

Knitting 1914-2014 Study Days 2-3 April 2014

Speakers - abstracts and biographies

Gill Clarke - Home Front Woollies: Art and Knitting in the First and Second World War

This paper will focus largely on artists' portrayal of knitting on the Home Front during the First and Second World War. Attention will be directed for instance to the memorable portrait of 'The Sock Knitter' painted in 1915 by the Australian artist Grace Cossington Smith and 'A Knitting Party' completed by Evelyn Dunbar, the only salaried British woman war artist in 1940. Dunbar's paintings of members of The Women's Land Army in their iconic green pullovers will also be examined alongside patterns for 'Service Woollies for Women'. The intention is to explore the intersections between art and knitting and in so doing show how this corpus of work bears 'moral witness' to the impact of war on the Home Front and the diversity of experiences therein.

Dr Gill Clarke is Visiting Professor at the University of Chichester and Guest Curator of From Fields to Factories: Women's Work on the Home Front in the First World War at the University's Otter Gallery and Home Lad, Home: The War Horse Story at St Barbe Museum & Art Gallery, Lymington. Her books include Randolph Schwabe: A Life in Art (2012), The Women's Land Army: A Portrait (2008) and Evelyn Dunbar: War and Country (2006). Her last academic post was at the University of Southampton (1995-2010) where she was Director of the Centre for Biography and Education.

Dawn Cole – The silence of knitting

Dawn Cole is an artist and independent curator who works from her studio in Birchington, Kent. Cole uses archives as the starting point for developing projects and for the past few years has been making work in response to the archive of First World War VAD Nurse Clarice Spratling.

Winner of the V&A prize at the International Print Biennale 2011, and shortlisted for 2013 Arts Foundation Award, Dawn Cole has exhibited in Japan, France and around the UK.

Jonathan Faiers - Class conscious and cosy: Exporting British knitwear in *The Ambassador*

The Ambassador magazine was a publication aimed at promoting British fashion and textiles overseas, and from 1946 to 1972 produced feature spreads incorporating some of the most innovative graphic design and photography of the time. Its promotion of British knitwear is especially noteworthy in that this often ground breaking approach to layout and typography is offset by its representation of knitwear as enshrining the rigid class system that would be gradually eroded during its years of publication. This fundamental conservatism is seen at its most entrenched when, in an attempt to incorporate the more liberated and 'classless' fashions that emerged in the so-called 'youth quake' of the 1960s, the journal depicted knitwear as both simultaneously traditional and progressive. This paper will utilise both editorial features and advertisements from The Ambassador revealing that the magazine was exporting an increasingly embattled British class consciousness alongside cosy representations of leisure time woollens.

Dr Jonathan Faiers' work explores the interface between popular culture, textiles and dress. He has written articles, presented papers and organised colloquia on subjects including: Italian knitted sportswear and British male style, Balenciaga and ecclesiastical dress, Classicism, fashion and science fiction, and textiles and the production of space. His most recent book *Dressing Dangerously: Dysfunctional Fashion in Film* (Yale University Press) utilised fashion and film theory to explore the relationship between fashion, and its cinematic representation. Jonathan's guest edited special edition of *Textile: Journal of Cloth and Culture* was devoted to papers given at the 2012 In the Loop 3 international conference. He is currently researching the work and careers of a group of 'forgotten' London post-war female couturiers for a forthcoming publication *London Couture 1945-70* (V&A Publications). He is the editor of *Luxury: History, Culture, Consumption* (Bloomsbury Sept. 2014) the first peer-reviewed academic journal devoted to the subject, which provides a forum for the multi-disciplinary discussion of our understanding of luxury and its meaning today. He acts as a member of the Fashion Publishing

Group at the Victoria & Albert Museum, and is a member of the Costume Colloquium Advisory Committee, Florence.

Anna McNally – Loose threads; hunting for knitting in the archives

Anna McNally is Assistant Archivist at the University of Westminster, where her role focuses on the cataloguing and promotion of collections covering the 175 year history of the institution. She has recently published a chapter on the processing of artist's archives in "All This Stuff: Archiving the Artist" eds. Vaknin, Stuckey, Lane (ARLIS 2013). Her paper 'Discovering Knitting at the Regent Street Polytechnic, 1898-1948', originally presented at In the Loop 3, was published in Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture, 12:1, March 2014.

"Loose threads: hunting for knitting in the archives" will look at the way in which knitting - an activity that produces very few written records - has been recorded in historical archives, either deliberately or accidentally. As the primary source for historical investigation, the question of what - and who - is recognised by the archive has received much consideration in recent years. This paper will highlight ways in which the history of knitting can be discovered, and the impact of digitisation for historical research.

Linda Newington – Knitting 1914-2014: exhibition concepts and themes

This presentation will outline the conceptual framework for "Knitting 1914-2014" the current exhibition in The Special Collections Gallery, located in the Hartley Library at the University of Southampton. "Making connections" between different types of resources, with reference to current research and finally showcasing knitwear and swatches from Winchester School of Art BA (Hons) knitwear students underpins the themes of exhibition.

