

For immediate release

barbican

EVENTS PRESS RELEASE

Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art

Barbican Art Gallery

13 February – 26 May 2024

#Unravel @barbicancentre



Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art, installation view, Barbican Art Gallery, 2024 © Jemima Yong

From 13 February 2024, ***Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art*** shines a light on artists from the 1960s to today who have explored the transformative and subversive potential of textiles, harnessing the medium to ask charged questions about power: who holds it, and how can it be challenged and reclaimed? Spanning intimate hand-crafted pieces to large-scale sculptural installations, this major exhibition brings together over 100 artworks by 50 international practitioners. Drawn to the tactile processes of stitching, weaving, braiding, beading, and knotting, these artists have embraced fibre and thread to tell stories that challenge power structures, transgress boundaries, and reimagine the world around them. Please find the full press release [here](#).

Expanding on the themes of *Unravel*, a rich programme of talks, tours and hands-on workshops will run throughout the duration of the exhibition. Specially devised by our curators, this bespoke public programme delves further into the exhibition's artists, explores the multifarious potential of textiles, and uncovers the ancient technique of weaving.

Additionally, from Monday 25 March until Wednesday 3 April, the Barbican is delighted to be partnering with British lifestyle brand **TOAST** for a 10-day pop up to coincide with *Unravel*, highlighting the varied ways in which they foster longevity, celebrate the art of repair, and connect with their community over treasured pieces.

Please find further information below and check the [website](#) for the latest details.

PUBLIC PROGRAMME

Crafted by the exhibition's curators, this tailor-made public programme gives visitors the opportunity to learn more about the key themes and artworks of *Unravel*, untangling questions around power and politics through the frame of textiles in art.

Curator tour with Diego Chocano

Thu 29 Feb 6.30-8pm

Barbican Art Gallery

Tickets: £18, exhibition ticket included

Join Diego Chocano, Assistant Curator of *Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art*, to explore works in this major group exhibition and find out more about the artists who, using textiles, fibres and thread, challenge power structures and reimagine the world.

Curator tour with Lotte Johnson

Thu 14 Mar, 6.30-8pm

Barbican Art Gallery

Tickets: £18, exhibition ticket included

Join Lotte Johnson, Curator of *Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art*, to explore works in this major group exhibition and find out more about the artists who, using textiles, fibres and thread, challenge power structures and reimagine the world.

Curator tour with Wells Fray-Smith

Thu 28 Mar, 6.30-8pm

Barbican Art Gallery

Tickets: £18, exhibition ticket included

Join Wells Fray-Smith, Curator of *Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art*, to explore works in this major group exhibition and find out more about the artists who, using textiles, fibres and thread, challenge power structures and reimagine the world.

Courtauld Research Forum: *Unravel* panel conversation with Sarah Zapata, Diedrick Brackens and LJ Roberts

Mon 13 May, 6-8pm

The Courtauld Institute of Art

Free

In a discussion moderated by **Joseph McBrinn**, the artists **Sarah Zapata**, **Diedrick Brackens** and **LJ Roberts** will explore the queer potential of textiles. The notion of queerness will be used in its most expansive and porous sense – queer as in ‘conjuring relations that are unconfined by the limits of the known universe,’ as Julia Bryan-Wilson writes in her catalogue essay for *Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art*. With this as a starting point, the artists will explore how their practices harness textile’s multiplicity; its ability to evade easy categorisation and present multifarious political meanings.

Further events taking place in April include a local artist-led natural dye workshop and an additional event with artists in conversation. Booking details to be announced soon. For the latest information, please visit: barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2024/series/unravel-the-power-and-politics-of-textiles-in-art

TOAST CIRCLE | KEEPING WELL-CRAFTED PIECES IN CIRCULATION



Image by James Bannister

To coincide with *Unravel* in the Barbican Art Gallery, join British lifestyle brand **TOAST** to discover the varied ways in which they foster longevity, celebrate the art of repair, and connect with their community over treasured pieces as we partner with them for a 10-day takeover of our Level G Hub.

TOAST Takeover: Phoebe English circular design collection

Mon 25 Mar – Wed 3 Apr

Level G Hub

Free

Alongside a rich and varied events programme (details below), TOAST will present an exclusive 7-piece repurposed collection by award-winning British circular fashion designer, Phoebe English. Each piece in the collection will be created using pre- and post-consumer waste provided by TOAST and will be an expression of creative mending and repurposing techniques. The collection – demonstrating a synergy between TOAST’s slow fashion approach that emphasises quality and longevity and the Phoebe English design ethos that explores solutions towards less extractive fashion systems – will be available to purchase on the TOAST website in April.

