

TEACHERS' RESOURCE

National
Portrait
Gallery



**MICHAEL
JACKSON**

**ON THE
WALL**

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Front cover image: Atlanta by Boat by Todd Gray, 2015. Camilo Alvarez and Alexandra Cherubini | Image courtesy of Meliksetian | Briggs, Los Angeles © Todd Gray

Back Cover image: Michael Jackson Rolling Stone (White) by Graham Dolphin, 2017. Courtesy of the artist © Graham Dolphin

Artists including Glenn Ligon, Graham Dolphin and Rodney McMillian respond to Michael Jackson's journey from child performer and teenage idol to global superstar and social phenomenon in the 1980s. Jackson was born the eighth of ten children in Gary, Indiana, USA, and performed with his brothers in a group named the Jackson 5 during the 1960s. By the late 1970s Jackson had established his hugely successful solo career, the height of which was the success of *Thriller* in the early 1980s, which became the biggest selling worldwide album of all time.

Glenn Ligon's *Self-Portrait at Seven Years Old* (2005) displaces the artist's own boyhood image for that of Michael Jackson at approximately the same age. The drawing is part of a series in which Ligon identifies himself with musicians he admired as a child in order to represent and reflect his younger individual self through an African-American collective identity. Ligon describes Jackson as '*a childhood hero*' and that '*as a self-portrait, it's the idea of identifying with a popular culture figure as a self*'. (1)

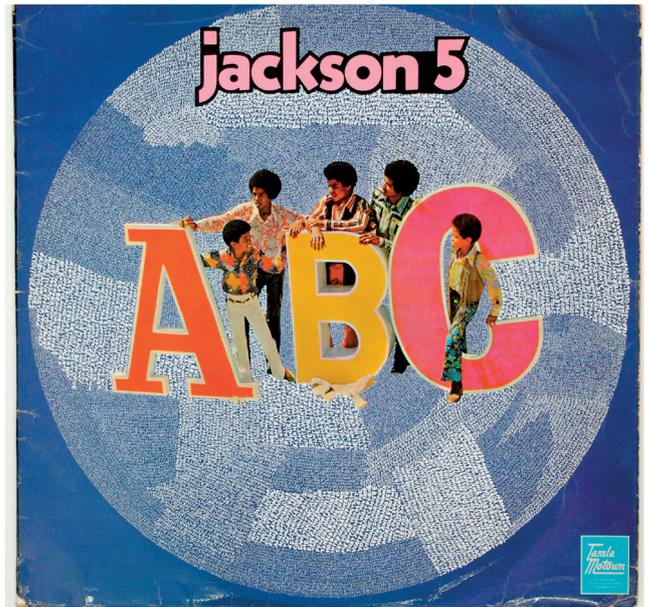


Self-portrait at Seven Years Old by Glenn Ligon, 2005.
Courtesy of the artist, Luhring Augustine, NY, Regen Projects,
CA and Thomas Dane, London. Photograph by Ronald Amstutz. © Glenn Ligon.

Lorraine O'Grady ... *'It's hard not to lapse into hyperbole when thinking about Michael. Don Cornelius, the creator of Soul Train, said that when he first saw Michael in a variety show two years before the family signed with Motown, he felt like he was in one of those cartoons where the two-ton safe falls out of the sky and lands on your head. An 8-year-old who could already sing as well as Aretha, dance as well as James Brown, and control an audience with Jackie Wilson's aplomb! And all the evidence on YouTube showed that, in the annals of child prodigies, he was one of the rare ones who could keep developing until the end.'* (2)

Graham Dolphin's artworks consist of original Michael Jackson and Jackson 5 album covers onto which he has inscribed the lyrics of Jackson's songbook.

Graham Dolphin *'One of the first records I bought, with my own pocket money, was Thriller (on cassette!) when I was eleven years old. I knew nothing about Jackson's past, unaware even of the Jackson 5, being purely driven along by the hype of the 'Thriller' video to buy the album. The event of that video was huge. I recall the BBC devoting a whole programme to its making before showing the full thirteen-minute film. 1983 was also the year our family got its first VHS recorder. With the new ability to record videos, to watch them over and over, the music of Jackson was forever married to the carefully choreographed image of Jackson in my young mind.'* (3)



ABC by Graham Dolphin 2017.
Courtesy of the artist

Questions:

- 1** What did Michael Jackson represent for African American artists who grew up in the 1970s and 1980s?
- 2** Look at the work of Glenn Ligon. Why has he titled the work as a self portrait?
- 3** What do we project onto our idols, our favourite celebrities?

Artist Todd Gray has described his own portraits of Michael Jackson as self-portraits. When working with Jackson as one of his personal photographers in the late 1970s and early 1980s Gray describes how he started to notice shared life experiences.



Hands by Todd Gray, 2016.
Cecilia Wong Collection, Los Angeles | Image courtesy
of Meliksetian | Briggs, Los Angeles © Todd Gray

IDENTITY

'I gradually saw that Michael's experience mirrored my own in significant ways. We were both in our twenties, shared family histories, and had a similar upbringing. Both our families were part of the great black migration from the agrarian rural South to the industrial urban North. My family settled in Chicago, Illinois, and his in Gary, Indiana. Our parents nurtured bourgeois dreams and desires for themselves and their children, and they wanted to emulate the pictures they saw on billboards and magazines of normal white families and more importantly, of famous white stars, both filmic and musical.

