

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: University of Central Lancashire</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: UOA 34 Art & Design: History, Practice and Theory</p>
<p>Title of case study: Making Histories Visible</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Making Histories Visible produces visual art projects with internationally recognised museums and galleries, in which new artworks and installations activate institutional and curatorial policies to re-examine collections and collecting. By investigating the historic through the contemporary, using the mechanisms of display and interventions, youth centred workshops, symposia, web-sites and publications; we help museums find new relevance within contemporary society.</p> <p><i>Thin Black Line(s)</i> Tate Britain (2011/12), <i>Cotton Global Threads</i> Whitworth and Manchester Galleries (2011/2012), <i>Jelly Mould Pavilions</i> NML (2010), reflect collaborations and sustainable relationships with a wide, influential range of museum curators, directors and community leaders.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Professor Lubaina Himid and Ms Susan Walsh joined UCLan in 1990 and 1998 respectively. The researchers asked questions through visual art practice about how to show that the cultural contribution and participation of ethnically diverse communities, at every level, can develop and enrich the museum experience for a broad range of audiences, while encouraging a sense of belonging and a desire for engagement.</p> <p><u>Impact on Institutional Policy</u></p> <p>Himid’s strategy of interweaving new artworks into the display of historical collections, and curating and recontextualising collections in new ways, allows previously invisible issues to surface. In 2004, Himid made <i>Naming the Money</i> having investigated work in the collection held at the Hatton gallery (Newcastle). It allowed discussion around forcible migration, whilst also initiating a dialogue between the museum and the local communities using neglected fabric samples from the collection. Nine years later this work was acquired by the International Slavery Museum (Liverpool), and in 2007 this installation was central to the exhibition <i>Uncomfortable Truths</i> at the V&A which commemorated the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slave trade in Great Britain.</p> <p>Examining and constructively critiquing museum acquisition records, Walsh made it possible to develop broader more inclusive collecting policies. Complicated issues inherent in making visible the diversity of British art history became easier to debate, when facts and figures around works and artists represented in collections were transparent and quantified. Walsh’s study on the National Art Collections at Tate (2005), for the first time, examined all artists in the collection, and linked them by ethnicity. Between 2005 and 2007 there was a significant increase in acquisitions of work by artists from the black diaspora within the Tate.</p> <p><u>Impact on Cultural Discourse</u></p> <p><i>Thin Black Line(s)</i> (2011) reassessed a ‘lost’ curatorial moment and illustrated the connectivity and influence of black women artists working in London in the 1980s on contemporary art practice at the turn of the century.</p> <p>Himid, in a curatorial role, raised questions about the level of recognition or celebration of the contribution made by these artists to cultural landscapes internationally. Working with a range of museum services to interrogate their collections, she used artworks as interventions to trigger dialogues around hitherto neglected creative histories.</p> <p>Celeste-Marie Bernier in <i>The burial and un-burial of women</i> (Hampton University Press) says “Leaving her audience under no illusions that the paintings, installations, photographs, sculpture and drawings on view are in any way representative of the total work produced by Black female</p>

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artists in Britain, Himid liberates her viewers to take account of the artistic and political rationale for this group display”

Impact on Social Inclusion

When the work of black artists is central to an exhibition or museum display, both programme and education curators have found that they can initiate discussions with young audiences around identity and belonging.

National Museums Liverpool, for example, commissioned Himid to work in collaboration with a small cluster of their public venues including Lady Lever Art Gallery, Merseyside Maritime Museum and Sudley House. The project *Jelly Mould Pavilions for Liverpool* (2010) developed ideas around memorialisation, commemoration and the city by using museum collections as forums through which to weave difficult questions about ownership, hidden histories and the future of the strategy to make visible cultural contribution. This work added to the strategy for meaningful local community engagement by combining material from collections and archives across the world, and ‘heroic’ portraits developed from local and regional research.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Lubaina Himid *Thin Black Line(s)* 2011/2012 Exhibition Tate Britain www.thinblacklines.info
<http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/display/thin-black-lines>
2. Susan Walsh *Images and Conversations in the 1980's* 2011 Showreel Thin Black Line(s) Tate Britain www.thinblacklines.info
<http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/eventseducation/lateattatebritain/lateattatebritain2011december.htm>
<http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/display/thin-black-lines>
3. Lubaina Himid *Jelly Pavilions for Liverpool 2010 Collection Intervention* National Museums Liverpool www.jellypavilion.info www.northernartprize.org.uk/ourblog/jelly-tales
<http://blog.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/JellyMouldHunt.aspx>
4. Lubaina Himid *Kangas from the Lost Sample Book 2012/Cotton Global Threads Collection Intervention* Whitworth Art Gallery www.cottonglobalthreads.com
www.ellelens.com/cotton_educators_resource.pdf
5. Susan Walsh *Colourcode.info 2008 onwards* on-line publication www.colourcode.info

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Three groups benefited from this research:

- museum professionals working with collections, programmes and education;
- museum audiences –artists, critics, collectors and historians;
- new, young and community audiences – using art to learn about other subjects and those who meet together for social and political projects.

