



# MIGRATIONS

The portability of textiles – the ease with which they move around the globe – and their hybrid position within the worlds of craft, design and art make them particularly apt carriers of culture. Alongside this portability is the reality that the textile often exists as a multiple. While versions roam, others stay closer to home.

*Migrations* travels throughout 2015 (America, Ireland, Australia) and explores the notion of textiles as carriers of multiple cultural influences put forth in the accompanying publication *Cultural Threads: transnational textiles today* (Bloomsbury: 2015). Brought together are contemporary artists, designers and an author who all work at the intersection of cultures and use multiple, portable textiles as their vehicle.

Jessica Hemmings, curator of *Migrations* & editor of *Cultural Threads*

clockwise from gallery entrance

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## Jasleen Kaur

'The main focus in my work is design as a cultural unifier,' explains Scottish-Indian designer Jasleen Kaur. In the photographic series that records the staging of the *Dear Lord Robert Napier* project Kaur documents her request to tie a turban, with her Sikh father's assistance, on the head of the current Lord Robert Napier. Lord Napier's grandfather – Sir Robert Napier – occupied a central role in the British annexation of the Punjab which, as Kaur explains, "helped to open up the migratory relationship between India and Britain that enabled my Sikh Great Grandfather to come to Britain."

### Jasleen Kaur

*Dear Lord Robert Napier*

2010

digital photographs and digital scan of Lambda C Type Print

Photographer: Rachel Louise Brown

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## Studio Formafantasma

Each blanket in the *Colony* series by Italian designers Studio Formafantasma contain urban and architectural plans from an African city that experienced a version of Italian colonization. (Ethiopia, admittedly, was never officially colonized by anyone.) The blankets share the same system of composition: the Italian city plan, plans for a key building such as a town hall, and in the final layer, references to the complex contemporary relationship between Europe and North Africa. *Colony* refers not only to an Italian image of Africa that did not come to pass but the escalating loss of life by individuals attempting to migrate from North Africa to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea today.

### Studio Formafantasma

*Colony: Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) & Colony: Asmara (Eritrea)*

2011

Mohair wool, cotton, ceramic tiles, polyester

Courtesy of Gallery Libby Sellers

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## Julie Ryder

Australian artist Julie Ryder's *Generate* series is inspired by Charles Darwin's journey across the South Pacific to Australia on the HMS Beagle. Working with the format of the portrait, Ryder translates the uncomfortably close genealogy of Darwin's own family tree into meticulously collected and cut discs of plant materials – a hybrid of plants that migrated by way of intentional introduction to Australia, alongside native species. She explains that the series of textiles addresses '18th and 19th century fascination with scientific exploration, botanical and zoological specimen collection and the appropriation of the "exotic other".' The blue palette of the digital textile prints offers a nod to Wedgewood, the pottery company founded by Emma and Charles' Darwin's mutual grandfather Josiah Wedgewood I.

### Julie Ryder

*Drawing for "Emma"*

2015

leaf dots, various plant species, archival glue, Hahnemuhle 300gsm paper

### Julie Ryder

*Regenerate: 1808 & Regenerate: 1835*

2008

silk, reactive dyes, digital print

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## Godfried Donkor

Godfried Donkor is a Ghanaian artist based in London. His video, *The Currency of Ntoma (Fabric)*, captures his mother's explanation of the meanings found in her personal collection of woven and printed textiles spliced with footage of the King of the Ashanti's Chief Dresser folding around himself a massive dark cloth.

Here "Holland prints" refer to wax-resist textiles. The transnational identity of wax-resist textiles emerges from the numerous cultures that have in the past, and continue today, to identify with wax-resist cloth. Present-day Indonesia has a history of refined wax-resist production known as batik. During Dutch colonisation of the region, batik production was taken up in the Netherlands intended for trade with the islands. When the market proved unsuccessful, trade was instead established with west African countries – originally stopovers – on shipping routes to the East Indies.

The woven kente cloth "The Mind is Finished" referred to in Donkor's video is also discussed in the short story "The End of Skill" by Mamle Kabu included in *Cultural Threads* (Bloomsbury: 2015).

### Godfried Donkor

*The Currency of Ntoma (Fabric)*

2012

video, 20 minutes 27 seconds

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## Mr Somebody & Mr Nobody

Mr Somebody & Mr Nobody is a collaborative practice between South African born Heidi Chisholm and Sharon Lombard who now reside in the USA. Self-described as "immigrant artists", Chisholm and Lombard adapt khanga – or proverb cloths – originally an east Africa textile tradition, with their own designs. The textiles exemplify portability: manufactured in North Carolina, or in the case of one version of the *Stubborn Chicken* khanga, silkscreened in Cape Town on Indian cotton, finished by a women's cooperative there, and then exported back to Miami for distribution.

