

**Hurvin
Anderson**



ArtSpark




GOV/ART/COL




Department
for Culture,
Media & Sport

Look out for the following symbols! They flag up prompts that work especially well with those areas of the curriculum.

 ENGLISH	 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES
 HISTORY	 LGBTQ+ RIGHTS
 ART, D&T	 BRITISH VALUES
 MUSIC	 MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING
 CITIZENSHIP	 PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE
 COMPUTING	 CREATIVE CAREERS IN THE ARTS
 DIVERSITY	

 When you see this icon (hand symbol), you can click on an external link to provide you with more information.

This learning resource is intended to bring you closer to the series of prints commissioned through the TenTen Award.


Bursting with information, you'll find suggestions on how to engage with the artwork in a whole range of ways – from exploring the artist's themes and techniques, to pointers on curriculum links. The wide variety of prompts are intended to ensure the artwork is approachable and relevant, no matter what your teaching specialism! You are encouraged to run with whichever you choose.

Each resource kicks off with 10 interesting facts about the artwork – but you don't have to become an expert on everything. Facts have their place, but so do feelings, and one of the most valuable things about art is it gives us space to play, explore, and feel.

Anything you think about the artwork, and the words you use to talk about it, it's all good.

10 facts about Hurvin Anderson

- 1 Hurvin Anderson is a British painter. He was born in Birmingham in 1965. The youngest of eight siblings, he was the only child not to be born in Jamaica.
- 2 He was educated at Wimbledon College of Art and the Royal College of Art, in London..
- 3 He often combines photographs and his own memories to create works that range from delicate paintings on vellum (a paper traditionally made from calfskin) to large canvases that can cover an entire wall.
- 4 Much of Anderson's work is about place. He is known for brightly painted, densely detailed landscapes and interior scenes. Particularly those relating to his upbringing in an Afro-Caribbean community in the Midlands of England and more recent trips to the Caribbean.
- 5 The interior of barbershops appear in Anderson's paintings as a place synonymous with enterprise, affirmation and community for many Afro-Caribbean migrants. He uses the space to pay homage to this cultural history and to explore themes of memory, identity and nationhood.

- 6 For the first TenTen print commission, Anderson worked with expert printers to replicate sourced and saved fabrics and wallpapers. The 13 base colours in the print are built up from 15 stencils over 21 layers.
- 7 Artificial flowers are listed in *The Front Room: Migrant Aesthetics in the Home* (Michael McMillan, 2009) as one of the 'top ten' items found in a Caribbean family front room. This was (and for many still is) a place of pride and display. Anderson's print is both a homage to the aesthetics of the front room and an interior that will be familiar to many families.
- 8 Anderson's solo exhibitions include *Hurvin Anderson: Salon Paintings*, The Hepworth Wakefield, UK (2023); *Hurvin Anderson: Anywhere but Nowhere*, The Arts Club of Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA (2021); *Backdrop*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada (2016) and Contemporary Art Museum St Louis, MI, USA (2015); *Dub Versions*, New Art Exchange, Nottingham, UK (2016); *Backdrop*, CAM, St Louis, MI, USA (2015); *Reporting Back*, IKON Gallery, Birmingham, UK (2013); *ART NOW: Hurvin Anderson*, Tate Britain, London, UK (2009). 
- 9 Anderson made the artwork **Is It OK To Be Black?** (2015–16) in response to a commission to create a new work for the Arts Council Collection on the occasion of its 70th anniversary.
- 10 He was shortlisted for the 2017 Turner Prize at the age of 52. Previously, only artists under the age of 50 were eligible for nomination.

About the print

When is a vase not a vase?