To do so we had to follow a strict code: speak the Queen's English; don't bring attention to yourself in public; dress in neat and clean attire appropriate for the social occasion; keep your nappy head in order; and maintain the Right Attitude... Simply put, we would need to work twice as hard to get half as far.' (4)

Todd Gray reflects *'As Michael's fame grew, after a while a bond formed between us. Over time we discovered that we had separate yet complementary goals for the photographs to fulfil.'* (5)

Gray references Jackson's familiarity with images of global Hollywood film stars and Jackson's ambition to achieve appeal on this scale crossing the boundaries of music, film and dance in popular culture.

In the exhibition Gray's artworks feature original images taken of Jackson during the 1980s, but they have been spliced, cropped and juxtaposed with other images and found objects.

Gray was influenced by the writings of cultural theorist Stuart Hall and revisited his original portraits of Michael Jackson to create new collaged works which re-interpreted Jackson's image. Gray explains that the works reference *'the obscuring of blackness's cultural history and the African diaspora.'*

He continued: *'As the most recognized black body on the planet, Jackson becomes a global surrogate for the legacy of post colonialism.'*(6)

Questions:

- 1** Why do you think Gray has used repeated images or motifs in his artwork?
- 2** Todd Gray has included images from the Cape Coast, Ghana in his portraits of Michael Jackson. Discuss why this might be and the effect the combined images have.
- 3** What does Gray mean when he says 'Jackson becomes a global surrogate for the legacy of post colonialism'?
- 4** How can a shared history influence the artist and person they are portraying?
- 5** Use Todd Gray's quotations to start a discussion around identity.

Michael Jackson's solo career was firmly established with his solo album *Off the Wall* in 1979 which became his first best-selling album. Three years later, Jackson issued *Thriller*, which topped several international charts and became the best-selling album of all time, a record it still holds today. *Thriller* included the singles 'Billie Jean', 'Beat it' and 'Thriller' for which Jackson crafted elaborate short films.

The release of the 'Thriller' film, regarded by many as the most influential pop music film of all time, in December 1983 was a global phenomenon with millions of fans and young people watching the premier in which Michael becomes a zombie dancing with the creatures of the night. The moves have been imitated the world over and these are still instantly recognisable today. This film inspired UK artists Isaac Julien and Spartacus Chetwynd to create work in response.

Spartacus Chetwynd and Candice Breitz use re-enactment of Jackson's performance and image in their artworks.



Michael Jackson's Thriller – Hoxton Hall by Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, 2002.
Courtesy of the artist and Sadie Coles HQ, London © Marvin Gaye Chetwynd

Spartacus Chetwynd:

'... it was the first time I did a performance that was not in my domestic space as a party, but more formally on a stage in a proper environment, with people watching it as a spectacle ...

I was inspired by a brilliant documentary about how Michael Jackson got the feature film director John Landis to make his 'Thriller' pop video. It showed how much work went into the make-up and the dance, and I just had this really strong instinct to use all the information that it gave about the making of 'Thriller' to actually make my own version.' (7)

Candice Breitz's 2005 *King*

(*A Portrait of Michael Jackson*) is a portrait of the singer as reflected through his fans. To make it, Breitz brought together sixteen of Jackson's fans from Germany and Austria, and filmed them in a recording studio in Berlin singing all nine songs on Jackson's *Thriller* album.

T H R I L L E R



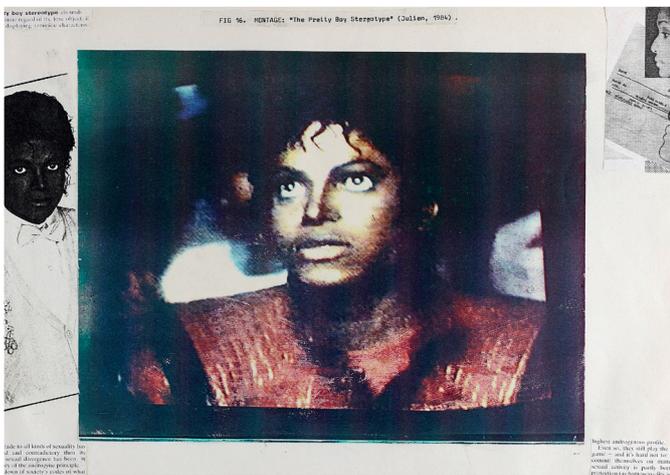
King (A Portrait of Michael Jackson) by Candice Breitz, 2005.
Courtesy: Kaufmann Repetto (Milan) + KOW (Berlin)

Isaac Julien

'I was very young when I made this work! It is drawn from a close reading of "Thriller" and a semiotic reading of the way in which genres of film noir and film studies intersected with black popular culture ...

I basically grew up being a huge Michael Jackson fan; my bedroom was a shrine where every inch of the wall was covered with images of Michael and the Jackson 5, as he was one of the few black popstar images available for fandom – from their cartoon series to occasional wondrous moments where they might appear live on Top of the Pops.

