



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

EXHIBITING CRAFT IN THE CHURCH, THE FACTORY, AND THE CITY IN PORTUGAL
AND THE UK, 2012-2022: A STUDY OF CRAFT AND ITS DISPLAY CONTEXTS

By

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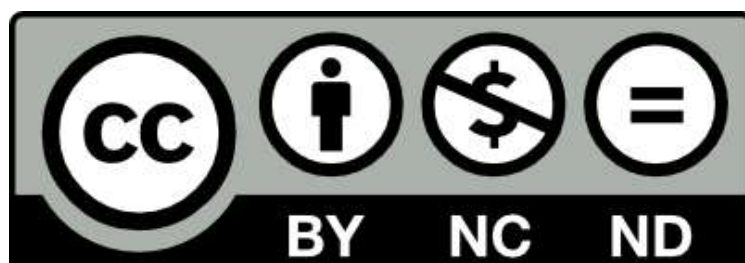
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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates contemporary craft-based exhibitions held in Portugal and the UK between 2012 and 2022. It examines three key sites of display: the church, the factory, and the city. This expands the emerging scholarship on the exhibition of craft, which has largely focused on white cube and domestic settings.

One of the research questions that guides this dissertation is the following: How is craft shaped by its specific sites of display? The study draws on archival research and ethnographical techniques such as fieldwork, observation, photography, interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter one analyses contemporary craft-based exhibitions in the church. It takes as case studies Cristina Rodrigues's exhibition *Heaven Descends to Earth* (2015) and the permanent installation *The Kingdom of Heaven* (2017), respectively held at the Monastery of Alcobaça, Portugal, and Manchester Cathedral UK.

Chapter two investigates contemporary craft-based exhibitions that draw on the factory. It identifies and sets out an emerging typology of craft display, which I term the material-based post-industrial biennial. The chapter focuses on *Contextile: Contemporary Textile Art Biennial*, held in the Portuguese city of Guimarães since 2012.

Chapter three examines contemporary craft-based exhibitions that establish itineraries of objects, people, and memories across urban sites. It delves into *Side-by-Side* (2018), an exhibition developed by US practitioner Ann Hamilton in Guimarães, which devised a circuit along various cultural, commercial, and industrial spaces in the city.

Based on the analysis of case studies, it is argued that craft can connect spaces, places, and geographies; fill sites with alternative stories; create and re-create diplomatic ties; bring makers together; prompt conversations around colonialism, imperialism, and their implications in the present; and generate intercultural, interfaith, and intergenerational encounters.

This dissertation contributes to knowledge through its focus on craft and exhibitions, which offers an opportunity to work across sites, practices, people, and histories that have been held apart. Its emphasis on unconventional spaces warrants a chance to examine class issues, from the royalty and clergy to industrial workers and those who specialise in traditional craft skills. The project's focus on Portugal and the UK enables an exploration of the historical connections between both countries; the divides between nations; the dynamic relations between centre and periphery; and different understandings of craft. By looking at exhibitions from the lens of craft, this research makes visible practices, people, spaces, and sensations which continue to be neglected in art historical scholarship.

To my mother Idalina

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Chapter one

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- Fig. 1.34, National Institutes of Health. The AIDS quilt in front of the Washington Monument. This work is in the public domain in the United States because it is a work prepared by an officer or employee of the United States Government as part of that person's official duties under the terms of Title 17, Chapter 1, Section 105 of the US Code. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>.
- Fig. 1.35, Ann Arbor Jaycees Foundation. Panel containing Michigan Jaycees quilt - part of 1997 Ann Arbor display as requested, 2011. This file is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/) license. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>.
- Fig. 1.36, Cristina Rodrigues. *The Blanket (Gold & Silver)*, 2013, installation view at the Monastery of Alcobaça, Portugal, April 18—August 31, 2015. Leather, wooden frames, spray paint, satin ribbons and cotton lace, 700 cm (height) x 500 cm (width). © Instante Fotografia. Source: Rajesh Punj, 'Surrendering to the Common Life', *Sculpture*, 35:1, 2016, 20-25.
- Fig. 1.37, Cristina Rodrigues. *The Blanket (Amarantina version I)*, 2015, installation view at Igreja de São Gonçalo (St. Gonçalo Church), Amarante, September—December 2015. Linen, cotton, and satin ribbons, 320 cm (width) x 500 cm (height). © Marco Coutinho Longo. Source: <https://cristinarodrigues.co.uk/>.
- Fig. 1.38, Kitchen chimney in the Alcobaça Monastery, Portugal. © Waugsberg. This file is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/), [2.5 Generic](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/), [2.0 Generic](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/) and [1.0 Generic](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/1.0/) license. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>.
- Fig. 1.39, Cristina Rodrigues. *The Lovers*, 2015, installation view at the Monastery of Alcobaça, Portugal, April 18—August 31, 2015. Site specific, iron, satin ribbons, freezing bags and ceramic hearts. © Instante Fotografia. Source: <https://cristinarodrigues.co.uk/>.
- Fig. 1.40, Cristina Rodrigues. *The Lovers*, 2015, installation view at the Monastery of Alcobaça, Portugal, April 18—August 31, 2015. Site specific, iron, satin ribbons, freezing bags and ceramic hearts. © Instante Fotografia. Source: <https://cristinarodrigues.co.uk/>.
- Fig. 1.41, Detail. Cristina Rodrigues. *The Lovers*, 2015, installation view at the Monastery of Alcobaça, Portugal, April 18—August 31, 2015. Site specific, iron, satin ribbons, freezing bags and ceramic hearts. © Instante Fotografia. Source: <https://cristinarodrigues.co.uk/>.
- Fig. 1.42, The tomb of Inês de Castro (Monastery of Alcobaça), probably built between 1358 and 1361. © SaraPCNeves. The copyright holder of this work released this work into the public domain. This applies worldwide. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>.
- Fig. 1.43, The tomb of King Pedro I (Monastery of Alcobaça), probably built between 1361 and 1367. © SaraPCNeves. The copyright holder of this work released this work into the public domain. This applies worldwide. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>.
- Fig. 1.44, Columbano Bordallo Pinheiro. *Assassínio de D. Inês de Castro* (Tragedy of Inês de

Castro), c. 1901-4, Military Museum, Lisbon. This work is in the public domain in its country of origin and other countries and areas where the copyright term is the author's life plus 80 years or fewer. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>.

Fig. 1.45, António Ferreira (director). *The Dead Queen*, 2018. Film still. Source: <https://www.cinema7arte.com/>.

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Fig. 1.50, Cristina Rodrigues. *Enlightenment III*, 2015, installation view at the Monastery of Alcobaça, Portugal, April 18—August 31, 2015. Iron, plastic paint, glass beads, crystals, and ceramics, 210 x 180 cm. © Instante Fotografia. Source: Rajesh Punj, 'Surrendering to the Common Life', *Sculpture*, 35:1, 2016, 20-25.

Fig. 1.51, Detail. Cristina Rodrigues. *Enlightenment III*, 2015, installation view at the Monastery of Alcobaça, Portugal, April 18—August 31, 2015. Iron, plastic paint, glass beads, crystals, and ceramics, 210 x 180 cm. © Instante Fotografia. Source: <https://cristinarodrigues.co.uk/>.

Fig. 1.52, Faustino António Martins (editor). *Minho (Portugal): Conversados: Costume*, 1900s. Animated phototypography. Source: Iconography Collection, National Library of Portugal.

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Fig. 1.54, Detail. Cristina Rodrigues. *The Grapes of Wrath*, 2015, installation view at the Monastery of Alcobaça, Portugal, April 18—August 31, 2015. Iron, stainless steel and glass bottles, 350 x 210 cm. © Instante Fotografia. Source: <https://cristinarodrigues.co.uk/>.

Fig. 1.55, Cristina Rodrigues. *Desert*, 2015, installation view at the Monastery of Alcobaça, Portugal, April 18—August 31, 2015. Site specific, reclaimed wood chairs, satin ribbons, and ceramics. © Instante Fotografia. Source: Cristina Rodrigues, *My Country through Our Eyes*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2016, 175.

Fig. 1.56, Cristina Rodrigues. *Desert*, 2015, installation view at the Monastery of Alcobaça,

Portugal, April 18—August 31, 2015. Site specific, reclaimed wood chairs, satin ribbons, and ceramics. © Instante Fotografia. Source: Cristina Rodrigues, *My Country through Our Eyes*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2016, 177.

Fig. 1.57, Tracey Emin. *For You*, 2008, installation view at Liverpool Cathedral, UK, 2009. Pink neon, circa 6 m (length). Commissioned by the Dean and Chapter of Liverpool Cathedral. © S Parish / Tracey Emin's message, Liverpool Cathedral / CC BY-SA 2.0. The copyright on this image is owned by S Parish. This file is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/) license. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>.

Fig. 1.58, Unknown author. Coverlet, eighteenth/nineteenth century, Museu Francisco Tavares Proença Júnior, Castelo Branco. Linen and silk, linen taffeta embroidered with silk, Castelo Branco stitch, *pé de flor* stitch and crossed net, 205 x 145 cm. Inventory number 2000.37 MFTPJ. © José Pessoa, Museu Francisco Tavares Proença Júnior – Câmara Municipal de Castelo Branco, DGPC, all rights reserved. Source: <http://www.matrizpix.dgpc.pt/>.

Fig. 1.59, Cristina Rodrigues. *The Garden of Eden (Spring/Summer)*, 2017. 100% natural silk and linen, each of the four panels: 100 x 95 cm. Source: <https://cristinarodrigues.co.uk/>.

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Fig. 1.64, Roman theatre in Lyon, France, circa 117-38 BCE, Hartill Archive of Architecture and Allied Arts. Column base with Vitruvian scroll, foliage. Source: www.artstor.org.

Fig. 1.65, Detail. Production of *The Kingdom of Heaven* installation. © Marco Coutinho Longo. Source: Estúdio Cristina Rodrigues, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, exhibition catalogue, Castelo Branco, Manchester Cathedral, Manchester, 2017, 64-65.

Fig. 1.66, Detail. Cristina Rodrigues. *The Rosary*, 2017. Natural silk and linen, front panel: 193 x 92 cm. © Marco Coutinho Longo. Source: Estúdio Cristina Rodrigues, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, exhibition catalogue, Castelo Branco, Manchester Cathedral, Manchester, 2017, 50.

Fig. 1.67, Detail. Cristina Rodrigues. *The Rosary*, 2017. Natural silk and linen, front panel: 193 x 92 cm. © Marco Coutinho Longo. Source: Estúdio Cristina Rodrigues, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, exhibition catalogue, Castelo Branco, Manchester Cathedral, Manchester, 2017, 51.

- Fig. 1.68, Cristina Rodrigues. *The Garden of Eden*, 2017, view of permanent installation at Manchester Cathedral's New Altar, UK. Source: <https://cristinarodrigues.co.uk/>.
- Fig. 1.69, Cristina Rodrigues. *The Garden of Eden*, 2017, view of permanent installation at Manchester Cathedral's New Altar, UK. © Inês Jorge, 2024. Source: author's own.
- Fig. 1.70, Cristina Rodrigues. *The Bread of Life*, 2017, view of permanent installation at Manchester Cathedral's Jesus Chapel, UK. © Inês Jorge, 2024. Source: author's own.
- Fig. 1.71, Cristina Rodrigues. *The Rosary*, 2017, view of permanent installation at Manchester Cathedral's Lady Chapel, UK. © Inês Jorge, 2024. Source: author's own.
- Fig. 1.72, Cristina Rodrigues. *The Kingdom of Heaven*, 2017, view of permanent installation at Manchester Cathedral's High Altar, UK. © Marco Coutinho Longo. Source: <https://cristinarodrigues.co.uk/>.
- Fig. 1.73, A panorama picture of *The Glade of Light* memorial in Manchester, England, commemorating the victims of the 2017 Manchester Arena bombing. © Tomasz 'odder' Kozłowski. This file is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>.
- Fig. 1.74, Austin Wright (designer) and Theo Moorman (weaver). *Nativity*, 1957, installation view at Manchester Cathedral's Lady Chapel, UK. © Inês Jorge, 2024. Source: author's own.
- Fig. 1.75, Austin Wright (designer) and Theo Moorman (weaver). *Visitation*, 1957, installation view at Manchester Cathedral's Lady Chapel, UK. © Inês Jorge, 2024. Source: author's own.
- Fig. 1.76, Linda Walton. *Healing Window*, 2004, installation view at Manchester Cathedral, UK. © Inês Jorge, 2024. Source: author's own.
- Fig. 1.77, Alan Davis. *Hope Window*, 2016, installation view at Manchester Cathedral, UK. Acid etched, painted, stained and leaded glass, 3.5 x 3 m. © Alan Davis. Source: <https://www.alandavisglass.com/>.
- Fig. 1.78, Mike McIntosh (designer). New suite of liturgical furniture, 2017, view of permanent installation at Manchester Cathedral's New Altar, UK. © Treske. Source: <https://www.treskechurchfurniture.com/>.
- Fig. 1.79, Detail. Martin Bartlett (designer). Series of bronze sculptures, 2017, view of permanent installation at Manchester Cathedral's New Altar, UK. © Treske. Source: <https://www.treskechurchfurniture.com/>.
- Fig. 1.80, The dedication of *The Kingdom of Heaven* permanent installation at Manchester Cathedral's New Altar, UK. © Estúdio Cristina Rodrigues. Source: Estúdio Cristina Rodrigues, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, exhibition catalogue, Castelo Branco, Manchester Cathedral, Manchester, 2017, 90-91.

Chapter two

Fig. 2.1, Maria da Conceição Miranda Ferreira (A Oficina). Samples of Guimarães Embroidery stitches: french knot, 2005, Museu de Alberto Sampaio, Portugal. © Museu de Alberto Sampaio/Miguel Sousa, 2022. Source: <http://www.matriznet.dgpc.pt/>.

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Fig. 2.4, Ribeiro Christino. *Exposição Industrial de Guimarães: A secção de ceramica* (Industrial Exhibition of Guimarães: The ceramics section), 1884. Source: *A Ilustração Universal*, 2 August 1884.

Fig. 2.5, Ribeiro Christino. *Sessão solemne de inauguração no palacio de Villa-Flôr* (Formal sitting of opening at the Vila Flor Palace), 1884. The label at the top reads 'Secção de Cortidos' (Tanned Hides Section). Source: *A Ilustração Universal*, 12 July 1884, 172.

Fig. 2.6, Ribeiro Christino. *Exposição Industrial de Guimarães: Palacio de Villa Flôr* (Industrial Exhibition of Guimarães: Vila Flor Palace), 1884. Source: *A Ilustração Universal*, 12 July 1884, 172.

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Fig. 2.8, Number and origin of works and practitioners selected for and competing at *Contextile's* International Exhibition. Practitioners based in Portugal, but born in a different country, were considered as international. © Inês Jorge, 2024. Source: author's own.

Fig. 2.9, Number of artists in residence across *Contextile's* different editions according to means of selection. © Inês Jorge, 2024. Source: author's own.

Fig. 2.10, *Barbora Gediminaitė. Dialogue of Light IV*, 2014. Mirror and light source, 100 x 100 cm. © Ivo Rainha. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/contextile/photos/a.521127517993391/565671746872301/>.

Fig. 2.11, Map of *Contextile's* first edition in 2012, on which I marked the historic centre of Guimarães with red stripes. Source: <https://contextile.wordpress.com/>.

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Fig. 2.13, British Ceramics Biennial, original Spode Factory Site. © The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery and Coalport China Museum. Source: <https://ceramicscuratorialtrainee.wordpress.com/>.

Fig. 2.14, British Ceramics Biennial, Spode China Hall. © Joel Fildes. Source: <https://www.a-n.co.uk/>.

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Fig. 2.16, Detail. Lawrence Epps. *Employees*, 2011. Over 15,000 miniature ceramic figures were placed across London, Manchester and Stoke-on-Trent over two nights by the Sykey Art Collective for the public to encounter, enjoy and remove. These large-scale participatory artworks were created as part of the British Ceramics Biennial in 2011 and FutureEverything in 2012. Source: <http://lawrenceepps.com/>.

Fig. 2.17, *Seventh International Biennial of Tapestry Arts, Lausanne*, 1975. The event opened on 14 June 1975 at the International Centre for Old and Modern Tapestry Art in the Lausanne Art Museum. © Hans Gabriel. © Photopress Archiv/Keystone/ Bridgeman Images. Source: <https://www-bridgemaneducation-com>.

Fig. 2.18, *Magdalena Abakanowicz*, 1975, private collection. Black and white photograph. © The Lewinski Archive at Chatsworth. All Rights Reserved 2023 / Bridgeman Images.

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Fig. 2.20, Anne Wilson. *Wind-Up: Walking the Warp Houston*, 2010, installation view at Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, USA, May 15—July 25, 2010. Photography: Simon Gentry. © Anne Wilson. Source: <https://www.annewilsonartist.com/>.

Fig. 2.21, Anne Wilson (artist); the Houston-based Hope Stone Dance Company: Jane Weiner (executive and artistic director); and Candace Rattliff, Catalina Molnari, Elizabeth Lucrezio, JoDee Engle, Joseph Modlin, Roberta Cortes (dancers); additional participation by Sarah Jones (lead assistant); Mina Gaber and Caroline George (artists); and Kristin Mariani Freiman (designer). *Wind-Up: Walking the Warp Houston*, 2010, performance at Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, USA, May 16 and June 27, 2010. Photography: Simon Gentry. © Anne Wilson. Source: <https://www.annewilsonartist.com/>.

Fig. 2.22, Anne Wilson (choreographer); Shawn Decker (composer); Bridget Fiske (choreographer); students from The Lowry Centre for Advanced Training in Dance Mahmood Ahmed, Ruairidh Bisset, Harry Brooks, Megan Charnock, Orla Collier, Tama Czernuska, Joe Delaney, Skai Donnelly, Niamh Honey, Emily Laing, Madeline Miller, Heather Oakes, Shannon Platt, Danielle Pollitt-Walmsley, James Rosental, Michael Scotland, Jessica Stafford, Patrick Sullivan, Jacob Tomlinson, Tyler Whitworth, Verity Wright (dancers); students from Manchester Metropolitan University, Textiles Katy Stoor, Georgia Smith, Sophie Watson, Heather Tribe, Rachel Clayton, Nikki Jones, Lauren Naylor, Lauren McNickel (costume dyers); Jess Shaughnessy, iCity Media, Manchester (videographer); Luke Lovelock (Whitworth multi-media technician). *Walking the Warp Manchester*, 2012, performance at Whitworth Art Gallery, UK, February 25, 2012. Stills from video by Jess Shaughnessy, iCity Media, Manchester. © Anne Wilson. Source: <https://www.annewilsonartist.com/>.

- Fig. 2.23, Unknown author. Lenço de namorados (enamoured handkerchief), nineteenth century, Museu Nacional do Traje (National Museum of Costume), Portugal. White and red cotton thread, taffeta, manual embroidery, crochet lace, 50 x 50 cm. © Museu Nacional do Traje / DGPC, all rights reserved. Courtesy of Museu Nacional do Traje. Source: <http://www.matriznet.dgpc.pt/>.
- Fig. 2.24, Detail. Ke-Sook Lee. *One Hundred Faceless Women*, 2007, installation view at George Billis Gallery, USA, April 10—May 5, 2007. Hand embroidered thread, pigment, and 100 vintage handkerchiefs, 6 x 3.7 x 3 m. Source: <http://www.ke-sooklee.com/>.
- Fig. 2.25, Detail. Ke-Sook Lee. *One Hundred Faceless Women*, 2007, installation view at George Billis Gallery, USA, April 10—May 5, 2007. Hand embroidered thread, pigment, and 100 vintage handkerchiefs, 6 x 3.7 x 3 m. Source: <http://www.ke-sooklee.com/>.
- Fig. 2.26, Detail. *Na Ponta da Agulha*, 2014, installation view at Alameda de S. Dâmaso, Guimarães, Portugal, September 24—September 26, 2014. Embroidered cloth. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/contextile/photos/gm.347899428718849/581657955273680/>.
- Fig. 2.27, Detail. *Na Ponta da Agulha*, 2014, installation view at Alameda de S. Dâmaso, Guimarães, Portugal, September 24—September 26, 2014. Embroidered cloth. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/contextile/photos/a.521127517993391/584112088361600/>.
- Fig. 2.28, *Na Ponta da Agulha*, 2014, installation view at Alameda de S. Dâmaso, Guimarães, Portugal, September 24—September 26, 2014. Embroidered cloth. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/contextile/photos/a.521127517993391/584112088361600/>.
- Fig. 2.29, *Na Ponta da Agulha*, 2014, installation view at Alameda de S. Dâmaso, Guimarães, Portugal, September 24—September 26, 2014. Embroidered cloth. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=583863785053097&set=a.521127517993391>.
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- Fig. 2.31, *Tecer Guimarães*, 2012, performance at Alameda de São Dâmaso, Guimarães, Portugal, July 27, 2012. Source: <https://contextile2012en.wordpress.com/>.
- Fig. 2.32, The Alameda de S. Dâmaso in the present day. © Inês Jorge, 2024. Source: author's own.
- Fig. 2.33, *Contextile's* artists in residence Francesca Piñol (left and centre) and Ernesta Dikinytė (right), 2012. Source: <https://contextile2012en.wordpress.com/>.
- Fig. 2.34, Detail. Ernesta Dikinytė. *Invisible People*, 2012. Fifty pillows in cotton and jacquard weave, 45 x 45 cm. Source: Joaquim Pinheiro, Lúcia David and Sandra Gomes (eds),

Contextile 2012: Contemporary Textile Art Triennial, exhibition catalogue, Porto, several locations, Guimarães, 2012, 130.

Fig. 2.35, Detail. Ernesta Dikinytė. *Invisible People*, 2012. Fifty pillows in cotton and jacquard weave, 45 x 45 cm. © Maria Madeira, all rights reserved. Source: <https://www.flickr.com/>.

Fig. 2.36, Ernesta Dikinytė. *Invisible People*, 2012, installation view at Casa da Memória, Portugal, September 1—October 14, 2012. Fifty pillows in cotton and jacquard weave, 45 x 45 cm. © Maria Madeira, all rights reserved. Source: <https://www.flickr.com/>.

Fig. 2.37, Ernesta Dikinytė. *Invisible People*, 2012, installation view at Casa da Memória, Portugal, September 1—October 14, 2012. Fifty pillows in cotton and jacquard weave, 45 x 45 cm. Source: <https://contextile2012en.wordpress.com/>.

Fig. 2.38, Unknown author. Jacquard loom, 1920, Museu Nacional do Traje e da Moda, Portugal. Wood, 410 cm (height), 172 cm (width), 281 cm (length). Includes a device that moves the punched cards. © Museu Nacional do Traje / DGPC, all rights reserved. Source: <http://www.matriznet.dgpc.pt/>.

Fig. 2.39, Unknown author. Jacquard punch card, twentieth century, Museu Nacional do Traje e da Moda, Portugal. Cardboard, 36 cm (height), 35 cm (width). Cream punched card for fabric design on a jacquard loom. Inscription: 'Mueller Neuhausen: Schweiz'. © Museu Nacional do Traje / DGPC, all rights reserved. Source: <http://www.matriznet.dgpc.pt/>.

Fig. 2.40, The entrance to Casa da Memória, Guimarães. © Inês Jorge, 2024. Source: author's own.

Fig. 2.41, Detail. City council of Guimarães (proprietor, promotor and general coordinator). *Territory and Community: Permanent Exhibition* at Casa da Memória, Portugal. © Inês Jorge, 2024. Source: author's own.

Fig. 2.42, Ai Weiwei. *Sunflower Seeds*, 2010, installation view at Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, UK, October 12—May 2, 2011. © Photo credit: Tate Modern, London. This file is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/) license. Source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/unilever-series/unilever-series-ai-weiwei-sunflower-seeds>.

Fig. 2.43, Antony Gormley. *Asian Field*, 2005, installation view at ICA Singapore, Singapore. October 27—December 11, 2005. Clay, 210,000 hand-sized clay elements made in collaboration with 350 people of all ages from Xiangshan village, north-east of the city of Guangzhou in south China. Photograph by Ung Ruey Loon. Source: <https://www.antonygormley.com/>.

Fig. 2.44, Bob Prince (manager) and Neil Brownsword. *Wedgwood Factory*, 2004. The image shows Suzanne Thompson, a prestige figure maker. © Recording the Crafts, University of the West of England, Bristol. Source: <https://uwe.ac.uk/>.

Fig. 2.45, Bob Prince (manager) and Neil Brownsword. *Wedgwood Factory*, 2004. The image shows Suzanne Thompson checking the figures she has produced from moulds. ©

Recording the Crafts, University of the West of England, Bristol. Source:
<https://uwe.ac.uk/>.

Fig. 2.46, The entrance to the Convent of Saint Anthony of the Capuchins during the fifth edition of the *Contextile* biennale in 2020. © Inês Jorge, 2024. Source: author's own.

Fig. 2.47, Patrícia Geraldês. *Writing Time*, 2020, installation view at the Convent of Saint Anthony of the Capuchins, Portugal, September 5—October 25, 2020. Burnt cotton rags, variable dimensions. © Inês Jorge, 2024. Source: author's own.

Fig. 2.48, Detail. Patrícia Geraldês. *Desenho de Linho* (Flax Drawing), 2020, installation view at the Convent of Saint Anthony of the Capuchins, Portugal, September 5—October 25, 2020. Flax on wall, variable dimensions. © Inês Jorge, 2024. Source: author's own.

Fig. 2.49, Magdalena Kleszyńska. *Hidden*, 2020, installation view at the Convent of Saint Anthony of the Capuchins, Portugal, September 5—October 25, 2020. Sisal, 24 elements, each approx. min. 17 x 17 x 16 cm / max. 30 x 30 x 34 cm. Arrangement dimensions: 130 x 130 x 200 cm, 130 x 130 x 200 cm (two confessional rooms). © Inês Jorge, 2024. Source: author's own.

Fig. 2.50, Detail. Magdalena Kleszyńska. *Hidden*, 2020, installation view at the Convent of Saint Anthony of the Capuchins, Portugal, September 5—October 25, 2020. Sisal, 24 elements, each approx. min. 17 x 17 x 16 cm / max. 30 x 30 x 34 cm. Arrangement dimensions: 130 x 130 x 200 cm; 130 x 130 x 200 cm (two confessional rooms). © Inês Jorge, 2024. Source: author's own.

Fig. 2.51, Detail. Angelina Nogueira. *De Fibra*, 2020. Discarded fabrics from local factories, pinewood, lighting, cotton threads, variable dimensions, installation view at the Convent of Saint Anthony of the Capuchins, Portugal, September 5—October 25, 2020. © Eduardo Vieira. Source: <https://angelinanogueirawork.wixsite.com/>.

Fig. 2.52, Angelina Nogueira. *De Fibra*, 2020, installation view at the Convent of Saint Anthony of the Capuchins, Portugal, September 5—October 25, 2020. Discarded fabrics from local factories, pinewood, lighting, cotton threads, variable dimensions. © Eduardo Vieira. Source: <https://angelinanogueirawork.wixsite.com/>.

Fig. 2.53, Angelina Nogueira. *De Fibra*, 2020, installation view at the Convent of Saint Anthony of the Capuchins, Portugal, September 5—October 25, 2020. Discarded fabrics from local factories, pinewood, lighting, cotton threads, variable dimensions. © Inês Jorge, 2024. Source: author's own.

Fig. 2.54, Detail. Angelina Nogueira. *De Fibra*, 2020, installation view at the Convent of Saint Anthony of the Capuchins, Portugal, September 5—October 25, 2020. Discarded fabrics from local factories, pinewood, lighting, cotton threads, variable dimensions. © Eduardo Vieira. Source: <https://angelinanogueirawork.wixsite.com/>.

Fig. 2.55, Barbora Zentková & Julia Gryboś. *The Light That Finds the Spreading Wounds*, 2020, installation view at the Convent of Saint Anthony of the Capuchins, Portugal, September 5—October 25, 2020. Abandoned place, former hospital, medical gauze, hand-dyed fabrics, linoleum cut, human cells and bacteria drawings (*sic*). Source: <https://www.zentkova-grybos.com/>.

- Fig. 2.56, Detail. Barbora Zentková & Julia Gryboś. *The Light That Finds the Spreading Wounds*, 2020, installation view at the Convent of Saint Anthony of the Capuchins, Portugal, September 5—October 25, 2020. Abandoned place, former hospital, medical gauze, hand-dyed fabrics, linoleum cut, human cells and bacteria drawings (*sic*). © Inês Jorge, 2024. Source: author's own.
- Fig. 2.57, Magdalena Kleszyńska. *Together at the Table*, 2020, installation view at the Convent of Saint Anthony of the Capuchins, Portugal, September 5—October 25, 2020. Dyed and bleached cotton, embroidery on cotton, hand-made and dyed fringes. Courtesy of Magdalena Kleszyńska. Source: private archive of Magdalena Kleszyńska, Poznań.
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- Fig. 2.62, Lubaina Himid. *Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service*, 2007, installation as part of the *ABOLISHED?* Exhibition, Lancaster City Museums, July—October 2007. This file is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license. Source: Elahe Haschemi Yekani, 'Conclusion: Queer Modes of Empathy as an Ethics of the Archive', *Familial Feeling: Entangled Tonalities in Early Black Atlantic Writing and the Rise of the British Novel*, Cham, 2020, 273-291 (286).
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Fig. 2.66, Maria da Conceição Miranda Ferreira (A Oficina). Coaster, 2005, Museu de Alberto Sampaio, Portugal. © Museu de Alberto Sampaio/Miguel Sousa, 2022. Source: <http://www.matriznet.dgpc.pt/>.

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Fig. 2.93, Detail. Susana Piteira. *Lenço Enamorado* (Enamoured Handkerchief), 2010. Embroidery with Piteira's design and a poem by Ana Paula Tavares. Certified Guimarães Embroidery, edition of 5 multiples. Courtesy of Susana Piteira. Source: <http://www.susanapiteira.com/>.

Chapter three

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- Fig. 3.12, Ann Hamilton. *when an object reaches for your hand*, installation view at Wexner Center for the Arts, USA, September 21—December 29, 2019. © Kara Gut, Ann Hamilton, Nick Stull, Katie Gentry, and Orange Barrel Media. Source: <https://annhamiltonstudio.com/>.
- Fig. 3.13, Ann Hamilton. *Side-by-Side*, 2018, installation view at CIAJG, Portugal, September 1—October 20, 2018. © Vasco Cielo. Source: <https://www.annhamiltonstudio.com/>.
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- Fig. 3.35, Detail. Ann Hamilton. *Side-by-Side*, 2018, installation view at the balcony of Guimarães's old market, Portugal, September 1—October 20, 2018. © Thibault Jeansen. Source: <https://www.annhamiltonstudio.com/>.
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Fig. 3.42, *Touch Me: Design and Sensation, Installation Shot*. © Jenny Tillotson. This file is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) license. Source: <https://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/>.

Fig. 3.43, Detail. Exhibition guide of the *Touch Me: Design and Sensation* exhibition at the V&A. © Inês Jorge, 2024. Source: author's own.

Fig. 3.44, Detail. Exhibition guide of the *Touch Me: Design and Sensation* exhibition at the V&A. © Inês Jorge, 2024. Source: Ann Hamilton, *Side-By-Side: Full project*, 2018, https://annhamiltonstudio.com/projects/side_by_side.html.

Fig. 3.45, Ann Hamilton. *Side-by-Side*, 2018. Printed image of coat from the SMS collection. Source: Ann Hamilton, *Side-By-Side: Full project*, 2018, https://annhamiltonstudio.com/projects/side_by_side.html.

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Fig. 3.48, Detail. Ann Hamilton. *Side-by-Side*, 2018, installation view at CIAJG, Portugal, September 1—October 20, 2018. © Vasco Cielo. Source: <https://www.annhamiltonstudio.com/>.

Fig. 3.49, Detail. Ann Hamilton. *Side-by-Side*, 2018, installation view at CIAJG, Portugal, September 1—October 20, 2018. © Vasco Cielo. Source: <https://www.annhamiltonstudio.com/>.

Fig. 3.50, Ann Hamilton. *Side-by-Side*, 2018. Exhibition design. The 'trees' displayed at CIAJG are highlighted in red. Source: Ann Hamilton, *Side-By-Side: Full project*, 2018, https://annhamiltonstudio.com/projects/side_by_side.html.

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Fig. 3.52, Detail. Ann Hamilton. *Side-by-Side*, 2018, installation view at the SMS Library Archive, Portugal, 2018. © Thibault Jeanssen. Source: <https://www.annhamiltonstudio.com/>.

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- Fig. 3.54, Detail. Ann Hamilton. *Side-by-Side*, 2018, installation view at the SMS Gallery, Portugal, September 1—October 20, 2018. Source: Ann Hamilton, *Side-By-Side: Full project*, 2018, https://annhamiltonstudio.com/projects/side_by_side.html.
- Fig. 3.55, *The Museum of the London Missionary Society, on Bloomfield Street, published in the 'Illustrated London News', 25th June 1859 (litho)*, 1859, private collection. Lithograph. Photo credit: Look and Learn / Peter Jackson / Bridgeman Images. Source: <https://www.bridgemanimages.com/>.
- Fig. 3.56, Detail. Ann Hamilton (practitioner) and Outra Voz vocal group (attendants). *Side-by-Side*, 2018, performance at the SMS Library Archive, Portugal, September 1, 2018. Source: Ann Hamilton, *Side-By-Side: Full project*, 2018, https://annhamiltonstudio.com/projects/side_by_side.html.
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- Fig. 3.58, Ann Hamilton (practitioner) and members of Outra Voz (attendants). *Side-by-Side*, 2018, performance at the balcony of Guimarães's old market, Portugal, September 1, 2018. Source: Ann Hamilton, *Side-By-Side: Full project*, 2018, https://annhamiltonstudio.com/projects/side_by_side.html.
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- Fig. 3.60, Detail. Ann Hamilton (practitioner) and members of Outra Voz (attendants). *Side-by-Side*, 2018, performance at Guimarães's Plaza, Portugal, September 1, 2018. © Inés Rodríguez/ Rir&Co. Source: Inés Rodríguez, 'Contextile 2018: Side By Side de Ann Hamilton', *Rir&Co.*, <https://rirandco.com/contextile-side-by-side-de-ann-hamilton/>, accessed 6 July 2023.
- Fig. 3.61, Detail. Ann Hamilton (practitioner) and members of Outra Voz (attendants). *Side-by-Side*, 2018, performance at Guimarães's Plaza, Portugal, September 1, 2018. © Inés Rodríguez/ Rir&Co. Source: Inés Rodríguez, 'Contextile 2018: Side By Side de Ann Hamilton', *Rir&Co.*, <https://rirandco.com/contextile-side-by-side-de-ann-hamilton/>, accessed 6 July 2023.
- Fig. 3.62, Detail. Ann Hamilton (practitioner) and members of Outra Voz (attendants). *Side-by-Side*, 2018, performance at Guimarães's Plaza, Portugal, September 1, 2018. © Inés Rodríguez/ Rir&Co. Source: Inés Rodríguez, 'Contextile 2018: Side By Side de Ann Hamilton', *Rir&Co.*, <https://rirandco.com/contextile-side-by-side-de-ann-hamilton/>, accessed 6 July 2023.
- Fig. 3.63, Detail. Ann Hamilton (practitioner) and Outra Voz vocal group (attendants). *Side-by-Side*, 2018, performance in the access staircase to CIAJG, Portugal, September 1, 2018. © Inés Rodríguez/ Rir&Co. Source: Inés Rodríguez, 'Contextile 2018: Side By

Side de Ann Hamilton', *Rir&Co.*, <https://rirandco.com/contextile-side-by-side-de-ann-hamilton/>, accessed 6 July 2023.

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Fig. 3.67, Crafts Advisory Committee. *View of the exhibition 'The Craftsman's Art' at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London in 1973, organised by the Crafts Advisory Committee*, 1973. © The Design Council Slide Collection at Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections Museum. Source: <https://www.vads.ac.uk/>.

Fig. 3.68, Crafts Advisory Committee. *View of the exhibition 'The Craftsman's Art' at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London in 1973, organised by the Crafts Advisory Committee*, 1973. © The Design Council Slide Collection at Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections Museum. Source: <https://www.vads.ac.uk/>.

Fig. 3.69, Ann Hamilton (practitioner) and members of Outra Voz (attendants). *Lanterna Adiante* (Beacon Ahead), 2018, performance at CIAJG, Portugal, November 25, 2018. © Ivo Rainha. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=2613082365400000&set=a.2613078338733736>.

Fig. 3.70, Ann Hamilton (practitioner) and members of Outra Voz (attendants). *Lanterna Adiante* (Beacon Ahead), 2018, performance at CIAJG, Portugal, November 25, 2018. © Ivo Rainha. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=2613079728733597&set=a.2613078338733736>.

Fig. 3.71, Ann Hamilton (practitioner) and members of Outra Voz (attendants). *Lanterna Adiante* (Beacon Ahead), 2018, performance at CIAJG, Portugal, November 25, 2018. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/outravoz/photos/pb.100081637274443.-2207520000/1164059540426792/?type=3>.

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Fig. 3.73, Detail. Ann Hamilton (practitioner) and members of Outra Voz (attendants). *Lanterna Adiante* (Beacon Ahead), 2018, performance at CIAJG, Portugal, November

25, 2018. Source:

<https://www.facebook.com/outravoz/photos/a.542044895961596/1157497567749656/>.

EXHIBITING CRAFT IN THE CHURCH, THE FACTORY, AND THE CITY IN PORTUGAL AND THE UK, 2012-2022: A STUDY OF CRAFT AND ITS DISPLAY CONTEXTS

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines contemporary craft-based exhibitions held in Portugal and the UK, focusing on the period between 2012 and 2022. Throughout this study, I will use 'contemporary craft-based' as a compound adjective to refer to works and exhibitionary projects characterised by a blend between objects, materials and techniques commonly associated with craft, and contemporary formats such as installation, performance, and site-specificity.

This dissertation analyses the relationship of these exhibitions to specific sites – the church, the factory, and the city. It is particularly important to focus on these settings, as they have often been absent from exhibition and craft histories. Like the country house, the church is significant not only as a historic space for the production and commission of craft but also because of its ambivalent relationship with power. While it holds strong links with privileged segments of society such as aristocracy and the clergy, the church has also served as a place of refuge in contexts of political persecution. The context of the church therefore offers an opportunity to assess craft's associations with conservative or radical ideas and encourage reflections about power, nation, regionalism, gender, race, emigration, colonialism, and cultural identity.

Power relations were also established in the factory – a site which facilitated the development of global capitalism through the control of the working class. Due to the international dimension of domestic competition, the factory holds human skills that have

consecutively become obsolete. As a result, the space of the factory provides an opportunity to unveil the intersections between craft and industry, along with recent attempts to preserve endangered heritage skills and the memory of the people who endeavour to safeguard them.

Today, churches, factories, and many other sites coexist in the city – an ensemble of venues which have accumulated different uses across time; and a place distinguished by the movement of objects, people, practices, and materials, particularly from the beginning of the Portuguese trade of enslaved people with Africa until the current post-industrial era.

This Introduction begins by setting out the research questions, aims and objectives, methodology, and rationale for the selection of case studies deployed in this thesis. This is followed by a contextual framing that covers relevant theoretical discussions of craft and its exhibition. ‘Defining craft’ delves into key definitions of craft from the late nineteenth century until today. ‘Institutional contexts for craft: Portugal and the UK’ introduces institutional approaches to craft in these two countries, and addresses how institutions from both Portugal and the UK have shaped the meanings of craft. ‘Exhibiting craft’ analyses key modes of exhibiting craft since the late nineteenth century. ‘Craft, place, and memory’ explores craft’s connotations with geography and cultural identity, and the use of craft within exhibitionary projects which aim to commemorate individuals or communities. ‘Exhibiting craft within historic spaces and collections’ examines efforts to exhibit craft beyond the white cube, with a specific focus on historic spaces. The three subsequent sections investigate what I consider key contexts for contemporary craft-based exhibitions between 2012 and 2022: ‘The church’ as one of the original contexts for craft; ‘The factory’ as a space which contests the separation between craft and industry; and ‘The city’ through

the mobility and itineraries of objects across different sites. The Introduction ends with a 'Chapter overview' providing a summary of each chapter.

Research questions, aims, and objectives

The questions driving this study are: How is craft shaped by its specific sites of display? In what ways does craft engage with sites of display beyond the museum and gallery? How can craft as a curatorial and making practice provide new readings of these display contexts? How can craft as a methodology provide new readings of these display contexts? How do specific sites of display affect craft's expansive reach and connection to place and community?

Through these questions, I aim to fill a gap in the scholarship, which has rarely examined craft from the perspective of its display. Rather than aiming to define what craft is, my project focuses on exhibitions as devices that shape the meaning and reception of craft. This allows me to analyse the current diversity of contexts, agents, practices, and strategies within the wide spectrum of contemporary craft-based exhibitions. However, because its focus is on the relations between craft and contexts of display, this thesis does not cover the entire range of significant scholarship on craft that has emerged over the last decades.

By directing attention to the exhibition rather than the production of craft, I intend to shift emphasis away from traditional perspectives on craft centred on objects and materiality, towards an exploration of process, gesture, circulation, and performance. I particularly seek to expand the fields of craft studies and exhibition studies by examining how different themes around contemporary craft practice – notably craft's intersections with art and industry, as well as its links to tradition, place, trade, memory, and community –

are addressed across various exhibiting platforms. I endeavour to demonstrate not only how distinct contexts of display can shape the perception of craft, but also how craft can provide new readings of these spaces. This allows for discussions beyond the usual list of exhibited works, to include multiple practices and contexts, and the numerous dialogues and confrontations that these connections raise.

This study centres on the exhibition as a site for investigating craft's ties with both the powerful and the oppressed; for representing audiences and issues which have been overlooked by institutions; for showcasing the social value and context of craft skills and materials, and the relevance of craft in everyday life; for re-evaluating the divides between sites, practices, objects, and people, and acknowledging their interconnectedness; for examining local histories of production; and for reclaiming the multisensory features of craft and other cultural manifestations.

This project is original not only in looking at the monastery, the cathedral, the factory, the craft's workshop, the country house, and the city as sites of craft but also in bringing them together in a single study. To work across such distinct spaces is to trace various dynamics of power, labour, and trade through craft and across different periods of history. To set the church, the factory and the city side by side also allows me to uncover the connections between people, practices, materials, and sensations which are so often kept apart; and to foreground the proximity between the museum and the marketplace, between buildings cleared of their contents and cities cleared of their smellier industries, between figures of wealth and authority and market stall holders. Through this approach, I aim to overcome specific issues underpinning craft theory such as perceived divisions between studio and factory, the realms of culture and commerce, and spaces of production and

exhibition.

Methodology

This project is interdisciplinary, drawing on the history and theory of craft, exhibition histories and studies, art history, curating, and further disciplines and research areas as relevant to each case study. I work both with and across material definitions and segregations, dependent on the case study; and across geographical divisions, notably the South and North of Europe.

This dissertation focuses on craft, rather than fine art or design. It uses craft as a tool to analyse exhibitions and practices. The primary reason for this is that craft, both as a term and a set of approaches, has been substantially overlooked by scholars and curators. As a result, I examine several exhibitions where the word 'craft' is entirely absent, but in which materials, practices, and concepts that are often associated with craft are present. This approach has its pitfalls, as the term has become charged and its meaning varies according to the cultural and geographical context in which it is employed. In the interviews I conducted within this study, Portuguese practitioners and cultural agents were particularly apprehensive about my use of the term 'craft'.¹ Yet because of the renewed acceptance of the term in curatorship and scholarship, and the opportunity I have had to disseminate my research in publications such as *The Journal of Modern Craft*, some of the interviewees became more appreciative of my approach. This illustrates not only the difficulties which can be experienced in using craft as a lens but also that insisting on using and problematising the

¹ See Chapter one and Chapter two, respectively, for an analysis of the interviews conducted with Portuguese practitioner Cristina Rodrigues and Joaquim Pinheiro, director of the Contextile biennale.

term can bear fruit.

By approaching exhibitions from the perspective of craft, I also aim to use the fluidity of the word to my advantage. The notion of 'craft' holds strong links to power, religion, gender, labour, memory, and history. My approach to exhibitions through craft, coupled with my selection of the church, the factory, and the city as sites, highlights ideas of labour, collaboration, community, memory, and sensory experience, whilst challenging longstanding – and often intertwined – divides between practices, people, spaces, and sensations. The term 'craft' also allows us to think across media that have often been associated with craft, such as ceramics and textiles, and to move beyond these divisions. Many of the practitioners I explore in this project combine these media with contemporary formats in their practice. While the prevalent labelling of Cristina Rodrigues and Ann Hamilton as 'contemporary artists' has led to a neglect of the material diversity which distinguishes their practice, approaching them through the lens of craft allows me to acknowledge the presence of traditional materials and skills. By using 'craft' as an all-encompassing term, however, one runs the risk of neglecting the material and technical intricacies of each work. Accordingly, this thesis does not provide an in-depth exploration of particular skills and media.

While I draw on available sources for each case study, including exhibition catalogues, installation photographs, exhibition interpretation, and other archival materials, I also conducted fieldwork in exhibitions, biennales, museums and galleries across Portugal, the UK and beyond, where I observed events and met some of their organisers and participants, including curators, mediators, and practitioners. I recorded these exhibitions through extensive photographic coverage, not only to avoid potential copyright issues but also to capture details and perspectives that do not appear in official photographs and my

unique view of what I witnessed. Additionally, I interviewed curators, practitioners, members of the clergy, and other cultural agents; and conducted questionnaires and focus groups with members of the vocal group *Outra Voz* (Another Voice).² This approach resembles that of ethnography, allowing me to gather perceptions from a wide range of participants, from those who run artistic projects to makers and other external collaborators.

Yet I acknowledge the pitfalls of these methodologies, especially those involving oral history. The act of interviewing might sustain a hierarchy between the researcher and the interviewee, perpetuating divisions of class, gender, and others. When interviewing someone about their employment in or contribution to a certain project, one must understand that the interviewee needs to protect their job, and this might inhibit their responses to the researcher's questions.

My approach is, nevertheless, highly descriptive. In order to bring historic sites, communities, and makers into play with each other, it seems necessary to explain where these sites, communities, and makers come from. Across the three chapters and various exhibitions which form my case studies, I engage in extensive descriptions of the works that comprise such exhibitions, of the works' potential meanings within the sites that they occupy, and of the exhibitions. This recalls Clifford Geertz's conception of 'thick description', which entails the interpretation of multiple, intricate conceptual structures, many of which

² On ethnographic fieldwork, see for instance Clifford Geertz, 'Thick Description: Toward and Interpretive Theory of Culture', Clifford Geertz (ed.), *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York, 1973, 310-23 (312). For a published, and therefore edited, version of an interview conducted within this study, see Inês Jorge and Isabel Oliveira, "'The Gesture Is Everything': Interview with the Artisan Isabel Oliveira', *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 15:2, 2022, 199-209.

overlap or are intertwined.³ As Geertz himself admits, this approach might lead to research that is more observational than interpretative. Yet, within this study, it allows me to foreground the relations between spaces, practices, and communities; the circulation of materials and sensations across various sites; and the complexity of these relationships.

By bringing together the church, the factory and the city in the same study, this thesis analyses spaces, disciplines, and practitioners that are usually held apart. Examples of these include the museum and the market; the fields of industry, decorative arts, fine art, and ethnography; the worlds of art and commerce; and those often categorised as industrial workers, craftspeople, and artists. Through examining the case studies, I propose a conceptual framework based on empirical research, which is how the exhibition of craft makes visible multiple dimensions of human relations and experiences. The project includes some typologies which have previously been investigated in art historical scholarship such as solo and thematic shows, artist's residencies, public art, site-specific projects, and biennales, but also overlooked or emerging formats such as permanent installations in churches and material-based post-industrial biennials.

While the temporal scope of this thesis allows me to trace recent exhibitionary trends, I also take previous examples into account. Its geographical scope, on the other hand, reveals a focus on Portugal and the UK, reflecting my own positionality as a Portuguese researcher who works between these two countries. Having taken place in parallel with Brexit and COVID-19, my personal journey as a doctoral student and immigrant in the UK has inspired me to confront both realities and increase my understanding and discovery of a different culture. Being acutely aware of Portugal's chronic peripherality

³ Geertz, 'Thick Description', 314.

within Western culture and academia, and particularly in the visual arts and art-historical writing, I aim to centre Portuguese craft and art within global discussions.

I am also mindful of Brazilian art historian Rafael Cardoso's reminder that 'the hegemony of English [language] [...] preserves the colonial hierarchies that global studies were meant to challenge'.⁴ In spite of these restraints, I recognise my privileged position as someone who is fluent in other languages, and who has had the opportunity to develop my research in the UK. As I explain in this Introduction, Anglophone studies on craft and exhibition histories have largely concentrated on Britain and its relations with former colonial settlements, along with Canada, the USA and Japan. This study partly challenges this bias, including discussions about the relations between Portugal, the UK, and other countries. Several realities are confronted such as those of Anglican and Catholic creeds; and the industrial regions of Lancashire in the UK and Vale do Ave in Portugal, both of which entail histories of imperialism, colonialism, and slavery. At the same time, I address the complex position of Portugal as both perpetrator and victim of imperialistic and colonialist attitudes.

The dissertation's focus on Portugal and the UK was also reinforced by Covid restrictions. The original project aimed to encompass a wider range of themes within contemporary craft-based exhibitions, including the juxtaposition of the historic and the contemporary; the engagement of local contexts, communities, and memories; and feminist approaches to displaying craft. This would have involved the analysis of case studies both within and beyond Europe. Yet the imposition of confinements and travel restrictions both in

⁴ On the marginal position of art-historical writing in the Portuguese language, and the institutional frameworks which lie behind it, see Rafael Cardoso, 'Why Have there Been No Great Portuguese-Language Art Historians?', *Art History*, 42:1, 2019, 178-84 (178).

Portugal and the UK forced a revision of the project. This thesis therefore comprises case studies of exhibitions by Portuguese practitioners in Portugal and the UK as well as of foreign practitioners in Portugal; and the third theme was replaced by exhibitions which bring together different spaces, practices, people, materials, and sensations across the city. This new focus has ultimately generated a more coherent project that examines the role of the Anglican and Catholic churches and the connections between clergy, royalty, and aristocracy; the effects of colonialism, global trade, migration, and post-industrialism on regions and communities; diplomatic relations between countries; and the histories of craft and art in Portugal and the UK.

Rationale for selection of case studies

This dissertation is based on an in-depth analysis of the following case studies: *Heaven Descends to Earth* (2015) and *The Kingdom of Heaven* (2017), an exhibition and a permanent installation by Cristina Rodrigues, respectively held at the Monastery of Alcobaça in Portugal and Manchester Cathedral in the UK; *Contextile: Contemporary Textile Art Biennial*, an event held in the Portuguese city of Guimarães since 2012; and *Side-by-Side* (2018), an installation by Ann Hamilton, which established itineraries of images, cloth, and voice across different sites in Guimarães. Such case studies are pertinent to my study, as they encompass craft-based responses to a range of sites, from the church to the factory and the city. They therefore offer the opportunity to explore different sites in the same project, along with the people, practices, and senses that participate in them. On the other hand, the practitioners discussed in this thesis engage with people and skills linked to particular spaces and places, drawing on their cultural, material, and sensual specificities as well as on a wider global

context.

Firstly, though, a note on definitions. As this thesis examines contemporary craft-based exhibitions, the complexity of craft as a concept should be investigated. I begin by addressing distinct definitions of craft over the last 150 years, to establish its relevance as a concept to this study.

Defining craft

Craft is [...] a fluid set of practices, propositions and positions that shift and develop, sometimes rapidly.⁵

Craft only exists in motion. It is a way of doing things, not a classification of objects, institutions, or people. [...] [It is] a dynamic phenomenon, open to debate and dissent as well as affirmation.⁶

[C]raft, as a discipline, is not so much about materials as it is about an approach to materials.⁷

Craft, as these examples of definitions show, is a problematic and contested term. It is still often associated with ideas rooted in the Arts and Crafts movement of the late nineteenth century such as the handmade, natural materials, and skilled practices of making. The excerpts above embody recent attempts to question these assumptions about craft. Their authors – Paul Greenhalgh, Glenn Adamson, and Anna Fariello – have redefined craft as an interdisciplinary and fluid concept that challenges rigid disciplinary and material boundaries both within itself and in relation to art, industry, and design. Yet despite these more flexible approaches, the art/craft/design divide continues to impact the conception and reception of

⁵ Paul Greenhalgh, 'Introduction: Craft in a Changing World', Paul Greenhalgh (ed.), *The Persistence of Craft: The Applied Arts Today*, 2nd edn, New Jersey, 2003, 1-17 (1).

⁶ Glenn Adamson, *Thinking through Craft*, 2nd edn, Oxford and New York, 2017, 4.

⁷ M. Anna Fariello, 'Making and Naming: The Lexicon of Studio Craft', Maria Elena Buszek (ed.), *Extra/Ordinary: Craft and Contemporary Art*, Durham and London, 2011, 23-42 (40).

craft. A significant part of the scholarship on craft has therefore endeavoured to delineate craft, along with its boundaries vis-à-vis art and the adjacent practices of design and industry.

One of the central difficulties in defining craft – particularly in relation to this dissertation – is that it is often linked to anxieties around the meaning and status of fine art. Western definitions of craft are inseparable from the conceptualisation of painting, sculpture, and architecture as fine art, which originated in Ancient Greece. As Howard Risatti and Larry Shiner demonstrate, Immanuel Kant's division between 'mechanical art' and 'beautiful art' in the 1790s precipitated the split between art and craft.⁸ This separation was lamented by practitioner and socialist William Morris in a lecture entitled 'The Lesser Arts' (1877).⁹ For Morris, the detachment between fine and decorative art was as damaging for architecture, painting, and sculpture as it was for decoration. He highlighted the crafts – notably housebuilding, painting, joinery, carpentry, silversmithing, pottery, glassmaking, and weaving – as 'a great industry' and key provider of everyday beauty.¹⁰ Akin to other proponents of the Arts and Crafts movement at the end of the nineteenth century, Morris aspired to restore the unity among all arts.¹¹

Some historians accordingly argue that the categories of art and craft became increasingly intermingled from the mid-twentieth century onwards. For instance, Shiner describes how movements such as Neo-Dada and Pop Art embraced materials associated

⁸ Howard Risatti, *A Theory of Craft: Function and Aesthetic Expression*, Chapel Hill, 2007, xviii; Larry Shiner, *The Invention of Art: A Cultural History*, Chicago, 2001, 88-94; Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. by John Henry Bernard, 2nd edn, New York, 2012, 90-136.

⁹ William Morris, 'The Lesser Arts', *Hopes and Fears for Art and Signs of Change*, London, 1914; repr. Bristol, 1994, 3-27.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹ Tanya Harrod, 'Introduction: Craft Over and Over Again', Tanya Harrod (ed.), *Documents of Contemporary Art: Craft*, Cambridge (Massachusetts), 2018, 12-21 (13).

with craft such as clay, textiles, glass, and wood.¹² He further notes that practitioners working in these media began to challenge established definitions of craft based on function, materiality, and skill, whilst appropriating elements from contemporary painting, sculpture, and installation. Those who formed part of the studio craft movement were particularly interested in abolishing the boundaries between art and craft. Yet some scholars claim that this 'crafts-as-art' impulse only contributed to diminish craft's status and create additional barriers – for Shiner, amongst the crafts themselves; for Peter Dormer, between craft, industry, and design.¹³

A key scholar who focused on craft's interactions with industry and design was David Pye. In *The Nature and Art of Workmanship* (1968), Pye equates mass production and handwork with his alternative designations of 'workmanship of certainty' and 'workmanship of risk'.¹⁴ He argues that the workmanship of certainty privileges accuracy and quality over speed and economy of time and labour, whereas the workmanship of risk is distinguished by its diversity, delicacy, and subtlety. For Pye, what differentiates these two methods is the predetermination and alterability of the result at the start of production. Yet he acknowledges that some activities stand somewhere between the workmanship of certainty and the workmanship of risk, and that both approaches can coexist in the same project. Pye's reconceptualization suggests an attempt to overcome the loaded terms 'craft' and 'industry' and the perceived dichotomy between them.

¹² Shiner, *The Invention of Art*, 274-78. See also Larry Shiner, "'Blurred Boundaries"? Rethinking the Concept of Craft and Its Relation to Art and Design', *Philosophy Compass*, 7:4, 2012, 230-44.

¹³ Shiner, *The Invention of Art*, 274-78; Peter Dormer, 'The Salon de Refuse?', Peter Dormer (ed.), *The Culture of Craft: Status and Future*, Manchester, and New York, 1997, 2-16 (2-4).

¹⁴ David Pye, 'The Workmanship of Risk and the Workmanship of Certainty', *The Nature and Art of Workmanship*, Cambridge, 1968, 4-8. Examples of exhibitions which have explored these relations include the two-part exhibition *Agua con Azúcar* and *La Muestra Provisional* (1996) at the Centro de Desarrollo de las Artes Visuales in Havana, and *Object Factory* (2008) at the Gardiner Museum in Toronto.

Recent re-readings of the place of craft in industry have made similar attempts to challenge the separation between these two fields. While the leaders of the Arts and Crafts movement saw the Industrial Revolution as a point of rupture for craft, the scholarship now acknowledges that it created a space for craft practices, notably within the factory. For example, in *The Invention of Craft* (2013), Adamson demonstrates that craft was conceived as the opposite of industry, which was seen to encompass a set of transformations such as mechanical, mass-produced, and specialised labour taking place in factories.¹⁵ He also contends that, contrary to established discourses about this period, the Industrial Revolution did not eradicate craft:

An objective look at the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries suggests that John Ruskin and William Morris did not see the whole story. Consider the fact that in Europe in 1850 there were undoubtedly more skilled artisans, plying a far greater range of trades, than there had been in 1750. Far from being obsolete, manual skill was the primary way the workforce divided itself [...] Craft revivalists [...] also ignored the nuanced interdependences of the hand and the machine [...] If we broaden the scope to include the whole range of Victorian material culture, [...] it becomes obvious that skills were not in decline in the mid-nineteenth century. On the contrary, craft was the order of the day.¹⁶

By highlighting the sheer presence of craft not only in industrial production but more broadly in Victorian material culture, Adamson questions the diagnosis disseminated by advocates of the Arts and Crafts movement that craft declined during the Industrial Revolution – a misnomer that set up certain understandings of craft, and which has influenced the theory of craft until today. Instead, Adamson argues that craft was a primary field in this period, as shown by the increasing number and range of skilled workers and activities.

¹⁵ Glenn Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, London and New York, 2013, xiii.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, xvi.

The scholarship has also discussed the impact of disciplinary boundaries on the teaching of craft. In the late nineteenth century, the ethnographer Joaquim de Vasconcelos advocated a reform of fine arts teaching in Portugal, condemning the prevalence of theoretical instruction over practical learning of the crafts in a workshop context.¹⁷ Yet Harrod traces the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement on pedagogical practices in Europe, Japan, and the USA, where the crafts were separated both from fine art and into different disciplines.¹⁸ An example of this was the Bauhaus's preliminary course (*Vorkurs*) in Germany, which introduced students to key principles of creative work and to various materials such as clay, glass, metal, stone, textile, and wood.¹⁹ Regarding postwar Britain, Dormer notes that craftsmanship was virtually eliminated from foundation courses in art schools, since teachers had little knowledge of or appreciation for craft.²⁰ This dissertation expands on this scholarship by focusing attention on the impact of deindustrialisation on craft practice and teaching in Portugal, particularly in the field of textiles, along with recent attempts to retrieve textile education in the country and change perceptions around this field.

Within the Portuguese context, popular art and craft became the object of academic study in the twenty-first century, through the discipline of anthropology. According to Maria Manuela Restivo, scholarly reflections about the crafts in Portugal have focused on historic conceptualisations of these practices; on ethnographic discourses and practices developed

¹⁷ Joaquim Vasconcelos, *A reforma de Bellas-Artes: analyse do relatorio e projectos da comissão oficial nomeada em 10 de Novembro de 1875*, Porto, 1877. See also Maria Manuela Restivo, *Arte popular e artesanato em Portugal: atores, redes e narrativas*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Universidade do Porto, 2022, 57-63.

¹⁸ Harrod, 'Introduction: Craft', 13.

¹⁹ Howard Dearstyne, 'The Three Phases of the Preliminary Course', David Spaeth (ed.), *Inside the Bauhaus*, Cambridge, 1986, 85-94.

²⁰ Dormer, 'The Salon de Refuse', 3.

during *Estado Novo* (New State), the dictatorial regime from 1926 to 1974; on particular craft techniques approached from the field of cultural studies, heritage and gender issues; and handmade production in the context of design.²¹ Restivo highlights, however, the ways in which Ernesto de Sousa, Everardo Ramos, and other Portuguese scholars in the 1960s defined popular art as a means of personal expression, rather than a shared cultural practice.²² This was part of an attempt to push back against *Estado Novo*'s authoritarianism and oppression. Restivo positions herself in this claim for individual authorship, as part of a wider movement to democratise art history.²³

The scholarship has also investigated craft's intersections with gender, class, and race.²⁴ A central concern is the relations between specific craft media and the social constructs of femininity and masculinity. In her seminal study *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (1984), Rozsika Parker revises the history of embroidery to trace changes in ideas about the feminine, thus demonstrating that femininity is socially constructed.²⁵ She argues that the perception of embroidery was shaped by two historical moments. In the first, the Renaissance, needlework became associated with domestic labour performed by amateur women. In the second, the eighteenth century, embroidery was excluded from art academies and relegated to the realm of minor arts, whilst turning into an essential component of an emerging ideology of femininity. For Parker,

²¹ Restivo, *Arte popular e artesanato*, 19-20.

²² *Ibid.*, 20-21.

²³ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁴ Throughout this study I approach the term 'race' with caution. The notion of race is a construct which has been consistently deployed by institutions to marginalise people of colour. The concept of 'ethnicity', on the other hand, elicits social aspects such as 'history, language, beliefs, customs'. I will use both terms, along with the respective adjectives 'ethnic' and 'racial', to acknowledge different systems of oppression. Paula Braveman and Tyan Parker Dominguez, 'Abandon "Race." Focus on Racism', *Front Public Health*, 9, 2021, 1-8.

²⁵ Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, London, rev edn, 1996.

the lesser artistic value attributed to embroidery derives from a historical correlation between embroidery, women, and the working class. Yet, as she demonstrates, embroidery was also used to 'inculcate femininity' in young girls from aristocratic backgrounds.²⁶ *The Subversive Stitch* therefore anticipated the intersectional approach of third-wave feminism, which explores discrimination based on a combination of factors including sex, gender, race, and class.

While Parker's study reinforces sewing as a woman's activity, Joseph McBrinn's *Queering the Subversive Stitch: Men and the Culture of Needlework* (2020) responds to and challenges some of her findings, by focusing on men's sewing practices. McBrinn's research shows how queer men have deployed stitching to destabilise masculine stereotypes.²⁷ Beyond the Western context, archaeologists Gertrude A. M. Eyifa-Dzidzienyo and Benjamin Kankpeyeng question the assumption of pottery as a woman's activity. In their analysis of Kpando pottery in Ghana, Eyifa-Dzidzienyo and Kankpeyeng suggest that boys and men might have been involved in several stages of its production such as digging for clay and painting vessels.²⁸ Other scholars have explored how women's making has anticipated more recent artistic movements. For example, in *Live Form: Women, Ceramics, and Community* (2016), Jenni Sorkin redefines post-war women ceramists in the USA as the forerunners of socially engaged art and pedagogical craft practices.²⁹

My dissertation expands on these approaches, examining the ways in which

²⁶ Ibid., 11.

²⁷ Joseph McBrinn, *Queering the Subversive Stitch: Men and the Culture of Needlework*, London, New York, and Dublin, 2021.

²⁸ Gertrude A. M. Eyifa-Dzidzienyo and Benjamin Kankpeyeng, 'Gender in Archaeology: A Ghanaian Perspective', James Anquandah, Benjamin Kankpeyeng, and Wazi Apoh (eds), *Current Perspectives in the Archaeology of Ghana*, Oxford, 2014, 110-22.

²⁹ Jenni Sorkin, *Live Form: Women, Ceramics, and Community*, Chicago, 2016.

contemporary craft-based exhibitions represent or engage with people who are marginalised because of their gender, class, age, place of residence, and nationality. By combining these different experiences in the same study, I question the links between social divisions and artistic hierarchies, along with the connections between the two.

Apart from the divides between craft, art, industry and design, a substantial part of the scholarship still relies on the segregation of craft according to materials. Several studies focus on single media such as clay and textiles and analyse them in isolation.³⁰ Some authors, however, have argued against the classification of craft as a static set of disciplines. For example, Adamson emphasises that this division is specific to Anglophone contexts, and therefore overlooks a variety of cultural practices.³¹ For Risatti, this separation is based on a superficial approach to objects. In *A Theory of Craft: Function and Aesthetic Expression* (2007), he offers a 'taxonomy of applied function' that considers the links between the object's purpose and function, along with the processes and materials that allow this function to be fulfilled.³² Risatti thus arranges craft objects according to the following groups: 'containers' such as jugs, pots and boxes, whose aim is to contain things; 'covers' such as clothing, blankets and quilts, which are used to cover the human body; and

³⁰ For scholarship based on traditional media divisions see Peter Dormer (ed.), *The Culture of Craft: Status and Future*, Manchester, and New York, 1997; Paul Greenhalgh (ed.), *The Persistence of Craft: The Applied Arts Today*, 2nd edn, New Jersey, 2003; Tanya Harrod (ed.), *Obscure Objects of Desire: Reviewing the Crafts in the Twentieth Century. Conference Papers University of East Anglia 10-12 January 1997*, London, 1997.

Publications with a focus on ceramics include Judith S. Schwartz, *Confrontational Ceramics: The Artist as Social Critic*, London, and Philadelphia, 2008; Christie Brown, Julian Stair, and Claire Twomey (eds), *Contemporary Clay and Museum Culture: Ceramics in the Expanded Field*, Oxon and New York, 2016.

For writings centred on textiles, see: Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*; Lesley Millar (ed.), *Cloth & Culture Now*, exhibition catalogue, Canterbury, Epsom, Farnham, Maidstone and Rochester, Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia, Norwich, 2008; Elissa Auther, 'Fiber Art and the Hierarchy of Art and Craft, 1960-80', *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 1:1, 2008, 13-33.

³¹ Glenn Adamson, 'Introduction', Glenn Adamson (ed.), *The Craft Reader*, 2nd edn, London and New York, 2018, 1-5 (2).

³² Risatti, *A Theory of Craft*, 32.

‘supports’ such as beds, tables and sofas, whose purpose is to support the human body.³³

This thesis disrupts such approaches to craft and builds on recent methodologies such as those by Adamson and Risatti. Although my project demonstrates a particular emphasis on textiles, I approach this medium from a transdisciplinary standpoint, acknowledging its combination with other media such as ceramics, ironwork, found objects, installation, and performance. Additionally, I adapt Risatti’s classification of craft objects, considering the metaphorical implications of this classification within contemporary craft-based exhibitions, where these objects are no longer meant to be functional.

My approach is therefore informed by the influence of post-disciplinarity on craft practices, reflecting and problematising the role of craft in this post-disciplinary framework. Adamson, Shiner, and Clare Twomey have observed that, since the rise of the ‘post-disciplinary’, ‘post-medium’ or ‘post-studio’ paradigm in the 1950s, contemporary practitioners began to appropriate a number of craft materials and processes, which would traditionally have been held separate.³⁴ Rather than making things themselves, they often outsource the making, disputing craft’s supposed emphasis on the handmade and whole made object. Analyses of these practices ‘in the expanded field’ reveal an unprecedented blend of disciplines such as curation, installation, and performance, along with collaboration and shared authorship.³⁵

³³ Ibid., 33-34.

³⁴ On the impact of post-disciplinarity on craft see Shiner, “‘Blurred Boundaries’?”, 230-44; Greenhalgh, ‘Introduction: Craft’, 3; Adamson, *Thinking through Craft*, 8; Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, xv-xviii; Clare Twomey, ‘Introduction: Ceramics in a Place of Cultural Discourse’, Christie Brown, Julian Stair, and Clare Twomey (eds), *Contemporary Clay and Museum Culture: Ceramics in the Expanded Field*, Oxon and New York, 2016, 1-4.

³⁵ Twomey, ‘Introduction: Ceramics’, 3. For other discussions of expanded forms of practice, see Anthea Black and Nicole Burisch, ‘Craft Hard, Die Free: Radical Curatorial Strategies for Craftivism’, Maria Elena Buszek (ed.), *Extra/Ordinary: Craft and Contemporary Art*, Durham and London, 2011, 204-21.

The following section addresses the key institutional contexts for craft in Portugal and the UK, and their contribution to devising new meanings and understandings of craft, namely through the exhibition device.

Institutional contexts for craft: Portugal and the UK

Institutions have played a significant role in shaping definitions and perceptions of craft, notably through the staging of exhibitions. In the twentieth century, several national and transnational organisations were created to support craft, such as the American Craft Council in the USA (1943); the Crafts Council in the UK (founded as the Crafts Centre of Great Britain in 1948); and the World Crafts Council (1964), which is divided into different geographical areas such as Europe and Asia Pacific Region. In Portugal, the Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional or IEFP (Institute of Employment and Professional Training) has managed the promotion of craft through intersecting entities such as the Centro de Formação Profissional para o Artesanato e Património or CEARTE (Centre of Professional Training for Craft and Heritage).

A comparative analysis of institutional approaches to craft reveals that, in the UK, craft has been supported by successive (and sometimes overlapping) institutions since the post-war period, whereas in Portugal these underwent a dramatic change with the transition from dictatorship to democracy in the 1970s. According to Harrod, the Crafts Centre of Great Britain, founded in 1948, was successful in providing an official definition for craft, albeit one that highlighted ‘fine craftsmanship’ at the expense of rural and vernacular crafts.³⁶ In 1971,

³⁶ Tanya Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century*, New Haven and London, 1999, 211.

the Crafts Centre and the Crafts Council were assimilated by the newly founded Crafts Advisory Committee (CAC), which would be renamed Crafts Council in 1979. Since 1972, the Crafts Council holds a collection with an emphasis on the contemporary, and its first gallery was inaugurated in the 1980s.³⁷ In Portugal, by contrast, the Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional or SPN (Secretariat of National Propaganda, 1933-44), subsequently named Secretariado Nacional de Informação or SNI (National Secretariat of Information, 1944-68), directed its attention to vernacular crafts. Shortly after its establishment, the SPN began collecting objects and holding temporary exhibitions in its headquarters. This collection was later integrated in the Museu de Arte Popular (Museum of Popular Art), founded in 1948.³⁸

Collecting and exhibiting practices were also a core aspect for CAC in the UK. This organisation implemented several measures to endorse and expand craft practices. These included launching grants to help makers and organisations dedicated to craft; organising exhibitions and assembling a collection of objects for purposes of study and loan, with a focus on the contemporary; releasing the *Crafts* magazine in 1973, to bridge the gap between makers and audiences; and promoting multiple educational activities.³⁹ By contrast, development policies and legislation on craft production were only introduced in Portugal in the 1980s.⁴⁰

In 1979, shortly after the 25 April revolution put an end to the dictatorial regime, the IEFP was established, becoming Portugal's key government entity supervising the arts and crafts sector. This framework of craft under employment concerns also led to the foundation

³⁷ Ibid., 391; Tanya Harrod, *Factfile on the History of the Crafts Council*, London, 1994, 7-13.

³⁸ Restivo, *Arte popular e artesanato*, 73-78.

³⁹ Harrod, *Factfile on the History*, 8.

⁴⁰ Restivo, *Arte popular e artesanato*, 98-99.

of the Programa Escolas-Oficinas (Workshops-Schools Programme) in 1996, which offered craft training to the young and the unemployed. The certification of multiple craft products began in the late 1990s, with the aim of promoting excellence, informed consumption, and safeguard of craft practices. As Restivo demonstrates, some policy makers contest the effectiveness of these policies and governmental support.⁴¹ My thesis expands on these histories, identifying various institutional frameworks and including testimonies by different actors involved in each case study, namely practitioners, cultural agents, members of the clergy, and local communities. This allows me to analyse and critique the inclusion of certified making techniques in contemporary craft-based exhibitions, and the persisting power relations between several practitioners.

The next section identifies key methods for exhibiting craft. It sets out historic precedents, from the simulation of domestic interiors in the late 1800s, to the expansion of the white cube setting and the acknowledgment of its limitations in the twentieth century, and the exploration of alternative displays from the second half of the 1900s. It then focuses on the more recent history of exhibitions, and assesses the contribution of craft to discussions about the impact of exhibitionary frameworks on the perception of objects and contexts.

