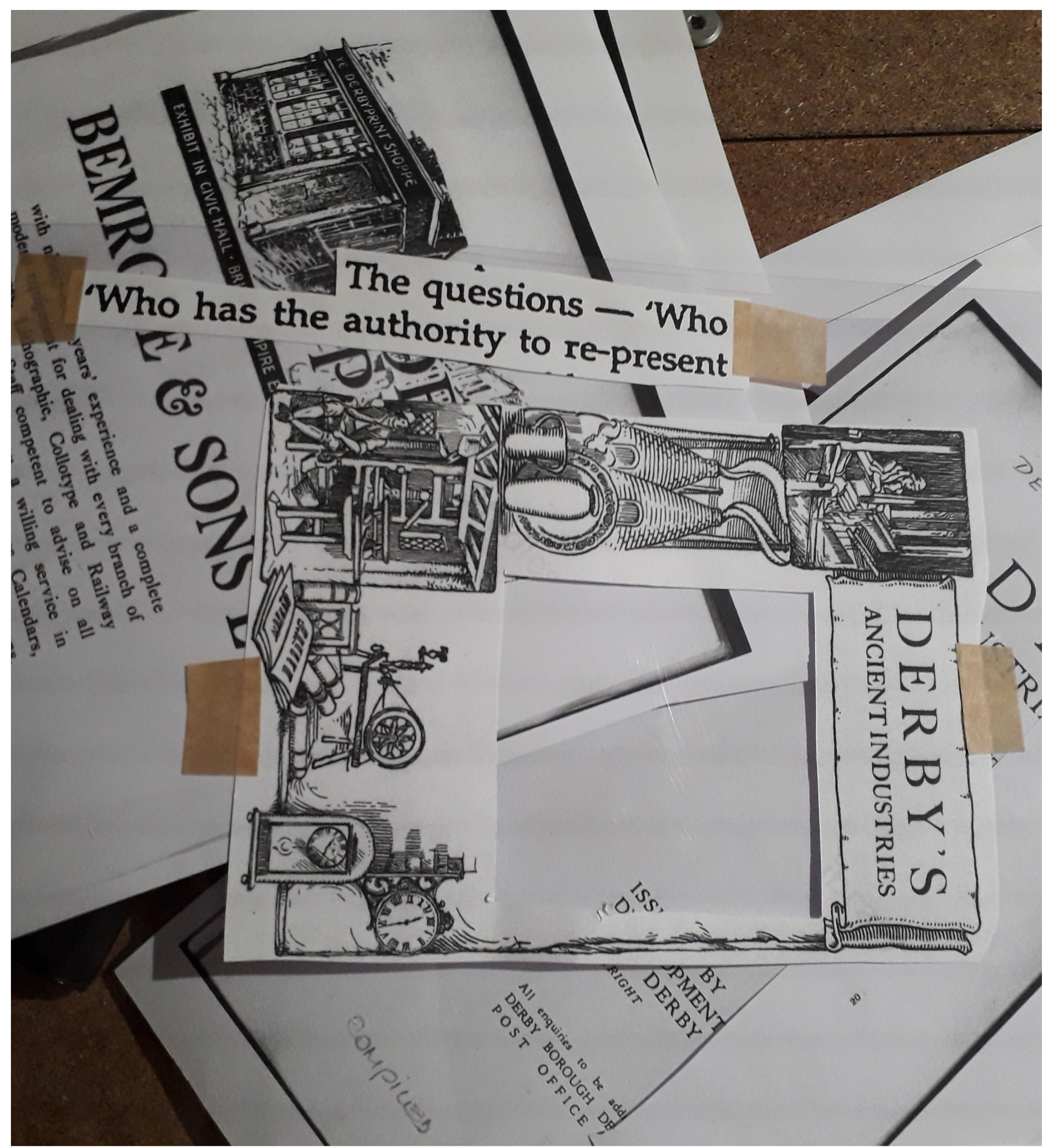


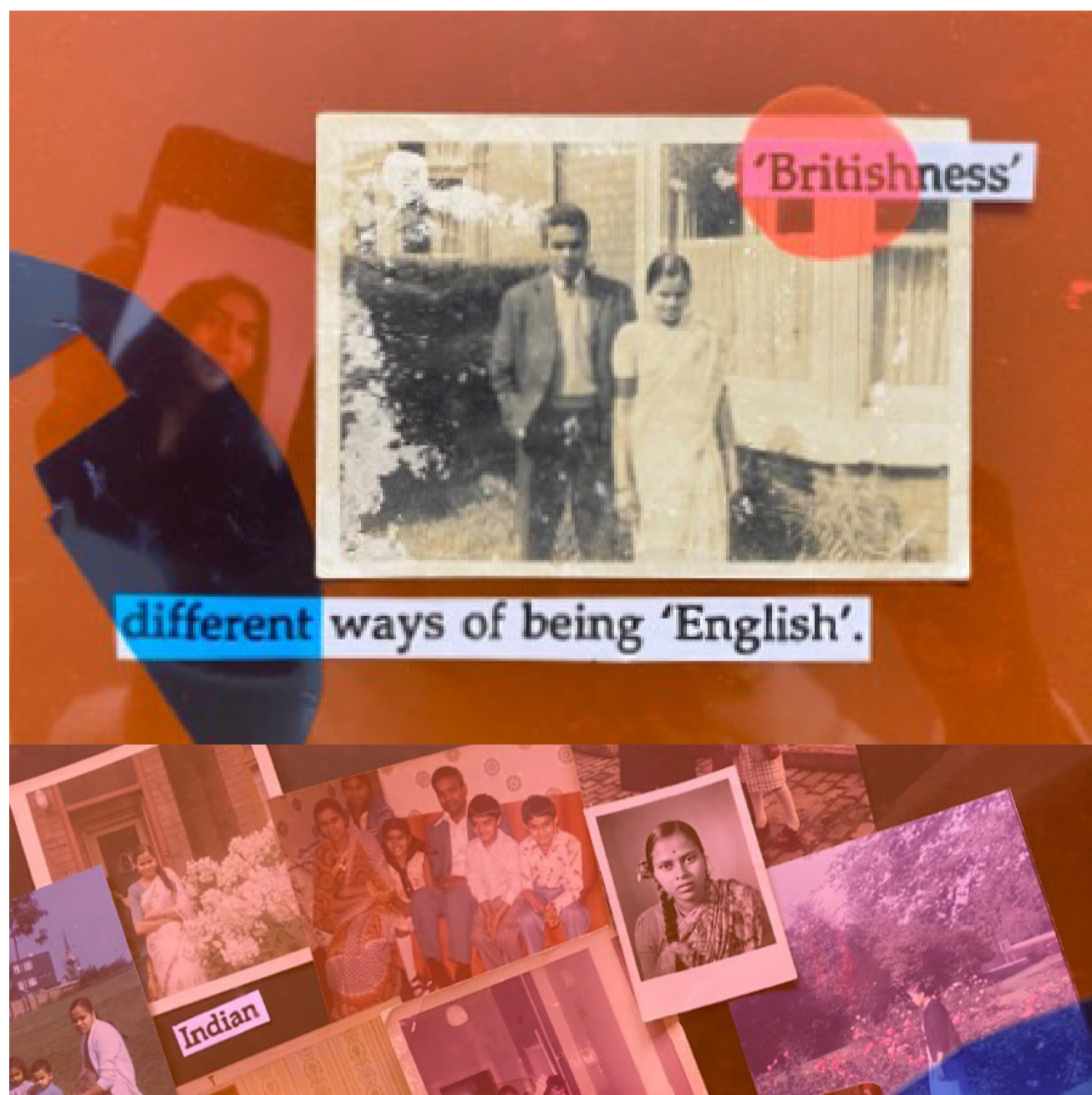
DERBY DAYS AT WEMBLEY: THE BRITISH EMPIRE EXHIBITION OF 1924 AND THE MAKING OF MODERN DERBY X 'EXPERIENCING THE PAST' DESIGN LAB



The MA Design programme at University of Derby offers a series of short, experimental, design labs in which participants explore different contexts for process driven approaches to design.

Experiencing the Past is one of these labs that focusses on developing methods that designers and their collaborators might use together to explore and expand our collective understanding of what we mean by 'Heritage'. These processes can be used to better inform the design of what we might think of as designed outcomes, for example interpretation or educational materials, spaces and encounters with archive materials (digital, physical, or hybrid), publications or exhibitions.

We ask how design processes can aid us in attuning to materials, texts, imagery, and how these processes help us relate with greater awareness to the complex idea of heritage, with the hope that we can stay with the hard questions, difficult feelings and insights that might emerge.



