
# IKON ACTIVITY PACK

## **Donald Locke:** *Resistant Forms*

A creative learning resource for all ages

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Illustrations by Michael Kennedy.
Additonal content by Nastaran Tavakoli.
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mike

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# Who was Donald Locke?

Donald Locke was born in 1930 in Guyana (then called *British Guiana*) where he grew up in a village located between two sugar plantations. He attended the Working Peoples Art School in Georgetown, and learned carpentry from his father.

Locke moved to the UK as part of the **Windrush Generation** in the 1950s, studying art and ceramics in Bath, Edinburgh and London. He later moved to the United States, continuing to make artwork until he died in 2010

*Plantation Series X/1* (1973)

Donald Locke is known for his **sculptures** and **ceramics**, as well as large paintings which have layers of images, materials attached to the surface and thick, textured paints.

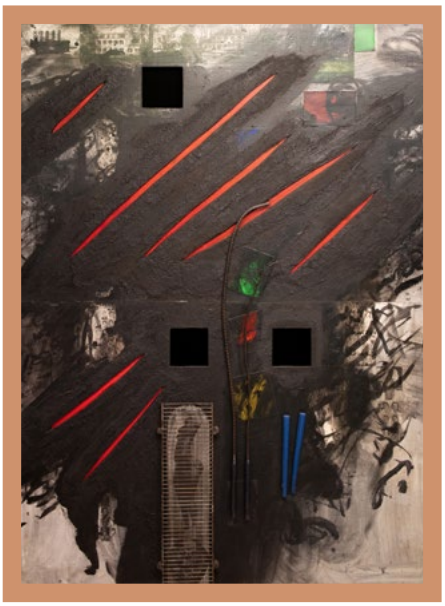
Throughout his work are references to his Guyanese heritage in **organic shapes,** which resemble birds or seeds, and forms he called 'bullets' which highlight the violent legacy of **colonisation**.

Many works contatin grids, which refer to the division of Guyana's natural landscape during colonial occupation, where long, straight canals supplied water for intensive **plantation farming**.

Guyana is a Caribbean nation in South America. Its name means ‘Land of Many Waters’ and much of the country is covered by the Amazon Rainforest. Guyana was **colonised** by the Dutch and British Empires before regaining independence in 1966.

Guyana has a diverse population which reflects its colonial past. During European colonisation, African people were brought to the Caribbean as slaves. Following the abolition of the Slave Trade, families from India and other British colonies were transported as low-paid workers to live and farm on the sugar plantations.

Today, the total population of Guyana is less than 1 million people. (Birmingham has around 1.2 million people.)



*The Mark of Brer Nancy* (1995)


