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EXHIBITION 11 May – 28 October 2018

BALTIC

Lubaina Himid *OUR KISSES ARE PETALS*



Lubaina Himid, *Why are you Looking*, 2018. Image courtesy the artist and Hollybush Gardens

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art will launch the first in a series of exhibitions for the UK's largest public event of 2018, the Great Exhibition of the North (22 June – 9 September), with a solo show of new work by Turner Prize-winning artist Lubaina Himid. *Our Kisses are Petals* will run from 11 May – 28 October and will feature a community-focussed outdoor commission beginning in June.

Our Kisses are Petals originates from new paintings on cloth that employ the patterns, colours and symbolism of the Kanga, a vibrant cotton fabric traditionally worn by East African women as a shawl, head scarf, baby carrier, or wrapped around the waist. Typically, kangas consist of three parts: the *pindo* (border), the *mji* (central motif), and the *jina* (message or 'name'), which often takes the form of a riddle or proverb.

For Himid, these multicoloured fabrics are 'speaking clothes', which employ 'the language of image, pattern and text through which one woman's outfit talks to another's'. Himid's works engage in a dialogue with each other and with the viewer, both through their individual *jina*, borrowed from influential writers such as Maud Sulter, Essex Hemphill and Audre Lorde, and through the invitation for visitors to rearrange the hanging works by a system of pulleys to form their own poetry.

The suspended Kangas take on a flag-like quality, which, together with the colours and patterns of the fabrics, evoke regimental and ceremonial colonial flag-bearing. Through disrupting the familiar aesthetics and function of flags, the artist raises questions of belonging and identity, asking participants to create their own narratives and begin new conversations.

Across the various flags, the artist depicts inner body parts, such as the inside of an eye socket, to provide an alternative way of reading the accompanying phrases, and offer a deeper understanding of that which we share in humanity. Hemphill's words 'Our kisses are petals, our tongues caress the bloom' prompt careful consideration of the language we use to express ourselves, together with the actions we undertake as they ultimately form the world we all endure.

Himid will also explore the role of flags in British culture through producing a major outdoor commission for Great Exhibition of the North from 22 June this year. This element of the project will be presented in tandem with a weekly programme of free public events every Sunday, including performances and community happenings. Working alongside artist Richard Bliss, Himid seeks to collaborate with and give visibility to marginalised creative communities.

Within these events, the gallery becomes a renewed focus for activity through live performance, poetry and music. The flag that sits atop BALTIC will be raised as a commentary on processes associated within ceremony, subverting such traditions by asking us 'Why are you looking?' and encouraging us to question and contemplate our own views.

As part of the Great Exhibition of the North, BALTIC will also be hosting exhibitions by installation artist Michael Dean (22 June – 30 September) and Turner Prize-nominated artist Phil Collins (22 June – 14 October), as well as a group exhibition, *Idea of North* (11 May – 30 September), which explores the wider northern identity, highlighting resilience, resurgence, culture, photography, music and language.

About the Artist

Lubaina Himid lives and works in Preston. Forthcoming solo exhibitions include: Musée régional d'art contemporain Occitanie / Pyrénées-Méditerranée, Sérignan, and Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem. Forthcoming group exhibitions include BALTIC, Gateshead and Glasgow International. Himid has held recent solo shows including *The Tenderness Only we can See*, Hollybush Gardens; *The Truth is Never Watertight*, Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe; *Navigation Charts*, Spike Island, Bristol; *Invisible Strategies*, Modern Art Oxford. She curated *Meticulous Observations and Naming the Money*, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; and was recently included in the group exhibition *The Place is Here* at South London Gallery and Nottingham Contemporary. Her work is held in several public collections, including National Museums Liverpool, Tate, Museum Ludwig, British Council, Arts Council Collections, UK Government Art Collection, Birmingham Museums, Rhode Island School of Design, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, Victoria & Albert Museum and Wolverhampton Museum.

Himid is professor of Contemporary Art at the University of Central Lancashire, where she runs the Making Histories Visible archive and collection. She is the winner of the 2017 Turner Prize. Prize. She is represented by Hollybush Gardens.

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BALTIC is a major international centre for contemporary art situated on the south bank of the River Tyne in Gateshead, England and has welcomed over seven million visitors since opening to the public in July 2002. BALTIC presents a distinctive and ambitious programme of exhibitions and events, and is a world leader in the presentation and commissioning of contemporary visual art.

Housed in a landmark ex-industrial building, BALTIC consists of 2,600 square metres of art space, making it the UK's largest dedicated contemporary art institution. BALTIC has gained an international reputation for its commissioning of cutting-edge temporary exhibitions. It has presented the work of over 396 artists from 54 countries in 197 exhibitions to date.