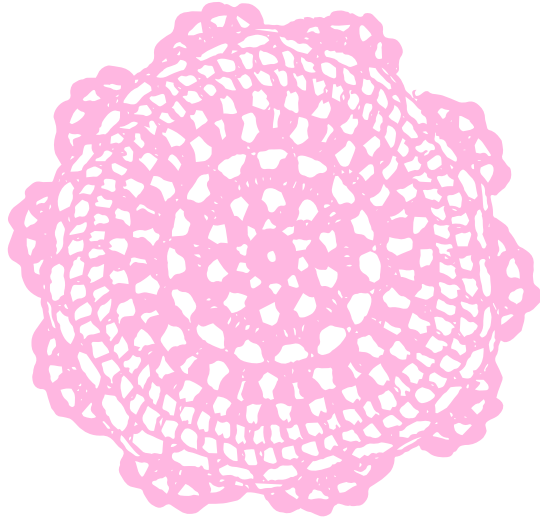
When it tells a story, when it represents something else. Anderson's print evokes a snapshot of the artist's mother's front room in Birmingham and his mother's prized possession: the vase.

- We are told that the vase travelled with her from Jamaica, but how does Anderson *show* us that it is special?
- Why do you think we are told in the title that the flowers are artificial?
- Why do you think there are no people in the room?



Hurvin Anderson
Still Life with Artificial Flowers, 2018

Beneath the vase are three crocheted doilies. Crochet was taught to young women in the Caribbean by Christian missionaries.



Similar pieces displayed in the 1970s inspired West Indian Front Room at the Museum of the Home belonged to women who, like many Caribbean migrant women, made them to supplement their income.

- Does this information affect the way you feel about the artwork?

Pattern

Although the image looks like a snapshot, it is constructed from multiple layers of patterns.

- Why do you think Anderson used not just patterns but specifically those from saved fabrics and wallpapers?
- What does the wallpaper remind you of?
- The rich use of pattern flattens and alters the space. Why do you think Anderson chose to use that technique?



When is a front room political?

Anderson was commissioned by the Government Art Collection to create 'a print for display in diplomatic buildings across the world'.

He responded with a snapshot of his mother's front room in Birmingham. The artist's parents were part of the 'Windrush generation' and the glass vase is one of his mum's prized possessions, which travelled with her from Jamaica.

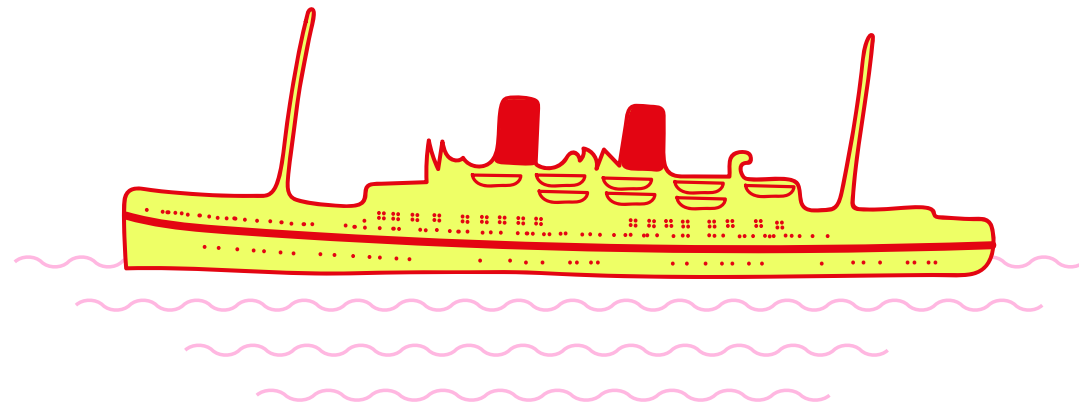


The 'Windrush generation' denotes the people who emigrated from the Caribbean to Britain between the arrival of the HMT Empire Windrush on 22 June 1948 and the Immigration Act 1971.



The **Windrush scandal** began to surface in 2017 after it emerged that hundreds of Commonwealth citizens, many of whom were from the 'Windrush generation', had been wrongly detained, deported and denied legal rights.

- Do you think Anderson's work is political — and if so, how?
- What do you think *Still Life with Artificial Flowers* says about Britain now?
- Do you think the artwork is a good choice for displaying in diplomatic buildings such as British Embassies abroad? (Explain why).