Linda Newington is Head of Library and Archive Collections for Art and Design at Winchester School of Art, a specialist art and design library, of the University of Southampton Library. The School holds number of Special Collections including the Knitting Reference Library, the Artists Books Collection, and the School of Art Archive. Her unique and distinctive approach has been to work with these collections for a range of activities including conferences, events, exhibitions, publications, digitisation and student projects.

In 2007 she completed an MA in the History of Textiles and Dress with the Textile Conservation Centre. Her dissertation focused on the image and status of knitting in relation to the Knitting Collections held by the University Library. She is the Director of *In the loop*, a series of four international, interdisciplinary conferences which have focused on the many aspects of knitting. The conferences have been the foundation for cutting-edge research on knitting with contributions from academics, designers, knitters, researchers and students worldwide.

Alex Pengelly – Future heirlooms

Future heirlooms takes a critical look at the power of the hand knitted object and how emotional value can be achieved in knitting from a knitwear designer's perspective.

Considering examples of contemporary and historical design; interest is centred on societal perceptions of handknitting and the modern fascination with the 'handcrafted' object. Knitwear's position within fashion and the Media is analysed with a view to questioning how a range of design methodologies can be used to create products that could be the heirlooms of the future. Finally examples of contemporary designers working in this way offer insight into a new generation of designers whose work and research methods offers a different approach to knitting.

Martin Polley – Sheep in the park, sticky bombs, and service sweaters: knitting and the People's War

This paper will explore the diverse ways in which knitting was part of the British experience of the Second World War. Using Angus Calder's notion of 'The People's War' as a starting point, the paper will explore such diverse strands as the representation of knitting in propaganda films and posters, the popular drive for knitted items for service men and women, and the use of knitting in weaponry. It will argue that knitting played a part in the everyday life of British people in wartime.

Dr Martin Polley teaches History and Sport Studies at the University of Winchester and History at the University of Southampton. He is the author of *Moving the Goalposts: a history of sport and society since 1945* (Routledge, 1998), *Sports History: a practical guide* (Palgrave, 2007), and *The British Olympics: Britain's Olympic heritage, 1612-2012* (English Heritage, 2011). He has written articles and book chapters on many aspects of sports history, including politics, professionalism, national identity, and the Olympic Games, and he is an editor of the journal *Sport in History*. He is a regular broadcaster on sporting issues, and has contributed to news and documentary programmes on television and radio stations in the UK, Canada, Australia, and Japan, and has given keynote papers at conferences in Sweden, France, and Japan. He has been involved with In the Loop since 2008, and his new article, 'Knitting and the Olympics', appears in the latest issue of *Textile*.

Deryn Relph - Repeat from *: patterns of reoccurrence and reinvention

Deryn Relph, a University of Southampton Alumni, and former Winchester School of Art BA (Hons) Fashion Textiles student, is a contemporary designer maker with her own interior/lifestyle brand. She also works as a freelance designer & social media content writer for the interiors industry.

In her presentation "Repeat from *: patterns of reoccurrence and reinvention" by taking a taxonomical approach, Deryn will explore several strands which demonstrate how ideas, solutions and design elements commonly re-occur or are re-invented through knitting history.

Tom Van Deijnen - From piece work to a modern classic: the development of Sanquhar knitwear

Sanquhar Knitwear has been a firm favourite with knitters for many years. This tradition can be traced back to the late 1700s and has developed a distinct pattern and style since then. A resurgence in the 1950s made the Sanquhar gloves popular again, and in the 21st Century knitters have reappropriated and reinvented patterns and construction, showing that a classic in the repertoire continues to evolve into exciting new designs.

Tom van Deijnen is a self-taught knitter from The Netherlands, who now lives in Brighton, UK. Technique, tradition and narrative inform much of his work. Under the moniker tomofholland, he explores these aspects of knitting and shares his enthusiasm with other knitters through exhibitions and workshops. Hand-knitting has also raised his awareness of the meaning behind garments and his relationship with the clothes he wears. This has led to the Visible Mending Programme, in which Tom provides mending and repair inspiration, skills and services to people.

Website: www.tomofholland.com Facebook, twitter, instagram: tomofholland

Victoria Walters - Acting for the Body of Society: Thinking Through Knit in the Work of Rosemarie Trockel

Contemporary fine artist Rosemarie Trockel once argued that fashion should not just be seen as something decorative, but that it should be understood as "acting for the body of society", a statement which points to the influence of 20th Century artist Joseph Beuys on her work. In this talk I will consider Trockel's work with knit and discuss the way in which she engaged with this key artistic precedent, but forged her own distinct position.

Dr Victoria Walters is a Senior Research Fellow at Winchester School of Art. She holds a doctorate from the University of Ulster on the art practice of German 20th Century artist Joseph Beuys. She is a member of the Mapping Spectral Traces network and SIEF (the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore) and contributes to one of the society's working groups, Place Wisdom. Victoria's publications include *Joseph Beuys and the Celtic Wor(l)d: a language of healing* (Lit Verlag, 2012) and *Beuysian Legacies in Ireland and Beyond: Art, Culture and Politics* co-edited with Professor Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes (Lit Verlag, 2011).