

STUDENT  
LEARNING  
RESOURCE

1-31 OCTOBER 2021

BRITISH  
TEXTILE  
BIENNIAL

# BRITISH TEXTILE BIENNIAL

## STUDENT LEARNING RESOURCE

THE STORY OF TEXTILES IS THE STORY OF LABOUR, TRADE AND POWER, WEAVING A COMPLEX WEB AROUND THE WORLD AND THROUGHOUT HISTORY. *BTB21* FOLLOWS THAT JOURNEY ACROSS CONTINENTS AND CENTURIES, TRACING AND UNRAVELLING THE THREADS THAT STILL BIND US, IN THE SERVICE OF FAST FASHION, EXPRESSION AND IDENTITY.

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 and 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 every day, from the canals built to transport goods, to the museums, libraries and town halls that we still use to this day; and impressive buildings, like the Cotton Exchange in Blackburn that 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.

These education activities aim to help you debate and discuss subjects that range from our shared colonial histories, to modern day manufacturing, fast fashion, and environmental sustainability. All of these global issues are woven into our local textiles story.

The British Textile Biennial is produced by Super Slow Way, a cultural development programme along the Leeds & Liverpool Canal in Pennine Lancashire, hosted by the Canal & River Trust. [superslowway.org.uk](http://superslowway.org.uk)

More can be found out about the British Textile Biennial programme at here [britishtextilebiennial.co.uk](http://britishtextilebiennial.co.uk)

The British Textile Biennial is made possible with funding from Arts Council England.



#britishtextilebiennial

f @/britishtextilebiennial  
@textilebiennial

BRITISH  
TEXTILE  
BIENNIAL

CINQUANTA  
*50 YEARS OF SPORTSWEAR  
INNOVATION BY C.P. COMPANY*

DARWEN MARKET HALL  
CAR PARK

PHOTO: C.P. COMPANY

## CINQUANTA

### 50 YEARS OF SPORTSWEAR INNOVATION BY C.P. COMPANY

>>> 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.

The *50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS* continue as part of the British Textile Biennial 2021, in Darwen, the birthplace of modern football, where C.P Company is presenting key garments from their archive for the great grandchildren of the cotton mill workers that formed the league in 1878.

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.

This is a rare opportunity to see selected items, garments and artefacts, such as the iconic Goggle Jacket, from the C.P archive and witness the thinking, design, techniques and production that make **C.P Company** the world's most innovative sportswear brand.

#### DISCUSSION ACTIVITY:

- Is there an item of clothing that you wear that could represent your identity?
- If you launched a clothing line, what logo would you choose?
- What items of clothing do your peers associate with you?
- How important is fashion and clothing in your life and to your identity?
- Discuss and share examples of these items as a group.

BRITISH  
TEXTILE  
BIENNIAL

JASLEEN KAUR, MASIMBA  
HWATI AND JAMIE HOLMAN  
*THE BRITISH INVASION*

THE COTTON EXCHANGE



PHOTO: LYDIA MCCAIG

## JASLEEN KAUR, MASIMBA HWATI AND JAMIE HOLMAN *THE BRITISH INVASION*

>>> This exhibition is a conversation between three artists about the complexities of colonial histories. The exploration of these histories, family archives and lived experiences, reveal the contradictions and unexpected migrations of people, language and cultures in response to pop music, entertainment and fashion; revealing textiles as a key factor in cultural resistance.

The artists consider the Biennial itself and the Cotton Exchange as it is now, in relation to their individual practices. A recurring theme in these conversations was the experiences of their fathers and their memories, remembered rituals and intimate recollections that do not reflect accepted histories of Empire.

The title '*THE BRITISH INVASION*', references **Masimba Hwati's** father's diaries during 1970's Zimbabwe, where his father was fighting for independence against the British whilst at the same time listening to The Beatles, and other 'British Invasion' bands.

All three artists identified this as a common theme; **Jasleen Kaur's** father was in Britain due to the partition of India and was viewed as a product of a different 'British Invasion', while **Jamie Holman's** father was a colonising soldier in Northern Ireland. Holman's father was brought up with the legacy of the Blackburn cotton workers who created the first football league and whose descendants, in the 1970s and 1980s, 'invaded' European cities to fight rival football fans and steal luxury designer clothes.

