Knitting after making: What we do with what we make

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Knitting after making

What we do with what we make

Jessica Hemmings

The identity of *The Knitting Map* (2005) today raises questions about the potential difference in value between the act of making and its physical outcome. In an effort to understand these differences, I take as a starting point an interest in knitting as a verb, rather than a noun; knitting as an action and activity, rather than an object. Anthropologist Tim Ingold's advocacy for a way of thinking 'that assigns primacy to processes of formation as against their final products' (2010: 2–3) may be useful to consider in this context. Ingold coins the acronym EWO or *environment without objects* (2010: 6) which he posits 'not [as] a material world but a world of materials, of matter in flux' (2010: 8). While I do not fully share in Ingold's anxiety over the object (2010: 3), his emphasis of change (2010: 7) in contrast to stasis seems particularly useful when considering the examples of public durational knitting[1] discussed in this chapter.

In an attempt to contribute to an understanding of the current identity of *The Knitting Map*, this chapter considers a number of knitting projects over the past decade that share either in a commitment to create knitting in a public setting or to create knitted fabric with multiple hands. Contemporary artistic practice is, of course, not the only place where shared knitting can be found. Long before the advent of machine knitting in the round, Korsnäs sweaters,[2] made in western Finland, required three women to work with knit and crochet simultaneously on a single sweater. The technique requires the knitters to sit in extremely close proximity for the entire project – a reality that has been modestly described as requiring 'good interpersonal skills' (Esselström 2016).

At the opposite extreme, knitting also occupies central roles in performances ranging from film to theatre. The central character of the Japanese film *WOOL 100%* (2006), directed by Mai Tominaga, creates 'conspicuously troubled knitting' (Corkhill, Hemmings, Maddock and Riley 2014: 43) by unravelling and reknitting her red cocoon-like garment throughout the film. *Knitting Peace* (2013) by Cirkus Cirkör from Sweden[3] – a circus group who incorporate knitting and thread into their contemporary performance – credit the performers with various contributions including: 'handstand, live knitting', 'knitted live music' and 'knots and tangles' (Cirkus Cirkör 2013). Comparisons are, of course, never identical. Many of the projects selected for discussion in this chapter are considerably smaller than *The Knitting Map*; others have now existed over a far longer duration. But the *activity* of making, or as Ingold may say the 'processes of formation' (2010: 2–3), often emerges in the following examples as the primary objective.

Textiles and a general level of knowledge shared by the public about textile techniques have made them useful components of participatory art strategies. Even weaving (which is more practically encumbered by the need for a loom) has been adapted by artists such as American Travis Meinolf to allow for public participation in making (Hemmings 2012). The Taiwanese American artist Lee Mingwei consistently includes participation from the audience with invitations to eat, sleep and write letters used in his projects. The 2016–2017 exhibition at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, *Lee Mingwei and His Relations: The Art of Participation*, included a video interview in which he reflects on the moment textile repair took seed in his artistic work. He recounts a compulsive drive to mend clothing in his home, which he experienced immediately after the 9/11 attacks in New York City. (The attacks left the artist and his partner physically unharmed, but only because his partner was running late for his job in the Twin Towers on the morning of September 11.) Mingwei describes the evening of the attacks when he found himself 'mending clothing [I] always wanted to mend but did not have the time. Eight years after 9/11 I realized I could do mending not only for myself but for strangers' (2014).

Subsequently, Mingwei has invited the public to bring objects and clothing in need of repair, which he and his assistants then stitch in public. The "repaired" objects remain on public display for the duration of the exhibition. But repair is an inaccurate term for many of these stitches, which include decorative flourishes and tangled bundles of yarn – far more symbolic than practical in execution. Mingwei explains:

> The act of mending took on emotional value as well, depending on how personal the damaged item was, e.g., a favorite shirt vs. an old but little-used tablecloth. This emotional mending was marked by the use of thread which was not the color of the fabric around it, and often colorfully at odds with that fabric, as though to commemorate the repair. Unlike a tailor, who will try to hide the fact that the fabric was once damaged, my mending was done with the idea of celebrating the repair. (2017)

The artist suggests that these gestures exemplify a connection that underpins his entire practice:

> Connection with community really goes back deeper, even before 9/11 to when I was a weaver at CCA [California College of Arts]. I truly believe that all of my projects, especially this one [*Mending Project*], are a conceptual weaving of a sort of the warp and weft of human psychology, social relationships and memories together. (2014)

It is here, in the social aspects of Mingwei's project, that comparisons to *The Knitting Map* may be most fruitful, as Gilson reflects:

> Poetically and politically it was a work that sought to rework the urban territory of matter and meaning: knitting was used as something monumental – an abstract cartography of Cork generated by the city itself and its weather, and knitted every day for a year. To make such a gesture using feminine and female labour aspired to re-work the relationship between femininity and power in an Irish context: it gave cartographic authority to working-class older women from Cork, for a year. (2012: 11)

In Mingwei's practice (and shared by *The Knitting Map*), the practical function of mending (or knitting) is subservient to the conversation offered by the artist and fostered through his artistic strategy. His invitation arguably may inspire me to dig out that piece of clothing that has needed repair for longer than I care to admit, but the decorative, essentially nonfunctional, flourishes that he (or his assistants) contribute in the gallery and the display of these "repairs" make clear that physical mending may be the most minor goal of the project.

