



# BRITISH ART SHOW 9

HAYWARD  
GALLERY  
TOURING



SECONDARY RESOURCE | TEACHER'S NOTES



You can access this resource via the *British Art Show 9* Google Classroom using the code using this code: **pa3cjvh**

British Art Show is widely acknowledged as the most influential exhibition of contemporary art made in the UK. Organised every five years by Hayward Gallery Touring, this is the first time it will be presented in Aberdeen. The 33 selected artists showing at Aberdeen Art Gallery (with one project presented at Aberdeen Central Library) use film, photography, painting, sculpture, and performance to explore issues that affect us all, including climate change, identity, and social justice. After Aberdeen the exhibition tours to Wolverhampton, Manchester and Plymouth.

## Contemporary art is the art of now

All the work in *British Art Show 9* has been made in the last five years, with two new commissions specifically created for Aberdeen and a site-specific artwork in Aberdeen Central Library. The exhibition changes and adapts to each of its four host cities and Aberdeen's presentation explores how we can heal the earth and put care at the heart of our relationship with nature. This is very topical, as Aberdeen is in the process of moving its economic reliance on oil and gas, towards green energy production.

## About Aberdeen Art Gallery

Aberdeen Art Gallery has a long history of collecting new work by living artists – from our Victorian beginnings to the present day, the collection is always growing. With a £34 million redevelopment in 2019, Aberdeen Art Gallery is now a world class venue housing permanent displays, programming an inclusive learning and public programme, and hosting amazing displays such as *British Art Show 9*.

To see a list of *BAS9* artists presented in Aberdeen Art Gallery click [here](#).

## About teacher's notes

This resource can support a visit to the *BAS9* exhibition as well as being suitable for use in the classroom. It will help learners engage with selected *BAS9* artworks on display in Aberdeen Art Gallery, as well as explore the Aberdeen Archives Gallery and Museum's collection on similar themes.

Ground  
level

# NEON HIEROGLYPH

## Tai Shani

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Tai Shani describes this installation as ‘a mausoleum for psychedelic witches, a house for ghosts where the gothic and hallucinatory collide.’ The installation includes a pair of floating glass eyes, a huge melting candle and Dracula’s disembodied hand. The inspiration for this artwork is ergot, which is a fungus that grows on rye and other edible grasses such as wheat. In the past, ergot’s toxic properties may have been responsible for what seemed to be demonic possession and bizarre behaviour in women mistaken for witchcraft. Drawing on references from pop-culture and science fiction to architecture and psychoanalysis, Shani reclaims stories and reimagines misunderstood historical myths.



### Discussion

Art installation is a complete immersive experience and is different from traditional sculpture, which is a display of an individual artwork. Tai Shani has thought carefully about how she set up the different objects in this installation. What do these objects make you think of? What feeling do you get when you see this installation? Why do you think you feel that way?



Tai Shani, *Neon Hieroglyph*, 2020. © Tai Shani. Installation view, *British Art Show 9*, 2021-22, Aberdeen Art Gallery. A Hayward Gallery Touring exhibition organised in collaboration with galleries across the cities of Aberdeen, Wolverhampton, Manchester and Plymouth. Photo © Mike Davidson.



### Activity

Tai Shani is sometimes inspired by her dreams and other artists, such as the Surrealists, used automatic drawing to unlock their subconscious mind. Automatic drawing is about making marks without thinking, it is not about making a perfect drawing that looks like something real. It’s a great way to relax and unlock your creativity.

