

Sue Flowers

One Tenth



ABOLISHED?

Lancashire Museums marking 200 years of the abolition of the slave trade

This year is the Bicentenary of the Act of Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

In many ways the Transatlantic Slave Trade is one of worst periods in Britain's long history. It is clear that every part of the British Isles was involved. Some supplied the trade – others benefited from it. Lancashire's farms, ironworks, hatters and so on provided the goods for sale in Africa, its people became sailors to take slaves across the seas and its merchants invested heavily to make it happen. Lancashire's residents consumed the sugar and tobacco, its businesses worked the cotton, the fine woods, the produce of the plantations. Fortunes were made (and sometime lost) in Lancashire. The profits went into buildings, land and industry – often changing the very face of the towns and countryside of the North West.

Yet there are positive lessons to be learnt amidst the death and disease; cruelty and inhuman acts that characterise this obscene trade in human cargo. Many Africans fought against the Trade – including a strong and active group of former slaves based in London. Thousands of Lancashire people signed petitions to Parliament and attended public meetings as the impetus

for change grew and the majority in Parliament against abolition was whittled down year on year.

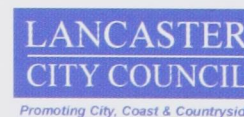
Lancashire Museums have been working for a number of years in partnership with others to raise awareness of this history and its legacies. It is particularly pertinent as Lancaster was for many years the country's fourth largest slaving port. In commemorating this largely lost or forgotten impact we have worked closely with artists to add an emotional and sometimes disturbing element to the plain facts of history.

ABOLISHED? sees the culmination of Lancashire Museums' current phase of this work. We will continue to reveal this hidden history beyond 2007 and I am grateful to the work of the many individuals and organisations that have been with us on the journey so far and who will be with us as we progress.

Edmund Southworth
County Museums Officer



RENAISSANCE
NORTH WEST



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Foreword

ABOLISHED? is Lancashire Museums' commemoration of the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act. It acknowledges Lancaster's deep involvement in the transportation of enslaved Africans. Between 1736 and 1807 Lancaster's merchants transported over 29,000 captured Africans across the Atlantic to plantations in the Americas and West Indies.

Although Lancaster Maritime Museum covered aspects of this history we have felt increasingly uncomfortable about its dry, almost distanced approach – so far from the nature of the trade and its human cargo. It was clear to us that the 'uncomfortable truth' of Lancaster's close involvement with the slave trade was not well known. For a number of years we have been focussing our work on raising awareness of this history, working with partners wherever possible. ABOLISHED? is part of this continuing work.

At the very heart of ABOLISHED? are the commissioned installations and interventions by artists Lubaina Himid

and Sue Flowers. Contemporary art grapples with difficult and contentious subjects. It often asks us to question our views of the world and of ourselves. In our role as carers of artefacts and community histories, Lancashire Museums are committed to working with artists in many areas of our work to bring new perspectives into view. Lubaina Himid and Sue Flowers have brought to the project their creative energy and their powers of visualisation and re-interpretation to our collective histories.

As this publication goes to press, ABOLISHED? has now been launched in Lancaster. Work by around 800 local school students accompanies Sue Flowers' installation at the Maritime Museum and our outreach programme continues apace throughout the run of the exhibitions. Details of the full ABOLISHED? project and of our work in this area spanning the last five years can be seen on the Museums' website; **www.lancsmuseums.gov.uk/abolished**

The ABOLISHED? project team, Anthea Dennett (Judges' Lodgings Museum), Laura Pye (Lifelong Learning

and Outreach Officer) and Sarah Riddle (Lancaster Maritime Museum), is acutely aware that none of this work could have taken place without the willing involvement, assistance and support of many colleagues, partners, organisations and individuals. We are grateful to them all even though I do not have space to name them here.

Lancashire Museums have a particular debt of gratitude to all our project funders; Arts Council England, Renaissance North West, Museums Libraries and Archives Council, Lancashire County Council, Lancaster City Council, Anti-slavery International, Spot On Rural Touring and Osun Arts Foundation and most especially to artists Lubaina Himid and Sue Flowers for their energy, patience, tenacity and creative vision.

Sue Ashworth
Project Manager



Sue Flowers at Green Close Studios, 2007.
© Lancaster Guardian

All photographs in this book are taken by the artists, unless otherwise stated.

From left to right clockwise: STAMP workshop Arkholme Primary School 2004; STAMP workshop Ripley St Thomas Secondary School 2004; STAMP workshop Arkholme Primary School 2004; One Tenth Workshop Hornby High School at Green Close Studios with Osun Arts 2007.



When I first came across Lancaster's involvement in the trade of enslaved African people, I felt its importance to the development of Lancaster was so paramount that I should have been aware of it – given that I have spent most of my life living and working in and around the Lancaster District.

My subsequent involvement in the development of STAMP – the Slave Trade Arts Memorial for Lancaster in 2004, informed my understanding of these issues and gave me a great many new ideas to assimilate and contextualise about my own identity and past.

I have lain awake for many a night considering identity, economy, wealth, whiteness and enslavement and how they all strangely interweave to tell a rarely told story. The 'Abolished?' project gives voice to that story – it has allowed me to reconsider my creative work with colleagues from Black Arts Alliance during the STAMP project, and to work alongside and absorb inspired comments and artworks by Lubaina Himid.

How can one make anything of any real meaning when faced with a history so unbearable it has almost been erased from our history books? I'm not so sure, but I think it is better to try than not to try at all. I have spent hours considering the relevance of creativity amongst this dark and horrid past. The truth is we can't do anything about the past, but we can do something about the present. These sentiments have informed the work I have created for Lancashire Museums.

I want to thank all those who contributed to *One Tenth* and its wider programme of work; Jenny Atkinson, Daedalian Glass, The Eden Centre, Hornby Village Trust, Osun Arts Foundation, Tiburcio Soteno and Spot On Rural Touring.

Detail of *One Tenth* showing Sugar Loaf installation and *Slave Ship* textile work by Osun Arts 2007.



