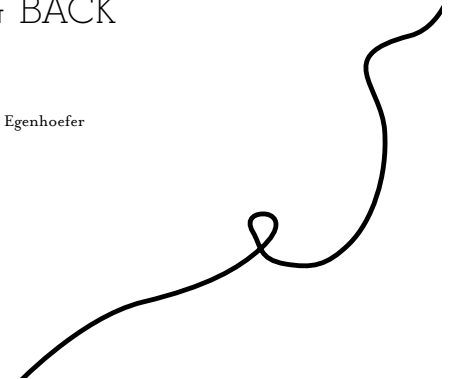
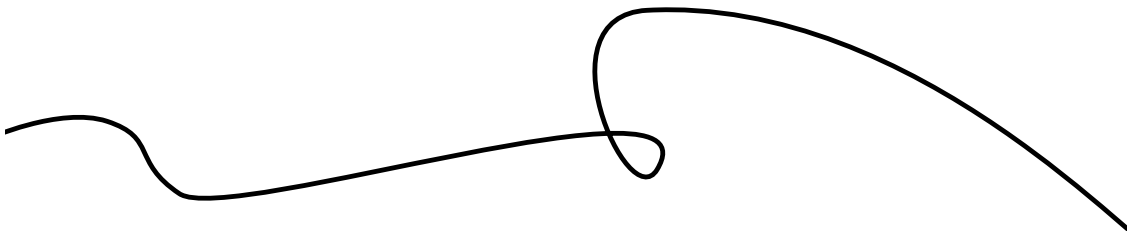


In the loop
KNITTING NOW
JESSICA HEMMINGS

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INTRODUCTION

JESSICA
HEMMINGS

The content of this book originates from the In the Loop conference Linda Newington and I organised at the Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton, in July of 2008. Our interest in organising the conference grew out of the curious and contradictory energy felt around the surge of public interest in knitting we were witnessing. On the one hand, picking up needles and wool are seen as admirable pastimes again; but simultaneously, taking shape is a far more challenging dialogue about the meaning and potential of knitting.

When compiling this book I wanted to avoid at all costs the common pitfall of commentary that speaks only from the perspective of history and theory and erases the voice of the artist and maker along the way. As a result, the contributors to this book have written and illustrated from a number of perspectives and borrow from a variety of conventions. Some provide rich images accompanied by brief statements. Others have elected to write at length about their practice, using the format of the illustrated essay to move equally between word and image. At the opposite extreme are essays that consider knitting in fiction and address the identity of knitting as it appears in print.

Inside this range of formats are an equally diverse variety of voices. Academic, artist, conservator, historian, librarian and poet are all to be found on these pages. There is no chronology at play in the book's organisation and I suggest readers dip and skip to the images and voices that speak to them. I acknowledge that this approach results in a format that strays from what we are conditioned to expect of books: pages of neatly ordered text punctuated at regular intervals with pretty pictures. But it is my hope that this variety introduces a broader range of readers to knitting's diverse endeavours.

Where voices do jar, it is worth asking what they jar against? If this new identity of knitting is unsettling, what exactly was knitting expected to be? I hope, at the very least, that the material contained within these pages provokes dialogue and debate that may contribute to a more broadly considered definition of knitting in the future.