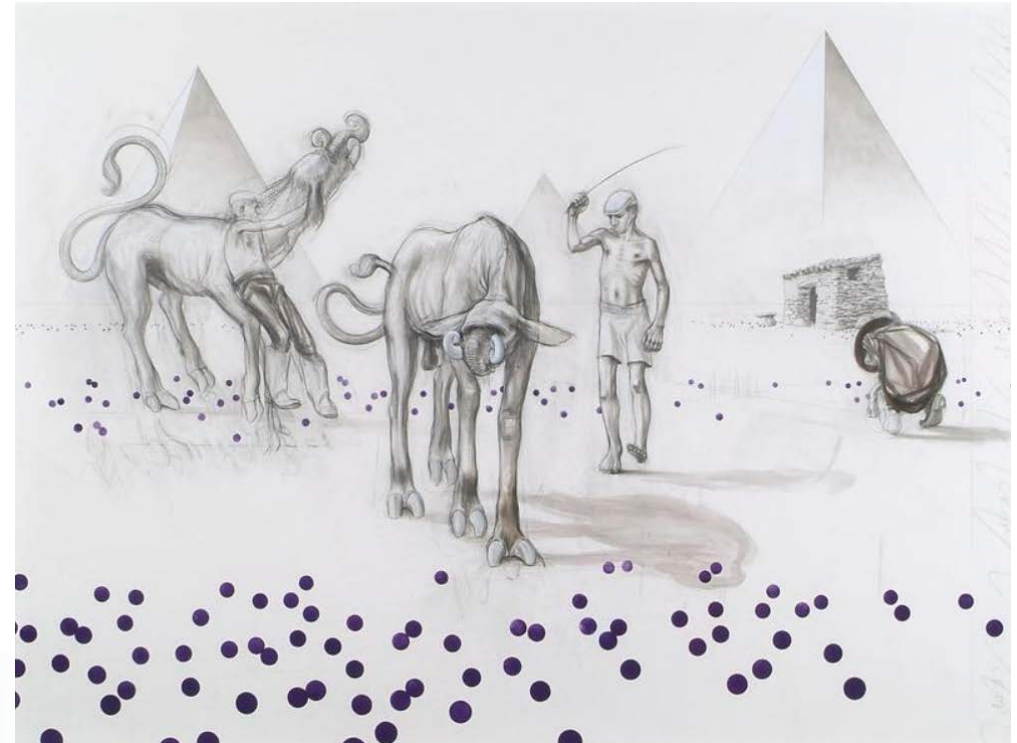
You can have a go at automatic drawing by following this [short video](#).

## UNTITLED (MEN LEADING UNRIDEABLES)

Charles Avery

Charles Avery is an artist who was presented in *British Art Show 7* and is also in the AAGM permanent collections. Avery creates imagined worlds through stories and imagery that sort of recognisable but also very strange. Avery is often inspired by writers and artists, but the most important influence has been the landscape and myths based on his Scottish upbringing in the Inner Hebrides. His artwork *Untitled (Men Leading Unrideables)* created in pencil and gouache, is part of a larger work called *Islanders*, in which describes the imaginary island inspired by his childhood.

You can see this artwork on the AAGM [emuseum](#).



*Untitled (Men Leading Unrideables)*, Charles Avery



Ground  
level

# WHEN DECISIONS BECOME ART

Kathrin Böhm

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Words matter. Language has the power to soothe, hurt and unite us - it can tap into every human emotion. Using text in art allows an artist to communicate in a creative and direct manner. Kathrin Böhm's work for *British Art Show 9* questions how art and culture both depend on and affect our economy. An emotional exploration of Aberdeen's relationship with oil appears on one of her sticky-paper wall drawings, as well as a letter denouncing the Southbank Centre's plans to make up to two-thirds of its staff redundant in the wake of the coronavirus crisis.

Böhm believes that art does not need to look like 'art' and sees herself as part of a 'critical mass of artists who don't want to comment on or decorate the world we live in, but actually to shape it.' As for how this can be achieved, she thinks that we can all be creative in our everyday activities. This way art becomes less of a separate, set event scheduled for specific times.



Kathrin Böhm, *When Decisions Become Art*, 2019-ongoing. © Kathrin Böhm. Installation view, *British Art Show 9*, 2021-22, Aberdeen Art Gallery. A Hayward Gallery Touring exhibition organised in collaboration with galleries across the cities of Aberdeen, Wolverhampton, Manchester and Plymouth. Photo © Mike Davidson.



## Discussion

How do you think this artwork was created and what materials have been used? What do you think the artist was feeling or experiencing when she made this? Do you think these words are to be shouted or spoken quietly? If you were to create an artwork like this one, what message would you write and why?



