

Thin Black Line(s) catalogue 2012

Letters to Susan

Dear Susan

Thank you for asking such interesting questions, the business of answering all of them is going to be a test of my resolve, my memory and my pride. The best way for me to begin to discuss any strategy for exhibiting visual art is always to list the artists. I could describe the objects or make clear my philosophy and illustrate the theoretical underpinning which supports the whole project; this will unfold soon but a list of names has to come first.

5 Black Women at the Africa Centre (1983) Covent Garden London

Sonia Boyce

Veronica Ryan

Houria Niati

Claudette Johnson

Lubaina Himid

Black Woman Time Now (1983/4) Battersea Arts Centre London

Ingrid Pollard

Veronica Ryan

Claudette Johnson

Sonia Boyce

Lubaina Himid

Chila Burman

Mumtaz Karimjee

Houria Niati

Jean Campbell

Andrea Telman

Margaret Cooper

Elizabeth Eugene

Leslee Wills

Cherry Lawrence

Brenda Agard

The Thin Black Line (1985) Institute of Contemporary Art London

Marlene Smith

Veronica Ryan

Sonia Boyce
Claudette Johnson
Maud Sulter
Chila Burman
Brenda Agard
Sutapa Biswas
Jennifer Comrie
Lubaina Himid
Ingrid Pollard

You don't often see all the artists listed together especially the line up for Black Woman Time Now, its not in Passion: Discourses on Black Womens Creativity (1990) and its not in The Companion to Contemporary Black British Culture (2002) even though the exhibition is mentioned, or Shades of Black (2005), or the catalogue for Transforming the Crown (2007). Our names along with much other very useful information can however be found in the publication Recordings: A select bibliography of Contemporary African, Afro Caribbean and Asian British Art. It was published by inIVA and Chelsea College of Art & Design in 1996.

If you want to track the creative and cultural shifts that have happened during the past twenty five or so years since the idea for these three shows came into my head you have to hear the names to be able to assess the influence these then young and emerging artists had on the visual art landscape of the following decades and to adequately either navigate the terrain or map the course you must remember who was (and wasnt) in the exhibitions.

The whole story started for me when I was accepted as an unfunded student without a bursary for an M.A. in Cultural History at the Royal College of Art in 1982. Sir Christopher Frayling and Paul Overy took me on then both encouraged and supported chivvied and parried with me for two years. It was Paul Gough who helped me to apply for the money to pay part of the fees and Lady Bridget Astor who gave me several hundred pounds for the remainder. Marlowe Russell allowed me to live in her house virtually free in exchange for nothing but heartache. I was single minded and did not hesitate to ask for help and demanded total support for my plan to tip the British art world up-side down.

Looking back and piecing together the tapestry of it now it really was easy to stage these shows because Eddie Chambers, Keith Piper, Claudette Johnson and Donald Rodney had already surmounted huge amounts of diffidence, prejudice, hostility and hatred by staging Black Art an done : An

Exhibition of work by Young Black Artists Wolverhampton Art Gallery in 1981, The Pan Afrikan Connection: An Exhibition by Young Black Artists Ikon Gallery 1982, and by staging The First National Black Art Convention Open Exhibition of Black Art at the Faculty of Art and Design Gallery at Wolverhampton Polytechnic. All the tour venues of The Pan Afrikan connection exhibition including 35 King Street Gallery Bristol, Midland Group Gallery Birmingham, Herbert Museum and Art Gallery Coventry, The Africa Centre London and the Black-Art Gallery in London had staged work curated by Eddie Chambers and his colleagues before any of my shows had reached the walls of anywhere.

I was writing about them in my M.A. thesis at the R.C.A. (1982-1984) the underlying challenge was how to articulate the idea that black women had a voice and a creative energy which needed nurturing, each paragraph tapped out very slowly as i struggled on a portable typewriter in the converted kitchen/studio in south London.

