

**Lubaina Himid and
Magda Stawarska**

*Nets for Night
and Day*

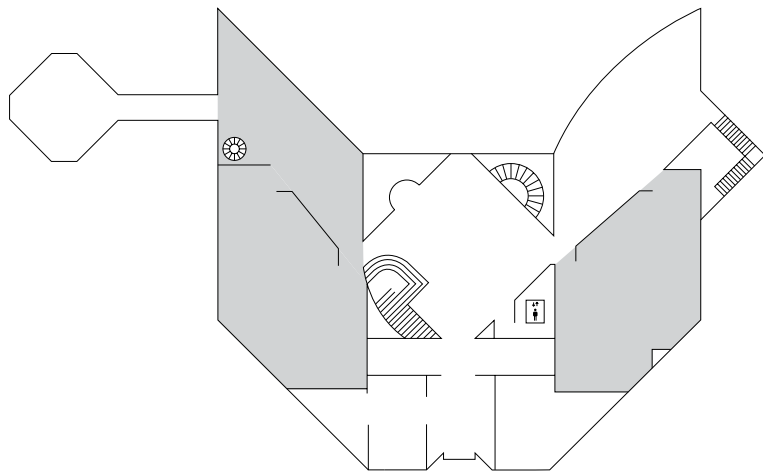


MUDAM

The Contemporary Art Museum of Luxembourg

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Lubaina Himid and Magda Stawarska

Nets for Night and Day

07.03 — 24.08.2025

Guest Curator

Dr Omar Kholeif, Director of Collections and Senior Curator, Sharjah Art Foundation

Coordination

Julie Kohn, Curatorial Assistant, Mudam Luxembourg

Exhibition design

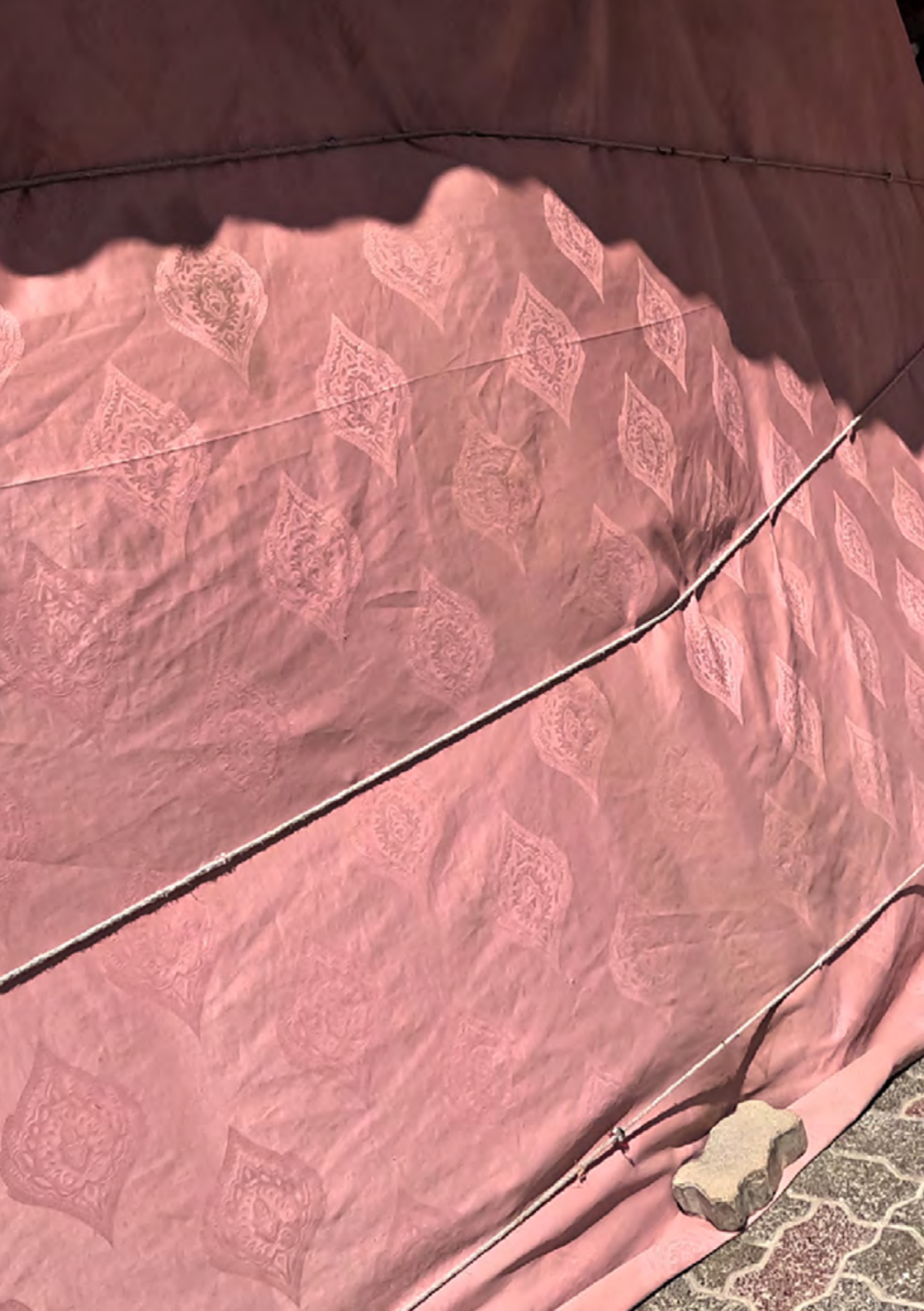
Souraya Kreidieh, Senior Collections Researcher and Spatial Designer, Sharjah Art Foundation