...He was the embodiment of the best of all the signifying practices of African-American culture, which symbolise for me that he was one of the most gifted, talented and important artists to emerge out of popular music in the twentieth century.' (8)



The Other Look by Isaac Julien, 1984.
Courtesy of the artist © Isaac Julien and Victoria Miro Gallery, London



Thriller (Black and White) by Graham Dolphin, 2017.
Courtesy of the artist © Graham Dolphin

Zadie Smith

in her novel *Swingtime* the narrator recalls:

'... watching Top of the Pops, when the "Thriller" video came on, it was the first time any of us had seen it. ... There was so much new information: the red leather trousers, the red leather jacket ... What we were watching was not a music video at all. It was a work of art that should properly be seen in a cinema, it was really a world event, a clarion call. We were modern! This was modern life!' (9)

LOOK

at the works by Spartacus Chetwynd and Isaac Julien which both directly reference *Thriller*.

WATCH

the video by artist Candice Breitz *King (A Portrait of Michael Jackson)* which invites German fans of Jackson to dance and sing to every track on the *Thriller* album. Spartacus Chetwynd and Candice Breitz use re-enactment of Jackson's performance and image in their artworks.

Questions:

- 1** Do you think these works qualify as portraits?
- 2** Are the films tributes to Michael Jackson or is there something else going on?
- 3** What did the 'Thriller' film do that made its impact so remarkable?

REFERENCING THE PAST

Equestrian Portrait of King Philip II in the Battle of St Quentin 1557 (1628) by Peter Paul Rubens
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid © Photo MNP/Scala, Florence



Michael Jackson had a keen interest in art and art history. He owned thousands of art books and was a collector of art.

'I'm a great fan of art. I love Michelangelo. If I had the chance to talk to him or read about him, I would want to know about what inspired him to become who he is – the anatomy of his craftsmanship. Not about who he went out with last night, or why he decided to sit out in the sun so long...' (10)

In 2008 Michael Jackson commissioned Kehinde Wiley to paint his portrait after seeing the artist's work at the Brooklyn Museum. Wiley is known for his large scale portraits of contemporary black sitters that draw on the visual vocabulary of European art history to question stereotypes about identity and representation.

Kehinde Wiley describes how the portrait came about: 'He saw one of my works at the Brooklyn Museum, a very large equestrian portrait of a young black man in the pose of Napoleon crossing the Alps. He said to his crew: 'I need to meet that artist.' At first, I didn't believe it. And so we set something up.' ... '

It was extraordinary. His knowledge of art and art history was much more in-depth than I had imagined. He was talking about the difference between early and late Rubens brushwork. OK, why not? One of the things we talked about was how clothing functions as armour. And if you look at the painting, he's on horseback in full body armour.' (11)

Wiley and Jackson worked on the painting as a collaboration. Jackson died before the portrait was finished but Wiley decided to finish the portrait in tribute to Jackson.



Equestrian Portrait of King Philip II (Michael Jackson) by Kehinde Wiley, 2010. Olbricht Collection, Berlin | Photo: Jeurg Iseler, New York © Kehinde Wiley | Courtesy of Stephen Friedman Gallery, London and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York

Kehinde Wiley:

'I think that's partly the success of my work - the ability to straddle both of those worlds, the ability to have a young black girl walk into the Brooklyn Museum and see paintings she recognizes not because of their art or historical influence but because of their inflection, in terms of colours, their specificity and presence. When I was growing up and going to art school and learning about African-American art, much of it was a type of political art that was very didactic and based on the '60s, and a social collective. I feel sometimes constrained by the expectation that the work should be solely political. I try to create a type of work that is at the service of my own set of criteria, which have to do with beauty and a type of utopia that in some ways speaks to the culture I'm located in.' (12)

Artists David LaChapelle and Mark Ryden have also referenced historical artworks in their works included in the exhibition.



The Beautification: I'll never let you part for you're always in my heart
by David LaChapelle, 2009 Courtesy of the artist. © David LaChapelle



The King of Pop (#135) (detail) by Mark Ryden, 1991-2018.
Private Collection. Image courtesy of Mark Ryden, MJJ Productions, Inc.
and Paul Kasmin Gallery



Archangel Michael: And No Message Could Have Been Any Clearer,
(detail) by David LaChapelle, 2009.
Courtesy of the artist © David LaChapelle

Questions:

- 1** How is the relationship between Jackson and Wiley different to other artists in the exhibition?
- 2** If Kehinde Wiley were going to paint you, as any historical figure, who would it be? Think in particular about the pose.
- 3** Kehinde Wiley famously painted Barak Obama in 2017. Why do you think Obama commissioned the artist?

REPRESENTATION

Njideka Akunyili Crosby's portrait focuses on how Michael Jackson was received in Nigeria.

'Of the few international musicians that trickled down to us, Michael was the biggest ... Since many families, including mine, lacked the means to travel abroad, Michael, with his electric on-screen persona, became a stand-in for the exciting – at least in our perception – world outside our homogenous town. Amongst other things, watching him awakened a desire in me to experience the diversity of life beyond Enugu. This desire is what prompted me, a parochial 10 year-old, to go to boarding school nine hours away in Lagos, the largest African metropolis, and later to leave the country and move to the United States for university.'

(13)

Njideka Akunyili Crosby's *As We See You: Dreams of Jand* is not a portrait in the traditional sense but instead explores how a still life of an invented Nigerian interior can evoke Michael Jackson and the aspirations that he represented for a younger generation internationally. Her portrait contains multiple images which reference Jackson in different ways including the image of world famous Naiji group 'P-Square' who were in turn hugely influenced by Jackson.

