

TG

Jade Foster

Wallpaper

July 7th — August 19th, 2023

Gallery 1 / Corridor / Gallery 2

Anticipatory Grief Before and After Moving to Marley, 2021

Series of 38 digital prints, glass, nails

Exhibition copy size: 29.6 x 21 cm each

Gallery 1

Anticipatory Grief Before and After Hearing Marley, 2021,

Porcelain vessel with photograph (one part of a three-element artwork)

Dimensions variable

Foster, Roy. *Roy Foster's Records*. The private home of Roy and Epsie 'Blossom' Foster, Great Barr, Birmingham.

Retract(ors): Two Mouths on their Guard, 2023,

Oil pastel, soft pastel, and coloured pencils on paper

57 x 76 cm (Unframed)

Gallery 2

Black Lights, 2023,

Four ultraviolet fluorescent tubes

(In)visible, 2016

Audio

1:45 mins

Shown in this instance with flush mounted speaker and plastic grille.

For sales enquiries, please speak to Tom Godfrey.

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Wallpaper is the first solo exhibition by artist and curator Jade Foster.

Encircling the walls of both exhibition spaces and adjoining corridor is a series of photographs printed from scanned 35mm colour negatives. These images document a private performance that took place within an art gallery called Eastside Projects in Birmingham. The space was mid-changeover; wallpaper that had been applied to the walls for a previous exhibition was in the process of being removed.

Under the window in the front gallery is a desk supporting a turntable and a selection of records that belonged to Foster's grandfather. With assistance, these records can be played and listened to via headphones.

Displayed within the sash window is a small porcelain vessel that also belonged to Foster's grandparents. A small photograph of Foster's grandmother, normally stored inside the pot, is presented alongside. The pot was found in a decadent crystal cabinet in their grandparent's front room.

Hung on the opposite wall is a framed drawing by Foster executed in coloured pencil, oil, and soft pastel. The drawing depicts the artist's mouth, from the perspective of anatomical experience (the tactile sensation of the interiority of the mouth) and as a site for desire, expression, and contention.

In the rear gallery, the daylight-balanced bulbs have been swapped with ultraviolet fluorescent tubes (otherwise known as 'black lights').

A soundtrack – recorded, edited, and manipulated by Foster, plays into the room via a flush-mounted speaker in the ceiling. A black speaker grille is mounted on top, reminiscent of the hardware used in the construction of speakers in sound-system culture.

The audio track captures artist, curator, and BLK Art Group co-founding member Marlene Smith describing the subject of invisibility/hyper-visibility to Foster from her position as a black woman inhabiting both civic and cultural space. The analogy of 'wallpaper' is utilised in this speech as an aid in articulating this experience.

HOME FROM HOME

Michael McMillan's *The Front Room* 2021 is a reconstruction of a front room of a West Indian home from the 1960s and 1970s. Front rooms were typically adult spaces, used for hosting guests, even in the smallest houses. They conveyed a sense of accomplishment and respectability, as well as diasporic memory of a life left behind. The typology of objects and style was remarkably similar from home to home: intensely patterned wallpapers and carpets, a radiogram, a bar or drinks cabinet, a display cabinet, and pictures typically featuring religious or kitsch subjects and decorative maps of Caribbean islands.

Earlier versions of the installation suggested the space and its contents were those of a family, but for this latest iteration McMillan imagines the room belonging to a single professional woman. Her bookshelves and pictures convey her political outlook, her sense of self as a Black woman of Caribbean heritage, and the Caribbean she left behind.

West Indians in the UK frequently encountered an unofficial colour bar in many areas of everyday life: employment, housing and social spaces. In this hostile climate, the front rooms of their homes acquired special significance as private-public thresholds. Later on, the next generation - setting aside the quiet respectability of their parents - held 'Blues nights' in front rooms: semi-public parties, with pay bars and sound systems playing the latest Reggae, Lovers Rock and Dub. They were often subject to police raids.

In *Life Between Islands* McMillan's *The Front Room* hosts photography that could be confused for the mementos of the room's fictitious owner: Neil Kenlock's and Armet Francis's tender documentary photographs of families at home in the 1960s and 1970s and, on the other hand, conceptual and staged images by Joy Gregory and Maxine Walker from the 1980s - self-portraits by the former and a wedding photo-narrative by the latter.

Sequences from *Pressure* (1975), by Horace Ové (the first feature film made by a Black British director), play on the vintage television set in *The Front Room*. *Pressure* is about the challenges faced by a teenage boy growing up in the 1970s, caught between the outside world's racism and discrimination, his parents' Christianity and sense of respectability, the financial temptations of petty crime and the radical political message of the Black Power movement.

Martina Attille's *Dreaming Rivers* 1988 is set at the wake of a Miss T. Her life and character, in Britain and the Caribbean, are evoked, in fragments, through the piecemeal recollections of her children. The dreamlike set was designed by Sonia Boyce. Boyce's highly decorative, semi-autobiographical pastel drawings from the 1980s also recall the complex generational and gender dynamics of the diasporic West Indian home in 1960s and 1970s Britain.

'Home from Home', in *Liberation Begins in the Imagination: Writings on Caribbean British Art*, ed. by David A. Bailey and Allison Thomson (London: Tate Publishing, 2021), pp. 133–151.