The exhibition *Lubaina Himid and Magda Stawarska: Nets for Night and Day* is organised by Sharjah Art Foundation and Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean.

Level 0
Galleries, Jardin des sculptures



SHARJAH ART FOUNDATION



Overture

Nets for Night and Night
Nights require air and light
as much as they require
Protection from the vampiric

Days for Days
Days
modulating yield from the sun

Nights and days
Days and nights

Nights and days
Days and nights
Stretch into endless endlessness

endless ocean
abounding
over land
on ships

Landlocked life
port living

We carry these vestiges
as emblems
insignias of life lived,
of unceasing time
A time that does not pass

We long to let go
Carrying the places we've left behind
At the distance
Like the rust on a Razor's Edge

Only to realise the failure
The disappointment found
In the shape of our own deception

The waterway beneath, whirls
Denotes another journey

another prayer
someone's commencement speech

Abounding thrill and frenzy
That feeling only familiar to a child
Unaware of the prospect of melancholy
that lingers underneath
the risk of capture
of being trampled underfoot

The current may appear serene today
But everything
shall be empty on arrival, all the same

Likewise,
the buildings overhead
are wrapped in their veils

Gradually, the sheaths of fabric unbuckle
Offering another light
after years of darkness





As we approach the gallery
of painted salvage

Carts of the fleeting and familiar
Lay unspooled on the ground
akin to a mobile theatre
caught in standstill

Moving pictures loop-in
from a feed
Crossings diagonally
along the Bosphorus
Transversely along icy borders
if only for fleeting moments
They shimmer!

