

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

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### ***The Event of a Stitch.***

This paper will take as its points of departure the event, the visit and the legacy, told through the voice of the seamstress, the traveller and the storyteller. That this symposium is taking place in Margate, looking out to the port and the sea is particularly pertinent as it marks a site where cultures meet and create community together – a precarious ecology built upon exchange and encounter.

According to Slavoj Žižek, an event is an effect that exceeds its causes – a point of rupture, after which everything is changed (2014: 6). As needle and thread pass through cloth, they engage in a tactical creation of mutual exchange. To visit, on the other hand, is to spend time in another place, with its residents, to be introduced through their eyes and bodies, not *in place of* them, but *together with* them. Hannah Arendt drew on the concept of visiting in terms of ‘thinking with an enlarged mentality’ (1978: 257), a mode for thinking that foregrounds and presupposes movement away from the self, towards the other, not in a colonising manner, but in the role of the invited visitor, the guest.

These two points of departure necessarily involve the leaving behind of traces, a legacy, a way of being together beyond and through the visit. This paper draws upon the legacy of Anni Albers, whose assertion that all weaving traces back to ‘the event of a thread’, together with Walter Benjamin’s storyteller/craftsman, and their repeated, fragmented, joined and embellished story-fabric.

Setting stitch as simultaneously and separately event, visit and legacy, this paper will consider these legacies and their makers, seeking to expand the notion of stitch from a hand-held series of movements into full-body articulation of stitching as a form for enlarged mentality. Works by kimsooja, Kirstie Macleod and Chiharu Shiota will be drawn upon as a way by which to think of the event of a stitch as a cosmopolitan

practice – a mode of practice which exists in each moment of encounter between needle, thread and cloth.