Prioritising social connections over practical material making is noted by Kate Adey in her PhD research of knitting clubs in Edinburgh, Scotland. Adey's extensive interviews include examples of participants who confirm their enjoyment and enthusiasm for meeting to knit in public, but confess to undoing the material they produce during these social gatherings when they get home out of a desire to execute the highest quality work their solitary concentration can allow. Adey recounts:

> They choose which projects to bring to the group carefully as they did not want to bring a project which required intense concentration which meant they would 'miss out on the gossip'. Members talked about getting home and realising they had made mistakes that needed to be unpicked because they had been distracted by conversation during the group . . . It presents an interesting situation that women should choose to knit together despite the potential that this will hamper their knitting. (2015: 155)

Adey's research suggests that a desire for companionship while knitting complex patterns can, at least at times, be antithetical. I can talk, and I can knit. I want to talk to others; I also want to and can knit complex patterns. While both are desired, they cannot always occupy the same moment.

In fact, the practical question of material function troubles many knitting projects. (By material function I acknowledge that symbolic meaning can exist without a textile

being particularly well made, able to withstand use or with an example such as *The Knitting Map*, exist in a scale that an individual, alone, can control.) But it may be useful to consider *The Knitting Map* alongside examples of knitting that appear in the context of performance because it is here that the emphasis on knitting as a verb rather than a noun becomes ever more pronounced. In some durational knitting performances, such as the examples by Ana María Hernando, the action of knitting does not even result in the production of any knitted cloth. And as the final examples discussed in this chapter of performances by Alya Hessy and Zsuzsanna Szabó will show, public durational knitting can also include intentional deconstruction as an aspect of the performance.

In our materially gorged world, perhaps it is useful to release the purpose of knitting from an obligation to produce a concrete material outcome and allow space for knitting as a gesture and the meaning of un-knitting as an example of Ingold's EWO (2010:8). While the production of *The Knitting Map* has not been described as a performance, it is clearly credited as an action that "gave cartographic authority to working-class older women from Cork, for a year" (Gilson 2012: 11).

Gilson's sense of knitting as an entry point to map or model for activities that go past the immediate production of cloth is not isolated. The American artist Sabrina Gschwandtner, for example, sees knitting as a tool that extends beyond a structure for creating cloth from a single thread to instead suggest that knitting provides her with a model through which she approaches a variety of creative tasks:

> When I am asked what I do I often reply that I'm an artist who works with film, video and textiles. To me the link between the three is instinctive and implicit – media is a textile – and my work expresses why and how I find that to be true. The model for my career as an artist, curator, writer, editor and publisher is knitting. (2008: 271)

If we accept the purpose of knitting can, as Gschwandtner observes, exist in its breadth, then the material result of knitting may diminish in importance. The cloth, knitting as a noun, isn't always the point. Sometimes it is knitting as a verb – as action and even gesture – that is the point.

One maker: Celia Pym

Title: *Blue Knitting*
Duration: nine months

London-based artist Celia Pym created *Blue Knitting* during a nine-month solo journey through Japan in 2001. The work has been exhibited with notebooks from Pym's journey to help contextualise the making, but she acknowledges that an exhibition strategy was not something considered during production. Pym reflects,

> The work of knitting every day for nine months in a country I had never been to and with very little language skills was a way of making a journey, observing

Figure 6.1 Celia Pym, *Blue Knitting (Detail)*, 2001. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 6.2 Celia Pym, *Blue Knitting*, 2001, Tokyo. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 6.3 Celia Pym, *Blue Knitting*, 2001. Image courtesy of the artist.

the new place and slowly measuring time. That was the project. Having this large piece of knitting at the end of it was important. (2015)

Pym travelled light and set herself just one rule – the use of blue yarn for her daily work on a single piece of knitting that accompanied her throughout the duration of her travels. When the ball of wool she was knitting with ran out, Pym took this as her cue to move on to her next destination. 'The pace of the journey was determined by the speed of my knitting', she explains. (2015) The fabric is consistently fifty stitches wide, but variations in width were created through changes in needle size. Yarn was bought as well as donated by the public when Pym knit in spaces such as shopping malls, as well as evenings in her shared hostel room. As the knitting grew beyond the length of a recognizable scarf, public understanding of the project became easier to communicate, despite the language barrier.