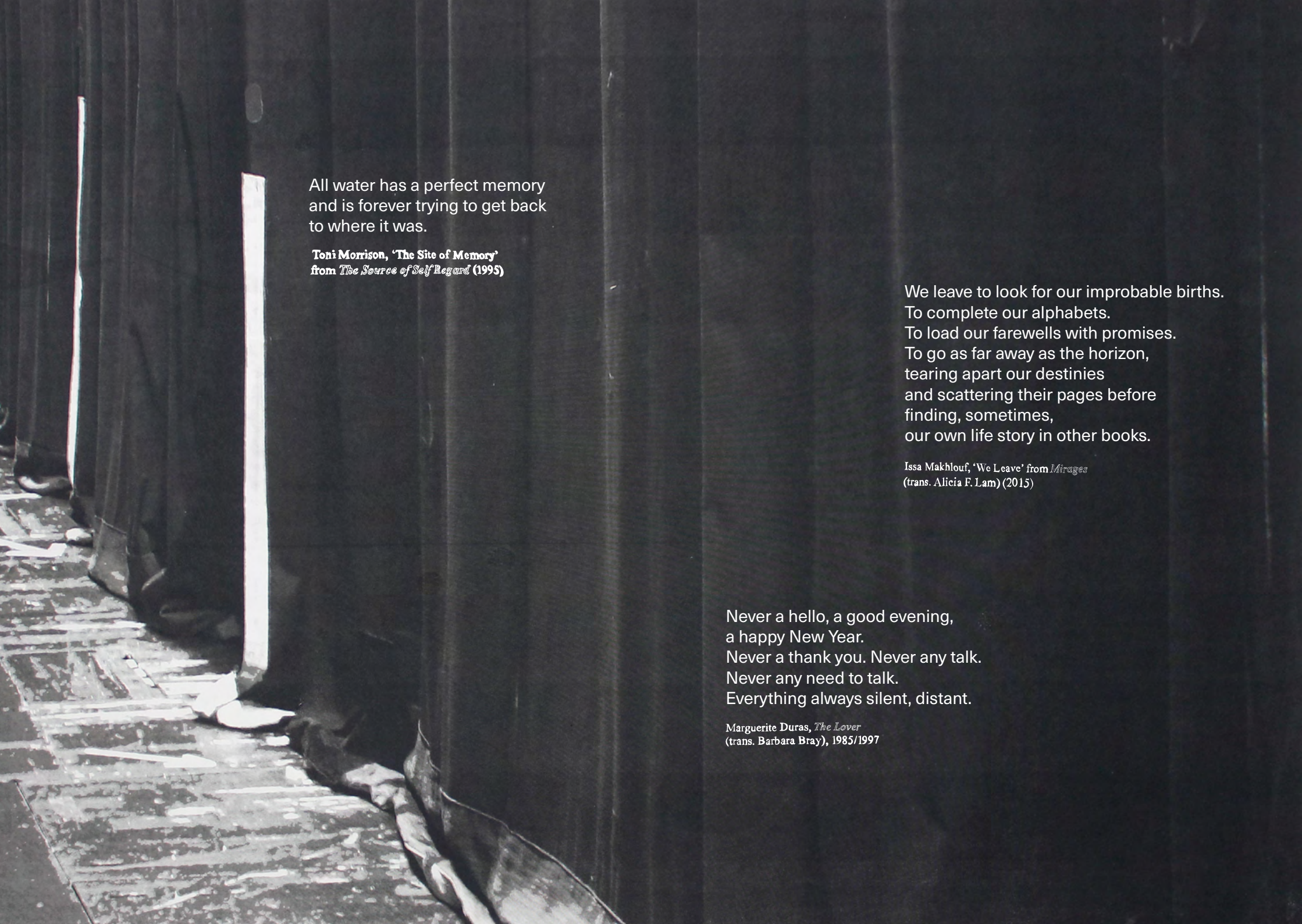
In this makeshift garden of
life and death
light seeps into the Green House
In a jewel box: Are we hiding
in plain sight?
We wonder: If this is where
the end meets its end –

What will you take with you?

– **O. Kholeif,**
'A Paean for Christmas' (2024)







All water has a perfect memory
and is forever trying to get back
to where it was.

Toni Morrison, 'The Site of Memory'
from *The Source of Self-Regard* (1995)

We leave to look for our improbable births.
To complete our alphabets.
To load our farewells with promises.
To go as far away as the horizon,
tearing apart our destinies
and scattering their pages before
finding, sometimes,
our own life story in other books.

