

You Are the Journey
(an embroidered
intervention)
Dr Claire Barber

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Project Description

My practice takes local communities as its starting point, and for *You Are the Journey (an embroidered intervention)* (2015), I revisited an earlier collaborative project with RA Webb which placed questions and space for handwritten responses by commuters on the front of the Hythe Ferry Ten Journey ticket used by passengers commuting between Hythe and the city of Southampton on southern coast of England. Subsequent batches of tickets printed the commuters' responses in the same area where the multi-use tickets received punch holes to indicate a journey. Revisiting the appropriated and fully functional tickets used in the project, I needle-wove into the paper tickets with remnant threads of my daily wardrobe of clothes - yet another pattern that communicates identity while accompanying our daily journeys.



Hythe to Southampton ferry and pier train commute, 2006.

Project Duration:

January 2014 - October 2016

Funder:

N/A.

Research Partners, consultants, collaborators:

N/A.

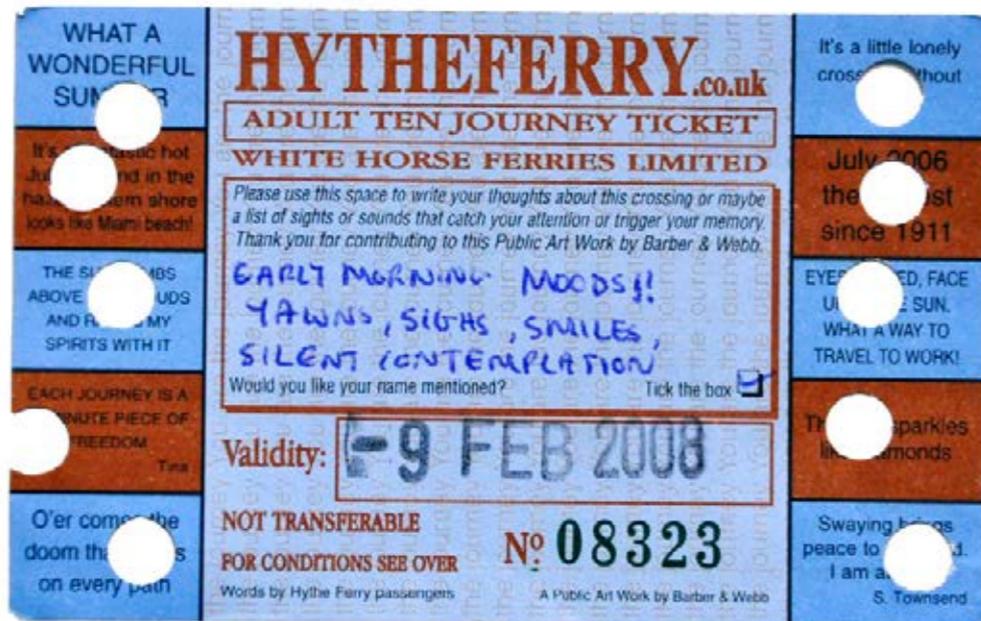
Research Aims & Objectives

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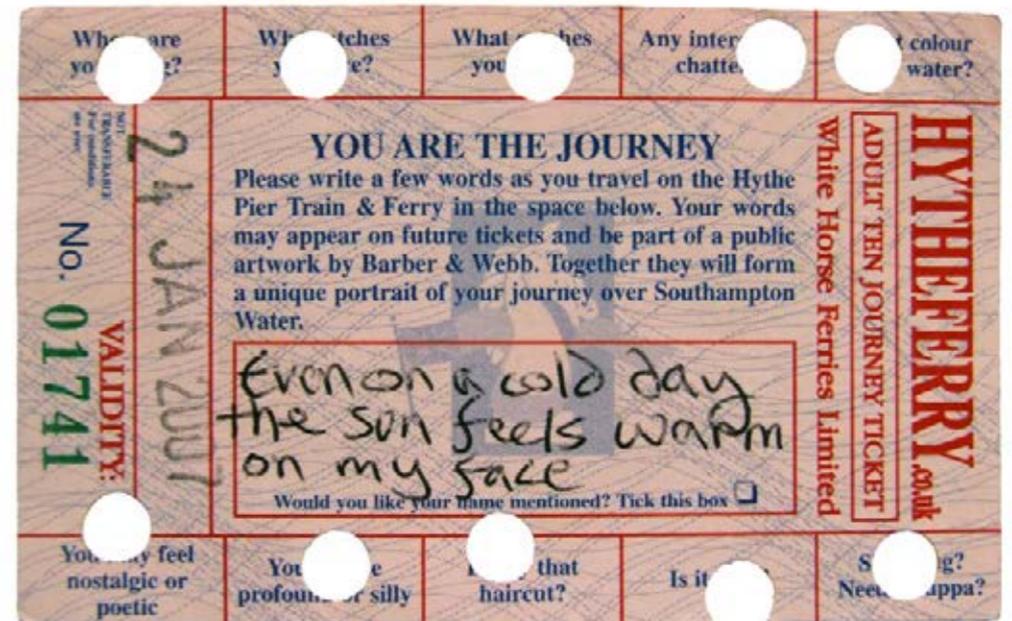
- To investigate the significance of textiles as an aesthetic experience within a socially engaged material practice.
- To utilise everyday objects in such a practice moving between private and public spaces in processes of interaction and exchange.
- To reconsider and re-evaluate socially engaged artworks through their re-use and recontextualisation by subsequent reworking and exhibition.
- To investigate the challenges of installing and exhibiting textile works in diverse, multiple venues and their impact on public understanding and engagement.



Barber and Webb, *You Are the Journey*, 2006-09.

