

London Cloth Stories

Names in brackets are the people who created the artwork that represents that particular story in the Blanket.

1.

Kayt

I was working for Granada at the time, on a Sherlock Holmes episode. I was in a taxi going down Euston Road (towards the costume suppliers). The artist needed a shawl and I wanted it to have an Indian connection.

So, we're in the taxi, we're coming down the Euston Road, when in my head I hear a voice, as if someone was sitting next to me. The voice said, "you'll find the shawl in that portacabin". I looked up and we have just gone past a very big portacabin.

As we pulled in I saw a sign – INDIAN SHAWLS. Inside, it was packed floor to ceiling with shawls. I walked forward 15 yards and put my hand out into a tightly packed shelf, and I pulled out the grey wool shawl with the cream embroidery, which was exactly what I was looking for.

2.

Irene (Lauren)

A jacket made for me by an American (US) woman in Guatemala in early 1990's. Made from 3 hand woven traditional huipiles overlaid several times to hold the colour.

The women (indigenous) of Guatemala still wear the traditional huipiles (blouses) handwoven for them, the designs and colours denoting their village. The men have mostly stopped wearing traditional dress except in very remote areas or for festivals. Most women have chests with old huipiles but are now forced by poverty or circumstance to sell them.

3. as above + (Yasmeen)

4.

Jane

Chinese embroidered silk jacket, with dragons.

It was a gift to my husband and myself in 2009 from members of a Tai Chi and Chi Kung group on a trip to China with our master; a thank you to us for supporting, helping the group. I wear the jacket for the annual Chinese New Year celebration of the Tai Chi class.

Tai Chi/Chi Kung is a vital part of my life for over 30 years. The jacket is therefore a LIVING object in my life. (The bright yellow represents the dragon in the jacket)

5.

Alinah

This piece of cloth belonged to my beloved late mother, Parvin Azadeh Rieu, who died in Phuket, Thailand in the 2004 tsunami. It was one of the headscarves she used to take to Iran to wear in the spring /summer months on her annual trips home, and was returned to me by my aunt, who she must have gifted it to at some point.

I don't actually remember seeing her wear it (I only went to Iran with her twice) but when it was given to me, I plunged my nose into it and could still detect the faint smell of her favourite perfume, "Eden" and all the memories of being there with her and of her love for her wounded country flooded right back .

6.

Matilde

This is a rug made by my mother when she last visited us from Spain. She was 86 years old then and this year, in September, she will be 90. So, this is my homage to her and to that generation of Spanish women who endured so many hardships and to whom we, their daughters, owe so much.

My mother made this rug out of discarded old t-shirts, once worn by my daughter, my husband and by myself. She wanted to be of use when she was staying with us so, she decided to make the rug. It was a project into which she threw herself with her usual energy and determination. Each t-shirt had a story to tell and we would remember and talk about each one of them as we cut the pieces and used them. She wove them all, stories and cloth, in the garden of our house, on sunny July afternoons. She recycled the old, remembered the past, and created a new useful item of life. It was an act of love as well as a practical one, which brought us closer in the process.

The rug reminds me of her everyday from the sorrow of the distance; of her many personal qualities, which I have only truly understood in adulthood, and her skilled craftsmanship as an embroiderer, knitter and lace-maker, appreciated by so many in her village in Southern Spain. Some of the pieces she created no longer exist, but those which still do I've learnt to admire and to treasure over the years because they are beautiful and they represent the story of a wonderful ordinary woman, my mother, whom I very much love. I hope to be able to leave one day such a valuable legacy to my own daughter.

7.

