

# GINA PANE

**Arnolfini, Bristol**

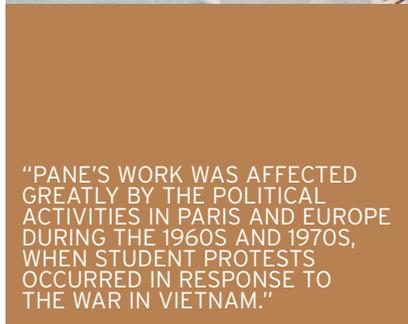
23.2.02 TO 13.04.02

words: Carolyn Black

The series of events and exhibitions at the Arnolfini between February and April, jointly referred to as the *Marked* season, showed a range of work by artists whose primary concern is the body and its specificity. Unfortunately, most media coverage focussed on the sensationalist aspects of the work and ignored the range and depth of what was on offer.

The Gina Pane exhibition was the main show of the *Marked* season, a retrospective covering works from the 1960s until her untimely death from cancer in 1990. Over the course of her career, Pane's work evidently changed in its production methods yet retained and acknowledged the body throughout. Pane's work was affected greatly by the political activities in Paris and Europe during the 1960s and 1970s, when student protests occurred in response to the war in Vietnam and the American nuclear testing at Bikini Atoll. It was during that period that she began to perform actions rather than create sculptures. These actions are what she has become most well known for.

The exhibition at Arnolfini showed mostly documentation of those actions, which is always a difficult thing to do - to record and document a live performance in the static medium of photography (I would like to have seen more videos of these performances). The main video documentation shown was *Death Control* (1974), juxtaposed with a film of a child's birthday celebration. *Death Control*, in both its forms (photographic and video) shows a close-up of Pane's face with live maggots crawling across its surface. They wriggle in her ears and appear to



"PANE'S WORK WAS AFFECTED GREATLY BY THE POLITICAL ACTIVITIES IN PARIS AND EUROPE DURING THE 1960S AND 1970S, WHEN STUDENT PROTESTS OCCURRED IN RESPONSE TO THE WAR IN VIETNAM."

**Above top to bottom**  
 Action Posthume de L'action Death Control, 1974  
 Sans Titre, 1964-65 - 10 Structures, 1969  
 Azione Sentimentale - Sentimental Action, 1973  
**Right** Action Laure, 1977

try and get in under her eyelid. The obvious association with death and disease is disturbing - we know flies land on corpses and lay eggs, which develop into maggots, and that they are generally considered vile, disgusting creatures which will eventually burst forth as blowflies. Yet here they were on a living person and that person was almost motionless, not even flinching. When watching the film after seeing the photo-documentation of the event, there was no comparison - the photograph was merely uncomfortable to look at, the video, unbearable. In the catalogue accompanying the exhibition, Caroline Collier and Stephen Foster discuss Pane's frequent reference to sight and blindness - the eye masks in *Action Laure* (1977), the maggots crawling into the eyelids in *Death Control* and the drawings in the series *Les Ennigmes Blesses* (1974-1976), which were done whilst Pane herself was wearing a blindfold. So much of the work is associated with the desire to see; yet her sight had been restricted. Another video showed Pane blindfolded, banging cymbals which had been silenced by fake fur. She performs over a mirror, which she eventually smashes to pieces with her fists. Often when confronting imagery that evokes a visceral response, a viewer might squint or cover their eyes. There were several other references to pre-lingual childhood - the milk, the suckling of her own breast and the toys. Might the fact that the artist herself was acting 'blind' reflect her own difficulty in confronting her pain, and that of others?

The mirror piece in particular had Freudian associations, the denial of identity and the destruction of the means of that identification. It seems Pane subjected herself to pain yet cushioned and protected herself at the same time - she clashed her cymbals but made no sound, she wore a thimble to protect her fingers whilst penetrating the skin of her arm with needle and thread.

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 Carolyn Black is an artist and a writer who has recently been awarded the South West Arts Critical Writing Award.

