

the Whitworth

Audio Descriptions transcript

April 2021

AUDIO DESCRIPTIONS

Audio descriptions of artworks from the collection of the Whitworth, The University of Manchester.



AUDIO DESCRIPTION: Lubaina Himid b. 1954 'Fill New Buckets with your Tears', from the series Kangas from the Lost Sample Book (2011-12)

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Lubaina Himid b. 1954 'Fill New Buckets with your Tears', from the series Kangas from the Lost Sample Book (2011-12)

In the 1980s, Himid was a pioneer of the British black art movement, which addressed issues of gender, race and representation. She has continued to champion the role of black creativity throughout her career. She was awarded the Turner prize for contemporary art in 2017 and had a career retrospective at Tate Modern in 2022.

In 2011-12 she worked with textile curators at the Whitworth to interrogate our small group of 20th century East African Kangas. Worn by women and often with Swahili sayings relating to love, friendship or prosperity, Himid is interested in the kanga as a vehicle for communicating personal or sometimes political messages. In these works, Himid's invented slogans are full of hope and determination. Accompanying each of these kangas is a collaged portrait of a woman, the imagined owner of the cloth and the message it conveys.

This work from the series is titled Fill New Buckets with your Tears. A colourful, acrylic painting of a kanga is paired with a separate collaged portrait of the imagined owner. These framed pieces sit side by side. The collage is in portrait format and is approximately half the size of the landscape kanga painting.

The portrait, which is on the left-hand side, is set within a dark, wooden frame and nested inside a cool, off-white mount. The imagined owner of the Kanga is portrayed as a young, black woman. The young woman is shown in profile, from the shoulder up, smiling with joy. She wears a headscarf of cornflower blue, made up of two pieces of collaged paper covering her hair. Her face is made up of one, full cut-out from a magazine. Her face is expressive, her eyes are closed and creased, mouth slightly ajar, and her smile is wide, exposing her joyful grin. As if the character is captured mid-laughter. The shoulders of her striped top, are made up of long, strips of black and white magazine cut-outs. This

portrait work is positioned so that the woman appears to be looking at the colourful, acrylic Kanga painting positioned beside it.

Fully laid out, a kanga textile is usually a large rectangle with a border around the outside. In a dark, wooden landscape frame, this acrylic painting represents only the top left portion of a larger garment. This is apparent because the border – which is a scarlet orange block, outlined in a thin strip of navy blue and overlaid with a floral pattern - goes up the left hand side and along the top. This stylised pattern is a curling vine - with full-faced poppies alternating with budding roses. These flowers are in a rich navy blue, flecked with lighter-blue accents that pick out the shape of the petals.

Inside this floral border sits the larger, rectangular block of the textile. The background colour of this block is a vibrant, lemon-yellow. Across the top width of the block, a statement in white lettering reads: 'Fill New Buckets with your Laughter'. This sits within a cornflower blue ribbon.

The remainder of the yellow block runs to the edges at the right and bottom of the painting. On top of this yellow there is a recurring pattern. This consists of flattened, oval shapes, speckled with tiny, circular cut-outs. This pattern is not busy or detailed, each shape is slightly different from the last. It sparsely populates the remaining yellow block in four alternating rows.

Standing back, this piece is striking, bold and colourful with pronounced lines and shapes, bringing out the positive sentiment in the work.