

# At the Fruitmarket – Howardena Pindell: A New Language

A new exhibition at Fruitmarket Gallery features the work of American artist, writer and teacher, Howardena Pindell.

*Howardena Pindell: A New Language* is the artist's first solo institutional exhibition in the UK and the second exhibition to take place in the new Fruitmarket. It will run until May 2022.

The artist has had a six decade long career and showing her multifaceted talents, some of her writings are included in the exhibitor along with works on paper, video and a publication with her writing sitting alongside newly commissioned essays about her art.

Curated by Fruitmarket Director Fiona Bradley, the exhibition takes its cue – and its title – from the artist. In '*A Documentation, 1980-1988*', she described the overwhelming whiteness of exhibitions and the exclusion of artists of colour as all but tokens, and asserted: 'I am an artist. I am not part of a so-called "minority", "new" or "emerging" or "a new audience". These are all terms used to demean, limit, and make people of color appear to be powerless. We must evolve a new language which empowers us and does not cause us to participate in our own disenfranchisement.'



Plankton Lace #1, by artist Howardena Pindell is one of a

series of artworks unveiled as part of the American artist's first UK exhibition Howardena Pindell: A New Language which opened at Fruitmarket, Edinburgh this weekend. The exhibition brings together work from the artist's six decade long career. Through a selection of paintings, works on paper, video and a publication featuring Pindell's own writing alongside newly commissioned essays about her work, it celebrates her work and its response to racism and white supremacy from the 1970s to now.

Fiona Bradley, Director, Fruitmarket, said: "It is exciting to be able to bring an extensive selection of Pindell's work to the UK for the first time, and to present her way of thinking, art making and writing to our audience. Working with Howardena, looking at her work, and reading her writing has been inspiring and enlightening for me, and I cannot wait to share her vision more widely".

The exhibition is being staged in collaboration with [Kettle's Yard](#), Cambridge and [Spike Island](#), Bristol and will tour to both of these galleries in 2022.

Andrew Nairne, Director, Kettle's Yard, said: "We are delighted to be able to work with Fruitmarket and Spike Island to present the remarkable work of Howardena Pindell at Kettle's Yard."

Robert Leckie, Director, Spike Island, said: "For the last six decades, Pindell's fiercely experimental approach to art-making has tested the formal boundaries of art as much as the structural inequities of the field. I am thrilled that this collaboration between Spike Island, Fruitmarket and Kettle's Yard will enable her potent work and ideas to become more widely known throughout the UK."

Howardena Pindell: A New Language

Fruitmarket, Edinburgh, 13 November 2021 – 2 May 2022 Open 7 Days

Gallery spaces 11am–6pm

Bookshop and Café 10am–6pm [www.fruitmarket.co.uk](http://www.fruitmarket.co.uk)



Fruitmarket staff member Chris Counihan looks on at Plankton Lace #1 2020, by artist Howardena Pindell ahead of the opening of the Howardena Pindell: A New Language exhibition at Fruitmarket, Edinburgh. Howardena Pindell: A New Language is the artist's first solo institutional exhibition in the UK and the second exhibition to take place in the new Fruitmarket, Edinburgh. Organised by the Fruitmarket, Edinburgh in collaboration with Kettle's Yard, Cambridge and Spike Island, Bristol, it runs at the Fruitmarket from 13 November 2021 to 2 May 2022.

Pindell, born in Philadelphia in 1943, began her career in the 1960s. Having studied art at Boston and Yale Universities she became an Exhibition Assistant at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1967, rising to Associate Curator and serving on the Byers Committee to investigate racial exclusion in museum acquisitions and exhibitions. She first exhibited her art in 1971, and was a founding member of A.I.R (Artists in Residence), the first women's cooperative gallery in New York City.

Resigning from MoMA in 1979, she became a professor in the Art Department at Stony Brook University, where she still teaches today. She rose to prominence throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, and had a major solo exhibition at the Studio Museum, Harlem in 1986. In 1992, *Howardena Pindell: A Retrospective*, her first solo touring exhibition, brought her art and writing together and in 1997, she published *The Heart of the Question*, an anthology of her written works.

She was included in *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles in 2007; in *We Wanted A Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85* at the Brooklyn Museum, New York and *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power* at Tate both in 2017; and The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago presented her first major US survey exhibition, *Howardena Pindell: What Remains to be Seen* in 2018. In 2020, an exhibition of new work at The Shed, New York

showed recent work 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.

The first half of the exhibition at Fruitmarket will be a celebration of the primarily abstract artistic language developed by Pindell in the late 1960s and early 1970s – the grid, the circle, and an insistence on repetition. She pioneered a way of making paintings that involved spraying paint through a hand-made, hole-punched stencil onto unstretched, often cut and resewn canvases, often further embellishing them through the addition of thread, glitter, powder and sequins. This section of the exhibition will combine large, colourful acrylic paintings on which the stencil was used; densely worked, white abstract canvases from 1974 and 1975 and a group of drawings and collages from 1970 to 1980.

After 1979, Pindell's work began to encompass her own story, with abstraction joined to a sense of social and political urgency and an understanding that the pressures, prejudices and exclusions she faced as a black artist and as a woman needed to be part of the subject of her art. The exhibition's selection moves on to focus on Pindell's more overtly political works, particularly her important 1980 video *Free, White and 21*, as well as a selection of paintings and works on paper which address apartheid, police violence, the AIDS crisis and racism, and the astonishing recent video *Rope/ Fire/ Water* (2020).

