Lubaina Himid
Do You Want an Easy Life?
By
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A Beginning

> Out of my flesh that hungers
> and my mouth that knows
> comes the shape I am seeking
> for reason.
> The curve of your waiting body
> fits my waiting hand
> Darkly risen…
> the moon speaks
> -*On a Night of the Full Moon* by **Audre Lorde**[1]

I met artist Lubaina Himid in 2016, to discuss the possibilities of Himid's participation in the 14th edition of the Sharjah Biennial, which I was co-curating. Our encounters, however, stretched back in time over several years—via second-hand conversations, loan agreements, image clearance forms, and the like. Such is the life of the curator seeking to notarize art into its sanctioned forms to enter history. When I was a senior curator at Cornerhouse, Manchester's international arts center, Prof. Sarah Perks, who hails from Rochdale, a town where Himid had once worked as an "Exhibition Officer" at the Rochdale Art Gallery, often inserted Himid's name into our exhibition timelines. Institutional leadership at the time professed that they wished to emphasize the "internationalization of the art world" and not the "local", thus, they steered the program otherwise—otherwise now being an operative word used for the reclamation of Black people's creativity.[2]

My preoccupation with unfolding the details of Lubaina Himid's practice is tethered to certain details of her inner life. Born in Zanzibar in 1954 to a white English mother who originally hailed from the North-West of England and a Comoran father from Zanzibar—life for the artist born, Lubaina Ramadan Abdullah Himid, was unsettled from the beginning. Her father died suddenly of malaria aged 33. Her mother was 26, and Lubaina, was but a few weeks old. At just under 5 months of age, Himid accompanied her mother, a textile designer, who set up roots in London. Creativity was bedded into the material of everyday life. Himid

began learning to play the cello in 1965 at age 11, took morning art classes at the Camden Arts Centre in 1968, at age 14, and won the Observer newspaper's poetry competition in 1970, aged 16.

This cursory look at early successes, suggests a gifted adolescent with a bounty of extra-curriculars who could pursue any formal academic path. But Himid had constituted her own trajectory. Although, it took nearly 40 years of working life for perceived mainstream recognition to emerge, Himid had opted for a different "plan."[3] The design of this plot was not individualistic, but anchored by a communal desire to disentangle the folds of culture that for far too long has been the preserve of a particular British [yes white] elite.[4]

Himid's interests were fueled by an ongoing negotiation of myriad cultural forms that orbited her life. The kanga—a piece of thin cotton cloth, often deployed as a repeating pattern in women's clothing in East Africa is a significant reference. The tradition associated with pattern, the emotional experience being in the theatre or at the opera, the European and North American art taught in school, all served as orientations for Himid to decode.

Within these vessels of concern—threads, looping and woven, have constituted a political fabric for Himid to delve into histories of Black people's lives in Britain.[5] The 18th century movement of African slaves is often cited, conjured, and contoured in Himid's paintings. These works find their rejoinder in a scenography of cut-outs, text, poetry, sound, music, and performance. In the world of each canvas, one will simultaneously find architecture and color, layered, inter-textual worlds that invoke historical references from James Tissot to William Hogarth, although constituted in a scenography entirely of her own imagination.[6]

At the heart of Himid's art are the affective possibilities of using the space of the exhibition as a stage, as a site of encounter, and response.[7] This can be evidenced in Himid's profound love of opera. This, we are informed, is because 'that is how she experiences the world'—small, everyday acts accumulate, becoming living performances—sites of unrelenting question with the charge of potential love and heartbreak, or of the tragedy of potential loneliness and isolation.[8] Realities of grief and heartbreak that we will each experience at some point in our lives. The probing interior question posed by poet, Mary Oliver, "what is your plan to do/with your one wild and precious life?" can be understood as a bookend to every one of these lived and felt scenes that Himid, constructing in her mind, is crafting for the spectator to bear witness to.[9]

