Interwoven Histories



Image donated to Leeds Industrial Museum, Archive through Interwoven Histories.

Dr Gill Park

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Introduction

INTERWOVEN HISTORIES

Reinstating migrant workers' histories in Leeds Museums & Galleries' collection (the textiles and clothing industry 1894-1985).

Interwoven Histories was a two-year curatorial project and exhibition (2016-2018) contributing research to the intersecting areas of arts and heritage. It undertook and disseminated new research on the histories of migrant workers in Leeds, UK, challenging rhetoric around immigration, work and representation in the context of the industrial heritage of Leeds.

Produced by Pavilion, Leeds and supported by Heritage Lottery Fund, it aimed to make visible the important contributions that migrant workers have made to the textiles and clothing industries of Leeds through questions of migration and representation.

The project was documented and shared on a bespoke website, alongside other research material: photographs, documents, films, oral histories, letters, diaries and other archival material. These artefacts tell the stories of migrant textile workers from across Leeds. This formed an online archive of visual material and oral histories. Pavilion worked together with partners Leeds Industrial Museum, the Women's Group at refugee support organization, Meeting Point Leeds and community organisation Touchstone.

A series of talks, an exhibition, an artist film commission and other city-wide events also took place between 2016–18.

The project was was curated while I was Director of Pavilion, who are a visual arts commissioning organisation based in Leeds.

The exhibition developed Pavilion's reputation for curatorial innovation, as an organisation which produces research-driven, place-specific and socially-engaged exhibitions in Leeds and further afield.

300 Word Statement

INTERWOVEN HISTORIES

Curated exhibition and the creation of a new archive Interwoven Histories (2018) was a curated arts and heritage exhibition which brought together and disseminated new research into the relationship between migration, work and representation in the context of the industrial history of Leeds.

I successfully bid for funding from Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England in support of this project, which was conceptualised while I was Director of Pavilion, a public-facing arts organisation based in Leeds. It developed Pavilion's curatorial commitment to placespecific, research-driven, socially- engaged curating.

It was developed in response to a knowledge gap identified by the Leeds Museums & Galleries, who knew that migrant workers had contributed significantly to the development of industry in Leeds but who had no evidence of this contribution in their public collections. The research also countered the negative representations of migration circulating in the local and national media post-Brexit vote by drawing attention to the vital contributions made by migrants to the city's culture, work and economy in the 20th/21st centuries. Methodologically, it developed my research into the politics of archives, and particularly Stuart Hall's concept of the 'Living Archive'. The concept of the Living Archive was activated through the production of new oral history interviews with first generation migrant workers in the city.

The project also produced a new documentary archive of material drawn from a wide variety of collections. It was the first public archive of migrant work in the city of Leeds. There was a strong emphasis in the research process on co-production and thus a public programme of screenings, discussions and workshops were significant for both building and disseminating the research.

The research material was shared on a bespoke website for the project and it was also brought together as a curated exhibition alongside artworks by contemporary artists and community groups. This was presented at the Leeds Industrial Museum (10 October 2017–1 April 2018).

I wrote about this project in relation to my wider research into photography, feminism and politics of representation, in a chapter for the book *Expansive Reflections* (Kimberly Lamm & Shilyh Warren eds) forthcoming.



Editor : Clinton Cameron, 2 Avenue Hill, Leeds 8. No.24 March 1975. Price:2p

PRESSURE RACIST ATTACKS OFFICIAL CONTROL POLICE PRESSURE

Chapeltown News has to change when Chapeltown itself changes. There is a time and a place for a paper to report on damp housing and peoples wedding -(even though these can still be important things in our lives.)

Recently various incidents have occured which we hope to detail, not in an over dramatic and emotional way, but factually because we have tried our best to check out which parts of what we all have heard are true and which is rumour. The result to date of all these incidents we describe in this edition of the paper is a whole lot of tension which anyone who feels part of our area can sense in no time at all. And it is planned. that we should feel this pressure .. The aim and intention of those who are causing it is to set us all against each other and in fear of each other. For the present this 'we' means both black and white (though as will be shown the major part of the pressure by its very nature affects the black community.)

