

ArtSpark

# Lubaina Himid

GOV/ART/COL



Department  
for Culture,  
Media & Sport

Look out for the below symbols!  
They flag up prompts that work especially well with those areas of the curriculum.

 ENGLISH

 DIVERSITY

 MATHS

 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

 HISTORY

 LGBTQ+ RIGHTS

 GEOGRAPHY

 BRITISH VALUES


 ART

 MENTAL HEALTH  
& WELLBEING

 CITIZENSHIP

 PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT  
OF YOUNG PEOPLE

 COMPUTING

 When you see this icon (hand symbol), you can click on an external link to provide you with more information.

This learning resource is intended to bring you closer to the series of prints commissioned through the TenTen Award.

Bursting with information, you'll find suggestions on how to engage with the artwork in a whole range of ways – from exploring the artist's themes and techniques, to pointers on curriculum links. The wide variety of prompts are intended to ensure the artwork is approachable and relevant, no matter what your teaching specialism! You are encouraged to run with whichever you choose.

Each resource kicks off with 10 interesting facts about the artwork – but you don't have to become an expert on everything. Facts have their place, but so do feelings. One of the most valuable things about art is it gives us space to play, explore and feel.

Anything you think about the artwork, and the words you use to talk about it, it's all good.

# 10 facts: Lubaina Himid

- 1 Lubaina Himid is a British painter who has dedicated her career to uncovering marginalised and silenced histories, figures and cultural expressions.
- 2 She was born in Zanzibar in 1954 but moved to the UK with her mother when she was only four months old.
- 3 Growing up with a mother who was a textile designer taught Himid a lot: 'I was living with a woman who was constantly looking at the colour of things, at other people's clothes. And we were constantly in shops and we weren't at shops buying things. We were in shops looking.'
- 4 She originally studied Theatre Design at Wimbledon College of Arts, and her interest in theatre remains a powerful factor, both in how she displays her work and what she wants the viewer to feel. She describes trying to make a show 'so that the audience member believes they're the most important person in the room.'
- 5 In 2017, Himid became the first Black female artist in history to win the Turner Prize, shattering records and breaking traditional prize rules (previously only artists under 50 could receive the award).

- 6 Himid's work has raised awareness about harmful representations of people of colour in British society. 'In the 1980s', she recalls, 'you didn't see many black people anywhere. We were here... but we were not on the television, or in newspapers unless something drastic or dangerous happened.'
- 7 Himid was one of the first artists involved in the UK's Black Arts movement. In the early 1980s, three exhibitions in London curated by Himid marked the arrival on the British art scene of a radical generation of young Black and Asian women artists. These exhibitions gave a platform to artists whose work would have otherwise been neglected by the art world.
- 8 Himid was appointed MBE (Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) in June 2010 "for services to Black Women's Art", and was promoted to CBE (Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) in the 2018 Queen's Birthday Honours "for services to Art." The CBE is the highest ranking Order of the British Empire award (excluding a knighthood/damehood) and is awarded to individuals for having a prominent role at national level or a leading role at regional level.
- 9 Himid has said that she hopes her work might encourage a person to do something they were hesitant about: 'Maybe to send a letter, or try new food. To take an action, to make a step - no matter how seemingly small - that could possibly change their circumstances.'
- 10 Himid lives and works in Preston, one of the rainiest cities in the UK. She is Professor of Contemporary Art at the University of Central Lancashire.

# Old Boat, New Weather

'The whole of history is in the harbour –  
but we know that this story will set sail.'

– Lubaina Himid

→ *Old Boat, New Weather* is a screenprint representing a shack being carried on a sailing ship, with a European building on the harbour side. The vessel, part-ship and part-shack, was inspired by an encounter with the dilapidated dwellings of freed slaves in the Carolinas (USA). The image it produces is that of an ark: a symbol for a place of refuge.

Himid, whose work often gives voice to enslaved people and draws attention to the legacies of slavery, made *Old Boat, New Weather* in the context of the Black Lives Matter movement and in response to climate change. The composition brings together familiar themes in her practice, such as the juxtaposition of safety and danger, architecture and ships, slavery and imperial trade.



Lubaina Himid  
*Old Boat, New Weather*, 2021

Take a look at this statement:

*Old Boat, New Weather* is both stalling history and preparing for a future where changes in the climate will cause mass displacement.

- Do you think the image achieves this? And if so, how?

Himid has reinvented the traditional elements of painted seascapes – the harbour, the impending storm and the boat – by mixing up archive photographic imagery and woven strips of colour. Patterns frequently feature in Himid's practice. Here it is the sky pushing down a grid of blue and grey lines.

- What happens if you replace this sky with a different one?