Njideka Akunyili Crosby:

'And that aspiration seemed, for the first time, to be within the realm of possibility: previously, all the international icons we'd known were white British or American stars. Therefore, Jackson was particularly special because he was as cool – if not cooler – than the others and he was black!' (14)



As We See You: Dreams of Jand by Njideka Akunyili Crosby, 2017
Courtesy of the artist and Victoria Miro Gallery, London © Njideka Akunyili Crosby

Which Mike do you want? David Hammons, 2001.
Private Collection. © David Hammons



David Hammons' work *Which Mike do you want to be like...?* (2001) consists of three microphone stands represent three Michaels – Jackson the performer, Tyson the boxer and Jordan the basketball player.

The height of the stands is very high, taller than could be used by people and represents a commentary on 'aspirational' options open to African-American men.

The sculptural installation *P.Y.T.* by Appau Junior Boakye-Yiadom makes reference to Michael Jackson's iconic dance move 'the freeze'.

Artist Catherine Opie also uses the still life format to create the portrait *Beside Table* (2010–11), in this instance a photographic portrait of actress Elizabeth Taylor who was a close friend of Jackson. The portrait shows Taylor's belongings beside her bed, including a framed photograph of her with Jackson (one of her closest friends) and the order of service from his funeral.

P.Y.T. by Appau Jnr Boakye-Yiadom 2009 Latex balloons, ribbon and penny loafer shoes
© Appau Jnr Boakye-Yiadom



Untitled #13 (*Elizabeth Taylor's Closet*) by Catherine Opie, 2012.
Courtesy of the artist and Regen Projects, Los Angeles © Catherine Opie

Questions:

1 How is the artist choosing to depict Michael Jackson?

1. Njideka Akunyili Crosby

2. Appau Junior Boakye-Yidom

3. David Hammons

4. Catherine Opie

2 What must an artwork contain to be seen as a portrait?

3 Can you create a portrait where the face is not shown?

4 How can we tell who the subject of the painting is?

IDENTITY



Equestrian Portrait of King Philip II (Michael Jackson) by Kehinde Wiley, 2010. Olbricht Collection, Berlin. Photo: Jeurg Iseler, New York © Kehinde Wiley. Courtesy of Stephen Friedman Gallery, London and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York



Equestrian Portrait of King Philip II in the Battle of St Quentin 1557 (1628) by Peter Paul Rubens Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid © Photo MNP/Scala, Florence

Kehinde Wiley has painted Michael Jackson inspired by the historical *Equestrian Portrait of King Philip II in the Battle of St Quentin 1557 (1628)* by Peter Paul Rubens. The original portrait was itself a posthumous depiction of the subject and he is shown on horseback wearing body armour and a cape.

- 1** Think about how you can represent yourself in a portrait inspired by an artwork from the past.
- 2** Research historical and contemporary portraits in the National Portrait Gallery's collection online: <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/explore/>
- 3** How do artists depict 'status' now compared to in the past? Which symbols or objects do artists use?
- 4** In your portrait what will you wear? What will you be doing?
- 5** What environment will you be in? Which pose will you choose? Will you be looking at the viewer or looking away?
- 6** Include imagery symbolic to you and construct the image of yourself you want to convey to others.
- 7** Can you find examples of other artists working today who reference historical paintings and bring them up to date?

REPRESENTATION



P.Y.T. by Appau Jnr Boakye-Yiadom 2009
© Appau Jnr Boakye-Yiadom

This sculptural installation is comprised of a bunch of balloons lifting a pair of penny loafers onto tiptoes. In this piece, Appau Junior Boakye-Yiadom makes reference to Michael Jackson's iconic dance move called 'the freeze'. It displayed Jackson's skill as a dancer, being able to balance on his toes. The work makes reference to the fragility of keeping up a public image.

- 1** How could you portray yourself using only objects?
- 2** Select a maximum of three objects of meaning to you (your phone cannot be one of them!) Choose a selection of objects that represent you – these objects can symbolize your talents, interests, personality, heritage, opinions, feelings etc.
- 3** Photograph these objects either separately or together.
- 4** Bring the objects together in the order you choose to create a self-portrait.
- 5** Capture your chosen portrait by taking a photograph of the combined objects then print it. Your portrait may resemble a still life or a sculptural collage depending on what you choose.
- 6** Bring together the photographic portraits, and in your group or class try to guess who is who.



Dawn Mellor grew up in the north of England in the 1980s. Between the ages of thirteen to sixteen she made a large number of drawings of Michael Jackson. These teenage fan drawings (displayed in the exhibition like a fan's bedroom wall) reveal Mellor's interest in African-American culture whilst she was living in a predominantly white working-class area.

Dawn Mellor Drawings of Michael Jackson 1984–6 by Dawn Mellor
Courtesy of the artist and Studio Voltaire © Dawn Mellor

Looking back at her work more recently she explains
'It is unlikely that the hours spent drawing them would have been so dedicated if I had been able to consume his work online, as young fans of celebrities are today'. (15)

- 1** Looking at the way Dawn Mellor responded to Michael Jackson in the 1980s, what would be your twenty-first-century response as a fan to a performer you admire?
- 2** Explore how you will create your portrait on the theme of fandom. Will you create drawings of your chosen celebrity or bring together found imagery sourced online? Will you mix found imagery and your own work to create a mix media collage? Perhaps you might create a performance and film this?
- 3** How will you display these images of your chosen celebrity? Will they echo the bedroom wall format or something new? Think about how the display of the images can alter the perception of the person you are portraying.

