1. **Freedom and Change, 1984**

   ‘Discourse is a primary tool against the weapons used to marginalise and write out of history our contribution / she who writes herstory rewrites history.’ — Maud Sulter, 1990

   **Freedom and Change** is a bold example of Himid’s ‘rewriting of history’, as proposed by the poet, curator and artist Maud Sulter, via the reference to Picasso – the epitome of masculine painterly energy. These women are personifications of freedom and change: they look to the future by embracing the past, yet overturning oppressive colonial histories. By quoting a painting from Picasso’s ‘return to order’ neoclassical period (1918–25), Himid comments on the rampant political conservatism at the height of the Thatcher era.

2. **Le Rodeur: The Lock, 2016**

3. **Le Rodeur: Exchange, 2016**

   After completing this most recent series, the artist realised that these interiors were the odd, empty rooms of her earlier Plan B paintings, now populated with a full cast of characters, and always with a glimpse of the sea. They reflect Himid’s complex personal relationship to water and the sea: ‘I have never been able to swim properly and am very frightened of the sea and of drowning. I used to constantly look at new ways of painting it as if it had never been painted. The reading of narratives about people being taken forcibly from west-coast Africa to the coasts of America in trading ships to be later used as slaves made an impact during the early part of my painting career.’

**Plan B, 1999/2000**

11. **Everybody Is**

12. **The Gare of the Sun**

13. **Yellow Pool**

   The Plan B series was produced as the result of two month-long residencies in St Ives, where Himid used a lifeguard hut as her studio. Looking out to the beach and sea, she completed hundreds of preparatory works on paper. The resulting paintings depict imaginary spaces that contain echoes of real places, contorted by multiple perspectives and distortions. The initial impression of peace, stillness and tranquility in these paintings masks the creeping incursion of war and trauma. With this series, Himid has claimed: ‘Everything shifted; the safe ideas became more dangerous and the risky strategy became the blueprint.’ Despite a preoccupation with the sea, the composition of Yellow Pool focuses on sharp angles, illusionary space, illogical perspectives, and a room empty of people.

14. **Meta(Paper)/Beach House, 1995**

   The Beach House paintings, first exhibited at Wrexham Library Arts Centre in 1995, and a biographical fusion of many experiences, journeys and places, including Ghana, Zanzibar, Tanzania, Nigeria, the United States and Latin America. In the artist’s text Beach House she writes: ‘I was born on an island in the Indian Ocean and lived for the first four months of my life two hundred yards from the beach in a house at Ber el Ras in Zanzibar. When my mother and I arrived in England on Christmas Eve, 1954, we flew into Blackpool Airport. One grandmother had waved goodbye with the sound of the warm sea around her; another welcomed me to her seaside home in the chilly north of England.’

15. **Shelter in the Shade of Deep Friendship, 2011**

16. **Safety is the Lost Territory, 2011**

17. **Reminder of an Ancient Fetish, 2016**

18. **Freedom and Change, 2016**

   ‘Son of a slave was a fisherman. His son was a fisherman. His son was a fisherman. His grandson was a fisherman. His grandson was a fisherman.’

19. **Have Courage in the Crisis/Set Yourself Free, 2016**

20. **The Source of the Tears is Long Run Dry, 2016**

   This series of works on paper is named after the everyday cotton garments long manufactured and worn by women in East Africa. Their influence reached the nineteenth-century textile production in the north of England, an industry that relied heavily upon cotton from slave plantations in the southern United States. Himid’s painted Kangas feature thought-provoking aporias devised by the artist or taken from the abolition and civil rights movements, echoing the Swahili sayings often incorporated into the printed fabric designs.


22. **Negative Positives, 2007–ongoing**

23. **Negative Positives (x20)**

24. **Negative Positives (x14)**

25. **Negative Positives (x27)**

   For ten years, Himid has over-painted her regular newspaper to highlight images of black people that she feels are implicitly prejudicial. It is a form of visual research, examining visual racism through artistic means, to provoke a conversation about how racial biases (subconscious or conscious) persist in maintaining out-dated power relations.

   Acknowledging the profound feelings of anger and frustration that underlie this daily process of reading, selecting and making visible, Himid explains: ‘The invented and borrowed patterns on these figures appeared within the artist’s first retrospective exhibition New Robes for MaShulan, a collaboration with Maud Sulter held at Rochdale Art Gallery in 1987. In Sulter’s curatorial text, ‘Surveying the Scene’, she declared: ‘The show does not stand in isolation. Its roots are in the collective Black struggle of our history. […] We will remember those who are seen to die at the hands of the state but also bear witness and will testify to the lives and the deaths of so many others whose lives touch ours. The warrior takes many guises. The educator uses many tools.’


   **Swallow Hard** is supported by Arts Council England Strategic Targeting fund.

   **Swallow Hard** is the着眼点 exhibition guide is available in a large print format. Please ask at the Information Desk located in the cafe.

   Invisible Strategies is supported by Arts Council England Strategic Targeting fund.

   **Swallow Hard** defines Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service as ‘an intervention, a mapping and an excavation. It is a fragile monument to an invisible engine working for nothing in an amazingly greedy machine. It remembers slave servants, sugary food, mahogany furniture, greedy families, tobacco and cotton fabrics but then mixes them with British wild flowers, elegant architecture and African patterns. […] This work is not a memorial but more an encouraging incentive for everyone committed to restoring the balance, revealing the truths and continuing the dialogues.’

Please ask your Visitor Assistants if you have any questions.
The exhibition features numerous paintings that explore Himid’s expansive and vibrant palette, including Metal/Paper, Beach House (1995), where the fiery hues and foreboding views of water speak to a sense of danger on the horizon; Zanzibar – Sea: Wave Goodbye Say Hello (1999), where the experience of the artist’s homecoming is rhythmically abstracted; and Plan B (1999), which imagines peculiar interior spaces of refuge and escape, poised halfway between safety and peril. These evocative sites are revisited in a new painting series, Le Rodeur (2016), named after a nineteenth-century slave ship. Mysterious rooms are populated with theatrically staged figures in dramatic, ambiguous settings that invoke Himid’s recurring iconography of vessels, classical architecture, blocks of abstract pattern and choppy waters.

The sea and poetic abstractions of it are woven throughout Himid’s work over the last two decades. It is a near constant presence, often observed from a watchful distance, its dangers respected and feared. These series of paintings are also connected by acts of journey making: a biographical echo of the artist’s own formative journey, aged four months, from her birthplace in Zanzibar to her mother’s home in England.

Lubaina Himid’s work is also presented at Spike Island, Bristol, and Nottingham Contemporary.

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