

**Claudette Johnson, *Untitled 1990 (Standing Woman)*
Carol Thompson, Senior Curator at Wolverhampton Art Gallery**

Claudette Johnson's pastel drawing *Untitled 1990 (Standing Woman)* is a really significant work for Wolverhampton. It's a key part of our growing collection of works by Black British artists, which we've been building up over the past decade.

Wolverhampton is a truly multicultural city, and it had a major part to play in the development of the Black Arts movement of the 1980s and 90s.

Wolverhampton Art Gallery was the first major public gallery to host an exhibition of works by young Black British artists called *Black Art An' Done* in 1981. It was curated by Eddie Chambers, and featured work by himself and other recent graduates including Keith Piper, who formed the Black Art Group, along with Donald Rodney and Marlene Smith. Claudette Johnson was an art student at Wolverhampton Polytechnic at the time and she visited the show, which was overtly political and a radical call to action for Black artists in the UK. Claudette responded by joining the Black Art Group and the following year, 1982, she helped to organise the First National Black Art Convention, held at Wolverhampton Polytechnic, which is now the university's school of art across the ring road from the art gallery. She presented a talk and seminar at the conference which are now considered formative moments of the Black feminist art movement. 2022 is the 40th anniversary of the convention, so it's particularly fitting that Claudette's work should be featured here at The Courtauld.

This particular work, *Untitled 1990 (Standing Woman)* is a fantastic example of Claudette Johnson's "womanist" works. Its directness and scale come under tension, and the beautiful, powerful black female figure defies containment. It's larger than life, it expands beyond the frame and takes up space, which has so often been denied to black women.

Being part of the Courtauld's National partners project has been a huge pleasure for the team here at Wolverhampton Art Gallery. We've loved working with the Courtauld team, having access to their expertise and outstanding collection, and taking part in training and networking events. It's been wonderful to share ideas, have items on loan for our own local visitors to see, and of course to be able to show this stunning work from our own collection at the Courtauld gallery.

The Courtauld factory had a really important impact on the local people, and was a major employer in the city, especially in Dunstall where the factory once stood, so it's great to be able to reach out to those communities and share these histories. It's also been an opportunity to work with partners around the UK, and to share our experiences of the project, so that we can learn from each other about best practice when working with different communities. Everyone had a different approach, so there's been a really interesting range of projects to learn from. We're really looking forward to continuing our partnership and building on the positive relationship with the Courtauld.