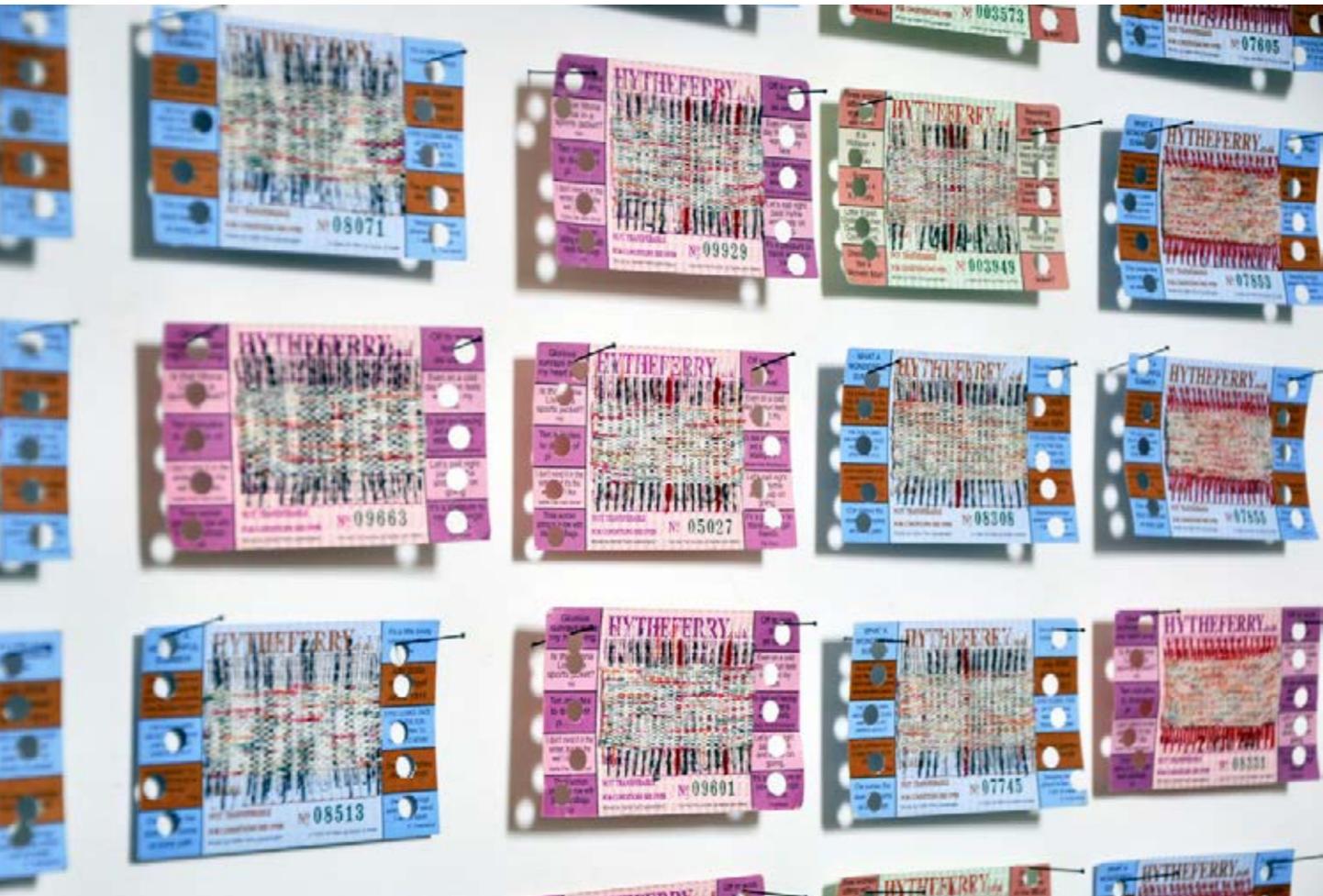


Barber and Webb, *You Are the Journey*, 2006-09.



Barber and Webb, *You Are the Journey*, 2006-09.

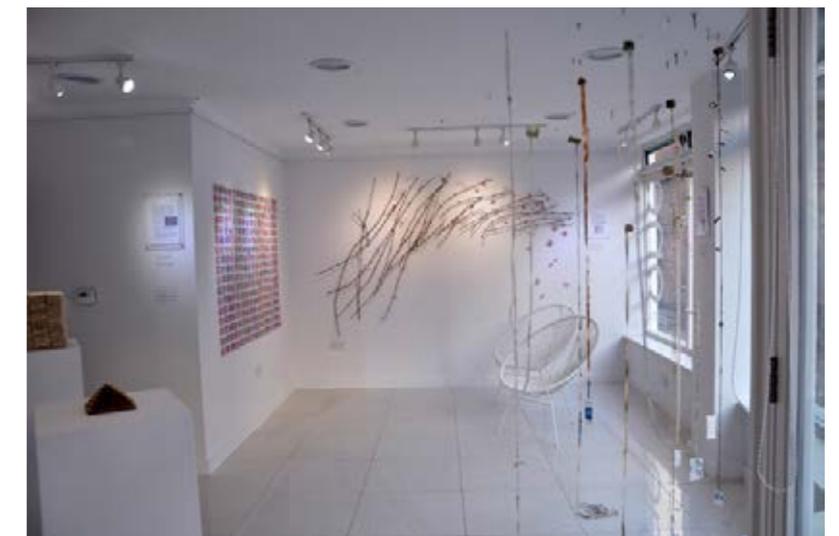
Research Context



You Are the Journey (an embroidered intervention), 2015. Installation view at Pinpoint ii, One Church Street Gallery, Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire 6 February 2015 – 28 February 2015.

You Are the Journey, was a development of an earlier collaborative project with the artist R.A.Webb that proposed the use of the Hythe Ferry ten-journey ticket as a medium for interactive public art. (This had been exhibited in 2013, and a personal critical analysis of it was presented in the article, 'Weaving technologies in the construction of a ferry ticket' in the 4th edition of *Radar [Review of Art, Design and Architecture Research]*, University of Huddersfield Press, 2014, pp.36-37).

Subsequently, for this project, the original used *You Are the Journey* tickets were reused with actual textiles as a further medium for communal engagement when I was invited to submit a proposal for an installation in response to a wall space within One Church Street Gallery, Buckinghamshire as part of an exhibition 'Pinpoint ii' in 2015. The exhibition was supported by a 21-page 20.5cm x 25.5cm full colour catalogue with a double page spread on each artist's work published by Joanna Bryant and Lyndsey Keeling with a forward by Joanna Bryant and review by Gwen Hedley, ISBN 978-1-32-091255-6.