Yet for a long time Chapeltown has remained different from Handsworth or Brixton and friends have stayed friends whatever their race. We have not yet divided here and we do not have to. A division however between black and white working people is precisely what those against the Chapeltown community would relish. Both the racialist right wing. organisations in Leeds and the Authorities,- Education Departments, Magistrates, Police, so-called social workers and community workers, are by their actions seeking to split Chapeltown apart. We must resist falling into the trap they set.

Many people will criticise this issue of 'Chapeltown News' for being 'alarmist.' But we believe that we as the people must be aware of what is going on in order to defend ourselves in the community.



News Clipping , Industrial Museum, Leeds Archive donated through Interwoven Histories.

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Produced by

Pavilion, Leeds

Pavilion is a commissioning organisation based in Leeds that deals with contemporary art and its politics. Through an exploratory process of research and discussion, Pavilion produces new work with artists that materialise across diverse sites and locations.

Pavilion presents its work as a route for audiences to further develop a critical position within the world, drawing on a breadth of practices, media and political/ philosophical thought. Its aim is to identify, open-up, nurture and illuminate resonant critical practices in meaningful and stimulating ways, places and times.

A set of discourse events takes place each year that illuminates Pavilion's curatorial research and artist commissions. Pavilion was founded in 1983 by graduates from the University of Leeds, as a feminist photography collective, with support from art historian Griselda Pollock among others.

The organisation was originally based in a disused pavilion building in Hyde Park, Leeds, but now works from an office at the university.

The first decade of the organisation's activity is archived as part of the Feminist Archive North, housed within Special Collections at the University of Leeds.

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Funded by

Heritage Lottery Fund Leeds Museums and Galleries Leeds City Council Leeds Inspired

Delivered with

Leeds Industrial Museum The Women's Group at refugee support organization, Meeting Point Leeds Community organisation Touchstone, Leeds

Participating Groups

Leeds Irish Health and Homes' CHIME Art Group Touchstone's BME Dementia Service Sikh Elders Cha Da Cup group BME Dementia Service's Hamari Yaadain Dementia Café.













Majestic Soundsystem by Syd Shelton, taken in Leeds during the Militant Entertainment Tour, 1979. News Clipping , Industrial Museum, Leeds Archive donated through Interwoven Histories.



Source Image Photograph by Timothy Neat, taken in Leeds Market, c.1966/7 Industrial Museum, Leeds Archive

Researchers

Project Lead – Gill Park. During the project was carrying out doctoral research into the founding moment of Pavilion, the relationship between feminism and photography. Gill is Director of Pavilion teaches curating at the University of Leeds and Newcastle University.

Ang Zheng studied BA (Hons) Cultural Industries Management at the Inner Mongolia Normal University in China and currently Masters in Culture, Creativity and Entrepreneurship at the University of Leeds. She collected reports from Yorkshire Post and Yorkshire Evening Post in Leeds Central Library archive and wrote a blog about Jewish textile life in Leeds.

Annderley Hill studying for a history degree at the university of Leeds. She is in her final year and will be writing her dissertation on the partition of India. She has family from an Irish background that worked as tailors in Leeds so this project holds great personal interest for her.

Cindy Sissokho - MSc in Cultural Events Management (De Montfort University) currently Touring Programme Coordinator at Nottingham Contemporary

Christopher Sharp, Leeds Industrial Museum at Armley Mills.

Claudia Ivette Ribera Tejeda studied BA (Hons) Communication and Digital Media at the Technological Institute of Higher Education of Monterrey in Mexico. She is currently studying the Masters degree in Film Photography and Media at the University of Leeds, where she explores the relationship of the lens-based practice to relevant social issues related to gender, identity and culture.

Daoud Al-Janabi - recently completed BA (Hons) History and Philosophy at University of Leeds.

