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Abstract

This special issue explores how textiles can define our identities in ways that are bound up with how they are made and also with how cloth is used in specific places. Place is defined by its physical aspect and its constituency of people, and also by its transactions with other places, in which the exchange, circulation and consumption of textiles play a key role. The first section explores how textiles are involved in codifying place through tradition and memory and through site-specific and community-based practices, while the second section focuses on the role of textiles in movement between places, transmission of histories, the crossing of cultural boundaries, migration, and postcolonialism. Contributors examine how textiles register and record change, and provide a means to place the past in dialog with the present. Textiles can also play a role in making change happen, in strengthening community solidarity and in constructing new ideas of place. Close attention is paid to processes of making and also to the metaphorical resonances of textiles that provide critical and creative ways of thinking through conflicted relations with places and their histories. The influence of textiles extends from the specific and local to global networks of relationships.

Keywords: textile; place; cloth; making; global; community; tradition; migration

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Textile and Place

Introduction
Context

Textiles are deeply and uniquely entangled with place across time and throughout the globe. Fashion and design scholar Hazel Clark writes that textiles "reveal how nowadays the local is always imbued with the global and vice versa, bringing responsibilities and relationships that require creative strategies to reflect current times" (Clark 2016, 167). This special issue explores the capacity of textiles to define our identities, and discusses the social environments that they occupy, examining them in relation to place and politics. Through their production, their materials, and their motifs, which are closely interwoven with cultural and social histories across diverse locations, textiles provide a lens through which to explore cultural sameness, difference, and change. Textiles as material are grounded in particular places, but they also trace our migration around the globe. By following these links and trajectories we can track complex histories and follow the narratives of communities and their relationships with place. Textiles reflect distinctive traditions and beliefs and how we carve out our social and cultural lives within the changing contexts of environmental and political challenges.

This special issue is informed by and develops the themes discussed at the international conference "Textile and Place" held in Manchester in April 2018 and jointly convened by Manchester School of Art and the Whitworth Art Gallery. The location was significant, as Manchester, nicknamed "Cottonopolis" in the 19th century, was the world's first center of mass production of textiles, which involved not only technological innovations but also the traffic of people and materials across the globe. The architecture of the city, its transport infrastructure, its railways with their soaring viaducts, and its complex canal systems are built on this industrial heritage. Cotton production, trading, movement, and migration are integral to the substrate of Manchester's vibrant multicultural identity.

The local as we see it through the lens of Manchester extends to the global and to the movement of goods, the mobilization of workers, and colonial and postcolonial politics. Textiles are caught up in these transnational relationships and, as Clark suggests, "Poetically, we might think of textiles wrapping the globe and linking together cultures, peoples and nations, through manufacture, trade, use and disuse" (Clark 2016, 165). The legacy of today's globalization is our contemporary and future responsibility for place and for new relationships with textiles and our use of them. Place as a setting is both a fixed and a mutable concept, defined by its physical aspect and its constituency of people. The ubiquity and portability of textiles are central to lived experience imprinted by geographical specificity and impacted by transactions between one place and another. Although diverse in conceptual vocabulary and reflecting different disciplines (including design, visual art, material culture, ethnography, gender studies, and textile practice), the articles featured here share an emphasis on issues of belonging and

negotiating diverse and new communities.

Recent discourses in critical textile studies dialog with anthropology, ethnography, archeology, philosophy, and museology, and examine the production of textiles, their use, and their relation to cultural identity (Sykas 2005; Oboh 2018). They engage with the affective dimensions of place, exploring how it is charged with memory and emotion and bound up with language and social interactions (Augé 1995; Gupta and Ferguson 1997).[1] Place can also be defined through virtual rather than material spaces, and through contact points that become new places. Global economic restructuring, migration, and concepts of deterritorialization have focused the attention of anthropologists on place-making, identity construction, and embodiment in the context of mobility and displacement (Lawrence-Zuniga 2017; Tsing 2000). The anthropologist Tim Ingold uses a concept of place as movement, unbounded by binary distinctions between fixity and changeability. Ingold's approach is informed by the sensory, lived experience of making and dwelling in places by moving in and through them and becoming part of them (Ingold 2000). In this special issue, textiles are presented both as carrying associations and meanings and as actively participating in this movement of place-making.