Issa Makhlouf, 'We Leave' from *Mirages*
(trans. Alicia F. Lam) (2015)

Never a hello, a good evening,
a happy New Year.
Never a thank you. Never any talk.
Never any need to talk.
Everything always silent, distant.

Marguerite Duras, *The Lover*
(trans. Barbara Bray), 1985/1997

The Measure of Life Travels

with

Lubaina Himid

and

Magda Stawarska

By Omar Kholeif

Whether you approach the Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean aka Mudam Luxembourg via the underground passageways of Fort Niedergrünwald or attend to it through the ramparts that stretch across the fortress of the Musée Dräi Eechelen, one thing is certain, the thick weave of time is layered, looped and steeped into the fabric of this hilltop. An echo is found in Mudam's civic positioning, a vessel within the second city of the European Union. As you approach the glass structure's facade, the city reveals itself, in particular through its noteworthy administrative buildings – the Court of Justice of the European Union and European Investment Bank are both in eyesight. Peering at the translucent stone clad structure designed by the late architect I. M. Pei, one is reminded of a ship as much as of a series of refracting orbitals that at once amalgamate to form a whole.

Inside, this configuration splinters as beams of light divert one's gaze over and across the museum's atrium and open walkways. Waiting expectantly at the museum entrance on this foggy autumnal morning for Lubaina Himid (1954, Zanzibar) and Magda Stawarska (1976, Ruda Śląska) on their first visit to Luxembourg, painterly scenes circulate within the realm of the imagination. The Baroque of French artist, Claude Lorrain (1600 or 1604/5–1682) comes to mind as does Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818). This could be described as a scene of wanderlust. The prospective audience ambling around me however creates the scale, accumulation and distance of a Bruegel setting, one as majestic as *The Hunters in the Snow* (1565). The three of us greet each other with a hug and enter the building to warm our bodies before we commence a new journey in our ongoing conversation.

We quickly settle into the West Gallery to set sails into motion. In this case, the narrative journey of an exhibition that unfolded under the sun of the Arabian Gulf, specifically amidst the courtyards, walkways and galleries of Sharjah Art Foundation where we spent several years conceiving of an exhibition titled *Plaited Time / Deep Water*. Water, a literary idiom often associated with navigation, persistence, reflection and movement, resounds here in the newly imagined exhibition in Luxembourg. A metaphor of vessels and movement. It remained perfect. As Lubaina Himid

articulates on the gallery walls, her and Stawarska's exhibition hearkens to a particular kind of longing – transmitting the emotions 'of the places that we carry with us but never truly leave behind'.

The installation that occupies the entirety of West Gallery, *Zanzibar* (1999–2023) by Lubaina Himid and Magda Stawarska encapsulates the central themes of the duo's two-person exhibition, *Nets for Night and Day* – Stawarska and Himid's most extensive presentation of their collaborative practice to date. *Zanzibar* itself, a former British protectorate, as a place, bears several complex connotations in this story. At once, Himid's place of birth and thus annotating the artist's biography, it has become for many, both the artist's presumed physical and ideological home. As Himid's voice blooms amidst opera, rainfall and news broadcasts, she informs the listener as they move throughout these waterways of an immense tragedy that occurred around the time of her birth. As a result of these circumstances, *Zanzibar* would remain a place of intimate distance. The paintings presented in West Gallery consist of nine large diptychs – eighteen paintings, all landscapes, bar for one diptych. The artist started the process of creating these after a visit to her place of birth in 1997. Originally, Himid described these paintings as a series of journeys about journeys, ones that span from 1954 through to the time of the paintings' initial exhibition in 1999.