Dr Emma Storr - a GP and Lecturer in the Academic Unit of Primary Care, University of Leeds. Her research in *Interwoven Histories* looked at the personal stories of immigrant workers; the working health conditions in the mills and how these improved over time.

Researchers

Kerstin Doble has BA (Hons) Fine Art from Goldsmiths College, London. She has overseen the first six months of the Interwoven Histories project, working with community partners, artists, research volunteers, and organising the initial public programme. Coordinates communications and archival engagement projects at the School of Design at University of Leeds. She worked on exhibitions projects at The National Archives and Tate Modern, London.

Meeting Point Leeds: Women's Group

Rebecca James is currently in her final year studying BA (Hons) Printed Textiles and Surface Pattern Design at Leeds College of Art.

Touchstones (Leeds) Hamari Yaadain BME group, Sikh Elders group, Cha Da Cup group

Will Rose - codirector of Pavilion. Leeds.



Former mill owner Ernest Tempest, alongside Eastern European worker Wally Gorbun and a worker from the Caribbean who is known only as Derek. This photograph is the first documentation of migrant workers at Armley Mills, collected by the project *Interwoven Histories* it was donated by a member of the public to Leeds Industrial Museum, Leeds Museums & Galleries.

Research Context

Addressing an absence of migrant workers in Leeds Museums & Galleries collections showing textiles and clothing industrial history from 1894-1985.

Interwoven Histories was developed in response to a knowledge-gap also recognised by the Leeds Museums & Galleries service, an underrepresentation of migrant workers that have contributed significantly to the development of industry in Leeds. There was no evidence of this contribution in their public collections.

This project has aimed to correct this 'gap', and also to provide a counter narrative to negative representations of migration and migrants in local and national UK media, by drawing attention to vital contributions made by migrants in the 20th and 21st centuries, to the city of Leeds's economy, commerce and culture.

It was informed by previous practice-based research captured under the title *Images and Journeys* which explored, through a curated film programme, the 'image of journeying and the journeying image'. It was also informed by workshops with refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants living in Leeds.

I secured an exhibition partnership between Pavilion and Leeds Industrial Museum (Leeds Museums and Galleries).

The museums service was aware of the issue that its collections tell the story of industry in Leeds through the perspective of those who owned the means of production, and to a lesser extent, the white working classes.

In 2016, however, when Lis Tempest, daughter of the last mill-owner, was interviewed by the museum's curatorial team and she recalled her memories of Pakistani, Indian and Caribbean workers at the mill. This posed an interpretation challenge for the museum.

I approached the museum about hosting an exhibition that would seek to make visible – for the first time – objects, images and stories of migrant work in Leeds. The selected time period spanned from 1894 (when Marks & Spencer's was established in Leeds) to 1985 when Armley Mills (which is the site of the Leeds Industrial Museum) closed as a factory. The main focus was on the contributions of post-war migration to the city's developing economy.

When the exhibition was announced, we made a public call out for material that could join the archive/collection. The photograph on the previous slide was donated by a member of the public. It depicts former mill owner Ernest Tempest, alongside Eastern European worker named Wally Gorbun and a worker from the Caribbean who is known only as Derek. This formed the title image of the exhibition, as the first documentation of migrant workers at Armley Mills.



Research Context

Public funding leading to diverse research methods

Heritage Lottery Funding

The project's funding partners, and their remits positively shaped the research, ensuring that the research was generated using methods that upheld diversity values, had real world engagement and was not only relevant to the academic area of curatorial and heritage studies.

Heritage Lottery Fund's strand 'Our Heritage' awarded £54,700 to the project, initially titled, 'Making visible Leeds' Hidden Immigrant Workforce 1894-1985'. The grounds on which this award was successful was contingent to its proposal to use the following research methods:

- i. Methods of archive-collection which upheld diversity principles.
- ii. I don't know, some more things!
- iii. Some more things.