Himid's foundational study was followed by a degree in Theatre Design at Wimbledon Art School. In context, this makes perfect sense. Himid's early designs were for the notable restaurant and bar, Tuttons in Covent Garden—in proximity of the Royal Opera House, the Theatre Royal, and the Linbury Theatre. After graduation, the prospect of assembling an "artistic life" that could economically sustain her was a challenge in the trenches of Thatcher-era Britain.[10] Himid's subsequent pursuit of an MA in Cultural History at the Royal College of Art (RCA), London in 1982, coincided with Himid attending the first congress of the Blk Art Group, a consortium of artists from art schools in and around the East Midlands. Figures associated with this constellation of artists include Eddie Chambers, Claudette Johnson, Keith Piper, Donald Rodney, and Marlene Smith. At the "First National Convention of Black Art" at Wolverhampton Polytechnic, Himid would attend a talk by artist Claudette Johnson. Known primarily for her large-scale drawings of Black figures, as well as performative self-portraits, Johnson was the only woman to give a keynote presentation at the event. Her talk, which spoke of the marginalization of women within the field of what would later become referred to, and understood to be, the British Black Art Movement, a riposte to the Black Arts Movement in the United States two-decades prior, stirred discomfort and debate.[11] Himid developed a life-long friendship with Johnson and curated Johnson's first institutional solo exhibition at the Rochdale Art Gallery in 1990.

At the Royal College of Art, Himid posted an announcement in *Art Monthly* magazine calling for "young black artists" to respond to a questionnaire. It is at this juncture that one of her primary concerns takes shape. That of using her voice to create space for other Black and women artists. Himd was studying, curating, and creating paintings, such as the large-scale mural, *Justice, Unity, Equality, Freedom* (1985), a collaboration with Simone Alexander in Meanwhile Gardens, London. Fueled by an unrelenting fervor for making hidden histories visible and a strategic eye to opportunity, Himid organized the exhibitions, *5 Black Women* at the Africa Centre in 1983 and *Black Woman Time Now* at Battersea Arts Centre, as well as her most talked-about of exhibitions, *The Thin Black Line* at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), London in 1985. Setting up in temporary studios and spaces from Borough to the Docklands, Himid conterminously developed a distinct form of creative expression, most recognizably with her paintings of cut-outs, such as *Carrot Piece* (1985) and *A Fashionable Marriage* (1986). These works constitute a form of living theatre that evokes the dummy boards popular in 1600s Europe and colonial-era America. Himid notes that her attraction to

the form is tethered to the cut out's "call to action"—to invite you to pose with a historical figure, or to animate a restaurant menu, for instance.[12] From a 21st century vantage point, Himid's cut-outs feel especially contemporary, akin to the holograms of light found in airports and train-stations of human beings presenting security instructions, each of these attempting to stand-in for something life-like. They also evoke the contemporary concept of the avatar—the appropriation of a historic figure, re-fashioned, and made animate in the networked world of gaming, as much as they induce feelings of the painter Henri Matisse, and his cut-outs. Whether subconscious or not, Himid has cited Matisse's 1968 Hayward Gallery exhibition in London, as being one of the more memorable early exhibitions that she visited growing up.[13] The cover of the exhibition catalogue presented a blue cut-out of a female body that looks as if it is about to leap off the page.

One of the distinctive aspects of Himid's cut-outs is that they can be used in exhibition spaces to configure entire worlds of their own. These bodies demand voluminous space be constructed around them. Early cut-outs posed critiques of Black life and experience in Britain. *Carrot Piece* (1985), which Himid included in her exhibition *The Thin Black Line*, recasts the 18th century cartoonist and printmaker, James Gillroy's *Sandwich Carrots! dainty sandwich carrots* (1796) where a callow aristocrat can be seen grabbing a hold of a woman with a cart full of provisions. In Himid's imagining, we bear witness to a white figure attempting to capture a black woman with a carrot on a stick, but she too is already equipped with "everything she needs."[14] Speaking of this work, which is now held in Tate's collection of British and international art, Himid has noted that it was created during a moment when Black women artists were being "cajoled" by public institutions to enact an inclusionary politics. In Himid's domain, Black women were crafting out their own sustenance, which required, "self-belief, inherited-wisdom, education and love."[15]

