

The Turner Prize 2017 - A Turning Point in the Public Recognition of Black British Women Artists?

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Introduction: The Turner Prize and Black British Art

The Turner Prize, awarded since 1984, is for the art world what the Booker is for the literary scene: the most prestigious prize a contemporary British visual artist can win. When on the evening of 5 December 2017 the winner of that year was announced in the Ferens Art Gallery, Hull (then UK City of Culture), it was a surprise to many British art lovers and a great pleasure to those who take a special interest in black art, admiring its characteristic combination of a political stance with great artistic talent. The winner was Lubaina Himid, 63 years old and a very active black British woman artist and curator since the 1980s. Two things were new that year: the age limit of 50 was removed, and the limitation to recent work was also lifted, so that the lifelong development of the competitors could be taken into account.

Before continuing, a word on my use of the term “black British”: I am using it here as the politically active artists in the 1970s and 1980s had done, namely referring “to *all* those communities, of whatever ethnic or ‘racial’ origin, who were regarded as ‘other’ – *different* – and thus racially excluded” (Hall, 2001a: 35). Though in theory covering all kinds of people, in practice the term meant black and Asian British citizens. Several in that sense black British male artists had won the Turner since the 1990s: sculptor Anish Kapoor in 1991, painter Chris Ofili in 1998, film maker Steve McQueen in 1999, while film maker Isaac Julien made it to the shortlist in 2001 and painter and installation artist Yinka Shonibare in 2004. But only once, in 2013, a black woman artist was shortlisted: Lynette Yiadom-Boakye was honoured for her timeless, fictional portraits of black subjects. This is surprising for two reasons: for one thing six white women before Himid had won

the prize, and for another quite a few black British women artists had been very productive since the 1980s. It seems that the naming of Himid has finally cleaned up with an unspoken prejudice: that black women don't make great art.

In a seminal article Stuart Hall has divided the history of black art in Britain into three phases, a pattern that has meanwhile been taken over by other historians of art, e.g. by Eddie Chambers (Hall 2006, Chambers 2014). The first phase is defined as covering the period from the 1940s to the 1980s, when fully trained black artists from all parts of the Commonwealth came to the "mother country", (falsely) assuming they would be welcomed as equals by the art scene. The second phase began in the 1980s, when young artists, who – though not all born in the UK – had grown up there and were trained in British art schools, came to the fore with a distinctly political art programme. Lubaina Himid was one of them. The third phase, according to Hall, began in the 1990s with artists like Chris Ofili and Yinka Shonibare, who approached critical topics in a more playful, sometimes carnevalesque manner, appealing more easily to the taste of an increasingly international and commercialised art scene.

A Bit of History: The Work and Exhibition History of Black Women Artists from the 1980s on

Women were involved in the second phase right from the start: in 1979 Marlene Smith joined three very young men, Donald Rodney, Eddie Chambers and Keith Piper, in founding the first political group of black artists in the UK, the legendary Blk Art Group. They were inspired by the American Black Art Movement (BAM) of the 1960s and 1970s, part of the Black Power Movement, and in Britain there was also good reason for an artistic protest: in times of an economic decline and under the influence of the National Front, Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood Speech" and Thatcher's politics, racism and marginalisation had intensified and led to the first violent clashes since the late 1950s. Three years later, at the First National Black Convention in Wolverhampton in 1982, an impressive number of black women artists with the same experiences and a similar agenda joined the Blk members, forming the wider British Black Arts Movement: Lubaina Himid, Sonia Boyce, Joy Gregory, Claudette Johnson and (of Indian origin) Sutapa Biswas, Chila Kumari Burman. Yet despite the same motivations, the women preferred different topics as they were not only fighting racism but also male dominance. While the men focused on historical

and current public events and symbols (the flag, the cross, the slave ship, a lynching scene, cruise missiles etc.), the women turned to the personal and the private, especially the body and the domestic sphere, which was, however, perceived as a highly politicised space. Characteristic examples were Sutapa Biswas's *Housewife with Steak-Knives* (1985) and Sonia Boyce's *Missionary Position I* and *Missionary Position II* (1985) (see von Rosenberg 2008).