Arts Council England Funding

The project was awarded £62,249 via Arts Council England's 'Celebrating Age' grant scheme which enabled Pavilion to work with the third sector organisation Touchstone as a further research method to ensure:

i. Methods of archive-collection which upheld diversity principles.

ii. Anything else you think is relevant? Like enabling you to work with older people to gather primary research.

iii. Extended the exhibition's reach to migrant communities in Leeds.

iv. Why you wanted to work with Touchstone were there further Ethics benefits like their standing procedures and expertise in working with vulnerable adults? Could have been essential to being able to work with these groups, include their experiences and make the work more diverse.

Research Context

Head of Museums and Galleries for Leeds City Council, statement of support, the impact of the project on Leeds Museums and Galleries.

John Rowles, Head of Museums and Galleries for Leeds City Council, states in a letter of support (dated 13 June 2016) confirming the Leeds Museums and Galleries as a project partner, that it would help the service to fulfil their audience development plan and provide a focussed engagement with BAME communities.

"An important part of our audience development plan involves working with organisations in the third sector and communities who do not ordinarily access our sites and collections, in particular BAME communities."

"This exciting participatory project will enable migrants to Leeds to explore the textile and tailoring history of Leeds and the contributions made by previous immigrants with a focus on the Asian community whose stories and memories are currently underrepresented in our archives and collections." He then offered my access to in-kind support, staff time for information on the Leeds Museums and Galleries service's existing collections and research resources, meeting space, use of the exhibition space at Leeds Industrial Museum's Mill Space, support of the assistant community curator and staff there for an exhibition running 6 months.

He also states that:

"the intergenerational nature of the project would contribute to the wider Health and Wellbeing agenda in Leeds, working to bring different cultures and ages together on heritage projects".



Photograph by Max Farrar, showing the preparation of costumes for the 1993 Chapeltown Carnival Image donated to Leeds Industrial Museum, Archive through Interwoven Histories.

Methodology

The curatorial methodology was participatory and place-specific.

<u>Participatory</u> The exhibition process engaged members of the public and specific community groups in sourcing archival material and recording oral histories that had not previously been made public. In this sense it engaged with Stuart Hall's theoretical concept of the 'Living Archive'.

<u>Place-Specific</u> The exhibition also sought to develop Pavilion's strategy of place-specific curating, responding to the untold story of Leeds' migrant work history, gaps in its public collections, and current tensions within the city between different communities that are being exacerbated by Brexit rhetoric.



Workshop, Interwoven Histories, 2017

Methodology

AN INTERPRETIVE APPROACH

Archival material, found photography, newspaper reports, community publications and artwork were enlarged, printed and configured in order to present the story of migrant work in Leeds. The juxtaposition of material that was *critical* of migrant workers, alongside material that spoke of the *dependence* of the city on migrant labour made visible both the necessity of migrant work and the violence and racism of media representations. Alternative and community publications, as well as artwork and poetry spoke of the vital contributions migrant communities have made in building the culture of Leeds. This interpretive approach, which used visual media to engage critically with the theme of migration, can be read in relation to Zygmunt Bauman's concept of 'the poetic imagination in sociology'.

Image: Interwoven Histories, Leeds Industrial Museum, Archive through Interwoven Histories, 2018



Process

The curatorial methods used to generate material for the exhibition and project, used the qualitative research methods:

Recorded Oral History Interviews

with first and second-generation migrants living in Leeds from the Caribbean Islands, India and Pakistan.

This material was presented in the exhibition As audio to listen on headphones Excepts printed on text panels

In the online archive website for Interwoven Histories <u>https://www.interwovenhistories.co.uk/tagged</u> /community And on audio hosting website Souncloud

https://soundcloud.com/pavilion-leeds

Archival Research

West Yorkshire Archives Leeds Jewish Archive Leeds West Indian Carnival Archive Yorkshire Film Archive British Newspaper Archive.

This material. Including photographs and newspaper clippings were consigned on loan and

hung on the gallery wall and in vitrine cases – making it visible to the public.

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Source Image Newspaper Clipping Industrial Museum, Leeds Archive



Image: Industrial Museum, Leeds Archive donated through Interwoven Histories.