ACTIVITY 2

- 1** As a fan, can you design a range of merchandise for a singer, performer or celebrity you admire?
- 2** What do you associate with your celebrity and how can you translate this into a product or design? What will other fans of your icon want to consume? Try to capture the essence of the celebrity in a brand designed by you.

IDENTITY



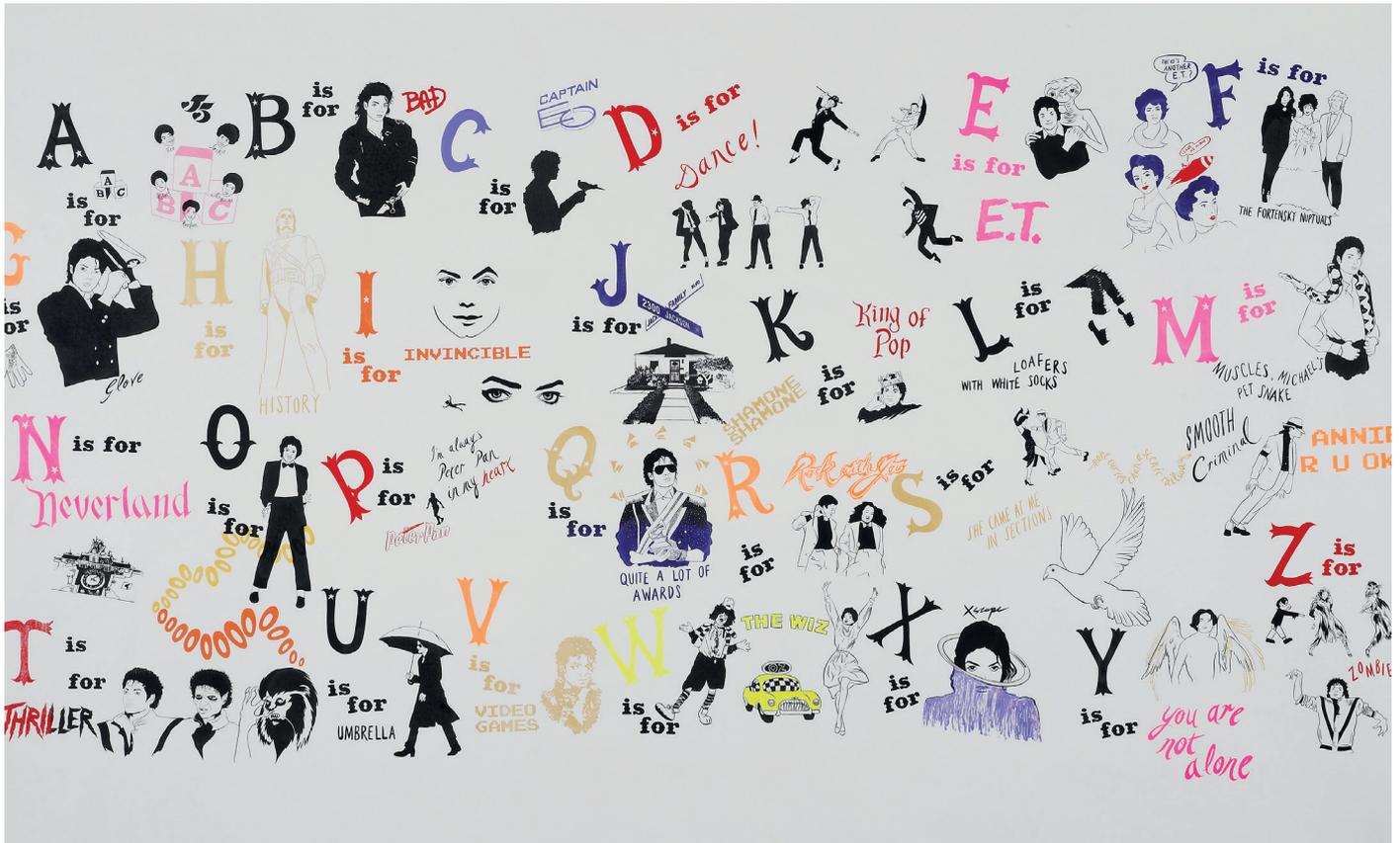
Atlanta by Boat by Todd Gray 2015.
Camilo Alvarez and Alexandra Cherubini.
Image courtesy of Meliksetian I Briggs, Los Angeles.
© Todd Gray



Cosmic Speaker by Todd Gray, 2015
Camilo Alvarez and Alexandra Cherubini. Image courtesy
of Meliksetian I Briggs, Los Angeles. © Todd Gray

Todd Gray describes his collaged portraits of Michael Jackson as *'Layering photos on top of each other, covering faces, problematizing the process of viewing, introducing cosmic imagery and combining this with my archive of photographs made over the years whilst working in my studio in Ghana is my way to add complexity and critique'*. (16)

- 1** Using found imagery, photography and / or found objects, create a portrait of someone you admire exploring their identity. This can be a family member, friend, famous person.
- 2** The found images that you source will add meaning to the portrait and allow you to construct an identity for your chosen person.
- 3** Think about how the juxtaposition of images can give new context to your portrait and change the meaning of images.
- 4** Play around with the composition of your images. Which part of the body will you obscure in your portrait with found imagery? You may want to research other artists who use collage techniques to create portraits.
- 5** Think about how you will frame your finished collage.