Keep going with your film

Love Lubaina

Dear Susan

I hope the Parisian comedy circuit is keeping you amused. I am tempted to be glib in answer to the question Why did you stage these exhibitions? There are many reasons not all of them thoroughly thought through, none of them financially sound and only a few strategically efficient.

Women artists were not being recognised as having a place in the visual arts generally and even the Feminist art movement had not given us enough room to manoeuvre within the discussions they were having in the art school and around the kitchen table. Black women artists were not getting the grants they deserved because they did not know the right avenues to follow. I was hungry to show with other black women to see whether there was a conversation to be had amongst ourselves around showing space,

political place and visual art histories, how to develop ideas around making, visual representation, belonging and identity. What were the global realities of black sisterhood ?

Almost all of the time the exhibitions came about because I responded to other peoples urgent desire for a physical and tangible proof of our creative activity.

The Africa Centre was a familiar venue; I worked in a restaurant I had helped to design on the opposite side of Covent Garden Piazza. The curators there knew me as an artist/ organiser of small exhibitions by emerging artists on the walls of eating places in London. We promoted shows of drawings and paintings by Theatre Design graduates with whom I had completed a B.A. at Wimbledon School of Art.

Battersea Arts Centre was around the corner from where I lived at the time, the space was rough and ready, friendly and loud. Working with Yvonne Brewsters Talawa Theatre Company as a designer led us to working with a group of Black women activists who had been asked to stage a festival of Black Womens Creativity they asked me to join them to organise a large exhibition of womens work, the opportunity was too tempting to ignore.

I had visited the I.C.A. at least once a month for the previous decade or more, either to see films, eat salads, and watch new plays or to engage blissfully with exhibitions, the place was part of my life and central for everyone interested in contemporary culture. A curatorial post was advertised and because I was a naive and yet ferociously ambitious black woman with an M.A. and a few exhibitions on my c.v. I applied for the job .Did everyone else know at the time that the people who planned to become pivotal to the contemporary art world in Britain and Europe usually started their careers at the I.C.A. As a theatre design graduate I knew about British theatre and loathed it, could not penetrate it and had abandoned it. The secret human machine, enabling British art galleries and collections to invent, produce and develop the exhibitions I had been visiting with my mother since the age of 9 or 10 at the Tate on Millbank, the Hayward on the South Bank and the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square, was completely unknown to me.

I didn't get the job, I don't think there was a job, but the director Bill McAllister called me on the telephone and asked me to put forward some ideas for a Black Arts Festival for the ICA. I wrote some energetic ideas for a cinema, theatre and exhibitions programme but cannot now remember

any significant details. I went to a meeting and discovered that there had been pressure (funding pressure) from the Greater London Council for much more evidence of a black cultural contribution to the programme at the I.C.A. I was the best or actually the worst the I.C.A. could come up with. Unsurprisingly the festival programme never materialised and I was offered the full length of the 20 metre corridor to present an exhibition. The very experienced Declan McGonagle (84-86) oversaw the project and Andrea Schlieker (85-88) was his assistant, Sandy Nairne (80-84) had just left, Iwona Blazwick his assistant was later that decade to return to take over the visual arts post herself (86-93).

In his article *Mainstream Capers: Black Artists White Institutions* written for *Artrage* (Autumn 1986) Eddie Chambers wrote It is my view that no persons (least of all Black artists) have the right to determine what Black artists (other than themselves) which are represented in white galleries. It would be foolish of me to pretend that his remarks were not influential once I understood his disgust.

Love Lubaina

Dear Susan

I hope you are getting time to wander around the hidden museums we talked about, have you found that brilliant ice cream parlour?

The contents of this letter could be the answer to why much of what I set out to do did not make the rapid changes to artists lives we all envisaged and yet unleashed a torrent of energetic and optimistic women into the exhibiting world who would go on to influence the way museums, collections and educators think about creative communication with audiences.