Rodrigo

It is a scarf. It's green, black and red, and it looks like a Burberry's one. It's a new accessory and it's not mine

What I would like to tell you about this garment is the star that is in the back of it. The scarf was bought by a guy named Ismael the 15th October 2015 at Gap Piccadilly Circus. That day Ismael was cold, it was a freezing day and he had forgotten his scarf at home. He was looking for it in the basement floor when I saw him. I'm working at Gap Piccadilly at the moment and I was then as well. You, reader, have you ever felt that someone wants to look at you but he is not looking? Have you ever felt that someone is catching your attention so much that you want to say something to him? That you can't stop looking? That you would love to have time with that person, if only five minutes? That was my feeling. But he was going upstairs with the scarf. I have not had the chance to talk with him. I was supposed to be working downstairs for the whole day but surprisingly in the exact moment that he was leaving the basement to pay, my managers called me by radio to jump on tills because the girl that was on had to go on lunch. I was excited because I probably had the chance to talk to him. I jumped on and there was a long queue. He was second. I was alone on tills, serving the first customer when one of my mates jumped as well. I couldn't believe that I was so close to talk to him and I wouldn't. So while my work mate was typing her user number, I rushed to finish with the woman. And I did it, my mate called the next customer but I already had finished with mine. He was so cute and handsome. He was wearing a jacket with a similar pattern as the scarf and he was holding a coffee in a Starbucks cup. It was at the morning and I hadn't got breakfast, so I told him, while I was taking out the tag from the scarf, about it. I asked him if that coffee was from Starbucks and he denied (sic). He told me that he smashed the beans himself and he did it at home. I was surprised and I told him I would love to taste a bit of it, and he said, "Whenever you want". I took 2 papers from my till and wrote my number and my name and he wrote: Ismael, the coffee guy. The next day I wrote him a message (he was waiting for me) and the 17th we met at my place. He never showed me how to make coffee, but we are gonna live together in a few months instead.

8.

Alex and Nena (Usarae)

Our favourite material is shiny, cotton-y blanket like textile from Guatemala. Our friend Ola gave it to us because he will leave UK because of work.

The cloth is mostly green with multi-coloured red, pink and gold threads. It's soft, cuddly, light and keeps us warm. We've never been to Latin America but we feel happy to have our Guatemalan blanket. It is cut into two halves.

9.

Irene (Ishrat) see 2 and 3

10.

Ekka (Kayt)

The only one I can think of are a couple of my Dad's vests. They were green and red. I think they have holes...However, I'm no longer quite sure. The last time I saw it was a decade ago.

These items are very special to me, for they are the significant things that remind me of my Dad. My Dad passed away when I was 9, that was in 2006. My Dad, living in a very hot tropical country, (Philippines), actually preferred to flaunt his round tummy in public. But, normally, when he didn't want to model his cute tummy, he would instead wear his vest. So cute.

11.

Barbara

A cotton scarf I've looked after for my sister-in-law for 30 years!

It's a lovely red, blue and navy patterned scarf I still have and it reminds me of Eilish, my sister-in-law. She lets me mind it for her now as I've had it so long.

12.

Allegra

It's a silk blanket, with a pink corner, a couple of rips in the sides.

I've had it since I was born. It was my special blanket. It got me through everything, bad and good. I thought I would need it forever but one day I found out how to deal with life myself. I haven't needed my blankie since.

13.

Laurence

All I can remember is my mother gave me a shirt to wear as a young child and something about this shirt seems magical. A checked shirt like tartan. I was 5 - 6 years old. Brings back memories of security and being with my Mother.

Vivid memories of a very happy childhood. I idolised my Mother and I lost her when I was twenty-two. Not exactly a child, but my faith suffered, how could life be so cruel? But this shirt, even though I could not wear it, kept me going.

14.

Sue

A knitted maroon cardigan which my sister-in-law knitted on her new knitting machine. It was the smartest thing I've ever owned back around 1964

It was for school (secondary modern) and I wore it until it fell apart. The cardigan was V necked and tiny tiny stitches. I thought I looked the bees knees!

15.

Motto

It's a fluffy, widely striped, comfortable jumper. Its colours are white and greyish blue. It is fairly new. Yet, it is so big for me. But the sentiments that go with it make it very special to me.

It was given to me by my best friend (boyfriend) and his mum, Auntie. That is the reason why it is ultra special, because my boyfriend and I belong to groups that shouldn't be romantically together. He's a Muslim. I'm a Christian. We've been together for nearly six years now. So Auntie bringing me a jumper means a lot to me.