Scholarship in critical textile studies also looks closely at textiles themselves, their materials, production techniques, patterns, and symbolic meanings, showing how they provide a narrative subtext to their connections with specific places. It examines how the exchange, circulation, and consumption of textiles form and reinforce labor relations, social

hierarchies, and global connections (Hemmings 2015). In *Cultural Threads: Transnational Textiles Today*, textile writer Jessica Hemmings draws on postcolonial thinking to argue that textile practices are informed by "hybrid cultural identities and contemporary migration" and influence complex fusions of cultural identity (Hemmings 2015, 12). Hemmings uses the term "transnational" to describe how textiles can work at the intersection of multiple cultural influences. Textiles fuze, fix, entangle, and remake who we are, being central, transient, and peripheral to the places we are part of.

Recognizing the relationship between textile and place is also key to sustainable practices that can meet current challenges of social justice and environmental integrity. The design researcher and activist Kate Fletcher, whose research concerns sustainability, reflects on the centrality of textiles to key contradictions and controversies of our time, noting the "tension and even conflict between … the role of technology and ecological quality; mechanisation and the provision of meaningful employment; the pressure within industrial capitalism to make and buy more, when less is what is required."[2] The articles in this volume, while not directly addressing environmental issues, focus strongly on social justice and on how textiles afford reconsideration of the past or advocacy of future change.

Clark argues that we need creative strategies as part of our local and global citizenship (Clark 2016, 167). Textile-making, with its metaphorical resonance, enacts the non-linear and iterative processes that connect, pull, draw through, knot, and loop back into themselves to make a new fabric.

All the articles in this volume identify strategies that are shaped through textiles to change social dynamics, to make new places within existing spaces, and to construct new ideas of place in virtual or conceptual sites. They explore the "residue" of place histories, the lingering responsibilities, the emergent techniques, and material interpretations, technologies, and the unforming and re-forming of place. They offer insights into how textiles can enact place change, based at once on past traces and on contemporary notions of place as a site we move through and can remake as multivalent. They thereby seek to negotiate what we mean by place and how textiles are entangled in this process (Sharrad and Collett 2004).

The articles fall into two overlapping thematic groupings: tradition, memory, and community-based practices; and movement, migration, and making of identities. Feminist practice underpins several contributions that discuss how textiles symbolize, mediate, and actively impact on the lives of women and the places they live in. The first section focuses on the role of textiles in codifying place through tradition and memory and through site-specific and community-based practices. The contributors (Macbeth; Shercliff; Carden; Pérez-Bustos et al.) explore how domestic textile practices are inherited and adapted to form and engender community and new forms of cultural identity. They discuss the responsibility for newly entering/ colonizing places and examine how textile practices can actively develop and reinforce new, open-ended concepts of place. Contributors to the second section (Waters; Craven; Wooldridge), and a short description below of Lubaina Himid's work,[3] explore textiles in relation to

movement between places, transmission of histories, the crossing of cultural boundaries, transculturation, and postcolonialism. They examine the materiality of textiles and their processes and show how the action of making draws communities together, practically and metaphorically.

Tradition, Memory, and Community-Based Practices

Arguably more than any other medium, textiles are tied to geographic locations through their material origins and processes, ranging from small local domestic making to mass industrial production. Cloth is socially engaged or socially enacted, embedded, and entwined in community making and in recording histories. As a record of past civilizations, the remains of burial cloths are the carriers and repositories of ancestral lives. In "A Matter of Life and Death," Macbeth describes how these cloths function as sites of absorption for the activities that surround death, and bring communities together in their production. They continue to evolve through time, holding stories in their fabric and communicating with the living. The agency of fragmentary cloth is a tangible reminder of events that resonate beyond the individual and relate to the technologies and political structures of global histories, people's movements, and political change. Macbeth takes the quilts of the early North American pioneers, made piecemeal, collectively, and on the pioneer trail, as examples of a symbolic fabric that is a composite whole of stitched fragments, embodying an uncertain future and passages through time and space. In journeying, the quilts operated as records of shared making and constitute powerful testimonies

to these contested historical territories, where the borders and shaping of place are as much in the present as the past.

The interaction between community-forming and place-making is discussed by Shercliff ("Material Memories in Storage: The Aftermath of Site-Specific, Collectively Made Textiles") in terms of the act of stitching and of passage through places, which in this instance takes place through time. As Shercliff states, the actions create "a certain kind of social integration or a sense of being and belonging somewhere, however temporary and changeable these might be." Making as the means to enact the fleeting moment of the everyday is made tangible in textiles, but precarious cloths are not preserved in their materiality and are residues of a valuable social production. Shercliff emphasizes the uncertain nature of the artifact and how the liveness and site-specificity of collective making are lost once the work is done. She discusses how textiles are residual to their making, and suggests that the "imprint of the experience" and the process of enactment, the "'flow of activity itself'" (Malafouris 2008, 35), are where community is formed and the site of making endures. The powerful notion of textiles in action as a performative narrative offers a vision of future place, formed and constantly reformed through its constituency.