This, then, is the 'mess' of new cultures that emerge as a consequence of colonisation, each artist revealing something of the personal in order to better understand the past and make sense of the present.

### DISCUSSION ACTIVITY:

— We are known across the world for our music, fashion, films and creative industries. What does it mean to be British now?

BRITISH  
TEXTILE  
BIENNIAL

JOHN TINEY  
*SHIRTS*

PRISM CONTEMPORARY

TAMIYA PLASTIC MODEL CO.



PHOTO: ALEX ZAWADZKI

JOHN TINEY  
*SHIRTS*

>>> Our day to day lives are full of images, with designs, logos and information that become a blurred part of the visual background of our daily lives. John Tiney makes artistic use of these 'banal' images to create his artworks.

John focuses on the things we often disregard, whether the giant coffee beans he sees on an advertising poster whilst cycling to work, corporate logo vinyls on the delivery van that arrive with his packages or caricatures on a children's menu in a local café; and redraws or photocopies them to create screenprints.

He prints these reworked designs onto his vast collection of second hand t-shirts which he has collected from numerous places over the years. These t-shirts already display particular kinds of graphics which are used to identify sports teams, gigs and even express political beliefs.

He creates his work like a factory production line, through a very specific process. First by wearing one of his shirts while he paints, and afterwards cleaning his brushes onto it. Once the shirt is dry, he layers up his own choice of image onto the paint marks, alongside the t-shirts original graphic and screen prints this image. Finally he stretches the shirt onto a frame to make a canvas.

**DISCUSSION ACTIVITY:**

— T-shirts have become a cheap commodity to give away at events, in teams, or as staff workwear; and an accessible item to sell as memorabilia or souvenirs.

— What t-shirts do you have in your wardrobe that share something about your identity or the things you have done and achieved?

**ACTIVITY:**

— For the rest of today - pay attention to the images and graphics around you that you may not usually notice. Sketch them in your notebooks when you get an opportunity.



BRITISH  
TEXTILE  
BIENNIAL

MR X STITCH  
*STITCH YOUR STORY*

BLACKBURN CATHEDRAL

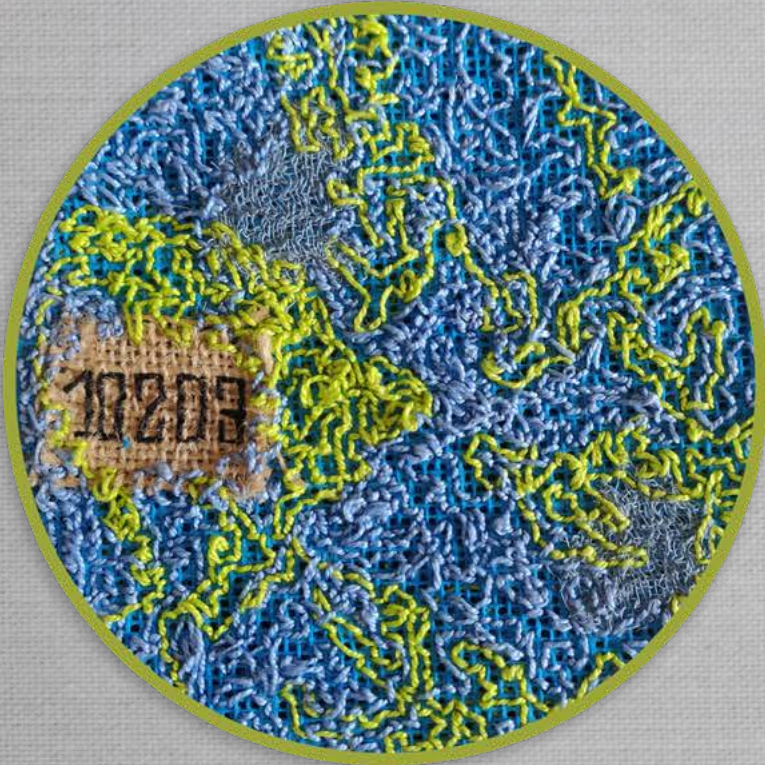


PHOTO: MR X STITCH

>>> **Jamie Chalmers** picked up a needle and thread for the first time in 2002.

