



## Diversity in the National Curriculum—Art

### Art and diversity: The Bronze Woman Monument Project

The Presentation Group and the Bronze Woman Monument Project will, in October 2008, erect a permanent, nine-foot (3-metre), bronze statue of a woman holding a child to recognise the contribution and service made by Caribbean women throughout the ages to society. The child held aloft is a symbol of the woman's strength and her aspirations for the new generation.



The Monument will be placed in Stockwell Memorial Garden, South London and aims to promote cultural exchange and learning. This will be enhanced through an educational programme aimed at young people in the local community that seeks to promote Caribbean culture, history and achievements, and raise awareness, understanding and learning.

### How did it start?: Bronze Woman from conception to creation

It all began thirty years ago with a poem. Cécile Nobrega, a poet and teacher, arrived in Britain from Guyana in 1968. Driven by a passion to convey the important contributions of Caribbean women to society, Cécile wrote a poem entitled 'Bronze Woman'.

([www.bronzewoman.org.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?alId=1729](http://www.bronzewoman.org.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?alId=1729))



*Find me a place  
In the sun  
In the sea  
On a rock  
Near an Isle  
In the Caribbee;  
There I will set her,  
Honoured, Free ...*

(Extract from the poem 'Bronze Woman')

Cécile's dream was to see a statue erected as a lasting and public tribute to all women, champi-

oned by the example of those who came from the Caribbean. Her dream took her to the famous sculptor, Ian Walters who created Nelson Mandela's monument, now in



Parliament Square. Ian turned the poem into a maquette (small replica of the statue). After the death of Ian Walters, the project was taken over by 30-year-old Aleix Barbat, a sculpture graduate.

The Bronze Woman Monument Project was born out of a sheer determination to express her message in a stronger manner—through the commissioning of a magnificent piece of art.



In a recent radio interview on BBC Radio, Cécile described it with these words: 'One thing I loved about his work is that it's not just that the child is in her arms but he's up-lifted, you see. The fact that she wants this child on a higher level than she has ever been or could. It's not that the baby is being cuddled in her arm; this child is deliberately pushed above her head—up-lifted—because that's what she wants: a new start and a higher start for that child.'

### Demonstrating diversity through art: why is it important?

Art is used to depict so many aspects of life. It is a fundamental vehicle for capturing culture, a place in time, emotions. Art is also a powerful medium of communication where different forms can be used to convey a subtle message or to make a powerful statement.



As with so many other aspects of society, it is the dominant culture that prevails. More often than not, art that conveys the culture, heritage

and experiences of minorities does not feature in the public domain. (Despite extensive research no record was found of any similar monument to the Bronze Woman being in existence—a fact confirmed by English Heritage who checked its register of monuments.) Yet art is so significant in communicating those subtle and powerful messages that give us our identity.



In a recent speech, before he stepped down as Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone described our city as a living room where our communities can place meaningful reminders of their contribution to London.

Our hope is that the Bronze Woman will stand as a powerful symbol of self-determination and recognition of the role of women to all—reflecting London’s rich diversity that makes it such a special place to live in.

### What is the significance of the monument?

For the first time we will see a monument of a woman of colour displayed in a public space in London. This monument, cast in bronze, will be installed in Stockwell Memorial Garden in October during Black History Month. Both the timing and location of the monument are important. This year



marks the 60th anniversary of the arrival of the SS Empire Windrush, which brought a significant number of Caribbean people to England. The monument will be situated at the heart of Stockwell which has a thriving Caribbean community.

The site rests on disused underground tunnels from WWII, which were also used as shelter by Caribbean families who faced difficulties finding accommodation due to racism.