These ideas of affirming identity and place, both stable and movable, are discussed by Siún Carden in "The Place of Shetland Knitting." Carden uses ethnographic research to explore how "Shetlandness" is made through textiles in the Shetland Islands, off the Scottish coast. Knitting is in the arteries of Shetland, and until recently

it formed part of the educational curriculum, as a heritage practice that provided a sustainable income to both sheep framers and knitters alike. Carden sees Shetland knitting as a process through which place is created, reenforced, and experienced, extending beyond its own boundaries through the use of globally accessible digital platforms and social media to create interactive relationships between knitters in Shetland and "Shetland knitting." She posits that the stasis of traditional place-based textile practices can be transformed: "textile-making in places like Shetland is part of the everyday, inventive, and always changing practice through which 'place' is constituted." The residue of tradition is constantly revitalized, acknowledged as a cultural imprint, and made new. These extended, unboundaried, offline and online experiences strengthen place identity. The outward view loops back to the inside place, the distant homes in Shetland that are separated from the mainland by a rough expanse of sea.

In their paper, "Textile Material Metaphors to Describe Feminist Textile Activisms: From Threading Yarn, to Knitting, to Weaving Politics," Pérez-Bustos, Sánchez-Aldana, and Chocontá-Piraquive use textile-derived metaphors to interpret feminist textile practices in Bogotá, Colombia. They discuss how textiles can be adopted as a means of catalyzing social change, where the process of making alters the material substance of the textile itself through time and also promotes collective practices. Textiles strengthen community solidarity, providing a means to contest repressive social and political authority in a relationship that is "human–material–communal."
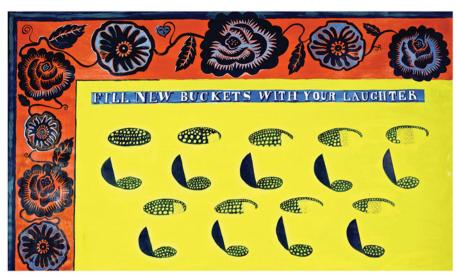
Figure 1
Lubaina Himid, *Fill New Buckets with Your Laughter*, 2011–12. Acrylic on paper. Photograph courtesy of Denise Swanson.

The authors explore the metaphorical resonance of making relationships between flexible lines that have the potential to be entangled and enmeshed. As in Carden's account, the fabrication takes place in multiple individual sites, encouraged and promoted through public, private, physical, and virtual spaces. The authors discuss 14 initiatives where textiles brought together diverse populations to reaffirm cultural and social identities through different genealogies and forms of production. Using textile metaphors to understand the feminist politics of textile activism, they argue for the need to challenge standardization and homogenization, allowing errors and chaos to remain visible and affirming the strengths in fragility.

Movement, Migration, and Making of Identities

In her work (see Figure 1), the artist Lubaina Himid weaves the everyday of the African diaspora with the discarding of precious cultural history and the loss of local Lancashire industry. Himid's "Speaking Cloths" exhibition at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, in 2011 used cloth as a vocal and distinguishable language to connect her diasporan African identity in Lancashire to the East African kanga tradition.[4]

Using the Whitworth's collection of historic kangas, Himid's cloth kangas reference Manchester in the 1960s, its period of decline, when factories were closing and textile sample books were discarded as worthless and

useless. Her reimagined kanga cloths are like vast renditions of sample book patterns, as if ready for production in the former local factories. The kangas have strong patterned edges and each features a "pithy phrase" (Sherwin 2018), epitomizing cloths that speak for women. "Don't forget me," reads the motto on one, over a sketched field of crested newts, with a speckled border that echoes the amphibians' spotted belly. The flag-like textiles are emblematic of the slave trade, which was crucial to the success of the Lancashire cotton industry in the 18th and 19th centuries, notably through the purchase of slave-grown raw cotton from the West Indies and America, and the trading of cloth for captured Africans. Himid makes small scrap samples into bold fluttering symbols of black creativity, challenging its invisibility and lack of representation. She critiques institutional blindness to the ethnic, feminine presence within the flux and turmoil of Lancashire's history of labor. In her work it is the very marginalization of textiles that offers an enabling space for problematic and contested narratives and makes the borders permeable and active.