Himid's practice of making space for a personal and historically situated form of Black visuality, can be understood as an accumulation of material effects—drawings, paintings, cut-outs, sculpture, sound, installation, and performance, which dovetail into an act of what the philosopher, Martin Heidegger referred to as a form of "worlding"—a kind of care in this case, anchored around a female ocular perspective, one made manifest through exhibitions, acts of institution-making, teaching, writing and public intervention.[16] Pulling together these various nodes of thought reveals Lubaina Himid to be a polymath—a person whose knowledge is not circumscribed to the field of a perceived singular art form or

context, but rather anchored around a constellation of thought that includes the history of the stage, music, broadcast; a convening of lyric and song; a sprawling sketchbook where the satire of William Hogarth, the poetry of queer-Black-feminist, Audre Lorde, the illusory Op-Art of Bridget Riley; the sublime of J.M.W. Turner, the cavernous landscapes of William Bell, the emotional abstraction of late painter Howard Hodgkin, all coalesce under one plane.

A key routing text for Lubaina was the publication from 1983 by American author, Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose*. A 'Womanist' connotes/is 'a Black feminist of color,' a term derived from the folk expression in Black American culture of mothers to female children. It relates to what Walker defined as a person who prefers women's culture. A person that is drawn to "women's emotional flexibility", and individuals who "value tears as natural counterbalances to laughter." A person who "Loves music. Loves dance…Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. *Loves* the Folk. Loves herself. *Regardless*."[17] In these words, Lubaina Himid may have found both a descriptor for and how she approached her creative community. Her plan now had a framework, through and from which she could journey.

Framing a Womanist Worldview

While love is unfashionable
let us live
unfashionably.
Seeing the world
a complex ball
in small hands;
love our blackest garment
…
While love is dangerous
Let us walk bareheaded
beside the Great River.
Let us gather blossoms
under fire.
-*While Love is Unfashionable* by **Alice Walker**[18]

Lubaina Himid's continuous acts of space-making followed-on after her graduation from the Royal College of Art. In April 1986, she opened the Elbow Room. The invitation for the first exhibition read: Lubaina Himid at The Elbow Room presents *Unrecorded Truths* in Vine Yard, SE1. The show featured women with whom Himid had collaborated before such as, Simone Alexander, Sutapa Biswas, and Marlene Smith, but also Black male artists including, Donald Rodney. Himid would curate Donald Rodney's first solo exhibition in 1989 at Rochdale Art Gallery—the only institutional solo held during his lifetime. He died 9 years later.

The warehouse-like space of the Elbow Room, which would later move to east London, continued alongside Himid's artmaking. It appears, scrolling through archival documents, to have served as a composed stage for convenings of Black British artists, revealing a polyphony of voices and artistic styles. Himid galvanized the attention of the UK broadcast media via former ICA director, Sandy Nairne, and was profiled in the flagship TV documentary series, *State of the Art* in 1986. Himid was profiled in the sixth episode on the theme of "Identity, Culture and Power."[19] By 1990, the Elbow Room was no more. Lubaina Himid moved out of London, first to Yorkshire and then to Preston. A group of white artists known as the Young British Artists or the YBA's took center stage in the world of art. Himid's next path would be forged and sustained via the pleasure Himid found working full-time in higher education with fine art students. At the University of Central Lancashire, Himid served as director of research for the art school, and set-up the archive, Making Histories Visible, which became a key resource for scholars examining Black creativity and expression. It attracted the likes of scholars such as Courtney J. Martin, Griselda Pollock, Dorothy Price, Helen Legg, and Zoé Whitley, to name but a few.[20] The assembly grew.

The Amenities of an Artistic Life

> Shadows move along ladders
> under the silence of ordinary things
> there is another silence:
> it belongs neither to the leaves nor to the
> dead
> -*The Manifestations of a Voyage* by **Etel Adnan**[21]

The exhibition catalogue for *New Robes for MaShulan*—a reference to Himid's late grandmother MaShulan, opened with a reproduction of two painted women running ecstatically entitled, *Freedom and Change* (1984). This black and white photo preceded reflections made manifest in poetry and prose. Drawings by Himid sat alongside poems by Audre Lorde, as well as personal photographs. Near the end of the catalogue, Himid and exhibition collaborator, Maud Sulter discuss a form of social activism. They propose that their collaborative dialogue was part of an attempt at "creating a space of our own."[22]

Later, Maud Sulter's sought to embody facets of the life of Edmonia Lewis, a female sculptor of international repute who disappeared in Rome in the 19th century (with Himid photographed as a performing subject), also serves as evidence of Himid's persistent desire for creating space for Black women to gain control and claim back historical narratives, and to allow for them to be embodied.

