

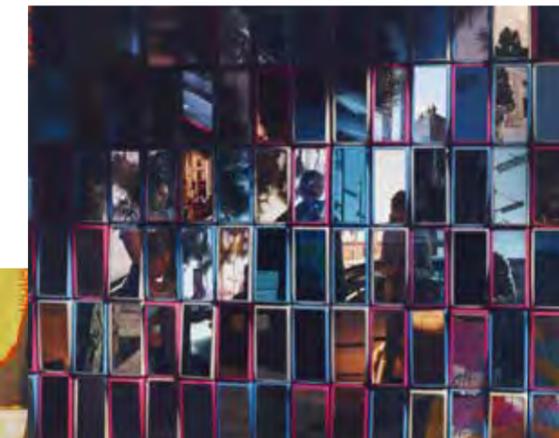
Found Cities, Lost Objects: Women in the City encourages us to view the city through the eyes of female artists. It acknowledges the privileges which allow some women to roam freely, while also considering the boundaries that may curb the experiences of others. This is an exhibition with conversations between audiences and artists at its heart, exchanging observations, memories and imaginings to give us all a greater sense of self and consider our own relationships with the city.

Cities are places to make history, make money and the ability to predict the future. They are full of memories, lost lives and lost objects.

— Lubaina Himid CBE



**FOUND
CITIES**
**LOST
OBJECTS:**
**WOMEN IN
THE CITY**



Curated by
LUBAINA HIMID CBE

An Arts Council Collection Touring Exhibition



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Right: Milena Dragicevic, *Opet*, 2002, Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre © the artist
Cover left: Young In Hong, *Burning Love*, 2014, Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre © the artist
Cover right: Hannah Starkey, *Mirror - Untitled*, September 2015, 2015, Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre © the artist

Design: Park Studio

Exhibition Guide by Hanna Baumann

THIS EXHIBITION INVITES YOU TO DISCOVER THE CITY THROUGH THE EYES OF FEMALE ARTISTS

The works shown encourage you to reflect on your everyday experiences and your relationship with the built environment. How do the buildings, streets and neighbourhoods you inhabit shape you and your life? Can you envision an alternative city, one which is more inclusive and welcoming for everyone?

Cities are full of people, and crowds can have unpredictable dynamics. But their anonymity also offers a form of freedom. In her essay ‘Street Haunting’ (1927), Virginia Woolf writes about the joy she experiences while drifting through the city and people-watching. She describes losing her sense of having a body and becoming an ‘enormous eye’ – being primarily an observer, rather than being watched by others. Of course, some people find it easier to blend into the crowd than others, and what catches our eye on urban wanderings depends on who we are.

Lisa Milroy, *Views of Marunouchi*: There are two sets of paintings by Milroy in the exhibition, both scenes of Japan. These works are from a series of seven which put us on the streets of Japan walking alongside others.

Sophie Calle, *The Tie*: Throughout her career, Calle has repeatedly claimed the role of stalker, choosing to follow strangers who captured her imagination. One evening Calle attended a lecture by a man she deemed interesting but badly dressed, so each Christmas she anonymously sent him clothes.

Lucy McLauchlan, *Expressive Deviant Phonology*: McLauchlan paints female forms onto large-scale public buildings, like the Birmingham Central Library demolished in 2016. In this work, women’s eyes stare at us, returning the male gaze that often dominates in public settings.

Q: When you think of your city, what words spring to mind? Would outsiders have a different image from yours? What would draw their attention?

Q: How would it make you feel to follow someone, letting their actions dictate where you went? Consider the possible benefits of being an unseen observer, what would it mean to you to become less visible in public places?

Q: Images of women are all over our cities. What kind of women are they? How do the images you see on billboards or at bus stops make you feel – about yourself, about the women you know? What parts of women’s lives and achievements should be highlighted in the public realm?

Young In Hong, *Burning Love*: illustrates a scene from a candle-lit vigil that was held in Seoul, South Korea in 2008. The demonstration was triggered by the Korean government’s reversal of a ban on US beef imports and saw thousands of people take to the streets to join the protest, making it one of the most important democratic events in South Korea’s modern history. However, very little was done to document this by mainstream media.

Milena Dragicevic, *Opet*: here we have an anonymous figure, hood up, watching the world go by. Inspired by Gerhard Richter’s famous painting, *Betty, 1988* and adopting a film strip format where one frame interrupts the other, we are left wondering who this person is and what they may be thinking.

Hannah Starkey, *Mirror – Untitled*: Starkey has described her work as ‘explorations of everyday experiences and observations of inner city life from a female perspective’, and has traced her interest in street photography to the French 19th-century concept of the urban wanderer, the *flâneur*, or rather it’s much less common female version, the *flâneuse*. This work captures the artist in the act of taking a photograph. Her reflection, as well as those of two young women and the anonymous street they stand in, is presented to the viewer fractured and distorted in the mirror’s multiple planes.

Filed in two Liverpool pubs, **Imogen Stidworthy’s *Barrabackslarrabang*** features individuals speaking in a local form of backslang. Traditionally, backslang – which consists of the insertion of extra vowels and syllables into ordinary speech – was used to obscure discussion about illegal activity.