By placing the past in dialog with the present, the lineage of textiles transmits histories and confronts how these histories are formulated in current times. Sera Waters ("The Unsettling Truths of Settling: Ghostscapes in Domestic Textiles") is representative of those artists whose practice uses the agency of textiles with their symbolic and metaphorical resonance to think through their own sense of place and the tensions between its rich heritage and its uncomfortable contemporary

obligations. Waters' notion of "reckoning" concerns "the unsettling truths of settling," the ghostscapes of white colonization of Australia. She discusses her use of the penitential repetitive actions of stitching patterns to produce embodied understanding of her ancestral past in ways that disclose and subvert colonial practices, creating unsettling awareness. The cloth is inscribed with stitches where the agency of textile absorbs, witnesses, and makes visible "the glaring blindness of whiteness" in the discriminatory practices of antipodean colonizers. The present place is reconstituted by visualizing a place cohabited by current generations where "a progressive movement forward includes a backwards movement within it, there is a space and time of reflexive thought" (Pajaczkowska 2015, 86). This reflexivity is unsettling and becomes a form of truth-telling and collective protest.

Textiles serve as a means of holding onto skills and practices, of engaging with personal/ancestral histories, and of reconceptualizing what has been marginalized or misrepresented. Mona Craven ("Reflecting a Diaspora: In-Between Whitework and Indigo") explores how textiles absorb the "residue of inherited English culture" in South Africa. Whitework embroidery and the indigo resist print cloth of ShweShwe symbolize crossing the binary of cultural insider–outsider and of belonging to everywhere or nowhere. Craven views textiles as part of the interstitial place of migrant movement, the product of colonial rule and of decolonization in India and South Africa. She draws on the critical theorist Homi Bhabha's (2006) "Third Space" theory of hybridity to conceptualize how textiles that cross

multiple cultural boundaries make it possible to create new meanings and mixed identities and to juxtapose complex cultural signifiers.

In her article, "Materializing Migration: Weaving the Mashrabiya in Nevin Aladağ's *Screens I–III* (2016)," Wooldridge moves beyond hybridity and draws on Helmbrecht Breinig and Klaus Lösch's recent (2002) concept of transdifference, which "emphasizes the continual oscillation between irreconcilable cultural differences." She discusses how Aladağ uses weaving to renegotiate the relationship between her Turkish and German identities, tussling with the stereotypical binary perception of cultural difference and convergence. Wooldridge uses her knowledge of the processes of textile-making as a method to critique the homogenizing effects of acculturation, arguing that "[the] interweaving or interlocking of warp and weft threads allows for an interrogation of difference (a questioning of the binary), while resisting deconstruction (the threads retain their independent qualities)." Textile as an adaptive medium helps us to conceptualize these complex relationships of movement, integration, separation, and patterning.

Place is at once fixed and unstable, reconfiguring and shifting through human interactions. Textiles register such shifts within the form of the fabric, for instance, the movement from an interior, domestic, and feminine dimension, to one that embraces and interacts with community and with what is near, to a more public place. This can be seen in the use of traditional domestic processes to create social change (Pérez-Bustos et al.), or Aladağ's screens in the central town square (Wooldridge).

Textiles record change-making and crucially they also provide a means to make change happen. This capacity, as the contributors have shown, can encompass the specific, individual, and local while also being connected to a global network of relationships that are constantly in the making. This recognition is timely, as contemporary Europe has been experiencing a time of political and social changes, conflicts, and incoming movements of people since the late 1990s in what has come to be known as the "migrant crisis," a term that expresses a Eurocentric border panic. Textiles both participate in and map such changes. They witness the everyday and symbolize the identities and communities we seek to claim. The articles in this volume powerfully demonstrate how textiles are flexible instruments of change that shift, unsettle, and catalyze new identities and are also fabrics that wrap, absorb, and preserve changes that are taking place.

Notes

1. This includes the concept of non-places such as airplanes or shops whose individual identity has been lost (Augé 1995).

2. Paper presented at the "Textile and Place" conference, Manchester School of Art, 2016.

3. Lubaina Himid MBE was the keynote speaker at the "Textile and Place" conference in 2016 at the Manchester School of Art. A British contemporary artist and curator, she is a professor of contemporary art at the University of Central Lancashire, United Kingdom. She was the Turner Prize winner in 2017.

4. The exhibition was part of "Cotton Global Threads," curated at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester. See http://cottonglobal threads.com

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