Looked at from within the bosom of this expanse, the series of non-figurative paintings appear to exist at the threshold of a passage initially not to be entered. Each twofold can concurrently connote despair and elation; tortured memory and present movement, serving as an insignia linking the past to the present tense. The 'Zanzibar paintings' represent a form of 'scaffolding' in Himid's creative practice to invoke a comment by long-term collaborator, Magda Stawarska. Perhaps it is for this reason that Stawarska initially begun the experiment of taking the paintings off of the walls – suspension relief for the visitor and for the paintings themselves. They are here enfolding within their own orbit. The works are gazing at each other, examining each other, emoting to each other, holding and collecting each other's tears. In this gallery, yours and their tears may be bottled, whether one is found to be hiding behind the sprawl of one of the canvasses, kneeling

on carpet, or perched at the edge of one of six bespoke crate-like seats created for this sun-kissed gallery's light.

The open windows that the artists have chosen to emit serves as a welcome glow. It exists in stark contrast to the sound of rainfall that ushers you into the careful choreography of *Zanzibar*. Birthed from an intimate dialogue between Stawarska and Himid, the sonic-layers of the installation constellate to fashion a nearly forty-minute aural composition created by Stawarska and transmitted across 8-channels.

From the precipice, as if held by hand, one is ushered across Himid's picture planes by the sound of the oud instrument familiar to Himid from her youth. The gentle rub of a finger across a string within seconds unfolds into the sound of a full orchestra; we are in a time-machine. The music fades, or grinds to a halt, depending on where one's body finds itself in the gallery. Each visitor's journey is distinct. The sound of archival material from mid-century life in Britain, researched from BBC radio programmes held at the British Library espousing pithy quips regarding fashion and the aristocracy interleave with recordings of operas at their crescendo. Speaking of the process, Stawarska articulates it as 'a meticulous choreography of technical layering, specifically of keeping time, to maintain the intimacy of emotion'.

Himid has often described her penchant for opera as being one of the great loves of her life. The songbooks, most often authored by men, but performed by supremely talented women, forced to embody doom, within the proscenium theatre engenders specific sensibilities. The schism of gender and class; the gloriousness of ornate costume and patterned set design. When pared back to their essence, Himid informs me, these stories all bear something familiar to everyday life, akin to a fairy tale – opera can be said to be the hyperbolic subconscious unspooled on stage, a vessel for bottled, suppressed feelings.

Likewise, might you enter *Zanzibar* to find yourself stirred with empathy, or finding yourself abounding in an abundance of laughter. Whichever way you go, there is something here true to life, for us all.

Water continues to serve as a metaphor in East Gallery, exemplified here in the architecture of boats, which materialise in manifold form. Conceived as a site for visitors to perambulate in and around; to sit and stand; observe and decode. To visit once, twice, in person, or through one's imagination. Like in all of the duo's exhibitions, the visitor is conceived as an active and complicit part of the exhibition experience. Himid and Stawarska stretch out cleats – ropes of empathy into the unknown – but they are an offering, for the visitor to hold on to.

The symbolic apparatus of movement has served as an anchor to our conversations in Luxembourg – a country, where over 170 languages are regularly spoken. A country where for over a hundred years, foreign nationals both from across Europe and beyond its corridors, have formed a vital part of the nation's culture and economy.

The centrepiece, or rather, the skin that coheres this tapestry of artworks in multiple media are a series of long sheaths of blue – sumptuous silkscreen paper created by Magda Stawarska. Inspired by conversations that initially revolved around the possibilities of pattern to serve as conduits for transcultural dialogue, movement and social change, Stawarska gathered her references during a residency in Sharjah, UAE. At the time, the artist was engaged in a process of what she refers to as 'inner listening'. Inner listening is a practice akin to that of a flaneur, of walking the city, recording sounds and pictures, which are edited and translated, given to invited participants with a series of prompts that subsequently inform the final outcome of the artwork. Wandering through side streets, quiet alleys behind souks during prayer time, observing the wrapping of shop stalls by vendors in myriad textiles evoked patterns new and familiar. A process of study that returned us both to the Iberian Peninsula was set in motion. Here, these cartographic planes held together by paint and ink also evoke graph paper and ancient scrolls, serving as surfaces to exhibit Stawarska and Himid's evocative paintings.

