

The voices of
knitting
In the loop 3

in the
loop 3



Welcome

Welcome to **In the loop 3: the voices of knitting**. This conference is dedicated to the memory of Richard Rutt who was popularly known as the “knitting bishop”. His seminal book *A history of hand knitting* remains the key text on this subject. To have acquired his library which is now an integral part of the Knitting Reference Library at Winchester School of Art has been a privilege and professional highlight.

I first met Richard and his wife Joan during 1999 when I visited them at their home in Falmouth to discuss the donation of his library. A special feature of his library is the collection of Victorian knitting manuals all of which have been digitised and are available as full texts via the internet. His collection of knitting patterns is particularly strong on menswear so we have taken six boxes as a pilot project to catalogue and digitise depending upon copyright clearance.

The keynote speakers for **In the loop 3** each bring their distinctive approach to looking at knitting in unexpected ways which I am confident Richard would have enjoyed. Together with all the speakers they are the voices who will cover adornment, exploration, representation, sport and well-being. As we all know knitting is many faceted. It is not for any one single group, is not confined by period or place, there is no one approach to its history or contemporary manifestation. I am sure you will all agree that it may be domestic, cultural, world-wide, an art or craft, historic, industrial, contemporary or futuristic!

Linda Newington
August 2012

Day 1

Wednesday 5th September 2012

09.00 – 10.00	Registration		
10.00 – 10.30	Welcome and dedication to Richard Rutt by Linda Newington	14.15 – 15.00	Keynote speaker Dr Carol Christiansen “The best of British: knitwear used by Polar and Himalayan explorers”
	Knitting in Sport	15.00 – 15.20	Anna McNally Discovering knitting at the Regent Street Polytechnic, 1898-1948
10.30 – 11.15	Keynote speaker Dr Martin Polley “Knitting and the Olympic Games”	15.20 – 15.50	REFRESHMENTS
11.15 – 11.45	REFRESHMENTS	15.50 – 16.10	Sharon Evans-Mikellis Future forms: a methodological investigation for garment shape innovation in knitwear design
11.45 – 12.05	Alison Carter Looking good on the beach: art deco wool-knit bathing costumes – were they ever designed for water immersion, or simply for sun-bathing?	16.10 – 16.30	Tom Van Deijnen Curiosity cabinet of knitting stitches
12.05 – 12.25	Susan Strawn Nordic knitting design: cross-cultural “branding” of the American ski industry	16.30 – 16.45	Questions to panel
12.25 – 12.45	Sarah Elwick Producing knitwear for enhanced sports performance: design process to product realisation	17.00 – 18.00	Book stall open for specialist books, journals and patterns
12.45 – 13.00	Questions to the panel	18.00 – 20.00	CONFERENCE RECEPTION Welcome to the WDC from Alice Kettle
13.00 – 14.15	LUNCH		

Dr Martin Polley

Knitting and the Olympic Games

“ Over the past five years, my main research projects have all been about the Olympic Games. Alongside this, thanks to the initiatives created by **In the loop**, I have also explored knitting patterns through the lens of sports history. In this paper, I will use the unique opportunity created by London 2012 and **In the loop 2012** to bring these two rather disparate strands together. My paper will explore some of the ways in which knitting and the Olympic Games have intersected. Themes will include the use of knitted garments by sportsmen and sportswomen in the Olympic Games, the presence of knitting as a prize event in the Much Wenlock Olympian Games in the 1850s, the use of knitting in some Cultural Olympiad projects, and the glut of unofficial Olympic-inspired knitting books that have been published in 2012. Through an exploration of these eclectic strands, I aim to provide an off-beat look at the Olympic Games, and to inspire detailed research into these intersections between sport and knitting. ”

Dr Martin Polley is Senior lecturer in Sport at the University of Southampton. He previously taught at King Alfred's College, Winchester. His books include *Moving the Goalposts: a history of sport and society since 1945* (1998), *Sports History: a practical guide* (2006), and *The British Olympics: Britain's Olympic heritage 1612-2012* (2011). He is an editor of *Sport in History*, and his consultancies include work on Olympic-related projects with the National Youth Theatre and the Free Word Centre.