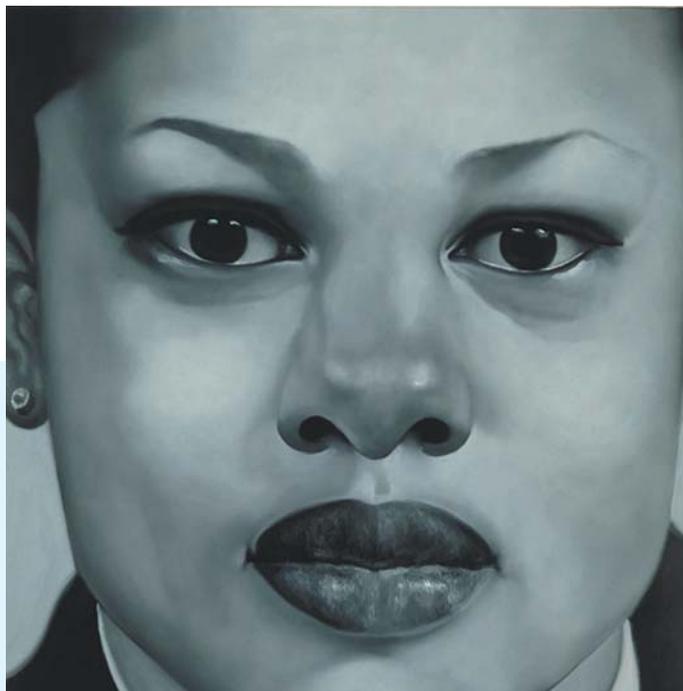


# PALMER & DHANJAL

## NEW AND RECENT WORK

4 Victoria St. Bristol 30.03.01 TO 4.05.02

words: David Trigg



"PALMER HAS TAKEN AS HIS SUBJECT VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE BLACK PRESENCE IN NUMEROUS CONTEXTS, INCLUDING: THE BLACK PRESENCE IN EUROPE, THE WORLD, THE HISTORY OF ART AND, AS HERE, PHOTOGRAPHY."

Top / Eugene Palmer *Six of One* 2000  
Right / Avtarjeet Dhanjal *The Limitless*



**Six identical portraits** stare out at you from the canvases of Eugene Palmer's *Six of One* in this exhibition, which is the first that local curator Eddie Chambers has staged outside of a gallery context. The venue for the show has been totally transformed from an old disused and derelict building, close to Bristol Bridge, into a presentable exhibition space suitable for showing contemporary art. Making use of two floors, work by London based painter Eugene Palmer was on display downstairs and the Shropshire based sculptor Avtarjeet Dhanjal showed a new installation upstairs. He also had two older works in the downstairs space. Viewers may be familiar with Palmer's work from the *Pictures of Pictures* exhibition at Arnolfini back in 1999.

Although appearing identical, Palmer's six portraits in *Six of One* do have slight variations in tone and detail. These six close-ups sit in contrast to three much larger, full figure portraits on the opposite wall. The cheery faces of these paintings, along with the deadpan expressions of the other six give us no real clues as to who they are or why they're there. These untitled, anonymous portraits are in fact, as I later discovered, pictures of Palmer's family; the only male on display being the artist's father. The paintings, all rendered in black and white, at once refer to photography, suggesting that they are painted not from life but from photographs. This is no exercise in mimesis though, even if initially *Six of One* may suggest otherwise; closer study reveals painterly surfaces with visible brush strokes and areas of thickly applied paint. These paintings do not try to hide the fact that they are painted. Throughout his career Palmer has taken as his subject various aspects of the Black presence in numerous contexts, including: The Black presence in Europe, the World, the history of art and, as here, photography. Although Palmer consistently depicts the Black image in his work he does not do so (as the curator has commented) in overly political or didactic terms. However, a passive response to these paintings is insufficient. Although they have no fixed agenda, they do raise questions of difference, sameness, history and identity, their matter-of-fact confrontational style challenging us to contemplate these issues.