## Glossary

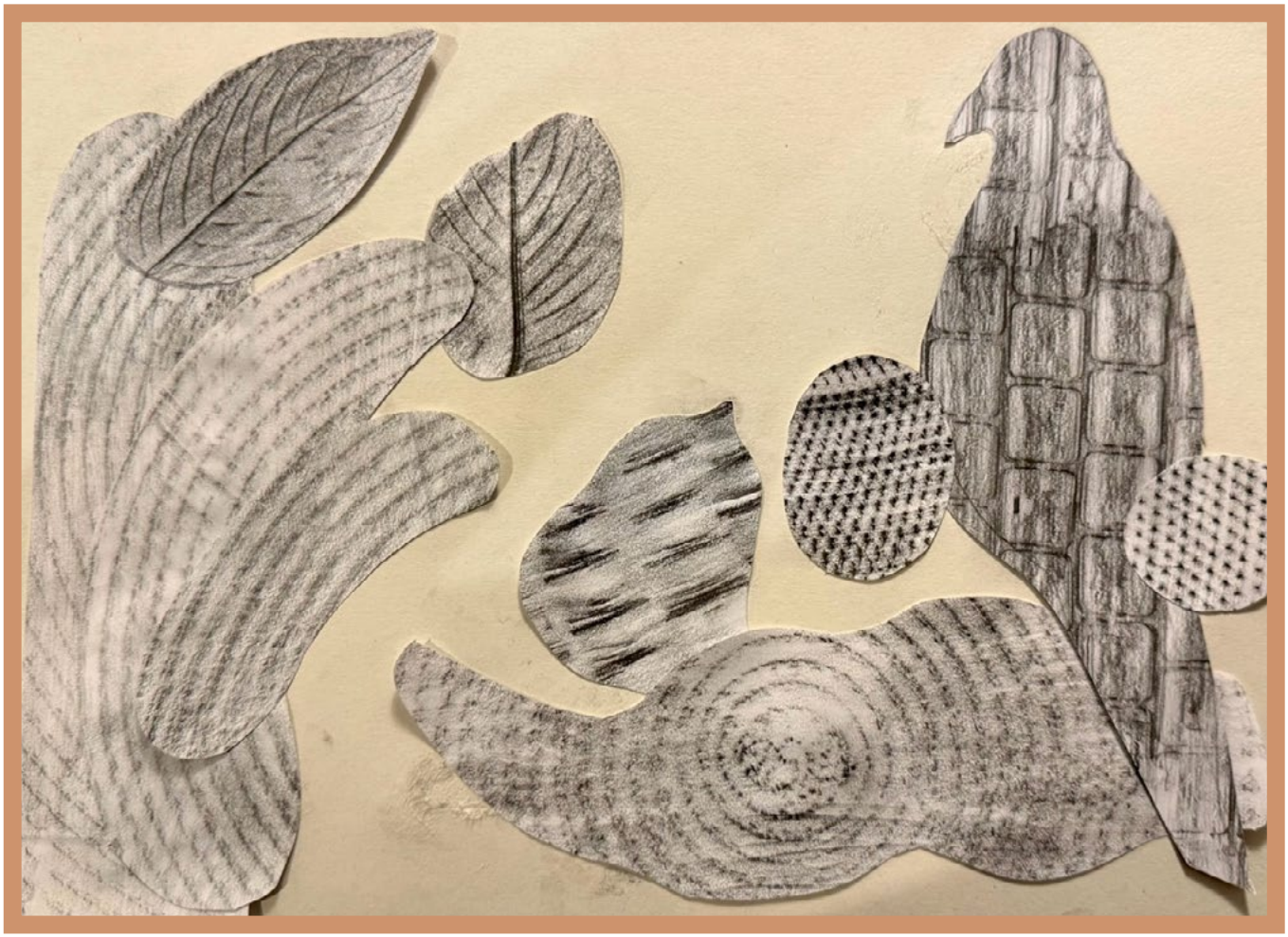
**Plantation:** A system of farming that used forced labour to grow crops. Europeans established plantations in the Caribbean to grow sugar, coffee, bananas and cotton.

**Windrush Generation**: The people who migrated from the Caribbean to the UK in the 1950s.

**Colonised:** When one country creates settlements in another distant country, using military or political force to maintain power.

Activity:
**Textured collage**

Make a collage using different textures inspired by Donald Locke's paintings.



This example uses shapes inspired by the rainforests of Guyana, where Donald Locke grew up. Although his paintings may look dark, they contain lots of different 3D surfaces and textures

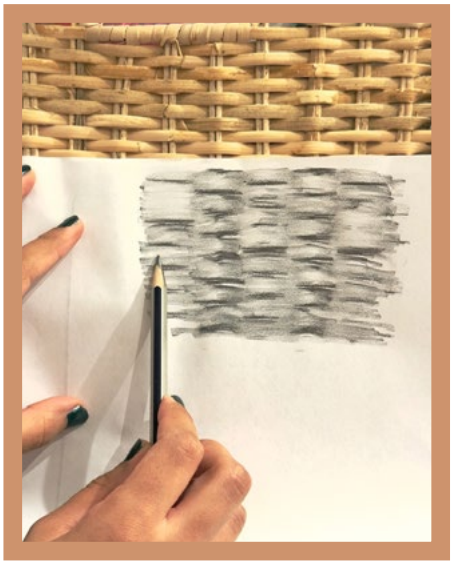
*The Cage* (1976-79)

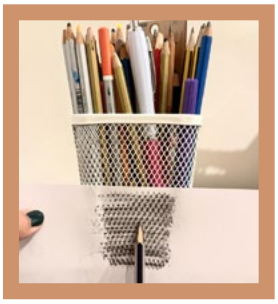
You will need:

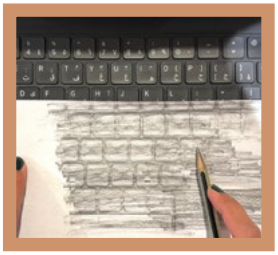
**Pencil or soft pastel**
**paper**
**glue**
**scissors**

Look around you for different surfaces and textures.