Why make exhibitions containing the work of young black women in that way, as an artist/selector, in those particular spaces?

I have only put together four or five such shows in thirty four years but at the time it seemed right to showcase this huge variety of voices with visual stories to share. Rules were being broken all across the landscape of British gallery spaces by young artists who were not aware of the underlying strategies in which they were being manipulated. Shows emerged in response to strategically friendly requests by organisations, politically obliged, for funding reasons, to be seen to shift their way of defining who could be an artist; In tandem with this understand that we wanted to exhibit the work we were making in our kitchens and back bedrooms and were determined to be as inclusive as possible. It suited us to show alongside each other, presenting a whole variety of beliefs, life choices and philosophical narratives. We exhibited in this way to make visible our richness of vision. We did not all think about audiences in the same way or use materials the same way. We prioritised differently in relation to politics, money or faith and were brave enough to expose this. We were not a movement or a group or a sisterhood or even close friends but instead a fluid set of women who were not prepared to be herded into a single way of expressing ourselves. We were happy to liaise with anyone in almost any busy space and encourage our friends and families to participate in the looking experience.

In 1986 Eddie Chambers thought that none of the 11 artists in The Thin Black Line would be represented in the ICA for quite some time, if ever. He was also convinced that the curators had herded us into this small space against our will. This ground-breaking curator was right about the first and wrong about the second.

Good decisions about place and space were and still are often determined by footfall; offer me a space to show in the middle of a city where there is the chance that hundreds of people may happen upon us while engaged in another activity and I will consider it above a secluded space for a pre-selected audience, especially when the creative output is by artists starting out. They need to have the chance to be seen by as many people as possible then grow their own audiences over time.

My initial letter/leaflet sent out across Britain to art schools community centres women's groups and friends was a simple but effective, totally random typed and copied slip of paper, it attracted a particular kind of artist; optimistic and determined, ambitious and young with no fear of failure. The other four artists in 5 Black Women were women who had responded quickly and with clear images of art work coupled with a passionate desire to be exhibited. I made a decision to select 11 artists

including myself, for the then 20 x 2 metre corridor of the ICA essentially and absolutely to illustrate that there was not enough room for the amount of visual endeavour being produced.

Love Lubaina

Dear Susan

I do hope the screening went well and you are enjoying the deliciousness of Rome now that the work is done.

It seems an odd exercise to chronicle in 2010 what the artists who were working with me in 1983/4/5 are doing now. This is not meant to sound like a pop quiz or friends reunited, nor is it proof of success or failure.

I still remember and re imagine those three exhibitions in terms of artists and what they were trying to achieve, rather than a gathering or juxtaposition of aesthetically interesting objects displayed for pleasure or analysis. This could be why conversations with mainstream curators have often faltered in the years since as they tried to fit our activity into the landscape of the time. They explain to me that their tendency to think about how ideas can be conveyed in terms of objects, arranged and displayed. It is normal for some of them to try to communicate over a period of time with an artist then to be part of the development of the pieces gradually so that it becomes part of the overall curatorial vision. I have never worked in quite that way. The process with which artists invent and devise is endlessly interesting to me. I want to facilitate space and time for them to make and think for themselves. We sometimes discuss the impact of the ideas during the months before they emerge into the public space but I am a sounding board not a midwife.

Success largely depends on what each artist decides success actually is.

I have included this list for you so that it can act as a starting point for

further discussion and just in case we want to make some commitment to an archive/collection project or an article for Colourcode.

Sonia Boyce has an MBE and two works in the Tate collection. She exhibits all over the place and her latest exhibition Like Love Parts One and Two was shown at Bluecoat Liverpool in 2010.

Maud Sulter died in 2008; her work is in the collections at the V&A, the Arts Council and the National Portrait Gallery.

Jean Campbell and **Cherry Lawrence** have both practiced as art therapists in medical, community and educational settings each has written articles on the subject and been part of the Art therapy, Race and Culture group.