Himid was simultaneously developing a container—a vestige for her own memories to find their life. The result of this searching act forms the backbone of the nine diptychs entitled, *Zanzibar* (1999-2023). These paintings, produced mostly in 1998 speak of a series of journeys—triggered by a visit by Himid back to Zanzibar in 1997. Paintings of shutters and seashells live next to evocations of cloves and her mother's rosewater, which forms a pink wash on one of her linen canvasses. Himid has noted that after creating these paintings, she came to realize that she had spent her entire life painting the "place, the sound, and the memory of the island [of Zanzibar] all along."[23] The creation of these works, dubbed an exercise in "speed, daring, calm and panic"—evoke landscapes, of the "fleeting and familiar"—of textile and tiles, and mosquito nets.[24] At first exhibited on walls, *Zanzibar* would find a new life in her ongoing collaboration with artist, Magda Stawarska, with whom she has worked for nearly two decades. Between 2022 and 2023, Stawarska worked with Himid to construct a floating architecture to display the nine diptychs as one singular

installation. Over the course of a year, Stawarska also developed an eight-channel sound composition, fusing myriad cultural references into a living score. The sound of rainfall anchors one's senses as they enter the installation. Inside, archival recordings of life in mid-century Britain from the BBC are juxtaposed against the sound of familiar musical instruments to Himid from childhood. Himid's voice comes to life in a two-hander, reading passages from her diary from Zanzibar, and reading passages from the guidebook that Himid's father had given to her mother before her journey there. By putting Himid's voice at the heart of the aural sphere, Stawarska, allows Himid to finally be seen as a subject in her own work. The resulting installation creates a space for vulnerable contemplation, for intimacies to be explored, and weaves the listener through animate opera, as the visitor's body moves amongst Himid's floating memories.

Another key interlocutor for Himid over the years is the artist, Susan Walsh. Walsh's interest in civic space, home, and homelessness, led to the creation of *The Feast Wagon* in 2015, an exhibition which presented a series of 39 found carts, which were painted, animated, and exhibited at the now shuttered Tetley gallery in Leeds. Here, Himid explores how the concept of migration and circulation is explored through everyday objects—ones traditionally used to move people and their personal belongings. The installation of this body of work is often punctuated with Himid's question: 'What will you take with you?' The phrase was emblazoned across a window by Himid when presenting these moving receptacles at Sharjah Art Foundation in the UAE in her joint survey with Stawarska in 2023. In this site, the wagon functioned not as a container of provisions or of dreams, but rather, as a mechanism or proposal of or for escape for all those dwellers who come to temporarily reside in the locality: *The Feast Wagon* as moveable museum.

Himid's eager embrace, the way that she enters the spheres of her collaborators, affirms the generosity that she affords to other artists, namely those who are preoccupied with the same pursuit of fashioning an imagination that is contrary to that which has been sanctioned by official record or history. In 2017, the artist became the first Black woman, and the most senior figure to win Britain's storied Turner-prize—an award that had for long been associated with the Young British Artists. Soon after, she was offered a major one-person survey exhibition at Tate Modern—at the time, the world's most visited museum of modern and contemporary art, and London's most popular tourist attraction. In 2020, one of her paintings—a nature painting created during the Covid-19 pandemic, graced the covers of

British Vogue. Concurrently, several of the women who Himid had presented in her curated exhibitions had become the subject of vital attention. Artist Sonia Boyce was announced and would go on to become the first Black woman to represent Britain at the Venice Biennale, where she would go on to win the Golden Lion. Ingrid Pollard would be nominated for a Turner-Prize, alongside Veronica Ryan, who would go on to win the prize, replacing Himid in becoming 'the most senior individual' to receive the award. All three women featured in *The Thin Black Line* in 1985 curated by Himid.

