

Social Fabric Stories, 2021, 27 Patches

At the heart of *Rita Keegan: Somewhere Between There and Here*, is the mixed-media installation *Trophies Revised, 2021* which remixes the work *Cycles, 1992* presented initially at the Bluecoat, Liverpool, as part of the exhibition *Trophies of Empire* curated by Keith Piper. Rita's reimagining includes a patchwork train entitled *Social Fabric*, which consists of patches contributed by folks she knows and loves.

This collectively crafted textile makes material the many threads of Rita's kinship relations while also calling for more collective understandings of art-making and social modelling. The process of making the work reflects on the power and resilience held in our creative communities globally as well as the nature of togetherness held in Rita's home while making the work during a pandemic. *Social Fabric* was led by Lauren Craig who is a co-curator at the Rita Keegan Archive Project.



1. **Ego Ahaiwe Sowinski, she/her/hers/Ego**

Untitled

My patchwork represents a number of themes that I would discuss with Rita, the birds represent migration - UK to US, US to UK. The material is a nod to my mother, my Nigerian heritage and buying material for Rita and talking about sewing and making patterns.



2. **Ajamu**

Untitled

To Rita, from one of Ajamu's boys [XXXX].



3. **Raelene E. Ash**

Biscuits

Art has always been a part of my life. In grade school I learned to draw the human figure. And all through my schooling I began to master my art with oil painting, small murals and still life sketching. I was very fortunate to have job positions where I got to do arts and crafts, going to a host of community networking. I've worked with parent-ing groups, young teen mothers, recruiting high school students for Technology Col-lege courses. I worked as an Advocate for families and homeless families. Cooks for day-care centres and an Art Instructor for children in Kindergarten to 12th grade. As years passed, I became a mother of two, married and a grandmother. But in every life things change for a reason. In 2005 I became ill and had surgeries back-to-back that caused my health to fail. I had to have a surgery that saved my life. I was homeless. I started painting on Brown Paper bags. I painted stories of poverty and the struggles of African American Women. Today I have a collection of prints and note cards that include the original *Classic Bagg Ladies* and *Freedom Road Stories*. My health continues to be a challenge. "I'm still on my journey to my freedom".



4. **Charlie & Kate Boxer**

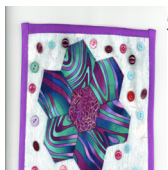
Our patch is a poem called

The sleeping peach's dream

A cleft

A stalk

A stone



5. **Pat Brown** (82 years, widow)

The Carousel



6. **Sayge Carroll** (was born and raised in Minneapolis MN, USA. She spent a brief time in Washington DC attending Howard University. She moved back to the twin cities in 2007 and resides with her son Morgan and dog Wolfy. As an artist she has leveraged her skills to secure several residencies, given lectures, curated shows, received grants and offered consultation services around inclusion and incorporating our rich cultural diversity into organisations and the city of Minneapolis. She has worked in arts education for over two decades building community and creating art at Juxtaposition Arts, Walker Art Center, Phillips East, Youth link and Little Earth to name a few. Carroll founded the Women of Color Artist Gathering, Art Church, and co-founded Cross County Arts. She is passionate about art as life practice and an approach to community engagement in a sustainable and inclusive way).

Home

This quilt square is a piece of memory. It's a placeholder for my trip to Scotland with the knitting, Paris is the plaid shirt, my summer dress worn while spinning cotton into yarn for knitting during the pandemic. This quilt square holds my journey for the last five years.



7. **Althea Greenan** (Curator, the Women's Art Library at Goldsmiths)

Bitches Brew Archive Vibes

Rita in the archives glitters as the all-seeing mischief maker. She is at the center of drawing in the stories and laughing with the dead whose elegance outshines us. How can I resist this fabric of sugar skulls? I dress her up with beads and jewelry findings inherited from my cousin this past calamitous summer. I channel both their skills hilariously with my clumsy stitching, and pay tributes to her as I pay tributes to Rita and the alchemy of archive making. I sew brass archive paper clips for good voodoo luck for my work struggles with the Archive. Give me strength! Give me a reason! And Rita laughs to remind me: colour, copy, frame, tell, listen, work together the social fabric that makes the grey boxes and acid-free folders open and dazzle.



