



Creative  
Lancashire

## Conversations in Creativity

Explorations in inspiration

British Textile Biennial Edition  
Autumn 2021 #12





LUBAINA HIMID 'LOST THREADS'  
PHOTO: LUBAINA HIMID

# BRITISH TEXTILE BIENNIAL

1-31 OCTOBER 2021

BRITISH TEXTILE BIENNIAL RETURNS THIS YEAR WITH NEW ARTIST COMMISSIONS, EXHIBITIONS AND PERFORMANCES PRESENTED AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF THE IMPRESSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE COTTON INDUSTRY IN PENNINE LANCASHIRE.

This October, BTB21 turns its attention to the global nature of textiles and the relationships they create, both historically and now, with a major new commission by Turner Prize winner **LUBAINA HIMID**, fashion historian **AMBER BUTCHART** as guest curator, a groundbreaking, sustainable fashion project with designer **PATRICK GRANT**, a collaboration with artist **JAMES FOX** and actor **MAXINE PEAKE** and a major exhibition to celebrate the 50th anniversary of global sportswear icons **CP COMPANY**.

Also including work by Jasleen Kaur, Jamie Holman and Masimba Hwati, The 62 Group, Raisa Kabir, Brigid McLeer, Azraa Motala, Bharti Parmar and Reetu Sattar.

FOR FULL PROGRAMME GO TO  
[BRITISHTEXTILEBIENNIAL.CO.UK](http://BRITISHTEXTILEBIENNIAL.CO.UK)

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CITIZENRY  
CP COMPANY  
PHOTO: CP COMPANY



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Conversations in Creativity is a publication and series of talks where practitioners from around the world and across disciplines explore how creative inspiration informs process.

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**Cover Images - Azraa Motala**  
Front: "I beg you to define me"  
Back: "Untitled"

# Everything is different (but little has changed!)

The fashion industry reacts to politics, activism and movements for change – rarely does it give birth to one.

Illustrations by Erin Jones

Two years ago, over 54,000 visitors experienced the second iteration of British Textile Biennial, Throughout October BTB21 returns with new artist commissions, exhibitions and performances to share meditations on events of the last 2 years through the lens of the global nature of textiles and the relationships they create.

BTB21 coincides with Black History Month and also the 50th Anniversary of the Craft Council. The organisation recently invited leading lights from across the disciplines to choose the milestones that had the most impact on the craft world. Kenyan-born British studio potter, Magdalene Odundo selected the Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM June 2020). "It brought people together in recognising the legacy of slavery and its ongoing impact.... like other sectors the craft world had its own moment of reckoning".

To understand how the legacy of slavery impacts makers of colour today, seek out the recent Making Changes in Craft report by Karen Patel. In response, the establishing of a Global Majority Branch, a network of Black, Asian and ethnically diverse makers, craft businesses and professionals is one of the steps taken by Crafts Council to make much needed and overdue improvements.

Odundo continues "What has been admirable is the call to action by young people. Like the climate crisis, it's the young who are most affected by racial inequalities and who will be the ones to bring about change. One of these trailblazing young people meeting the call to action head on is Tiwirayi Ngoro. Her *Woke Denim Project*, commissioned by Creative Lancashire for BTB21 is a conscious photo series about the modern-day fight for social justice.

The project draws focus on "a generation of activists who refuse to say yes to injustice but demand to be heard". The results will be exhibited at Blackburn Mall for the duration of BTB. Tiwi also leads an extended roundtable event with



other young activist voices (*2pm Tues 26 Oct - Blackburn Cathedral*). Azraa Motala's *Unapologetic* exhibition is another study on style as a powerful statement of self expression and activism and will be one of the highlights of BTB21 (*Blackburn Museum & various venues*).

Denim, with its many links to activism, features prominently in our series of Conversations in Creativity talks for BTB21. Jeans were co-opted and entered the mainstream as a trend worn by all.

**"Whether it was pants, denim, or the bra, choosing to wear or not wear one of these items (as well as many others) holds a great significance and has been coded in politics at one time in history or another."**

**Miko Underwood, Denim Designer & Historian**

The Civil Rights movement with its roots struggle for social justice took place mainly during the 1950s and 1960s, ignited by the Brown v Board of Education case (1954), which outlawed segregation in public schools. A year later Rosa Parks a, black African American woman, was arrested when she refused to move to a seat at the back of a bus in Montgomery. These events ushered in over a decade of boycotts, sit-ins, and marches. Jeans were not only the preferred dress of some activists, but also a symbol of protest for the movement.

State ministers were among the first to wear the denim uniform of the civil rights movement over their clerical collars.

Often whitewashed from history, the wearing of denim recalled the work clothes worn by African Americans during slavery and as sharecroppers. It also represented solidarity with the plight of *blue-collar* workers worldwide to signal how little had really changed since Reconstruction. Young activists' members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), used denim as an equalizer between the genders and an identifier between social classes.

When the first consignment of Levi's landed behind the Iron Curtain in 1978 it was soon adopted by East Berliners as a symbol of status and liberation in response to years of restrictions to human liberties whilst under Soviet control.

Denim Day began in 1992 after a ruling by the Italian Supreme Court where a rape conviction was overturned because the justices felt that since the female victim was wearing tight jeans she must have helped the person who raped her to remove her jeans, thereby implying consent. Annually on a designated Wednesday during April, women (and men) across the globe wear jeans as a visible means of protest against the misconceptions that surround sexual violence.

In 2006 police seized opposition flags from activists that took to the streets to protest the sham presidential elections in Belarus - a protester tied a denim shirt to a stick, creating a makeshift flag. The Denim Revolution was born. The symbols and flags may look different in 2021 but the struggle remains the same.

When it comes to denim even our consumer choices can translate into political activism. By purchasing from small, independent brands sourcing ethically produced denim, consumers can assert power to deliver a powerful statement to address the politics of fashion production. Homegrown/ Homespun conceived by Super Slow Way, who also curate and produce BTB21, is a ground-breaking regenerative fashion project in collaboration with designer Patrick Grant to create the first garment for his Community Clothing line,

created from flax and woad grown in Pennine Lancashire. However, denim is already woven into the textile story of the region – some of the last pairs of Wrangler jeans sewn in the UK rolled off the production line at Brierfield Mill in Nelson.

The BTB21 talks programme is developed in collaboration with Amber Butchart (Guest Curator, BTB21). *For Cloth Cultures – Stories of Movement, Migration & Making* (Haworth Art Gallery, Accrington), Amber has selected pieces from the Gawthorpe Textile Collection.

Elsewhere, BTB21 presents a major new commission by Turner Prize winner Lubaina Himid, collaborations with artist James Fox and actor Maxine Peake, and an exhibition to celebrate the 50th anniversary of CP Company in Darwen. This iconic Italian global fashion brand draws inspiration from the military apparel produced in the county by manufacturers such as Cookson & Glegg (now owned by Patrick Grant).

Jamie Holman, who's own work will be exhibited alongside Jasleen Kaur and Masimba Hwati (*The British Invasion, Blackburn Cotton Exchange*), sees a shared DNA of brands such as CP Company and themes explored in his own practice. The foundations of the football league emerged from strong rivalries between industrial textile mill towns. Now the brand is celebrated and worn by the aspirational Asian youths in Blackburn and soccer casuals worldwide.

Political fashions frequently emerge from street culture. Punk is another example of fashion born on the streets and distilled into high fashion. The fashion industry reacts to politics, activism and movements for change – rarely does it give birth to one.

Jeans may be ubiquitous now, and even the least rebellious of us wear them - but their history means they can still be a rich symbol for change.

**Ed Matthews-Gentle FRSA  
Creative Lancashire**





Amber Butchart

## Cloth Culture

“Although most people would rightly associate Lancashire with cotton, it’s been the home of wool, silk, and linen production too.”

**“Many years ago there was an Emperor so exceedingly fond of new clothes that he spent all his money on being well dressed” wrote Hans Christian Andersen in 1837. “He cared nothing about reviewing his soldiers, going to the theatre, or going for a ride in his carriage, except to show off his new clothes.”**

The folk tale that Andersen was recounting can be found in one form or another across the globe from Turkey to Sri Lanka. The tale warns us that to be too concerned with fashion demonstrates the vanity of artifice. But it also tells us the historical importance of dress and textiles: that it has the power to deceive the powerful, and that it can tell us a great deal about the wearer, and the society in which it was formed.

Throughout my work for the British Textile Biennial this year I have relished the opportunity to further investigate the stories behind what we wear. Through the Cloth Cultures exhibition and podcast I am exploring movement, migration and making through cloth, using pieces from the Gawthorpe Textiles Collection. Focussing on four fabrics – silk, linen, wool and cotton - I’ve been investigating the global strands of local stories that link Lancashire, at the heart of the textile industry in Britain, to areas throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

Although most people would rightly associate Lancashire with cotton, it’s been the home of wool, silk and linen production too. For the podcast I was able to draw on the expertise of a wealth of contributors, including artists, historians, makers, and scientists to shed light on our textile history. I wanted to showcase the work of these researchers who spend their lives thinking about what cloth means to us, and the stories it can tell.

Silk cloth fashioned from the yarn of silkworm cocoons has been a luxury product for millenia, desired by many cultures around the globe. The textile collection at Gawthorpe Hall includes a huge number of exquisitely embroidered silks from China, where silk cultivation

dates back to at least the third millennium BCE. In China’s history the origins of sericulture are enshrined in myth, and the trade has given its name to the Silk Road - a system of commercial routes that joined the Far East to the Mediterranean. I spoke to Rachel Midgley, curator at Gawthorpe, about the history of the Chinese silks in the collection, and to design historian Dr Sarah Cheang about her work with the Research Collective for Decoloniality & Fashion, and her research into Sinophilia: the impact of Chinese design on Europe.

Silk yarn and cloth were manufactured in and around Lancashire from the mid 17th century, lasting into the 19th. And although better known in Macclesfield in Cheshire, towns such as Preston and Ormskirk also had silk production. Dr Aarathi Prasad, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Global Health, UCL, talked to me about the natural history of silk while Dr Paul Blanc, physician and professor of medicine at the University of California, explained how silk was the first fabric to be recreated artificially, which could have disastrous consequences.

Flax-woven linen cloth was produced throughout Lancashire and Manchester from the medieval era, and by the late 16th century it was a major centre of linen production. Until cotton became widespread in the late 17th and 18th centuries, linen was a mainstay for clothing in Europe, often worn close to the body for reasons of hygiene and practicality: to protect harder to clean fabrics like wool or silk from the sweat and dirt of the body. Dr Anna Garnett, curator at the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology explained how linen’s proximity to the body can shed light on life - and death - in ancient Egypt, as well as the legacy of British archaeology in the area. Moving from Egyptian Pharaohs to the mills of Belfast, Fiona McKelvie talked to me about the linen industry in Ireland, when Belfast became known as ‘Linenopolis.’ Linen’s agricultural history has often tied it to recurring trends for romanticised rural life, including today’s ‘cottagecore’. Researcher Alison Toplis shared her work

on the smock as a marker of English rural identity and its transition from function to fashion; a transition that's evident in two smocks in the Gawthorpe collection that top and tail the 19th century, and which will be on view in the exhibition. Linen's links to the soil were also covered by Justine Aldersey-Williams of North West England Fibreshed, who is a collaborator on the hugely exciting Homegrown Homespun project at this year's Biennial. The aim is to create a pair of linen jeans that are grown, spun, woven, dyed and stitched in the UK, beginning with planting flax for fabric and woad for dye. Justine had a beautiful message about the regenerative potential of linen, and the importance of going back to the agricultural origins of our clothing.

Wool played a crucial role in the medieval English economy and was of such huge importance that it often became entangled in the politics of the day. Even now, a Woolsack sits in the House of Lords as a seat for the Lord Speaker, as a reminder of this relationship. Sheep grazing land across Lancashire ensured the success of the woollen industry by the 13th century, and the first mechanised textile mills in the county were in fact for fulling: cleaning and degreasing woollen cloth. Knitter and writer Esther Rutter told me about the history of wool in the British Isles, and how we get from fleece to fabric.

Through woollen yarns we can understand how technology has impacted textiles, through industrialisation, but also developments such as aniline dyes which created bright, long-lasting colours. Wool can also teach us about empire and colonialism, from paisley shawls which imitated handcrafts of Kashmir, to Scottish tartans which have travelled around the world. Artist Raisa Kabir told me about her work for this year's Biennial, as well as her previous artworks that have explored these histories. Dr Sally Tuckett from the University of Glasgow shared her research into tartan, and how it became aligned with Scottish identity, while Teleica Kirkland, founder and Creative Director of the Costume Institute of the African Diaspora, traced the story of tartan from Scotland to Kenya, South Africa and the Caribbean.

The fabric that is most closely associated with Lancashire is undoubtedly cotton. Evidence of the Industrial Revolution is all around us, including Haworth Art Gallery, the former mill owner's house where the Cloth Cultures exhibition is staged.

From the 18th century, mills were built across the county as the process of spinning and weaving cotton was mechanised: first water-powered, then steam, fuelled by the local coalfields. This grew to become the largest cotton industry the world had seen. Many of the key figures of industrialisation were from the historic county of Lancashire, including John Kay (flying shuttle, Walmersley), James Hargreaves (spinning jenny, Oswaldtwistle), Richard Arkwright (water frame, Preston) and Samuel Crompton (spinning mule, Bolton). These developments were not always welcome, and were often attacked as threats to the livelihood of spinners and weavers. I hope this exhibition sparks discussions about family histories of working in the mills and related industries.

But what was happening in Lancashire had global consequences. The cotton plantations of the American South, harvested by enslaved labourers forcibly taken from Africa, provided the raw material that fuelled the Industrial Revolution in Britain, creating huge amounts of wealth for both slave owners and factory owners. The legacy of this is all around us from country houses to art galleries and public statues. After slavery was abolished, cotton continued to play a key role in commerce and colonialism around the globe.

Gillian Berry, manager of the Haworth Art Gallery, talked to me about the history of the cotton industry in Accrington, while artist, professor and Turner Prize winner Lubaina Himid discussed her work for this year's Biennial, looking at batik 'wax' fabrics which were historically manufactured in Europe and sold to markets throughout Africa. But we also see stories around the globe of people repurposing cotton, and using it as a tool of activism rather than oppression. Dr Bharti Parmar told me about her Textile Biennial commission, 'Khadi', which explores the place of cotton in the drive for Indian independence from British rule through the Swadeshi movement, including Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Darwen in 1931. And stylist Tiwirayi Ndoro discussed her Biennial photography project, which looks at the role of denim in protest from the American civil rights movement, to Black Lives Matter marches today.