Experiment with alternatives:

- Can you change the mood of the print by using different patterns, or different colours?

How about if the sky was also created from a black and white photograph?

Or if it was hand-drawn?

# Change

'It's not easy to make a painting, it's actually very difficult. But it is possible to change something about yourself or about your surroundings or about the world. I want people to think: "If she can do it, then it must be possible for me to do it too."

— Lubaina Himid

After a visit to Zanzibar, where she was born, Himid found inspiration from the kangas – the traditional clothing worn by women from the region, which often bear a written inscription or motto.

## Himid on Kangas



Lubaina Himid  
*The Sweet Sharp  
Taste of Limes*,  
2018

# Design your own kanga!

- What would you like to change – about yourself, your surroundings or the world?

You are going to use this as the inspiration for your own personal **kanga** design.



The dimensions for a kanga are:  
landscape, 100cm x 1500cm

Keeping the same dimensions, develop your design as a collage or on a computer.

Print your final design onto material, or try sewing techniques such as patchwork and appliqué, using recycled fabrics.



The design of a kanga can be divided into three parts:

1. The legend (the words, or motto)

Decide on a phrase that has a special significance to you in terms of change – it might be a lyric, proverb, or family expression. Keep it snappy!

2. The landscape

This is the image that fills the central panel and connects to the words.

Play around with collage.

Research archival photographs, as in Himid's print, or take your inspiration from the juxtaposition – use surprising contrasts.

3. The border

A repeated pattern that pulls an element from the landscape or illustrates the words.

Get technical:

- Work out how many repeats you want.  
Will the image flip from right to left, top to bottom?  
Can you print this? How many colours?  
What technique?

How will you display the completed kangas?



→ Himid is particularly interested in the history of textiles in both East African and British contexts. Her work explores how the making of clothing is tied up with the histories of industrialisation, female labour, migration and globalisation. She regards clothing as a form of communication rather than as passive items that we use to dress ourselves.

## What do your clothes say about you?

— What are your favourite items of clothing?

Do you know where they were made and who made them?

Do you think school uniforms are a good idea and if so why?



# My name is



‘We have an easy, lazy way of saying “refugees”. I think about people being actual people – each one born out of someone’s womb. So if you were to say, off the boat today came Mohammed or David or John and then added that, before they left, they were a carpenter, a doctor, a teacher... it is then they would start to breathe.’

– Lubaina Himid

‘We must not do this distancing – we are none of us more important than others.’

– Lubaina Himid

A theme running through much of Himid’s work is naming and namelessness.

In *Naming the Money*, 100 life-size cut-out figures representing enslaved African people share their real names, the names given to them by their masters for convenience, details of their lives before displacement and accounts of their lives as slaves and servants.

‘My name is Effiong. They call me John.  
I used to make rings for royal fingers.  
Now I make shoes for ladies’ feet.  
But I have gold.’

– Excerpt from *Naming the Money*

— Although these are fictional, symbolic stories, what is the effect of providing us with them?

How is the namelessness of people throughout history from Africa and the African Diaspora relevant in the context of nameless migrants and refugees today?

Can you think of an example, in the news or in your own experience, when a word was used that made a person seem less than an “actual person”?



# Design Your Sign Name

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Deaf culture is rich and varied. Often you will notice that sign names are used within the Deaf community.

Sign names are unique and personal and are a way to identify someone without finger spelling out their name using British Sign Language (BSL).

These sign names can often reflect a person's character, their appearance or their personality.



## What will you choose?

Here are some things to consider:

It has to be unique to you.

You need to be able to make the name using just fingers, hands and arms. It must be done within the space from the top of your head to your shoulders.

It could be something about your appearance. It might be something you are passionate about, like a hobby, or something you love doing.

Maybe a memory that is personal to you. It might relate to the sound of your name - maybe an action that rhymes with it. Or perhaps your sign name could be a gesture that is to do with the meaning of your name.

Help each other out if you are unsure. If you know someone who is Deaf, ask them for advice. If you are Deaf, share your sign name, and explain how you came to choose it.

You cannot officially give yourself a sign name until you meet someone from the Deaf community and it is agreed by that person that this will be your unique sign name.

→ What are the possible concerns you might have with choosing a sign name?

- Will it always fit?  
Might you outgrow your name?  
Could it be considered offensive or insulting?

List any concerns you may have and share ways you might use to address them.

Himid's voice reading out 'My name is'

Naming the Money' from Himid's website


Jonny Cotsen introduces Sign Names

# Stepping into the Painting

One of the techniques Himid employs is appropriation, which she uses to sometimes rework famous artworks by others.