Try looking indoors and outdoors. The textures might be natural, like leaves or tree bark, or man-made, like metal or fabric.





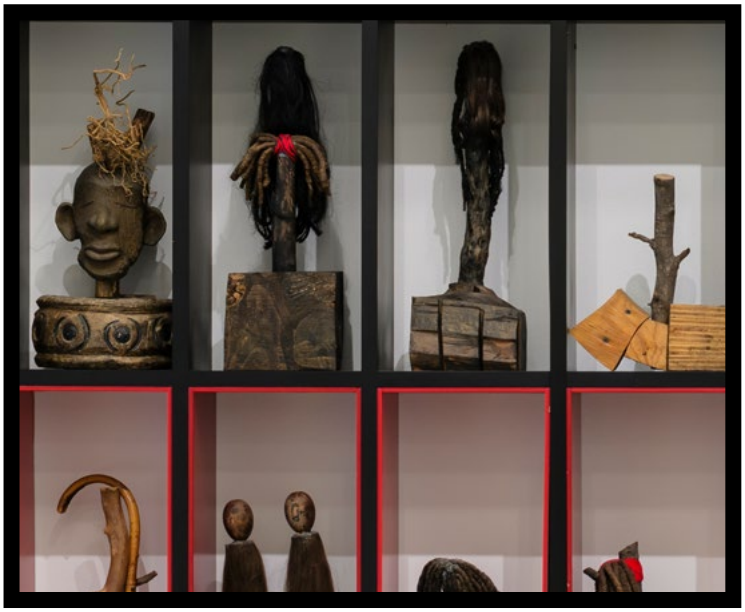


To make a rubbing, place your paper on top of the object or material. Hold your pencil sideways and rub gently over the paper to capture the texture. Try to find as many different textures as you can!

Cut out different shapes,big and small.
Arrange your shapes on a clean sheet, trying out different arrangements.

When you're happy with the composition, lift each piece and glue into place.

# Activity:
# **Organic sculptures**

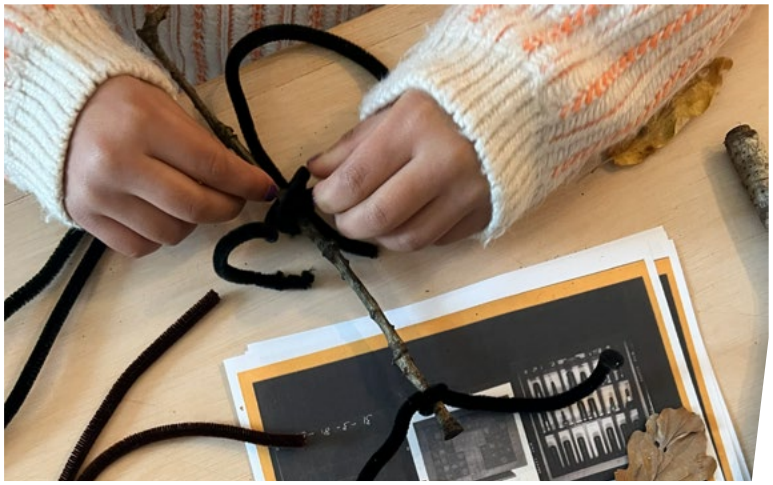


Make a sculpture inspired by Donald Locke's *Trophies of Empire #2,* turning natural objects into characters.

You can use:

**Sticks, twigs, leaves**
**conkers, acorns, stones**
**pipe cleaners**
**fur, string, wool**
**modelling clay**
**beads**