Exhibiting craft

This emerging field [exhibition histories] offers a significant methodological framework for understanding how the category of craft has been shaped, redefined and contested through display. [...] We argue that exhibitions – both physical and digital – are important to the study and future of craft. They are spaces in which the complex associations of craft – technical, spiritual, social, political, individual and

⁴¹ Ibid., 128-134.

collective can be exposed, contested and remade.⁴²

This extract, from the introduction to the first of two special issues of *The Journal of Modern Craft* on 'Exhibiting Craft' (2022), guest edited by Claire Jones, Imogen Hart, and myself, demonstrates the importance of exhibitions as devices that enable us to think about craft.⁴³ Craft has been constructed and deconstructed through displays. Exhibitions allow us to see how craft has been defined and what it might become. The exhibition space is a tangible site that enables us to critique the ambiguous, sometimes even contradictory, connotations of craft. Focusing on how craft is exhibited and presented – even when the term craft is not mentioned – is important, because it allows us to point out what is included and excluded in these contexts. This section focuses on approaches to exhibiting craft from the Arts and Crafts movement to today.

In her essay 'House-Trained Objects: Notes Towards Writing an Alternative History of Modern Art' (2002), Harrod argues that investigating the hitherto neglected presence of craft within modern art might afford a more accurate history of modern art. Harrod provides numerous examples of practitioners who integrated ceramics, textiles, paper, stone, glass, and other craft media in their so-called fine art practice. However, by removing many craft objects from museums and galleries, scholars and curators have articulated an erroneous narrative about modern art in which craft appears to not be present. Harrod's essay subsequently raises an important question: what happens if we reinstate those objects into

⁴² Imogen Hart, Claire Jones and Inês Jorge, 'Introduction: Exhibiting Craft: Histories, Contexts, Practices: Exhibiting Making: Gesture, Skill and Process', *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 15:2, 2022, 105-10 (105-6).

⁴³ Imogen Hart, Claire Jones and Inês Jorge (eds), 'Special Issue on Exhibiting Craft: Histories, Contexts, Practices. Exhibiting Making: Gesture, Skill and Process', *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 15:2, 2022, 105-233; Imogen Hart, Claire Jones and Inês Jorge (eds), 'Special Issue on Exhibiting Craft: Histories, Contexts, Practices. The Politics of Craft Exhibitions', *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 15:3, 2022, 235-355.

those spaces and narratives?⁴⁴

This interrogation might be further examined if we look at how the work by modern practitioners who engaged with practices often associated with craft has been exhibited across time. For instance, various exhibitions including works by Sophie Taeuber-Arp (1889-1943) reveal the shifting visibility of craft, along with its changing definition vis-à-vis industry and art. An early example was the *Ire Exposition Nationale d'Art Appliqué* (First National Exhibition of Applied Art), held in the Swiss city of Lausanne in 1922. This was Switzerland's first exhibition exclusively dedicated to applied art, which had hitherto been incorporated as a subcategory within exhibitions of fine art (Fig. 0.1). The 1922 exhibition ascribed works by Taeuber-Arp, notably embroideries and rugs, to the notion of 'applied art' (Fig. 0.2).⁴⁵

By contrast, Taeuber-Arp's first retrospective, posthumously held at Kunstmuseum Bern (Museum of Fine Arts Bern) in 1954, was exclusively comprised of paintings, omitting her diverse practice which encompassed media such as sculpture, architecture, interior design, craft, performance, and jewellery. As no solo exhibitions of her work were held during her lifetime, this retrospective demonstrates that Taeuber-Arp's legitimisation as an artist relied not only on displaying her work at a 'fine art' institution but also on neglecting all practices beyond the single, 'fine art' medium of painting.⁴⁶ This exclusionary approach followed that of the first *catalogue raisonné* of Taeuber-Arp's oeuvre, which was compiled and posthumously published by her husband Jean Arp in 1948 and, once again, was entirely

⁴⁴ Tanya Harrod, 'House-Trained Objects: Notes Towards Writing an Alternative History of Modern Art', Glenn Adamson (ed.), *The Craft Reader*, 2nd edn, London and New York, 2018, 512-24 (521).

⁴⁵ *Ire exposition nationale d'art appliqué*, exhibition catalogue, Lausanne, L'Œuvre: Association Suisse Romande de l'Art et de l'Industrie, Lausanne, 1922, 12.

⁴⁶ León Degand, *Sophie Taeuber-Arp: Berner Kunstmuseum*, exhibition catalogue, Bern, Kunstmuseum Bern, Bern, 1954, 4-6.

comprised of paintings.⁴⁷

Attempts to reverse this erasure of craft from art history and institutions date back to the end of the 1900s. In the early 1970s, feminist art critics reassessed Taeuber-Arp's work, exposing its multiplicity.⁴⁸ Taeuber-Arp's first UK retrospective at Tate Modern in 2021 represented a radical shift, celebrating rather than hiding the transdisciplinary nature of her practice (Fig. 0.3, Fig. 0.4).⁴⁹ In its introductory wall text, the words 'craft' or 'crafts' appear no less than six times (Fig. 0.5). The term was strategically deployed to illustrate the diversity of Taeuber-Arp's oeuvre, which 'challenges the historically constructed boundaries separating art, craft and design'.⁵⁰ Spanning a period of one-hundred years, these different scholarly and curatorial approaches exemplify the limitations of ascribing the work of a practitioner to a single category and the recent proliferation of the term 'craft'. My project follows Tate's approach to Taeuber-Arp's oeuvre by using craft as a tool, giving visibility to multiple practices that are commonly associated with craft and which proliferate within contemporary art.

The exhibitionary denial of craft is not confined to the last two centuries. In the late 1800s, the Arts and Crafts exhibitions equally revealed the paradoxical nature of craft, along with its continuous involvement in attempts to question and expand artistic canons. In *Arts and Crafts Objects* (2010), Hart unveils the coexistence of 'aesthetic, commercial and moral

⁴⁷ Georg Schmidt (ed.), *Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, Basel, 1948.

⁴⁸ See for instance Donna G. Bachmann and Sherry Piland, *Women Artists: An Historical, Contemporary, and Feminist Bibliography*, Lanham, 1978.

⁴⁹ Bettina Kaufmann and Medea Hoch, *Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, exhibition catalogue, London, Tate Modern, London, 2021. The exhibition was curated by Natalia Sidlina, Anne Umland, Walburga Krupp, and Eva Reifert with assistant curators Sarah Allen and Amy Emmerson Martin.

⁵⁰ Exhibition wall panel, in 'Sophie Taeuber-Arp', Tate Modern (15 July-17 October 2021). This text corresponds to the introduction of the exhibition guide, which can be found in the institution's website: Tate, *Exhibition Guide: Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/sophie-taeuber-arp/exhibition-guide>, accessed 27 January 2023.

intents' within the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society.⁵¹ Based on these overlaps, she argues that a redefinition of the Arts and Crafts movement should take place. By focusing on aspects of discord and discrepancy within the Society, Hart questions the assumption that the Arts and Crafts was a uniform and consistent movement. She also explains how this 'artistic co-operative society' emerged to counteract the Royal Academy exhibitions, forming a genuinely national exhibition, led by practitioners to endorse handicraft.⁵²

For Hart, the Society provided 'an alternative arena in which such [decorative] objects can legitimately be judged upon "strictly artistic grounds"'.⁵³ Yet she also notes that preparing exhibitions was only a small part of the group's endeavours, which also included writing articles and delivering lectures. As there is no evidence of how individual objects were meant to be interpreted within the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (ACES), Hart examines their writings alongside available installation photographs of Arts and Crafts exhibitions. For example, the fact that stained-glass cartoons and other exhibits were positioned to reflect their function, rather than to be clearly visible to the audience (Fig. 0.6), leads her to conclude that the overall display was considered more significant than individual works.

Developing this research on Arts and Crafts exhibitions, Zoë Thomas's *Women Art Workers and the Arts and Crafts Movement* (2020, henceforth *Women Art Workers*) focuses on exhibition spaces for women. While the Art Workers' Guild refused to exhibit work by women practitioners, Thomas demonstrates that the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society was

⁵¹ Imogen Hart, *Arts and Crafts Objects*, Manchester, 2010, 148.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 150.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 154.

not the only alternative.⁵⁴ Her study highlights a variety of women's exhibitionary initiatives from the late 1800s to the early 1900s, demonstrating their attempt to transform exhibiting practices in Britain to suit women's needs, notably by providing opportunities for support and collaboration. *Women Art Workers* focuses on national and international exhibitions, whose influence and popularity have been overlooked by the historiography on craft due to their larger scale and commercial intents.

As with Adamson's, Harrod's, and Hart's analyses of the Arts and Crafts movement itself, Thomas's investigation reveals that their exhibiting sites bore elastic ideologies, often combining innovation and tradition. She also suggests that women practitioners associated with the Arts and Crafts movement were able to expand the range of audiences which could interact with their objects, by using an array of public spaces. However, while many coeval exhibitions across Europe simulated domestic interiors to encourage the visualisation and consumption of objects, the first exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society at London's New Gallery in 1888 presented items in vitrines like in a museum.⁵⁵

From the 1920s onwards, the white cube joined the decorative art museum as the archetypal model to display craft (Fig. 0.7, Fig. 0.8, Fig. 0.9). The white cube setting is distinguished by fixed architectural features such as white-painted walls, blocked windows, and scant furniture, along with the presentation of often similar artworks hung on a single line and separated from each other across the wall (Fig. 0.10). In his seminal work *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (1996), Brian O'Doherty analyses how the modernist gallery promoted art's isolation from the outside world.⁵⁶ More recent

⁵⁴ Zoë Thomas, *Women Art Workers and the Arts and Crafts Movement*, Manchester, 2020, 66-105.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁵⁶ Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and

scholarship has demonstrated the impact of the white cube on craft objects. For example, in his editorial introduction to *Documents on Contemporary Crafts No. 3: Crafting Exhibitions* (2015), André Gali identifies the white cube and the decorative art museum as the most common templates for exhibiting artefacts.⁵⁷ For Gali, both solutions are based on the assumptions that it is possible to create a neutral setting, that objects must stand out from their surroundings, and that craft exhibitions do not need specific curation. He argues to the contrary, through a series of case studies (Bergen, London, Gothenburg and Oslo; all in 2014) which, in his view, exemplify 'new modes of curating and presenting crafts to the public'.⁵⁸

According to Gali, these alternative strategies for exhibiting craft are as follows: creating strong surroundings for the objects to challenge the perceived neutrality of the white cube; approaching the exhibition as a whole through an interplay between details and the overall display; exploring various ways of interacting with audiences that question systems of value linked to craft and other items of consumption; and the exhibition as a work-in-progress. However, his examples all take place in museums or white cube settings, reiterating the significance of these conventional or conventionalised contexts. My thesis expands on these studies, examining spaces for exhibiting craft beyond the white cube, the museum, and the art gallery.

Many of the strategies set out by Gali are echoed in Alla Myzelev's edited book *Exhibiting Craft and Design: Transgressing the White Cube Paradigm, 1930-Present* (2017, henceforth *Exhibiting Craft and Design*), which addresses the effect of the white cube setting

London, 1999, 13.

⁵⁷ André Gali, 'Introduction', André Gali (ed.), *Documents on Contemporary Crafts No. 3: Crafting Exhibitions*, Oslo, 2015, 11-25 (15).

⁵⁸ Ibid., 11.

on three-dimensional works of craft and design. Myzelev observes that ‘the White Cube paradigm’ deprives artefacts of their function, cultural value, and context, treating them as if they were autonomous, and producing an exclusionary approach to many artefacts and identities in museums and galleries.⁵⁹ Most of the case studies in *Exhibiting Craft and Design*, as with Gali, refer to strategies deployed inside the white cube. Tactics include involving various makers and audiences in workshops and performances which retrieve the object’s purpose, disclose making practices, and break the barriers between publics and institutions; displaying objects of inspiration, tools and models alongside the works themselves, to increase knowledge and understanding of making processes; developing collaborations between curators, practitioners and communities to discuss the social role of craft and design, along with issues of productivity and consumption; and creating liminal spaces bridging the home, the shop, the workshop, and the factory.

This study contributes to our understanding of exhibition histories, by examining a more recent shift where media such as textiles, which are often associated with craft, are being displayed in several institutions, from different kinds of museums to churches, factories, and various sites within a city. The aim of these exhibitions is not so much to collapse artistic divides but to commemorate, preserve, and rethink the role of craft skills for the future.

While such projects in part dissolve or question divisions between the arts, they also reflect a wider attempt to reposition the textile medium as a valid form of art.⁶⁰ An early

⁵⁹ Alla Myzelev, ‘Introduction: The Persistence of the White Cube Paradigm’, Alla Myzelev (ed.), *Exhibiting Craft and Design: Transgressing the White Cube Paradigm, 1930-Present*, London and New York, 2017, 1-21 (5).

⁶⁰ Other examples include *Abstract Design in American Quilts* (1971) at the Whitney Museum of American Art, *A Secret History of Clay: From Gauguin to Gormley* (2004) at Tate Liverpool, and *Making Knowing: Craft in Art, 1950-2019* (2019-22), also at the Whitney.

example of this type of endeavour is *Wall Hangings*, a touring exhibition across eleven cities in the US between 1968 and 1969, curated by Mildred Constantine and Jack Lenor Larsen. As Elissa Auther makes clear, this show aimed to introduce ‘fiber art’, an emerging global field distinguished by a conceptual approach to textiles, an expansion of their scale, and an exploration of processes beyond the loom.⁶¹ When *Wall Hangings* arrived at MoMA in 1969, Constantine insisted that the exhibition should take place in the special exhibition rooms, rather than in the Department of Architecture and Design. This gesture seems to respond to Adamson’s diagnosis of American museums in the twenty-first century, where the spheres of art and craft are separated by different departments, and unevenly present (and presented) in the gallery space.⁶² Yet in their attempt to legitimise the works in *Wall Hangings* as art, the curators upheld the hierarchy between craft and art. Constantine and Lenor Larsen followed the archetypical display for fine art settings, providing each piece with ample space, direct lighting, and equal height; and painting the walls with so-called ‘neutral’ colours.⁶³ The majority of the works were hung on the wall like paintings – explicitly wall hangings.

The poor attention given to *Wall Hangings* by the press reflects how proximity to craft often generates an absence of response from art critics. And as Dormer asserts, the classification of objects as craft can negatively impact their economic value.⁶⁴ It is therefore not surprising that, in her review of *Wall Hangings*, the French-American practitioner Louise Bourgeois regarded most of the pieces in the show as a third category, ‘decoration’, arguing that their attractive qualities set them at odds with the demanding nature of painting and

⁶¹ Auther, ‘Fiber Art and the Hierarchy’, 19.

⁶² Glenn Adamson, ‘Handy-Crafts: A Doctrine’, Paula Marincola (ed.), *What Makes a Great Exhibition?*, Chicago and London, 2006, 108-16 (109-10).

⁶³ Auther, ‘Fiber Art and the Hierarchy’, 24.

⁶⁴ Dormer, ‘The Salon de Refuse ?’, 6.

sculpture.⁶⁵ As the daughter of a woman who had owned a tapestry restoration workshop in the outskirts of Paris, Bourgeois might have been acutely aware of the correlation between gender and class through the textile medium.⁶⁶ Despite her previous rejection of textiles, Bourgeois's later work would be characterised by an extensive adoption of the medium through her 'soft sculptures'. Anchored in the use of pliable materials such as fabrics, paper, and rubber, soft sculpture was adopted by many women practitioners and flourished hand in hand with feminist art.⁶⁷ My thesis expands on these recent developments through its in-depth analysis of exhibitions that serve as platforms for creating extended dialogues between practitioners, local communities, buildings, and institutions.

Other museums and exhibitions have deliberately used craft to revise perceived divisions among the visual arts and unveil the power of 'outliers' such as craft, decorative art and 'self-taught art'.⁶⁸ A key example is Manhattan's New Museum, founded in 1977, which relies heavily on its sense of 'place'.⁶⁹ It was part of a wave of new galleries and museums built in alternative urban areas to attract new publics. In her essay 'Marcia Tucker's Domestic Politics: Art and Craft in the 1990s' (2022), Elyse Speaks highlights Marcia Tucker's vision as the curator and founder of the New Museum, which revealed her advocacy for equality, inclusivity, and nonconformism. Speaks's essay emphasises *A Labor of Love* (1996), an exhibition curated by Tucker at the New Museum, as a paradigmatic example of Tucker's

⁶⁵ Louise Bourgeois, 'The Fabric of Construction', *Craft Horizons*, 29:2, 31-35 (34). For a further analysis of Bourgeois's response to the exhibition, see Auther, 'Fiber Art and the Hierarchy', 19-22.

⁶⁶ Paulo Herkenhoff, 'Needles', Frances Morris (ed.), *Louise Bourgeois*, London, 2007, 186-87, repr. Tanya Harrod (ed.), *Documents of Contemporary Art: Craft*, Cambridge (Massachusetts), 2018, 125-26.

⁶⁷ Auther, 'Fiber Art and the Hierarchy', 31; Jill Fields, *An Intimate Affair: Women, Lingerie, and Sexuality*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 2007, 358.

⁶⁸ Elyse Speaks, 'Marcia Tucker's Domestic Politics: Art and Craft in the 1990s', *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 15:3, 2022, 1-17 (2).

⁶⁹ Sandy Nairne, 'The Institutionalization of Dissent', Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne (eds.), *Thinking about Exhibitions*, London, 1996, 271-88 (280).

experimentation with exhibiting, collaborative, and alternative models.⁷⁰ According to Speaks, *A Labor of Love* reflects Tucker's attempt to disrupt the conventional gallery framework by creating a 'domestic structure of engagement'.⁷¹ This was devised by ascribing different sections of a house to each gallery room, adding furniture to the display, painting the walls with the colours of a typical household, and interrupting the quietness of the museum through labour songs from distinct geographies (Fig. 0.11).⁷² The works themselves were installed as if in our homes. For example, a quilt by Jane Kaufman was set up on a bed – a strategy standing in sharp contrast with previous attempts to present quilts as fine art by hanging them on the wall in a white cube space (Fig. 0.12).⁷³

Yet Speaks argues that *A Labor of Love*'s house-like format thwarted the exhibition's radical goals.⁷⁴ As shown by the placement of Kaufman's quilt on a bed, the setting of the home, like that of the museum, might be deceptively objective whilst reiterating craft's associations with women and the establishment. Nevertheless, *A Labor of Love* was successful in disclosing craft as a varied set of practices that provide a lens to reflect about questions of labour and consumption across diverse cultures.

This dissertation offers a historical and critical context for understanding these recent approaches towards exhibiting craft, examining a range of exhibitions taking place in or across spaces with overt and more indirect links to political, cultural, and economic power. These include buildings linked to royalty and the clergy, outdoor spaces such as avenues and

⁷⁰ Speaks, 'Marcia Tucker's Domestic Politics', 1.

⁷¹ Ibid., 4.

⁷² Ibid., 4.

⁷³ A paradigmatic example is the exhibition *Abstract Design in American Quilts* (1971) at the Whitney Museum of American Art. On this exhibition, see Karin Elizabeth Peterson, 'How the Ordinary Becomes Extraordinary: The Modern Eye and the Quilt as Art Form', Maria Elena Buszek (ed.), *Extra/Ordinary: Craft and Contemporary Art*, Durham and London, 2011, 99-114.

⁷⁴ Speaks, 'Marcia Tucker's Domestic Politics', 6.

squares, in and beyond white cube settings, and public spaces such as markets and museums. Such a diversity of sites allows me to analyse if and how these projects engage with personal and collective traumatic experiences and issues of social justice and national identity; if and how these projects encourage the public's reflections about those spaces and places; the audiences that these venues include and exclude; and the implications of bringing together multiple sites – and subsequently the realms of culture, commerce, and industry – and people in a single project.

The next section explores the links between craft, place, and memory. It focuses on scholarly discussions about the appropriation of craft in the 'othering' of different peoples, the construction of a homogenous collective memory and heterogenous individual memories through craft, making practices by marginalised groups, and the role of textiles as carriers of memories and messages.

Craft, place, and memory

Craft is often recognised as a marker of place, cultural heritage, permanence, and collective memory. Scholars and makers such as Shiner and Edmund de Waal have problematised these connections, discussing how the Western constructs of 'authenticity' and 'primitivism' are frequently projected onto an exoticized 'Other'.⁷⁵ This 'Other', who might belong to the working class, the countryside, or former colonies, is usually perceived as the keeper of tradition. In the early twentieth century, the fascination of Western makers with the traditional crafts of Africa and the Far East was driven by this bias and exacerbated by

⁷⁵ Shiner, *The Invention of Art*, 270-74; Edmund de Waal, 'Altogether Elsewhere: The Figuring of Ethnicity', Paul Greenhalgh (ed.), *The Persistence of Craft: The Applied Arts Today*, 2nd edn, New Jersey, 2003, 185-93.

imperialism and colonialism.

Several authors have also discussed the urgency – and, on occasion, the pressure – to re-engage with ancestral making traditions in regions affected by imperial or colonial domination such as the African continent, Canada, Latvia, India, and Scotland.⁷⁶ For example, Elizabeth Cumming argues that, in the third quarter of the twentieth century, Scottish makers resorted to artistic tradition to assert national identity.⁷⁷ In spite of these connections with nationalist movements, Risatti distinguishes craft as a vital manifestation of humanity in the face of nationalism and religious fundamentalism.⁷⁸ For Lesley Millar, however, the worldwide phenomena of globalisation and migration have generated a shift from an emphasis on collective memory linked to nation-states to a paradigm of individual memory, which embraces fragmented conceptions beyond national boundaries.⁷⁹

In his introduction to *The Persistence of Craft: The Applied Arts Today* (2002) (hereafter referred to as *The Persistence of Craft*), Greenhalgh devises a ‘geography of craft’, describing its key shifts since the 1970s.⁸⁰ This expands the spatial focus on craft, whilst containing it within national, regional, and ethnic borders. Greenhalgh argues that the leading nations in modern craft – defined as Britain, the USA, the Scandinavian countries, and Japan – have since lost their prominence in the global arena. The new millennium,

⁷⁶ On the ways in which different communities have engaged with their cultural heritage, see the essays by Astrida Berzina, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Elizabeth Cumming, Amadou Hampâté Bâ, Carol E. Mayer and other authors in the following edited books: Greenhalgh (ed.), *The Persistence of Craft*; Glenn Adamson (ed.), *The Craft Reader*, 2nd edn, London and New York, 2018; Harrod (ed.), *Obscure Objects of Desire*; Millar (ed.), *Cloth & Culture Now*.

⁷⁷ Elizabeth Cumming, ‘Living Tradition or Invented Identity? The Restructuring of the Crafts in Post-War Edinburgh’, Tanya Harrod (ed.), *Obscure Objects of Desire: Reviewing the Crafts in the Twentieth Century: Conference Papers University of East Anglia 10-12 January 1997*, London, 1997, 66-72.

⁷⁸ Risatti, *A Theory of Craft*, xii.

⁷⁹ Millar (ed.), *Cloth & Culture Now*, 6-9.

⁸⁰ Greenhalgh, ‘Introduction: Craft’, 4.

however, witnessed a renaissance of craft in Italy, Spain, Czech Republic, and the Netherlands; the unprecedented rise of Canada and Australia both in craft theory and the practice of ceramics, jewellery, textiles, and furniture; and the international projection of India, Mexico and Korea in international circuits. This shift denotes a visibility of making beyond the North Atlantic axis, although arguably identifying the significance of craft practices in particular places along Western principles.

The Anglophone scholarship on craft largely focuses on the North Atlantic axis, Britain and its relations with former colonial settlements, and Japan.⁸¹ Yet some studies cover other geographies and cultures. For example, *Obscure Objects of Desire: Reviewing the Crafts in the Twentieth Century* (1997), comprises essays about Pueblo pottery, along with craft practices from North, South, East, and Central Europe; Southeast Africa; and Asia.⁸² Greenhalgh's *The Persistence of Craft* includes contributions on Norwegian woodcarving and silversmithing, Australian pottery, and Canadian crafts practised by First Nations people and Quebecois.⁸³ *Cloth & Culture Now* (2008), edited by Lesley Millar, incorporates studies on Finland and the Baltic countries.⁸⁴ *The Journal of Modern Craft* is explicitly interdisciplinary and international and has published research dedicated to modern and contemporary craft and design from across the Americas and the Caribbean; the Nordic countries, along with Southern, Western and Central Europe; North, South, East and West Africa; North, South, East and Central Asia; and Oceania.⁸⁵

⁸¹ See for instance Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain*; Auther, 'Fiber Art and the Hierarchy'; Brown, Stair, and Twomey (eds), *Contemporary Clay and Museum Culture*; Tanya Harrod (ed.), *Documents of Contemporary Art: Craft*, Cambridge (Massachusetts), 2018.

⁸² Harrod (ed.), *Obscure Objects of Desire*.

⁸³ Greenhalgh (ed.), *The Persistence of Craft*.

⁸⁴ Millar (ed.), *Cloth & Culture Now*.

⁸⁵ Glenn Adamson and others, *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 15 volumes, 2008-2023.

Adamson's *The Invention of Craft* discusses the colonial relations between the UK and India, the USA, and indigenous peoples.⁸⁶ His edited book *The Craft Reader* (2010) equally comprises texts about making in Sweden, Israel, India, South Korea and amongst London's Jamaican community.⁸⁷ Authors such as Eliana Moya-Raggio, Jacqueline Adams, and Marjorie Agosín have been analysing the Chilean *arpilleras* (patchworks).⁸⁸ *A Companion to Textile Culture* (2020), edited by Jennifer Harris, includes studies about textile practices by indigenous and African American communities in North America; Chile; Northern, Southern, Eastern and West Africa; the Muslim world; Pakistan and the Indian state of Gujarat; China and Japan; Oceania and the Pacific.⁸⁹ Craft is thus increasingly perceived as a global practice and activity. These works highlight making practices beyond the West or by minority or oppressed groups, and how these groups position themselves vis-à-vis dominant cultures through craft.

My project goes beyond the conventional geographies of craft and its scholarship by examining two national contexts – Portugal and the UK. Through its partial focus on Portugal, it highlights a country which, despite encompassing a multitude of craft traditions, is often overlooked in histories of modern and contemporary art and craft. This thesis also addresses various forms of 'othering' craft practices and their makers in the Portuguese context across different historical periods. A paradigmatic example is the contemporary practitioner Cristina Rodrigues, whose work draws on women as the guardians of cultural

⁸⁶ Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*.

⁸⁷ Adamson (ed.), *The Craft Reader*.

⁸⁸ On the Chilean *arpilleras*, see Eliana Moya-Raggio, "'Arpilleras': Chilean Culture of Resistance', *Feminist Studies*, 10:2, 1984, 277-90; Jacqueline Adams, *Art Against Dictatorship: Making and Exporting Arpilleras Under Pinochet*, Austin, 2013; Marjorie Agosín, 'Patchwork Memories', *ReVista*, 13:1, 2013, 12-14.

⁸⁹ Jennifer Harris (ed.), *A Companion to Textile Culture*, New Jersey, 2020.

heritage.

The scholarship has also emphasised the unique characteristics of textiles as bearers of memories and messages. For example, as Esther Leslie's research demonstrates, Walter Benjamin's writings are imbued with metaphors about craft.⁹⁰ In his essay 'The Storyteller' (1936), Benjamin regards weaving as an activity through which past, present and future become intertwined.⁹¹ Yet he also views weaving as the symbol, both of an idealised history which precedes industrialisation and of a utopian future. Along with Benjamin, Sadie Plant highlights textile crafts as a means of communication, based on the etymological root shared by weaving and writing (*textum*).⁹² My project expands on this scholarship, addressing the ways in which contemporary craft-based exhibitions engage with memories and communities linked to local histories of textile production. This includes analyses of emerging exhibitionary formats that draw on the industrial history of specific regions, with the aim of rethinking the present and future role of heritage practices; and of other curatorial and creative strategies that invite audiences to engage with urban spaces through textiles and texts.

The next section explores contemporary craft-based exhibitions which generate dialogues with historic collections and settings such as house-museums.

⁹⁰ Esther Leslie, 'Walter Benjamin: Traces of Craft', *Journal of Design History*, 11:1, 1998, 5-13.

⁹¹ Walter Benjamin, 'The Storyteller. Reflections on the Works by Nikolai Leskov', Hannah Arendt (ed.), *Illuminations*, London, 1999, 83-107.

⁹² On the associations between different craft practices, memory, and storytelling, see Benjamin, 'The Storyteller', 90-91; Leslie, 'Walter Benjamin: Traces', 6; Sadie Plant, *Zeros + Ones: Digital Women and The New Technoculture*, London, 1998, 66.

Exhibiting craft within historic spaces and collections

This dissertation addresses the exhibition of practices that are commonly associated with craft beyond the traditional art gallery or museum, by investigating temporary and permanent interventions within historic spaces and collections. This contributes to recent scholarship, which has begun to focus on craft's engagement with house-museums and historic buildings and/or collections, although this has largely involved single media, notably ceramics.⁹³ The involvement of craft in site-specific installations to activate historic sites raises similar questions to those posed in craft theory, such as whether craft aligns with conservative or progressive ideologies, or with both.

My thesis engages with these issues around ideology and site-specificity, by focusing attention on exhibitions and permanent installations in heritage sites and churches in Portugal and the UK. These projects incorporate traditional craft techniques and involve collaborations with skilled practitioners. I consider the ways in which such projects tackle questions of gender, colonialism, migration, and cultural identity in spaces with strong links to power structures. My analysis shows that, at times, practitioners have to negotiate with these different institutions to address these contemporary issues. This emphasis on exhibitions allows me to reflect not only about their exploration of specific folk customs, but also about the intersections between vernacular culture and the official and national narratives conveyed by historic contexts.

Several site-specific installations encompassing ceramics, textiles, and other media

⁹³ On scholarship focusing on exhibitions of contemporary ceramics in historic settings and collections, see for instance Emmanuel Cooper, *Contemporary Ceramics*, London, 2009; Matt Smith, 'Queering the Museum', Christie Brown, Julian Stair, and Claire Twomey (eds), *Contemporary Clay and Museum Culture: Ceramics in the Expanded Field*, Oxon and New York, 2016, 196-208.

have been devised for museum collections and country houses. These evidence craft's ability to highlight the ways in which historic collections and sites have contributed to marginalise people of colour, LGBTQIA+ people, and women. An early example within this exhibitionary format is Fred Wilson, a practitioner and curator who has taken 'the museum as a medium' since the 1980s, whilst incorporating media such as iron and Murano glass.⁹⁴ For his seminal installation *Mining the Museum* at the Maryland Historical Society (1992-3), Wilson was invited to search the institution's stored collections and address any question that aroused his interest. Wilson decided to create unexpected pairings of objects to underscore silenced histories of racial and social conflict. For instance, in an installation called *Metalwork, 1793-1880*, he placed a silver tea set next to a pair of iron shackles, using these objects to make visible the connections between slavery and wealth (Fig. 0.13).⁹⁵ Through tactics such as these Wilson has been able to shift the gaze, pointing out the ways in which racism is perpetuated in the discourses of many institutions.⁹⁶

Exhibitions within historic collections or settings can also engage with one of craft's original habitats – the home. Scholars have examined the development of new curatorial approaches in country houses and other domestic settings within the last three decades, with a particular focus on the field of ceramics.⁹⁷ In *Contemporary Ceramics*, Emmanuel Cooper mentions projects developed by the ceramicists Edmund de Waal and Li Jianhua in

⁹⁴ Artnet, *Fred Wilson*, 2024, <http://www.artnet.com/artists/fred-wilson/>, accessed 2 January 2024.

⁹⁵ Leslie Bedford, *The Art of Museum Exhibitions: How Story and Imagination Create Aesthetic Experiences*, Walnut Creek, California, 2014, 95.

⁹⁶ Rachel Corbett, 'The Curators Were Shocked': In Istanbul, Fred Wilson Exposes the Black Art History Hidden in Plain Sight, 2017, <https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/fred-wilson-istanbul-biennial-1100798>, accessed 14 February 2020.

⁹⁷ Laura Gray, 'Museums and the "Interstices" of Domestic Life': Re-Articulating Domestic Space', *Interpreting Ceramics*, 13, 2011, 1-14; Laura Gray, 'Ceramics On Show: Domesticity, Destruction and Manifestations of Risk-Taking', Christie Brown, Julian Stair, and Clare Twomey (eds), *Contemporary Clay and Museum Culture: Ceramics in the Expanded Field*, Oxon and New York, 2016, 57-65 (58).

English country houses.⁹⁸ Yet, for Laura Gray, rehabilitating the home as an exhibitionary context for contemporary ceramics practice entails a form of curatorial 'risk'.⁹⁹ Gray's research demonstrates that site-specific interventions in house-museums have the potential to emphasise pottery's connections not only with domesticity, but also with modern art.

A key example of ceramics' engagement with the home is *A Sounding Line* (2007), an installation by Edmund de Waal at Chatsworth House in Derbyshire, UK. Through this project, de Waal aimed to highlight the fact that, at Chatsworth, 'porcelain is as much a part of its texture as the pictures and furniture'.¹⁰⁰ This reveals de Waal's desire not only to evidence the presence of porcelain in this country house, but also to even up the status of his own ceramic practice to that of fine art and decorative art. He therefore filled high brackets and fireplaces with his elegant porcelain vessels glazed in pale blue, claiming the home as their rightful place (Fig. 0.14).¹⁰¹

Since the late twentieth century, contemporary craft-based exhibitions have also evoked the home within the museum space.¹⁰² Exemplary of this exhibitionary model is de Waal's 2007 project at Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, and at the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA). Several groups of porcelain vessels were set against the domestic framework of Kettle's Yard, or the white cube settings of MIMA. While in an installation at

⁹⁸ Cooper, *Contemporary Ceramics*, 229-31.

⁹⁹ Gray, 'Ceramics on Show', 58.

¹⁰⁰ Edmund de Waal, *A Sounding Line*, 2024, <https://www.edmunddewaal.com/making/a-sounding-line>, accessed 24 October 2023.

¹⁰¹ Cooper, *Contemporary Ceramics*, 229.

¹⁰² Edmund de Waal, Kettle's Yard Gallery and Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, *Edmund de Waal at Kettle's Yard, MIMA and Elsewhere*, exhibition catalogue, Kettle's Yard, Cambridge and MIMA, Middlesbrough, 2007; Martina Margetts, 'The Walls Come Tumbling Down', Christie Brown, Julian Stair, and Clare Twomey (eds), *Contemporary Clay and Museum Culture: Ceramics in the Expanded Field*, London and New York, 2016, 17-30; Gray, 'Museums and the "Interstices"', 9-10. Other exhibitions which simulate domestic environments include *In Praise of Function* (2005), curated by Gloria Hickey at the Craft Council of Newfoundland & Labrador, Canada. Speaks, 'Marcia Tucker's Domestic Politics', 1.

Kettle's Yard de Waal replaced some of the books from a bookshelf with his own pots (Fig. 0.15), at MIMA an arrangement of pots was displayed in custom-made white racks. His vessels also reached new heights, using MIMA's high, modernist structures as a shelf – a gesture that provided new perspectives about these objects and the building's architecture (Fig. 0.16). Through these different approaches, de Waal wanted to experiment with various possibilities for ceramic displays and challenge the spatial barriers which constrict the viewing of objects. By bringing together spaces which have been deemed opposite such as the museum and the home, projects such as this bring into question a multitude of categories such as those separating sites, objects, and people.

My project is informed by these concerns and risks, including case studies of exhibitions in venues that have accumulated different functions across history. This accumulation of purposes complicates and enriches the potential meanings of craft within these settings, and increases potential to engage or resonate with different audiences. My analysis centres on projects held at rehabilitated industrial spaces as well as other historic venues – notably a convent which was converted into a hospital, before becoming a heritage site. This focus on ecclesiastical sites reflects the increasing role of contemporary art in places of worship, although, as the section below sets out, practice and scholarship have largely focused on churches rather than the more complex sites of convents and monasteries that serve multiple functions.

The church

The Hall was an extraordinary set of Gothic buildings in an accommodating public school; meaning had heritage-appeal-a-plenty. The original collegiate church could trace its ancestry back to its founding in the year 933 by King Athelstan of Wessex.

These were premises with considerable space as well as the demonstration of the medieval craft skills of stone, glass, and wood carving. It had an educational ethos underneath high church sentiment. Furthermore, the drive to the school was glamorous, taking in the manicured and symmetrical village of Milton Abbas – some of the county’s most beautiful landscape. This venue was a world apart from the Seldown Gallery and its intractable white walls, or the Bradford and Bingley Building Society with its inflexible screen and white plinths. Here, craft could rightfully resound in history.¹⁰³

Despite being one of craft’s primary spaces, the church is an understudied subject in the fields of craft and exhibition studies.¹⁰⁴ This excerpt is part of ‘Within the Guilded Cage’ (2017), an article in which Simon Olding describes the activities of the Dorset Craft Guild, established in the South West of England in 1978. It focuses on *Craftwork ’80*, an exhibition held at the Abbot’s Hall of Milton Abbey School.

Olding’s account illustrates some of the benefits and pitfalls of displaying craft at ecclesiastical venues. For example, he demonstrates that, by using a former collegiate church as an exhibiting space, the Guild was able to accomplish its goals, notably to accommodate an increasing number of members, to exhibit their works in more respectable settings, and to draw more members. These objectives were fulfilled because of the extraordinary characteristics of the building, with its large rooms; its incorporation of manifold original works of craft; its layered atmosphere combining historic, religious, and educational purposes; and the beauty and opulence of the surrounding rural landscape. Here, the church is a site where contemporary craft can engage both with its own past and with broader histories, with clergy and royalty, with the countryside and its romantic connotations, and with the emotional gravity and sensory abundance of ecclesiastical

¹⁰³ Simon Olding, ‘Within the Guilded Cage’, Alla Myzelev (ed.), *Exhibiting Craft and Design: Transgressing the White Cube Paradigm, 1930-Present*, London and New York, 2017, 56-75 (64).

¹⁰⁴ See, for instance, Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain*, 352-68; Ann Wilson, ‘Arts and Crafts and Revivalism in Catholic Church Decoration: A Brief Duration’, *Éire-Ireland*, 48:3/4, 2013, 5-48.

venues.

Milton Abbey also offered complications such as the impossibility to access its high ceiling or fix works to its hard walls, and insufficient levels of illumination for such a vast space. The design team tackled these issues by painting the walls white, stitching material to hang over the end wall, and borrowing display cases from a nearby art school.¹⁰⁵ This demonstrates the limitations of using places of worship as exhibiting sites, and the way in which the Guild responded to these by mimicking the atmosphere, modes of display and furniture of a white cube setting.

Although the exhibition of craft in ecclesiastical venues offers a unique exchange between works and space, the presence of contemporary art in religious venues is not without its frictions. In his book *Art and the Church: A Fractious Embrace: Ecclesiastical Encounters with Contemporary Art* (2016), Jonathan Koestlé-Cate traces an increase of contemporary art installations in religious sites since the late 1990s.¹⁰⁶ He ascribes this phenomenon to a mutual interest and curiosity between the worlds of art and religion, to the dissipation of institutional boundaries, and to the commodification of art. Koestlé-Cate criticises the excessive number of art projects in British cathedrals, advocating for quality over quantity. *Art and the Church* focuses on site-specific work, video, performance, and temporary installations as opposed to more conventional and permanent formats. It is mostly confined to England, and to Anglican contexts. Koestlé-Cate also observes the resistance of the Church and its attenders to contemporary art projects, especially in Protestant settings. While contemporary art can disturb the religious ceremony and its

¹⁰⁵ Olding, 'Within the Guided Cage', 65.

¹⁰⁶ Jonathan Koestlé-Cate, *Art and the Church: A Fractious Embrace: Ecclesiastical Encounters with Contemporary Art*, London, and New York, 2016, 1.

spaces, the church's charged atmosphere might also overpower and affect the meaning of artworks – particularly within Catholic or High Anglican milieus – through the sight of statues, bas-reliefs, paintings and stained glasses, the smell of the censer and the taste of the wafer.¹⁰⁷

Throughout Europe, religious venues have long been filled with a multiplicity of crafts. Decorative traits such as brickwork patterns on the tympana of arcades have helped scholars date buildings, notably in the case of the Church of St Catherine in Thessaloniki (Fig. 0.17).¹⁰⁸ At the turn of the twentieth century, the construction of 'a distinctive Irish cultural identity' was deemed vital in the struggle for national independence.¹⁰⁹ Within the nationalist movement, 'Irishness' had become intrinsically tied to Catholicism, against British Protestantism. As a result, churches were embellished with 'Irish' signs and ornamentations connecting nationhood and faith.¹¹⁰ According to Ann Wilson, the Catholic church interiors at St Brendan's Cathedral in Loughrea and the Honan Hostel Chapel in Cork reveal a comprehensive adoption of the Irish Arts and Crafts.¹¹¹ Built in the early 1900s, both settings encompassed several commissions to Irish practitioners; the use of local or regional materials; signals of Irish identity such as local saints, biblical figures and the Irish cross; along with decoration and iconography inspired by Irish medieval art.

Craft also played a key role in the reconstruction of churches in the countries most affected by WWII. A key example is Coventry Cathedral, built in the aftermath of a sustained

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 6.

¹⁰⁸ Evangelia Hadjitryphonos, 'The Church of St. Catherine in Thessalonike: its Topographical Setting and the Current State of Scholarship', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 108:2, 2015, 673-714.

¹⁰⁹ Wilson, 'Arts and Crafts and Revivalism', 14.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 15.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 5.

attack on the city of Coventry in England, which had caused the destruction of a fourteenth century cathedral. Conceived by architect Sir Basil Spence, the new building was completed in 1962. Spence's project was distinguished by its integration of the ruins of the old building, which remains side by side with the new cathedral, 'creating a symbolic contrast between conflict and resolution'.¹¹² The site therefore embraces different degrees of remembrance, as a token of national memory which also makes room for individual reminiscence. As Tanya Harrod demonstrates, another distinctive feature of Coventry Cathedral is its extensive incorporation of craft through numerous commissions (Fig. 0.18, Fig. 0.19, Fig. 0.20, Fig. 0.21, Fig. 0.22).¹¹³ Driven by a desire for reconciliation, the reconstruction of the cathedral involved several commissions to émigré German makers such as Hans Coper and Ralph Beyer.¹¹⁴

Contemporary craft has also been practiced, exhibited, and sold at sacred venues to express painful experiences of political tyranny. As Jacqueline Adams explains, in the context of Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile:

[...] it was the moral authority and power that the Comité, Vicaría, and Catholic Church enjoyed that made them able to offer protection and support; they were the only oppositional organizations that the regime could not violently confront, and the *arpilleristas* [makers of *arpillera* patchworks] trusted them. [...] Hence an institution powerful enough to offer support and protection can be very helpful in the emergence of a solidarity art system.¹¹⁵

This statement reveals that some religious organisations aided those who were persecuted

¹¹² Johnathan Djabarouti, 'Translating Change: A Continuity of Craft Heritage at Coventry Cathedral, UK', *Journal of Heritage Management*, 7, 2022, 167-85 (172).

¹¹³ Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain*, 352-68.

¹¹⁴ Tom Devonshire Jones, 'Jewels in the Casket: Coventry Cathedral's Works of Art: Comment: Letter from Mark Cazalet', *Theology*, 105:825, 2002, 175-83 (176).

¹¹⁵ Adams, *Art Against Dictatorship*, 253. For an earlier account of the *arpilleras*, see Moya-Raggio, "'Arpilleras': Chilean Culture'.

during Chile's military junta. In a context of oppression and violence, a few ecclesiastical settings functioned both as a sanctuary and a space for making, exhibiting, and selling *arpilleras*. The *arpilleras* – embroidered narrations of brutality of the dictatorship – were first exhibited at the Jesuit school of San Ignacio and the colonial church of San Francisco, both in Santiago; and later in the headquarters of La Vicaría de la Solidaridad, a human rights organisation under the Archdiocese of Santiago.¹¹⁶ Groups of *arpilleristas* would regularly meet in places of worship to create works, share experiences, and cope with traumatic events such as the persecution of their relatives. Some *arpillera* workshops would gather in the same churches, allowing different groups of women to interact with each other.

As the regime regarded them as craft made by unassuming and illiterate women, the *arpilleras* and the impact of their global circulation were underestimated. This demonstrates that both craft and the space of the church hold a subversive potential which is often overlooked. Opponents of the regime also offered *arpilleras* as a gift to international figures and exiled family and friends. The *arpilleras* were exhibited in Europe and the United States, where they testified to experiences of unemployment, deprivation, abduction, and imprisonment.¹¹⁷ This mobility across different continents drew international attention to the violence of the dictatorship.¹¹⁸

The relations between women and gifts were further explored in Laura Vickerson's *Offering* (2000), an installation at Église Saint-Roch (Saint-Roch Church) in Quebec, Canada.

¹¹⁶ Adams, *Art Against Dictatorship*, 214.

¹¹⁷ Early examples of exhibitions of *arpilleras* in the West include a show at the Power Center for The Performing Arts in Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1980; and an inclusion of *arpilleras* in *Women and Textiles: Their Lives and Their Work* (1983), an exhibition organised by Janis Jefferies, Marysia Lewandowska, Sara Bowman, Gillian Elinor and Pauline Barrie at Battersea Arts Centre in London. Janis Jefferies, 'Textiles', Fiona Carson and Claire Pajaczkowska (eds), *Feminist Visual Culture*, Edinburgh, 2000, 189-205 (194-95).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 210.

The columns encircling the altar of this Roman Catholic church were enveloped in rose petal fabric, whilst a petal-decorated cloth hung from the balcony to the altar and forward on the floor (Fig. 0.23). *Offering* was also a participatory work, which invited the public to attach rose petals to the fabric, as a donation or plea for somebody.¹¹⁹ Given its associations with the Virgin Mary and secular experiences of love, the motif of the rose allowed the inclusion of multiple meanings, contexts, and audiences in the space of the church.¹²⁰ The long piece of cloth resembled a stream of blood flowing through the sacred space, conveying ideas of fertility, love, and grief. It also functions as a curtain, signalling the edge between the profane and the sacred.¹²¹

Another work that juxtaposed craft and the church to reconcile the earthly and the spiritual worlds, was *The Matter of Life and Death* (2013) at York St Mary's, UK.¹²² York St Mary's is a contemporary art gallery installed in a former church, which is managed by the York Museums Trust and retains the building's original structure. The exhibition brought together works by British potter Julian Stair and historic objects from the York Museums Trust's collection, which Stair selected himself (Fig. 0.24). In a presentation video of *The Matter of Life and Death*, he claims that churches are sites which cover life's transitional moments – notably birth, marriage, and death.¹²³

Stair's selection of pieces from the York Museums Trust's collection primarily

¹¹⁹ Laura Vickerson, *Offering*, <http://lauravickerson.com/?projectid=09&catid=01>, accessed 30 December 2021.

¹²⁰ Laura Vickerson, *Artist Statement*, <http://lauravickerson.com/?pageid=04>, accessed 30 December 2021.

¹²¹ Nadine Käthe Monem (ed.), *Contemporary Textiles: The Fabric of Fine Art*, London, 2008.

¹²² For other scholarly reflections on this case study, see James Beighton, 'Possibilities Regained: Transitions through Clay', Christie Brown, Julian Stair, and Clare Twomey (eds), *Contemporary Clay and Museum Culture: Ceramics in the Expanded Field*, Oxon and New York, 2016, 177-85 (179).

¹²³ York Museums Trust, *The Matter of Life and Death: An Installation by Julian Stair*, online video recording, Youtube, 16 May 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DcEG1INKqqE&ab_channel=YorkMuseumsTrust> [accessed 18 July 2023].

included archaeological items such as funerary vessels. These historic objects became temporarily accessible to the public, through their display in plinths rather than in cases (Fig. 0.25). Although such mode of display arguably replicated Stair's privileged access to the collections' storage, where he could handle the urns, it equally positioned these pieces as works of art. This body of work inspired Stair to produce various pots in different types of clay, from porcelain to naturally occurring clays. His creations were differentiated from the historic objects by placing them in a separate section with a wall, two small shelves, and a plinth (Fig. 0.26). The medium of clay allowed Stair to reflect about the links between death, pottery, and the human body – often referred to as a 'vessel' or 'container' of the soul.¹²⁴ Through these analogies, Stair aimed to demystify death as an intrinsic part of life; and celebrate life through these objects. The meeting of historic and contemporary vessels at a church setting evoked the space's original connections with ritual along with the symbolism of ceramics.

My study responds to these projects and builds on the scholarship, examining contemporary craft-based exhibitions across different religious contexts. These include temporary exhibitions and permanent installations in Catholic and Anglican places of worship. Such exhibitionary formats involve distinct ecclesiastical institutions and their historic and political contexts, allowing me to investigate the complex dialogues between practitioner, church, royalty, and state. I also examine the ways in which these recent projects respond to emerging discussions about inclusivity, social justice, and migration, injecting the stories of local and rural communities, women, migrants, and younger

¹²⁴ Ibid.

generations in these spaces of power.

While the church offers discussions about the links between secular and religious power, the factory allows reflections about place, industrial history, and the role of skilled labour in the present day. As the section below shows, scholars and practitioners have recently begun to engage with the factory as a site of production as well as exhibition, with a particular focus on ceramic and textile practices.

The factory

Whenever artists depend on the hands of others to make their works, those hands become part of the meaning of the work.¹²⁵

This statement discloses the common involvement of skilled workers in contemporary practices, where they are or are not paid to execute someone's idea. Despite the apparent separation of craft and industry, many of these skilled workers come from what might be termed more commercial or industrial contexts – foundries, or manufacturers such as Spode.

The scholarship has recently begun to explore the factory as a place for producing and exhibiting craft.¹²⁶ Several authors have traced the rejection of the studio by contemporary practitioners, which has its origins in fine art practices of the late 1960s. For example, in her essay 'Out of the Studio' (2016), Harrod brings to light the paradoxical

¹²⁵ Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 41.

¹²⁶ On research about craft and the space of the factory, see Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain*, 342; Neil Brownsword, *Action/Reflection: A Creative Response to Transition and Change in British Ceramic Manufacture*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Brunel University, 2006, 194-258; Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*; Tanya Harrod, 'Out of the Studio', Christie Brown, Julian Stair, and Clare Twomey (eds), *Contemporary Clay and Museum Culture: Ceramics in the Expanded Field*, Oxon and New York, 2016, 45-54; Ezra Shales, 'Soil so Good: Neil Brownsword's Reinventions', *Neil Brownsword's Factory*, exhibition catalogue, Seoul, Icheon World Ceramic Centre, Seoul, 2017, 10-31.

dependence of studio ceramics on the space of the factory, which allowed studio pottery to be produced in large quantities.¹²⁷ This refutes the dichotomy cultivated by studio ceramicists in the early twentieth century, between the studio as a place of isolation and intellectual activity and the factory as a place of collective and mechanical labour. Harrod equally detects a difference in the motivations of studio potters who visited China in the late 1970s and early 1980s and those of the twenty-first century. While the former were more interested in ceramic objects from the past than in contemporary industrial ceramics, current visitors look for dazzling wares. Chinese factories in cities such as Jingdezhen feel vibrant to British studio potters, in comparison to the decay of former pottery hubs in Britain such as Stoke-on-Trent. Many of these practitioners also outsource the expertise of Chinese factories and their workers to produce their creations, due to their competitive costs.¹²⁸

Contemporary practitioners have also engaged with the factory through the artists-in-residence format. In a first-person account of her three-month residency at the Kohler Co. factory in Wisconsin (2008), British ceramic practitioner Phoebe Cummings reflects on the eloquence and perfection of labour in these places. In her view, these qualities are achieved through collective work divided into multiple stages. She describes the factory not only as a space for making, but also 'part museum, part tourist destination, part design center, part laboratory'.¹²⁹ This discloses the contemporary factory as a site intersecting the activities of conservation, exhibition, consumption, creativity, and research. Cummings acknowledges her own nostalgic feelings during her experience at Kohler Co. Her final project deliberately

¹²⁷ Harrod, 'Out of the Studio', 45.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 47-49.

¹²⁹ Phoebe Cummings, 'Peripatetic Making: A Borrowed Space, Time Continuum', *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 8, 2016, 359-71 (362).

rejected the uniformity which is expected from factory products. Cummings also notes the effect of the financial collapse of 2007-8 on the production and atmosphere of the factory. Her account reveals a tendency to romanticise processes of deindustrialisation within contemporary craft-based exhibitions.

By contrast, Valérie Delarue's residency at the Cité de la Céramique (City of Ceramics) at Sèvres resulted in a work produced and exhibited at its factory. Her colossal piece *La Chambre d'Argile* (The Clay Room, 2010) was the outcome of *Corps au Travail* (Body at Work), a video performance developed by Delarue in a storage silo at the Sèvres's mill workshop (Fig. 0.27). By using her own naked body to sculpt a clay chamber, Delarue introduced the performative character of making into a storeroom. Delarue's residence at the ceramics factory arguably allowed her to discover areas which are usually inaccessible to the public. Yet *Body at Work* still perpetuates the stereotypical image of the solitary studio artist battling (and immersing herself) with the material.¹³⁰

While Sèvres is still in production, supported by state funding, other industrial sites across Europe have had a less positive outcome. In many countries, deindustrialisation has led to the closure of several factories, affecting whole cities, regions, networks, and lives. Some of these defunct industrial buildings have subsequently been incorporated into heritage and museum culture. An example is the Gladstone Pottery Museum, founded in 1974 on the premises of a derelict factory in Stoke-on-Trent. The Staffordshire Pottery Industry Preservation Trust established the museum to protect the factory from being demolished and to safeguard Stoke's unique landscape, particularly the massive bottle-

¹³⁰ Valérie Delarue, *Body at Work*, <https://www.valeriedelarue.com/en/body-at-work/>, accessed 19 January 2023.

shaped brick kilns known as ‘pot banks’ which enfold the Gladstone Pottery Museum.¹³¹ For Martina Margetts, the shift in the site’s status from factory to museum, and the presence of potters producing at a much smaller scale than in the original industrial context, embody the artificial enactment of a lost past created for visitor consumption.¹³² The museum hosts daily demonstrations of ‘bone china flower making, pot throwing, casting using liquid clay, and hand painting on to pottery’.¹³³ The demonstrators convey these pottery skills, along with their knowledge about the atmosphere and making processes carried out at Victorian factories. Ceramic objects made and painted at the museum are also sold at its gift shop. The Gladstone Pottery Museum thus exemplifies the limitations of attempting to recreate the atmosphere of former industrial buildings.

Contemporary practitioners working in ceramics have looked at the factory and industrial heritage with a more critical eye. For instance, Neil Brownsword’s creative practice explores brownfield sites, particularly the disused and contaminated areas of ceramic production in his birth city of Stoke-on-Trent, also known as The Potteries.¹³⁴ Born into a family of potters, Brownsword began working as an apprentice at the Wedgwood factory, and later completed a PhD involving interviews with workers from this site.¹³⁵ His work disrupts the gulf between studio ceramics and the factory, which art and craft historians have perpetuated, unveiling the class divides which underpin it. Within Brownsword’s practice, the brownfields are treated as museum objects, as testimonies of labour and craft

¹³¹ Karen DeBres, ‘Seaside Resorts, Working Museums and Factory Shops: Three Vignettes as British Tourism Enters the Nineties’, *Focus*, 41:2, 1991, 10-17; Stoke-on-Trent Museums, *History*, 2023, <https://www.stokemuseums.org.uk/gpm/history/>, accessed 21 February 2023.

¹³² Martina Margetts, Margetts, ‘The Walls Come’, 20.

¹³³ Stoke-on-Trent Museums, *Activities*, 2023, <https://www.stokemuseums.org.uk/gpm/whats-on/activities/>, accessed 21 February 2023.

¹³⁴ Shales, ‘Soil so Good’, 10-31.

¹³⁵ Brownsword, *Action/Reflection*, 194-258.

skills.

Some museums have also invited ceramic practitioners to engage with their craft collections and make visible the lives of skilled workers. For example, curator Rachel Gotlieb asked UK ceramicist Clare Twomey to create a work at the Gardiner Museum in Toronto. *Piece by Piece* (2014-5) encompassed a massive eery piazza built in the museum's temporary exhibition gallery, which included three original figurines from the museum's *commedia del arte* collection, 2,000 replicas of these statuettes made by Twomey, and a colossal table where maker-performers created more pieces to add to the collection. As Gotlieb concludes in a reflective essay on the project, 'Twomey invented a new space that was not museum, factory or studio; it was a liminal space where time undoes meaning and where we forget'.¹³⁶ This statement demonstrates the ways in which installation art and the theatrical staging of exhibitions can create a space which defies categories, and transports the audience to an alternative realm.

In the field of textiles, Anne Wilson's exhibition *Local Industry* (2010) at the Knoxville Museum of Art in Tennessee involved a collaboration with hand weavers, who produced a nineteen-meter-long piece of fabric inside the institution. Thousands of visitors also helped make the textile. The final work was integrated into the museum's collection, including the project's archive of the production process, which is shown alongside the work every time it is displayed.¹³⁷ Practitioners such as Brownsword, Twomey and Wilson transform the

¹³⁶ Rachel Gotlieb, 'Ego and Salve in the Gardiner Museum', Christie Brown, Julian Stair, and Claire Twomey (eds), *Contemporary Clay and Museum Culture: Ceramics in the Expanded Field*, London and New York, 2016, 209-22 (219).

¹³⁷ Anne Wilson, *Local Industry: Project Statement*, <https://www.annewilsonartist.com/local-industry-credits.html>, accessed 18 January 2023; Inês Jorge, 'The Use of Textiles in Anne Wilson and Kathrin Stumreich's Work', Cristina Carvalho and Gianni Montagna (eds), *International Conference on Textiles, Identity and Innovation*, Lisbon, 2017, 3-8. See also Lisa Vinebaum, 'Outside the White Cube', Alla Myzelev (ed.), *Exhibiting Craft and Design: Transgressing the White Cube Paradigm, 1930-Present*, London, 2017, 160-80 (161-62).

museum into a performative site of work, emphasising questions of labour, community, and time, and questioning the place of craftsmanship in a post-industrial framework.

Some of these practitioners have specifically incorporated live makers in their work. In Twomey's *Piece by Piece*, those who were working live had to determine whether the ceramic figures had enough quality to be integrated into Twomey's display, or should be discarded. The rejected works were gathered in a visible pile beside the worktable.¹³⁸ Rita Floyd, a flower maker, has also stacked ceramic waste while working live in the museum. Alongside Brownsword himself, she has been present and at work in several of Brownsword's exhibitions. Having worked in the ceramics industry for several years, and currently working at Gladstone Pottery Museum, Floyd models her ceramic blooms and then tosses them onto piles.¹³⁹ Although it might be argued that the maker becomes a mere sculptural presence in the exhibition setting, my visit to Brownsword's solo exhibition at the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery during the 2021 edition of British Ceramics Biennale revealed that visitors can talk with both Brownsword and Floyd while they work (Fig. 0.28, Fig. 0.29, Fig. 0.30). Through enactments of making in the exhibition space, the viewer is directly confronted with workers, craft skills, and materials that were cast off in the process of deindustrialisation.¹⁴⁰

The recent expansion of biennales dedicated to specific media in former industrial locations has also enabled the development of site-specific and community-based projects, drawing on local histories of making. For example, *Collateral*, an installation by Irish

¹³⁸ Gotlieb, 'Ego and Salve', 209-22.

¹³⁹ Love Clay, *Rita Floyd*, https://www.loveclay.co.uk/ritafloyd/?doing_wp_cron=1677079064.6044189929962158203125, accessed 22 February 2023.

¹⁴⁰ Shales, 'Soil so Good', 25-6.

practitioner Brigid McLeer at the British Textile Biennial in 2021, offered a physical and conceptual intertwinement with its extraordinary setting at the Queen Street Textile Mill in Burnley – a town located in Lancashire, a former hub of UK’s textile industry. Produced in collaboration with a group of local women, the textile piece made with cotton and organza is a memorial to the factory workers who have died, and continue to die, in the global textile industry. *Collateral* is also inspired by another commemorative piece – a 4.5 metre long lace panel dedicated to the Battle of Britain, which belongs to the Gawthorpe Textiles Collection, also in Burnley.¹⁴¹ Applying white stitching on a white base, McLeer replaced the military imagery of the original panel with images of flaming factories and their victims (Fig. 31). McLeer’s substitution of a representation glorifying a historic British feat for another that drew attention to a global issue, conveyed a message of interconnectedness, unveiling the effects of capitalism, imperialism, colonialism, and racial and class violence at a worldwide scale.

Collateral thus gives visibility to those harmed and killed within global textile production. At the centre of the loom shed, red threads connect the sewn images of factories to the looms of the historic mill; each thread symbolizing one person who died (Fig. 0.32). Strangely, these blood-like textile traces of the deceased seem to bring the factory to life once again, as they cross with the leather drive belts of the looms, whilst their bright-red colour complemented the monochrome tones of the weaving shed, intensifying the visual rhythm within this space (Fig. 0.33). Such elements juxtapose the suffering of contemporary

¹⁴¹ British Textile Biennial, *Brigid McLeer – Collateral*, 2023, <https://britishtextilebiennial.co.uk/programme/brigid-mcleer-collateral/>, accessed 16 January 2023; British Textile Biennial 2021, *Brigid McLeer – Collateral*, online video recording, YouTube, 27 September 2021, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MwbKLe2MH34>> [accessed 16 January 2023].

textile workers with that which was once endured at the historic factory. The installation also includes a video interview of McLeer and a survivor of one of these textile factory fires (Fig. 0.34).

My thesis builds on these contributions, examining exhibitionary projects which draw on the factory and the workshop as sites of production and exhibition. The spaces of the factory and the workshop offer the opportunity for practitioners to learn different making methods, respectively ground-breaking and traditional craft techniques; to take advantage of the human and physical resources at these making sites; and to treat these sites and their workers as a subject. I therefore consider the implications of outsourcing making communities through artistic residencies, and how the hands of industrial workers and makers are made visible or invisible through the exhibition setting. Questions are raised regarding site-specificity and urban centres of making, including the mobility and travels of people and objects across different sites and spaces. I now turn to the city itself as an exhibition site for craft, and examine scholarly reflections on the question of mobility, and exhibitionary projects focusing on the itineraries of objects and the city.

The city

Cultural artefacts never stand still, are never inert. Their existence is always embedded in a multitude of contexts, with tensions surrounding their roles, usages and meanings. Objects are meaningful only in relation to conflicts, negotiations and appropriations. Things shift in a wide range of modes, and very often it is through these particular alterations that they assume a specific meaning.¹⁴²

This extract, from Hans Peter Hahn's and Hadas Weiss's editorial introduction to *Mobility*,

¹⁴² Hans Peter Hahn and Hadas Weiss, 'Introduction: Biographies, Travels and Itineraries of Things', Hans Peter Hahn and Hadas Weiss (eds), *Mobility, Meaning and the Transformations of Things*, Oxford and Oakville, 2013., 1-14 (1).

Meaning and the Transformations of Things (2013), evidences the intrinsic instability of objects, as they navigate multiple contexts where they assume different – even conflicting – functions, values, and interpretations. It is through these frictions, debates, and borrowings that the object acquires meaning. To trace the transformations undergone by objects allows us to understand them. Such an approach to objects is part of an emerging scholarship on ‘itineraries’ and the ‘mobility of things’, which has focused on the cultural exchanges between different regions of the world, notably between Northern and Central Europe, Europe and North America.¹⁴³ My dissertation expands on these contributions, examining the ability of contemporary craft-based exhibitions to establish journeys of objects, media, people, and sensations across different sites within the post-industrial city. The context of the post-industrial city allows me to explore not only the legacies of deindustrialisation, but also those of empire, colonialism, and the subsequent circulation of cotton, songs, and other materials within and across Portugal and its former colonies of Mozambique and Angola.

Scholarly research on the mobility of objects has challenged previous interpretations of objects as something fixed and confined to a singular geographical and temporal context.¹⁴⁴ For example, Hahn and Weiss respond to former conceptions on the ‘biographies of objects’ and ‘travelling objects’, whose metaphorical connotations are not only inaccurate and questionable, but might also limit our understanding of objects’ routes.¹⁴⁵ They propose

¹⁴³ Ibid., 2.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 1-14; Martina Droth and Michael Hatt, ‘The Greek Slave by Hiram Powers: A Transatlantic Object’, *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, 15:2, 2016, <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/summer16/droth-hatt-intro-to-the-greek-slave-by-hiram-powers-a-transatlantic-object>, accessed 1 November 2023; Sara Ayres and Elettra Carbone, ‘Introduction’, Sara Ayres and Elettra Carbone (eds), *Sculpture and the Nordic Region*, Abingdon, 2017, 1-11; Michael Hatt, ‘Galathea: Ships, Sculpture and the State in Golden Age Denmark’, Imogen Hart and Claire Jones (eds), *Sculpture and the Decorative in Britain and Europe: Seventeenth Century to Contemporary*, New York, 2020, 47-81.

¹⁴⁵ Hahn and Weiss, ‘Introduction: Biographies’, 1-7.

an alternative metaphor, ‘itineraries’, which combines contemporary notions of itinerancy with older ideas such as pilgrimage – a concept embodying the transformations undergone by the traveller across a journey.¹⁴⁶ As the ways in which we perceive and value objects are influenced by ‘social and cultural negotiations’, a close analysis of an object’s history might allow us to trace changes in the object’s role in a certain social milieu.¹⁴⁷ Histories of objects and people are therefore intertwined.

While recent research on the biography of things has assumed a linear development of objects from birth to death, Hahn and Weiss demonstrate how things ‘discarded’ as ‘waste’ and ‘rubbish’ or re-used acquire new meanings and usages.¹⁴⁸ By contrast, the value ascribed to objects allegedly coming from afar varies across different contexts. Despite Europe’s historic fascination with porcelain, Indian cloth and other ‘exotic’ products, unusual objects are often disregarded by the fields of archaeology and cultural anthropology, as they endeavour to provide a sense of unity within a given culture. Yet, as Hahn and Weiss argue, things are innately itinerant, not just because they travel, but also because their meanings can change dramatically.

Analyses of the movements of objects have often focused on specific regions of the world. For instance, *Sculpture and the Nordic Region* (2017) investigates various itineraries of sculpture between the Nordic countries and the European continent since the 1500s. In their editorial introduction, Sara Ayres and Elettra Carbone outline mobility ‘as a dialectical process in which artworks and artists, skills and styles are exchanged between the Nordic

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 2.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 2.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 4.

countries and wider Europe'.¹⁴⁹ These networks were prompted by Nordic practitioners who studied and worked abroad, and by migrant practitioners who lived in Nordic countries.

Sculpture and the Nordic Region includes case studies of styles – notably those associated with cultural heritage and national 'roots' – that travelled and re-emerged in other places and epochs, producing new 'routes'.¹⁵⁰ Ayres and Carbone also question the definition of sculpture as a permanent medium, highlighting it as both a source and an outcome of mobility that can change in a material and immaterial sense.¹⁵¹ This revised notion of sculpture mirrors the abovementioned conceptions of craft as a fluid, rather than fixed, term; along with scholarly contributions which have questioned the division of craft practices into national schools.

The physical and conceptual journeys of objects across time and space can also be exposed and made accessible online.¹⁵² An example of this is *The Greek Slave* (2016), an online project that aimed to redefine American sculptor Hiram Powers's statue *The Greek Slave* as a 'transatlantic object', by tracing the routes from the production of the statue to its dissemination across Europe and North America.¹⁵³ The project included a digital publication, which encompassed a collection of essays on *The Greek Slave*, along with musical scores and recordings linked to the statue, allowing a wider audience to access and experience them. As stressed by Martina Droth and Michael Hatt, this was a response to the silence of art history: 'History of art is a curiously mute discipline, even as it routinely implies

¹⁴⁹ Ayres and Carbone, 'Introduction', Sara Ayres and Elettra Carbone (eds), *Sculpture and the Nordic Region*, Abingdon, 2017, 3.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 4.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 5.

¹⁵² For other examples of museum projects that mobilise sculptures to reach new audiences, see also C. Claire Thomson, 'Body culture and film culture in Thorvaldsens Museum 1932-1963', Sara Ayres and Elettra Carbone (eds), *Sculpture and the Nordic Region*, Abingdon, 2017, 130-45.

¹⁵³ Droth and Hatt, 'The Greek Slave'.

such things as the chatter of audiences, the roar of modernity, or the speech and song of religious ritual.¹⁵⁴ The digital format of the publication therefore enabled the exploration of sound and music as further iterations of the statue, with the aim of correcting ‘the silence of the book’ and questioning the invisibility of certain communities within art historical discourses.¹⁵⁵

My approach draws on projects such as *The Greek Slave*, by focusing on exhibitions that incorporate music, voice, fabrics, and scans of museum objects. I analyse the ways in which these different elements and their travelling across sites, can arguably challenge the supremacy of vision in the West and temporarily dissipate the divisions between those sites. Collaborations between practitioners and local collectives also have the potential to bring together people from various backgrounds and generations, literally giving a voice those who otherwise would not attend these exhibitions, and breaking the silence within the exhibition space. By approaching these exhibitions from the perspective of craft, I foreground craft’s potential to address the absence of sound, touch, and people from different backgrounds and generations, from art history.

Exhibitions addressing issues of diversity and social exclusion at specific locations might also involve marginalised populations. *Tensta Museum: Reports from New Sweden* (2013-9, henceforth *Tensta Museum*) was a project driven by Tensta konsthall, which endeavoured to generate dialogues between the past, present, and future of Tensta, a suburb in the city of Stockholm.¹⁵⁶ In an essay about *Tensta Museum*, Maria Lind, then

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Maria Lind, ‘Tensta Museum: Reports from New Sweden’, André Gali (ed.), *Documents on Contemporary Crafts No. 3: Crafting Exhibitions*, Oslo, 2015, 83-103.

director of Tensta konsthall, describes a project encompassing multiple phases, platforms, agents, and initiatives across this residential area. According to Lind, Tensta embodies New Sweden – a diverse, conflicting, and collaborative site beyond the former model of the welfare state. *Tensta Museum* responded to the suburb's multifaceted history, architecture, and population, through a symposium which discussed the appropriation of the notion of national heritage by ultraconservative groups in Sweden and Europe more broadly. The name of the project also illustrates Tensta konsthalls reaction to its own precarious status as an underfunded private foundation, acting like a museum to ensure its own continuity.

The exhibition functioned as a platform that brought together different works, presenting 'old and new artworks [...] alongside other materials and artefacts'; sites, such as a school (Tensta Gymnasium); historic and contemporary themes, from late-modern housing programmes to suburban life and problems of denigration and poverty in these areas; and people, notably representatives of the district's diverse communities such as the Somali and Kurdish associations; and organisations.¹⁵⁷ These various perspectives were incorporated in the project through artworks, seminars and collaborative formats. While works moved across several spaces during *Tensta Museum's* timespan, the discussions generated by the exhibition continued after its official end.

My project expands on this scholarship, focusing on contemporary craft-based exhibitions as a format which offers an encounter between various sites, people, materials, and sensations. The final section of this Introduction provides a summary of the dissertation's three chapters.

¹⁵⁷ Lind, 'Tensta Museum', 92-94.

Chapter overview

The thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter one examines contemporary craft-based exhibitions in the church. This is an expanding area of exhibitionary practice, which retrieves the church as a longstanding location for commissioning and showing craft, and specifically seeks out contemporary makers to respond to these spaces and their histories. The chapter takes as a case study several installations by Cristina Rodrigues at various sacred and historic venues in Portugal and the UK between 2013 and 2017. A specific focus is *Heaven Descends to Earth*, an exhibition held at the Portuguese Monastery of Alcobaça in 2015.

Chapter two investigates contemporary craft-based exhibitions which draw on the factory. It introduces an emerging typology of craft display – the material-based post-industrial biennial. This exhibitionary format emerged at the turn of the twenty-first century in response to the decline of specific local industries, notably those of textiles and ceramics. The chapter focuses on *Contextile: Contemporary Textile Art Biennial*, held in the Portuguese city of Guimarães since 2012. This event was initially proposed within Guimarães's nomination as European Capital of Culture in 2012 and its emphasis on urban regeneration. The chapter highlights several exhibitionary formats encompassed in *Contextile*, from outdoor projects to artistic residencies engaging with the factory and the workshop as subjects and spaces of production.

Chapter three analyses contemporary craft-based exhibitions which establish itineraries of objects, materials, people, and sensations across different sites within a city. It explores *Side-by-Side*, an exhibition developed by Ann Hamilton for *Contextile's* fourth edition in 2018, encompassing a circuit along various cultural, commercial, and outdoor spaces in Guimarães. The context of the post-industrial city allows me to explore the legacies

of empire, colonialism and deindustrialisation in contemporary Portugal, and the journeys of cotton, songs, and other materials within and across Mozambique, Angola, and Portugal.

CHAPTER 1

CRAFT IN THE CHURCH: ENGAGING WITH SPACES OF POWER

The arenas of craft and the church hold strong and shared connections with tradition, heritage, and the establishment. Yet there is surprisingly little scholarship on this. This chapter examines the way in which craft is shaped by the space of the church, and by historic settings more broadly; how craft engages with the church as site of display; how craft as a curatorial and making practice and, on the other hand, as a methodology, can provide new readings of religious and historic sites; and the way in which the display of craft in the church affects craft's expansive reach and connection to place and community.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first sets out the context and scholarship on the intersections between the historic and the contemporary through craft, expanding my preliminary overview of the place of craft within historic settings and collections in the Introduction to this dissertation. Given the complexities of some of these sites, as places of worship, power, heritage, home, and healing, this also goes beyond the space of the church, addressing examples of contemporary craft-based exhibitions within historic collections and settings such as palaces, country houses, museums, and house-museums. The second section takes as a case study *Heaven Descends to Earth*, a solo exhibition by Portuguese practitioner Cristina Rodrigues at the Monastery of Alcobaça, Portugal, in 2015. My analysis follows the route of the exhibition across different spaces of

the building, unpacking its different works, contexts, and meanings. The chapter's third section focuses on *The Kingdom of Heaven*, a permanent installation developed by Cristina Rodrigues for Manchester Cathedral, UK, in 2017. This is followed by a concluding section in which I summarise the chapter's main achievements regarding the way in which craft operates in religious and historic venues, and what the church as a context of display can reveal about craft.

