

Self-narrating cloth: The aesthetics of (a) weaving

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Abstract

Despite almost universal participation in textile use, an understanding of the fundamentals of textile construction within the global north appears to be increasingly superficial. The typical person is largely unexposed to the making process of textiles and textile products, as production is outsourced to locations distant from the final user. In recent years, fashion and textile designers have attempted to engage users in their making processes through the use of various supporting media. My intention is not to disregard the production of additional media, but to propose a turn to utilising the textile itself as the site for further user engagement. In this article I reflect on my experiences working with weavers in rural Bangladesh as part of my creative practice and postgraduate research. There, through multisensorial observation, I began to see each ‘weaving’ (noun/verb) not as a flat thing but as a multidimensional *changescape* (Gibson vii). Ephemeral moments occurring during the making process were found to materialise within each weaving, acting as a physical record of the spatial, temporal and personal traces of making. Using photography, these traces have been visually amplified in order to involve each weaving in the narration of its own creation.

Keywords

Weaving; Making Processes; Textile Research; Construction Narratives; Changescapes; Mutability

Introduction

I suppose I was a child when I first regarded the textile as flat. When accompanying my mother to the fabric store for supplies in order to sew my school uniform, I considered woven cloth (or ‘material’ as we called it) an ingredient, a raw material, a thing that other things would be constructed from. That it had already been constructed – a check pattern intentionally woven into its very being, weft over warp – eluded me, because many of the spatial and temporal traces of weaving (particularly in machine-loomed

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cloth) are virtually invisible to the naked eye. I imagined the textile as flat and static, disregarding its assembly: the horizontal and vertical threads, intertwining and intersecting perpendicularly, creating their own structure. Through postgraduate research and creative practice experience in fashion, textiles and interiors, I have become aware that I was not alone in taking this position. Despite almost universal participation in textile use, an understanding of the fundamentals of textile construction within Australia appears to be waning. Due to shifts in the global textile and garment industry and in domestic structures, it is now typical that Australian residents are largely unexposed to the making process of cloth because production is outsourced to locations distant from them.

This article tracks my own learning of the textile as the opposite of flat. I have come to see it as multidimensional, or, in Ross Gibson's words, a *changescape* (vii). This understanding came through observing artisans constructing hand-woven cotton cloth at a fair-trade garment and textile cooperative, Thanapara Swallows Development Society (TSDS), in Rajshahi, Bangladesh. The textiles (example shown in Figure 1) were being woven for my 'socially and ecologically conscious' fashion label, Bhalo, which operated in Australia from 2009 to 2016. What began as a trip in 2014 to oversee production in order to reduce miscommunications and subsequent errors became an experience in understanding the multiple processes involved in creating a textile. A rich account of events could be textually narrated about the experiences in the workshop – the rhythmic clinking of the fly shuttle looms, the repetitive round-arm motions of winding bobbins, the smell of the wood fire stoves used to boil the yarn, and personal exchanges occurring throughout. However, what started to interest me more was how each of these ephemeral moments were physically materialising in the cloth itself. Each length of cloth began to represent an intensified and materialised version of the external conditions that produced it (Gibson 4).



Figure 1. A cut raw edge of woven cotton cloth produced for Bhalo by TSDS (reproduced with permission, Yarwood 2019).

In recent years, fashion and textile designers have attempted to engage users in these making processes and textile origins through the use of various supporting media. Brief and curated ‘haptic’ videos of work being made are commonly exhibited through social media channels (Masri, “No Touching”), and advertising copy is increasingly engaged with construction details such as maker, origin, technique and materiality. The intention of my research is not to disregard the production of this additional media, but to propose a turn to utilising the textile itself as the site for further user engagement. In this article, I detect the visible processes of weaving embedded in cloth (designed by myself) through process observation and photography. I identify particular intentional, unintentional and incidental traces of the *event* of hand weaving which are embedded into the *artefact* of weaving. It is through observing these traces of making (visible in Figure 2, below) that I came to believe a woven textile has the visual and haptic capability to narrate the story of its construction.