Continuing the monochromatic theme of the exhibition was the work of Avtarjeet Dhanjal whose installation upstairs, *The Limitless*, used coal dust as its main medium. The centrepiece, a large disc made from a mass of small coal fragments, took up much of the available floor space. Surrounding that, on the walls, there were a number of coal dust drawings all featuring

the disc motif; eight framed pieces and four larger works hanging by pegs, with another on the floor towards the rear of the space. The coal dust that Dhanjal used was collected from a power station located near to his studio. The use of natural materials such as coal is significant for Dhanjal who grew up in a small village in the Panjab at a time where there were no cars, computers or even electricity. He states that: "As a growing child one of my great ambitions was to generate electricity to light up my home and then my

village." His work shows a deep fascination with the relationship between the natural and the man-made.

This was a very confident exhibition, the work of each artist complimenting the other. The space was used effectively and similar exhibitions of this kind, outside of a gallery setting will be most welcome.

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*The exhibition was part of a new venture co-ordinated by Chambers named the Edward Wilmot Blyden Project, which exists to show work by Black artists across the South West.*

## HUGHIE O'DONOGHUE

Victoria Gallery, Bath

16.03.02 TO 14.04.02 / Words: Emma Brown

**Richer Dust** was a touring exhibition of work made by Hughie O'Donoghue between 1995 and 2000, organised in association with Purdy Hicks Gallery in London. The exhibition consisted of paintings, drawings and several series of carborundum prints, which are concerned with memory, language, myth and history. The exhibition attempted to explain O'Donoghue's use of carborundum and explore the way it corresponds to his paintings and drawings in related work.

Carborundum printmaking is a relatively new process invented in the US during the 1930s that allows artists to work on a large scale. Carborundum grit is an abrasive compound of carbon and silicon. It is applied in a paste to the surface of an aluminium plate. When the paste



Hughie O'Donoghue That Idiot Colonel Howard

"BY EXCAVATING HISTORY AND REWORKING MYTH... *RICHER DUST* CALLS INTO QUESTION THE IDEA OF MASCULINE INDIVIDUALISM, THE PATRIARCHAL LINE AND THE WAY THESE RELATE TO THE DOMINANT CULTURE."

is dry, ink is applied and trapped in its granular surface, then wiped from the bare areas of the plate. The ink plate is then printed onto paper in a rolling-bed press used for intaglio printmaking (etching, aquatint, engraving etc.). The result is a print of painted marks, which, due to the fact

that they sit on top of the plate, are embossed into the paper.

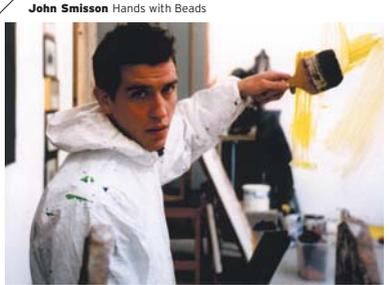
O'Donoghue uses other materials in a similar way, including images from the Imperial War Museum archive, to impinge upon the surface of his work. The surfaces are consequently layered and impacted, riven with shifting relations of difference. *Line of Retreat* (1996) is a series of prints describing his father's wartime experience as a motorcycle dispatch rider in France. The printmaking process has enabled O'Donoghue to manipulate the transparency of colour and he has added a masking layer of glaze. As prints, they exploit the opposition of negative versus positive and the carborundum process, in particular, exploits the opposition of recession and protrusion. The transparent versus the opaque, the hand-made versus the machine-made, and the literal versus the illusory all bring the surface of the work into play.

O'Donoghue's use of words and symbols traces the advance and retreat of forces across Europe. The word 'Roma' is incorporated into several works in the exhibition, and signifies the futile rivalry between the American 5th and British 8th armies, which resulted in the accusation that they had let a retreating German army escape at Cassino in favour of the glory of taking Rome. The painting *Roma* (1998) includes the cross from Benedict, the name and arrow from Roma and the traces of a head from Marsyas, all prints from the *On The Rapido* series made at the same time. The usual job of a picture is to correlate signifier and signified, so as these signs shift between works, evoking what is absent, the viewer's field of vision is disrupted. By forcing the viewer to be self-reflexive in this way, O'Donoghue explores the nature of visual representation.