Leslee Wills is a history teacher in a secondary school and organises events for Black History month.

Veronica Ryan has seven works in the Tate collection including one she showed in the Thin Black Line. She works in America and the last show I can find her work included in was at the Brooklyn Museum in 2007. She exhibited a piece called Between Spaces 2003 to the present, in a show called Infinite Island: Contemporary Caribbean Art.

Ingrid Pollard received a Leverhulme Individual award, has work in the Arts Council collection and is associate research fellow at the Centre for Urban and Community Research at Goldsmiths.

Brenda Agard is a storyteller and works with the North London Partnership has written plays and worked as a photographer.

Sutapa Biswas is a Reader in Fine Art at Chelsea College of Art & Design University of the Arts and works within TrAIN the Research Centre for Transnational Art, Identity and Nation.

Houria Niati works in performance and has been represented by Janet Rady.

Jennifer Comrie, Elizabeth Eugene, Andrea Telman, Mumtaz Karimgee and Margaret Cooper have fallen off my radar and I have fallen off theirs.

Chila Kumari Burman was most recently Leverhulme artist in residence at the University of East London, shows frequently in a wide variety of venues.

Marlene Smith was director of The Public when it opened in West Bromwich in 2008

Claudette Johnson does not exhibit widely but still contributes to discussions about visual art and works with groups to develop their visual skills. She may work with us at UCLan in the Print room soon.

I have an MBE, am Professor of Contemporary Art at the University of Central Lancashire, have work in numerous collections including three paintings in Tate, several in the V&A and a series in the Arts Council collection. My exhibitions in recent years in the museums; The Bowes, The V&A, The Judges Lodgings Lancaster, The Merseyside Maritime, Lady Lever, The Williamson, Sudley House and in 2011 Platt Hall, Manchester, have interrogated important issues around audiences and are central to my practice.

It seems rather slight, a string of words about collections awards and careers, written here without reference to the families these women have nurtured and the places they have visited or the music they have listened to or the conversations they have had with each other during the past twenty five years but it is obvious that in between the stark lines there nestle some very deep, significant, dramatic, scandalous and even tragic narratives, all of which we could bring to the surface with hundreds of drawings and photographs stories and illustrations to link the multiple developments and influences. Its a story waiting to be told. Each woman could tell it.

Love Lubaina

Dear Susan

I'm glad the trip is going well and the set up at the screenings is as good as

they promised. It will be so fabulous to meet up with you in Berlin next week.

In the meantime I will try to unpack the whole funding thing around the exhibitions, its important to make things clear about how the finances worked because to some degree the projects seemed well supported, two of the venues were well used and well known and were in receipt of fair amounts of public money. On the whole the money in circulation was very modest, I received modest expenses for Black Woman Time Now in line with the other women in the creative steering group, I received a small fee of 100 for the 6 months work on The Thin Black Line which covered some of my expenses and no fee at all for the exhibition at the Africa Centre. I realised at the time that not very many people could ever have afforded to work on these shows but it is only during the past decades that I have wondered whether the fact that I agreed to do this work for nothing meant that it was difficult for other artist/selectors to develop relationships with the venues, the ICA or Battersea Arts Centre because they had to support themselves without help from friends.

I received a huge amount of help from Marlowe Russell she had been a good friend of mine since the age of 15, she was an artist and I lived in her house. She was always there for me to exchange ideas with, she would listen to the endless worries I brought home. She agreed to hire and then drive large unwieldy old transit vans to transport the work from all over London to the various exhibiting spaces. It did not seem so important at the time but not having to be at work at 9 am every day, not having to pay much rent to her and not having to commit to a job for 5 days a week meant that I was able to work part time, near to home, earning small amounts of money as a youth worker. This privilege allowed me to work with all three venues, virtually free.