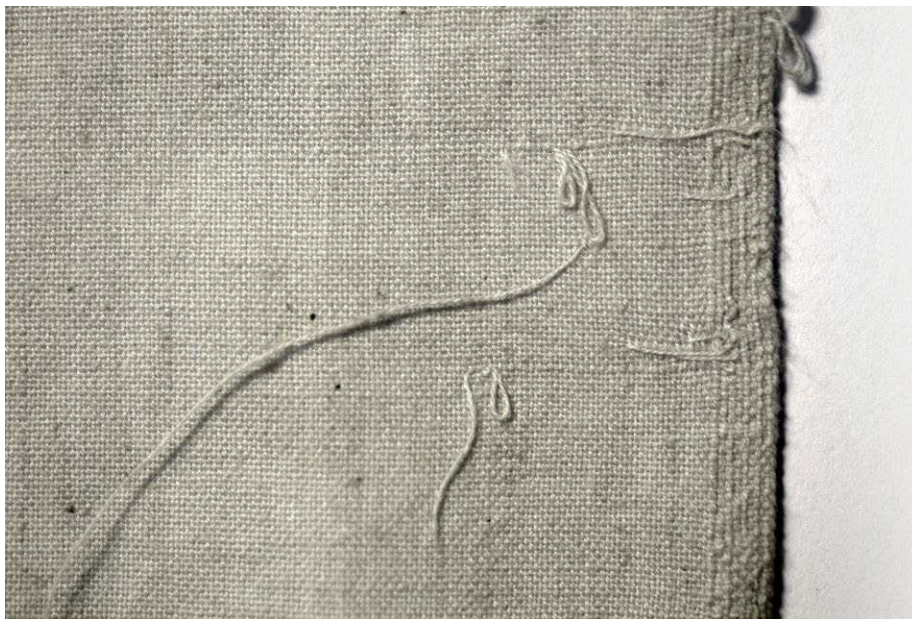


Figure 2. Snags, skipped threads and other traces of hand making in woven cotton cloth produced for Bhalo by TSDS (reproduced with permission, Yarwood 2019).

Zooming in

The traces that identify a textile as handmade are arguably its imperfections. By experiencing a more imperfect surface we can relate it to craft or artisanal work – the work of a person, embedding a certain inconsistency that may be caused by the roughness of the hand, and the non-homogenous rhythms of working that are invariably visible, though subtle. Aspects such as irregular *selvedge* (Figure 3) or weave structure, varying thread sizes and colour variation may also express this.

This article involves ‘zooming in’ and inspection of the woven textile closely to identify covert traces that may normally be hidden or appear invisible. Through the close-up presentation of designed woven textiles presented in this article I aim to highlight the

often-subtle traces of making present in hand-woven cloth. Throughout my time working with Bhalo I began to consider cloth a finished object/thing in its own right. By ‘zooming in’ I was able to fully appreciate the woven textile as multidimensional, not just a raw material to be constructed *from* (as past-me would have believed) – rather a thing which had already undergone a process of construction.

During my process of closely examining the physical structure of textiles, the closer I looked the simpler cloth seemed. Instead of a convoluted world of intertwining fibres, I witnessed all that (plain) weaving is: two intersecting threads. They don’t hook around each other or make any kind of complex exchange – they simply pass each other, taking the decision to either go over, or under. The repetition of this action over and over again creates a length of cloth. When this repetitive act of intersections is intentionally highlighted through weave, either by pattern, colour, or yarn, it invites the wearer or viewer to also observe this microscopic world and, perhaps as I did, to begin to consider the textile as spatial and mutable.



Figure 3. *Selvedge* on hand-woven cloth sample produced at TSDS. The selvedge (edges) of handwoven cloth are often indicators of the skill level of a weaver as it is something controlled by ‘feel’ and learned through experience (reproduced with permission, Yarwood 2019).

The act of weaving is commonly defined as forming fabric by interlacing horizontal and vertical threads. However, as I observed the weaving process, I came to understand that the creation of a woven fabric requires much more than just the act of ‘weaving’ fibres together. At TSDS the process begins with acquiring the pre-spun cotton, then includes dyeing, bobbin winding, and warping the fly-shuttle hand loom. Eventually this leads to ‘throwing the weft’ – the action-packed and rhythmic action that I had previously considered as the primary event of weaving. Constructing a textile involves multiple people, multiple tools and multiple procedures. Previously, despite working in fashion and textiles, a lack of understanding of the constraints, complications and procedures of textile production had left me unaware of the impact each stage of making had on the

cloth itself. So, as part of my own process of looking closer, I put cloth under a macro lens, as well as a microscope, and found several things of interest. Though the irregularities present in cloth occur at multiple stages of the process, the focus of this article is primarily about hand-dyeing and the interlacing (or ‘throwing’) of the horizontal weft thread through the vertical warp threads. This focus was chosen as it was the activities that I had observed most closely during my time at TSDS, as well as being processes that seemed to have the most visible impact on the cloth.

Visual texture and visible processes

The variations of weaving patterns are multiple, and of first concern when designing a textile. Bauhaus designer and master weaver Anni Albers determined the order of importance in textiles to be texture (weave), yarn type and colour. On emphasising the structure of a textile, Albers states “If texture produced through the interlocking of threads is the focal point in weaving, those peripheral components that can variegate it come only second in importance” (75). Albers considered that the ‘weave’ or structure of a textile should be the initial priority of a weaver – a position shared by the weavers that I worked with at TSDS (and later on when I began to weave myself).

The weave of the cloth that I had designed for Bhalo, despite only being a plain weave and quite fine, is somewhat visible to the naked eye and arguably more prominent than a synthetic machine-made woven textile. During my work with Bhalo I identified particular signifiers of the event of hand weaving that can be physically embedded into the artefact of weaving. In this article I will look at *intentional stories* (choices taken to amplify the handmade qualities), *incidental traces* (simply, what happens when you hand make), and also *accident aesthetics* (mistakes acceptable to a point where they appear as ‘inconsistencies’ and not structural flaws that would compromise the integrity of the cloth, such as the variation shown in Figure 4).