Realising that public visibility was an essential part of their political struggle, many of the young artists engaged in curating. Eddie Chambers was particularly active among the men, Lubaina Himid among the women. Always very interested in the work of other black artists, Himid had interviewed many of her colleagues for her MA thesis "On Being a Young Black British Artist in Britain Today: A Political Response to a Personal Experience" (1984). Her first exhibitions in 1983 were dedicated to women only: "Five Black Women", shown in the Africa Centre, and a few months later "Black Women Time Now" at the Battersea Arts Centre, displaying work of 15 women. Himid's exhibition "The Thin Black Line" in 1985 was the first group exhibition of black artists hosted by a major British institution, the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA)/London, and – despite the gender-neutral title – also

focused on women: work by 11 female artists was on display and thus came to the knowledge of a larger audience. In 2011 Himid was invited to restage part of the exhibition under the slightly changed title *Thin Black Line(s)* at Tate Britain in acknowledgement of the importance the original show had for the gradual acceptance of black art as an essential contribution to British art history.

Several of the female artists, whose work was included in the pioneering shows of the 80s, as well as some other black women who started working in the 1980s like Joy Gregory, have developed impressive careers as artists, curators, archivists and academic teachers changing their techniques and topics, but never deviating from an underlying motivation: the critical view on British society and history from the "double perspective" they were born to. As it is impossible to give a complete overview of the success of black British women's art here, I will look at four exemplary careers and try to draw some general conclusions concerning their public reception.

Lubaina Himid

Let us begin with Himid. Born in Zanzibar in 1954 to an African father and an English mother, she came to London with her mother after her father's death, four months old. Having studied theatre design at Wimbledon Art School but finding no entrance to

the theatre world after her BA, Himid first had to earn her living with waiting and occasional teaching while studying for her MA at the Royal College of Art. Gradually she developed her own artistic practice and committed herself to curating the work of fellow artists, finally running her own small Elbow Room Gallery from 1986 to 1988. Since 1990 she has been teaching at Lancaster Polytechnic, now University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), at the same time continuing to produce and exhibit her own work as well as launching several projects promoting black art, e.g. *Colour Code*, an informative website for an interested circle, and *Making Histories Visible*, an ever growing archive of images by and documentary material relating to black artists.

Himid started with painting, and her *Between the Two My Heart Is Balanced* of 1991, figuring two black women in a boat tearing to pieces the charts of colonialism, was early acquired by the Tate. Soon she also turned to installations using all kinds of material from paper, cardboard and wood to textiles and objects of everyday use, which she overpaints, e.g. antique crockery, drawers, wagons as well as pages from *The Guardian*. She changes between abstract art, inspired by textile patterns (her mother was a textile designer), and figurative work, which is sometimes easy to read, sometimes somewhat enigmatic.

Many critics have noticed the alluring brightness of her saturated colour scale, seducing the viewer to swallow critical messages along with aesthetic pleasure and fun, a combination reminiscent of the work of some male colleagues, e.g. Chris Ofili and Yinka Shonibare. Like them Himid has also relished the ironical re-working of icons of European art: *Two Women* referred to *Portsmouth Dockyard* (1877), a gallant painting by James Tissot showing a Highlander flirting with two women in a boat. Another important specimen was included in the pre-Turner show of Himid's work: *A Fashionable Marriage* (1987), an installation of 10 cut-out figures, is a modern version of Hogarth's satirical print *Countess's Morning Levée* (1743-1745).

Cut-out figures from cardboard or wood have been a technique specially favoured by Himid from early on. She has traced it back to "a very British tradition known as the dummy board" (Himid 2018: 73), flat wooden figures, of waiters for example, she first came across in Blenheim castle, but it was certainly also influenced by her training as a theatre designer. Many of her most arresting works are cut-outs painted in her characteristic bright colouring, telling a scandalous story from black history or present, but with humour and empathy for the black characters. An early example is the *Carrot Piece* (1985, ironically referring to the codpiece

worn by men in 16th century Europe).



