

Sensory Information

MIMA is a large contemporary three storey building with a lot to process in terms of space, light, and architectural features. On arrival, the triple height glass atrium could present spatial and auditory challenges. Upper floors can be reached using either a staircase or accessible lifts. The Atrium and Kitchen have a number of noise sources.

The Lubna Chowdhary, *Erratics* exhibition on the ground floor occupies four large rooms with smooth wooden floors, regular white walls, and a combination of light panels and spotlights in the ceiling. The first gallery is very tall. The four galleries are interconnected and there is only one entrance and exit. The doors in the galleries are open and you can see the exit at all times. Acoustically, the space can be quiet and echoey. Ear defenders are available as well as large print guides and magnifiers.

In this exhibition you will encounter large, natural wood sculptural objects positioned directly on the floor, monochrome sculptures on plinths, colourful ceramic works shown against the walls and paintings on wood. There is also one large tubular work attached to the wall in the first gallery, which is made of a shiny metal material. There is no video/ audio in the exhibition. A high level of colour contrast can be found which is balanced throughout by monochrome installations and the white gallery walls.



Inside Erratics

A sensory reflection on the exhibition Lubna Chowdhary, *Erratics* by Sonia Boué

MIMA Ways In

Inside Erratics

A sensory reflection on the exhibition

Lubna Chowdhary, *Erratics* by, Sonia Boué

From a sensory perspective, *Erratics* is a high-energy experience that uplifts without being overwhelming. There is much to process in this beautifully presented show.

Having worked primarily in ceramics, Lubna has increasingly diversified her practice to encompass a range of materials and forge a distinctive visual language. Lubna described the “cultural mash-up of references” which underpin her practice, also explaining that her work is in constant motion between influences and modes of production. “There is never really a fixed point”, she says. I think about busy hands and busy minds.

Lubna was born in Tanzania to Pakistani parents and grew up in England. In a recent conversation she explained that in geology an erratic refers to a rock transported hundreds of thousands of miles on glacial ice. Geographical and cultural displacement inform Lubna’s unique hybrid aesthetic.

The word ‘erratic’ also describes how Lubna thrives on the in-between and resists the binary of either/ or. It’s a word often applied negatively to things that are irregular and unpredictable, but Lubna chooses to own it. In so doing she reminds us that to be erratic is profoundly human – there is much to relate to in her work. Lubna playfully subverts forms and defies categorisation with elegance and verve, and a gleefulness that I find infectious.

Lubna has a knack for paradox (the coexistence of opposites) and reinvention. She makes improbable objects appear wholly natural, as if they have a life of their own. As Lubna put it, the “joyful cacophonous display” of *Certain Times* appears in sharp contrast to the minimalist *Modular* series. Works also veer ‘erratically’ in scale from the toy-like intricate ceramics of *Disobedient Typologies*, to the imposing scale of the large silver sculpture *Modular 4*.

Materials matter; the surface and texture of ceramic glazes and painted board are distinct. Lubna’s vivid signature geometrics are an improvised vocabulary of signs and symbols, bold geometrics that feel like a personal code speaking to themes of identity and belonging.

Erratics could be a sensory riot if not for an unerring sense of balance. In *Bind 1*, we find invigorating colours dialed-up to the max yet the piece is meditative: the eye follows strands of electric blue rope weave hypnotically round crimson circles. The more I look, the more I feel *Erratics* is a masterclass in sensory regulation.

There’s a naturalness and a rhythm to Lubna’s practice. With some works, like *Disobedient Typologies*, there is a “short time between thinking and making” she explained, while other works involve more complex processes requiring a deeper kind of consideration. She creates, tests, and revises ideas with a maker’s approach I think we can apply to life.

Lubna tells me that “it can feel awkward to bring together two visual languages” and that there’s a risk attached to the code-switching she practices. Lubna works in a space of neither-nor to make something new. By resisting the binary Lubna asserts the human and the diverse. Yes, awkwardness can arise when we find ourselves between cultures and identities, but Lubna signals that this is where the riches of invention lie.

Sonia Boué is an artist and writer and a leading consultant for neurodiversity in the arts. Her cross-disciplinary arts practice examines home and the domestic as metaphors for exile and displacement and her writing centres on autism and art.