I have selected Rodrigues as a key focus for this chapter, because of her extensive engagement with historic sites in several countries, from Catholic and Anglican churches to country houses, embassies, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and royal palaces. Her practice within these spaces enables the investigation of different formats, from solo exhibitions to permanent installations in religious spaces – a model which has received little attention from scholarship. Rodrigues's experience as a Portuguese-born practitioner who lived in the UK allows me to explore the ways in which her projects negotiate ideas of national identity, evoke or involve migrant communities from Portugal and the UK, and prompt the establishment of new diplomatic ties between different regions. Her wide-ranging use of media which are often associated with craft, such as textiles, ceramics, and iron, alongside found objects, offers an opportunity to examine craft beyond its previous segregation by disciplines. Through Rodrigues's collaborations with female practitioners, I reflect on outsourcing skilled labour within contemporary practices and its ethical implications.

The Christian Church was one of the most significant patrons of craft, commissioning practitioners to produce furniture, images of saints, stained glass windows, tiles, and gilt woodcarving for the interiors of sacred buildings. More recently, attempts to restore the significance of the Anglican Church in British society have led to an exponential growth of

‘church-based art’.¹⁵⁸ Yet several scholars have investigated the uncomfortable position of contemporary art in the church, and the difficulty in preserving contemporary art’s disruptive character within religious settings.¹⁵⁹ This chapter explores contemporary exhibitions in historic venues through the lens of craft, offering a more nuanced relationship with ecclesiastical and palatial milieus, whilst generating discourses, conversations, and critiques around these spaces and the social and political positioning of their owners.

Exhibiting contemporary craft in historic spaces: an overview

This section sets out the key ways in which craft crosses the historic and the contemporary through contexts of display. It focuses on contemporary craft-based exhibitions held within historic collections and settings, including palaces, country houses, museums, and house-museums. I seek to understand how contemporary practitioners engage with the narratives disclosed in these spaces, which have often served the interests of social elites. I particularly investigate the role of craft in this critical engagement and in processes of healing linked to issues of social justice and war.

Sovereigns and clerics were once among the most important sponsors of art, assigning architects, painters, and sculptors. For example, Louis XIV himself pioneered the conception of the palace as promoter of an artistic avant-garde, sponsoring international

¹⁵⁸ Koestlé-Cate, *Art and the Church*, 1. A mapping of modern and contemporary practices in British churches and cathedrals since 1920 can be found in the online project *Ecclesiart: Art+Christianity*, *Ecclesiart*, <https://www.artandchristianity.org/ecclesiart-projects>, accessed 19 July 2023.

¹⁵⁹ On the difficult relationship between contemporary creative practices and the church, see Koestlé-Cate, *Art and the Church*; W. David O. Taylor and Taylor Worley (eds), *Contemporary Art and the Church: A Conversation between Two Worlds*, Illinois, 2017; James Elkins, *On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art*, New York and London, 2004.

practitioners to produce works for his royal residence.¹⁶⁰ Aristocratic and ecclesiastical patronage was mainly driven by a desire to boost personal and national prosperity and reputation. Craft and the decorative arts also formed an important part of these commissions. As Shiner notes, many court practitioners produced portraits, festivals, and costumes; embellished interiors; painted furniture and chests; and designed tapestries and vessels for their patrons, in exchange for an annual stipend, food, and accommodation.¹⁶¹ Practitioners who are now revered as fine-art masters such as Andrea Mantegna, Cosimo Tura, and Leonardo da Vinci were expected to create a wide range of works, from painting and sculpture to craft and decorative art.

Palatine contexts such as mansions, castles and country houses were early precedents of the public museum as spaces for collecting and displaying art.¹⁶² It is therefore not surprising that the first museums emulated the lavish domestic settings of palaces and country houses. From the 1920s, however, the white-cube gallery was established as the key device for presenting art. The late twentieth century witnessed art's return to what curator Miguel Amado described as its 'primary place', through the organisation of temporary exhibitions and permanent displays of contemporary art in former aristocratic residencies.¹⁶³

An early example of this recent turn in contemporary craft-based exhibitions in

¹⁶⁰ See for instance: Benjamin Lamblin, 'Les sculpteurs non académiciens à Versailles sous le règne de Louis XIV (1664-1715)', *Bulletin du Centre de recherche du château de Versailles*, 15 February 2019, <http://journals.openedition.org/crcv/16487>, accessed 19 July 2023.

¹⁶¹ Shiner, *The Invention of Art*.

¹⁶² Roger Cardinal and John Elsner, *The Cultures of Collecting*, London, 1994; Susan Mary Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*, London, 1995; Bettina Messias Carbonell, *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, Chichester, 2012.

¹⁶³ '[...] sitio primordial', Miguel Amado, 'El sitio primordial del arte', Atelier Joana Vasconcelos and Henrique Cayette Design (eds), *Joana Vasconcelos: Palácio Nacional da Ajuda*, exhibition catalogue, Alfragide, Palácio Nacional da Ajuda, Lisbon, 2013, 7-10 (9). For a key example of a contemporary temporary exhibition at a historic museum, where contemporary practitioners were commissioned to respond to the historic space and collections, see Penelope Curtis and Veit Görner, *Private View: A Temporary Exhibition of Contemporary British & German Art*, exhibition catalogue, Leeds, The Bowes Museum Barnard Castle, 1996.

historic settings can be found at the National Palace of Ajuda in Lisbon, where the royal family resided from 1826 to 1910. Between 1994 and 2013, a cycle of contemporary art exhibitions titled *A Glimpse at the Palace* opened annually to mark the anniversary of Queen Maria Pia of Savoy (1847-1911) and celebrate her progressive personality. A daughter of Adelaide of Austria and Victor Emmanuel II, the first King of Italy, she has been described in several historical accounts as brave, energetic, and charitable.¹⁶⁴ The series of exhibitions also aimed to generate dialogues between contemporary practitioners and the royal collections.

Yet the catalogue of Bela Silva's exhibition of ceramic sculpture, held in 2007, discloses a wider purpose – to retrieve the central role of the National Palace of Ajuda in the cultural life of the city.¹⁶⁵ Silva was particularly inspired by the numerous animals represented in the palace's ceramic collections.¹⁶⁶ For example, she produced a series of porcelain birds (Fig. 1.1) for the Saxe Room, a porcelain room which functions as an antechamber to the Queen's bedchamber, created by the architect Joaquim Possidónio Narciso da Silva between 1862 and 1865 (Fig. 1.2).¹⁶⁷ Other areas of the palace, such as the Winter Garden and the Green Room, were filled by Silva's expressive owls and doves in stoneware and porcelain (Fig. 1.3, Fig. 1.4). Her mischievous and fantastical bestiary evoked

¹⁶⁴ For example, following a series of floods in 1876, which affected hundreds of families, she gathered a sum of money to be passed around households where there was no bread. She was also an amateur photographer. Alberto Pereira de Almeida, 'D. Maria Pia de Saboya, rainha de Portugal', *Álbum dos vencidos*, 2, 1913, 36-40; Teresa Mendes Flores, 'By Maria Pia: The Observed and the Observer. Some Reflections on Gender Issues Considering the Case of Queen Maria Pia, the Photographer', *Comunicação e Sociedade*, 32, 2017, 123-45.

¹⁶⁵ Anabela Silva, Cristina Neiva Correia and Isabel da Silveira Godinho, *Um olhar sobre o palácio: Bela Silva: escultura cerâmica*, exhibition catalogue, Lisbon, National Palace of Ajuda, Lisbon, 2007.

¹⁶⁶ Cristina Neiva Correia, 'À vol d'oiseau', Anabela Silva, Cristina Neiva Correia and Isabel da Silveira Godinho (eds), *Um olhar sobre o palácio: Bela Silva: escultura cerâmica*, exhibition catalogue, Lisbon, National Palace of Ajuda, Lisbon, 2007, 41-48 (41).

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 41-42.

styles from earlier eras, as shown by a series of Baroque ceramic shoes combined with botanic and animal motifs (Fig. 1.5). The creatures' stances – at times static, at others dynamic – reflected the diversity and contradictions of human behaviour, whilst evoking the former occupation of the palatial rooms.

By contrast, Joana Vasconcelos's solo exhibitions at the Palace of Versailles (2012) and the National Palace of Ajuda (2013) (Fig. 1.6) unveil her transformation of domestic objects through craft. Her exhibition at one of France's former royal palaces is part of an annual programme of contemporary exhibitions held there since 2008, in which practitioners are invited to create pieces evoking the site and its history. According to Gilles Lipovetsky and Jean Serroy, Vasconcelos established a dialogic relationship with the palatine interiors, in contrast to the more confrontational approaches of practitioners previously shown at Versailles such as Anish Kapoor, Jeff Koons, and Takashi Murakami.¹⁶⁸ Vasconcelos achieved this by drawing on several elements of Baroque culture such as luxury, opulence, theatricality, the opera and the garden; and juxtaposing objects that one would expect to find in a privileged household – such as pianos and chandeliers – with surprising or seemingly out-of-context materials and objects such as crochet and tampons.

While the pieces of furniture that inspired or formed the basis of these works uphold connections with a royal domain, the materials used in their structure or decoration allude to craft, domesticity, popular culture, the everyday, and gender. For example, by wrapping a piano in crochet, Vasconcelos recalled the fabrics once used to cover or decorate sofas and televisions at home. This textile envelopment also made it impossible for the piano to be

¹⁶⁸ Gilles Lipovetsky and Jean Serroy, 'Joana Vasconcelos: The Re-Enchanted Art', Atelier Joana Vasconcelos (ed.), *Joana Vasconcelos*, Porto, 2011, 299-308.

played – a loss of function shared with other objects at Versailles’s rooms, as the palace no longer serves as a residence. Such overpowering presence of craft in a historic setting offers the opportunity to expose the class and artistic divides inherent to these spaces. This injection of the contemporary into the historic aims to draw new audiences to historic buildings and to confront their interiors with the needs and expectations of current visitors.

Vasconcelos’s exhibitions at the French and Portuguese royal palaces encompassed works drawing attention to the queens most strongly tied to each site – respectively Marie Antoinette and Maria Pia. The first, *Wig* (2012), is an ovoid-shaped piece of furniture, comprised of multiple pointy bulges gushing artificial locks of hair. These features evoke the exuberant hairstyles flaunted at Versailles, the Fabergé egg, Portuguese and French furniture, and Queen Marie Antoinette’s eccentric character. It sat harmoniously in the Queen’s Chamber at Versailles (Fig. 1.7), for which it was purposefully made, and later in the Room of the Queen’s Portrait at Ajuda (Fig. 1.8).¹⁶⁹ *Wig* was produced in collaboration with Fundação Ricardo do Espírito Santo Silva (Ricardo do Espírito Santo Silva Foundation), a museum and school of Portuguese decorative arts located in Lisbon.

The title of the second work, *Maria Pia* (2013), refers to the princess from the House of Savoy who became Queen of Portugal from 1862 to 1889. This comprises a giant ceramic wasp designed by Portuguese practitioner Rafael Bordallo Pinheiro in the late nineteenth century, which Vasconcelos appropriated and covered in crochet. Placed beside a rug made from a bear’s body and head in the queen’s former chamber at Ajuda, *Maria Pia* reflects dominant depictions of Queen Maria Pia as superficial, capricious, spendthrift, and ignorant

¹⁶⁹ Atelier Joana Vasconcelos and Henrique Cayette Design (eds), *Joana Vasconcelos: Palácio Nacional da Ajuda*, exhibition catalogue, Alfragide, Palácio Nacional da Ajuda, Lisbon, 2013, 58-59.

(Fig. 1.9). Yet, as Maria Antónia Lopes demonstrates, many of these historical accounts lack documental evidence and emulate biased representations of women from the previous century.¹⁷⁰ Vasconcelos's trapping of Queen Maria Pia in crochet wrapping seems to illustrate persisting misrepresentations of her personality in Portuguese historiography.¹⁷¹

The continuity of stereotypical portrayals of women in contemporary society was stressed by Vasconcelos at the highly symbolic and historic spaces of Versailles and Ajuda. A paradigmatic example is *Marilyn* (2009), a pair of colossal women's shoes made with dozens of cooking pans. This work testifies to a practice based on repetition, encompassing serial production, recurring objects, and the multiplication of those objects to obtain a certain image.¹⁷² The objects (the pans) which shape and the image (the high-heeled shoe) which is formed by *Marilyn* embody a twofold, stereotypical representation of women: the perfect housewife and the *femme fatale*. By placing this work at the Galerie des Glaces (Hall of Mirrors) of Versailles and the Sala do Trono (Throne Room) of Ajuda, where major political events were held, Vasconcelos retrieved a public role which was denied to women in the previous centuries. Through *Marilyn*, the more private and domestic universe of the kitchen was transported to areas most symbolic of (male) monarchical rule (Fig. 1.10, Fig. 1.11).¹⁷³

In these ways, Vasconcelos's works exhibited at Ajuda and Versailles demonstrate that the boundaries between secular and religious, public and domestic, sites such as

¹⁷⁰ Maria Antónia Lopes, 'Maria Pia de Sabóia (1847-1911), rainha de Portugal: um pilar da monarquia portuguesa e das relações Portugal-Itália', Maria Antónia Lopes e Blythe Alice Raviola (eds), *Portugal e o Piemonte: a casa real portuguesa e os Sabóias: nove séculos de relações dinásticas e destinos políticos (XII-XX)*, Coimbra, 2012, 239-99 (240).

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 239-40.

¹⁷² Amado, 'El sitio primordial', 8; Lisa Wainwright, 'The Decorative Arts as Found Object: Converging Domains for Contemporary Sculpture', Imogen Hart and Claire Jones (eds), *Sculpture and the Decorative in Britain and Europe: Seventeenth Century to Contemporary*, New York, 2020, 241-68 (241-2); Gray, 'Museums and the "Interstices"'.

¹⁷³ Amado, 'El sitio primordial', 7.

churches, palaces and country houses are not so clear. For example, *Royal Valkyrie* (2012) is part of a series of multicoloured, monumental textile works with organic shapes, which usually hang from the ceiling of a room or building. This ‘textile body’ dominated a majestic, yet ascetic space at Ajuda now dedicated to holding temporary exhibitions, which was once the royal chapel (Fig. 1.12).¹⁷⁴ *Royal Valkyrie* was produced in collaboration with craftswomen from Nisa, a small village in Portugal known for its embroidery. By fusing traditional patterns and embroidery techniques from this region, with opulent brocades and floral designs, *Royal Valkyrie* evokes and reinvents the fashionable interiors and clothing cultivated by members of the aristocracy. Yet the work’s title alludes to the beautiful young women who, according to Norse mythology, were commanded by Odin or Tyr to bring the souls of deceased warriors to Valhalla.¹⁷⁵ These references to different cultural customs, including paganism, penetrated a space once bound to royalty and the Catholic Church.¹⁷⁶

Historic contexts might infuse various meanings into craft-based works. In 2015, Cristina Rodrigues presented *The Fountain of Happiness* in the gardens of Tatton Park Mansion, UK (Fig. 1.13). Despite its obvious inspiration in Duchamp’s *Porte-bouteilles (Bottle Rack)* (1914-59) (Fig. 1.14), the work holds the shape of a cask. This rigid structure is counteracted by intricate iron ornaments such as spiralling bottle holders, flowers, vine leaves, and grapes, which recall the iron designs of gates, benches, and pergolas at English estates and gardens (Fig. 1.15).¹⁷⁷ *The Fountain of Happiness* therefore established a

¹⁷⁴ ‘[...] cuerpo textil’, Atelier Joana Vasconcelos and Henrique Cayette Design (eds), *Joana Vasconcelos*, 74.

¹⁷⁵ Mara L. Pratt-Chadwick (ed.), *Legends of Norseland*, Boston, New York, and Chicago, 2015.

¹⁷⁶ Vítor Serrão, ‘Joana Vasconcelos en el Palacio Nacional de Ajuda: disposiciones de memoria com color y sombra’, Atelier Joana Vasconcelos and Henrique Cayette Design (eds), *Joana Vasconcelos: Palácio Nacional da Ajuda*, exhibition catalogue, Alfragide, Palácio Nacional da Ajuda, Lisbon, 2013, 79-82 (81).

¹⁷⁷ Cristina Rodrigues, *My Country through Our Eyes*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2016.

dialogue with the carefully designed parkland of the Neoclassical house.

Yet multiple iron chains hung from Rodrigues's work, whose structure holds inverted bottles – of *Licor Beirão*. From Portugal's historic region of Beira, this liqueur derives from herbs and seeds extracted from different places in the globe, notably the former Portuguese colonies of Brazil, India, and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). These colonial origins can also be found in the UK, where the National Trust recently published a report outlining the connections between ninety-three of its historic sites with colonialism and slavery.¹⁷⁸ This document identifies Wilbraham Egerton MP (1781-1856), landowner of Tatton Park, as the joint trustee and executor of a plantation in British Guiana, where 185 people were enslaved. Throughout the nineteenth century, chains were often depicted in sculptural representations of enslaved, and often female, figures.¹⁷⁹

As a result, the juxtaposition of *The Fountain of Happiness* with Tatton Park might lead us to interpret the iron chains and bottles of liqueur as symbols of empire and slavery across Portugal and the UK. If we take the structure of this work as the representation of a stratified society, and the inverted bottles as a portrayal of the enslaved, it becomes clear that the 'happiness' of European countries such as the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the UK relied on the dehumanisation of overseas populations.

These contemporary dialogues with histories of slavery resonate with the seminal work of African American practitioner and curator Fred Wilson. In 1991, The Contemporary, an itinerant museum based in Baltimore, invited Fred Wilson to embark on an artistic

¹⁷⁸ Sally-Anne Huxtable, Corinne Fowler, Christo Kefalas, and Emma Slocombe (eds), *Interim Report on the Connections between Colonialism and Properties Now in the Care of the National Trust, Including Links with Historic Slavery*, Swindon, 2020.

¹⁷⁹ For an exploration of representations of slavery in British and American sculpture across the nineteenth century, see Droth and Hatt, 'The Greek Slave'.

residency with a collection of his choice from the state of Maryland. Opting for the Maryland Historical Society (MHS), Wilson embarked on an investigation into the history, collection, and archives of the institution, whilst conducting experimental research with the staff from The Contemporary and the MHS as well as with communities from Baltimore. His resulting exhibition *Mining the Museum* (1992-3) examined how museums, particularly the MHS, whose original mission is to represent its local history and people, have excluded Native Americans and African Americans from their discourses.¹⁸⁰ *Mining the Museum* aimed to fill the gaps in the institutional narrative by literally mining the museum's storages for traces of these larger histories.

A key curatorial strategy adopted by Wilson, and which continues to be enacted in historic spaces by curators and practitioners keen to raise questions and draw connections across history, is juxtaposition. *Mining the Museum* included unprecedented juxtapositions between historic objects, and between pieces from the collection and Wilson's own creations. Wilson selected objects and display devices that brought to the foreground either the marginalised experiences of African Americans and Native Americans, or the abusive categorisation and misrepresentation of these communities.

Mining the Museum included media usually associated with the fine arts such as sculpture, painting, and video, along with objects linked to craft, decorative art, and industry. For example, *Metalwork, 1793-1880* (henceforth *Metalwork*) is a work encompassing Baltimore repoussé silverware placed alongside iron shackles used to restrain enslaved peoples (Fig. 15). Wilson's inclusion of fine art and instruments of torture and

¹⁸⁰ Lisa Graziose Corrin (ed.), *Mining the Museum: An Installation*, exhibition catalogue, Baltimore, and New York, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, 1994.

control into the single category of ‘metalwork’ disrupted traditional classifications of art objects. It also revealed the hidden links between taxonomies of objects (according to material) and taxonomies of people (according to class, ethnicity, race, and gender), and the ways in which these are upheld by museums and the scholarship. *Metalwork* further embodies an ample scope of lived experiences – from extreme poverty and exploitation to wealth and abundance – all of which were conveyed through metal.

Wilson also discovered several objects in the collection which had been produced by Africans living in Liberia. His research unearthed the bonds between the MHS (now the Maryland Centre for History and Culture) and the Colonisation Society, established in 1817 to solve what they perceived as the problem of free Blacks in the United States, by setting up a colony in Liberia where enslaved people and free Black volunteers were to be sent. A specific Maryland colony was created in Liberia, where Black people were removed to at least until the mid-nineteenth century. Within *Mining the Museum*, Wilson placed the objects from Liberia next to items made by African American enslaved people – a gesture evoking the African roots shared by these different people.¹⁸¹ His exhibitionary strategy discloses the ways in which historic objects can be retrieved and brought together to make visible the lives of the displaced and marginalised.

Wilson’s curatorial approach to historic sites as spaces of research and critique has also been taken up in part by contemporary practitioners in the hybrid setting of the house-museum and through the medium of ceramics. For example, within the group exhibition *Unravelling the Manor House* at Preston Manor, Matt Smith created *Bulldog* (2010), a work

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 17-18.

incorporating a large collection of ceramic objects shown in the dining room.¹⁸² Alongside Ellen Thomas-Stanford's collection of 124 white Buddhist lions made in Chinese porcelain (commonly called *Dogs of Fo*), Smith set two rows of earthenware British bulldogs produced with American casts and coated with Milano red Honda spray paint (Fig. 1.16). His juxtaposition of objects and colours evoked the St George's Cross, England's national flag, which has been appropriated by several groups across the UK, standing for their anti-immigrant sentiment, xenophobia, and racism. This fanatical defence of an idealised nation is satirised through the presence of the *Dogs of Fo*, which originally functioned as protective charms to ward off evil, and were placed at the entrance of temples.

Through objects which suggest American casting, British dog breeds, a religion born in India, materials from China, and a Japanese multinational, *Bulldog* also reminds us of the trading routes of colonialism and the global market (Fig. 1.17). As a result, this site-specific work exposes the contradictory nature of racist and xenophobic discourses. For Smith, *Bulldog* acted as a 'conversation piece', which responded to Thomas-Stanford's acquisition of the *Dogs of Fo* to encourage discussions over dinner.¹⁸³ By juxtaposing his British bulldogs with the historic collection, he introduced contemporary debates about nationalism and bigotry in the Edwardian house, bringing it once again back to life.

Unravelling the Manor House was the first project by Unravelled, an arts organisation supported by Arts Council England. Its aim was to work

across fine art and craft practice by offering exhibition opportunities in spaces where artists and makers can explore how art can evoke histories, stories and a sense of place.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Unravelled Arts, *Unravelling the Manor House*, exhibition catalogue, Unravelled Arts (UK), Preston Manor, Brighton, 2010, 33.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 33.

¹⁸⁴ Unravelled, *About Us*, <http://unravelled.org.uk/about/>, accessed 19 July 2023.

Historic spaces such as Preston Manor were therefore seen to provide opportunities to explore different narratives and ideas through craft. *Unravelled* have also commissioned site-specific works for the National Trust properties Nymans, The Vyne, and Uppark (2012-5). These projects invited practitioners to conduct research at these estates, to provide unconventional or imaginary views on their stories, and to disclose aspects of their histories and previous dwellers. Themes included childhood, *mise en scène*, fusing different epochs and stages of construction, and debauched behaviour.¹⁸⁵ As Laura Breen notes, the *Unravelling* series has reassessed the meaning of historic contexts through craft.¹⁸⁶

Contemporary craft-based exhibitions are therefore increasingly to be found within historic settings, as a means of – temporarily at least – exploring and critiquing their histories. My analysis has considered exhibitions held in palaces, country houses, and house-museums, along with interventions in museum collections. I have examined how media often associated with craft establish a particular proximity with these venues, merging with their decorative elements whilst disclosing their affinities with power and elitism. My investigation revealed ceramics, textiles, and metal as key media in these projects, expanding on previous scholarship which has focused on single media, with a particular emphasis on clay. By exploring the use of these different media across exhibitionary initiatives, I foregrounded craft's ability to generate critical dialogues with historic sites but also, at times, to comply with these spaces of power.

The following section attends to the church as a key context for contemporary craft-

¹⁸⁵ Unravelled, <https://unravelled.org.uk/>, accessed 7 November 2023.

¹⁸⁶ Laura Marie Breen, *Re-Modelling Clay: Ceramic Practice and the Museum in Britain (1970-2014)*, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Westminster, 2016, 177-78.

based exhibitions. It addresses *Heaven Descends to Earth* (2015) as a case study within this exhibitionary format, exploring how this exhibition confronted the Monastery of Alcobaça and its associations with church and monarchy while filling the building's vacated spaces with stories of the present.

Women, regionalism, and migration: the *Heaven Descends to Earth* exhibition, Monastery of Alcobaça, Portugal (2015)

Cristina Rodrigues: In the exhibition 'My Country Through Your Eyes' [2013], which took place at Jerónimos Monastery, a World Heritage site by UNESCO, in Lisbon, we moved from a collective show to a solo show; and from two art installations to five large scale art installations and sculptures. What is your review on this show?

Paulo Longo: This exhibition is a landmark. Jerónimos Monastery houses the National Archaeology Museum (MNA – Museu Nacional de Arqueologia) and its permanent collection and thereby the exhibition 'My Country Through Your Eyes' was designed around the existing collection. This attitude obliges to study and enquire [into] the existing collection in order to build a new contemporary narrative which makes sense and is able to coexist with it. Each contemporary art installation was in direct counterpoint with the existing objects of the archaeology collection.¹⁸⁷

In an interview with anthropologist and curator Paulo Longo, conducted as part of her PhD research at Manchester Metropolitan University (2016), Portuguese practitioner Cristina Rodrigues highlights her exhibition *My Country Through Your Eyes*, held between September and December 2013 at Lisbon's National Archaeology Museum. She does so for two reasons: it was the first solo exhibition in her career, and it comprised a higher number of larger and more varied works than ever before. Longo adds that *My Country Through Your Eyes* was also a 'landmark', because of its attempt to produce a new discourse in harmony with the collection of the museum, which is located in the Jerónimos (or Hieronymites) Monastery.

¹⁸⁷ Rodrigues, *My Country through Our Eyes*, 109.

The exhibition emphasised the contrast between Rodrigues's works and the archaeological objects; the bright colours of the former stood out against the neutral tones of the ancient stones and introduced a new route within the permanent exhibition (Fig. 1.18, Fig. 1.19). Her works were inspired by ethnographical and archaeological research carried out by José Leite de Vasconcelos, the founder and first director of the museum. A paradigmatic example is Rodrigues's *Dressed Mooress* series, drawing on a legend from Portuguese and Galician folklore which was firstly recorded by Vasconcelos (Fig. 1.20).¹⁸⁸

Although *My Country Through Your Eyes* was technically held in a religious space, it was only in 2014 that Rodrigues directly engaged with a church. *Women from My Country* was an exhibition held at Manchester Cathedral in 2014.¹⁸⁹ While its title might point to a dichotomy between an 'I' and an 'Other', and perhaps even an inclination towards women from the same nation as Rodrigues, this exhibition arguably manifested her claim for a national identity without borders:

I think that [national identity] is something that does not exist. [...] [In the UK t]here are Pakistan and Indian immigrants – this is how they are identified by others. If you ask them, they feel like they are a bit of each thing. [...] The great richness of the world is the ability of human beings to adapt to the situations in which they find themselves. [...] And that is my work. Thus, I would not like my work to be identified as Portuguese, because I think that would be extremely reductive. [...] I always interview people before my projects, to listen to their stories, talk to them, and understand their journey. [...] This world without borders that exists since 1986 [when Portugal joined the European Economic Community] is important to me. [...] I obviously interpret things from Portugal [...] because they were part of my memory; not because I feel a great identity in being Portuguese. I do not!¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 15.

¹⁸⁹ A video about the exhibition can be seen at Cristina Rodrigues, *Women from My Country by Cristina Rodrigues*, online video recording, YouTube, 12 July 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jHCEMGEOXho&ab_channel=CristinaRodrigues> [accessed 8 November 2023].

¹⁹⁰ 'Eu acho que [a identidade nacional ...] é uma coisa que não existe. Há os imigrantes paquistaneses e indianos – isso é como eles são identificados pelos outros. Se lhes perguntares a eles, eles sentem que são um bocadinho de cada coisa. [...] A grande riqueza do mundo é a capacidade do ser humano de se adaptar às situações em que se encontra. [...] E isso é a minha obra. Portanto, eu não gostaria que a minha obra fosse

This quotation reveals Rodrigues's conception of national identity as something which encompasses all the places where one lives, and all the cultures which co-exist in a single place. Yet Rodrigues is a Portuguese national who lived in the UK before Brexit, benefiting from a freedom of movement which does not apply in the present day or in other geographical contexts. Rodrigues's comment should therefore be read through her own lens which, though impacted by the economic crisis in Portugal, is privileged in comparison with the situation of asylum seekers and refugees.

Rodrigues's statement also evidences anthropology and ethnography as key methods in her practice. While these disciplines hold a colonial legacy, Rodrigues specifically deploys a 'collaborative art-ethnography approach', which aims to increase the closeness between members of a population through the sharing of memories and problems; and to involve people in the creation of artworks, encouraging them to develop new skills and share this knowledge with their colleagues.¹⁹¹ By interviewing people before her projects, she listens to people's stories, integrates those testimonies into her process, and turns them into a pivotal element of her work.¹⁹² The resulting works have often been presented at ecclesiastical and secular monuments in Portugal, Spain, Brazil, Sri Lanka, and the UK.

Some of the works included in *Women from My Country* embody Rodrigues's reflections on migration, and the links between social and artistic divisions. For instance, the

identificada como a obra de uma portuguesa, porque acho que isso seria extremamente redutor. [...] Daí eu fazer sempre entrevistas antes dos meus projectos, ouvir as suas histórias, conversar com eles e entender o seu percurso. [...] É importante para mim este mundo, que existe desde 1986, sem fronteiras. [...] Sendo que, obviamente, eu interpreto coisas de Portugal [...] porque essas coisas fizeram parte da minha memória, e não porque sinto uma grande identidade em ser Portuguesa. [...] Não sinto!', Inês Jorge, Interview with Cristina Rodrigues on her creative practice in historic sites, unpublished audio recording, 1 hour, 30 minutes and 53 seconds, Lisbon, 27-28 April 2021.

¹⁹¹ Rodrigues, *My Country through Our Eyes*, 20.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 36.

Enlightenment series (2014-5) comprises large iron chandeliers. The versions made for Manchester Cathedral encompass black (*Enlightenment I*) (Fig. 1.21) and white (*Enlightenment II*) (Fig. 1.22) structures adorned with crackle glass necklaces in vibrant and contrasting colours. These items of cheap jewellery were made by migrant women from several backgrounds, who joined Rodrigues at her studio in Manchester over the period of one year.¹⁹³ The fact that crackle glass necklaces can be found in Chinese and Indian shops across the UK, attests to issues of social segregation and livelihood amongst migrant communities. The bases of the chandeliers, however, are filled with *putti* – figures of naked male children which are often found in Baroque architecture, paintings, and decoration (Fig. 1.23).¹⁹⁴ This series of works therefore brings together decorative elements from different domestic contexts such as sumptuous palaces and middle-class dining rooms, as well as notions of luxury and thrift, which connote distinctions between objects, people, and social classes.

The display of *Enlightenment I* and *Enlightenment II* at Manchester's major Protestant church symbolically relocated these migrant communities, who usually live in urban peripheries, to the centre of the city. For the migrant women who worked with Rodrigues and other migrants who might have attended the exhibition, this potentially increased their hope about becoming more integrated in British society. At the same time, using Manchester Cathedral as a setting for *Women from My Country* foregrounded the Church's responsibility to promote messages of tolerance and inclusion. The exhibition also encompassed *The Blanket (Gold & Silver)* (2013) – analysed below – a work which was

¹⁹³ Ibid., 114.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 58-59.

constructed with the aid of women from the Portuguese municipality of Idanha-a-Nova.¹⁹⁵

Craft subsequently allowed people from various national and social backgrounds – including Rodrigues and female collaborators from different countries – and everyday and luxury items, to come together in the same space. While they might have or have not been physically present, these diverse communities were, in some way, represented by these works.

The following focuses on *Heaven Descends to Earth*, Rodrigues's first solo exhibition in Portugal, and the first of her projects to establish a conversation with a sacred setting in Portugal, and a Roman Catholic space. This exhibition took place between 18 April and 31 August 2015 at the Monastery of Saint Mary of Alcobaça (henceforth Monastery of Alcobaça), located in the central region of Portugal. Held less than a year after *Women from My Country*, *Heaven Descends to Earth* discloses strategies, themes, and works similar to the previous exhibition, but engages with its specific context. The proposal originally submitted to the Monastery of Alcobaça reveals that this exhibition was meant to bear the same title as the one held at Manchester Cathedral.¹⁹⁶ Curated by Paulo Longo, *Heaven Descends to Earth* formed part of a programme which commemorated twenty-five years of Alcobaça's nomination as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Awarded in 1989, this distinction was motivated by the recognition of the monastery as an outstanding example of Gothic Cistercian architecture and the distinctive austerity of early Cistercian constructions; as well as a place holding significant examples of Gothic funerary sculpture, important construction elements such as monastic facilities and hydraulic systems, and a striking kitchen from the

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 45-46.

¹⁹⁶ Cristina Rodrigues and Paulo Longo, Proposta de exposição: Mosteiro de Alcobaça: mulheres do meu país, 2014, private archive of Cristina Rodrigues, Castelo Branco, 1.

1700s.¹⁹⁷

While derived from its Manchester origin, *Heaven Descends to Earth* responded to and engaged with the Monastery of Alcobaça. In an interview held in 2021, Rodrigues explained that the exhibition conceived this space ‘first and foremost as an architectural work which has been a stage for a myriad stories and memories throughout the centuries’.¹⁹⁸ The official history of the Monastery of Alcobaça usually begins in 1153, when the first king of Portugal bestowed the estate of Alcobaça to the Cistercians, a religious order that developed from the Benedictines. Afonso I’s was a gesture of gratitude for their support in his conquest of the hitherto key Muslim stronghold of Santarém in 1147.¹⁹⁹ A contingent was then sent to this site by Bernard of Clairvaux, a Burgundian abbot and important promoter of the Cistercian Order and its reform of the Benedictine tradition.²⁰⁰

The church which forms part of the Monastery of Alcobaça accordingly replicates the Gothic, Latin-cross model of Pontigny Abbey in Burgundy, France. The Cistercian monks resided in the estate until 1834, when a royal decree established that all regular orders should be abolished and that their properties would be secularized.²⁰¹ This was the outcome of the influence of anticlericalism and illuminism in Portugal, leading to the extinction of convents, monasteries, collegiate churches, hospices and other buildings belonging to religious orders. The Monastery of Alcobaça was subsequently nationalised, sold at public

¹⁹⁷ ICOMOS – International Council on Monuments and Sites, *World Heritage List*, 505, 1989, 33-35.

¹⁹⁸ ‘[...] em primeiro lugar como uma peça arquitectónica que serviu de palco para imensas histórias e memórias ao longo dos séculos’, Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues.

¹⁹⁹ Maur Cocheril, ‘Abadias cistercienses portuguesas: inventário e cronologia das abadias do século XII’, *Lusitania Sacra*, 4, 1959, 61-92.

²⁰⁰ Jonathan Wilson, ‘A Cistercian Point of View in the Portuguese Reconquista’, *The Journal of Medieval Monastic Studies*, 8, 2019, 95-142.

²⁰¹ *Collecção de decretos e regulamentos mandados publicar por Sua Magestade Imperial o Regente do Reino desde a sua entrada em Lisboa até à instalação das câmaras legislativas: terceira série*, Lisbon, 1835.

auction, disaggregated, and subjected to multiple occupations. While this caused irreversible damage to the construction, it also ensured its survival and structural integrity.²⁰² The Monastery of Alcobaça is therefore a heritage site embodying a history of agreements and disagreements between monarchy, church, and state.

Rodrigues's exhibitionary project also acknowledged the impact of the monastery's conversion into a heritage site on its relationship with the local community. As she recalls, the estate was once used as a playground by local children and enjoyed freely by other inhabitants.²⁰³ However, when the monastery was classified as a national monument in 1907, its appropriation by the local population was sidelined. Between 1929 and 1960, all national monuments underwent works of restoration at the initiative of the authoritarian government known as *Estado Novo*, which sought symbols of the past to forge the image of a victorious and superior nation.²⁰⁴ While such initiatives rendered the Monastery of Alcobaça a tourist destination, its connection with the local community became less significant. As a result, Rodrigues aspired to 'amplify the range of people who visit the space' beyond 'the tourist who pinpoints the monument'.²⁰⁵

Most of the buildings within the monastic complex have two floors. At present, the ground level largely comprises public spaces originally meant to host official events, whereas private and less formal spaces are located on the first floor. The route of *Heaven Descends to Earth* follows and crosses this divide, progressing from the ground level to the first floor. As

²⁰² Mosteiro de Alcobaça, *Pós-Cister*, <http://www.mosteiroalcobaca.gov.pt/pt/index.php?s=white&pid=212>, accessed 15 June 2021.

²⁰³ Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues.

²⁰⁴ Maria João Batista Neto, *Memória, propaganda e poder: o restauro dos monumentos nacionais (1929-1960)*, Porto, 2001.

²⁰⁵ '[...] ampliar esse leque de pessoas que visitam o espaço'; '[...] o turista que faz pinpoint do monumento', Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues.

local archaeologist Manuel Vieira Natividade noted in 1885, the ground floor once accommodated carpentry, bookbinding, earthenware, metal, and sculpture workshops.²⁰⁶ His account demonstrates that the current arrangement of the Monastery of Alcobaça is remarkably different from previous ones, thus affecting our experience of this site. My reconstitution of the exhibition plan (Fig. 1.24) reveals that *Heaven Descends to Earth* opened on the ground floor with the work *The Chapel* in the church, followed by *The Queen (Monastery of Alcobaça version)* in the Kings' Hall, *The Blanket (Gold & Silver)* in the Chapter House, and *The Grapes of Wrath* at King Dinis's Cloister. It then moved on to the first floor with *Desert* and *The Blanket (Amarantina version I)* in the Dormitory, *The Lovers* in the Kitchen, and *Enlightenment III* in the Refectory. This diversity of settings, materials, and themes allowed Rodrigues to bring together activities such as worship, reading, gathering, administration, meditation, rest, nourishment, and making, originally held at the Benedictine building.

Heaven Descends to Earth has mainly been described as an exhibition of contemporary art. A project proposal was initially submitted by Rodrigues and Longo to the Monastery of Alcobaça, labelling all eight pieces as 'installations of Contemporary Art'.²⁰⁷ Yet the same document emphasises Rodrigues's 'strong sense of mission', which is reflected in her proposition of 'social intervention through the dialogue between contemporary art and traditional matrixes'.²⁰⁸ The works in the exhibition blended found objects such as old furniture, musical instruments, glass bottles, and cheap jewellery, and handmade media and

²⁰⁶ Manuel Vieira Natividade, *O Mosteiro de Alcobaça (notas históricas)*, Coimbra, 1885, 91.

²⁰⁷ '[...] instalações de Arte Contemporânea', Rodrigues and Longo, Proposta de exposição, 2.

²⁰⁸ '[...] forte espírito de missão'; '[...] intervenção social através do diálogo entre a arte contemporânea e matrizes tradicionais', *Ibid.*, 2.

techniques, notably satin ribbons, weaving, papermaking, ironwork, ceramics, and filigree. Some works were produced in collaboration with female practitioners from rural areas of the cities of Idanha-a-Nova and Amarante, incorporating objects and craft skills which are specific to these regions, and merging the contemporary and the traditional. These large-scale, highly decorative, and colourful pieces stood out against the austerity of the Cistercian building, which was virtually empty of objects due to the historical and political events mentioned above.

The preliminary list of works included *Dressed Mooress*, a series of works which evokes a legend about supernatural female creatures. ‘Moor’ was a derogatory term deployed by Europeans to designate the Muslim people of African descent who dominated sections of Iberia between the eighth and fifteenth centuries. According to the legend, female moors show themselves to common mortals and seduce them, promising treasures to those who release them from their spell. For Rodrigues, this is but one amongst numerous stories reflecting social expectations towards women, and instilling in them the duty of being beautiful and kind – a subject equally examined by Vasconcelos in her work *Marilyn*, and discussed above.²⁰⁹ Although the *Dressed Mooresses* series was not included in the final display, *Heaven Descends to Earth* disclosed a strong focus on popular religion, regionalism, and women as the leading guardians of local traditions. The countryside, its communities, and particularly the elderly women who dominate these desolate areas, are often absent from official narratives. *Heaven Descends to Earth* brought these identities to the fore in a monument of national and global importance, which embodies the close ties between monarchy, clergy, and nationhood.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 13.

This blend of contemporary and traditional references developed from her previous investigation about the Portuguese countryside and the effects of depopulation and desertification in Portugal. An example of this was *21st Century Rural Museum* (2012-3), a touring exhibition where Rodrigues invited Portuguese and British practitioners to produce works about this topic.²¹⁰ In 2013, the exhibition was held at the Idanha-a-Nova Cathedral in Portugal. Although this is listed in Rodrigues's PhD dissertation as a solo exhibition, for the purposes of this study I consider *21st Century Rural Museum* as a group exhibition, as it included works by Rodrigues and other practitioners. Regardless, Rodrigues's focus on sparsely populated regions in Portugal eventually brought about the creation of installations, many of which were included in *Heaven Descends to Earth*. The project proposal further highlights the ways in which Rodrigues draws on

the vibrant universe of the festivity, of the legends and narratives, which evoke the role of the great maker of traditional society – the woman. Now and always, it is up to her to keep alive the practices and the memories of her own community [...] There is a world which still goes through her hands: [she] keeps the melodies from other times, knows the old stories of oral tradition and the secrets of the table, defines and sustains the scenic apparatus of festivities and of faith.²¹¹

This extract describes women as the key custodians of tradition, a concept encompassing both intangible customs such as stories, songs, festivities, popular religion, and cooking recipes which are passed down from one generation to the next; and tangible customs such as the architectural staging of sacred and secular celebrations. A vast amount of responsibility is subsequently being placed on women. This social and cultural duty is further

²¹⁰ Rodrigues, *My Country through Our Eyes*, 10.

²¹¹ '[...] o universo vibrante da festa, das lendas e narrativas que evoca o papel da grande artesã da sociedade tradicional, a mulher. Hoje e sempre, cabe-lhe manter vivas as práticas e as memórias da respectiva comunidade [...] Há um mundo que passa ainda pelas suas mãos: guarda as melodias de outros tempos, conhece as velhas histórias da tradição oral e os segredos da mesa, define e sustenta o aparato cénico das festas e da fé.', Rodrigues and Longo, *Proposta de exposição*, 2.

underscored through terms such as ‘maker’ and ‘hands’, reflecting the use of craft as a metaphor for the safeguarding and creation of culture. The contention of women as the guardians of religious festivities, on the other hand, counteracts the male-dominated context of the Monastery of Alcobaça. The fields of craft and traditional arts, and the themes of women’s regional folklore, all form an important part of the discursive framework for the exhibition.

In an interview, Rodrigues describes *Heaven Descends to Earth* as a ‘patchwork quilt of personal and collective memories that produce a narrative about what it is to be Portuguese in the contemporary era’.²¹² Her deployment of textiles as a metaphor to explain the concept of the exhibition reflects the entanglements between fabrics, storytelling, private and public remembrance across different cultures. These interconnections have been analysed by scholars such as the German philosopher Walter Benjamin, who frequently used the image of weaving to emphasise the relations between past and present; and the Malian historian Amadou Hampâté Bâ, who saw weaving as a manifestation of cosmic rhythms acting through time and space within traditional African culture.²¹³ Rodrigues’s exhibition at the Monastery of Alcobaça reveals a similar blend of the contemporary and historic, integrating collaborative practices; found, handmade and industrial elements; and issues of power, gender, domesticity, ethnicity, popular culture, and the pastoral. It is because of this complex imbrication that I identify *Heaven Descends to Earth* as a contemporary craft-based exhibition.

²¹² ‘[...] tapete de retalhos de memórias pessoais e colectivas que formam uma narrativa sobre aquilo que é ser português na época contemporânea’, Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues.

²¹³ Leslie, ‘Walter Benjamin: Traces’, 5-13; Amadou Hampâté Bâ, ‘African Art: Where the Hand Has Ears’, Glenn Adamson (ed.), *The Craft Reader*, London and New York, 2018, 379-85.

This exhibition also inaugurated an unprecedented conversation between craft and the Church within the Monastery of Alcobaça. Although the Portuguese state owns the majority of the building, the parish of Alcobaça manages both its practising church and the Kings' Hall. *The Chapel* and *The Queen* were the first contemporary artworks ever displayed in these areas. Rodrigues recounts how, after talking with the church's priest Ricardo Cristóvão, he understood how these two works were linked to faith and allowed her to exhibit them in the church and the Kings' Hall.²¹⁴ By integrating these two settings into the exhibition route, *Heaven Descends to Earth* promoted a reconnection between the secular and the spiritual worlds. *The Chapel* (2013) is a pyramidal construction in wrought iron, comprised of tubes whose holes are crossed by cotton yarns of different colours (Fig. 1.25). As its shape replicates the candle holders often found at the entrance of churches in Portugal, *The Chapel* seemed to harmonise with the space of the church's main nave, where it was positioned. However, the perforated tubes resembling gun barrels, combined with multicoloured shoelaces, alluded to war, displacement, and the subsequent loss of childhood (Fig. 1.26). For Rodrigues, *The Chapel* ultimately questions the belief in a God who leaves their people mired in violence.²¹⁵ As a structure installed inside a church, this work introduced an alternative and critical place of worship within the establishment.

The Chapel can also be understood in the context of migration. It was produced during a period of significant movement of refugees and migrants to Europe.²¹⁶ This work arguably establishes a parallel between this recent reality and the previous function of the

²¹⁴ Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ International Organization for Migration, *Data*, 2023, <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/data>, accessed 5 April 2023.

monastery as a place of refuge for the White Monks. Through its evocations of displacement, *The Chapel* might have appealed to different ethnicities, creeds, and audiences less familiar with contemporary art. The structure of this work, however, would have been more familiar to a Portuguese audience, persuading national visitors to revisit the historic building. Its allusions to play and fun possibly contributed to retrieve the connection between the local community – notably those who once used the monastery and its surroundings as a recreational area – and the monument. From the viewpoint of the ecclesiastical institution, the presence of contemporary artworks might have sought to attract new followers and to uphold the significance of the Church in the present day. This coincides with the goals identified by Jonathan Koestlé-Cate regarding Anglican churches in Britain, which have held an increasing number of contemporary art exhibitions since the 1990s.²¹⁷

Despite not being religious, Rodrigues has frequently engaged with churches, along with country houses and other monuments, throughout her career. Rodrigues is interested in how the artwork responds to the space, and how the space can be inflected and integrated into the story of the artwork. Spaces, for her, are never neutral.²¹⁸ Rodrigues's fascination with places of worship might be compared to Fred Wilson's early interventions in spaces of display, with the aim of exposing the divides embedded in institutions. Both practitioners are simultaneously outraged and seduced by museums (in the case of Wilson), churches (in the case of Rodrigues), and their underlying ideologies.²¹⁹ They are also united by their use of craft's aesthetic qualities and deceptive naiveté as a Trojan horse to disrupt

²¹⁷ Koestlé-Cate, *Art and the Church*, 1.

²¹⁸ Rajesh Punj, 'Surrendering to the Common Life', *Sculpture*, 35:1, 2016, 20-25.

²¹⁹ Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues.

the hegemonic narratives conveyed by these institutions.

One of the pieces in *Heaven Descends to Earth* evoked the power of popular religion to bond women from different classes – from the anonymous woman to the female saint or sovereign. Part of a series of site-specific works, *The Queen (Monastery of Alcobaça version)* specifically evoked Saint Mary of Alcobaça, the patron saint of the building. According to Rodrigues and Longo, this work ‘offers an [architectural] continuity between the [...] [c]hurch of the Monastery of Alcobaça and the Kings’ Hall’.²²⁰ Rodrigues also declared that *The Queen* would ‘crown the folk at the entrance of the Monastery’.²²¹ She later clarified that this was a political statement against persisting social hierarchies in Portuguese society, which in her opinion were caused by the late establishment of democracy in the country.²²² Indeed, the relatively recent transition from a dictatorial to a democratic government in Portugal has not been enough to dissolve class divides and power relations among citizens.

The Queen’s canopy-like shape, comprising silk paper flowers and satin ribbons, recalls the decorations usually made by women for sacred festivities across Portugal (Fig. 1.27, Fig. 1.28).²²³ It therefore reflects Rodrigues’s and Longo’s description of women as the keepers of cultural heritage, mentioned above. A photograph taken from below shows the visitor’s perspective as they enter the space and look up (Fig. 1.29). While kings and queens are usually crowned in important churches, *The Queen* enveloped the Kings’ Hall, at once enshrining the visitor as if they were holy. Viewers might also have stood underneath the

²²⁰ ‘[...] oferece uma continuidade [arquitectónica] entre o espaço que é a Igreja do Mosteiro de Alcobaça e a Sala dos Reis’, Rodrigues and Longo, Proposta de exposição, 9.

²²¹ ‘[...] coroar o povo à entrada do Mosteiro’, Anonymous, “‘O Céu Desce à Terra” no Mosteiro de Alcobaça com a artista plástica Cristina Rodrigues’, *RTP*, 18 April 2015, https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/cultura/o-ceu-desce-a-terra-no-mosteiro-de-alcobaca-com-a-artista-plastica-cristina-rodrigues_n821382, accessed 20 July 2023.

²²² Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues.

²²³ Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira, *Festividades cíclicas em Portugal*, Lisbon, 2020 [1984].

work as if they were about to be crowned. This manifested Rodrigues's intention to blur class distinctions in Portugal, allowing each visitor – at least temporarily – to feel important.

Despite being merely decorative, *The Queen* demonstrates the difficulties in classifying objects based on their use. For example, in his investigation of ways to categorise craft objects based on their applied function, Risatti begins by hypothesizing that the tent might not be classified as a 'cover' but as a 'container', 'since it is small, mobile, and contains people'.²²⁴ Yet he argues that containers usually hold things whose materiality might change if they are not physically contained. This leads him to regard the tent as a 'shelter', because one is not forced to stay inside of it. *The Queen* arguably encompasses several metaphorical connotations which might be linked to each of these functions – containment and shelter. Some perceive popular devotion and the Church as sanctuaries which protect the vulnerable and dispossessed. Others see them as instruments of control, abuse, and repression of individual freedom. As Risatti asserts: 'Sometimes the peculiar way things are used (as opposed to their intended purpose) might also suggest shifting from one category to another.'²²⁵ A symbolic reading of *The Queen* further complexifies these attributions, evidencing that the viewer's interpretation is crucial to this work. This personal viewpoint offers alternative responses to the work and the space.

Installing *The Queen* at the Kings' Hall equally represented the intrusion of a female perspective into a male monastery, and particularly in a space which glorifies male figures from royalty and the church. The lower level of the Kings' Hall is enclosed by *azulejos* (glazed tiles) from the late 1700s, which depict various episodes linked to the foundation of the

²²⁴ Risatti, *A Theory of Craft*, 34.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

Monastery of Alcobaça (Fig. 1.30).²²⁶ By contrast, the upper level holds several elevated plinths with sculptures representing most kings of Portugal, along with a group of statues of Afonso I, Saint Bernard, and pope Alexander III. The plinths, which were left empty by the missing figures of male monarchs, recall Wilson's earlier labelling with the names of African American Marylanders on three vacant pedestals in the *Mining the Museum* exhibition.²²⁷ These raise a key question: whose experience is represented in museum collections and exhibitions?

The Queen echoed this critical void and interrogation, portraying a crown without a sovereign in an area hitherto exclusively dedicated to men. Once again, the ideas behind this work might therefore be compared to some of the works created by Vasconcelos for the royal interiors of Versailles and Ajuda, which were discussed in the previous section. By paying tribute to saintly queens and female saints, who are frequently depicted wearing a queen's crown – including the Virgin Mary – *The Queen* explicitly re-gendered the Kings' Hall.²²⁸ Its blue, white, and yellow tones also matched the colours of the *azulejos* on the surrounding walls.

As it adorned the ceiling of the Kings' Hall, *The Queen* evoked the close ties between clergy and royalty at the Monastery of Alcobaça. Throughout the history of Portugal, these have included the support given by Crusaders and monastic orders to the Portuguese expansion into the southwest of Iberia (1139-1249), giving rise to the foundation of the Monastery of Alcobaça and many other religious buildings; King Alfonso VII of León's

²²⁶ Júlio César Machado and Manuel Pinheiro Chagas, *Fóra da terra*, Porto and Braga, 1878; UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage: World Heritage Committee: Ninth Session*, Paris, 1985.

²²⁷ Corrin (ed.), *Mining the Museum*, 13.

²²⁸ Rodrigues, *My Country through Our Eyes*, 9.

acknowledgement of the Kingdom of Portugal in the presence of a papal representative (1143); and the missionary expeditions which underpinned the Portuguese colonisation in parts of Africa, Asia, and the Americas (from 1415 to the late 1800s). Beyond the Portuguese empire, the longstanding view of monarchs as representatives of God on Earth equally reflects the connections between earthly and spiritual power. *The Queen* series reverberates these links, extending outside Portugal and Catholicism. For example, an earlier version of this work was conceived for Manchester Cathedral in 2014, where it established a dialogue with the Church of England, a Protestant institution that is constitutionally governed by the British monarch.

The experiences of marginalised communities were further introduced at the Monastery of Alcobaça through *The Blanket*. This is another series of works resulting from Rodrigues's ethnographic research on women's experiences in the Portuguese countryside. *The Blanket* series has been produced in collaboration with women – most of whom are in their sixties and seventies – from different rural settings.²²⁹ In an interview with Rajesh Punj for *Sculpture* magazine, Rodrigues explained:

The object is always selected with intention — I couldn't do it with just anything. The object needs to be central, and it needs to be recognized by people in a certain space. And then, crucially, I display it in a natural context, where it is used, and create an item, in this case a blanket, that becomes a gigantic object itself, objectifying something with a very theatrical environment.²³⁰

This reveals Rodrigues's deliberate selection of objects, which are then magnified and replicated – a strategy similar to the one deployed by Vasconcelos, as explained above. The object is then placed in a particular setting, which emphasises the object's dramatic

²²⁹ Ibid., 97-98.

²³⁰ Punj, 'Surrendering to the Common Life', 23.

qualities. At Alcobaça, two versions of *The Blanket* were installed. In *The Blanket (Gold & Silver)* (2013), the 'object' is the *adufe*, a traditional square tambourine from Raia, a border area in the central region of Portugal (Fig. 1.31). In *The Blanket (Amarantina version I)* (2015), the 'object' is a linen pillow handwoven by women from Fridão, a village located in the city of Amarante (Fig. 1.32).

Within *The Blanket (Gold & Silver)*, the *adufe* was intentionally chosen to represent women. This instrument is traditionally built and played by women, who are called the *adufeiras*. However, these musical groups began to disappear in the 1980s, as younger people left in search for better living conditions.²³¹ In *The Blanket (Gold & Silver)* the *adufes* are tied by twisted satin ribbons with vibrant colours, recalling the woman's regional costume from Beira Baixa (Fig. 1.33).²³² The *adufes* and their painted patterns further evoke the lasting influence of the Arab occupation of the Iberian Peninsula between the eighth and sixteenth centuries. These musical and visual expressions equally reflect the peaceful coexistence of different ethnicities, races, and faiths under Muslim rule, contrary to the subjugation of other faiths by the Christians.

The Blanket series discloses the *adufe* rehearsals as a space of freedom, which enables women to form ties of solidarity and cope with domestic oppression:

These are places where women have often suffered psychological and physical violence. During the making of *The Blanket*, I would hear stories like, 'I got married when I was 19 (the majority of these women were 60 and 70 years old). I had no freedom at my parent's house. And so I wanted to get married really quickly so I would have some freedom of my own. But then I realized that I would not have any more freedom because the conservatism was transferred from my parents to my husband, who ruled the home entirely.' So, they gained little or no freedom at all. And their notion of marriage, which was romanticized from the moment when they were born and deliberately promoted by the popular media, fed into how they

²³¹ Ibid., 22-23; Rodrigues, *My Country through Our Eyes*, 62.

²³² Rodrigues and Longo, *Proposta de exposição*, 20.

perceived marriage. Unfortunately, marriage was nothing like that notion, and they were unprepared for it. Such cultural misunderstandings show how resilient women are, because they adjust to their circumstances, and that fascinates me.²³³

This manifests the ways in which these women, who were born in the 1940s and 1950s, idealised marriage as something which would set them free from their parents' subjugation, only to become hostages to the coercion of their own husbands. The *adufe* rehearsals therefore provide these women with rare moments of independence, as well as opportunities to get together, play songs that have been orally transmitted across generations, and confide in each other.

The Blanket series draws on the quilt as another object associated with social expectations towards women. Within these works the conventional rosettes in crochet have been replaced by *adufes* or pillows, and interlaced with satin ribbons.²³⁴ The 'item' formed by the multiplication of these objects is a large quilt, an object which has been described by Lucy Lippard as the ultimate feminist metaphor for interconnectedness, inclusiveness, and integration.²³⁵ The fact that this series arose from Rodrigues's investigation into the depopulation and desertification of rural areas in Portugal, their inclusion of the *adufes* as symbols of cultural belonging, and their allusion to women as custodians of cultural traditions, reinforce these feminist values. Relevant cultural usages of the quilt can be found in Britain and the USA, where women sewed or purchased quilts to cover their wedding beds, warm their families, and comfort the sick; and in Portugal, Spain and Brazil, where the mantilla (or *mantilha*, in Portuguese) would shroud women's heads and busts, in white if

²³³ Rodrigues, *My Country through Our Eyes*, 63-64.

²³⁴ Rodrigues and Longo, *Proposta de exposição*, 20.

²³⁵ Lucy Rowland Lippard, 'Sweeping Exchanges: The Contribution of Feminism to the Art of the 1970s', *Art Journal*, 40:1/2, 1980, 362-65.

unmarried and in black if married or widowed.²³⁶ Both quilts and mantillas can be classified as 'covers', as their purpose is to cover the human body.²³⁷ As a result, these two items can embody feelings of care (quilt) and/or conventions of femininity (mantilla).

Despite their frequent associations with heteronormative culture, quilts have also been exhibited in the public space to represent the experiences of LGBTQIA+ communities. In the US, the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt has encompassed an informal and ever-expanding quilt memorial which remains active to this day (Fig. 1.34, Fig. 1.35). Between 1987 and 1995, the number of quilted panels exhibited across the US rose from 40 to 32,000, highlighting AIDS as a national issue.²³⁸ Since then, numerous quilted projects have developed across the globe, in response to this epidemic.²³⁹

By contrast, in *The Blanket* series the quilt lost its covering function, just as the bed in Robert Rauschenberg's *Bed* (1955) was no longer required to function as a support. As Risatti states, in the context of 'fine art [...] the form and visual appearance of these materials are more important than their functional properties'.²⁴⁰ Akin to *Bed* (which included an actual quilt, sheet and pillow), the significance of *The Blanket* relies on the fact that its quilt remains recognizable as a quilt. This series of works therefore illustrates Greenhalgh's description of the significance of 'ethnic traditions, customs, practices, local and vernacular

²³⁶ Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues. On different cultural uses of quilts, see Neil Cummings, *Recycling: Forms for the Next Century: Austerity for Posterity*, exhibition catalogue, Birmingham, Crafts Council Gallery and touring, London, 1996; Lucia Chataignier, 'Memórias: mantilhas e véus: o discreto charme da heresia', *dObra[s]: Revista da Associação Brasileira de Estudos e Pesquisas em Moda*, 3:5, 2009, 25-28.

²³⁷ Risatti, *A Theory of Craft*, 33.

²³⁸ Peter S. Hawkins, 'Naming Names: The Art of Memory and the NAMES Project AIDS Quilt', Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne (eds), *Thinking about Exhibitions*, London, 1996, 95-112.

²³⁹ Norfolk Makers Festival, *The UK AIDS Memorial Quilt*, 2023, <https://norfolkmakersfestival.co.uk/events/the-uk-aids-memorial-quilt-with-daniel-fountain-23>, accessed 20 February 2023.

²⁴⁰ Risatti, *A Theory of Craft*, 132.

approaches to art and life' within late-Modern, globalised culture.²⁴¹ Rodrigues's investigation of regional folklore in cities such as Idanha-a-Nova reflects this concern, whilst highlighting the role of women in the preservation of this cultural heritage.

The exhibition of two versions of *The Blanket* series at the Monastery of Alcobaça reclaimed the original function of each site. As Rodrigues asserts:

The monastery [of Alcobaça] always struck me as very empty. You visit it, you see the architecture, but there is no relationship with what happened there. Thus, I tried to fill it with things that told stories of our time, of our generation.²⁴²

This statement discloses Rodrigues's perception of Cistercian building as a difficult space, devoid of much of its original furniture, where it is hard to visualise its histories and connections to the present. Rodrigues responded to this, by presenting works that conveyed contemporary narratives, notably those linked to her generation. Her strategy could be deployed in other historic sites suffering from this emptiness.

The Blanket (Amarantina version I) was placed in the Dormitory, whereas *The Blanket (Gold & Silver)* was shown at the Chapter House – a key space which held larger meetings, readings, and even burials of friars (Fig. 1.36). Recalling Rodrigues's words in her interview for *Sculpture* magazine, both settings could be considered 'natural contexts' for the 'objects' in each work – the pillow and the *adufe* – as they respectively signify the actions of sleeping and coming together. Yet the original purposes of the Dormitory and the Chapter House are now hardly recognisable, as these spaces were stripped from furniture and other objects in the early 1800s. It could therefore be argued that *The Blanket (Amarantina version I)* and

²⁴¹ Greenhalgh, 'Introduction: Craft', 9.

²⁴² 'O mosteiro sempre me pareceu um lugar muito vazio. Tu vais visitar, vês a arquitectura, mas não tens qualquer relação com nada do que se passou ali. E, então, eu tentei encher com coisas que contassem histórias do nosso tempo, da nossa geração.', Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues.

The Blanket (Gold & Silver) retrieved the context for these two areas, offering a means for their immediate identification. Albeit inadvertently, both versions of *The Blanket* equally recovered the link between the Dormitory and the Chapter House, which were formerly connected by the Escada das Matinas (Matins Staircase).²⁴³ The presence of the pillows ('object') and the quilt ('item'), along with the accidental reconnection of the two sites, asserted the monastery as a domestic space, where the White Monks lived until the early nineteenth century.

This curatorial strategy differs from previous attempts to legitimise quilts as fine art in the West. For example, the exhibition *Abstract Design in American Quilts* (1971) at the Whitney Museum of American Art dissociated these textile objects from the home and emphasised their visual, formal, and two-dimensional traits at the expense of their content, function, tactility, and three-dimensionality.²⁴⁴ Twenty-five years later, in the exhibition *A Labor of Love* (1996), curator Marcia Tucker converted each gallery of the same museum into a different area of a home, adding corresponding furniture. In the 'bedroom', for instance, Jane Kaufman's quilt was placed on a bed, as though it was ready to be used. The placement of *The Blanket* series at the Monastery of Alcobaça represents, on the one hand, a return of the quilt to the home and, on the other, a recovery of domestic experience to the monastic building. Both works were suspended between two columns, partially lying on the floor. *The Blanket (Amarantina version I)* unintentionally evoked the previous division of the Dormitory into individual cells, whereas *The Blanket (Gold & Silver)* faced the tombstone of

²⁴³ In an interview with Rodrigues, she confirmed that she was not aware of the former connection between the two spaces. Ibid. See also Sónia Maria do Livramento Moreira, *As intervenções da Direcção Geral de Edifícios e Monumentos Nacionais: o caso do Mosteiro de Santa Maria De Alcobaça: Igreja, Claustro de D. Dinis e dependências monásticas*, unpublished Master's dissertation, Universidade de Évora, 2006.

²⁴⁴ Peterson, 'How the Ordinary', 99-114.

an unidentified abbot in the Chapter House. These settings evoke the use of quilts as bedcovers or memorials to the diseased.²⁴⁵

Contrary to *Abstract Design in American Quilts*, *Heaven Descends to Earth* highlighted the particular contexts, purposes, and qualities of these objects. Later in 2015, however, *The Blanket (Amarantina version I)* hung on the wall next to the altar of St Gonçalo Church, like a painting or a tapestry (Fig. 1.37). The combination of blue and golden tones in this work also recalls the juxtaposition between blue and white tiles and gilt woodcarving in the interiors of sacred buildings throughout the Baroque period, disseminated in Portugal and parts of its former empire, notably Brazil.²⁴⁶ At Alcobaça, both works stood out against the dark, ascetic background of the Cistercian building through the use of directed lights. *The Blanket* series therefore introduced a sense of warmth into a space of power and control.

Conversely, *The Lovers* drew on the historic Kitchen of Alcobaça to highlight issues of gender inequality and environmental destruction. Although the project proposal for *Heaven Descends to Earth* describes gastronomy as one of the key customs preserved by women, this work highlighted the kitchen as a place where love and agony co-exist.²⁴⁷ Estelle Maré has identified the Kitchen of the Monastery of Alcobaça as a pioneering exemplar of the pre-electrical period. Its sophisticated layout, comprised of tiled walls and a pyramidal chimney, reflects the self-sufficiency of the Cistercians (Fig. 1.38). They took advantage of the natural resources at hand through the cultivation of numerous crops and an underground brook deflected from the Alcoa river, which furnished the monastic complex with fresh water, fish,

²⁴⁵ Hawkins, 'Naming Names', 95-112.

²⁴⁶ José Simões de Belmont Pessôa, 'Entre o singelo monumentalizado e o simbólico, reflexões sobre o patrimônio cultural brasileiro', *IV Enanparq: Encontro da Associação Nacional de Pesquisa e Pós-Graduação em Arquitetura e Urbanismo*, Porto Alegre, 25-29 July 2016, 1-13.

²⁴⁷ Rodrigues and Longo, Proposta de exposição, 2; Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues.

and a means of debris dumping and drainage.²⁴⁸ Rodrigues's work included multiple porcelain hearts wrapped up in freezer bags, which were hung from iron structures together with satin ribbons, and placed alongside one of the tanks once used to collect water in the Kitchen (Fig. 1.39, Fig. 1.40). The iron hooks, which held the crafted vascular organs, had been discarded from a slaughterhouse, following regulations to avoid the contamination of food by heavy metals. As Rodrigues is a vegetarian, one can imagine her uncomfortable (almost masochistic) engagement with these references.²⁴⁹

The poisonous effects of iron might also allude to the frequent toxicity of human relationships. In *The Lovers*, more porcelain hearts were placed over satin ribbons on the Kitchen's large marble table, once used by the White Monks to prepare food (Fig. 1.41). All these elements were carefully set as multiples and aligned in rows across the space, evoking the methodical arrangement of pottery in the domestic environment, notably by storing it in cupboards or hanging it on hooks.²⁵⁰ Once again, the inclusion of media that are often associated with craft, along with tactics of repetition and multiplication, retrieved the original purpose of the setting. Yet while their material (porcelain) might conjure ideas of home and conventions of femininity, their subject (a central organ) suggests the bodies of humans and animals and strong emotions. Through its meticulously-stored porcelain hearts, its mournful colours – black, white, and especially oxblood red – and lights placed on the floor and pointing upwards, *The Lovers* enhanced the exceptional architectural features of the Kitchen, transmuting it into a refrigerator or morgue.

²⁴⁸ Estelle Maré, 'Two Kitchens Before the Era of Electricity: The Cistercian Monastery of Santa Maria de Alcobaça and the Topkapi Palace, Istanbul', Peter Stupples (ed.), *Art and Food*, 2014, 5-12.

²⁴⁹ Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues.

²⁵⁰ Cooper, *Contemporary Ceramics*, 227.

Yet some people, including the then director of the monastery Jorge Pereira de Sampaio, interpreted *The Lovers* as an account of the legendary relationship between Pedro, heir to the Portuguese throne, and Inês de Castro, a noblewoman from the rival Kingdom of Castille.²⁵¹ Inês had worked as a lady in waiting for Pedro's wife, Constança Manuel, who died shortly after their wedding in 1345. Against the wishes of his father King Afonso IV, Pedro and Inês fell in love and had four children. Due to increasing concerns about the Castilian influence over Pedro, Afonso IV ordered the assassination of Inês in 1355. Once he became king, Pedro declared that he had married Inês a few years before, initiating a political process to legitimise their union, and their offspring as rightful heirs to the throne. The new monarch also consecrated Inês as Queen by ordering the construction of two sumptuous tombs for the Monastery of Alcobaça, where her mortal remains were moved in circa 1361-3, and later joined by his own (Fig. 1.42, Fig. 1.43).²⁵² Their relationship has since generated debates about its socio-political repercussions, and representations of the 'Inesian' theme in literature, the visual arts (Fig. 1.44), cinema (Fig. 1.45), and contemporary dance (Fig. 1.46).²⁵³

Although this episode of Portuguese history has often been idealised as a love tale, it is also a story of violence against women. In this sense, it once again relates to the stories told to Rodrigues by women from Idanha-a-Nova during the creation of *The Blanket*. *The Lovers* therefore expands on Rodrigues's reflections about women, notably those born around the mid-1900s, and the ways in which they have coped with oppression from their

²⁵¹ Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues.

²⁵² Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho and António Manuel Ribeiro Rebelo, *D. Pedro e D. Inês: diálogos entre o amor e a morte*, Coimbra, 2016.

²⁵³ Maria Helena da Cruz Coelho, 'Congresso internacional Pedro e Inês: o futuro do passado (28-31 de Março de 2012)', *Revista de História da Sociedade e da Cultura*, 12, 2012, 498-500.

families, husbands, church, and state. Such brutality persists in the present day; according to Associação Portuguesa de Apoio à Vítima or APAV (the Portuguese Association for Victim Support), over 10,000 women were victims of crimes and other forms of violence in 2021.²⁵⁴ In this sense, the work foresaw the outburst of the #MeToo movement in 2017.²⁵⁵ *The Lovers* injected the difficult and marginalised concerns of women into a religious space through craft.

Questions of class were equally addressed in *Heaven Descends to Earth* through the combination of handmade and appropriated items. According to Lisa Wainwright, since the late twentieth century the decorative arts have been incorporated as found objects in contemporary artworks ‘to captivate and then unveil broader issues of race, class, gender and ethnicity’.²⁵⁶ She adds that practitioners such as David Hammons and Nick Cave have incorporated the motif of the chandelier in their work, with the aim of ‘[imbricating] spaces typically assigned to distinct classes and races’ (Fig. 1.47, Fig. 1.48).²⁵⁷ Rodrigues seems to emulate this gesture in her *Enlightenment* series which, as mentioned above, comprises large iron chandeliers. The project proposal reveals that *Enlightenment III* was initially meant to be suspended from the ceiling.²⁵⁸ However, during the exhibition, this group of no less than six chandeliers stood on the floor of the monastery’s Refectory (Fig. 1.49). Unlike Hammons’s and Cave’s works, Rodrigues’s *Enlightenment* series also retains the structure of a typical chandelier (Fig. 1.50). According to Rodrigues, its final layout illustrates the idea

²⁵⁴ Associação Portuguesa de Apoio à Vítima, *Estatísticas APAV 2021: vítimas no feminino*, November 2022, https://apav.pt/apav_v3/images/pdf/Estatisticas_APAV_2021_VitimasNoFeminino.pdf, accessed 1 September 2023.

²⁵⁵ Laurie Collier Hillstrom, *The #MeToo Movement*, Santa Barbara and Denver, 2018.

²⁵⁶ Wainwright, ‘The Decorative Arts’, 241-42.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 258-59.

²⁵⁸ Rodrigues and Longo, *Proposta de exposição*, 30-32.

expressed in the exhibition title – an inversion between heaven and earth.²⁵⁹ Yet the upside-down position of the chandeliers might allude to Rodrigues's desire for transformation among the Portuguese society.

In the context of the Monastery of Alcobaça, the swap articulated in *Enlightenment III* could denote rigid social divisions during the medieval period, and more specifically the implementation of different social categories within the Cistercian order. These included the *conversi*, lay brothers of poor origin who mainly worked in the fields and wore a brown habit and a beard; the choir monks, men of manorial ancestry who lived in reclusion and dressed in white; and the abbot, the highest authority in the monastery.²⁶⁰ The monastic architecture reflected these hierarchies, as lay brothers and choir monks lived, cooked, and ate in separate areas.²⁶¹ At Alcobaça, the abbot sat in a table on the North side of the Refectory, along with the prior, subprior, and the Order dignitaries when they visited the monastery. The lay brothers were only allowed to eat here with the monks and novices after their refectory was destroyed.²⁶² The display of *Enlightenment III* at the Refectory of the Monastery of Alcobaça might subsequently be interpreted as Rodrigues's critique on the Church and its complicity in social hierarchies and power relations.