Lubaina Himid: *The Carrot Piece* (1985)

Courtesy of Lubaina Himid 2019

A white man, straddling a unicycle, is dangling a carrot in front of the nose of a black person (man or woman?), who is turning round with a sceptic look – obviously an image of the white race trying to outsmart black people from the slave trade to modern society. But does the work perhaps specifically target the art world? The biggest project with cut-out figures is the installation *Naming the Money* (2003) thematising the wealth made by the slave trade. First shown at Nottingham Contemporary, then in parts in various exhibitions, it was re-installed in *Navigation Charts* at Spike Island/Bristol in 2017, one of the two big exhibitions leading up to the Turner. Inspired by black servants

portrayed in 18th century paintings, the work consists of 100 figures, larger than life, of elegantly dressed black servants, entertainers, craftspeople working in rich men’s households. Refusing to stress their status as victims, instead emphasising their humanity, Himid provided each of them with two names, one African, one European, and an individual life story told in five lines ending on a positive note to be read or heard on a soundtrack. After that she abandoned the technique because “there didn’t seem any point in making cut-outs again” (Himid 2018: 84).



Lubaina Himid: *Figures from Naming the Money* (2003)

Courtesy of Lubaina Himid 2019

Himid’s abstract work is less humorous. Thus her memories of Zanzibar, where she travelled in 1997 for the first time, are expressed in large delicately coloured graphic patterns. And a unique historical event, a rare act of solidarity between British textile workers and black slaves during the

American Civil War, is remembered in *Cotton.com* (2002), an installation of 85 square panels painted with black and white abstract patterns.

Recently Himid has discovered textile as a medium, making series of so-called Kangas, squares of cotton cloth used in Zanzibar for garments or flags and printed by Himid with bright graphic images of objects and text lines. And she has returned to painting pictures, most recently *Le Rodeur* (2016-2018): a series of images depicting groups of strangely forlorn black figures on board a ship, some of them in modern dress, some in historical costume, referring to a horrible crime in the 18th century, when slaves were thrown overboard to stop a disease.



Lubaina Himid: *Le Rodeur: The Exchange* (2016)

Courtesy of Lubaina Himid 2019

Some of Himid's early works had been acquired by the Tate, but larger ensembles had for decades been shown in provincial galleries only and thus were known to comparatively few

art connoisseurs. This has changed. In 2017 two major exhibitions of much of her older and recent work - *Navigation Charts* in Bristol and *Invisible Strategies* at Modern Art Oxford - and a prominent place in the group exhibition *The Place Is Here* remembering art from the 80s at Nottingham Contemporary plus the exhibition *Warp and Weft*, her show in the Tate as a shortlisted artist - all these together earned her the Turner Prize. Suddenly there was great interest in her work worldwide. Several exhibitions followed at home and in Sérignan/France, in Karlsruhe and at the Berlin Biennale 2018 and a solo show at the New Museum/New York will open this summer.

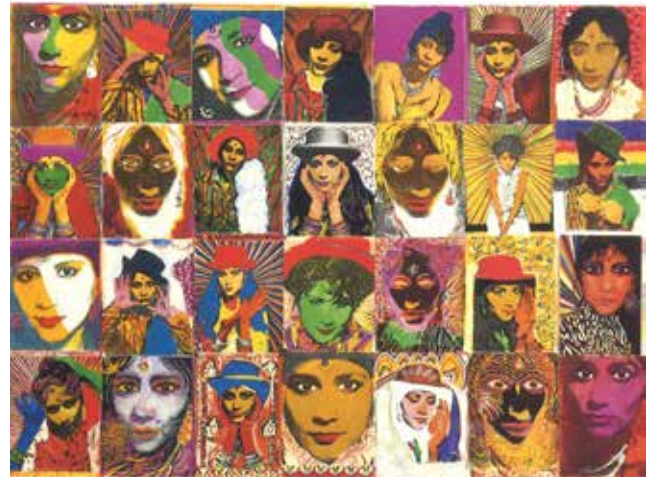
Chila Kumari Burman

Chila Kumari Burman was born to Punjabi parents in Bootle near Liverpool in 1957, growing up in an Asian British working-class milieu: "we didn't have any books in our house, let alone art books and magazines..." (quoted in Bernier 2018: 188). Nevertheless she studied at Southport College of Art, the Leeds Polytechnic and Slade School of Fine Arts, where she specialised in print-making, graduating in 1982. Ever since she has been leading the financially precarious life of a free-lance artist and is proud of it: "Artists are slightly outside the system. I avoid anybody who is going to upset my confidence" (McKenzie 2018). In her art - painting, photography, collages, films - Burman combines fine

art techniques and photography with compositional ideas from popular art and advertising and uses all kinds of everyday objects like bindis, fashion jewellery, flower petals, items of clothing. Activist of the black arts movement from the beginning and included in Himid's second and third exhibitions, Burman began with straightforward agit-prop art, for instance collaborating with Keith Piper on the *Southall Black Resistance Mural* (1986). But soon she developed a more specific feminist agenda. Questions of identity, the female body and sexuality, especially of Asian British women, became central to her work.