*"IN 2002, I WAS GOING TO CANADA ON HOLIDAY AND WANTED SOMETHING TO DO ON THE PLANE. I WENT INTO A HABERDASHERY SHOP AND SAW AN ART NOUVEAU CROSS STITCH KIT. I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE FUNNY TO SEE PEOPLES' RESPONSES TO SOMEONE OF MY SIZE STITCHING ON A PLANE, SO I BOUGHT THE KIT...I REALLY ENJOYED THE CALM FEELING THAT COMES FROM THE MEDITATIVE PROCESS OF STITCHING. I WAS HOOKED."*

Jamie has spent the last 13 years changing perceptions of stitch work and believes embroidery is a fantastic activity for all genders, abilities and tastes as he works to create, promote and curate contemporary cross-stitch. It is also a hobby that is affordable, can be carried out anywhere and offers a space to be creative and calm.

Stitch and tapestry have traditionally been a beautiful way for our ancestors to record history; from the epically sized Bayeux Tapestry recording the Battle of Hastings, to the tiny samplers people stitch to document a new baby's birth. This year Jamie invited people across the world to share their own story of migration and belonging in a crowd-sourced collection of stitched hoops, with embroidered images relating to their personal heritage. You can see over a hundred people's stories hanging together in this space.

#### DISCUSSION ACTIVITY:

— It has been researched and proven that craft and making activities can have a positive impact on our mental health. In a time where our lifestyles have been impacted so heavily by technology, life can move very fast.

— Do you do any 'slow' meditative activities to take time to be mindful?

— What story of migration, movement and belonging would you share?

Parties play

BRITISH  
TEXTILE  
BIENNIAL

FLASHBACK POP UP STORE  
*WITH ROUGH TRADE BOOKS*

14-16 LORD STREET WEST

...bourgeoisie attempt claim on cultural capital of Northern rave scene, locals resist

At the end of the 1980s, a determined group of young people reclaimed the empty warehouses and mills of Blackburn so they could throw 'Parties for the People of the People'. The media called them 'Rave'.

# Acid secret is out

Reports from  
**UNCULTURED  
CREATIVES and  
ROUGH TRADE  
BOOKS**

Creatives made up of artists, writers, designers, and photographers. Al Holman and curator Al Holman collated the stories of those who lived and breathed it, the good and the ugly of the 1988-1991.

10,000 people visited Blackburn's Acid House. They had a different story to tell. They invited DJs, the organisers, the politicians to tell their intention of these parties to create a future and not just a past.

PHOTO: CRAIG OLDHAM

## FLASHBACK POP UP STORE WITH ROUGH TRADE BOOKS

>>> In the 1980s, unemployment, empty mills, football hooliganism and racial segregation were the hallmarks of many Northern towns but Blackburn's young people hit back. From the late 80s to the early 90s an underground movement emerged until its sudden crash and burn in 1991, with a single manifesto, 'come together....and dance'.

Blackburn's youth illegally gathered, breaking and entering into empty mills, factory spaces and beyond to find the party and to not let the police stop the party. A groundbreaking music style emerged and Acid House was born.

10,000 people were a part of Blackburn's Acid House era. They all have a different story or perspective to tell. Uncultured Creatives invited ravers, DJs, organisers, police and politicians to tell their story to create a future archive of unedited, unobstructed memories. This archive, which was created in 2019, is a snapshot of the rebellious spirit of 20th Century Northern England for people to read 100 years in the future.

In 2021 **Uncultured Creatives** extended this research into a collaboration with Rough Trade Books, inviting writers to respond to the *FLASHBACK* archive to create a series of pamphlet books.

### DISCUSSION ACTIVITY:

— What things are happening in your lives now, or in underground cultures, that you think will become a heritage story that should be recorded in 30 years time?