Throughout the Textile Biennial we'll also be investigating the global stories of cloth through the Conversations in Creativity Talks. We'll be running panel events on the narratives that connect migrant journeys through the global textile industry, as well as denim's role in grass-roots movements, counterculture, protest, and how citizens worldwide are impacted by its production. Teleica Kirkland will host a panel on tartan's journey through the African diaspora, and Tiwirayi Ndoro will co-chair a roundtable event on the significance of denim as a tool of protest for Gen Z.

Images Credits:  
Previous page - Jo Bridges  
Opposite - Caroline Eccles, Huckleberry Films



A recurring story that came up again and again through my research and interviews was the tension between Britain's agricultural past and the industrial, then post-industrial present. These discussions are still with us today and are more urgent than ever in a world facing climate catastrophe from the combined extractive effects of fossil fuels and colonialism.

So while the Emperor's new clothes strike a moralistic tone about the dangers of narcissism, studying our old clothes, and the ways we make them, can help to unravel the global strands of local stories. The culture of cloth is woven deep into the fabric of our lives. By placing Lancashire at the nucleus of a web of global trade and manufacture, we can start to understand the legacy of these industries, which have resulted in movement, migration and making through cloth.

Amber Butchart is a writer and broadcaster who specialises in the cultural and political history of textiles and dress. She is a former Research Fellow at the University of the Arts London, and is a regular public lecturer across the UK's leading arts institutions. She researches and presents documentaries for television and radio, including the six-part series *A Stitch in Time* for BBC Four that fused biography, art and the history of fashion to explore the lives of historical figures through the clothes they wore. Amber is an external adviser for the National Crime Agency as a Forensic Garment Analyst, working on cases that require investigation of clothing and textiles. She has published five books on the history and culture of clothes, including *The Fashion of Film*, *Nautical Chic*, and a history of British fashion illustration for the British Library.



[amberbutchart.com](http://amberbutchart.com)  
[gawthorpetextiles.org.uk](http://gawthorpetextiles.org.uk)

Cloth Cultures exhibition runs at the  
Haworth Art Gallery from 1st - 31st October

Find the Cloth Cultures podcast wherever  
you get your podcasts



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Sophie Woodward

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## Art of the Ordinary

My work focuses upon material culture – the relations people have to things such as clothing, or other objects in the home to think through what personal collections such as a wardrobe tell us about identity and social relationships.

Popular histories of denim position blue jeans as part of a history of America: cowboys, the workwear of the Gold Rush, and later cultural icons of 1950s American movies before jeans become part of counter cultures. This is one history of jeans. Given that jeans are globally ubiquitous – worn in most countries and in many of these worn by all sectors of the population – there are many other stories. Stories that co-exist. Indeed, we can trace the fabric (serge de Nimes) and jeans from Genoa (where the fabric was initially woven) from Europe. This history of origin is again only part of the story and history of jeans, which are instead multiple: textiles used for jeans fabricated in Lancashire make this a part of the history. There are multiple local stories of jeans and denim and how global places are implicated in the bigger story of jeans.

As a sociologist, trained as an anthropologist, I am interested not only in how things came to be (such as where jeans and denim come from) but in how things are now and why – how jeans are worn across the world and why they continue to be everyday wear for so many people. Daniel Miller and I set up the Global Denim Project to address precisely this question, and in our ethnography into jeans wearing in London find that many people know very little about jeans or where they come from – they are ‘just jeans’. Jeans become both unmarked clothing – an item of clothing you can wear to different occasions and not draw attention to yourself for wearing the wrong thing – as well as a form of differentiation. When worn as differentiation, the multiple styles of jeans are a medium through which people articulate belonging to a sub-culture, style grouping or even a political affiliation.

Jeans are beset with apparent contradictions: unmarked and yet paradoxically a form of differentiation; anti/post-fashion clothing, as well as a signifier of a current trend, worn to attract attention as well as to shy away from it.

Perhaps it is its ability to enable these multiple positions that speaks to its widespread appeal. When we reconsider its histories, we can see many of these contradictions in place: from practical workwear to Hollywood glamour for instance. Rather than these being the broader historical transition from different meanings and significance of jeans we can instead see these as the potentials of what denim can mean and can be. These can – and do – co-exist in the contemporary world in the multiple ways that jeans are worn and what they come to mean. There are stories of jeans, but jeans also allow us to tell stories about who we are, what we stand for and who we stand with. Multiple histories of jeans stand alongside personal histories. The personal is always social as jeans carry our bodies through the unique way they wear down (with the white threads being revealed through wear), as worn differently by particular generations or sub-cultures jeans position us in history.

**Sophie Woodward is a professor of Sociology at the University of Manchester and carries out research into fashion, clothing (particularly denim), and wardrobes as well as dormant things (things people no longer use but are keeping) and feminist theory. She is the author of 5 books including Why Women Wear What they Wear and Blue Jeans: the Art of the Ordinary.**



[manchester.ac.uk/dormant-things/sites.manchester.ac.uk/global-denim/](http://manchester.ac.uk/dormant-things/sites.manchester.ac.uk/global-denim/)  
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[@sophierwoodward](https://twitter.com/sophierwoodward)

Sophie will be taking part in a [Conversations in Creativity Panel](#)  
Discussion: Politics, Power & Production:  
The Global Impact of Denim - 6pm, Tuesday  
26 October, Blackburn Cathedral .

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Gillian Berry

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## Haworth Art Gallery

Gillian Berry is a museum professional working in the sector for over 15 years. Her interests lie in heritage from below, working class histories and transformational art. Arts and creativity have the ability to drive social change and help to develop ambitious futures for disadvantaged places and people.

Partnership work at all levels has recently become a focus as a means to improve cultural access for Hyndburn (Lancashire). Berry has presented at the Corning Museum of Glass Annual Seminar of Glass on her research work on Joseph Briggs a working class born Accrington man who went on to become the President of Tiffany Studios, New York, USA.

Collaborating with the British Textile Biennial has focused on a new exhibition, Cloth Cultures, curated by fashion historian Amber Butchart featuring the Gawthorpe Textile Collection at Haworth Art Gallery. The gallery is in a beautiful Arts and Crafts House imbued with a sense of place and the context of the textile industry in Accrington. Arguably Accrington saw the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution with the invention of the Spinning Jenny by James Hargreaves and the first attempts at mass production in the weaving and printing sheds of Robert ‘Parsley’ Peel, grandfather to the former Prime Minister and founder of the modern Police Force of the same name. Mass migration to the area took place and the town’s fortunes grew as a result of the specialist work in cotton weaving, dying and printing industries. Uncovering Accrington’s hidden histories and presenting them for this exhibition helps to reveal the identities of local people who lived and worked in the area and sit alongside Butchart’s carefully selected objects from the Gawthorpe Textile Collection.

Sitting alongside the exhibition is an intervention by South Asian artist Azraa Motala featuring as a banner on the front of the building. Her work reveals a portrait of a young British woman of South Asian descent through layers of Western and South Asian modes of representation. Lastly, an exhibition by local group Aawaz who working with embroidery artist Saima Kaur, contemplates connected lives and identity.

Images:  
Caroline Eccles, Huckleberry Films



[haworthartgallery.org](http://haworthartgallery.org)

Listen to Gillian Berry in conversation with Amber Butchart for the related Cloth Cultures podcast series for BTB21 on the theme of Cotton (over page)

Cloth Cultures – Stories of Movement, Migration & Making runs from Friday 1 to Sunday 31 October at Haworth Art Gallery, Accrington.

# Cloth Cultures Podcast Series



To accompany the Stories of Movement, Migration & Making Exhibition at Haworth Art Gallery, curator Amber Butchart (also our guest editor for this publication), has created a series of illuminating podcasts to provide a greater insight into the textile story of Lancashire and the world. Through four fabrics – Wool, Linen, Cotton & Silk, the exhibition, podcasts (and related talks events) explore the threads of imperialism, telling a myriad of stories of movement, migration and making through cloth.



## Alison Toplis

Alison Toplis is currently an honorary research fellow at the University of Wolverhampton. She worked for several years as a dress and textiles specialist at Christie's Auctioneers before completing her doctorate in the area of nineteenth-century working-class dress. She has since lectured and published widely, including her book *The Clothing Trade in Provincial England 1800-1850* (2011). Her second book, *The Hidden History of the Smock Frock*, was published by Bloomsbury in May 2021.

@smockfrock98  
@\_everydaydress  
@everyday\_dress

[smockfrock.co.uk](http://smockfrock.co.uk)



## Anna Garnett

I'm the Curator of the Petrie Museum of Egyptian and Sudanese Archaeology at UCL, one of the largest and most important collections of this subject in the world. I've previously worked across several local, national and university museums in the UK, and I earned my PhD in Egyptology from the University of Liverpool in 2017. I've worked as a Field Ceramicist in Egypt and Sudan for over 10 years, including at the royal city of Tell el-Amarna.

@Beket\_Aten

[ucl.ac.uk/culture/petrie-museum](http://ucl.ac.uk/culture/petrie-museum)



## Sally Tuckett

I am currently lecturer at the University of Glasgow, and I've been running the MLitt in Dress and Textile Histories since 2014. I did my PhD at the University of Edinburgh looking at the clothing and textile cultures of eighteenth-century Scotland, and have since explored a number of aspects of Scotland's textile heritage working closely with museums and archive collections.

@SallyTuckett

[fleecetofashion.gla.ac.uk](http://fleecetofashion.gla.ac.uk)



## Fiona McKelvie

Fiona McKelvie has had a career in textiles for more than 30 years, much of that time with Liberty of London. Originally from Belfast, she has a passion for Irish Linen, collecting it since the 1970s. Fiona is fascinated by the history and heritage of the industry and has spent many years researching the connections and legacy of Irish linen, flax and textiles. In 2013, she launched McBurney and Black, specialising in the sale of antique and vintage Irish linen. Fiona's lectures on flax and linen illustrate her extensive knowledge and have been delivered to international textile tours and museums.

@mcburneyandblack

[mcburneyandblack.com](http://mcburneyandblack.com)



## Justine Aldersey-Williams

Justine Aldersey-Williams is a textile artisan and teacher specialising in botanical fabric dyeing. In 2017, she launched a comprehensive online training in natural dyeing which has since reached 2000+ students in over 40 countries and she is a visiting lecturer delivering my her curriculum, 'Make it Sacred: Regenerating Fashion with Natural Dyes'.

Justine is the founder and Regional Coordinator of North West England Fibreshed, advocating for the reintroduction of bioregional textile crops and is one of three partner organisations on the 'Homegrown Homespun' flax and woad growing project in collaboration with the British Textile Biennial and social enterprise Community Clothing.

@thewilddyery  
@northwestenglandfibreshed

[naturalfabricdyeing.com](http://naturalfabricdyeing.com)  
[northwestenglandfibreshed.org](http://northwestenglandfibreshed.org)



## Paul David Blanc

Dr. Paul D. Blanc MD MSPH is Professor of Medicine and holds the Endowed Chair in Occupational and Environmental Medicine at the University of California San Francisco. Blanc received his BA from Goddard College (Plainfield, Vermont), where he first became interested in health and the environment, later training at the Harvard School of Public Health (in industrial hygiene), the Albert Einstein School of Medicine New York, and Cook County Hospital Chicago. Blanc has authored numerous scholarly publications in his field and is the author of *How Everyday Products Make People Sick and Fake Silk: The Lethal History of Viscose Rayon*.

[ucsf.edu](http://ucsf.edu)



## Cloth Cultures Podcast Series

**Cotton:** with: Bharti Parmar, Gillian Berry & Alison Iddon (Haworth Art Gallery), Lubaina Himid (Artist) & Tiwirayi Ndoro (Photographer & Stylist)

**Silk:** with Aarathi Prasad (writer & academic), Rachel Midgley (Gawthorpe Textiles Collection), Paul Blanc (writer & academic) & Sarah Cheang (RCA)

**Wool:** with Esther Rutter (writer), Sally Tuckett (University of Glasgow), Raisa Kabir (artist) & Teleica Kirkland (CIAD)

**Linen:** Alison Toplis (writer), Dr Anna Garnett (writer & curator), Fiona McKelvie (McBurney & Black) & Justine Aldersey-Williams (Fibreshed)

For more information visit [creativelancashire.org](http://creativelancashire.org)

Teleica Kirkland



# Cloth Connections

Tartan has an iconic and recognisable cultural image which links it immediately to Scottish heritage, the influence of which can be identified in traditional fabrics across the world.

There is a very involved and engaging history that details the legacy of colonial engagement with African and Asian people through material culture and highlights how cloth that can be found in India, the Caribbean and Africa have had intrinsic connections to tartan that have come via colonialism and empirical trade.

## Madras

Developed in India in its current form in the 17th Century, madras cloth is an amalgam of influences from Scotland to India to the Americas. Named after the small fishing village, Madras Patnam, where it was woven that later grew into the large southern Indian city now known as Chennai, madras cloth was made, often in bright and bold colours, to be sold to emerging markets in the western colonies.

The fabric was distributed across the British Empire and came to represent different social classes in each place. In the USA, particularly the northern states madras cloth has been used in the leisurewear of the Ivy League collegiate and the casual wear of moneyed classes. Patchwork madras is a particular favourite in the USA as something that although worn very casually is still considered a signifier of wealth. In the Caribbean, madras was bought and worn by the enslaved and indentured servants and used for head ties, shirts, and dresses.

The Caribbean is a region of 36 countries and territories and although not every nation has a madras history, those that do use madras as a traditional fabric in pageants and national festivals.

## George Cloth and Pelete Bite

As the influence of tartan and the development of madras cloth had become such a lucrative endeavour for the colonialists, it was also sold in West Africa. This is how it found its way to Nigeria amongst the Kalabari and the Igbo people. For the Igbo of the southern Nigerian regions, the cloth arrives in a variety of different colours and is used in an unaltered state. For the Igbo the fabric is called George cloth or George madras and is named after King George III as he was the monarch at the inception of colonial occupation.

However, the Kalabari of the eastern regions of Nigeria modify the cloth by manipulating the fibre to create different patterns, thereby transforming it into another fabric known as pelete bite which means “cut-thread cloth” and speaks to the technique of pulling and cutting the threads to make other patterns. By cutting threads in the warp and weft of the woven fabric the Kalabari are able to create intricate and distinctive patterns that give it a very different look from madras or any direct associations to tartan.



## Shukas

The Maasai are one of the oldest cultural groups in Africa and they live on land that straddles the border of Kenya and Tanzania known commonly as Maasailand. Any images of Maasai will more than likely show them wearing brightly coloured shukas mostly with a base red colour but often with a bold check pattern that has a striking resemblance to tartan.