Detail of *One Tenth* showing Sugar Loaves and *Slave Ship* textile work by Osun Arts 2007.

© Lancashire Museums



One Tenth is a condemnation of the actions of white imperialists on the lives of enslaved Africans, and a celebration of our power to overcome injustice and prejudice.

The installation *One Tenth* examines the criminality of one man from one city and one tenth of the number of the African enslaved human cargo he took onto one ship – *The Barlborough* – in the 18th Century from the port of Lancaster.

Detail of *One Tenth* 2007.



His identity, and this work act as a representation of the exploitation of white imperialists on the lives of African people during this forgotten and invisible history.

The installation weaves together our relationship with each other as global citizens, our understanding of the past and its relationship with the present, and our relationship with trade and how it impacts on the life of the producer and the purchaser, as relevant to today as it is to the past.

Placing the work within the context of the Maritime Museum in Lancaster, has particular resonance: it was here – the former Customs & Excise House for Lancaster port – that slave traders came to register their imported and exported goods. The merchants took goods from Lancaster, exchanging them for enslaved Africans and then travelled to the Americas to trade them for luxury products such as sugar, rum and tobacco. This all meant that when the ships returned to the port, the reality of shackled humans from the '*middle passage*' of the journey was no longer present,

it was replaced by seemingly wonderful new produce.

The work draws on the trade of sugar, which developed during the 17th and 18th Centuries, as a direct result of the slave trade during that period. European countries turned over large areas of their colonies to the production of sugar, using slaves from Africa – ‘imported’ to undertake hard and gruelling unpaid work. It is estimated

that up to 12 million Africans lost their liberty or lives on sugar plantations. Many sugar workers today endure extreme poverty and hardship – a legacy of the slave trade.

The installation seeks to develop an understanding of our relationship with environment, through adding to our understanding and relationship with one plant, its use, its trade and its impact on peoples’ lives. The work plays on the

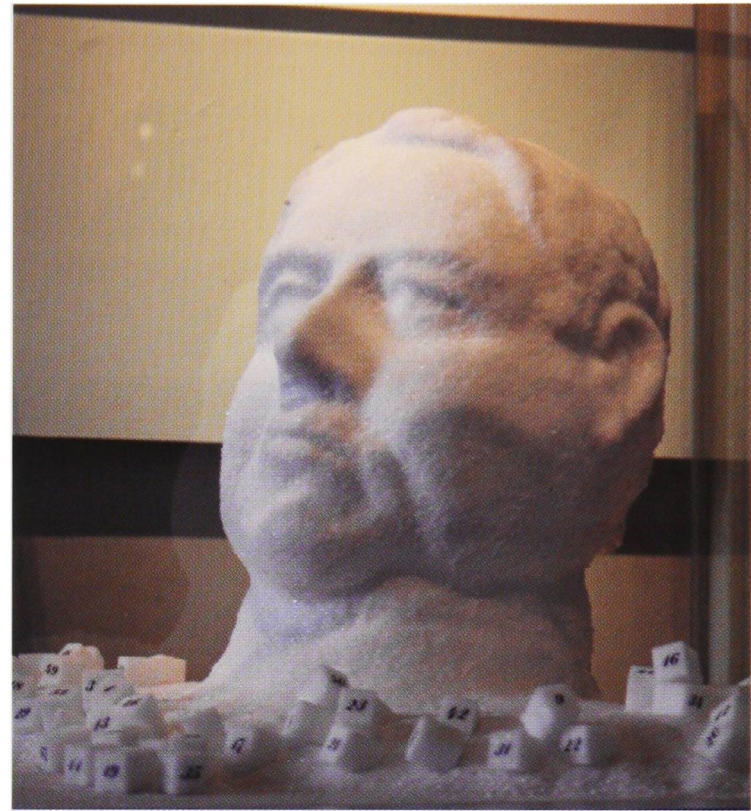
Detail of *One Tenth*: 550 Cargo 2007.



term '*refined white sugar*'. The production of Sugar (*Saccharum Officinarum*, a product created from the refined sap of sugar cane), one can clearly see, has degraded and impoverished millions of African people in its long trade history. William Cowper writes, in '*Pity for Poor Africans*', in 1788:

*'I own I am saddened at the
purchase of slaves,
And fear those who buy them and
sell them are knaves;
What I hear of their hardships, their
tortures and groans.
Is almost enough to draw pity from stones.
I pity them greatly but I must be mum,
For how could we do without
sugar and rum?'*

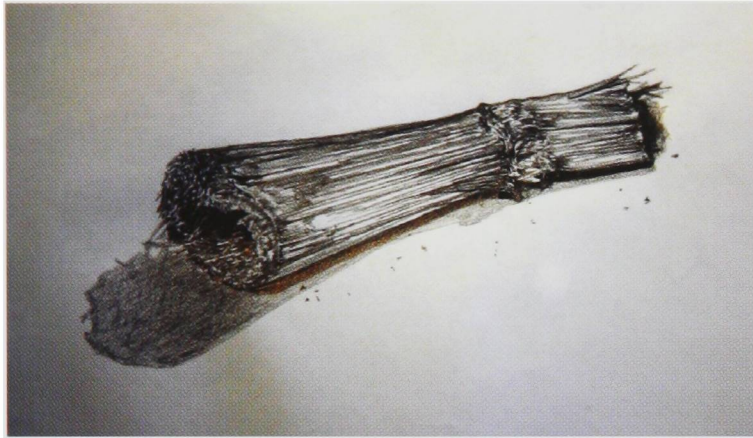
The installation references sugar cane as a metaphor for human life. One piece of cane has been uprooted, dried and divided into fifty-five pieces – the pieces have been painstakingly drawn: at a glance each piece of the plant is strangely similar, yet each piece retains its individuality, its connectivity to its



One Tenth: Sugar bust of Dodshon Foster, made in collaboration with Tiburcio Soteno Fernandez, ceramic artist Metepec, Mexico.

heritage and its own unique beauty. I have had the privilege to focus on each unique piece – fifty-five pieces cut from one cane from one plant (kindly provided by the Eden Centre in Cornwall).