BRITISH  
TEXTILE  
BIENNIAL

INDOOR WORKS:  
BLACKBURN MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

AZRAA MOTALA  
*UNAPOLOGETIC*

OUTDOOR WORKS: BLACKBURN TOWN HALL  
HAWORTH ART GALLERY, ACCRINGTON  
TOWNLEY HALL, BURNLEY  
NELSON LIBRARY, NELSON



PHOTO: AZRAA MOTALA

AZRAA MOTALA  
*UNAPOLOGETIC*

>>> Following a public call-out, **Azraa Motala** created this series of portraits of young British-Asian Muslim women in the North West, showing alongside the 19th century paintings of Blackburn Museum to challenge expectations and identities.

**Azraa Motala** creates work that untangles some of the culturally inherited expectations she experiences as a young British-Asian Muslim woman, exploring the way women from the diaspora are represented in both past and present day art works, particularly through their dress.

Azraa paints in oil on canvas, appropriating and subverting the so-called 'Orientalist' style in which 'Eastern women' were exoticised and fetishised by European male artists in the 18th and 19th centuries.

As a descendant of two generations of Lancashire mill workers, she invited other British South Asian women, aged between 18-30, to be painted wearing clothes of their own choosing. Her paintings help us consider identity, belonging, culture and heritage for an overlooked community of young women who share a similar heritage and history. Often invisible and unheard, these young women choose for themselves how they want to be represented in these powerful portraits.

These works can be found in the Victorian Painting Gallery at Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery, in a curated 'disruption' of the usual collection. For the first time in this gallery, this series of uncompromising, working class, non-white female portraits sit alongside historic, idealised portraits of women.

Large-scale banners of the portraits can be seen on major buildings in Blackburn, Accrington, Burnley and Nelson.

**DISCUSSION ACTIVITY:**

- Who is a portrait for? What can it tell us about the person we see, but also the times in which they lived?
- How would you choose to be portrayed? What would you choose to wear?

BRITISH  
TEXTILE  
BIENNIAL

BHARTI PARMAR  
*KHADI*

BLACKBURN MUSEUM  
& ART GALLERY

PHOTO: BLACKBURN ARCHIVES

BHARTI PARMAR  
*KHADI*

>>> Khadi is the name given to a type of natural Indian textile that is handspun and hand woven and is also the name used for a rough, thick Indian paper.

The cloth became the symbol of the Swadeshi movement led by **Mahatma Gandhi** that boycotted English-made textiles as a protest against the British occupation of India. Gandhi said  
*“MACHINERY IN THE PAST HAS MADE US DEPENDENT ON ENGLAND, AND THE ONLY WAY WE CAN RID OURSELVES OF THE DEPENDENCE IS TO BOYCOTT ALL GOODS MADE BY MACHINERY. THIS IS WHY WE HAVE MADE IT THE PATRIOTIC DUTY OF EVERY INDIAN TO SPIN HIS OWN COTTON AND WEAVE HIS OWN CLOTH.”*

**Bharti Parmar** is the daughter of an immigrant textile mill worker who came from India to work in Yorkshire; her fascination with textiles stems from her father’s story.

Her work here is a collation of punched Khadi paper, archive images, film, drawings and books related to this story of global connections, fast fashion, labour and colonialism through the early 20th century to the present day.

**DISCUSSION ACTIVITY:**

— This year is the 90th anniversary of Gandhi’s historic visit to Darwen. 90 years on and textiles is dominated by ‘fast fashion’ that promotes disposable garments that are designed to be worn once or twice then discarded. What are the impacts of fast fashion on both the environment and on the people who make the garments ?



BRITISH  
TEXTILE  
BIENNIAL

LUBAINA HIMID  
*LOST THREADS*

THE GREAT BARN  
GAWTHORPE HALL

PHOTO: ??

>>> Cascading through the structures of a barn space at **Gawthorpe Hall**, 114 metres of Dutch Wax fabric reflect the movement of oceans and rivers that have been used to transport cotton across the planet and over centuries.

Waterways historically transported raw cotton, spun yarn, and woven textiles from continent to continent, as well as enslaved people from Africa to pick raw cotton in the southern states of America or workers who migrated from South Asia to operate looms in Europe.

