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Sabrina Rahman is Lecturer in Art History and Visual Culture at the University of Exeter.

Her research focuses on design and diaspora in Britain, Central Europe and South Asia, with recent publications in the *Journal of Design History* and *Camera Austria*. She is currently co-convenor of the British Art Network Research Group *Race, Empire and the Pre-Raphaelites*, funded by Arts Council England, the Paul Mellon Centre and Tate.

Inside the Invisible: Memorialising Slavery and Freedom in the Life and Works of Lubaina Himid

Celeste-Marie Bernier, Alan Rice, Lubaina Himid and Hannah Durkin

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Since the 1980s, Lubaina Himid has tirelessly given her creative energies to the critical reframing of Black diasporic histories. The first Black woman to win the Turner Prize (2017), Himid has developed a rigorous body of work that blurs the boundaries of academic research, curation and artistic practice — and at the heart of these intersections lies a profound mission to resurrect the voices of historical Black bodies and souls, reminding us of the constant traces of the past in the present. Co-written by Celeste-Marie Bernier, Alan Rice, Hannah Durkin, and Lubaina Himid herself, *Inside the Invisible* is an impressive undertaking on all accounts. As part of the *Liverpool Studies in International Slavery* series, the volume makes extensive use of Himid's archive at the University of Central Lancashire in Preston (where the artist is Professor of Contemporary Art), integrating primary and secondary sources with artist's statements and stunning colour illustrations. The book is the first major study of Himid's life and work, and it is a beautiful and complex articulation of the depths of her practice.

The title *Inside the Invisible* refers directly to a series of pieces painted by Himid for a 2001 site-specific exhibition at the leprosy museum in Bergen, Norway; it also encapsulates the artist's dedication to making visible the stories of those who have been marginalised in Eurocentric narratives of history, race and culture. As stated in the Introduction, 'Himid uses art-making to protest against the atrocities and abuses not only of transatlantic slavery and its

dehumanising legacies but also of the contemporary disenfranchisement, dislocation and dismissal of African diasporic peoples across a global imaginary' (9). What follows is a carefully researched exploration of how Himid's life has informed her positionality in tackling these issues through a range of visual media. The book is organised according to the analysis of key themes in the artist's oeuvre, which are framed by five artist's statements. The authors have conceived of the following pervasive themes from the 1980s to 2010s: visualising the 'politics of representation'; resistance, reclamation and history painting; revealing hidden histories, narratives and memories; reimagining Black lives and labour; 'guerilla memorialisation'; and mapping space in relation to sites of slavery (45). The dynamic structure gives the reader an acute understanding of Himid's creative, intellectual and political development as an artist, and also allows her work to be situated more widely within the context of Black cultural history and diaspora studies. This is complemented by an extensive bibliography of printed and digital sources (many of which remain unpublished), as well as an engrossing twelve-page interview with Himid towards the end of the book.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Himid's practice is how she makes visible the connections between historical and contemporary lives in a vivid and eloquent manner. In many respects, her artworks mirror the ideas conveyed by Michel-Rolph Trouillot in *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995) — indeed, the past is a position that only exists in relation to the present, and *Inside the Invisible* succeeds in arguing this through the detailed analysis of specific pieces by Himid. The volume is dense with multi-layered readings of her approach to recasting lost or misunderstood histories. These include the rich discussion of the watercolour and pencil series *Scenes from the Life of Toussaint L'Overture II* (commissioned for Stuart Hall's 70th birthday in 2002), in which the leader of Haitian Revolution is depicted not as a military figure, but rather as an embodiment of the Black diasporic experience; in this set of diptychs, Himid 'visualises the everyday

rituals of dancing, musical performances and food preparation that make up otherwise invisibilised African diasporic lives' (104). *Cotton.com* (2003) is another striking work, an installation for C.U.B.E. Manchester that addresses both local and global history from the unique perspective of Himid's biography. *Cotton.com* relates not only to Himid's African heritage, but it also is a means of engaging with her maternal roots in the north-west of England, as well as the artist's continued connections with the region, having worked as an academic in Preston for thirty years. The reading of this piece in particular unpacks the radical potential of Himid's creativity, as it underscores the intersectional history of enslaved Africans on plantations and workers in textiles factories — invisibilised groups that have been exploited on both sides of the Atlantic.

This book is timely for several reasons, and the authors are to be commended for their meticulous research of Himid's life and work. The mixed-media *London and Paris Guidebooks* (2009) is especially prescient in its aim to 'destabilise the ideological, political and cultural stranglehold exerted by celebratory narratives that trade only in white supremacist "landmarks"' (251). This set of images is obviously striking in the wake of the toppling of the Edward Colston statue in Bristol in June 2020, yet Himid's work over a decade earlier allows us to envision cityscapes rebuilt on the foundations of the Black diaspora. Among these sites are already visible figures such as Muhammad Ali and Maya Angelou, but there are also the faces of Africans on a slave ship, superimposed onto a photograph of the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich so that it occupies the same amount of space as the mainstream white-washed narrative that British cultural institutions are only recently being forced to rethink. While *Inside the Invisible* challenges us to face painful histories and their contemporary legacies, it also celebrates the possibilities of what can be achieved by reimagining these issues through Himid's perspective. This is an

important and generous publication, essential reading for scholars seeking to reframe the study of art through the lenses of anti-racism and decoloniality.

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