In a further progression *You Are the Journey (an embroidered intervention)* was presented at the group exhibition 'Repetition Variation' at Frameless Gallery, London (2015) which presented fourteen contemporary artists (Molly Blunt, Louise Bourgeois,

Victoria Burge, Alan Franklin, Amy Gear, Alexander Massouras, Emma McNally, Robert Moon, David Nash, James O'Connell, Bridget Riley, Jill Sylvia, Jayne Wilton). This provided the opportunity to make a new assessment of my work, influenced by the gallery location, the themes implied by the title 'Repetition Variation' and the way in which my practice connected with the other exhibiting artists' works. The work was subsequently nominated for the international 'Contextile16' Textile Art Biennale, Guimaraes, Portugal (2016). The jury selected 54 works by 51 artists from 19 countries on the criteria of: 'conditions of high creativity, originality and expertise around the textile element, construction, theme, concept or material used'. Contextile16 was supported by a 146-page 21 x 21cm full colour catalogue, with a double page spread on each exhibiting artist's work. In a review of the Contextile Exhibition for the journal *Surface Design* Jessica Hemmings states that:

"British artist Claire Barber made used ferry tickets into temporary, portable looms woven in small patches with threads from her own clothing. Displayed as a grid of units pinned to the wall, *You Are the Journey* (2016) makes use of the repetitive and often unremarkable patterns of daily life to remind us that requires resourcefulness and determination, but little else." (Hemmings, 2016, p.3).

Finally, the work was selected by Jessica Hemmings, Professor of Crafts, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, as part of the 'Migrations' exhibition at Huddersfield Art Gallery (October 2016 – January 2017). My interview with Hemmings for the exhibition is accessible on vimeo:

<https://vimeo.com/188348113/8bc4de187d>

You Are the Journey (an embroidered intervention), 'Repetition Variation' at Frameless Gallery, London 15 September 2015 – 27 September 2015.



Social engagement was an active and deliberate aspect of the aesthetic transformation of the functional material object in *You Are the Journey*. The relations between an aesthetic transformation and socially engaged practice was implicit in Rozsika Parker's seminal text *The Subversive Stitch*, first published in 1984, providing an analysis of textiles within social history. My relationship with the book has been complex and full of tensions. My perceptions of Parker's work changed as I discovered connections between her work and mine that enable a deeper understanding of the need in my socially engaged textile practice today for the kind of aesthetics she describes historically as arising from social constraint. Consequently, *The Subversive Stitch* has now re-appeared with value as a touchstone for my work in a contemporary context. In contemporary Britain, I have shown how such everyday objects such as travel tickets can capture the imagination by creating a connection with participants, when they may not have been consciously seeking an insight separate from the functionality of these objects. Nevertheless, an aesthetic gesture is surreptitiously tucked away. This has created a hybrid form of social engagement that can move fluidly between private and public spaces. The social engagement also involves processes of interaction and exchange with the object in the presentation of an active relationship with the object that is both seen and unseen.

You Are the Journey (an embroidered intervention), Contextile 2016, 3rd edition of the Biennial of Contemporary Textile Art, Guimarães, Portugal 30th July – 16th October 2016.