The artists received nothing at all from the Africa Centre but some of us sold work. They were not paid for showing at the Battersea Arts Centre and at the ICA we had to share 250 between 11 of us to speak at a public event. Maud Sulter cleverly had the sense and nerve to ask for her own fee for speaking. It sounds utterly naive now but these opportunities to work with other women on projects resulted in a huge increase in our ability to communicate ideas to people in a way we truly believed in. It was a privilege for me but the other artists might want to develop and unpack that notion of working for nothing and tell you what it meant for them.

There was money to produce leaflets, invitations and the launch parties at

all the venues but at the ICA there was also technical help to hang the exhibitions and a catalogue.

Love Lubaina

Dear Susan

You want to know about the nitty gritty of the actual installation of these shows, is it because you have already solved all the hassles of the presentation of your film in Berlin? What a freezing city it can be how did we ever think it was going to be easy there?

It does help when the technical staff are willing to take their time and give you experienced advice without being patronising.

At the Africa Centre we did it ourselves, My contribution of 5 naked life sized painted cut out men with one metre long erections, raised some sceptical eyebrows but all I had to do was decide on an order, position the figures and then lean them against the wall.. I placed them early in the audience experience of the exhibition; the worst space of course but I understood that it takes some time to acclimatise to the environment. It was a disconcerting space to hang, essentially the gallery is an actual gallery hovering high around a large hall with a vast, ornate and elaborate ceiling. Standing back to look at the placing meant walking around the room at its edge and looking at what you had placed across a yawning chasm beneath you.

The layout dictated that it was inevitable that an audience would see the work at very close quarters or from nine metres away; nothing was ever quite seen in the comfortable medium distance. Claudette Johnson's deeply sensuous large scale richly coloured almost life sized pastel drawings of women, were light and easy to hang. They could hold the space and were so beautifully rendered that it was a joy to be close to them and to see the crafted marks and blended colours.

Veronica Ryan chose to contribute a series of fascinating small objects, gourds, fruits, strange shaped things, dark mud brown and matt gun metal grey rubbed and scratched, with pitted surfaces. A series of twisted curved and familiar yet uncanny creatures; all in rows on a metal three tiered display device. They looked like something abandoned by an unknown force displayed as products for sale in the corner shop. We simply had to fix the shelving and then place the objects in the order according to the plan. There was never a question that anyone would steal or move the pieces, it wasn't necessary to engage in long conversations with the visual art team there about securing the sculptures or invigilation, insurance or health and safety.

It was an arts centre predominantly a performance venue and meeting place for people from all over the continent, it was famous in London for the lovely crowded restaurant in the basement which served delicious West African food, almost unheard of at the time. People came and went from the building in between meetings, meals, dance performances and visits to the shop all day and late into the night. It was unpretentious, low key yet challenging because every minute we were there either arranging the work or visiting during the run, we would be intellectually stretched by audiences demanding answers to their questions about our unfailing commitment to being aspiring contemporary artists making work with personal and political narratives. We were feminists, two African women and three Caribbean women working together as artists. We were seen as a formidable group.

Houria Niati exhibited her extraordinary re imaginings of Delacroix paintings in which using every colour imaginable she questioned and argued with his interpretation of how North African women think and feel look and behave. They were bold, active and rude paintings which refused to unnecessarily respect the masterworks yet acknowledged their significance. They could hold the distance and were able to shout loudly at you from across the massive airiness of the space.

In those far off days Sonia Boyce made large scale pastel drawings, full of pattern and portrait, seductive autobiographical narratives revealing absolutely everything about real life and young love, secret conversations, working peoples aspirations, difficult relationships and childhood memories. Many people wanted to buy this work, after all who told these stories in the wider public then? Sonia later stated in print in a leaflet produced for a display she had at The Whitechapel gallery, that she was not altogether happy to be exhibited in this show, confessing that she felt she was not ready for the attention, the praise, of critics, collectors and audiences. She

was not happy either with the venue, feeling The Africa Centre was too far away from the homes of the people to whom the work was directed; the people with whom she had grown up.

