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 qualities, 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?