Dr Carol Christiansen

The best of British: knitwear used by polar and Himalayan explorers

“ The Heroic Age of Exploration marked the celebrated use by explorers of British-made woollen garments. Clothing included knitted garments made by large and small British firms. Both explorers and knitwear manufacturers were influenced by ideas developed by Gustav Jaeger for his Sanitary Woollen System. Professor Jaeger’s mandate formed the basis for the eponymous clothing company, which supplied a large number of expeditions with knitwear, as did rival firm Wolsey. The success or failure of the expeditions had implications for the marketing strategies of both companies. Similarly, smaller knitwear firms based in Shetland also filled orders for Britain’s explorers. These companies were literally, cottage industries, producing an ensemble of hand-made garments for each team member. Knitwear designs and methods of manufacture were based on traditional clothing made for men at sea. Like the larger firms, the Shetland companies used their relationship with successful expeditions as a means to market their products to the average customer. ”

Carol Christiansen is a textile archaeologist and historian, specialising in the manufacture of woollen cloth. She has published works on primitive wools, archaeological textiles and tools, and Shetland textile history. She is curator at Shetland Museum and Archives and was co-host for **In the loop 2** in 2010.

Day 2

Thursday 6th September 2012

09.30 – 09.45 Linda Newington - Welcome and house-keeping

Well-being

09.45 – 10.30 Keynote speaker:
Dr Jessica Hemmings
“Introversion and knitting”

10.30 – 10.50 **Jill Riley & Betsan Corkhill**
Knitting for well-being: the psychological and social benefits of hand-knitting, findings from an international survey

10.50 – 11.20 REFRESHMENTS

11.20 – 11.40 **Jessica Worley**
Haptic learning in the development of children and young people using the example of the Craft Club and other educational projects

11.40 – 12.00 **Angela Maddock**
Re(a)d Knit: Body/Mother/Home

12.00 – 12.15 Questions to the panel

12.15 – 13.15 LUNCH

13.15 – 14.30

14.30 – 14.50

14.50 – 15.10

15.10 – 15.40

15.40 – 16.00

16.00 – 16.20

16.20 – 16.40

19.30

Voices

Keynote speaker:
Hazel Hughson
“A voice on Shetland’s knitting”

Lesley O’Connell Edwards
The voices of 19th century knitting writers 1840-1900

Alyce McGovern
Guerrilla knitting: the craft of subversion?

REFRESHMENTS

Hazel Tindall
Knitting in Shetland in the 1960s

Adrienne Sloane
Unravelling political knitting

Questions to the panel

CONFERENCE DINNER to be held in the Paul Woodhouse Suite, Winchester Cathedral

Dr Jessica Hemmings

Introversion and knitting

“ Knitting is often celebrated for its social potential. Individuals gather together to share time and conversation while knitting in what are now increasingly rare examples of community spirit. While this potential for knitting is accurate, I want to move away from this well-trodden association to instead explore the usefulness of knitting in the formation of meaningful solitary activity. Depictions of knitting as a solitary past time are often presented in negative terms: loneliness, isolation – even madness – frequently appear in literature and films depicting the lone knitter. Drawing on the recently published *Quiet: the power of introverts in a world that can't stop talking* by Susan Cain, this lecture will suggest that such stereotypes are the by-product of attitudes that devalue the creative potential of elected individual activity. Cain argues that it is more often individual, rather than group, endeavour that results in new ideas. Borrowing from this thinking, the identity and wellbeing of the lone knitter will be reconsidered. ”

Jessica Hemmings has taught at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, the Rhode Island School of Design and was a Reader in Textile Culture at the Winchester School of Art until October of 2008. In 2010 she edited a collection of essays entitled *In the Loop: Knitting Now* published by Black Dog, which was based on the first **In the loop** conference. She has recently compiled *The Textile Reader* for Berg (2012) and written *Warp & Weft* for A&C Black (2012). In September of this year she moved from the Edinburgh College of Art, where she was Head of Context and Deputy Director of Research, to the National College of Art and Design, Dublin, where she is currently Professor and Head of the Faculty of Visual Culture.





