



Convenience not Love, 1986-1987,
Chila Kumari Burman Reproduced
courtesy of the artist

© Photo Chila Kumari Burman

Exploring Identity

Open Arms: embracing a new internationalism through solidarity, collaboration and creativity

The *Open Arms* theme includes the work of Caribbean and African-born Black artists who embraced a new internationalism through solidarity, collaboration and creativity. *The Open Arms* theme features archive materials, such as posters, greeting cards and book covers, as well as correspondence, flyers and photographs that demonstrated the Huntleys' cultural, and political activism.

Materials you will need include: source materials, photocopy of a passport or identity card, colour pencils, pencils, pens, white board, access to the Internet. Video about artist Paul Dash and *Convenience Not Love* on nocolourbar.org.

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CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

Embracing a new internationalism through solidarity, collaboration and creativity, Open Arms included the work of Caribbean and African-born Black artists who embodied these ideals. From the 1970s onwards there was a passionate struggle for Black people to define their sense of identity within the binary constraints of being both 'Black' and 'British'. These boundaries and stereotypes were broken through their self-expression, contributions to changing society and influences of new creativity within the arts.

Through the 1950-70s, African and Caribbean people came into Britain to work and became migrant settlers. Faced with discrimination and social exclusion, many Black people took to activism, campaigning for equality and social justice through various means including education, community work and art. Artists sought to signal their humanity, fighting for the equal treatment and appreciation of Black people through their unapologetically raw expressions of self.

Paul Dash, who arrived in the UK in 1957 as a child, introduced African inspired art techniques into schools and promoted Black British Art through his innovative pieces and self-portraits.

Chila Kumari Burman explores feminism and Asian identity and her work often has an autobiographical basis, reflecting on British society, Bollywood culture, family history and the representation of women.

ACTIVITY ONE

As a group, discuss Paul Dash's feelings about identity. Watch the video clip via nocolourbar.org

ACTIVITY TWO

Present image of artwork *Convenience Not Love* by Chila Kumari Burman.

- What does a passport or an identity card mean to you? Identify the information held on passports and discuss how much what is included
- What is missing?

Discuss what makes someone who they are. Note what important things make you, you? e.g. family, culture, friends, religion, languages, likes/dislikes, hobbies, philosophies etc.

RESEARCH

Using the images in the *No Colour Bar* exhibition, find two other examples of where an artist is talking about their own identity. Search through the nocolourbar.org website. Once you have made your choices, write down the reasons.

- Why you think the topic of Identity is important to the artist?
- What does the image say about the artist?
- Who is the artist trying to influence?
- What attracts you to the image?

REFLECTION

Working individually, pupils make a list of things that make up their own individual identity on their passport Identity sheet. Using the findings from their independent study, pupils then make their own version of an identity passport, including images, poems and family tree information they feel describes them and tells their story. Pupils should use the concepts from the Burman artwork (or other imagery) to depict what they wish to represent when drawing their picture on their worksheet.

EVALUATING AND DEVELOPING WORK

Pupils will evaluate their work as it progresses and talk about finished product, its intentions and whether these were met. Further discussions methods and approaches to creating Art will help to increase their knowledge of technical processes. This is developed within a specific cultural context, understanding that when peoples are scattered, significant elements of their culture may be lost to them. A discussion should take place at the end of each session to provide pupils with the tools and confidence to investigate the themes on their own.

For useful links please visit: www.nocolourbar.org

No Colour Bar: Black British Art in Action 1960 - 1990 is a collaborative project between The Friends of the Huntley Archives at the LMA, the City of London: London Metropolitan Archives, and the Guildhall Art Gallery, supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund.

