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Abstract for 1st **MEND*RS Research Symposium**

April 2012

Re-knitting: emotional mending

Through my knitwear label, Keep & Share, I have explored strategies for 'slow fashion', aiming to encourage emotional connections between wearer and garment. In recent years, I have become increasingly interested in the potential of amateur fashion making to engender emotional connections, and create a sense of personal well-being.

Rather than viewing making as a one-off production 'event', to be followed by consumption and disposal, I see it as an ongoing relationship between wearer and wardrobe. With this in mind, I am developing a range of techniques for intervening in existing knitted garments, to be shared with amateur makers. Stitch-hacking, for example, involves the laddering and reconfiguration of stitches in an existing knitted fabric. Other techniques involve unravelling, replacing, opening, edging, inserting and embellishing.

Many of these techniques are based on processes of mending; for example, stitch-hacking is based on a straightforward repair technique. I use the technique in a new context, changing a fabric to a new design rather than returning it to its former structure. These processes depend on the inherent tinkerability, and mendability, of the knitted structure, which is common to all weft knitting. The deficiencies which I am addressing through such actions are not physical, but emotional; I am trying to repair an emotional connection through activity rooted in the physical act of making.

I would like to show my knit intervention samples and discuss the theoretical ideas which underpin my work.

Statement

Mending, in its broadest sense of interacting with existing stuff, is important to me because it is implicit in a world of reduced consumption. As the symposium's themes and manifesto show, the 'humble' process of mending connects with a wealth of theoretical and practical viewpoints and practices.

My own paper particularly connects with the following themes:

Theories of mending: emotional mending and attachment (*repairing emotional connections through craft processes*)

The mendability of matter: mending affordances, making mendable (*the inherent mendability of knit*)

Practices of mending: upcycling/re-use/remake/repair/upgrade/DIY/bodge, enabling/skilling solutions, transmission of mending skills (*my knit intervention techniques, which I am planning to share with others*)

Bio

Amy Twigger Holroyd is a designer, maker and researcher specialising in knitting, participation and sustainability. She founded her 'slow fashion' knitwear label, Keep & Share, in 2004. Amy is currently undertaking PhD research at Birmingham Institute of Art & Design, exploring the relationship between amateur making and well-being in relation to fashion, and the role of a designer-maker in supporting such activity. (www.keepandshare.co.uk)