Enlightenment III also reflects how classifications of people and objects travelled across the former Portuguese empire. Akin to previous versions of the *Enlightenment* series, this work juxtaposes so-called 'high' and 'low' art, handwork and mass production, original

²⁵⁹ Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues.

²⁶⁰ Maria Manuela Albuquerque Lopes, *Mosteiro de Santa Maria de Maceira Dão: proposta de reabilitação sustentável*, unpublished Master's dissertation, Universidade da Beira Interior, 2012; Rebeca Eleutério Holanda, *Hábitos culturais-alimentares dos monges no Mosteiro de Alcobaça: século XII*, unpublished Bachelor's dissertation, Universidade de Brasília, 2018, 16.

²⁶¹ Georges Duby, *L'art cistercien*, Paris, 1998.

²⁶² Moreira, *As intervenções da Direcção*, 21-22.

and reproduction. Yet the chandeliers in *Enlightenment III* are decorated with cheap imitations of filigree necklaces from Minho. Gold filigree jewellery from this historic Portuguese province encompasses both large-scale pieces for public display and small-scale pieces for everyday use, which are linked to different occasions throughout the year and to women's life, following social and economic distinctions.²⁶³

The necklaces in *Enlightenment III* are all adorned with the same pendant, the filigree heart (Fig. 1.51). This is a common motif in women's jewellery from Minho, whose traditional female costume includes multiple necklaces enveloping the chest along with earrings, bracelets, rings (Fig. 1.52).²⁶⁴ Fine gold filigree crafted in Portugal was also disseminated since the sixteenth century amongst Indian craftsmen through the Portuguese colonial harbour of Goa.²⁶⁵ In the late 1600s, the discovery of gold in the Brazilian region of Minas Gerais originated a migratory wave from Portugal, in which most people came from Minho and brought along gold filigree ornaments and other objects for personal and domestic use.²⁶⁶ Akin to the crackle glass necklaces in *Enlightenment I* and *Enlightenment III*, cheap imitations of filigree jewellery can currently be found in Chinese shops across Portugal. As a site-specific work, *Enlightenment III* incorporates craft objects embodying social and economic distinctions, which have circulated across the former Portuguese empire and the contemporary globalised market. Displaying this work at the Monastery of Alcobaça subsequently reinforced these connections between power, wealth, migration, and

²⁶³ Gonalo de Vasconcelos e Sousa, 'Ourivesaria popular: arte, sociabilidade e patrim3nio das gentes do Minho', *Revista do IHA*, No. 3, 2007, 222-37 (227).

²⁶⁴ '[...] cora3o [...] filigranado', *Ibid.*, 228.

²⁶⁵ Courtney Stewart, 'Necklace and Pair of Earrings', *The Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 76:2, 2018, 30.

²⁶⁶ Ana Luiza Castro Pereira, "'Lenois de linho, pratos da 3ndia e brincos de filigrana": vida cotidiana numa vila mineira setecentista', *Estudos hist3ricos*, 24:48, 2011, 331-50 (345).

empire.

Social and economic hierarchies are further explored in *The Grapes of Wrath* (2015), a work unveiling the strong links between wine production, land management, and the implementation of social divisions in the estate of Alcobaça. This work was placed at the centre of King Dinis's Cloister, an area which once held a water fountain (Fig. 1.53).²⁶⁷ It comprises a structure in iron and stainless steel, on which bottles of cheap wine were placed upside down (Fig. 1.54). This configuration and materials are analogous to *The Fountain of Happiness*, a work discussed in the previous section. *The Grapes of Wrath* embodies multiple Catholic allusions such as the biblical account of Jesus's transformation of water into wine; and wine as a symbol of Christ's blood in the eucharist.

More importantly, wine was also a key means of subsistence and wealth in Alcobaça. Wine presses, along with olive presses and mills, comprised a significant part of the economic enterprise created by the Cistercians through a tenant farming system. The establishment of lay brothers as a separate class was a response to the rapid growth of the monastic estate. The number of lay brothers was exponentially larger than that of choir monks. Unlike choir monks, lay brothers were allowed to live and work in the tenant farms, which were administered by the abbot.²⁶⁸ While these farming units spread across the feudal dominion of Alcobaça, by the fourteenth century the Cistercians could no longer look after their lands, causing a decrease in the number of lay brothers. Such phenomenon, which took place across the Cistercian Order, compelled the White Monks to rent their lands

²⁶⁷ Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues.

²⁶⁸ Moreira, As intervenções da Direcção, 24-25; Celso Silva Fonseca, 'As granjas cistercienses na estremaadura portuguesa: contribuições para uma matriz sócio-económica', *T.E.X.T.O.S DE H.I.S.T.Ó.R.I.A. Revista do Programa de Pós-Graduação em História da UnB*, 2:4, 1994, 131-44.

to settlers.²⁶⁹

Meanwhile, the estate of Alcobaça became a significant centre of wine production, where processes of winemaking and conservation developed alongside commercial know-how.²⁷⁰ When the Portuguese kingdom issued the dissolution of all religious orders in 1834, these lands were taken from the tenant farmers, and relocated to former owners and a group of prosperous liberals.²⁷¹ The iron structure supporting the wine bottles in *The Grapes of Wrath* might therefore embody significant sections of the population – such as lay brothers and settlers – who are dominated by, and sustain, a small number of privileged people – notably the abbot, the Portuguese crown, and the aristocracy who allegedly borrowed large sums of money from the Benedictine monastery.²⁷²

While the installation of *The Fountain of Happiness* at Tatton Park alluded to slavery and colonial relations, *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Desert* (2015) used the historic building of the Monastery of Alcobaça to highlight the persistence of social imbalances, economic decline, and its effects on the Portuguese population. In the introduction to her doctoral thesis, Rodrigues states:

The Portuguese government, particularly in the last decade [2000s-2010s], has endeavoured to free itself from certain responsibilities from which the Portuguese people benefitted and had taken for granted for many years, and my generation is feeling the effects of it.²⁷³

Works such as *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Desert* thus established a parallel with the global financial crisis in 2007-8 and the subsequent crisis of sovereign debts and austerity measures

²⁶⁹ Pedro Gomes Barbosa, *Povoamento e estrutura agrícola na Estremadura Central: Séc. XII a 1325*, Lisboa, 1992.

²⁷⁰ Holanda, *Hábitos Culturais-Alimentares*, 17.

²⁷¹ António Valério Maduro, 'As vinhas e os vinhos dos monges cistercienses de Alcobaça: uma história de longa duração', *Douro: vinho, história & património*, 3, 2014, 75-87.

²⁷² Holanda, *Hábitos Culturais-Alimentares*, 18-19.

²⁷³ Rodrigues, *My Country through Our Eyes*, 11.

in Europe. These events caused a significant rise of unemployment, especially amongst highly qualified young people – such as Rodrigues herself – many of whom were forced to emigrate between 2010 and 2015.²⁷⁴ The title of *The Grapes of Wrath* thus also echoes John Steinbeck's book of the same name, which traces the journey of a farmers' family from Oklahoma to California during the Great Depression of 1929-39. Within the Portuguese context, Rodrigues's work particularly alludes to the acknowledgement of wine as 'the bread of the poor'; in a not-so-distant past, peasants would feed themselves with pieces of bread soaked in wine (*sopas de cavalo cansado*) to endure a day of labour.²⁷⁵ Considering the abovementioned social divides intrinsic to the production of wine at Alcobaça, it could be argued that both *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Desert* established a parallel between the recent economic downturn and a past of social injustice and deprivation.

While *The Grapes of Wrath* materialises the scarcity of resources, *Desert* personifies the effects of the latter on the absence of life. *Desert* includes two discontinuous rows of found chairs, in which Rodrigues has intertwined satin ribbons (Fig. 1.55).²⁷⁶ Each seat was placed before a pair of porcelain feet (Fig. 1.56). As Rodrigues explains, *Desert* represents

several women who are sitting and waiting for our generation. A generation who barely had children. Because of the 2008 crisis, many working conditions, and the possibility of starting a family were denied to our generation. [...] [I]n truth, it is called *Desert* because it is a desert of creation, [...] of life. [...] They are there [...] with black and white porcelain feet, of every race and colour, [...] waiting for something that will never come. That was my vision, a few years ago, of what would be the destiny of our generation, and it is what is happening.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁴ Anonymous, 'Governo admite que Portugal é "sobretudo, de novo, um país de emigração"', *Diário de Notícias*, 28 October 2015, <https://www.dn.pt/portugal/portugal-e-de-novo-pais-de-emigracao-110-mil-emigraram-em-2014-4859538.html>, accessed 20 July 2023.

²⁷⁵ '[...] o pão do pobres', Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues.

²⁷⁶ Rodrigues, *My Country through Our Eyes*, 8-10.

²⁷⁷ '[...] várias mulheres sentadas à espera da nossa geração. Uma geração que quase não teve filhos. Por causa da crise de 2008, foram negadas imensas condições de trabalho à nossa geração, a possibilidade de constituir uma família. [...] Não fundo, chama-se Deserto porque é um deserto de criação [...] de vida. [...] Elas estão ali [...] com os pés em porcelana pretos e brancos, de todas as raças e de todas as cores, [...] à espera de uma coisa

Desert accordingly embodies a problem faced by many Portuguese people from the same generation as Rodrigues, who were forced to leave their country and find a better life elsewhere. Rodrigues lived in Manchester from 2009 to 2015, where she taught at university, began her career as a practitioner, and developed her PhD.²⁷⁸ Her doctoral research addressed the impact of emigration on the depopulation of the Portuguese countryside. Works such as *The Blanket (Amarantina version I)* derived from Rodrigues's reflections on the specific impact of poverty, desertification, depopulation, and emigration on elderly women. *The Blanket (Amarantina version I)* and *Desert* were respectively placed in the north and south sides of Alcobaça's Dormitory, portraying the struggles undergone by women from different generations. An intergenerational dialogue was therefore generated through these two works.

The Grapes of Wrath, *The Blanket (Amarantina version I)*, and *Desert* reflect Rodrigues's desire to 'fill' the Monastery of Alcobaça 'with things that told stories of our time, of our generation'.²⁷⁹ By evoking a contemporary 'desert of life' at what is now the empty setting of the Dormitory, *Desert* equally recalls the imposition of celibacy, quietness, and communitarian living among Cistercians. As Maur Cocheril notes, 'the monk was never alone. At the Dormitory, he slept on a pallet, separated from his neighbours by a division which was not very high. When he was not in the garden or the fields, he worked in silence.'²⁸⁰ By contrast, the placement of *The Grapes of Wrath* at the King Dinis's Cloister –

que nunca vai chegar. Aquilo era a minha visão, há uns anos atrás, daquilo que ia ser o destino da nossa geração e que, na realidade, é o que está a acontecer.', Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues.

²⁷⁸ Cristina Rodrigues, <https://cristinarodrigues.co.uk/about/>, accessed 20 July 2023.

²⁷⁹ '[...] encher com coisas que contassem histórias do nosso tempo, da nossa geração', Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues.

²⁸⁰ '[...] o monge nunca estava só. No dormitório, dormia sobre um enxergão, separado dos seus vizinhos por uma divisória de pouca altura. Quando não estava na horta ou nos campos, trabalhava em silêncio', Maur

also called the Cloister of Silence – overtly counteracted the silence imposed on Cistercian monks, disclosing Rodrigues’s will to speak out about social injustice, hardship, and emigration in the present day.

This analysis of *Heaven Descends to Earth*, a solo exhibition by Cristina Rodrigues held at the Portuguese Monastery of Alcobaça, Portugal, in 2015, has revealed the distinct contexts of contemporary craft-based exhibitions in sites linked to Church and royalty. This exhibition evidences Rodrigues’s use of craft as a tool to fill spaces which had been left empty and narratives which had been silenced at the building. Such a strategy embodies a response not only to the absence of furniture and other elements which would allow visitors to identify the different areas and functions of the building, but to also make present the absent voices of women of different generations, people from rural settings, the local community, and Portuguese emigrants, in a space that has historically served the interests of a privileged few. Rodrigues took advantage of craft’s connotations with heritage to raise contemporary social issues and highlight identities and experiences, which were overlooked by heritage venues in the past.

The next section examines more closely a permanent installation titled *The Kingdom of Heaven* (2017), designed by Cristina Rodrigues for Manchester’s Anglican Cathedral, UK. It investigates the exhibition of craft not so much as a means of exposing social injustice and hierarchies, as in the previous section, but as a tool within processes of healing and reconciliation.

Cocheril, *Alcobaça: abadia cisterciense de Portugal*, Lisbon, 1989, 22.

**‘Healing’ communities and restoring ‘Hope’ through craft: *The Kingdom of Heaven* (2017),
a permanent installation at Manchester Cathedral, UK**

The Kingdom of Heaven is a series of altar frontals created by Cristina Rodrigues for Manchester Cathedral, UK. Through an analysis of this case study, I will explore the role of contemporary craft in the context of the Anglican Church and, more specifically, in processes of healing and reconciliation. In contrast to the temporary exhibitions *Heaven Descends to Earth* and *Women from My Country*, discussed above, *The Kingdom of Heaven* is a permanent installation, manifesting the exceptional level of demand and complexity involved in this exhibitionary format in the UK. As Rodrigues stresses, by 2021 very few practitioners had been allowed to exhibit their work permanently in active places of worship across the UK (Fig. 1.57).²⁸¹ Finally, I will examine the potential effects of the dedication or consecration of the altar frontals on 17 September 2017 on their classification as works of contemporary or religious art and/or craft.

In his text for *The Kingdom of Heaven’s* exhibition catalogue, Warren J. Smith, the High Steward of Manchester Cathedral, explained how Rodrigues’s solo exhibition *Women from My Country*, held in 2014 at this site, originated a long-term relationship between her and the Anglican cathedral:

Three years ago Cristina Rodrigues [...] exhibited some of her remarkable works of art in the Cathedral. It was a real “tour de force”. During the time of the exhibition Cristina became very much part of the Cathedral and was taken to the hearts of all those who met her. I believe in turn she too developed an affection for this Cathedral and it is as a result of her inspiration and her substantial efforts that the Cathedral is

²⁸¹ Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues. An example of a contemporary artwork permanently installed in a British sacred context is Tracey Emin’s *For You* (2008), commissioned by the Liverpool Cathedral. Durham Cathedral also commissioned the Portuguese practitioner Paula Rego to create the painting *St Margaret* (2022), which is now on display in this building. For other examples of modern and contemporary works exhibited in UK churches and cathedrals since 1920, see Art+Christianity, *Ecclesiart*.

the recipient of these wonderful altar frontals.²⁸²

This statement attests that Rodrigues's first project at Manchester Cathedral gave rise to an affective relationship, which eventually led her to propose the creation of a permanent work for this space. According to Rogers Govender, Dean of Manchester Cathedral, her proposal specifically encompassed a textile work.²⁸³ The cathedral, in turn, needed new altar frontals.

Titled *The Kingdom of Heaven*, the resulting permanent installation comprises a series of seven altar frontals, developed over six years by six professional female practitioners from the Oficina-Escola de Bordado de Castelo Branco (Castelo Branco Embroidery Workshop-School). The collection was executed in Castelo Branco Embroidery, a technique from the central interior region of Portugal (Fig. 1.58). Manchester Cathedral is a Grade I listed building, rendering it of exceptional interest. It is also an active place of worship, which poses additional restrictions to exhibiting artworks. The project subsequently required approval at the institutional, local, and national levels, being subjected to multiple comments and revisions. About 150 drafts were produced before the final version was approved. The altar frontals were funded by the city council of Castelo Branco and donated to Manchester Cathedral. In his preface to the exhibition catalogue, Luís Correia, then mayor of Castelo Branco, described this gift 'as a vote of trust in the quality of the work of this artist [...] but also because that involvement would offer the exceptional opportunity to promote the Embroidery of Castelo Branco'.²⁸⁴ The collection's estimated financial value exceeds half

²⁸² Warren J. Smith, 'Lord-Lieutenant of Greater Manchester and High Steward of Manchester Cathedral', Estúdio Cristina Rodrigues (ed.), *The Kingdom of Heaven*, exhibition catalogue, Castelo Branco, Manchester Cathedral, Manchester, 2017, 10-11 (11).

²⁸³ Inês Jorge, Interview with Rogers Govender on the collaborations between Cristina Rodrigues and Manchester Cathedral, unpublished videoconference, 30 minutes, Birmingham, 25 April 2023.

²⁸⁴ Luís Correia, 'Mayor of Castelo Branco Town Hall', Estúdio Cristina Rodrigues (ed.), *The Kingdom of Heaven*, exhibition catalogue, Castelo Branco, Manchester Cathedral, Manchester, 2017, 8-9 (9).

a million pounds.²⁸⁵

The seven frontals cover altar tables located in different areas of Manchester Cathedral. They include *The Garden of Eden*, a series of four altar frontals in the New Altar; *The Bread of Life*, an altar frontal at the Jesus Chapel; *The Rosary*, an altar frontal at the Lady Chapel, and *The Kingdom of Heaven*, an altar frontal at the High Altar, UK. These works comprise different, vibrantly coloured designs set against a white linen background and over wave patterns. While their composition might seem symmetrical, subtle variations reveal their asymmetry. The four altar frontals forming *The Garden of Eden* all depict a large tree over water. Yet each altar frontal is made with threads of different tonalities, which correspond to the four seasons of the year (Fig. 1.59, Fig. 1.60). The trunk and branches of the trees and their surrounding space are filled with dozens of leaves. By contrast, *The Bread of Life* portrays ears of wheat in yellow, green, and burgundy (Fig. 1.61). *The Rosary* depicts a succession of lavish roses in yellow, green, pink, and red, some of which originate from secondary stems (Fig. 1.62). The composition of the central piece, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, centres around seven trees in different colours, which are placed under a double halo in blue and gold and flanked by a pair of gold and yellow colossal wings (Fig. 1.63).

The altar frontals encompass a wide range of meanings and symbols. In his essay for the exhibition catalogue, Bernardo Pinto de Almeida asserts:

[Rodrigues's] Trees of Life which fill this gigantic 'The Garden of Eden' (2017) gain an increasing presence that isn't merely linked [...] to Christian imaginary [...] Instead, they open up a multiple dialoguing relationship with a variety of cultures, creeds, religious and symbolic forms that extend from ancient Hinduism to Islamism, or from Buddhism to forms we now see as ancestral: the remote Persian cults of Zoroaster, or even more laic spiritual forms, which everyone can recognise [...]. They thus promote a process that could be perceived as belonging to an ecumenical and deeply open spiritual communication, suggesting, by its mere location; a cathedral [*sic*], the possibility of an

²⁸⁵ Anthony O'Connor, 'Campaign Corner: Altar Frontals from Portugal', *Cathedral News*, October 2017, 11.

inter-religion dialogue [...].²⁸⁶

This statement discloses how *The Garden of Eden* particularly embodies references to multiple types of spirituality across different periods and civilisations. Its placement in a cathedral further emphasises how this work offers a conversation between different faiths. The wave pattern in *The Bread of Life*, *The Rosary* and *The Kingdom of Heaven* particularly recalls the Vitruvian scroll, a design dating back to antiquity (Fig. 1.64).²⁸⁷

The Rosary signifies both a series of prayers related to the life of Mary and the strings of beads used for counting these prayers across several Christian communities. According to Rodrigues, the roses depicted in this altar frontal symbolise not only Mary but also England.²⁸⁸ The rose as an embodiment of English identity also relates to the Wars of the Roses (1455-87), a series of civil wars between two rival branches of the royal House of Plantagenet, Lancaster, and York, which respectively held the crests of the Red Rose of Lancaster and the White Rose of York. Because of its connections with the former royal House of Lancaster, the Red Rose of Lancaster also represents Manchester, featuring in the city's coat of arms. *The Kingdom of Heaven*, on the other hand, illustrates the desire to accomplish God's will on Earth. According to Rodrigues, it portrays the number three, whose representation as three strokes in Mandarin (sān) (三), alludes to humankind, the earth, and the sky.²⁸⁹ The golden silk threads used in some of the altar frontals equally recall the use of gold embroidery in liturgical objects throughout Christianity.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁶ Bernardo Pinto de Almeida, 'Cristina Rodrigues: entre o local e o global', Estúdio Cristina Rodrigues (ed.), *The Kingdom of Heaven*, exhibition catalogue, Castelo Branco, Manchester Cathedral, Manchester, 2017, 14-23 (23).

²⁸⁷ Michael Clarke, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Art Terms*, 2nd edn, Oxford, 2010.

²⁸⁸ Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ On the role of gold embroidery in the Byzantine Empire, see Gavrilean Emilian Adrian, 'Moldavian Medieval

The execution of the altar frontals in Castelo Branco Embroidery also generates an encounter between a regional, rural technique and a multicultural, urban context. As Rodrigues asserts, choosing this technique allowed her to represent both herself and her country.²⁹¹ Castelo Branco Embroidery is usually executed with natural silk on linen; its designs derive from the Iberian *azulejos*, European drawings and prints from the 1600s and 1700s, Chinese and Indian textiles, Chinese porcelain, and other inspirations.²⁹² This demonstrates the multicultural origins of many handmade practices, and their deep imbrication in transnational relations and colonialism.

Rodrigues describes Castelo Branco Embroidery as ‘the most extraordinary technique which has endured in this country’, attesting Jorunn Veiteberg’s association between craft, luxury, opulence, an exceptional use of materials and craftsmanship.²⁹³ In an interview, Correia stressed that this project made it possible to ‘carry this heritage and the [...] embroiderers’ work [...] to a new level’.²⁹⁴ *The Kingdom of Heaven* thus introduced a new function for Castelo Branco Embroidery, following its applications in architecture, coinage, stamps, furniture, fashion, and public transport since the early twenty-first century.²⁹⁵ These are part of a municipal programme to promote this regional technique. The permanent

Liturgical Pieces: Art Objects at the Museum of Putna Monastery’, *Anastasis (Iași)*, 2:2, 132-64.

²⁹¹ Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues.

²⁹² Instituto dos Museus e da Conservação and Museu de Francisco Tavares Proença Júnior (ed.), *Bordado de Castelo Branco: caderno de especificações técnicas*, 2nd edn, Castelo Branco, 2017, 81-84.

²⁹³ ‘[...] a técnica mais extraordinária que se tem mantido neste país’, José Júlio Cruz, ‘Cultura: bordado de Castelo Branco nos altares de Manchester’, *Reconquista*, 15 March 2017, <https://www.reconquista.pt/articles/cultura-bordado-de-castelo-branco-nos-altares-de-manchester>, accessed 20 July 2023; Jorunn Veiteberg, ‘Ambiguous Gifts’, Tanya Harrod and Edmund de Waal (eds), *Gift: Papers and Exhibition*, Gmunden, 2007, 41-45 (41).

²⁹⁴ ‘[...] transportar o património e o trabalho [...] também pelas bordadeiras albicastrenses que o estão a realizar para um novo patamar’, Cruz, ‘Cultura: bordado’.

²⁹⁵ Câmara Municipal de Castelo Branco, *Outras aplicações do bordado*, 2024, <https://www.cm-castelobranco.pt/visitante/bordado-castelo-branco-o-ex-libris/outras-aplicacoes-do-bordado/>, accessed 15 November 2023.

display of *The Kingdom of Heaven* at the Anglican cathedral and the institution's intention to organise a touring exhibition of the altar frontals across the UK provide a unique opportunity to promote Castelo Branco Embroidery internationally.

Whilst supporting a regional skill, Rodrigues's project exposed a hierarchical relationship between her and the practitioners who executed the work. A short video, published on Rodrigues's Youtube page, shows one of the practitioners winding the linen fabric around a wooden frame; Rodrigues making the drawings; several hands pointing to Rodrigues's designs; and the practitioners reproducing the drawings through sewing.²⁹⁶ While Rodrigues's face briefly appears, the only visible parts of the practitioners' bodies are their hands. By contrast, the exhibition catalogue includes 'production' photos, where the faces of the practitioners can be seen whilst they work on the altar frontals (Fig. 1.65).²⁹⁷ When I asked Rodrigues what the extent of the practitioners' participation in the project was, she assertively replied:

The creative freedom [of the practitioners] is none. Everything that I give them has been studied and it is exactly what I want, but that is what they do in their daily routine. [...] Here, I imposed the use of different colours; I made the drawings of the shapes; I drew on the linen; I marked the colours so that they would not fail them; I picked the colours, one by one [...] Therefore, everything was imposed, dictated, projected thread by thread, and they executed everything that they were told to.²⁹⁸

This statement discloses a methodology where Rodrigues controls the actions of the other

²⁹⁶ Rodrigues, Cristina, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, online video recording, 27 April 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ur8DhmFkxuw&ab_channel=CristinaRodrigues> [accessed 10 April 2023].

²⁹⁷ Estúdio Cristina Rodrigues (ed.), *The Kingdom of Heaven*, exhibition catalogue, Castelo Branco, Manchester Cathedral, Manchester, 2017, 59-71 (59).

²⁹⁸ 'A liberdade criativa é zero. Eu dou-lhes sempre tudo estudado; dou-lhes exactamente o que quero. Mas, na realidade, é isso que elas fazem no seu dia-a-dia. [...] Aqui, eu é que fiz a imposição do uso de cores diferentes; eu é que desenhei as formas; desenhei sobre o linho; fiz a marcação das cores para elas não falharem as cores; escolhi as cores uma a uma [...] Portanto, foi tudo imposto, ditado, projectado linha a linha e elas executaram tudo o que foi dito.', Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues.

practitioners, reserving all creative decisions for herself. Rodrigues stresses that the project reflected the practitioners' usual procedure of executing another's design. As mentioned in the technical guide *Bordado de Castelo Branco: caderno de especificações técnicas* (Castelo Branco Embroidery: Technical Requirements File): 'Alterations of colour in Embroideries meant for contemporary creation are accepted so long as they are proposed by visual artists, architects, or designers.'²⁹⁹ This means that, while practitioners such as Rodrigues are allowed to modify the colours which are traditionally deployed in this technique, those who are categorised as craftspeople, are not allowed. The technical guide outlines 'the rules and general principles of good practice for the preservation of Castelo Branco Embroidery', to avoid 'adulteration by lack of knowledge and/or disrespect for traditional techniques and motifs'.³⁰⁰ The safeguarding of Castelo Branco Embroidery subsequently relies on rigid standards that limit the technique's creative possibilities, and on an uneven application of these standards between different practitioners.

The altar frontals reflected the ways in which craft combines innovation and conservatism. As Roszika Parker argues, craft embodies an interplay between convention and subversion, which grants craft the ability to unsettle gender and artistic divides.³⁰¹ Within this project, Rodrigues altered the method of Castelo Branco Embroidery, employing more vibrant colours than those conventionally used; using threads of different colours to outline shapes, as in the contour of a drawing; and applying the thread in multiple directions

²⁹⁹ 'Aceitam-se alterações de cor nos Bordados de criação contemporânea desde que propostas por artistas plásticos, arquitectos ou designers.', Instituto dos Museus e da Conservação and Museu de Francisco Tavares Proença Júnior (ed.), *Bordado de Castelo Branco*, 92.

³⁰⁰ '[...] as regras e os princípios gerais para uma boa prática para a preservação do Bordado de Castelo Branco'; '[...] uma descaracterização por falta de conhecimento e ou/desrespeito pelas técnicas e motivos tradicionais', *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁰¹ Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*. See also Amy E. Elkins, 'A Stitch in Time: H. D.'s Craft Modernism as Transhistoric Repair', *The Space Between: Literature and Culture 1914-1945*, 12, 2016, 1-18 (2-3).

– rather than in a single direction as is customary in this technique – to create the illusion of various colours whilst using only one (Fig. 1.66, Fig. 1.67).³⁰² She reveals that, whilst the professional practitioners involved in the project were initially sceptical about it, they now hold it in great esteem.³⁰³ Local amateur practitioners, on the other hand, saw her modifications as a misrepresentation of Castelo Branco Embroidery. An additional divide therefore arises between professional and amateur practitioners, suggesting that professional practitioners are more exposed, and thus more open, to contemporary approaches to craft, whereas amateur practitioners tend to follow traditional techniques more strictly.

The collection establishes a harmonic relationship with Manchester Cathedral. According to Govender, the tonalities in the altar frontals follow the liturgical colours which, in turn, are based on important events held throughout the year such as Christmas and Easter.³⁰⁴ The four altar frontals in *The Garden of Eden* are also rotated across the New Altar's altar table, according to the seasons of the year (Fig. 1.68). As the visitor circulates in the space, they may see a different altar frontal, and imagine the season which it represents (Fig. 1.69). They are therefore invited to take a twofold journey – physically across space, and symbolically across time. *The Garden of Eden* thus introduces the dimension of time and the rhythms of nature in the church – a human-built construction and institution which often aspires to be eternal. By contrast, *The Bread of Life* alludes to God's self-proclamation as a

³⁰² Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues. For an overview (in Portuguese) of the common ornaments, symbols, techniques, and materials in Castelo Branco Embroidery, see Câmara Municipal de Castelo Branco, *Temática, técnica e materiais*, 2024, <https://www.cm-castelobranco.pt/visitante/bordado-castelo-branco-o-ex-libris/tematica-tecnica-e-materiais/>, accessed 3 March 2021.

³⁰³ Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues.

³⁰⁴ Jorge, Interview with Govender.

symbol of spiritual salvation, suiting its location in the Jesus Chapel (Fig. 1.70).³⁰⁵ *The Rosary* equally complements the Lady Chapel, which is dedicated to Mary (Fig. 1.71). Finally, through its placement in the High Altar – the cathedral’s chief altar for eucharistic celebration – *The Kingdom of Heaven* is physically and symbolically elevated and becomes part of the rite of communion (Fig. 1.72).

The permanent installation *The Kingdom of Heaven* is part of a programme of physical and spiritual regeneration at Manchester Cathedral, through craft. In 1940, the building was partly destroyed by the Manchester Blitz, which also had devastating effects across the city of Manchester and other areas in the Northwest of England. In 1996, an IRA bomb caused further damage to the cathedral. According to their website, following a terrorist attack at Manchester Arena in 2017, Manchester Cathedral equally played a key role in the ‘spiritual recovery’ of the local community, notably through *The Glade of Light* (2021) memorial (Fig. 1.73).³⁰⁶ As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, several cities and churches across Europe suffered extensive attacks during WWII. In this context, Coventry Cathedral has often been described as a praiseworthy example of postwar church reconstruction. This encompasses a new cathedral built alongside the old cathedral, thus integrating the memories associated with it. According to Tanya Harrod, Coventry Cathedral is also exceptional because of its wide-ranging involvement of craft in the new architectural programme.³⁰⁷ Coventry Cathedral equally embodies the idea of reconciliation, as German practitioners such as the émigré letter carver Ralph Beyer created works for the building.

³⁰⁵ Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett (eds), *The Bible: Authorized King James Version*, Oxford, 1998, 122.

³⁰⁶ Manchester Cathedral, *Manchester Cathedral Timeline*, 2024, <https://www.manchestercathedral.org/about-us/timeline/>, accessed 10 November 2023.

³⁰⁷ Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain*, 443.

While the postwar reconstruction of Coventry Cathedral drew on the notion of reconciliation, the various episodes of restoration undergone by Manchester Cathedral have emphasised ideas of healing, hope, diversity, and inclusion. Since the 1940s, works in tapestry, metalwork, stained glass, letter carving, and furniture were commissioned to refurbish the building. For example, the two tapestries suspended on each side of the Lady Chapel were designed by Austin Wright and woven by Theo Moorman in 1957. They portray the biblical episodes of Nativity (Fig. 1.74) and Visitation (Fig. 1.75).³⁰⁸ Wright designed the metal cross at the Jesus Chapel (1970) (Fig. 1.70), which also includes creative inputs from Bryant Fedden, Gerald Carter, Keith Jameson, and Moorman. Moorman particularly contributed to this work by creating a tapestry insert for the cross, and a vibrant orange woven cloth against which the cross is suspended. As Sally Reckert notes, this work emphasises the hopeful moment of Resurrection rather than the dismaying episode of Crucifixion.³⁰⁹

This assuaging message finds continuity in more recent works such as *Healing Window* (2004) (Fig. 1.76), a stained-glass window designed by Linda Walton.³¹⁰ The words ‘Diversity’, ‘Healing’, ‘Wholeness’, ‘Glory’ and ‘Inclusion’ are engraved underneath this work, encompassing the more conventional Christian values of integrity and splendour, along with recent and broader messages of multiculturalism, spiritual recovery, and equity. A report from the Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England further underscores that *Hope Window* (Fig. 1.77), designed by Alan Davis and dedicated in 2016, was sponsored

³⁰⁸ Sally Reckert, ‘Theo Moorman in Manchester Cathedral’, *Tapestry Weaver*, 28 September 2020, 10-11.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

³¹⁰ Manchester Cathedral, *2021 Was a Major Anniversary for Manchester Cathedral, 2024*, <https://www.manchestercathedral.org/about-us/600-anniversary/>, accessed 10 November 2023.

by people ‘from beyond the worshipping Christian community [...] People recognise that this space [Manchester Cathedral] is a resource for the whole community, but that it is so because of rather than despite its specific Christian identity’.³¹¹ This demonstrates that the wider society has been involved in the maintenance and improvement of the building and that they might draw on the cathedral’s spiritual – and specifically Christian – means. In 2017, a new set of liturgical furniture created by Mike McIntosh, was installed in the New Altar (Fig. 1.78). This includes an altar table; and choir stalls embellished with Martin Bartlett’s bronze sculptures of bees and a honeycomb, representing the industrial city of Manchester and its working people (Fig. 1.79). It is also here that the new Stoller organ is located since 2017 (Fig. 1.68).

By participating in a restoration process taking place at Manchester Cathedral, Rodrigues’s altar frontals contribute to its aims of material and spiritual healing. According to Smith, ‘the final piece of the jigsaw, in the restoration programme of Manchester Cathedral [...] has been the installation and dedication of the Stoller organ’.³¹² *The Kingdom of Heaven* was consecrated on 17 September 2017, only three days after the dedication of the Stoller organ. The consecration of the altar frontals entailed a religious service centred on Manchester Cathedral’s New Altar, UK.

Govender, Smith, and other members of the Church led the ceremony, where Rodrigues and the mayor of Castelo Branco were also present. A photograph of the service shows the Dean and another member of the clergy standing at the aisle of the New Altar (Fig. 1.80). Beside the altar table, Rodrigues stands and bows her head in a gesture of

³¹¹ The Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England, *Witness*, London, 2020, 44.

³¹² Smith, ‘Lord-Lieutenant’, 11.

reverence, whilst people wearing white gloves – arguably to protect the altar frontals – hold *The Rosary* and *The Bread of Life* with their hands. The two panels face the attendants, who are seated. Although the permanent installation is a contemporary artwork, its consecration ascribed it to a sacred dominion.³¹³ Rather than being legitimated by a museum as works of art, the altar frontals were legitimated by the Anglican Church as sacred objects. Their incorporation in Manchester Cathedral and the Church of England more broadly also manifests the values of healing, hope, inclusion, and diversity, which these institutions seek to represent.³¹⁴

Albeit unintentionally, the donation of the altar frontals to the Anglican cathedral evokes that which is deemed the oldest diplomatic alliance in the world, established over 600 years ago between Portugal and England. The first Anglo-Portuguese agreement in 1373 arose from common strategic and dynastic interests.³¹⁵ In 1369, the alliance between France and the former Kingdom of Castille had posed a threat to England's security, prompting England to form a union with Castille's bordering country, Portugal. On the other hand, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, wished to claim the Castilian throne through his wife, Constance, daughter of Peter of Castille. In the following years, the increasing risk of a Franco-Castilian invasion motivated the English to renew their pact with Portugal.

Sealed between King Richard II of England and King John I of Portugal in 1386, the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty of Windsor aimed to secure mutual protection and free trade

³¹³ Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson (eds), 'Consecrate', *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, eleventh edn, Oxford, 2008.

³¹⁴ The Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England, *Witness*, 45.

³¹⁵ Ben Trowbridge, 'History's Unparalleled Alliance: The Anglo-Portuguese Treaty of Windsor 9th May 1386', *Gov.uk*, 9 May 2016, <https://history.blog.gov.uk/2016/05/09/historys-unparalleled-alliance-the-anglo-portuguese-treaty-of-windsor-9th-may-1386/>, 13 November 2023.

between the two countries. Clauses included an incentive to freedom of movement and residence between Portugal and England – a privilege which has not always prevailed since the fourteenth century and has recently been called into question because of Brexit. In 1387, the marriage between Philippa, daughter of John of Gaunt, and the Portuguese king ensured the continuity of the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty, affording a decisive dynastic factor to this transnational agreement.³¹⁶ As Manchester Cathedral is part of the Duchy of Lancaster – a private estate owned by the British sovereign – it holds particular royal connections, including those embedded in the alliance between Portugal and England.

Rodrigues's permanent installation therefore illustrates the ways in which craft embodies history, and that a history of transnational relations can be told via objects. As Veiteberg asserts,

many of the objects we find in museums of applied art all over Europe were originally gifts. Expensive treasures given to people in authority and to the clergy in order to honour and praise them have later ended up in museums, together with other objects donated by collectors, philanthropists and other pillars of society.³¹⁷

The links between craft, gifts and giving can be traced in numerous museums of applied art across Europe. Despite integrating the collection of a church rather than that of a museum, *The Kingdom of Heaven* follows a long tradition of gift giving through craft, which is also linked to the historic diplomatic relations between Portugal and England. The dedication of the altar frontals in 2017 commemorated sixty years of Queen Elizabeth II's visit to Portugal in 1957, when she was offered a quilt made in Castelo Branco Embroidery.³¹⁸ This gift by the

³¹⁶ Trowbridge, 'History's Unparalleled Alliance'; Smith, 'Lord-Lieutenant', 11.

³¹⁷ Veiteberg, 'Ambiguous Gifts', 41.

³¹⁸ While Cristina Rodrigues in an interview stated that the quilt offered to Queen Elizabeth II belongs to the V&A collection, the museum's Textiles and Fashion team could not find an item recorded as connected to both Castelo Branco and Queen Elizabeth II. Important collections of Castelo Branco Embroidery can be found at the V&A, the National Museum of Ancient Art in Lisbon, and the Museum of Francisco Tavares Proença Júnior in Castelo Branco. Jorge, Interview with Rodrigues; Smith, 'Lord-Lieutenant', 11; Cruz, 'Cultura: bordado'.

Portuguese government was part of a wider attempt to promote this traditional technique and make up the impression of a wealthy country through embroidery.³¹⁹

The royal trip also had important diplomatic implications in a postwar context. World War II was an economic as much as a military conflict, with significant repercussions on the diplomatic, military, political and ideological relations between the Axis and the Allies.³²⁰ In this context, tungsten became a strategic material used in warfare and machinery. As many tungsten mines in Europe are in the Northwest of Spain and the North of Portugal, these countries became central in the war economy despite their neutral position. Until France's capitulation in June 1940, the Allies had controlled the Portuguese tungsten trade. Yet, from July 1940, the Axis was able to transport goods purchased and furnished to Portugal through Spain and France.³²¹

Over the following years, Portuguese Prime Minister António de Oliveira Salazar signed multiple trade pacts on tungsten and other goods with both sides of the conflict.³²² For example, in November 1940, Britain and Portugal established a Payment Agreement that granted the British state and its companies unlimited credit to purchase goods in Portuguese currency until the end of the war.³²³ From 1942, the Portuguese dictatorship intensified its commitment to ideological principles and strategies, including the rejection of monopoly capitalism and mass consumption and the importance of a powerful Germany in the fight against communism.³²⁴ Held a mere twelve years after the Axis's defeat, Queen Elizabeth II's

³¹⁹ Maria Margarida Ivo Rosa, *O bordado de Castelo Branco: história, arte, colecionismo e musealização*, unpublished Master's dissertation, Universidade de Évora, 2005, 34.

³²⁰ João Paulo Avelãs Nunes, 'Portugal, Espanha, o volfrâmio e os beligerantes durante e após a Segunda Guerra Mundial', *Encontro 'Relações Portugal-Espanha: cooperação e identidade'*, Zamora, 1999, 789-823 (790).

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 794.

³²² *Ibid.*, 797.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 795.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 815.

visit to Portugal was orchestrated by the *Estado Novo* regime to present the country as a respectable, hospitable, and orderly ally. The event served to erase the memory of the Portuguese support of Nazi Germany during the war.³²⁵ By accepting the handmade blanket, the English monarch ensured the continuity of the political pact between the two countries.

While the quilt offered to Queen Elizabeth II aimed to warrant the stability of a transnational agreement, the offering of the altar frontals in 2017 generated an interregional accord. In her essay 'Ambiguous Gifts', Veiteberg explains that

[t]he concept of a gift also includes the social and symbolic values and meanings that accompany the objects as well as the act of giving. [...] A gift or service must be reciprocated in a return service. [...] In other words, to accept gifts means to acquire obligations, thus forming the basis for lasting bonds between the parties.³²⁶

By encompassing a physical object and the gesture of gifting, the notion of gift embodies tangible and intangible aspects. As the act of gifting assumes a degree of reciprocation, it originates a relation between the giver and the beneficiary of the gift. According to Govender, the offering of the altar frontals is beneficial, not only for Manchester Cathedral, but also for Rodrigues, as it can boost her international recognition.³²⁷ Furthermore, the project might increase the visibility of Castelo Branco Embroidery and assert Church as a significant patron of contemporary art in the UK.

The donation of *The Kingdom of Heaven* also inaugurated a cultural agreement between the cities of Manchester and Castelo Branco, comprising their local governments as well as Manchester Cathedral, the School of Art of Manchester Metropolitan University, and the College of Applied Arts of the Instituto Politécnico de Castelo Branco (Polytechnical

³²⁵ Fernando Correia and Carla Baptista, 'O Diário Ilustrado nasceu há 50 anos', *Jornalismo e Jornalistas*, 28, October-December 2006, 58-65.

³²⁶ Veiteberg, 'Ambiguous Gifts', 42-43.

³²⁷ Jorge, Interview with Govender.

Institute of Castelo Branco). A friendship accord was signed on 20 March 2023, where the two parties pledged to cultivate their relationship. The settlement aims to explore the cultural, educational, and scientific links between Castelo Branco and Manchester, including cooperation across different arts such as embroidery and music. A series of cultural visits have therefore taken place between both cities.³²⁸ The altar frontals constitute the first tangible manifestation of these associations.

Both Rodrigues's project and the ensuing interregional agreement can also be interpreted as a response to the increase of conflict and hate at a regional, national, and global scale. A report from the Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England describes Manchester Cathedral as a space, situated within

a society that very easily polarises over responses to terrorism, over the activity of the far right, over Brexit. In such a context, the cathedral tries to be a sign of God's welcome, a sign of God's inclusive love, a sign of God's delight in the diversity of humanity. It seeks to be a sign of hope in the midst of a fractured world.³²⁹

This statement demonstrates that Manchester Cathedral has actively sought to counteract division and increased polarisation in society. Govender, who defines himself as a 'remainer', particularly acknowledges that *The Kingdom of Heaven* aims to maintain friendship ties and mitigate Britain's isolation from other European countries because of Brexit.³³⁰ The Anglican cathedral has accordingly promoted several initiatives advocating for 'peace, [...] inclusion, [...] the building of bridges, and [...] overcoming [...] division and hatred'.³³¹ Examples include

³²⁸ Manchester Cathedral, *Manchester Cathedral Lead Friendship Links with Portugal*, 20 March 2023, <https://www.manchestercathedral.org/news-events/news/manchester-cathedral-lead-friendship-links-with-portugal/>, accessed 20 July 2023.

³²⁹ The Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England, *Witness*, 42.

³³⁰ Jorge, Interview with Govender. For a definition of 'remainer', see Frances Robinson, 'Never Gonna Give EU Up: By Hook, Crook or Marriage, Remainers Are Making Plans to Keep their European Citizenship', *Spectator*, 331, 2016, 22.

³³¹ The Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England, *Witness*, 45.

the Challenging Hate Forum, a monthly gathering aimed at thinking and sharing information about hate crime across Manchester; Peace and Unity, an annual event organised to offset the upsurge of anti-Muslim sentiment in the West; and numerous inter-faith assemblies.³³² Within this context, *The Kingdom of Heaven* demonstrates that craft and the Church can play an active role in the fight against discord, notably by complementing historic transnational agreements with interregional alliances. The permanent installation of a work by a Portuguese practitioner might equally encourage the inclusion of the Portuguese in Manchester in the aftermath of Brexit.³³³

Rodrigues's altar frontals might therefore be seen to contribute to the healing of conflicts in the histories of Britain and Portugal such as the tyranny over the Portuguese people during *Estado Novo*. As Almeida asserts, under this dictatorial regime (1933-74) the 'popular arts acted in part as a clear expression of a dominated and peripheral culture and in this aspect not so different from colonial cultures', underscoring that 'Portugal imposed a colonialist regime even within its borders'.³³⁴ This statement suggests that national craft skills were a particular target within the Portuguese government's oppressive ideology.

A paradigmatic case is Castelo Branco Embroidery, which was instrumentalised to promote traditional principles of marriage, female modesty, and social distinction. In 1942, for example, *Exposição de Colchas de Noivado (Bordados de Castelo Branco)* (henceforth

³³² Ibid., 43.

³³³ For data on the Portuguese population in Manchester and beyond extracted from the 2021 Census, see Office for National Statistics, *Census Maps*, 2021, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/population/country-of-birth/country-of-birth-60a/europe-other-europe-eu-countries-member-countries-in-march-2001-portugal-including-madeira-and-the-azores?lad=E08000003>, accessed 10 April 2023. For a reflection on the perception of the Portuguese community in the UK about the impact of Brexit, see Raquel Xavier Rocha, Jennifer McGarrigle and Alina Esteves, 'O Brexit e os emigrantes portugueses no Reino Unido', *OEm Working Paper No. 7*, Lisbon, 2020, 1-24.

³³⁴ Almeida, 'Cristina Rodrigues', 19.

Exposição de Colchas de Noivado), an exhibition of bridal quilts executed in this traditional technique, was held at the Studio of the Secretariat of National Propaganda (SPN).³³⁵ The SPN, founded in 1933 and renamed the National Secretariat of Information (SNI) in 1944, was devised by the *Estado Novo* administration to disseminate their nationalist ideology, complement actions of censorship, and homogenise culture and the arts through exhibitions. Its headquarters at Lisbon's Palácio Foz (Foz Palace) included a large studio, where exhibitions could be held and visited by tens of thousands of people.

Vera Marques Alves describes *Exposição de Colchas de Noivado* as a small display including a few exemplars of bridal quilts and five women practitioners of embroidery working live.³³⁶ This event was carefully curated and enacted, notably through the placement of the embroiderers in the gallery room and the selection of their garments. Three of the embroiderers wore traditional costumes from the villages of Malpica and Estreito, both from what was then called the province of Beira Baixa, the birthplace of Castelo Branco Embroidery. The other two women dressed in a style from the eighteenth century – regarded as the most fertile period in the production of this traditional technique – respectively posing as a betrothed woman preparing her bridal quilt, and her maid.³³⁷ Their distinct clothes were meant to be seen at a short distance by the audience and highlighted the social differences between the two characters. The exhibition was crafted by experts who frequently collaborated with SPN such as the ethnographers Eurico Sales Viana and Francisco Lage. *Exposição de Colchas de Noivado* therefore exposes the ways in which the

³³⁵ Carla Patrícia Silva Ribeiro, *SNI e SEIT (1944-1974): A história de uma instituição do Estado Novo*, Final post-doctoral report, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 2020.

³³⁶ Vera Marques Alves, 'O povo do Estado Novo', José Neves (coord.), *Como se Faz um Povo: Ensaio em História Contemporânea de Portugal*, 2010, 183-94.

³³⁷ Rosa, *O Bordado de Castelo Branco*, 13.

Estado Novo regime brought together regional craft skills and the exhibition device to propagandise class, ethnic, and gender divides.

More recent and comprehensive perspectives on the crafts in Portugal reveal that opponents of the dictatorship also supported these practices. In her thesis on folk art and crafts in Portugal (2022), Maria Manuela Restivo asserts that many Portuguese ethnographers and practitioners in the 1950s and 1960s were interested in vernacular culture, but were driven by different intentions than those advocated by *Estado Novo*:

[D]ue to the then existing Estado Novo regime, the proximity to the popular acquires a dimension which is not found in other places: that of a resistance, not so much to the industrialised and anonymous society developed by capitalism, as detected in the Arts & Crafts movement in England and in the United States [...] [but] as a resistance to the regime itself.³³⁸

Restivo therefore challenges established narratives claiming that the Portuguese crafts were exclusively encouraged by the regime. Instead, she demonstrates that the crafts were also endorsed by intellectuals who opposed the authoritarian regime. This once again attests the ambiguous position of craft in relation to power. In the first instance, contemporary exhibitionary projects involving craft skills, such *Heaven Descends to Earth* and *The Kingdom of Heaven*, might seem to comply with the authority of the state and the Church. Yet, in this chapter, I have uncovered Rodrigues's commitment to exposing several forms of social injustice, and explored how traditional making practices can also be re-presented through contemporary craft-based exhibitions in church settings.

The Kingdom of Heaven establishes a meeting point between two distinct textile

³³⁸ '[...] devido ao regime do Estado Novo então vigente, a aproximação ao popular adquire uma dimensão que não se encontra noutros lugares: a de uma resistência, não tanto à sociedade industrializada e anónima desenvolvida pelo capitalismo, como se detetou no movimento Arts & Crafts na Inglaterra e nos Estados Unidos [...] mas uma resistência concreta ao regime do Estado Novo', Restivo, *Arte popular e artesanato*, 117.

cultures. As stressed by Almeida,

Cristina's unexpected reencounter with a Portuguese tradition that is ancestrally linked to an artisan production became aligned with the historical textile tradition of Manchester, one of the oldest European capitals of textile industry, in turn, linked to the Industrial Revolution which had actually transformed an artisan production model into manufacturing.³³⁹

The permanent installation of the altar frontals at Manchester Cathedral therefore places Castelo Branco's handmade textile heritage and Manchester's industrial textile heritage side by side. As mentioned above, Castelo Branco Embroidery is executed in linen embroidered with silk, whilst the industrial boom in the county of Lancashire, where Manchester is located, was driven by cotton. In the nineteenth century, the predominately traditional manufacture of linen was overcome by the Industrial Revolution and the advent of cotton – an easily industrialised fibre retailed in large amounts.³⁴⁰ This has been described as a period of decline in the production of Castelo Branco Embroidery, suggesting an indirect link between the successful introduction of machinery and mechanical power in Lancashire's textile industry and the decadence of rural, handcrafted textiles in Castelo Branco.

While the reasons for this decrease are not entirely clear, Maria Margarida Ivo Rosa points to a potential consumption shift owing to the emergence of new, industrially manufactured products.³⁴¹ The cotton textile industry in Lancashire, on the other hand, faced relative recession after 1880 and effectively collapsed during the interwar years. For Lars G. Sandberg, this was due to two independent events: the swift and worldwide expansion of cotton manufacture, often supported by various governmental policies such as

³³⁹ Almeida, 'Cristina Rodrigues', 14.

³⁴⁰ Instituto dos Museus e da Conservação and Museu de Francisco Tavares Proença Júnior (ed.), *Bordado de Castelo Branco*, 15.

³⁴¹ Rosa, *O Bordado de Castelo Branco*, 13.

tariff protection; and the efforts of governments to protect national cotton textile industries against imports.³⁴² Govender and other Manchester representatives found further parallels between both textile traditions when they visited a museum in Castelo Branco and saw a large industrial loom from England.³⁴³ This arguably dates to the twentieth century, when Castelo Branco Embroidery began to be mechanically produced in manufacturing companies.

This section examined *The Kingdom of Heaven* as an interfaith and transnational project. My visual analysis of this collection revealed that its images embody references to an array of cultures and creeds, offering an intercultural encounter in the multicultural city of Manchester. It also disclosed how Rodrigues's altar frontals engage in a dialogue with each other, and with other pieces of contemporary craft at Manchester Cathedral. This dialogue between different works of craft results from several restoration programmes at Manchester Cathedral, following various episodes of destruction and conflict. On the other hand, the involvement of a traditional Portuguese craft technique – Castelo Branco Embroidery – and of Portuguese practitioners in this contemporary artwork allowed me to address the tensions and hierarchies between different practitioners, including professional and amateur makers.

Through its dedication in a ceremony held at Manchester Cathedral, *The Kingdom of Heaven* became a religious work as much as a piece of contemporary art. Rodrigues's altar frontals equally evoke a long history of diplomatic ties between Portugal and the UK, which attest to the connections between gift giving, power relations, and nations. The project also generated a contemporary agreement between the cities of Castelo Branco and Manchester,

³⁴² Lars G. Sandberg, *Lancashire in Decline: A Study in Entrepreneurship, Technology, and International Trade*, Columbus, 1974, 13.

³⁴³ Jorge, Interview with Govender.

disclosing a desire to strengthen interregional rather than transnational bonds. Yet this cultural alliance is also part of Manchester Cathedral's recent attempt to heal social conflict and division, to promote inclusion, and to mitigate the estrangement between the UK and Europe after Brexit. The section therefore focused on the political dimension of *The Kingdom of Heaven* – a permanent installation which is enmeshed in a web of diplomatic and affective connections between regions, institutions, and individuals.

The following section offers a summary of the key ideas discussed in this chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the space of the church from the perspective of craft, whilst also investigating craft through the church as a context of display. Here I draw some conclusions from it and describe how the methodologies set out in the Introduction to this thesis have been applied.

In the first section of the chapter, we briefly stepped outside the church, looking at a broader horizon of contemporary craft-based exhibitions in historic settings. This wider approach has offered an opportunity to move beyond conventional divides between historic contexts such as palaces, country houses, museums, and house-museums, and to question the underlying social divides that these divisions reveal. I have also examined exhibitions across different regions of the world, providing a more comprehensive view than the case studies in the following sections. My approach to these exhibitions from the lens of craft has firstly resulted in an emphasis on the way in which these exhibitions incorporate a plurality of media, including ceramics and textiles, alongside other practices such as painting, sculpture, installation, and site-specificity. Such combination of different techniques, in turn,

has led me to stress the collaborative nature of many of these projects, and the persisting hierarchical relations between the various practitioners involved.

Approaching historic venues from the perspective of craft has allowed me to investigate the strong links that both historic contexts and craft hold with different kinds of power – be it sacred, royal, and/or economic. By focusing on specific materials and objects, their symbolism and origins in global trade, I explored the ways in which many monuments and heritage sites are involved in histories of colonialism and slavery. My analysis of historic spaces through craft has shown that the proliferation of contemporary craft-based exhibitions in these sites since the late twentieth century reflects a desire to engage, not only with spaces beyond the perceived neutrality of the white-cube gallery, but also with established ideas of nation and national identity, and the effects of imperialism, colonialism, slavery, and social injustice on the recent rise of nationalism, racism, and xenophobia throughout the West.

The chapter investigated specific works by Cristina Rodrigues, drawing on both published and unpublished material, exhibition reviews, and installation photographs; on visits conducted in 2015, 2021, and 2022; on interviews conducted with Rodrigues and Rogers Govender; and on my own photographs of the permanent installation at Manchester Cathedral. Interviewing Rodrigues on her practices across several historic settings has unveiled her intentions, her negotiations with these institutions, her involvement of external collaborators, and her view on where her practice stands in relation to craft.

Heaven Descends to Earth was a solo exhibition by Rodrigues at the Monastery of Alcobaça – a building with links to both royalty and the Church. Through descriptions of the works included in this exhibition, and examinations of their potential meanings according to

their positioning in the building, my investigation has highlighted Rodrigues's creative strategy. For example, I have argued that Rodrigues's use of a wide range of media allowed her to question who is represented in this space; to introduce stories of the marginalised such as women, migrants, and those living in the countryside; and to hold religious and political institutions responsible for the perpetuation of displacement, poverty, and social injustice. Her incorporation of decorative objects such as jewellery, traditional musical instruments, silk paper flowers, and satin ribbons, on the other hand, offered visitors an opportunity to connect or reconnect with skills and folklore from across the country. Such diversity of cultural expressions equally reflects the expansion of heritage since the Monastery of Alcobaça was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Additionally, Rodrigues's employment of colourful shoelaces evoked childhood, displacement, and the refugee crisis. Other found and handmade objects such as chairs, chandeliers, and wine bottles embodied different experiences of migration, the difficulties of raising children due to financial hardship, and the persistence of class divisions in Portuguese society.

Despite these critical allusions, Rodrigues's works also elicited ideas of home, foregrounding the Monastery of Alcobaça as a domestic space where the White Monks lived. My investigation of *Heaven Descends to Earth* has therefore revealed that the exhibition of craft in historic buildings facilitates the identification of emptied areas, and makes visible their varied human occupations. This makes it possible for audiences to re-connect audiences with historic settings by triggering their critical and emotional responses.

The chapter then addressed a second case study, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, a permanent installation devised by Rodrigues for Manchester Cathedral. My approach to this project through craft allowed me to explore the collaboration between Rodrigues and six

professional women practitioners of embroidery, the persisting hierarchies between those who design and those who execute, and a dynamic relationship between innovation and tradition. Through this case study I have analysed the significant role of craft in both the physical and spiritual restoration of Manchester Cathedral, following several episodes of conflict and destruction. Additionally, I have argued that the Anglican cathedral has partly fulfilled their desire for spiritual recovery and commitment to diversity, healing, and inclusion through commissioning multiple works of contemporary craft over the last decades.

My intention to work across geographical divisions, notably the South and North of Europe, has been achieved through an analysis of *The Kingdom of Heaven's* evocation of the historic alliance between Portugal and Britain, along with its prompting of a cultural agreement between the cities of Castelo Branco and Manchester. In this context, I have argued that the contemporary, interregional pact embodies a response to the disconnection between the UK and the rest of Europe in a post-Brexit context. My approach to *The Kingdom of Heaven* has revealed that the exhibition of craft in places of worship can foster encounters between different faiths and cultures, including textile cultures from distinct regions. Such encounters, in turn, can transform religious spaces into platforms for intercultural dialogues and values of equity, multiculturalism, and spiritual recovery in the face of social division and hate.

This chapter has evidenced various formats encompassed in contemporary craft-based exhibitions in historic sites, with a focus on religious settings. My approach has revealed that contemporary craft-based exhibitions in the church can offer critical reflections on the links between these sites and power. Craft might offer an opportunity to

represent marginalized populations in the space of the church, thus emphasising the Church's links with power. Craft also has the ability to blur the distinctions between the church and other sites and challenge their simplistic categorisations, such as considerations of the church exclusively as a place of worship; instead, it can emphasise the church as a heritage site or domestic space.

Looking at the church as a context of display, on the other hand, allows us to acknowledge the ability of craft to represent a variety of people regarding their gender, age, place of residence, nationality, and race. Yet the church might also demonstrate the ways in which craft can easily perpetuate stereotypical conceptions of some of these identities, such as Rodrigues's understanding of women as the guardians of cultural customs.

The next chapter engages with the factory and the workshop, providing an opportunity to analyse the encounter between different practitioners through an emerging exhibitionary format – the material-based post-industrial biennale.

CHAPTER 2

CRAFT IN THE FACTORY: THE MATERIAL-BASED POST-INDUSTRIAL BIENNIAL

Clay is everywhere: shards of factory waste are dispersed in the soil, which itself is riven with seams of Etruria marl (the red clay made famous by Wedgwood). [Stoke-on-Trent's] landscape is still pockmarked with the scars of factory closures and demolition. [...] the city's ceramic heritage is not, as in Middlesbrough, an interesting detour from its core industrial narrative; it is its beating (and wounded) heart.³⁴⁴

In this quotation, Laura Breen describes the pervasiveness of abandoned factories and industrial waste in Stoke-on-Trent, located in the County of Staffordshire, UK. An effervescent ceramics industry animated this region from the early seventeenth century, with Wedgwood as one of its most renowned examples. Following the decline of ceramic activity in the late 1980s and 1990s, a walk through Stoke now offers a panorama of devastation and shoots of regeneration. As Breen notes, clay is a defining element of this place, its soil, and its culture. Since the late twentieth century, contemporary practitioners have drawn on the industrial heritage of regions across the globe, from Staffordshire to Faenza, Icheon, Jingdezhen, Lancashire, and Vale do Ave. The working or abandoned factory has subsequently become a source of materials and stories, and a site of display. Contemporary craft-based exhibitions in post-industrial sites address the histories of these areas and impact on the present, reactivating them along with the practices they hold through community-based projects, artistic residencies, and other formats.

Paradigmatic examples of these making and exhibitionary endeavours include Gwen Heeney's *Mythical Beast* at Ebbw Vale in South Wales (1992, UK), Neil Brownsword's work,

³⁴⁴ Laura Breen, 'Making Cities: Place, Production and (Im)Material Heritage', Nick Cass, Gill Park and Anna Powell (eds), *Contemporary Art in Heritage Spaces*, Oxon and New York, 2020, 32-48 (39).

based on research on the North Staffordshire ceramics industry (early 2000s to the present, UK), the exhibition *Possibilities and Losses: Transitions in Clay* at the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA, 2009, UK), Ai Weiwei's *Sunflower Seeds* at Tate Modern's Turbine Hall (2010, UK), the exhibition *Tensta Museum: Reports from New Sweden* in Tensta (2013-8, Sweden), and the exhibition *New Linthorpe* at MIMA (2014-ongoing, UK).³⁴⁵ These exhibitions generate encounters between contemporary craft and the factory, the hand and machine made, unseen labour and the everyday. Amongst these, the biennial has become a key platform for bringing together practitioners and researchers in a sustained reflection on post-industrial cities.

This chapter seeks to understand the way in which craft is shaped by the space of the factory; how craft engages with the factory as site of display; how craft as a curatorial and making practice and, on the other hand, as a methodology, can provide new readings of industrial venues; and the way in which the display of craft in the factory affects craft's expansive reach and connection to place and community.

This is the first study to identify and set out the material-based post-industrial biennial as an emerging typology of craft exhibition practice. In this chapter, I describe the ways in which the material-based post-industrial biennial distinguishes itself from that which has become the established format of art biennales, through its origins in a post-industrial context, and its focus on specific locations and singular media – notably ceramics, textiles, and glass – that hold a historical connection with those sites. My conception of this exhibitionary format does not concern the design biennial – a model focusing on

³⁴⁵ Gwen Heeney (ed.), *The Post-Industrial Landscape as Site for Creative Practice: Material Memory*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2017; Lind, 'Tensta Museum'.

architecture, industrial design, fashion, graphic design, and interactive media, which does not converge upon local histories of production.³⁴⁶

The chapter intends to highlight how the material-based post-industrial biennial brings together three key types of sites, which I have termed as follows. *Living sites* include post-industrial cities, their surrounding regions, and outdoor spaces such as squares and markets. *Making sites* consist of homes, workshops, active or derelict factories, and companies. Finally, *exhibition sites* encompass cultural or art venues, notably museums and archives. These categories are often juxtaposed in post-industrial areas where, for instance, many disused industrial buildings have been converted into cultural infrastructures. In an increasingly digital world, material-based post-industrial biennials also reconnect audiences and makers with these different contexts via online platforms.

The chapter takes as its case study *Contextile: Contemporary Textile Art Biennial* (henceforth *Contextile*), an event held in the city of Guimarães – whose historic centre is inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site – since 2012.³⁴⁷ Through its focus on textiles, this biennale responds to histories of industrial textile production in Guimarães and the surrounding region of Vale do Ave, located in the Northwest of Portugal. By developing varied and long-term partnerships and drawing on the unity of the worldwide textile community, *Contextile* has positioned local making within a global framework, notably through exchanges with practitioners and biennials from across the globe. Its main event,

³⁴⁶ For an example of a design biennial, see the Istanbul Design Biennial: İKSV – Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, *About Istanbul Design Biennial*, 2022, <https://tasarimbienali.iksv.org/en>, accessed 20 November 2023.

³⁴⁷ On *Contextile*, see Inês Jorge, 'So Far and Yet So Near: The Artistic Residencies of Contextile Biennale Amidst a Pandemic', *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 15:2, 2022, 181-97; Inês Jorge, "'Contextile 2020: Places of Memory – Interdiscourses of a Textile Territory", Artistic Residency Programme', *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, 10:2, 2021, 276-80; Jorge and Oliveira, "'The Gesture Is Everything'". Beatrijs Sterk has written several reviews of *Contextile*, which can be found on the *Textile Forum Blog*: Anonymous, *Textile Forum Blog*, <https://www.textile-forum-blog.org/>, accessed 12 October 2023.

the International Exhibition, takes place in a conventional white cube gallery space at Centro Cultural Vila Flor. by to submit works, using textiles as a language. A multidisciplinary jury selects the works and awards acquisition prizes and honourable mentions.³⁴⁸ The city council of Guimarães, Associação Têxtil e Vestuário de Portugal or ATP (Textile and Clothing Association of Portugal), and other institutional partners of the biennale acquire the awarded works.

My analysis focuses on exhibitionary contexts beyond this central site; highlighting those that somehow challenge the white cube setting and the International Exhibition, by generating dialogues between artworks and the city of Guimarães, along with alternative interactions between practitioners and publics. By directing particular attention not only to the factory, but also to the craft's workshop, this chapter explores sites that have been overlooked in craft history and brings to light the often omitted perspectives of makers. This, in turn, leads to an investigation on collaborative practices between different practitioners – including industrial workers – and the hierarchies upheld by these collaborations. I draw on my recently published research on *Contextile*, whilst reflecting on the context of postcolonial Portugal and its impact on the textile sector.

The chapter is divided into seven sections. The first provides a short historical context on textile production in Guimarães and Vale do Ave. The second introduces the *Contextile* biennale, focusing on its organisation and development since its inception. The third compares *Contextile* with other material-based post-industrial biennials, notably the British Ceramics Biennial. The fourth situates the *Contextile* biennial within the wider

³⁴⁸ Joaquim Pinheiro, Lúcia David and Sandra Gomes (eds), *Contextile 2012: Contemporary Textile Art Triennial*, exhibition catalogue, Porto, various locations, Guimarães, 2012, 12; Ideias Emergentes, *Bienal de Arte Têxtil Contemporânea*, <https://contextile.pt/edicoes-anteriores/>, accessed 6 September 2023.

history of biennials and the more recent emergence of the material-based post-industrial biennial. The three following sections all tackle *Contextile*, examining various projects that respectively draw on public sites, and the spaces of the factory and the workshop. The concluding section summarises the chapter's main achievements regarding how craft operates in industrial venues, and what the factory as a context of display can reveal about craft.

A brief history of textile production in Guimarães and Vale do Ave

The history of Guimarães is intertwined with that of textiles. This section addresses the history of textile production in Guimarães and the region of Vale do Ave more broadly. This provides a historical and economic context for the following sections, which explore the *Contextile* biennale and situate this event in a wider, global network of material-based post-industrial biennales.

Guimarães does not fit neatly in Western narratives of industrialisation. In the Middle Ages, the city's economy mainly drew on agriculture and its key crop was fine linen, both yarn and fabric. In the nineteenth century, however, developments in the textile industry would contribute significantly to the transformation of the city.³⁴⁹ In 1884, the *Exposição Industrial de Guimarães* (Industrial Exhibition of Guimarães) highlighted a persisting tradition of flax in the region, and first efforts were being initiated to retrieve this practice through the foundation of local textile factories such as *Fábrica do Castanheiro* (Castanheiro Factory) (1885-2013).³⁵⁰ These different periods seem to align with Armando Castro's contention that

³⁴⁹ Catarina Pereira, 'Guimarães Embroidery: A Legacy for the Future', *Datatêxtil*, 2014, 46-57 (47).

³⁵⁰ Jorge Fernandes Alves, 'A indústria têxtil do Vale do Ave', José Amado Mendes and Isabel Fernandes (eds),

mechanised production in Portugal only began after 1875.³⁵¹ Such dates, however, contradict accepted timeframes of the Industrial Revolution in Western Europe, between the mid-1700s and the mid-1800s.³⁵² This chapter thus contributes to a more accurate understanding of the Industrial Revolution as it expanded globally, and to a need to consider the particular stories of making in peripheral nations and regions.

In the broader region of Vale do Ave, spinning and weaving were typically women's activities carried out alongside agricultural labour.³⁵³ Flax was spun and woven at home and in small family workshops until the mid-1800s. By the late nineteenth century, half of the city's female population was employed in linen embroidery.³⁵⁴ These women responded to orders from local dealers, who then sold the items to the South of Portugal and Brazil. This follows Jane Lou Collins's account of the role played by women in the development of a global textile industry, and on how women's exploitation has been key to its success.³⁵⁵

The local technique known as Guimarães Embroidery (Bordado de Guimarães), executed in cotton yarn on white linen cloth, results from a combination of 'rich embroidery', a varied set of specific stitches made with white cotton thread, and 'popular embroidery', a more colourful variant originally applied to the garments of farm workers and distinguished by its natural motifs.³⁵⁶ This technique encompasses no fewer than twenty-one stitches (Fig. 2.1), six colours (red, white, blue, grey, beige, and black), and a typically symmetrical design with legible floral, stylised, and geometrical designs. Guimarães

Património e Indústria no Vale do Ave, Vila Nova de Famalicão, 2002, 372-89 (373).

³⁵¹ Armando Castro, *A revolução industrial em Portugal no século XIX*, 2nd edn, Lisbon, 1971.

³⁵² Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, xiii.

³⁵³ Alves, 'A indústria têxtil', 372.

³⁵⁴ Pereira, 'Guimarães Embroidery: A Legacy', 52.

³⁵⁵ Jane Lou Collins, *Threads: Gender, Labor, and Power in the Global Apparel Industry*, Chicago, 2003, ix.

³⁵⁶ Pereira, 'Guimarães Embroidery: A Legacy', 52.

Embroidery attained a fixed identity under *Estado Novo* in the mid-twentieth century. Its formal teaching began in 1958, when the Industrial and Commercial School of Guimarães (now named Francisco de Holanda Secondary School) opened its Course in Female Skills.³⁵⁷ This course was exclusively open to women.³⁵⁸ The characterisation of embroidery as a female skill in Guimarães mirrors Rozsika Parker's claim that embroidery became associated with femininity in post-medieval Europe.³⁵⁹ Other Portuguese cities, such as Castelo Branco and Porto, offered courses on embroidery techniques until the reorganisation of the education system, following the 25 April 1974 revolution.³⁶⁰

The cotton industry, too, shaped relations between Portugal and its colonies. In contrast to the longstanding production of linen, the manufacture of cotton fabrics – often incorporating linen, silk, or wool – was introduced to the area of Vale do Ave by the early 1800s. In 1930, the Colonial Act established that Portugal's largest dependencies, Angola and Mozambique, would sell low-priced raw cotton to Lisbon, where saleable products would be created from them; the colonies would then buy these at a high price.³⁶¹ Their low production cost, versatility, and further advances in industrial machinery would render cotton textiles the primary national industry in Portugal throughout the twentieth century.

Similar protectionist policies were deployed in other imperial contexts such as Britain, which reduced the costs of production from the 1700s to compete against Dutch weaving. The British sourced low-cost raw materials in India, Asia, and Latin America, and

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 52-53.

³⁵⁸ Luís Rosa Duque, *O ensino técnico-profissional em Portugal na segunda metade do século XX: o fenómeno da mobilidade social ascendente de carácter intergeracional*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Universidade Aberta, 2009, 277.

³⁵⁹ Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*, 5.

³⁶⁰ Maria Carlota Pontes Afecto, *O contributo das Escolas Industriais no desenvolvimento regional: um estudo de caso*, unpublished Master's dissertation, Universidade do Minho, 2022, 15-18.

³⁶¹ Anonymous, 'Acto colonial', *Diário do Governo: Primeira Série*, 156, 8 July 1930, 1309-18.

then exported high-priced cloths to their own colonies, generated by mechanised spinning and weaving as well as hand labour. This had a harmful effect on the Indian hand-weaving industry in the late 1800s. As a result, cloth was officially incorporated into India's quest for self-determination in 1921. In this context, Mahatma Gandhi endorsed a campaign to boycott foreign cloth. By then, he had understood the potential of cloth as a key means of communication and self-government in India. This led Gandhi to become an advocate for homespun cotton— as opposed to mechanically produced cotton – which he named Khadi and believed to be a vital source of employment for the Indian population.³⁶²

The textile industry therefore played a key role in the imbalanced relationship between European empires and their colonies. The last years of the Portuguese empire were marked by the colonial war (1961-74), during which a restructuring plan was devised to prompt the modernisation of the country. This modernisation relied on the industrialisation of Angola and Mozambique. The Portuguese government therefore assigned part of its textile manufacture to these two countries.³⁶³ This strategy can be understood in terms of what Irina Rodionova and Alexander Sholudko have argued, that, in order for supposedly highly-developed countries to progress into the service sector, other nations had to function as 'industrial workshops'.³⁶⁴ The 25 April 1974 revolution in Portugal, however, brought about the independence of its former colonies and ceased colonial trade, with immediate effects on all these economies.³⁶⁵ In particular, the

³⁶² Susan S. Bean, 'Ghandi, Cloth and Self-Government', Tanya Harrod (ed.), *Documents of Contemporary Art: Craft*, Cambridge Massachusetts), 2018, 192-94.

³⁶³ Ana Catarina Pinto, 'Ecos de projetos concorrentes de exploração colonial na assembleia nacional portuguesa (1961-1974)', *História unisinos*, 22, 2018, 111-24.