Alongside the drawings I have created a series of fifty-five visual motifs, representing sugar loaves, made from



Detail of two of fifty-five drawings from United We Stand series of drawings for *One Tenth* 2007, with thanks to the Eden Centre Cornwall for the kind provision of sugar cane. © Lancashire Museums



cast glass crystals, which bear a strange resemblance to sugar crystals themselves. The whole of this work acts a memorial to *One Tenth* of the enslaved Africans on the merchant ship the *Barlborough*, and forms an epitaph not only to the 'cargo' of 550 humans, but to more than 29,000 Africans, which Lancaster was responsible for exploiting and the many more millions exploited internationally in the past and the present.

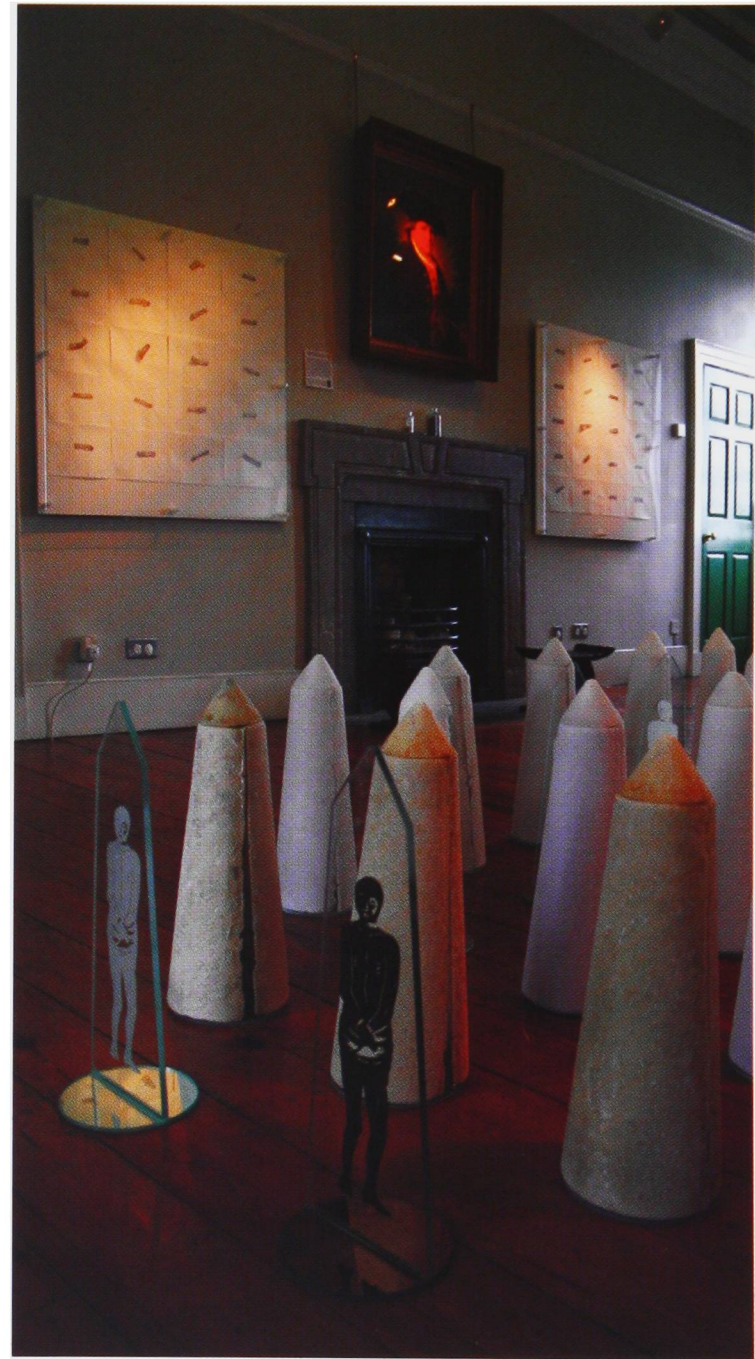
The loaves sit in the framework of a ship's plan – *the Brookes model* – used by the abolitionists to campaign in Parliament to show some of the appalling conditions which Africans were subjected to during their enslavement. The numeracy of this exploitation is very hard to comprehend fully – seeing fifty-five physical objects as one tenth of the Africans from one ship of 550, from one port, which was responsible for the enslavement of so many people makes the reality start to come home.

The man was Lancaster slave trader Dodshon Foster, whose portrait hangs prestigiously over the exhibition space

of the Museum's main exhibition hall. He was wealthy enough to commission a portrait in oils. The installation, which includes this portrait, begins to undermine the process of the wealthy patron and starts to look at the ethics of wealth in a world and society where poverty and injustice prevail.

The legacy of the trade in enslaved Africans is still around us in the world we know today. Its legacy is found in prejudice, inequality and unwritten truths: working with this issue has been like trying to re-visualise a drawing, one that has been almost permanently erased – yet the faint outline of pressure on the white paper, despite the most vigilant erasure, has kept its presence – the invisible drawing is still able to depict quite tangible traces of a most disgusting past.

The installation attempts to subvert our daily understanding of our environment of Lancaster and its history. Here, the wealthy merchant is transformed into a man of our times and becomes trapped into the very fabric of the building. Here, one man