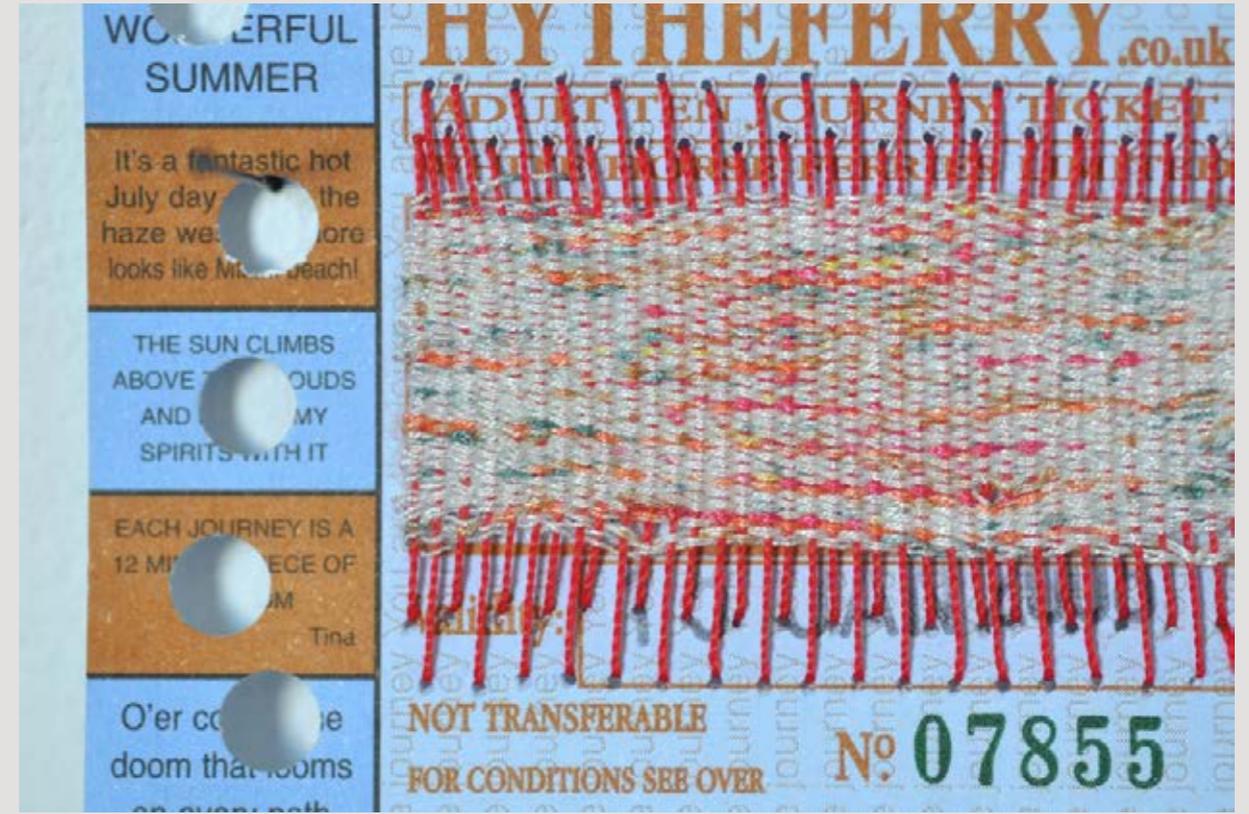


You Are the Journey (an embroidered intervention), Migrations at Huddersfield Art Gallery 22 October 2016 – 21 January 2017.





You Are the Journey (an embroidered intervention), 2015. Contextile 2016, 3rd edition of the Biennial of Contemporary Textile Art, Guimarães, Portugal 30th July - 16th October 2016.



You Are the Journey (an embroidered intervention), 2015. Migrations at Huddersfield Art Gallery 22 October 2016 - 21 January 2017.

Research Methods & Process

Earlier research considered the front of the Hythe Ferry Ten Journey Ticket as a site for on-going public art. By posing questions on the front of the Hythe ferry ticket, commuters responded with hand-written comments on the front of their ticket. On subsequent batches of tickets, the commuters' responses were then positioned in the spaces where the punch hole is made creating an ephemeral poetry that is erased as the tickets are punched each day.