8. **Catherine Grant** (b. 1975, she/her)

Untitled

Material from my scrap bag, remnants of clothing altered, re-sized, repaired. Silk from my mum, made into a comforter for my son, the offcut used by him for his experiments with the sewing machine. An abstract collage in honour of Rita's glamour and style, memories of outfits and experiences over many years.



9. **Joy Gregory** (she/her)

Good Hair, Bad Hair, Nothing About Day...

My patch is a nod to the *Look of Colour Chat* which I made for the *Blonde* in 1998. For at least 20 years – as long as I can remember, I've worn my hair in braids or twists. Mainly for convenience and definitely to protect it. Every time I take them out, I'm left with a ton of dead hair. Recently I've been collecting this material which I have used to make this piece.

Black hair is never neutral. It cannot ever be something which just sits on your head. However you wear it, black hair is political. When I grew up you had good hair (long, strong, easy to handle – usually with shades of mixed ancestry). Or bad hair (tight, short, curly and fragile), any stubbornness was literally burned away with a hot comb to make it more 'presentable'.



10. Anna Harding (b. 1961, she/her)

Untitled

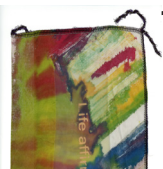
I'm sew out of touch with stitching. I grew up immersed in making, my grandma trained as a milliner and made flower decorations for hats although she really wanted to go to art school, aunt Beat sewed such fine garments on her treadle Singer sewing machine that it must have ruined her eyesight. My mother raided Aquascutum fabric sales and made fine tweed coats for my son Edwin. I have bolts of her fabric still waiting for a project. My earliest creations included a patchwork pinafore dress, Fair Isle legwarmers and a rainbow mohair jumper. Thanks Rita for giving my drawers of fabric an airing.



11. Hiroko Hagiwara (b. 1951)

Untitled

Sewn onto an A4 sheet of cloth are fragments of things I have made, used or worn. For example, a handkerchief I dyed as a teenager with a floral pattern, and a pair of Pakistani trousers I commissioned from a Bengali tailor in Whitechapel, both cut to stamp size. A Margaret scarf made from Philippine pineapple cloth is a rare feminine item for me, as my wardrobe is full of boyish fashions. The indigo-dyed cloth from West Africa was cut from a bedspread I used with my friend at Upper Wimpole. The Indian printed floral cloth was a tablecloth on which I wrote books over the decades. These pieces of cloth have seen where and how I have lived and moved on. They have come to me from Okinawa, Kamakura, London, Mindanao, Dhaka, Accra and elsewhere on this planet.



12. Zhi Holloway (artist/entrepreneur)

Life Affirmative

Silk and paints/silkscreen/pineapple plastic

Whether it's affirmations and the multitude of colours of culture, thrust into the furnace of life!



13. **Terry Humphrey**

Feet's don't fail me now

Well, it must have been around 2019 when I came across this Wax Block Print remnant fabric outside a store in Brixton Market. At the time I had this urge to paint my living room a deep red, which I did, on reflection I was possibly bedding in for a Lock-down. After rummaging through a pile of fabrics I was struck by the sweet and folk-like illustrations of paired Slippers along with the red and black patterned background. I purchased the two half metre pieces and used them as arm covers on my sofa, it created an instant warmth in the room. I guess I'm one of many friends who over the years has experienced the warmth of Rita and her home...put simply, this pair of Slippers represent a source of comfort. Just like Rita!

In conversations with Rita we often communicate by song lyrics so I felt it appropriate to graffiti the patch with 'Feet's don't fail me now' really I'm just wishing Rita the very best and to 'Keep on Keeping on'. Damn here I go again...I'm out.