The responsibility for giving Maasai shukas a tartan pattern has been given to an Indian man living in Kenya by the name of Mr P.D. Dodhia. Although Dodhia had been designing tartan style patterns for shukas for many years he was gifted a book containing several types of Scottish tartans which he then adapted and had made into acrylic shukas that have become the common dress of the Maasai people.

Through this brief glimpse of Scottish material cultural influence, it is clear to see how connections between different people and cultural groups are formed through their engagement with cloth.

**Teleica Kirkland is Founder & Creative Director at Costume Institute of the African Diaspora (CIAD), and Lecturer in Cultural and Historical Studies, London College of Fashion.**

[ciad.org.uk](http://ciad.org.uk)  
[@CIADuk](https://www.instagram.com/CIADuk)

Teleica leads a Conversations in Creativity panel: Cloth Connections - the Colonial Impacts of Material Cultures of the African Diaspora, 6pm Thursday 28th October 2021 (online).





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Alice Kettle

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# Textile & Place



The Textile and Place Conference explores the politics of textiles. Hosted by Manchester School of Art, it is led by Alice Kettle, Professor of Textile Arts, with support from Rachel Kelly and Kate Egan, who are senior lecturers in textiles.

The 2021 conference is completely online and builds upon the debates from the first Textile and Place conference which took place in 2018. This second conference spans 5 days with talks, academic papers, discussions, panels, in conversations, films, and exhibitions from international and local contributors. We are delighted to be partnering with the British Textile Biennial.

The conference explores how textiles describes and maps specific places and broader ideas about location, which relate to traditional methods of making, memories and through site-specific and community-based practices. It examines how textiles carries within its fabric and in its production, the stories of trade, the transmission of histories, the crossing of cultural boundaries, of migration, and postcolonialism. We use the word politics as a broad term to indicate how textiles is implicated in particular places and is part of the relationships between groups or organisations and used to confront issues of power. Textiles can fix us to a place and also be part of the process of making change.

The conference is opened on different days by **Maria Balshaw**, the Director of the Tate, **Penny Macbeth** Director of the Glasgow School of Art, **Rosy Greenlees** Executive Director of the Crafts Council, **Laurie Peake** Director of the BTB and MMU's VC Prof **Malcolm Press**, **Sharon Handley**, Dean of Arts and Humanities, **Martyn Evans**, Head of Manchester School of Art, **Shelley McNulty**, Head of the Design School and **Kristina Neidderer**, Professor of Design.

The range of key speakers includes, Turner prize winner **Lubaina Himid** CBE artist and curator. **Assadour Markarov**, Professor in Fibre Art, China Academy of Art, Hangzhou with **Hu RenRen** Director of the Hanshan Art Museum Suzhou, China; **Amber Butchart** writer and broadcaster who presented the BBC Four's A Stitch in Time, and is curating an exhibition for the BTB; **Jessica Hemmings** Professor at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden; **Analyn Salvador-Amores**, Professor at the University of the Philippines; **Peju Layiwola**, Professor at the University of Lagos, **Vic McEwan** from CadFactory Australia, **Jools Gilson** Professor at University College Cork with **Fionna Barber**, Reader at Manchester School of Art.

There are conversations between **Janis Jefferies** and **Eliana Sanchez-Aldana**, between **Jennifer Harris** and **Neringa Stoskute** and **Monika Zaltauskaite Grasiene** and between **James Moss** with **Maria Nepomuceno**. Films are shown by **Raisa Kabir**, **David Penny**, **Mary Stark** and **Kani Kamil** and **Michelle Stephens**. And much more.

The conference looks at how textiles enables connections between sociability and communities; is a medium of protest and engages with alternative narratives; participates in economies of production, and the environment. The context and backdrop for all this discussion is Manchester's rich textile histories as well as today's challenges, where textiles is woven into changemaking.



The Textile & Place Conference takes place online from 11th to the 15th October 2021.

[textileandplace.co.uk](http://textileandplace.co.uk)

# Textile + Place Conference 2021

TEXTILE+PLACE Conference 2021

ONLINE  
11-15/10/2021

Manchester Metropolitan University | MANCHESTER SCHOOL OF ART | BRITISH TEXTILE BIENNIAL

The conference is hosted by Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University, in association with The British Textile Biennial.



Models:  
 Rasheed Yusuff  
 Suma Haidarah  
 Yolanda Damoyi  
 Izzy Miranda  
 Laure Marie  
 Randi Agyare  
 (KYSO Project)

Tiwirayi Ndoro



## Woke Denim – Denim and Civil Rights

There are many layers to the journey denim has made throughout the years, From the mills of Nimes in France to the creation of Levi's jeans which were then taken to America and commercialised as "workwear".

Soon this new hardwearing fabric would become a political statement worn to unite black people, to protest racial discrimination and fight for equality in a movement lead by the likes of Martin Luther King jr and many other civil rights activists' decades after the slavery era.

"Student Civil Rights activists were among the first to wear denim overalls and jeans outside of the context of factories and farms - and arguably set those indisputably American staples down a path to their current international near ubiquity. What's more, they did so thoughtfully and deliberately - using denim to identify themselves and their cause."

**R Lim - The denim days of civil rights protest**

Denim was reintroduced to the world as a wardrobe essential by the fashion industry. Prior to abolition plantation owners would make black people wear denim for work clothes in what used to be known as slave cloth or Negro cloth - given to slaves to wear in their daily toils, in contrast to their families who would wear more delicate and decadent fabric, such as lace draped dresses and linen suits. Denim became type casted as clothing only fit for the "inferior class." Which then lead to denim inescapably becoming classed as "negro clothing." This was an imposed identity, which was set as a limitation and boundary for the progression of the black minority in America.

With full acknowledgement of the past, in the 60's civil rights movement, activists re-appropriated denim as a statement to unite and empower the Black community, and act as a vivid reminder to America of its unjust and discriminatory treatment towards Black people.

Fifty years later, formed in 2013 in the United States of America, Black Lives Matter (BLM) is an international social movement which was created in response to racism and anti-black violence, especially demonstrated in the form of police brutality. Statistically Black people are three times more likely to be killed by the police than white people in the United States.



The movement demands that the system and society value the lives and humanity of Black people as much as it values the lives and humanity of all colour and race.

Fast forward to the recent present, Gen Z (often referenced as the social media generation) completely revolutionised activism in 2020 picking up the baton to transform BLM into a global movement for change. It was hands down the most impactful and largest civil rights movement in history. With protests being held in solidarity with the black community around the world who face issues such as institutional racism, systematic/systemic racism, micro-aggressions within the workplace etc.

The deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor shook the world, as videos and their stories circulated the internet, which then ignited a widespread conversation spearheaded by Gen Z, or as frequently labelled, the social media generation. The voices of young people have become a major influence for people of all ages, class, economic status and incomes when it comes to what people consume and relate to. Young people took what has been traditionally called recreational and superficial and completely revolutionised it into a resource for discussion, education and information. Gen Z are a generation of activists who refuse to say yes to injustice but demand to be heard not just in towns and cities but on a global scale with the help of modern-day technology.

Whilst there are so many similarities to the Boomers who stood for civil rights and racial equality during the 60's and 70's civil rights movement. The main difference between Gen Z and the Boomers would have to be the age demographic of the people leading the movement. Back in the day, it was very much the older generation leading and young people following but recent times have shown the dynamic shift as young people have begun to step forward as the new generation of leaders today. Though the leaders are new, the cause and the symbol remain the same and the journey continues through this chapter of the denim storey and the ongoing battle for social justice.

**Tiwirayi Ndoro is a Fashion Promotion with styling graduate, specialising In Fashion Photography and Styling.**

**Her Woke Denim Project, commissioned by Creative Lancashire for BTB21 is a conscious photo series about the modern-day fight for social justice. It will be exhibited in the windows of the former Debenhams department store in Blackburn for the duration of BTB.**



Tiwi is also co-hosting an extended roundtable Woke Denim: Style, Protest & Self-Expression - from MLK to BLM at 2pm, Tuesday 26 October 2021 at Blackburn Cathedral

All images by Tiwirayi Ndoro  
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Super Slow Way & North West Fibreshed

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# Homegrown/ Homespun



Fields of Flax and Woad: growing a new, regenerative textile industry in East Lancashire with Community Clothing.

In late September 1931, Mahatma Gandhi came to the UK on his homespun campaign and was invited to Darwen, Lancashire at the invitation of its millworkers to demonstrate their plight due to the Indian boycott of their textiles. In the 90th anniversary year of that visit, the textile industry in Lancashire all but disappeared but Gandhi's swadeshi philosophy of homespun self-sufficiency with a closed loop of local production and use takes on a renewed relevance in this moment of climate emergency.

“BTB21 explores the global relationships created by the industrialisation of fast fashion production across centuries and continents, whose catastrophic environmental impacts are only just beginning to be realised.”

Homegrown/Homespun proposes an alternative. The project aims to kick start the rebuilding of communities of fibre and dye growers, processors, makers and manufacturers in Pennine Lancashire to produce home-grown textiles and garments in a healthy, resilient and regenerative textile ecosystem on its disused green and brown spaces, and in vacant mills buildings, alongside the Leeds & Liverpool Canal.

In the spring of 2021, an enthusiastic and hardworking band of volunteers cleared and prepared a neglected patch of land in the Audley Range (Blackburn) neighbourhood and cared for it in the ensuing weeks as it grew. Everyone involved was thrilled as it thrived and transformed into a beautiful swathe of bright blue flowers in June and ultimately into a field of gold which was harvested in August. It was then flipped, dried, 'retted' and hand processed into fibre which will then be spun into yarn and dyed using natural indigo dye, also grown in Lancashire, to be finally woven into linen by one of the few specialists in the UK, live during BTB. The linen will be made into a pair of dungarees for the youngest of the regular volunteers on the flax field, at just 3 years old, as the first homespun item in the Community Clothing collection, sewn live in Blackburn during BTB (see website for details).

We asked Justine Aldersey-Williams, Laurie Peake and Patrick Grant about the origins and evolution of the project.

#### Where did the idea come from?

The project started with a discussion between Justine and Patrick just after Justine founded North West England Fibreshed in Spring 2020. Fibreshed advocate for the reintroduction of local textile crops and had set the precedent with their 'Grow Your Jeans' project. She suggested growing linen and woad to make a denim mending kit and Patrick countered that with the more ambitious idea of bringing a line of indigo linen jeans to market via his social enterprise Community Clothing in Blackburn. The Super Slow Way team joined the conversation with their plans for the British Textile Biennial for 2021, inspired by the 90th anniversary of Gandhi's visit to Darwen and Laurie named the project Homegrown/Homespun.

#### Why Blackburn?

Both Community Clothing and Super Slow Way are based in Blackburn which is part of the North West England Fibreshed region. It's an area in need of regeneration due to the offshoring of manufacturing and the subsequent decline of the textile industry there, but its legacy is very much alive with a large population of ex-textile workers and their children and grandchildren in the area along with many unused mills, making this the perfect place to kick-start a new, regenerative textile industry here on a scale that every member of the community can take part in.

#### What have been the main challenges?

We have been on a very steep learning curve at every stage – from identifying a suitable patch of land with the council and having the soil tested by Regenagri to preparing the land to sow and making the decision when it was ready to 'pull' (harvest). A lack of skills and equipment has meant we've been reliant upon a handful of specialist artisans and a network of experts across the UK and beyond.

#### What have been the high points?

So many, not least seeing how the relatively simple task of clearing the site of fly-tipping and litter and cutting back undergrowth and tangled branches created a beautiful natural oasis in an otherwise grey landscape. Simply seeing the seeds sprout, grow and flower has been a joy and the community around the land have embraced this new-found habitat. The outdoor textile workshops for volunteers nurtured great camaraderie but the high point was definitely the mass effort of 'pulling' the flax on harvest day and the satisfaction of having achieved what we set out to do just 112 days before!

#### Where do you want to take it? What's the vision?

Community Clothing is planning to launch a whole Homegrown/Homespun line at BTB23 as a step change towards more sustainable clothes. We aim to work with communities across Pennine Lancashire to repurpose disused urban open spaces on their doorsteps, using regenerative agriculture to create vibrant green spaces, creating products which can be repaired, repurposed and recycled locally. We want to create jobs, reconnect communities, offer opportunities that improve people's physical and mental health and to create long-term sustainable economic growth. We envisage a distributed network of growers of all sizes from allotments and small parcels of land owned by e.g. councils, schools or housing associations, to full scale agricultural growing, creating the opportunity for both permanent and seasonal agricultural work.

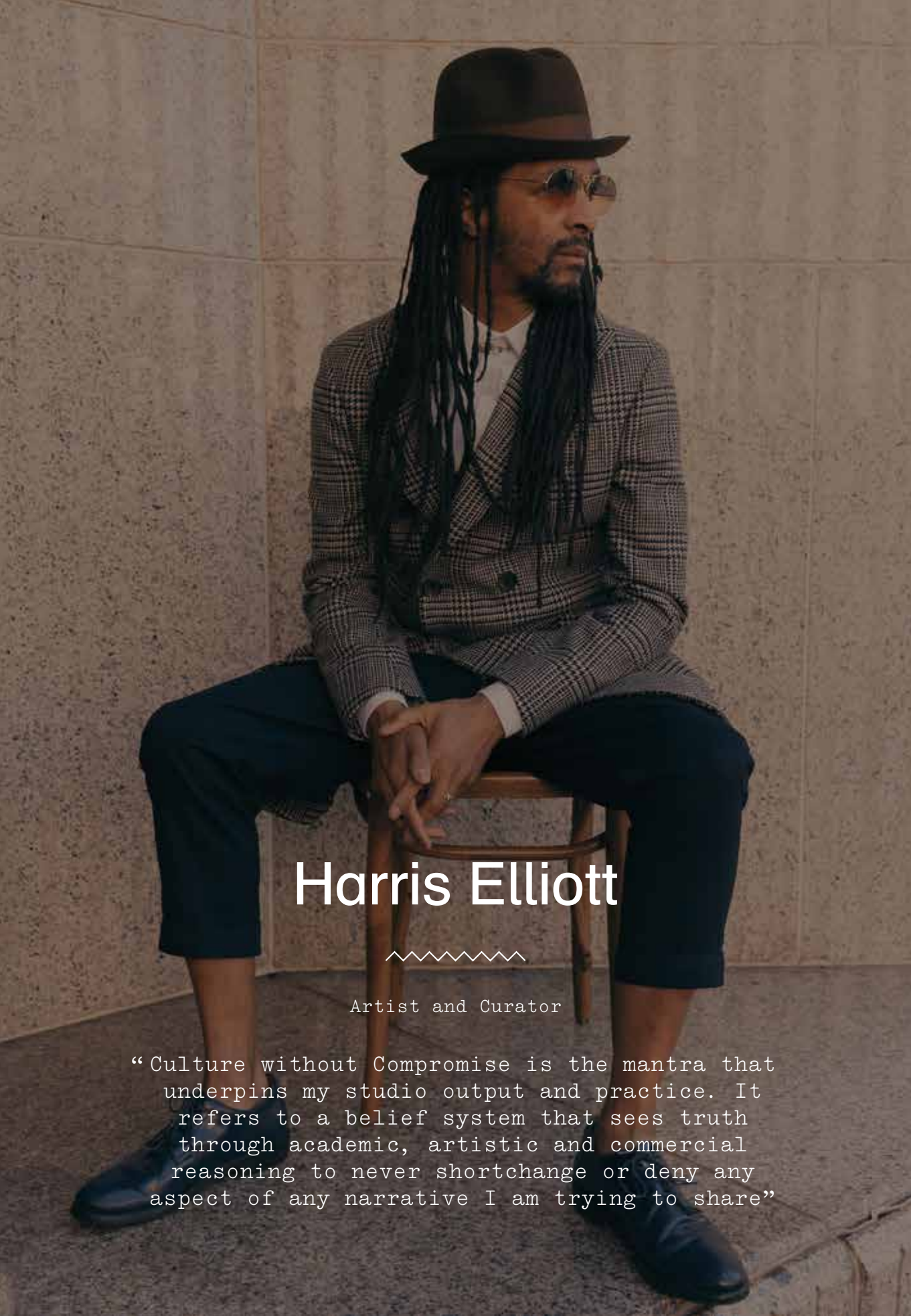
We want to emulate the Isle of Harris where practically every single resident, regardless of age, gender or ability plays a part in the production of Harris tweed. Likewise, Homegrown/Homespun offers something for everyone from growing, spinning, dyeing, weaving, designing, sewing and selling!