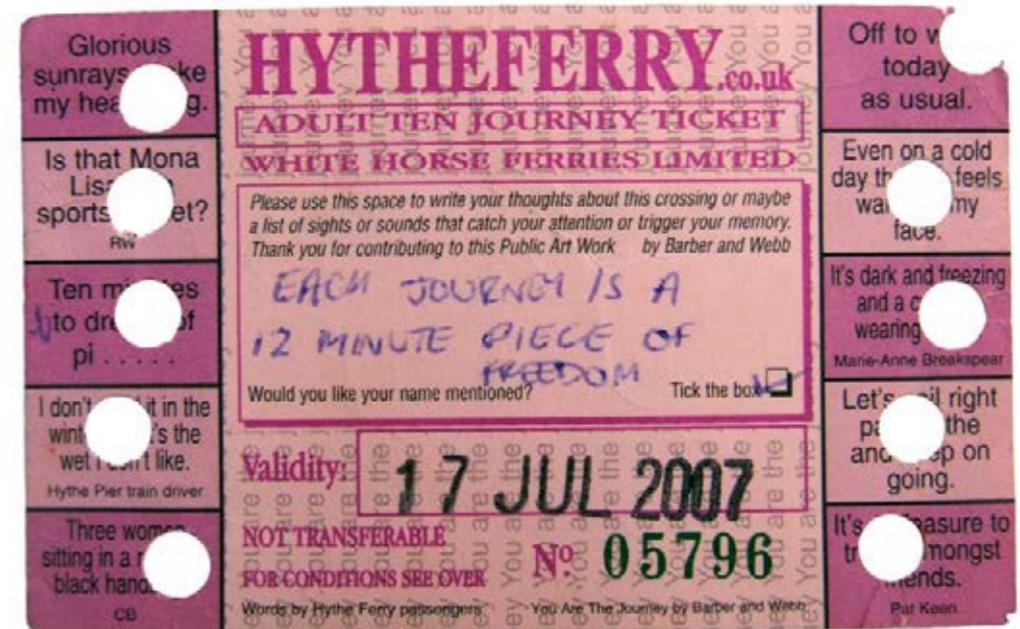
You Are the Journey (an embroidered intervention) is an installation involving used ferry tickets, reclaimed yarn, pins and needle weaving over used ferry tickets (dimensions 222.9cm x 117.5cm). It incorporates a personal, solitary and creative endeavour developed through my understanding of traditional embroidery skills where every intervention mattered as it was inserted into the found object of the travel ticket. I was instrumental in orchestrating a meaningful and supportive environment for collective participation, bringing disparate people together using textile ideas and techniques. A summary is provided in the supporting interpretation leaflet for the exhibition 'Repetition Variation' presented at Frameless Gallery, London, curated by Joanna Bryant and Julian Page:

Claire Barber considers the poetic relationship between traditional craft-based skill and fine art, often using the idea that many small actions repeated over and over again can make a difference to our lives. In *You Are the Journey*, the repeated action of needle weaving small tapestries over used transport tickets, from seams and inside pockets of travellers, may have the ability to 'lift' the incredibly fragile and throwaway redundant artefacts to a new material purpose and meaning. Presented together, the tickets reveal a visceral quilt-like form, retelling many fragmented and reconstructed memories. (2015)

You Are the Journey (an embroidered intervention) was installed at four separate galleries independently from the artwork's original maritime location. I have come to understand that exhibition display and the material challenges of installing the work at multiple venues impacts significantly on the public's understanding and respect for the textile element of the work. Further display decisions involving

textiles in galleries has been provided by Jessica Hemmings in an article called 'Floppy Cloth: Textile Exhibition Strategies Inside the White Cube' in 2019. Hemmings summaries my approach as follows:

British artist Claire Barber's painstaking installation of *You Are the Journey (an embroidered intervention)* (2015) for the *Migrations* exhibition at the Huddersfield Gallery of Art, England (October 22, 2016 – January 21, 2017) similarly lists the long pins used to install the needle-woven ferry tickets as one of the materials in the artwork' (2019, p.18).



Barber and Webb (2006-09) *You Are the Journey*, White Horse Ferries, Hythe, Southampton.

You Are the Journey (an embroidered intervention), 2015.



Research Outcomes & Dissemination

**General public dissemination:
Public exhibitions, exhibition
guides, catalogues and video**

Barber, C. (2015). *You Are the Journey (an embroidered intervention)* [Textile installation]. Exhibited at Pinpoint ii at One Church Street Gallery, Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire 6 February 2015 – 28 February 2015.

February 2015. The *Pinpoint ii* exhibition was supported by a 21-page 20.5cm x 25.5cm full colour catalogue with a double page spread on each artist's work published by Joanna Bryant and Lyndsey Keeling ISBN 978-1-32-091255-6 with a forward by Joanna Bryant.