Hazel Hughson

A voice on Shetland's knitting

“ I am interested in the relevance of Shetland knitting to people in Shetland in 2012, as a creative or commercial activity, or part of Shetland's heritage tourism. Each Shetland generation designs and knits for their own time, their own families, or for selling. These skills are declining. Fewer knitters have the knowledge of knitted lace and Fair Isle that our grandmothers had, applying understanding of the material to any form, as a jeweller uses silver.

In Shetland we voice opinion on our responsibility to preserve Shetland's knitting. In this presentation I share an overview, after a lifetime of involvement and year of close observation of Shetland's knitting. Our textile culture is shared with Faroe, Iceland, and Norway, we promote Shetland's “unique cultural identity”, but our complicated, beautiful and wearable knitting may not be part of our future.

Working in arts development for Shetland Arts, my research outcomes may influence our work on knitting skills. But which knitter's method is the one to sponsor and teach? Could formalising our techniques repress creativity? Should we teach Shetland knitting as a medium for expressing ideas - and is its future secured through business development? ”

Hazel Hughson works in arts development for Shetland Arts, developing contemporary craft practice and jointly programming Shetland Arts' Bonhoga Gallery. After focussing on contemporary forms of indigenous Shetland craft, she now delivers projects, exhibitions and cross artform collaborations. Aware of the challenge of developing creatively within the boundaries of island life, she encourages new influences through national and international links.

After graduating from Edinburgh College of Art in the 1970's she returned to Shetland to establish a commercial practice in contemporary Shetland knitting for national and international markets, becoming involved with Shetland knitwear factories in industrial knitting technology and export marketing. She has researched and developed Shetland textiles in all forms, as craft, applied art or fine art and is interested in various perceptions of northern culture and perceived remoteness.

Day 3

Friday 7th September 2012

09.00 – 09.15 Linda Newington - Welcome and house-keeping

The representation of knitting

09.15 – 10.00 Keynote speaker **Dr. Jonathan Faiers** “Knitting and catastrophe”

10.00 – 10.20 **Jo Turney**
A sweater to die for

10.20 – 10.40 **Siún Carden**
Crafting stories of belonging: the Aran jumper as myth and merchandise

10.40 – 11.10 REFRESHMENTS

11.10 – 11.30 **Helen Whitman**
‘lass, tak dy sock’: creating authenticity through cultural and emotional narrative in Shetland knitted textiles

11.30 – 11.50 **Angharad Thomas**
Knitting and the internet

11.50 – 12.10 **Emmanuelle Dirix**
Stitched up: vintage mania and the dark side of the knitting revival

12.10 – 12.30 Questions to the panel

12.30 – 13.30 LUNCH

Adornment

13.30 – 14.15 Keynote speaker **Linda Newington** “The decorative art of knitting”

14.15 – 14.35 **Roslyn Chapman**
Shetland lace knitting

14.35 – 14.55 **Vivian Høxboro**
The knitted night shirts from Denmark in a new light

14.55 – 15.25 REFRESHMENTS

14.25 – 15.45 **Sandy Black**
Couture hand-knitting in the post-war period: the work of Maria Luck-Szanton

15.45 – 16.05 **Juliana Sissons**
Engaging fashion

16.05 – 16.25 Questions to the panel

16.30 CASTING OFF

Dr Jonathan Faiers

Knitting and catastrophe

“ The practice of hand knitting is conventionally understood as a domestic occupation that is fundamentally conservative, cosy, economical and, by extension ‘worthy’.

And yet, given this, knitting’s representation in literature, film, and other media positions it as consistently accompanied by a sense of impending doom, destruction or as a prelude to catastrophe. From the sanguinary craft of the notorious tricoteuses knitting as aristocratic heads rolled from the blade of Madame Guillotine, to more recent cinematic and fictional imbrications of yarn and harm, knitting can be understood as a ritual either summoning up or warding off impending dissolution.