Positioned on these scrolls one will find Lubaina Himid and Magda Stawarska's paintings side by side for the first time in a museum. Many of Himid's paintings from her signature series, *Distance No Object*, which she began in 2004–5 are on view here. Also presented here are a body of paintings and intricate drawings created between 2021–2, which loosely fall under the umbrella of the 'Dream Boats' series. Himid notes that she wished to fill the galleries with explorations from 'the grand Armada of the real and the imagined' as well as sites of 'temporary habitation' and 'floating taxis and mythical homes' that are 'nimble, steady' all the while their duplicitous shells could elide the fact that they are 'horrible inhumane and dangerous containers for the transportation of the oppressed'.

The intimacy of this convening – revealing the interior armature of these sophisticated vessels, through to the humble nature of the most serene fishing boat was developed through conversations between the two artists, who worked with exhibition designer Souraya Kreidieh to consider the interplay of proximity and distance for the spectator. *In Some Boats Wait Forever* (2024) by Magda Stawarska, a unique exchange between photography, painting, silkscreen techniques and collaging find their final form on a primed and painted linen surface.

A ship unmoored, lost at sea. A drowned orchard off of a pier floating across the Gulf of Oman towards a tourist enclave. It has come to a standstill. It rises. Leaning. Stawarska captures this instant through the aperture of her camera lens on her first visit to the UAE. From this vantage point, its metallic armature resembles that of an aircraft wing collapsed into the sea. A forlorn memory. A deceased military vessel. The marshland, the mangroves, materialise in and out of view from a distance as the human eye glints to focus into the image. Stawarska has painted over this site in magenta hues, blues and whites. The canvas is overlaid with colonial-era patterns found and borrowed from the wallpapers of 'oriental art' exhibitions that I had gathered over the years and lent to Magda to deploy, decipher, strip and re-stitch as a connective tissue between past and present.





Across from here, another movement through bodies of water ensues via Lubaina Himid's six overpainted wooden oars. Used as devices to aid in movement, here, they are meticulously painted with details that form part of Himid's visual vocabulary: a warty newt, cowry shells, domestic utensils and a surgical knot. Arched here, these ready-mades propose a 'barricade' signifying that the visitor must pause and take stock. They, you, are all performers in the theatre of the exhibition choreographed by the duo. The invitation is not without its suggestion. But there is always a path for exit and entry, and of course, re-entry.





Elsewhere, you may happen upon a private corner anchored by *Lost Door* (2021), where you may invite yourself to be cradled in the privacy of the artists' inner world. To sit in and be transposed in a wicker chair from the artists' home and observe drawings studies that have never been shown before, or to observe painted drawers originally conceived by Himid for the Glyndebourne Festival, UK. The theme of architecture in this gallery, which crystalises in the use of salvaged material finds a different life in the actionist painting of Stawarska. Her architectonic paintings created in piercing grey-blues and magenta pulse through the skin of copper, canvas and linen, revealing architectures that slip in-between the cracks while others shimmer in the interstices during fleeting instances of hurried excitement, rapture, and tension.



Exit the stage where you entered or if you do so via the dimly lit passage than you might encounter two of Himid's *Dreamboats* (2023) from the 15th Sharjah Biennial – street signs that adorned the shop fronts of decommissioned shop fronts across the Emirate of Sharjah, UAE. Positioning over a dozen bilingual signs with annotating boat paintings of various sizes served as an empathic gesture on Himid's part. It was a means to support shopkeepers, drawing attention to local socioeconomics, but more significantly, a welcome invitation for women of all disposition to join Himid in inhabiting the street.