TOAST Repair Consultations

Mon 25 Mar - Wed 3 Apr, 10am-6pm

Level G Hub

Free, booking required

TOAST Repair is a free mending service that brings new life to your worn TOAST garments. Whether darned, reworked or visibly mended using techniques like sashiko repair, a garment that has been given a new chapter continues to tell a story of the wearer. Excludes Easter Sunday, 31 March.

Sashiko Repair with TOAST Repair Specialists

Wed 27 Mar, 10am-12pm & Fri 29 Mar, 12-1.30pm

Level G Hub

Free, booking required

Join TOAST repair specialists to discover the art of visible mending. During this workshop, they will show you how to repair and restore your beloved woven garments or home textiles – whether it’s a fraying pillowcase, a torn tea towel or simply a linen or cotton garment that needs some care. Using patches made from reclaimed TOAST materials, specialists will demonstrate how to mend both small and large holes and tears using traditional Japanese sashiko repair. This workshop is suitable for beginners. All materials will be provided. Bring an item to repair if you would like to, or you will be able to practise the technique on a sample.

Icelandic-Inspired Reading & Repair Workshop with Katie Treggiden

Wed 27 Mar, 2-4pm

Level G Hub

Tickets: £20 (50% of ticket sales will be donated to TRAIID)

The Icelandic tradition of kvöldvaka involves family and friends gathering together during the long winter evenings to share stories and work on handicrafts. Join craft and circularity advocate Katie Treggiden for a special reading and repair workshop inspired by kvöldvaka. Katie's book, *Broken: Mending and Repair in a Throwaway World*, celebrates the artists, curators, menders and re-makers who reject the culture of throwaway and instead favours the stories and longevity of care and repair. This event combines a repair workshop, reading and Q&A. The audience is warmly invited to bring their own mending projects to work on throughout the morning as Katie reads a passage from her book. All materials will be provided, and attendees will have the opportunity to purchase a copy of *Broken: Mending and Repair in a Throwaway World* on the day.

Kantha Embroidery Ekta Kaul

Thu 28 Mar, 2-4pm

Level G Hub

Tickets: £20 (50% of ticket sales will be donated to TRAIID)

Join textile artist Ekta Kaul for a Kantha embroidery workshop exploring places, history, and belonging through stitch. Kantha is a beautiful stitch technique from the Indian subcontinent, with a rich heritage rooted in storytelling and upcycling. During this workshop, Ekta will introduce you to a variety of Kantha stitches to create pattern and texture through a step-by-step demonstration, whilst sharing the cultural context of Kantha textiles in Bengal. By the end of the workshop, you will have the skills to develop your Kantha project, as well as a deeper understanding of this mindful craft. This workshop is suitable for beginners and is free to attend. All materials will be provided, but we invite you to bring any remnant textile you would like to work with.

Knitwear Darning with TOAST Repair Specialists

Thu 28 Mar, 5-7pm & Sat 30 Mar, 10am-12pm

Level G Hub

Free, booking required

Join TOAST Repair specialists to learn the basics of knitwear darning. During this workshop you will be guided through the practice of repairing your knitwear through a traditional woven darning technique. After learning about the technique, you will be invited to begin a repair on your own cherished item, from knitted socks and jumpers to blankets and homewares. This workshop is suitable for beginners and is free to attend. All materials will be provided. Bring a knitted item to repair if you would like to or you will be able to practise the technique on a sample.

Textile Wrapping | Objects of Memory with Bridget Harvey

Fri 29 Mar, 2-4pm

Level G Hub

Tickets: £20 (50% of ticket sales will be donated to TRAIID)

Join artist Bridget Harvey to learn creative textile wrapping techniques and instil memory into objects of significance. Bridget uses found objects and materials in her work, examining repetition and playfulness with a focus on repair practices. She has a long-standing interest in how objects can be joined together, and how fibre work and thread can instil memory association with objects. During this workshop, Bridget will work with you to wrap small found and reclaimed objects with cloth, stitch, and yarn, to create or inspire memory imbued objects. Some reclaimed wood and other objects will be provided, or you can bring your own small object that has meaning or resonance, perhaps natural materials collected from around the Barbican. You may also wish to bring a photo or similar for colour references. This workshop is suitable for beginners.

Connect, Make & Share: Textile Manipulation & Waste Materials with Phoebe English

Wed 3 Apr, 10am-12pm

Level G Hub

Tickets: £25 (50% of ticket sales will be donated to TRAIID)

Join us for a fabric manipulation workshop with London-based Fashion Designer, Phoebe English. During this workshop, try your hand at a range of unique fabric manipulation techniques used in the

exclusive 7-piece repurposed collection created by Phoebe English using pre- and post-consumer waste provided by TOAST. Following the workshop, you will have the chance to discover the collection of unique repurposed pieces alongside the latest TOAST Renewed collection.