Justine Aldersey-Williams will be taking part in a Conversations in Creativity Panel Discussion: Making Matters x Levi's Digital with British Council - 2pm Monday 25th October, Blackburn Cathedral

Image Credits: Bea Davidson, Justine Aldersey-Williams, and volunteers on the HomeGrown/HomeSpun Project.





# Harris Elliott

Artist and Curator

“Culture without Compromise is the mantra that underpins my studio output and practice. It refers to a belief system that sees truth through academic, artistic and commercial reasoning to never shortchange or deny any aspect of any narrative I am trying to share”



### What was your first memory of creativity?

As a child my mum always used to take me into central London to see the Christmas window displays, I used to love the magic in the windows, it wasn't till a few years ago that I realised how influential those trips were on my creative expression.

### What was your creative journey to get to where you are?

I studied interior architecture and design for 5 years, upon leaving I met the iconoclast Judy Blame who commissioned me to create headdresses and that gave me a taste for fashion and styling. I styled numerous musicians and campaigns but always had a desire to create more expansive narratives. In 2014 I created and curated Return of the Rudeboy exhibition at Somerset House with Dean Chalkley which became a turning point in my practice. Throughout the past 2 decades I have nurtured a great working relations with Japanese collaborators and clients.

### How do you establish your own style over a period of time and still stay relevant?

I hate being pigeon holed or for things to look the same, I'm still curious and willing to adapt and experiment. Within Jamaican culture from music to life standing alone in your approach was always sought after, I try to apply that ideology to my practice. Collaboration is incredibly key to my work and it always sparks new ideas and allows me to have a different approach.

### Tell us about your process. Does your work develop thematically, or is it more distinctive and random?

Random and chance occurrences ignite ideas to create themes that I work with.

### What or who has been the biggest influence on your work and why?

The biggest influence on my work is the intersection of Jamaican attitude and Japanese sensibilities, it's an unlikely alliance but is so right. The list of creatives that inspire me is is exhaustive but the few that are currently taking my attention are Tomas Saraceno, Doh Ho Suh, Arthur Jafa, Tobe Nwigwe.

### What inspires you or provokes the motivation towards creativity within?

Conversation is currently the most important design tool that I use as the basis for most ideas and projects. Creating new cultural narratives and developing sustainable human values motivates me to keep developing my craft.

### What is it you love most about what you do?

It is best summed up in the unexpected meeting of people I don't know who stop and tell me how much my projects and work inspires them and that encourages me to keep creating. It is also the blessing I've had to travel the world and discover new cultures and dream new dreams.

**Harris Elliott is a Multi Disciplinary Artist, Cultural Curator and Academic with an extensive portfolio working in fashion, music and art. 'Culture without compromise' is Elliott's studio mantra, a statement of intent refined through 20 years of inspired global working with heavy emphasis in Japan and Jamaica. Harris is a Senior lecturer in Fashion at the Royal College of Art and Central Saint Martins.**

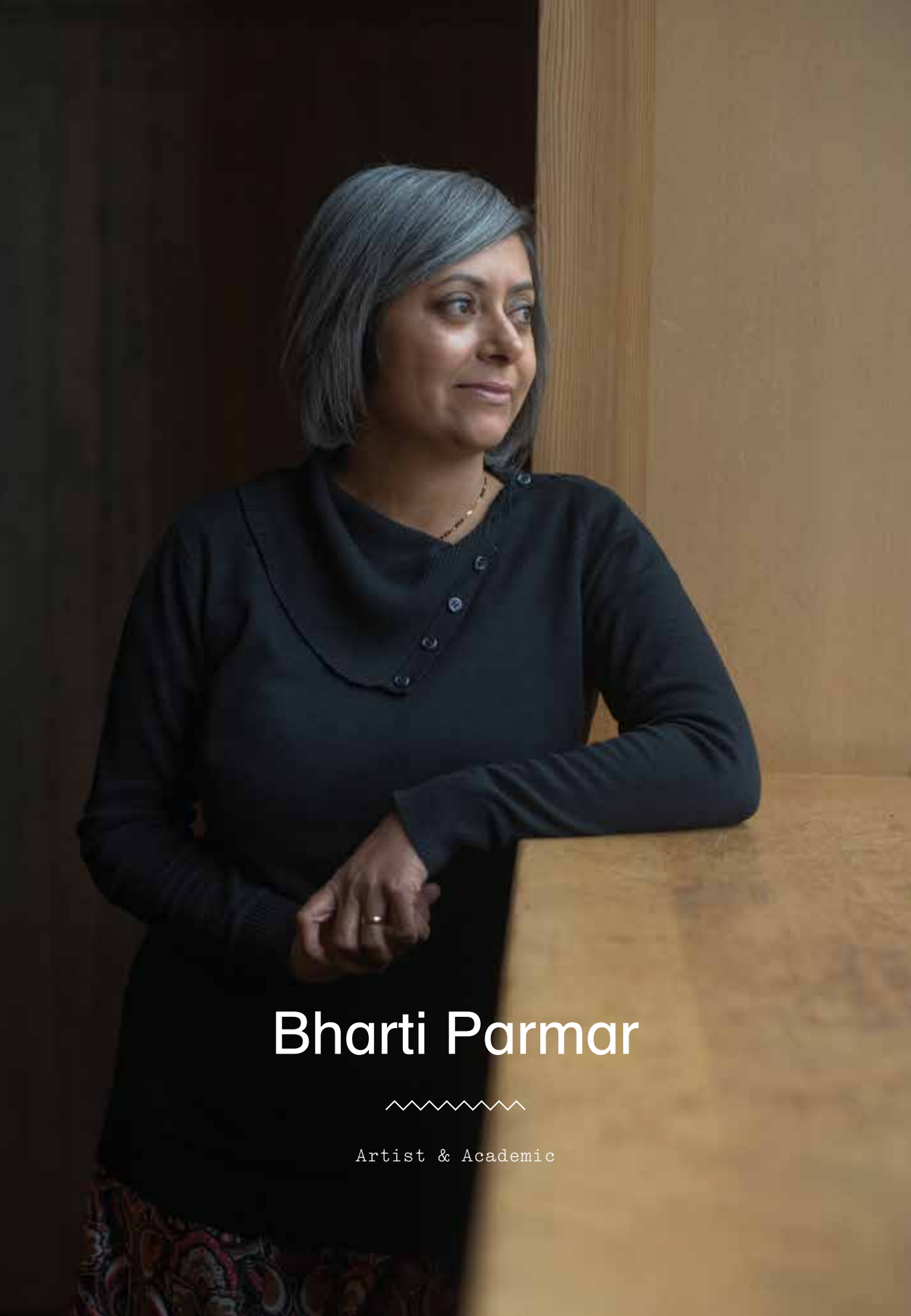


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Harris will be taking part in a Conversations in Creativity Panel Discussion:  
Politics, Power & Production: The Global Impact of Denim - 6pm, Tuesday 26th October, Blackburn Cathedral





# Bharti Parmar



Artist & Academic

Bharti is concerned with vernacular and material cultures as diverse as historical needlework, clip art and marquetry. She makes highly crafted artefacts from simple materials imbuing them with poetic and political meaning.

### What are your earliest memories of creativity?

I grew up in Leeds as the child of immigrants. Gujarati was my first language. As I couldn't speak English in nursery, I remember being drawn to tessellated shapes, building blocks and objects to lace and string together. I realise now that the school advocated the educational philosophy of Froebel's Gifts: (wooden blocks 1-6) and occupations (including sticks, clay, sand, slates, chalk, wax, shells, stones, scissors, paper folding). I believe that early interaction with these geometric shapes had a formative experience on my interest in shapes, systems, language and how things connect in the world.

### What was your creative journey to get to where you are?

I've had quite a conventional artistic training. After my foundation course in art and design at Jacob Kramer College in 1986 (now Leeds College of Art), I went onto Coventry Polytechnic then the Royal College of Art. I went straight into academia and have taught Fine Art and Degree level and above for over 25 years in universities across the UK. My PhD in material culture studies allowed time to re-focus my energies into my practice and I now work full-time in the studio.

As an academic, I sit on various panels and speak about how my work locates within wider contexts at conferences. I also support organisations and artists through mentoring and as a board member for various arts commissioning agencies.

### How do you establish your own style over a period of time and still stay relevant?

'Style' is a term which suggests a simplistic and fleeting change of fashion and most artists wouldn't subscribe to that. To be an artist and to stay relevant is to make art which is alert and is a mirror of contemporary society.



### What or who has been the biggest influence on your work and why?

I'm particularly interested in the conceptual wit of a number of feminist artists I follow, I know or who have taught me, most notably Helen Chadwick, Alice Maher and Kathy Prendergast. The last two are Irish and I met with them whilst I undertook an artist's residency at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in 2017.

### Tell us about your process. Does your work develop thematically, or is it more distinctive and random?

I have various different approaches to work. Usually I am approached by a museum or organisation at a very early stage regarding a commission, often relating to their history, their location or their collection. A number of meaningful conversations take place with stakeholders from which emerges a creative proposal for artwork. This is how Khadi for British Textile Biennial was born.

Sometimes I work speculatively in which I am exploring general ideas in my studio in a more experimental way – in which there is no prescribed outcome.

### What is it you love most about what you do?

Artists don't work in an isolated bubble; they are part of a larger community, an ecosystem which supports itself and grows. In this way, it's really important to be an engaged member of an artists' community – of all generations. This is what I love most about what I do.



Bharti Parmar is featured in Amber Butchart's Podcast series and is participating in our Panel Event: Breaking down Borders: Movement & Migration Through Cloth (6pm, Monday 25th October 2021, Blackburn Cathedral)

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Image credits: Main Photo: Ming de Nasty  
Bharti in Caroline Eccles, Huckleberry Films



# Esther Rutter



Author

Over the course of a year, Esther Rutter – who grew up on a sheep farm in Suffolk, and learned to spin and knit as a child – travels the length of the British Isles, to tell the story of wool’s long history here.

## What was your first memory of creativity?

My first memory of creativity was learning to spin yarn from raw wool. From the age of five until I was a teenager, I lived in a cottage beside a sheep farm in Suffolk. Opposite the house were a muddle of barns and farm buildings, where rats hid in feed bins and swallows nested in the rafters. Hay bales for the cows and sheep were stacked around the place, and the whole farm seemed to be held together with luck, dust and bailer twine.

As a child I had the run of the place, and one thing I loved to do was to collect tufts of sheep’s wool from wire fences. My mum had a wooden spinning wheel and a huge pair of wooden carders – broad brushes with hard, sharp spines – and together we would untangle the clots of fleece I brought in from the field, using the carders to separating the wool into smooth strands. Then Mum would turn the carders in the other direction, and a smooth rolag of wool would magically appear between their spikes. This was my cue to set the spinning wheel whirring with my foot, so she could coax this fat cigar of carded wool into a smooth string of yarn. It was a magic trick I never tired of – and the skill of turning wool to yarn has held me in thrall ever since.

## What was your creative journey to get to where you are?

After my farm childhood I went to study English Literature at Oxford University, where I became particularly interested in psychogeography and life-writing. Fascinated by the interplay between places and stories, I went on to work for a decade in literary museums including the Wordsworth Trust in Grasmere and the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum in Ayrshire. When I wasn’t at work, I spent a lot of time writing poems and stories – and knitting, which never seemed to involve sticking to a pattern!

When I started a new job in university administration in 2016, I became frustrated by the lack of creativity in my role. Knitting took on a new importance for me: as well as providing a way to deal with my frustration, it was now an essential creative spur. I wanted to learn more about this history of the craft, but when I looked for a book on it there wasn’t anything in print that wasn’t either a technical guide or a pattern book. Then I thought that perhaps I could write the book I wanted to read, and so came up with the idea of something that was a history of knitting across the British Isles – and a personal journey of discovery.

I quit my job and a few weeks later entered my idea into a Twitter competition, one run by writer development agency XpoNorth. Before long I had secured an agent – the fabulous Edinburgh-based Jenny Brown – and This Golden Fleece: A Journey Through Britain’s Knitted History was eventually published by Granta Books in 2019. In 2021 I secured an Honorary Research Fellowship at the University of St Andrews, and I’m now working on a second book, Calls Home the Heart, which explores the connections between landscape, literature and belonging.

## How do you establish your own style over a period of time and still stay relevant?

With This Golden Fleece I realised that fully immersing myself in process of making was an essential part of my writing practice. The book is structured around twelve areas of the UK with strong knitting or wool-working traditions – Lancashire, the Yorkshire Dales, the East Coast, London, the Midlands, East Anglia, Wales, Shetland, the Outer Hebrides, the Scottish Borders, the Channel Islands, Highland Scotland – and for each chapter in the book, I researched and made a garment connected to each place. Physicality is at the heart of the book, and I hope that this both demonstrates the skill involved in making your own clothes and also empowers my readers to have a go at knitting something new themselves – be it hat, scarf, gloves, or even a bikini!

