

## Exhibition Tours

Free, no need to book

Informal introductions to the exhibitions led by members of the Spike Island community.

**Valda Jackson, artist**

**Saturday 28 January, 2pm**

Spike Island studio artist and writer Valda Jackson considers questions of dislocation and identity in the work of Lubaina Himid.

**Art History student-led tour**

**Saturday 11 February, 2pm**

Gain insight into Himid's exhibition during this tour led by BA/MA Art History students from the University of Bristol. This tour is particularly suited to under 18s.

**Libita Clayton, artist**

**Saturday 25 February, 2pm**

Libita Clayton leads a tour of the exhibition responding to the influence of theatre and performance on Lubaina Himid's work.

**Dr Elizabeth Robles**

**Saturday 25 March, 2pm**

Dr Elizabeth Robles leads a tour looking at the way diverse histories — personal, social, economic and art histories — converge and diverge in the work of Lubaina Himid.

## Spike Island

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 [@\\_SpikelIsland](https://twitter.com/_SpikelIsland)

 [@SpikelIsland](https://www.instagram.com/SpikelIsland)

### Visitor Information

Gallery open Tuesday to Sunday, 12–5pm (during exhibitions only).

Admission to the gallery is free.

Café open Monday to Friday, 8.30am–5pm  
Saturday and Sunday, 10–5pm.

Spike Island aims to be a fully accessible building.

## Saturday School: Modernism and The Black Atlantic

Led by Dr Elizabeth Robles

University of Bristol

**Saturday 4 February, 11am–6pm**

**£30/£25, booking essential**

This study day traces the impact of Black Atlantic creative culture (a space of exchange across the continents of Africa, the Americas and Europe) on Modernism — from Picasso's bronzes to the American Jazz influences of Dada — and the impact of black artists on the story of twentieth century art.

## Sounding in, sounding out

Led by artist Evan Ifekoya in collaboration with Network11

**Saturday 18 February, 4–10pm**

**£10/£7 (free for Spike Associates)**

**Booking advised**

This artist-led gathering takes Lubaina Himid's practice as a starting point, drawing on Édouard Glissant's metaphor of opacity: 'Opacities can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics. To understand these truly one must focus on the texture of the weave ...'. The event incorporates a series of sound interventions.

## In Conversation: Lubaina Himid and Lisa Milroy

**Thursday 9 March, 6.30pm**

**£5/£3 (free for Spike Associates)**

**Booking advised**

Lubaina Himid discusses her work as a painter with Canadian artist Lisa Milroy, Head of Graduate Painting at the Slade School of Fine Art.

## UWE Africa Week Launch Event

**Thursday 23 March, 6–9pm**

**Free, booking advised**

Join us for a celebration of African culture as we mark the launch of UWE Africa Week with a late opening of Lubaina Himid's exhibition, African-inspired cuisine, live poetry and music.

Book for events online at [www.spikeisland.org.uk](http://www.spikeisland.org.uk), call 0117 929 2266 or visit reception.

# Exhibition Guide

## Navigation Charts Lubaina Himid

20 January to 26 March 2017

## Spike Island

Lubaina Himid's work has long been concerned with the visibility of black creativity, history and identity. *Navigation Charts* draws together five bodies of work spanning 1999 to 2016 and is presented in collaboration with concurrent exhibitions at Nottingham Contemporary and Modern Art Oxford which include some of Himid's earliest works from the 1980s. Taken together, these three exhibitions offer the first major retrospective view of Himid's work.

Adopting the mantle of the history painter, Himid seeks to question and subvert tradition, introducing colour and pattern associated with the non-Western and the feminine. She memorialises historical events through the imagined perspectives of ordinary people, commenting that her work centres on the '*narratives of insignificant people engaged in the struggle to manage their everyday lives, lived as part of monumental and global strategies for power and wealth.*' The exhibition takes on a specific resonance at Spike Island, a former tea packing factory on Bristol's harbourside. A major port at the height of the slave trade, Bristol exported cloth and imported tea, tobacco and other goods from the colonies, with much of the city's wealth coming from its involvement in slave trading.

*Naming the Money* (2004) is the largest installation in the exhibition. Shown only once before in its entirety, it comprises 100 life-size painted figures on freestanding wooden grounds, depicted as shoe, toy and map makers, drummers, dog trainers, ceramicists, herbalists, viola da gamba players, dancers and painters. Himid initially trained as a set designer with a particular interest in street theatre. These vibrantly coloured, stylised 'cut outs' populate Gallery Two where visitors can walk among them. The figures represent Africans brought to Europe as servants and given new names and roles. This experience of displacement, of having to forge a new identity, is shared by the present day refugee or immigrant. Depictions of African servants are found in paintings of high society figures from the 17th century where they are typically isolated and shown in the margins of the image, there to signify the wealth of their masters and mistresses. Here Himid positions a hundred such servants centre stage, returning to each their individuality, creativity and voice. An accompanying soundtrack including Cuban, Irish, Jewish, and African music

suggests cultural wealth contributed to and shared by different peoples over many, many years. Himid says, '*Naming The Money tries to bring all the old dialogues I have had in my work about the injustice of slavery and the neglect of black histories and interweave them with new conversations about belonging, integration and migration and the struggle to make visible and real a recognition of the rich and complicated contribution to the culture and the economy made by those who have come from somewhere else.*'