### Mr Somebody & Mr Nobody

*Stubborn Chicken*

all 2014

white khanga, silk screen print on cotton (top)

white khanga, digital print on cotton (bottom)

### *Whirl a Snake*

baby blue khanga, digital print on cotton (top)

### *Stubborn Chicken*

rusty red khanga, digital print on cotton (middle)

### *Whirl a Snake*

white khanga, digital print on cotton (bottom)

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## Dan Halter

Zimbabwean artist Dan Halter's *Rifugiato Mappa del Mondo*, which translates from Italian as *Refugee World Map*, uses carrier bags refashioned in the shape of a world map loosely based on migration statistics. Françoise Dupré uses these very same bags as the common material of her own collaborative-participatory art practice, which involves co-production with local community groups. And – in a cruel irony – the large woven plastic bags also appeared in Marc Jacobs's 2007 collection for Louis Vuitton, a luxury brand celebrated for their iconic logo patterned luggage.

Halter's *Space Invader (Johannesburg taxi rank – Port of entry)* video was staged in the taxi ranks of Harare, Zimbabwe and Johannesburg, South Africa – respective points of entry and departure between the two nations. In each location Halter has installed and recorded large woven synthetic carrier bags often owned by migrants to transport their material possessions. Recorded from above by Halter, the bags suggest icons of a video game. While *Space Invader* adopts a veneer of science fiction/gaming culture it has a far harder narrative of displacement and economic inequality to tell.

### Dan Halter

*Rifugiato Mappa del Mondo*  
2013

new and used plastic weave bags, multiple of 8

### Dan Halter

*Space Invader (Johannesburg taxi rank - Port of entry)*  
2010

video, duration: 3 minutes 4 seconds, edition of 5 (flat screen by gallery window)

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## Pamela Johnson

"100% Cotton" explores Britain's postcolonial identity. Shifting between the perspectives of a father and daughter, the poem appropriates textile terms and garment shapes to show how culturally specific details migrate and move into daily use, often with little recognition of the past. Following antagonism between neighbours, the poem describes the north west of Britain today – a region of once thriving textile manufacturing.

### Pamela Johnson

audio recording, 2 minutes 4 seconds, first published in *The Textile Reader* (Bloomsbury: 2012)

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## Françoise Dupré

London-based French-born artist Françoise Dupré's material of choice – large plastic carrier bags – are controversially known as "Ghana-must-go bags" after the 1983 expulsion order that gave illegal immigrants (often Ghanaian workers) 14 days to leave Nigeria. Dupré notes the ubiquity of similar carrier bags in the multicultural eighteenth arrondissement of Paris where she spent her childhood and adopts the fabric for the narratives of migration and movement of labour the material communicates.

*From Cluj-Napoca with Shetland motif* and *From Morant Bay: see the world* are pieced from carrier bags to create a cacophony of colour and motif. *Stripes* uses the straps from the same type of woven carrier bags Halter has used to create *Rifugiato Mappa del Mondo* – multiple carrier bags that transport the personal possessions of so many around the world.

### Françoise Dupré

#### *Stripes*

started in 2009 in Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina with straps of bags used in *OUVRAGE* project – 2011 woven webbing, straps from carrier bags and thread, bamboo cane and hooks

### Françoise Dupré

#### *From Morant Bay: see the world*

2014

stitched woven and printed polythene, PVC, webbing, one steel red plastic coated screw hook (top)

### Françoise Dupré

#### *From Cluj-Napoca with Shetland motif*

2014

stitched woven and printed polythene, webbing, one steel red plastic coated screw hook (bottom)

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## Toril Johannessen

Norwegian artist Toril Johannessen creates digitally printed textiles inspired by the optical illusions found in wax-resist textile patterns. Wax resist textiles – the same material discussed in Godfried Donkor's video *The Currency of Ntoma (Fabric)* provide a fertile example of cross-cultural influence generated by trade, labour and the migration of both people and material goods originally between the Netherlands and what is now known as Indonesia and, more recently, the west African nations. **Responding to the importance of our need to understand the textile through touch, you are invited to handle these fabrics and refold the display.**

### Toril Johannessen

#### *Unlearning Optical Illusions:*

*The Hermann Grid Illusion, The Hering Illusion, The Wundt Illusion, The Oppel-Kundt Illusion*

2014

cotton, digital print (table in centre of gallery)