Though This Golden Fleece is now finished, I still do a lot of knitting and have recently begun to branch out into knitwear design, which is exciting but also a challenge, as I do not have a design or textile background. However, I continue to love writing, and I believe the challenge for me will be to continue to combine a wide range of interests in my written practice. Craft, landscape, poetry, women’s history, gardening, food, walking – I am interested in all these topics, and want to continue to be able to tell stories about them for the rest of my working life.

## Tell us about your process. Does your work develop thematically, or is it more distinctive and random?

For me it really helps to think of each book in terms of a concrete project that can be tackled within a year: twelve knitted garments for This Golden Fleece, or twelve months of living in Lake District for Calls Home the Heart. In fact, seasonality is a key tenet of my practice: changes in light, temperature and weather have a huge impact on me and my work, and having a set timeframe is a good way to ensure that my books actually get finished.



## What inspires you or provokes the motivation towards creativity within?

The urge to make or write seems to come to me particularly strongly at two points in the year. The first is at New Year: after the darkening days of December and the absorbing focus of Christmas, I relish the chance for a new start and find I usually have a lot of energy around this time. The next comes with the first signs of autumn: this is my favourite season, and I love everything about this time of year. The change in the air feels like it is echoed in my blood, and I am usually fizzing with plans and ideas for writing (and knitting) as the days lengthen.

## What or who has been the biggest influence on your work and why?

In terms of writing, non-fiction author Amy Liptrot, poet Gwyneth Lewis and biographer Janet Malcolm are huge influences on my work: all of them are mistresses of precision as well as exceptional storytellers. As a knitter, I love Felicity Ford – aka KnitSONIK – and Karie Westermann, who combine a strong sense of place and fun in their work.

## What is it you love most about what you do?

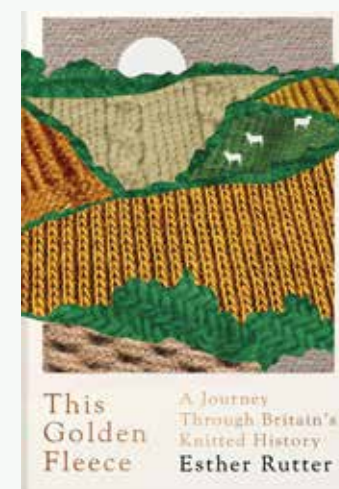
I love taking the germ of an idea and working it up into the physical reality of a published book – just like turning scraps of wool into yarn, the process has that sleight-of-hand magic which never fails to amaze me!



Listen to Gillian Berry in conversation with Amber Butchart for the related Cloth Cultures podcast series for BTB21 on the theme of Wool.

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@rutterwriter

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# Azraa Motala

Visual Artist

“Being a woman of colour is inherently political, especially when our identities have been stigmatised as a result of attitudes towards immigration and religion. Further fuelled by the media and cultural gatekeepers often promoting a narrative of “otherness”. Unapologetic will challenge the rhetoric and provide a platform for an overlooked community of young British South Asian women based in Lancashire to self represent in a society that lacks this authentic representation.”

## What was your first memory of creativity?

As a child I'd spend countless hours drawing and painting - I was fascinated by all kinds of art and experimented tirelessly, teaching myself how to use different materials and methods often learning as I went along. My parents are both quite creative too, when I was younger I hardly used a conventional colouring book instead, my dad would draw out landscapes, cars and cartoon characters for me to colour in. I'd also find envelopes dotted around the house covered in intricate henna patterns my mum had unconsciously doodled on whilst jotting down shopping lists or phone numbers - which she would then translate into delicate patterns using mehndi across my palms.

## What was your creative journey to get to where you are?

I completed my BA in Fine Art at the University of Central Lancashire in 2017 and later went on to study for my masters at the Chelsea College of Art. I have been working as a freelance artist since then.

## How do you establish your own style over a period of time and still stay relevant?

My work evolves and changes as I do - a constant push and pull from forces within me and the outside world. A response to life, stories and lived experiences which pour into it. I've never worried about staying relevant, I make work and let people experience, engage and interpret it through their own lens.

## Tell us about your process. Does your work develop thematically, or is it more distinctive and random?

My work has usually developed from an autobiographical stance, whilst at the same time being driven by history and culture. Unapologetic will provide greater nuance to stories and visions of a larger group of women that would otherwise be left unheard. Exploring the overlapping themes that make up our individual modes of representation. Creating works that touch upon class, culture, gender, sexuality, belonging and the histories bound to us.



## What or who has been the biggest influence on your work and why?

Influences on my work have always been quite diverse ranging from 17th- 19th century French and Italian painters for the way they would manipulate paint and for their ability to tell stories through painting such as Artemisia Gentileschi, Delacroix, Ingres and Jean Leon Gerome. As well as incredible artists including Mona Hatoum, Titus Kaphar, The Singh Twins, Sarah Maple, and Frida Kahlo.

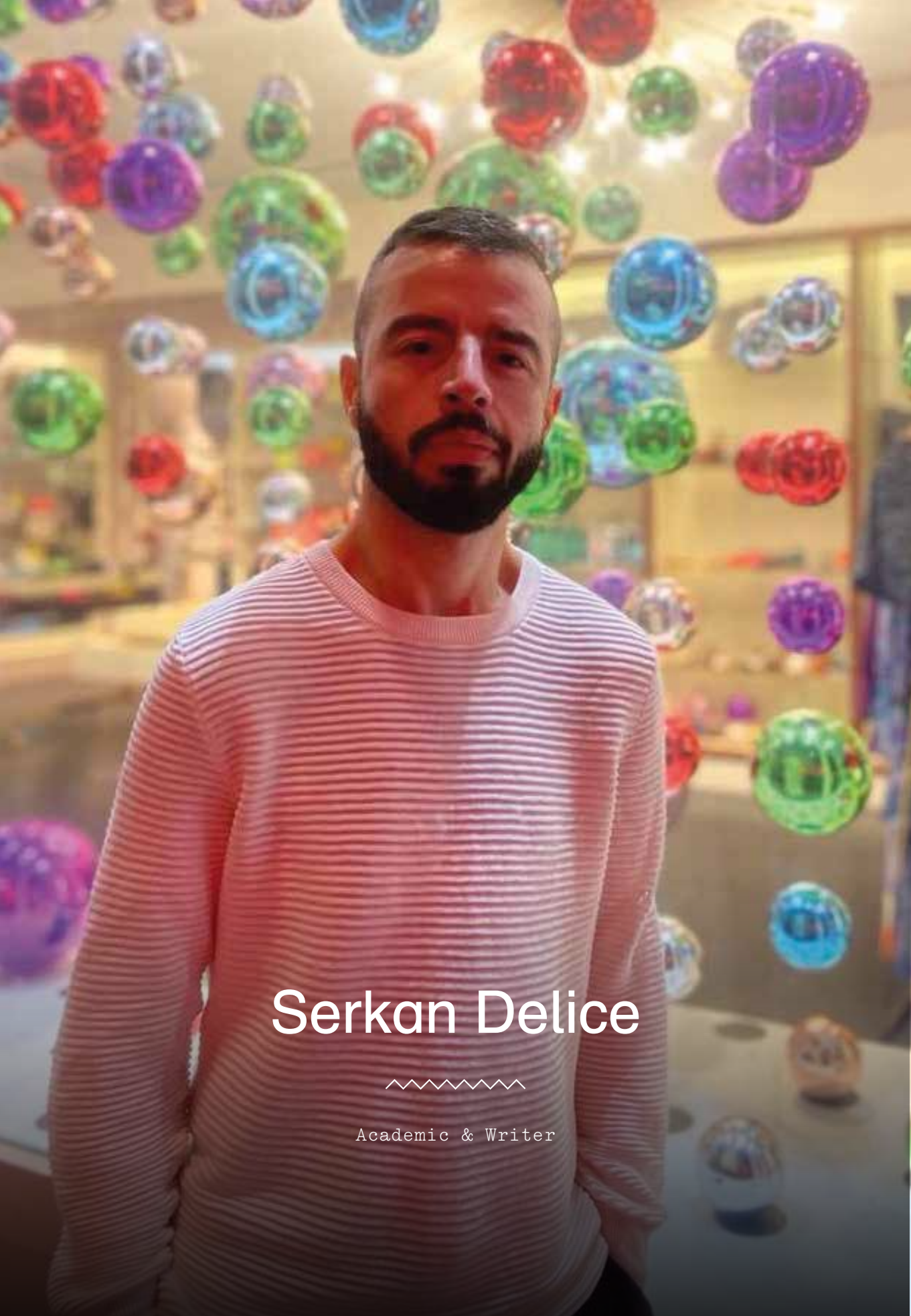


Azraa Motala's "Unapologetic" exhibition runs for the duration of British Textile Biennial at Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery, from 1st to 31st October 2021.

@azraamotala

azraamotala.co.uk

Image credit: Main image: Caroline Eccles, Huckleberry Films



# Serkan Delice



Academic & Writer

Serkan's current research investigates the possibilities of defining and practicing a transnational ethics of fashion that challenges neoliberal, racial capitalism and its systemic appropriation of labour and culture.

**Focusing on the historical, and ongoing, centrality of refugee and immigrant labour to fashion production - and drawing upon Hannah Arendt's idea that refugees 'driven from country to country represent the vanguard' of all stateless and displaced people, of all racialised and marginalised Others.... as a political identity that exposes the structurally exclusive character of the nation-state as a racialised and territorial myth of European construction.**

#### **What was your first memory of creativity?**

My first memory of creativity was my rendition of a song by Müzeyyen Senar (b.1918-d.2015), an Ottoman-Turkish classical music performer whom I would characterise as the 'Billie Holiday of Turkey', for a singing contest I entered, and won, as a High School student in Istanbul in the 1990s. This was a deeply melancholic, soulful song about one's eternal devotion to one's beloved, even in the absence of any real hope for a reunion—an excessively sentimental song for a 16-year-old to sing.

Much later when I started to study English literature as an undergraduate—and when creativity became associated with writing—I wrote an enthusiastic, if not audaciously naïve, essay on Waiting for Godot in which I linked the very act of waiting-almost-for-the-sake-of-waiting not to a gnawing sense of existential futility, but to a steadfast devotion to imagining a new world of revolutionary possibilities, even in the absence of any real hope for a revolution.

#### **What was your creative journey to get to where you are?**

I am a lecturer as well as a writer. I studied English literature, Ottoman and Middle Eastern history, sociology and cultural studies. My tendency has always been to read widely and across disciplines. Doing so has sensitised me not only to the flow of ideas across disciplines, but also to what Edward Said calls 'overlapping territories, intertwined histories', that is, culture as a transnational and hybrid phenomenon shaped and reshaped by the movement of people, capital and labour across national borders. Exploring the history of the production of fashion and textiles, to which refugee and immigrant labour has always been central, has enabled me to grasp the artificiality of borders as well as the importance of connectedness—the two central tenets of my creative journey.

#### **Tell us about your process. Does your work develop thematically, or is it more distinctive and random?**

Randomness can be truly emancipatory—as long as there is a kind of method to one's madness. In his critique of the concept of historical progress, Walter Benjamin tells us that 'nothing has corrupted the German working class so much as the notion that it was moving with the current'. Thus, I am highly sceptical of narratives of development and progress. I envisage my work as a series of distinct interventions; an attempt, in Benjamin's words, to 'seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger' and show how the past and the present are always inextricably linked to each other; and a call to action—social, cultural and political.

#### **What inspires you or provokes the motivation towards creativity within?**

Righteous indignation! The anger I, as an immigrant from a working-class background, feel in the face of the ever-increasing class and race inequality that stems from neoliberal, racial capitalism and its violent regime of border enforcement and immigration policing nourishes and sustains my creativity—so does Aretha Franklin when she exclaims, without any fear or ambiguity, that 'the way you treat me is a shame'!

#### **What is it you love most about what you do?**

Teaching and learning from my students.



Serkan will be taking part in a **Conversations in Creativity Panel Discussion: Breaking down Borders: Movement & Migration Through Cloth** - 6pm, Monday 25 October, Blackburn Cathedral.

[arts.ac.uk/research/ual-staff-researchers/serkan-delice](https://arts.ac.uk/research/ual-staff-researchers/serkan-delice)



# Denise Gouveia



in conversation with Donna Claypool

Denise Gouveia is an emerging applied surface pattern designer whose printed textiles centres around her heritage of Mozambique, and her experience of studying in Portugal before emigrating to the UK.

Denise recently graduated with a First-Class BA (Hons) Textiles and Surface Design degree from the University of Bolton.

Her work is inspired by travels through her country of origin, Mozambique, developing decorative patterns through her own photographs and drawings of objects found at busy market stalls, symbolic shapes and motifs, traditional tools, crafted objects and the flora, fauna and native animals found within Gorongosa National Park. She also examines museum objects, including masks from Mozambique, which are linked to dance, arts and theatre, in tradition used for spiritual rituals, often made of wood. Denise takes inspiration from printed fabrics including Capulanas, a 2-metre traditional Mozambique

cloth for Sarongs, with historical links to early Portuguese traders. These patterns and objects are carefully observed through highly detailed, pencil drawings, and recoloured applying contemporary colour palettes.

Denise utilised both digital and hand-crafted screen-printing techniques using reactive dyes and pigments onto wool, linen, silk and cotton to create the 'Lourenco Marques' collection - a range of scarves, bags and contemporary Capulanas, which also serve as alternative wall hung pieces.

## What was your first memory of creativity?

I don't have any concrete memory, I remember several episodes as a child when I was in the nursery where I was always selected to do crafts, drawings or even write posters to present at the end of the school year. Besides that, I have a picture made from Father's Day, from when I was only 2 years old, which I still have. I believe my artistic skill started then.

## What was your creative journey to get you where you are?

I originally studied Visual Arts at college in Portugal and after 7 years I had the opportunity to emigrate, that's when I decided I wanted to study my degree at the University of Bolton. Initially I thought about being an interior designer, fortunately I studied the foundation course which helped me choose the direction I wanted to take, exploring materials and pattern which resulted in a passion for colour and screen printing. I completed my degree in Textiles & Surface Design, which I feel it was the best choice I made, and I am now embarking on a new journey. At the end of our final year, we exhibited our work on site at the Creative Show where I was fortunate to gain an award to exhibit my work at the Manchester Craft and Design Centre. More recently I have been offered workshops at the Great Northern Contemporary Craft Fair, and will showcase my work on the University stand, which for me is already a very important opportunity in my creative journey.