Process

The curatorial method then involved commissioning contemporary artists to produce new work in response to the archival material, and the artefacts were shown alongside the artists in the exhibition:

Interwoven Histories, Leeds Industrial Museum, February – April 2018.

New artworks commissioned were:

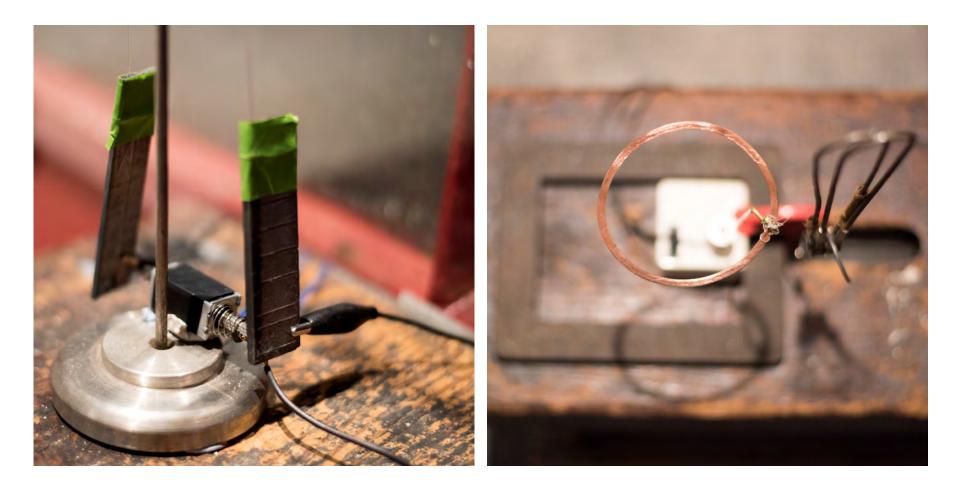
Ryoko Akama, *loiner or*, 2018, sound, objects, hearing aids, motors, woods, metals, glasses, light bulbs.

A kinetic sound sculpture which brought to life oral histories and found industrial materials. *Image by Stephen Harvey*



Installation Image: Ryoko Akama, 'Joiner', Interwoven Histories Exhibition, 2019, Leeds Industrial Museum.

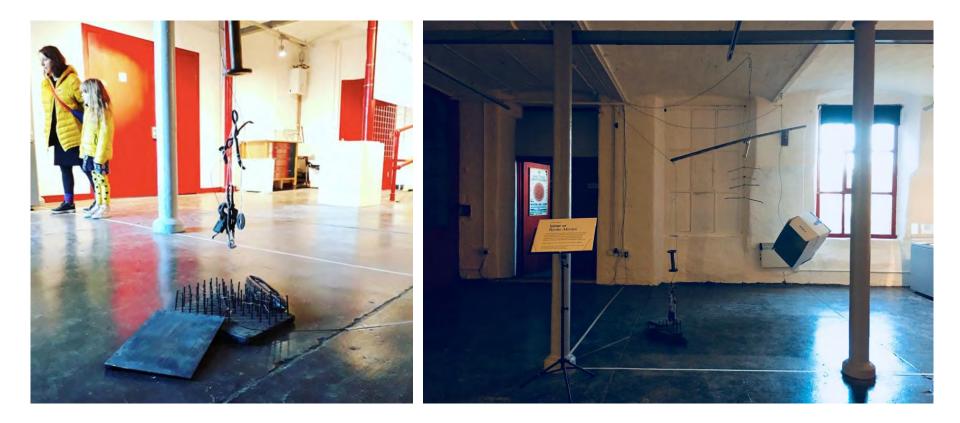
Process



Process



Process



Process



Process

New artworks commissioned were: A group authored poem by Iain Dhuig and the Sikh Elders Cha Da Cup group from organization Touchstone's BME Dementia Service.

Poet Ian Duhig hosted two workshops with the Cha Da Cup group. The workshops have celebrated food, culture and personal stories and resulted in the group poem 'The Meaning of Food'. This group poem was subsequently published in the new **Sewerby Hall Cookbook**, 2018, Invisible Dust: London by New Zealand artist Ahilapalapa Rands. It was also exhibited in the exhibition *Interwoven Histories*.