### What is the Bronze Woman’s message?

The statue will be a lasting reminder that women can overcome adversity and contribute significantly to the history of a country. They are carers, nurturers and often sacrifice themselves for their children to have a better life and future. In her poem, Cécile expresses this sacrifice with these words:



*Feel joy with those who serve the mine  
Today your sons and daughters shine  
Like the bright gold you, in great professions  
Music, Medicine, Law...*

The monument conveys the ambition that every mother has for her child. The seed of all creation comes from the mother, the bringing of the next generation—a positive inspiration for all.



As seen, a fine work such as the Bronze Woman shows how art can inspire discussion of numerous important topics around history, culture, poetry and the value of art and how it is created, as well as evoking powerful emotions.

### What does Bronze Woman aim to achieve?

The project seeks to celebrate the positive contribution made by the established Caribbean community in Stockwell, and, in particular, its women. The aim is to foster a more inclusive society by:



- Strengthening the role of women in society
- Promoting the Caribbean contribution to society
- Instilling pride amongst the Caribbean community
- Representing diversity in the art world
- Creating a positive image of South London
- Creating a legacy project to make this work truly lasting

### What next? The Legacy

The monument will become an important landmark and its attraction will continue beyond the life of this project. After the unveiling in October, we will establish a legacy education programme to inspire young people through art, culture and history. Young people will be encouraged to become familiar and proud of their heritage whilst exploring different ways of expressing themselves.



The education programme will focus on teaching young people about their heritage through intergenerational understanding. It will also be directly linked to gender and race equality with an



emphasis on the achievements of women in African and Caribbean communities.

**Brenda Poggio**  
Promotion Coordinator  
Bronze Woman Monument  
Project  
Olmec



The Bronze Woman Monument Project is supported by Olmec, part of the Presentation Group. Olmec is a dynamic community investment foundation working alongside disadvantaged communities to deliver programmes that lead to positive change.

If you are interested in the project and would like more information, you can get in touch with Brenda by calling or emailing  
T: 020 7091 9491  
F: 0207 091 9300  
E: [brenda.poggio@olmec-ec.org.uk](mailto:brenda.poggio@olmec-ec.org.uk)  
[www.bronzewoman.org.uk](http://www.bronzewoman.org.uk)

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With thanks to Claire Andrews for permission to use her Legacy family photograph

## Additional Resources

The **Real Histories Directory** has a number of resources that might be of help to teachers wishing to introduce more diversity to their teaching of Art. Although many of the art galleries featured are physically located in London, their websites have many resources available online.

The **AAVAA** (African & Asian Visual Artists Archive) website ([www.aavaa.org.uk/](http://www.aavaa.org.uk/)) has been designed as an easy-to-navigate archive of African and Asian visual arts in Britain. You can browse a list of artists to read biographies and see samples of their work. You can learn more about the social and political events that impacted art throughout history in the 'Context' section. There are over 3000 images and information about over 200 artists. This is a comprehensive resource for students, teachers and historians.

**Iniva** (Institute of International Visual Arts)—[www.iniva.org/](http://www.iniva.org/)—creates exhibitions, publications, multimedia, education and research projects designed to bring the work of artists from culturally diverse backgrounds to the attention of the widest possible public. Examples of work from current and previous exhibitions can be seen on the website. They also publish **Emotional Learning Cards** ([www.iniva.org/publications\\_shop/learning\\_resources/what\\_do\\_you\\_feel#](http://www.iniva.org/publications_shop/learning_resources/what_do_you_feel#)), twenty cards for creative exploration and emotional learning at home, school or in art therapy and counselling sessions.

Located in Brixton, London, the **198 Gallery** ([www.198.org.uk/](http://www.198.org.uk/)) was created in response to the social unrest of the 80s. It has grown into a contemporary visual arts organisation searching out artistic excellence and investing in emerging talents. It provides opportunities for primary and secondary school students to experience gallery-based activities and workshops. The content of their schools programme is specifically designed to encompass the issues tackled by the exhibition on show. These may include, but are not limited to, issues of citizenship, diversity and identity. Their schools workshops are a mixture of discussion-based and practical artistic activities. The website has an archive of past exhibitions and events.