Museum professionals (Impact on institutional policy)

Initially, Himid’s work with museum professionals was to meet audience inclusion targets, to include all members of the community. Through her research within a museum collection, she was able to shift the focus to interrogate institutional policy.

For example, with Merseyside Maritime Museum (2010), Sudley House (2010), Platt Hall (2011), The Whitworth (2012) and Tate Britain (2011) Himid’s strategy was to interweave new artworks into the display of historical collections, and co-curate and recontextualise their collections in a new way. This enabled public discussions around work held in the permanent collections to examine migration, identity, belonging and memory while allowing a broader debate to take place about travel, colonialism and the decorative arts, specifically, *Late at Tate* (2011) and *Open Days at the Heiman Kreitman Archive* Tate Britain (2012). Himid’s *Between the Two my Heart is Balanced* was used as the main marketing image for Tate’s collection exhibition *Migrations*. This represented a strategic conversation between the museum and their target audience, with Himid’s work as a

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focus for debate.

Beyond their initial expectation, the Tate took the unusual decision to extend the 7 month exhibition run of *Thin Black Line(s)* by six weeks in 2012 to include Easter visitors to Tate Britain, responding to the public's desire to engage with the topics raised by TBL(s). This engagement led to the acquisition of new work by TBL(s) artists Ingrid Pollard and Sutapa Biswas for the Tate's permanent collection. Himid's artwork *Moments and Connections* and Walsh's *Images and Conversations in the 1980's* were both acquired for the permanent collection.

Himid's installation *Naming the Money* was recently acquired by International Slavery Museum (Liverpool) for use as an introduction to the museum and its work (National Museums Liverpool). The accessible format of the work is intentionally designed to enable debates and issues of enslavement to reach the widest range of audience possible.

Himid's *Kangas from the Lost Sample Book* (2012) informed The Whitworth Art Gallery workshops to raise issues relating to Colonialism, Britishness and the decorative arts. In-house programme curators worked with education curators archivists and acquisitions teams to improve cross institutional communication around neglected histories, collections and loans. Himid was commissioned by the Whitworth to become part of the advisory group and asked to write a catalogue essay for *We Face Forward: Contemporary Art from West Africa*.

Museum audiences (Impact on Cultural Discourse)

Audiences familiar with international exhibitions, national collections, established artists and historical artefacts are comfortable with attending events at museums, and regard the museum as a place for which they can claim ownership; feel at home. However, this can turn into complacency and subsequent lack of interest.

Exhibitions that challenge complacency, through collection intervention and reflect societal shifts during the past 50 years, initiate debates to emerge among audiences about cultural contribution, globalisation and the links between art and politics.

For example, *The Jelly Pavilions for Liverpool* project encouraged people to visit outlying National Museums Liverpool venues, in addition to the use of shops and cafes as exhibition spaces across the city.

Thin Black Line(s) gave access to research into the central role played by black women artists in cultural debates during the 1980's. Importantly, the method of access via maps, archive material and show reel allowed a simultaneous historical contextualisation of the works on display. For Himid and Walsh, established audiences for art have to take responsibility for sharing what they discover, and this process of reading the historical through the contemporary makes this more possible.

New, young and community audiences (Impact on Social Inclusion)

Himid and Walsh often speak to audiences informally as well as by invitation in person about their work. They often explain their work within a public context, and see dialogue as an opportunity to develop practice. Their work directly relates to issues of belonging, cultural contribution and migration and how attitudes to this, and experience of this, have shifted during the past two hundred years.

The debates that arise informally in museum galleries, or formally through museum workshops, are triggered by the artwork itself: reinforced by the technical simplicity of the artworks this encourages participant self-expression. They have found that people enjoy artist led encounters which mix visuals and narrative: Himid's *Jelly Mould Pavilions* won the People Choice Award for the 2010 Northern Art Prize.

Their interventions into collections are designed to encourage an awareness of public ownership and responsibility: even accountability. New and young audiences have been enabled through the

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device of exhibits in alternative but connected venues to get a sense of another layer of British Art; this has allowed an accessible entry into contemporary art.

Several interventions have proved to have the potential, to tap into popular/youth culture, black culture and memorialisation. In specially designed young peoples' creative workshop series, weekly discussions exploring ideas have been developed. The young students made new artworks, which were then exhibited to highlight the issues locally (2010/2011) with Lubaina Himid.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Contact 1: Dr Penelope Curtis, Director, Tate Britain.

Contact 2: Jennifer Harris, Director, Whitworth Art Gallery.

Contact 3: Dr Miles Lambert, Director, Platt Hall (Manchester Art Galleries).

Contact 4: Dr Celeste Marie Bernier, Professor of African-American Studies, Nottingham University.

Contact 5: Christine Physick, Director of Creative Development, Plaza Community Cinema, Liverpool.