ARNOLFINI SCHOOL RESOURCE

WHILE YOU EXPLORE ARNOLFINI...

YOUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS MATTER

Art can make us feel all sorts of things — curious, inspired, even unsure — and all of those reactions are valid. That's the exciting part about art: there's space for everyone's interpretation!

RESPECT EACH OTHER'S IDEAS

Everyone sees things differently, and that's what makes conversations about art so interesting. You might not always agree, but staying open to others' opinions is important.

TAKE YOUR TIME

Look closely. Step back. Look again.
Some artworks take a moment to reveal something new.

BE CURIOUS

Ask questions, imagine stories, or think about what the artist might be trying to say. There are no wrong questions here!

ENJOY THE SPACE

This is your time to explore, think, and be creative.

JOY GREGORY
CATCHING FLIES WITH HONEY

17 OCTOBER 2026 TO 7 FEBRUARY 2027

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Portrait of Joy Gregory © Joy Gregory
Courtesy Brook Andrews

Joy Gregory (b. 1959, Bicester, UK) is a British-Jamaican photographer and artist who explores history, identity, race, gender and cultural difference. She works with a wide range of photographic processes, from digital and analogue photography and video to historic Victorian printing techniques.

Gregory began developing her practice in the 1980s and 90s, at a time before social media and when people of colour were significantly underrepresented in the media and cultural institutions. Television, newspapers and radio were the main ways people encountered images and stories about the world, and there were few opportunities for Black people to see themselves represented on their own terms. Black artists — particularly Black women artists — were also underrepresented in galleries and museums. Against this backdrop, Gregory's work was pioneering in its exploration of who gets to create images, whose stories are seen and heard, and how people can take control of their own image and identity.

Gregory continues to challenge our expectations of what photography can be and how images shape how we see ourselves, other people and the world around us. Her work connects personal experiences with wider social and political histories, exploring questions of identity, beauty, cultural difference and belonging.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Catching Flies with Honey brings together more than four decades of Joy Gregory's work, from the 1980s to the present day. Working across photography, video, installation and textiles, Gregory explores how images can shape the way we understand identity, beauty, history and belonging. Gregory's work often starts with something familiar — a body, a found object, a place, a memory or family saying — and invites us to look at it differently. Her photographs ask complex questions about race, gender, migration, colonial histories and whose stories are remembered.

The title *Catching Flies with Honey* comes from a saying Gregory's mother used: "you catch more flies with honey than vinegar." For Gregory, this reflects her approach to making work about complex social and political subjects. Rather than telling us what to think, she often uses beauty, humour and curiosity to draw us in, encouraging us to look more closely and question our assumptions.

Across the exhibition, Gregory experiments with contemporary and historic photographic processes, including digital photography, video, cyanotypes, kallitypes and other Victorian printing techniques. She explores photography as something that can be more than a flat image, using objects, materials and installation to create different ways of experiencing her work. From self-portraits and investigations into beauty to explorations of language and cultural memory, Gregory asks us to consider who is represented, how they are represented, and what might be revealed when we look again.

SEE PAGE 5 FOR DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Gregory uses photography to explore identity and representation.
Look closely at one of her self-portraits or portraits. What do you notice about the person's pose, expression, clothing, setting or framing? What does the photograph tell you about the person — and what does it leave out? How might the image change if it were photographed from a different viewpoint or if the person had chosen how to represent themselves? How might your viewpoint of this work change depending on your gender, race or class?

Gregory often uses beauty and visual appeal to draw us into more complex subjects.
Look closely at one of her artworks that explores ideas of beauty, such as the series *Girl Thing* and *The Blonde.* What first catches your attention? What makes the image appear attractive, intriguing or playful? Look again: what other ideas or questions does the work raise about race, gender, beauty and identity? Why might Gregory choose to make an artwork visually appealing when exploring a difficult or uncomfortable subject? How does this change the way you respond to the work and think about the issues it is raising?

Gregory uses both contemporary and historic photographic processes.
Look closely at a work made using an unusual photographic process or material, such as a cyanotype or kallitype. What do you notice about the surface, colour, texture, scale or level of detail? How does the process affect the mood or meaning of the image? What might Gregory be able to communicate through this process that she could not achieve with a digital photograph? How does the work challenge your idea of what a photograph can be?

AUTOPORTRAIT, 1989 - 1990

Autoportrait, 1989 –1990, printed 2024

***Autoportrait* explores ideas of visibility, identity and self-representation.**

Look closely at how she uses cropped photographs of different parts of her own face and body. What do you notice about the way the images are framed and arranged?

How does seeing only parts of a person change the way you imagine the whole person?

What might the photographs reveal about Gregory — and what might they leave out?

Gregory made this work in response to the lack of Black women in British fashion and beauty imagery. How might knowing this change the way you understand the photographs? What ideas about beauty, race or identity do you think Gregory is asking us to question?

How might this work be viewed differently in today's world of social media, AI and increasingly image-focused digital culture? How much control do we really have over the images others create and share of us?