A Brief Study through Windows

> I should sit on a rock off Cornwall and comb my hair/We should meet in another life, we should meet in the air, Me and You.
> -*From Lesbos* by **Sylvia Plath**[25]

Venturing in the afternoon from Himid's home to her city-center studio. The shutters gradually open, and the light brings her in-progress paintings into focus. Himid is known for only painting in daylight. Her words, are affecting, "my paintings exist in the space between a question and an answer.'' She continued, 'I seek to capture how the shape of one's life can be changed by the very simple decision, of a yes or no. How can an invitation affect the rest of your life?'[26]

In the 1980s and 90s, Himid may have been more recognized for her portraits of Black women, but recently, Black male figures equally command significant space and attention. A painting catches my gaze. Here, an affable looking Black man in what one assumes is a velour turquoise waistcoat is affectionately holding a cage with two birds inside. He is holding another empty cage in his right hand. Behind him neo-classical railings, known as a balustrade for their Latin root that denotes the "swelling" of their center, gives way behind him to a floating seascape and pier. Another gentleman, in contemporary dress, in a florescent yellow jacket, with a red tote bag, enters the frame and seems to *just nearly about* to *touch* the other man's shoulder.

"Are they queer?" I queried. There was no immediate response. "They seem like they could be illicit lovers—out of sync, out of step with time", I continued. There was no response. The work—to situate and pose the questions—was either reserved for the inner

worlds of these two men or for me to hold in my person. To constitute one's own opera, or to allow others theirs, was to permit these characters a certain kind of breath. They were not to be suffocated by overt language nor to have their fate determined.

Lubaina Himid has birthed multiple sites—some exist only for her characters; others are pulled from history. In 2018, at Baltic art gallery in Gateshead, the words, "Our Kisses are Petals/Our Tongues Caress the Bloom" were painted across an entire room in her signature use of the font "Thorne Shaded." An iconic typeface first developed at the Fann Street Foundry in 1810, its animism lies in the capacious space that it creates. Deployed here at Baltic, it gave visuality to the late gay Black Chicago-born poet, Essex Hemphill, who died of AIDS-related causes in 1995 aged 38.[27] The quote by Himid resuscitates him into a semi-public consciousness referencing a poem about the experiences of two men attempting to share space, against the searing backdrop induced by their race and extreme poverty. In 2023, the words pulse—reimagined, translated into Arabic, protruding from the wall, visible from a public courtyard.

With gentle precision, Himid has embodied what bell hooks once referred to as an 'oppositional gaze'. This type of looking was originally described as an act of "political rebellion" and resistance, demanding the Black person's "right to look."[28] Equally, Toni Morrison's profession that she authored books about people whom she wanted to read [withheld from popular histories], also serves as an exemplary reference point.[29] But the galvanizing of the symphony, is reserved for the audiences who visit Himid's exhibitions. Himid's rooms bear multiple seats of possibility for her audiences. Each of her characters, such as the 100 cut-outs in her ambitious project, *Naming the Money* (2004) are embodied with the rarest of talents and skillsets. Sentient, they enliven sets for the human imagination to action, and all the while, Himid is still behind-the-scenes, conducting with pure feeling.

Grids and Squares

Tulips spilled sensuous stamen
scattering intense purple
pigment across glass toppled table.
Blown petals sunkissed yellow
shot through with spiced pink
flanked full and open cores.

-*From Bounty* (*from Zabat*) by **Maud Sulter**[30]

One can speak at significant length of the conjured figures in Lubaina Himid's paintings—found holding space together—be they intimate, restless, or uneasy in their varied settings. The world in which they are anchored, can be read as 'in-dialogue' with a history of political abstraction—conceiving of space through the interlocking fields and codified pattern that form her various backdrops. Himid has often cited her textile designer mother as one of her biggest creative influences.[31] Evidence of this can be found in the motifs found in the painted clothes of her figures, or in the detailed grids woven into the centers and folds of works of art that have seen Himid begin to form her own culturally located canon of history painting. Patterns inspired by Kangas sweep across some of the artist's most recognizable paintings, as well as in installations such as, *How Do you Spell Change?* (2018), where Himid's kangas are annotated with different lines of poetry and exhibited at the size of national flags, shown in public squares.