Figure 4. Variation in hand woven cotton cloth produced for Bhalo by TSDS (reproduced with permission, Yarwood 2019).

Intentional stories

The natural structure of a textile can be emphasised by use of colour. Though Albers believes the use of colour to visually emphasise the weave texture should be of lesser importance than creating actual textural weave patterns, I began here as it is also arguably the most simple and effective way of differentiating warp and weft. As mentioned previously, a woven textile can be described as two planes intersecting, horizontally and vertically, of warp and weft (Albers 1). For most fibre artists and artisans, colour is selected, and yarn dyed prior to construction – aptly named ‘yarn dyed’ cloth. Colouring the warp and weft colours differently adds a sense of depth to a textile and can accentuate the structure. As Albers states, “By giving different colours to the differently functioning threads the structural character of the weaving will be intensified” (76). Even when the same dye is used on both warp and weft, small inconsistencies in colour can create visual texture.

As stated by Albers, “The dyeing process (post-weaving) diminishes rather than enhances the quintessence of weaving, for it bridges over and thereby obscures with one colour, the separate functions of the structural elements” (75). In Figure 5, the contrasting warp and weft colours of the textile emphasises visual texture. The opportunity to accentuate the weave pattern (even when plain weave) using pre-determined coloured threads is given privilege by weavers as it amplifies structural and spatial qualities. In this case, to dye a pre-woven fabric would almost be considered a form of textural erasure.



Figure 5. Visual texture: contrasting warp and weft colours in hand woven cotton cloth produced for Bhalo by TSDS (reproduced with permission, Yarwood 2019).

The contrast between warp and weft is often not obvious to the untrained eye, at least until viewing the cut edges of cloth (such as in Figure 6). However, seeing as most textile edges are concealed (for structural purposes) by hems and seams, it is through the increase in visual texture that such spatial details can be detected. When textiles have a different warp and weft colour they can appear as slightly different colours from different angles. This gives the cloth a kind of “rough variation” (Spuybroek 6), making it seem different to the homogenous mass-produced cloth of the machine that we have typically become accustomed to.



Figure 6. Concealed and exposed: A folded seam and a raw edge of a textile with differing warp and weft colours (reproduced with permission, Yarwood 2019).

Incidental traces

For *Bhalo*, I attempted to avoid homogeneity in the cloth produced by using differing warp and weft colours. However, these effects were also born out of a restriction in resources. The majority of hand looms at TSDS during this time could only produce plain weave, meaning that we were restricted to a plain cloth, a stripe, or a check. Plain cloth became the textile of choice, as we wished to embellish later, and aesthetically a stripe or a check was less adaptable to applied graphics. Another way to embed a feeling of variation in the cloth was to use different weights (thickness) of yarn for the warp and weft. Like the differing colours it provided visual depth, but additionally, a more haptic textured experience.

Variations in colour occur naturally during the hand-dyeing process. Within one length of hand-dyed yarn-dyed cloth you can find a variation of colour throughout. This can be caused by a variety of factors. During the hand-dyeing process, yarn is submerged into a dye bath. The human factor in this process leads to a number of inconsistencies – usually too small to be identified as ‘mistakes’ – but enough variation to make the cloth appear textured. Working with cotton, a plant fibre, meant that the yarn absorbed slightly different amounts of dye, making it almost impossible to create a completely

flat colour. As shown in Figure 7, unevenly spun cotton also results in variation visible in cloth. Even though the spinning of the cotton was done on machine and outsourced to another facility, cotton being a natural fibre is much more prone to irregularities in the yarn-making process than a synthetic yarn.



Figure 7. An example of variation in hand woven cotton cloth produced for Bhalo by TSDS (reproduced with permission, Yarwood 2019).

Accident aesthetics

Mistakes in cloth are either deemed acceptable or unacceptable by a variety of different people involved in the design, construction and buying of cloth. The line between an unacceptable mistake and just an irregularity can be a fine one, and depends on who is assessing it, and whether or not the damage is structural or superficial. Common flaws that lead to the cloth being rejected include holes in the textile, stains and discolorations caused by dust or spills.

An example of an unacceptable error in a piece of cloth would be caused by the incorrect threading of the heddle during the warping process. This creates the look of a 'skipped' warp thread (Figure 8). On discovery of this error generally the heddle would be rethreaded. Even if this mistake was right on the edge and could be cut away during the garment production process, it could be considered somewhat torturous for a weaver to work on a weaving where they are forced to skip a weft thread repeatedly until the warp is complete. The artisan would likely correct it prior to having to live this ordeal. Like any craft, hand-weaving is fraught with unexpected flaws, and the unravelling and undoing of work is a prominent part of the process. But the effort of skipping each weft thread would change the nature of the weaving too much. Throughout a textile's construction, it is constantly in a state of becoming and unbecoming. Depending on how 'unbecoming' the error is influences whether or not typical people in Australia (consumers) are ever witness to these kinds of traces in the first place.