Other works in the exhibition are *Three Studies for a Crucifixion* (1996), part of a series of work on the subject of The Passion and *Laocoon* (2000), based on the sculpture famously unearthed in the Renaissance. By excavating history and reworking myth in this way, *Richer Dust* calls into question the idea of masculine individualism, the patriarchal line and the way these relate to the dominant culture. O'Donoghue examines the way history and myth are constricted by linguistic convention and how historical consciousness is determined by the way we ourselves exist in language.

## JOHNSMISSON FACE TO FACE

CREATE CENTRE, BRISTOL  
4 APRIL TO 18 APRIL 2002  
WORDS: CHRIS MILLER



John Smisson Hands with Beads

**Though he trained** as a painter, John Smisson is a portrait artist who uses video. Frustrated with the tradition of painted portraiture, with its static nature, Smisson felt the need to 'take it a stage further' - to open an investigation into the process, and relationship, between the artist and the model. Many of the videos shown in this exhibition involved a clear screen that divided the artist from the model. This screen becomes the surface for describing the model and his/her actions; the artist on the other side works instinctively, often frantically, to make a record of the interplay. The painted dialogue grows as the relationship is explored, but can just as easily break down and inevitably the process starts again. Not only is the role of the artist being questioned here, but the traditional notion of model or sitter is seen in a new light. This is because the models here are active, smashing apart a chair for instance, dancing or fencing. Well why not? In fact the fencing piece seemed to work particularly well - brush in hand, Smisson counteracts the fencing actions of the model on the other side of the screen, and paint-marks build up on the surface. Thus the interaction becomes like a duel, but without an end result.

The videos were dotted around three rooms of the eco-home, part of Bristol's CREATE Centre. John claims that displaying the work in a domestic setting is in keeping with ideas of portraiture, "since people leave traces of their lives all over their homes". This didn't really add to, or take anything away from the work. It did however attract a different audience and provided a relaxed space to consider a challenging body of work that operated on a multitude of levels.

## SEX & CONSUMERISM CONTEMPORARY ART FROM JAPAN

HOTBATH GALLERY, BATH  
10 APRIL TO 8 MAY 2002  
WORDS: PAUL CUNLIFF



## A PELICAN IN THE WILDERNESS

HOLBURN MUSEUM OF ART, BATH  
16 APRIL TO 8 JUNE 2002  
WORDS: MIKE SALWAY

**Sometimes** we all feel the need to take some time out from the pressures of everyday life, but I doubt whether many of us have ever considered actually giving everything up, opting out and becoming a hermit. Those that have are the subject of *A Pelican in the Wilderness*, an exhibition focusing on the intriguing tradition of the hermit. Guest curated by local author Elizabeth Colegate, who has also written a book of the same name, it brings together a wide range of fascinating images and objects. One of the most interesting exhibits on display by far was the shoe that once belonged to the 17th century hermit John Bigg. More a mass of patch worked scraps of leather than a shoe, appearing as if it fell straight out of a Grimm fairy tale.

Amongst the highlights of the show was a dynamic painting of early Christian hermits by the Belgian artist Justus Van de Hamme (*St. Paul the Hermit and St. Anthony Abbot*). On occasion I felt somewhat sympathetic towards certain hermits, especially when reading St. Jerome's account of his 2-3 year stint in the desert: "Oh how often, when I was living in the sun-scorched solitude of the desert, which offers monks a savage hospitality, how often I imagined myself back in the pleasures of Rome!" For those who seek solitude as a spiritual discipline it seems it is often a far from enjoyable experience.

Other work showed solitaries' relationships with nature. Roger Ackling's intriguing hermit-inspired driftwood sculptures, with markings etched in by the sun's rays via a magnifying glass were on display, as were rare photographs by American hermit Thomas Merton showing his simple life-style and his intense personal relationship with nature.

The exhibition was awkwardly hung and confusing at times, but it makes us reconsider the importance of times spent in solitude for self-reflection and contemplation, especially so in these increasingly stressful modern times.