The monochromatic *Cotton.com* (2002) is inspired by a little known act of solidarity enacted by Manchester mill workers at the time of the American Civil War (1861-64). As President Lincoln moved to abolish slavery, raw cotton supplies from the plantations to British mills dried up, resulting in mass unemployment – an event known as the Cotton Famine. Despite the high personal cost, the workers' unions passed a motion in support of Lincoln's efforts to end slavery. In *Cotton.com* Himid imagines a conversation carried out between labourers on both sides of the Atlantic, an exchange dependent not upon language but rather pattern. Pattern plays a key part in Himid's painterly grammar; regarded as feminine and merely decorative, it operates in the work as a means of non-literal communication. '*I love the language of pattern, its immense potential for movement, illusion, colour experiments and subliminal political messaging. This...is just part of the exploration of how to imply invisible influences without explanation but without slipping into the abstract. The patterns are narratives.*' The work is completed by a text adapted from one written by a plantation inspector and selected for its perverse romanticisation of a woman's enforced labour. A vocal feminist and defender of women's rights, Himid empowers the woman to speak back to the male gaze.

In the same room is *Drowned Orchard: Secret Boatyard* (2014), 16 paintings on wood, originally made for the Gwangju Biennial in South Korea. Featuring Korean folk designs, African patterning, flags and images of boats, shells and fish, it brings together an array of cultural reference and in its imagery of the sea – a constant in Himid's work – refers to the movement and mix of people in a globalised world.

Works from the *Kanga* series occupy the project space. Kangas are cotton cloths cut into two halves, one to be wrapped around the body and one for the head. Featuring slogans and proverbs over bright, sometimes elaborate patterns, Himid has designed her own *Kangas* and imagined, in accompanying collaged portraits, the women who might have owned them.

The earlier *Zanzibar* series which wraps around Gallery One similarly takes its double panel form and size from that of the kanga. Made in 1998-99 following the first visit Himid made to her birthplace, Zanzibar, which she left for England after the death of her father, these works are deeply personal and communicate a painful sense of place, memory and loss. The thin washes of paint read both as tears flooding the canvas and as yet another reference to the sea with all its associations of migration, exile, travel, time and drowning.

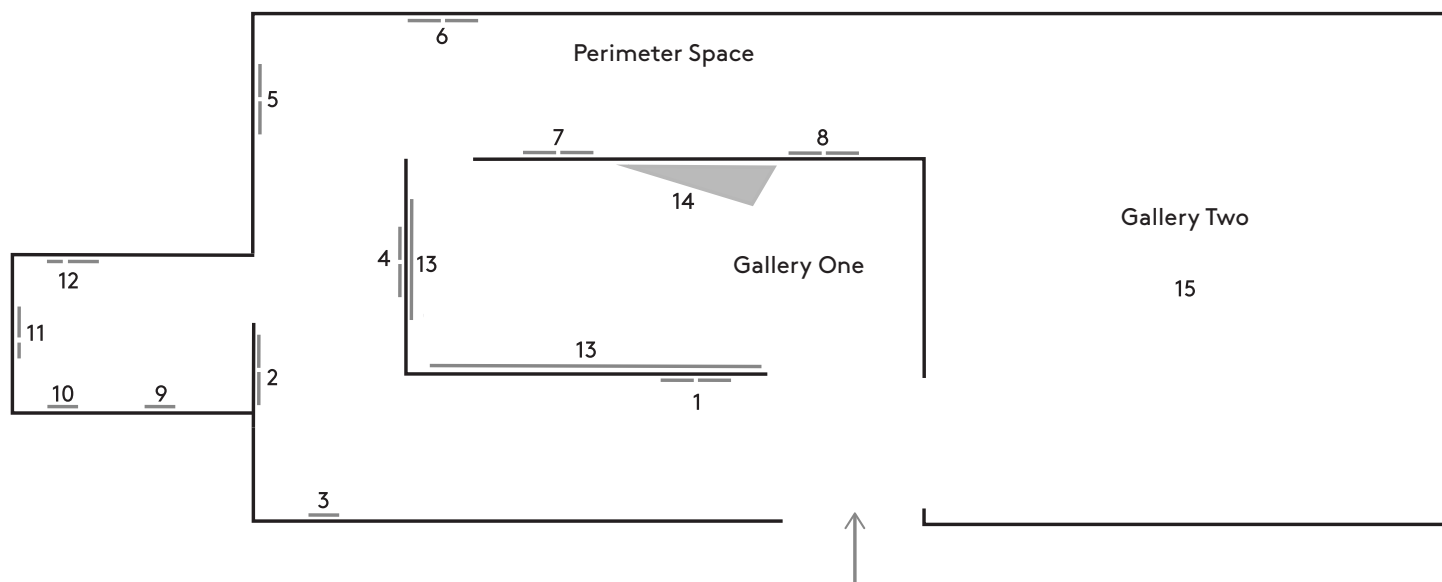
This exhibition is presented in collaboration with Modern Art Oxford and Nottingham Contemporary. Each gallery presents work by Lubaina Himid simultaneously; Modern Art Oxford shows *Invisible Strategies* (21 January to 30 April 2017) while Nottingham Contemporary presents the group exhibition *The Place Is Here* (4 February to 30 April 2017.) Works from the exhibitions will later tour to firstsite, Colchester and Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston.