³⁶⁴ Irina Rodionova and Alexander Sholudko, 'The Transformation of Labour and Employment in Post-Industrial Society', *Bulletin of Geography Socioeconomic Series*, 9:9, 2008, 21-32 (31).

³⁶⁵ Alves, 'A indústria têxtil', 387.

importation of cotton and other products from Angola and Mozambique to Portugal at secured prices decreased abruptly.

The 1980s and 1990s therefore witnessed the decline of textile and garment industries in Portugal, casting families into unemployment and many industrial buildings into ruin. As Cláudia Melo, artistic director of *Contextile*, explains: 'Basically everyone who lives in Guimarães has or has had a relationship with textiles in one way or another [...] There is no way to escape this!'³⁶⁶ The collapse of the textile industry in the city coincided with the beginning of a shift from industrialism to post-industrialism across the globe, leading rates of employment to decrease in industry and grow in the service sector. This transformation reached G7 nations – Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, and the USA – between 1970 and 1990.³⁶⁷ This indicates a rising influence of the global market on national economies, and the negative impact of industrial modernisation on employment.³⁶⁸

More recent developments in the Portuguese textile industry reflect the dislocation of Western companies to the Global South in search of a cheaper workforce. While centuries of European colonisation were partly responsible for the inequalities between the North and South hemispheres, the West now perceives the practice of low wages in poorer nations as a threat to the leadership of Western countries. Since the 1990s, an increasing competitiveness in the global garment industry has led to the spread of sweatshop labour across the two hemispheres.³⁶⁹ In the same decade, the downturn in the Portuguese textile

³⁶⁶ 'Basicamente, toda a gente que vive em Guimarães tem ou teve uma relação com o têxtil, de uma forma ou de outra. Não há como fugir!', Inês Jorge, Interview with Cláudia Melo on *Contextile: Contemporary Textile Art Biennial*, unpublished videoconference, 1 hour, 18 minutes and 17 seconds, Lisbon, 14 September 2020.

³⁶⁷ Rodionova and Sholudko, 'The Transformation of Labour', 29-30.

³⁶⁸ *World Textile Trade: An International Perspective: Proceedings of a Conference: Organized by the British Textile Confederation in Association with the Textile Institute, Held in London on 25-26 May, 1978*, Manchester, 1978.

³⁶⁹ Collins, *Threads: Gender, Labor, and Power*, 1-4.

industry was aggravated by the strong valuation of the national currency, the subsequent adhesion to the Euro, and the increasing competitiveness of Asian markets. In 2005, a study on employment in Portugal disclosed several cases of firms which filed for bankruptcy, closed their production sites, fired their staff, and moved to other countries even in cases when a production crisis was not imminent.³⁷⁰ The research lists textiles as the most affected sector in 2003. It further reveals that many Portuguese textile companies have turned outwards, looking for increased flexibility in productive processes, relocating to and subcontracting in the Far East, Eastern Europe, and South America.

Yet post-industrialism has compelled the textile industry in Vale do Ave to reinvent itself once more. Following the traumatic process of losing the colonial market, and being forced to navigate more demanding markets, this sector shifted its focus towards the garment industry and high-quality production.³⁷¹ Today, Guimarães remains one of the most industrialised municipalities in Portugal, with textile and clothing production as its main activities. Melo recounts that, after the local firm Coelima filed for bankruptcy in 2021, its employees formed a collective to preserve a sense of community and pride, including theatre and sports groups.³⁷² This can be understood as a more recent development of what Adamson has identified as the adaptation of an earlier generation of skilled practitioners to the impact of the Industrial Revolution: 'As craft was invented, craftspeople reinvented themselves.'³⁷³ The case of Guimarães, along with the founding of the *Contextile*

³⁷⁰ Marinús Pires de Lima and Marta Sofia Lino, 'O desemprego em Portugal: alguns exemplos para reflexão', *Actas dos ateliers do V Congresso Português de Sociologia: Sociedades Contemporâneas: Reflexividade e Acção*, ed. by Associação Portuguesa de Sociologia (Lisboa: Associação Portuguesa de Sociologia), 2005, 70-79.

³⁷¹ Alves, 'A indústria têxtil', 387.

³⁷² Jorge, Interview with Melo.

³⁷³ Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 22.

biennale, suggests the persistence of craft in a post-industrial period.

The crisis in the Portuguese textile industry also had an adverse impact on the national appreciation of textiles. Many textile departments across art schools and universities ceased to exist during the 1980s and 1990s.³⁷⁴ After the sector began to recover at the end of the twentieth century, textiles were re-integrated in the curricula of fine art programmes. As Melo asserts, however, 'there is still a long way to go, perhaps because the condition of textile as minor art is still ingrained. This is now beginning to change, but I think it is something that should be demystified'.³⁷⁵ This suggests that education can play a key role in shaping the perception of textiles from an artistic standpoint and as a viable career.

This section has offered a brief reconstitution of the history of the textile industry in Guimarães. Similar to other examples across Europe, this industry relied on colonial trade. As a result, following the 25 April 1974 revolution, the demise of the Portuguese empire caused the decay of Guimarães's textile industry. The crisis which followed affected the local economy, the self-esteem of its population, and their views around textiles.

As I have shown in this section, efforts to revitalise various industries in Guimarães date back to the late nineteenth century. The next section explores the emergence of *Contextile* in a post-industrial context, where the industrial resurrection across Europe is once again at stake.

³⁷⁴ Jorge, Interview with Melo.

³⁷⁵ '[...] ainda há muito caminho a desbravar, porque a condição do têxtil como arte menor talvez ainda esteja um pouco enraizada. Começa agora a ter outros contornos, mas essa é uma parte que eu acho que se deveria desmistificar', Ibid.

The *Contextile* biennale, Guimarães, 2012 to 2022: organisation and development

This section examines the organisation and development of the *Contextile* biennale, from its origins within European Union's European Capitals of Culture to its current exploration of Guimarães as a textile territory.

Initially proposed as a triennial, *Contextile* was sponsored by Guimarães's nomination as European Capital of Culture (ECC) in 2012. Established in 1985, ECC is a European Union (EU) project, hosted annually by EU member countries or candidates for EU, European Free Trade Association or European Economic Area membership.³⁷⁶ This programme promotes the development of creative industries and cultural tourism through the creation of new cultural infrastructures. Such initiatives aim to stimulate urban regeneration and economic reform, whilst preserving European heritage and a sense of community.³⁷⁷

Although the ECC brought about several architectural and urban interventions in Guimarães, some local actors have questioned the effectiveness of these initiatives.³⁷⁸ Guimarães 2012 – European Capital of Culture highlighted textiles as a key element to reposition Guimarães in the context of small and medium European cities. This creative dimension was accomplished through *Cidade* (City), a programme led by Tom Fleming, a

³⁷⁶ European Commission, *European Capitals of Culture*, 2023, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/policies/culture-in-cities-and-regions/european-capitals-of-culture>, accessed 14 August 2023.

³⁷⁷ European Commission, *European Capitals of Culture Fact Sheet*, 30 July 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/ecoc-factsheet-300720_en.pdf, accessed 2 September 2022.

³⁷⁸ For example, in a panel entitled 'Um museu na cidade' (A museum in the city), held at the International Museum Day in 2022, local actors discussed the inability of the recently built Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães or CIAJG (José de Guimarães International Centre of the Arts) to attract more audiences and connect with the city's new market, next to which it is located. Tiago Mendes Dias, 'Da visibilidade às verbas: futuro do CIAJG (e o que falta) esteve em debate', *Jornal de Guimarães*, 19 May 2022, <https://jornaldeguimaraes.pt/noticias/da-visibilidade-as-verbas-futuro-do-ciajg-e-o-que-falta-esteve-em-debate/>, accessed 15 August 2023.

creative consultant with offices in London and Porto, ‘who specialises in research and support for the cultural and creative industries sector’.³⁷⁹

In his introduction to the catalogue of *Contextile*’s first edition in 2012, Fleming stressed that ‘textiles are part of the whole soul and collective memory of the city’, and that ‘to “re-imagine the possibility of the city” [...] we need to “re-imagine the possibility of textiles”’.³⁸⁰ This suggests that material-based post-industrial biennials such as *Contextile* are platforms which can promote the reinvention of post-industrial areas through the reinvention of local making. As shown by the rebranding of Vila Nova de Famalicão in Vale do Ave as ‘Textile City’, neighbouring cities have also implemented regeneration policies centred on textiles (Fig. 2.2).³⁸¹ This evidences the lasting impact of the ECC in the wider region.

The *Contextile* biennale is produced by Ideias Emergentes (Emerging Ideas), a cooperative society based in Porto.³⁸² Its programme comprises an international competitive show (International Exhibition), displays of invited practitioners and invited countries, exhibitions of students from national art schools (*Emergências*), satellite shows, artistic residencies, workshops, conferences (*Textile Talks*), and interventions in the public space. As previously mentioned, its artistic director is Cláudia Melo. As a practitioner, Melo had little knowledge of textiles until she applied for *Contextile*’s International Exhibition in 2012, where she received an Honourable Mention. Since then, her practice has focused on the

³⁷⁹ Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy, 2023, <https://www.tfconsultancy.co.uk/>, accessed 14 August 2023.

³⁸⁰ Pinheiro, David and Gomes (eds), *Contextile 2012*, 6.

³⁸¹ Famalicão Made In. *Famalicão Cidade Têxtil*, 2024, https://www.famalicaomadein.pt/industria_textil_cidade_textil, accessed 24 September 2020.

³⁸² Ideias Emergentes, 2023, <https://www.ideiasemergentes.pt/en>, accessed 14 August 2023.

textile medium.³⁸³ She also directed public art projects in Porto in the context of heritage and urban regeneration initiatives, which promoted a rediscovery of the city and involved the local community.

In 2016, Melo was invited to take on the role of artistic director of *Contextile*. She perceives her twofold identity of practitioner and curator as beneficial for understanding the needs of the practitioners who participate in her projects.³⁸⁴ Melo's professional path also reflects Janis Jefferies's description of a recent shift to a blend of theory, art practice and curatorship; and to 'the community ethos of craft and textiles, performing and engaging with new forms of public address and commitment'.³⁸⁵ It could be argued that Melo's interest in public space and in developing new ways to engage the community has been further achieved throughout her artistic direction of the *Contextile* biennale. Yet, as Melo explains, *Contextile's* emphasis on space is inextricably linked to its emphasis on time:

A territory is constituted by layers, and one of those layers is memory. [...] We have been working with memory [...] as a constitutive element of territory, which allows us to understand the territory. It is memory as matter for future work. We do not want to show again, we do not want to be again. We want to understand that past or tradition, the memories which are part of it, and [we want those memories to] become [...] matter transformed for a future.³⁸⁶

The use of memory as a device for projecting the future, rather than dwelling on the past, partly echoes various theoretical accounts on the relations between craft and memory. For

³⁸³ Jorge, Interview with Melo.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.; Magic Carpets, *Claudia Melo*, 2020, <https://magiccarpets.eu/curators/claudia-melo/>, accessed 14 August 2023.

³⁸⁵ Janis Jefferies, 'Editorial Introduction', Janis Jefferies, Diana Wood Conroy and Hazel Clark (eds), *The Handbook of Textile Culture*, London and New York, 2016, 3-15 (9).

³⁸⁶ 'Um território é constituído por camadas, e uma dessas camadas é a memória, por isso ela tem de estar presente. [...] Temos vindo a trabalhar a memória [...] como constituinte e como possibilitador do entendimento do território. É a memória como matéria de trabalho futuro. Não queremos voltar a mostrar, não queremos voltar a ser. Queremos entender o que é esse passado ou tradição, as memórias que o constituem, e serem [...] matéria transformada para um futuro.', Jorge, Interview with Melo.

example, Walter Benjamin often approached activities like pottery as symbols of an idealised pre-industrial history, but he also regarded memory as an infinite process interweaving past, present, future.³⁸⁷ *Contextile* expands on these ideas, conceiving memory as a device for thinking about the geographical context of Guimarães and Vale do Ave. This event therefore interconnects – or reconnects – space and time. The biennale’s recent slogan, ‘territory of textile culture’, and the theme of its fifth edition in 2020, *Places of Memory – Interdiscourses of a Textile Territory*, further disclose the key role of textiles in re-imagining the city and the region more broadly.³⁸⁸

Although my analysis focuses on unconventional sites such as the factory and historic or public venues, *Contextile* also includes established exhibition spaces which operate all year round beyond the biennial. Yet even its core site, Centro Cultural Vila Flor or CCVF (Vila Flor Cultural Centre), is historically linked to the textile industry.³⁸⁹ This cultural space was installed in the premises of the former Vila Flor palace and gardens, which date back to the eighteenth century. The role of this building in the history of exhibitions precedes *Contextile* by over a century, as this is where the Industrial Exhibition of Guimarães was held in 1884.

Promoted by the local intellectuals Alberto Sampaio and Joaquim José de Meira, the Industrial Exhibition of Guimarães highlighted the need to improve the region’s industries by increasing financial investment and boosting the education of industrial workers. Sampaio and Meira’s report on the exhibition lamented the ‘delicate and difficult [...] state

³⁸⁷ Benjamin, ‘The Storyteller’, 83-110 (90-91); Leslie, ‘Walter Benjamin’, 5-13 (6).

³⁸⁸ Cláudia Melo and Samuel Silva (eds), *Contextile 2020: Contemporary Textile Biennial*, exhibition catalogue, Porto, various locations, Guimarães, 2020, 6.

³⁸⁹ Centro Cultural Vila Flor, <https://www.ccvf.pt/en/>, accessed 14 August 2023.

in which our industrials find themselves', as industrials faced 'competition from wealthy countries, where the production is largely mechanical, and therefore at a reduced price'.³⁹⁰ The report also includes transcriptions of reviews about the exhibition by the country's leading newspapers. In his address at the exhibition's opening, the Baron of Pombeiro (Barão de Pombeiro) highlighted exhibitions as 'one of the strongest elements to rejuvenate and improve the industries'.³⁹¹ This suggests that industrial exhibitions have historically played a significant role in attempts to revitalise local industries.

Illustrations by Ribeiro Christino depict the Industrial Exhibition of Guimarães as a gathering of different classes and genders, which disclosed a variety of historic industries in the city such as textiles, cutlery (Fig. 2.3), pottery (Fig. 2.4), and leather (Fig. 2.5). Christino's portrayal of the event establishes a sharp contrast between the two sexes, each connoting a different social class, and the countryside or the city as symbols of the past and the future. While men wear beards, contemporary suits, top hats, and walking sticks which denote a sophisticated, urban bourgeoisie, women are dressed in rural peasant attire such as long skirts and headscarves (Fig. 2.6). Christino's representation of men as the driving force of industrial modernisation hinges on his account of the female working class as unsophisticated and bound to tradition.

The site where the Industrial Exhibition of Guimarães took place, CCVF, is now a multifaceted cultural complex. The *Textile Talks* have been held at its auditorium since the biennale's first edition, and the International Exhibition has taken place at its gallery space

³⁹⁰ '[...] melindroso e difficil [...] estado em que se acham os nossos industriaes'; '[...] concorrência de paizes ricos, onde a produção é principalmente mecanica, e portanto a preços reduzidos', Alberto Sampaio and Joaquim José de Meira, *Relatório da exposição industrial de Guimarães em 1884*, Porto, 1884, 83.

³⁹¹ '[...] um dos mais fortes elementos para rejuvenescer e aperfeiçoar as industrias', *Ibid.*, 10.

since 2016 (Fig. 2.7). Although its gallery setting is becoming too small to accommodate the increasing number of applications to the biennale, CCVF embodies an accumulation of living and exhibition sites, and is part of a history of craft exhibitions in the city.³⁹²

The Portuguese state co-sponsors *Contextile* through the Direcção-Geral das Artes (DGArtes), and the city council of Guimarães is *Contextile*'s institutional partner. The biennale organisers have often acknowledged the difficulty in convincing companies to support the event, notably by providing materials for creative projects and hosting artistic residencies.³⁹³ This evidences a persisting disconnection between the worlds of art and industry, along with the inability to recognise the indirect impact of *Contextile* on corporations and the region at large. It also reflects the deep-rooted tradition of state philanthropy in Europe, in contrast with the weight of private philanthropy in nations such as the USA.

Despite the scarcity of private sponsorship, *Contextile* has been able to raise not only its own international profile, but that of Portuguese practitioners. As Melo acknowledges, this goal has partly been achieved through the establishment of 'surgical partnerships' with prominent institutions from the world of textile art.³⁹⁴ These include the Toms Pauli Foundation, which succeeds the Centre International de la Tapisserie Ancienne et Moderne or CITAM (International Centre of Ancient and Modern Tapestry), organiser of the Lausanne Tapestry Biennials between 1962 and 1995; the European Textile Network (ETN); *Fiber Art*

³⁹² Jorge, Interview with Melo.

³⁹³ See, for instance: Jorge, Interview with Melo; Anonymous, 'Contextile revela lado artístico do têxtil', *Portugal Têxtil*, 18 October 2018, <https://www.portugaltextil.com/contextile-revela-lado-artistico-do-textil/>, accessed 27 June 2023; Inês Jorge, Interview with Joaquim Pinheiro on Contextile: Contemporary Textile Art Biennial, unpublished videoconference, 1 hour, 6 minutes and 39 seconds, Lisbon, 13 August 2020.

³⁹⁴ '[...] parcerias cirúrgicas', Jorge, Interview with Melo.

Fever!, a platform for contemporary textile art based in France; the International Triennial of Contemporary Tapestry in Łódź; and the International Linen Biennale of Portneuf (BILP). For this reason, *Contextile* is arguably more recognised abroad than nationally.³⁹⁵

Its worldwide projection has also contributed to a rise of participations in open call events such as the International Exhibition, the artist's residencies, and the *Textile Talks*. For instance, the graph in Fig. 2.8 reveals that the number of participating practitioners in the International Exhibition element of *Contextile*, has seen a fivefold increase – from 233 in 2012 to 1250 in 2022. The graph in Fig. 2.9 discloses an overall increase in the number of artists in residence since the beginning of the event. This reflects a development of the artistic residencies to include practitioners selected via open calls and partnerships with international organisations, as we will see in the following sections. For example, *Contextile*'s partnership with Magic Carpets, a platform supported by Creative Europe, allowed the biennale to temporarily expand beyond its editions in even years, hosting three artistic residencies in 2019. Exchanges have also taken place with other biennales such as BILP, as well as between national and international practitioners through artistic residencies held by these different events.

Beatrijs Sterk, the former publisher of *Textile Forum* magazine and former secretary general of ETN, notes that *Contextile* has introduced Portuguese textile practitioners to the European textile community, where they were virtually non-existent. Yet it was not until 2019 that the biennale selected a Portuguese practitioner for their artistic residencies,

³⁹⁵ Fondation Toms Pauli, 2024, <http://www.toms-pauli.ch/en/home/>, accessed 14 August 2023; European Textile Network, 2024, <https://etn-net.org/home.html>, accessed 14 August 2023; Fiber Art Fever, 2024, <https://www.fiberartfever.com/>, accessed 14 August 2023; Centralne Muzeum Włókiennictwa w Łodzi, 2017, <https://cmwl.pl/public/>, accessed 14 August 2023; Biennale internationale du lin de Portneuf, 2023, <https://biennaledulin.com/>, accessed 14 August 2023; Jorge, Interview with Melo.

through the partnership with Magic Carpets.³⁹⁶ This arguably reflects an inferior status of Portuguese art and makers, even within Portugal, and calls into question the way in which these projects might contribute to increase international visibility. Nevertheless, *Contextile's* organisers have further announced their ambition to create a platform in the South of Europe for both professional and emerging creators.³⁹⁷

As a visitor to *Contextile* since 2014, I have witnessed the ways in which this event has turned the peripheral into an asset, building a familiar and affectionate atmosphere for practitioners, scholars, and aficionados. By drawing international attention to the rich textile traditions in Guimarães and Portugal more broadly, *Contextile* has the potential to ensure the continuity of some textile practices and businesses, with positive effects on the country's economy, cultural life, and self-esteem.

Contextile has also endeavoured to shape the meaning of textile art on a national level. The catalogue of its first edition specifies the biennial's key aims: to transform the perception of textile art in Portugal, a country where function, commerce, tradition and skill had been favoured to the detriment of plastic potentialities; to foster textile art education and training in the country; to provide a platform for the exchange of projects, ideas and practices; to bring together national and international practitioners, and local industries; and to encourage innovative approaches to the arts.³⁹⁸

The need to introduce both Portuguese practitioners and the wider public to the

³⁹⁶ Portuguese practitioner João de Guimarães was one of the three participants at an artistic residency in partnership with the Magic Carpets platform, which resulted in *Anamnesis – Textile Memory*, an exhibition held at the Convent of Saint Anthony of the Capuchins between 30 August and 5 October 2019, with a work titled *drops of memory*.

³⁹⁷ *Contextile 2016: Contemporary Textile Art Biennial*, exhibition catalogue, Porto, various locations, Guimarães, 2016.

³⁹⁸ Pinheiro, David and Gomes (eds), *Contextile 2012*, 8.

creative possibilities of textiles is evidenced by the initial difficulty in understanding what *Contextile* was. A paradigmatic example is a visitor's comment on the biennale's social media to Barbora Gediminaitė's *Dialogue of Light IV* (Fig. 2.10), displayed at the International Exhibition in 2014: 'I saw the work live. I liked it a lot... [Y]et I do not understand it in the context of *Contextile*. Although the shadow seems to recreate a weaving, the work does not show a single textile element.'³⁹⁹ Audiences therefore struggled to comprehend metaphorical, rather than literal, approaches to the textile medium.

Regarding the International Exhibition, Melo also observes a shift in the profile of applicants around the year 2016, from those in the fields of 'arts and crafts' and fashion design to those in the visual arts.⁴⁰⁰ She speculates about the factors that led to this change, including the practitioners' better grasp of *Contextile* and the International Exhibition, a more directed communication programme, and the rejection of submissions from disciplines beyond the visual arts. She also notes that the quality of submissions has risen. This suggests that material-based post-industrial biennials can gradually alter both practitioners' and the wider public's perceptions of specific media and of a once marginalised city, its people and economy on the global circuit.

Since its first edition, *Contextile* has undergone significant developments both in terms of its dimension and geographical scope. The maps of the first and latest editions of the biennale (Fig. 2.11, Fig. 2.12) reveal its expansion from the historic centre to other areas

³⁹⁹ 'Vi a obra ao vivo. Gostei bastante [...] mas não a entendo no contexto da Contextile. A sombra, na realidade [sic], parece recriar uma tecedura, mas o trabalho não apresenta nenhum elemento têxtil.', Contextile, "'Dialogue of Light IV" of Barbora Gediminaitė at Casa da Memória/ Contextile 2014, Guimarães. Foto: Ivo Rainha.' [Facebook] <<https://www.facebook.com/contextile/photos/a.521127517993391/565671746872301/>> 19 August 2014 [accessed 11 October 2023].

⁴⁰⁰ Jorge, Interview with Melo.

of Guimarães and that it has included an increasing number of spaces. Albeit at a smaller scale, this growth mirrors the extension of *documenta* from the Museum Fridericianum, where its first edition was held in 1955, to a wide range of museums, galleries, historic and disused buildings, and public spaces across the German city of Kassel. This growth is often caused by a rising international recognition and sponsorship experienced by many biennales. As Melo, notes, however, the use of derelict industrial venues as display settings entails a high financial cost, which *Contextile* is not yet able to bear.⁴⁰¹ Nevertheless, she asserts that a future enlargement of the event is under preparation, with the aim of asserting its presence across the city.

This section analysed the organisation and development of the *Contextile* biennial, from its origins in the context of the European Capitals of Culture programme to its current exploration of the city of Guimarães as a textile territory. My investigation has revealed *Contextile's* primary goal of transforming perceptions about textiles, establishing textiles as art at the national level. In this context, the biennale organisers view education as a powerful tool to achieve this aim. Nearly 150 years ago, the intellectuals who promoted the Industrial Exhibition Guimarães (1884) placed a similar emphasis on education, but with different aims. They highlighted the need to create an industrial school to increase the technical knowledge of industrial employees.

Contextile has also promoted a rethinking of the role of textiles in local and national life through the concept of memory – which is strongly linked to craft across craft practice and scholarship. This is not to say that the biennale idealises Guimarães's industrial past; on the contrary, they strive to integrate this past in contemporary conversations. The next

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

section draws points of connection and contrast between *Contextile* and the British Ceramics Biennial in Staffordshire, UK.

The British Ceramics Biennial, Stoke-on-Trent, 2009 to 2023

This section compares the *Contextile* biennale with identical events, focusing on the British Ceramics Biennial.

The British Ceramics Biennial (BCB), held in Stoke-on-Trent since 2009, bears several similarities with *Contextile*. BCB is also linked to a regeneration programme and run by a non-profit organisation. Clare Woods was appointed its new artistic director and CEO in 2021; like Melo, she is an experienced arts and cultural manager. Akin to *Contextile*, BCB's main sponsors are public institutions, notably Arts Council England, Staffordshire University and Stoke-on-Trent City Council. Yet, as Breen notes, the biennial equally benefits from extensive corporate funding.⁴⁰² BCB also encompasses a competitive exhibition, entitled *Award*, which nonetheless features a small number of practitioners, all of whom must be UK-based.⁴⁰³ As Wendy Gers stresses, prominent institutions have criticised the competition format in ceramics biennials. Their main argument against is that competitions induce increasingly weak and homogenous submissions, along with inconsistent exhibitions.⁴⁰⁴ These observations were followed by the emergence of alternative formats within ceramics biennials, among which Gers identifies five main types: events produced by independent invited curators; events produced by a group of international curators; 'closed'

⁴⁰² Breen, *Re-Modelling Clay*, 263.

⁴⁰³ While at *Contextile*'s sixth edition in 2022 fifty-four practitioners were selected amongst 1505 entries, at BCB's eighth edition in 2023 ten practitioners were selected amongst 180 entries.

⁴⁰⁴ Wendy Gers, 'Biennale Bonanza', *Ceramics, Art and Perception*, 101, 2015, 24-31.

competitions, evaluated by a panel of specialists or national commissioners; ‘open’ competitions; and hybrid formats combining national competitions and shows delivered by invited curators.⁴⁰⁵

Akin to *Contextile*, BCB follows a hybrid format. Both events encompass an open international competition appraised by a jury or selection board, and their artistic directors are invited, independent curators. In contrast to *Contextile*, however, BCB chiefly presents local practitioners because of budget restrictions.⁴⁰⁶ BCB also used the historic Spode factory as its main location between its second and sixth editions, respectively held in 2011 and 2019 (Fig. 2.13, Fig. 2.14). This biennale is usually scattered throughout Barlaston, Burslem, Hanley and other towns, reflecting the polycentric character of the city of Stoke, as a federation of six towns, all of which have connections to the ceramics industry (Fig. 2.15).

Both *Contextile* and BCB have encompassed outdoor creative interventions. For example, in 2011 Lawrence Epps was commissioned to create an outdoor installation for BCB. He produced 6000 miniature commuters in terracotta, which were dispersed both in Stoke’s train station and various places around London and could be picked up and taken home (Fig. 2.16).⁴⁰⁷ Epps’s work aimed to reach out to audiences and encourage people to reflect on their own urban contexts – a goal shared by *Contextile*’s interventions in the public space. Through his installation, Epp activated the public in the signification of craft, rather than in its physical fabrication. By contrast, as we will see in the following sections, some of *Contextile*’s projects have not been led by individual practitioners, but by curators,

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 25–26.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 26.

⁴⁰⁷ BBC, *Little Clay Commuters Fired for Stoke Ceramics Festival*, 28 September 2011, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-stoke-staffordshire-15088521>, accessed 15 August 2023.

researchers, mediators, and institutions. The mediation role played by some members of the *Contextile* team particularly crosses different contexts of display.

The profile of the artistic directors of *Contextile* and BCB highlights the significance of place within material-based post-industrial biennales. Both Melo and Woods were born in the country where each event takes place and have built a relationship with their respective city. These traits expand Jessica Morgan's claim that curatorial roles are bound to the sites where they are carried out such as museums, biennales, and non-profit organisations.⁴⁰⁸ As curators of material-based post-industrial biennales, Melo and Wood are not only bound to the locations where they occur, but also to the medium on which they focus. As stressed by Anthony Gardner and Charles Green, this stands in sharp contrast to curators of art biennales:

Such loyalty to a single idea and single site was to be rarely seen in the curatorship of biennials. They were, after [Harald] Szeemann's time [as artistic director of *documenta 5* in 1972], often directed by itinerant freelancers like Szeemann himself. Such cultural nomads did not necessarily have any long-term relationship with either host institution or city.⁴⁰⁹

Although Melo and Woods have had professional experiences outside of Guimarães and Stoke, their role as artistic directors of *Contextile* and BCB ensures their commitment to these cities and their historic industries.

Akin to BCB, whose mission is to foster innovative ceramics practice, *Contextile* has often side-lined craft. The drive to reconceive textile as an art form is manifested in the catalogue of the Portuguese biennale's second edition in 2014:

The *here* and *now* of textile art cannot deviate from the *here* and *now* of

⁴⁰⁸ Jessica Morgan, 'What Is a Curator?', Jens Hoffman (ed.), *Ten Fundamental Questions of Curating*, Milan, 2013, 21-29.

⁴⁰⁹ Anthony Gardner and Charles Green, *Biennials, Triennials, and Documenta: The Exhibitions that Created Contemporary Art*, Chichester, 2016, 23-24.

contemporary art. [...] Specific matters originate singular forms and incorporate an integrated thought.

The artworks displayed in this Biennial represent an ecosystem which is permeable, transmutable, but also incomparably rich. They diverge, converging, in thought, reflections and concepts, but they belong to the same root – that of textile.⁴¹⁰

This statement discloses a desire to align contemporary textile practices with those of contemporary art. It also claims textile art as an intellectual rather than physical activity. Such conception of textile as an art form, which can impregnate and be impregnated by other fields, echoes recent definitions of craft as a fluid set of practices and ideas, as a process, and as an approach to materials.⁴¹¹ This interdisciplinary approach also reflects developments taking place in craft practice in the twentieth century, notably the advent of studio ceramics, and later the broader movement of studio craft. *Contextile* therefore takes textiles as a common foundation from which multiple creative possibilities arise, including performance, installation, architecture, photography, and sculpture.⁴¹²

However, in an interview with Joaquim Pinheiro, the director of *Contextile*, he stated that there is no room for craft in this biennale, as their focus is textile art.⁴¹³ Yet as this thesis aims to demonstrate, approaching *Contextile* from the perspective of craft has its benefits. Craft opens up ideas about the relations between art, craft, and industry; the collaborative rather than the individual; balanced and affective interactions between

⁴¹⁰ 'O aqui e agora da arte têxtil não se poderá afastar do aqui e agora da arte contemporânea. [...] As matérias, essas sim específicas, originam formas singulares e incorporam um pensamento integrado. As obras apresentadas nesta Bienal representam um ecossistema permeável, transmutável, mas que encerra em si uma riqueza incomparável. Divergem, convergindo. Em pensamento, reflexos e conceitos, mas parte de uma mesma raiz – a do têxtil.', *Contextile 2014: Contemporary Textile Art Biennial*, exhibition catalogue, Porto, various locations, Guimarães, 2014, 10.

⁴¹¹ See for instance: Greenhalgh, 'Introduction: Craft', 1; Adamson, *Thinking through Craft*, 4; Fariello, 'Making and Naming', 40.

⁴¹² Pinheiro, David and Gomes (eds), *Contextile 2012*, 6.

⁴¹³ Jorge, Interview with Pinheiro.

audiences, practitioners, and institutions; the local and the global; multi-sensory experiences of objects; collective and individual memory; and memory as a device for building a better future. As a material-based post-industrial biennale, *Contextile* can and should acknowledge the fluctuating nature of craft, its embeddedness in everyday life, and its role in the past, present and future of the city of Guimarães. This would liberate the event from concerns with artistic hierarchies and divides, which have led to the marginalisation of diverse people and practices, and which should therefore be considered obsolete.

This section drew a comparison between the *Contextile* biennial and other material-based post-industrial biennials, with a particular focus on the British Ceramics Biennial in Stoke-on-Trent. My investigation revealed that *Contextile* still largely relies on public funding, whilst BCB benefits from extensive corporate funding. As a result, one of *Contextile*'s key goals for the future is to attract more corporate sponsorship, particularly from textile companies. The next section situates the *Contextile* biennale within a larger exhibitionary framework, providing an overview of the material-based post-industrial biennial, and identifying the ways in which this format converges with and diverges from the more conventional model of art biennales.

The art biennial and the material-based post-industrial biennial

This section positions *Contextile* biennale within a wider, global network of material-based post-industrial biennales, offering an analysis of this exhibitionary model, and highlighting its similarities and discrepancies in relation to the now established format of art biennales. This is followed by an investigation of exhibitions beyond the biennale context, which have

engaged with local histories of textile manufacturing in the twenty-first century. Lastly, I reflect about the particular closeness of the textile art community, and how this has sparked the emergence of multiple textile art biennials across the globe.

Biennials have played an active role in offering alternative definitions of art. In their book *Biennials, Triennials, and Documenta: The Exhibitions that Created Contemporary Art* (2016), Charles Green and Anthony Gardner highlight two events that tackled the divide between craft and fine art. Firstly, the First Asia-Pacific Triennial (1993) exposed the tensions between Western-based artistic canons and the specific connections between heritage and contemporary culture in the Pacific region. Secondly, the Shanghai Biennale, which focused on traditional Chinese art and craft until its third edition in 2000.⁴¹⁴ As Julia Bryan-Wilson notes, in the West, one had to wait for the fifty-seventh edition of the Venice Biennale in 2017 to see an unprecedented range of textile-based art. Yet in her review of this 2017 event, she criticised its lack of attention to issues of labour and social inequity, which are often addressed through the textile medium.⁴¹⁵ Apart from a few exceptions, Western art biennials have reiterated the artificial separation between art, craft, and industry.

Art biennials have witnessed a gradual decentring from a global, to a national, and then a regional scale. The scholarship has identified four waves of development with regard to these events: a first wave from the 1890s to the 1950s, exclusively held in Europe and dedicated to the visual arts; a second wave between the mid-1950s and the 1980s, focusing on the Global South in response to the North Atlantic hegemony; a third wave from the late 1980s to the early 1990s, whose emphasis on specific regions aimed to generate both local

⁴¹⁴ Gardner and Green, *Biennials, Triennials, and Documenta*, 55.

⁴¹⁵ Julia Bryan-Wilson, 'Loose Threads', *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 10, 2017, 327-30.

and international impact; and a fourth wave since the 2010s, which conceives the biennial as an international platform for local politics.⁴¹⁶ The Liverpool and Gwangju biennials, along with the most recent editions of the São Paulo, Sydney, and Istanbul biennials, have taken place at post-industrial sites.⁴¹⁷ I suggest that what I have termed the material-based post-industrial biennials comprises a fifth biennial wave, extending the geographical dispersion of previous waves through its attention to local histories of making in the aftermath of deindustrialisation.

The material-based post-industrial biennial is at once medium and site-specific, responding to the effects of deindustrialisation on the economy of particular regions. This exhibitionary format focuses on singular media such as ceramics, textiles, glass, iron, and wood, and on areas once centred on their production. Akin to art biennials, many of these exhibitions have developed in a post-industrial context, in connection with initiatives of urban regeneration and the emphasis on creative industries. Yet material-based post-industrial biennials particularly draw on local industries as a point of discourse and creativity to restore deindustrialised cities. They offer a particular intersection between local and global histories of making, and propose a broader understanding of creative production beyond the supposed divorce between craft, art, and industry.

Material-based post-industrial biennales emerged at the turn of the twentieth century across the five continents. Founded in 1938, the Faenza Ceramic Art Competition is technically the oldest ceramics biennale. Since 1989, it comprises a biennial in the Italian city

⁴¹⁶ Terry Smith, 'Biennials: Four Fundamentals, Many Variations', Biennial Foundation, 7 December 2016.

⁴¹⁷ Gardner and Green, *Biennials, Triennials, and Documenta*, 34; Rebecca Coates, 'From the Margins to the Center: The São Paulo Biennial, the Biennale of Sydney, and the Istanbul Biennial', *Museum Worlds: Advances in Research*, 2, 2014, 113-32.

of Faenza, which since the Renaissance has been known for its majolica production. As Gers notes, most of the ceramics biennales and triennials which are currently active emerged in the 2010s.⁴¹⁸ Concerning textiles, a former biennale was Werken in Textiel in the Dutch city of Haarlem (1968-73), a centre of linen production in the seventeenth century, whereas the Kaunas Biennial in Lithuania (1997-present) is a more recent example.⁴¹⁹ A different emphasis can be found in the International Biennial of Miniature Textiles (1970-present), named the International Triennial of Textile Arts since 2003 and taking place in Szombathely, a Hungarian city located in the Vas county, where textiles were a dominant industry until the twenty-first century.⁴²⁰ An early event dedicated to glass was the National Glass Biennial, later named Australian Glass Triennial (1981-94) and held in Wagga Wagga, a city in New South Wales, where Muruwari people flaked objects such as glass bottles to produce tools

⁴¹⁸ Gers, 'Biennale Bonanza', 24. Gers's article lists all operational events dedicated to ceramics by 2015, which include the Taiwan Ceramics Biennale (2004-present) and the British Ceramics Biennial in the UK (2009-present).

⁴¹⁹ Other former examples of textile biennales and triennales include the Nordic Textile Triennial in Scandinavia (1976-83); the Biennale der Deutschen Tapisserie in Germany (German Tapestry Biennale, 1978-90); the Rijswijk Textile Biennial in the Netherlands (1995-present); and Trame d'Autore – Biennale Internazionale di Fiber Art in Italy (Creative Textiles – International Biennale of Textile Art, 1998-2004). For a list of several extinct and operational events dedicated to textiles, see Beatrijs Sterk, 'Textile Art', *Textile Forum Blog*, 28 June 2014, <https://www.textile-forum-blog.org/2014/06/textile-art/>, accessed 12 October 2023. Other active textile exhibitions include the Riga International Triennial of Textile and Fiber Art in Latvia (2001-present); the Biennale du Lin de Portneuf in Quebec, Canada (BILP, 2005-present); Stroud International Textiles (SIT) in the UK (2008-present); the International Extraordinary Textile Festival (FITE), alternating between France in even years and cities in Eastern Europe in uneven years (2012/3-present); the Young Textile Art Triennial in Łódź, Poland (2013-present); the Biennale of Contemporary Textile Arts in Switzerland (2016-present); the Textile Art Biennial in Poznań, Poland (2017-present); and the British Textile Biennial in the UK (2019-present). On the Kaunas Biennial, see Ed Carroll, 'Kaunas Biennial: Spindling from Textile Culture to Public Culture', Hazel Clark, Janis Jefferies, and Diana Wood Conroy (eds), *The Handbook of Textile Culture*, London and New York, 2016, 309-18.

⁴²⁰ Olha Lukovska and Tetiana Kara-Vasylieva, 'Mini Textile Art in Eastern Europe: Historical Survey', *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, 21:1, 2022, 25-45; Levente Komarek, 'Changes of Human Resource Concentration and Specialisation in Hungarian Industry', *Review on Agriculture and Rural Development*, 2:1, 2013, 91-97. Other examples of events dedicated to miniature textile have been the International Exhibition of Miniature Textiles in London (1974-82); Baltic Mini Textile Gdynia (formerly International Baltic Triennial of Miniature Textile in Gdynia) in Poland (1993-present); the International Triennial of Mini-Textiles in Angers (1993-present); the International Mini Textile and Fibre Art Exhibition 'Scythia', a biennial event in Ukraine (1996-present); the International Exhibition of Textile Miniatures in Bratislava (1998-present); and the International Mini-Textiles Triennial in Saint Petersburg (2017-20).

following European settlement.⁴²¹ A celebration of glass in the UK currently takes place in Stourbridge, a leading glassmaking centre for four centuries, through the British Glass Biennale (2004-present). In Italy, the Biennale Internazionale di Forgiatura al Maglio (International Biennale of Mallet Forging, 2010-present) occurs in Brescia, a city belonging to the Lombardy region, where metal production dates back to the twelfth century.⁴²²

Beyond Europe, textile biennales can be found in Asia through the International Fibre Art Biennale (2000-present) and the Hangzhou Triennial of Fibre Art (2013-present), both held in China; in North and South America through the WTA International Biennial of Contemporary Textile Art (2000-present) and the Biennale du Lin de Portneuf (BILP) in Quebec (2005-present); and in Africa, where the literal and figurative presence of fabrics in several editions of the Dak'Art Biennale (1990-present) in Senegal has been highlighted.⁴²³ An important ceramics biennale is the Korean International Ceramic Biennale (2001-present) in the Gyeonggi-do province, a hub of the country's ceramics industry. Disclosing a broader focus, the Biennial of Contemporary Bantu Art (1985-2002) aimed to preserve and promote Bantu cultures across Central, Southern, Eastern and Southeast Africa. Held in a different country each year, it encouraged exchanges between painters, sculptors, ceramicists, and engravers from this region.⁴²⁴

Although most biennials that focus on specific media emerged during the post-industrial era and/or in areas with a tradition in their production, there are two key

⁴²¹ Rodney Harrison, *Shared Landscapes: Archaeologies of Attachment and the Pastoral Industry in New South Wales*, Sydney, 2004, 125.

⁴²² Anna Maria Bietti Sestieri, 'The Metal Industry of Continental Italy, 13th to the 11th Century BC, and its Connections with the Aegean', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 39, 1973, 383-424.

⁴²³ Susan Kart, 'The Phenomenon of Récupération at the Dak'art Biennale', *African Arts*, 42:3, 2009, 8-9.

⁴²⁴ Nora Greani, 'Biennale d'Art Bantu Contemporain: passeport ethnique et circulations artistiques en Afrique sub-sahélienne', *Artl@s Bulletin*, 5:2, 2016, 70-82.

exceptions to this. The first is the Lausanne Tapestry Biennial (1962-95), the earliest event to be exclusively dedicated to contemporary textile art. It was held in the Swiss city of Lausanne, which is not historically linked to the textile industry, and initiated by CITAM, an institution then based in the French city of Aubusson, which played a key role in the effort to revitalise the practice of tapestry in Europe. The Lausanne Tapestry Biennial rendered Lausanne a hub of contemporary textile art through a blend of private initiative and local funding. As shown by Fig. 2.17, this event fostered a transition from collective to individual weaving, and from classic wall tapestry to spatial textile art.⁴²⁵ During the Cold War, it provided a unique platform for ground-breaking practitioners from beyond the Iron Curtain such as Magdalena Abakanowicz (Fig. 2.18). This attests to how biennials can contribute to raising the profile of practices and practitioners from peripheral regions of the world. Both the city and the textile medium were therefore reinvented through the biennial format. The second exception is the important International Triennial of Tapestry (1972-present), which preceded the collapse of the textile industry in the Polish city of Łódź, following the fall of communism in the Eastern Block and beyond in 1989.⁴²⁶

While *Contextile* and other biennales have emerged in the aftermath of industrial decline, active industrial sites have also been subjected to cultural regeneration policies. For example, the Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres (National Manufactory of Sèvres) is a working manufactory, which is now part of a cultural complex named Cité de la Céramique (City of Ceramics). This includes the National Ceramics Museum since 2010, and the Adrien Dubouché National Museum of Limoges since 2012. Created by the French Ministry of

⁴²⁵ Giselle Eberhard Cotton, 'The Lausanne International Tapestry Biennials (1962-1995)', Hazel Clark, Janis Jefferies, and Diana Wood Conroy (eds), *The Handbook of Textile Culture*, London and New York, 2016, 349-58.

⁴²⁶ Blanka Brzozowska, "'Creative City' as a Brand – The Case of Łódź", *Creativity Studies*, 9:1, 2016, 3-14.

Culture, this single entity formed by several institutions aims to highlight Sèvres as a leading global point of attraction for the ceramic arts.⁴²⁷ This suggests that heritage culture can also assimilate living industries to preserve their history whilst ensuring their continuity.

Beyond the biennale model, other exhibitions have tackled local histories of textile production in the twenty-first century.⁴²⁸ Between 2008 and 2014, Anne Wilson created four performances under the title *Wind-Up: Walking the Warp*, which were presented at the Rhona Hoffman Gallery in Chicago, the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston, the Whitworth in Manchester, and The Drawing Center in New York.⁴²⁹ All of these places were once important hubs of textile manufacturing, including men's clothing (Chicago), cotton production (Houston and Manchester), and women's clothing (New York). The inclusion of the modal verb 'wind-up' in the title therefore alludes both to the winding involved in textile making and to the decline of the textile industry in these cities.

In *Walking the Warp*, actions linked to weaving such as spinning, counting, winding, and entwining, were interpreted literally by the performers, through their bodily movements in the space. The fabric and additional materials used in the US performances were brought from local weaving factories. The performances at the Rhona Hoffman Gallery and the Contemporary Arts Museum entailed the creation of a sculpture, which remained in each of the spaces throughout the respective exhibitions (Fig. 2.19, Fig. 2.20). The two-part

⁴²⁷ Sèvres – Manufacture et Musées Nationaux, *Sèvres' missions*, <https://www.sevresciteceramique.fr/en/l-etablissement/sevres-missions-de-l-etablissement.html>, accessed 15 August 2023.

⁴²⁸ Other examples include *Local Industry*, Anne Wilson's solo exhibition at the Knoxville Museum of Art (2010, USA); and *The Stuff That Matters: Textiles Collected by Seth Siegelaub for the Centre for Social Research on Old Textiles* at London's Raven Row (2012, UK). See Sara Martinetti, Alice Motard and Alex Sainsbury, 'Curating Textiles: The Stuff that Matters', Janis Jefferies, Diana Wood Conroy and Hazel Clark (eds), *The Handbook of Textile Culture*, London and New York, 2016, 35-50.

⁴²⁹ Videos of the performances can be found in Wilson's website. See for instance Jeroen Nelemans, *Walking Chicago*, 2008, <https://www.annewilsonartist.com/windup-chicago-video/>, accessed 30 May 2023.

performance at the Contemporary Arts Museum was presented in collaboration with local group Hope Stone Dance (Fig. 2.21). The UK performance was produced in collaboration with the choreographer Bridget Fiske and executed by dancers from The Lowry Centre for Advanced Training in Dance. The dancers' costumes were dyed by textile students from Manchester Metropolitan University (Fig. 2.22). A musical composition by Shawn Decker incorporated mechanical rhythms and excerpts from English labour songs, which are strongly linked to cultural identity. Textile fragments from The Whitworth's Ancient Egypt collection were also exhibited, to illustrate the pervasiveness of the striped-pattern textile across different cultures and periods. The performances generated textile pieces, which remained in each space throughout the duration of each exhibition.⁴³⁰ The *Contextile* biennale expands on these formats through the establishment of long-term relations between international practitioners, local makers, communities, and the city itself.

The field of textiles and its large network of biennales have benefitted from an exceptionally close-knit international community. As Melo asserts:

The textile art community is an actual community. [...] Perhaps this community is much more supportive. [...] We would all like there to be a utopic artistic community, but this no longer exists. [...] And, in textiles, I think that it exists. I think that that community helps each other a lot. [...] I think that this is a very healthy working practice [...] which I have not seen in architecture [...] not to mention the plastic arts.⁴³¹

The textile art community accordingly stands out from the visual arts and other creative fields due to its closeness. It draws on several international organisations such as the

⁴³⁰ Jorge, 'The Use of Textiles', 3-8.

⁴³¹ 'A comunidade de arte têxtil é de facto, uma comunidade. [...] Se calhar é uma comunidade muito mais incentivadora. [...] Já não existe esta comunidade artística utópica que todos gostaríamos de saber existente. [...] E, no têxtil, eu acho que ela existe. Acho que essa comunidade se entreajudá muito. [...] Eu acho que isto até é uma prática muito saudável de se trabalhar [...] que eu não tenho visto na arquitectura [...] então, nas artes plásticas, nem se fala.', Jorge, Interview with Melo.

European Textile Network (ETN), based in Austria since 2020; World Textile Art (WTA), based in the USA; and Nordic Textile Art (NTA), which focuses on Nordic countries. The metaphors of community, collaboration, and solidarity, so frequently deployed in theoretical accounts about textiles, seem to materialise in the field of textile art.

This section provided an overview of an emerging typology, which I have termed the material-based post-industrial biennial, highlighting points of contact and divergence in relation to the established model of the art biennale. While art biennales have often echoed the Western division between art, craft, and industry, material-based post-industrial biennials expand on previous biennial waves through their emphasis on local histories of making in a post-industrial context. This exhibitionary format is distinguished by focusing on singular media which are commonly associated with craft, and relate to historic industries in the regions where such events take place. Material-based post-industrial biennials often arise in the context of cultural regeneration initiatives, which have also been implemented in active industrial sites. Local histories of production, particularly regarding textiles, have equally been tackled in contemporary exhibitions. Yet the material-based post-industrial biennial provides a unique opportunity for the long-term exploration of histories of making in particular areas. Within the textile field, these events have both benefitted from and contributed to the existence of a close international community. This reflects the specific qualities of craft as a practice which generates affective encounters.

The next section dives into the *Contextile* biennale, focusing on two interventions in the public space held in the first and second editions, respectively in 2012 and 2014. This preliminary format enabled the activation of audiences through textiles, messages, and memories.

Interventions in the public space: activating audiences through textiles, texts, and memories

Guimarães is this body with many, clearly differentiated layers which go back several centuries [...] Textile is one of the most important layers of Guimarães's body. A quintessentially textile region. A fabric that absorbed such a large population over several years, and which, despite having faced difficulties, resisted and reinvented itself. [...] It is from this part of the body, this textile region, of which we should be proud, but which is seen by many as a wound, that culture can emerge as a reinterpretation, allowing the perception of this important part of the Guimarães's whole to be reinvented.⁴³²

In this excerpt from the exhibition catalogue of *Contextile's* fourth edition in 2018, Adelina Pinto, Vice-President of Guimarães's city council, articulates the city of Guimarães as an organism formed by multiple strata, among which textile is one of the most significant. She emphasises the resilience of the local textile sector, and its ability to adapt and face dramatic changes. Pinto also acknowledges the traumatic effects of deindustrialisation and unemployment on the city's population, echoing Breen's account of the ceramics industry in Stoke. For her, culture plays a vital role in providing a different understanding of this industrial history. This attempt to reinvent perceptions of textiles both at the local and national levels has been a key focus for the *Contextile* biennale.

This section investigates the ways in which the material-based post-industrial

⁴³² 'Guimarães é este corpo com várias camadas bem diferenciadas, que remontam há vários séculos [...] O têxtil é uma das mais importantes camadas do corpo vimaranense. Um território têxtil, por excelência. Um tecido que absorveu tanta população durante vários anos e que, mesmo tendo passado por dificuldades, resistiu e reinventou-se. [...] É desta parte do corpo, deste território têxtil que nos devemos orgulhar, mas que muitos olham como ferida, que a cultura pode emergir como uma reinterpretação que permita reinventar a percepção desta importante parte do todo vimaranense.', Adelina Pinto, 'Introduction', Cláudia Melo and Susana Milão (eds), *Contextile 2018: Contemporary Textile Art Biennial*, exhibition catalogue, Porto, various locations, Guimarães, 2018, 6-7 (7).

biennial retrieves associations between textiles, texts, and memories, to activate audiences in textile production and its reception. It focuses on *Na Ponta da Agulha* and *Weaving Guimarães*, two outdoor projects created for *Contextile*'s second and first editions in 2014 and 2012, respectively. My analysis reveals that both interventions claimed the presence and visibility of the textile medium in urban and public spaces, whilst using the textile medium as a tool for communication and collaboration.

Na Ponta da Agulha drew on the etymological and theoretical connections between textiles and texts. A few days before the public presentation of this project, a Facebook post invited the audience as follows:

to write or to draw a message with threads and a needle. The messages can be stitched by hand or by machine. The fabrics [...] are available at Casa da Memória [a cultural space installed in a derelict plastics factory] for those who want to participate. These fabrics with embroidered messages will cover the trees and the bandstand at Alameda de S. Dâmaso.⁴³³

The project's title, which could be translated as 'on the tip of the needle', results from the adaptation of an idiomatic expression shared by the Portuguese and English languages – 'on the tip of one's tongue' – to the act of stitching.⁴³⁴ This phrase reclaims the etymological link between textiles and texts since both words are rooted in the Latin term *textum*.

Scholars from different fields of knowledge have also examined the associations between craft, textiles, and communication. For example, in his essay 'The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov' (1936), Walter Benjamin established a parallel

⁴³³ '[...] a escrever ou a desenhar uma mensagem com linhas e agulha. As mensagens podem ser bordadas à mão ou à máquina. Os tecidos [...] estão disponíveis na Casa da Memória para quem quiser participar. Estes tecidos com as mensagens bordadas irão cobrir as árvores e o coreto da Alameda de S. Dâmaso.', *Contextile*, 'Bom dia! Já ultrapassámos os 1500 seguidores aqui no Facebook. [...]' [Facebook] <<https://www.facebook.com/contextile/photos/a.521127517993391/579630192143123>> 15 September 2014 [accessed 8 September 2023].

⁴³⁴ Soanes, Catherine and Stevenson, Angus (eds). 'Tip1', *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, eleventh edn, Oxford, 2008.

between craft and storytelling, arguing that both practices integrate the experience of their creator.⁴³⁵ Similarly, in *Zeros + Ones: Digital Women + the New Technoculture*, Sadie Plant highlighted fabrics as storers of data which compile the thoughts of the people who made them.⁴³⁶ While the use of woven cloths to convey and store information precedes the advent of the written word, weaving differs from both writing and the visual arts, in that it records not only data and images, but also information about who made it, along with the process, techniques, and skills involved in its making. Textile production, as Plant asserts, is centred on process rather than the final product, and the visual appearance of textiles is intrinsic to the processes through which they were made. By inviting people to create embroidered messages on handkerchiefs, *Na Ponta da Agulha* allowed participants to register their own experiences through textiles and text and exhibit them in a public space. It also emphasised their creations as the outcome of a process that is at once physical and intellectual.

Na Ponta da Agulha is also closely influenced by the *lenço de namorados*, a textile object reflecting societal beliefs and stereotypes around femininity. Dating back at least to the late 1800s, the *lenço de namorados* is a type of handkerchief which was particularly popular in the province of Minho, where Guimarães is located. These items are often square and embroidered in cross-stitch on linen or cotton cloth. They include motifs and messages of love in the form of traditional or popular verses. The *lenços de namorados* were usually offered as a gift to one's betrothed, often bearing the initials or name of the recipient. While these objects were firstly shared amongst the elite, they later disseminated amongst less affluent classes. Philologist Carlos Nogueira explains their function and symbolism in the

⁴³⁵ Benjamin, 'The Storyteller', 90-91; Leslie, 'Walter Benjamin', 6.

⁴³⁶ Plant, *Zeros + Ones*, 66.

twentieth century, during the *Estado Novo* regime, as follows:

The handkerchief [...] had a symbolic meaning: it indicated, metonymically, the women's ability to make the dowry and, by extension, to marry and organise a home. The whole ideology of the *Estado Novo* was represented here: by securing the management of home and family, the woman ensured the cohesion of the whole community and the functioning of the country.⁴³⁷

A series of social conventions have therefore been ascribed to the *lenço de namorados* – a feature common to many craft objects. Within a Portuguese authoritarian context, the *lenço de namorados* embodied the woman's role as a housewife, a mother, and a spouse. This object therefore incorporated the core values enforced by the government: God, homeland, and family (Deus, Pátria e Família). Perhaps because of their patriarchal appropriation, many believe that the *lenços de namorados* were exclusively bestowed by young women to young men. Yet there is evidence that young men also had handkerchiefs made for their sweethearts to wear in public.⁴³⁸

The *lenço de namorados* thus materialised a public demonstration of affection – perhaps even possession – of one's enamoured, in line with social expectations. Since the 1990s, these objects have become attractive souvenirs amongst national and foreign tourists.⁴³⁹ Despite their persisting associations with the rural milieu, the *lenços de namorados* are increasingly present in urban settings, where they are framed and hung on the wall as collectables and to decorate rooms.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁷ 'O lenço [...] tinha um significado simbólico: indicava, metonimicamente, a capacidade da mulher para fazer o enxoval e, por extensão, para casar e organizar uma casa. Toda a ideologia do Estado Novo estava aqui representada: garantindo a gestão do lar e da família, a mulher assegurava a coesão de toda a comunidade e o funcionamento do país.', Carlos Nogueira, 'Os lenços de namorados: amor e corpo', *Anthropos*, 108, 2013, 622-27 (624).

⁴³⁸ Jean-Yves Durand, *Os lenços de namorados: frentes e versos de um produto artesanal no tempo da sua certificação*, 2nd edn, Vila Verde, 2008.

⁴³⁹ Nogueira, 'Os lenços de namorados', 622.

⁴⁴⁰ Durand, *Os lenços de namorados*, 18.

The *lenço de namorados* is a powerful symbol of the region's cultural identity. This type of object holds marks of place and literacy, notably through 'spelling, morphological, and syntactical deviations'.⁴⁴¹ For example, the handkerchief in Fig. 2.23, dating from the nineteenth century, contains two poems distributed across two squares. The text in the central square reads: 'Friendship / Remembrance / Your love / With tenderness'.⁴⁴² The passage in the outer square could be translated as follows: 'In this handkerchief / I lay / tears. For. Whoom. I weep / For. I. Cannot. Reach / The. Arms. Of. Whoom. I worship [sic]'.⁴⁴³ While the first message follows modern Portuguese spelling, the second arguably adopts phonetic spelling and includes several spelling mistakes. This partly reflects levels of literacy; in 1890, more than 75% of the Portuguese population over seven years of age could not read or write.⁴⁴⁴

Contemporary practitioners have used the handkerchief as a tool to pay homage to their foremothers, who were unable to read and write. Korean-born practitioner Ke-Sook Lee's installation *One Hundred Faceless Women* (2007) (Fig. 2.24, Fig. 2.25), for instance, comprises one-hundred vintage handkerchiefs on which she has drawn and stitched visual symbols. These aim to express the shared angst, suffering and aspirations of Korean women from previous generations.⁴⁴⁵ The *lenço de namorados*, on the other hand, asserts the specificity of place through language, embroidery technique, and textile.

Some of the participants in *Na Ponta da Agulha* used embroidery to reflect on their

⁴⁴¹ '[...] desvios ortográficos, morfológicos, e sintáticos', Nogueira, 'Os lenços de namorados', 624.

⁴⁴² 'Amizade / Recordação / Teu amor / Do coração'.

⁴⁴³ 'Neste. Leusso. De. Puzitu / Lagrimas. Por. Quen. Euchoru / Por. Eu. Não. Poder. Chigar / Aos. Brasos. De. Quen. Adoru [sic].'

⁴⁴⁴ Rui Grácio, 'Ensino primário e analfabetismo', Joel Serrão (ed.), *Dicionário de história de Portugal: volume II*, Lisboa, 1971, 51.

⁴⁴⁵ Monem (ed.), *Contemporary Textiles*, 15.

personal experiences. Photographs of the installation at Alameda de S. Dâmaso allow us to read excerpts of these messages. In one of the cloths, a woman seems to hypothesise her own silence ('[If] I were [...] [a s]ilent [woman]') (Fig. 2.26), whereas a text stitched in fluorescent green yarn on a bright orange fabric reads: 'All passes but not all that passes is forgotten' (Fig. 2.27).⁴⁴⁶ While the bright colours animated the bandstand (Fig. 2.28) and trees (Fig. 2.29), they stood in sharp contrast to the contemplative and melancholic character of the stitched thoughts. By sharing private testimonies in an outdoor setting, *Na Ponta da Agulha* reclaimed them as a public matter, echoing the feminist motto, 'the personal is political'.⁴⁴⁷

The display of messages on the bandstand particularly emphasised the performative nature of language. This space might therefore enact the 'place of speech' (*lugar de fala*), a concept devised by the Brazilian philosopher Djamila Ribeiro that questions who is entitled to have a voice in a normative society ruled by whiteness, masculinity, and heterosexuality.⁴⁴⁸ The inclusion of a woman's statement in *Na Ponta da Agulha* suggests that this project allowed at least some of the marginalised to articulate their feelings and experiences. By incorporating textiles – a medium primarily associated with women and other underprivileged communities as the dominant participants – *Na Ponta da Agulha* offered a space beyond heteronormative culture (*lugar de fala*).

By exhibiting the *lenço de namorados* at a larger scale and in an urban, public context, *Na Ponta da Agulha* enabled the public verbalisation of personal experiences. Across distinct geographies and social backgrounds, knotting, embroidery, patchwork and

⁴⁴⁶ 'Tudo passa mas nem tudo o que passa se esquece.'; '[Se] eu fosse [...] [si]lenciosa'.

⁴⁴⁷ Carol Hanisch, 'The Personal is Political', *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation*, 2, 1970, 76-78.

⁴⁴⁸ Djamila Ribeiro, *O que é lugar de fala?*, Belo Horizonte, 2017.

other textile activities have contributed to the oppression as much as the self-expression, communication, protest, and healing of the people who practice them.⁴⁴⁹ For example, Puleng Segalo argues that needlework has empowered Black women in post-apartheid South Africa to recreate their lives, tell their own stories, and connect past and present.⁴⁵⁰ This suggests the ability of textiles, and craft more broadly, to create a space for responding to traumatic experiences. Glenn Adamson particularly draws an analogy between craft and trauma, conceiving craft itself as a response to the painful experiences of modernity and industrial progress.⁴⁵¹ In this chapter, we also witness some of the emotional, physical, and economic wounds generated by processes of industrialisation and deindustrialisation.

The city of Guimarães and the wider region of Vale do Ave have witnessed distressing experiences linked to industrial development. According to Conceição Rios, a workshop coordinator and technical artistic consultant at *Contextile*, ‘people have a bad memory of textiles. It was all very painful. There was nothing pretty about the considerable exploitation of an underpaid workforce’.⁴⁵² The capitalist model, which had been applied at textile factories in several countries throughout the 1800s, had become disseminated in the region of Vale do Ave at the end of the century. This involved an increasing emphasis on low wages and the employment of girls and women, whilst men were primarily hired for duties of vigilance, machine maintenance, and support services. Men and boys, however, also worked as weavers in the linen and cotton industries. In 1951, 60% of those working in the region’s

⁴⁴⁹ See for instance Catherine Amoroso Leslie, *Needlework through History: An Encyclopedia*, Westport, 2007.

⁴⁵⁰ Puleng Segalo, ‘Embroidery as Narrative: Black South African Women’s Experiences of Suffering and Healing’, *Agenda*, 28, 2014, 44-53 (44-47).

⁴⁵¹ Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 185.

⁴⁵² ‘[...] as pessoas têm má memória da [sic] têxtil. Era tudo muito doloroso. Não havia nada de bonito num trabalho de grande exploração de mão de obra, mal pago’, Valdemar Cruz, ‘Cenas da vida de quem tece’, *Expresso*, 30 August 2014, 24-25.

cotton industry were women, 10% of whom were underage; until 1969, the minimum legal age for working was 12 years old.⁴⁵³ Yet the impact of the textile industry on workers in Vale do Ave and those involved in its wider network, including those who harvested cotton in Angola and Mozambique, still needs to be assessed. It is hoped that *Contextile* can become a platform for these broader narratives, research, and conversations.

Another project which promoted a collective dialogue was *Tecer Guimarães* (Weaving Guimarães), a pop-up event held during *Contextile*'s first edition in 2012. As the biennial director Joaquim Pinheiro explained in a video reportage, *Tecer Guimarães* endeavoured

to challenge people [...] either women or men. It is an outreach activity to interact with people, raising their awareness about a big event, which is *Contextile* 2012 [...] [Textile i]s still the major activity in the city of Guimarães [...] and I think that [for] people, especially the elderly – though not so much for men – stitching, knitting, and weaving are entirely familiar activities [...] I hope that the performers can provoke the people a little bit [...] as the goal is [...] [not for people to be] spectators, but leading characters.⁴⁵⁴

The use of the phrases 'challenge', 'interact', 'raising [...] awareness' and 'provoke' reflects the intention to generate both immediate and lasting effects among the audience. Pinheiro's statement also discloses the desire to mitigate the biased connection between textiles and women, and to involve both sexes in this textile intervention; although those who do not identify as either men or women were not included in his speech. The video reportage shows performers from both sexes knitting with large needles, whilst sitting on the benches

⁴⁵³ Alves, 'A indústria têxtil', 14.

⁴⁵⁴ '[...] lançar um desafio às pessoas [...] mulheres ou homens. É uma acção de interacção com as pessoas, sensibilizando-as para um grande evento que é a *Contextile* 2012 [...] [O têxtil c]ontinua a ser a actividade mãe da cidade de Guimarães [...] e, por isso, penso que [para] as pessoas, sobretudo as mais antigas – os homens nem por isso – o bordar, o fazer malha, o tecer é uma actividade que é totalmente conhecida [...] Espero que os performers consigam provocar um pouco as pessoas [...], porque o objectivo é [...] [que as pessoas não estejam] como espectadores, mas sim como protagonistas.', Expressodoave, *Tecer Guimarães*, online video recording, YouTube, 27 July 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3Ff1QptFd4&ab_channel=expressodoave> [accessed 11 May 2023].

and ground of Alameda de S. Dâmaso.⁴⁵⁵

The performance entailed the construction of a human loom in the public realm, with the active participation of local inhabitants and visitors. The coordinated movement of their bodies produced a knitted fabric comprising different designs and forming the word 'Guimarães'. This partly echoes the exploration of the links between written and sewn lines within *Na Ponta da Agulha*. Yet rather than highlighting personal testimonies through textile texts, *Tecer Guimarães* emphasised the importance of collaboration in the development of the city. The different patterns that constitute the textile mesh, however, arguably embodied the diverse identities that make up the urban environment. By forming a human loom in the public space, participants were symbolically encouraged to reinvent Guimarães through the textile medium.⁴⁵⁶ This intervention therefore delved into the broader associations between textiles and social relations, which pervade language through expressions such as 'social networks', 'social fabric', and 'World Wide Web'.

Na Ponta da Agulha and *Tecer Guimarães* attempted to transcend the gendering of both craft and public space. In this sense, they fit into the scope of feminist art and theory, both of which have questioned the divide between low and high art, along with the connotation of women's work with low and domestic art.⁴⁵⁷ At the same time, women have been excluded from the public realm both in the professions and arenas of modern urban life and through dominant conceptualisations of the city.⁴⁵⁸ The different allocation of female and male bodies is still visible at the Alameda de S. Dâmaso, where men from older

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Anne Wilson, 'Foreword', Janis Jefferies, Diana Wood Conroy and Hazel Clark (eds), *The Handbook of Textile Culture*, London and New York, 2016, xxvi.

⁴⁵⁸ Malcolm Miles, *Art, Space and the City: Public Art and Urban Futures*, London and New York, 1997, 30.

generations occupy the benches more often than women. While an equal number of female and male performers were involved in *Tecer Guimarães*, two photographs disclose a sharp contrast between the enthusiastic participation of women of different ages and the seemingly sceptical stance of an elderly man sitting beside them (Fig. 2.30, Fig. 2.31).⁴⁵⁹

Accounts of the historic textile industry in Vale do Ave also contradict the gendered boundaries of public and private spaces. Both men and women were employed by retail merchants, who provided the looms and yarn to weavers in small establishments or at home. A cottage industry remained dominant even as factories spread in this region.⁴⁶⁰ By disclosing textiles as an activity practised by both sexes and relocating textile production to the public space, *Tecer Guimarães* subverted stereotypical associations between women and the textile medium.

Na Ponta da Agulha and *Tecer Guimarães* emulated the tactics of craftivism to re-familiarise audiences with the textile medium. According to Anthea Black and Nicole Burisch, the following strategies allow the preservation of craftivist intents: involving audiences in making; creating opportunities for teaching and learning craft skills, notably in the public realm; participatory and democratic processes; and using publications, documentation, archival material, and digital networks to share information and increase accessibility.⁴⁶¹ The two interventions in Guimarães invited the public to stitch and knit in outdoor spaces, showcasing the materials, processes and products of these activities in the public sphere. This allowed those with and without experience in these techniques to play an active role in the projects. By using Facebook to encourage the audience to participate, *Na Ponta da*

⁴⁵⁹ Expressodoave, *Tecer Guimarães*.

⁴⁶⁰ Alves, 'A indústria têxtil', 8.

⁴⁶¹ Black and Burisch, 'Craft Hard, Die Free', 215.

Agulha particularly discloses the use of social media to reach a wider range of publics. Both interventions literally placed needlework and weaving at the heart of the city, emphasising the central role of textiles in its past, present, and future.

As interventions in the public space involving textiles and texts, *Na Ponta da Agulha* and *Tecer Guimarães* exposed the central role of culture and the arts in rethinking the city. In *Art, Space and the City: Public Art and Urban Futures*, Malcolm Miles analyses public art from the viewpoint of urban policies, gender, and other fields of knowledge. Despite questioning the effectiveness of public interventions in the development of sustainable cities, he acknowledges that ‘imagining possible futures [...] is as much part of a democratic society as informal mixing in public spaces, and that such imaginings may produce an urban regeneration in which the social benefits are primary’.⁴⁶² This suggests the social benefits of conceiving the future of the city, and how those conceptions can contribute to urban regeneration, both in a tangible and intangible sense.

Part of the PopUp Culture programme of Guimarães 2012 – European Capital of Culture (ECC), *Tecer Guimarães* echoed the ECC goals of urban regeneration through cultural development.⁴⁶³ The performance took place at Alameda de S. Dâmaso, an avenue located in the historic centre, which underwent a process of revitalisation before the advent of *Contextile* (Fig. 2.32).⁴⁶⁴ Resonating with Miles’s words, *Tecer Guimarães* envisioned the city’s prospects through an act of collective knitting in the public space. The textile medium therefore played a key role in a joint reimagining of Guimarães.

⁴⁶² Miles, *Art, Space and the City*, 2.

⁴⁶³ Guimarães 2012: European Capital of Culture, *Change in Progress*, Guimarães, 2011.

⁴⁶⁴ On the concept of urban revitalisation, see for instance Greg Richards, *Eventful Cities: Cultural Management and Urban Revitalisation*, Oxford, 2010.

This section examined two participatory projects developed by *Contextile* in the public realm. Both *Na Ponta da Agulha* and *Weaving Guimarães* reflect the ways in which involving audiences in the practice and fruition of textile activities can retrieve the connections between textile, text, place, and memory. Interventions in the public space are one of the key making and display formats within the material-based post-industrial biennial. This model draws on craft as a practice which enables the sharing of personal experiences through the collective act of making. Collaborative crafting in the public realm, particularly through textiles, might also symbolise the fabric of the city as something which can be created, mended, and recreated together. In the next section I focus on artistic residencies, as an exhibitionary format which enables practitioners to engage with communities of industrial workers.

Artist's residencies in the factory: engaging with communities of skilled industrial workers

The artistic residencies developed within the *Contextile* biennale promote and facilitate encounters between various practitioners, including industrial workers, with the aim of re-bridging the worlds of contemporary art, craft, and industry. As stated in the catalogue of *Contextile's* first edition in 2012, its artist-in-residence programme aspires to 'create new languages from the "raw matter" that exists in the region'.⁴⁶⁵ This reveals the biennale's conception of artistic residencies as a format which enables practitioners to draw on the territory of Guimarães, its industrial history, and the technical know-how held in its textile companies and workers. Artists in residence have been invited to engage either with local

⁴⁶⁵ '[...] criar novas linguagens a partir da "matéria prima" existente na região', Pinheiro, David and Gomes (eds), *Contextile 2012*, 128.

textile companies such as Sampedro and Pereira da Cunha, or with local craft workshops through A Oficina – Centro de Artes e Mesteres Tradicionais de Guimarães (The Workshop – Centre of Traditional Arts and Crafts of Guimarães), a project dedicated to event management and programming for the city of Guimarães that also includes a heritage and crafts shop (Loja Oficina). These two different sites of production – the factory and the workshop – entail different forms of craft practice, allowing practitioners to draw on the skills of local textile companies or practitioners.