Examples of working processes and outcomes from 2023

Thanks to Cath Feely, Kirsty Adamson, Lauren Higgins, India Birtwisle

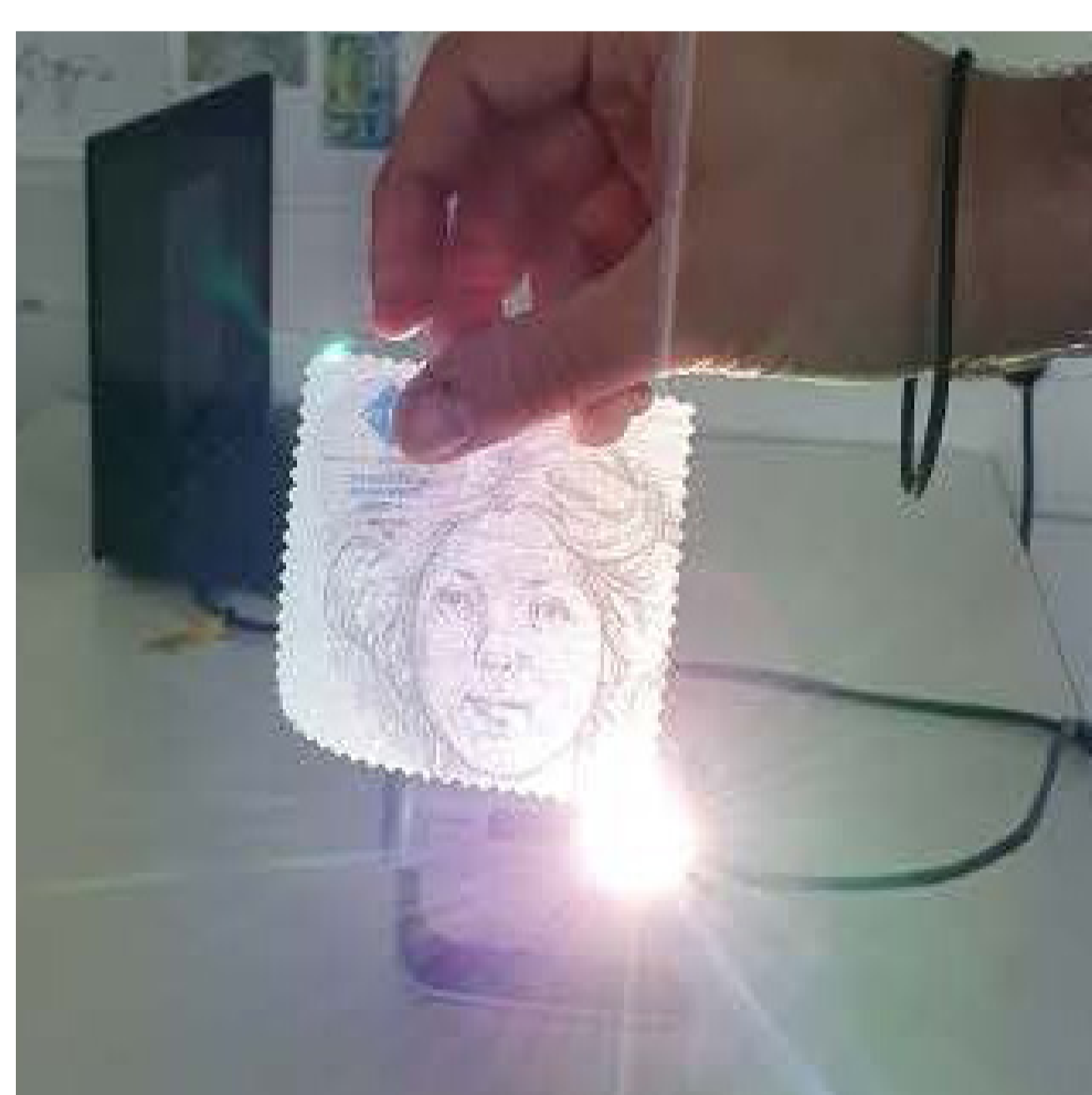


THE BRIEF AND THE PROCESS



Dr Cath Feely invited current MA Design students at the School of Arts to re-enact / re-interpret the process undertaken by Derby School of Arts students in 1924, who were commissioned by the Derby Borough Corporation to produce historical murals about the city's history.

A century later, the city has evolved – along with perspectives on its historical narrative. This time, the brief was to not only recognise the original event, but to acknowledge the complexities of empire and colonialism that history raises, and how they have shaped our present reality. This project aims to confront this narrative, challenge conventional wisdom and consider marginalised voices. It proposes an exploration of the notion of re-enactment and asks whether this form might have critical potential.



'STAYING WITH THE TROUBLE' IN CO-PRODUCTION

As we came to terms with the brief collectively, we tussled with the responsibility of representation and how knowledge is formed. The diversity of age, gender, nationality, and economic situation in the team was laid bare as we explored our perspectives and experiences of the city. Each person's specific knowledges and experiences offered a distinct understanding of Derby, unearthing resonant ancient and recent stories.

We faced discomfort in the act of selecting images, ideas, and used collage to explore how scale, medium, colour and context could 'unsettle' our reading of the ideas and stories that resonated with our group: rewilding, architecture and space, spirituality, unseen stories and threads of connection. We repeatedly asked: whose history do we hear / see? Who is represented today, why and how? And returning to Stuart Hall's provocations we asked - 'who has the authority?'