The practice of knitting is a fragile operation after all; the attempt to contain a series of voids, of making forms out of the formless imbues it with a sense of imminent collapse, the propensity to unravel being a constant threat. This paper will consider knitting as a catastrophic practice and a theoretical context will be provided by Georges Bataille’s notion of ‘formlessness’, whilst cinematic and literary examples drawn from Montse Stanley’s collection of knitting related fiction held at Winchester, and films such as *A Tale of Two Cities*, *The King of Comedy* and *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* will furnish further evidence of knitting’s rejection of its woolly innocence. ”

Dr Jonathan Faiers, Reader in Fashion Theory, taught previously at Goldsmiths College and Central St Martins. His research examines the interface between popular culture, textiles and dress. His critically acclaimed work *Tartan* was published in 2008 and he is currently completing his next book *Dangerous Dressing: Dysfunctional Fashion in Film* with Yale University Press. He has published articles, given papers and organised colloquia on subjects including, formlessness in knitting, Classicism in sci-fi film costume, Balenciaga and ecclesiastical dress, tweed and gender subversion and textiles and the production of space. His installations have explored cultural commodification and the Kashmir shawl, Huguenot silk weaving and religious diasporas, and the representation of art spaces in mainstream cinema. He acts as a consultant and is a member of the Publications Advisory Board at the V&A.





Linda Newington

The decorative art of knitting

“ The beautiful, embellished and ornamental are all present in the Knitting Collections held by the University of Southampton Library. From the beaded bags and decorative accessories collected by Montse Stanley to the complex, patterned gloves knitted by Richard Rutt and the glamorous, stylish knitting patterns of Jane Waller. This world of the decorative, colourful and patterned is present in all parts of the collections including the photographs, postcards, books, journals and magazines.

The collections reveal a variety of approaches to embellishment and the potential of knitting to test the skill and inventiveness of designers and makers for both hand and machine knitting. This may be for accessories, the home, as gifts, and for the clothing of babies, children and adults. The current revival allows us to reconsider this aspect of knitting whether as a solitary pursuit or an essential part of the fashion industry. These themes will be explored in this presentation for **In the loop 3**. ”

Linda Newington began her professional career as a librarian at the British Museum (Natural History) in the Botany Library curating the collection of botanical drawings, paintings and prints. She is now a member of the Senior Library Staff at the University of Southampton. 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. She has led and developed the series of **In the loop** conferences since 2008 and has published on artists' books and the knitting collections in a wide variety of journals and magazines. She is a regular speaker at public events.

In the loop 3 presents two practical knitting workshops led by specially invited textile designers.

Wilma Malcolmson Painting with wool

Tuesday 4 September 2012 at the Winchester Discovery Centre

This creative workshop will focus on the use of colour and Fair-isle pattern in knitting. It will be led by Wilma Malcolmson the creative force behind her own knitwear business “Shetland Designer” since the 1980s. Wilma was brought up on a croft near Skeld on Shetland and was taught to knit as a child by her mother. Colour has been her lifelong interest and is integral to her knitwear. She will share with you her expertise and approach with reference to her northern environment of clear light, muted hues and accent colour.

Wilma has prepared some colour Fair-isle swatches specifically for use in this workshop. You will learn to prepare your own swatches to test colour and pattern for your future projects. You may also choose to knit an i-phone cover using colour and pattern during the workshop.

Yarn and needles provided please bring graph paper and pencil.

Deryn Relph Retro-rainbow crochet

Saturday 8 September 2012 at the Winchester Discovery Centre

This creative workshop will focus on developing shapes and colours to produce funky decorative motifs in crochet. It will be led by Deryn Relph a contemporary textile designer who also learnt to knit and make at an early age. Her textiles for interiors won her “Best in Show” at the Knitting & Stitching Show 2010 awarded by the UK Hand Knitting Association. Deryn has developed a unique approach to her work with an emphasis on exploring shapes and new colour ways for textiles in the home and is sometimes influenced by historical and vintage textiles.

For the workshop Deryn will share her expertise in helping you develop your own individual approach to working with colour and shape through crochet for your future projects.

Yarn and crochet hooks provided.

Both workshops are suitable for those with intermediate skills but NOT for beginners. To book a place please contact the Box Office + 44 (0)1962 873603. Fee £40. Lunch is not provided but there is a café in the WDC and other cafés close by.

With thanks to Rowan for bags and yarn for the **In the loop 3** conference bags and to Texere for yarn towards Pom-pom Making.

All images in this publication are from the Knitting Collections held by the University of Southampton Library.

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