14. **Bhajan Hunjan** (is a visual artist and also works as an artist educator creating temporary and permanent installations in community and school settings).

Love

Inkjet of monoprint, drawing and embroidery on calico

Love transcends all emotions – it's a state of being.



15. **Symrath Kaur Patti** (b. 1961)

Untitled

This image is from the *Keepin' it Together* catalogue. The text is what I have added to the image that was part of the catalogue and is now in the WOCI (Women of Colour Index) archive at the Women's Art Library.



16. **Amoke Kubat** (b.1950) is a multi-disciplinary artist, curious about the self, the natural world and the Sacred. Self-taught, she uses writing and artmaking to define and hold a position of wellness in America – sick with inequalities and inequities. Her writings include her memoir, *Missing Mama: My Story of Loss, Wellness and Healing*, the plays *ANGRY OLD BLACK WOMAN & Well-Intentioned White Girl* and *Old Good Pussy and Good Old Pussy*. Amoke is the creator of *YO MAMA LLC* that offers' Art of Mothering Workshops and *YO MAMA's House Co-operative*, a shared (non-residential) space for mothers who are artists, community activists and healers).

Once Water

Photo, fabric, Sharpies

I am aging in these interesting times of COVID and global unrest. My mind returns to places where I found comfort, solace and sanctuary. Water, I loved playing in water. The best water comes in a greedy slurp from the garden hose on a hot summer day. My happiest place was the Southern California Pacific Ocean. All was well walking this shifting hot sand, crunchy with shells. Or feeling the cool swirl of salt water and its tickle of sea foam around my ankles.

In 2020, my mind returned to these spaces. I felt the warmth of an August sun, tasted the salt, floated on waves big and small. My mind emptied and my body released. I was gently reminded to “go with the flow of the water” and its possibilities. Return to the womb of all existence. Be safe. Be protected. Be well. I was *Once Water* too.



17. **Samia Malik** (b. 1980)

Thank you Rita Keegan for WOCI

My patch is a thank you message to Rita Keegan for WOCI (Women of Colour Index). In 2016, alongside artists and educators Michelle Williams Gamaker and Rehana Zaman, we founded the WOCI Reading Group that set out to make visible histories of women of colour artists collated by Rita Keegan.

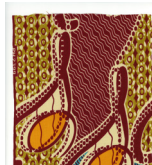


18. Ruth E. Morgan

Untitled

Layers of time - pieced together

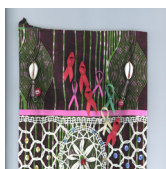
References to friendship with Rita. Swiss spot. Own screen print.



19. Virginia Nimarkoh (artist/social entrepreneur)

Untitled

African print, Brixton market cotton



20. Professor Georgina Obaya Evans (she/her)

Untitled

African wax print, lace, ribbons, beads, cowrie shells, feathers

This piece is a homage to women and women's actions in maintaining social cohesion (often in the face of oppression and gender violence) with their (our) being, work, care, activism, community, creative technologies, and creations of beauty. My piece also speaks of my dual African (Nigerian) and British (Welsh) heritage. My mum's father was a tailor, my mum was a seamstress, and she taught all her daughters to sew. The lace was handcrafted by women on my father's side – women I never knew. The HIV ribbons are offered in remembrance of the warrior women I met in Rwanda.

I love sewing and I know Rita is a brilliant seamstress. As well as us being artists, this connects us, and the many people Rita brings together. I chose the wax fabric of this piece in Rwanda while volunteering during the summer of 2009. I was there offering yoga classes to support the wellbeing of women survivors of gender violence, many of whom contracted HIV as a result: <http://www.we-actx.org/about-us/>. The Rwandan women made me a dress from this fabric which I wore to Rita's annual birthday party the following year, (2010). I had the most fabulous fun reconnecting with everyone after missing the celebratory gathering the year before. Rita's summer party feels like a sparkling celebration of life, creativity, friendship, and joy.