We inhabit both buildings and clothes – they protect us from the outside world and enable us to carry out daily activities, but they can also be constraining or disabling when they do not fit our needs.

Q: Think about the clothes you wear when you go to different parts of the city. Do you sometimes dress to be more visible, sometimes less? Do you feel you can gain wanted attention or avert unwanted attention through your self-presentation? What makes you stare, what draws you in or makes you recoil?

Q: As you walk around the city, does your reflection catch your eye? Do you enjoy seeing how you appear to others, or do such moments catch you off guard? Do you think architects consider how people may see themselves reflected in the buildings they design?

Maps are instruments of power. The science of cartography allowed colonisers to navigate space in order to appropriate it, to exploit resources. On the city scale, naming streets, squares and parks can also reflect a symbolic domination.

These photographs by **Markéta Luskačová & Margaret Murray**, primarily of London, show the city through a distinctly female gaze, highlighting people and places that might well have been ignored by other passers-by.

Cornelia Parker, *Meteorite Lands on ...* series: Here the artist imagines a meteorite landing on some of London’s most well-known landmarks by heating up a real Gibeon Meteorite found in Namibia in 1836 and then placing it on a map of London, letting it burn through the pages.

Melanie Manchot, *Dance (All Night, London)*: Manchot worked in collaboration with 10 dance schools from around east London, each representing a different style of movement, from Cuban Rueda to Chinese Dance and Argentine Tango. Dancers paraded through the streets, coming together in Exchange Square, Broadgate, where they danced alongside each other.

Christiane Baumgartner’s *Ladywood* points to the industrial past reflected even in natural urban spaces. Such traces that require uncovering are quite different from monuments which seek to self-consciously memorialise one, official version of the city’s past.

susan pui san lok’s film *Trailers (RoCH fans and Legends)* shows another dimension to the everyday streetscape of the British high street. Urban areas used by diasporic and migrant communities often refer to spaces beyond themselves, with layers of meaning that are not always visible to other city-dwellers. The martial arts sequences superimposed on this setting suggest to the audience a way to experience an area through someone else’s eyes.

Q: Do you think you notice or care about people and places that are not valued in public representations of the city?

Q: How do you relate to famous land-marks in your city? Currently, there is a lot of discussion about removing monuments and renaming streets to reflect changing political values. After whom would you name your local street, square, or park? To whom or what event would you build a monument?

Q: We often behave as we are expected to in public space, to not break social conventions, to not stand out, and to protect ourselves. What would happen if we acted in unsanctioned ways, or moved an activity permitted in one space (like the dance studio) into another (such as the street at night time)? Can claiming space for enjoyment through parties, carnivals and celebrations be a political act?

Sometimes we might need to tear up existing maps, to forge our own way, to rediscover hidden or forgotten places, or reclaim spaces for new purposes.

Mona Hatoum, *Measures of Distance*: The artist reads letters exchanged between her and her mother regarding photographs she took of her mother when they were once together. It was an intimate moment now discussed while they are separated by thousands of miles.

Glenys Johnson, *Berlin*: Berlin was long famously divided, along with other cities such as Belfast, Jerusalem, Beirut, and Nicosia. But even cities without visible walls experience division and segregation.

Magda Stawarska-Beavan, *Bracka 40*, examines the city of Łódź in the artist’s native Poland, providing glimpses of Jewish lives obliterated by the Nazi ghettoisation of the city during the Second World War. The artist based her research on recordings of first-hand accounts of Polish Jewish women’s lives from the Oral History British Library Sound Archive and on street plans, maps and architectural drawings at the Łódź State Archives.

Naiza Khan, *Membrane & The City Soaks Up Like A Sponge*: The constant renewal of cities can also be a process of erasure. Khan’s work evokes how the removed historical layers nonetheless shine through and inform the new strata of the city.

Tai Shani, *Dark Continent*: Semiramis: This work asks us to envision a post-patriarchal city. The scene you see in front of you is the setting for a 12-part performance series where each episode focuses on one of the characters of an allegorical ‘City of Women’. These create both a physical and a conceptual space to critique contemporary gender constructs and imagine an alternative history.

Q: Where are the spaces where you can be yourself, let down your hair, where you do not have to keep up appearances? What conditions and infrastructures enable such a sense of safety – be it CCTV, familiar faces, religious or cultural spaces, single-sex spaces?

Q: What are the markers of your home turf, the signals you look out for that make you feel you belong? Does your gender, ethnicity, class, age, physical appearance, or another aspect of your identity shape where in the city you go, where you feel you belong?

Q: If we read the signs of the landscape closely, we might find remnants of the past, clues that tell us why our cities are the way they are today. Have you ever stumbled upon markers of forgotten histories where you live?

Q: Whoever plans the city determines how it is used for generations to come. Birmingham, for instance, was re-designed for car use after World War Two. While at the time, this ‘motor city’ planning seemed forward-looking and modern, it also destroyed existing urban fabric and disadvantaged many residents. How does the city’s car-centric plan affect your experience? In your city, is there a space, building or landmark that is under threat from urban renewal that you would consider worth preserving?

Q: What improvements would you like to see to make the city more welcoming and inclusive to all types of women, as well as gender-non conforming people? What physical changes to the built environment might encourage such social change?