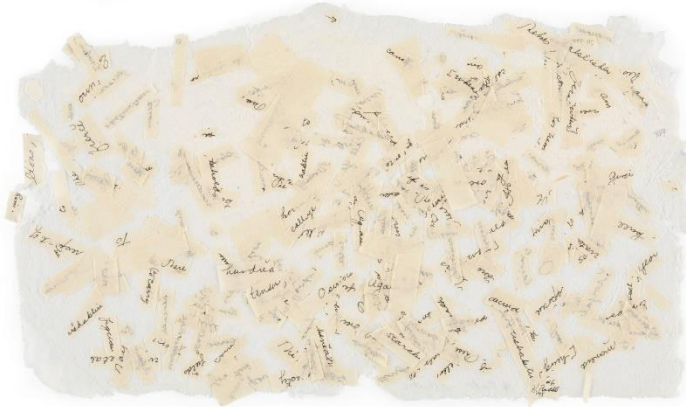


# Spike Island

PRESS RELEASE

HOWARDENA PINDELL  
*A NEW LANGUAGE*  
18 February to 21 May 2023



Spike Island presents *A New Language*, an exhibition bringing together paintings, works on paper and video from Howardena Pindell's **six**-decade-long career. The exhibition tracks the **development of Pindell's artistic language from the 1970s to now**, and examines her work as exemplary in articulating empowerment.

Best known for her monumental abstract canvases, 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.

A selection of paintings and works on paper from the 1970s map the **development of Pindell's distinctive, process-driven abstraction**. In these 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 address 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



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Pindell's own experiences, as well as on historical data relating to segregation, discrimination and race-based violence in America.

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.'**

Image: Howardena Pindell, *Text* (1975). Ink on paper collage. Courtesy the artist, Garth Greenan Gallery, and Victoria Miro

– Ends –

For further information and high-resolution images please contact Jane Faram, Senior Communications Consultant at Spike Island on [jane.faram@spikeisland.org.uk](mailto:jane.faram@spikeisland.org.uk) or Niquita Munowenyu, Communications Manager on [niquita.munowenyu@spikeisland.org.uk](mailto:niquita.munowenyu@spikeisland.org.uk), or call +44 (0)117 9292266.

#### NOTES FOR EDITORS

- Howardena Pindell: *A New Language* is organised by the **Fruitmarket, Edinburgh in collaboration with Kettle's Yard**, Cambridge and Spike Island, Bristol.
- **HOWARDENA PINDELL**  
Howardena Pindell (b.1943, Philadelphia, PA) is an artist, activist, curator and teacher. After graduating from Yale University in the late 1960s, Pindell moved to New York City and became the first Black female curator at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). In 1972, she co-founded A.I.R., the first not-for-profit, artist-led gallery for women artists in the United States. She rose to prominence through the late 1970s and early 1980s and had a major solo exhibition at the Studio Museum, Harlem in 1986. She has exhibited widely, including solo and group exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2018); Museum Brandhorst, Munich (2015); Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston (2013); Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2007); PS1 Contemporary Art Center, New York (1980); and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1971). In 2020, an exhibition of new work at The **Shed, New York articulated Pindell's response to racism and white supremacy against the backdrop of the Black Lives Matter movement and growing international outrage at anti-Black state violence in the US and elsewhere in the wake of the murder of George Floyd.**
- **ABOUT SPIKE ISLAND**  
Spike Island supports, produces and presents contemporary art and culture across an 80,000 square foot former industrial building in Bristol. Its diverse artistic programme includes free major exhibitions, events and engagement activities taking place on-site and online. Championing outstanding work by emerging and underrepresented local, national and international artists, the programme enhances access to contemporary art for audiences from all backgrounds.



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Alongside its public offer, Spike Island directly supports artists through new commissions, over 70 subsidised studios, and sector-leading artist development opportunities that widen access to its programme and facilities. Its Exhibition Services business supports the bespoke production and installation of artists' film and video throughout the UK and internationally. Spike Island is home to a dynamic community of hundreds of artists and creative businesses, working in flexible, affordable workspaces, alongside UWE Bristol's Fine Art department, Spike Print Studio, and café bar Emmeline.  
[www.spikeisland.org.uk](http://www.spikeisland.org.uk)



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