21. Elizabeth Oniri (mixed-media artist/educator based in Peckham)

Are We?

I am acknowledging that we are all human and that race is a human/social construct. I also acknowledge that as humans we originate from similar forms of biological DNA. As individuals we are intrinsically different and unique, while making that statement, my response to that is a question, and that question is the title of my patch: *Are We?*



22. Ingrid Pollard & Olive Pollard

Untitled

This fabric came from a dress my mother wore a lot. It was the only dress I kept from my mother's wardrobe when she died. The patchwork will be a way for her to live on in a different way: a new memory.



23. Raju Sachi Singh (they/them)

Untitled

My mother's curtains



24. Michelle Williams Gamaker (b. 1979)

Untitled

This patch of fabric is from my latest film *The Bang Straws*, 2021. My protagonist, O-Lan, wears this fabric as a headscarf – she is a farmer's wife – but also in my film, facing and overcoming the structural violence of a film set based on the historic structural violence of British and Hollywood 20th-century film studios.



25. Jacqueline Wright (b.1965, she/her)

Untitled

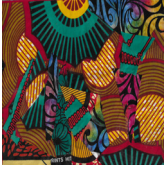
In the colour of the patch is the colourful world and how it can be, the beads are rain drops, the sequins are snowflakes, the heart beads are how much I love doing crafts, the numbers are the many different crafts to do, the blanket stitch is to cover the edges of the fabric, the patch was a time to relax and to express my ideas, I enjoyed working on it.



26. Keegan Xavi (she/her is a visual artist, passionate about Art History with an insatiable desire for research and learning. Her personal work addresses the emotionally brutal realities of American History and its impact on the present and the future – with a recurring broader theme about the intersection between nature and technology. Art is a vital tool for connection and resiliency and she uses her strengths as an Arts Educator to produce community events that unite Minneapolis neighbours through creative action).

Landscape

When the lockdowns first started in March 2020, all my energy went into figuring out how to protect my family. I taught myself how to sew facemasks and everyone around me got one whether they wanted it or not. Living with a family of artists there's always an abundance of art supplies left over from other projects. I found a bag of someone's old quilting supplies and used the fabrics I found. But I started to crave fabrics that I was genuinely attracted to and picked up a bad fabric habit during the pandemic, ordering left and right. Oh but the colours! As a collage artist, I have a love for paper. Thin, thick, old glossy, magazines, newspapers, etc. But now...I'm in love with fabric and particularly drawn to Ankara fabric, batik and prints of fruits and flowers (we won't even talk about the gardening addiction I picked up during 2020 as well). So when asked to create a patch for the Social Fabric project I used the scraps from all the facemasks I made, and I had made like 50 of them at that point (I'm up to 200) or so now). Colour elicits feeling and I used fabric to create a landscape of what safety feels like for me. Velvet violet sky, a warm nurturing abode nestled underneath an unfathomable universe and billions of stars.



Wet Paint

For this project I made two patches. The first I just called *Landscape* and used the fabric scraps leftover from all the facemasks I taught myself to make in 2020. The first patch was more sculpted, structured. I used a whole different part of my brain for this second patch and treated the fabric the way I would paper when I make collages. They say collage is “the poor man’s paint” ...but I didn’t stop to think that you could paint with fabric as well. And that’s what this piece is...a kaleidoscope of all the prettiest parts of the fabric without need or form or explanation. The process of not-thinking as I pieced the fabric together was beyond therapeutic. Colour makes me happy. Celebrating colour with this patch brought me joy.



27. **Rehana Zaman** (b. 1982, she/her)

ghilaf

The fabric comes from the ‘ghilaf’ or sleeve I wrapped my Quran and religious books in when going to the mosque as a child. I’ve kept it all these years but never was able to find a good use for it – nor could I throw it away. The metallic tape was gifted to me from a student and the word ‘slow’ is a daily reminder: How can I embody slowness better?