Koji Tanada Domination & Submission 1999,  
Yoshiko Shimizu/BUBU Heal/Repair, 1998



**Behind us**, amongst other works, are two prints by Aida Makoto in which naked teenage girls are chained up like dogs *Dog (Snow)* and *Dog (Moon)*. They strain at their leashes to peer at a melting snowman or a bluish moon and have sweet smiles; though their legs have been severed at the knee, their arms at the elbow and blood is leaking from their bandaged stumps. The prints are beautifully made, exquisitely coloured and undoubtedly some of the most disturbing imagery ever to be publicly exhibited in Bath. Yoshima is only here for a special one-off performance to mark the opening of *Sex and Consumerism*, but her appearance makes concrete the absurd marriage of the traditional and the controversial that drives this touring exhibition. Curator Sumee Keelan has brought together eight 'leading' artists from Japan to reflect something of the complicated social and sexual politics of the post-Hirohito era. Not all of the works were as disturbing as Makoto's mineral prints though. At the more playful end of the show, Takahiro Fujiwara had created a series of giant, brightly coloured beans, that visitors were encouraged to straddle - once activated, they illuminate and vibrate frantically. They're mischievous, amusing and maybe, since they are essentially giant vibrators, a little sinister. Much of the work deals with the subjects of domination and submission. Koji Tanada's life size sculptures confronted the theme overtly; bound and gagged mutants with giant appendages. Well made and displayed, these sculptures attracted a lot of interest but one might ask

if we were being presented with anything more than just cheap comic book imagery. In the gallery setting, we're quick to assume profundity lies behind provocation - but when it comes to Tanada's work, I have my doubts. The highlight of the show was a series of poetic works from prostitute Bubu, who presents 'Diary' extracts describing some of her more interesting experiences with customers. Bubu's prose grapples with the same essential issues as Tanada's sculpture, but where Tanada appears superficial, Bubu appears sentimental. If you've ever read one of Japan's most successful literary exports, Haruki Murakami, then you may have found much to appreciate in Bubu's work. Even at their most graphic, there is a background sensitivity that made me think of both Murakami's insightful prose and Yoshima's musical performance. There was delicacy and poetry, ever present behind the bravado. This was also true of Peter Bellar's sculptural work *Pillows of an Empire*, but the sentiment seems less effective and more affected coming from a male perspective. At times *Sex and Consumerism* was provocative, on occasions touching and sometimes disturbing, but in its relation of difference to just about every other exhibition in the area, always interesting. Herein lied the success of the show. Its failures? Whilst there was plenty of prostitution, schoolgirls and tortured bodies on show, there were only occasional glimpses of the real meaning behind these images - if we are to be disturbed, offended, and amused, why should we not also be enlightened?



Peter Day one in a series of pictures for *invisible Boundaries*

## PETER DAY INVISIBLE BOUNDARIES

MICHAEL TIPPETT CENTRE / BATH  
2 APRIL TO 25 MAY 2002  
WORDS: CHRIS MILLER

There's always something to photograph, any number of amateur photography manuals will tell you that. Peter Day photographs everything in his flat: the simple, the everyday, the banal, even the kitchen sink. Over three years he's taken more than a thousand images, resulting in the creation of a personal archive. It's a reflection of Day's life at its core: his home. The very nature of photography, its ability to freeze and record a moment, is employed to full measure. The result, in Day's words, "makes the invisible visible, the banal a historical artefact". Invariably the viewer scavenges amongst the works, trying to account for the motives behind these records of such everyday scenes, whilst also questioning if this is anything more than just a personal indulgence. Sometimes fragments of text and juxtapositions of objects seem to form meanings. 'Mystery of physical life', reads a line of text adjacent to an image of Bruce Nauman's *One Hundred Live and Die*.