In the adjacent Jardin des sculptures – your ‘Fun Palace’, Himid and Stawarska have collaborated with the team at Mudam on a site-specific installation to present an almost entirely new suite of artworks. The flickering breath of a projector offers us glimpses into the steady movement of Magda Stawarska’s body traversing borders – the so-called demarcation of the ‘east’ and the ‘west’ as signified by portals of the Bosphorus Strait in Istanbul are negotiated. Videos of train journeys on monitors give light under this arched ceiling to a dreamscape of boundless contusion co-conceived by Stawarska and Himid. Here, four half-sawn wooden structures redolent of stable doors float mid-air. Overpainted carts protrude their contents – revealing instruments such as a lute, as well as a french horn. Elsewhere, overpainted carts present us with the proposition of a drum, a spanner and a radio that plays, but that also silences the sounds of the birds.

Distilled here is a silent orchestra made animate through colour and feeling, through Himid’s patterned carts and Stawarska’s free-wheeling bodily movement across projection and screen. A skip door, a kitchen door, a mucky door, a makeshift set of utensils – from the domestic realm to the exterior view of a world that we are promised, but which is never truly over, ‘what will you take with you?’ Himid asked when she first began presenting overpainted carts with artist Susan Walsh in 2015. This prompt today feels more like an urgent summoning to the visitor not merely with regards to her and Stawarska’s exhibition itself, but more explicitly of the function of art more generally. What we ‘take’ and carry with us – from art – is the empathic, affective possibility to imagine the world anew.





Lubaina Himid

Lubaina Himid CBE RA was born in Zanzibar in 1954, and now lives and works in the UK. She is an artist who for over four decades has explored and expanded the possibilities of painting and storytelling to depict contemporary everyday life and to fill gaps in art history. Self-described as a painter, cultural activist, witness, storyteller, and historian, Himid is an influential figure within the British Black Arts Movement in the 1980s, and has been a champion of women artists in her role as a teacher, curator, critic, and organizer. In 2017, she won the Turner Prize, in 2023 the Maria Lassnig Art Prize, and the 2024 Suzanne Deal Booth / FLAG Art Foundation Prize. Himid has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions globally including a major 2021 survey at Tate Modern, as well as monographic presentations at UCCA, Beijing; Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts in Lausanne; New Museum; Modern Art Oxford; Spike Island, Bristol; Tate Britain, London, and has featured in the 14th and 15th Sharjah Biennials, the 12th Liverpool Biennial; the 10th Berlin Biennale and the 10th Gwangju Biennale. She is Professor Emeritus at The University of Central Lancashire. In 2026, Lubaina Himid will represent Great Britain at the 61st Venice Biennale.



Magda Stawarska

Born in Poland in 1976, Magda Stawarska's multi-disciplinary practice combines moving image, sound, silkscreen prints and painting. Her work often arches around her distinct practice of 'inner listening', through which she explores the connections between personal memory, place, and sound, uncovering hidden and conflicting histories. Recent solo and group exhibitions include *Artist-to-Artist*, Frieze, London; *Drift*, Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix, London; *Plaited Time / Deep Water*, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE; *A Fine Toothed Comb*, HOME, Manchester; *Rewinding Internationalism*, Villa Arson, Nice, and Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. Her work is in public collections including the Government Art Collection, London, the Arts Council Collection, London and the Sharjah Art Foundation Collection. She is a Research Fellow for Artlab Contemporary Print Studios at the University of Central Lancashire and lives and works in the UK.

Public Programme

Opening Talk

With Lubaina Himid, Magda Stawarska,
Omar Kholeif, Bettina Steinbrügge

06.03.2025 | 19:30 – 20:30 | EN

Mudam Akademie

*Black Art – From 1980s Britain
to Today*

With Christine Eyene

12.03.2025 | 19:00 – 20:00 | EN

Lunchtime at Mudam

28.03.2025 | 12:30 – 13:30

30.05.2025 | 12:30 – 13:30

Drop-in

Memory motives

05.04 – 15.06.2025

on weekends and holidays

Poetry Workshop

Stitching Verse, Linking Dreams

With Omar Kholeif

03.05.2025

10:00 – 11:30 | Youth (13 – 18 years)