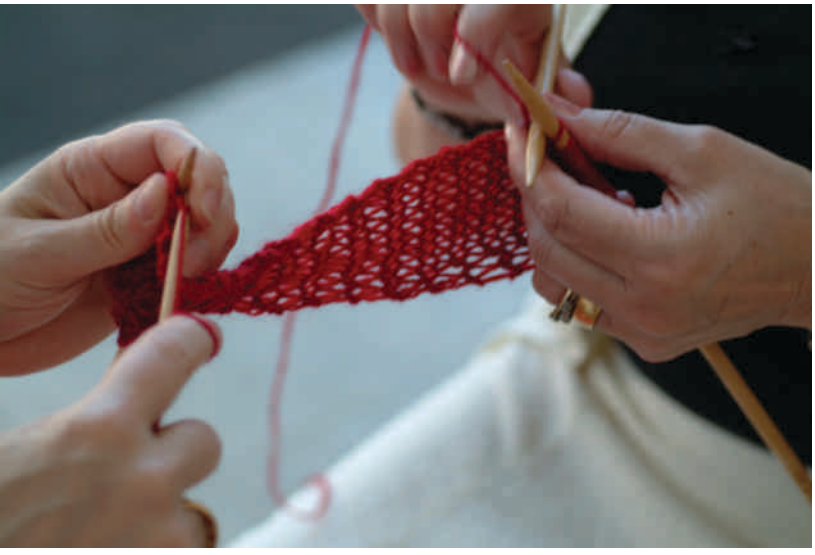
Knitting provided companionship for the solo traveller and, Pym reflects, became a 'way to describe myself – I got positive responses to deflect questions of being alone' (2015). (The nine-month time frame holds no particular symbolic meaning beyond the practicalities of her funding during one 'academic incubation' period from September to May.) Nearing its final length of eighty feet, the project eventually took up all the space in her travel bag. *Blue Knitting* now lives in mothproof box in the artist's London studio.

Two makers: Angela Maddock

Title: *Bloodline*
Duration: twelve years (ongoing)

British artist Angela Maddock has knit *Bloodline* during regular visits with her mother that now span more than a decade. A seam marks the starting point of garter stitches initially made in claustrophobic proximity to each other. The blood red yarns used in the project came from a Scottish woollen mill, selected intentionally for its connection to the artist's Scottish father and an unresolved desire for dialogue about this topic with her mother.

Maddock refers to knitting as 'a metaphor for staying connected that enables us to talk about past inheritance; a way of reflecting on attachment, proximity, smothering' (2015). Over time Maddock noticed she had unintentionally dropped a stitch; its uncorrected absence now symbolising the violent death of her brother when a young man. Maddock acknowledges that the project can be understood as a type of 'anticipatory grief' noted by Darian Leader in his book *The New Black: Mourning, Melancholia and Depression*. But she also observes that the project is 'never left on its own' (2015). While *Bloodline* also exists in photographs, it remains viable to carry in a bag. Accompanying the artist on her journeys, the project can be read as a reassuring reminder of a continuity and bond. *Bloodline* is kept in a mothproof bag at the bottom of the artist's wardrobe.



Figures 6.4 and 6.5 Angela Maddock, *Bloodline*, 2005–ongoing, wool, knit. Images courtesy of the artist.

Two makers: Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger

Title: *Untitled (Pink Tube)*
Duration: twelve years (ongoing)

Over the past twelve years American artists Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger have crocheted[4] *Untitled (Pink Tube)*, always working together and in public. The crocheted work has a distinct centre starting point and, over time, variations of pink acrylic yarn have intentionally been bought for the project. The couple recognise that some of the associations we have with the colour – such as breast cancer awareness – did not exist when the project started. Today, over a decade of public performances mean the work is soiled, particularly near the centre where it has spent the most time on the ground.

Miller and Shellabarger describe the work as a 'physical manifestation and metaphor of our relationship' (2015). Early in the project the pink crochet tube looked phallic, with time and growth the physical references have shifted to something umbilical or intestinal and now even comic. The couple reflect that living openly as a gay couple was 'more problematic ten years ago' (2015) but express frustration that the 2015 legalisation of same-sex marriage across the entire United States is progress, but does not erase homophobia overnight. The public rather than private construction of the work is crucial to its meaning.

One tube twists clockwise, the other counter-clockwise, making the two sides 'very different – our tension, our difference' (2015), the couple explain. Their public making rule means that they face regular interruptions, but have 'no interest in going back. Mistakes don't matter' (2015). Even a red wine stain from an exhibition opening remains.

Figure 6.6 Miller and Shellabarger, *Untitled (Pink Tube)*, 2005–ongoing, acrylic, yarn, crochet. MCA Chicago. Image courtesy of the artists.