Figure 8. An unexplained skipped weft in woven cotton cloth produced for Bhalo by TSDS (reproduced with permission, Yarwood 2019).

The heartbeat of human time/rhythms of making

There are many unintentional irregularities in cloth that some may find endearing. The aesthetic appeal of the accident may be best explained through this quote by Octavio Paz in *In Praise of Hands*:

Since it is a thing made by human hands, the craft object preserves the fingerprints – be they real or metaphorical – of the artisan who fashioned it. These imprints are not the signature of the artist; they are not a name. Nor are they a trademark. Rather, they are a sign; the scarcely visible, faded scar... (21)

As observed during my time ordering fabrics from TSDS, there are unintentional errors or ‘scars’ that, while not planned, are accepted. The point of interest here is that while they may be deemed just acceptable to the weaver or designer from a quality control point of view, they may be considered *ideal* to a particular type of wearer. For some, there is the added appeal of (quite literally) wearing signifiers of your social and ecological consciousness on your sleeve. The aesthetic accident expresses a narrative of construction to make the weaver visible.

Other accidental but accepted (or even privileged) errors in the cloth produced for Bhalo included slubs present in Figure 9 (thicker pieces of yarn woven in), tiny snags in the fabric shown in Figure 10 (where the yarn is ‘pulled’ out irregularly, making a tiny loop in one place and pulling or bunching the fabric in others), a rare skipped thread as visible in Figure 11 (where a weft thread skips over a warp thread), ‘dust’ of ‘flyaways’ caught in the weave (workshop detritus becoming embedded in the cloth), and what I began to refer to as the ‘rhythm stripe’ – a visible change in colour that marked the

stopping and starting of the weaver. These spatial and temporal markers effectively remind us of the person behind the loom, their “crafts[wo]manship” representing “the heartbeat of human time” (Paz 24).

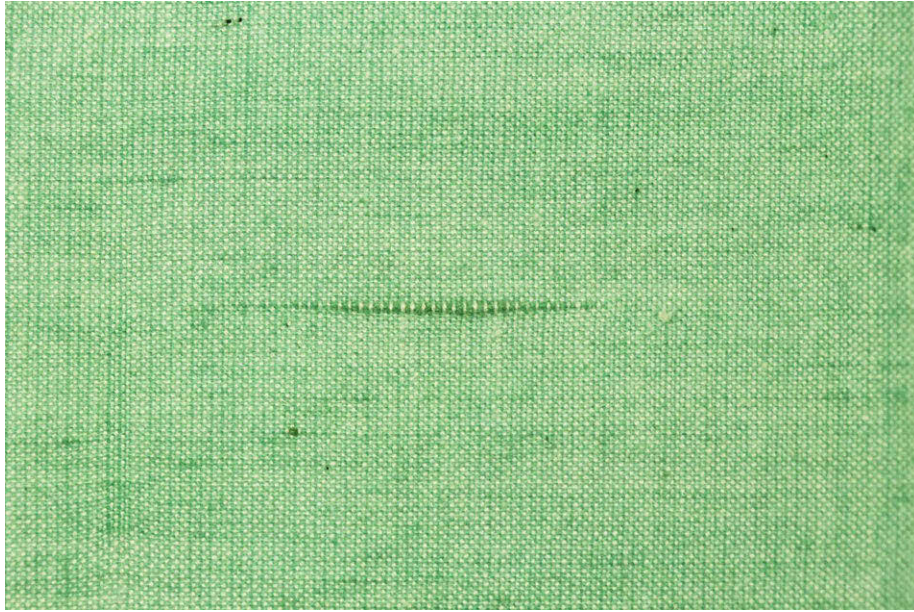


Figure 9. ‘Slub’ – irregularly thicker yarn accidentally occurring during the spinning process, visible in the woven cotton cloth produced for Bhalo by TSDS (reproduced with permission, Yarwood 2019).



Figure 10. A snag in the fabric. This is easily fixed by smoothing out the textile and pulling the thread back into place. While not ideal, tiny loose threads such as this will not affect the structural integrity of this type of cloth and are barely noticeable when rectified (reproduced with permission, Yarwood 2019).



Figure 11. Snags/skipped threads in a woven cloth. When this happens at TSDS, the cloth is not rejected outright – the garment cutter would simply avoid cutting pattern pieces that would include this error. This particular error is on the edge, so it wouldn't matter as much (reproduced with permission, Yarwood 2019).