Themes and techniques



Much of Anderson's work is about place. He says his paintings evoke a sense of 'being in one place but thinking about another'. He often returns to motifs like barbershop interiors and public parks, drawn from memories of his own upbringing in Birmingham during the 1970s and 1980s.

Anderson talks about place in his work and his personal connections with Handsworth.

The following activities explore a variety of ways of using place.

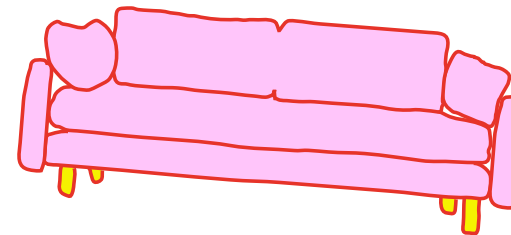
Activity

Discuss — who would live in a room like this?

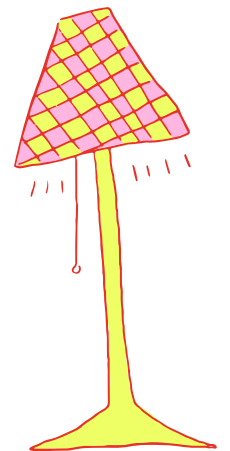
Take a look at these examples of rooms that tell the stories of their occupants.

1970s African-Caribbean families setting up home in the UK

Short film of British Indian Front Room



The British Indian Front Room in 1987



- Thinking about what we notice in the rooms, rather than information we are given, what do we learn from these rooms about their occupants?
- Where are we, and how do we know?
- What clues are there that these rooms are historical and not present day?
- What has changed? What hasn't changed?



Class activity :

Create a portrait of someone by describing their room.

Test your powers of observation and deduction.

You'll need a selection of photographs showing home interiors (but not their occupants).

Begin by exploring one of the rooms as a group — ask: *Who would live in a room like that?*

Build as vivid a portrait as you can of the imagined occupant.

Give them a name, an occupation, a backstory...

Discuss:

What are you basing your decisions on?



Pairs activity :

Create a room for a character

This activity flips the previous one.
This time, you design the room.

The teacher provides a list of one-line character descriptions. For example:

'A retired couple whose children
now live in another country'

'A visually impaired student'

'A single parent'

'Someone who uses their
home for professional childcare'

'A recently divorced man'

'Someone who has recently
arrived from another country'

Each pair is given one of these descriptions
Do not disclose this to the rest of the group.

Now create a room where you imagine your character lives.

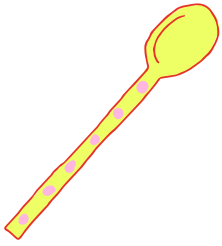
You'll need to decide on a lot of things first — which room, and what kind of single parent, visually impaired student, etc.

Decide on the furniture, the objects and ornaments, evidence of recreation, etc.

Share your descriptions with the group, and discuss:

- Can you guess who the character is? (Does it matter if you can't?)
- What detail gave it away?
- What was confusing?
- Did you tend to create stereotypes, or were the characters subtly drawn?
- What was effective, and how might they have been improved?

Variation – duplicate the character descriptions, so two pairs each create a room for the same character. Compare the different results of each pair, and discuss.



Writing activity : In that kitchen...

Write what you know, use all your senses and be specific — these are key principles for creating authentic writing. Try it for yourself in this short guided exercise.

Think about a house you know very well: it might be where you live now, or it might be somewhere you once lived. Close your eyes and picture it.

Think about entering the house through the front door, and then imagine looking inside each of the rooms in turn.

Note what the furniture is like, where the windows are, what is on the walls.

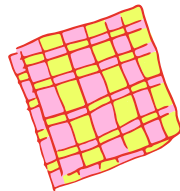
Now, in your imagination, enter the kitchen.
Take a good look around. Notice all the details —

What can you hear?

What can you smell?

Now, start writing.