A Michael Jackson Alphabet by Donald Urquhart 2017.
 Courtesy Maureen Paley and Herald Street, London | Peacock Visual Arts, Aberdeen © Donald Urquhart

Donald Urquhart made this work especially for the exhibition exploring Michael Jackson's impact on contemporary art.

The artist explains 'for many of my generation (Jackson) took us from mono to stereo, from records through cassettes to CDs; from black and white to colour television; from video to DVD; video games to computer games; through Motown and disco to RnB... He wasn't simply a performer who kept abreast of his times and changed with them, he was prepared to be innovative and be the one who was making the changes.' (17)

- 1** Look at 'A Michael Jackson Alphabet' by Donald Urquhart where the artist has highlighted significant moments and achievements during Jackson's life and career as a tribute to him. Do you feel this is representational of Jackson's life? Are there elements you would change? Do you think there are any key aspects missing?
- 2** Inspired by A Michael Jackson Alphabet, design an alphabet especially for an iconic performer or celebrity of your choice? Use the letters to illustrate key moments in their life and the influence they hold in celebrity culture.
- 3** Your illustrations can reference a wide range of key identifiable images including clothes, dance moves, song lyrics, celebrations, awards, publicity and so on to represent your chosen celebrity.
- 4** Think about colour in your designs and how simple illustrations can capture the person you are portraying.
- 5** Alternatively you can design an alphabet or series of letters (for example your name) as a self-portrait.

TEACHERS NOTES

This teachers' resource is intended to support teachers visiting the National Portrait Gallery's *Michael Jackson: On the Wall* exhibition. It aims to introduce key themes, lines of enquiry and encourage critical thinking from students. Before bringing a group to the exhibition teachers are invited to visit the exhibition, read the resource and decide which aspects are most relevant for their group. The resource can also be used in the classroom either following a visit or as a stand-alone guide for groups unable to visit the Gallery.

The main themes in the exhibition, as explored by the artists included in the show, include **identity, celebrity culture, fandom** leading on to discussions on **image and representation**.

The information in the resource is suitable for KS3 to KS5 Secondary Art and encourages students to question what a portrait can be. Through discussion, debate and art activities the resource provides opportunities to learn about contemporary artists from around the world working in portraiture in a wide range of media, and to create their own work in response.

Artworks included in the exhibition include films, paintings, photographs, collage, sculptures and installations. Artists featured include: Rita Ackerman, Dara Birnbaum, Candice Breitz, Monster Chetwynd, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Mark Flood, Isa Genzken, Maggi Hambling, David Hammons, Lyle Ashton Harris, Jonathan Horowitz, Gary Hume, Rashid Johnson, Isaac Julien, David LaChapelle, Louise Lawler, Klara Liden, Glenn Ligon, Paul McCarthy, Rodney McMillian, Dawn Mellor, Lorraine O'Grady, Catherine Opie, Yan Pei Ming, Grayson Perry, Paul Pfeiffer, Faith Ringgold, Donald Urquhart, Kehinde Wiley, Hank Willis Thomas, Andy Warhol and Jordan Wolfson, among many others.

School groups can visit *Michael Jackson: On the Wall* at the discounted school group exhibition ticket price.
£5 per student available for school groups of 10+,
visiting Mon – Fri, 10.00 – 14.00.
Call 020 7312 2483 to book.

The exhibition is on display 28 June – 21 October 2018.

Njideka Akunyili Crosby (b. 1983, Nigeria)

Nigerian-born Akunyili Crosby moved to the United States at the age of sixteen, where she has lived and worked ever since. Drawing on art historical, political and personal references, Akunyili Crosby creates densely layered figurative compositions that conjure the complexity of contemporary experience. Her body of work reflects largely on her dual cultural identity, which she explores through images of everyday scenes, social gatherings and domestic interiors.

Appau Junior Boakye-Yiadom (b. 1984, Britain)

Since graduating from the Royal Academy Schools, London, in 2008, Boakye-Yiadom has used multimedia to create installations that often have a performative element, to explore connectivity and physical sensory responses. His works often reference well-known cultural figures.

Candice Breitz (b. 1972, South Africa)

Breitz's renowned moving image installations explore the dynamics through which an individual develops in relation to a larger community, whether family, race or nation. Her recent work explores how and when empathy is produced in an ever-globalising world, in which audiences strongly identify with fictional characters and celebrity figures, but demonstrate indifference to those facing real adversity around the world.

Monster Chetwynd (b. 1973, Britain)

Known for adopting ever-shifting personas, performance artist Chetwynd was born Alalia Chetwynd. From 2006 to 2013 she was known as Spartacus Chetwynd before changing her name to Marvin Gaye and changing her name to Monster Chetwynd in 2018. Her practice combines performance, sculpture, painting, installation and video, but she is best known for her improvised performances, which appropriate genres such as folk plays, street spectacles and literature.

Graham Dolphin (b. 1972, Britain)

Newcastle-based artist Dolphin adopts a meticulous and highly crafted approach to his installation and mixed media work, which explores issues surrounding fandom and idolatry. He often uses readily available and cheap materials in order to focus on issues of labour and time.

