

A Knitter's Media Guide
:Knitting as a Meaning-Making Device

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Abstract

In a dialogue with Catherine Dormor's book, *A Philosophy of Textile* (2020), this paper argues that knitting has a unique position in the sphere of textile. To understand the technique as both practice and theory is not only to acknowledge its potency as expression and reflection, but also to perceive textile in a broader perspective.

Starting with the article *Offset, Buch- und Werbekunst* (Offset, Printing, and Commercial Art) written by one of the key figures of the Bauhaus weaving workshop, Gunta Stölzl in 1926, I outline the historical context, and justify the significance of my research.

Employing the concept—championed by the artist/psychoanalyst Bracha L. Ettinger—, the *Matrix*, in particular together with (Inter)relationship, *Techne* as Dormor suggests, I navigate knitting in general as well as my own practice. By closely inspecting knitting as a mode of both making and thinking, this paper proves that knitting has a capacity to embody multiple layers of time and space, and by doing so, becomes a meaning-making device whose production questions, challenges and overturns hierarchical and binaristic modes of thinking.

Keywords

Textile, Knitting, Machine-Knitting, Double-Jacquard, Materiality, Bauhaus Textile, Philosophy of Textile, Modernism, Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis

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Introduction: It Takes Three Women to Raise a Knitter

Haesim, The Woman Who Shaped My Head

The back of my head is flat. To my mom, it is a constant reminder that she failed me as a mother for having let me lie down on the floor in front of the TV for too long when I was a toddler. Even though TV might have taken away a chance for me to have the perfect shape of head, it certainly has enriched what is inside the head. As far as I remember, TV has always been an irreplaceable part of my life. I learned love, empathy, generosity, hatred, envy and so on. All from TV. On the surface of the screen, anything was possible. TV blended time and place into an universe of infinite number of layers, and let me travel beyond the screen.

Sunhee, The Woman Who Trained My Hands

One of my favorite TV programs that I watched growing up was a weekly show for children where the host taught how to craft various things with common household items. For instance, a toy that looks like a lion made of an empty toilet roll. I would obsessively follow her hands, make such creatures and cherish them dearly. That was the moment that I, with my very own hands, brought the dreamland of TV to reality. By making, I did not have to be a mere passenger any longer but could become a co-pilot on the journey of navigating the world that TV illuminated.

Hwang's Mother, The Woman Who Sharpened My Needles

I was around 10 years old when I found knitting for the first time. I was to knit a scarf for a school project, which was part of the home education subject. After school, I would go to my friend Hwang's place and his mother would teach me everything you need to know about knitting from A to Z. How to hold needles and yarns in your hands, do knit and purl stitches, and make cables, etc. What an epiphany I had on the day she pointed out to me that a knit and a purl stitch were identical. That they only look different depending on which side of the fabric you are looking at. (Image 1) The fascination that I felt in that instance still remains in me. The versatility and interconnectability of knitting that reside in its simple mechanism have not ceased to surprise me until today. Now, I cannot help but make a connection between such characteristics of the technique and the transformative and imaginative qualities of TV mentioned above. Then, how can one reconcile the flat surface of the screen and the materiality of knitting, which seemingly are completely unrelated to each other? How can the surface of knitting simultaneously embody multiple layers of time and space?

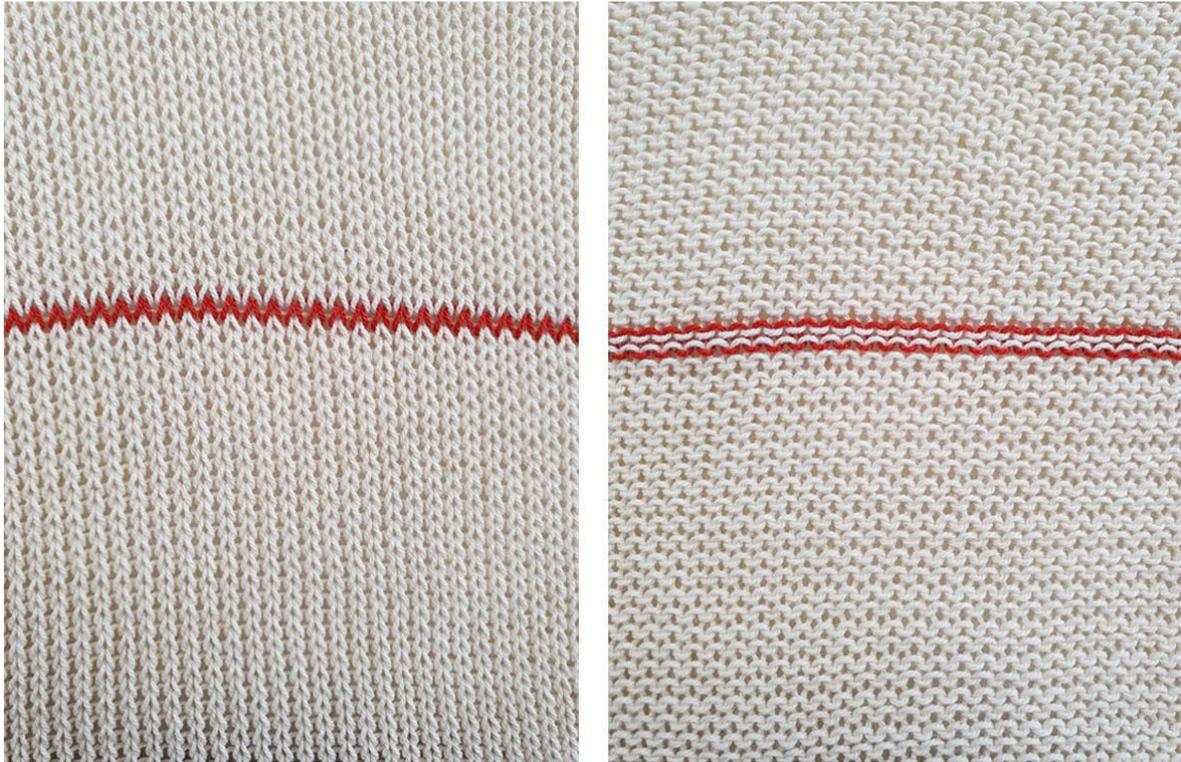


Image 1: The two sides of stockinette fabric. Commonly referred to as the right side (left), and the wrong side (right).