During my time at TSDS, I observed that it takes a considerable amount of strength and endurance to operate a large fly-shuttle handloom. As a weaver begins, they have more energy and pull both the fly shuttle cord with one hand and beat the weft hard and consistently with the other. (The harder you beat the weft the denser and tighter the cloth, though this is also impacted by other things too.) However, as the weaver works they gradually become more tired, and the beater is pulled less vigorously. The weave may progressively get less dense and looser, until the weaver needs a break. When they return from their break they have somewhat regained their energy and will go back to weaving at full speed. This narrative becomes embedded in the cloth. The change in weave closeness is visible in Figure 12, as the aforementioned 'rhythm stripe'. This is something that experienced weavers have learnt to manage, however the less skilled weavers struggle to maintain regular rhythm and power (affecting density/closeness of setting) when weaving.

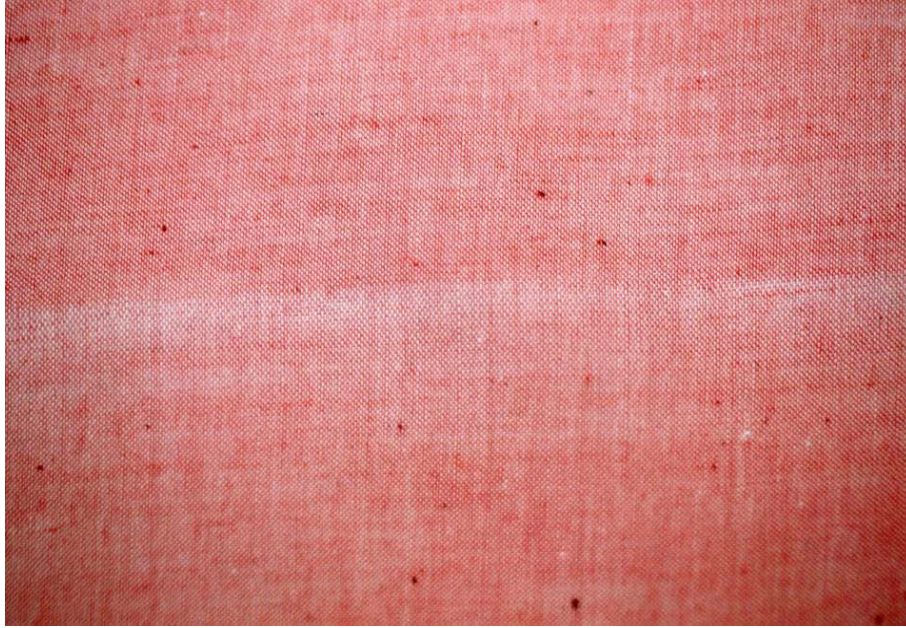


Figure 12. *Rhythm Stripe #1*: traces of patterns of making in woven cotton cloth produced for Bhalo by TSDS (reproduced with permission, Yarwood 2019).

Other things that can cause a similar stripe effect include irregularities in dyeing, as shown in Figure 13. If cotton is dyed in different batches then wound on to bobbins separately, then sometimes each bobbin can differ. When the weaver gets to the end of a bobbin they will switch it and a faint stripe will emerge. Though caused by different means, the pause required when changing a bobbin is still notated here, in the cloth. Thus, the stripe still represents the stop-start of the weaver, once again signifying the rhythms of making – and the ‘imprintedness’ of the maker.

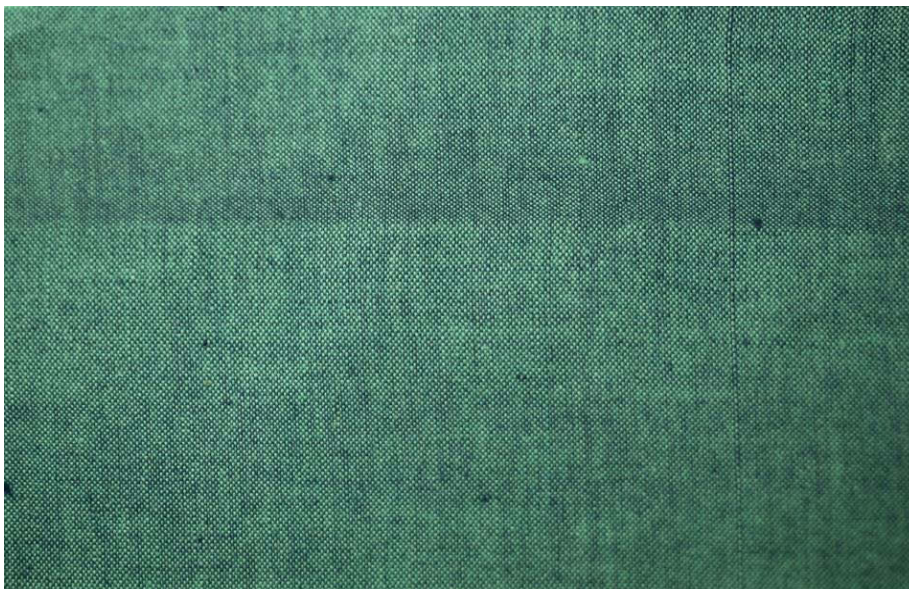


Figure 13. *Rhythm Stripe #2*: traces of patterns of making in woven cotton cloth produced for Bhalo by TSDS (reproduced with permission, Yarwood 2019).