Lubaina Himid  
*Freedom and Change*  
Photograph copyright of the artist

In *Freedom and Change* (1984) Himid reworks Pablo Picasso's 1922 painting *Two Women Running on the Beach (The Race)*. 

→ Look up both the artworks and talk about what changes Himid chose to make?

This might include who is depicted, the materials she has used, the mood of the work, etc. Why do you think Himid made these changes? What do you think are the effects of these changes?

How do both artworks make you feel? In order to appreciate Himid's work, do you think it matters whether or not the viewer is familiar with the original Picasso artwork?

The materials in Himid's version include a pink bed sheet, painted plywood, small torn pieces of cardboard collaged directly onto the fabric, and recycled paper tags and envelopes. What does this use of everyday materials suggest to you?

Do you think appropriation is an effective technique? What might you use it to say?

## Try it out for yourself!

On the next few pages are some artworks you'll find on the Government Art Collection website (or select any others you like).

A tableau is a group of models or motionless figures representing a story. Working in small groups, create a tableau of one of these artworks.

Using yourselves as models, one of you will take on the role of director and another will be the photographer.

\*If you do not have access to a camera you can stage these scenes in the moment, taking turns to be the audience for each other.

Use whatever you can find to create the costumes, scenery and props.

Be inventive - what can you transform into a hat?



- How can you evoke a sky?  
Think about the lighting.  
Play around with who gets to perform which character - what happens if you play with the gender spectrum or change size or age?

Take turns at being the director and photographer.

If you have taken photos, looking through them afterwards. Talk about which ones are particularly effective.

- Why did they work well?  
Did any make you laugh? What was funny?  
How did it feel enacting the different roles?

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## Extension Activity:

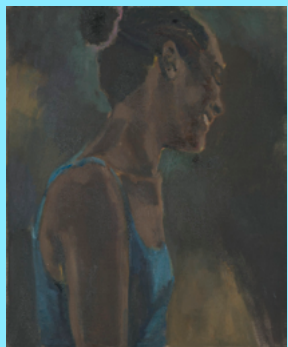
Write a monologue in the voice of the character you became.



Ahmad, Fath 'Ali  
Shah (1797-1834)  
2nd Qajar Shah of  
Iran, 1832 - 1833



Sir Godfrey  
Kneller, Arabella  
Hunt (1662-1705)  
Playing a Lute,  
1692



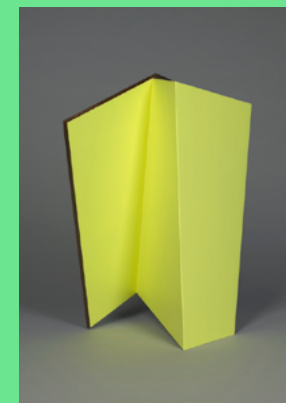
Lynette Yiadom-  
Boakye, Almond  
Clasp, 2018



Denzil Forrester,  
Family Living, 2004



Peter McDonald,  
Car Boot Sale, 2009



Rana Begum,  
No. 587 W Fold, 2015

# What do artists do all day?

'Being an artist is about working incredibly hard every day, and at the same time feeling free to do as you please with the ideas that you develop and the materials you have.'

- Lubaina Himid

'I'm a Painter and a Cultural Activist'

Lubaina Himid



In her own words, Himid's practice highlights the valuable 'contribution' black people have made to cultural life in Europe for the past several hundred years.'



As well as being a professor of Contemporary Art at the University of Central Lancashire, Himid is also on the board of many museums across the country, and leads a project called "Making Histories Visible".

Take a look at these five activities that the project covers

- Why are these all important to Himid?  
How are they part of an artist's job?
- Has Himid's practice changed your idea of what an artist does all day?

# What Next?

Feeling inspired? Here are some suggestions for extending the themes you've been looking at. These can be done outside school, and work equally well as solo activities or with friends and family.



## Change Something for Good!

Here are just a few ideas of ways to turn landfill into love:

**Repurpose an object:**  
Is it broken? Find an alternative use for it (eg. broken coffee pot to vase).  
Take a photo of the object in its new role.

Turn old plastic water bottles into a greenhouse

Turn a potato into a battery

Grown out of a favourite item of clothing?  
Turn it into something new (eg. jumper into cushion cover)

**Moth attack?**  
Get decorative with some visible darning

Make a solar panel out of old CDs

Add your own ideas of positive transformations.  
Share them in a poster.

# Further reading and links

[How Lubaina Himid gives voice to enslaved people and draws attention to the legacies of slavery.](#)



[Himid talks about using existing artworks](#)



<https://clou.uclan.ac.uk/5106/22/thinblacklinesbook.pdf>



<https://artuk.org/discover/stories/lubaina-himid-celebrating-the-history-of-black-creativity>



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