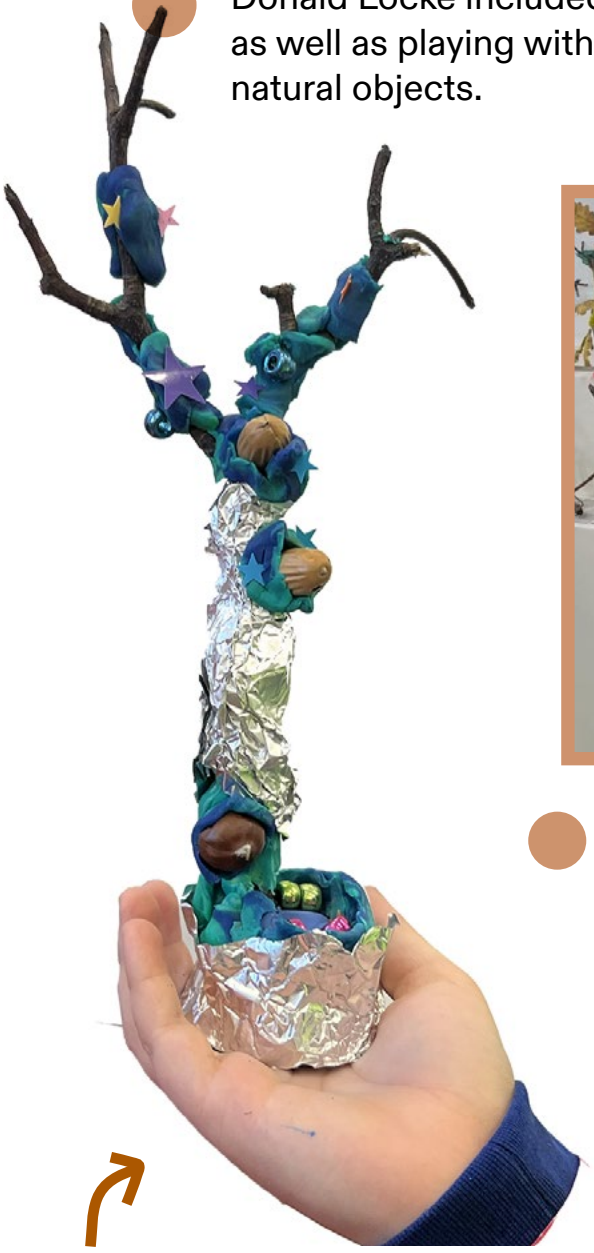
- Choose a twig or stick that you like the shape of.
- Attach different pieces together using string or pipe cleaners.
- Thick thread or wool can represent the hair used in Donald Locke's sculptures.
- Add modelling clay or plastecine to add details and give your sculpture more personality.



- You could also start with a clay 'body' and add features using twigs, leaves or any other bits you can find.

*Trophies of Empire #2 (The Cabinet of Billy Mick Miller) [Altar Piece of Hernando Cortés]* (2006–08)

Donald Locke included carved wooden faces as well as playing with the shapes of the natural objects.



Display your finished sculpture next to your classmates' work and create your own **installation** like Donald Locke!

**What other natural or recycled materials could you use?**

Here, natural materials (sticks & acorns) have been combined with recycled materials (tin foil) and colourful beads.

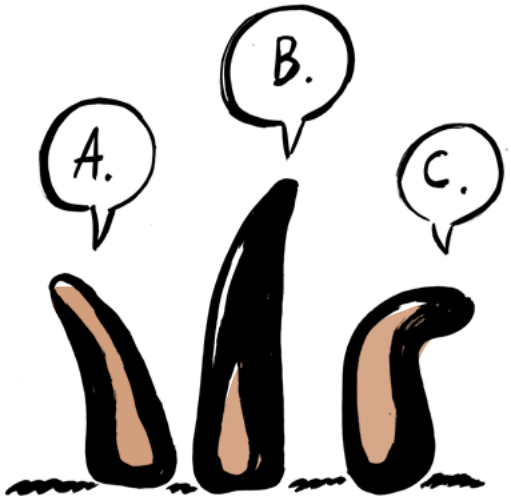
# Group discussion questions

Explore a 3D tour of Donald Locke: *Resistant Forms*

- Why might the artist choose to paint using only black?
- What objects can you spot in the surface of the paintings?
- How could you make your own 3D, layered painting?

*The Cage* (1976-79)

- How have the sculptures been grouped together?
- Does this change the way we see them?





*Black Box with Green Surface – Blackbirds (1974)*

*Trophies of Empire* (1972–74)

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**1 Oozells Square, Brindleyplace**
**Birmingham B1 2HS**
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Cover: Donald Locke's studio. Photo: Tom Meyer.

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Photos: Michael Brzezinski.

*Resistant Forms,* Installation view images. (C) Ikon. Photos: Tom Bird.

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