Although recognised as 'African' cloth, these textiles have a complex lineage and identity that reflects an historic and continuing flow of labour, trade and money. The vibrantly coloured and intricately patterned fabric in the installation dominates West African markets and is globally recognised as quintessentially "African". The cloth was originally forged by Dutch colonial companies attempting to mechanically reproduce handmade Javanese batik cloth in Holland. When this failed to take off in Southeast Asia, Dutch traders began to sell the cloth in West African markets.

The patterns were modified to fit local tastes and quickly became popular, ultimately becoming an essential everyday consumer good. However, today the majority of Dutch designs available on African markets are low-cost reproductions made in China, such as the fabric used in *LOST THREADS* which leads us to ask, what is African?

#### DISCUSSION ACTIVITY:

- Over the past 3 decades fashion designers in the West have used these fabrics for their couture collections.
- Discuss appropriation. What does this mean in the context of design, fashion, culture, music and language? Are there parts of people's culture and identity you think should be protected and not 're-appropriated'?



BRITISH  
TEXTILE  
BIENNIAL

RAISA KABIR *RESISTANCES*,  
REETU SATTAR *SHABNAM*,  
BRIGID MCLEER *COLLATERAL*

QUEEN STREET MILL

PHOTO: RICHARD TYMON

# BRITISH TEXTILE BIENNIAL

## >>> BRIGID MCLEER *COLLATERAL*

Brigid McLeer was inspired by a large-scale lace panel that was created to commemorate the Battle of Britain during WW2 and worked with local embroiderers to create this new panel, to remember the lives lost in factories, including fast fashion clothing factories, across the world that have been destroyed by fire or negligence. This common occurrence is a consequence of a lack of regulation, allowing for unsafe working environments for textile workers in order to keep costs down, and allow goods to be sold cheaply in Europe and America. The central panel depicts the trade routes taken by container ships across the world. The edge panels depict 14 factories that have burnt or fallen down from the UK in the early 20th century to Thailand and India, killing 2265 workers. The panel is edged by bodies wrapped in shrouds, as they often are at the sites of these tragedies. Each shroud has been individually embroidered by sewers who responded to a call out; all have recounted that this simple act allowed them to think of the lives needlessly lost.

### DISCUSSION ACTIVITY:

— The impact of colonisation across the Indian subcontinent and the industrial revolution that ignited the early mass production of cloth and clothing in the 19th century still has resonance today in fast fashion created in Asia and sold in Britain. Discuss how these 3 artists' works connect through these stories.

## REETU SATTAR *SHABNAM*

Shabnam is a film that explores the historic and continuing relationship between East Lancashire and Bangladesh in a textile tug-of-war, starting with the delicate muslin produced in Dhaka in the 17th and 18th centuries and highly prized by the British market, through the migration of textile workers to Lancashire in the 20th century and back to present day garment workers in the same city in Bangladesh.

## RAISA KABIR *RESISTANCES*

Linking the history of Queen Street Mill with the contemporary mill in Burnley, John Spencer Textiles, Raisa Kabir's new works interweave geographical and historical connections between these industrial spaces, global textile archives and communities of Lancashire.

Raisa researched a series of catalogues in the Harris Museum, Preston, entitled 'The Textile Manufacturers of India', made in 1866 by John Forbes Watson that collected the textile patterns from the Indian Subcontinent, to copy for the British market and the designs became widely used in English textile manufacturing. Raisa talked to members of communities in Burnley and beyond whose families migrated to Lancashire from Punjab, Lahore, Dakha, Syhlet and Calcutta; the places where the designs were created. Raisa reclaims the identities and cultures of the people and places who are rarely credited in British archives by weaving a series of new patterns, in partnership with John Spencer Textiles.

