



ReThread Program: Repetition and Return through Textiles and Nature

Program OdMik: ponavljanje in vračanje skozi ustvarjanje s tekstilom in naravo

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This paper introduces *ReThread*, an innovative educational program curated within BIEN25, the Slovenian Textile Art Biennial. BIEN combines contemporary textile art with community engagement and knowledge-sharing, and through *ReThread* it has grown into an important “third space”—a community space of well-being and health situated at the art-and-health continuum.

The three-day program gathered thirty participants from Slovenia, Italy, Croatia, Austria, and Germany, including artists, craftspeople, architects, educators, art therapists, and social pedagogues. Experiential training took place in cultural and natural locations in Kranj and was guided by international mentors, including Savneet Talwar (USA), who introduced a model of social and community art therapy, and Jasmina Pacek (Croatia/USA), who led narrative textile art-therapy work through Story Cloth. Other facilitators integrated practices such as forest therapy, textile journaling, mindful art, craft and yoga, ritual-based art, and textile activism in community, closing with art-based reflection.

Framed by the conference theme of *repetition and return*, *ReThread* emphasized cyclical gestures in textile handcrafts - such as sewing, embroidery, and mending - inviting participants into rituals of repetition that regulated the nervous system, fostered reflection, and opened possibilities for transformation. The notion of *return* unfolded on multiple levels: participants experienced a return to themselves through personal self-care, to community through shared creative processes, and to wider traditions of collective textile practices that historically nurtured belonging and resistance. Nature-based activities reinforced cyclical rhythms and ecological connectedness, deepening an embodied sense of return to natural cycles of renewal.



ReThread offered an opportunity to 'help the helpers', enabling participants to slow down, regenerate, and experience what it means to be nurtured within a community. As part of a textile art biennial, it demonstrates how 'third spaces' can serve as bridges between community-based creativity and more formal therapeutic contexts.

Following the program, participants were invited to complete an evaluation questionnaire, and my paper presentation will also share insights from this research.

Biography

Jasmina Ferček, mag. pom. z umetn. holds an MA in Textile Art and an MA in Arts Therapy (Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana). She is a member of the Oloop collective, where for over thirteen years she has worked in participatory textile art, social design, community art and art-and-health projects, as well as in social activation programs for immigrants. As curator of ReThread Program and professional associate of Textile Biennial BIEN since 2023, she researches the impact of textile arts and crafts on individual and community well-being and health. She is a full member of SZUT, HART, and EFAT.

Recent Publications

Ferček, J. **Project and exhibition review: I AM NOT ALONE: embroidering self-portraits of vulnerable immigrant women.** *Journal of textile design, research and practice*. 2022, vol. 10, iss. 2, pg. 164-174, ilustr. ISSN 2051-1795.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/20511787.2022.2105000>

Ferček, J., Orel Zala, B. **Textile communities: social impacts and psychological benefits of creating with textiles.** In: *Nordic Art Therapy Conference 2024*.

FERČEK, J., **Letter to ---: Visual Poetry on Shared Textile.** In: *EFAT Conference: Between & Beyond creativity and Destruction - The Role of Art Therapy in Affecting Personal and Social Transformation: Brunel University London, Jul 2 - 4, 2025*.