Knitting Does Not Always Get the Memo

Starting her book *A Philosophy of Textile* (2020), Catherine Dormor points out that textile is a site of the obscure and manifold: as material, concept, language, and metaphor. To understand textile as both theory and practice, therefore, is to grasp its complexity within the elements that make up textile, as well as the relations that interplay between the elements.¹ While successfully offering a framework in which readers can explore textile in both its material and philosophical properties, Dormor carries out a discourse whose focus is heavily on weaving practice and woven textile.

Where does it position knitting then? Knitting is one of the most common textile techniques besides weaving. Though the behavior of knitted fabric resembles that of woven one, the two disciplines bear significant difference in terms of their architectures. Thus, to navigate the unique properties of knitting, I believe, will be supplementary to, and enrich Dormor's argument in order to perceive textile in a broader sense. However, I will not discuss crochet because it admittedly has similarity to knitting when it comes to the structure, whereas it has its own expressional language. Therefore, crochet is to be discussed separately.

In this paper, I want firstly to take a look at some examples of how knitting has been fashioned, concerned, and utilized in the context of art and craft. Also, with the above mentioned book as a pivot, I aim to dissect, apply, reconfigure, and refute Dormor's argument, in order to claim that the surface and structure of knitting has a significance as a mode of thinking and making. Furthermore, I will

¹ Catherine Dormor, *A Philosophy of Textile: Between Practice and Theory*, London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020, p. 1.

establish that the act of knitting opens up a unique space for distinctive expressions and thoughts by closely investigating knitting in general², as well as my own practice with a focus on double-jacquard knitting technique on a hand-operated knitting machine.

Episode 01 / Pilot: Backdrops and Props

One-Sided Love

In his book *Abstract Art: A Global History* (2020), Pepe Karmel accounts for the relation between weaving and abstract art, in the eyes of modernists. Exemplifying with the works of such artists as Piet Mondrain, and Frank Stella, he demonstrates that weaving transferred from the medium to the content, from the signifying to the signified; weaving then could even refer to itself.³ (Image 2) Liberated from the shackles of its historically narrow-sanctioned themes, hence the limited expressions, the craft could rise to an unprecedented level. All thanks to Anni Albers, one of the key figures of the Bauhaus weaving workshop, who was deeply inspired by the paintings of Paul Klee, Josef Albers among others.⁴

One can clearly confirm that such an endeavor was largely shared within the members of the workshop, in an article written by a fellow student of Albers, Gunta Stölzl who later became a junior master of the very workshop, for the journal “*Offset, Buch- und Werbekunst*” (“Offset, Printing, and Commercial Art”) in 1926:

“... Woven fabric constitutes an esthetic entity, a composition of form, color, and material as a whole.

Today in all fields of design there is a quest for law and order. Thus, we in the weaving workshop have also set ourselves the task of investigating the basic elements of our particular field. [...] a fabric was, so to speak, a picture made of wool...

[Weaves] are subject to the laws of plane geometry...

Petit point and tapestry are not “commodities.” Other standards apply to these; they belong in the area of free artistic expression but are influenced by the process of weaving.”⁵

In the era of postmodernism, the legacy of the workshop continues in the companionship of weaving and abstract art as Karmel discusses further.⁶ It can be said that Stölzl is not an unusual bedfellow for such painters as Miriam Schapiro, and Beatrice Milhazes, as one might believe, when postulating that

² Stockinette stitch will be the main part when discussing the structural aspects of knitting. This is because stockinette is the most basic stitch, and demonstrates the characteristics of machine-knitting most candidly while other stitch patterns are variations of stockinette.

³ Pepe Karmel, *Abstract Art: A Global History*, New York: Thames & Hudson, 2020, p. 263-264, 268.

⁴ Matthew Taylor, *Josef and Anni Albers: Designs for Living*, London: Merrell Publishers, 2005, p. 26.

⁵ Hans M. Wingler, *The Bauhaus*, translated by Wolfgang Jabs & Basil Gilbert, edited by Joseph Stein, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980, p. 116.

⁶ Pepe Karmel, *Ibid.*, p. 265-267, 273, 280.

the extension of “the area of free artistic expression” includes techniques not mentioned above—for example, quilting, and appliqué in this case— in the weaver’s writing.

