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ART AND CULTURE ▶ EXHIBITIONS & SHOWS

Lubaina Himid and Magda Stawarska's new show at Kettle's Yard will uncover the missing narratives in everyday life stories

The artists and partners in life are collaborating on an immersive takeover of Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, in an exhibition that delves into a lost literary legacy



Lubaina Himid (left) and Magda Stawarska photographed at their Preston, UK studio in May 2025
(Image credit: Photography: Jermaine Francis)

BY HANNAH SILVER PUBLISHED 7 HOURS AGO IN [FEATURES](#)

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Creating worlds and telling stories around marginal communities has long been a passion for Lubaina Himid, who intertwines history, narrative and a centralisation of the Black figure throughout her boldly coloured works. A long career has been punctuated with significant milestones, from Himid's curation of 1985 exhibition 'The Thin Black Line' at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts, which shone a spotlight on underrepresented Black and Asian women artists, to the taking home of the Turner Prize in 2017. In 2026, Himid is to represent Great Britain at the 61st Venice Biennale, with a solo exhibition at the British Pavilion.

Now, Himid is debuting new work alongside her partner, artist Magda Stawarska, at Cambridge gallery Kettle's Yard. Stawarska is absorbed by a mix of mediums in her multidisciplinary practice, from sound and image to more traditional pieces, such as delicately layered silkscreen prints, her works bringing an evocative immersion to Himid's brightly coloured paintings.



From the series *How May I Help You?* (2025), by Lubaina Himid
(Image credit: Photography: Jermaine Francis)

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'I really like working with Magda,' says Himid, speaking over Zoom as the duo prepare for the exhibition's opening in July 2025. 'There's somebody there being capable and reassuring, and we can have a fabulous, interconnected conversation. Our two practices, seen separately, look incredibly different to me, but lots of the themes are connected. They just come from a completely different direction: politically, geographically and historically. But we are both having conversations around codes and patterns and language evolving, and we're trying to find a way to be more playful, perhaps, when we're working together.'

The work on show at Kettle's Yard draws from this cultural overlapping. Once the home of Tate Gallery curator Jim Ede and his wife Helen, Kettle's Yard – which opened as a house and gallery in 1970 – provided a fitting backdrop for an artistic takeover that combines sound, paintings, installation and printmaking. 'We've got different ways of working,' says Stawarska. 'We can be very supportive of each other – for example, I love asking Lubaina what she thinks, because she works much more freely and spontaneously. She's not held by process, while my practice requires a different discipline, so I think we're learning all the time, about making as well as about what we are interested in.'



Detail of *Slightly Bitter* (2025), by Magda Stawarska and Lubaina Himid
(Image credit: Photography: Jermaine Francis)

In varying ways, both artists are fascinated by the often-neglected minutiae of daily life, from Himid's interest in the motifs and rituals of the contemporary everyday and the significance of domestic space to Stawarska's exploration into the power of sound and its potential to reveal a personal relationship with place. Showcasing their new works in a house already ripe with an artistic history feels like an entirely natural move.

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The exhibition is inspired by the partially surviving correspondence between writer and poet Sophie Brzeska and artist Nina Hamnett. Known more widely for their connection to modernist sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (Brzeska's long-term companion, with whom Hamnett is thought to have had an affair), both women are often overlooked for their own work. In Kettle's Yard, Hamnett's likeness lives on in Gaudier-Brzeska's marble *Torso* (1913) and bronze *Dancer* (1913), indirectly leading Himid to her subject. 'I was interested in the house, and in Henri's sculptures, and I had been interested in Nina Hamnett for a long time, for her crazy Englishness. I remembered that Nina had been very rude about Sophie, and then I discovered these two had written postcards and letters to each other, in English and French. There aren't many, but they are really quite caring. There is a care there that you don't see in Hamnett's book [*Laughing Torso*], where she is very throwaway and rude.'

The new work, installation *Slightly Bitter*, delves into a mish-mash of mediums to bring this complicated relationship between the two women to life, combining the sonic with paintings and found objects, alongside postcards from Himid and Stawarska's own archives, limited by the fact that Brzeska's letters were the only ones to survive.



Your Charm Offensive, a current work by Lubaina Himid, on display in her Preston studio
(Image credit: Photography: Jermaine Francis)

The ambiguous nature of Brzeska and Hamnett's relationship resonates. Stawarska, who shares Poland as a country of birth with Brzeska, says, 'I'm quite fascinated by what it would be like to be immigrants in early 20th-century Britain. From Brzeska's text, you feel that she doesn't have that sense of belonging. She actually didn't like being in Britain. She would rather have been in Paris.'

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‘So many things resonated with both of us,’ says Himid. ‘We used that understanding of the awkwardness of being those women in difficulty to think about our own lives. It was useful in terms of working out why we did and didn’t do things. This installation isn’t a documentary, it’s about conversations, translations and exchange.’ Himid points to the concept of postcards themselves as key. Easily read, their simultaneously private and public status echoes Kettle’s Yard itself, which acts both as a place to display possessions to visitors and as a retreat from the public gaze.

Himid and Stawarska’s work is everywhere in the space, gentle interventions that are hidden in drawers, behind closed doors and glimpsed in the kitchen. These more subtle pieces join works from Himid’s latest series *How May I Help You?*, which draws on last year’s *Street Sellers*. In this new series, Himid envisages the tradespeople and vendors that the Edes may have met during their time living in Tangier, from 1936-1952. Often full length, they are drawn in Himid’s distinctive bold palette of hues, theatrically residing over the imagined world.



Lubaina Himid in her studio

(Image credit: Photography: Jermaine Francis)

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'I'm absolutely obsessed with the daily act of buying and selling ordinary things, the relationship that the seller has with both the things they are selling and the people they are selling them to, and how the people that are buying things have a relationship to the things they're buying, but quite often seem not to have a relationship with the person they're buying it from,' says Himid. 'You buy a bucket, but you have to decide if you're going to this or that bucket shop, because of who's selling it to you. Even if that's not at the front of your brain, it must be a reason why you choose it.' To go alongside the *Street Sellers* series, both Himid and Stawarska worked together on signs that reveal what the street seller was both shouting and feeling, bridging a gap between language, cultures and narrative in much the same way that parallels are drawn between their own oeuvres.

'There's been a short but intense history of collaborations [with Stawarska],' says Himid. 'I've always wanted to show at Kettle's Yard, and now it has become something with its own momentum.' Adds Stawarska: 'Lubaina had mentioned Kettle's Yard many times in conversations, how much she loves it as a house, how it feels as a space, how sometimes she tries to recreate similar moments in her own house. So I felt privileged to be invited to be a part of this exhibition, because I'm involved in something that she has been passionate about for a very long time.'

'Lubaina Himid with Magda Stawarska: Another Chance Encounter' will be on show from 12 July-2 November 2025 at Kettle's Yard, Cambridge