When there is an opportunity for public exhibition the couple add to the piece. Between public performances the crochet is displayed with photographs that document the nature of its making. At other times they simply take the work into a public setting such as a park or coffee shop and crochet. Transport is a new challenge. Where they once could pop the project in a bag, size now requires that *Untitled (Pink Tube)* travels by taxi. The ongoing work currently resides with the artists. But, in what could be read as the ultimate resolution of Ingold's EWO, Dutes Miller and Stan Shellabarger have agreed that when half of the couple passes away, the other person will begin to unravel *Untitled (Pink Tube)* in public. This work must commence within one year of the date of death.

Two makers: Andrea Vander Kooij and Alan Groombridge

Title: *Tension*
Duration: two months

In 2000, the Dutch-Canadian artist Andrea Vander Kooij knit a sweater in collaboration with Alan Groombridge, the man who is today her husband. Vander Kooij explains that in previous artistic collaborations with her then-fiancé she was aware of her deference to what she perceived to be his greater technical skill. Looking to address this power

Figure 6.7 Andrea Vander Kooij and Alan Groombridge, *Tension*, 2000. Image courtesy of the artists.

dynamic, she proposed a project that required them to construct jointly. In *Tension*, Vander Kooij appropriates an androgynous garment shape in an unassuming beige yarn. Coloured pattern and technical flourishes are absent. Instead, the couple set about constructing a plain sweater – arguably wearable by either artist. Each knit half with the moment of handover split down the front centre panel, rather than tucked away in a discrete side seam. The result is functional, but a little lopsided.

Sitting side by side to knit, Groombridge's inexperienced knitting is visible in his overly tight stitches and unequal tension. Rather than droop, the sweater seems to shrink, one shoulder hiked and tucked in tension. Vander Kooij explains that the project took place while the couple were planning their own wedding, a time of unity and preparation for the formal vows of marriage, but inevitably also a phase of intense negotiation and, at times, emotional tension. While the differences in knitting are more pronounced than initially expected, the project set out to create a functional garment and any errors in knitting were corrected during production. *Tension* is now stored in the private collection of the artist.

93 + 52 + 38 makers: Kate Just

Titles: *KNIT HOPE* (UK), *KNIT SAFE* (Melbourne) and *Big Knitted Welcome Mat*
Duration: three months + two months + one month

Across 2013–2014, American-born Australian artist Kate Just worked on three community knitting projects that were produced in public settings such as libraries and galleries in collaboration with volunteers. *KNIT HOPE* (UK) took place in 2013 with individuals and knitting groups across the UK to produce a large-scale banner knit with the word "hope" in fluorescent yellow bricklayer's yarn and silver reflective thread. The companion work, *KNIT*

Figure 6.8 Kate Just, HOPE & SAFE, 2014, Exhibition at Daine Singer Gallery, Melbourne, knitted bricklayer's yarn and retro-reflective silver thread, aluminium, paint, 25 x 280 x 25cm. Collection City of Wangaratta. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 6.9 Kate Just, HOPE BANNER (*Detail*), 2013. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 6.10 Kate Just, *Hope Walk Leeds*, 2013, type C digital print, 170 × 120 cm. Image courtesy of the artist.

SAFE (Melbourne) was produced on the artist's return to her home city and uses black bricklayer's yarn and silver reflective thread.

Both projects are a response to violence against women and an effort to reclaim public places for women. Juliette Peers' observation that the banners' 'chosen material reiterates the strong civic and public intention of the works' (2014: n. p.) could also be seen as Ingold's EWO – in particular his emphasis on change (2010: 7). After their community production, the banners in the UK and Melbourne took to the city streets on a number of walks that included volunteer knitters. When exhibited, the textiles have been displayed with candid photographs of the artist and others marching, often at night, in both Britain and Australia with the reflective banners.

Figure 6.11 Kate Just, *Big Knitted Welcome Mat*, 2014, cotton, knit, 300 × 150 cm. Image courtesy of the artist.

Following these pieces, the *Big Knitted Welcome Mat* was made of knit and crocheted squares produced by volunteers over the span of a month in the city of Dandenong's Civic Centre in recognition of the city's ongoing designation as a Refugee Welcome Zone. *KNIT HOPE* (UK) and *KNIT SAFE* (Melbourne) are in the Wangaratta City Art Gallery collection, known for its contemporary textile art works. *Big Knitted Welcome Mat* is owned by the City of Dandenong and hangs in the Dandenong Library. (Just 2017)

60+ makers: Liz Collins

60+ makers:
Liz Collins' *Knitting Nation Phase 1: Knitting During Wartime* (2005)
Knitting Nation Phase 2: Atelier (2006)
Knitting Nation Phase 3: The Strip Game (2006)
Knitting Nation Phase 4: Pride (2008)
Knitting Nation Phase 5: Architectural Embellishment (2008)
Knitting Nation Phase 6: Mapping (2011)
Knitting Nation Phase 7: Darkness Descends (2011)
Knitting Nation Phase 8: Under Construction (2011)

Figure 6.12 Liz Collins, *Knitting Nation Phase 7: Darkness Descends*, 2011. Image courtesy of the artist. Photographer Scott Rudd.