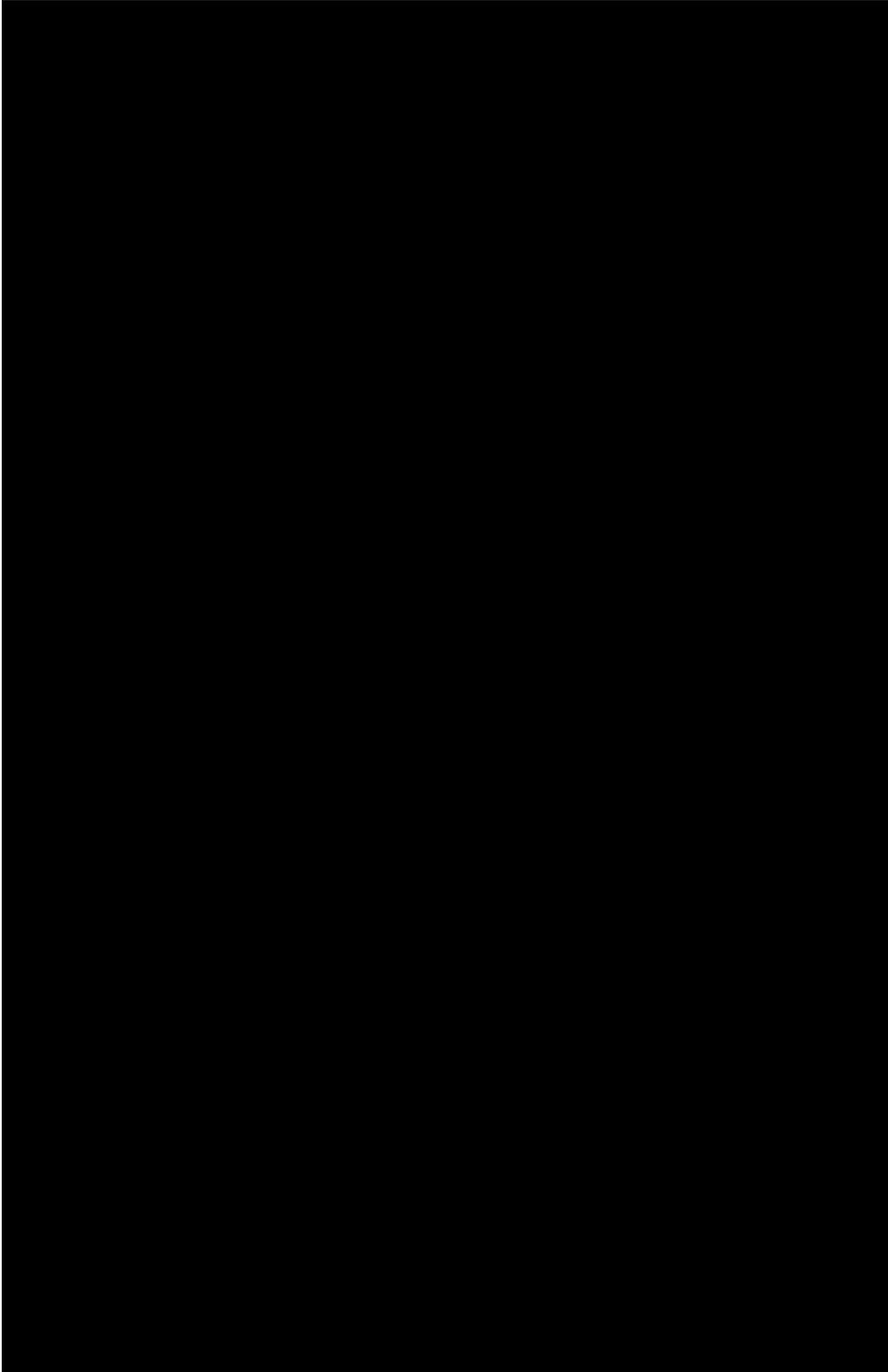


Image 2: Anni Albers, *Wall Hanging* [Mercerised cotton, silk], produced by Gunta Stölzl Workshop, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1926/1965

What of knitting then? The emergence of the technique, in the context of art and (studio) craft, seems rather abrupt, compared to the smooth transition of weaving. Knitting largely remained a domestic activity until the dawn of postmodernism with which the notable use of knitting—both as a medium and a content—coincided; It was only in 1978 when Mary Walker Phillips was praised for being “the first to introduce knitting as a form of artistic expression” by the American Craft Council.⁷

Postmodern knitting, often associated with ruralism, and romanticism,⁸ has become a crucial part and a tool of artists in their practices, encompassing a wide range of diverse societal-, cultural-, historical structures, from feminism, consumerism to DIY-culture.⁹ However, as the word suggests, ‘post’modern knitting stands, in most of the cases, on the ground of modern or its ruins. So to speak, postmodernism loses its premise without modernism. The very dilemma is well-depicted by Kirsty Robertson. Discussing different cases of contemporary craftivism, she points out that the nature of craftivist movements not only dwells in the notion of gender roles, but also perpetuates the stereotypes of femininity, and domesticity.¹⁰

Then, what took knitting so long to come out of the home into the realms of art? What kept knitting from indulging in its own formal language, while weaving gladly did so? Returning to Stölzl’s article might offer a clue to the questions. Knitting was viewed as a hindrance for the Bauhaus artists to carry out their investigation on “the basic elements”, and “the laws of plane geometry”; also as the inferior to their rigidly set standard, on which fabric “has to be a surface and always has to have the effect of a surface”:

“...The factors affecting the production are:

The loosely knit structure, which can only be made into a definite surface by the arrangement to which it is subjected

A multiplicity of interlocking threads, which produce a “sculptured” surface...”¹¹

Moreover, Stölzl managed to raise the status of weaving, and assert the superiority of weaving by making connections to the notion of needlework from the nineteenth century, in which embroidery (petit point) was considered ‘decorative’ or ‘fancy’ needlework as high education for high class women while knitting ‘plain’ needlework as a source of income of the working class.¹²

To the modern eyes, knitting was simply not modern enough; Knitted fabric intrinsically lacks important qualities to be celebrated on its own. As to the postmodern eyes, the right side of the fabric—the social, historical connotations attached to knitting as an activity— is far more attractive and considered to be effective in order to employ the technique as an antidote to modernism. Consequently, a holistic approach to the right and the wrong side of the fabric—the formal properties of knitting, such as the actual structure of the knitted surface— is still to be more researched in the art and craft context.

As the textile designer Jack Lenor Larsen attributed the achievement of Phillips to taking “knitting out of the sock-and-sweater doldrums,”¹³ Phillips strategized by completely erasing the

⁷ Jennifer L. Lindsay, “Mary Walker Phillips: The Art of Knitting”, *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 8(2), 2015, p. 126.