TOAST Exchange Swapping Event

Thu 4 Apr, 5pm-8pm & Sat 7 Apr, 11am-6pm

Fountain Room

Free, booking required

Swap a TOAST item you've cherished for another. Bring up to five worn TOAST garments to trade for tokens, which will then be assessed by our shop teams. Browse the pre-worn rails and exchange them for others to cherish and take home. Each item features a story label detailing its history from the previous wearer.

WORKSHOPS IN THE BARBICAN SHOP

Drawing inspiration from the shapes, colours and textures of the Barbican, artist and tapestry weaver **Christabel Balfour** will lead a series of tapestry weaving workshops in the Shop on Level G and free weaving demonstrations in the Gallery Shop.

Weaving Demonstrations with Christabel Balfour

Fri 8 Mar, 5-8pm | Sun 7 Apr 12-3pm | Sat 4 May, 12-3pm | Thu 16 May, 4-7pm

Gallery Shop (Level 3)

Free

Inspired by the *Unravel* exhibition, Christabel Balfour will be demonstrating the art of tapestry weaving in the Barbican Gallery shop. Working on a loom she designed herself, she will share the skills she uses in her work every day and give an insight into this slow and intricate craft.

Weaving Workshop with Christabel Balfour

Various dates, 13 Apr – 5 May

Barbican Shop (Level G)

Tickets: £120 (includes all materials and weaving kit to take home)

These four-hour classes cover the basics of hand-weaving before building up to more advanced techniques. Participants will learn how to set up and warp their looms, create a fringe for their wall-hanging, and start weaving. They will then move on to building shapes, blending colours, and creating texture with soumak and rya knotting. Throughout, the class participants will be encouraged to draw on the Barbican itself for inspiration, from the texture of the concrete, the geometric motifs of the architecture, and even the light, sound, and qualities of the space around them.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

For further information, images or to arrange interviews please contact:

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Barbican press room

All Barbican Centre press releases, news announcements and the Communications team's contact details are listed on our website at www.barbican.org.uk/our-story/press-room

About TOAST

Established in 1997 in Wales, TOAST began with nightwear and loungewear, inspired by nature and the surrounding landscape. The collections were designed with a relaxed sense of ease and made with quality materials in long-lasting silhouettes. Today, its approach remains true to its beginnings – creating simple, modern, and functional pieces intended to last for years to come.

Its clothing, homeware and accessories are produced in collaboration with artisans, weavers, and mills from across the globe. TOAST works together to support local communities, preserving craftsmanship and traditional techniques. Handmade pieces created by skilled craftspeople become treasured items to keep and pass on. TOAST Circle offers a range of options to help foster longevity, celebrate the art of repair, and connect with their community.

Each of its shops across the UK is a welcoming space in which to slow down, discover our seasonal collections, learn more about its makers and techniques, and come together for creative events.

<https://www.toa.st>

About the Barbican

The Barbican is a catalyst for creativity, sparking possibilities for artists, audiences, and communities. We showcase the most exciting art from around the world, pushing traditional artistic boundaries to entertain and inspire millions of people, create connections, provoke debate, and reflect the world we live in.

We are an international arts and events centre rooted firmly in our own neighbourhood, collaborating with local communities, and putting the City of London on the map as a destination for everybody. Central to our purpose is supporting emerging talent and shaping opportunities that will accelerate the next generation of creatives.

As a not-for-profit, we rely on the generosity of individuals and organisations, including our principal funder the City of London Corporation. Every ticket purchased, donation made, and pound earned supports our arts and learning programme and enables the widest possible range of people to experience the joy of the arts.

Opened in 1982, the Barbican is a unique and audacious building, recognised globally as an architectural icon. As well as our theatres, galleries, concert halls and cinemas, we have a large conservatory with over 1,500 species of plants and trees, a library, conference facilities, public and community spaces, restaurants, bars, and a picturesque lakeside oasis.

We are the home of the London Symphony Orchestra, and a London base of the Royal Shakespeare Company. We regularly co-commission, produce and showcase the work of our other partners and associates: the Academy of Ancient Music, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Boy Blue, Britten Sinfonia, Cheek by Jowl, Drum Works, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Serious, and We Are Parable.

For more information, visit our [website](#) or connect with us on [Instagram](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Spotify](#) | [LinkedIn](#)