## Activity

Words can be used to inspire and make art that is thought-provoking, emotional or even amusing. What you would like to say about something you care about? How would you show that in words? Would you paint them or scribble them? Perhaps you would use collage or photography? Would you make it very neat and precise or messy and random? You can make word art in your classroom or at home. You can find some inspiration for word art [here](#).



# AAGM COLLECTIONS

## FOR YOU

### Tracy Emin

Tracey Emin is one of Britain's most acclaimed and successful contemporary artists. She is also a storyteller whose subject matter comes from her own life and regards her big neon pieces as "love poems" as she explains: "Poetry can be one line, a sentence. When you read the words, you imagine what you're seeing, you're given a sense of vision by the words".

*For You* is an artwork with handwritten text that is glass-blown and neon-lit. The three short lines are reminiscent of graffiti, text messages or Post-it Notes. The pink neon heart contrasts with the blue words inside, showing the difference between emotion and language.

You can see this artwork on the AAGM [eMuseum](#).



*For You*, 2008, Tracy Emin



Level  
1

# RISING HEAT (THE DEPTH OF DARKENSS, THE RETURN OF LIGHT)

Anne Hardy

Anne Hardy has created eight unique photograms made over the last year, which are part of a series called (*The Depth of Darkness, the Return of The Light*). Photograms are different to photographs, as they are not made with a camera. Instead, they are created in a photographic darkroom using found objects, photosensitive paper and coloured light. Hardy sees these the fragments they are made from as 'forgotten thoughts'.

Hardy says: "I imagine the photograms as feelings or states, like remnants of touches and gestures at intimate or massive scales. I want them to suggest spaces where we become aware of our own presence, because of the ambiguous or shifting scale between micro detail and infinite space. This state of hovering is about creating or finding a 'gap' that sits between two states: between representation and abstraction...I want them to provoke your imagination whilst making you aware of the contingency and mutability of perception."



## Discussion

If you are not in front of Hardy's photograms, you can see them on her website [here](#).

Look at Hardy's photograms and think of the title *Rising Heat III (The Depth of Darkness, the Return of Light)* - what comes to your mind? What do the photograms make you think of? Why do you think Hardy chose this title?



## Activity

You need photosensitive paper and chemicals to create photograms in a darkroom, like in Hardy's artwork. But you can easily recreate a photogram effect using your smartphone. Use a combination of everyday and unusual objects to make weird and wonderful images. Watch this [easy to follow video](#) and have a go in the classroom or at home.



Anne Hardy, *Rising Heat III (The Depth of Darkness, the Return of the Light)*, 2020,  
© the artist, courtesy Maureen Paley, London

## THE MASSACRE

Rachel Maclean

Rachel Maclean is a Scottish multimedia artist who has been exhibited across the UK and internationally. Her elaborate films and digital prints show her acting out every role in various costumes and elaborate make-up. She received widespread acclaim by being presented at *British Art Show 8* in 2016, represented Scotland + Venice at the Venice Biennale 2017 and working on various TV commissions with the BBC and Channel 4. Her outlandish characters occupy fantasy worlds to comment on Scottish Identity, politics, and society.

You can see this artwork on the AAGM eMuseum [here](#) and it is on display in Gallery 2 in Aberdeen Art Gallery during the run of *British Art Show 9*.



*The Massacre*, 2013, Rachel Maclean



Level  
2

# [NAMES II] AN EVOCATION

Elaine Mitchener

Elaine Mitchener's sound installation [*NAMES II*] *an evocation* memorialises some of the 2,000 enslaved African people owned by an eighteenth-century sugar planter, whose family came from Aberdeenshire. The planter kept a list of the enslaved people, along with other possessions such as furniture and livestock, replacing their birth names with English names. A roll call of those people provides the sound to this installation, along with a stain glass triptych picturing Mitchener performing her experimental music theatre work called *SWEET TOOTH*, which exposes the transatlantic slavery created by the sugar trade.

It is a powerful installation, presented like a chapel where a person would usually sit and contemplate in silence, but is instead surrounded by the sound of the enslaved African people, who in Mitchener's words 'lived lives of suffering and in spite of that had such strength of character and courage to create an independent and unique culture of their own'.

You can watch the chapter [*NAMES II*] *an evocation* from Mitchener's *SWEET TOOTH* [performance here](#).



