

## **The Matter of Material at Turner Contemporary**

**Dr. Beverly Ayling-Smith**

### ***The bed-sheet – from linen cupboard to art gallery.***

The choice of material in the creation of artwork is vital to the communication of the meaning of the work, be it concept, narrative or metaphor.

Bedsheets act as silent witnesses to many natural processes in life such as birth, puberty, pleasure, disease, decay and death. At a time of day when we are wearing little clothing, or perhaps none at all, the bedsheet is in contact with the body for many hours every night, soaking up sweat and bodily fluids to create a very personal cloth impregnated with the identity of a person. Whilst their function seems simple, they can also be appropriated to act as banner, bandage, noose, escape ladder or shroud. The bedsheet can become a material on which to literally or metaphorically write our meanings and messages to the world.

This paper will discuss the materiality of the bedsheet, an everyday and humble cloth. It will reference the work of artist Ewa Kuryluk who used sheets in her work. It will also draw on my own research into the use of materials to carry metaphors of emotion. It will be illustrated by my recent works using bedsheets to make a connection with the emotions of the viewer.