

Hand-Knitted Textiles and the Economies of Craft in Scotland



Workshop 2 Economies and Cultures of Knitting Friday 1 June 2012

The following is a summary of points that emerged from presentations and discussions at the Knitting workshop:

- Value: of time and skill. Hand-knitted garments are time and skill intensive - the market needs to know and appreciate this; treat this as a usp. Hand knitted pieces have added value
- Identity: handknitting engenders pride,
- Craft revolution: knitting as an activity undertaken in more remote areas facilitated by internet BUT expensive in time and money
- Special-ness: a handknitted item is special, individual - 'making it special' - companies develop products with museums and archives. Hand knit = special because of construction, techniques, individuality and stories
- Skill: an open secret. Everyone could knit but not everyone does. Recognition of knitters' skill and education of consumer needed
- Education: hand skills subordinated in education system to 'knowledge'. Knowledge economy does not incorporate craft skill. Importance of education of designers - need to understand the processes behind and construction of hand knit.

- Production: SMEs more suited than mass production
- Sustainability: hand knitting can be part of sustainable living in isolated areas (see Eriskay knitting project)
- Provenance: important to consumers paying high prices -
- History: which elements of hand knitting from the past are evident today? Which are celebrated and which have been forgotten?
- Marketing: internet revolution; overseas demand (Japan, USA)
- Dialogue: between older knitters and younger knitters/designers - conversations about techniques, traditions, designs - ideas exchange
- Story - importance of the narrative (see Mulberry filming knitters for stories around products)
- Inwards/Outwards
- Authenticity: tensions between tradition and modern designers; 'Made in Scotland' - 'fashionable heritage'
- Memories: of family knitting; oral tradition of 'patterns' handed down
- Techniques - re-use of old garments; unpicking of old garments (sustainability)
- Co-operation: eg Highland Loop - new socio-economic models - pooling resources, skills, strengths (and sociability) [harks back to earlier knitting practices]
- Cottage industry meets globalisation
- gender: knitters mainly female; factories run by men
- Slow fashion
- Every stitch is important
- Knitting in the round
- Scotland Global