Accidental variations in colour can also occur from an irregularly dyed skein of yarn, being one that was not submerged correctly or was completed by a less skilled maker, or, as mentioned above, multiple skeins with slight differences in colours due to being dyed inconsistently or in different dye baths. Colours mixed by eye and by hand can result in variations, especially when multiple dye baths are used to dye different skeins of yarn to be used in the same cloth. This creates a pattern, sometimes regular, sometimes irregular, that speaks ever-so-subtly about these colour stories, but also can often indicate the *amount* of yarn that was used to weave the cloth (by an emerging repetitive pattern), or the *order* in which a cloth is constructed (by slight gradient).

Traces of the visit – embedded context

There are very delicate ways in which context is lightly etched into the weave. Here I examine the embedding of ‘dust’. From a regular distance, the particle appears as a nondescript dot, as shown in Figure 14. When viewed under a microscope, as in Figure 15, it reveals itself as an irregular entanglement of fibres and other detritus. Through the presence of random colourful threads (or ‘flyaways’), it becomes apparent that not only is the textile being affected by the open windows and doors of the workshop through the implanting of random soil and plant matter, but each textile being woven simultaneously in the workshop is embedding parts of itself into the others, as evident in Figure 16. Geographical location and origin narratives are typically expressed through garment labels, social media and advertising/marketing copy. Here, the cross pollination of landscape and fibre represents a new poetic representation of how place can be embedded in the cloth, potentially acting as a visual and haptic marker of context.



Figure 14. Specks of ‘dust’ stuck in woven cotton cloth produced for Bhalo by TSDS. This cloth was rejected by another buyer (reproduced with permission, Yarwood 2019).

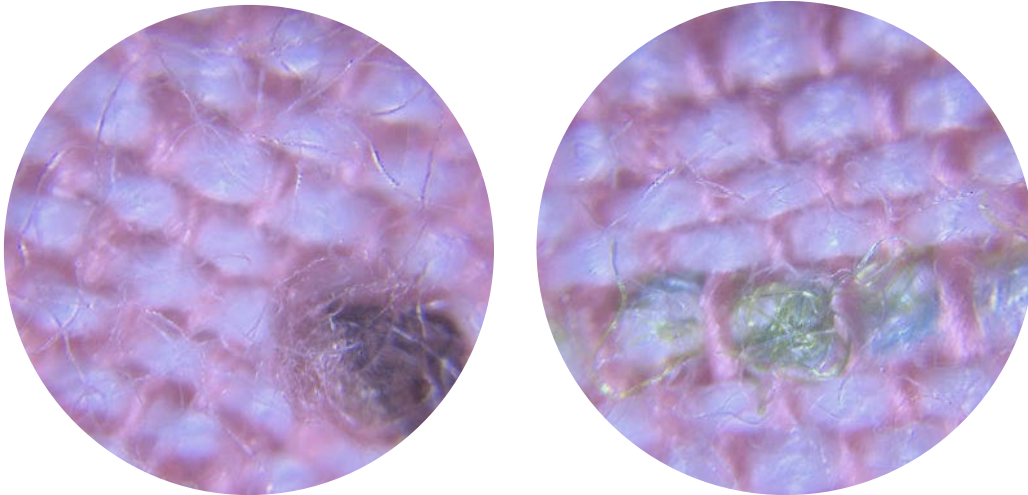


Figure 15. Dust caught in cloth, then caught under the microscope (Author’s own).

That both textile and context share a root word is befitting in the case of this project. The Latin root of the word, **teks-*, meaning ‘to make’, is also present in the word context, from the Latin *contextus*, meaning to join, or *weave*, together (*Oxford Dictionary of Etymology*, “Textile”). Textile making verbs such as weave, thread, tie and knot all allude to connectedness and are a part of our everyday vocabulary. The visual study of dust represents the ways in which the physical surroundings of a textile weaving workshop may affect the uniformity of cloth – the weaving together of context and textile, and, thus, cloth’s innate connectedness to place. As Carolyn Steedman states in *Dust*: “It happened, there are traces of the visit” (168).

While giving the cloth an increased look of variation, there have been instances where the amount of dust and flyaways trapped (in particular on light coloured cloth) has shifted from having ‘texture’ to just looking a little dirty. Many textiles produced by TSDS (for labels other than Bhalo) that have gathered multiple dust particles have been rejected by buyers for appearing faulty. In response to this, the weaving looms at TSDS are covered up when not in use to avoid dust being trapped. However, even with these measures the trapping of microfibers is inevitable. As Steedman states “Dust is the opposite thing to Waste, or at least, the opposite principle to Waste. It is about circularity, the impossibility of things disappearing, or going away, or being gone. Nothing *can be* destroyed ... Nothing goes away ...” (164). The hand-weaving process involves avoiding or actively fighting off these traces, to minimal avail. This represents a part of the process itself – a fighting against the natural occurrences of making and the consequences of place – which is usually elided.

