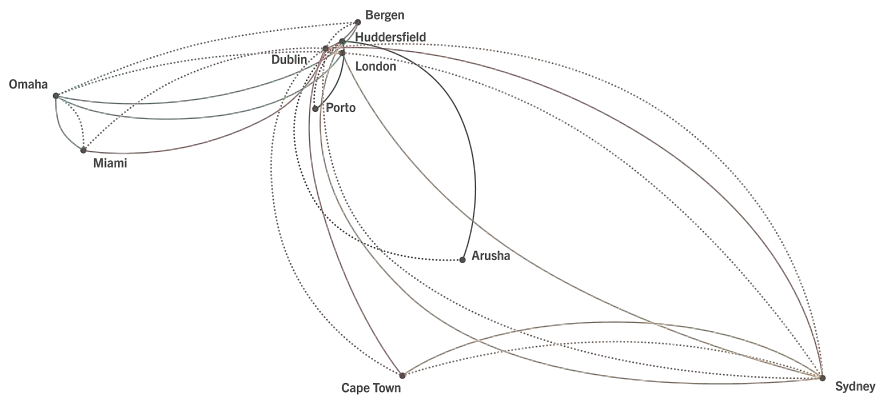




above: installation view *Migrations* at Huddersfield Gallery of Art, England (photograph: University of Huddersfield)

The *Migrations* exhibition travelled through 2017 (America, Ireland, Australia, England) and explores the notion of textiles as carriers of multiple cultural influences put forth in the accompanying publication *Cultural Threads: transnational textiles today* (Bloomsbury) edited by Jessica Hemmings. Curated by Hemmings, the exhibition included contemporary artists, designers and an author who all work at the intersection of cultures and use multiple, portable textiles as their vehicle.



above: *Migrations* exhibition destinations and shipping routes of objects (map designed by Chris Fullam)

Objects and their transnational narratives were the primary focus of the *Cultural Threads* book, from which the Migrations exhibition emerged. The premise of the *Migrations* exhibition was that the portability of textiles – the ease with which they move around the globe – and their hybrid position within the worlds of craft, design and art make them particularly apt carriers of culture. Alongside portability, the exhibition also focused on the reality that the textile often exists as a multiple. While versions roam, others stay closer to home.

Curating an exhibition after editing the publication is an unconventional sequence to adopt in exhibition making (books typically coincide or follow exhibitions). In this case, curating the exhibition after the publication allowed for the exhibition to include artists and projects that came to light as a result of the book's publication but were not included in the publication. This allowed connections to expand beyond the initial content of the publication. The sequence also meant that the book concept started with the objects contributors were inspired to write about and concluded with new reflections on a further group of objects and artists – ensuring that the physical rather than textual remained foregrounded.

Joseph McBrinn of Ulster University, in his exhibition review of *Migrations* in the academic publication *Textile: the journal of cloth and culture*, writes, “Although the spread of global capitalism seems to flatten and homogenize all cultures, this exhibition and publication aptly showed just how textiles, operating beyond the literary abstract of postcolonial theory, have acted as both resistance to and comment upon this process.” (*Textile*, volume 15, Issue 1, pp. 115)

The move beyond what McBrinn terms “the literary abstract of postcolonial theory” was a crucial motivation for the exhibition – a desire to show that the often inaccessible theoretical writing of postcolonial theory could be seen and felt in numerous examples of contemporary textile art and design. Focussing on the textile as an object rather theoretical discourse allowed exhibition visitors an accessible entry point into the exhibition theme. As curator and academic Christine Checinska observes in her video interview recorded to accompany the exhibition, “there is an accessibility when we work with textiles in a curatorial setting so that people can come in a recognise, or begin to recognise themselves and their own stories because we are working with cloth.” (<https://vimeo.com/242571907>)



above: east African Khangas, printed, (2014 & 2016)