It only took a day to make the installation work but it was dizzyfying, either because we had to go round and round the gallery to see what the show looked like from every angle or because to look down instead of across the space brought on terrible vertigo.

Love Lubaina

Dear Susan

I still remember snatches from the events of the installation at each of those shows every time I complete an exhibition hang now. It is still a nerve racking business, fraught with anxiety about the technical details and full of excitement for the possibilities of the project.

Just trying to ensure that all the work actually arrived at the ICA was a challenge, one which occupied many hours prior to the opening date.

Maud Sulter had happily agreed to be part of The Thin Black Line but as we neared the dates for collection and delivery of the work we kept missing each others calls. In the end I tracked her down to her office at a womens education project and picked up her collages from there. She had had the brilliant idea of remaking Salvador Dalis Christ of St John on the Cross; a strange depiction with vertiginous, smooth, kitch, slippery blue grey forms. Mauds painting designed for the walls of the staircase was to be the Dali work remade as a black woman crucified. Unfortunately she never did make the piece nor did she come to the opening of the exhibition.

Sonia Boyce arrived with her work when everyone else's was almost fixed to the walls, I was slightly upset but only because I had not actually seen the work she had been working on. It was a new piece, a work on paper called Mr Close Friend of the Family (1985) a most extraordinary and powerful black and white pastel drawing about 4x3 foot. All around the edge as a border is a pattern of small life sized childs hands; each with fingers spread wide. Layered on top is a short text. At the centre of this intense work is a

young black girl looking out of the frame at the viewer. She seems numb and silent but is trying to be strong. She is dressed in a plain top and is depicted from the waist up. Standing close to her is the figure of a black man with a slight paunch, in shirt and trousers whose head we do not see, depicted from his groin to his chin. The man reaches across the heavily scalloped patterned surface towards the young girl's breasts; his hand is millimetres away from her. The border text reads Mr Close friend of the family pays a visit whilst everyone else is out.

Chila Burman had a typically wild and funny idea for the staircase as well as installing paperwork in the main corridor display area. Her project was a whole body print for the venue; to facilitate her making the piece we had to clear the area as she removed all her clothes, smeared herself in paint/printing ink and pressed herself repeatedly against the wall in a kind of body kiss.

Veronica Ryan was chosen by me to exhibit for just two weeks in the beautiful Nash room on the first floor of the ICA as well as in the main corridor with everyone else. The room was available to us, in between other projects and it seemed like a superb opportunity to display the work of an artist who was at the time very prolific and serious about her ambitions to work as a professional contemporary artist. One of the pieces was later purchased by Charles Saatchi before he donated to the Tate collection.

Sutapa Biswas Housewife with Steak Knives was an astonishing larger than life sized pastel drawing in deep red black and brown, a contemporary translation of the multi armed goddess Kali brandishing knives, flowers and flags. The installation of it was smooth as it took its place at the end of the corridor near the bar and restaurant. Later in the run some idiot spat on the piece and we began to understand the power of what we had achieved.

Since then I have realised that all exhibitions have an elements of danger shifting and shimmering amongst the ghosts of past lives, plenty of my own work has been wilfully broken or damaged with boots, knives and screwdrivers in the gallery setting. Considering the energy flashing and flying around the space at the ICA the rest of the work in The Thin Black Line emerged at the end of the run, unscathed.

Love Lubaina

Dear Susan

Thanks for asking about the impact of these shows. There were all sorts of reactions and responses from other artists, critics and curators, family and friends, largely unarchived and off the record. The work was made in the main for other black women to engage with. We made it so that we could communicate, so that we could swell the ranks of active, creative and political artists. We made it for young women like ourselves and also for the thousands of older black women in Britain who had supported the system for decades. We each brought favourite family photos and pictures of singers, dancers and musicians to adorn the space and make it feel like home.

