

Hand-Knitted Textiles and the Economies of Craft in Scotland



Workshop 2 Economies and Cultures of Knitting

Aims of the workshops

- To situate the history of hand knitting in Scotland as a cultural and economic practice;
- To examine the current contribution of hand knitting in local and national contexts;
- To look at the ways in which Scotland's rich heritage of hand-knitted textiles can contribute to other national industries, such as tourism and fashion.



Workshop Programme

Workshop 1: Economies and Cultures of Wool

Workshop 2: Economies and Cultures of Knitting

Workshop 3: Economies and Cultures of Design
(18 October)

Public Study Day: Reinventing Scotland's Woolen Traditions
(19 October)

Summary of workshop 1: Wool

- Wool in a global market: the power of economics over production, over preparation processes and production of final product.
- Globalisation and Scottishness how Scottish is Scottish yarn?
- Wool miles: produced in Scotland, cleaned in China!



Summary (2)



- Wool work: issues re apprenticeships and continuation of skills in wool industry
- Environment and sustainability: wool production = industrial process at larger scale - not just a museum or heritage industry.
- Authenticity/provenance: increasing interest in the provenance of wool/yarn plus focus on natural/organic/local etc.

Summary 3



- Knit as process/making as meaning: meaning embedded in the process of doing (rather than the end product) and meaning attached to the materials and the making (myth, history, landscape etc)
- Narrative of the Craft: need to tell the story to sell, create an interest and a market
- Scale: the value of small scale production, ability to link product with maker
- Value: Added value to product if provenance can be shown
- Textile tourism: creating and buying into a myth? More can/should be done in Scotland to promote this important cultural and industrial heritage
- Niche Market – fixed capacity, cannot provide mainstream product and in large quantities, so what can be done to add value?

Hand-knitting – a history

- labour, carried out by women (mainly), at home (often poorly financially remunerated)
- domestic labour **and** leisure
- skilled work
- Carrier of 'heritage' and 'tradition'
- Symbol of culture
- Home-based craft
- Creative, individual, social



Hand knitting – now

or the redefinition of 'craft' – connecting the traditional with the contemporary

- Social activity
- Art
- Heritage
- Labour
- Leisure
- Therapy
- Online



Hand Knitting

research questions



- what is the economic and cultural history of Scottish hand knitting?
- How does this heritage influence community identities and local cultures today?
- What is the economic future for hand knitting – as luxury brand, domestic necessity or artwork?
- What is the social potential of hand-knitting? As therapy? As social network?