Barber, C. (2015). *You Are the Journey (an embroidered intervention)* [Textile installation]. Exhibited at Repetition Variation at Frameless Gallery, London 15 September 2015 – 27 September 2015.

September 2015. The *Repetition Variation* exhibition was supported by a 3-page A4 information guide outlining the curatorial aims and information on each of the exhibiting artists' works.

Barber, C. (2016). *You Are the Journey (an embroidered intervention)* [Textile installation]. Exhibited at Contextile 2016, 3rd edition of the Biennial of Contemporary Textile Art, Guimarães, Portugal 30th July – 16th October 2016.

July 2016. The Contextile16 exhibition was supported by a 146-page 21 x 21cm full colour catalogue, with a double page spread on each exhibiting artist's work printed by Greca Artes Gráficas ISBN 978-989-96552-4-9. A video of Contextile 2016 is accessible on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xT9Hfp1hiY0>

Barber, C. (2016-17). *You Are the Journey (an embroidered intervention)* [Textile installation]. Exhibited at Migrations at Huddersfield Art Gallery 22 October 2016-21 January 2017.

January 2019. A Migrations exhibition leaflet with an introductory essay by the curator Jessica Hemmings and artist information on each page.

October 2016. A 16-page A5 exhibition guide supported the exhibition *Migrations* at Huddersfield Art Gallery with artist information on each page and an introductory essay by the curator Jessica Hemmings.

October 2016. Jessica Hemmings interviews me at the University of Huddersfield for the exhibition *Migrations* filmed by Alistair Macdonald and accessible on vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/188348113/8bc4de187d>

**Academic dissemination:
Published journal article**

Barber, C. (2014). Weaving technologies in the construction of a ferry ticket. *Radar*, 4(1), 36-37, published by University of Huddersfield. ISSN: 2049-4327.



Figure 16
Installation view with background in focus of *Migrations*, Huddersfield Gallery of Art, England (October 22, 2016 - January 21, 2017). Left: Claire Barber *You Are the Journey (An Embroidered Intervention)* (2015), used ferry tickets, reclaimed yarn, pins, and needle weaving over used ferry tickets (detail); middle: 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; right: Françoise Dupré, *Arabesques, Stars with Dragon* (2014), wall hanging installation, stitched woven and printed polythene, polyester/cotton bias, thread, quilting pins, acrylic knitted flat braids, and six stainless steel screw rings.