## Discussion

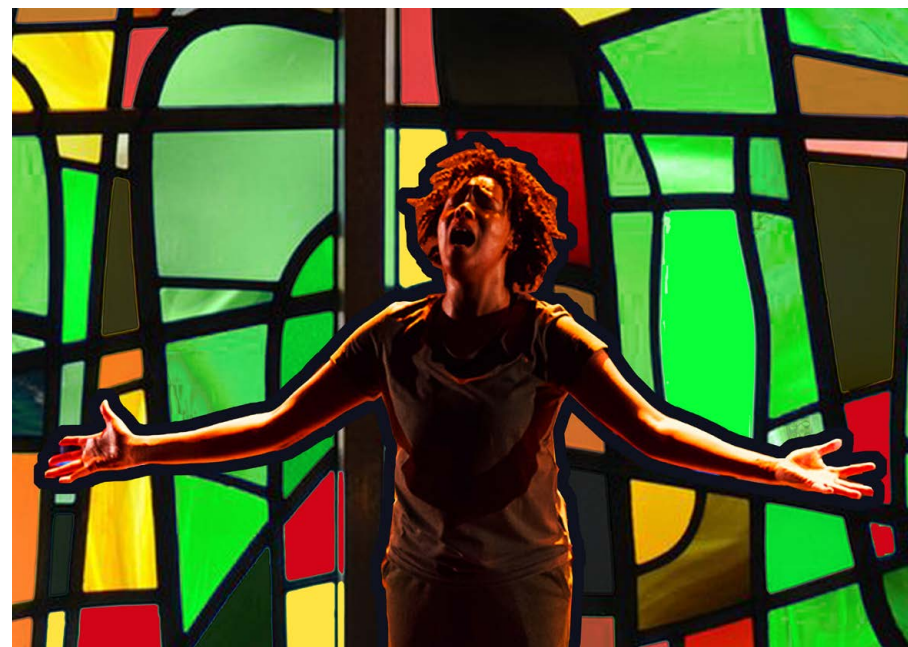
It is ok to feel nervous when talking about enslaved peoples, whether in a historical or modern context, but it's important to remember there are no silly questions. Is there something about the enslaved African people in this art installation that you would like to know more about? If you could ask Elaine Mitchener about the research she did when creating this artwork, what would you ask her? How does this art installation make you feel?



## Activity

You can find out more about enslaved African people during the transatlantic slave trade [here](#) and [here](#). It is important to remember the enslaved African people had their own culture and independence before becoming enslaved for trade. Research a West African country where enslaved people came from and find out more about the people and their culture.

Senior learners may want to complete this free course with Future Learn on the [History of Slavery in British Caribbean](#) or learn more about modern slavery [here](#).



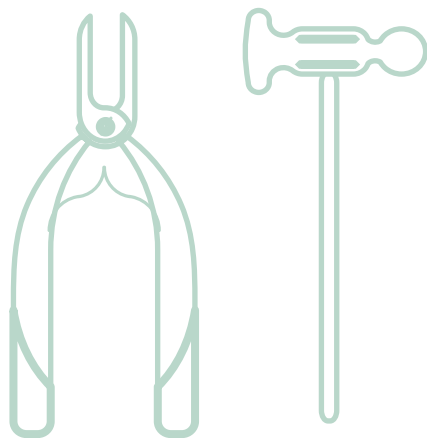
Elaine Mitchener, [*NAMES II*] *an evocation*, 2019-21  
© Elaine Mitchener. Courtesy the artist

## URQUHART SUGAR CASTER

George Robertson

George Robertson was one of Aberdeen's leading silversmiths in the early 18th century. Castors were used for sprinkling spices, sugar and other condiments and generally came in sets of three. This particular castor is for sugar and engraved with the crest and motto of the Urquhart family. Although we have some beautiful objects related to sugar in our collections, it's good to be reminded that the industry behind the object may have a darker story and objects can help us learn about those stories. This can also be true for many of the things we buy and consume today.

You can see this artwork on the AAGM [eMuseum](#).



*Urquhart Sugar Caster, 1710-1727, George Robertson*

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