During *Contextile's* first edition in 2012, the artist-in-residence programme encompassed two dimensions. While *Guimarães Embroidery* focused on traditional handmade techniques in the crafts workshop, *In Factory* delved into industrial labour at local textile companies (Fig. 2.33). The work produced by the Lithuanian textile practitioner Ernesta Dikinytė, for instance, reflected her experience as an artist in residence at Pereira da Cunha, one of the oldest manufacturing firms dedicated to home textiles in Portugal. In an essay for the biennial catalogue, she clarified her expectations for the residency:

to learn more about jacquard weaving technology, and create a piece of work that would be interesting for the local community, especially for the workers in Pereira da Cunha. [...] Usually, the final customer doesn't know anything about those who are behind the whole textile work. When I first arrived in the company, I was astonished with the quality, innovation, technology and design of the work. These are the features that very much depend on these "invisible" people.⁴⁶⁶

Dikinytė's statement reveals her aspiration not only to increase her knowledge about jacquard weaving – a technique in which she specialises – but to devise an artwork that would be meaningful to the local community, particularly the industrial workers at Pereira da Cunha. According to Dikinytė, the artistic residency increased her awareness around

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 131.

skilled labour in this textile company, and encouraged her to give visibility to their employees through a contemporary creation. Dikinytè's conception of the Pereira da Cunha staff, and subsequently of their work, as 'invisible', turn her into a sort of foreign explorer. While the workers' skills might be well recognised within the factory and the wider community, the quality of the labour carried out at the textile company was validated by the international practitioner. Dikinytè's temporary immersion in the textile company echoes with the ways in which the *Contextile* biennale invests in the 'creation of community' across its various projects.⁴⁶⁷

Dikinytè wanted the workers at Pereira da Cunha to participate in her work, and therefore decided to photograph them, and then print their portraits on pillows similar to those which are produced at the firm. It is not known whether their contribution as subjects in these portraits was paid or not. Through shading and relief, she allowed their faces to 'emerge from the fabric and come to life'.⁴⁶⁸ A closer look at each pillow demonstrates that the jacquard weave accentuated the expressiveness and three-dimensionality of the employees' faces (Fig. 2.34, Fig. 2.35). The installation views in Fig. 2.36, Fig. 2.37, however, reveal that the staff's portraits in white almost faded into the neutral and slightly darker backgrounds of the pillows and the white cube setting of Casa da Memória, where they were exhibited. By choosing to print the worker's faces on the pillow, a two-sided object which serves to cushion the head, Dikinytè evoked the ways in which our sleep and rest relies on the effort of the company's staff. Just as the bottles of liqueur in Cristina Rodrigues's *The Fountain of Happiness* and *The Grapes of Wrath* symbolise a society borne by the working

⁴⁶⁷ '[...] criação de comunidade', Jorge, Interview with Melo.

⁴⁶⁸ Pinheiro, David and Gomes (eds), *Contextile* 2012, 131.

class, the pillows in *Invisible People* embody the labour on which the success of the company relies.

Invisible People comprised a blend of techniques, genres, and influences beyond the artificial divide between craft, art, and industry. As Adamson argues, the classification of craft as a set of disciplines is only applicable in Anglo-Saxon contexts.⁴⁶⁹ Practitioners too approach subjects that are often associated with craft through various means, challenging conventional definitions of craft. Dikinytè's project was inspired by the fields of sculpture, notably the application of historic relief and bas-relief portraiture in coins, medals, houseware, and architecture; jacquard weaving; and photography.⁴⁷⁰ By merging different technologies and materials, she was able to explore their concrete and symbolic possibilities, including ideas of commemoration, memorialisation, immortalisation, representation, and index. She also asserted craft as a fluid and multifaceted practice, which draws both on art and manufacturing.

In *Invisible People*, the faces of the Pereira da Cunha staff are laid out next to each other in a pillow panel. The work functions both as a memorial which pays tribute to the company's employees, and as a record of their professional activity and existence. Unlike the historical – often straight, white, and male – characters whose faces are printed on coins and bills, the Pereira da Cunha employees are working people. They do not display the serious, aggressive pose deemed appropriate amongst the generals, sovereigns, and presidents who have ruled empires and nations. Instead, their stance seems natural; many of them smile. Some look forward, facing the viewer, while others tilt or turn their heads to the side as if

⁴⁶⁹ Adamson (ed.), *The Craft Reader*, 1-5.

⁴⁷⁰ Pinheiro, David and Gomes (eds), *Contextile 2012*, 131.

glancing at their co-workers (Fig. 2.36). This suggests a sense of community amongst the Pereira da Cunha staff members.

Invisible People equally unveiled the affinities between textiles and computation. Invented by Joseph-Marie Jacquard (1752-1834), the Jacquard loom was the first mechanical device for weaving intricate images into silk (Fig. 2.38). It encompasses thousands of woven rows; each woven row controlled by an early nineteenth-century programming device – a punched card (Fig. 2.39) – which instructs the loom to weave the picture.⁴⁷¹ Shortly after Jacquard's invention of punched-card programming, Charles Babbage, in 1834, adapted the same principle to create the first calculating machine, which he later called the Analytical Engine. His most important ally in this invention was the mathematician Ada Lovelace, who translated and annotated scientific papers on the subject. Her writings disclose her knowledge about principles of computation such as the distinction between software and data – an idea embodied in the jacquard loom.⁴⁷² The Analytical Engine was the precursor to the modern computer, containing a memory (the 'store') and a processor (the 'mill'). About 150 years later, Herman Hollerith developed automatic accounting machines, which have been deemed as a distinct kind of Jacquard loom which records information rather than silk. Automatic accounting machines anticipated the invention of the computer, which fulfils the function and features envisioned by Babbage.⁴⁷³

In her statement for the biennale catalogue, Dikinytè used the term 'pixel' – which usually refers to digital images – to describe the minimal component of woven fabrics, comparing its role to that of each individual employee within a firm: 'Just as a pixel is very

⁴⁷¹ James Essinger, *Jacquard's Web: How a Hand-Loom Led to the Birth of the Information Age*, Oxford, 2007, 5.

⁴⁷² Ibid., 121-22.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 160.

important for weaving, each worker is very important for the company.⁴⁷⁴ Similar to the punched-hole process in jacquard weaving, the Pereira da Cunha staff follows a pre-existing process. Like the woven rows which are controlled by punched cards, each employee's every movement is controlled. Their creative freedom is therefore subsumed in this mechanical process. The installation echoes this analogy since the pillow-portraits were hung and attached, forming a kind of weaving or pixelated pattern. Some spaces were left empty by the absence of pillows, arguably symbolising past employees or the blank spaces of this, and every other, history.

Invisible People was displayed at Casa da Memória, whose history reflects the juxtaposition of different spaces in post-industrial cities. According to Kerstin Barndt, the integration of post-industrial sites in museum and exhibition cultures is linked to regeneration practices, which aim to rejuvenate deactivated areas and produce heritage and memory.⁴⁷⁵ Casa da Memória is a cultural venue seeking to provide 'various perspectives of the memory of a place', and to represent the people of Guimarães.⁴⁷⁶ It was installed at the building complex of Fábrica Pátria, a derelict plastics factory. As a result, it is a making site converted into an exhibition site. As shown in Fig. 2.40, the exterior of the building preserves the structure of the previous industrial space. Its gallery rooms, however, now bear the appearance of a white cube setting. Casa da Memória was the main space of *Contextile's* first edition, even though its restoration was not complete.⁴⁷⁷ Both Casa da Memória and the *Contextile* biennale fulfil the aspirations of European Capitals of Culture by promoting local

⁴⁷⁴ Pinheiro, David and Gomes (eds), *Contextile 2012*, 131.

⁴⁷⁵ Kerstin Barndt, 'Layers of Time: Industrial Ruins and Exhibitionary Temporalities', *PMLA*, 125, 2010, 134-41.

⁴⁷⁶ '[...] várias perspetivas da memória de um lugar', Exhibition guide, in 'Territory and Community', Casa da Memória de Guimarães (permanent exhibition).

⁴⁷⁷ Jorge, Interview with Pinheiro.

heritage, reinterpreting industrial legacies, and involving citizens in the rethinking and remaking of the city (Fig. 2.41). This and other material-based post-industrial biennials expand the regeneration practices described by Barndt, by encouraging contemporary practitioners to activate and reassess the cultural and economic value of these spaces.

Invisible People revealed the tensions between the anonymous and collective nature of both handmade and industrial labour, alongside fine art's emphasis on individual authorship. In her essay 'Exhibition Making as a Driving Force in Contemporary Craft', Marianne Zamecznik argues that the concept of single authorship can be contested through reflections about use within art.⁴⁷⁸ Applying this to our case study, the temporary visibility of the Pereira da Cunha employees was only attained through Dikinytè's status as artist and author and the display of the installation in a dedicated fine art gallery space. In an interview with Cláudia Melo, she admitted that contemporary practitioners still struggle to acknowledge external collaborations as a form of co-authorship.⁴⁷⁹

Albeit drawing on the materials, products, and staff from a textile company, *Invisible People* kept these workers' lives in obscurity through the project's identification as a single-authored work. This returned the workers to the invisibility which Dikinytè herself had detected, excluding them from the creative process, documentation, and interpretation. Their faces were only recognisable to their families, friends and co-workers, and the installation would remain in the memory of visitors as Dikinytè's work.

Yet through its exhibition at Casa da Memória, Dikinytè's memorial inscribed the Pereira da Cunha workers and the objects they make onto the history and fabric of the city.

⁴⁷⁸ Marianne Zamecznik, 'Exhibition Making as a Driving Force in Contemporary Craft Discourse', André Gali (ed.), *Documents on Contemporary Crafts No. 3: Crafting Exhibitions*, Oslo, 2015, 27-45 (40).

⁴⁷⁹ Jorge, Interview with Melo.

Her portraits of living industrial employees indirectly evoked those who were once employed at Fábrica Pátria. By resting on the pillow, an item produced at Pereira da Cunha and used for comfort and decoration, *Invisible People* engaged with ideas of intimacy, warmth, and personal memories. These notions were simultaneously conjured by the space of Casa da Memória, whose name could be translated as ‘house of memory’. Dikinytė’s project therefore exemplifies the incorporation of textiles in a contemporary piece, connecting past and present, tradition and innovation, visibility and invisibility. This combination of media, periods, and practices might foster a different, perhaps more constructive, perception of Guimarães’s textile industry, in which the artwork and its context complement each other, one enhancing the understanding of the other. Both *Invisible People* and Casa da Memória reflect the ambition to transform perceptions about the history of textiles in Guimarães through culture.

Invisible People discloses the artistic residency as a format which allows practitioners to explore new creative possibilities, and disseminate them through the exhibition device. For example, the British ceramicist Neil Brownsword acknowledges that his artistic residency at the European Ceramic Work Centre in the Netherlands in 1999 enabled him to investigate formats which are not usually encouraged by commercial galleries such as installations requiring large physical spaces.⁴⁸⁰ In the same year, he began a practice-led PhD at Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College, which allowed him to evaluate, question, and expand his practice. These experiences, along with the dissemination of creative experiments via exhibitions such as *Close* at the Crafts Council (2000), prompted a shift in Brownsword’s work from ceramic figures to installations that evoked the collapse of the

⁴⁸⁰ Brownsword, *Action/Reflection*, 4.

pottery industry in North Staffordshire, where he was born. During this transition, Brownsword's practice has invariably intersected his biography with the industrial legacy of this region. His creative journey attests to the significance, on the one hand of artistic residencies in the development of new creative processes and concepts and, on the other, of exhibitions in their diffusion and exposure.

Beyond the artistic residency format, contemporary practitioners have used paid and unpaid labour, rather than close collaborations, as an alternative way of working with skilled makers. Between 2010 and 2011, millions of clay seeds were spread across the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern (Fig. 2.42). *Sunflower Seeds*, a work by Chinese practitioner Ai Weiwei, reflected on how products made in China are perceived in the West, the role of individuals in society, and issues of labour, consumerism and sustainability.⁴⁸¹ For Adamson, *Sunflower Seeds* enacted the tremendous magnitude of global outsourcing, which largely relies on women's labour.⁴⁸² The tiny pieces comprising this monumental work were handmade by 1600 skilled workers in Jingdezhen, a former hub in the production of imperial pottery, which collapsed in the late 1990s. *Sunflower Seeds* entailed both a comment and a temporary response to these circumstances. Over several years, Ai hired local practitioners – mostly women – to reach audiences unfamiliar with the art world and revise ancient techniques that have been transmitted across generations.⁴⁸³ A video on the project shows Ai visiting the space where people are making the sunflower seeds. When he asks them if

⁴⁸¹ Tate, *The Unilever Series: Ai Weiwei: Sunflower Seeds*, <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/unilever-series/unilever-series-ai-weiwei-sunflower-seeds>, accessed 15 August 2023.

⁴⁸² Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 43.

⁴⁸³ A Chinese name is expressed with the surname/last name/family name, followed by the personal/first/given name. Yvonne Li Walls and Jan W. Walls, *Using Chinese: A Guide to Contemporary Usage*, Cambridge, New York, 2009, 161.

they are happy to participate in the project, they say that they are, because it brings business and they are virtually unemployed. Ai later adds that they asked if they could continue to work for him.⁴⁸⁴

Like *Invisible People*, *Sunflower Seeds* and *Field* simultaneously brought to light and took advantage of anonymous handmade labour. According to Adamson, Ai's work reflects the problematic notion of relational aesthetics, which often draws on the 'skill of the maker, which is offered up to the viewer as a sort of gift'.⁴⁸⁵ This contributes to maintaining an imbalanced relationship between various practitioners, curators, and audiences. Indeed, the makers who produced the sunflower seeds were not named alongside the work.⁴⁸⁶ A distinct approach to this display of handwork in the museum space through clay can be found in *Field*, a series of works that Antony Gormley began developing in the late 1980s. Each iteration of *Field* has involved the collaboration of local people and the use of local clay from places such as Amazonia and South China. In contrast to Ai's work, however, Gormley's collaborators worked as unpaid volunteers. A documentary on his work shows Gormley stepping on the clay, and several people – mostly boys – moulding it whilst working side by side. Unlike the workers in *Sunflower Seeds*, these makers are not skilled workers:

I just have to give them very simple instructions. You just take a ball of clay, form it in the hands, place it apart from you, [...] give it eyes, and now see how a form will arise, and it will be your form; it will be unique to you. What gets released when you give a common collective aim to a group of people [...] is [...] absolutely astonishing.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁴ Tate, *Ai Weiwei – Sunflower Seeds | Artist Interview | Tate*, online video recording, YouTube, 14 October 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PueYywpkJW8&ab_channel=Tate> [accessed 6 September 2023].

⁴⁸⁵ Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 44.

⁴⁸⁶ Wei Wu, *Spreading Seeds: Ai Weiwei's Sunflower Seeds and His Performative Personality Received in the West*, unpublished Bachelor's dissertation, Scripps College, 2017.

⁴⁸⁷ Antony Gormley: *Being Human*, TV documentary, dir. Morag Tinto, BBC One Imagine series, 2015.

The resulting installations consist of up to hundreds of thousands of clay figures, each made to the size of a hand.

At ICA Singapore, for example, *Field* filled an entire room, blocking its entrance (Fig. 2.43). Despite their seemingly insignificant size, the multiplication of the ceramic figurines altered the layout of and circulation within the gallery space. The human miniatures occupied the museum setting in the manner of a protest, recalling the demonstrations and sit-ins of the 1960s in which Gormley himself took part.⁴⁸⁸ As Martina Margetts notes, the compression that characterises this work reflects the practitioner's intention to provide a physical dimension to the voiceless. She compares the clay beings to the golem, an anthropomorphic figure in Jewish folklore usually made with clay or mud, 'which originated mankind, before any concepts of institutions and civilisation contained (and constrained) it'.⁴⁸⁹ The clay creatures 'marching across the floor' – a motif repeated by Gormley in other works from the same period such as *Twenty Four Hours* (1988) – unveil military overtones, turning the viewer into the object of an intimidating stare.⁴⁹⁰ For Margetts, *Field* exemplifies the ability of ceramics and museums to promote human encounters without physical and emotional barriers.⁴⁹¹

Some contemporary practitioners have deployed ethnographic methodologies, photography, and film to document industrial labour and its workers. For example, Brownsword, who trained as a modeller and designer at Josiah Wedgwood and Sons before attending art school, returned in 2003-4 to carry out ethnographic fieldwork in the

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Margetts, 'The Walls Come', 28.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 29.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., 29.

Wedgwood factory in Stoke.⁴⁹² Throughout nearly eight months, he filmed and documented various craft skills and the testimonies of employees. During this period, the Wedgwood factory was undergoing a process of economic restructuring, as technological breakthroughs and global outsourcing had rendered the know-how of factory workers obsolete.⁴⁹³ This caught the eye of The National Electronic and Video Archive of the Crafts (NEVAC, now 'Recording the Crafts' based at the University of the West England, Bristol), who later collaborated with Brownsword to expand their archive of craft practices in Britain. Brownsword interviewed several makers at the factory, including Suzanne Thompson who made prestige figures. Audio-visual documentation discloses the makers at work, demonstrating their different functions in the factory – the master mould makers, the picture mould makers, the figure maker, the ornamenteer, the Jasper turner, the engine turner, and the pâte-sur-pâte decorator (Fig. 2.44, Fig. 2.45).⁴⁹⁴

Brownsword's investigations into the processes of making, and the skill and knowledge of individual makers, led him to further relinquish the physical crafting of objects. He began to include by-products rescued from the factory in his works, 'in an attempt to reference the maker's identity, knowledge and actions implicit in a variety of specialised labour'.⁴⁹⁵ This means that Brownsword understands incidental manufacturing objects as an expression of the industrial workers, their skills and gestures, which were becoming obsolete. For him, they served as documents of making practices at risk of extinction.

In this post-industrial context, exhibitions can be used as a device that documents

⁴⁹² David Withing, 'Neil Brownsword: Collaging History', *Crafts*, September/October 2005, 63-64.

⁴⁹³ Brownsword, *Action/Reflection*, 194-200.

⁴⁹⁴ University of the West of England, *Recording the Crafts: Wedgwood Factory*, Barlaston, Staffordshire, 2004, <https://www.uwe.ac.uk/sca/wedgwood.htm>, accessed 22 May 2023.

⁴⁹⁵ Brownsword, *Action/Reflection*, 8.

and channels these fragmented histories of making and the fragile position of industrial workers during periods of economic transition. Continuing with the case of Brownsword, the footage at the Wedgwood factory was integrated into the exhibition *Collaging History* (2005) at The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery in Stoke-on-Trent. A second film depicted the continuous destruction of once-prosperous workshops. As David Whiting writes in his review of the exhibition, '[t]he stark contrast' between the two videos 'was unbearably poignant'.⁴⁹⁶ The exhibition combined Brownsword's response and source material, which encompassed remains found in abandoned pot banks and industrial locations, with objects from the museum's collection. These different items chronicled a loss of knowledge: 'For Brownsword such relics are redolent of the skills and working rhythms of generations, here reintegrated and transformed into essentially abstract ceramic collages – melting, fusing, constructed – revealing a delicate, organic, almost preternatural response.'⁴⁹⁷ Brownsword's visual recording of making practices, along with his fixation on 'the silent fragments, the residue', points to tacit knowledge which cannot easily be expressed in the written form.⁴⁹⁸

Exhibitions therefore have the potential to bring to light making practices and their unique characteristics. Two recent special issues of *The Journal of Modern Craft*, which I co-edited, explored the multiplicity of ways in which the maker and practices of making can become visible in exhibition contexts.⁴⁹⁹ The contributors focused on the exhibition format to investigate the impact of several sites, agents and curatorial practices on the economic,

⁴⁹⁶ Whiting, 'Neil Brownsword', 64.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., 64.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., 64.

⁴⁹⁹ Hart, Jones and Jorge (eds), 'Special Issue on Exhibiting Craft: Histories, Contexts, Practices. Exhibiting Making: Gesture, Skill and Process', 105-233; Hart, Jones and Jorge (eds), 'Special Issue on Exhibiting Craft: Histories, Contexts, Practices. The Politics of Craft Exhibitions', 235-355.

political social, and creative role of craft.⁵⁰⁰ They draw on sources such as exhibition catalogues, installation photographs, public programming, records of craft demonstrations, interviews with makers and curators, and jury reports. Some of the themes addressed in the essays are central to the fields of craft history and exhibition history, notably ‘the roles of amateur and professional makers [...] and ways of making visible practices of making’.⁵⁰¹

For example, in her article ‘The Nineteenth-Century Industrial Worker as Exhibition Visitor: Ways of Engaging with Making’ (2022), Claire Jones attempts to ‘restore visibility and agency to the industrial worker as a central yet largely overlooked agent in the histories of art, craft and design’.⁵⁰² As noted in the editorial introduction, this is part of a wider aspiration ‘to make museums more diverse and inclusive in response to movements for social justice and decolonization’.⁵⁰³ The first of the two special issues focuses on ‘Exhibiting Making’, and particularly investigates how gesture, skill and process can be represented in exhibitionary contexts. The essays in this issue reveal the ways in which craft can be displayed not as a commodity, but as a set of embodied practices of making which foreground questions of technique, professional identity, and collaboration.⁵⁰⁴

This chapter contributes to this research by examining a complex interplay of practitioners, within the context of a post-industrial city and its material-based biennale. I have specifically examined artistic residencies within the factory as a platform of encounter between practitioners and industrial workers. By focusing on *Invisible People*, a project

⁵⁰⁰ Hart, Jones and Jorge, ‘Introduction: Exhibiting Craft’, 106.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., 106.

⁵⁰² Claire Jones, ‘The Nineteenth-Century Industrial Worker as Exhibition Visitor: Ways of Engaging with Making’, *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 15:2, 2022, 167-80 (167).

⁵⁰³ Hart, Jones and Jorge, ‘Introduction: Exhibiting Craft’, 106.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 107.

developed by Ernesta Dikinytė at the textile company Pereira da Cunha in Guimarães, I have foregrounded the ways in which *Contextile's* artistic residencies work across production and exhibition sites, engage industrial workers in creative processes, and combine approaches from different geographies, periods, and disciplines. Material-based post-industrial biennales therefore provide opportunities for contemporary practitioners to draw on the resources, skills and stories of people working at industrial sites. Yet *Invisible People* also revealed the practitioner's resistance to relinquishing their status of exclusive author, whilst involving external collaborators, and raised questions regarding the documentation and economics of such projects

The following section examines collaborations through artistic residencies further, but shifts attention from the factory and skilled industrial workers to the workshop and collaborations between other kinds of practitioners, including those involved in traditional craft skills. Analysing *Contextile's* artistic residencies during the COVID-19 pandemic, I explore the ways in which the biennale responded to the effects of restrictions on exhibitionary methods of collaboration through a blend of in-person and remote practices.

Artist's residencies in the workshop: engaging with communities of practitioners specialised in traditional craft skills⁵⁰⁵

Since its first edition in 2012, the *Contextile* biennale has invited practitioners 'to inhabit the territory, in order to then create something from it'.⁵⁰⁶ While the previous section focused

⁵⁰⁵ This section has been previously published as a peer-reviewed article, Inês Jorge, 'So Far and Yet So Near: The Artistic Residencies of Contextile Biennale Amidst a Pandemic', *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 15:2, 2022, 181-97. Adjustments were made to the text to ensure its appropriate integration into this dissertation.

⁵⁰⁶ '[...] a habitar o território para, a partir dele, criar', Exhibition wall panel, Cloyster, in 'Contextile 2020: Contemporary Textile Art Biennial: Artistic Residencies', Convent of Saint Anthony of the Capuchins (5

on artistic residencies which generate encounters between practitioners and industrial workers in the factory, this section examines artistic residencies that foster collaborations between various practitioners, including those who specialise in traditional craft skills, in the workshop. It analyses the projects developed by Angelina Nogueira, Barbora Zentková & Julia Gryboś, Magdalena Kleszyńska, Michèle Lorrain, and Mylène Boisvert during their artistic residency at *Contextile*'s fifth edition in 2020. I particularly reflect on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the contact between practitioners from outside Guimarães, local professional practitioners of Guimarães Embroidery, and other members of the local community; and on the ways in which *Contextile* responded to this issue by merging on-site and distant methods of production and display.

In 2020, COVID-19 brought about the closure of museums, galleries, and other exhibition spaces across the world. The fifth edition of *Contextile*, held in the same year, was entitled *Places of Memory – Interdiscourses of a Textile Territory*, and aspired to encourage new perspectives about Guimarães and the history of its textile industry. The artists-in-residence programme was curated by Melo. To mitigate the virus, the biennale team devised a blend of on-site and distant approaches to creative and curatorial practice. While it may seem paradoxical to combine the idea of an artistic residency with remote site-specificity, the biennale team developed hybrid methodologies fusing internet technology and handmade practices. These strategies were deployed to connect practitioners working in different global locations with makers and the local community.

The artists-in-residence programme in 2020 was characterised, first and foremost, by an attempt to balance the desire for internationalisation and the inclusion of national

September-25 October 2020).

practitioners. The number of artists-in-residence was increased from three to eight. All participating artists-in-residence identify as women, reflecting a continued association between this gender and the textile medium. The practitioners were selected via three routes. Barbora Zentková (Slovakia), Julia Gryboś (Poland), and Paulina Almeida and Patrícia Geraldès (both from Portugal) were selected through a partnership with Magic Carpets; Mylène Boisvert and Michèle Lorrain (both from Canada) by means of a partnership with the *Biennale internationale du lin de Portneuf* or BILP (International Linen Biennale of Portneuf, Quebec); and Angelina Nogueira (Portugal) and Magdalena Kleszyńska (Poland) via an open call.⁵⁰⁷

Yet the fifth edition of *Contextile* was also affected by the coronavirus. Encounters between practitioners, the biennale team, the city, and local inhabitants were hindered by successive lockdowns. Of the five artists-in-residence from overseas, only three were able to fly to Portugal. This called for alternative methodologies to facilitate the exchange of information, communication, and creative interaction. The duration of the projects was also adjusted from one to two months, a change necessitated by multiple quarantines and by the intensive nature of artist residencies.⁵⁰⁸ As is customary, the artistic residencies took place in the summer, before the opening of the biennale on 5 September. For the practitioners who worked at a distance, their works were posted to and assembled in Guimarães. All physical events included in the fifth edition of *Contextile* were complemented by a virtual exhibition, which could be accessed through the biennale's website.⁵⁰⁹ With regard to the artist's

⁵⁰⁷ Magic Carpets, <https://magiccarpets.eu/>, accessed 7 September 2023; Biennale internationale du lin de Portneuf.

⁵⁰⁸ Jorge, Interview with Melo.

⁵⁰⁹ Contextile Virtual, 2022, <https://contextilevirtual.pt/>, accessed 5 May 2022.

residencies, this online platform offered non-interactive panoramic views of the displays as well as still images of installation views and details of artworks.

The outcomes of the artists' residencies were then brought together in an exhibition held between 5 September and 25 October at the Convento de Santo António dos Capuchos (Convent of Saint Anthony of the Capuchins) (Fig. 2.46). As a former convent and hospital converted into a heritage site in 1991, this space embodies the accumulation of uses and memories in Guimarães. Works by the eight practitioners occupied several divisions on the two floors of the former convent and what was once the city's main hospital, including areas as diverse as the cloister galleries, the confessionals, the inner courtyard, and emptied rooms. These distinct settings, in conjunction with the deployment of varied forms of natural and artificial illumination, emphasised ideas of being inside or outside, secrecy, decadence, seclusion, and travelling.

Akin to *Contextile's* broader aims, the multiple installations reveal an exploration of textiles not merely as a medium, but as a concept – through media as diverse as print, drawing, ceramics, artist's books, metalwork, embroidery, paper, and knitting. Rather than being displayed on plinths or in glass cases, objects were hung through different methods (Fig. 2.47, Fig. 2.48) and placed in purposely designed props or spaces within the convent such as confessionals (Fig. 2.49, Fig. 2.50). Each practitioner produced one artwork, except for Kleszyńska, who drew on and worked across the collections of various museological spaces in Guimarães.

Of the works developed on site, Angelina Nogueira's *De Fibra* (2020) is a paradigmatic example of the important role played by the mediation team within *Contextile's* community-based projects. Before the practitioner enters the scene, the

biennale's 'field staff' approach members of the local community to explain the project to them, using a language free from artistic jargon, and inquire about their interest in the project.⁵¹⁰ This is particularly crucial for projects involving practitioners who do not speak Portuguese or who are not from Guimarães, as in the case of Angelina Nogueira, who lives and works in Porto. As Melo notes, the success of community-based projects largely relies on the input of local people who know and are recognised by the city's inhabitants.⁵¹¹ She describes working with communities as a long and painstaking process, where local agents play a key role in the 'attentive listening [of] and mediation' with the population.⁵¹²

De Fibra, for instance, is a collaborative performance and installation derived from objects and stories shared by a group of local women.⁵¹³ The participants were identified by Paula R. Nogueira, a researcher on the history of textile production in Guimarães who is an invaluable source of knowledge and information for *Contextile's* projects.⁵¹⁴ The project entailed a series of one-on-one conversations between Angelina Nogueira and the women, which were documented in photography and film. The community's input varies across the biennale's different projects; they are either involved in all stages of the creative process, or simply provide preliminary material which is then transformed by the practitioner.

De Fibra exemplifies the latter type of collaboration, where the community's contribution is less visible. Nogueira subjected the materials collected amongst the women to a process of 'distillation'.⁵¹⁵ For example, one of the participants, Isabel Oliveira, showed

⁵¹⁰ '[...] equipa de terreno', Jorge, Interview with Melo.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² '[...] auscultação e mediação', Ibid.

⁵¹³ Melo and Silva (eds), *Contextile 2020*, 124.

⁵¹⁴ Jorge, Interview with Melo.

⁵¹⁵ '[...] destilação', Ibid.

Nogueira two textile pieces:

[O]ne from the time when I took the Guimarães Embroidery training; and [the other was] a little towel that was gifted to my mother when I was born, which instead of turning into a diaper, she sent to be embroidered. It has symbolic value to me.⁵¹⁶

Oliveira's statement demonstrates that the stories and objects explored through the project were connected to highly personal experiences which, in turn, attest to the meaningful and sentimental character of handmade textiles. Yet the resulting work did not entail a literal interpretation of these tangible and intangible testimonies. At the entrance of the exhibition, a textile artist's book (Fig. 2.51) contained embroideries in cotton thread – a remote evocation of Guimarães Embroidery. The room was then filled with a series of discarded fabrics from local factories, which were sewn together, painted, and drawn on by Nogueira. These assemblages were hung on pinewood structures (Fig. 2.52). Some of the fabrics were placed over windows (Fig. 2.53), while others were illuminated from behind through light bulbs, producing effects of light and shadow. One of the textiles disclosed a handwritten statement, 'o meu marido ainda não nasceu' (my husband is not yet born), reflecting the personal content of the conversations between Nogueira and the participants (Fig. 2.54). This recalls the role of fabrics as primary data storers before the inventions of writing and computing.

De Fibra (Of Fibre), alludes not only to the material component of fabrics (which, in the Portuguese use of the term, can refer to 'animal, vegetal and mineral substances'), but

⁵¹⁶ '[...] uma [...] do tempo em que fiz a formação de bordado de Guimarães; e uma [...] que era um pano que foi uma oferta à minha mãe quando eu nasci e que a minha mãe, em vez de transformar aquele pano em fralda, mandou bordar. [...] Isso tem ... um valor simbólico para mim.', Jorge and Oliveira, "The Gesture Is Everything", 203; Inês Jorge, Interview with Isabel Oliveira on the collaborations between Adélia Faria, Maria da Conceição Ferreira, Isabel Oliveira, and the Contextile biennale, unpublished videoconference, 34 minutes and 9 seconds, Lisbon, 22 September 2020.

also to the Portuguese idiom *de fibra* (of fibre), which is often applied to women and expresses the '[e]nergy or capacity to make difficult decisions or take on firm positions'.⁵¹⁷ In the context of the historic hospital setting and of COVID-19, this connotation evokes the difficult decisions that had to be made by healthcare staff in hospitals and nursing homes across the globe. Within Nogueira's project, the expression *mulheres de fibra* (women of fibre) equally articulates textiles as part of the identity of the Guimarães community.

The various components in *De Fibra* mirror the fragmentary nature of the history of textile production in Guimarães. This history not only comprises material elements such as industrial buildings, cast-off fabrics, and personal objects, but also oral history. The arrangement of the hanging textiles in one of the hospital rooms generated an intimate space, emulating Nogueira's private exchanges with each woman and the therapeutic power of sharing – and perhaps also of listening – to stories. Yet her intervention, which involved the distortion and disintegration of these accounts, deliberately hinders us from knowing them fully. This suggests that Nogueira's intention was not to provide an accurate record of the participants' testimonies through her installation. In contrast to verbatim theatre, which conveys a sense of documentary truth through the voices and experiences of real people, in *De Fibra*, Nogueira's transformation rendered most of the women's statements indiscernible.

The duo Barbora Zentková & Julia Gryboś also engaged with discarded fabrics but centred on narratives of waste, decay, and redundancy. Due to the need to restrict physical contact during the pandemic, they were allowed to visit an industrial building in Guimarães,

⁵¹⁷ '[...] substâncias animais, vegetais ou minerais'; 'Energia ou capacidade para tomar decisões difíceis ou assumir posições firmes', Priberam, *Fibra*, 2023, <https://dicionario.priberam.org/fibra>, accessed 11 May 2023. Similar idioms can be found in the English language such as 'moral fibre' and 'with every fibre of (one's) being'.

but not to spend time with its employees. Their installation, *The Light that Finds the Spreading Wounds* (2020) (Fig. 2.55), incorporates industrial waste retrieved in local factories. Akin to Nogueira, Zentková & Gryboś transformed the cloth – in this case by dyeing it in tones of grey, blue, purple, orange, and white – but kept its flaws and breaks visible.

More translucent and brightly coloured than Nogueira's almost opaque and pale ones, the fabrics were pierced by natural sunlight. They were hung from the ceiling, creating divisions within the old hospital setting such as areas where walls previously existed. This arrangement recalled the historic use of tapestries to warm and decorate the interiors of castles and palaces, or the curtains of a hospital bed, a sight all too familiar during the pandemic.⁵¹⁸ More broadly, the redundant cloth evoked the collapse of the textile industry and its physical and psychological damages. This traumatic past occurred at multiple scales, from the class-based suffering of families affected by unemployment to the ongoing effects of colonial violence implicated in the history of textile production.

By displacing the rejected cloth at the Convent of Saint Anthony of the Capuchins, Zentková & Gryboś arguably suggested a new function for textiles within a post-industrial context. In *The Light that Finds the Spreading Wounds*, fabrics seem to represent the notion of intangible cultural heritage as outlined in UNESCO's 'Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage'. This concept encompasses

the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁸ See for instance Mary M. Brooks, "'Mouldering Chairs and Faded Tapestry... Unworthy of the Observation of a Common Person": Considering Textiles in Historic Interiors', *Textile History*, 47:1, 2016, 60-81.

⁵¹⁹ UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 1992-2023, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>, accessed 15 August 2023.

In this sense, Zentková's and Gryboś's dyed fabrics not only filled the emptied areas of the historic building with artefacts, but also articulated the practices, representations, knowledge, and skills involved in textile production. Craft – particularly textile making – therefore resurfaces as a recuperative activity. Akin to the discarded cloth, which was transformed and integrated into the installation, Guimarães's textile history can be retrieved as a key element of cultural heritage, paving the way for a healing of this traumatic past.

In contrast to Nogueira's *De Fibra*, Zentková & Gryboś's collaborative intent was only partially fulfilled. The duo had planned to lead a workshop inviting local people to etch their remembrances of the hospital on the linoleum floor of the building. As the event had to be cancelled due to the pandemic, this was not undertaken until after Zentková & Gryboś's departure, when members of the community were invited to complete the project that the duo had started on the Capuchins' flooring.⁵²⁰

The impossibility of a physical meeting consequently gave rise to a sort of faraway *cadavre exquis*. The gouged imprints include uncanny and biomorphic shapes (Fig. 2.56), which bear a resemblance to the collective and automatic drawings and texts introduced by the Surrealists in the early twentieth century.⁵²¹ Yet while the Surrealist exquisite corpses were usually sketched on paper, in an informal exchange between practitioners, in *The Light that Finds the Spreading Wounds* these were imprinted by both Zentková & Gryboś and participants on the floor of the abandoned hospital. This work thus encompasses a collaboration between practitioners, members of the community, and the institution on

⁵²⁰ Jorge, Interview with Melo.

⁵²¹ André Breton, *Le cadavre exquis: son exaltation*, exhibition catalogue, Paris, La Dragonne, Galerie Nina Dausset, Paris, 1948.

whose ground the etchings were engraved. As the initial aim of the workshop was to explore personal memories of the hospital, intuitive drawing became a tool to access the subconscious of contributors. The subsequent multiplication of etchings throughout the floor also seems to echo the spread of COVID-19 and the formation of its variants.

All artists-in-residence had to change their practice in direct response to the pandemic. Despite working from different locations, Kleszyńska, Lorrain, and Boisvert instigated conversations and meetings with fellow and local practitioners through virtual platforms and fax machines. For example, during her artist's residency in Guimarães, Kleszyńska devised *Together at the Table* (2020) (Fig. 2.57) as a fictional gathering between all artists-in-residence. She described this encounter as follows: 'It had to appear as a group project [...] But because we couldn't meet together, I thought that we could meet at the table by other means – correspondence.'⁵²²

Before coming to Portugal, Kleszyńska organised a meeting with the other practitioners via Zoom, in which she described the topic of her project and explained how she imagined it would materialise. She used a mood board to display her ideas and theoretical context. Kleszyńska then asked her colleagues to participate by sharing one element of their projects through drawings, sketches, texts, photos, or other media. These were sent as digital files. She received one of Boisvert's square drawings, a poem by Lorrain (Fig. 2.58), and a family archive photograph of Nogueira's mother – a highly personal object (Fig. 2.59).⁵²³ When Kleszyńska arrived in Guimarães, Zentková & Gryboś offered her one of their floor patterns.

⁵²² Magdalena Kleszyńska, *Artist residencies: Contextile 2020: Guimarães, Portugal*, unpublished digital text, 2 pages, private archive of Magdalena Kleszyńska, Poznań, 2.

⁵²³ This photograph was also included in Nogueira's project *Tempo Terra* (2015).

Kleszyńska then prepared a cotton tablecloth, which she dyed and to which she added fringes by hand. She bleached eight circles onto the tablecloth, suggesting the position of dinner plates for each of the artists in residence. Then, she reproduced the practitioners' different contributions in these bleached circles via embroidery, 'trying to be as close to the[ir] ideas as I could be' (Fig. 2.60).⁵²⁴ As Geraldles and Almeida did not want to join the project, their spaces were marked by circles but left empty. The methods of colouring and decolouring the cloth mimic processes of remembering and forgetting, reflecting Kleszyńska's investigation on the connections between past, present and future, of being 'beyond but still together'.⁵²⁵ She responded to the biennale's topic, *Places of Memory – Interdiscourses of a Textile Territory*, not by thinking about a specific place, object, or story, but about combinations of minor elements that make up 'a full picture' of a certain site.⁵²⁶ Drawing on these elements, she created her 'own story' about Guimarães.⁵²⁷

Together at the Table is equally reminiscent of previous creative recreations of dining scenes. These include Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* (1974-9) (Fig. 2.61) and Lubaina Himid's *Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service* (2007) (Fig. 2.62), which use media such as ceramics and needlework to explore, respectively, histories of women and a specific city's involvement in the trade of enslaved people. These two artworks seek to make visible the histories and identities of the marginalised, notably women and people of colour.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁵²⁵ Ibid., 1.

⁵²⁶ Ibid., 2.

⁵²⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁵²⁸ On Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party*, see Amelia Jones (ed.), *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago's Dinner Party in Feminist Art History*, Berkeley, 2005, 107. On Lubaina Himid's *Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service*, see Celeste-Marie Bernier and others, 'Intervention, Mapping and Excavation: White Caricatures versus Black Dehumanisation in *Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service* (2007)', Celeste-Marie Bernier, Alan Rice, Lubaina Himid and Hannah Durkin (eds), *Inside the Invisible: Memorialising Slavery and Freedom in the Life and Works of Lubaina Himid*, Liverpool, 2019, 217-36.

Similarly, Kleszyńska inscribed the traces of the artists in residence – all women – onto the tablecloth, through the marginalised practices of textile making and dyeing.

In the exhibition, *Together at the Table* comprised a dining table, covered with the manipulated tablecloth. In Rodrigues's *Desert*, a work discussed in the previous chapter, the positioning of chairs alongside porcelain feet embodied a generation who waited for something that would never happen and was prevented from building a family. By contrast, in Kleszyńska's work, the table and the absence of chairs seemed to evoke a waiting for the restitution of human contact because of coronavirus. The dim illumination, provided by three exposed lightbulbs hanging above the table, generated an atmosphere at once intimate and funereal. It called to mind the ways in which hospitals became the forced dwellings of patients, particularly when family visits were restricted; and how the commitment, risk, and humanity of healthcare and related staff was central to combatting the pandemic. *Together at the Table* therefore retrieved the personal, domestic, and cooperative dimensions of COVID-19, through craft.

Although she was not able to travel to Guimarães, Michèle Lorrain also devised an imaginary meeting point between Canada and Portugal from her studio in Sainte-Louise, Québec.⁵²⁹ Her *Places of Memory – Peregrinations* (2020) occupied two spaces within the exhibition. One of the vacated rooms featured a found cotton tent, in which Lorrain had knitted a forest evoking the forest in Québec, where she lives (Fig. 2.63). Alongside this were a traveling bag stuffed with *tricotins* (a French knitting toy) made by artists-in-residence working on both sides of the Atlantic; and a tarpaulin where Lorrain had embroidered the walking paths of a friend and of other artists-in-residence around Guimarães (Fig. 2.64).

⁵²⁹ Melo and Silva (eds), *Contextile 2020*, 130.

Looking out of the window, visitors could see an additional series of tarpaulins hanging on the walls of the inner courtyard (Fig. 2.65).

Peregrinations thus established a connection between the interior and exterior areas of the building. The objects, materials and settings conjured in this installation also alluded to journeys across space and time: from room to courtyard; around and between Québec and Guimarães; from infancy to adulthood. By incorporating the *tricotin* and the tarpaulin, *Peregrinations* equally highlighted the textile medium as a crossroads of tradition and innovation, and learning through play. Furthermore, the arrangement of the piece in the courtyard of the former convent and hospital brings to mind those who had the privilege to use windows, balconies, terraces, and gardens to walk, breathe, and communicate with each other during the pandemic.

Mylène Boisvert also had to work remotely from her studio in Montréal. As she explained in her presentation at *Textile Talks*, Boisvert's *Tracing Places* (2020) forged a link between Portugal and Canada not only through its subject matter but also through a 'correspondence' with the biennale staff and local practitioners.⁵³⁰ Boisvert's installation was inspired by two visual ingredients. The first was Guimarães Embroidery, whose botanical designs derive from the observation of nature whilst cultivating the fields (Fig. 2.66). The second was the fern garden in the backyard of a house in Canada that Boisvert had shared with a Portuguese emigrant couple in the 1990s and early 2000s. After the couple and Boisvert left, the place was completely transformed by its new occupiers. As she only had a photo of the front of the house, 'the topology [of the garden] [...] was drawn from memory'

⁵³⁰ Ideias Emergentes, *Contextile 2020: Textile Talks*, online video recording, YouTube, 11 September 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXI_ZJpHTNQ> [accessed 8 September 2023]. Boisvert's presentation can be found between 5h 41m 25s and 5h 57h 17s.

(Fig. 2.67), in response to the overall theme of *Contextile*'s fifth edition, *Places of Memory – Interdiscourses of a Textile Territory*.⁵³¹

Whilst in *De Fibra* the *Contextile* team mediated Nogueira's interactions with the local community, in *Tracing Places* the team became Boisvert's 'eyes and hands in Guimarães', the key intercessors between Boisvert, the city, Guimarães Embroidery, and local practitioners.⁵³² This was achieved through the digital exchange of sources for artistic research and records of creative processes (Fig. 2.68). Two virtual meetings also took place between Boisvert and the three remaining professional practitioners of this local technique – Adélia Faria, Isabel Oliveira and Maria da Conceição Ferreira, respectively aged 62, 64, and 79. Because Boisvert could only access samples of Guimarães Embroidery through a book and reproductions on her computer screen, she spent the summer of 2020 looking for the exact shade of red used in this technique. The colours and shapes of Guimarães Embroidery, along with the fern garden, inspired Boisvert to produce drawings with red ink on small linen paper squares (Fig. 2.69). This process also reflects Boisvert's personal technique, in which 'flax fibre in the form of fabric is turned into paper and then transformed into thread'.⁵³³

At the same time, Boisvert asked Faria, Oliveira, and Ferreira to interpret her fern sketches into needlework; to write about their relationship with embroidery; and to look at a garden or flower and make a drawing of it, which she then transposed to textile (Fig. 2.70). Boisvert then copied their sketches with red ink on small linen paper squares. These elements were incorporated into the work. Akin to Boisvert's illustrations, the embroidered squares predominantly disclose asymmetrical designs, departing from the conventional

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ Mylène Boisvert, *About*, 2023, <https://www.myleneboisvert.com/en/about>, accessed 15 August 2023.

composition of Guimarães Embroidery. The technique itself merges craft and art, popular and elite models, and Boisvert adds a layer of complexity to this dichotomy between high and low, intersecting makers, approaches and media ascribed to both domains. As a result, *Tracing Places* exposes the historic linkages between supposedly ‘superior’ and ‘inferior’ spheres of creation – the local practitioner of embroidery and the international practitioner of so-called fine art.

The separate components of *Tracing Places* were brought together on the floor of the exhibition space, where the production team assembled the work (Fig. 2.71). The shape of the work replicates the topology of the Portuguese Canadian fern garden. *Tracing Places* is comprised of linen paper squares with Boisvert’s drawings inspired by the ferns in her garden, linen paper yarn squares dyed with red calligraphy ink, thirteen embroidered squares with Ferreira, Faria, and Oliveira’s interpretations of Boisvert’s fern designs, linen paper yarn squares made from Ferreira, Faria, and Oliveira’s texts, and linen paper squares with Boisvert’s interpretations of Ferreira, Faria, and Oliveira’s plant sketches (Fig. 2.72).⁵³⁴ The work is therefore a complex juxtaposition of different hands, media, practices and spaces that underwent successive alterations over time such as the garden, the convent, and the hospital. Boisvert’s collaborative method also mirrors the need to rehabilitate jobs, skills, and sites because of industrial decline.

The various hands and minds involved in *Tracing Places* were nevertheless assimilated into a work, whose only acknowledged author was Boisvert. While Ferreira, Faria, and Oliveira do not usually sign their works within the traditional technique of Guimarães Embroidery, the object label of *Tracing Places* credited Boisvert as its author,

⁵³⁴ Ideias Emergentes, *Contextile 2020: Textile Talks*.

giving ‘special thanks’ to Ferreira, Faria, and Oliveira (Fig. 2.73).⁵³⁵ Drawing a parallel between this project and the acknowledgements section often included in academic publications, Faria, Ferreira, and Oliveira were listed as people who provided invaluable information or support for the work, but not as its co-authors. This once again reflects the artist’s difficulty in openly sharing their authorship with others, and the secondary position of craft and its makers.

The projects developed by Boisvert and Zentková & Gryboś disclose the important presence of drawing in collaborative practices. In the context of contemporary craft scholarship, drawing is often discussed as a means of asserting design control over those who execute the work. For example, Adamson describes the current condition of post-disciplinarity as one in which contemporary practitioners tend to oversee rather than execute their creations.⁵³⁶ As an illustration of this shift, he discusses Alexander McQueen’s collaboration with woodcarver Paul Ferguson, explaining how Ferguson drew a pattern to be approved by the designer, ‘conforming to the long-established authorial hierarchy’.⁵³⁷

While Adamson’s case study discloses drawing as a skill reserved for the subordinate practitioner, within *The Light that Finds the Spreading Wounds* and *Tracing Places* drawing and stitching were used as collaborative tools to engage both skilled and unskilled contributors. As a result, these projects challenged the dichotomy between fine art and craft, and between those who create and those who execute, while also maintaining some of those rigid boundaries. Within parameters defined by Zentková & Gryboś and Boisvert,

⁵³⁵ Object label, Mylène Boisvert, ‘Tracing Places’ (2020), in ‘Contextile 2020: Contemporary Textile Art Biennial: Artistic Residencies’, Convent of Saint Anthony of the Capuchins (5 September-25 October 2020).

⁵³⁶ Adamson, *Thinking through Craft*, 8.

⁵³⁷ Ibid., 35.

external participants were granted some degree of creative freedom. For example, in *Tracing Places* Boisvert asked Ferreira, Faria, and Oliveira to interpret – not reproduce – her designs through embroidery, and created drawings based on Ferreira, Faria, and Oliveira’s plant sketches. This complicates the separation between producer and executor. Adamson’s account, however, also demonstrates the concealment of craft skills within luxury production. Although the artistic residencies sustained a certain imbalance between the various practitioners, traces of craftsmanship were not so much hidden but rather assimilated into these projects.

Contextile’s artists-in-residence programme also raises questions about the legacy and future of craft practice, and how material-based post-industrial biennales shape and support that. As mentioned above, Faria, Ferreira and Oliveira are the only three professional practitioners of Guimarães Embroidery. The biennale’s artistic residencies disclose craft as a heritage activity. This is based on a twofold strategy: the promotion of Guimarães Embroidery and the engagement with both material and immaterial heritage.

First, the artists-in-residence programme promoted Guimarães Embroidery amongst an international creative community. This expands on efforts to increase training in this technique since the 1950s, and more recently ‘to raise the profile of Guimarães Embroidery among existing consumers and to attract potential new markets’.⁵³⁸ Such undertakings have brought about the official certification of this making practice in 2010, with the aim of safeguarding its history, legacy, and authenticity. Faria, Ferreira and Oliveira are all certified practitioners of Guimarães Embroidery, who convey this technique to practitioners of so-called fine arts and design. This ensures the reinvention and continuation of Guimarães

⁵³⁸ Pereira, ‘Guimarães Embroidery: A Legacy’, 56.

Embroidery.

Yet, as stated in the technical guide *Bordado de Guimarães: caderno de especificações* (Guimarães Embroidery: Requirements File), innovative practices are restricted to the alteration of a single element – colour, line, or motif – to preserve the technique's identity.⁵³⁹ While any practitioner is allowed to introduce modifications, the resulting works can be categorised as 'Contemporary' or as 'traditional or classical Guimarães Embroidery' – a labelling that perpetuates the divide between artist and embroiderer.⁵⁴⁰ Within *Tracing Places*, however, Faria, Ferreira and Oliveira were arguably free to break the norms. For example, the embroidery at the bottom right corner of Fig. 2.74 discloses the creation of relief, through stitching not inside but outside of the central leaf motif. This suggests a rupture with the typical way of representing relief within Guimarães Embroidery.⁵⁴¹

Second, craft becomes a heritage activity when it is used as a tool to engage with other material and intangible customs. This includes the fabrics and stories shared by the community in *De Fibra*, the discarded textiles from local factories in *The Light that Finds the Spreading Wounds*, the French *tricotin* in *Peregrinations*, the Portuguese Canadian garden in *Tracing Places*, and the historic convent and hospital. In this context, the deployment of the Convent of Saint Anthony of the Capuchins as a display setting offered significant connections not only with the COVID-19 pandemic, but also with past and present, individual and collective narratives around decay and rejuvenation, confinement and encounter, domesticity and various forms movement such as local walking and visiting loved ones in the

⁵³⁹ Ana Pires and others, *Bordado de Guimarães: caderno de especificações*, 3rd edn, Guimarães, 2019, 54.

⁵⁴⁰ '[...] Categoria Contemporânea'; '[...] bordado de Guimarães tradicional ou clássico', *Ibid.*, 54.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

hospital. It was equally through the exhibition apparatus that many of the distant conversations among practitioners as well as between the practitioners and the Guimarães community were made manifest. Both approaches to craft as a heritage activity thus embody potential responses to different periods of crisis and trauma.

This section has examined collaborative practices that rely on the space of the workshop and bring together various practitioners, including those involved in traditional craft skills. My analysis of *Contextile's* artists-in-residence programme has revealed that it allows practitioners to become immersed in the city of Guimarães, learn local craft skills, and disseminate them in their own work. Yet my focus on the fifth edition of *Contextile* in 2020 has foregrounded the impact of the pandemic on the development of collaborative exhibitionary methodologies. In response to COVID-19 restrictions, the biennale devised alternative methods of collaboration through a blend of in-person and remote practices. In both cases, works were produced in correspondence with members of the local community, and international and local practitioners. Because of the restrictions on each other, as well as on other makers and collaborators, practitioners used different strategies to collaborate and imagine encounters. In this context, the material-based post-industrial biennale emerges as a format which enables the development of projects, both *in situ* and at a distance, and brings together traditional craft techniques and contemporary practices. As shown by *Tracing Places* and other projects developed within the biennale's artistic residencies, this exhibitionary format enables more flexible methods of collaboration, which stimulate the maker's creativity and the reinvention of artisanal techniques. My investigation has demonstrated the use of textiles as a tool to explore ideas of collaboration, memory, and creativity.

The next section further highlights the importance of collaboration within the *Contextile* biennale but puts those who specialise in traditional craft practices on centre stage, emphasising their role in the safeguarding of these techniques.

‘The gesture is everything’: preserving endangered craft practices through collaborations

This section focuses on the maker as a key figure in the preservation of endangered craft practices by teaching them to practitioners and conveying objects and stories within community-based projects. It is based on an interview conducted in September 2020 with Isabel Oliveira, a professional practitioner and certified instructor of Guimarães Embroidery.⁵⁴² Oliveira is one of the three remaining professional practitioners of this traditional technique, all of whom have participated in *Contextile*’s artistic residencies since 2012. She recounts her discovery of the technique and its impact on her life:

I am not from Guimarães [...] I am from Porto, I moved here twenty-something years ago and, when I took the training, I fell in love with the work, and since then I have never done anything else except embroidery.⁵⁴³

The turning point for Oliveira was a training course in Guimarães Embroidery, offered by A Oficina with the support of Instituto de Emprego e Formação Profissional or IEFP (Institute of Employment and Professional Training), which she completed in 1997. Since then, she has taught this and other traditional Portuguese embroidery techniques. Guimarães Embroidery workshops are held by appointment at Loja Oficina, and imparted by Oliveira, Faria and

⁵⁴² This section has been previously published as a peer-reviewed article, Inês Jorge and Isabel Oliveira, “‘The Gesture Is Everything’: Interview with the Artisan Isabel Oliveira”, *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 15:2, 2022, 199-209. Adjustments were made to the text to ensure its appropriate integration into this dissertation.

⁵⁴³ Jorge and Oliveira, “‘The Gesture Is Everything’”, 206; Jorge, Interview with Oliveira.

Ferreira (Fig. 2.75, Fig. 2.76). Faria, Ferreira, and Oliveira are not employees at Loja Oficina, but self-employed workers who respond to commissions from the shop and execute the embroideries. Their works are displayed and sold at Loja Oficina (Fig. 2.77).

Loja Oficina is therefore a commercial, teaching, and exhibitionary space, where the Faria, Ferreira, and Oliveira connect with *Contextile*'s artists in residence and instruct them how to execute Guimarães Embroidery (Fig. 2.78). As Oliveira states: 'Although my English is limited, [...] we can understand each other, and sometimes [...] the gesture is everything [...]. So, by watching us execute the stitch, they learn.'⁵⁴⁴ This learning process exemplifies the tacit knowledge involved in craft practice. The practitioners also learn Guimarães Embroidery in a sampler given to them and then incorporate the technique in a work presented at the biennale. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Faria, Ferreira and Oliveira taught the practitioners at a distance, via two online workshops (Fig. 2.78, Fig. 2.79). As Oliveira explained, this entailed the additional complication of a video camera to capture the process:

[W]e were trying to execute several stitches and there was a technician filming us from up close. [The practitioners] were trying to execute the same stitches that we were doing, and then they tried to show it to see how it looked. It is not easy, but at least there was an attempt for them to see some of the stitches that are part of Guimarães Embroidery.⁵⁴⁵

This statement discloses the adoption of technology to carry out collaborative practices and the transmission of traditional craft skills, along with the difficulty in communicating 'the

⁵⁴⁴ 'Embora eu fale um bocadinho, mas não muito, o inglês, [...] dá para nos entendermos e, às vezes, [...] o gesto é tudo [...]. Por isso, ao ver-nos a executar o ponto, elas aprendem.', Jorge and Oliveira, "'The Gesture Is Everything'", 200; Jorge, Interview with Oliveira.

⁵⁴⁵ '[...] estávamos a tentar executar vários pontos e havia um técnico a filmar-nos de perto, e elas a tentarem, do lado de lá, executar os mesmos que nós estávamos a fazer, e depois tentavam mostrar para ver como é que estava. Não é fácil, mas pelo menos houve alguma tentativa de elas tentarem ver alguns dos pontos que fazem parte do Bordado de Guimarães.', Jorge and Oliveira, "'The Gesture Is Everything'", 206-8; Jorge, Interview with Oliveira.

complex set of actions, both material and intellectual, involved in the making of things'.⁵⁴⁶

Yet for Oliveira, the most memorable projects have been those 'where it is us and not the artist who executes the embroidery'.⁵⁴⁷ She expressed particular enthusiasm and delight about her collaboration within Boisvert's *Tracing Places*, alongside Faria and Ferreira. As explained in the previous section, Boisvert asked Faria, Ferreira, and Oliveira to transpose her garden designs into small 5 x 5 cm embroidered squares, applying the stitches that they liked (Fig. 2.74); to draw sketches of a garden or flower; and to write a few sentences about their relationship with embroidery (Fig. 2.80). Boisvert then reproduced Faria, Ferreira, and Oliveira's sketches with red ink on small linen paper squares. These different components, made by different hands, were brought together in the work.

Faria, Ferreira, and Oliveira's needlework was equally incorporated in *Para onde estamos indo?* (Where Are We Going?), a work developed by the Italian practitioner Virginia Zanetti during her residency at *Contextile* in 2019, through a partnership with Magic Carpets. The project involved the collection of memories linked to textiles amongst the elderly of two nursing homes managed by Santa Casa da Misericórdia (a lay Portuguese charity founded in 1498) and other people of the Guimarães community. Faria, Ferreira and Oliveira helped Zanetti to stitch the title of the installation (Fig. 2.81) and individual testimonies on two pieces of linen fabric (Fig. 2.82). While the use of linen relates to a longstanding making practice in Guimarães, their triangular shape evokes the 'latin sale caravel', a ship used by the Portuguese in their maritime expeditions during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁶ Inés Moreno, 'Exhibiting Know-How: Curatorial Strategies for the Display of Artisanal Technical Gestures', *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 15:2, 129-47 (130).

⁵⁴⁷ '[...] não foi a artista a executar o ponto de bordado mas sim nós', Jorge and Oliveira, "'The Gesture Is Everything'", 208; Jorge, Interview with Oliveira.

⁵⁴⁸ '[...] caravela de pano latino', Avelino Teixeira da Mota, 'As rotas marítimas portuguesas no Atlântico de

For Zanetti, the latin sale symbolised this historic period which is held in the collective memory as triumphant, and to which some wish that they could return. The latin sales embodied Zanetti's proposal

to look at our memory from the right distance. The Portuguese are connected to their past as sea conquerors. There is a prevailing feeling of *saudade* a nostalgia for better times [*sic*]. Now they are experiencing economic changes and a crisis like other countries all over the world. With all these memories we should and can wonder where we are going. Colonialism, capitalism, human greed, may always lead to a state of crisis to be crossed in order to rethink the real. Memories transformed in a vision for the future.

Zanetti therefore proposed that the country's history should be examined from a critical rather than idealised stance. For her, the crisis that Portugal was going through was a consequence of colonialism, capitalism, and greediness. Yet she regarded critical moments such as this as an opportunity to reconsider what is actually happening, instead of dwelling on what has been lost. According to Zanetti, memory might be used as a tool to envision a more equal and compassionate future.

The participants, which included Zanetti, Faria, Ferreira, and Oliveira, shared personal testimonies in their native languages. Examples of these memoirs include 'I broke the needle and my sister tried to hit me'; 'fighting for the power'; 'dating and embroidering, trousseau', over the stitched symbol of a heart; 'longing'; 'At thirty-four years of age I learned to weave on a handloom'; 'When I was six or seven, I worked in the fields keeping the oxen'; 'I went to school. Sewing Embroidered Kneetted [*sic*]'; 'Woman of the factory, the men are privileged'; 'my grandmother Vilma's precious hands'; and 'The bed sheet bearing my grandparents' monogram' (Fig. 2.83).⁵⁴⁹ They refer to experiences of hardship, violence, and resistance

meados do século XV ao penúltimo quartel do século XVI', *Do Tempo e da História III*, Lisboa, 1970, 13-33 (13).

⁵⁴⁹ 'parti a agulha e a minha irmã tentou bater-me'; 'lutar pelo poder'; 'namorar e bordar, enxoval', 'Aos 34 anos de idade aprendi a tecer num tear manual', 'Quando tinha 6 ou 7 anos trabalhava no campo a guardar os

linked to familial and marital relations and making textiles at home, across different stages of life. The authors' original handwriting and spelling mistakes were preserved. Participants helped to assemble, carry, and film the installation at Monte da Penha (Mount of Penha), the summit which offers a panoramic view of Guimarães (Fig. 2.84).⁵⁵⁰

Other artists in residence invited professional practitioners of Guimarães Embroidery to impart personal stories and objects linked to textiles, as shown by Nogueira's project *De Fibra*, discussed above. Oliveira further adds:

[a]rtists actually try – [...] amongst the people, the inhabitants – to look for memories linked to textiles. Hence, [...] the word *Contextile*. [...] Of course, each year there are different artists who present different works, but they really try to convey a little bit of those memories to the works that they present. [...] each year is surprising [...]. What will come, what can they look for?⁵⁵¹

Oliveira's statement reflects her understanding of the biennale's core aim and its strong emphasis on textile practices and memories linked to textile production in the city of Guimarães. It also discloses her eagerness to discover the work that practitioners might propose at *Contextile's* upcoming editions.

Faria, Ferreira, and Oliveira, however, have not been frequent visitors to *Contextile's* exhibitions. This is partly because of the difficulty in understanding the meaning of some of the artworks: 'Sometimes it is hard, especially in the field of contemporary art. Sometimes we find it hard to identify or see exactly what the artist means in their work.'⁵⁵² Oliveira's

bois', 'fui para a escola. Custura Bordava Tricutava [sic]', 'Mulher de fábrica, os homens são privilegiados', 'Le mani di oro di mia nonna Vilma', 'O lençol com o monograma dos meus avós'.

⁵⁵⁰ *Contextile, ANAMNESIS – Textile Memory*, online video recording, Facebook Video, 4 June 2019, <<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=366704864204671>> [accessed 23 May 2023].

⁵⁵¹ '[...] as artistas tentam realmente, [...] nas pessoas, nos residentes, ir buscar isso das memórias ligadas aos têxteis. Daí [...] a palavra Contextile. [...] Claro que, em cada ano, há artistas diferentes que apresentam trabalhos diferentes, mas tentam, realmente, transmitir um bocadinho dessas memórias para os trabalhos que elas apresentam. [...] cada ano é surpreendente [...]. O que é que virá, o que é que poderão vir buscar?', Jorge and Oliveira, "The Gesture Is Everything", 206; Jorge, Interview with Oliveira.

⁵⁵² 'Às vezes é difícil, principalmente nesta área da arte contemporânea. Às vezes nós temos dificuldade em

statement expresses the opacity of some creative processes deployed at *Contextile*. The resulting works might therefore require further explanation, which at times is omitted from the exhibition. Yet she seemed to have a better grasp of the projects in which she provided more input. For example, Oliveira found *Tracing Places* ‘very interesting and very beautiful! It was nice to see a little bit of ourselves there, exposed in that beautiful piece. [...] [The installation] was exhibited where the former maternity hospital used to be.’⁵⁵³ This suggests that playing a more active role in the making of the work offers a greater sense of understanding, connection, and pride. Oliveira’s statement also reveals her acknowledgement of the historic significance of the Convent of Saint Anthony of the Capuchins as an exhibition site.

In other projects, practitioners themselves became a source of personal inspiration for Faria, Ferreira, and Oliveira. For instance, Oliveira recalls that she was moved not only by the work but by the experience of Sandra Heffernan, a New Zealander artist in residence at *Contextile*’s third edition in 2016:

[S]he was not a young woman but closer to retirement age, and [she had the] willpower to come from a country [...] on the other side of the world, [...] learn something new, and then apply it in her work and exhibit it. This experience gave us a little encouragement, because it made us think that after all, age no longer matters. [...] This relates to the feeling that [Guimarães] Embroidery might fade and die, as professionally we are already at an advanced age and, no matter how many attempts we make for young people to stay in a more professional guise, it is a bit tricky. When we make contact with these people, who are even older than us, [...] it encourages us to continue.⁵⁵⁴

identificar ou ver bem o que é que o artista quer dizer com aquilo.’, Jorge and Oliveira, “‘The Gesture Is Everything’”, 203; Jorge, Interview with Oliveira.

⁵⁵³ ‘[...] muito interessante e muito bonito! Foi agradável vermos um bocadinho nosso lá, exposto naquele belíssimo trabalho.’, Jorge and Oliveira, “‘The Gesture Is Everything’”, 201-6; Jorge, Interview with Oliveira.

⁵⁵⁴ ‘[...] já não era uma senhora muito nova, [...] não sei se já estaria na idade da reforma, mas que achámos interessante aquela força de vontade de ela vir de um país [...] do lado de lá do mundo, [...] e de querer aprender uma coisa nova para depois aplicar na sua técnica e expor. [Esta experiência] dá-nos um bocadinho de alento, porque pensamos assim: afinal, não já há idades [...]. É o tal problema de sentirmos que o [B]ordado [de Guimarães] possa, por vezes, esmorecer e morrer porque, profissionalmente, nós já estamos numa idade

Faria, Ferreira, and Oliveira saw in Heffernan a role model, an example of personal determination, youthfulness, and willingness to carry on. Heffernan's overcoming of obstacles seemed to echo their own struggle to preserve Guimarães Embroidery, an endangered technique. Once transmitted from mother to daughter, Guimarães Embroidery is now mainly practised as a hobby rather than professionally. Faria, Ferreira and Oliveira act as advocates for more training in this technique and for new generations to specialise in this activity:

[I]t is difficult, because [...] craft is not easy, [...] because it is very time consuming, and its price would increase considerably if we took into account the time spent while making it. [...] Those of us, the women who are working, already have the support from our husbands in maintaining this rich tradition.⁵⁵⁵

Oliveira's testimony illustrates the problematic connections between the feminisation of this craft and underpaid labour, along with the need to provide more social and economic protection for people employed in the crafts.

Some of the objects displayed at Loja Oficina disclose previous attempts to preserve Guimarães Embroidery, by bringing together various practitioners. Oliveira recalls *Lenço Enamorado* (Enamoured Handkerchief), a project in which Portuguese practitioners were invited to design handkerchiefs measuring 50 x 50 cm, which were subsequently embroidered by Faria, Ferreira, and Oliveira (Fig. 2.85, Fig. 2.86). According to her, these works 'have been widely praised. [...] We carried on and ended up making smaller sized

avançada e, por mais tentativas que a gente faça para que a gente nova fique profissionalmente, é um bocado complicado. [...] ao contarmos com estas pessoas com mais idade até do que nós, [...] isso dá-nos alento para continuarmos.', Jorge and Oliveira, "The Gesture Is Everything", 205; Jorge, Interview with Oliveira.

⁵⁵⁵ ' [...] é difícil, porque [...] o artesanato não é fácil, [...] porque é muito demorado [...] e [...] teria talvez custos muito elevados, se começamos a levar o verdadeiro valor pela hora. [...] nós, as que estamos a trabalhar, já temos o suporte atrás dos maridos, vamos lutando para que realmente se mantenha este trabalho que é lindíssimo e rico', Jorge and Oliveira, "The Gesture Is Everything", 206; Jorge, Interview with Oliveira.

versions [made by hand] commercially [...]. So, the works have broad appeal and we liked to make them'.⁵⁵⁶ This demonstrates not only the success of this initiative but also the need to reduce the scale and price point of the original handkerchiefs. The project equally discloses the abovementioned shift in the function of the *lenço de namorados*, from a symbol of conventions of femininity and marriage to a collectable souvenir and a mark of social status. As a project following the process of study, certification, and recognition of Guimarães Embroidery, *Lenço Enamorado* once again reflects the attempt to promote and reinvent a traditional technique through collaborations with contemporary practitioners.⁵⁵⁷

Artistic residencies therefore have the potential to act as a meeting point between various practitioners. This section has focused on *Contextile's* collaborative strategies that contribute to the acknowledgement and preservation of making practices and individual testimonies linked to textiles in Guimarães, through a close exploration of the perspective of maker Isabel Oliveira. Regarding the future of Guimarães Embroidery, *Contextile* offers the opportunity to increase the international appreciation of this technique, which might have a positive effect on national perceptions around this and other vernacular making practices. The following and final section discusses the chapter's main achievements.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have identified the emergence of a specific typology of craft exhibition

⁵⁵⁶ '[...] têm tido bastante aceitação [...] E continuámos, depois acabámos por fazer num tamanho mais reduzido, mas exatamente a mesma cópia, e que são comercializados. Por isso, por isso as pessoas também gostam e nós gostamos de fazer.', Jorge and Oliveira, "The Gesture Is Everything", 206; Jorge, Interview with Oliveira.

⁵⁵⁷ Albano Martins, 'Museu de Alberto Sampaio: lançamento de "Lenços Enamorados" em bordado de Guimarães', *Notícias de Guimarães*, 11 December 2009, 9.

practice, the material-based post-industrial biennial. In this concluding section, I summarise the key findings of this chapter, notably that Guimarães and other post-industrial sites encompass both industrial and heritage practices; that *Contextile*'s exhibitions expand on this, involving curators and practitioners in industrial and heritage practices; and the complex issues of authorship and economic and hierarchical relations exposed in the biennale's projects, which reveal the persisting marginalisation of industrial workers and makers. This is followed by an analysis of how this chapter builds on the previous one, and how the methodologies set out in the Introduction to this thesis have been applied.

The chapter began with an examination of the Portuguese city of Guimarães and the broader region of Vale do Ave as the post-industrial context where the *Contextile* biennale takes place. I analysed the ways in which the textile industry has shaped not only this area in the Northwest of the country, but also the relationship between Portugal and its former colonies of Angola and Mozambique. My investigation has demonstrated that the production of cotton particularly relied on the exploitation of natural and human resources across these different territories, and on imbalanced commercial transactions devised by the Portuguese government in a colonial and imperial context.

The chapter then introduced the *Contextile* biennale as an event arising in the aftermath of colonialism and deindustrialisation, and seeking to transform national perceptions around textiles through the establishment of partnerships and exchanges between practitioners and institutions. Both national and international practitioners are invited to develop projects drawing on the region's industrial past, revealing a focus on local and regional rather than transatlantic histories.

This was followed by a comparison between *Contextile* and other material-based

post-industrial biennales, particularly the British Ceramics Biennial. Such analysis of the connections and disparities between these two events reflects the application of two fundamental methodologies. The first is to work across geographical divisions, notably between the South and North of Europe, and more specifically to confront Portuguese and British cultural realities. The second is to think beyond the segregation of craft in different disciplines, namely textiles and ceramics. My research has revealed several similarities between the two events, but also a fundamental distinction regarding their funding. While BCB benefits from considerable corporate funding, *Contextile* largely relies on public funding and has struggled to convince textile companies to become their sponsors. This means that the organisation, structure, and development of material-based post-industrial biennales is often dependent on the governmental and economic contexts in which these events emerge.

The chapter continued by situating the *Contextile* biennale in a broader history and range of material-based post-industrial biennales; and by defining this format in relation to the more established model of art biennials. The material-based post-industrial biennale is distinguished by a focus on particular media and taking place in areas where ceramics, textiles, and other media were once produced. These events attempt to rejuvenate places, spaces, and the local economy of regions affected by deindustrialisation, from Guimarães and Lancashire to Icheon.

I then delved into *Contextile* as a paradigmatic example of a material-based post-industrial biennale, exploring three key sites where its activities are carried out: public spaces, factories, and craft workshops. These spaces have undergone transformations in a post-industrial context, united by the aim of ensuring the survival, preservation and

renovation of buildings, neighbourhoods, industrial and heritage skills, and the people who inhabit or work in those spaces. Such a diversity of venues has therefore enabled an investigation into the ways in which the *Contextile* biennale engages with various audiences and practitioners, namely the general public, skilled industrial workers, and practitioners of traditional crafts.

Within *Contextile's* artistic residencies, practitioners have the opportunity to engage with the factory and its industrial workers, or with the crafts workshop and its makers. These post-industrial sites encompass industrial and heritage skills, which the biennale promotes through its exhibitions. My research has shown that these collaborative projects, which involve different kinds of practitioners as well as curators, expose complex authorship, economic, and hierarchical relations. Examples include the practitioner's difficulty in acknowledging shared authorship, a lack of transparency regarding workers' compensation, the worker's lack of autonomy to make creative decisions, and the practitioner's desire to give some visibility to skilled workers whilst perpetuating the workers' invisibility. These imbalances reflect the persisting marginalisation of skilled industrial and artisanal makers. Despite engaging with the factory and the crafts workshop, *Contextile's* artistic residencies reflect continuing divisions which are at once spatial, disciplinary, and social.

In order to counteract the persisting hierarchies between various practitioners, the chapter ended with an exploration of the perspective of Isabel Oliveira, a professional practitioners of Guimarães Embroidery. It focused attention on the maker as an essential agent in the preservation of craft practices which are at risk. Oliveira does this by passing on the technique to others. Yet her participation in *Contextile's* projects is not limited to

making. She also shares stories and objects linked to textiles through community-based projects which, in turn, contribute to documenting these experiences.