Figure 6.13 Liz Collins, *Knitting Nation Phase 13: Weaving Factory*, 2015. Image courtesy of the artist. Photographer Scott Rudd.

Knitting Nation Phase 9: Accumulation (2012)
Knitting Nation Phase 10: Domestic Swarming (2012)
Knitting Nation Phase 11: Stripped Bare (2013)
Knitting Nation Phase 12: H20 (2013)
Knitting Nation Phase 13: Weaving Factory (2015)
Knitting Nation Phase 14: The Heart of the Matter (2015)
Duration: twelve years (ongoing)

American artist and designer Liz Collins has conceived fourteen and counting *Knitting Nation* performances. Each iteration brings together a team that machine knits large volumes of cloth in a public setting. Making visible the often invisible labour behind textile production is a constant theme of the project. Alongside this ongoing theme, various phases of the project have taken up particular foci. For example, Phase 1 drew on Collins' frustration at US involvement in Iraq; Phase 4 created a giant version of the rainbow pride flag; Phase 6 explored machine knit cloth as a form of drawing; Phase 8 is described by Collins as "netherworld factory and construction site; part Dr. Seuss and part Willy Wonka" (2015).

Seven years of cloth produced during *Knitting Nation Phases 1–8* became the content for *Knitting Nation Phase 9: Accumulation* (2012). When de-installed, *Knitting Nation Phases 1–9* were then stored by the artist in garbage bags in

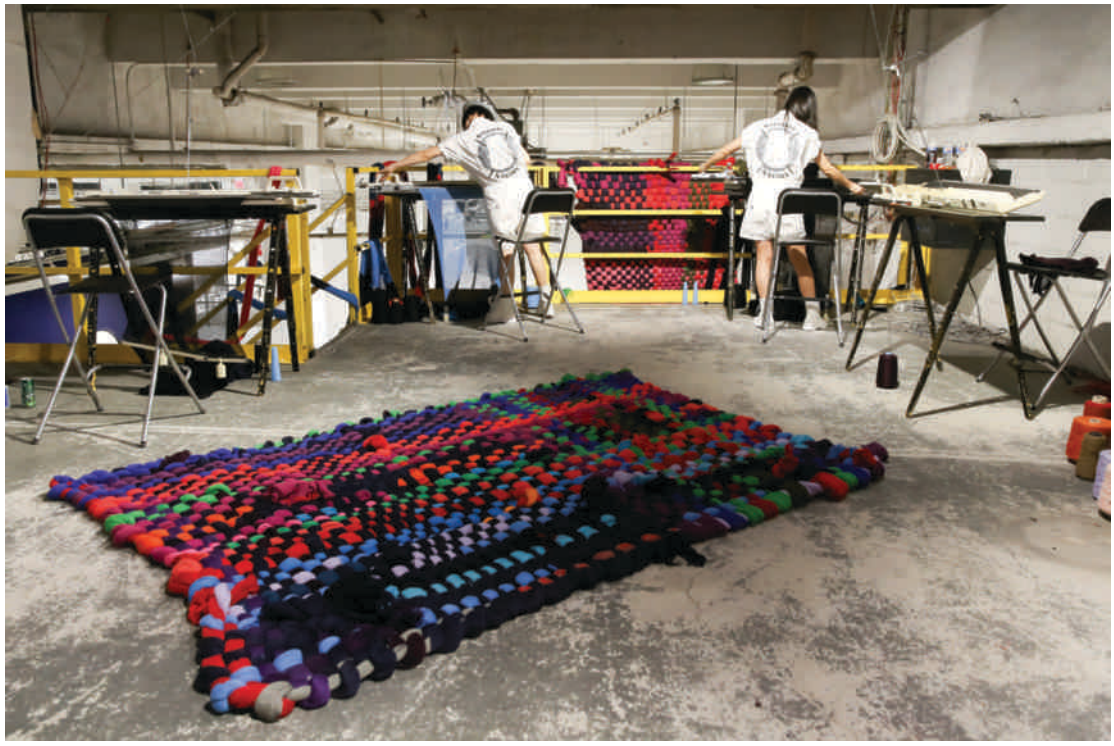


Figure 6.14 Liz Collins, *Knitting Nation Phase 13: Weaving Factory,* 2015. Image courtesy of the artist. Photographer Scott Rudd.

her Providence, Rhode Island studio and later her New York studio. Collins then determined that future iterations would need to make use of the cloth produced during the performance. The machine knit cloth produced in *Knitting Nation Phase 10* was braided directly into rugs made on site during the course of the performance at the Museum of Modern Art Studio in New York City. The whereabouts of *Knitting Nation Phase 11* and *Phase 12* are unknown; the material stayed in Zagreb and California, respectively. *Knitting Nation Phase 13* wove much of the material of previous *Knitting Nation* performances in the artist's possession into three rugs. *Knitting Nation Phase 14* recycled sweaters donated by the American knitwear brand Eileen Fisher. Very little *Knitting Nation* fabric now remains. The exceptions are two flag projects: *Knitting Nation Phase 1* (the red, white and blue American flag) and *Knitting Nation Phase 4* (the rainbow pride flag).