In Himid's "Le Rodeur" series of paintings (2016-2017) her familiar tessellating pattern ushers us into the realm of the French slave ship that set sail in April of 1819. The historical narrative of this vessel was that several of the crew and enslaved Africans had gone either temporarily or permanently blind over the course of their journey. The narrative is that for insurance purposes, the ship's captain ordered 36 slaves be thrown overboard as they crossed the Middle Passage—more useful dead than alive.[32] In one of Himid's paintings, *Le Rodeur: The Exchange* (2016), the artist finds a new metaphor for blindness by creating an expository realm for the unknown. She notes, "these are individuals who most certainly had never been on a boat before… had no idea where they were…what was going to happen to them."[33] The figures in her frame, could be said to be in sartorial dress, plucked from their everyday lives. The look of despair on the central character's face, sees another figure attempting to placate him. The sense of innocuous anxiety, of individuals unable to placate one another speaks precisely to the surreal experience of slavery as a passage unto itself, one filled with the infuriating unknowing of what will become of one's future.

The trenchant sea, its architecture, and framing, brings one to Himid's "Plan B" series of paintings, conjured during a residency at Tate St. Ives initiated in 1997. In *The Glare of the Sun (Plan B)* (1999), one's eye is witness to what resembles a darkened and empty stage set, or is it a theatre? Empty chairs, the burnt orange glare cast overhead, exists across a room

sinking half of the scene into a shroud of darkness. The smallest of windows offers a brief form of respite—the sea; it beckons, treacherous as it may be. The left side of the canvas presents a lyrical two-hander—narrating a journey of migration—forced—one of lack, of thirst, where the salt of tears descends into the vast sea. In *Everybody Is (Plan B)* (1999), ebullient color suggests a warm welcome, until one's gaze adjusts to the confines of Himid's choreographed grids. These are unceasing nets, proposing endless bounds of emptiness. The beauty of the sea here at first seems absent. In her exhibition with Stawarska at Sharjah Art Foundation, Himid returns to the spirit of collaboration to re-imagine a culturally situated context for her artworks. In this scenography, her Plan B paintings are displayed at various points in a large square room that mirrors the hollow angular lines found in her paintings. Beneath a skylight sit two ascending curved benches, which were designed by Lebanese architect, Thourayya Kreidieh, inspired by the arched seating found in English churchyards. The sound of the thrashing waves, from St. Ives is mixed into a sonic relay between two male voices speaking in an Egyptian dialect of Arabic. These words are translations of the stories of exile found in Himid's paintings. This setting, *Plan B: A Libretto* (2023) is once again created in collaboration with Magda Stawarska.

The immeasurable expanse of water features everywhere in Himid's art, the artist's relationship with it, nevertheless, is changeable. The sea's presence stimulates a sense of what she has referred to as unease.[34] A site of ceaseless longing, a space of absence, a trench of and for warfare. From time to time, but for a gust of wind, its prospect as a proposed route of and for escape, is recognized. The emptiness in the Plan B paintings is evocative of the artist's starting point for the project, which revolved around her preoccupation with the painters of St. Ives, who were unable to paint the sea or its coastline during World War One. For the sea had become exposed as a battlefield, and so these painters were forced to turn inwards to paint landscapes.

In Himid's hands, the absence becomes an evocative exercise in framing emptiness—these are not white walls or simple white cubes—a pivotal reference in contemporary art history. For Himid, the desolation associated with this period gives architecture new life. Lattices emerge in *Pool Series: Blue*, where thickets of blue paint are overlaid across two canvasses that sit atop each other—stretching, contorting—forging an illusory stage set for a world of characters that do not seem to exist. The scale and height of these expressive painted panels are as evocative of Op Art as they are of the ocular experiments with line and

color by the late Lebanese artist Saloua Raouda Choucair. Choucair's Sufi-influenced concept of "infinite possibility", which was fueled by her interest in Islamic history, from architecture to mathematics.[35]

Himid's grids are bound together by both emotion and politics. They are situated passages, invoking the symbolism of places and cultures that have been forgotten. Tethering fields of abstraction to memories of places lost, she imbues the abstract political sphere with the dramaturgical preparation of a set designer—her backdrops often evoking the sense of constant movement. In her Plan B drawings, such as *Near Neighbors* (1998) the trellised lifeguard huts expand to a boundless sea summoning allusions to the myriad literary and biblical references that it holds from Moby Dick to Noah's Ark. As ever, Himid is communicating to a scope of history that is larger than her own. Hers is an environment with a depth of field that stretches back centuries. Himid's grid is as much a space, as it is a constructed network—one that can be used as an index, or an alphabet for looking.