⁸ Joanne Turney, *The Culture of Knitting*, Oxford: Berg, 2009, p. 46-47.

⁹ Joanne Turney, *Ibid.*, p. 73-105.

¹⁰ Kirsty Robertson, “Rebellious Doilies and Subversive Stitches: Writing a Craftivist History”, in *Extra/Ordinary: Craft and Contemporary Art*, edited by Maria Elena Buszek, Durham: Duke University Press, 2011, p. 189-192.

¹¹ Hans M. Wingler, *Ibid.*.

¹² Sally Hesketh, “Needlework in the Lives and Novels of the Bronte Sisters”, *Brontë Society Transactions*, 22(1), p. 72.

¹³ Jennifer L. Lindsay, *Ibid.*.

connotations—such as the body, the home— that are often associated with the technique; *For Paul Klee* (1963) (Image 3) testifies directly to the link between the artist and the Bauhaus weavers. On the other hand, Rosemarie Trockel, summoning back such connotations—femininity, domesticity—, employs knitting to comment on the legacy of modern(ist) paintings and painters. (Image 4)

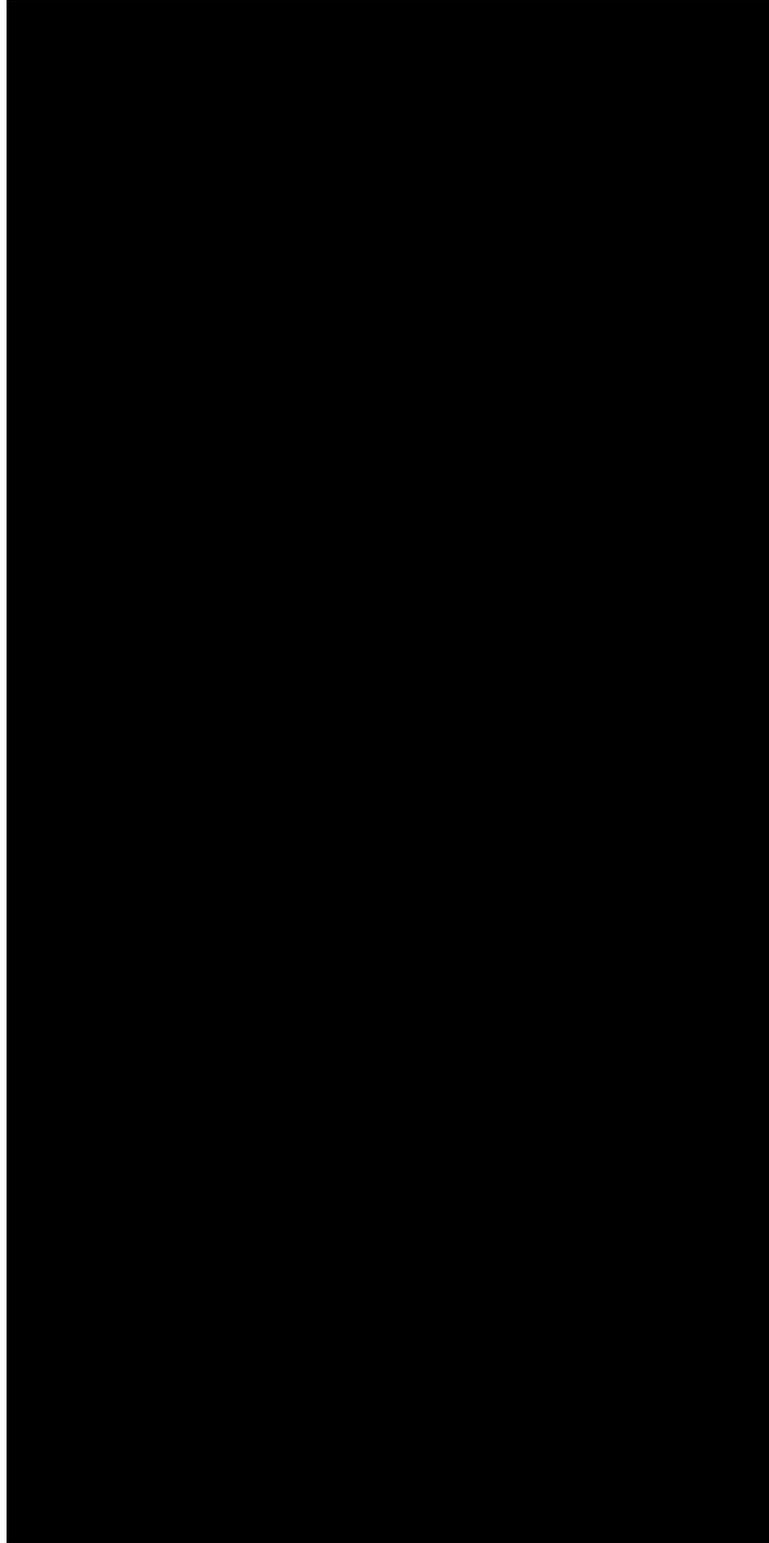


Image 3: Mary Walker Phillips, *For Paul Klee*, detail [Linen], 1963



Image 4: Rosemarie Trockel, *Study for After the Hunt* [Wool, wood], Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 2013

Such disparity not only fragmentizes knitting and overemphasizes its one element over the rest, but also impedes us from understanding knitting as traverse between practice and theory; materiality and activity; the right and wrong side. Hedwig sings *The Origin of Love* in the film, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (2001):

“When the earth was still flat, and clouds made of fire, and mountains stretched up to the sky, sometimes higher.
Folks roamed the earth like big rolling kegs; they had two sets of arms; they had two sets of legs; they had two faces peering out of one giant head.
So they could watch all around them as they talked while they read...”

