

# Andrew Robarts

## Installation from the exhibition, *Second Wave*

### 1988



This work was installed in the front yard of Bluecoat in 1988. The artist, Andrew Robarts, created the work for an exhibition called *Second Wave*, having researched the extent to which the charity school, like many Liverpool institutions of that period, had grown as a result of funds derived from Transatlantic slavery. Although no enslaved people were officially sold in Liverpool, such was the importance of the trade to the port that it was said that every brick of the town was 'cemented with the blood of an African.'

In Robarts' installation, the concrete feet are chained together and to the Bluecoat railings. There is no body or face to give the feet a personal identity, they are just one of

many.

Once Blue Coat School children finished their education at the age of 14, many were apprenticed to sea, some of them involved in the slave trade, or in trades related to it, such as sugar, tobacco and cotton. Following a successful career at sea, several old boys of the school donated money to it.

### **THINK ABOUT**

- How does Andrew Robarts' work make you feel?

### **TALK ABOUT**

- How do you think people reacted to this work when it was presented in the Bluecoat courtyard?
  - What was the artist trying to make visitors think about?
  - Do you think it's an important part of the work that the feet are not attached to a body?
- Why do you think the artist chose to install his work in the Bluecoat courtyard?
  - Does this artwork say anything about the idea of freedom?
  - Why is it important that people are recognised as individuals who have their own thoughts and feelings?

### **FIND OUT ABOUT**

- Can you find out anything about the lives of enslaved people?
- How has the idea of freedom changed over the last three hundred years? Was freedom something that everyone was entitled to, or was it only for a small group of people?

### **Activity**

Andrew Robarts' artwork explores the idea of being enslaved, forced to do something against your will, not having your own thoughts and feelings listened to, and being treated in a brutal and inhuman way.

The opposite of enslavement is freedom. Working as groups or on your own, create an artwork that describes the idea of freedom, just as Robarts' work explores the idea of

enslavement.

You could think about:

- What does freedom mean to you?
- Why is freedom important?
- Are there any colours, shapes or symbols that you associate with the idea of freedom?
- What emotions would you like people to feel when they look at your artwork?
- Robarts' artwork suggests what it might have felt like to be a slave. Are you trying to tell a story through your artwork?

You could do a painting, take a photograph or create a sculpture like Robarts', to best show what freedom is, and why it is so important.

### **Learning aims and outcomes**

The children will

- learn about the lives of people in the past.
- learn about slavery, what it means and its impact.
- learn about the importance of freedom, what it means and how the idea of freedom has changed over the last 300 years.
- experience discussing and debating difficult issues.