Burman frequently used her own body and face in her artworks. Body prints, made in the 1980s and 1990s in sugar and Indian ink or acrylic and glitter, highlighted the female sexual body parts with pride, for Burman saw sexuality as an element of empowerment for Asian women. Burman's many pictures of her face from single mirror images overwritten "*This Is Not Me*" or "*Don't Judge a Book by Its Cover*" (both 1992) to multiple self-portraits hit a special nerve of the time, thrilling writers and cultural theorists concerned with hybrid identity construction like Stuart Hall and Meera Syal. In *28 Positions in 34 Years* (1992), for example, the artist looks at the viewer in various costumes from elegant Western style to Indian dress or as a black tribal woman, thus ironically expressing

her multi-layered cultural identity. The work was reproduced in important art books (e.g. Hall and Sealy 2001: 203) and appeared on several book covers like that of James Procter's anthology *Writing Black Britain 1948-1998* (2000).



Chila Kumari Burman: 28 Portraits in 34 Years (1992)

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In the late 1990s Burman's feminist zeal softened and her work became more playful. After making collages of flowers, she began exploring her Asian and Asian British legacy. Her father's work as an ice-cream seller became a topic: his van reappears as a profusely decorated icon in many of her pictures, and colourful glass cones are arranged to pretty installations. Another theme was the impact of Indian comics and Bollywood on Asian British people's lives. Burman saw Bollywood films critically – "fetishism of things Indian" (Burman 2007) –, but also used them as an inspiration adopting - tongue in cheek - the glaring colours, heavily made-

up faces and figures of women and men plus overboarding decorations into her mixed-media artworks. *Punjabi Rockers* (2009), for instance, is a kaleidoscopic collage of elements signifying Indian culture Bollywood style: portraits of film stars, a tiger, a skull, an elephant's trunk, flowers, the lettering "India".



Chila Kumari Burman: *Punjabi Rockers* (2009)

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Shows like *Icecream and Magic* (1997), *Candy Pop and Juicy Lucy* (2006), which included work by a Hackney youth group, and *Beyond Pop* (2017) charmed viewers in Britain, but since the 1990s her opulent work has also been internationally shown in group exhibitions in Asia, Australia, the States and many European cities. In 2017 Burman got a big chance to make her work known to a large audience: she was commissioned to contribute artworks to

a series of events at the Science Museum, *Illuminating India. 5,000 years of Science and Innovation* (2017). Burman's *India Illuminated!* consisted of 29 panels in mixed-media technique, arranged in orderly rows, and a richly decorated tuk-tuk, which welcomed the guests at the entrance. The panels, inspired by objects from the Science Museum's collection and elements of Indian culture, showed a Buddha figure, Hindu god Ganesha, the ancient game "snakes and ladders" invented in India, elephants etc. in combination with colourful patterns, her beloved "jewels" and beads only sparsely applied. On 8 August 2018 she e-mailed happily: "I live from my work now!" The latest sign of her growing recognition has been the awarding of an Honorary Doctorate from the UAL in 2018.



Chila Kumari Burman: *Illuminated Buddha* (from *India Illuminated!* 2017)

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Joy Gregory

Joy Gregory, born in Bicester/Buckinghamshire to Jamaican parents in 1959, studied photography at Manchester Polytechnic and the Royal College of Art. Like Burman she is a free-lance artist and works in a variety of photographic techniques from Victorian printing methods to digital video installations. In contrast to Burman's exuberant colourful art, Gregory's photographic and filmic work comes across as carefully concentrated on essential elements, a restrained selection of colours and the thoughtful choice of the adequate technique.

Yet much like Chila Kumari Burman, Gregory as a young woman was fascinated by questions of identity, race and femininity, and images of her series *Autoportraits* (1988-1990) have been almost as frequently reproduced in



Joy Gregory: Autoportrait
(1988-1990)

Courtesy of Joy Gregory 2019

studies on cultural identity and books on black art as Burman's self-portraits (e.g. Hall and Sealy 2001: 132-134).