... And then fire shot down from the sky in bolts, like shining blades of a knife. And it ripped right through the flesh...

...Last time I saw you. We just split in two. You was looking at me; I was looking at you. You had a way so familiar but I could not recognize 'cause you had blood in your face and I had blood in my eyes...

...We wrapped our arms around each other, trying to shove ourselves back together. We were making love, making love..."¹⁴

To consider the ability of knitting as a reflective crucible—which calls for numerous historical-, symbolical-, social associations— together with the formal capacity inherent its materiality, is to restore back to “two sets of arms”, “two sets of legs”, and “two faces peering out of one giant head.”; The knitted fabric, in this sense, is an “object whose two leaves cannot be separated without destroying them both”¹⁵; Knitting becomes a device generating new meanings that defies the conventional way of thinking.

Cast On

Outlining her discourse on textile, Dormor suggests three keywords: the *Matrix*, (Inter)relationship, Techne. The Matrix is a term coined by the artist/psychoanalyst, Bracha L. Ettinger. It is a supplementary concept to the Lacanian Symbolic: the *Phallus*. The Matrix concerns “multiplicity, plurality, partiality, asymmetry, alterity” and “the unknown”¹⁶ as opposed to Lacan’s plane where the formation of subjectivity is operated by “castration”,¹⁷ the clear divisions between subject and object. Such separations—fueled by the only one signifier, the Phallus— therefore, produce polarities, and subsequently cement an hierarchical and binaristic mode of thinking.¹⁸ Thus on the level of the Matrix, it is possible to conceive the non-hierarchical, and the non-binaristic through *metramorphosis*, a process of countless change and exchange:

“[Metramorphosis] deals with relationships that are asymmetrical and not mirroring one another; with the co-emergence of several elements or (partial) subjects together; with influence without domination of one over another. It deals with transformations in emergence, creation and fading-away, of I(s) and non-I(s), and with transformations of the borderlines and transgressions of the links between them. Metamorphosis is the becoming-threshold of borderlines.”¹⁹

¹⁴ John Cameron Mitchell, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, [film], New York: Killer Films, 2001.

¹⁵ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1981, See Catherine Dormor, *Ibid.*, p. 47-48.

¹⁶ Bracha L. Ettinger, *Matrixial Subjectivity, Aesthetics, Ethics: Volume 1, 1990-2000*, edited by Griselda Pollock, London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2020, p. 145.

¹⁷ Griselda Pollock, “Introduction: Matrix as a Sensing-Thinking Apparatus” in *Matrixial Subjectivity, Aesthetics, Ethics: Volume 1, 1990-2000*, edited by Griselda Pollock, London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2020, p. 1.

¹⁸ Bracha L. Ettinger, *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹⁹ Bracha L. Ettinger, *Ibid.*, p. 141.

(Inter)relationship goes hand in hand with the Matrix for the matrixial borderspace highlights the mutual interactions between the actors within. Dormor expands this to the inseparable bond between textile practice and theory where the two feed each other. *Techne* speaks to not only the bodily labor entailed in production, but also the tacit knowledge involved behind; it is a meeting point of making and thinking.²⁰ In most contemporary textile practices, the three concepts are immanent; they intricately operate together, even though one might appear to stand out more than the other two; they help inspect the delicate and ambiguous stratum of textile. Arguing further, I will recall and build upon the three implicitly and/or explicitly.

Episode 02 / Three's a Crowd: Machine Knitting

A Guest Star

In an episode of *Sex and the City* (1998-2004), the four main protagonists discuss a threesome, when Charlotte confesses that her date suggested bringing a third party to their bedroom. Samantha is not shy to share her opinion on the topic, and says she enjoys it but only when she is a guest star. Meaning that she gladly visits a home of another couple, but does not invite someone to hers, to avoid complications; 2 plus 1 does not equal 1 plus 2. What she points out here is that the small, yet drastic change of dynamics takes place when adding a subject to the event; and it greatly depends on the way in which the new player is introduced.

In this sense, hand-knitting is rather monogamous. It establishes a one-on-one relationship: knitter and yarn. The maker, then, still holds a clear consciousness of them being the subject, and yarn the object. What about machine-knitting then? Is it a threesome of the knitter, yarn, and the machine?

A Love Dodecagon

The Korean sitcom, *Hello Franceska* (2005-2006) follows a group of vampires from Romania, seeking refuge from vampire hunters; and comically depicts how they settle in Korea. This satirical show creates a strange space for laughter by drawing from eclectic references, crossing different cultures, time periods, and places. In one episode, the two main characters, Franceska and Doo-il form a love triangle with another guy. As more characters appear into the scene, one by one, the triangle gets bigger and bigger, and finally becomes a total fiasco of a love dodecagon. (Image 5) What makes this even more ridiculous is that the twelve parties have different relationships with one another; love interests; a landlord and a tenant; a mother and a son; co-workers; old classmates from decades ago. This cleverly plays with, and incapacitates the strands of dynamics and attached hierarchies, that are precarious and hard to define; then reconfigures to a weird orchestra of dissonance.

²⁰ Catherine Dormor, *Ibid.*, p. 3.