One maker and two John Deere excavators: Dave Cole

Title: *The Knitting Machine* (2005) at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA)
Duration: Fourth of July weekend

Figure 6.15 Dave Cole, *The Knitting Machine*, 2005. Image courtesy of the artist.

American artist Dave Cole's *The Knitting Machine* was installed in the courtyard of MASS MoCA over a holiday weekend. Video documentation of the project records 'aluminum utility poles attached to John Deere excavators to "knit" a giant American flag out of acrylic felt' (2005). The United States flag received a pragmatic simplification: where fifty white stars representing each state in the Union usually appear on a dark blue background, Cole knit a single block of blue on a field of red and white stripes.

Cole explains of the project's construction:

> [we] technically knit all the stitches of the flag with the needles on the machines – the manipulation of the yarn by me with the hook was simply the 'flipping' of the yarn (wrapping it from the back to the front) that happens with the smallest finger when knitting continental style. The stitches were pulled through each other with the needles themselves at my direction to the operators with hand signals. It was and is actually quite important to me and to the piece that all 500 stitches were actually knit with the machines. (2017)

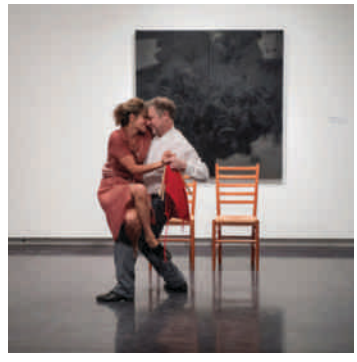
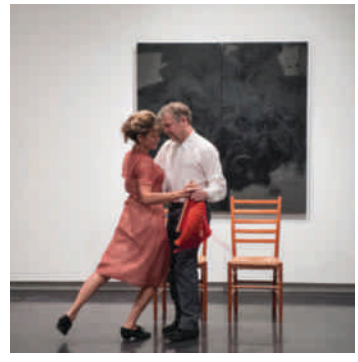
The first iteration of the work was performed at Providence, Rhode Island's 2002 Convergence Arts Festival, but it is the video record of the MASS MoCA performance filmed by Jack Criddle that has enjoyed 47,000 Vimeo views (Cole 2005). The work no longer exists.

Two performers: *Knitting Ballet*

Title: *Knitting Ballet.* Directed and choreographed by Ana María Hernando and performed by Deb Sclar and Brian Dunn
Duration: *Knitting Ballet* version 1, Art Museum, University of Colorado Boulder, was performed for 3 minutes and 30 seconds. *Knitting Ballet* version 2 was performed for two afternoons for 3 minutes and 30 seconds, six to seven times at different City of Boulder, Colorado bus stops for a total time of three hours each performance day.

'My work is about the loss of quiet crafts, like losing languages. It is political because it is domestic' (2016), explains the Argentinian American artist Ana María Hernando. The artist has long worked with communities of cloistered nuns in Argentina and Andean weavers and farmers in Peru to stitch components of her large-scale installations, while providing these communities with much needed employment. In her recent *Knitting Ballet* (2016), Hernando directed and choreographed two tango dancers, Deb Sclar and Brian Dunn, who performed with knitting, first in the Colorado University Art Museum at Boulder as part of Hernando's *We Have Flowers* exhibition (24 June through 22 October 2016), and then at bus stops throughout the city as part of the City of Boulder's Experiments in Public Art. Photographs and video act as records of the performances.[5]

Moving from bus stop to bus stop through the city was a desire to remind people of the many moments in life where we drift, not particularly present anywhere. 'I want to awaken people to the awareness of silent moments, many times we are not present on the bus, in an elevator, or with each other' (Hernando 2016). Hernando is clear that in these performances 'knitting [is] at the service of performance and dancing' (2016). The

Figures 6.16, 6.17, and 6.18 Ana María Hernando, *A Knitting Ballet (Details).*

red knitted fabric was prepared in advance and few stitches actually made it onto the needles during the performance. Instead Hernando draws together what she describes as the staccato arm movements of knitting with those of tango. 'Conversations are a way of knitting', Hernando reflects, and 'tango is knitting bodies together' (2016). The two pieces of red knitting used in *A Knitting Ballet* (2016) are stored together in a grey box held at the artist's Boulder, Colorado studio until their next performance date is confirmed.