You have ten minutes to write anything that comes to mind, beginning with the words: 'In that kitchen'.



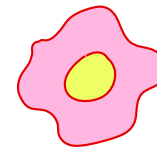
You might describe what it is like, and you might remember things that happened there — the ritual of getting your breakfast each morning, or preparing a special meal.

You might remember conversations that happened there. Write anything you like, so long as it starts 'In that kitchen'.

When you get stuck, start a new line, and begin again with the same words, 'In that kitchen'. Repeat it as many times as you like.

At the end of 10 minutes, read through what you have written, underlining any parts you like and maybe could develop, and that you want to share (if you choose not to share, that's fine too. Just say 'pass').

- Did focusing on a single place help you to get some specific ideas?
- Do you feel you know those who shared their writing a little better from what you have each written?



2

Talking objects

Activity : Show and tell

Bring in an object that says something about you, your family, or your culture or community.

It doesn't need to be precious in a material sense, but something that's important to you. (If you're unable to bring in the object, or take a photo of it, you can describe it).

Introduce your object, saying what it is, and why you selected it.

- Why is it special?
- What is its story?

Activity : Inspiring objects

Here are a few ways to use your object in an artwork:

Taking inspiration from Anderson's composition, create a still life that includes your object.

Gather a selection of magazines with colour pictures. These will be your paints.

Go through the pages looking for colour and pattern (try not to get distracted!)

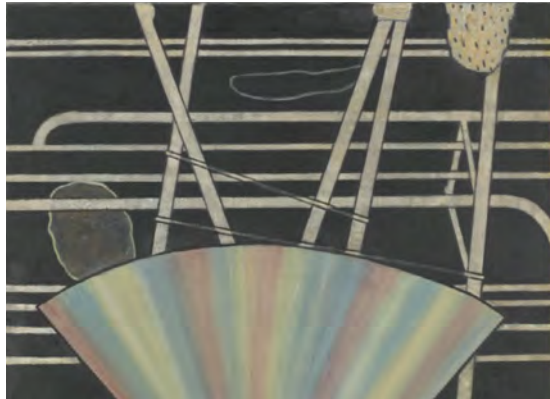
Create a collage of your still life composition.

- What happens to the sense of space?

Using a photocopier enlarge a photo and work directly onto it, using collage and paint.

If you like, you can add writing (think about including what you said when introducing your object).

Take a look at Prunella Clough's painting of enlarged and abstracted household goods



Prunella Clough
Oil on canvas, 1989

and

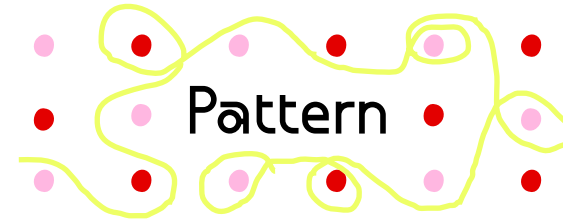
Jade Montserrat's drawing with writing.



Jade Montserrat
The glamour of her homemade stage, 2016



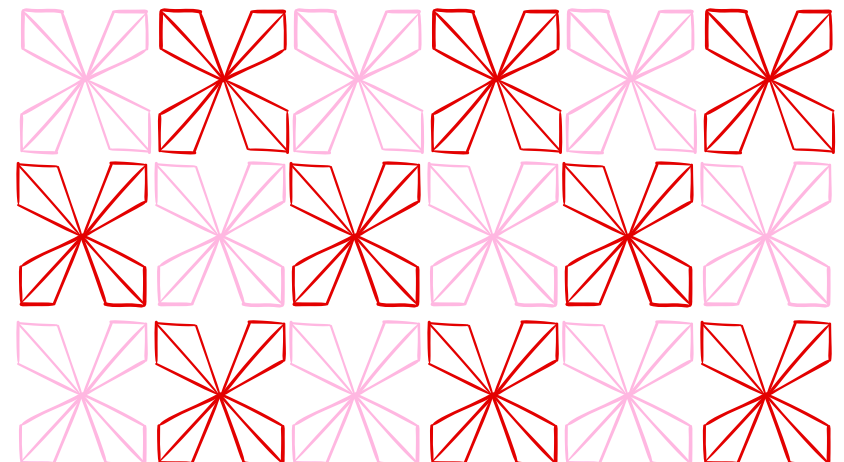
3



Using pattern in an artwork can create a variety of effects.

