



Installation at the *The Glamour of Italian Fashion* at the V&A

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Lina Peterson's jewellery on show at Collect 2014

The Crafter:

words from the craft world

Linda Newington is the instigator of Southampton University's **In the Loop** events that have pulled together academics, anthropologists, historians, knitters and I'm sure a few interested passers-by. I've been lucky enough to attend quite a few of the In the Loop events. Linda runs the **Knitting Reference Library at Winchester School of Art**, which recently put on an exhibition, *Knitting: 1914-2014*, at the Hartley Gallery with examples from the Library's collection and respondent work from students.

The exhibition was accompanied by a study day where much of the talk was about the WWI centenary this year. For me, the highlight was listening to **Dawn Cole** knitting. Her performance piece, *The Silence of Knitting*, is based on the life story of her Great Aunt Clarice Alberta Spratling, a volunteer nurse during WWI. Dawn showed us some slides of her solar plate etchings that make beautiful patterns out of the writing found in Nurse Spratling's diaries and letters. Then she sat down and began to knit. The audience wasn't sure what to expect, some music perhaps or a narration, but there was only the 'cacophony of silence'. The trouble with quiet is that you start thinking about what those women must have been going through as they made socks and clothing for the menfolk at the front. All those unspoken messages and thoughts being sent to brothers, fathers and husbands woven into every stitch. Dawn worked a shamrock lace pattern, and didn't stop until she had finished a whole pattern repeat. It was a moving experience.

At the end of the talking Linda let us loose on a selection of the archive with her '**mobile knitting library**'. There were old patterns aplenty for us to

rifle through, although some of us were told off for handling items too roughly in our excitement.

At these knitting talks you tend to bump into some of the same people. I re-met the interesting **Penny Ryan**, a knitter from South London. She has had some success in using knitting in her own small protest to amusing effect. On discovering that yet another betting shop was due to open in Tooting, bringing the number up to 23, Penny and her friends set about knitting a quiet protest. You can see the banner here says 'Tooting says no to more betting shops.' A few days later someone posted another message underneath: 'Tooting says no to politicised knitting.' Fortunately this got the message back into the local media.

The not-to-be missed exhibition at the V&A on *The Glamour of Italian Fashion 1945-2014* had some great knitting and at least one showcase on the knitwear of the period that was fascinating and gave a glimpse into the processes used by Missoni and their like.

At the Saatchi Gallery was **Collect 2014**, the Craft Council's show of international craft galleries. There wasn't much knitting to be seen this year, though the lovely **Lina Peterson** has some fab jewellery in fresh colours using threads and crochet. Also showing was **Felieke van der Leest** from Norway



Missoni ensemble, 1972, *The Glamour of Italian Fashion* at the V&A

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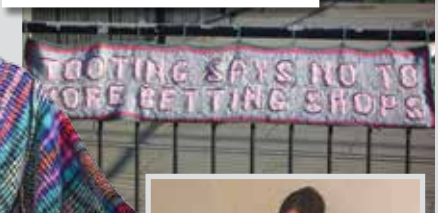


In the Loop

Mobile knitting library



Say no to 'politicised' knitting?



Dawn Cole's performance piece, *The Silence of Knitting*

with her Bear-maid (that's a bear that's a mermaid, do keep up). I didn't build up the courage to ask how much it was, though suspect a few too many noughts on the end for me.