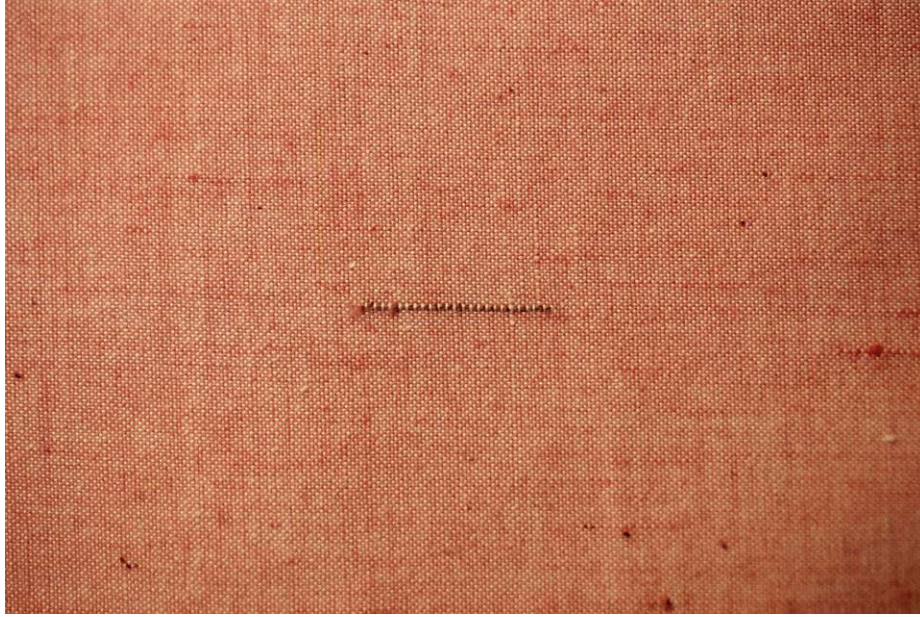


Figure 16. A stray piece of yarn has become stuck and woven into cloth (reproduced with permission, Yarwood 2019).

(A) weaving as self-narrating *changescape*

Though the focus of my article is more on the *traces of construction* than the *traces of use*, it is worth mentioning how particular qualities affected by use influence the way in which a textile is understood or defined. The misperception of the ‘flat’ textile can also be called into question by the changefulness and dynamism of its material qualities. Most textiles do not simply lie completely flat, even when we would prefer them to. Textiles are constantly moving, draping, folding and continually being shaped by other things, like our bodies. A major characteristic of natural fibres (in this case, cotton) post-weaving is the creases, shown in Figure 17, that emerge after handling the textile. Traditionally, with creases comes the desire to immediately erase them through ironing and pressing. The need to control the natural characteristics of cotton occur at multiple stages of the making process – prior to embellishment and prior to pattern cutting and post-construction, and finally, upon completion. In the past decade, a trend toward people selling already-creased natural fibres has emerged. Amongst a contemporary market dominated by machine made synthetic fibres, designers, retailers and consumers may desire to prove the ‘naturalness’ of a garment and its ‘authenticity’ – as mentioned previously, demonstrating their commitment to ecological responsibility (not to mention what is usually a higher priced item) – or what John Thackara may refer to as an ‘aesthetic of sustainability’ (“On regarding the pain of the planet”). Creases as a clear signifier of natural fibres are arguably becoming progressively valued and visible.



Figure 17. Creases in woven cotton cloth produced for Bhalo by TSDS (reproduced with permission, Yarwood 2019).

Textiles denote changefulness with use, through all too familiar stains, rips (as shown in Figure 18, below), snags and holes. They may also stretch, shrink or fade. Cloth emerges through construction and continues to evolve throughout its lifespan. Consideration of the mutable qualities of woven cloth lead to the question, where and/or when does a textile begin, or end? In light of this question, the textiles in this article might be considered more as projects, or processes. Throughout my research I struggled to identify a beginning or end point to weaving, with the woven textile being constantly in a state of becoming. As a *changescape*, textiles “tend not to finish” (Gibson 17). It remains open as to whether the woven textiles in question were ever ‘finished’ or whether they are still unfinished – remaining infinitely in-process. The boundary of these ‘weavings’ created by TSDS for Bhalo seem undefinable, or ‘edgeless’ as their “force pushes forwards and backwards in time” (Gibson 45). On *changescapes* being “always in process” Gibson reminds us, “Let’s not forget that the word building signifies a noun-thing that is also an endless action energized by the verb inside it” (263). For this reason, the word *weaving* (another noun-thing/verb) could be used as a replacement for all other words used to describe textiles in this article. These weavings not only display traces of how they came to exist, but continue to aesthetically narrate their use, their life, their mutability.