Gregory has explained that as a teenager she was an avid reader of women's magazines and became increasingly frustrated realising there was hardly a picture of a black woman to be seen. Her self-portraits of 15 years later were an attempt to create the black woman as the glamorous catwalk beauty the magazines had excluded. In the following years Gregory remained fascinated with the theme of beauty and its construction. *Objects of Beauty* (1992-1995), the *Hand Bag Project* (1998, ghostlike images of old handbags owned by white South African women referencing silence and secrecy during Apartheid) and *Girl Things* (2002), all take issue with the western beauty craze. The images in the monochrome colours produced by early photographic techniques (kallitype print, salt print, cynotype), show single items of clothing, accessories, jewellery or tools of beautification, isolated like severed body parts. A more cheerful project was *The Blonde*, begun in 1998 and circling around a new meaning of blonde beyond the old stereotypes of the fairy princess, the dumb and the perfect sex object. Having noticed in the streets of London that more and more women and men of non-European origin dye their hair blonde, Gregory made photographs,

drawings, installations, even started an interactive website, reading the trend as a sign of “the positive side of globalisation involving the crossing not only of political and physical borders, but also the internal borders of human identity and metaphysical space” (Gregory 2004: 36). A specially charming work, telling a story, was *Cinderella Tours Europe* (1997-2001), a series of nine large coloured photographs of European touristic landmarks, in which a pair of golden pumps is conspicuously placed. They symbolise the greatest wish of women in the Caribbean, whom Gregory had interviewed while taking their portraits for her project *Memory & Skin*: they all confessed that their greatest wish was travelling to famous European cities. Thus the images, a friendly parody of the Grand Tour, may be read as a playful reversal of the colonial conquest.



Joy Gregory: from *Cinderella Tours Europe* (1997-2001)

Courtesy of Joy Gregory 2019

From the mid-1990s on Gregory herself has travelled a lot, often on invitation by cultural institutions, and much of her work since has been triggered by her journeys, not only to the Caribbean, but to several African countries, Sri Lanka, Gomera, the Orkney Islands etc. Wherever she was, she explored the historical past and people’s memories, which she captured in portraits and images of landscapes and interiors. Endangered languages fascinated her specially. For the Sydney Biennale 2010 Gregory made a beautiful 10-minute film *Gomera* (available on Vimeo), figuring two boys using El Silbo, the musical whistled language used in a remote wooded corner of the island, once almost extinct, but now protected. A series of large colour photographs of the Southern Kalahari, the land of the San people (who like to be known as Bushmen), is meant as a memorial to their almost extinct language Nju, known for its clicking sounds. In 2011 Impressions Gallery/Bradford showed her first encompassing retrospective *Lost Languages and Other Voices*, restaged in Penzance in 2017 (catalogue available as pdf), and some of her work from the 1980s was included in *The Place is Here* in 2018. In 2017 Gregory was invited to contribute to the Venice Biennale and showed her work *Overlooked and Underrepresented* in the Diaspora Pavillion: a golden memorial plaque inscribed with the

names of extraordinary women from 40 BC to the 20th century, accompanied by a photographic wallpaper.



Joy Gregory: Overlooked and Underrepresented (2017)