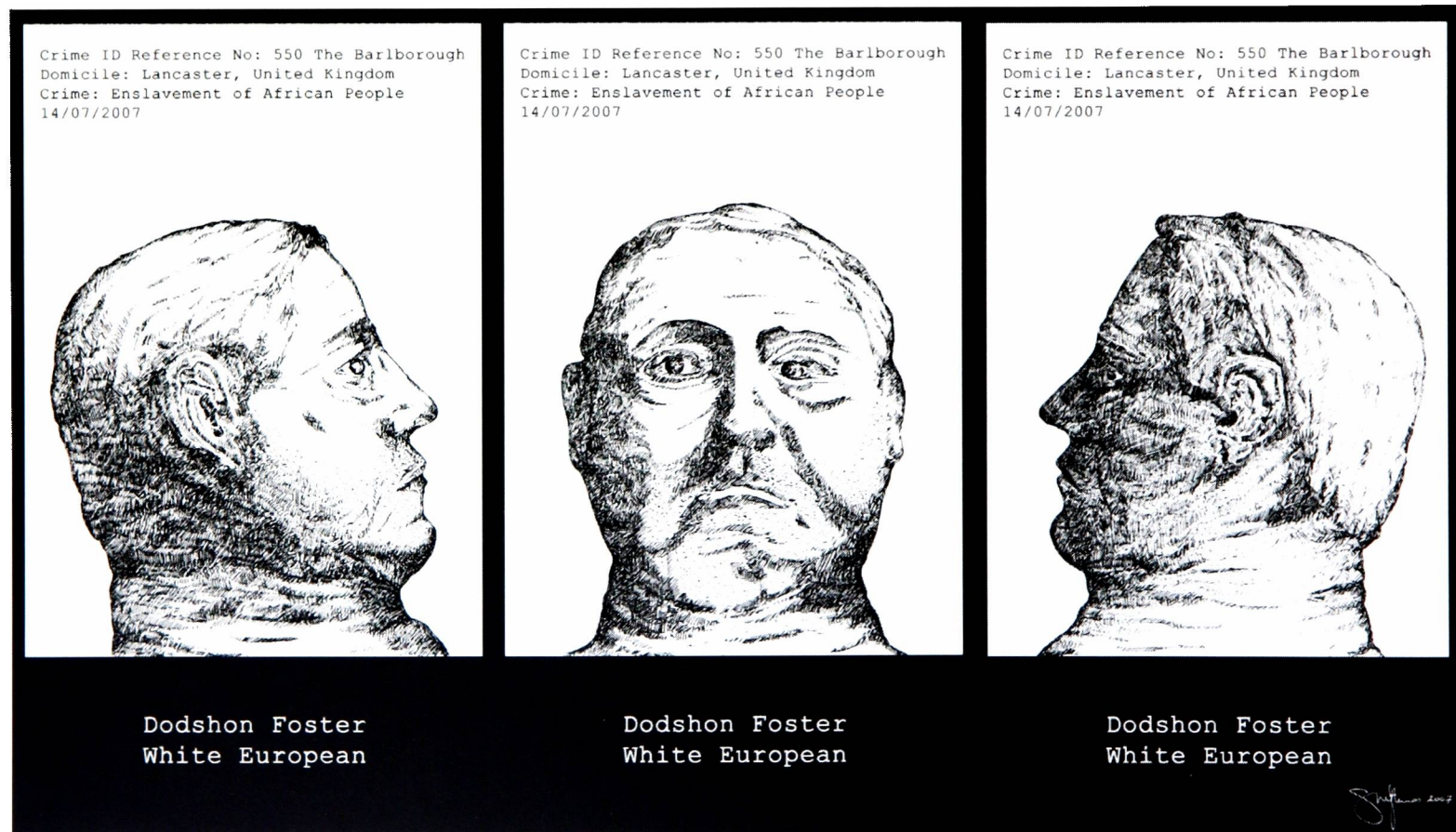


Detail of *One Tenth* 2007.

is criminalised – re-framed inside a building, which represented his wealth and power. A new representation of the man is created in a new portrait and a series of images have become trapped behind the protective bars of the window frames.

Within the installation stand two Ashanti stools, specially commissioned by UK African-based arts organisation Osun Arts and fabricated in Ghana. The stools feature the Sankofa bird, a Ghanaian symbol meaning ‘learn from the past’. Also to be found in the gallery is a

Drawings used for window installation representing Dodshon Foster as a modern day criminal from *One Tenth* 2007.





pile of sugar cubes, encased by history, numbered and scattered like discarded cargo washed up on the shore.

Hanging above the sugarloaf installation is a new textile work, which gives the installation a strong African presence. The dyed, printed and painted textile entitled *Slave Ship* was inspired by traditional Ghanaian funerary cloths and Adrinka symbolism. Each Adrinka symbol represents the life of a slave. The central symbol - meaning 'Except God' - envisages that only when God enters the minds of all humanity will slavery truly end. The work celebrates the life and importance of the deceased through symbol and colour and brings forth the individual identities of the enslaved Africans.

This work, and a celebratory reclamation of the space enacted by Osun Arts as an opening ceremony, will ensure the work sends out a message of unity,

Osun Arts Foundation work for *One Tenth* 2007: Isioma Williams working on the textile piece *Slave Ship*; Jerry Blankson Ghanaian Artist putting the finishing touches to his design *Slave Ship* (both at Green Close Studios); Performance artists recreate a scene from *IGBEKUN* for a special reclaiming of the site event at Lancaster Maritime Museum.

Slave Ship textile work By Osun Arts Foundation: Designed by Jerry Blankson and realised with Stanley Ifamene, Felix Ologbosere and Isioma Williams for *One Tenth* 2007.
© Lancashire Museums



collaboration and hope for the future. A flag is being flown from the utmost mast of the Museum building, as a symbol to empower the youth of today to stand up against prejudice and racism and to celebrate our commonality as humans. The flag has been designed by Ripley Saint Thomas schoolgirl Sammy Faulkner (sewn by textile artist Jenny Atkinson) and was based on the Ashanti flags of Ghana. It interweaves a contemporary look at Lancaster's involvement in slavery history with Ghanaian textile art. Titled with Sammy's own saying '*Freedom connected as one*' – the flag represents a real coming together of committed individuals, empowered by their mutual understanding and determination to acknowledge the truths of our terrible past, and to work with commitment and hope for a better and more equal world in the future.

People today can feel outraged at the injustices of the past but can still fail to see the injustices of the present. Much of what is known as modern-day entrepreneurship and capitalism may take no account of the life conditions of a workforce when high

Pupils from Ripley St Thomas School with their flags representing proverbs about Slavery. 'Freedom connected as one' featured in the foreground was flown at the Maritime Museum for *One Tenth*. Also pictured; artists Jenny Atkinson & Sue Flowers and art teacher Helen Hunter. *Abolished?* workshop 2006.
© *Lancaster Guardian*



productivity and profit are the driving forces of the economic wheel.