Ian Dhuig encouraged the group to explored everything from how it is made, who made it, ingredients, smells, textures, taste and the whole experience of eating. The theme stimulated rich discussion, memories and experiences of enjoying everyone's most savoured meal.

"My wife doesn't eat meat, and I do. She cooks me food with meat in but even though she never tastes it, it's always perfect."

"I would eat dal every single day, and I'd always be happy. There are so many different types of dal, and it's always got ginger, garlic and turmeric. Each ingredient is good for your body in different ways, which is why we always have them." The discussion highlighted how integral food is to our identity and culture. Sharing food is an important aspect of our social lives, and we love to share and enjoy food together. After each session, we get together to share a delicious warm curry.

The discussion of food brought back memories, for some people the discussion reminded them of times before they moved to England.

"I left India when I was very young. We moved to Africa, but I always had this memory of walking through the villages in India and you could smell the cooking coming from each house. For years, I craved that food so much, until I finally went back to India 36 years later."

"There's nothing I don't like. It's all in the preparation for me. If it is made with care, I am happy. My favourite would be boiled rice with vegetables, garlic, ginger and green chilli. I like it spicy."

"Sometimes I make chapatti. You can have different breads too; roti, bhatura, salty and aloo potatoes are stuffed into the roti. I just can't pick one, I love every food!"

"I make my own yogurt. I boil milk, and then use my finger as a temperature gauge to see if it's hot enough. Then I add a little bit of culture and mix it and put it into my flask at 10pm. By the morning it is good, and ready for me to enjoy. I love it and my wife loves when I make it. I was shown how to use my finger to tell the temperature when I was a child. I am known as the yogurt maker in my family."

"I love corn chapattis. I'd walk to London for a corn chapatti."

Process

Collaborative curatorial approaches: artists coproducing literature and artworks with community groups.

The curatorial method then involved commissioning artists to work with community groups and produce new work in response to the archival material, and for the exhibition. These artworks were shown alongside artefacts in the exhibition:

Interwoven Histories, Leeds Industrial Museum, February – April 2018.

The poets **Rommi Smith** worked with female refugees and asylum seekers from Meeting Point Leeds, to produce a series of collaborative poems these addressed the resonances of Leeds textiles heritage with contemporary migrants living in Leeds.

The groups then turned the poems into visual artworks in collaboration with artist **Carol Sorhaindo.** Using natural dyes made from buddleja flowers – the budlea plan being a metaphor for survival – the groups reflected on their own roots and stories of survival.



Process

Collaborative curatorial approaches: artists coproducing literature and artworks with community groups.

Wokshops with Pavilion, Touchstone Dementia Service and Leeds Irish Health and Homes CHIME Art Group

Pavilion and Touchstone's BME Dementia Service partnered with Leeds Irish Health and Homes' CHIME Art Group to deliver a three-part workshop focusing on the groups 'first impressions' of Leeds when many of them migrated to England from Ireland.

Prior to the workshops, Teresa who runs the CHIME group had encouraged everyone to write about, draw and collect photos and objects which helped them to think about their heritage, culture and experiences of moving to England. When we arrived for the first workshop, we were thrilled to see two whole tables filled with memorabilia, stories, poetry and personal photographs from the group's collective experiences.

"I've been interested in finding out about a 'part' of life that I would never have been able to access"

Outputs

Animation

Leeds Animation Workshop made from the material from the workshops a short film, showcasing all these personal stories and everyone's animation and poetry.

Oral Histories

Pavilion used the workshops to record people's oral histories as part of these workshops too, which will be shared within the group film. Keep an eye out on our website for chance to see the film in the near future!



Process

Collaborative curatorial approaches: artists coproducing literature and artworks with community groups.