Some of what we wanted to express in a very direct way was also revealed in the catalogue for *The Thin Black Line*, it contained some extraordinary texts; the following extracts may give you some idea of the determined opinions we were happy to share.

Sutapa Biswas said All art forms are political and must be read within a socio-historical context. Much of my work is satirical and insists upon the multiplicity of meaning. One of its intentions is to re- assess, question and re-write that history which belongs to imperialism.

Jennifer Comrie wrote "My blackness and spiritual awareness are important elements within the work. With a sense of black consciousness, I am able to speak as a black woman who feels that her sexuality within this society is reduced to rabidity whose intelligence, confidence in herself is still being reduced to inefficiency..Though others of a different racial group may be able to intellectualise and rationalise the problems I face as a black person, experiencing similar problems one is only truly comforted when ones own kind states I understand, I have been there myself."

Marlene Smith said As Black women artists our work revolves around and evolves out of an experience which is our own. As a Black woman I feel a responsibility to address that experience, to embrace it, to explore it. In so doing many of my images deal with brutality and violence. It is important to point out here that such work is about the continued attempt to dehumanise us. My work is not about a dejected people nor does it portray a degraded black womanhood. I seek to contribute to the building of a

material culture that might have been denied were it not for the struggles of my people.

I was called a cultural terrorist by one free-lance curator, who worked in the commercial sector, it hurt then, but she simply could not deal with the apparent speed and strength of our progress nor our disregard for the market.

Claudette Johnson said The black women in my drawings are monoliths. Larger than life versions of women, invisible to white eyes and naked to our own. They are women who have been close to me all my life - with different stories. They are not objects. Every black woman who survives art college fairy tales & a repressive society to make images of her reality - deserves the name artist.

Sonia Boyce wrote A child's curiosity and fear of the adult world, religion and personal relationships: these have been my main themes. The familiar/sensual, the familiar/uncomfortable. I work mainly on paper with paper and crayons.

The pastel work she produced for this show, that I described in some other letter to you, was among the last of its kind she made for public showing.

Maud Sulter's text was long in comparison to most of the other artists; she was after all a poet. She didn't include images at all in her contribution; one section read, The primary area of my creative production is my writing. Poetry, prose, articles. Covering a range of subjects; personal/political. The images I produce incorporate photography, drawing, newspaper cuttings and texts; both my own and by others. Within this context the significance of the image modulating the text fascinates me. Later in the text towards the end she says, Yes being visible can be dangerous. But being invisible eats away at your soul. Night and Day.

Veronica Ryan really wanted to talk about her practice and allow the political to emerge, In my studio I have a collection of natural objects. The collection started when I became aware of the fact that more and more the sculptures resembled particular kinds of land and sea structures. These objects I have decided have their origins in a primal past. More specifically they are partly reminiscent of the very unlikely way these objects grow. Their relationship to the ground or bulging out of a tree trunk continually arrests my imagination. They are ridiculous and wonderful at the same time.

I am trying to establish a sense of place both historically, culturally and psychologically. The word heritage conveys a rich sense of tradition and

security. But there is a sense in which I use sculptural language to make and explore boundaries in a contemporary context. The sculpture could be described as having a direct parallel with the diverse ways in which human behaviour communicates, or remains alienated.

Ingrid Pollard submitted 41 simple words of biographical text which held within them such a rich tapestry of experience it still moves me when I read it today. She said, Born in Georgetown Guyana I came to England when I was 4 years old and have lived in London since then. I have spent recent years as a photographer and as a printer in a Community Arts Project in Hackney.

This short narrative illustrates exactly what was in different ways central to all of us ; our families had come from somewhere else at some point, we were all educated in Britain and knew we had a great deal to contribute to the cultural landscape. None of us has ever given up being creative and all of us who are still alive continue to attempt to share what we know.

See you soon
Love Lubaina