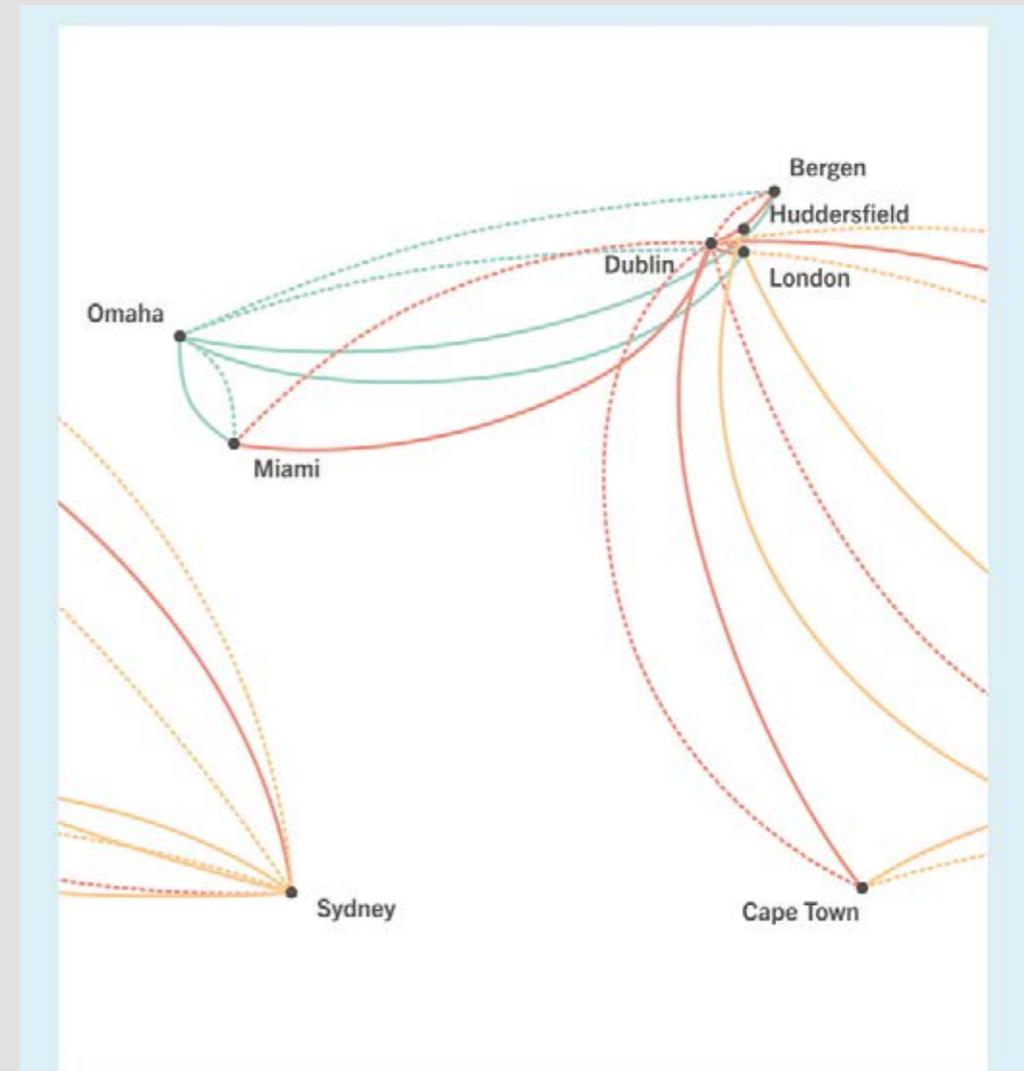
confusion over textiles' "place" in the art world I'm sure! Lucy Day et al. (2018, 313)

Questions around installation solutions and who is best positioned to resolve these decisions are central to the examples discussed throughout this article. While a gallery installation team is, in an ideal situation, expert in their knowledge of the space they are working in, they do not necessarily have textile-specific knowledge. Ironically, this challenge has become more common as textiles have found

themselves increasingly welcomed into exhibition spaces that work with a range of media, rather than material-specific craft galleries. Artists aware of the many and various challenges of textile installation have resorted to their own installation solutions planned and integrated into their artworks. Some include the means for installation as part of the work, the gallery being instructed to use only the method and materials provided.

For example, the London-based French artist Françoise Dupré includes the hooks she has sourced

for hanging her work in the materials list for the artworks, which makes their use in installation not optional for the gallery (Dupré 2015) (Figure 16). British artist Claire Barber's painstaking installation of *You Are the Journey (An Embroidered Intervention)* (2015) for the *Migrations* exhibition at the Huddersfield Gallery of Art, England (October 22, 2016 - January 21, 2017) similarly lists the long pins used to install the needle-woven ferry tickets as one of the materials in the artwork (Figure 17).



Migrations exhibition

KANEKO Center, Nebraska, USA (February 6 - April 25, 2015)
National College of Art & Design Gallery, Dublin, Ireland (April 30 - May 29, 2015)
Australian Design Centre, Sydney (December 18, 2015 - February 27, 2016)
Huddersfield Art Gallery, England (October 22, 2016 - January 21, 2017)



Claire Barber interviewed by Jessica Hemmings [video file].
Retrieved from <https://www.jessicahemmings.com/migrations-exhibition-4/>

References

Hemmings, J. (2016). Contextile Exhibition Review by Jessica Hemmings, Surface Design Association, December 5, 2016
<http://www surfacedesign.org/contextile-exhibition-review-by-jessica-hemmings/>

Hemmings, J. (2019): Floppy Cloth: Textile Exhibition Strategies Inside the White Cube, TEXTILE, DOI: 10.1080/14759756.2019.1588688

Output Type:

Creative body of enquiry, original artistic works,
contribution to collaborative group exhibitions