Mark Flood (b. 1957, USA)

Houston-based artist Flood was a founding member of the 1980s punk band Culturcide. His conceptual paintings, collages and sculptures are ruminations on the effects of consumerism, capitalism and celebrity. He has become especially well known for his works made with lace.

Todd Gray (b. 1954, USA)

California-based artist Gray works across photography, sculpture and performance art. From 1979 to 1983 he was one of Michael Jackson's official photographers, and he has drawn on his archives from this time for different projects.

David Hammons (b. 1943, USA)

Hammons came to prominence in 1980s New York, where he lives and works, producing sculptures, installations and performances. His conceptual art draws on a diverse range of cultural influences, from baseball, jazz and street culture to Marcel Duchamp, Abstract Expressionism and Arte Povera. His works comment on the position of African-American people within society and engage directly with the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. Hammons often uses debased materials, including elephant dung, chicken parts, human hair and cheap wine.

Isaac Julien, CBE (b. 1960, Britain)

Film maker and installation artist Julien was born in London, where he lives and works. His multi-screen film installations and photographs incorporate different artistic disciplines to create a visual language.

David LaChapelle (b. 1963, USA)

LaChapelle is a fine art and commercial photographer, and director of documentaries and music videos. As a young photographer in Manhattan, he met Andy Warhol, who gave him his first job as a photographer at Interview magazine. Since this time, LaChapelle has made work, which combines his signature hyper-realistic aesthetic with social messages.

Glen Ligon (b. 1960, USA)

Ligon works across painting, photography, sculpture, print, installation, neon and video, to explore issues of history, language and identity. Throughout his career, Ligon has built on the legacies of modern painting and more recent conceptual art.

Dawn Mellor (b. 1970, Britain)

Mellor utilises image-making to deconstruct the cult of celebrity, which she sees as a modern-day religion. The grotesque imagery she applies in her paintings of figures ranging from Audrey Hepburn as Holly Golightly and Judy Garland as Dorothy, to Margaret Thatcher, reveals an interest not in the celebrities themselves, but in the volatile behaviour of their fans, which can turn from adoring to vicious with one negative news story.

Lorraine O'Grady (b. 1934, USA)

O'Grady worked as an intelligence agent, translator and rock music critic before turning to visual art in the late 1970s. She works across performance, photo installation, moving media and photomontage, exploring identity politics, gender, aesthetics and diaspora, all of which she brought to the forefront of the 1970s feminist movement, feeling that these hybrid identities had been overlooked. O'Grady is also a prominent contributor to cultural criticism.

Catherine Opie (b. 1961, USA)

Known for her vibrant colour photography, Opie examines various facets of American life, from the identities of individuals, subcultures and communities, to urban settings and majestic natural surroundings. Her portraits, often taken in studios, are characterised by a Formalist style, evident in the careful composition and placement of light and high level of detail that she brings to each photograph.

Faith Ringgold (b. 1930, USA)

Painter, mixed-media sculptor, performance artist, writer and teacher Ringgold grew up in New York during the Harlem Renaissance. The vibrancy of that period for black culture, paradoxically combined with the unequal racial situation in America, have been significant influences on her work. She draws on a rich variety of inspirations including the writer James Baldwin, African art, Impressionism and Cubism. By the 1970s she had become an activist for the feminist and civil rights movements which is also reflected in her work. Ringgold is best known for her painted narrative quilts on which she presents fictional storylines exploring race and feminism, often based on her own experience.

Mark Ryden (b. 1963, USA)

Blending pop culture themes with a traditional painting technique, Ryden creates oil paintings that blur the boundary between high and low art. Ryden has painted album covers for Michael Jackson, Red Hot Chili Peppers and Aerosmith.

Donald Urquhart (b. 1963, Britain)

Scottish-born Urquhart lives and works in London. Before becoming an artist, he worked as a postman, model and fashion journalist, later becoming a key player in the performance-art and drag-club scene in 1980s London. He first received recognition for his ink on paper works in 2000, made for nightclub The Beautiful Bend that he had co- founded in the early 1990s. More recently he has made 'alphabet' word and image works focusing on single celebrity personas, including Joan Crawford and Judy Garland.

Kehinde Wiley (b. 1977, USA)

Wiley's portraits draw on the visual vocabulary of canonised European portraitists such as Titian, Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Gainsborough and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. By bringing together disparate styles and subjects, he subverts established visual traditions and questions stereotypes about black identity and social positioning.

KEY TERMS

Diaspora

The dispersion or spread of any people from their original homeland.

The African diaspora consists of the worldwide collection of communities descended from Africa's peoples. In relation to art, the term diaspora is used to discuss artists who have moved from one part of the world to another, (or whose families have), and who express their culture and identity in the work they make; often expressing alternative narratives, and challenging the ideas and structures of the establishment. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/d/diaspora>

Film noir

A style or genre of film marked by a mood of pessimism, fatalism, and menace. The term was originally applied (by a group of French critics, meaning 'dark film') to mostly American thrillers or crime dramas made in the 1940s to late 1950s. It was particularly applied to the work of directors including Orson Welles, Fritz Lang, and Billy Wilder.

Post-colonialism

A theoretical approach that is concerned with the lasting impact of colonization in former colonies. Postcolonial art refers to art which responds to the aftermath of colonial rule, often addressing issues of national and cultural identity, race and ethnicity.