## Who or what has been the biggest influence on your work and why?

I adapt lived experiences and/or striking situations, as well as social aspects within my designs. I feel that as a designer, I must raise awareness and communicate my ideas through my creative process, make society more aware and empathetic with what goes beyond what surrounds us. My work narrates my individual story, aiming to promote and validate the importance of African culture in how it can influence and inspire the interior and fashion industry. This collection suggests the importance of representation and the value of diversity, giving the opportunity to tell stories through designs.

## What inspires you or provokes the motivation towards creativity within?

My will to win and be successful. It may sound cliché, but the fact that I came from a different culture with different needs, I saw my mother's difficulty in raising her children, which impacted on me to look at everything and try to see beyond what is presented. The desire to create and make, everything starts when I know there is an opportunity to express my creativity and feel somehow privileged to be able to merge my experiences with my artistic skills, which is something that fascinates me.

## What new practices or approaches have you acquired in your work during your degree?

In general, I learnt to be a resilient person, I believe it is essential for my career and for any designer, as well as the ability to adapt and innovate for any situation that is proposed to me. I was particularly inspired by the opportunity to explore many new processes within the printed textile workshop, working intuitively with hand-applied processes.

## How has undertaking your recent degree helped you with your practice?

I feel that it was the reward for all my dedication and effort, which simultaneously serves as an impetus for the new phase that is approaching. I want to be positive and believe that achieving a degree is an opening for new opportunities.

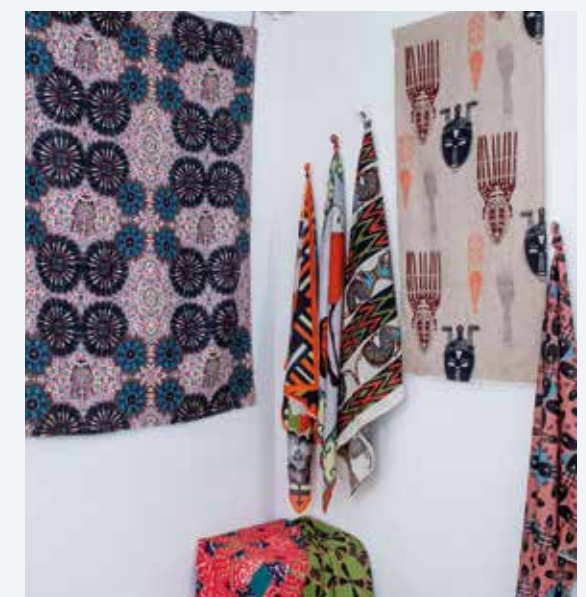
## What is it you love most about what you do?

Being able to communicate and tell stories through my designs, I like to investigate and explore the meaning of what I intend to produce, as well as being in a printing laboratory surrounded by pigments and colours, watching the construction process happening.



@deniise.design  
@textilesboltonuni

Images: Joel Chester Fildes

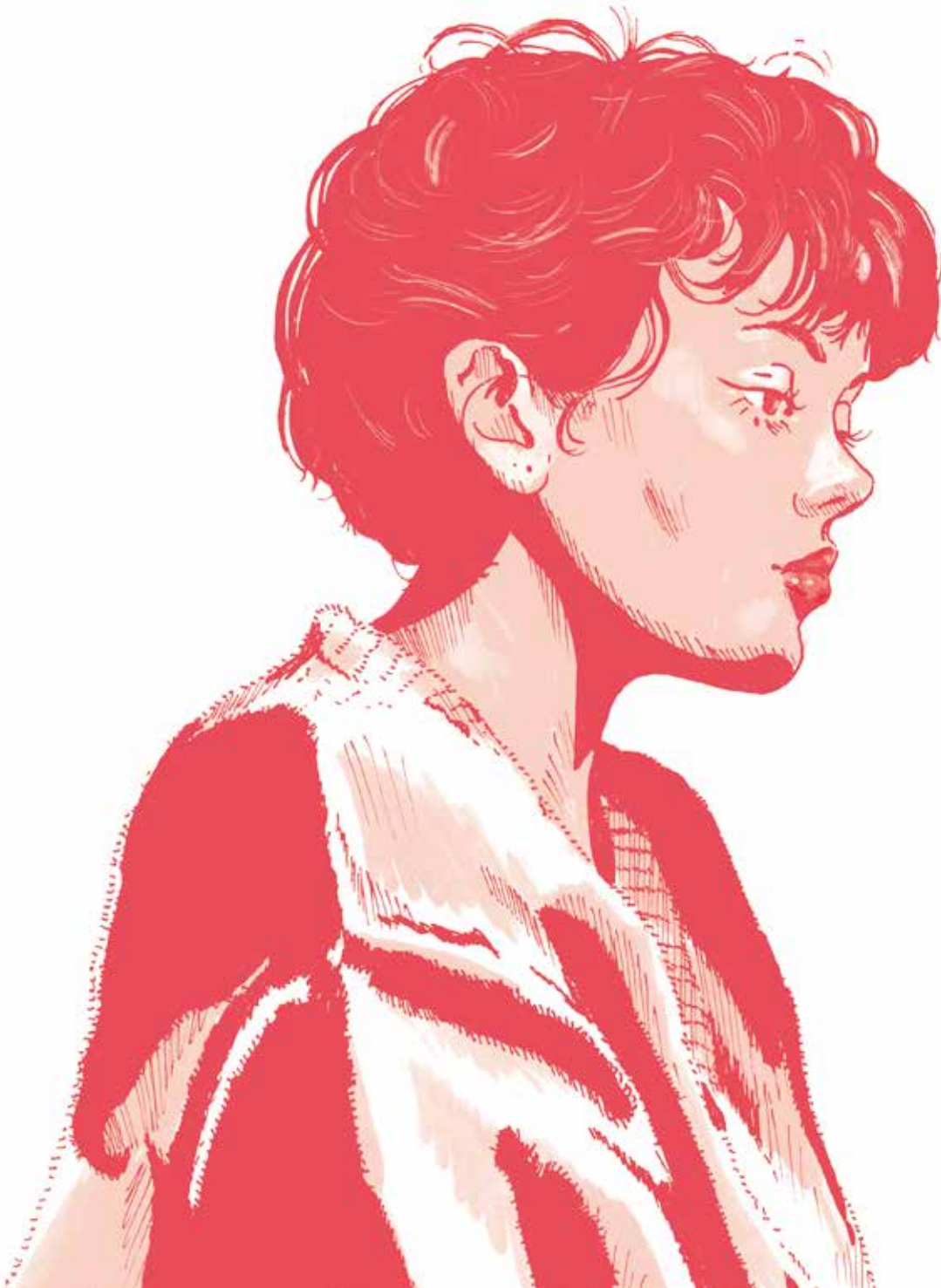


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# Erin Jones



Illustrator & Designer



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Erin Jones is an award-winning graduate from the University of Central Lancashire. Creative Lancashire commissioned her to create work for this publication.

### Why did you choose to study illustration?

I studied Art and Design at college and at the last minute I decided to go to university instead of getting a job. When looking through the different courses, illustration seemed to perfectly fit what I wanted to do.

### What is your first memory of creativity / being creative?

I remember drawing when I was little, specifically drawing people, I used to draw around a glue stick for the head aha.

### Tell us about your creative journey. How did you get to where you are now?

Like I said I've been drawing all my life, I used to draw during lessons in school and I'd always look forward to art class with my friends. It was the only thing I had a real interest in, I didn't exactly know that having a career in illustration was a thing at the time but I definitely knew I wanted to be an artist.

### Tell us about your final year project. What inspiration and ideas informed your work?

For my final year project I got to write my own brief so I combined my love for music, fashion and portraiture together, I created a 10 year anniversary merchandise collection for one of my favorite albums, Bankrupt! by Phoenix. I designed an artbook and vinyl cover and with the help of graphic designer Dom Dzik, we created postcards, plane tickets, bags, t-shirts and more. I wanted the merchandise to be a sunny escape from the gloomy and depressing winter we all went through, I was inspired by the bands French roots, my favourite fashion houses and the music itself.



### What/Who has been the biggest influence on your work to date?

I think my work has an obvious Japanese influence, most of my favourite artists are from Japan but I was also into anime when I was in highschool. I'm also hugely influenced by my music, when listening to songs I can imagine images/scenes/characters that go with them. **Which creatives (artists/designers/ illustrators) do you admire or inspire you the most?**

My favourite artists are Yusuke Nakamura, Aya Takano, seiichi hayashi, Bryan Lee O'Malley and Jamie Hewlett

### How has your style evolved over time?

I'm pretty critical of myself and so I'm always trying to improve. I think university has definitely helped me to improve quickly, since we're always getting feedback and searching for new inspirations. Also through university I've become more open minded to where my art can go and to trying new things and mediums.

### What keeps you motivated to keep creating?

I try to take in as much media as I can, like listening to new albums and watching new movies. Also taking breaks is important to me, sometimes you just need to go to a new place or to just have a day of doing nothing to recharge.

### What are your future plans and career goals?

Currently, I have an exciting commission from FYC (a prize for winning the UCLAN student awards) which I can't wait to share. I'm also going to do a masters at UCLAN in Fashion and Lifestyle promotion for a year, and after that I want to become a full time illustration/creative either with an agent or an agency.



@studio\_jonesy  
erin-jones-9625a3212

studiojonesy.com



# Reimagining Lancashire

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Debbi Lander

Lancastrian identities co-exist within two realities – that bridge the temporal, the cultural and the geographic. Many are trapped in a history, and to a realm that no longer officially exists – causing a diminished sense of place and a confusing sense of self.

Yet in all this lies opportunity... and ambition; since just as Lancashire gave birth to the revolution that exploited resources with little regard for the consequences; so, Lancashire today stands at the threshold of new challenges and opportunities in a high-speed, globalized world in the foothills of the Anthropocene and at the dawn of the next (our fourth) industrial revolution engendered by the information age.

In these respects, the county's diverse and gentle topography belies its extraordinary contribution to British and Global history – from the Tudor succession more than 500 years ago, and as the birthplace of the industrial revolution 300 years later, to its decline in the face of boundary changes and subsequent fragmentation and de-industrialization. These forces have rendered the county into an eclectic collection of places and communities whose disjointed present belies the alternative futures and vibrant identities that might yet be wrought from its proud heritage of influence, innovation, and resilience.

This is where the story of Lancashire 2025 – the County's bid to host the 2025 City of Culture – begins. It reflects an ambition to transcend the recent fragmentation of regions and counties here and elsewhere, by harnessing Lancashire's talents, assets, and passion for re-invention to craft a new and inclusive identity as the 'Virtual City of Lancashire' in which achievements and challenges offer tangible opportunities to re-imagine the emerging cities of the future, and re-invigorate the role that culture-led regeneration can play in realizing this vision for regions throughout the UK and beyond.

In this, most critical sense, Lancashire is already imagined and re-imaginable, through our cultures and aspirations, and over time and place.



With Lancashire 2025's vision, encounters with the future will be actively encouraged and facilitated via a series of provocations based within artistic endeavor, design interactions and cultural imaginations. In my role as Bid Director, the cultural programming will bring together diverse practices to articulate the various areas of inquiry that orbit this futurological landscape.

This vision draws on my work with an extraordinary range of artists, scientists, academics, technologists, thinkers, entrepreneurs, and designers of all disciplines as well as organisations, including global agencies, pioneering collectives, cross-sector partnerships, government-funded programmes, internationally renowned festivals and producing organisations.

In a 35-year career of project-based works, I have maintained a singular focus on two key ingredients: the new; and the unprecedented. And, in a succession of rather unique projects, I have incorporated evolving cultural opportunities to expand human creativity and creative uses of technology including through: novel performative technologies (90's, shinkansen); placing the body at the centre of digital interaction (2000's, Future Physical), inquiring into the future of humanity through art and science (2007, Liverpool 08), celebrating the play ethic as a manifesto for a different way of living (Cultural Olympiad, 2008 -2012), connecting the past to cinematic futures (2014, Encounters Film Festival) and stewarding next practice in contemporary art (Forma, 2015 -2018). Indeed, it has been a huge privilege being able to develop and establish a model of professional practice that combines research, technological innovation, and the application of art.

Working in site-specific programming since 1988 has led to a fascination with local ecologies (human, social, creative and natural), and this has drawn me to explore and better understand the ways in which people-power and authority articulate themselves. The motivation behind joining Lancashire 2025 to take on the role of Bid Director was the unique opportunities this offers for drawing together the creative abilities and aspirations of people cross such a diverse range of localities, communities, and backgrounds to harness these in the making of something radically different, and special: a newly imagined 'virtual city' that transcends the present, embraces the past and looks to the future.

The imperative to imagine beyond what is known and to create new images of old things is a key motivation for all artists – and our individual and collective ability to imagine things differently is often all that is required to enact change itself; to imagine the possible and thereby bring it into being. In this way, culture can and does play a significant role in re-imagining places for the future and for the better – creating the places where people want to be. Lancashire 2025 wants Virtual City of Lancashire to become a dream for a generation and beyond. We want them to have the best of both worlds; all the advantages of multiple different situations and none of the disadvantages: a high-density urban life and a low-density county for future living.

Cities of tomorrow are founded on digital innovations, re-imagined as hubs for biodiversity conservation and climate resilience, transformed through inspirational cultural projects and designed to optimise residents' quality of life. These transformations concern academics, urban planners, and municipal officials more generally, instigating changes in their ways of seeing, thinking, and governing. With a county to reinvent, urbanisation at the heart of the future and a new paradigm for architecture on the horizon,

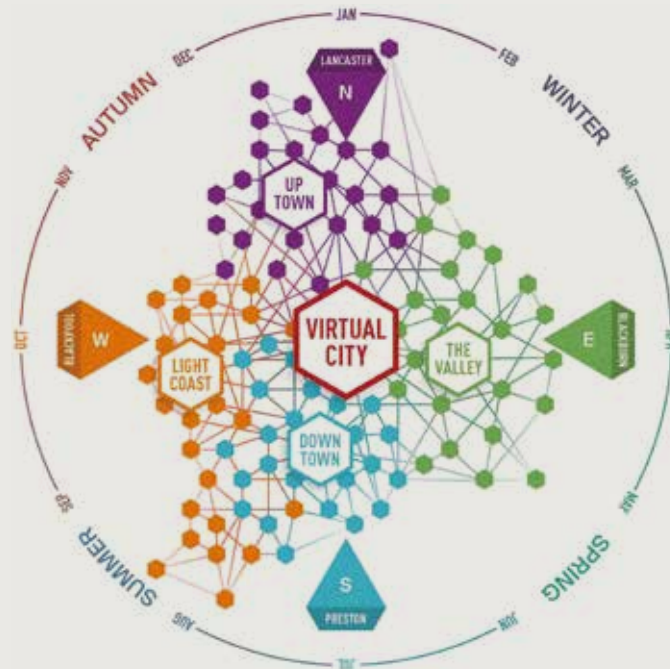
With Lancashire's 2025 vision, the geography of the non metropolitan county is the inspiration for a design, vision and plan for future cities. The concept of Virtual City defines the county as a cultural space, where we build the installation of a "Virtual City of Lancashire" which develops according to cultural events'

## Building The Virtual City of Lancashire

Lancashire 2025 conceive the Virtual City of Lancashire in the production, as a mode of event. It holds the view of a transition, concerning the event, as it will be a Spectacle of City-Making.