15:00 – 16:30 | Adults

Mudamini Workshop

Imaginary cartography

08.05.2025 | 14:30 – 16:30

27.05.2025 | 14:30 – 16:30

6 – 12 years

Artist Talk

Revisiting the Canons

With Lubaina Himid,

moderated by Florence Ostende

07.06.2025 | 14:30 – 16:00 | EN

Listening session

Ida & Friends

With Magda Stawarska

08.06.2025 | 14:30 – 16:30 | EN

Lecture-Performance

Dreamwork: A Journey of Voices

By Omar Kholeif

12.07.2025 | 14:30 – 16:00 | EN

Images

Cover outside

Magda Stawarska

Shimmering Moment, 2024

Courtesy the artist and Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix,
London

Photo: Magda Stawarska

Cover inside

Lubaina Himid

Bang the Colander Cart, 2024 (detail)

Switch On for Sound Cart, 2024 (detail)

The Radio Plays But no Birds Sing, 2024 (detail)

Drum Cart, 2024 (detail)

Bang the Spanner Cart, 2024 (detail)

Lute Cart, 2024 (detail)

French Horn Cart, 2024 (detail)

Courtesy of Hollybush Gardens, London

and Greene Naftali, New York

Photo: Gavin Renshaw

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Magda Stawarska

Research photos, 2024

Courtesy of the artist

Photo: Magda Stawarska

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Lubaina Himid

In Your Dreams, 2021 – 2022

Courtesy of the artist, Hollybush Gardens, London

and Greene Naftali, New York

Photo: Gavin Renshaw

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Magda Stawarska

Curtain II, 2017

Courtesy the artist and Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix,
London

Photo: Magda Stawarska

6

Lubaina Himid

So Many Dreams, 2021 – 2022

Courtesy of the artist and Hollybush Gardens, London

Photo: Gavin Renshaw

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Lubaina Himid

Lunar Eclipse, 2024

Courtesy of the artist and Hollybush Gardens, London

Photo: Eva Herzog Studio

8

Lubaina Himid

Shell Magic, 2024

Courtesy of the artist, Hollybush Gardens, London

and Greene Naftali, New York

Photo: Eva Herzog Studio

9

Lubaina Himid

Surgeon's Knot, 2024

Courtesy of the artist, Hollybush Gardens, London

and Greene Naftali, New York

Photo: Eva Herzog Studio

10

Lubaina Himid

Warty Newt (Male), 2024

Courtesy of the artist and Hollybush Gardens, London

Photo: Gavin Renshaw

11

Lubaina Himid

Dreaming Has a Share in History, 2021 – 2022

Courtesy of the artist and Hollybush Gardens, London

Photo: Gavin Renshaw

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Lubaina Himid

Dreaming Has a Share in History, 2022

Dreams Can Come True, 2022

From the series 'Dream Boats', 2022

View of the exhibition Lubaina Himid and Magda

Stawarska: *Plaited Time / Deep Water*, Al Mureijah

Art Spaces, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, 2023

Courtesy of Sharjah Art Foundation

Photo: Shanavas Jamaluddin

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Magda Stawarska

Slipping Veil, Katowice, 2024

Courtesy the artist and Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix,
London

Photo: Magda Stawarska

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Lubaina Himid

So Many Dreams, 2021

Courtesy of the artist, Hollybush Gardens, London

and Greene Naftali, New York

Photo: Gavin Renshaw

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Lubaina Himid

Skip Door: Mucky Door, 2024

Skip Door: Utility Room, 2024

Skip Door: Kitchen, 2024

Skip Door: Counting Room, 2024

Courtesy of the artist, Hollybush Gardens, London

and Greene Naftali, New York

Photo: Eva Herzog Studio

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Portrait of Lubaina Himid

Courtesy of the artist and Hollybush Gardens, London

Photo: Magda Stawarska

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Portrait of Magda Stawarska

Courtesy of the artist

Photo: Lubaina Himid

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