Two performers: Alya Hessy

Title: *Over and Under*
Duration: two days

If Hernando sees the movement of tango as a way of knitting together bodies, the Ukrainian-born Dutch artist Alya Hessy takes this one step further by turning pairs of bodies into knitting needles. In her *Over and Under* performances held at venues such as the Fries Museum (21–22 November 2015) and VanAbbe (16 April 2016) in the Netherlands, Hessy performs what she has coined 'body knitting' alongside a male dancer. The performance literally creates a knitted structure, looped from one body/needle to the next, back and forth in a mesmerising action. Hessy explains:

Figure 6.19 Alya Hessy, *Over and Under*, 2016. Photographer team Peter Stigter. Image courtesy of the artist.

> the work explores knitting as a concept, whereby this heritage craft becomes a model of human relationships. Two entities, working together, create a material. Two human bodies start moving to become knitting needles, the choreography of knitting unfolds into space and materialises into a story of two people collaborating. (2017)

In the performances to date, Hessy has left the knitting from day

one intact and picked up the stitches again – sometimes with understandable difficulty – on day two. The knitting is then taken apart and the thick wool yarn used in subsequent performances. She explains that 'the action is the work; the piece that you make is the result, but it [alone] does not have special value' (Hessy 2016).

In other performances, Hessy has also knit with her own body, slipping thick red thread from one arm to the other to create long chains of knit that draw a dynamic line down multistory walls in various museum settings. The artist carries her giant cache of yarn in an oversized bag around her own neck that touches her feet: noose and medallion at one and the same time. Here too the material is un-knit at the end of each performance and reused in future performances.

Two performers: Zsuzsanna Szabó's *Transition*

Title: *Transition.* Performed with dancer Csilla Nagy of Cipolla Collectiva
Duration: Four one-hour cycles of knitting, unknitting and reknitting for a total performance time of four hours

In contrast to the hand-knitting performance choreographed by Ana María Hernando or the body knitting of Alya Hessy, the Hungarian artist Zsuzsanna Szabó uses, like Liz Collins, machine knitting in her performance work. Szabó explains the performance *Transition*:

> the point of knitting is to change the status and the consistency of the material, the yarn. Materials have a memory, like human beings, but in a very visual way. So I wanted to create a performance, which can show us this memory. I wanted to show all the "life" of a piece of new yarn. (2016)

Szabó's interest in the energy and memory rather than the material object of knitting may be the most explicit example of Ingold's EWO (2010: 6) introduced in this chapter. Here the imprint of the action of knitting is the stated priority. The work exists in a cycle, rather than moving along an assumed trajectory that ends with the completion of physical object. 'The person who works on the material, creates a skin around the body, tears it down, and start[s] the work again' (Szabó 2017).

Transition seeks to exhaust the material capacity of knitting by performing in a cycle that builds and then unravels a cocoon around the body:

> Repeating this process was also important, because knitting itself is a repetitive action. As I was focusing [on] the phenomenon of knitting, it wasn't a problem that I would not have a "final piece". But it was important to unravel it always [. . .] This is why I was repeatedly making and unmaking it, until it arrived to its end, when it became so damaged that I couldn't use it anymore. (Szabó 2016)

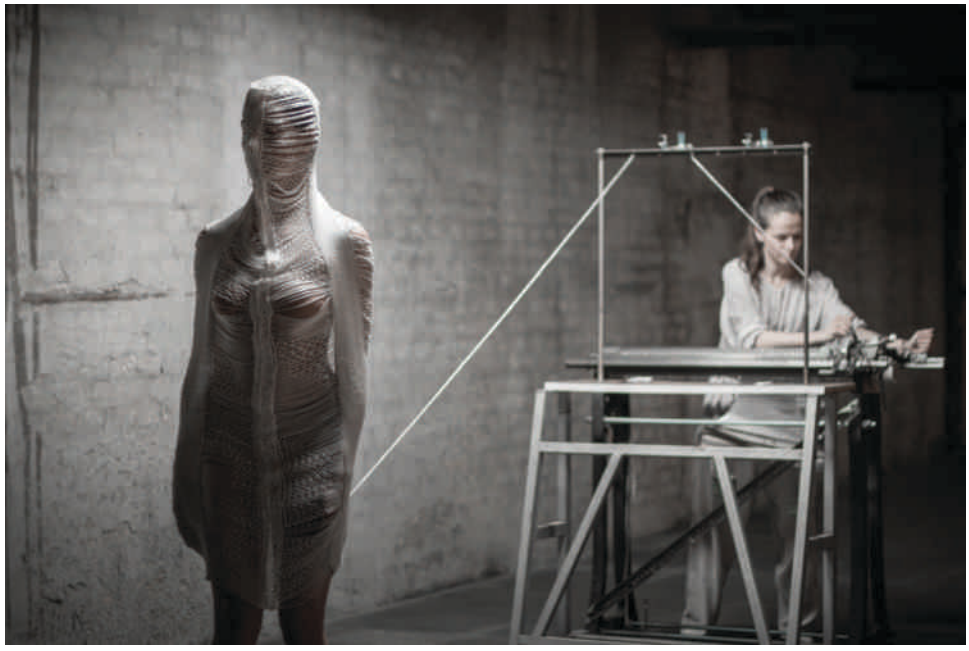


Figure 6.20 Zsuzsanna Szabo, *Transition*, 2016. Photographer Enikő Hodosy. Image courtesy of the artist.