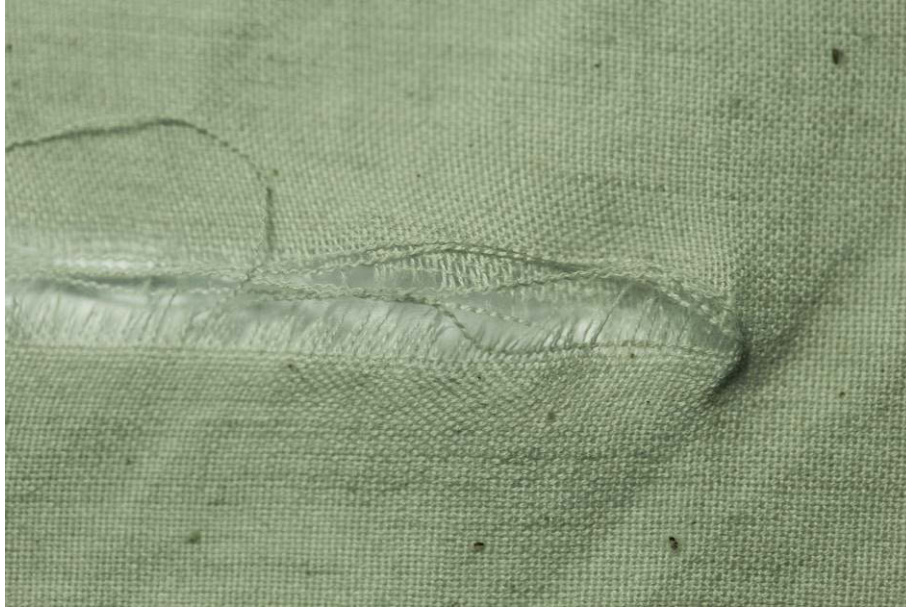


Figure 18. *Unbecoming*: A rip in woven cotton cloth produced for Bhalo by TSDS (reproduced with permission, Yarwood 2019).

Construction, use and disintegration are all temporal processes that the textile undergoes throughout its life. Beyond the markers of change through construction and use, textiles are constantly in flux. The threads are not entirely fixed, allowing the flexibility and movement that they were designed for. This dynamism is visible from the rustling of our garments, the flowing of a curtain, the scrunching of bedsheets, the wringing of a towel. In my own work, it became visible watching Bhalo customers pulling, picking and caressing the cloth and its embellishments. Through the photography of the cloth for this article, changes were observable in real time as, after each shot and adjustment, no weaving appeared the same. Objectives of straight selvages, perpendicular lines and flat (ironed) surfaces are ideally observed during textile construction. However, through both construction and use, the textile regularly deviates from the flat grid. In fact, everything is moving and changing, and no moment is like one before it – imprinting on and affecting the textile in what Gibson may refer to as the “feedback patterning of action and reaction” (7). While the museum cloth may remain frozen, the typical and used cloth is highly dynamic and mutable.

It is not just the traces of making or use that signify mutability. It goes beyond real-time movement, or even gradual alterations to the fabric, to an implied movement. For example, something that shows ordered and directional change, like a colour gradient, lets the user’s eye follow the weft thread. This now predictable snaking line (visible through the unravelled weft thread in Figure 19) implies a what Lars Spuybroek describes as a ‘nextness’, emphasising the inherent organised restlessness and continuation in such a piece. On closer inspections, textiles can, in Gibson’s words, incite “contemplative engagement with mutability” (15), encouraging a kind of wayfinding as we stop, and consider, what Albers famously referred to as, “the event of a thread” (xi).



Figure 19. An unravelling thread, a snaking line that indicates the journey of a thread (reproduced with permission, Yarwood 2019).

In *Changescapes*, Gibson recalls Walter Benjamin’s translation of an old German axiom – that “when you have gone on a journey, you have a story to tell” (90). Similar to Albers’ ‘event of a thread’, this idea reinforces the ability of the textile, as a changescape, to express its own story. Despite being recounted through text and photographic media for this particular article, the emphasis of this research is on finding ways in which the weaving recounts its creation – the traces of the journey. In this article I exhibit traces of a cloth’s making and journey, as well as indicate cloth’s potentials. Though the focus has been towards detecting traces through variation, by understanding a textile’s ‘organised restlessness’, its irregular deviations become familiar, and even its changefulness predictable. Through its implied ‘nextness’, the weft thread can be imagined to continue snaking back and forth rhythmically, over and under the tensioned warp, travelling ahead through time. The research and creative work I have conducted, with Bhalo and afterward, involves an amplification of these past (and potential future) traces of making – making the invisible visible, the flat spatial and the static mutable. It is my intention to utilise these amplified traces through my design practice as a form of radical expression towards (a) self-narrating weaving.

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About the author

Jessica Priemus is a multidisciplinary designer and academic at Curtin University in Perth, Western Australia. Jessica's work explores how materials may be designed to emphasise traces of the making process, with an aim to incorporate visual and tactile richness into contemporary design. Her doctoral thesis (in progress) *Narrating Textile Construction* is generating a unique practice framework, considering usually flat materials, such as cloth, as spatial, temporal and dynamic.