The **Brunei Gallery**, ([www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/](http://www.soas.ac.uk/gallery/)) in the heart of London, hosts a programme of changing exhibitions that reflect subjects and regions studied at the School of Oriental and African Studies. They are both a student resource and a public facility. The Gallery is dedicated to showing work from Asia and Africa, of both a historical and contemporary nature. Current and previous exhibitions are featured on the website with illustrations.

The **October Gallery** ([www.octobergallery.co.uk/](http://www.octobergallery.co.uk/)) in London exhibits cutting-edge contemporary art from all cultures around the world. 24 artists are featured on the website along with examples of their work. You can also browse by world region. The Schools and Early Years' gallery programme provides 90-

to 120-minute, artist-led workshops, held in the gallery. Workshop content is related to the work of the exhibiting artists, using observation, discussion and a variety of practical and artistic techniques taught in the context of the art on display. The workshops are tailored to suit children of all ages, from Early Years, through Key Stages 1 to 4. They also welcome special schools and EAL groups. They also run longer, artist-led projects which take place both in the gallery and at the school/centre over a period of days or weeks, usually leading to a permanent artwork.

The **Chinese Arts Centre** ([www.chineseartscentre.org/](http://www.chineseartscentre.org/)) in Manchester is the international development agency for contemporary Chinese artists. Their website has details of current and forthcoming exhibitions and events as well as an archive.

**One Million Days in China** ([www.glasgowmuseums.com/onemilliondaysinchina/](http://www.glasgowmuseums.com/onemilliondaysinchina/)) is Glasgow Museums' first major Chinese exhibition. This is a unique exhibition which introduces, explores and celebrates 4000 years of Chinese history and culture through Sir William Burrell's world-class collection of Chinese art. The exhibition takes you on a tour to discover what the collection can tell us about ancient China, archaeology, the emergence of a writing system, beliefs in life after death and ancestor worship.

**Cloth of Gold**, ([www.clothofgold.org.uk/](http://www.clothofgold.org.uk/)) based in London and Cornwall, is an arts organisation that runs collaborative arts projects and commissions exploring traditional and new creative technologies. The website shows examples of their work with schools. There are also a number of games for children to play.

**Evwreni Productions** ([www.evwreniproductions.co.uk/](http://www.evwreniproductions.co.uk/)) have a programme that aims to take black artists from diverse fields into schools, working with and adding value to the curriculum while making available to institutions a bank of skilled art practitioners. A number of artists are featured on the website along with details of the workshops they run.

**Gasworks' Triangle Arts Trust** ([www.gasworks.org.uk/triangle/](http://www.gasworks.org.uk/triangle/)) was set up in 1982 as an artists' workshop bringing local and international artists to work together for a period of two weeks. This model was adopted by some of the participants who returned to their home countries to start workshops of their own while maintaining contact with each other. As a result, over 25 years, Triangle has developed into a worldwide network of artists and projects. On the website, you can see work produced in workshops held in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, South America and the Caribbean.

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## The Real Histories Directory

The **Real Histories Directory** ([www.realhistories.org.uk](http://www.realhistories.org.uk)) has been created as a resource tool for teachers, parents, pupils and the wider community to support them in their teaching and learning about cultural diversity in the UK. The website helps you to locate **resources** in your and other LEAs, such as storytellers, dual language books, culturally diverse toys and relevant **events** taking place in the UK. There are also items of **news** that may be of particular interest to schools and teachers.

You can also submit resources that you would like to include in the directory free of charge by visiting the site, clicking on 'Submit an entry' and following the on-screen instructions.

As well as the varied resources available, each month a new **Topic of the Month** is added with suggestions for using the Directory in the classroom and at home.

We are interested in hearing your views on our Topics and the Real Histories website. You can email comments and suggestions to: [realhistories@runnymedetrust.org](mailto:realhistories@runnymedetrust.org).