canvas. Courtesy of the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York, and Victoria Miro

Howardena Pindell: *A New Language* is organised by the Fruitmarket, Edinburgh in collaboration with Kettle’s Yard, Cambridge and Spike Island, Bristol.

Spike Island is an international centre for the development of contemporary art, located in Bristol’s harbour area.
spikeisland.org.uk

Spike Island, 133 Cumberland Road
Bristol BS1 6UX

+44 (0)117 929 2266

Facebook / Instagram: @SpikelIsland

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