The show has been billed as an 'innovative fusion of documentary and archaeology', and the more time spent studying the images, the more this becomes apparent. A bland image of a duvet and a pillow initially seems devoid of significance until one notices the delicate presence of a strand of hair. It signifies an absence, a history, like the remnants of food or a finished cigarette present in other images. This can hardly claim to be an innovative 'fusion' though, look at the work of Paul Graham for instance, Wolfgang Tillmans, and even Martin Parr. Parr utilises the quality of digital imaging (and Xerox) to emphasise a lurid and disposable theme, whereas Day's decision to use digital prints is questionable. The prints are high in contrast and saturation, almost lurid. It seems to intensify the composition, pushing at abstraction. The project is documentary but the resulting aesthetic is perhaps distracting.



Above / *Kachina Doll* Zuni Indians, New Mexico, 1965  
Below / *Pair of Moccasins* Plain Indians, Late 19th century

"EXPECT TO FIND MANY EXAMPLES OF TRADITIONAL ARTS AND CRAFT FROM DIFFERENT INDIAN GROUPS SUCH AS VIVIDLY DESIGNED NAVAJO RUGS AND WOVEN BLANKETS, DISTINCTIVE VESSELS FROM PUEBLO POTTERS AND JEWELLERY FROM THE SOUTHWEST TRIBES."



## THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN AS VARIED AS THE LAND

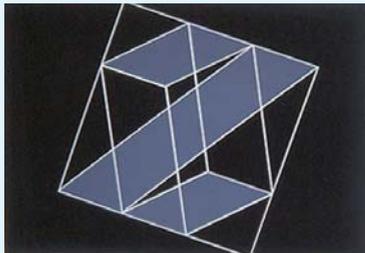
THE AMERICAN MUSEUM, BATH  
MARCH TO NOVEMBER 2002  
WORDS: PAUL CUNLIFFE

In the past, Europeans often used art to justify their treatment of the American Indians, from representations of ignorant, blood-thirsty savages waiting to be trained and tamed, to comical cigar store figures. Images from Hollywood movies and TV serials did little to give a true picture of the variety of American Indian culture and could only reinforce damaging stereotypes. Bath's American Museum has recently opened this special exhibition for 2002 entitled *The North American Indian, as varied as the land*. Central to the exhibition are examples of stereotyped representations from the past alongside a large variety of photographs and artifacts that attempt to piece together something of the lost truth behind these fascinating people. The exhibition runs until early November and features a range of objects and artifacts associated with North American Indian culture, from traditional head-dress and moccasins to hand made tools and weapons. Expect to find many examples of traditional arts and craft from different Indian groups such as vividly designed Navajo rugs and woven blankets, distinctive vessels from Pueblo potters and Jewellery from the Southwest tribes. The exhibit offers a large display of items from many different aspects and areas of American Indian culture, admission is a reasonable £3.50. Certainly, a great deal of effort has gone into making this an effective and educating exhibition. As the catalogue says: 'It is hoped that you will leave with not one but many pictures of native American Indians, living both in the past and the present. As varied as the landscape is in North America, so too are the native peoples who continue to inhabit it.'

Further information can be found on the museum's website: [www.americanmuseum.org](http://www.americanmuseum.org) or by calling: 01225 460503

## JOSEF ALBERS

MICHAEL TIPPETT CENTRE, BATH  
1 JUNE TO 27 JUNE 2002  
WORDS: DAVID TRIGG



Josef Albers Composition, 1972

**Work by the** enormously influential artist Josef Albers (1888-1976) will be on display at Bath's Michael Tippett Centre during June. The show, a national touring exhibition from the Hayward Gallery, is drawn from a portfolio of screenprints produced in close collaboration with the artist in 1972. It will feature versions of many of his most famous images, showing the development of his work as he created multiple variations on major themes. Albers taught at the Bauhaus in Weimar until the Nazis closed it down in 1933. He also taught at Black Mountain College and Yale, where he held his famous classes on colour. Colour was an obsession with Albers who, throughout his career, explored it perhaps more thoroughly than any other artist has ever done so.