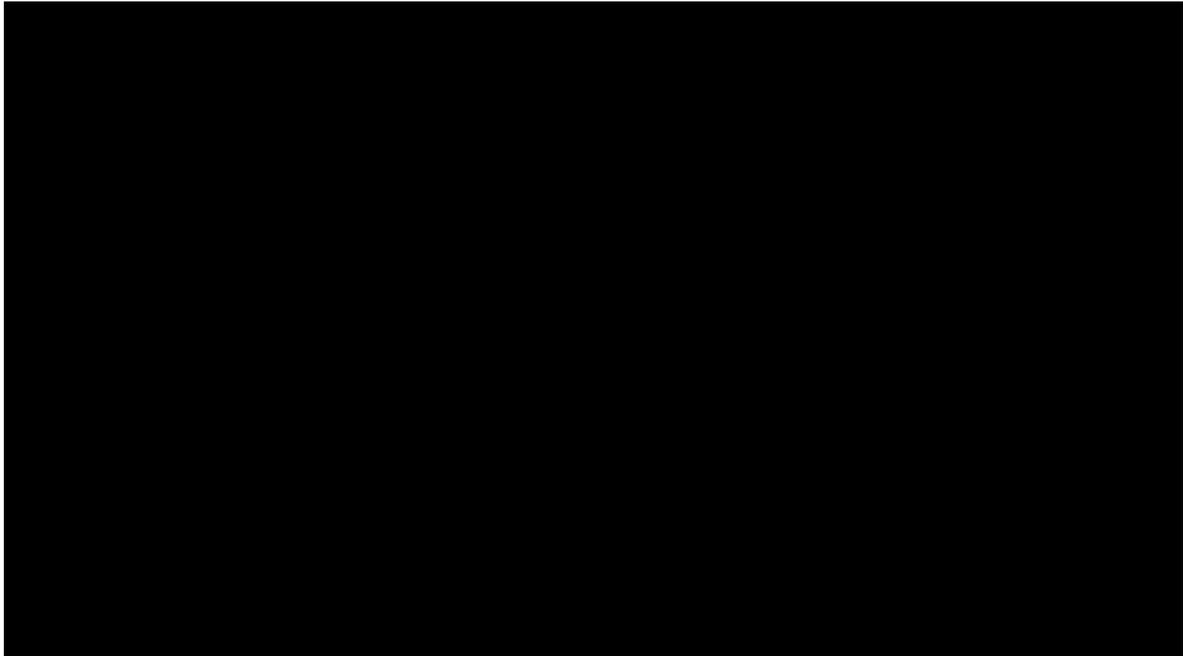


Image 5: A still from the scene. Doo-il agonizing in the middle.

The same happens in the knitter's workshop. A complete loss of oneself as a subject, entering the matrixial space. One might consider the parts that consist of a knitting machine—the main bed, the ribber, carriages, needles, yarn feeders, claw weights, the color changer, etc.— expansion or delegation of the knitter's hands. However, each part has its control over only one or two of the others. The multi-directional interactions among the elements are in a fragile balance which can be broken any moment. For instance, you run the carriage across the knitting bed, then the carriage manipulates the needles while the yarn feeder simultaneously keeps the tension of the thread, and the claw weights hold down the fabric; in the next row, the carriage goes the opposite direction but you do not realize that you need to add another weight onto the fabric because the row before has made the fabric slightly heavier; the fabric hangs too loosely or too tightly, which makes the feeder lose the grab of the yarn, the yarn goes off-track, and then you find the fabric on the floor with its stitches all dropped. Here, the knitter loses the entire control over the process, if they had any to begin with; The clear line between the subject and the object is blurred; The maker is positioned as a partial subject who shapes and is shaped by other partial subject(s).

Such interrelational plays are apparent in double-jacquard knitting. The technique produces two sheets of fabric, one on the main bed, and the other on the ribber. These two do not function as two separate individual fabrics, but rather they are deeply affecting each other depending on how and where they are conjoined in every single stitch in every row of fabric while getting made. (Image 6) Every single stitch forms and is formed. Thus, machine-knitting is fundamentally matrixial in Ettinger's sense.

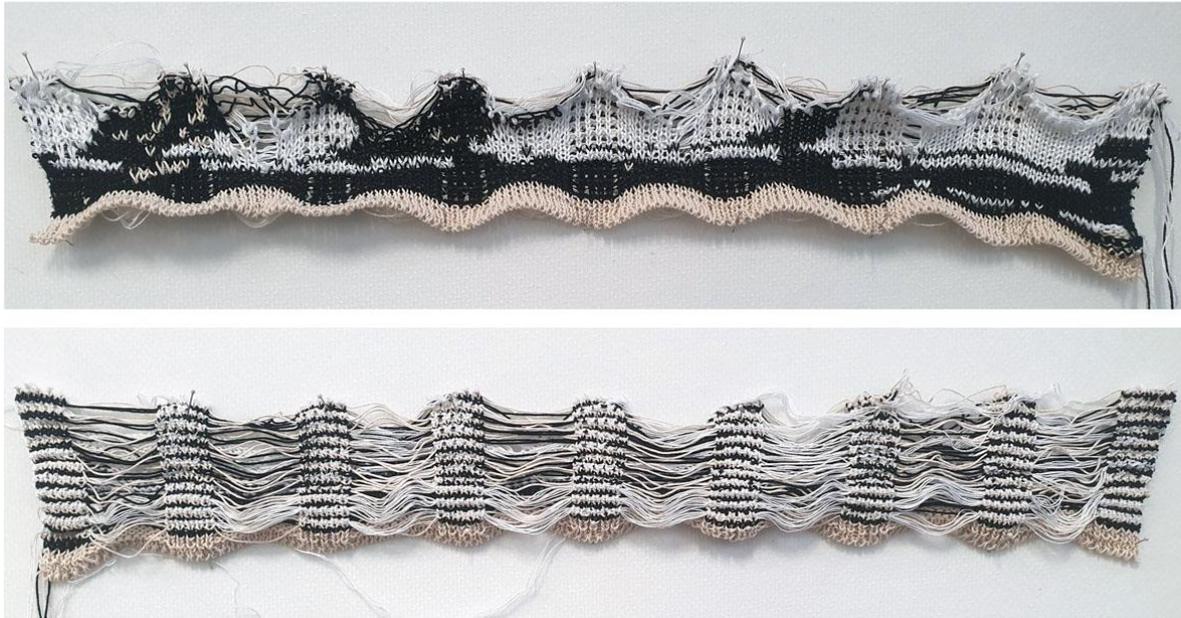


Image 6: A double-jacquard sample. The stitches on the main bed (top), directly respond to the manipulation on the ribber (bottom).