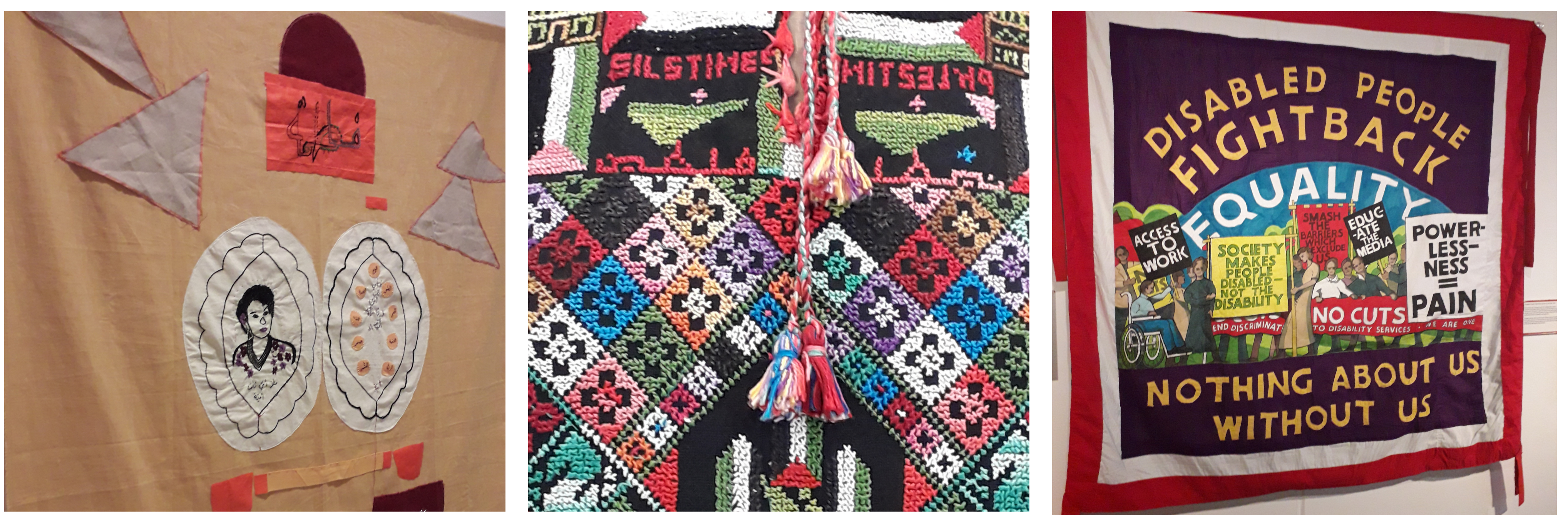
Only by returning to the idea that this process and any resulting artefacts could help is to expose the problems of Heritage and the (possible) mis-use of narrative that we could continue. At the time, we had in mind Donna Harraway's idea of avoiding the pitfalls of either hope / despair, and instead chose to attend closely to tussle of co-production.

THE EXHIBITION

A proposal emerged for an installation of banners that could echo the panels originally made in 1924, and raise the same questions and problems we had encountered, to wider audiences. This would be accompanied by an online presence for the project, a platform that could gather and highlight stories from visitors to the site, and connect them to the 'threads' present in the physical banners.

Unlike the historical frieze of 1924, this is not a self-contained or finished product. It is a temporary installation undertaken by a team of staff and students to explore the difficulties of representing collective identity and heritage. We are presenting this process to put forward ideas for inspiration, challenge and continuing co-production. We want to start a conversation that survives beyond our project and we need your help to do this.

This is the first iteration of a piece that we hope will be ongoing and involve multiple voices and perspectives beyond our group.



Banner-forms in art works, trade union and protest movements, collective quilting and making projects. Non hierarchical and slow production methods from the People's History Museum, and 'Material Power', an exhibition exploring textiles from Palestine in the context of colonial resistance.

WHAT NOW? WHAT NEXT?

Some questions we are interested to explore further:

- What might the conversations have been like in 1924? Were they similar? Who got to decide?
- How can we build processes that subvert the hierarchies that we might find ourselves practicing or subject to?
- How is making different than talking ?
- What are the possibilities and difficulties of words / images / process when we come together to tell stories?
- How can we set up a communal process that will sustain beyond us?
- What words, questions, or images would you add to the spaces on these banners?

MA Design 'Experiencing the Past' student team:

Sidony Swan, Heather Duncan, Yuyu Tan, Jayne Brewster, Jorge Rodrigues Estevao, Zuzanna Grebla, Daniel Dada

University of Derby team + Museum of Making colleagues:

Jo Ray, Cath Feely, Charlotte Clewlow, Emma Rowson, Kath Owens, Katie Smith, Dan Webber and Eilish Clohessy-Dennis