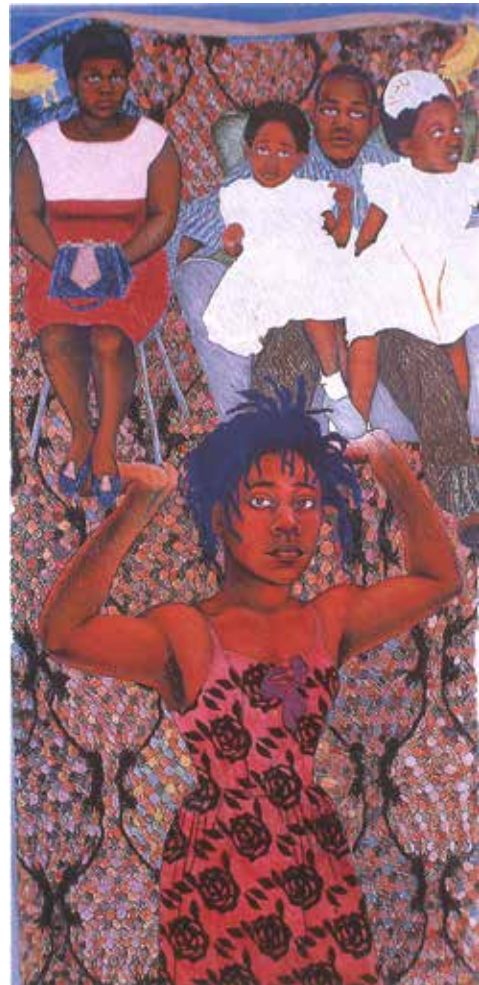
Courtesy of Joy Gregory 2019

Sonia Boyce

Sonia Boyce was born in 1962 in London to parents from Barbados. She studied at East Ham College of Art and Technology/London and Stourbridge College of Art and Technology/West Midlands, completing her BA in Fine Arts in 1983. She joined the black art movement from the start, and her work was included in all the major black art exhibitions of the 80s.

Boyce started off as a painter focusing in her early work on gender roles and sexuality as determined by colonialism, patriarchy and Christian religion. She expressed her criticism through treacherously beautiful pastels full of colourful patterns, leaves, flowers and young women's faces, frequently her own. Works like *Missionary Position I – Lay Back* and *Mr. Close Friend of the*

Family (both 1985) thematise the sexual harassment of black women by white men, while the four-panel work *Lay Back, Keep Quiet and Think of What Made Britain Great* (1986) places the abuse of women in the context of a wider anti-colonialist criticism, and her very last pastel *She Ain't Holding Them Up, She's Holding On (Some English Rose)* (1986) deals with the parent family's meaning to the young generation in Britain. After that Boyce stopped painting. In an interview she later explained: "I felt there was nowhere else to go. I had come to a full stop" (Higgin 2018).



Sonia Boyce: She Ain't Holding Them Up, She's Holding On (Some English Rose) (1986)

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From the 1990s on Boyce got more and more interested in co-operation with others and turned to a very different manner of working: her art became improvised, performative and collaborative, a social practice. Her first work in that line was *The Audition* (1997). Through an open call she invited women of various racial backgrounds to her studio to put on Afro wigs from a fancy-dress shop and took their photographs. When placed side by side, these images – she made 900 - effectively challenge the automatic reading of particular body parts as racial signifiers.



Sonia Boyce: from *The Audition* (1997)

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The deconstructive play with racial clichés was continued in further works, e.g. *Tongues* (1997), showing four black and white pictures of racially indistinguishable open mouths. Close-ups of mixed couples caressing and a film project, *Exquisite Tension* (2005), in which a white and a black person plait their hair together, stress the common humanity of both.

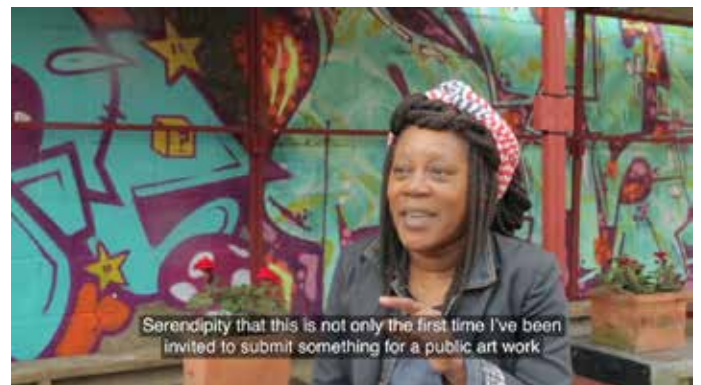
Apart from the visual Boyce is also fascinated by touch and sound. Indefinable objects made from hair, most of it her own, some blonde, in an exhibition *do you want to touch?* (1993), openly appealed to the haptic sense as did *4 Tablecloths* (for the tearoom in St. Pancras Station). Of *Lover's Rock*, a series figuring the lyrics of a reggae song embossed on a white surface reminiscent of wallpaper, Boyce explicitly said: "I wanted to suggest a touch" and traced her obsession with touch to the fetishisation of black skin (Boyce 1998: 36 and 37). Her interest in music and the co-operation with musicians and singers has led to the production of several videos showing events, in which classical music – jazz, but more often church music - is mixed with modern improvisation (*Drift* 2009, *You, Only You* 2010, *Justicia*, 2010, *Oh Adelaide* 2011. All on Vimeo). Her biggest project on music began in 1999: the *Devotional Collection*. Over several years Boyce, supported by friends, family and others, collected all kinds of black music on hundreds of videos, CDs, vinyls etc. in order to preserve them for the collective memory.