These forms are a testament to a life and time, which is on-going, a world and context that the artist continues to mold, shape, and configure. Leaving spectators with a situated frame for a shared and collective future.

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[1] Audre Lorde (1970) *Cables to Rage*. New York: Paul Breman.

[2] Lola Olufemi (2021) *Experiments in Imagining Otherwise*. London: Hajar Press.

[3] Here, I am referencing Himid's "Freedom Kangas", what Hettie Judah referred to as a "speaking cloth", specifically the work, Lubaina Himid, *Always have a plan*, 2016, acrylic on paper, 72 x 102 cm. Read more at Hettie Judah (2017) 'Interwoven: The Fabric of Things'. *Kvadrat Interwoven*. Available at: http://kvadratinterwoven.com/lubaina-himids-speaking-cloth, accessed 22 November 2023.

[4] Courtney J. Martin (2019) 'Lubaina Himid: Curator 1983-21012. In L. Panting and M. Ståhl (eds.) *Lubaina Himid: Workshop Manual*. London and Cologne: Koenig Books. Pgs: 55-73.

[5] Helen Legg (2019) 'On Navigating, Naming and Choosing to Speak'. I. In L. Panting and M. Ståhl (eds.) *Lubaina Himid: Workshop Manual*. London and Cologne: Koenig Books. Pgs: 143-153.

[6] Lubaina Himid (2019) 'A conversation between Lubaina Himid, Lisa Panting, and Malin Ståhl'. . In L. Panting and M. Ståhl (eds.) *Lubaina Himid: Workshop Manual*. London and Cologne: Koenig Books. Pgs: 293-300.

[7] Griselda Pollock and Lubaina Himid (2021) 'On the Pleasures of Opera'. In M. Wellen (ed.) *Lubaina Himid*. London: Tate Publishing. Pgs: 16-40.

[8] Lubaina Himid (2023) 'I love opera because it is the way I experience life'. *The Guardian*. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2023/jun/08/lubaina-himid-paintings-glyndebourne-opera, accessed 22 November 2023.

[9] Lubaina Himid has led me to this quote from poet Mary Oliver. Mary Oliver (1990) 'The Summer Day'. *House of Light*. Boston: Beacon Press.

[10] Courtney J. Martin (2019) 'Lubaina Himid: Curator 1983-21012. In L. Panting and M. Ståhl (eds.) *Lubaina Himid: Workshop Manual*. London and Cologne: Koenig Books. Pgs: 55-73.

[11] Aurella Yussuf (2021) 'The Women of the British Black Arts Movement'. *AWARE*. Available at: https://awarewomenartists.com/en/magazine/les-femmes-du-british-black-arts-movement/, accessed 22 November 2023.

[12] Omar Kholeif, Lubaina Himid and Magda Stawarska (2023) 'Interview'. In. O. Kholeif (ed.) *Lubaina Himid and Magda Stawarska: Plaited Time / Deep Water*. Sharjah: Sharjah Art Foundation. Pgs: 27-53.

[13] Ibid

[14] Lubaina Himid (2015) 'Carrot Piece: Online Caption'. *Tate*. Available at https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/himid-the-carrot-piece-t14192, accessed 22 November 2023.

[15] Lubaina Himid (2021) 'How Himid is rewriting history'. *Tate*. Available at: https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/lubaina-himid-cbe-ra-2356/yes-but-why-lubaina-himid, accessed 22 November 2023.

[16] Matin Heidegger (1927/1966) *Being in the World* (trans. Joan Stambaugh). New York: State University of New York Press. Pages 8-52.

[17] Alice Walker (1983) *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*. New York: HBJ. Page X.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Sandy Nairne (1987) *State of the Art: Ideas & Images in the 1980s*. London: Chatto & Windus in collaboration with Channel 4 Television Company Limited.

[20] From a conversation with the author at 13.00 BST on 22 September 2020.

[21] Etel Adnan (1990) *The Spring Flowers Own and the Manifestations of the Voyage*. Sausalito, CA: Post-Apollo Press. Pages:

[22] Maud Sulter and Lubaina Himid (1987) *New Robes for MaShulan* (1987). Hebden Bridge: Urban Fox Press. Pages: 1–3.

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