Inspired by 'City of Culture as Art Installation'.

"A spectacular county environment provides the setting for Lancashire's Virtual City, built on location at Lancashire 2025. Over one year, a body of citizens will set out a 100 event locations to create the Virtual City of Lancashire for an unknown audience, waiting for the best representation of a county's response to UK City of Culture".



Debbi Lander is Bid Director of Lancashire 2025 UK City of Culture.

# great northern contemporary craft fair

VICTORIA BATHS  
MANCHESTER  
8-10 OCTOBER 2021



—CRAFT SAYS SOMETHING

Buy beautiful objects for you and your home, direct from 160 makers.



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Jamie Holman

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## From the End to the Beginning



The story of textiles is the story of labour, trade and power, weaving a complex web around the world and throughout our industrial and post-industrial history.

BTB21 unpicks those connections across continents and centuries, tracing and unravelling the threads that still bind us, with a focus on fashion, expression and identity that extends our heritage story, into a contemporary reflection of the cultures that have emerged beyond the accepted nostalgia of 'The Mills'.

Most people who live in East Lancashire do so because the textile industry brought them here, whether from all over the British Isles to work in the new forges, factories or cotton mills of the industrial revolution; or after the second world war, when workers came from across the Indian sub-continent, to work in the cotton mills that were still trying to compete on the world stage. Towns across Pennine Lancashire such as Burnley, Blackburn, Colne or Accrington were built on the wealth from cotton mills and textile manufacturing. This can still be seen from the canals built to transport goods, to the museums, libraries and town halls that we still use to this day. Impressive buildings, like the Cotton Exchange in Blackburn, were built to conduct the business of cotton trading which was so vital to these towns; everywhere you look in East Lancashire, it's clear that our heritage and history is directly linked to the cotton trade.

Although most of the mills have now closed and many of these buildings no longer weave cotton, we are still involved in the textile industry. Boohoo.com is one of the biggest employers in the area, importing and distributing clothing that is often made in Asia, while the grandchildren of the former cotton mill workers here in East Lancashire make up the majority of its workforce.

The phenomenon of 'fast fashion' is creating new relationships, conversations and issues across the world, with single use garments often ending up in Africa, raising new questions about the ethics of fast fashion and the global environmental impact of our clothing.

Our textile heritage is complex, challenging and in some cases reveals unexpected outcomes that echo through the centuries. In my own work I have explored the manifestations of culture related to the mills and the people that have worked there, but have previously lacked visibility or have not been connected to the accepted narratives. I have been particularly interested in the cultures that have emerged since the collapse of cotton, notably Acid House in the late 1980's producing an oral history archive 'Flashback'. As well as this, for BTB21 a collaboration with Rough Trade

Books producing a publication 'Parties for the people, by the people', designed by Craig Oldham, with contributions from six new writers and Dorothy design studio. The basic proposition is that without the cotton mills, Acid House as we know it, would not have emerged in this area.

The empty industrial spaces becoming a playground for the great grandchildren of weavers, wefters and warpers who re-claimed these spaces and did 'something new'. The same can be said for the great grandchildren of those mill workers who founded the football league in 1888. They couldn't anticipate their descendants gathering on the terraces of the country, and later the world, developing new folkloric rituals of mass singing, banner making and processing.

And, as with Acid House, there is a difficult history to navigate as some fans in the 1980's engaged in football violence and international shoplifting; bringing luxury brands and sportswear to the area. This is a sub culture that is now very much the mainstream, as kids in Milan and Paris wear adidas Spezial trainers named after people and locations in Lancashire, the home of football. The place where it all began. In a natural follow on from our headline exhibition in 2019, with designer, Gary Aspden and Adidas Spezial, we continue to explore the evolution of our textiles heritage, and our relationship with global manufacturing and youth cultures.

It is not surprising then that C.P. Company have chosen BTB21 as the location to celebrate their bicentenary. Darwen may not seem to be the obvious choice for an international sports brand, but C.P. Company are aware of their relationship with the area and are keen to celebrate their history. Since 1971, C.P. Company has balanced timeless design with technical innovation, and their sportswear has been an enduring favourite on the football terraces of the North West of England from that time.

50 years later, C.P. Company is celebrating their beginning through a programme of collaborations, community and presentation of five decades of garment innovation. Founded by graphic artist Massimo Osti and musician Lucio Dalla, Massimo created a brand with a

strong identity, that at the time was unlike anything else available on the market. Due to his passion for military uniforms, especially from the British Army, Massimo amassed a large collection of books on the subject, one of which gave him the inspiration for the brand logo, the British sailor.

Blackburn shares this history of military textiles with Cookson and Clegg, who were founded in Blackburn in 1860. The firm began working in leather but by the 1930's they were producing jerkins, flying helmets and other leather products for the British Army. These are the heritage overlaps, shared histories and lesser known threads that bind us together. This is what I find exciting in my own research, with Alex Zawadzki and our Uncultured Creatives studio practice. This is where our work emerges, beyond the nostalgia and misplaced patriotism of well-worn historical clichés, interrogating exciting working class culture that challenges the perception of towns like ours being "left behind". We're not left behind, we're leading. Some of you are just late to the party (That's you Guardian News Paper and BBC Panorama).

C.P. Company in Darwen.  
If you know, you know.

**Jamie Holman leads Fine Art at Blackburn College University Centre and works from a studio in the town centre as one half of "uncultured creatives" a collaboration with producer Alex Zawadzki, delivering works in public, digital, print and traditional gallery spaces.**



@jamie\_holman\_studio  
@uncultured\_creatives

Jamie Holman will be taking part in a Conversations in Creativity Discussion: Woke Denim: Style, Protest & Self-Expression - from MLK to BLM 2pm Tuesday 26th October, Blackburn Cathedral



# Conversation in Creativity Explorations Inspiration







Raisa Kabir

## Resistances

Linking up the past history of Queen Street Mill, with contemporary textile technological futures of John Spencer Textiles, these commissions interweave the geographical and historical connections between these industrial spaces, and reference the extensive artist's research of global textile archives found Lancashire, that name the South Asian Diasporas present in Burnley today.

There is a series of volumes created by the head of the India Museum, John Forbes Watson, in 1866 called "The Textile Manufactures of India". It includes 700 samples taken from Indian textile designs across many of its states and geographies. The books are found at many UK institutions such as the V&A, The Whitworth Gallery, and The Harris Museum in Preston.

My work would intend to weave some reinterpreted designs that represented Lancashire and its varying diverse communities. Many of the samples were taken from places such as Lahore, Punjab, Bengal, Dhaka, Kashmir, which are places where many of the communities at the moment, who are living in East Lancashire and West Yorkshire, are also from. My work would be an antidote to these pattern books, to look at the resistances in history and textile patterns.

I am Raisa Kabir, an interdisciplinary artist and weaver based in London. I work with woven text/textiles, sound, video and performance to translate and visualise concepts concerning the politics of cloth, labour and embodied geographies. My work addresses cultural anxieties surrounding nationhood, textile identities and the cultivation of borders; as well as examining the encoded violence in histories of labour in globalised neo-colonial textile production. I have critically engaged with materials such as flax, jute, indigo, cotton and linen production, working with their material properties as well as their potent histories.

As part of my practice I build weaving looms, using textile making technology related to bodies and tacit knowledge, to bring the activation of industrial/craft labour into gallery spaces as a way to take up labour space within institutional structures. My performances use the ability of weaving, as a theoretical strategy, to be used as a disruptive performative practice that builds on theories

of embodied knowing, textiles as gendered archives, enacted through performance with the racialised queer disabled body.

My (un)weaving performances comment on power, production, disability and the body as a living archive of collective trauma. My practice has looked at the weaving processes of gesture, repetition, tension and production. In particular how there is always a need for tension in order to enable production, and how might a weaving/healing/embodied practice ultimately resist those ideas of bodily production in a capitalist system that relies on 'functioning' bodies and disregards others. Gendered bodies. Racialised bodies. Disabled bodies. Queer bodies. Undocumented bodies. Indigenous communities + knowledge.

My recent work has included multiple live woven performances which has explored the parameters of weaving and labour, but I have also woven tapestries. For these tapestries, I weave hidden text and non western languages within the woven patterns, to create readable text/iles, often referencing queer muslim voices or decolonial maps.

**For BTB21 Raisa Kabir presents work at Queen Street Mill as a continuation of her Art in Manufacturing residency, commissioned by The National Festival of Making.**



Raisa will be taking part in a Conversations in Creativity Panel Discussion: Breaking down Borders: Movement & Migration Through Cloth - 6pm, Monday 25 October, Blackburn Cathedral.



# The North West Craft Network



The NW Craft Network was formed in 2012 with the aim of bringing together craft organisations and practitioners in the region. The North West has always had healthy, active craft sector, but it was felt that organisations and practitioners were often working in isolation and that as a collective we could be stronger and more resilient.

The network is driven by the shared vision of its members to build a strong regional identity and healthy craft ecology in the North West. It depends upon the collective input of its members and thrives on collaborative working.

Members of the network include: museums, higher education institutions (HEIs), commercial galleries, craft organisations and craft practitioners at all stages of their careers.

## The Network initially identified a number of ongoing challenges for the region:

The NW holds major collections of historical and contemporary craft and has a good range of venues presenting craft. There are well-developed links with HEIs, a number of makers with national and international reputations based or teaching in the region, some strong commercial craft outlets and an annual high-profile event in the shape of the Great Northern Contemporary Craft Fair. However, we are only now beginning to realise the potential of our work together to develop our combined strengths through building critical mass and shared audiences.

Graduate maker retention is traditionally poor due to a lack of incubation and subsidised studio spaces and, with some notable exceptions in Manchester, Stockport and Merseyside, there are few development opportunities for new and recent graduates.

There are gaps in curatorial knowledge around craft, with many curators covering a huge breath of art, craft and design disciplines, and in some cases making artificial distinctions between contemporary art and high-end, more conceptual craft and, conversely, applied arts curators failing to recognise the crossovers between the two areas of visual arts practice.

The group initially identified 4 priorities they wished to interrogate: Market Development; Maker Development; Perception and advocacy of the craft sector in the region and Curatorial development including critical writing. Much of the work carried out in the past 9 years has focused on these priorities and still does.

More recently, the North West Craft Network took some time to explore the opportunities and the difficulties that the pandemic has presented to us and examined what we thought our priorities should be for the next year or so. Here's a summary of what we felt was pushing us forward, what has potential, and what is holding us back...

While the pandemic had brought great turbulence, problems, and hardship, it has also brought an opportunity to think about doing things differently and a push to accelerate change. Makers and organisations have tried new platforms and been forced to find funding – all of which are experiences that can be built upon. Forced to look for stay at home activities that are nourishing, social and accessible, people have rediscovered the value of everyday making and creativity in unprecedented levels.



Within the North West Craft Network, not only do we have a wealth of collective skills, knowledge, and expertise, but members are passionate about craft and making and about how their organisations support it along with goodwill and willingness to share.

The increased public engagement with craft and perceived value of creativity by both public and professional together has been brought into sharp focus by the pandemic. Together with a weariness in throwaway consumerism in the young, this is something that the craft sector can respond to and build upon. The pandemic has given us a unique opportunity to make a new normal.

Despite the things pushing us forward and the potential for growth, there are hard realities such as reduced funding and increased competition for the funding that there is. There is not enough diversity either in our network or in the wider sector. Within the wider context, we are facing a recession and ongoing economic hardship that will impact on us all. And while there are many creative graduates, they are not exploring craft as a career. Alongside this there is an emerging tension between hobbyist and professional approaches to craft, between the democracy of making on the one hand and the perceived elitism and exclusivity of professional craft on the other.

## We have identified the following priorities:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Maker Development
- Diversity

Further information will be published on a soon-to-be-launched website.



If you think you can contribute to these priorities and would like to get involved with the North West Craft Network, please get in touch:

[craftnorthwest@gmail.com](mailto:craftnorthwest@gmail.com)

(Montage: Bluecoat Display Centre, Great Northern Contemporary Craft Fair & Manchester Craft & Design Centre)



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Enjoyed the British Textile Biennial and want to see more? Here's a selection of events and exhibitions celebrating craft around the North West this Autumn.

#### PAST PRESENT FUTURE: CELEBRATING CRAFT

**Date:** 18 May (2021) - tbc

**Venue:** Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

Celebrating the creative flair of makers with links to the North West.

[liverpoolmuseums.org.uk](http://liverpoolmuseums.org.uk)

#### HANDS ON

**Date:** 11 September - 13 November (2021)

**Venue:** Manchester Craft and Design Centre

Hands On is an exhibition of work by three local makers specialising in ceramics, textiles and wood who are part of our inaugural bursary holder project. Work from Bhaggie Patel, Simon Denton and EvaD Ould-Okojie.

[craftanddesign.com/hands-on-exhibition](http://craftanddesign.com/hands-on-exhibition)

#### HALIMA CASSELL & EMMA RODGERS

**Date:** 1 October - 13 November (2021)

**Venue:** Bluecoat Display Centre, Liverpool

This exhibition brings together two of most accomplished women sculptors from the North West, Halima Cassell and Emma Rodgers, for the first time and is part of our wider Celebrating Craft series.

[bluecoatdisplaycentre.com](http://bluecoatdisplaycentre.com)

#### IN THE WINDOW: SOPHIE LONGWILL GLASS

**Date:** 1 - 31 October (2021)

**Venue:** Bluecoat Display Centre, Liverpool

Bluecoat Display Centre and Liverpool Irish Festival are delighted to be working with the Design & Crafts Council Ireland (DCCI) to select an Irish based maker to feature as part of this year's festival.

[bluecoatdisplaycentre.com](http://bluecoatdisplaycentre.com)

#### GREAT NORTHERN CONTEMPORARY CRAFT FAIR

**Date:** 8-10 October (2021)

**Venue:** Victoria Baths, Manchester

Buy beautiful one-off handmade craft direct from 160 specially selected makers working in textiles, jewellery, ceramics, wood, glass and more.