We are collectively responsible for the world we live in. We are still responsible for how we choose to work, purchase, produce and consume. Anti-slavery International and the Fairtrade movement, among others, attempt to make an impact on these global injustices; yet it is ourselves as individual global consumers that must consider our own consciences, and the impact of our economic choices on others as we go about our daily lives.

Sue Flowers 2007

Sue Flowers is both a practising artist and Director of Green Close Studios, a pioneering rural arts organisation based in North Lancashire.

Her work explores our identities in relation to the planet, in such a way as to bring deeper and more powerful understandings of our environments and our relationships to change.

Sue Flowers studied 3-D Design (Ceramics) at Middlesex Polytechnic from 1984–87. Her practice, over the last twenty years, has focussed on exploring our relationship with the earth itself. This has taken the form of public artworks, temporary installations and photography. Sue Flowers has undertaken exhibitions and public art commissions in France, Denmark and widely across the UK.

Sue now practices as a freelance artist and project manager. This year she has been working with artists from across the globe – Southern India, Mexico and Ghana – exploring our global identities, relationships and interdependences with the earth. Much of her work attempts to develop an understanding of how these relationships with the earth connect us with a common identity and understanding.

“Art has always been a powerful catalyst for introducing change and developing understanding of new ideas. The recent role of the public artist in assisting communities to take ownership of social and environmental change – considering their own vital relationships to the environment and each other – has meant that I have been fortunate to undertake a series of public artworks, temporary installations and interventions, which attempt to alter our perceptions and challenge our understanding of environments and identities.”

Sue Flowers is based at Green Close Studios in Melling, which offers an innovative approach to rural regeneration through the arts; providing facilities for other artists, and being pro-active in the development of contemporary art practice within a rural context.

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Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service, Judges' Lodgings Museum, Lancaster, 2007.

public collections including the Tate, the V&A, Arts Council, Birmingham City Art Gallery, Rochdale Art Gallery, the Harris Art Gallery, Bolton Art Gallery and New Hall Cambridge. Most recently her work was exhibited in 2007 at the Victoria and Albert Museum as part of the *Uncomfortable Truths* project and can be seen in 2008 in an exhibition of small works and paper pieces at Peg Alston Fine Art New York.

Lubaina Himid is Professor of Contemporary Art at the University of Central Lancashire. During the past 25 years she has exhibited widely both in Britain and internationally. Solo shows include *Naming the Money* at Hatton in Newcastle, *Plan B* at Tate St Ives, *Zanzibar* at Oriol Mostyn, *Vernets Studio* at Transmission Glasgow, *The Wing Museum* at Chisenhale, *African Gardens* at the Black Art Gallery in London and *Inside the Invisible* at St Jorgens Museum in Bergen plus several paperwork shows during the past 10 years at Peg Alston Fine Art in New York.

She represented Britain at the 5th Havana Biennale in Cuba, has shown in group exhibitions at the Studio Museum and Steinbaum Krauss in New York, Tate Britain, the Whitechapel, the I.C.A. and the Hayward Gallery in London, Track 17 in Los Angeles, The Fine Art Academy in Vienna and the Grazer Kunstverein and the City Art Gallery in Wellington. She has paintings and drawings in numerous private collections but is also represented by major works in several

This Dinner Service will sit as if it has always been there, on the tables, the mantelpieces, the sideboards and the window sills of the Judges' Lodgings telling the story of lost languages, the intense activity of commerce, the creative energy of influential traders and the alien looking structure of British wild flowers.

Hopefully the intervention will

in turn help to explain what makes Lancaster the complicated place it is. It is a city in which traders became Abolitionists and in which Quakers owned slave ships. There are beautiful buildings designed by men involved in horrible deeds. Behind doors in attics and underground are the hidden histories of a few almost invisible African people who were owned by families engaged in a legitimate but immoral strategy to make a lot of money fast. This work is not a memorial but more an encouraging incentive for everyone committed to restoring the balance, revealing the truths and continuing the dialogues.

Lubaina Himid 2007



Swallow, The Judges' Lodgings Museum, Lancaster, 2006.

details and the vistas. All this led to the production of numerous paintings and drawings, some shown as *Swallow* at the Judges' Lodgings in 2006. Since then I have looked at documents, ship designs, prints, watercolours, more details and more splendid doorways. These led into the houses of Lancaster slave ship owners such as Dodshon Foster, William Lindow and John Satterthwaite. I have tried to imagine the lives of the almost invisible slave servants these men owned, brought from the plantations to work in quiet isolation in this chilly place. I looked for clues, connections, ghosts and heroes.

*Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service,
Judges' Lodgings Museum, Lancaster, 2007.*



Commissioned by Susan Ashworth,
Project Manager Lancashire Museums,
this work has been in production for two
years. The research and development
stage was spent walking the hundreds
of streets; Queen Street, St George's
Quay, Castle Park and Chapel Street

are just four important ones. I read the
maps, photographed the buildings; the
Customs House, the Quaker Meeting
House, the churches, the Town Hall and
the Sun Hotel and many more. I looked
hard and filmed the wild plants and the
water, the bridges, the walls, the minute



Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service, Judges' Lodgings Museum, Lancaster, 2007.
© Lancashire Museums

The Customs House was designed by Richard Gillow and there are records to show that he at one time had part share in ships used for the slave trade. The installation attempts to map a visual

history of the city's involvement in the trade and to commemorate the Act of Parliament abolishing it in Britain in 1807. Slaves could still be owned of course but not traded for goods.



Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service, 2007.
Judges' Lodgings Museum, Lancaster, 2007.

a small village. Often it poses as a genteel watering station, a gateway to the Lakes.

Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner

Service is a part of this complex map.

Shown at the Judges' Lodgings Museum on the splendid 18th century dining table, made by the Lancaster firm of Gillows,

from imported Caribbean mahogany.