We have seen how Anderson uses patterned fabrics and wallpapers in *Still Life with Artificial Flowers* to evoke memories of other times and places. In *Welcome: Carib, 2005* he overlays a landscape painting with the formal grid derived from a decorative ironwork grille in a Trinidad bar, designed to keep people out.

- What effect do you think this grid pattern has on the way we view the landscape? Does the title influence the way we read the painting? (How?)



Patterns and the past

Take a look at two other artists who use pattern

‘Everything I did, I saw it through a tropical eye.’
– Althea McNish



A generation before Anderson, **Althea McNish** moved from Port of Spain in Trinidad to London and achieved international recognition as a fabric designer. Her designs featured natural imagery of tropical flora and fauna from her native Trinidad alongside her personal interpretation of the British landscape.

Sarah Morris is an American British artist who often uses grids in her artworks.



Sarah Morris
Dulles (Capital) 6, 2001

Activity :

Create a pattern album

Notice the patterns that feature in your daily life — in curtains, clothes, packaging, carpets... Take close-up photos of the patterns and collect them into your personal pattern album.

Use the patterns in your artwork — photocopy them, or draw freehand, or print.

Use them as collage materials for your ‘inspiring object’ still life (on page 21).

Activity :

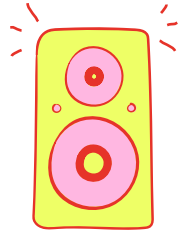
Create a fabric design

Take inspiration from flora and fauna around you to create a simple repeat design that can be lino printed.

Overlay this repeat pattern with a formal grid design in a contrasting colour.



4 Dub versions



In 2016 Anderson had a major exhibition, *Dub Versions*, at New Art Exchange, Nottingham.

Dub started life as a subgenre of reggae in the 1960s. The style is named for the dubplates used in the manufacture of vinyl records. Dub music is traditionally created by making a copy of an original track and stripping it back by emphasising the bass lines and taking out the vocals. This is then augmented with a combination of effects — echo, reverb, vocal samples, etc.

A large number of Jamaican expatriates in the UK helped create a 1980s British dub scene. Its stars included Birmingham bands UB40 and Anderson's neighbour from the band Steel Pulse.

A Brief History of Dub Music 



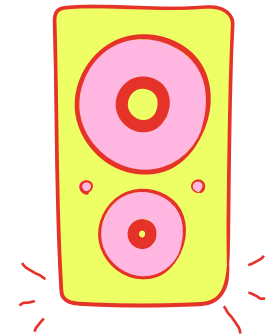
An Introduction To Dub In 10 Songs 



What's the connection between dub music and Anderson's visual art practice?

'There's that sense that the key element, the people, has been stripped out, as in a dub mix, where you might have the main thing about the song, which is often the lyrics, then take those away to give the music a different life of its own, a different form... The possibilities open up once you've stripped out that main element, the thing you'd usually focus on when looking or listening. Once you've taken away the voice from the song, say, or the figures from the interior, the things that would have previously seemed like the backgrounds can expand to take on their own importance and new meanings.'

– Hurvin Anderson





Activity : Dub it up

Minimal technology?

To create some human dub, you'll need at least three people and up to a class.

Each person creates a different repeatable sound - it could be made on an instrument, or with the voice, or using a smartphone as a recorder.

One person is the controller. They bring the sounds in, one at a time, until everyone is included. Follow the controller's instructions to drop out, until just one or two sounds remain. Come back in when the controller instructs.

Volume control

Play a song on whatever device you have.

During the tune, drop down the volume and make some noise over the top, keeping an awareness of the song's original rhythm.

