

GALLERY GUIDE

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Threads: 'Breathing stories into materials'

An invitation to connect from Bridges for Communities

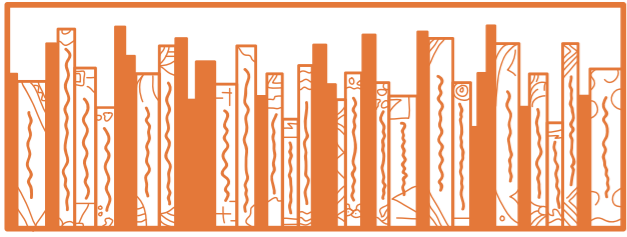
What are the threads that run through your life? Family, friends, faith, food, work, home, nature? How does it feel when these ties that bind us to place, to people, to home are broken? When the threads unravel, how do we start again and weave new connections?

At Bridges for Communities we are fortunate to work with people from a wide range of backgrounds, all of whom have their own unique story, and who now call Bristol home. In our day to day work we see the wonderful diversity of people's traditions and experiences and the unique contributions and skills they bring which help make Bristol the city that it is today. We witness the courage and resilience of people who have come here seeking sanctuary, such as the Afghan women whose work can be seen on the second floor as part of the project *Stitching Together*. In turn, we celebrate the ways in which so many Bristolians go out of their way to make this a welcoming and inclusive city.

As you explore this exhibition we invite you on a special journey, travelling through time and textures to unravel the stories of the people, the places and the work represented here. This is slow travel – a chance to unwind and think about your own memories and your relationship to threads, textiles and making. Who makes your clothes? Where do they come from? Do you or a family member knit or sew? Can *Threads* help you make deeper connections to another culture or tradition here in Bristol, playing your part in stitching together a better world?

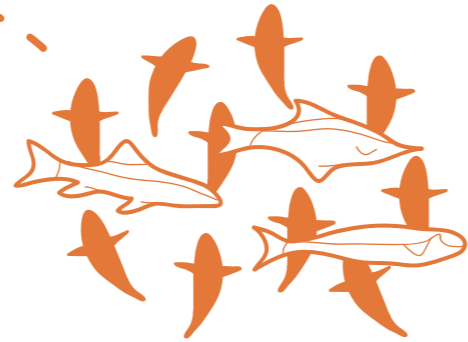
Bridges for Communities is a Bristol-based charity who have worked in partnership with Arnolfini since 2020. They seek to create communities that are kinder, fairer and more welcoming. The threads that run throughout their work are: Connecting, Inspiring, Welcoming, Enabling, Resourcing and Equipping.

At the heart of *Threads* lies the idea that textiles contain memories and stories which connect us to our lives and the lives of others. Our weekly Women's Craft Club have explored some of the works in *Threads*, inspiring the creative prompts below, designed to help you think about your own stories as you walk around the show.



STORYTELLING

Yinka Shonibare's books have been wrapped in Dutch Wax printed cloth. What stories do you think are contained within each book? What stories would you include in your own bookshelf?



PATTERN

Lubaina Himid has painted images on top of the patterns on her Dutch Wax printed cloths. What patterns and symbols do you recognize? Try closing your eyes and drawing a pattern in your palm with your finger.



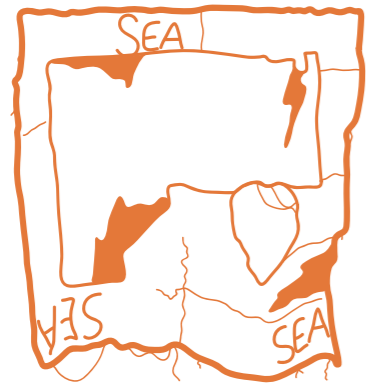
IMAGINATION

Caroline Achaintre's work looks like a mask or an animal's face. If you look long enough, what can you see? What might be hiding behind the mask?



STORING THE PAST

Esna Su's knitted and crocheted 'bags' are empty and hollow. What objects can you imagine them holding? What objects would you pack in a bag to remind you of home?



MEMORY

Ibrahim Mahama's jute sacks have passed through many hands before finding their way into his work. Can you see the marks and memories left upon the surface? Can you imagine where the textiles in your life have been before?



TEXTURE

Olga de Amaral weaves together linen and Japanese paper with gold leaf. What materials feel precious to you? What materials would you weave together to create your own story?



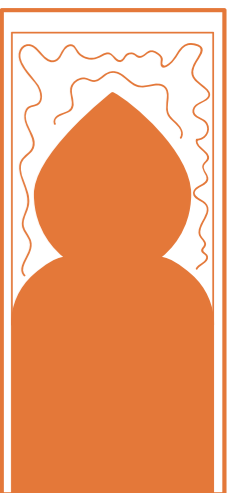
HOME

Raisa Kabir's work includes a Charpai, a traditional woven bed found in homes throughout South Asia. What textiles and materials remind you of home?



FRIENDSHIP/GATHERING

Farwa Moledina has created a space for reflection and conversation. What stories can you share with other visitors? Can you find your own common threads to share with others?



GLOSSARY

WEAVING uses two separate threads. One, the 'warp' runs lengthways, and the other, the 'weft' horizontally. They are woven together at right angles to form a fabric or cloth. Olga de Amaral uses a Japanese technique called **Shifu** to weave with paper. Monika Žaltauskaitė-Grašienė uses a technique called **Jacquard** where an image is woven into the fabric in a mechanized or digital process.

TUFTING is a traditional technique in which a thread is inserted through a backing material. Anna Perach creates her handmade carpet textiles using a **hollow needle**, whereas Caroline Achaintre uses a **tufting gun**. Anya Paintsil uses a form called **rug hooking** pulling loops of yarn through a stiff woven-based canvas.

STITCHING is the act of joining together pieces of material to create a structure, whereas **embroidery** adds decoration. Richard McVetis and Mounira Al Solh stitch with needle and thread by **hand**, whereas Alice Kettle uses a **sewing machine** with an 'embroidery foot' attachment to stitch patterns.

KNITTING is the process of continuously interlinking or knotting a chain of loops of yarn using needles. **Crochet** uses a hooked needle to interlock loops of yarn to make a pattern of connected threads. **Knotting** (such as Macramé) involves

tying deliberate knots in yarn and string to create decorative patterns or objects. Artist Esna Su uses all three techniques.

DYEING is the process of transferring colour to a finished textile material to add a permanent or long-lasting colour. Techniques include Japanese **Shibori**, Indian **Ayurvedic** dyes and Indonesian **Batik**. Raisa Kabir looks at **Indigo** a natural rich blue dye found in plants. In the 18th and 19th C It was highly valued and imported into Britain from South Asian countries including India and Bangladesh.

PRINT is a form of decorating cloth with different patterns, achieved by applying colour to the surface of a fabric by hand, machine, or digitally. Dutch Wax printed cotton fabric, also known as 'African' batik or 'Ankara' cloth is used by Lubaina Himid and Yinka Shonibare. Historically it has been produced on an industrial scale in the Netherlands for African markets. The original Batik designs come from Indonesia.

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