Lancaster is a strange mixture of a place as cities often are; it has elegance but it's rough, urban and rural at one and the same time. You only have to visit the graveyards to be where slave ship owners are buried and the pubs to be where they made transactions. It feels like an important town and a tiny city, even sometimes like



My name is Anika
 They call me Sissie
 I used to make boxes for jewels
 Now I make boxes for children
 But at least they are used

In 2007 sixteen of these figures were shown as part of the exhibition *Uncomfortable Truths* at the Victoria & Albert Museum, a selection will appear at the Harris Museum in Preston and two or three will guard *Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service* at the Judges' Lodgings.

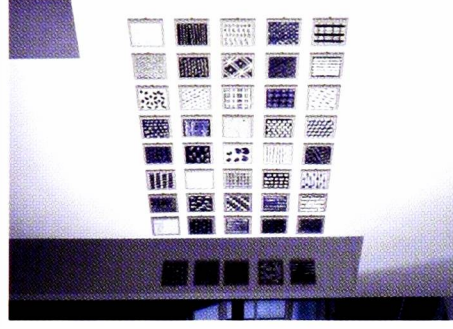
My name is Olorun
 They call me Henry
 I used to play for pleasure
 Now I play Sainte Colombe
 But I love to hear the laughter

In 2004 The Hatton Gallery and the then curator Lucy Whetstone commissioned *Naming the Money*, 100 painted cut out slave servants gathered in three gallery spaces telling, through 100 poems, of their former lives, their real names and how they planned to survive their unbelonging.

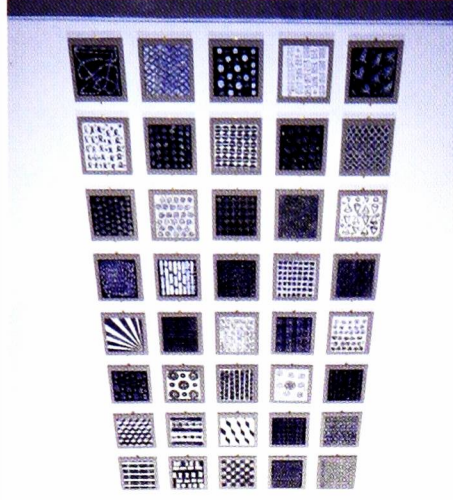
My name is Nzambi
 They call me Sally
 I made jugs for milk and water
 Now I mix feed for cows and pigs
 But I have their smell

In 2001, for the exhibition *Fabrications* at CUBE in Manchester I made 100 black and white paintings and 100 (unshown) texts to commemorate conversations between the cotton workers of Manchester and the slaves of Carolina. A three metre brass plaque displayed the only exhibited text "He said I looked like a painting by Murillo as I carried water for the hoe gang just because I balanced the bucket on my head".

Cotton.Com
Fabrications,
CUBE,
Manchester,
2002.



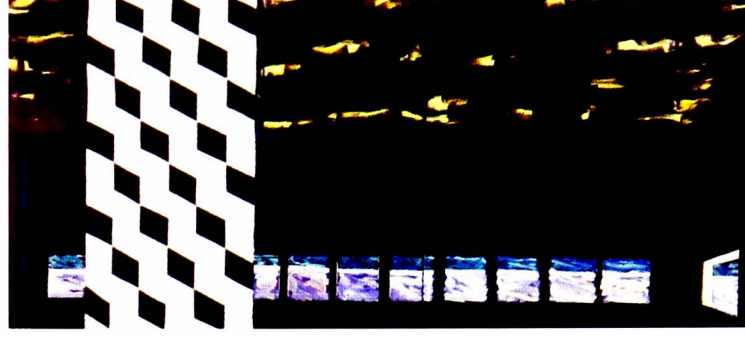
Opposite page:
Naming the Money,
Hatton Gallery,
University of
Newcastle
upon Tyne,
2004.



By 1999 in the solo exhibition *Plan B* at Tate St Ives (curated by Mike Tooby) the slave narratives had become entwined with imagined texts from more contemporary war zones and escape routes.

We grew rapidly more exhausted as the endless days of running and hiding continued. Some of us became dangerously disheartened and began to hear strange, terrifying noises all around; wailing, screaming, moaning. Far away yet near at hand. We wasted precious time standing still, trying to fathom their origins. Our fear was unbearable. After many terrible nights of this we slowly began to remember the glorious words of our old songs. This united us and we had the strength to see that we could survive long enough to enjoy our freedom.

Plan B, Tate St Ives, 1999.



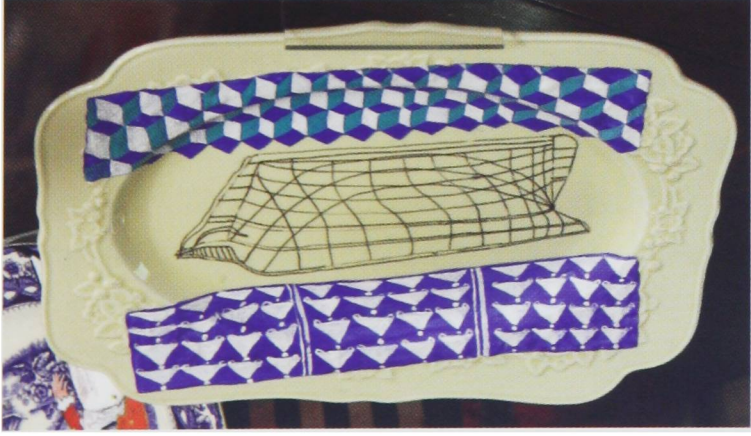
second solo show from me, it was called *Revenge*. I make work all the time and this came four years after the first and was two years after *The Wing Museum* for Chisenhale gallery curated by Emma Dexter. *Revenge* had two main strands which were interwoven; in one black women struggle to turn the tide of history, in the other I exhibited studies and designs for slave memorials.