Szabó's approach uses and reuses thread until knitting (a verb, an action) exhausts knitting (a noun, an object). The materials used in the performance no longer exist.

And that leads us back to the question of what indeed becomes of knitting after making. Public durational knitting after making is varied. Unquestionably, projects that involve the hands of one or two makers face far simpler negotiations about their future whereabouts than projects made by many. Photography, video and journals are used by some to help exhibition visitors see knitting as an action. These decisions confirm that the knitted object is not – alone – entirely the point. From January of 2006 *The Knitting Map* was stored in the Cork City Council Arts Office Store. During 2007–2008 it travelled across the Atlantic to Pennsylvania for exhibition and then returned to storage in the University College Cork's library store (a warehouse in the city's suburbs). After the 2015 exhibition at The Glucksman, *The Knitting Map* went into private storage. Conversations continue about its future permanent home.

Should *The Knitting Map* be considered an object or an action? The project that perhaps most closely resembles it, Kate Just's *Big Knitted Welcome Mat*, now hangs in a community library. But mothproof storage, recycling into further projects and deconstruction by way of unravelling exemplify other strategies in use. This suggests, as Ingold celebrates, that in many public or community knitting projects production is of equal, if not greater, importance than the physical outcome. Adey's research into

knitting groups in Edinburgh highlights that some knitters are willing to reknit what they produce during their knitting groups in an effort to preserve material quality while enjoying the social benefits of the group (2015: 155). In performances, such as Hernando's *Knitting Ballets*, production takes on a secondary role to the gesture of knitting. (Liz Collins' ongoing *Knitting Nation* series offers one counter-example of this, with Collins more recently devoting considerable attention to the reuse of material knitted during her performances.)

Ingold emphasises the creative relationship between art and life, which I sense the majority of practitioners know and feel:

> The artist – as also the artisan – is an itinerant, and his [or her] work is consubstantial with the trajectory of his or her own life. Moreover the creativity of the work lies in the forward movement that gives rise to things. To read things "forwards" entails a focus not on abduction but on improvisation. (Ingold and Hallam 2007: 3, quoted in Ingold 2010: 10)

Knitting, of course, proceeds by pattern rather than sheer improvisation. But if we think past knitting as a noun to instead focus on knitting as a verb, then forward movement and an acceptance of improvisation strike me as fundamental contributions. Knitting can be understood as 'a model of human relationships' (Hessy 2017) or even 'the model for my career as an artist, curator, writer, editor and publisher' (Gschwandtner 2008). Knitting is a verb (always) resulting in a noun (sometimes).

8. In total, the Arts Council commissioned nine projects, with €1M at its disposal, to mark the occasion in 2016.
9. Article 41.2 of the Irish Constitution, which was written in 1937, states that: "By her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved. The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour the neglect of their duties in the home."

Chapter 4

1. See three important books: Parker 1989, Auther 2010 and Buszek 2011.
2. There are distinctions between collective (a group of individuals maintaining their individual identities, working together on a shared goal, such as a publication, like *Heresies*, where my own collective experience was honed); collaborative (two or more individuals or a group creating a single project together, sharing authorship) and cooperative (working under a lead artist or artists toward a shared goal).
3. For Gomme, Esparza, Newport and Sandra Valenzuela, see *Unknitting: Challenging Textile Traditions*. (Giangiulio 2008). Introduction by Kate Bonansinga and illuminating text by Stephanie L. Taylor.
4. http://lizcollins.com
5. I am indebted to Kirsty Robinson's essay 'Rebellious Doilies and Subversive Stitches: Writing a Craftivist History' (2011), for much pertinent and provocative information on radical knitting art, and also to Anthea Black and Nicole Burisch, 'Craft Hard Die Free: Radical Curatorial Strategies for Craftivism' (2011), both collected in *Extra/Ordinary: Craft and Contemporary Art* (Buszek 2011).

Chapter 6

1. I've resisted the urge to coin public durational knitting PDK out of fear that I might get my PDKs and EWOs mixed up while doing my best effort to shed light on TKM.
2. Many thanks to my new colleague in Gothenburg, Katarina Andersson, for introducing me to Korsnäs sweaters.
3. And further thanks to Jools Gilson for her introduction to Cirkus Cirkör. Cirkus Cirkör *Knitting Peace*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUq2t65jlr8, accessed June 12, 2018.
4. *Untitled (Pink Tube)* is constructed with crochet rather than knitting. Both knitting and crochet techniques can create cloth from a single strand of yarn. Knitting uses needles to hold loops of yarn, while crochet uses a hook to loop one loop to the next. Knitting typically unravels faster than crochet.
5. http://boulderarts.org/experiments-in-public-art/about/