Episode 03 / Spin Off: Between a Shimmer and a Shimmer

(In)finite Girls

Launched as an all-female spin-off of a long-lived variety TV program, *Infinite Challenge* (2005-2018), *Infinite Girls* (2007-2013) initially did not receive a favorable reception. The show was primarily criticized for being nothing more than a knock-off of its precedent, contrary to its ambitious catchphrase: “Non-format is a format.” However it did not take long until the table turned around. They quickly learned to twist the given format with their deeply feminine-coded humors and found an original voice. It also helped that the program aired on a cable TV channel as opposed to its equivalent on one of the national networks. The girls could take liberties with the relatively forgiving production guideline, and test the limits and push the format further than *Infinite Challenge* ever did. One can say that the finite—being like the other show, being on the network-like network—motivated, and generated. Then, I will argue that the surface of knitting finds its mediative territory in the same space: Something-like and like-something.

Membrane

Dormor reflects on the textile surface as a shimmer, borrowing from Roland Barthes, Hélène Cixous and Jacques Derrida; A shimmering surface concerns its conversation not only with light, but also with “the subject’s gaze.”²¹ She elaborates on a shimmer; It is a reflective space where social-, symbolic conventions are questioned, challenged, and overturned. The works of Eva Hesse, and Tricia Middleton are exemplified here; A shimmer is a material space in an intimate relationship with the core of textile materiality. The constructions of lace—“presence and absence together”— and woven cloth—“a grid of holes”, “relocates the relationship between warp, weft, light and space”— support the idea.²²

The structure of knitting is different from that of lace or of weaving, yet makes a surface that is lace-like, and weaving-like. However, on closer inspection, this others-like quality does not mimic but rather brings out the distinct nature in the knitted surface. Weaving is architecture. As Anni Albers pointed out, weaving and building share much in common.²³ Warp is scaffolding supported by weft; The woven surface is a wall. A lace, then, is a window; Holes or openings are carefully planned before construction.

Holes on the knitted surface are not a matter of choice or planning, but rather the mode or the condition of being. Knitting is essentially porous and permeable. Also, (inter)relationships play at the heart of the principle of knitting. For a stitch even to exist, it needs another stitch; A stitch supports and is supported; it affects and is affected; is a subject and an object at the same time. When a stitch is formed, it negotiates with not just the one made right before, but also with all the other stitches preceded. Thus knitting is metamorphosis; The surface of knitting is constantly in change and exchange; Yet with the traits of both, knitting is not a lace even at its loosest, nor a weave at its tightest; It is not a window nor a wall, but a membrane. Such a membrane creates a tensional field, as Giuliana Bruno discusses, unfolding the artist Krzysztof Wodiczko’s work, *If You See Something...* (2005).²⁴ (Image 7) In such a field, the membrane protects, projects, and shimmers, with its materiality in the forefront.

Circling back to Stölzl’s article feeds the idea of knitting as a membrane. “A picture made of wool” clearly illustrated the relationship between painting and weaving as the condition of the existence of painting; A canvas is a woven cloth after all. Such an idea is well-demonstrated in the work of the Korean artist, Seugnean Cha, who “explores the phenomenology of painting and its essence.”²⁵ (Image 8) Due to its construction, a knitted surface inevitably appears as a series of V-like or wavy shapes, or combinations of the two. Because of such “a sculptured surface” created, as Stölzl stated, knitting, albeit flat, can never be as pictorial or representational as weaving. Similar to Dormor’s accounting of Eva Hesse’s works, it opposes singularity, and opens up potential multiplicity.²⁶ The surface falls between painting and sculpture; an image and a mass; a picture and a stitch; it “defies

²¹ Roland Barthes, *The Neutral: Lecture Course at the Collège De France, 1977-1978*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1978, see Catherine Dormor, *A Philosophy of Textile: Between Practice and Theory*, London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020, p. 25.

²² Catherine Dormor, *Ibid.*, p. 25-39.

²³ Anni Albers, “The Pliable Plane: Textiles in Architecture”, in *Anni Albers: Selected Writings on Design*, edited by Brenda Danilowitz, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2000, see Giuliana Bruno, *Surface: Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality, and Media*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014, p. 90-92.

²⁴ Giuliana Bruno, *Ibid.*, p. 80.

²⁵ Geun-jun Lim, “*The Situation Awareness of Zombie-Modernism: A Comprehensive Path to Cha Seugnean’s Weaving Practice*”, 2014, p. 6.

²⁶ Catherine Dormor, *Ibid.*, p. 36.

flatness and puts the surface back into movement²⁷ like Tara Donovan's work as Bruno explains; it brings knitting back to the tensional field of membrane.