Four

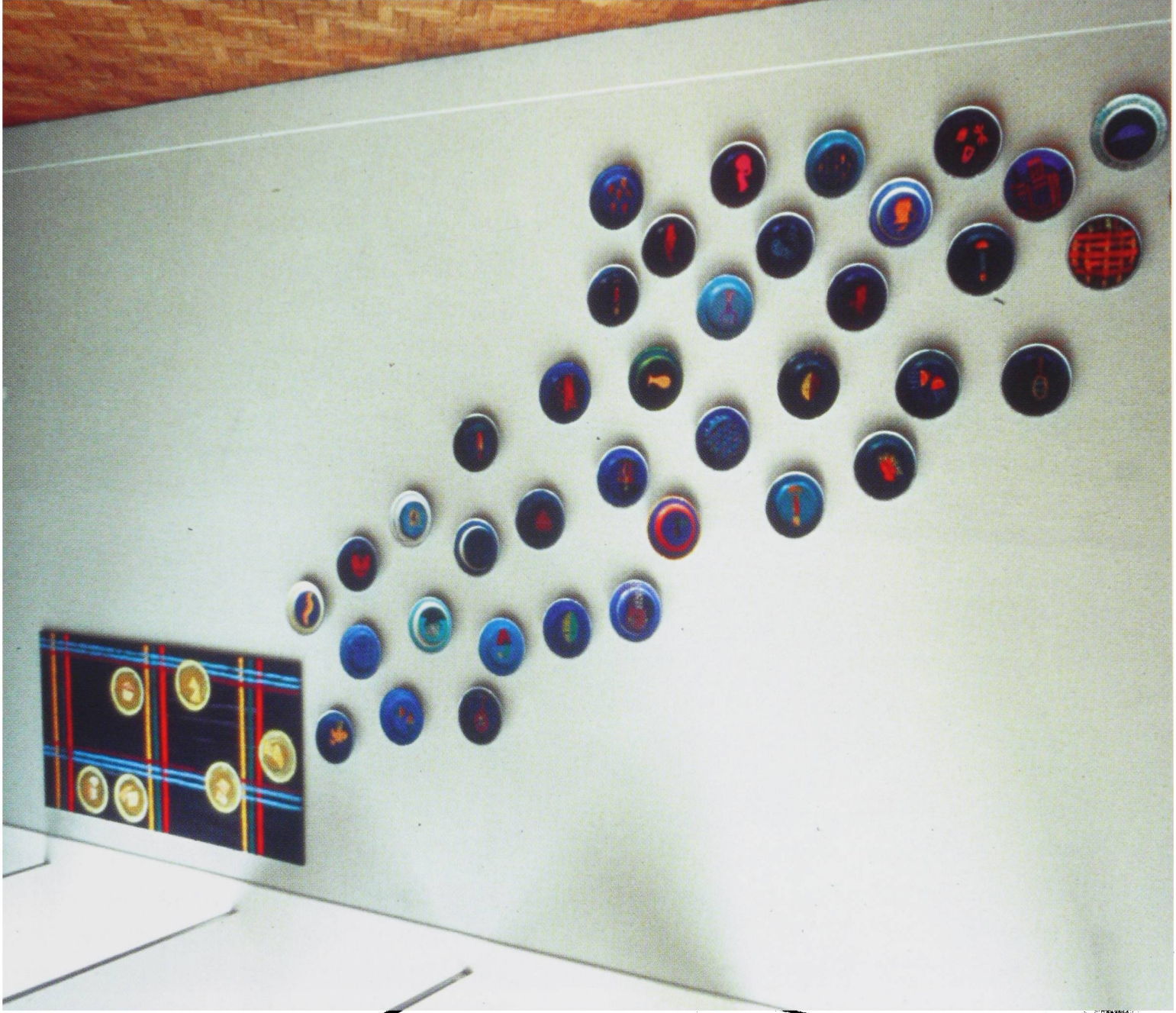
*Water cascading falling spouting sparkling
frothing whooshing trickling spurting
foaming running pouring falling pooling
puddling raining filling overflowing.
A fountain a monument a memorial to
people for water. For water to people wasted
in water in water, wasted for water:
A memorial to Zong. Singing buried
treasure. After the mourning comes revenge.*

Five

*Two women standing ankle deep behind
banners in front of cloths shredding maps;
fragments float away. Two women sit in a
small boat tearing up navigation charts; how
many died crossing the water. Two women
sit in a theatre box ripping up maps; can
the past be replayed. Two women sit at
dinner forming strategy; can the future be
different, better. Two women sit on rugs
reliving the history and planning the future.
Magic carpet fly.*



*Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service,
Judges' Lodgings Museum, Lancaster, 2007.*
© Lancashire Museums



Revenge, Rochdale Art Gallery, 1992.

ago yet city after city could never have had, nestling at their centres, jewels of elegant splendour, without the work of unpaid Africans, poorly paid Irish people and the wholesale exploitation of the British working classes. It was moving here north twenty years ago (less than 50 miles from where my English grandparents were born) that really focused the idea in my mind to seriously embark upon the revealing of neglected histories.

Before leaving I had made a ten piece cut out installation, a contemporary pastiche of Hogarth's *A Fashionable Marriage*, it was a cruel indictment of Thatcher's Britain, and the hypocrisy of the London art scene in which I was an ambitious curator/artist.

The Life and Times of Toussaint

L'Ouverture a set of fifteen watercolours now in the Arts Council Collection was the first piece of work I actually made outside London. It depicted the everyday activities of the man who led the first successful slave rebellion in Haiti in 1791. In 1992 Jill Morgan the then curator of Rochdale Art Gallery commissioned a

kidnapped people were individual human beings with personalities, with names and aspirations, hopes and tangible identities deeply embedded within their lives as abused and exploited labour. My interest in monuments and statues was born in London where I lived for most of my early life, they were crucial landmarks in the everyday. Moving to the north west of England and feeling too visible and too invisible as a black woman artist marooned hundreds of miles from the familiar and extraordinary madness that is London, miles from the Albert Memorial, Nelson's Column, Cleopatra's Needle, The Burglers of Calais, Edith Cavell, Shackleton, Churchill and Oliver Cromwell; they were casual markers in countless journeys across the city. I missed these politically loaded signifiers of oppression, theft, heroism and empire.