The work is called *Autoportrait,* rather than simply Self-Portrait. What does this title make you think about? What does it mean to have Gregory as both the person being photographed and the person controlling how she is seen?

Gregory photographs everyday objects associated with beauty and femininity, such as hairdressing scissors and false eyelashes.

Look closely at the objects and the way they are presented. What do you notice about their shape, texture, scale and composition?

How does photographing these objects on a flat background change the way you see them?

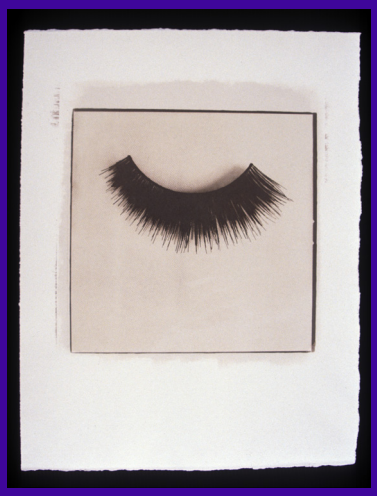
Who decides what "beautiful" looks like? Where do our ideas about beauty come from? How might they have changed over time?

What might these objects tell us about the ways people are expected to look or present themselves?

The objects can be seen as both symbols of beauty and tools of control. How might an object that helps someone feel confident and beautiful also create pressure to change their appearance? What effect does it have to present something ordinary as an "object of beauty"?

OBJECTS OF BEAUTY, 1992 – 1995

'Comb', Objects of Beauty, 1992-1995



'Eyelash', Objects of Beauty, 1992-1995

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Create a visual portrait of a word.
Choose a word that is important to you, your family or your community. It could be a name, a place or a word from another language. Think about how you could represent the word without simply writing it down. Gregory often uses photography to explore language, memory and cultural identity. Using a phone or camera, take a series of photographs that connect to your word. You might photograph people, found objects, places, textures, or details that have a personal association with it. Experiment with how you present the images: arrange them as a collage, choose a particular sequence, or show them one at a time. By looking at your photographs can someone else work out what your word is?

Create a self-portrait without showing your face.
How could you make a portrait of yourself using only fragments? Look at Gregory's *The Honeymoon Project* and *Autoportrait* and notice how she uses close-up photographs of eyes, lips, hands and skin to build a picture. Try creating your own self-portrait without showing your whole face. You could photograph small details of your body, clothing, belongings or surroundings. Think about which fragments you choose and what they might reveal about you. You don't need to arrange them in a logical order — you could crop, repeat, enlarge or rearrange your images to create a sense of mystery. Ask someone else to look at your finished work without explaining it. What story about you do they imagine? What might they have missed?

Reimagine a beauty advertisement.
Think about the images you see in magazines, advertising, social media or shop windows. What ideas about beauty do they communicate? Who is represented, and who is missing? What poses, clothing or objects are used to make someone or something appear desirable? Gregory's work such as *Girl Thing, Celebrity Blonde* and *The Blonde* question how ideas about beauty are created and whose bodies and identities are included in them. Create your own beauty advertisement but change one of its assumptions. You could change who is presented as beautiful, celebrate something that is usually hidden or overlooked, or make an ordinary object the star of your campaign. You could use photography, collage or drawing.

KEY TERMS

ANALOGUE PHOTOGRAPHY
A form of photography that uses light-sensitive film to capture an image, rather than a digital sensor. The process often involves developing and printing the photograph using chemicals.

COMPOSITION
The way different elements are arranged within an artwork or photograph. An artist can use composition to guide the viewer's attention and create a particular mood or meaning.

CULTURAL MEMORY
The ways that stories, traditions, images, objects, places and experiences help communities remember and understand their shared past.

CYANOTYPE
A nineteenth-century photographic printing process that produces x-ray-like images with distinctive blue tones. Objects are placed on light-sensitive paper and exposed to sunlight or another source of UV light.

FEMININITY
The qualities, behaviours, appearances and cultural expectations that are traditionally associated with being a woman or being feminine. Artists can explore femininity to question ideas about gender, identity, beauty and the roles expected of women.

KALLITYPE
A historic photographic printing process that uses iron silver solution to create soft toned images on paper. Gregory uses this process to explore the qualities of historic photography.

MIGRATION
The movement of people from one place to another, within a country or across borders. People may migrate for many different reasons, including work, family, safety or opportunity.

SELF-PORTRAIT
An artwork in which an artist represents themselves. A self-portrait does not have to show the artist's face or body directly and can communicate ideas about identity through objects, places, gestures or other images.

'Phillipa', Fairest, 1997 -

'Zara', Fairest, 1997 -

Celebrity Blonde, 2001

MORE RESOURCES

Discover our **EXPLORE MAP, SMALL WORDS, BIG IDEAS** and **EYE SPY** resources to find different ways of engaging with the exhibition.

Listen to the **AUDIO DESCRIPTIONS** by scanning the QR codes below each described artwork.

Visit our **COMMUNITY WORKSHOP** to get creative with materials and our **READING ROOM** to further inspire you.

All images are courtesy of and copyright Joy Gregory.