Apart from her own creative work Boyce has been teaching in many art schools and is currently Professor of Fine Art at Middlesex University as well as Chair of Black Art and Design across six colleges of the UAL. Her work has been shown in numerous solo and

group exhibitions in Britain, the US and many European cities. Invited by curator Okwui Enwezor, she contributed to the 2015 Venice Biennale “All The Worlds Futures”. Her short video *Exquisite Cacophony* shows a joint improvisation by an indie rapper and a classically trained vocalist, exemplifying the world’s mixed voices. Also in 2015 Boyce was commissioned to lead another huge memorial research project: *Black Artists and Modernism*. Financed with £700,000 by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and based at the UAL and Middlesex University, the project’s aim was to compile over three years the first database of black visual artists in British collections. Over 2,000 pieces were found, many of them never publicly shown.

In 2018 Manchester Art Gallery staged the first retrospective of Boyce’s art, presenting five of her works from the 1990s on and a new work produced on site called *Six Acts*. This six-screen film and wallpaper installation documents an evening-long gallery takeover, prepared in a series of conversations with the gallery staff and others, in which a modern approach to the outdated politics of gender, race and sexuality in the gallery’s 18th and 19th century paintings display was discussed. The takeover, to which a number of independent performance artists were invited, caused a public outcry, as a popular picture by J.W. Waterhouse, *Hylas and the Nymphs*

(1896), figuring naked nymphs and a lustful Hylas, was temporarily taken down. Since 2016 Boyce’s has been involved in her first public commission, a great challenge she has met with the help of the community, contributing their ideas: the *Newham Trainside Wall Project* (or *Crossrail Project*). She has been asked to cover the 1.3 km long bare trackside wall in the Docks with multimedia artworks, a project that linked up with her early fascination with wallpaper. Boyce is intimately familiar with the area, having grown up in the East End. Regarding the topic, she decided to commemorate the local past by pictured stories and the inscription of family and street names, framed by William Morris-style patterns of local plants and flowers.



Sonia Boyce: Newham Trainside Wall (Crossrail Project) (2017-2019)

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Conclusion

Of course, each of the artists discussed deserves a much longer appreciation of her work than was possible here. But a few general observations seem possible. First of all, all four artists resemble one another

in their development. All have moved away from their early commitment to feminist issues to an interest in a wider range of people and in the larger topics of history and memories of the colonial past impacting on people's lives today in Britain and other parts of the world. Their artistic techniques also show a certain similarity. Though Himid and Boyce began with figurative painting, in general the artists prefer modern media, film, photography, installations or multi-media work, as less loaded with the legacy of European art history.

As to their success, all of them have made careers though in varying degrees; an academic position proved a great help, providing not only a regular income, but also easier access to public notice. Himid and Boyce, both academic teachers, have proved the most successful so far, but the work of all four artists has been shown in a great number of solo and group shows in Britain and in many other countries, and their work has been collected by private art lovers as well as by bigger and smaller commercial and public institutions in Britain and abroad. The Tate has bought works by Himid, Boyce and Burman from early on, while the V & A holds work by Gregory. Himid and Boyce have both been honoured by the Queen, Boyce with an OBE and an MBE, Himid with an MBE and – after the Turner – in 2018 with a CBE “for services to art”. Burman was awarded

an honourable doctorate. And yet, none of the four women artists are as visible and internationally well-known as some white female colleagues like Tracy Emin and Sarah Lucas on the one hand and some black or Asian British male artists like Yinka Shonibare, Steve McQueen and Anish Kapoor on the other. Thus, considering all this, how is the title question to be answered: does the Turner Prize for Lubaina Himid indicate a generally increasing public recognition of black British women artists? Let us hope that Himid is too pessimistic in her judgment of the current situation: “I think you'd only have to look at the evidence to see that it's more difficult for a young black woman to make it as an artist. Me winning the Turner Prize does not mean we've made it. It's a pity that it could ever be touted as such, because it probably means that there'll be a bloody gap before anything like that happens again” (Sherlock 2018). A hopeful sign may be that Tate Britain has announced a major survey of Lynette Yiadom-Boakye's work, showing 80 paintings, from 19 May to 31 August 2020.

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