Workshops with Pavilion, Touchstone's BME Dementia Service, artist Simon Warner, the Sikh elders Cha Da Cup group

Warner's workshop was centred on creating silhouettes, an age-old art form which first became popular in the mid 1700's due to the work of physiognomist Johann Caspar Lavater.



Process

Collaborative curatorial approaches: artists coproducing literature and artworks with community groups.

Pavilion held a movie morning with members of Touchstone's BME Dementia Service's Hamari Yaadain Dementia Café.

We developed a film, which would help to stimulate thoughts about the passage of time, the present moment and reflecting on times gone by. In 2018, with the South Asian Dementia Café group working with film and sharing life stories.



Process

Collaborative curatorial approaches: artists coproducing literature and artworks with community groups.

Artist Carol Sorhaindo ran a community workshop with Touchstone's Hamari Yaadain Dementia Café members to design Flags.

Using the resilient buddleja plant as inspiration to think about our roots, migration and what gives us strength in difficult or uncertain times.



Exhibition: Interwoven Histories, Leeds Industrial Museum, February – April 2018



Image: Interwoven Histories, Leeds Industrial Museum, Archive through Interwoven Histories, 2018

Website and online archive: Interwoven Histories www.interwovenhistories.co.uk

MENU

Histories

Touchstone's Cha Da Cup group create silhouette portraits with artist Simon Warner and his antique chair



Animation and Poetry workshops with Leeds Irish CHIME Group



As part of our Celebrating Age 'Interwoven Histories' project, Pavilion and Touchstone's BME Dementia Service partnered with Leeds Irish Health and Homes' CHIME Art Group to deliver a three part workshop focusing on the groups 'first impressions' of Leeds when many of them migrated to England from Ireland.

Prior to the workshops, Teresa who runs the CHIME group had encouraged everyone to write about, draw and collect photos and objects which helped them to think about their heritage, culture Touchstone's Cha Da Cup group co-create and publish poem with Ian Duhig



tumblr



Continuing our partnership with Touchstone's BME Dementia Service, poet lan Duhig hosted two workshops with the Sikh Elders Cha Da Cup group who regularly attend Touchstone. The workshops have been a fantastic celebration of food, culture and personal stories and have resulted in the group poem '*The Meaning of Food'*. We are pleased to share that this group poem has been selected for publishing in the new Sewerby Hall Cookbook by New Zealand artist Ahilapalapa Rands.

Film: An Armley Odyssey by Golden Owls <u>www.interwovenhistories.co.uk</u> <u>https://vimeo.com/253237604</u>

In early 2018 at Leeds Industrial Museum, *Interwoven Histories* worked with a local secondary school, Swallow Hill Community College at the Leeds City Council library service, who provided the location for a filming project about the history of the local area.

Upon discovering, from our Interwoven Histories exhibition, that the mill had employed workers from around the world in the 1960s, this was worked into the film by the students to increase accuracy and representation.

The film went on to win awards at the Leeds Young Filmmakers ceremony and has been screened at Leeds Industrial Museum at Armley Mills (and across the city) since.



Oral History Interviews: *Interwoven Histories* https://soundcloud.com/pavilion-leeds/sets/interwoven-histories

Original interviews were undertaken published online, and available in listening stations in the *Interwoven Histories* exhibitions.

Available here:

https://soundcloud.com/pavilionleeds/sets/interwoven-histories

Outcomes

Audience feedback:

'It provided a chance for us to hear again those lost voices and the stories they have to tell'.

'What an amazing show!'

'Thought-provoking exhibition'.

'Lovely parade of portraits of Leeds millworkers'

"Workers from overseas are vital to the story of Yorkshire's textile industries. People tend to be aware of the great industry leaders such as Montague Burton, who moved from Lithuania to Britain in 1900 and set up the famous 'Burtons' brand, but less so of the tailors, weavers, and spinners from abroad who worked daily in textile manufacture throughout the twentieth century. This part of the story is currently underrepresented in Leeds Industrial Museum's collections, which makes Pavilion's project all the more important."

(Chris Sharp, Assistant Community Curator, Leeds Museums and Galleries)