Bring the volume back up: have you kept true to the timing?



Fancy some toast?

Toasting is a form of rapping that is improvised over a dub record.

Take a karaoke version of a song. Ignoring the provided lyrics and melody line, use it as backing for your own toasting.

Access to a computer?

Download a free multi-track [audio editor and recorder](#) to try out these simple dub experiments:

Explore importing and combining two or more sounds, then drop out one of them.

Get two distinct sounds to run in parallel. For more advanced mixing, take a look at

[What Dub Mixing Is & How To Do It](#)



What do artists do all day?

Anderson's practice is informed by a myriad of influences – his teachers, the established painters he discovered from a young age on visits to galleries, and the generation of Black British artists such as Sonia Boyce, Eddie Chambers and Keith Piper.

He is also inspired by figures in the world around him. For each new work he collects newspaper clippings, posters and photographs before compiling reams of drawings and sketches as drafts to the final painting. These figures have included Carl Lewis, Dorothy Dandridge, Bruce Lee and Muhammad Ali.

In his 2015 Arts Council commissioned painting, *Is it okay to be Black?* Anderson depicts the interior of a barbershop. The viewer is positioned as if seated in the barber's chair. The painting includes key figures in black history: Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and Marcus Garvey.



Anderson explains:

‘There’s the space itself with the mirrors, then all of these images and photographs pinned up on the mirrors and walls. Some of these related to styles of hair, so had a practical use, while others... were figures from history and contemporary life... So the title was really about how those images on the walls seemed to be asking ‘who do you want to be?’”

Activity :

Who do you want to be? Create your own cuttings wall

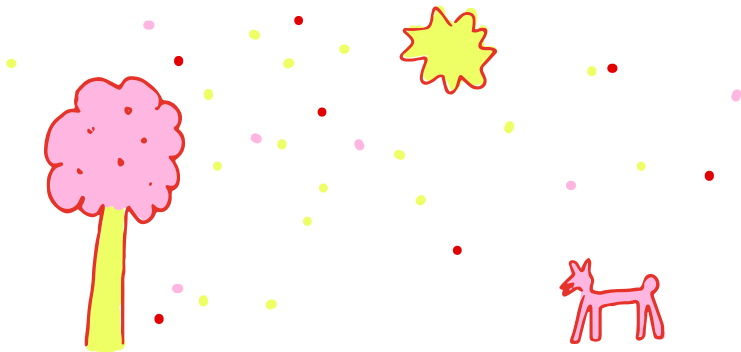
Collect newspaper clippings (or print out material you find online) of figures from history and contemporary life who resonate with you, and who shape the way you position yourself in the world.

Discuss who you have selected. Are they all heroes? There might be people who have made an impact on you, but who you feel ambivalent about. Do you include them?



Feeling inspired?

Here are some suggestions for extending the themes you've been looking at. These can also be done outside school, with friends and family.



Activity : Create a community/family show and tell

Develop the 'Talking Objects' activity (on page 20) to include friends, family and the wider community. Invite them to talk about an object that says something about them, their culture or community.

Learn how to conduct an oral history project and record their stories.



Conducting an oral history project:

Guidelines for teachers



Photograph their objects, and display them alongside their stories in an exhibition.

Invite the community to the exhibition.




Headphones, jacket, soya bean grinder...


Take a look at **this project** that invited British Chinese women to present an object of personal significance to explore how questions of belonging and identity are entangled with the most everyday of things.




Further reading and links


[Older artists, better shows Financial Times, 2017](#) 


[Anderson's first major monograph](#) 

[Artists Newsletter Q&A with Hurvin Anderson](#) 


[Althea McNish – an introduction \(V&A\)](#) 


[The Museum of the Home: Rooms through Time](#) 


[The Migration Museum Education Resource Bank](#) 

['Where are you from?' BBC short film](#) 

More on Windrush

[Windrush Foundation education pack](#) 

[Explore the Windrush story through art](#) 

[Windrush 70 years on learning resources](#) 

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