It was 1988 when I tried to devise ways of making visible the very human reality, the essential contribution and the hidden foundations of the wealth of the north-west. The details were still largely unspoken in public up here twenty years



Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service, Judges' Lodgings Museum, Lancaster, 2007.

S wallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service is an intervention, a mapping and an excavation. It is a fragile monument to an invisible engine working for nothing in an amazingly greedy machine. It remembers slave servants, sugary food, mahogany furniture, greedy families, tobacco and cotton fabrics but then mixes them with British wild flowers, elegant architecture and African patterns.

I bought 100 patterned plates, jugs and tureens mostly old and used, sometimes chipped and cracked, from the shops and markets of Lancaster, Preston and Whitehaven. The buying and the painting took place in the same time frame so the Dinner Service grew organically. For instance I might buy six items, paint them, then buy three items, leave them until I had bought four more items, then paint them until all were complete before buying more. The prices paid vary hugely; some were almost given away and some are very valuable, all are overpainted with acrylic paint. There are views of the city, plants

that always grew here, there are maps, slave ship designs and texts from sales of these ships which took place in the pubs and hotels. I have painted pages from account books, elegant houses, patterns from Mali, from Nigeria, from Ghana and all along the West African coast, these patterns like the paintings of buildings and vistas, boats and documents all cut across or weave in and out of the original patterns found on the old ceramics. On every tureen the faces of the unknown and unnamed black slave servants ask to be remembered. On every item it's possible to see large areas of the original design as the new painting emerges or unsuccessfully attempts to hide the identity of the old. During the past twenty five years I have made several projects in direct response to the history of the global trade in African people. This work has always been an attempt, especially at first, to draw attention to what in the late 1980s and early 1990s seemed to be a neglected jig-saw piece in the puzzle that is British history. The aim has always been to establish that these captured

been to establish that these captured



*Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service,
Judges' Lodgings Museum, Lancaster, 2007.*

and Outreach Officer) and Sarah Riddle (Lancaster Maritime Museum), is acutely aware that none of this work could have taken place without the willing involvement, assistance and support of many colleagues, partners, organisations and individuals. We are grateful to them all even though I do not have space to name them here.

Lancashire Museums have a

particular debt of gratitude to all our project funders; Arts Council England, Renaissance North West, Museums

Libraries and Archives Council, Lancashire County Council, Lancaster City Council, Anti-slavery International, Spot On

Rural Touring and Osun Arts Foundation and most especially to artists Lubaina Himid and Sue Flowers for their energy, patience, tenacity and creative vision.

Sue Ashworth

Project Manager

All photographs in this book are taken by the artists, unless otherwise stated.



Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service, Judges' Lodgings Museum, Lancaster, 2007. © Lancashire Museums

Foreword

ABOLISHED? is Lancashire Museums' commemoration of the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act. It acknowledges Lancaster's deep involvement in the transportation of enslaved Africans. Between 1736 and 1807 Lancaster's merchants transported over 29,000 captured Africans across the Atlantic to plantations in the Americas and West Indies.

Although Lancaster Maritime Museum covered aspects of this history we have felt increasingly uncomfortable about its dry, almost distanced approach – so far from the nature of the trade and its human cargo. It was clear to us that the 'uncomfortable truth' of Lancaster's close involvement with the slave trade was not well known. For a number of years we have been focussing our work on raising awareness of this history, working with partners wherever possible. ABOLISHED? is part of this continuing work.

At the very heart of ABOLISHED? are the commissioned installations and interventions by artists Lubaina Himid

and Sue Flowers. Contemporary art grapples with difficult and contentious subjects. It often asks us to question our views of the world and of ourselves. In our role as carers of artefacts and community histories, Lancashire Museums are committed to working with artists in many areas of our work to bring new perspectives into view. Lubaina Himid and Sue Flowers have brought to the project their creative energy and their powers of visualisation and re-interpretation to our collective histories.

As this publication goes to press, ABOLISHED? has now been launched in Lancaster. Work by around 800 local school students accompanies Sue Flowers' installation at the Maritime Museum and our outreach programme continues apace throughout the run of the exhibitions. Details of the full ABOLISHED? project and of our work in this area spanning the last five years can be seen on the Museums' website; www.lancsmuseums.gov.uk/abolished

The ABOLISHED? project team, Anthea Dennett (Judges' Lodgings Museum), Laura Pye (Lifelong Learning

Lubaina Himid

Swallow Hard:

The Lancaster Dinner Service

ABOLISHED?
Lancashire Museums marking 200 years
of the abolition of the slave trade

for change grew and the majority in Parliament against abolition was whittled down year on year.

Lancashire Museums have been working for a number of years in partnership with others to raise awareness of this history and its legacies. It is particularly pertinent as Lancaster was for many years the country's fourth largest slaving port. In commemorating this largely lost or forgotten impact we have worked closely with artists to add an emotional and sometimes disturbing element to the plain facts of history. ABOLISHED? sees the culmination of Lancashire Museums' current phase of this work. We will continue to reveal this hidden history beyond 2007 and I am grateful to the work of the many individuals and organisations that have been with us on the journey so far and who will be with us as we progress.

Edmund Southworth
County Museums Officer

This year is the Bicentenary of the Act of Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

In many ways the Transatlantic Slave Trade is one of worst periods in Britain's long history. It is clear that every part of the British Isles was involved. Some supplied the trade – others benefited from it. Lancashire's farms, ironworks, hatters and so on provided the goods for sale in Africa, its people became sailors to take slaves across the seas and its merchants invested heavily to make it happen. Lancashire's residents consumed the sugar and tobacco, its businesses worked the cotton, the fine woods, the produce of the plantations. Fortunes were made (and sometime lost) in Lancashire. The profits went into buildings, land and industry – often changing the very face of the towns and countryside of the North West.

Yet there are positive lessons to be learnt amidst the death and disease, cruelty and inhuman acts that characterise this obscene trade in human cargo. Many Africans fought against the Trade – including a strong and active group of former slaves based in London. Thousands of Lancashire people signed petitions to Parliament and attended public meetings as the impetus



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