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|----|--|----|--|
| 1  | <i>Zanzibar</i> (1999) Acrylic on canvas   | 12 | <i>Don't Forget Me (Kangas)</i> (2011) Acrylic and pencil on paper, collage, magazine papers   |
| 2  | <i>Women's Tears Fill the Ocean (Zanzibar)</i> (1999) Acrylic on canvas                                    | 13 | <i>Cotton.com</i> (2002) Eighty-five oil on canvas panels, brass strip   |
| 3  | <i>Zanzibar</i> (1999) Acrylic on canvas   | 14 | <i>Drowned Orchard: Secret Boatyard</i> (2014) Sixteen coloured, hand painted wooden planks  |
| 4  | <i>Zanzibar</i> (1999) Acrylic on canvas   | 15 | <i>Naming the Money</i> (2004) One-hundred life-size painted cut-out plywood figures, audio.   |
| 5  | <i>Shutters Only Hide the Sun (Zanzibar)</i> (1999) Acrylic on canvas                                      |    | Works 1-14 courtesy the artist and Hollybush Gardens.  |
| 6  | <i>Zanzibar</i> (1999) Acrylic on canvas   |    | <i>Naming the Money</i> (work 15) is loaned by the National Museums Liverpool, International Slavery Museum. Gift of Lubaina Himid (2015). |
| 7  | <i>Nets for Night and Day (Zanzibar)</i> (1999) Acrylic on canvas  |    |  |
| 8  | <i>Never Harm a Clever Man (Zanzibar)</i> (1999) Acrylic on canvas   |    |  |
| 9  | <i>Take the Freedom Ride Home (Kangas)</i> (2016) Acrylic and pencil on paper                              |    |  |
| 10 | <i>Speed up the Pace of Change (Kangas)</i> (2016) Acrylic and pencil on paper                             |    |  |
| 11 | <i>Leave the State of Unbelonging (Kangas)</i> (2011) Acrylic and pencil on paper, collage, magazine pages |    |  |

## About Lubaina Himid

Lubaina Himid's career as an artist, curator and scholar has been central to rethinking the Western canon of art history and museological practices over the past 30 years.

Born in Zanzibar in 1954, and moving to England shortly afterwards, her education includes a Masters in Cultural History at the Royal College of Art in London with a graduating thesis titled *Young Black Artists in Britain Today*, anticipating her involvement in the Black Arts Movement of the 1980s and 90s. Himid went on to organise a number of group exhibitions throughout the 1980s, including *Five Black Women at the Africa Centre*, London (1983), *The Thin Black Line* at ICA, London (1985), and *Unrecorded Truths* at the Elbow Room (1986), which brought to public attention her own generation of black female artists, questioning the limits of their creative visibility in the process.

Her own work challenges these boundaries, as seen in her solo show *Revenge*, featuring consecutive paintings of black women protagonists and memorials to the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade, at Rochdale Art Gallery and the South Bank Centre, London, in 1992, which contested the pictorial narratives so frequently repeated in art history.

She completed a residency at Tate St Ives between 1998 and 2000, and has participated in a number of group exhibitions including *Uncomfortable Truths: The Shadow of Slave Trading on Contemporary Art* at the V&A, London (2007), and more recently, *Migrations* at Tate Britain, *Keywords* at the International Institute of Visual Arts and Tate Liverpool (2013/14) and *Burning Down the House* at the Gwangju Biennale, South Korea (2014).

In addition to her prolific artistic practice, she holds the position of Professor of Contemporary Art at the University of Central Lancashire, where she leads the interdisciplinary visual art research project *Making Histories Visible*, reflecting critically on the success and failures of the Black Arts Movement and participating in numerous conferences on art of the diasporas.

Revisiting her earlier work, she staged *Thin Black Lines* in 2011 at Tate Britain with curator Paul Goodwin, and has produced a series of research documentaries including *Open Sesame* (2005) and *The Point of Collection* (2007), in collaboration with Tate Liverpool.