This chapter builds on the previous chapter by centring on a specific site, whilst going beyond it. While Chapter one did not focus exclusively on the church, but looked at historic settings more broadly, my analysis of the *Contextile* biennial has led me to emphasise not only the factory, but also the workshop. This has allowed me to reflect about these both as sites of exhibition as well as of making, which provide a platform for the encounter of different practitioners. This has also offered the opportunity to expand my reflections on collaborative practices, which began with the previous chapter. While in Chapter one I interviewed a practitioner who leads a project, here I interviewed a professional women practitioner who specialises in Guimarães Embroidery, a traditional craft technique. Chapter one evidenced that the functions of religious settings can vary across time, and that the church can also be deemed a domestic setting, whereas in this chapter I have examined the conversion of industrial buildings into cultural spaces. This illustrates my approach of overcoming simplistic categorisations of venues, practices, and people. Through its focus on the factory and the crafts workshop, on the other hand, this chapter has foregrounded the connections between handwork and industry, which are overlooked in craft history.⁵⁵⁸

The chapter reflects my exploration of the material-based post-industrial biennale from the perspective of craft. My investigation has unveiled that this exhibitionary format offers a double sense of reinvention – the reinvention of deindustrialised sites, and the

⁵⁵⁸ An important exception is Glenn Adamson's *The Invention of Craft*, which examines the position of craft not only in relation to art history, but also in the broader context of modern production. Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, xiii-xvi.

reinvention of craft. Material-based post-industrial biennales further promote contemporary approaches to traditional craft practices and collaborations between practitioners and manufacturing companies. My approach to the material-based post-industrial biennale, coupled with my selection of the factory as a setting, has revealed the ways in which these events respond to place, skilled labour, memory, and community. By highlighting the various creative formats that the material-based post-industrial biennial encompasses, this chapter has demonstrated that this exhibitionary model incorporates strategies from both fields of art and craft; and negotiates canonical definitions and divides within and between craft, art, and industry. I have also explored a neglected mode of exhibition in exhibition histories, which re-examines local histories of making in a global context and intersects different geographies, communities, and memories.

This chapter has drawn on available sources for each case study, including primary and secondary scholarship on industrialism, post-industrialism, the history of textiles in Guimarães, and biennial histories; exhibition catalogues, pamphlets and maps of *Contextile's* and BCB's different editions; and installation photographs. By conducting fieldwork at *Contextile*, BCB, the British Textile Biennial, and Poland's International Triennial of Tapestry, I have been able to observe and experience various material-based post-industrial biennales, connect with different agents, and include my own photographs of *Contextile's* exhibitions. Through my interviews with Melo, Pinheiro, and Oliveira, the chapter has also brought together the perspectives of different people who are involved in the *Contextile* biennial.

The following chapter explores the exhibition space as a sensory encounter, which craft in particular facilitates, prompting connections with artworks beyond the visual, and opening up ways to understand their context and experience their tactile, olfactive and

auditive characteristics.

CHAPTER 3

CRAFT IN THE CITY: CONNECTING SPACES, OBJECTS, AND PEOPLE

The first exchange was with the animal whose sacrifice became our second skin and our first side by side. Our two feet for its four, its hide covering our skin, forming our architecture, making our markets. The project is the side by side of the light blue hide that remembers the cow and the raw fleece that carries the smell of the sheep, is the tough hide muffling the friction between foot and ground and the soft fleece which insulates and holds our warmth.

[...] Side-by-Side is the side by side of humans and animals, is objects and their images, is memory etched into stone, space and song, is the view from the library archive to the cloister garden, is the reflection of the body in the museum's reflective surface, is the silence and the stillness next to the sound and the chaos, is storage next to circulation, is the new market next to the old market, is time, is the distance we see but cannot cross, is the voice touching at a distance, is bodies side by side, is the hand holding and the hand offering. Side-by-Side is a body, a hand, a touch. From touch a tending, in tending a voice, a line drawn between our absorbing senses and resisting bones.⁵⁵⁹

This extract is part of the project description of *Side-By-Side*, a site-specific installation devised by US practitioner Ann Hamilton for the fourth edition of the *Contextile* biennale, held between 1 September and 20 October 2018 in Guimarães. This project encompassed images, fabrics, and sounds, which were exhibited and travelled across various cultural and commercial spaces in the city. As shown by its title, it endeavoured to evidence the side-by-side, or closeness, between different beings and things, spaces and epochs, sensations and activities. These include humans and animals, objects and their images, the market and the museum, silence and sound, storage and circulation. Yet the allusion to 'the distance we see but cannot cross' reminds us of certain sites which, despite being physically near, are

⁵⁵⁹ Ann Hamilton Studio, *Side-by-Side*, *Contextile 2018 Contemporary Textile Art Biennial*, Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães, Guimarães, Portugal, *Project Description*, 2018, https://annhamiltonstudio.com/projects/side_by_side.html, accessed 23 August 2023.

somehow inaccessible and distant from each other.

The passage demonstrates how the coexistence of people, objects, and spaces can produce different sensations and memories. A wide range of senses are evoked: sight, through images of objects, spatial views, and mirrored surfaces; hearing, through silence and song; touch, through acts of holding and offering; and smell, through the odour of sheep borne by raw fleece. Materials such as fleece and hide elicit tactile and olfactive responses such as softness, roughness, and warmth. *Side-by-Side* also explored how touch can be felt in different parts of the human body, namely the hide beneath one's feet. Contrasting phenomena such as 'the silence and the stillness next to the sound and the chaos' coincide in a single place. The description of a 'voice touching at a distance' and the sequence of senses and emotions, '[f]rom touch a tending, in tending a voice', conjures an interface between multiple feelings, which elicits strong emotional responses and memories. These sensory experiences foreground the disparities and kinships between spaces such as the market and the museum, and the objects and people that inhabit them.

Side-by-Side thus forged a link between diverse venues in Guimarães. The ambition for the project was monumental: 'Let's weave the whole city together!'⁵⁶⁰ According to Hamilton's exhibition design (Fig. 3.1), Sociedade Martins Sarmento or SMS (Martins Sarmento Society) was the starting point of this route.⁵⁶¹ Like any other tourist, Hamilton began her research in Guimarães by visiting local cultural sites, including SMS, an archaeological society. *Side-by-Side* linked the Cloister Garden and the Library Archive, both

⁵⁶⁰ Ann Hamilton and Brian McHale, 'The Process: Ann Hamilton in the Twenty-Teens', *ASAP/Journal*, 5:2, 2020, 209-39 (228).

⁵⁶¹ Ann Hamilton Studio, *Side-by-Side*, *Contextile 2018 Contemporary Textile Art Biennial*, Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães, Guimarães, Portugal, Full Project pdf, 2018, https://annhamiltonstudio.com/projects/side_by_side.html, accessed 28 August 2023.

of which are part of SMS, before moving on to the Plaza. Following Guimarães's nomination as European Capital of Culture in 2012, the historic market and the square that belonged to it were transformed into a multifunctional space, the Plataforma das Artes e Criatividade or PAC (Platform for Arts and Creativity), which includes an ample Plaza.⁵⁶² PAC serves creative, cultural, and socio-economical purposes (Fig. 3.2).⁵⁶³ From the Plaza, the route branched off to two sites. The first, Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães or CIAJG (José de Guimarães International Centre of the Arts), is an art space that juxtaposes José de Guimarães's collection of African, Pre-Columbian, and ancient Chinese art with contemporary artworks. The second, the New Market, is a farmers market whose building is located less than one kilometre away from the site of the old market.

The circuit generated by *Side-by-Side* reflects the impact of deindustrialisation and cultural regeneration on the relations between old and new spaces across the city of Guimarães. Although Hamilton's exhibition design names all of these venues, the New Market and the SMS Cloister Garden and Library Archive (respectively labelled Garden and Library in the exhibition design) were only briefly occupied by the installation and the accompanying performances and were not part of the whole period of the exhibition.

This chapter examines how craft is shaped by the space of the city; how craft engages with the city as site of display; how craft, both as a curatorial and making practice and as a methodology, can provide new readings of urban sites, especially those whose urban fabric

⁵⁶² These sites are capitalised in my analysis to reflect Hamilton's capitalisation of different sites in her exhibition design and the equal importance that she attributes to them in the *Side-by-Side* installation, as well as to facilitate reading. The exception to this is the old market, as this space is not mentioned in the exhibition design.

⁵⁶³ Câmara Municipal de Guimarães, *Plataforma das Artes*, https://www.cm-guimaraes.pt/pages/1428?poi_id=68, accessed 29 September 2022.

has become somewhat fragmented following turbulent processes of urban regeneration; and how displaying craft in the city affects craft's expansive reach and connection to place and community.

The chapter takes *Side-by-Side* as its case study. It begins with an introduction to the project, after which I examine the three types of journeys conjured by the project: the travelling of objects through reproductions; the vocal wanderings of performers, attendants, and visitors; and the movement of cloth across sites. Connected to these, across the chapter, are the ways in which *Side-by-Side* engages with vision, sound, and touch, reflecting the ways in which humans assimilate their surroundings.

'The distance we see but cannot cross': *Side-by-Side* (2018), an installation by Ann Hamilton for *Contextile*, Guimarães, Portugal

Side-by-Side's itinerary came about through the circulation of tangible and intangible elements across various sites. In an interview with Brian McHale, Hamilton explains the highly intuitive nature of her practice: 'The process is to find how the specificity of material histories rub up against the abstraction of language and categories and the organization of knowledge.'⁵⁶⁴ As this chapter's opening quotation makes clear, songs, fabrics, and objects were used to connect nearby spaces such as the New Market, and the SMS Library Archive and Cloister Garden.

Firstly, 'Images travel[led]' between CIAJG and the New Market.⁵⁶⁵ By scanning

⁵⁶⁴ Hamilton and McHale, 'The Process', 214.

⁵⁶⁵ Ann Hamilton Studio, *Side-by-Side*, *Contextile 2018 Contemporary Textile Art Biennial*, Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães, Guimarães, Portugal, Full Project pdf.

objects from different museum collections and exhibiting them across these two buildings, Hamilton underscored the closeness between objects and their images, storage and circulation. ‘Voice travels’ also occurred, between the SMS Cloister Garden and Library Archive.⁵⁶⁶ Voices coming from the Cloister Garden echoed in the Library Archive, where it was also possible to see the Cloister Garden through a window. Finally, ‘Cloth travels’ took place from the Plaza to the New Market.⁵⁶⁷ Textiles were placed in different areas and positions within the exhibition, highlighting their distinct textures, along with their sensory qualities and purposes. Simulations of storage and circulation emphasised the overlooked links between creative and commercial realms. *Side-by-Side* accordingly drew attention to the unspoken separation between domains such as the market and the museum – ‘the distance we see but cannot cross’ – and sought to reconnect them and their respective inhabitants within a post-industrial context.

Hamilton’s integration of diverse spaces in the same exhibitionary project recalls previous attempts to highlight the importance of context for art. Marcel Duchamp’s curatorial experiments from the late 1930s and to the early 1940s particularly endeavoured to demonstrate that the context is the content of the artwork. At the *International Surrealist Exhibition* in 1938 and *First Papers of Surrealism* in 1942, he used sand, leaves, hundreds of coal bags, light effects, revolving doors, and yarn to transform conventional fine art spaces and affect visitors both physically and psychologically (Fig. 3.3).⁵⁶⁸ He also explored sections

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸ Benedetta Ricci, ‘The Shows that Made Contemporary Art History: The International Surrealist Exhibition of 1938’, *Artland Magazine*, <https://magazine.artland.com/the-shows-that-made-contemporary-art-history-the-international-surrealist-exhibition-1938/>, accessed 5 June 2023; Grace Ambrose, *His Twine: Marcel Duchamp and the Limits of Exhibition History*, 2023, https://icaphila.org/miranda_posts/his-twine-marcel-duchamp-and-the-limits-of-exhibition-history/, accessed 5 June 2023; O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, 71-72.

of the gallery beyond the walls such as the floor and the ceiling.

By exhibiting tangible and intangible elements across spaces such as the museum, the market and the square, *Side-by-Side* drew attention not only to the influence of different sites on the exhibits but to the overlooked relations between the sites themselves. Hamilton took advantage of the effects of each environment on the works such as artificial and natural light, and wind. Akin to the revolving doors introduced by Duchamp at the *International Surrealist Exhibition*, Hamilton's project blurred the distinction between inside and outside, notably through sound. Yet while Duchamp's extensive web of yarn was a radical device that altered the audience's experience in the gallery, Hamilton's integration of processed and unprocessed fibres evoked the very territory from which they were sourced and the economic and cultural practices that rely on them.

Recent scholarship has revealed the unique multisensory qualities of post-industrial landscapes. In his chapter 'Creative Engagements with the Past, Aesthetics and Matter in Ruined Space', Tim Edensor rejects established narratives which paint abandoned industrial buildings as useless and unsafe. Instead, he vividly describes these areas as fertile ground for unregulated and spontaneous assemblages of humans and non-humans. He argues that

what lures people into industrial ruins [is] the possibility of entering a sensory realm that contrasts with the often over-regulated world that lies outside. In designed and over-coded malls, heritage districts and housing developments, regulated soundscapes, tactilities, smellscape and visual scenes predominate. [...] Accordingly, in the modern production of urban environments, the body is entrained to habitually experience a highly conditioned sensescape, replete with values about efficiency, a lack of distraction and the privileging of certain sensory experiences. [...] In these ways, the city becomes a highly ordered realm in which through the distribution of the sensible, the senses are conditioned to unreflexively apprehend highly predictable milieux. In this context, industrial ruins offer material settings in which all of these sensory norms are violated, revealing the antiseptic ordering of the ordinary built environment as well as the regulation of our own sensory experience.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁹ Tim Edensor, 'Creative Engagements with the Past, Aesthetics and Matter in Ruined Space', Gwen Heeney

Edensor thus sets the industrial ruin against the museum, the heritage site, and the city more broadly. He describes the latter as highly controlled settings, which condition our sensory experience and prioritise certain senses in detriment to others. Empty industrial ruins, by contrast, hold a particular sensory dynamism because of their continuous state of decay. This includes the strong aromas of plants, manufacturing debris, and decomposing organic matter; along with a 'delicate soundscape' and deafening silence against 'the constant background hum of the city'.⁵⁷⁰ For Edensor, however, the most extraordinary trait of the ruin is its haptic quality. At devastated industrial sites, objects, their constituent ingredients, and 'the sensuous work that was involved in their manufacture', are foregrounded.⁵⁷¹ The clutter and fragments comprising the industrial ruin are diametrically opposed to polished urban surroundings, awakening our sensory abilities.

Abandoned industrial buildings allow us to engage sensually and playfully with objects, as opposed to the distanced gaze imposed in the white cube. Here, things escape the taxonomies that would constrain their meanings. As Edensor asserts:

Rather than posing as utilitarian artefacts, things can appear as sensuous, peculiar forms or resemble archaeological vestiges. Whether alone or mingling with other objects, they conjure up fantastic, mystical or absurd events. This oddness can be exacerbated when things that would not expect to become companions appear together. [This ...] contributes to a further aesthetic quality, whereby objects form [...] odd combinations that disrupt normative meanings. Such combinations present a cryptic company of forms, textures, relationships and meanings, and make the world look more peculiar than it did before.⁵⁷²

The industrial ruin therefore allows us to encounter objects in unexpected ways. In the

(ed.), *The Post-Industrial Landscape as Site for Creative Practice: Material Memory*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2017, 17-25 (17).

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid., 17-18.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁷² Ibid., 18-21.

technologically saturated Western society, these sites can offer truly unique experiences. According to Edensor, objects found in industrial ruins equally elicit an industrial past, allowing us to acknowledge both its demise and its bond with place. This historical involvement stands out against discourses imparted by heritage sites.

Yet despite his attempt to establish a contrast between the ‘sensual and imaginative’ experience offered by the industrial ruin and the deodorised environment of heritage sites, Edensor’s romanticisation of the former reiterates discourses which are often perpetuated in the latter. This is evident in his analysis of the ways in which the industrial ruin holds the traces of the skilled workers who once inhabited these spaces:

Discarded tools implicate the embodied skills of workers, conjuring up the habitual grasp required to wield heavy implements or the operational skills that emerged from the intimate hybridity of worker and machine. What is becoming debris, or is already in a distressed state, was once enfolded into the mundanity of a shared everyday or work and sociability.⁵⁷³

Machines, furniture, tools, and instruments that were left behind thus bear the memory of the factory employees who once used them. Edensor’s idealisation of the ‘intimate hybridity of worker and machine’ particularly overlooks the gruelling physical labour and other forms of violence involved in industrial labour. Deteriorated industrial buildings are not just an exotic escape for practitioners or bored and burned-out city dwellers. As we have seen in the previous chapter, for those who have experienced the intergenerational trauma of industrial decline, marked by hardship, unemployment, deprivation and loss, the industrial ruin cannot be experienced as a theme park. It embodies a wound and evokes memories and sensations – some of which might be positive, but many of which are not.

My analysis of *Side-by-Side* will demonstrate the key ways in which contemporary

⁵⁷³ Ibid., 21.

craft-based exhibitions can offer a more realistic, complex, and inclusive experience of the post-industrial city, breaking conventions, making and exposing connections, and stimulating the senses. While Edensor conceives industrial sites as sensory oases against the backdrop buzz of the city, Hamilton's installation proposed a way to connect different spaces such as the old tanneries, the market and the museum, reinserting the industrial history of Guimarães in the city's present. *Side-by-Side* offered a sensory rather than sensual encounter with objects and buildings, accommodating both comfortable and uncomfortable experiences linked to the leather and textile industries. In this context, the presence of unexpected items, such as fragments of hide, in the former market square and museum, elicited the past or present links between these materials and settings.

The performers' actions further activated these relations. Through Hamilton's collaboration with the Outra Voz choir, the project involved people of different ages, notably the elderly, validating their experience of a city which has changed dramatically due to industrial decline and ensuing policies of urban regeneration. I therefore argue that *Side-by-Side* provided a creative engagement with the industrial past, connecting objects, people, and spaces through craft. In the following section, I focus on the ways in which Hamilton's installation promoted visual and tactile encounters with collections through reproduction and dissemination across multiple sites.

'Images travel': connecting the market and the museum through the circulation of reproductions

Drawing upon the literacy – sometimes lost – of materials is one way my projects are structured. In Guimarães, the material history of the town is very present, the move of the farmers market away from the center of town something still spoken of [*sic*];

the historic entrance to the contemporary plaza where the museum was built is marked with the original sign: *Mercado*. I loved visiting the local market – the liveliness of the exchanges, the delight and reciprocal appreciations of the offerings, the haggling over price, the impulse to share. A farmer offers, “Taste this plum from my tree”, you taste its sweetness and carry home a sack, and every time you look or taste their ripe sugars you think of the farmer. An intimacy with a stranger.

Can this happen in a museum? Is the task of this project to share the collection that cannot pass hand to hand? Can photography become a form for that exchange? Can the image touch you like the plum in your hand?⁵⁷⁴

This section addresses how *Side-by-Side* encouraged optic and haptic sensations, using reproductions of museum collections to disseminate those collections across museums and unexpected venues. Scans of artefacts from several museum collections in Guimarães were disseminated across the Martins Sarmiento Museum, the New Market, and José de Guimarães International Centre of the Arts.⁵⁷⁵ This itinerary established a connection between two cultural sites which stand close to each other but are distant in content; and a commercial space that is habitually used by the local population. The worlds of art, trade, and everyday life were thus temporarily linked through this project.

Side-by-Side responded to the gaps between sites and investigated how sites can learn from each other. During ‘Um museu na cidade’ (A Museum in the City), a panel organised during International Museum Day in 2022, photographer and film director Eduardo Brito described CIAJG as “a very ambiguous space”, due to a subsisting “fracture” with the memories of the old market’.⁵⁷⁶ Brito thus foregrounded the urgency to dissolve the confines between the museum collection and the outdoor square. After her first research

⁵⁷⁴ Hamilton and McHale, ‘The Process’, 215-16.

⁵⁷⁵ Ann Hamilton Studio, *Side-by-Side*, *Contextile 2018 Contemporary Textile Art Biennial*, Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães, Guimarães, Portugal, Full Project pdf.

⁵⁷⁶ [...] “um espaço muito ambíguo”, pela “fratura” que subsiste com as memórias do mercado antigo’, Dias, ‘Da visibilidade às verbas’.

visit to Guimarães in 2017, Hamilton asked herself similar questions:

What is this thing that's being asked of me, or what's being asked on that site, and how can the museum and the way it functions become lively like the market? Can a place of storage and display invite the sociability of the market? Can the museum circulate in the farmers market, now located in a site across from the old tannery? Everything's a circle.⁵⁷⁷

This reflects Hamilton's site-responsive approach, which entailed an extensive investigation into the city's history, museum practice, and how the spaces of the museum and the market can enliven each other.

Researching the various cultural sites and objects encompassed by *Side-by-Side* also raises further questions. They reveal links between the rise of the public museum, the nation-state, empire, and colonialism. The first, José de Guimarães International Centre of the Arts, founded in 2012, brings together a private collection and contemporary artworks. As Hamilton asserts, the concept for the project largely drew on her conversations with Nuno Faria, curator and then CIAJG's director, during her first visit to Guimarães. Faria's knowledge of art history and philosophy, his attention to local culture, and his imaginative and unique approach to museums, along with CIAJG's publication series and the discussions prompted by their projects, inspired Hamilton to collaborate with the institution.⁵⁷⁸

CIAJG's permanent collection, however, is problematic because of its links to coloniality and post-coloniality. CIAJG's cultural programme is founded upon the work of José de Guimarães and his collection of African, Pre-Columbian, and ancient Chinese art. The works of African art now on display at CIAJG were purchased in Europe in the post-colonial era – from the 1980s onwards.⁵⁷⁹ Yet de Guimarães's first collection of African art dates back

⁵⁷⁷ Hamilton and McHale, 'The Process', 213-14.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁵⁷⁹ José Marmeleira, 'Conversa com Marta Mestre', *Contemporânea*, 2022,

to the late 1960s, when he travelled to Angola on a military service commission during the Portuguese Colonial War (1961-74).⁵⁸⁰ Since then, African art, culture and ethnography became a tireless source of inspiration in his work, which is distinguished by ‘a kind of cultural osmosis’ between the African and Portuguese cultures.⁵⁸¹

Although this could be seen as a valid attempt to grasp and absorb the diversity of African culture, the colonial and postcolonial contexts from which de Guimarães’s work and CIAJG’s collection originate have been under debate since Marta Mestre took on the direction of the museum in 2020.⁵⁸² For example, while the museum collection was previously displayed according to independent sections based on geography and period – such as Pre-Columbian and Ancient Chinese Art – and in large glass cases, since July 2022 the whole collection is on display under a new exhibition cycle titled *Heteroclites*.⁵⁸³ Objects from several civilisations and de Guimarães’s work are now combined through an innovative exhibition design, crossing different perspectives and exposing the exhibition as a device which generates discourses, fabricates meanings, and conceals conflicting identities (Fig. 3.4, Fig. 3.5).

The second setting, the Martins Sarmiento Museum, an archaeological museum founded in 1881, also reflects how archaeological research and museums constructed essentialist notions of national identity during the nineteenth century. As Andrea Witcomb explains, the emergence of the public museum is inextricably linked to the rise of the nation-

<https://contemporanea.pt/edicoes/10-11-12/conversa-com-marta-mestre>, accessed 21 November 2023.

⁵⁸⁰ Centro de Artes José de Guimarães, *José de Guimarães*, 2024, <https://www.ciaig.pt/sobre/#cildzugBKDL>, accessed 20 June 2023.

⁵⁸¹ ‘[...] uma espécie de osmose cultural’, *Ibid.*

⁵⁸² Marmeleira, ‘Conversa com Marta Mestre’.

⁵⁸³ Anonymous, ‘Heteroclites Programme and 2022–23 Exhibitions’, *e-flux*, 20 July 2022, <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/479082/heteroclites-programme-and-2022-23-exhibitions/>, accessed 1 December 2023.

state – an idea grounded on archaeological findings and a presumed historical continuity between past and present. This scholarship and discourses championed the superiority of the West and its colonial domination over other peoples: ‘The result was a display of power in which the cultures of others were given meaning only within histories of Western civilization.’⁵⁸⁴

Despite not being a large imperial metropolis such as Paris or London, Guimarães is still defined as the Cradle City (*cidade berço*) of Portugal. It was here that Count Henrique established the Centro Administrativo do Condado Portucalense (Administrative Centre of the County of Portugal) and that his son, Afonso Henriques, founded Portugal as its King in 1143. Over seven centuries later, in line with the deeply nationalist approach adopted by many intellectuals in the second half of the nineteenth century, local archaeologist and ethnographer Francisco Martins Sarmiento (1833-99) aimed to ‘define the essence of the “Portuguese man”’ through an analysis of its distant predecessors, notably the pre-Roman occupants of Western Iberia.⁵⁸⁵

To a certain extent, the Martins Sarmiento Society, named after the Portuguese archaeologist and established in 1881, reflects this nationalist, colonialist, and imperialist logic. The institution publishes the magazine *Revista de Guimarães* (founded in 1884) and encompasses a Library Archive (Fig. 3.6); a Cloister Garden; a Gallery that often holds exhibitions of contemporary art; and the Martins Sarmiento Museum, which focuses on archaeological finds from the North of Portugal. The archaeological sites of Citânia de

⁵⁸⁴ Andrea Witcomb, *Re-Imagining the Museum: Beyond the Mausoleum*, Florence, 2003, 107.

⁵⁸⁵ Amílcar Guerra, ‘Sarmiento, Francisco Martins de Gouveia de Moraes (Guimarães, 1833 – 1899)’, *Dicionário de historiadores portugueses. Da Academia Real das Ciências ao Estado Novo*, 2016, https://dichp.bnportugal.gov.pt/historiadores/historiadores_sarmiento.htm, accessed 21 June 2023.

Briteiros and Castro de Sabroso, where Martins Sarmiento conducted excavations, are also under the management and supervision of SMS.

As stated on their website, the Martins Sarmiento Museum recalls the ‘museumological conceptions and practices of the second half of the nineteenth century’.⁵⁸⁶ Exemplary of this is the presence of cabinets and display cases made of glass and wooden frames (Fig. 3.7), resembling those still visible in institutions such as London’s Natural History Museum. As John C. Welchman notes, vitrines provided a means of reclassifying certain objects as they entered exhibitionary spaces.⁵⁸⁷ The vitrine detaches the object from its setting, putting it in dialogue with other objects, and underlining artistic hierarchies. The SMS collection has been expanded by several donations, comprising ‘a vast ensemble of objects linked to indigenous art, religious practices, war, hunting, [and] everyday life originating from the former Portuguese colonies, with a special focus on African culture’.⁵⁸⁸ Part of its Ethnographic Section is still labelled as ‘overseas store’, adhering to *Estado Novo*’s euphemistic designation of the Portuguese colonies as ‘overseas provinces’ (províncias ultramarinas) until 1974.⁵⁸⁹

Hamilton’s project involved the production of digital scans of ethnographic objects from the SMS collection and of other artefacts from public and private collections across the city. These included CIAJG, SMS, Venerável Ordem Terceira de São Francisco (Venerable Third Order of St Francis), Museu de Alberto Sampaio or MAS (Alberto Sampaio Museum),

⁵⁸⁶ ‘[...] concepções e práticas museológicas da segunda metade do século XIX’, Casa de Sarmiento, *O Museu Martins Sarmiento*, 2019, <https://msarmiento.org/museus/martins-sarmiento/>, accessed 11 July 2023.

⁵⁸⁷ John C. Welchman (ed.), *Sculpture and the Vitrine*, London, 2nd edn, 2016.

⁵⁸⁸ ‘[...] um vasto conjunto de objectos relacionados com a arte, as práticas religiosas, a guerra, a caça, a vida quotidiana originários das antigas colónias portuguesas, com especial destaque para a cultura africana’, Casa de Sarmiento, *Etnografia*, 2023, <https://www.csarmiento.uminho.pt/site/s/MMS/item-set/37069>, accessed 30 August 2023.

⁵⁸⁹ ‘[...] fundo ultramarino’, *Ibid.*

and Museu de Agricultura de Fermentões (Fermentões Museum of Agriculture). Hamilton's scanning method allowed her to bring together and draw connections between these items and the cultural sites where they are kept. Piles of scans were placed on stands in a small basement room at CIAJG's temporary exhibition gallery (Fig. 3.8).

The objects were all linked to popular culture and ethnography, including statuettes of animals, people, and icons; clothing and shoes; African masks and jugs; and stone weights 'whose holes bear evidence of human hands and tools' (Fig. 3.9).⁵⁹⁰ It is likely that their previous owners engaged with them physically, touching icons as a sign of devotion, wrapping the scarf around their head, wearing the mask in a funerary ritual, picking up a jug and pouring liquid. Many of these could equally be labelled as craft objects because of their emphasis on function, everyday life, ritual, and labour. Authors such as Constance Classen, David Howes and Fiona Candlin demonstrate the possibility of touch within private and public European collections until the mid-1800s.⁵⁹¹ After entering different collections across Guimarães, many of the objects reproduced by Hamilton lost their original purposes. Their visitors became viewers, as they could only interact with these artefacts by looking at them and touching them in exceptional occasions or without permission.⁵⁹²

This method of scanning objects from museum collections reflects a recent shift in Hamilton's practice, from a response to sites to a response to materials and artefacts. Let us once again recall Hamilton's account of her work: 'The process is to find how the specificity

⁵⁹⁰ Ann Hamilton Studio, *Side-by-Side, Contextile 2018 Contemporary Textile Art Biennial, Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães, Guimarães, Portugal, Project Description*.

⁵⁹¹ Constance Classen and David Howes, 'The Museum as Sensescape: Western Sensibilities and Indigenous Artefacts', Elizabeth Edwards, Chris Gosden and Ruth B. Phillips (eds), *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums and Material Culture*, Oxford, 2006, 199-222; Fiona Candlin, *Art, Museums and Touch*, Manchester and New York, 2010.

⁵⁹² On visitors touching objects without permission, see Fiona Candlin, 'Rehabilitating Unauthorised Touch or why Museum Visitors Touch the Exhibits', *The Senses and Society*, 12, 2007, 251-66.

of material histories rub up against the abstraction of language and categories and the organization of knowledge.⁵⁹³ This discloses her critical approach on the ways in which objects are classified, notably within museums. During a project with Cleveland Museum, Hamilton unexpectedly discovered the potential of imaging things with early-generation scanners. She placed an object on the glass surface, and was mesmerised by the resulting image.

For Hamilton, scanning is distinct to photography, as the scanned image looks as though it is alive; furthermore, a physical exchange occurs between the object, the surface of the scanner, and the passage of light.⁵⁹⁴ As Hamilton explained to *Pasatiempo* magazine, these scans produce ‘ghostly captures where the most detailed, in-focus elements are those [...] parts [of the object] that were in direct contact with the scanner plate, while the parts that were not in direct contact are faded and blurred’.⁵⁹⁵ The uneven image obtained from laying the artefact on the scanner literally demonstrates the closeness elicited by touch, and the distance elicited by the lack of touch. Scanned images also have a strange colour and a shallow depth of field. As Hamilton asserts: ‘This imaging process almost makes touch visible.’⁵⁹⁶

By making touch visible, Hamilton’s scanning process exposes the interdependence between vision and touch. This interconnection has also been theorised in fields such as the anthropology of the senses, which have questioned the assumption that human cognition

⁵⁹³ Hamilton and McHale, ‘The Process’, 214.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., 217.

⁵⁹⁵ Michael Abatemarco, ‘Wall-to-wall Wildlife: Ann Hamilton’s The Common SENSE – The Animals’, *Pasatiempo*, 17 July 2015, https://www.santafenewmexican.com/pasatiempo/art/museum_shows/wall-to-wall-wildlife-ann-hamiltons-the-common-sense---the-animals/article_f82fd75f-ff58-54c2-9e3d-a28d09316dd4.html, accessed 22 June 2023.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid.

relies only on five senses and largely on sight.⁵⁹⁷ Exemplary of this perspective are Classen and Howes's research, which argues not only that touch allows us to understand things at greater depth than vision, but also that touch establishes a connection between the viewer, the object's creator, and its previous owners.⁵⁹⁸ Hamilton's method offers a way to enable touch differently, through the visual, which arguably enhances the comprehension of objects and their meaning. Although the physical bond between the original object's author and former proprietors and the reproduction's creator is lost, Hamilton's reproduction opens up other forms of contact including between the object and the machine, the image and the viewer, a specific museum collection and other collections.

Hamilton has applied this scanning process to a range of items, from artefacts to animal parts. While doing a tour of the University of Washington's Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture (year not known), she saw animal skins being prepared and became fascinated with this subject.⁵⁹⁹ At that time, she was investigating the relations between animals, humans, and touch. By observing the astonishing resemblances between the limbs of some specimens in the museum's collection and human hands, she realised that touch is the only sense that is shared by all beings. The outcomes of this discovery were the projects *the common SENSE* (2014) and *the common SENSE · the animals* (2015), respectively presented at Henry Art Gallery in Seattle and at SITE Santa Fe. Inspired by historic engravings of cabinets of curiosities, Hamilton printed several animal scans and arranged them across a wall.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁷ Classen and Howes, 'The Museum as Sensescape', 199.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid., 202.

⁵⁹⁹ Abatemarco, 'Wall-to-wall Wildlife'.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid.

Hamilton's imaging method demonstrates an alternative means of rendering museum collections more accessible, inclusive, and interactive. Devorah Romanek and Bernadette Lynch argue that recent innovations such as digital and virtual re-creations of objects can offer unique tactile interactions, whereas virtual collections enable combinations and experiences of artefacts which would be impossible in the real world.⁶⁰¹ Witcomb, on the other hand, claims that the introduction of digital devices has the potential to question the museum's authoritative position and displace its focus on objects and materiality.⁶⁰² As a result, the value of the object no longer rests exclusively on its materiality, but on the information that it can provide and the connections it raises alongside other media and sources of information.

Albeit relying on dated scanning devices, Hamilton's reproductions offer a mobility comparable to digital and virtual representations. As she explains:

Whereas the installations require whole architectures, I love the portability of the equipment and the low-tech process. It has opened doors to work in collections I might not otherwise have access to and has also opened doors to conversations and finding form for sharing those conversations.⁶⁰³

The flexibility of scanners therefore affords a counterpart to the rigidity and large scale of installations. Their low-tech process enables face-to-face encounters which are often neglected by the latest digital technology. The scanning process allows Hamilton to access museum collections which are essentially hidden from public view. Within *Side-by-Side* and related projects, the printed images circulate across multiple sites – something which would

⁶⁰¹ Devorah Romanek and Bernadette Lynch, 'Touch and the Value of Object Handling: Final Conclusions for a New Sensory Museology', Helen J. Chatterjee (ed.), *Touch in Museums: Policy and Practice in Object Handling*, London and New York, 2008, 175-86 (283).

⁶⁰² Witcomb, *Re-Imagining the Museum*, 113-16.

⁶⁰³ Hamilton and McHale, 'The Process', 236.

not be possible when using the original objects. Because of the portability of the wand and flatbed scanners, Hamilton began taking them in her travels and imaging objects in friend's homes. As a result, she can include a wide range of items – from scientific specimens to very personal objects – in the same display.⁶⁰⁴

Hamilton's reproduction method disrupts conventional systems of classification regarding museum objects. In Chapter One I analysed how Fred Wilson and other contemporary practitioners have used installation as a tool to unearth and question the inherent dogmas guiding the categorisation of objects in museums and exhibitions. Kenyan-born British practitioner Magdalene Odundo, on the other hand, works with pottery to challenge the labelling of African art both as authentic and a form of craft, arguing that these classifications reiterate stereotypical descriptions of Africans as the primitive 'Other'.⁶⁰⁵ Such conceptions are also based on the split between craft and art which, as we have seen, is a Western construct. The complex reality of artistic practices in a post-colonial, globalised and interdisciplinary context requires the conception of new, more inclusive systems of classification and display of objects.

Side-by-Side reflected this diversity by including scans of African masks from CIAJG's collection. These provide a more complicated story, which acknowledges the legacies of empire in the city. Besides de Guimarães's personal story as a local collector of African art, the textile city of Guimarães depended on enslaved labour and extractive practices, as seen in Chapter Two. Hamilton's reproduction of African masks, made mobile through her practice, exposes these colonial histories and connections, notably through private collecting

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., 232-33.

⁶⁰⁵ Elsbeth Court, 'Africa on Display: Exhibiting Art by Africans', Emma Barker (ed.), *Contemporary Cultures of Display*, New Haven and London, 1999, 147-73.

and museum displays.

Hamilton's dissemination of scans across and beyond museums disclosed the colonial and imperial ideologies underpinning the emergence of the museum and the Western hierarchy of the arts and the senses. The scholarship has addressed the ways in which the modern museum fulfilled the Cartesian opposition between mind and body. While the mind was related to sight, reason, and objectivity, the body was associated with the less reliable senses of touch, hearing, smell, and taste.⁶⁰⁶ Classen and Howes's research particularly demonstrates how, in the nineteenth century, vision developed into a symbol of European colonial supremacy, whereas the remaining sensations became associated with colonised peoples, and consequently classified as the 'lower senses'.⁶⁰⁷ The hierarchy of the senses was therefore linked to a racialised hierarchy, which set the 'rational, civilised' Europeans against the 'irrational and sensuous' people from other parts of the world.⁶⁰⁸ The rise of public museums accompanied the rise of imperialism.

This, along with an increasing emphasis on conservation concerns, led to the eradication of touch in museums, apart from the privileged few. Here, objects from other cultures were subjected to a parallel process of colonisation, becoming reduced to their visual qualities (Fig. 3.10). Contemporary theories of racial hierarchy guided other exhibitionary models in the West such as international fairs and exhibitions (Fig. 3.11).⁶⁰⁹ Throughout the nineteenth century, the related focus on the visual pervaded scientific

⁶⁰⁶ On the impact of the Cartesian opposition between mind and body on the development of modern museums, see Witcomb, *Re-Imagining the Museum*, 107; Fiona Candlin, 'Museums, Modernity and the Class Politics of Touching Objects', Helen J. Chatterjee (ed.), *Touch in Museums: Policy and Practice in Object Handling*, London and New York, 2008, 9-20 (9); Classen and Howes, 'The Museum as Sensescape', 206.

⁶⁰⁷ Classen and Howes, 'The Museum as Sensescape', 199.

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁶⁰⁹ Witcomb, *Re-Imagining the Museum*, 18.

research, body politics, and the arts, and generated a perceived divorce between art and craft.⁶¹⁰ The establishment of a hierarchy and the imposition of sensory constraints in the museum have impacted the experience and understanding of objects – particularly those coming from non-European cultures – and the multisensory contexts in which they were produced.

At CIAJG, stacks of printed scans were displayed on stalls, each lit from the top. The pages were scaled to the size of an open newspaper, folded in the middle, taking the form of a large open book. As Hamilton states: 'A book is one way in which images can circulate.'⁶¹¹ Her 'collection images' were displayed in a similar mode to those at the group show *HERE*, held between September and December 2019 at Columbus's Wexner Centre for the Arts (Fig. 3.12).⁶¹² The room at CIAJG, however, was completely dark, conferring an auratic quality to the newspaper stalls. The printed images could be picked up and removed from the gallery space as if the visitors were collecting free newspapers while commuting to work. Once they had the reproductions in their hands, people could engage with them without restrictions; perhaps they could even retrieve the old habit of licking their fingers before leafing through the sheets of paper.

This multisensory interaction with the scans destabilised their classification as 'visual' media, endowing them with other qualities. Such curatorial strategy also recalls the potential democratisation of the artwork through its reproduction. Precursors to this can be found in the nineteenth century, when popular newspapers and magazines began featuring

⁶¹⁰ Classen and Howes, 'The Museum as Sensescape', 207.

⁶¹¹ Hamilton and McHale, 'The Process', 232.

⁶¹² Ann Hamilton Studio, *Side-by-Side, Contextile 2018 Contemporary Textile Art Biennial, Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães, Guimarães, Portugal, Full Project pdf*; Hamilton and McHale, 'The Process', 211.

illustrations of museum objects, allowing their readers, including industrial workers, to become collectors.⁶¹³ Through the prints displayed across various sites, *Side-by-Side* similarly allowed a wider audience to access images from different collections in a single space, and individual visitors to create a personal and multisensory collection in their homes.

Through its use of low technology, *Side-by-Side* drew attention to how these two-dimensional reproductions are crafted by hand and echo their original. In a second, larger, and slightly brighter section of CIAJG's temporary exhibition gallery, an overhead projector showed the image of a donkey on the wall (Fig. 3.13). Akin to the scanners, the choice of this low-tech device, which has been largely superseded by digital technology, counters the widespread use of digital media in museums. A closer look at the image reveals that the transparency is not comprised of a single sheet, but of dozens of strips carefully placed on the plate of the projector (Fig. 3.14). Through this gesture, Hamilton highlighted the particular crafting of images – whether they are produced digitally or not. This emphasis on the crafted nature of objects and images, along with the use of outdated devices, recalls the interconnection between craft and technological progress from the Industrial Revolution until today.

The specific inclusion of the archival image of a donkey within *Side-by-Side* also reflects Hamilton's process of thinking while making on site.⁶¹⁴ She recalls:

Meeting [CIAJG] took me down other paths, which included learning about a historic breed of donkey unique to Portugal [...]. The project developed from being there, making decisions in the space as we worked. The material process is a thinking through and a finding; it is only after hours of suturing skins and needle-felting that I come to understand the multiple meanings of the acts, and in the acts find the

⁶¹³ Witcomb, *Re-Imagining the Museum*, 112-13.

⁶¹⁴ Ann Hamilton Studio, *Side-by-Side*, *Contextile 2018 Contemporary Textile Art Biennial*, Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães, Guimarães, Portugal, *Project Description*.

questions of the work.⁶¹⁵

Whilst working on the installation at CIAJG, Hamilton encountered the Miranda donkey (burro de Miranda), a breed native to Terra de Miranda in Northeast Portugal, where the Miranda language is spoken. The wider region of Alto Trás-os-Montes – a unique territory distinguished by highlands, uplands, mountains, large meadows, and severe weather – has been shaped by human activity, notably a balance between agriculture and pasture.

In this context, the Miranda donkey was once used as a working animal. As Maria Helena Marques demonstrates, however, this animal was often treated with cruelty by those who most needed it.⁶¹⁶ A widespread bias is reflected in language, as the terms ‘donkey’, ‘ass’, and ‘jackass’ (in English), ‘burro’, ‘asno’ and ‘jumento’ (in Portuguese), can be used in a derogatory manner to describe ‘a stupid, silly, or obstinate person’.⁶¹⁷ Yet, since its function is being superseded by machinery, the Miranda donkey is increasingly regarded as a part of the region’s cultural heritage, an economic asset, and even a mark of social distinction.

Although this animal is being converted into a tourist attraction and might become a new resource for local development, Marques argues that this might not suffice to impede the loss of population and the vanishing of traditional customs in this region.⁶¹⁸ In the exhibition design, the donkey is identified as a ‘beast of burden’, an expression alluding to the use of this and other animals for carrying loads.⁶¹⁹ Faced with the image of the donkey

⁶¹⁵ Hamilton and McHale, ‘The Process’, 229.

⁶¹⁶ Maria Helena Alcalde Gonçalves Marques, *O burro mirandês: a definição de um património: estudo de caso numa aldeia da Terra de Miranda*, unpublished Master’s dissertation, Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa, 2006, 124-49.

⁶¹⁷ Dictionary.com, *Donkey*, 2023, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/donkey>, accessed 11 July 2023.

⁶¹⁸ Marques, *O burro mirandês*, 162.

⁶¹⁹ Ann Hamilton Studio, *Side-by-Side, Contextile 2018 Contemporary Textile Art Biennial, Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães, Guimarães, Portugal, Full Project pdf*; Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson (eds), ‘Beast of Burden’, *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, eleventh edn, Oxford, 2008.

on the wall, the audience was invited to consider this animal as a cultural and living legacy and to ponder which relations might be built with other creatures in the future.

The donkey is a recurring icon across multiple civilisations. It appears in Biblical episodes such as The Nativity and The Flight into Egypt, which are well represented in collections such as that of SMS. For example, *Fuga para o Egipto* (Flight into Egypt) (Fig. 3.15) is a clay statuette from the twentieth century belonging to SMS's section of popular culture, which is specifically linked 'to daily life, work, festivities and popular traditions'.⁶²⁰ Notwithstanding the donkey's secondary role in these sacred representations, Hamilton's installation staged it as a key figure in the cultural heritage of Terra de Miranda and beyond.

By displaying collection images in various spaces, *Side-by-Side* also commented on how the movement of objects generates cultural exchanges and contributes to the dissemination of ideas across different geographies. In contrast to the installation at CIAJG, the one at the SMS Gallery included reproductions of a single object – a small ivory sculpture representing the *Bom Pastor* (Good Shepherd) (Fig. 3.16). Like the donkey, the Good Shepherd has obvious religious connotations. In a parable from the Bible, Christ claims to be the Good Shepherd, because he knows each of his sheep – i.e., each human – and is willing to give his own life for all of them.⁶²¹

The sculpture, which belongs to the collection of the Museu Alberto Sampaio in Guimarães, portrays Jesus sitting on a footstool with his legs crossed, his right hand holding his chin, and carrying a little goat in a bag (Fig. 3.17). Its material and composition are characteristic of Indo-Portuguese imagery. As defined by Cristina Osswald, this is a type of

⁶²⁰ '[...] à vida quotidiana, ao trabalho, às festas e às tradições populares', Casa de Sarmento, *Etnografia*.

⁶²¹ Maria Cristina Trindade Guerreiro Osswald, *O Bom Pastor na imaginária indo-portuguesa em marfim*: volume I, unpublished Master's dissertation, Universidade do Porto, 1996.

religious sculpture synthesising elements from Indian and Portuguese art.⁶²² The portable figure of the Good Shepherd was developed during the Counter-Reformation, to propagandise the ideals of the Catholic Church in Portuguese India and other colonised lands. Through its matter, the plastic treatment of the body and hair, and the position of the arms and legs, this representation evidences inspiration from deities such as the Hindu Krishna.⁶²³

At the SMS Gallery, scans of the Good Shepherd were printed on fabric and made to fit and cover the windows (Fig. 3.16, Fig. 3.18). Their position and material rendered them more permeable to the natural light coming from outside. The enlarged scale and multiple viewpoints of the image also allowed the audience to dissect it closely as if they were connoisseurs, and to visualise its different facets simultaneously – something which would not have been possible with the material object on its own. Although these reproductions were made on textile, acquiring a pixelated texture that rendered them distinct from the original sculpture, they became canvases. They were hung around the room like paintings, allowing no more than visual contemplation. Their display alongside items of wool clothing embodied the side by sideness of animals and humans.

Side-by-Side attempted to bridge the gap between the museum – representing high culture – and the market – representing capitalism and popular culture. For example, Witcomb acknowledges the ability of the working classes to elude institutional control during their trips to museums in the nineteenth century. These visitors behaved and interpreted objects in unique ways (Fig. 3.19, Fig. 3.20), notably by establishing links

⁶²² Ibid., 4.

⁶²³ Ibid., 118.

between artworks and the commercial realm.⁶²⁴

While the white cube display attempted to conceal the relations between culture and trade, few authors have examined how craft can contribute to retrieving those dialogues. In their essay 'Store/Museum', Jen Hutton and Sarah Nasby highlight the creation of departments and spaces devoted to vernacular design and industrial and applied arts within art museums from the first half of the twentieth century.⁶²⁵ These separate galleries, which began showing design products within settings hitherto exclusively dedicated to so-called fine art, altered the ways in which we perceive, classify, and value objects. For example, MoMA's exhibitions of industrial and applied arts between the 1930s and the mid-1950s celebrated everyday objects based on aesthetic criteria, imposing a definition of good design to both companies and the audience. This evaluation entrusted vernacular culture with the aura of art objects, allowing the typical customer to purchase these items: 'In turn, these exhibitions recognized the museum visitor as a consumer with purchasing power, educating them on what they could buy and how they could participate in current cultural (and economic) growth.'⁶²⁶

Side-by-Side encouraged a proximity – a side by side – between culture and trade through the travelling of collection artefacts via scans and of fabrics from CIAJG to the New Market:

Following the project's opening, we set up at the market to give away the printed images and the blue/gray cloth [...]. The vendors used the cloth in myriad ways – to cover or set up their weekend stands, and people were curious about the newspapers, printed on one side with an object from a local museum and on the other side with the score for one of the traditional songs *Outra Voz* sang live and

⁶²⁴ Witcomb, *Re-Imagining the Museum*, 24-26.

⁶²⁵ Jen Hutton and Sarah Nasby, 'Store/museum', Alla Myzelev (ed.), *Exhibiting Craft and Design: Transgressing the White Cube Paradigm, 1930-Present*, London and New York, 2017, 126-39 (128).

⁶²⁶ *Ibid.*, 129.

which also played on a record in the installation. If we couldn't bring people inside the museum, then we would bring it to the place where people gathered.⁶²⁷

This statement demonstrates the merchants' appropriation of the printed images and blue/grey textiles by laying them alongside produce such as fruit, vegetables, and flowers (Fig. 3.21). Through Hamilton's imaging process, objects from various museum collections were briefly integrated into everyday life. Photographs of the installation show the vendors – the majority of which are women – holding, contemplating, and conversing about the scans (Fig. 3.22, Fig. 3.23). Their circulation across CIAJG and the New Market mirrored global trading routes such as the Silk Road, through which all kinds of products and people travelled. This movement across cultural and retail sites questions systems of classification established by museums in the West, rendering these objects hybrid and complex, and open to touch and lively debate.

By allowing the saleswomen to handle the reproductions at the New Market, *Side-by-Side* rendered the collection images temporarily accessible to people who might not usually consider going to a museum. Through paper reproductions, these objects could be viewed, touched, and handled in ways that would not be permitted in the museum, where no-touch policies limit the experience of artefacts. This reflects recent attempts to improve the experience of underrepresented audiences or the visually impaired in exhibitionary settings by providing audio guides, offering opportunities to touch and handle original objects, and creating tactile replicas and displays. Romanek and Lynch particularly emphasise the value of object handling in the improvement of mental health, through the incorporation of storytelling and sharing traumatic and other experiences.⁶²⁸

⁶²⁷ Hamilton and McHale, 'The Process', 228-29.

⁶²⁸ Romanek and Lynch, 'Touch and the Value', 285.

Although the exact content of the interactions at the New Market is unknown, my research suggests that the evocative character of the collection images triggered recollections and emotional responses amongst the saleswomen – many of whom are in later stages of life.⁶²⁹ Objects such as the headscarf, the ceramic jug, the embroidered shirt, and the African mask – an item often found in the homes of the ‘retornados’, the Portuguese who lived in the African colonies and were forced to return to Portugal after 1974 – embody customs and practices of the past. As Charles Spence and Alberto Gallace suggest, visual, tactile, and auditory memories are experienced differently at the physiological, cognitive, and emotional levels, and multisensory experiences have the potential to provide richer memories.⁶³⁰ Many of the scans featured handmade objects holding unique textures and other haptic qualities, which might have further prompted associated memories.

As mentioned, however, the collection images only occupied the New Market during the first eight weeks of the installation, and this space was not included in *Side-by-Side*.⁶³¹ Although the project aimed to highlight the role of animal skins in the ‘making [of] our markets’, visitors were not explicitly encouraged to experience this site.⁶³² By contrast, the balcony which once belonged to the old market and its surrounding Plaza were incorporated into the installation. Possible reasons for this might be the relatively less central location of the New Market in the city, and the proximity of the Plaza to CIAJG, which was included in the project. As a result, the white cube settings of CIAJG and SMS remained more prevalent

⁶²⁹ Unfortunately, it was not possible to interview Ann Hamilton and clarify some aspects of the project. Inquiries were also made to market vendors in the summer of 2023, but some were not present, and others did not remember what happened.

⁶³⁰ Charles Spence and Alberto Gallace, ‘Making Sense of Touch’, Helen J. Chatterjee (ed.), *Touch in Museums: Policy and Practice in Object Handling*, London and New York, 2008, 21-40.

⁶³¹ Hamilton and McHale, ‘The Process’, 229.

⁶³² Ann Hamilton Studio, *Side-by-Side, Contextile 2018 Contemporary Textile Art Biennial, Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães, Guimarães, Portugal, Project Description*.

than the commercial space of the New Market In the official exhibition circuit.

Side-by-Side thus brought about a circulation of collection objects through reproduction, via prints on paper, transparency, and fabric. The prints provided a flexible medium through which different sizes, parts, and perspectives of an object could be represented and relocated. The printing of image collections on paper at CIAJG and of the *Bom Pastor* on textiles at the SMS gallery enabled different experiences, sensations, and interactions along with the market and the museum. These variations emphasised the materiality of both objects and their images, whilst maintaining a sense of continuity across multiple sites. The side by side – of objects and their images, of seemingly distinct venues, of animals and humans, and of various senses – was therefore highlighted by these visual representations. The following section analyses this sensory dimension further, through a focus on the sonic manifestations of voice and music.

‘Voice travels’: connecting spaces and places through song and speech

Hamilton’s mapping of the project discloses a series of ‘voice travels’ taking place between the SMS Cloister Garden and Library Archive, along with the presence of ‘solo voice record[s]’ of ‘song[s]’ at both the Library Archive and CIAJG.⁶³³ These occurred through the production of a music album, which resounded through the presence of record players; and through live performances by the Outra Voz choir across different spaces. These sonic journeys were extended to the New Market through musical performances. These auditory circuits engendered long-forgotten or unprecedented relations between various sites in the

⁶³³ Ann Hamilton Studio, *Side-by-Side*, *Contextile 2018 Contemporary Textile Art Biennial*, Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães, Guimarães, Portugal, Full Project pdf.

city of Guimarães.

Side-by-Side reflects Hamilton's interest in voice and choirs of sung and spoken voices.⁶³⁴ During her first visit to Guimarães, she serendipitously heard about Outra Voz (Another Voice), a local community group dedicated to vocal expression and experimentation.⁶³⁵ Outra Voz was founded in 2010 as part of the Community Area (Área de Comunidade) within the programming of Guimarães as ECC, and it was the only creative project which survived this programme.

The first collaboration between Hamilton and the choir involved the production of a vinyl record. This mirrored the concept of the exhibition through its division into two 'sides'. Each side comprised a different version of 'Água do rio que lá vai' ('Water running in the river'), a popular Portuguese song. Side A included a rendition by Outra Voz.⁶³⁶ For Side B, Hamilton asked Marisa Oliveira, one of the choir directors, to perform a solo interpretation of the tune. This is accompanied by an electronic composition by Carlos A. Correia, a poet and musician who leads the choir. The LP includes a label with the image of a sheep and identifies Hamilton and Outra Voz as its co-authors.

Despite the collaborative nature of this process, the inclusion of Hamilton's name raises questions of authorship. In contemporary practices, the practitioner often takes on the role of 'producer', creating the idea for a work which is then executed by other skilled practitioners.⁶³⁷ The collaboration between Hamilton and Outra Voz demonstrates that the

⁶³⁴ Amei Wallach, 'A Conversation with Ann Hamilton in Ohio', *American Art*, 22:1, 2008, 52-77 (72).

⁶³⁵ Outra Voz, 'About Outra Voz [...]' [Facebook]

<https://www.facebook.com/outravoz/about/?ref=page_internal> 2023 [accessed 11 July 2023].

⁶³⁶ Outra Voz's interpretation of 'Água do rio que lá vai' can be heard here: Outra Voz, 'Outra Voz | Ann Hamilton – "Side by Side"' [Facebook]

<<https://www.facebook.com/542044839294935/videos/301266067121890>> 31 August 2018 [accessed 11 July 2023].

⁶³⁷ Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, 34.

division between those who conceptualise a work and those who physically accomplish it, crosses the visual and performing arts.

The vinyl was played on two record players, one of which was placed on a desk at the SMS Library Archive next to a pile of semi-processed hide (Fig. 3.24). The second was shown at CIAJG, close to the stacks of image prints (Fig. 3.25). The musical score of 'Água do rio que lá vai' was also printed on the back of the images (Fig. 3.26). Its lyrics are as follows:

Water running in the river
Oh! Wish I could seize her fully
Hey! Oh, oh-oh-oh, oh
Water flows and chants graciously
My bliss whirling with her
Hey! Oh, oh-oh-oh, oh.⁶³⁸

These words emphasise the importance of rivers in people's lives, notably for the leather and textile industries in Guimarães and the Vale do Ave region more broadly. The personification of water, which 'flows and chants graciously', and with which the narrator whirls, awakens the sound of a water stream in one's imagination. Stephen R. Arnott's and Claude Alain's research demonstrates how music can affect areas of the brain which are linked to our emotions.⁶³⁹

As Correia explains, Side B was meant to be a more intimate, solitary, and maternal recording, 'which would phantasmagorically "weave" itself with life'.⁶⁴⁰ Oliveira sang freely, without being concerned with tempo, and thus her solo rendition seems to be slower than that of Side A. Correia's electronic arrangement, in turn, played with the echo of the

⁶³⁸ Original lyrics in Portuguese: 'Água do rio que lá vai / Ai! Quem m'a dera recolher / Ai! Lai, ai, lai, lo / A água corre e canta bem / Andar com ela é um prazer / Ai! Lai, lai, lai, lai, lai, lai, lai.'

⁶³⁹ Stephen R. Arnott and Claude Alain, 'A Brain Guide to Sound Galleries', Nina Levent and Alvaro Pascual-Leone (eds), *The Multisensory Museum: Cross-disciplinary Perspectives on Touch, Sound, Smell, Memory, and Space*, Lanham and Plymouth, 2014, 86-103.

⁶⁴⁰ '[...] que fantasmagoricamente se "tricotasse" com a vida', Inês Jorge, Email correspondence with Carlos A. Correia (September 15, 2022).

recorded voice, offering an ethereal quality to the song. He speculates that this might represent ‘a disembodying of the soul made matter (sound waves)’.⁶⁴¹ Throughout the song, however, a siren-like sound emerges and becomes increasingly louder, generating an unsettling feeling, as if something is about to happen. As Oliveira hums the melody for the last time, this and other noises fade away. A reverberation seems to persist in one’s ears after the song ends, which might have stirred a melancholic – perhaps even disconcerting – sentiment amongst visitors.⁶⁴²

As well as the two recordings, there were two live performances, *Side-by-Side* and *Lanterna Adiante* (Beacon Ahead), one each held at the opening and closing of the exhibition. These encompassed the interpretation of five musical themes: ‘Água do rio que lá vai’; ‘Alerta’ (Beware), a song collected and shared by Conceição Costa in the local parish of Briteiros; ‘Curiosidade’ (Curiosity) and ‘Bate, bate’ (Beat, Beat), two compositions by Amélia Muge; and ‘Da folhinha de uma rosa’ (The Foliage of a Rose), co-written by Muge and Michales Loukovikas for their joint album *Periplus – Deambulações Luso-Gregas* (Periplus – Luso-Hellenic Wanderings). Muge is a Portuguese singer, songwriter and musician born in Mozambique, whose work incorporates instruments and musical traditions from different geographical origins. These tunes reflect how *Outra Voz* draws mainly on orally transmitted music. Some songs are collected amongst members of the choir, which is constituted by approximately one hundred participants of all ages and backgrounds, but largely by elderly people. As its three choral directors are young, the project fosters intergenerational

⁶⁴¹ ‘[...] uma desencorporização [sic] da alma tornada matéria (ondas sonoras)’, Inês Jorge, Email correspondence with Carlos A. Correia (July 12, 2023).

⁶⁴² Arnott and Alain, ‘A Brain Guide’, 86-103; Marisa Oliveira and Carlos A. Correia, *Água do rio que lá vai*, unpublished recording, 7 minutes, private archive of Carlos A. Correia, Guimarães, 2022.

encounters. Rehearsals take place across different parishes of Guimarães such as Briteiros, Lordelo, Nespereira, Pavidém, S. Torcato, and Academia de Bailado de Guimarães, echoing their emphasis on community.

This focus on singing as a collective process which allows a heightened sense of social unity has been explored by other practitioners and in exhibitions, notably through intersections between craft, performance, and sound.⁶⁴³ For instance, Mata Aho is a collective of four Māori practitioners who produce large sculptural installations. In Māori culture, ceremonial speeches are followed by *waiata* (songs) to applaud the speaker. Mata Aho's project for the Dhaka Art Summit in 2020 entailed the creation of a shared *waiata*, reflecting the different *iwi* (tribes) to which each member of the collective belongs. They have shown their *patēre* (chant) at several international art events, where indigenous practitioners from different parts of the world were invited to exhibit aspects of their culture.

Yet Mata Aho do not regard their project for the Dhaka Art Summit as a performance, arguably because this term does not reflect the imbrication of art in everyday life within their cultures. In a conversation with curator Zoe Black, published in the online magazine *The Vessel*, the collective describe the Dhaka Art Summit – an international research and exhibition programme centred on South Asian art and architecture – as a 'sensory overload'.⁶⁴⁴ During this event, Mata Aho learned *Taku Aho E*, a *patēre* written by Te

⁶⁴³ See for instance, the 'Performativity and Sound' feature from *The Vessel* magazine. 'Performativity and Sound', *The Vessel*, November 2022, <https://vessel-magazine.no/discover/performativity-and-sound>, accessed 7 June 2023.

⁶⁴⁴ Zoe Black, 'Mata Aho: Māori Weaving Practices at Atua-Scale', *The Vessel*, November 2022, <https://vessel-magazine.no/issues/4/norwegian-crafts-magazine/mata-aho-m%C4%81ori-weaving-practices-at-atua-scale>, accessed 7 June 2023.

Kahureremoa Taumata (Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Tūwharetoa), a composer of *taonga puoro* (musical instruments).⁶⁴⁵ The collective practiced the *patēre* every day, for one hour, whilst seated beneath Taloi Havini's installation *Reclamation* (Fig. 3.27). They sat close to each other, discovering each other's breathing rhythms and synchronising them. In order to fence off external sensory interferences and memorise the *patēre*, they chanted with their eyes closed.

Mata Aho's project for *Dhaka Art Summit* therefore involved the creation of a collective, intangible piece, which embodies Mata Aho's shared cultural identity. Their collective process is an artwork in itself, through which the collective can (re-)present themselves and support each other. The *Side-by-Side* project similarly discloses the links between songs, rituals, the ecosystem, and the rhythms of labour. The traditional songs performed by Outra Voz reflect aspects of cultural identity and belonging, albeit some of which might be connected to social roles imposed on individuals. The fact that one of the songs was suggested by a member of the choir manifests a community-based practice, where the contributions of each participant are valued.

Outra Voz's rendition of 'Bate, bate' (Beat, beat) particularly evokes how the labour rhythms of handwork have often been accompanied by singing. Although it is not a labour song, 'Bate, bate' encompasses an analogy between the beating motion of the loom and the beating of the human heart.⁶⁴⁶ Handmade textile production entails painstaking processes, where songs help to maintain the cadence of movements and motivate the workers to carry

⁶⁴⁵ I am following the Māori custom of mentioning their iwi (tribes) in publication after their names. Black, 'Mato Aho'.

⁶⁴⁶ Original lyrics in Portuguese can be found in Bandcamp, *Bate, bate*, 2017, <https://sopadepedra.bandcamp.com/track/bate-bate>, accessed 10 July 2023.

on. In an article on linen work in Cabeceiras de Basto, a Portuguese town located in the Northern subregion of Ave, Teresa Soeiro describes the process of beating down the flax fibres, which was done manually until the mid-nineteenth century. This entailed the use of two wooden instruments: the flail, deployed by men in threshing, and the mallet, a shorter and simpler tool used by women. After sun-drying the linen straws to make them more brittle, they would be beaten with both tools. The second stage involved picking up a handful of straw and beating it with the mallet over a stone or a strong wooden bench. Women would then turn the straw inside out and upside down, whipping the part which they had held to reach the whole length of the stem.

This strenuous muscular work was carried out throughout several days, either by a woman on her own in the outdoors at public and domestic spaces or by groups of female relatives or neighbours, where individual rhythms would help each other and the singsong of pounding would transform into a labour song, increasing the women's productivity.⁶⁴⁷ Although 'Bate, bate' offers a poetic interpretation, establishing a parallel between the functioning of the loom and the heartbeat, and thus between weaving and life, the marking of its rhythm through the beating of hands or a percussion instrument recalls the connections between making and singing.⁶⁴⁸

Throughout the Portuguese empire, labour songs often documented the harsh reality of forced labour and the exploitation of the local population to ensure the supply of raw matter to Portugal. In Mozambique, Decree Law 11994 (1926) established that the

⁶⁴⁷ Teresa Soeiro, 'O trabalho do linho em Cabeceiras de Basto: engenhos de maçar', *Portvgalia: Revista de Arqueologia do Departamento de Ciências e Técnicas do Património da FLUP*, 40, 2020, 213-48.

⁶⁴⁸ An unpublished documentary about the Side-by-Side project shows a rehearsal by Outra Voz of the song 'Bate, bate', where they sing whilst using their hands to mark the rhythm. Nuno Castro, Side-by-Side, unpublished video, 16 minutes, private archive of Carlos A. Correia, Guimarães, 2022.

production of cotton should substantially increase to satisfy the demands of Portugal's textile industry. As LeRoy Vail's and Landeg White's research demonstrates, however, cotton was an unsuitable crop for most of Quelimane, a district in East-Central Mozambique.⁶⁴⁹ As a result, cotton overseers beat and sexually assaulted the local population to compel them to work. The following song was well known amongst women working at Sena Sugar's cotton concession in the central town of Sena:

This season I've seen suffering, the cotton
 Earthing up the cotton
 This season, I have witnessed it, the cotton
 Earthing up the cotton
 I've been beaten, I've been beaten, the cotton
 Earthing up the cotton
 Gardening for the man, gardening for the man, the cotton
 Earthing up the cotton
 This season, I have witnessed it, the cotton
 Earthing up the cotton
 Here, where I can find shelter, the cotton
 Earthing up the cotton
 I make my home in the long grass, the cotton
 Earthing up the cotton
 Here, I find no rest, the cotton,
 Earthing up the cotton.⁶⁵⁰

A variant of this song portrayed the circumstances of cotton growing in the region. A woman walks back and forth, using a tin rattle to enact the sowing of the cotton seed. A second woman, who represents the cotton overseer, runs towards the first woman and molests her while she plants the seed. The overseer then beats the woman so brutally that she falls and spins on the ground whilst she weeps. This example discloses vocal and physical

⁶⁴⁹ LeRoy Vail and Landeg White, *Capitalism and Colonialism in Mozambique: A Study of Quelimane District*, London, 1980, 316-17.

⁶⁵⁰ 'Maka uno dnina nyatwa tonje / O – ay – ay tonje nyankwira / Maka uno nachiona toje / O – ay – ay tonje nyankwira / Nameniwa nameniwa tonje / O – ay – ay tonje nyankwira / Kulima kwache kulima kwache tonje / O – ay – ay tonje nyankwira / Maka uno nachiona tonje / O – ay – ay tonje nyankwira / Ine pano nakhala kupi tonje / O – ay – ay tonje nyankwira / Ndinakhala ndiri nsanga tonje / O – ay – ay tonje nyankwira / Ine pano sinagona tonje / O – ay – ay tonje nyankwira.', Vail and White, *Capitalism and Colonialism*, 316-71.

performance as a tool to document and cope with the physically violent behaviour of cotton overseers, and the sexual nature of this violence when exerted by male cotton overseers on female workers. While the *Contextile* biennale has often exposed the severe conditions imposed by the textile industry on the Portuguese population, as we have seen in Chapter Two, these testimonies around cotton production in the former Portuguese colonies have been less explored, if at all. These should also be integrated into *Contextile* to reflect on the global experiences of labour exploitation and trauma linked to this industry, and to Portugal's own colonial and capitalist contexts.

Evocations of labour and its rhythms also guided the exhibition *A Labor of Love* at New York's New Museum in 1996. Curated by Marcia Tucker, this exhibition materialised what Elyse Speaks describes as 'a "domestic structure of engagement", distinct from the conventional museum-going experience and resistant to museum hierarchies of value and attention'.⁶⁵¹ The exhibition's parallel programming emphasised themes of handwork and process, including opportunities for collaborations and making things *in situ* which were incorporated into the exhibition. Examples of events comprised doll-making, sewing, and singing workshops; folk music concerts; razor haircuts, nail art, and Yemeni body painting; and artist talks. As Speaks demonstrates, Tucker's disruption of creative borders aimed to expose the margins of society and the power relations that underpin them.

A Labor of Love approached labour not as 'a specific set of processes – such as those that conform to the parameters of fine art or studio craft', but from a sensual, emotional, and critical standpoint.⁶⁵² This echoes recent definitions of craft as a fluid and dynamic

⁶⁵¹ Speaks, 'Marcia Tucker's Domestic Politics', 4.

⁶⁵² *Ibid.*, 11.

praxis, beyond rigid categories of objects, people and institutions.⁶⁵³ Hamilton's encounter and collaboration with the Outra Voz choir equally transformed and expanded the project. Traditional songs were recorded and performed by amateur singers. This type of music, which is often kept on the margins of fine art institutions, appeared alongside Hamilton's and other fine art creations, across white cube spaces and outdoor venues. In *Side-by-Side* these ancient melodies, along with the activities and customs that they evoke, were (at least temporarily) validated as a significant cultural expression.

Akin to the other media included in Hamilton's project, music also reached the New Market. Hamilton recounts that, throughout the first eight weeks of the exhibition, 'the vocalist, Ção Pitada, set up and serenaded the images and the shoppers at the Saturday market'.⁶⁵⁴ This once again reveals Hamilton's involvement of local practitioners to establish a proximity with the city and its community, along with an interplay between acoustic and visual manifestations with the aim of transforming the atmosphere of the commercial site. A photograph of Pitada's performance shows a woman glancing at the printed scans as she pushes a trolley across the farmers market (Fig. 3.28). The other customers and vendors seem to carry on their regular activities, attesting to the integration of this auditory and optical show on everyday life. The multiple reverberations of sound within *Side-by-Side* included specifically commissioned recorded songs as well as live performances across different spaces.

Through these sonic sources, the power of sound, voice, and music – individually and collectively – to influence human feelings was explored, notably in association with the other

⁶⁵³ See the section on 'Defining craft' in the Introduction to this thesis.

⁶⁵⁴ Hamilton and McHale, 'The Process', 229.

senses. As stated in the project description: 'Side-by-Side [...] is the voice touching at a distance [...]. From touch a tending, in tending a voice, a line drawn between our absorbing senses and resisting bones.'⁶⁵⁵ This statement becomes clearer when reading Hamilton's interview with *Público* newspaper in 2018: 'The hand – and the way in which it touches – is also a voice. It is a poetic weaving of this way of groping, in the presence of objects and images. But with *Outra Voz* I also noticed that hearing is touching at a distance.'⁶⁵⁶ This reflects the ways in which bodily sensations often interact with each other, and elicit emotional responses. It also reveals that the sensory aspects of *Side-by-Side* should be understood in chorus rather than separately. The performance expanded on this by fully realising the exhibition's multisensory evocations and further involving the audience in the installation, encouraging them to sing.

'Cloth travels': embodying the leather and textile industries through tactile interactions

Side-by-Side incorporated journeys of fabrics. Scraps of blue/grey cloth were hung on the balcony of the old market and then given away by Hamilton and her team at the New Market.⁶⁵⁷ The circulation of textiles across these two spaces evoked past and present trade routes across the globe, whilst retrieving the link between historic and contemporary ways of living and retailing in the city of Guimarães. Meanwhile, wool clothing items were

⁶⁵⁵ Ann Hamilton Studio, *Side-by-Side*, *Contextile 2018 Contemporary Textile Art Biennial*, Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães, Guimarães, Portugal, Project Description.

⁶⁵⁶ 'A mão – e a forma como ela toca – é também uma voz. É uma tecelagem poética dessa forma de tactear, na presença de objectos e imagens. Mas com a *Outra Voz* também reparei que ouvir é tocar à distância', Tiago Mendes Dias, 'À quarta edição, a Contextile está mais próxima da comunidade', *Jornal Público*, 1 September 2018, https://www.publico.pt/2018/09/01/culturaipsilon/noticia/a-quarta-edicao-a-contextile-esta-mais-proximo-da-comunidade-1842613?fbclid=IwAR1r69Qz3Gb6FhYREgnSsNG2UnM0Xnpt_rXjZPnE3ZLo-8tyGUIQfT7Hew0, accessed 13 September 2022.

⁶⁵⁷ Hamilton and McHale, 'The Process', 229.

exhibited at the SMS Gallery, and coats needle-felted with raw sheep fleece were displayed at CIAJG. The latter disclose how *Side-by-Side* addressed the importance of the leather industry in Guimarães, compelling Hamilton to work with animal skin for the first time:

While many of the projects make different references to skin – to membrane, to a surround – I have never worked with animal skin. The sheer visceral presence of it, in large stacked piles I encountered at the tannery, both attracted and repelled me. The animal is sacrificed to protect human bodies, sewn into coats to keep us warm, into bags to carry our things, into tents to shield us from the weather. The sacrificial figure of Jesus as a Shepherd filled the Catholic churches and archives I visited. And from a completely different cultural context, many of the masks and objects in the CIAJG collection are made from animal hair and skin and are inhabited in ceremonial rituals of transformation.⁶⁵⁸

This statement demonstrates that Hamilton's unprecedented use of animal skin in *Side-by-Side* is linked to her longstanding exploration of the relations between animals and humans.⁶⁵⁹ As the project description makes clear, the transformation of animal skins has allowed people to survive, using materials such as hide and fleece to make insulating and protective textiles such as wool. For Hamilton, the theme of sacrifice embodies the coexistence between animals and humans. While animals lose their skins so that humans can make clothes and houses to protect themselves, the Christian figure of the Good Shepherd represents Jesus's sacrifice to salvage humanity.⁶⁶⁰ The New Market equally reflects these connections, as a site cohabited by plants, animals, and humans (Fig. 3.29).⁶⁶¹

Side-by-Side brought together animal skins and textiles at CIAJG, the SMS Library Archive, and the Plaza where the old market is located. This provided the audience with the opportunity to engage with, and occasionally touch, diverse types and stages of leather and

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid., 217.

