**Is a Stitch Not as Sound as Word? Knitting as Expression, Preservation & Subversion**

**Marianna Vogt**

This paper will examine how knitting holds cultural memories with contemporary relevance. It looks at needlework as a ‘feminine’ challenge to ‘masculine ideals. It considers knitting as a form of movement meditation and meaning-making and as a way to incorporate art into the everyday. Supported by personal reflection, case study and written theory, I show how all these aspects have therapeutic potential.

I was lucky to be taught knitting as a girl. It had stopped being taught as a matter of course in the name of equality: to not relegate girls to stitchery but welcome them into academia, business etc. Yet there is a contemporary craving for needlework: google ‘knitting’ and go down a rabbit-hole of shared patterns, blogs, forums and proudly modeled garments. Women (the scene is predominantly female) are practising the skills of their grandmothers to clothe and empower themselves. Many knitters modeling their creations inhabit bodies considered unacceptable-- too fat, too old, too plain, etc. Making clothes frees you from industry standards. Showing off self-made garments, knit exactly to your tastes and measurements, is joyful rebellion against a litany of ‘shoulds’.

‘Shoulds’ come in wide variety. I often knit when I should be working (usually writing). With each procrastinating stitch I reassess forms of accomplishment I have been conditioned to esteem: productivity, innovation, publication, status; achievements that fit a ‘masculine’ world. In fact, I value old, slow textile skills just as much. Knitting’s repetition, like meditation, lulls me into a state of free association. Why is slowness scorned? Where do ambition and satisfaction intersect? Why is ‘women’s work’ undervalued? How many people can still read the village address knitted into a fisherman’s gansey? Then, refreshed, I write again. Stitches, like words, preserve and inspire the arts.

I would be honoured to present this paper in Vilnius, as a respectful nod to Lithuania’s rich knitting tradition.

**Biography**

**Marianna Vogt** trained in drama and movement therapy at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and as a clinical supervisor at the Institute of Group Analysis.

In addition to her private practice, she works in schools with children and their families and teaches on the MA Movement Studies course at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. Marianna is a peer reviewer for *Dramatherapy*, the professional journal of the British Association of Dramatherapists.

**Recent publications and conference presentations**

Vogt, M. (2017) ‘Mythic Place’. In: Hougham, R. & Jones, B. (eds) *Dramatherapy: Reflections and Praxis* (Macmillan, 2017)

2019. Workshop: ‘Encounter: Meeting, Mapping, Making Place’. PPLG Conference in Thessaloniki, Greece.

2017: Workshop: ‘Unlink/Relink: Therapeutic Exploration of the Great Chain of Being’. ECArTE Conference, Krakow.

2015: Paper: ‘The Significance of Attachment to Place’ ECArTE Conference, Palermo