BRITISH  
TEXTILE  
BIENNIAL

HOMEGROWN  
HOMESPUN

BLACKBURN MUSEUM  
& ART GALLERY

PHOTO: BEA DAVIDSON

## HOMEGROWN/ HOMESPUN

>>> In April this year, on the outskirts of Blackburn's town centre, a piece of disused land became the unexpected place of an experiment. Over 128 days, people from the neighbourhood and beyond planted, grew, nurtured and harvested a half acre of flax. It was then flipped, dried, 'retted', and hand processed into fibre which was collected by one of the few people in Britain who knew how to spin this into yarn, to dye it using natural indigo dye, also grown in Lancashire, and then weave this thread into linen. The linen will be made into a pair of dungarees for one of the regular volunteers on the flax field, 3 year old Quinn.

*HOMEGROWN/HOMESPUN* is an ongoing test unit, starting with a year of trial and error to see how we can make clothing that is not just made in the UK; but grown, spun, dyed, woven and manufactured here.

The mass production of cloth on a global, industrial scale has become unsustainable; economically, socially and environmentally. Lancashire was once the home of the textile industry, but it has since disappeared. By 2023 the programme hopes to have Homegrown clothing in production locally by **Community Clothing** as a step change towards more sustainable clothes manufacturing.

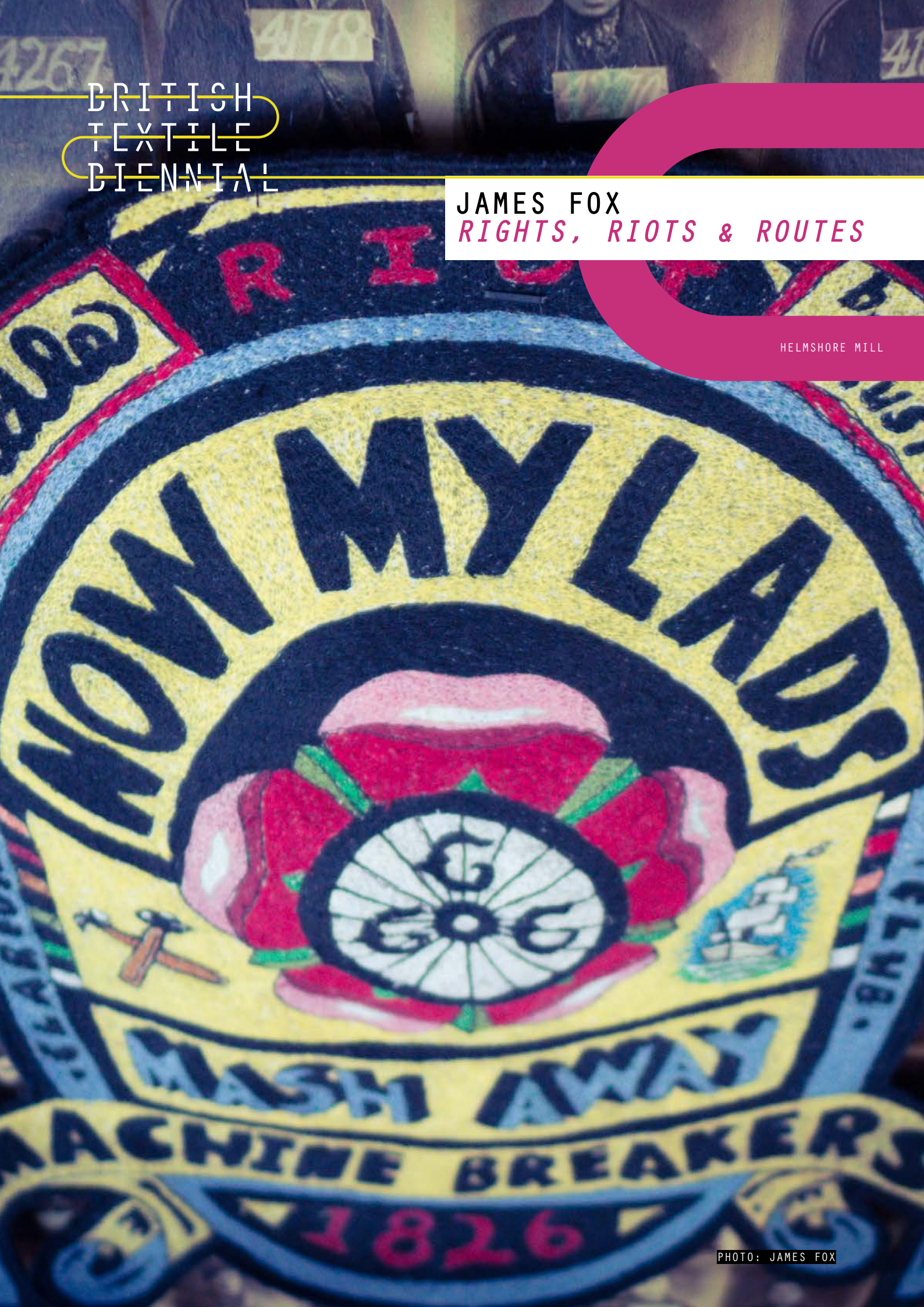
### DISCUSSION ACTIVITY:

— Consider fast fashion as a group. Do you buy sustainable or environmentally friendly clothing? If not; what considerations would help you move towards doing this? What do you think are the barriers that make it challenging for people to wear and buy sustainable clothing?

BRITISH  
TEXTILE  
BIENNIAL

JAMES FOX  
*RIGHTS, RIOTS & ROUTES*

HELMSHORE MILL



JAMES FOX  
*RIGHTS, RIOTS & ROUTES*

>>> The Lancashire Loombreakers' Riot at Middle Mill, Helmshore in 1826 is the starting point for **James Fox's** new work that explores the history of working class protest and punishment and the fellowship created by the **Clarion Club** in response. Mary Hindle, a mill worker from Helmshore, was sentenced to transportation for life to Australia for shouting "now my lads, mash away" to the men entering Middle Mill that year and supposedly inciting a riot. Mary was held at Lancaster gaol for 9 months before being deported to Australia where she committed suicide 6 years later, never to see her husband and child again. Her journey to Lancaster would have passed through Pendle, the site of the UK's only surviving **Clarion Club** which founded cycling clubs for workers across the country in the early 20th century.

**James Fox** uses this story to explore the history of protest and punishment and women's experience of the criminal justice system over two centuries, in particular in a film featuring **Maxine Peake**. On the top floor of the mill, he celebrates the Clarion movement which offered respite and fellowship in the countryside for workers, particularly through its cycling clubs.

**DISCUSSION ACTIVITY:**

— Have a look at the exhibition. What kind of social issues can you see between 19th Century prison and reform systems that still exist in our modern times? What images do you see repeated in James' work and why do you think he chooses certain media for certain messages?



BRITISH  
TEXTILE  
BIENNIAL

AMBER BUTCHART  
*CLOTH CULTURES:  
STORIES OF MOVEMENT,  
MIGRATION AND MAKING*

HAWORTH ART GALLERY  
ACCRINGTON



PHOTO: HUCKLEBERRY FILMS

# BRITISH TEXTILE BIENNIAL

## AMBER BUTCHART

*CLOTH CULTURES: STORIES OF  
MOVEMENT, MIGRATION AND MAKING*

>>> In the beautiful Arts & Crafts interior of a former mill owner's house, **Haworth Art Gallery**, Accrington, fashion historian **Amber Butchart** will present an exhibition with pieces chosen from the **Gawthorpe Textile Collection**. She has focused on four fabrics – wool, linen, cotton and silk. Each room features items made in each of the four fabrics in the collection.

Every piece of cloth tells a tale in this exhibition. Cloth is often the thing that survives the centuries and journeys, whether fleeing from conflict or migrating for work, and is easily passed down through generations in families, its meaning and value deepening down the years. It's often a medium people have used to record historic stories, from battles to celebrations on every continent; with each nation developing their own visual styles.

### DISCUSSION ACTIVITY:

- As a group, discuss where and how these four fabrics have been produced and where and when you think they were processed (spun / woven / dyed ).
- Are there any textile / cloth items you or your family treasure that feel valuable or hold memories?

### ACTIVITY AT HOME:

- Listen to Amber's four podcasts online - each focuses on a different fabric, illustrated by two items in the Gawthorpe Textile Collection and can be found on The British Textile Biennial website.