⁶⁵⁹ Wallach, 'A Conversation', 61.

⁶⁶⁰ Hamilton and McHale, 'The Process', 217.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., 213.

textile production. Yet such instances of touch were arguably restricted, occurring through less conventional body parts such as the visitors' feet or indirectly by using props.

Side-by-Side thus drew on the city's key industries – leather and textiles. Hamilton's exhibition design points to the presence of 'cloth' on the balcony of the historic market (Fig. 3.30).⁶⁶² Fragments of fabric were hung here and made visible from the Plaza, where four large wagons also stocked piles of skins. During her first visit to Guimarães in December 2017, Hamilton toured Lameirinho, an important factory specialising in home textiles, and witnessed the magnitude of its production: 'the winding of the giant warps, the operation of the looms were incredible to both see and hear'.⁶⁶³ While searching for a site for the installation, she found a tannery filled with semi-processed leather and tanning tools, which had recently closed down. Although she eventually decided not to use this space, the owners offered materials for the project. The hide was dyed light blue at Lameirinho, which equally supplied material for the installation.⁶⁶⁴ Hamilton states: 'This project began in these origins – in the tanneries whose basins were built along the river.'⁶⁶⁵

The earliest records of the leather industry in Guimarães date back to the twelfth century, and its remains can be found across the municipality. The Zona de Couros (Couros or Leather Zone) was installed in the city's former suburbs. This industrial district developed along the banks of the Ribeira de Costa/Couros (Costa/Leather Brook), a small stream of water – a key resource for this activity. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this reflects

⁶⁶² Ann Hamilton Studio, *Side-by-Side*, *Contextile 2018 Contemporary Textile Art Biennial*, Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães, Guimarães, Portugal, Project Description.

⁶⁶³ Hamilton and McHale, 'The Process', 212.

⁶⁶⁴ Anonymous, 'Contextile revela lado artístico'; Dias, 'À quarta edição'.

⁶⁶⁵ Ann Hamilton Studio, *Side-by-Side*, *Contextile 2018 Contemporary Textile Art Biennial*, Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães, Guimarães, Portugal, Project Description.

the interdependence between industrial production and geography. In the fourteenth century, other toponyms such as Rua Zapateira (Shoemaker's Street) and Rua de Coiros (Leather Street) alluded to leather and related industries.⁶⁶⁶ Historian Maria Elisabete de Sousa Pinto explains that the preparation of animal skins served shoemaking along with the production of containers for wine, olive oil, and flour; straps used in agriculture and manufacturing; and tools such as saddles and scabbards.

The leather industry therefore allowed different crafts to flourish. Between the late 1700s and early 1800s, the exceptional importance and vigour of this activity resulted in the granting of royal privileges to many factory owners. The Couros Zone – which, in 2023, was added to UNESCO's inscription of the historic centre of Guimarães on the World Heritage List – holds unique architectural structures that attest to the industry's economic boom in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Fig. 3.31, Fig. 3.32).⁶⁶⁷ Yet leather was a predominantly male industry, heavily reliant on weather conditions, physical strength, and centuries-old practices passed on from fathers to sons. According to Pinto, until the late 1800s the tanning process in Guimarães entailed

washing the hides in running water, and then bathing them, for several days, in aged water, dove excrements and calcium oxide. After being treated by calcium oxide and shaved, the hides were once again washed and bathed in a tanning soak obtained by the maceration of oak tree barks or sumac [...]. Afterwards, in the same bath, they would be tanned for various months. They would be dried in the open air, and lastly greased with oils and fat, becoming impermeable. They were then beaten to become flexible, according to the intended purpose.⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁶ Eduardo de Almeida, *Romagem dos séculos*, Guimarães, 1923, 94.

⁶⁶⁷ While the historic centre of Guimarães was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2001, twelve years later it was extended to include the Couros Zone – an industrial area which sits outside of the city's ancient walls. UNESCO World Heritage Centre, *Historic Centre of Guimarães and Couros Zone*, 2023, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1031/>, accessed 10 October 2023.

⁶⁶⁸ '[...] lavar as peles em água corrente e deixá-las, em seguida, durante vários dias, em banhos envelhecidos de água, excrementos de pomba e cal. Depois de tratadas pela cal e depiladas, as peles eram novamente lavadas e mergulhadas num banho tanante obtido pela maceração de cascas de carvalho ou, então, folhas de sumagre [...] Nesse banho curtiam-se com uma permanência que durava vários meses. Secavam-se ao ar e, por

This statement discloses a procedure taking place outdoors and involving a caustic mixture which prevented the skins from putrefying but caused a repulsive smell and extreme river pollution.

Through its focus on the leather industry, *Side-by-Side* encompassed not only visual, tactile, and auditory travels but also olfactory sensations. As mentioned, this activity was located ‘far from the visual horizon of those who lived inside the city’s walls’.⁶⁶⁹ Yet, because of the unpleasant odours released by the leather industry, such distance exceeded sight. Following Classen and Howes’s cue that smell can be used as a weapon to promote social exclusion, the spatial segregation of the leather industry arguably served to isolate its workers.⁶⁷⁰

Candlin and other scholars have examined similar phenomena resulting from the advent of the public museum.⁶⁷¹ Before this, most collections were private and only accessible to aristocratic audiences (Fig. 3.33). As museums became public and open to all, unprecedented encounters of, and tensions between, people ascribed to different social classes took place. Soon after, restrictions on entering the museum and handling objects were imposed on visitors, particularly the working class. Class was then seen as an indicator of people’s hygiene, esteem for, and ability to handle objects.⁶⁷² Malcolm Miles, on the other hand, describes the purification of cities during the Enlightenment as an attempt to

fim, engorduravam-se com óleos e sebo para ficarem impermeáveis. Eram depois surradas para ficarem flexíveis, em função da finalidade pretendida.’, Maria Elisabete de Sousa Pinto, ‘Os “Homens de Couros”: marcas no presente do passado da indústria de curtumes em Guimarães’, *I Congresso Histórico Internacional As Cidades na História: População: Atas, 24 a 26 de Outubro de 2012*, Volume I, ed. by Maria Luís Rocha Pinto (Guimarães: Câmara Municipal de Guimarães, 2013), 259-87.

⁶⁶⁹ ‘[...] longe do horizonte visual dos moradores da zona muralhada da cidade’, *Ibid.*, 271.

⁶⁷⁰ Classen and Howes, ‘The Museum as Sensescape’, 200.

⁶⁷¹ Candlin, ‘Museums, Modernity’, 13.

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*, 9.

masculinise urban spaces, notably by removing cemeteries and the ensuing odour of the deceased to peripheral areas.⁶⁷³

By contrast, *Side-by-Side* relocated the leather industry to the city centre, including the museum. The semi-processed skins that comprised the installation were dirty and smelly, potentially triggering disagreeable memories amongst the elder inhabitants of Guimarães. Through this gesture, Hamilton impelled audiences to visualise and inhale the importance of this activity and its workers.

The meeting of textiles and hides at the Plaza therefore enacted the importance of these two industries in the city (Fig. 3.34, Fig. 3.35). In an interview with Amei Wallach, Hamilton explained one of the questions that guided her project for the United States Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1999: 'How does any historical building carry forward the trauma rather than just the representation of the ideal?'⁶⁷⁴ In Guimarães, the stacks of animal skins mirrored the large piles that she had seen at the tannery, and which she found simultaneously appealing and revolting (Fig. 3.36). They particularly bring to mind 'massing', a strategy that, according to Harrod, 'reminds us of the industrial, iterative potential of all ceramics', and which has been explored by several contemporary practitioners.⁶⁷⁵ Curator Gloria Hickey argues that massing also serves to 'communicate the discipline and repetition of hard work and practice that are key to a successful studio potter'.⁶⁷⁶

Within *Side-by-Side*, the accumulation of hides and fabrics at the Plaza – a once vibrant space brimming with animals and people – takes these two perspectives further,

⁶⁷³ Miles, *Art, Space and the City*, 30.

⁶⁷⁴ Wallach, 'A Conversation', 64.

⁶⁷⁵ Harrod, 'Out of the Studio', 47.

⁶⁷⁶ Gloria Hickey, 'Curatorial Strategies that Remain True to the Craft Object', Myzelev (ed.), *Exhibiting Craft and Design: Transgressing the White Cube Paradigm, 1930-Present*, London and New York, 2017, 76-88 (82).

commemorating the city's industrial past.⁶⁷⁷ The installation seemed to capture a moment frozen in time, as though the animal skins and textiles had just been washed. It embodied the way in which these activities were – figuratively – hung out to dry. The fabrics suspended across the balcony of the old market counteracted the rigidity of this modernist building made of reinforced concrete, with gates and signs in wrought iron (Fig. 3.37). Akin to Hamilton's project at the US Pavilion in Venice, *Side-by-Side* established a dialogue between the building of the old market and the traumatic experience of deindustrialisation. Both installations embody a site-responsive approach in which she investigates how to connect different sites and institutions.

Blue/grey textiles were also distributed by Hamilton and her team at the New Market. A study by the Associação Comercial e Industrial de Guimarães (Commercial and Industrial Association of Guimarães) stressed that the local population viewed the old market as a space not only for buying products but also for social interaction and communication.⁶⁷⁸ Their investigation also disclosed that the majority of its clients were over fifty years old and retired.⁶⁷⁹ Yet testimonies collected in a focus group reveal that the old market was also a site of intergenerational encounters; several respondents describe how their mothers or grandmothers would take them there, especially on Saturday mornings.⁶⁸⁰ Many remember particular foods that their mothers bought there and that they liked, such as pomegranate, trotters, and dogfish. One of the respondents explained that the old

⁶⁷⁷ Hamilton and McHale, 'The Process', 213.

⁶⁷⁸ Associação Comercial e Industrial de Guimarães, *Uma abordagem sobre o mercado municipal de Guimarães*, Guimarães, 2000, 24.

⁶⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁶⁸⁰ Inês Jorge, Focus group with Outra Voz at Casa das Artes de Lordelo about the Side-by-Side installation, unpublished audio recording, 46 minutes and 48 seconds, Guimarães, 21 September 2023.

farmers market

was incredible. [...] It was a shame to take it away from there, and since then, it never had the same life again. [...] The social life of the city died because the city lived on Fridays and Saturdays. On Fridays we had the street market [...] all day long, [...] which was also relocated; and [on Saturdays] there was the farmers market, [...] the place where everybody went. The movement of the city revolved around it. And suddenly, they removed it from there.⁶⁸¹

This once again demonstrates that some local inhabitants perceive the old market as a key space in the city's communal life and dynamism and that these traits were lost after the market's relocation. The *Side-by-Side* project temporarily retrieved this sociability, allowing memories and experiences to be shared. The textiles inhabited the commercial site as any other product (Fig. 3.38, Fig. 3.39, Fig. 3.40); buyers and saleswomen could look at them, handle them, and discuss them (Fig. 3.41). These fabrics complemented the reproductions of objects from museum collections through their haptic qualities. By handling the printed scans and textiles, people became reacquainted with artefacts and customs from Guimarães to Africa, along with the city's industrial history.

For those who were from Guimarães, or the wider region of Vale do Ave, holding these fabrics and images of woven and embroidered clothes in their hands might have sparked different emotions linked to textile making at home and in the factory. As Romanek and Lynch assert, the experience of handling an object can be negative, and the whole spectrum of emotional possibilities should be explored.⁶⁸² The memories imparted by people at the New Market might have been individual or shared, both generating conversations.

⁶⁸¹ 'Era incrível. [...] Foi uma pena de tirarem-no dali e, desde que foi mudado, nunca mais teve a mesma vida. [...] A vida social da cidade morreu, porque a cidade vivia à sexta e ao sábado. À sexta, porque era a feira [...] o dia todo, [...] depois tiraram dali também; e [ao sábado] era o mercado [...] que era o sítio onde toda a gente ia. A movimentação da cidade era feita ali. E de repente, tiraram-no dali.', Ibid.

⁶⁸² Romanek and Lynch, 'Touch and the Value', 277.

While museums often oversimplify the sensory encounters of audiences by focusing exclusively on 'positive emotions', *Side-by-Side* used a meeting space to engage with marginalised publics and encouraged them to reconnect with different sorts of experiences and feelings through publicly and collectively touching textiles.⁶⁸³

The sensory and emotional engagement of the public at the New Market encompasses a more comprehensive approach to touch than in previous exhibitionary projects. For example, in a chapter dedicated to modern and contemporary art, in *Art, Museums and Touch*, Candlin critiques recent exhibitions exploring touch.⁶⁸⁴ According to her, the exhibitions *Touch: Relational Art from the 1990s to Now* (2002) at the San Francisco Art Institute and *Touch Me: Design and Sensation* (2005) at the V&A were based on two problematic claims: that there is a dichotomy between deficient tactility and excessive visuality in contemporary society; and that touch only elicits personal and social wellbeing. This ignores the fact that haptic interactions can be harmful. As Classen and Howes explain, *Touch Me* also encouraged the audience to touch both objects designed or made by various practitioners, blurring the institutional and artistic divides between art and craft (Fig. 3.42, Fig. 3.43).⁶⁸⁵ For example, a video focusing on the hands of a maker was exhibited next to a bowl by woodturner Robin Wood.⁶⁸⁶

By contrast, *Side-by-Side* conceived touch not as something which is isolated, but interwoven with other senses such as vision, as well as with society and everyday life. Through its evocations of the leather and textile industries, and other traditions from within

⁶⁸³ Ibid., 277.

⁶⁸⁴ Candlin, *Art, Museums and Touch*, 152-65.

⁶⁸⁵ Classen and Howes, 'The Museum as Sensescape', 217.

⁶⁸⁶ Candlin, *Art, Museums and Touch*, 160.

and beyond Guimarães, the project elicited multiple sensations and welcomed both positive and negative emotions at various sites. The section below will demonstrate that the inclusion of performance allowed the audience, and particularly the Outra Voz choir, to be involved in the installation and, in some instances, to embody and understand its meaning at a deeper level. Through its historical, site-specific, and multisensory engagement with hide and textiles, *Side-by-Side* enabled the public to interact with an array of images, objects, and materials at different stages of processing, bringing together several institutions and making processes, evoking sites such as the factory and the home. As a result, the project overcame binary conceptions of art and society and offered a more complex representation of local life, society, economy, and culture.

At CIAJG, the implicit and explicit presence of fabrics and hides alluded to the material, cultural, and technical knowledge involved in the textile and leather industries. Some of the printed images displayed in the first room show different kinds of clothing, whose positions suggest the envelopment of an absent human body. Examples include a seemingly child-sized knitted jumper (Fig. 3.44), a check patterned coat (Fig. 3.45), and a headscarf tied around an inexistent face (Fig. 3.09). Another scan depicts the back of a white linen shirt with embroideries in red thread on the collar and shoulders, recalling the local textile tradition of Guimarães Embroidery and its embeddedness in this particular territory (Fig. 3.46).⁶⁸⁷ These fabrics and their unique textures might evoke specific sensations and memories: the comforting feel of wool wrapping the body, the lightness of linen, a baby's scent, childhood recollections, and the colours and sounds of the countryside. Such

⁶⁸⁷ During her first site visit, Hamilton learned about Guimarães Embroidery and its strong contribution to the local identity of the region. Hamilton and McHale, 'The Process', 212.

embodied allusions induced an emotional and immersed encounter with the installation, as well as a deeper understanding of the specific local context that it aimed to represent.

In contrast to the light blue hide at the Plaza, at CIAJG, the floor of the second room was covered with fragments of tough hide (Fig. 3.47). Hamilton tried out different ways to suture the skins at her studio, a space that she uses to test ideas. As is customary in her practice, however, most of the elements of *Side-by-Side* were made on site; only objects and tools travelled from Ohio to Guimarães, along with four graduate students who sewed the skins together and needle-felted the coats with sheep fleece.⁶⁸⁸ As with the white shirts, the thread used to fasten the skins recalled that of Guimarães Embroidery (Fig. 3.48). Yet it could also be interpreted as the blood, sweat and tears involved in both leather and textile production. The act of sewing the pieces of hide arguably embodied Hamilton's attempt to string together the scraps that make up the industrial, social, and cultural history of Guimarães.

At CIAJG, several coats were also hung on tall wooden canes, which leaned against opposite walls. While Hamilton was preparing this project and reflecting on animal-human relations, she recalled a wool coat that she had partly needle-felted with raw fleece, and which had been left in her studio.⁶⁸⁹ That first coat had been made of wool from the Mid-States Wool Growers Association in Ohio, a wool co-operative where massive amounts of raw fleece are sent to be sorted, and then packed and delivered for processing. Hamilton describes her experience of the space: 'When you walk in, you are hit by the smell of animal and mountains of raw fleece.'⁶⁹⁰ By needle-felting the wool coat with raw fleece, Hamilton

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid., 229.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid., 214-15.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., 215.

brought together processed and unprocessed materials, manifesting her own olfactory and monumental encounter with raw fleece. Such technique and object, which had been ‘waiting for a project’, became *Side-by-Side* (Fig. 3.49).⁶⁹¹ The exhibition design identifies the coat as ‘human’, the sheep fleece as ‘animal’, and the structure formed by the coat’s suspension on a stick as a ‘tree’ (Fig. 3.50).⁶⁹² These mixed media constructions are therefore hybrid and multisensory, merging different kinds of beings and sensations.

Because of its combination of processed and unprocessed materials, *Side-by-Side* can be linked to the work of other practitioners who have explored the relations between textiles, hair, and the body. Throughout the 1990s, US practitioner Anne Wilson investigated the sensory qualities of hair – or, as James Yood calls it, ‘the ultimate body fiber’ – and the cultural connotations of fabrics made for the home.⁶⁹³ For example, her solo exhibition *Anne Wilson: Anatomy of Wear* at Chicago’s Museum of Contemporary Art in 2000 encompassed various works merging human and synthetic hair with found and reconstructed cloth (Fig. 3.51). By blending hair and textiles, these pieces interweave subjects of body and home, personal and social customs.

Hamilton’s project expands these associations by foregrounding animal skins as ‘our second skin and our first side by side’, evoking the proximity between humans and animals through its incorporation of hide, fleece, cloth, and clothing.⁶⁹⁴ As many of these materials and items were sourced from or transformed at local tanneries and textile companies, they

⁶⁹¹ Ibid., 215.

⁶⁹² Ann Hamilton Studio, *Side-by-Side*, *Contextile 2018 Contemporary Textile Art Biennial*, Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães, Guimarães, Portugal, Full Project pdf.

⁶⁹³ James Yood, ‘Anne Wilson’, *American Craft*, 1 December 2000, 78-79.

⁶⁹⁴ Ann Hamilton Studio, *Side-by-Side*, *Contextile 2018 Contemporary Textile Art Biennial*, Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães, Guimarães, Portugal, Project Description.

were further imbued with a sense of place, attesting to human labour and animal sacrifice within and beyond Guimarães and Vale do Ave.

Similar coats adorned with raw fleece were laid on the chairs of the SMS Library Archive (Fig. 3.52). The project description refers to the 'coat and tent' as 'the first portable architecture for the body'.⁶⁹⁵ More broadly, the term 'coat' can allude both to 'a full-length outer garment with sleeves' and to 'an animal's covering of fur or hair', once again emphasising the likeness between animals and humans.⁶⁹⁶ A more recent meaning denotes a piece of clothing providing a further layer of covering when we feel cold. Hamilton states: 'Like weather, however changeable, cloth envelopes experience.'⁶⁹⁷ The sheep fleece formed the outside, rather than the inside layer of these coats. This reversal makes visible the material that warms our bodies but is often unnoticed.

Alongside the coats, 'book skins' sat on desks at the Library Archive, as if they were about to be read. Their pages were made from animal skins and held to each other with red thread – again evoking the local embroidery. Another 'legible' skin sat on the card indexes (Fig. 3.53), echoing Hamilton's reflections on the circulation and relations between making processes and systems of classification and archiving – in which category would this hybrid object fit? As Peter Vergo asserts, the act of collecting is guided not only by aesthetic but also by political and ideological intents.⁶⁹⁸ The selection, acquisition, and public display of objects relies on considerations about the economic and social worth of cultural production.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁶ Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson (eds), 'Coat', *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, eleventh edn, Oxford, 2008.

⁶⁹⁷ Ann Hamilton Studio, *Side-by-Side, Contextile 2018 Contemporary Textile Art Biennial, Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães, Guimarães, Portugal, Project Description*.

⁶⁹⁸ Peter Vergo (ed.), *The New Museology*, London, 1989, 2.

Such considerations, in turn, stem from the system of values devised by each institution and from the wider cultural framework in which the institution is situated.

By turning hide into the book format, Hamilton invited its 'readers' to leaf through this material. The 'book skins' also recall parchment or vellum, on which ancient texts were written, and which were made of animal skin. These objects reflect the significance of language in Hamilton's work.⁶⁹⁹ Like the coats, they materialise a co-journey between animals and humans throughout history.

At the SMS Gallery, the printed images of the Good Shepherd were exhibited alongside wool clothing (Fig. 3.18). As stated in *Side-by-Side's* project description, 'a folded blanket is a story of trade. [...] With cloth we cover our extremities. A glove holds my hand; a wool cap covers the top of my head; a sock, my foot; a sweater, my heart; a blanket, my lap. [...] Naked flesh is vulnerable.'⁷⁰⁰ While elsewhere the audience could experience processed and unprocessed materials, here they were able to see some of their ensuing products, and their aim to protect the human body. The exhibition included two identical sets of clothes – each comprised of a jumper, a beanie, a pair of gloves and a pair of socks – one in brown and the other in cream, each placed on a stand (Fig. 3.54). These items of clothing were neatly folded, as if they were in a shop, ready to be picked up and sold. Yet their simple – almost austere – display was manifestly distinct from contemporary retail spaces, highlighting the care that went into the making of these articles, and prompting the public to reflect on how these and other products are made and consumed.

These clothes and accessories were also viewed without the obstruction of a glass

⁶⁹⁹ Hamilton and McHale, 'The Process', 212.

⁷⁰⁰ Ann Hamilton Studio, *Side-by-Side*, *Contextile 2018 Contemporary Textile Art Biennial*, Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães, Guimarães, Portugal, Project Description.

case, a display strategy utilised in museums and luxury shops. This stood in sharp contrast to the cabinets and display cases on SMS's first floor (Fig. 3.7). According to the society's website, its permanent exhibition recalls the 'museological conceptions and practices of the second half of the nineteenth century'.⁷⁰¹ From this period onwards, no-touch policies were implemented in Western museums, supposedly to ensure the conservation of objects.⁷⁰² The glass case therefore became a key device which provided a physical separation between the visitor – now viewer – and the object (Fig. 3.55). John C. Welchman further notes that vitrines provided a means of reclassifying certain objects as they entered exhibitionary spaces. They detach items from their settings and put them in dialogue with other artefacts, underlining particular artistic hierarchies.⁷⁰³

As a complement to the cutting instruments, ceramic fragments and other archaeological items exhibited in SMS's permanent exhibition, *Side-by-Side* presented wearable textiles as important evidence of the city's past customs and daily life. Although these items could not be touched, the absence of a glass case increased the physical and affective proximity with them, breaking down usual museological apparatuses, hierarchies, and barriers. Different objects were brought together in the same space not according to pre-established artistic categories, but based on thematic closeness. By placing wool clothes alongside the reproduction of the Good Shepherd, Hamilton illustrated the closeness between the sacrifices of Christ and sheep and the textile industry.

Side-by-Side expands on previous creative experiments by bringing together different media and sites. As Janis Jefferies notes, several practitioners in the late 1980s and 1990s,

⁷⁰¹ '[...] concepções e práticas museológicas da segunda metade do século XIX', Casa de Sarmento, *O Museu*.

⁷⁰² Classen and Howes, 'The Museum as Sensescape', 201.

⁷⁰³ Welchman (ed.), *Sculpture and the Vitrine*.

including Hamilton, drew on feminist art and incorporated textile media in hybrid and mixed practices, in a way that ‘transformed mainstream “art” making and “high” art institutions (public and commercial galleries)’.⁷⁰⁴ These practitioners critiqued stereotypical associations between textiles and femininity and exposed the intersections between textiles, gender, class and race through material and ornamental exuberance, the inclusion of home fabrics, and large-scale installations made of clothing.

Hamilton’s installation extends these tactics by showcasing not only a mix of hybrid objects and materials but also a mix of hybrid venues. Conventional art spaces, the library, the market, converted buildings and the public realm were reconciled through the circulation of images, voice, and cloth, and the deployment of collaborative, participatory, and performative methods. This reflects a will, not so much to transform art making and art institutions, but to transform perceptions around sites such as the market and the museum, around the leather and textile industries, and around the city of Guimarães more broadly.

Embodying and voicing communities through performance

This section explores these points of connection further, by investigating *Side-by-Side* and *Lanterna Adiante*, two performances which activated the *Side-by-Side* installation across its different settings. An average of sixty to eighty members of the Outra Voz choir acted as performers – or, as Hamilton usually calls the participants in her performances, ‘attendants’ – in these events.⁷⁰⁵ I argue that, by moving across several spaces, interacting with the

⁷⁰⁴ Jefferies, ‘Textiles’, 198.

⁷⁰⁵ Ann Hamilton, Jennifer Fisher and Jim Drobnick, ‘Attending to Presence: An Interview with Ann Hamilton’, *RACAR: Revue d’Art Canadienne*, 44:2, 2019, 144-64. In this interview, Hamilton argues that ‘attendant’ is a more subtle term than ‘performer’, since the former can operate as both noun and verb, object and action. This word, in her opinion, expresses the role more accurately. ‘[...] mediada’, Anonymous, ‘Bienal de arte têxtil

numerous components of the installation, and singing collectively, the performers mediated the various journeys, sites and senses included in the *Side-by-Side* project. Arising from Hamilton's site responsive practice, the performances allowed the local community to be involved in the exhibition.

While the *Side-by-Side* performance took place at the *Side-by-Side* installation opening on 1 September 2018, *Lanterna Adiante* marked the closing of the exhibition on 25 November in the same year. Weekly performances by Outra Voz were also held at the New Market, whilst printed images were distributed.⁷⁰⁶ The *Side-by-Side* performance was conceived by Hamilton, co-written with Outra Voz's artistic director Carlos A. Correia, and directed by Sandra Barros. *Lanterna Adiante* was jointly conceived and written by Barros, Correia, and Hamilton. According to Correia, no written room guides were produced for either performance. Yet a script of the opening performance was created as the outcome of conversations held between him and Hamilton, and to provide support to it.⁷⁰⁷ This demonstrates a collaborative process between Hamilton and the choir leaders, which arguably evolved in the period between the two performances.

The *Side-by-Side* performance explored the relations between adjacent spaces. These included the SMS Library Archive and Cloister Garden; the Plaza and the balcony of the historic market; CIAJG's mirrored entrance and the Plaza; CIAJG's mirrored entrance and the interior of CIAJG; and CIAJG and the Library Archive. The unpublished sketch of the

Contextile 2018 arranca no sábado em Guimarães', *Diário de Notícias*, 27 August 2018, <https://www.dn.pt/lusa/bienal-de-arte-textil-contextile-2018-arranca-no-sabado-em-guimaraes-9767120.html>, accessed 13 October 2023.

⁷⁰⁶ Anonymous, 'Contextile revela lado artístico'.

⁷⁰⁷ '[...] das conversas que mantive com a Ann', Inês Jorge, Email correspondence with Carlos A. Correia (July 27, 2022).

performance describes its route, and what is to happen in each venue. It starts just before dusk in SMS; while some attendants are in the Library Archive, others are in the Cloister Garden. Yet this serves as a 'prelude to the rest of the performance', whose focal point is the Plaza.⁷⁰⁸ Here, the attendants take over the balcony of the old market and guide the audience to CIAJG's mirrored entrance. Lastly, the public is directed to the temporary exhibition gallery on the underground floor of CIAJG, where the attendants no longer intervene. As we will see below, this is where Hamilton herself actively engages the audience in the *Side-by-Side* installation at CIAJG.

Within the *Side-by-Side* performance, attendants carried out repetitive actions at SMS's building. The performance began here, with some attendants standing at the Library Archive or 'reading room', and others at the Cloister Garden.⁷⁰⁹ The attendants interacted with the space, looking for books on the shelves, sitting on the reading tables, and leafing through the piles of semi-processed hide as if they were books. The photographs of the performance do not retain the whole scope of this playfulness. Despite wearing coats embellished with sheep fleece, the attendants seem to behave more compliantly, sitting on the chairs and 'reading' the 'book skins' (Fig. 3.24). Akin to other performances by Hamilton, they executed seemingly minor or repetitive tasks such as playing with the shutters to change the luminosity of the room, and turning the reading lights on and off 'as if it were a game'.⁷¹⁰

The attendant's movements, in turn, produced destabilising sounds that connected

⁷⁰⁸ '[...] prelúdio para o resto da performance', Carlos A. Correia, Esboço de texto dramaturgico, unpublished typescript, private archive of Carlos A. Correia, Guimarães, 2018, 1.

⁷⁰⁹ '[...] sala de leitura', Ibid., 1.

⁷¹⁰ '[...] como se de um jogo se tratasse', Ibid., 1.

the inside and outside areas of SMS. As Salomé Voegelin notes, sound has the power to connect sites, objects, inside and outside, whilst shedding light on the invisible relationships between materiality and immateriality.⁷¹¹ For example, the attendants at the Library Archive also sang and whistled:

It is not clear whether they sing/whistle to the piles of hide or if the singing/whistling are written on the books, but they do it as we do when we sing/whistle by ourselves, when we are alone with our own thoughts. This is a space of reflection.⁷¹²

The attendants subsequently disrupted the silence which is typically imposed in study settings. Singing and whistling were temporarily accepted as actions which support reflection – something which would otherwise not be permitted in this space. Some attendants peeked through the window blinds to see ‘the view from the library archive to the cloister garden’ (Fig. 3.56), where the other attendants wandered around pieces of ancient sculpture and inscriptions (Fig. 3.57).⁷¹³ Their voices and chants could be heard from the Library Archive: ‘Voices from outside are heard. Calling voices which are not directed to those who are inside, even though it seems so. Five or six people and perhaps some sheep’.⁷¹⁴ These vocal and physical manifestations blurred the boundaries between the Library Archive and the Cloister Garden, study and leisure, the archive and the object, books and sounds, the museum and the outside world.

Yet not every participant understood these actions and their intention to evidence

⁷¹¹ Salomé Voegelin, ‘Soundwalking the Museum: A Sonic Journey Through the Visual Display’, Nina Levent and Alvaro Pascual-Leone (eds), *The Multisensory Museum: Cross-disciplinary Perspectives on Touch, Sound, Smell, Memory, and Space*, Lanham and Plymouth, 2014, 113-22.

⁷¹² ‘Não se percebe se cantam/assobiam para as pilhas de pele ou se os cânticos/assobios estão escritos sobre os livros, mas fazem-no como quando cantarolamos/assobiamos sozinhos, quando estamos a sós com os nossos pensamentos. Este é um espaço de reflexão.’, Correia, Esboço de texto, 1.

⁷¹³ Ann Hamilton Studio, *Side-by-Side, Contextile 2018 Contemporary Textile Art Biennial, Centro Internacional das Artes José de Guimarães, Guimarães, Portugal, Project Description*.

⁷¹⁴ ‘Ouvem-se vozes de lá de fora. Vozes de chamamento que não se dirigem aos que estão dentro mas que assim parecem. 5 ou 6 pessoas e talvez algumas ovelhas’, Correia, Esboço de texto, 1.

the relations between different sites. For example, one of the attendants who stood in the Cloister Garden, while the main group was at the Plaza, admits:

I regret the fact that I was not inside of the performance. I do not understand the part where they put us in the garden. [...] We were there, singing under someone's command, [...] but I lost the essence of the performance. [...] I didn't even wear a skin [coat] because I didn't have to wear the same clothes as [the attendants who were at the Plaza ...]. There is always someone who creates the project, and they should tell us why.⁷¹⁵

This statement reveals that the attendants were not involved in the conception of the performance and that at least one of them did not understand why they were not part of the main performance taking place at the Plaza. By contrast, one of the choir directors was able to infer the reasons behind this separation:

I believe that this [separation] was thought out because of the historical collection that was carried out to understand the importance of the leather industry, and because of there is a lot of written material in the Library [Archive ...]. This is my surmise of what happened. [...] At that time, it was the director, Sandra Barros, who had the idea of starting there as an introspection of that collection, and there was also a connection between SMS and the area of the [New] Market.⁷¹⁶

The choir director was therefore able to intuit the motifs that led some of the creative choices, arguably because of their artistic training or their ability to communicate more closely with Barros. This suggests that there was a deeper gap between Outra Voz's directing team and the attendants of the *Side-by-Side* performance.

The audience was then led to the Plaza, where printed images were suspended 'on

⁷¹⁵ 'Eu lamento a parte de não ter estado por dentro do espectáculo. Não entendo qual foi aquela parte de nos porem no jardim da [Sociedade] Martins Sarmiento. [...] Estávamos ali a cantar a comando de alguém, [...] mas perdi a essência do espectáculo. [...] Eu nem sequer enverguei uma pele [...] porque não precisava de ter o traje [dos participantes que estavam na Praça [...]]. Há sempre alguém que elabora o projecto, e quem elabora tem de nos dizer porquê.', Inês Jorge, Focus group with Outra Voz at the Nespereira parish about the Side-by-Side installation, unpublished audio recording, 46 minutes and 48 seconds, Guimarães, 21 September 2023.

⁷¹⁶ 'Eu acho que isso foi pensado por causa da recolha histórica que foi realizada para perceber a importância dos couros, e porque há muita coisa escrita na Biblioteca [Arquivo ...]. Foi isto que eu depreendi do que foi feito. [...] Na altura, foi a encenadora, a Sandra Barros, que teve a ideia de começarmos lá em cima como introspecção da recolha, e [também devido à] ligação da SMS à zona do [Novo] Mercado.', Ibid.

ropes, as if they were laundry'.⁷¹⁷ The attendants occupied the balcony of the old market, where they swung the blue fabrics and scans (Fig. 3.58).⁷¹⁸ Akin to the hides, the sheets had been dyed in blue/grey tones, recalling the historical blue-and-white soap (*sabão azul e branco*) used in laundry and personal hygiene.⁷¹⁹ The printed images were passed around like newspapers until they reached the public. 'Here, everything is movement.'⁷²⁰ Some photographs of the *Side-by-Side* performance, such as Fig. 3.58, Fig. 3.59, capture this sense of motion, evoking the bustle of social and commercial exchanges once experienced at the Plaza. The Spanish practitioner Inés Rodríguez describes other actions which took place there:

Unexpectedly a man comes out dressed in a wool coat, with one half [...] covered with sheepskin, armed with a tall cane, wandering among the people until he adopted a fixed position, standing out from the building he looked like a strange being, from another planet. As one watched him, however, another woman crosses a path to stand and read underneath a tree, [...] and another one who reads while sitting on a bench, before a crowd who does not really know what to think.

A strange couple eats dry fruits, peacefully sitting on a bench, while a young woman rides a bicycle, spinning around while wearing a wool coat, before an astonished audience. In a space that almost reminds me of a washtub, a young woman 'washes' another skin such as those on the wagon, before the serious glance of two men in cloth-wool coats.⁷²¹

The uncanny presence of the man, holding a cane and wearing a coat partly covered with

⁷¹⁷ '[...] em cordas, como se de roupa se tratassem', Correia, Esboço de texto, 1.

⁷¹⁸ Correia, Esboço de texto, 1; Castro, *Side-by-Side*.

⁷¹⁹ Inés Rodríguez, 'Contextile 2018: Side by Side de Ann Hamilton', *Rir&Co.*, 2018, <https://rirandco.com/contextile-side-by-side-de-ann-hamilton/>, accessed 6 July 2023.

⁷²⁰ Correia, Esboço de texto, 1.

⁷²¹ 'Inesperadamente sale un hombre vestido con una abrigo [sic] de lana, cuya mitad estaba [...] con piel de oveja, armado con un gran vara, deambulaba entre la gente hasta colocarse en una posición acordada, recortado con el edificio parecía un ser extraño, de otro planeta. Cuando todavía estabas mirando para él otra mujer recorre un trecho para colocarse a leer debajo de un árbol, [...] y otra más que lee mientras se sienta en un banco ante una multitud de personas que no sabe bien que pensar. Una extraña pareja come frutos secos, tranquilamente sentada en un banco, mientras que una chica se pasea en bicicleta dando vueltas con una abrigo [sic] de lana, ante la mirada sorprendida de los que allí estábamos. En un espacio que casi a mi [sic] me hace recordar un estanque, una muchacha se encuentra "lavando" otra piel como las del carro, ante la mirada seria de dos hombres con abrigos de paño-lana.', Rodríguez, 'Contextile 2018'.

raw fleece, alongside CIAJG's modern building, evidences the connections between humans and animals, old and new (Fig. 3.60). By contrast, the two women who stood or sat reading (Fig. 3.61, Fig. 3.62) mirror other actions and objects relating to books and language across the *Side-by-Side* project and performance, and taking place in both public and private venues. Examples include perusing of 'book skins' in the Library Archive and handing out newspaper-sized scans in the New Market. This seems to reflect a recurring theme in Hamilton's practice, through which she has sought to find material means to express the fact that, to be human, is to conciliate body and language, intellect and embodied knowledge:

We are communicating all the time with words, trying to find the words in which we can recognize our experience. Can we think of something if there is no language for it? How do we understand experiences we can't name?⁷²²

Our understanding of our own experience therefore largely relies on language, and there might be sensory and other experiences that we cannot put into words.

A particularly powerful embodied experience seems to have taken place amongst the attendants who wore coats partly covered with raw fleece. One of the participants in the *Side-by-Side* performance explains how they felt whilst dressed in these garments:

I felt something which awoke me to the suffering of animals. I felt like I was inside of the skin as I was wearing it. [...] Since then, I think I became more sensitive to killing animals, because I used to do it with ease. I even used to stop the pig from bleeding when my father killed it. [...] The fleece on the coats] smelled awful. Then we were told not to touch the fur with our own skin, because it would cause allergy [...]. But I felt like feeling the fur running through and then I was called off. [...] All I know is I ran it through, and I loved that touch of the animal skin.⁷²³

⁷²² Wallach, 'A Conversation', 54.

⁷²³ 'A sensação que eu tive e que me despertou foi para o sofrimento dos animais. Eu senti-me dentro da pele, porque andei com ela vestida. [...] Acho que a partir daí comecei a ter mais sensibilidade ao matar um animal, porque eu até fazia com facilidade! Eu até parava o sangue quando o meu pai matava o porco. [...] A pele dos casacos cheirava muito mal. Depois chamaram-nos a atenção de que nós não podíamos tocar com a nossa pele no pêlo, porque fazia alergia [...]. Mas eu senti uma vontade de sentir o pêlo a passar e depois fui chamada à atenção para não fazer aquilo. [...] Só sei que passei e adorei aquele toque da pele do animal.', Jorge, Focus group with Outra Voz at Casa das Artes de Lordelo.

This statement reveals that, by wearing the animal's skin, the person felt an emotional connection with the animal. This, in turn, produced a radical shift in the person's relationship with animals and increased their sensitivity to animal suffering. On the other hand, their physical contact with the animal skin caused a sensation so pleasing, that they could not help touching it. This demonstrates that sensory engagement with animal skins, particularly through touch, offers an opportunity for an affective – even visceral – involvement with the animals themselves.

A potentially challenging moment which explored the persistence of patriarchal systems and their links to the hierarchy of the senses, occurred through the juxtaposition between the solitary woman washing the hide in the Plaza and the two men looking at her.

As Candlin notes:

Implementing touch [in the museum] offers no guarantees and, depending upon the specificity of the artwork, the context of its performance/exhibition, and the ensuing critical judgment, tactual art can consolidate, reveal or undermine patriarchal structures.⁷²⁴

The inclusion of tactile experiences in the exhibition space is therefore conditioned by the characteristics of the work, the context in which the work is performed or exhibited, and its critical reception. These factors, in turn, determine whether the work subverts or perpetuates patriarchal structures. Within the *Side-by-Side* performance, a woman washed an animal skin in a fictitious water tank on an exterior stairway connecting the Plaza and CIAJG's underground floor, before the vigilant stare of two men wearing hybrid coats (Fig. 3.63). This two-fold image seems to reflect ideas around the 'male gaze'; the stereotypical associations between sight, reason and masculinity, as opposed to touch and other senses,

⁷²⁴ Candlin, *Art, Museums and Touch*, 52.

sensuousness and femininity; and the phrase ‘wolf in sheep’s clothing’, which refers to someone who disguises their evilness through an amiable appearance.⁷²⁵

Such representation also evoked women’s use of public water tanks in the city of Guimarães, namely those of São Gualter and Trás-de-Gaia (Fig. 3.64).⁷²⁶ This activity remains to this day. In 2018, while Hamilton was developing her *Side-by-Side* installation, Hermione Allsopp’s and Ida Blazicko’s projects for the *Contextile* biennale drew on local water tanks as sites where women gather and socialise.⁷²⁷ Melo explains that Allsopp and Blazicko spent time with some of these women, learning their skills and listening to their stories. Their conversations revealed that the water tanks provide these women with a temporary escape from difficult personal experiences.⁷²⁸ The *Side-by-Side* performance thus provided an overt illustration of the gender power structures underlying the water tanks and their impact on how the different senses are socially valued and perceived.

By bringing together images, cloth and voice at the Plaza, the *Side-by-Side* performance expanded recent museological efforts to create more interactive, engaging experiences for the viewer, by taking them beyond the museum. Authors such as Witcomb have addressed the limitations of introducing interactive technologies in museums, arguing that interactivity does not necessarily warrant accessibility and democratisation. Drawing on the Museum of Sydney as a case study, she argues that interactivity can be sought in a

⁷²⁵ Romanek and Lynch, ‘Touch and the Value’, 282.

⁷²⁶ Magic Carpets, *Washerwomen community (Guimarães, Portugal)*, 6 July 2020, <https://magiccarpets.eu/communities/5-lavadeiras-dos-tanques-publicos-de-sao-gualter-e-de-tras-de-gaia-tras-de-gaia-washers-of-the-public-tanks-of-sao-gualter-and-of-tras-de-gaia-tras-gaia-guimaraes-portugal/>, accessed 7 July 2023.

⁷²⁷ Their projects were carried out in the context of Contextile’s partnership with the Magic Carpets platform. Cláudia Melo and Susana Milão (eds), *Contextile 2018: Contemporary Textile Art Biennial*, exhibition catalogue, Porto, various locations, Guimarães, 2018, 152-57.

⁷²⁸ Jorge, Interview with Melo.

broader sense, providing an ‘experiential dimension of the museum space’ that includes a wide range of sensations.⁷²⁹ For Witcomb, the Museum of Sydney exemplifies the creation of a multimedia experience, where objects, text, image, sound, and video are provocatively combined. The *Side-by-Side* performance not only offered an equally wide range of stimuli but also encouraged the audience to move across different sites before entering the museum. These included the Plaza, an outdoor space that lends itself to socialising – arguably an additional source of enjoyment for visitors. Here, voice was the last sensory element to be introduced:

Suddenly a soft, peaceful chant in the afternoon is heard in the distance, almost like a lullaby, and the people crowd round the wagons and the sheets, [...] and the thing is that “anonymous people” are singing a traditional song. It reminds me of the ancient washing places, where a community would gather to talk and wash their clothing.⁷³⁰

The collective singing therefore highlighted the communitarian nature of washing in public tanks, an activity which was also enacted by the women who folded and unfolded the blue fabrics at the New Market. This demonstrates how Hamilton sought to create, more than a multimedia or multisensory experience, a communal experience. *Outra Voz* began their vocal performance by chanting ‘Curiosidade’ as they wandered around the Plaza.⁷³¹ This song describes curiosity as an attitude which involves constant interrogations about what is going on around us and what might happen; looking at and from different directions and looking beyond; and stopping and observing. As a song written by Muge specifically for

⁷²⁹ Witcomb, *Re-Imagining the Museum*, 156.

⁷³⁰ ‘De repente se oye a lo lejos un canto suave, sereno en la tarde, casi como una nana, y las personas se arremolinan entorno a los carros y las sábanas, [...] y es que personas “anónimas del pueblo” cantan una canción tradicional. A mi [sic] me recuerda a los lavaderos antiguos, donde una comunidad se reunía a conversar y a lavar su ropa.’, Rodríguez, ‘Contextile 2018’.

⁷³¹ Original lyrics in Portuguese: ‘O que é que se passa aqui, / o que é que pode acontecer, / olha pr’aqui, olha pr’ali, / o que é que é isto, deixa ver. / O que é que se passa aqui, / Vamos parar um bocadinho. / O que é que se passa aqui, / Vamos parar um bocadinho. / Olhar d’aqui, Olhar d’ali. / Olhar também, p’ra mais além. / Sentir o céu bem mais pertinho. / Sentir o céu. Sentir o céu. O céu.’

Outra Voz, it arguably illustrates the purpose of this choir – to promote an attentive gaze upon our surroundings and an encounter between multiple perspectives. ‘Curiosidade’ equally seems to reflect Hamilton’s approach to the city of Guimarães during the *Side-by-Side* project, which encompassed the thoughtful observation of adjacent spaces and what they represent beyond their physical appearance.

Another song performed in the Plaza attests to the side by sideness of local tunes with those from different parts of the globe. As shown in a short video recorded by Rodríguez, ‘Da folhinha de uma rosa’ (The Foliage of a Rose) was interpreted by the Outra Voz choir while they were arranged in groups around the wagons.⁷³² In the lyrics, a female speaker declares that she will make a dress from the foliage of a rose; so long as her love lasts, her dress will not lose its colour.⁷³³ This traditional song is common to Portugal and Galicia – a region in the Northwest of Spain which is geographically and culturally close to Portugal. While preparing their joint recording, Michales Loukovikas introduced Amélia Muge to a traditional love song from Anatolia and İzmir. Muge realised with surprise that the lyrics were similar to those of ‘Da folhinha de uma rosa’. Loukovikas writes: ‘We can’t be sure if some Greeks and Iberians had the same idea [...] or if it’s an idea that voyaged with sailors from one place to the other.’⁷³⁴ In *Periplus*, Loukovikas sang half of the Greek song, while Muge adapted the rest into Portuguese. A special bond and collaboration then emerged between both musicians and Outra Voz, for whom Muge adapted the melody of

⁷³² RirCo Artesanías, *Contextile 2018: ‘Side by Side’ de Ann Hamilton*, online video recording, YouTube, 5 September 2018, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMogSyAsK6o>> [accessed 10 July 2023].

⁷³³ Original lyrics in Portuguese: ‘Da folhinha de uma rosa / Hei-de fazer um vestido / Que não vai perder a cor / Enquanto durar o amor / Que me faz andar contigo.’

⁷³⁴ Amélia Muge and Michales Loukovikas, *PERIPLUS | Luso-Hellenic Wanderings (Chronicle)*, 27 June 2020, <https://peripluscd.wordpress.com/2020/06/27/periplus-luso-hellenic-wanderings-chronicle/>, accessed 10 July 2023.

this tune. 'Da folhinha de uma rosa' is now part of the choir's repertoire, reflecting the mobility of ideas across Eastern and Western traditional cultures.

There were other instances where the *Side-by-Side* performance merged visual and auditory effects. After the end of the song, a woman pulled a large piece of hide from a wagon and dragged it across the Plaza.⁷³⁵ The weight of the leather caused her to walk slowly as if representing the physical strength which was essential for the leather industry. This need for physical strength was viewed as one of the reasons behind the predominance of men in this activity. Yet, as Pinto notes, women also participated in the tanning process, notably by collecting bird excrements at nearby dovecots and using combustible made from forest residues, both of which were deployed in tanning soaks.⁷³⁶ This performative action therefore disrupted the idea that the leather industry is exclusively male. Akin to the 'textile memory' that the people of Guimarães carries, the heaviness of the hide might also allude to the power and burden of memory.⁷³⁷ As the woman hauled the fragment of hide, she and the other attendants walked towards the exterior staircase which connects the Plaza to CIAJG's basement floor.⁷³⁸ They were joined by those attendants who had been at SMS for the prelude of the performance, standing beneath a prominent section of the museum which was used as an 'acoustic shell'.⁷³⁹ Because of CIAJG's mirrored entrance, the attendants were partly concealed, but their silhouettes were visible. As stated in the performance sketch:

The folks who have worked [at CIAJG] detected a very interesting acoustic phenomenon. All sounds in the Plaza are amplified, and they are very clear at the

⁷³⁵ Rodríguez, 'Contextile 2018'; Castro, *Side-by-Side*.

⁷³⁶ Pinto, 'Os "Homens de Couros"', 269.

⁷³⁷ Melo and Silva (eds), *Contextile 2020*.

⁷³⁸ Rodríguez, 'Contextile 2018'.

⁷³⁹ '[...] concha acústica', Jorge, Email (September 15, 2022).

bottom. [...] This is a moment when the museum confronts us with our own image. What will we sing?’⁷⁴⁰

The attendants chanted the song ‘Bate, bate’ (Beat, beat) accompanied by a ‘small percussion’ by Oliveira and Madalena Gonçalves.⁷⁴¹ This musical arrangement therefore took advantage of, and responded to, the Plaza’s distinctive audiovisual characteristics. The percussion equally materialised the beating sound which ‘Bate, bate’ verbalises.

I had the opportunity to participate in the final part of the *Side-by-Side* performance, which was distinguished by a particular engagement of the audience. As Rodríguez notes: ‘Without realizing it, I had the feeling of having been part of the installation rather than an observer, of being inside and outside of the same setting.’⁷⁴² This attests to the multiple ways in which the *Side-by-Side* project explored the connections between different spaces and between the inside and the outside of a single space, whilst challenging the boundaries between practitioner and public.

The audience was guided into CIAJG’s temporary exhibition gallery on the underground floor and invited by Hamilton herself – who had witnessed the performance together with Cindy Steiler, co-curator of the project – to walk over the tough hide and feel their texture beneath their feet.⁷⁴³ Each visitor was encouraged to pick up one ‘tree’, and to carry it from one side of the room to the other whilst humming the song ‘Água do rio que lá vai’ (‘Water running in the river’). This brought the people together in a kind of pilgrimage

⁷⁴⁰ ‘A malta que tem trabalhado lá apercebeu-se de um fenómeno acústico muito interessante. Todos os sons da praça da plataforma são amplificados e são muito claros lá no fundo. [...] Este é um momento em que o museu nos confronta com a nossa própria imagem. O que cantaremos?’, Correia, Esboço de texto, 2.

⁷⁴¹ ‘[...] pequena percussão’, Jorge, Email (September 15, 2022); Castro, *Side-by-Side*.

⁷⁴² ‘Sin darme cuenta, tuve la sensación de haber sido parte de la instalación a la vez que observadora, de estar dentro y fuera de un mismo escenario.’, Rodríguez, ‘Contextile 2018’.

⁷⁴³ A video posted on Facebook by Contextile shows this moment; Contextile, ‘Contextile 2018: Final Video’ [Facebook] <<https://www.facebook.com/505779056194904/videos/305581283374307>> 6 November 2018 [accessed 11 July 2023].

within the gallery space, contributing to a spiritual atmosphere which was heightened by the dim lighting along with the mentioned biblical references. It also involved the public in a collective act of singing.

These instances of touch and sound, united by the medium of performance, provided a richer insight into the leather industry in Guimarães. As Classen and Howes make clear, the visual appearance of artefacts is but a small part of their identity.⁷⁴⁴ Their sensory life is constituted not only by the object itself but also by its social function and environment. Much is lost, therefore, when artefacts are removed from their cultural setting and deprived of their sensory complexity. On the other hand, recent discoveries in disciplines such as neuroscience reveal that the human brain receives information about the surrounding environment through multiple sensory dimensions at once.⁷⁴⁵ Many visitors of the *Side-by-Side* exhibition were not from Guimarães or familiar with the leather industry. A purely visual representation of the hides would not suffice to understand the economic and cultural significance of this activity.

By placing the hides on the floor, the public was able to feel their physical and haptic qualities, whilst visualising their usual positioning when they were left outdoors to dry (Fig. 3.65). Similarly, the canes leaning against the walls of CIAJG's temporary exhibition gallery evoked the scrapers used to pound the animal skins (Fig. 3.66). The *Side-by-Side* project therefore encompassed several instances of sensory involvement, including the observation and active manipulation of the reproductions, singing, listening to songs, and stepping on the hide. These allowed the audience to actively engage with the contexts of activities such

⁷⁴⁴ Classen and Howes, 'The Museum as Sensescape', 200.

⁷⁴⁵ Alberto Gallace and Charles Spence, 'A Memory for Touch: The Cognitive Psychology of the Tactile Memory', Helen Chatterjee (ed.), *Touch in Museums: Policy and Practice in Object Handling*, 163-86 (172).

as animal rearing and tanning, along with the new customs and experiences which developed around these practices.

Craft exhibitions have historically been more open to active engagements with the senses. A paradigmatic example is *The Craftsman's Art*, an exhibition organised by the Crafts Advisory Committee at the V&A in 1973. Both Harrod and Breen have highlighted the sensory and theatrical characteristics of *The Craftsman's Art*.⁷⁴⁶ Barry Mazur and Brian Griggs's exhibition design included outlines of trees and actual plants (Fig. 3.67); gravel and sand; earthy-coloured flooring; coconut carpeting; recordings of birdsong; and a gazebo. As memory often intersects with different senses, the sight of sand and pebbles might have led visitors to imagine the scent and sound of the ocean. Barley swung as if blown by the wind, through the presence of a covert fan. These allusions to the British countryside, however, offset the lack of rural crafts in the exhibition (Fig. 3.68).⁷⁴⁷ For Breen, the striking arrangement of *The Craftsman's Art* also contained the different objects within a uniform discourse. As the exhibition aimed not only to show objects but also to sell them, the choice of a layout which appealed to multiple senses was arguably part of its commercial intent.⁷⁴⁸ Within the *Side-by-Side* installation, however, the multisensory elements did not derive from devices external to the exhibits. The visual, tactile, and auditory aspects were all part of the exhibits themselves.

By contrast, the *Lanterna Adiante* (Beacon Ahead) performance was restricted to a

⁷⁴⁶ Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain*, 380-86; Laura Breen, 'Productive Friction: Ceramic Practice and the Museum Since 1970', Christie Brown, Julian Stair, and Clare Twomey (eds), *Contemporary Clay and Museum Culture: Ceramics in the Expanded Field*, Oxon and New York, 2016, 7-16 (8).

⁷⁴⁷ Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain*, 382-83.

⁷⁴⁸ On the relations between the senses and commerce, and how tactile engagement and handling prompts visitors to buy, see also Hickey, 'Curatorial Strategies', 76-88.

single space – CIAJG. Photographs of the performance suggest that the attendants followed a path across the museum. For instance, a woman dragged a fragment of leather across a room (Fig. 3.69), and a man carrying a lantern (Fig. 3.70) followed several attendants who walked up the stairs (Fig. 3.71). They were all dressed in black (Fig. 3.72). A video of *Lanterna Adiante* shows the attendants walking around the hexagonal table at the entrance hall of the museum, whilst carrying canes.⁷⁴⁹ This table was filled with a pile of tough hide and coats covered with sheep fleece, evoking a sacrificial altar (Fig. 3.73). Sacrificial altars were at the centre of ancient ritual celebrations, where items that were vital for human sustenance were incinerated.⁷⁵⁰ These products, which included the tips of the head and limbs of domestic animals such as goats, sheep, and pigs, became offerings to deities. Such magical and religious ceremonies were often accompanied by chants, involving prayers which sought the divinity's favourable intercession.⁷⁵¹

Lanterna Adiante arguably draws on these highly symbolic practices; each attendant placed their cane on the stack as they sang the song 'Alerta' (Beware), whose lyrics are as follows: 'Beware, beware. Life is short, death is certain. Pray, pray, oh brothers of mine. One Our Father and one Hail Mary. And for the love of God, if you can, you must pray.'⁷⁵² Akin to the chants and prayers uttered next to sacrificial altars, this tune urges us to pray to God, warning us about the certainty of death. Through its allusions to solemnity, bonfires, and

⁷⁴⁹ Outra Voz, 'OUTRA VOZ: Lanterna Adiante' [Facebook]

<<https://www.facebook.com/outravoz/videos/344876976092157/>> 27 November 2018 [accessed 10 July 2023].

⁷⁵⁰ On the inclusion of animals in sacrificial altars, see for instance Verónica Alberto Barroso, Juan Francisco Navarro Mederos, and Pablo Castellano Alonso, 'Animals and Ritual: Faunal Remains from Sacrificial Altars of El Alto de Garajonay (La Gomera, Canary Islands)', *Zephyrus*, 56, July-December 2015, 159-79.

⁷⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁷⁵² Original lyrics in Portuguese: 'Alerta, alerta. A vida é curta, a morte é certa. Rezai, rezai oh irmãos meus. Um padre nosso e uma Avé Maria. E quem puder que reze, por amor de Deus.', Jorge, Email (September 15, 2022).

animal sacrifice, *Lanterna Adiante* once again foregrounded the side by side between humans and animals – a key subject in the *Side by Side* project.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how craft is shaped by the space of the city, and how craft engages with the city as a context of display. Its case study was *Side-by-Side* (2018), a site-specific installation devised by US practitioner Ann Hamilton for the *Contextile* biennale. This project produced temporary connections between sites, activities, and communities across the Portuguese city of Guimarães that have often been held apart. These links were created through the circulation of different elements along several venues, namely images, voices, and fabrics.

The chapter began with an introductory analysis of *Side-by-Side*, engaging with modern curatorial experiences that drew attention to the contexts for art as well as with scholarly debates on the material and sensory abundance of the industrial ruin. My investigation has revealed that, by bringing together various spaces in the city of Guimarães, including the market, the museum, and the old tanneries, *Side-by-Side* retrieved the industrial history of Guimarães in the city's present. Yet Hamilton's installation reflects an approach that is distinct from that of Edensor, as it proposes a sensory rather than sensual meeting with the post-industrial city, making room for a wide spectrum of emotions regarding the city's industrial past.

My analysis then revolved around the journeys taken by images, voice, and cloth across various locations, drawing on Hamilton's exhibition design. I focused on the ways in which *Side-by-Side* bridged the gap between the museum and the market and offered an

opportunity for audiences to engage visually and haptically with collections through the circulation of reproductions across these sites. The project also evidenced the reverberations between spaces and places through vocalisations and music. Lastly, the installation retrieved leather and textile media in urban areas of Guimarães, allowing the public to experience their haptic qualities.

I then focused on the two performances that activated the exhibition, exploring Hamilton's collaboration with the Outra Voz choir, and how the performances activated the installation and involved the public in a pilgrimage across its different settings.

My investigation has demonstrated that the *Side-by-Side* installation and its related performances actively opened a space for discomfort, notably through their incorporation of semi-processed animal skins and their unpleasant smells and dirt, as well as their allusions to gender violence and other traumatic experiences and sensations shared and inherited by people across Guimarães. Coming back to the question that guided Hamilton's project for the United States Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1999: 'How does any historical building carry forward the trauma rather than just the representation of the ideal?'⁷⁵³ My analysis has shown that, by bringing out the ways in which spaces enclose traumatic events, Hamilton's site-specific works reject nostalgic conceptions of the past and expose viewers and inhabitants to challenging encounters. Her approach therefore stands out from previous contemporary craft-based exhibitions, which idealised craft practices through associations with archetypal depictions of the countryside or with exclusively positive emotions.

The *Side-by-Side* project therefore attests the ways in which contemporary craft-based exhibitions in the post-industrial city have the ability not only to generate dialogues

⁷⁵³ Wallach, 'A Conversation', 64.

between buildings and user groups that do not often mix, but also offer opportunities for the public to engage with potentially repulsive or upsetting memories and feelings. Such projects entail risks, as some visitors might not want to be confronted with experiences of social exclusion, domestic violence, labour exploitation, deindustrialisation, and unemployment. By eliciting topographical, institutional, historical, economic and sensory routes, the *Side-by-Side* installation also traced the routes of animal sacrifice and human suffering, notably through racism and slavery.

Some materials in the installation produced conflicting emotions, as shown by one of the attendants who wore a coat needle-felted with sheep fleece during the *Side-by-Side* performance. While the attendant enjoyed the sensation produced by the contact between the fleece and their own skin, such closeness with the animal made them unable to kill animals. In this sense, contemporary craft-based exhibitions in post-industrial sites might also offer a space where audiences can process complex and potentially traumatic encounters. The participation of the *Outra Voz* choir in the two performances particularly allowed their members to deal with these emotions collectively and across different spaces. This demonstrates the potential for contemporary craft-based exhibitions to integrate multiple kinds of objects, venues, people, senses, and feelings, affording a rich, complex, shared, and perhaps more accurate, representation of the city.

This chapter has built on the previous chapters, exploring the city as a space where the church – examined in Chapter one – and the factory – addressed in Chapter two – can coexist. Hamilton’s exploration of materials and sites to address discomfort, trauma, and social and urban fragmentation, expands on Rodrigues’s condemnation of the Church and the state for causing war, displacement, and the lack of prospects. Yet the aesthetic results

of their practices are almost antipodal. Even though Rodrigues listened to women talk about being confined by family and marriage, her works idealise women as guardians of cultural customs. In *Side-by-Side*, on the other hand, Hamilton proposed that we confront the troublesome (and at times fetid) past of the leather and textile industries in Guimarães, literally placing these activities in the centre of the urban fabric.

Albeit focusing on the city rather than the factory, this chapter has continued an exploration of the *Contextile* biennale, which began in Chapter two. My investigation of *Side-by-Side* has addressed another exhibitionary format encompassed in *Contextile*, which is that of ‘invited artists’.⁷⁵⁴ This model offers individual practitioners the opportunity to immerse themselves in Guimarães and its different institutions and communities and to conduct research on multiple aspects of its history. Within the *Side-by-Side* installation, for example, Hamilton not only looked at the history of textile production in the city but also discovered other significant historical aspects from Guimarães and beyond such as the city’s historic leather industry and the particular breed of donkey from Terra de Miranda.

My investigation of the *Side-by-Side* project also demonstrates that the ‘invited artists’ format allows other kinds of creative collaborations with community groups and practitioners. For instance, Hamilton’s collaboration with the Outra Voz choir resulted in an interdisciplinary project, extending her longstanding exploration of performance and voice. This is not to say that *Side-by-Side* was less problematic in its treatment of external collaborators than other works that were analysed in the previous chapters. Some of the project’s creative results, namely the record players, and the testimonies gathered in focus groups, have revealed that *Side-by-Side* maintained a hierarchy between international and

⁷⁵⁴ Melo and Milão (eds), *Contextile 2018*, 4.

national practitioners and the community choir, which is mostly comprised of elderly people.

The chapter drew on available sources, including several exhibition catalogues, guides, and designs, project statements, artist's interviews, and installation photographs; on my own observation, experiences, and photographs through fieldwork conducted in the *Side-by-Side* installation, the *Contextile* biennial, and the city of Guimarães; on an interview with Melo; and on questionnaires and focus groups with members of the vocal group Outra Voz. My approach to the *Side-by-Side* installation through craft, alongside my focus on the city as a site, has allowed me to emphasise notions of labour, community, memory, and sensory experience, whilst contesting stereotypical categorisations of practices, people, venues, and sensations.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This thesis has examined craft-based exhibitions held in Portugal and the UK between 2012 and 2022. Each of its three chapters has focused on a different site, namely the church, the factory, and the city. This final section brings together the findings of this study and highlights and reflects upon its contribution to knowledge.

Craft can connect spaces, places, and geographies. By exploring the church, the factory, and the city from the perspective of craft, this thesis has foregrounded the links between these and other buildings, cities, regions, and countries. These include the monastery and the home, the factory and the crafts workshop, the museum and the market, city and countryside. I have therefore evidenced how craft offers a nuanced interpretation of spaces, and of the people who inhabit them, beyond simplistic categorisations. Despite my suggestion of an alternative classification of sites – *living sites*, *making sites*, and *exhibition sites* – in Chapter two, this study has demonstrated the overlaps between these activities across time and space. Additionally, my research has unveiled how contemporary craft-based exhibitions can highlight neglected rural settings and their scarce and aged populations; or areas historically associated with specific craft or industrial techniques such as Castelo Branco, Lancashire, and Vale do Ave.

Craft can fill sites with alternative stories. My investigation of the church, and of historic venues more broadly, has shown that these sites often undergo transformations and distinct functions across time. As a result, these spaces are full of hollows, both physically and symbolically – an aspect which makes it difficult for audiences to understand those sites and functions. My analysis of Rodrigues's solo exhibition at the Monastery of Alcobaça has demonstrated that craft-based exhibitions can contribute to occupying vacated areas of

buildings whilst evoking their previous uses. Through such creative occupations of the church and other historic sites, contemporary practitioners have the opportunity to inject narratives about marginalised populations in spaces which have repeatedly silenced these voices.

Craft can contribute to creating and re-creating diplomatic ties. My exploration of the church has evidenced that craft has historically been used as a tool for reconciliation between nations in the aftermath of conflict. My analysis of Rodrigues's permanent installation at Manchester Cathedral, and the ensuing cultural agreement between the regions of Castelo Branco and Manchester, has demonstrated that craft can prompt the rethinking of political alliances in the present through the forging of transregional, rather than transnational, agreements.

Craft can bring different makers together, even at a distance. My investigation of the factory has highlighted an emerging exhibitionary typology, which I named the material-based post-industrial biennale. This format provides a platform of encounters between various practitioners, including international and local practitioners and skilled industrial workers. My analysis of the *Contextile* biennale has demonstrated their development of methodologies to facilitate exchanges between practitioners working in different parts of the world, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. My research has also shown that contemporary practitioners continue to draw on the technical skills and material and human resources held in factories and crafts workshops.

Craft can connect sites within the city which have often been held apart. My exploration of the city has evidenced the ability of craft to establish dialogues between the market, the museum, and derelict industrial spaces, restoring urban fabrics that had become

disintegrated due to processes of deindustrialisation and urban regeneration. As shown by my analysis of Hamilton's *Side-by-Side* project, this temporary repair of the city can take place through the juxtaposition and circulation of objects and materials across these venues. Such combinations of works, in turn, have the potential to disrupt longstanding classifications of museums and their collections as craft, art, popular art, ethnography, and archaeology, which have served imperialistic and colonialist aims. Hamilton's process of scanning objects from multiple museum collections equally entails a promising solution, not only because it enables an unprecedented merging of works, but also because it reduces the carbon footprint of exhibitions and ensures the preservation of the original object – a particularly useful strategy for textiles, given their vulnerability to light, humidity, pests, and touch. Museums and galleries could learn from these examples by promoting exchanges with nearby sites and addressing traumatic experiences undergone by the populations that surround them.

Craft can prompt conversations around colonialism, imperialism, and their implications in the present. This dissertation has evidenced the urgent need for exhibitions to critically engage with the legacies of colonialism, particularly in Portugal, and across former empires. While the *Contextile* biennale has addressed the violence of the textile industry and its effects on people across the region of Vale do Ave, it has not yet tackled the repercussions of the cotton industry on Angola, Mozambique, and other former Portuguese colonies, or given voice to these communities who fed Vale do Ave its cotton. My analysis of the *Side-by-Side* project has nonetheless highlighted the links between colonialism, post-colonialism, and the presence of African artefacts in Portuguese collections and homes, demonstrating the potential of craft to bring to light the histories of African populations and

their descendants. Lessons might be learnt from other nations such as Britain which have begun to research their colonial past and its continued impact into the present. This has been explored for example by the British Textile Biennial, whose second and third editions, in 2021 and 2023, exposed the legacies of the British Empire through clothing and fabrics such as cotton.⁷⁵⁵ Collaboration across textile biennials with similar imperial and capitalist histories might be one way forward in researching and responding to this trauma.

Craft can generate intercultural, interfaith, and intergenerational encounters. This project has revealed attempts to retrieve the connection between local communities and historic or post-industrial sites; to offset the rise of hate, conflict, and social polarisation; and to involve audiences who are not familiarised with contemporary creative practices by stepping out of the museum and entering the farmers market. In such contexts, particular materials, handmade or appropriated objects, and traditional craft skills have often stood for these underrepresented people. Yet the publics of these exhibitions do not always reflect these ideals of inclusion and diversity. My investigation has demonstrated that the material-based post-industrial biennale offers a platform where practitioners from different parts of the world, and local, skilled, industrial workers and elderly practitioners of traditional craft skills can meet and collaborate. However, my analysis has evidenced that the contributions of both skilled and unskilled collaborators remain invisible or unacknowledged within their exhibitionary outcomes. This thesis has attempted to counteract such absence by foregrounding the perspectives and experiences of the skilled makers who worked in these projects. I have also emphasised that the authorities that certify craft skills in Portugal inhibit

⁷⁵⁵ Biennial guide, 'British Textile Biennial 2021: What's On Guide', various locations across Lancashire (1-31 October 2021); Biennial guide, 'British Textile Biennial 2023: What's On Guide', various locations across Lancashire (29 September-29 October 2023).

those who are labelled as craftspeople, but not those who are deemed as contemporary artists, from introducing innovations within traditional techniques. Ironically, it is only by participating in so-called contemporary art projects that those who practice traditional craft skills have a chance to transform making traditions.

One of the key innovations that my research introduces is its intersection of craft studies and exhibition studies. This thesis has demonstrated that the focus on craft and exhibitions enables us to work across spaces, practices, people, and histories which have so often been kept apart. Drawing on scholarship from both fields, this study has evidenced, on the one hand, the role of craft in several sites and, on the other, a way to understand craft through multiple contexts of display. My research therefore contributes to enriching these areas of study and the emerging field of craft exhibition studies.

This thesis also contributes to previous research by highlighting spaces, notably exhibition spaces, which are not conventional. Not only has my study gone beyond white cube settings, but it has deliberately focused on venues whose primary function is not to exhibit works. Like craft, the sites of the church, the factory and the city are complex and charged with a myriad of connotations. They are inherently connected to specificities of place, geography, and culture, and their transformations across time. Looking at the church, the factory, and the city has allowed me to address common – and at times conflicting – tropes in craft and art historical scholarship: conservatism and progressiveness; the factory, the workshop, and the studio; handmade and machine made; function and aesthetic contemplation; industry, craft, and art; among many others.

Through these sites, I have examined issues of class, from the longstanding power of the royalty and clergy to industrial workers and those who specialise in traditional craft

skills. Since the ruling classes have largely decided what 'art' means and what 'art' includes or excludes, these class divides are at the root of the formation of hierarchies between creative practices. The church, the factory and the city have also prompted discussions around the senses, and how the categorisation of different sensations is intimately linked to social exclusion within and beyond the museum. A particularly poignant example has been how the unpleasant odours caused by tanning, and those who worked in this industry were deliberately cast to the periphery of the city of Guimarães. In brief, focusing on the church, the factory, and the city has offered an opportunity to explore the divides between sites, classes, creative practices, and sensations, along with their interconnections. This study therefore goes beyond previous research on how the space of the museum reflects and perpetuates creative, social, and sensory divides.

Another way in which this thesis contributes to knowledge is through its focus on Portugal and the UK. Despite resulting from Covid restrictions, such particular attention to these two countries eventually tamed what was initially an overly ambitious study. Furthermore, my selection of these geographical locations reflects my own experience as a Portuguese researcher who lives between Portugal and the UK. Confronting the British and Portuguese realities has allowed me to explore the historical connections between both countries; additional divides, notably those between nations; the present effects of imperialism and colonialism, and the dynamic relations between centre and periphery; and different understandings of craft across various display contexts. Through this study, I have evidenced the creative and cultural significance of Portugal – a small, peripheral country which has often been absent from art historical research.

Through its emphasis on craft and contexts of display, my thesis also contributes to

new knowledge within the field of art history. By looking at exhibitions from the lens of craft, this research has made visible practices, people, spaces, and sensations which continue to be neglected in art historical scholarship. These include popular religiosity, textile techniques from particular regions, and community choirs; women, migrants, the elderly, those living in isolated areas of the countryside, factory workers, and professional practitioners of traditional craft skills; the bedroom, the kitchen, the farmers market, old tanneries, and water tanks; the visual abundance of the decorative, the touch and scent of hide beneath one's feet, and the reverberation of voices across sites. Despite its focus on Western countries, I hope that this study can contribute to recent efforts to acknowledge human diversity in art historical research.

With this project, I have aimed to show how craft is craft shaped by its specific sites of display, and how craft engages with sites of display beyond the museum and gallery. Its purpose is to contribute to enriching both the areas of craft studies and exhibition studies, as well as the emerging field of craft exhibition studies. The focus on craft and exhibitions enables us to work across spaces, practices, people, and histories which have so often been kept apart. I hope that this thesis can play a role in disseminating this multifaceted methodology and breaking down the divisions between historic sites, spaces of living, making spaces, and spaces of collecting and display.

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