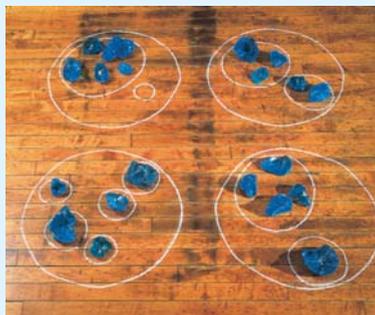
Through his most famous series of work, *Homage to the Square*, he strove to demonstrate the nuances of relativity and instability of colour and tone. Through this work he shows us how deceptive colour can be, how different colours can appear identical and even how three colours can be seen as two or four. The squares also create optical illusions such as appearing like a receding tunnel or a protruding three-dimensional shape. Other series of works that explore optical contradictions include *Graphic Tectonics*, in which inward or upward movement is evoked by juxtaposing lines of varying thickness, placed closer together or further apart. The *Structural Constellations* make forms appear both flat and three-dimensional whilst the *Varients* series again is an exploration into the mechanics of colour. For further information, please contact the Arts Centre Manager on 01225 875696 [www.bathspa.ac.uk/mtc](http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/mtc)

## SHIMMERING SUBSTANCE

ARNOLFINI, BRISTOL  
27 APRIL TO 23 JUNE 2002  
WORDS: DAVID TRIGG

**Currently on show** at Arnolfini is the first of two consecutive exhibitions which take painting as their point of departure. *Shimmering Substance* is an impressive international group show that takes its name from a 1946 painting by Jackson Pollock. The show is concerned with the physical materiality or 'substance' of art, bringing together works 'in which an unbridled pleasure in the manipulation or representation of various substances, including paint itself, is manifest.' It would be fair to say that the walls of the Arnolfini galleries haven't seen this much painting since the Gordon Bennett exhibition back in 2000. The materiality of paint itself is explored in the work of painters Rachel Howard, Alexis Harding, Kate Bright, Tom Chamberlain, David Musgrave and Marilyn Minter. Alongside these artists there are also many others showing work in a variety of media. Other works on display include the late Felix Gonzalez-Tores' *Untitled (Water)*. Hung at the entrance to the show it is a shimmering beaded curtain that refers to the artist's deep connection to the sea. *Water* features again in Sarah Dobai's five-minute film *Yard*, which shows a sudden deluge of an apparent rainstorm, yet the downpour is an obviously staged event. American Conceptual artist Lawrence Weiner has made a new sound work for the show, which also includes work by Mel Bochner, Roger Hiorns, Lawson Oyekan, Rudolf Stingel, and Pae White. The exhibition is co-curated by Barry Schwabsky and Catsou Roberts.

*Shimmering Substance* will be followed by *View Finder*, which opens at the beginning of July.



Mel Bochner, *Five by Four*, 1972 / 1993, glass slag and chalk

## MIRROR MIRROR

SELF PORTRAITS BY WOMEN ARTISTS  
VICTORIA GALLERY, BATH  
22 JUNE TO 1 AUGUST 2002  
WORDS: DAVID TRIGG

**As a genre**, the self-portrait is unusual in that it offers artists a freedom that allows them to be both subject and creator. This freedom has been especially valuable to many women artists over the years, as it still is today. Images taken from the long tradition of self-portraits by female artists will be on display in this forthcoming exhibition at the Victoria Art Gallery. *Mirror, Mirror*, on tour from the National Portrait gallery, London, will feature self-portraits by 40 women artists ranging from the 17th century up to the present day. The exhibition brings together all of the self-portraits by women artists in the National Portrait Gallery's collection as well as loans and new works acquired or commissioned especially for the show.

Self-portraits from well known female artists such as Mary Beale, Gwen John and Dame Barbara Hepworth are included, and several contemporary artists have contributed work to the exhibition including Yolanda Sonnabend, Elizabeth Blackadder, Victoria Crowe, Jennifer McRae and Daphne Todd. *Mirror, Mirror* introduces the history and function of the female self-portrait, exploring social, historical and gender issues, as well as raising questions of identity, style and technique. A fully illustrated catalogue to accompany the exhibition will also be available.



ALLAL YAMINE  
SAHA GALLERY, BRISTOL  
27 APRIL TO END JULY 2002

Moroccan born Allal uses his art to form cultural links and his exhibition "Berber Tribes" continues this concept further info. tel: 0117 3179696