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/p/postcolonial-art>

Soul Train

An American music-dance television programme which ran from 1971 to 2006.

The series was created by Don Cornelius who was also the show's longest running host and executive producer. The programme was popular and influential among African Americans and introduced many African-American musicians to a wider audience. The programme has been described as 'the primary destination for the dissemination of black culture throughout the 1970s' by Ericka Blount Danois in her book, *Love, Peace and Soul: Behind the Scenes of America's Favorite Dance Show*, 2013.

Stuart Hall

Stuart Hall was a Jamaican-British academic, writer and cultural studies pioneer, who was born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1932 and died in London in 2014. Hall was a Rhodes scholar at Merton College, Oxford, Director of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and Professor of Sociology at the Open University. He also chaired the arts organisations Iniva and Autograph ABP.

<http://stuarthallfoundation.org/professor-stuart-hall-2/biography/>

Hall's work often focused on questions of race and post colonialism, and on theorising the migrant view of Britain.

Zadie Smith

English novelist, essayist, and short-story writer. A graduate with a first in English from Cambridge, she won the Whitbread First Novel Award for her first book *White Teeth*, set in Willesden where she was born. Since its publication *White Teeth* has remained on the best seller lists and has been adapted for a television series. Smith was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 2002. Her second novel *The Autograph Man* was published in the autumn of 2002.

Many of her subsequent books (including *NW*, *On Beauty* and *Swing Time*) have received substantial critical acclaim, making her a literary sensation. Her new collection of essays, *Feel Free* was published in 2018.

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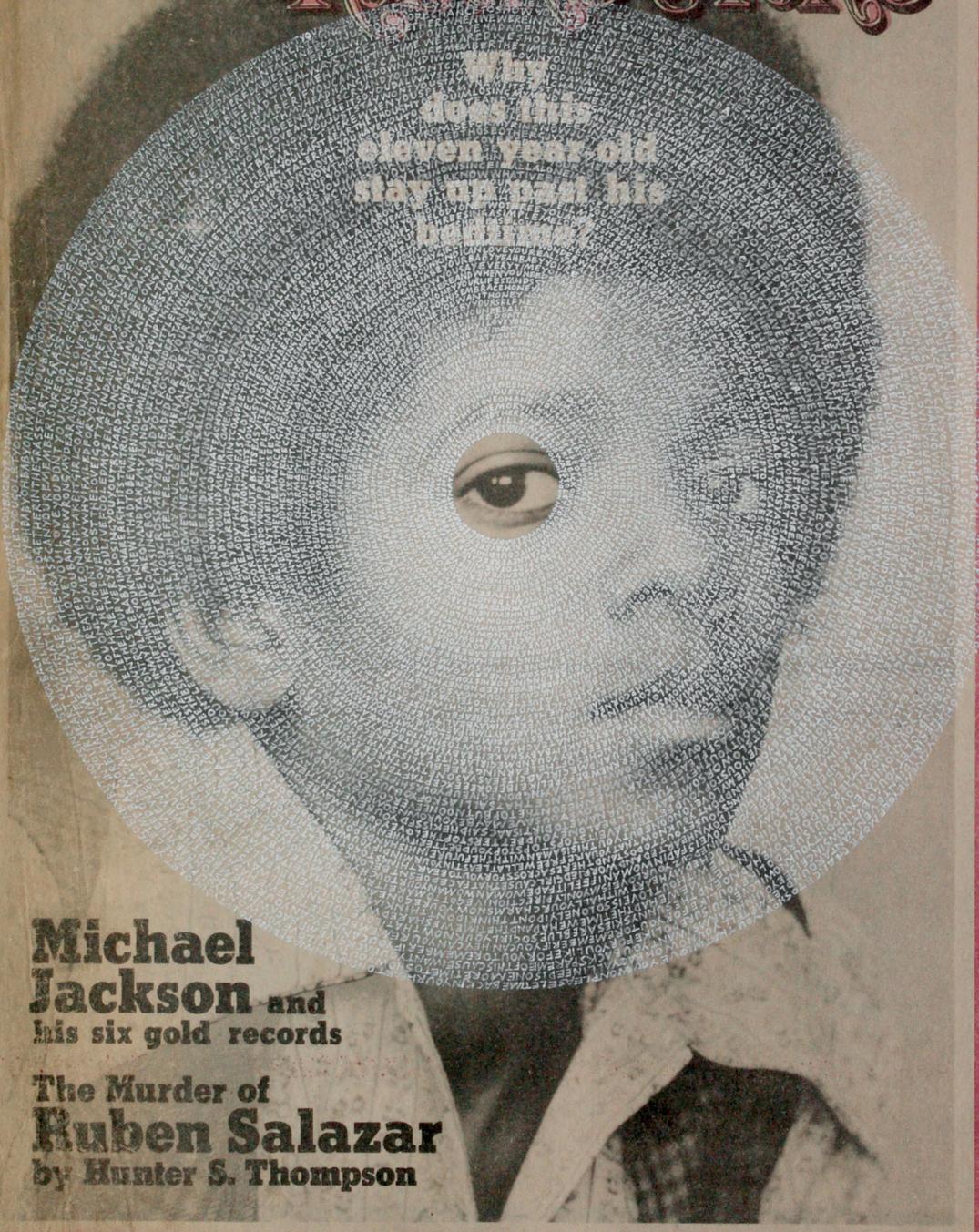
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