[greatnorthernevents.co.uk](http://greatnorthernevents.co.uk)

#### MCDC AUTUMN FUN DAY

**Date:** 28 October (2021)

**Time:** 11am - 3pm

**Venue:** Manchester Craft and Design Centre

Join us to delight in all things autumnal at our Autumn Fun Day. We'll have lots of craft activities, stalls from our local partners and much more!

[craftanddesign.com](http://craftanddesign.com)

#### IN THE WINDOW: VERITY PULFORD GLASS

**Date:** 1 - 30 November (2021)

**Venue:** Bluecoat Display Centre, Liverpool

Verity also features in 'Past Present Future' at the Walker Art Gallery, starting 15 September 2021, as part our collaborative Celebrating Craft series

[bluecoatdisplaycentre.com](http://bluecoatdisplaycentre.com)

#### MATERIAL MATTERS (1.30-3.30pm)

**Date:** 9th November (2021)

**Venue:** University of Bolton Textiles and Surface Design (Online Event)

In this workshop you will be encouraged to work intuitively, responding to the materiality of the cloth to produce your own mixed media sample using pre-loved and unused household textiles and objects.

[bolton.ac.uk](http://bolton.ac.uk)

#### WINTER DISPLAY: ANGIE LEWIN

**Date:** 17 November - 8 January (2022)

**Venue:** Bluecoat Display Centre, Liverpool

This curated display will feature printmaker Angie Lewin alongside a selection of makers working in ceramics, textiles and jewellery.

[bluecoatdisplaycentre.com](http://bluecoatdisplaycentre.com)

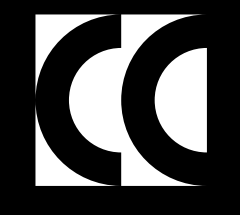
#### HOPEFUL & GLORIOUS WINTER ARTS FAIR

**Date:** 20 & 21 November (2021)

**Venue:** Lytham Hall

Based in Lancashire, Hopeful & Glorious work with talented makers across interesting venues and great organisations to produce colourful events, to exhibit and sell art and crafts.

[hopefulandglorious.co.uk](http://hopefulandglorious.co.uk)



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[CRAFTSCOUNCIL.ORG.UK](http://CRAFTSCOUNCIL.ORG.UK)

# Talks Programme



Creative Lancashire is collaborating with Amber Butchart to present a series of Conversations in Creativity talks to further explore the themes responded to by artists & makers contributing to the British Textile Biennial programme.

## POWER, DRESS & SPIRITUALITY

**Time:** 1.30 - 2.30pm  
**Date:** Saturday 23rd October  
**Venue:** Haworth Art Gallery, Accrington  
with **Lorene Rhoomes**

Lorene Rhoomes, designer behind Akhu Designs, shares her passion for West African textiles, looking at its vital role in the region covering adornment, rites of passage, textiles design and dress. On the same day, Lorene also presents opportunities to participate in head wrap workshops (11.30 & 1.30pm - see BTB21 website for details).

**FREE** to attend – Pre-registration via Eventbrite essential.

## CLOTH CULTURES

**Time:** 4.30 - 5.30pm  
**Date:** Saturday 23rd October  
**Venue:** Haworth Art Gallery, Accrington  
with **Amber Butchart & Gillian Berry**

British Textile Biennial invited fashion historian Amber Butchart to curate this new exhibition featuring items from the Gawthorpe Textile Collection shown for the first time at Haworth Art Gallery, a beautiful Arts & Crafts House imbued with a sense of place and the context of the textile industry in Accrington. Amber is joined by Gillian Berry, who is a museum professional working in the sector for over 15 years. Her interests lie in heritage from below, working class histories and transformational art. Berry has presented at the Corning Museum of Glass Annual Seminar of Glass on her research work on Joseph Briggs a working class born Accrington man who went on to become the President of Tiffany Studios, New York, USA.

**FREE** to attend – Pre-registration via Eventbrite essential.

## MAKING MATTERS x LEVI'S DIGITAL with British Council

**Time:** 2 - 4pm  
**Date:** Monday 25th October  
**Venue:** Blackburn Cathedral

with **Hannah Robinson, Justine Aldersey-Williams, Pammi Sinha, Theo Tan** and hosted by **Amber Butchart** (full line-up tbc)

Earlier this year Levi's with British Council invited interdisciplinary designers and artists to submit creative proposals for reimagining Levi's post-consumer materials as part of the Levi's by Levi's initiative and British Council Making Matters programme.

Exploring circular design and material transformation, the digital residency also has a focus on exploring the social and cultural values that underpin different geographical relationships with textiles around the world. This session will be an opportunity to meet the international collective selected to collaborate digitally with a UK-based practice for the duration of the residency and hear more from those connected to the project. The panel will be hosted by Amber Butchart and will also include contributions from experts and practitioners to share exciting and innovative ideas for a more sustainable production.

**FREE** to attend – Pre-registration via Eventbrite essential.

**Check [britishtextilebiennial.co.uk](http://britishtextilebiennial.co.uk) for up-to-date information on all talks, workshops and events.**

## BREAKING DOWN BORDERS: Movement & Migration Through Cloth

**Time:** 6 - 8pm  
**Date:** Monday 25th October  
**Venue:** Blackburn Cathedral

with **Alice Kettle, Bharti Parmar, Raisa Kabir, Serkan Delice** and hosted by **Amber Butchart**

**“Cultural appropriation only happens when there are power inequalities between different cultures. Cultural appropriation implies that a more powerful culture is using another less powerful culture.”**

This panel explores the narratives and intersections that connect migrant journeys through the global textile industry and perspectives on cultural appropriation within crafts practices.

**FREE** to attend – Pre-registration via Eventbrite essential.

## WOKE DENIM: Style, Protest & Self-Expression - from MLK to BLM

**Time:** 2 - 4pm  
**Date:** Tuesday 26th October  
**Venue:** Blackburn Cathedral

with **Calum Bayne, Jamie Holman, Tiwirayi Ndoro,** and **Tunde Adekoya** (full line-up tbc)

This extended round table event explores how denim and style more broadly features prominently in cultural and political movements for change throughout the twentieth century to the current.

The session takes inspiration from the work of Tiwirayi Ndoro who was commissioned by Creative Lancashire and British Textile Biennial to create a conscious photo series tracing the relevance of denim and style as a means of self-expression and protest - from black civil rights movement of the 60's to current day activism and Black Lives Matter. Tiwi co-chairs the discussion which will explore these themes from a Gen Z perspective.

**“The project draws focus on young people, a generation of activists who refuse to say yes to injustice but demand to be heard not just in towns and cities but on a global scale”**

**FREE** to attend – Pre-registration via Eventbrite essential.

## POLITICS, POWER & PRODUCTION: The Global Impact of Denim

**Time:** 6 - 8pm  
**Date:** Tuesday 26th October  
**Venue:** Blackburn Cathedral

with **Craig Oldham, Harris Elliott, Sophie Woodward, Tiwirayi Ndoro** and hosted by **Amber Butchart**

**“Movements throughout history have been led by ordinary people and ordinary people have always worn denim.”**

From the anti-war and civil rights movements of the 60s and 70s, to climate action and social justice today, denim clad people of all ages demanding change is a constant. Our expert panel considers denim's role in grass-roots movements, counterculture, protest, and how citizens worldwide are impacted by the global story of denim production.

**FREE** to attend – Pre-registration via Eventbrite essential.

## CLOTH CONNECTIONS: The Colonial Impacts on Material Cultures of the African Diaspora

**Time:** 6 - 8pm  
**Date:** Thursday 28 October  
(Livestream / Screencast details tba)  
**Venue:** Online

with **Cheyney McKnight, Elli Michaela Young** and hosted by **Teleica Kirkland**

**“The story of migration is not one story but millions of stories... there's more than one way to tell a story.”**

Tartan: Its Journey through the African Diaspora was the first major project conceived by Teleica Kirkland, for Costume Institute of the African Diaspora (CIAD). The project explored the emergence of tartans in Kenya in the form of shukas; the blankets worn by the Maasai Mara and discovered the relationship to tartan that has developed amongst the Zulu's in South Africa.

“The history of a people can be told through their material culture. Through my work, I endeavour to redress the balance of untold histories” Teleica leads this discussion with Cheyney McKnight, founder of Not Your Momma's History who acts as an interpreter advocate for interpreters of colour via the art of creative re-enactments, using her clothing and primary sources to make connections between past and present, and Elli Michaela Young, currently completing her PhD on the Jamaican Fashion Guild exploring the use of cotton in the clothing of enslaved Africans in the Caribbean.

**FREE** to join – Pre-registration via Eventbrite essential.

# Contributors



**Alice Kettle**

Alice Kettle is a textile/fibre artist, writer and lecturer based in the UK. Her vast textile panels narrate contemporary events through rich and intricate stitchwork. Her works often use embroidery to engage in participatory collaborative projects such as her show Thread Bearing Witness at the Whitworth, Manchester 2018-19 and at the BTB in 2019. Stitch was used to examine refugee issues and migration. Kettle is Professor of Textile Arts at Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University. She is Visiting Professor at the University of Winchester. Her work is represented in various international public collections including the Whitworth, the Crafts Council and the Hanshan ArtMuseum, Suzhou, China.

[alicekettle.co.uk](http://alicekettle.co.uk)



**Debbi Lander**

Debbi Lander is a director, producer and creative director specialising in cultural programming and creative production that reaches beyond specialist boundaries. Co-founder of shinkansen (90's pioneer digital performance collective), and previously London 2012 programmer for Cultural Olympiad (NW England), Artistic Director (CEO) of Forma Arts. Debbi is Board Member of Festival of new cinema, digital culture and art, AND, and Associate of the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT). Debbi Directed the 20th Anniversary of Encounters, the UK's leading Short Film, Animation and Virtual Reality (Bristol). Born in London, and living in Penwortham, Lancashire since 2019, where she is Bid Director of Lancashire 2025 - UK City of Culture.

[lancashire2025.com](http://lancashire2025.com)  
[@lancashire2025](https://twitter.com/lancashire2025)



**Jamie Holman**

Jamie Holman leads Fine Art at Blackburn College University Centre and is one half of 'uncultured creatives' with producer Alex Zawadzki, delivering works in public, digital, print and galleries. Jamie is also a director of Prism Contemporary in Blackburn and a non executive director of The National Festival of Making. Jamie's work is multi-disciplinary and is often fabricated using industrial processes or with makers and artists. His work is informed by the heritage of working class communities, in particular the impact of the industrial revolution and the cultures that have manifested as a consequence of its emergence and subsequent decline.

[@jamie\\_holman\\_studio](https://twitter.com/jamie_holman_studio)  
[@uncultured\\_creatives](https://twitter.com/uncultured_creatives)



**Amber Butchart**

Amber Butchart is a writer and broadcaster, specialising in the cultural and political history of textiles and dress. She is former Research Fellow at the University of the Arts London, and is a regular public lecturer across UK's leading institutions. She presents documentaries for television and radio, including A Stitch in Time for BBC Four. Amber is an external adviser for the National Crime Agency, and published five books including a history of British fashion illustration for the British Library.

[amberbutchart.com](http://amberbutchart.com)



**Donna Claypool**

Donna Claypool is Associate Teaching Professor & Programme Leader for Textiles & Surface Design & Fashion at University of Bolton, teaching design processes and printed textiles for contemporary craft and commercial practices. She has extensive experience of making, selling, and exhibiting textile designs and is currently working with the Bolton Museum archives for both student design projects and a PhD research project. She is a member of the Association of Degree Courses in Fashion & Textiles, and also the North-West Craft Network, regularly contributing to discussions surrounding the development of craft within the region.

[@textilesboltonuni](https://twitter.com/textilesboltonuni)



**Elli Michaela Young**

Elli Michaela Young is a PhD candidate at University of Brighton. Her research investigates how creolised styling practices which emerged in Jamaica's were utilised in the construction of Jamaican identities during a period of transition from colony to independence (1950-1970). She has a BA in Design from London Metropolitan University and a MA in Postcolonial Cultures and Global Policy from Goldsmiths College. and designed the University of Brighton's first African Diaspora Fashion Module. She currently teaches at the Design History Society.

[@elliyoung](https://twitter.com/elliyoung)



**Erin Jones**

Erin Jones, aka Studio Jonesy, is a recent UCLan degree graduate and about to commence her masters in Fashion and Lifestyle promotion. I've a love for illustration, in particular fashion and portrait illustration but I also like to mix it up by doing some product and branding design. When I graduate I want to launch a career as a freelance illustrator or working for an agency, getting as much of my art out into the world as possible by working with different clients and different media.

[studiojonesy.com](http://studiojonesy.com)



**Tiwirayi Ndoro**

Tiwirayi Ndoro is a recent graduate from The University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), specialising in Fashion Photography & Styling, and recipient of the Creative Lancashire Fashion & Textiles Award (2020). Tiwirayi's work is very much an expression of her experience, being a Black British woman while still embracing her Zimbabwean heritage. She is passionate about the development and progression of young people and aims to encourage and inspire young people through her work and community youth work as a director of KYSO PROJECT CIC in Manchester.

[@tiwi\\_michelle](https://twitter.com/tiwi_michelle)



**Teleica Kirkland**

Teleica Kirkland is a fashion historian, Lecturer in Cultural & Historical Studies at London College of Fashion, a PhD candidate at Goldsmiths University, and the founder & Creative Director of Costume Institute of the African Diaspora (CIAD), an organisation dedicated to researching the history and culture of dress and adornment from the African Diaspora. As an academic, she has travelled extensively establishing links with researchers, custodians, and practitioners across the globe. "The history of a people can be told through their material culture. Through my work, I endeavour to redress the balance of untold histories".

[ciad.org.uk](http://ciad.org.uk)

THANKS TO: Kate Kershaw, Laura Kelly & Uzma Raziq (Super Slow Way); Michelle (Bondesio Communications); Teleica Kirkland (CIAD); Alex Zawadzki & Jamie Holman (Uncultured Creatives); Amber Butchart; Tiwirayi Ndoro; Erin Jones (Studio Jonesy); Rebecca Johnson (Blackburn Museum); Pammi Sinha (University of Leeds); Andy Walmsley, Lynsey Thompson, Steph Murphy & Mark Adamson (Wash Studio); Tyneisha & Diana (TED); Stephen Caton (Source Creative); Tom Stables (3ManFactory); Richard Tymon; Jackie Jones; Susanna Boccaccio (Brilliant Trees); Pauline Rowe & the team at Blackburn Cathedral.

# Collaborators & Partners



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This edition of *Conversations in Creativity* is made in collaboration and with support from Jenny Rutter & Laurie Peak - Co Directors, Super Slow Way.

This edition is dedicated to the memory of our special friend & collaborator, Matt Evans (1974-2021) - The Grand Venue, Co founder of Cloudspotting Festival, journalist, broadcaster & promoter.