16.

Angela

This dress is in a thin silky fabric - not REAL silk. It is a summer dress with a black background and a white and grey swirly pattern. It is not full. More or less straight.

It hangs under a plastic cover in my loft. I bought it in Paris, where I lived for seven years, 1989 - 96. It will always be associated with a friend's wedding, and I looked so happy dancing in it. I have never worn it here in London where I now live. My French friend has been divorced for several years now, her son is 19. The dress is part of a much happier life. I shall never part with it - I don't know if I want to try it on - I think it could look okay on the old lady I am now, but know it wouldn't fit.

17.

Harper

It is my friends and my BFF shirt. It has three happy people. The colour in the back is coral. It is old. The shirt makes me feel happy inside, because my best friend Sophie is on the other side of the world. The shirt is like a hug wrapped round my body.

18.

Maria-Emilia

My mother bought me a pale yellow baby blanket that I remember holding as an infant. It was soft and had rows of this yellow ducks on it.

I stumbled upon a picture of me cradling the item. The photograph was taken in 2001 and I can imagine, back then, to me this 'piece of cloth' was one of the only items that was of intrinsic value to me. My mother would tell me stories about how she would cocoon me in it, absorbing my entire body and flesh within the duck covered fabric. I guess at some points, the fabric held my very existence; it was of some meaning to me then. It's 2016 now and at the age of 16 I uncovered a cardboard box that had gathered a coating of dust on

it. Inside the box was my baby blanket. Of course I had no memory of ever owning it, and the photograph was the only piece of evidence that it was even mine. I decided to wrap my body in the fabric once again, trying to replicate the 'me' in the picture. I couldn't fit the cloth around my shoulders. This cloth is of no vain to me now. Maybe it's sad that I don't feel connected to it anymore. It holds no meaning to me. It once did.

19.

John

I got it for Christmas in seventh grade. It was a black coach jacket with silver writing. The inside was a nylon cotton. I wore it every day and it defined my style. I lost it sadly.

20.

Jackie

A cotton white sun hat.

I had never worn a hat before and while on holiday in Devon there was heat wave! So I bought myself one. I absolutely loved it in fact I was disappointed when I came back to London and it was overcast and rainy, so the hat eventually went to the charity shop. It became misshapen after washing!!

21.

Viv

A collection of ties.

Jack had hundreds of ties; some of them I gave to his sons.

They represented all the different times, interests and enthusiasms in his life.

My life also, since Jack died, has been like jumping off a cliff.

(We deconstructed the ties; what you see is the inside of the ties)

22.

Shamin

Silk shalwar kameez

It was given to me by a friend of mine, going back several years ago, to 1986.

I think I wore it to her wedding, and she let me keep it.

She was like a mentor, very inspirational to a lot of people of South Asian and Caribbean background.

She inspired me. I feel really lucky to have met her when I met her, because it enabled me to build up the skills that I've been using to date.

(Shamin's shalwar kameez is the one piece of cloth that links all three of the blankets together as there a piece of her cloth in each blanket.)

23.

Usarae

Its crazy how we met: I was on the Isle of man, browsing a dating app on my phone - I'd somehow managed to set my location wrong and was getting matches with people in London! A guy with a luscious long hair caught my eye, we got talking and whole month passed until we met. He travelled all the way from London to meet me. We talked for hours and just as he was about to board the train home, he handed me a gift bag, it was full of biscuits from a fancy bakery called Konditor & Cook. I saved the ribbon that sealed the packet. We've been together for 7 months and very much in love! The ribbon reminds me of when we met. The biscuits were also delicious.

The strands that twist and turn through the centre of side A are part of Alinah's mum's scarf, it also represents a scarf story sent by:

Ciosa

My Mum's scarf. She wore it for my Aunt's wedding.

When I was a child my Mum would use this scarf as a 'dream catcher'. Spreading it over me, allowing it to flutter in the air, Mum saying "catch the dreams". It was like a protective layer or skin from the night.