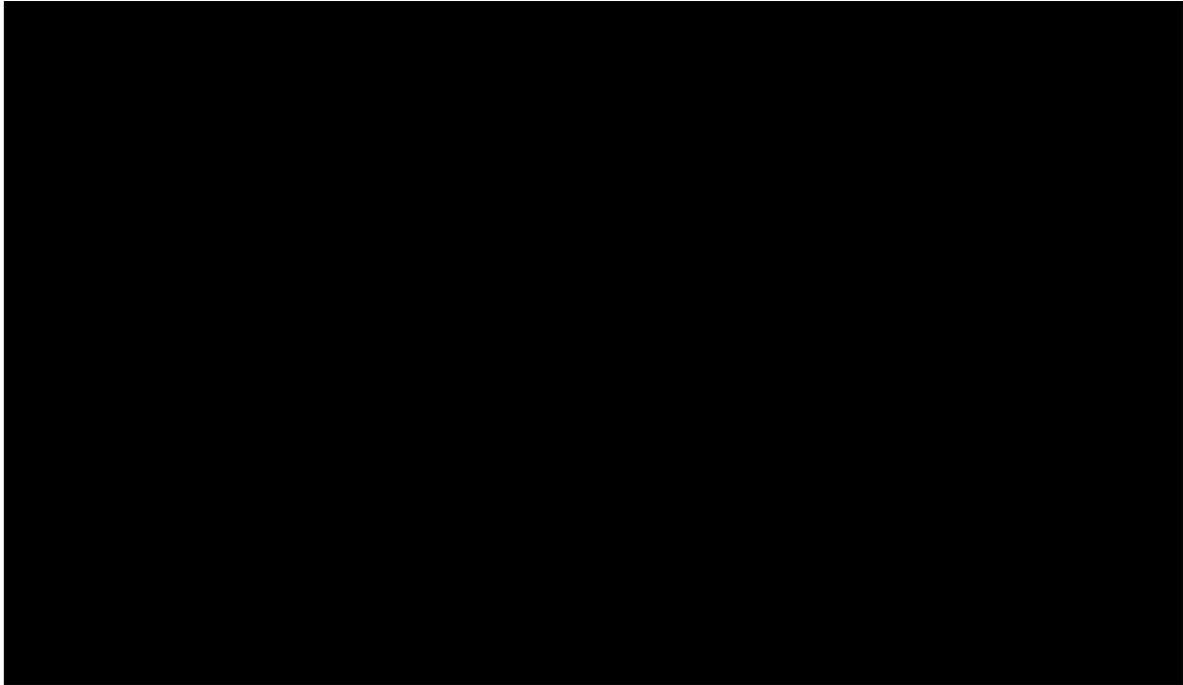


Image 7: Krzysztof Wodiczko, *If You See Something...* [Media installation], Galerie Lelong, New York, 2005

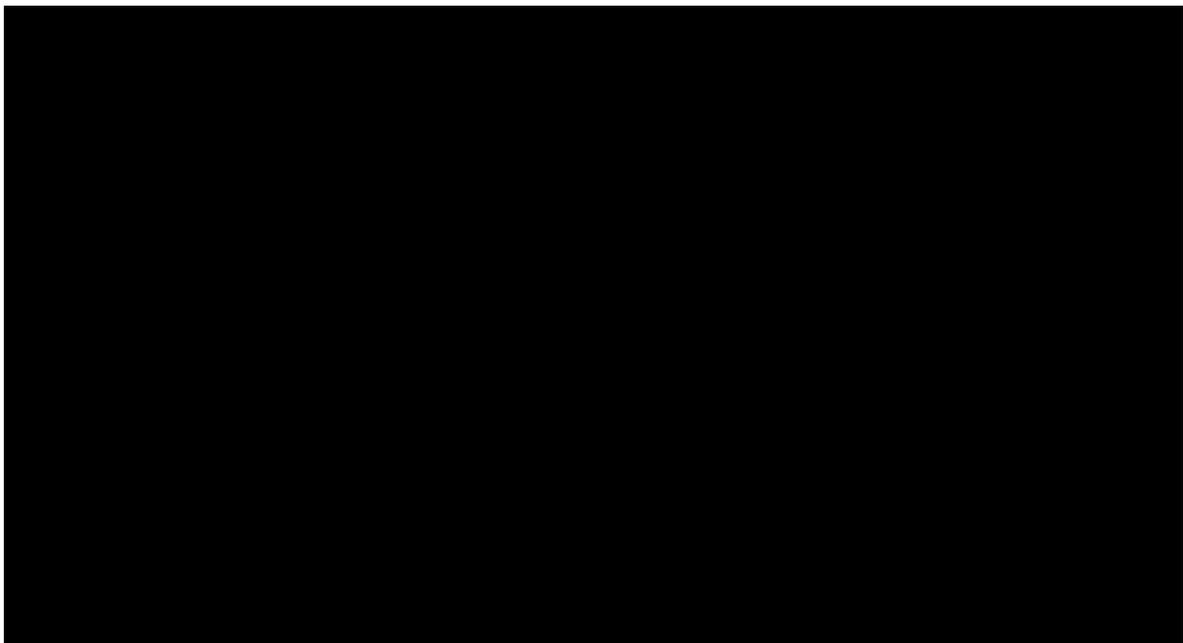


Image 8: Seungean Cha, *Clooooth-5* [Dye on cotton], 2014

²⁷ Giuliana Bruno, *Ibid.*, p. 99.

Episode 04 / Aftermath: (Dis)Joined

Fairy Tales Come True. But Which One?

TV grew and found a bigger home when I spent day and night playing a social simulation computer game called *Princess Maker 3: Fairy Tales Come True*. Given a ten-year old girl as a daughter by the fairy queen, the player receives a mission to raise her to become a princess.

There are, other than the princess ending, sixty alternatives. The game employs a few interesting features which the player can use strategically in order to reach a specific ending. ‘Schedule’ is one of the most outstanding components that characterize the software. (Image 9) It is basically the daughter’s timeline which you get to fill by choosing among various activities, such as working, taking a class of choice, going on a vacation. Each task, paired with pre-coded events within the system, despite seemingly arbitrary—for instance, encountering a suspicious cat who later turns out to be the cat prince—, may formidably affect the ‘future’ of your daughter, changing her status. Consequently, you have an almost infinite number of combinations of instances in the hand, in order to take or not to take a path, out of the sixty-one of them. The schedule, in principle, is modifiable at any point of your playing. It only takes one click to take a scheduled task off of the timeline; and even for the activities already undertaken, you can always go back to a certain point by loading the previous data you saved, like nothing ever happened. All the attempted schedules disappear when not saved. However, the memory of them being executed each time stays with the player.

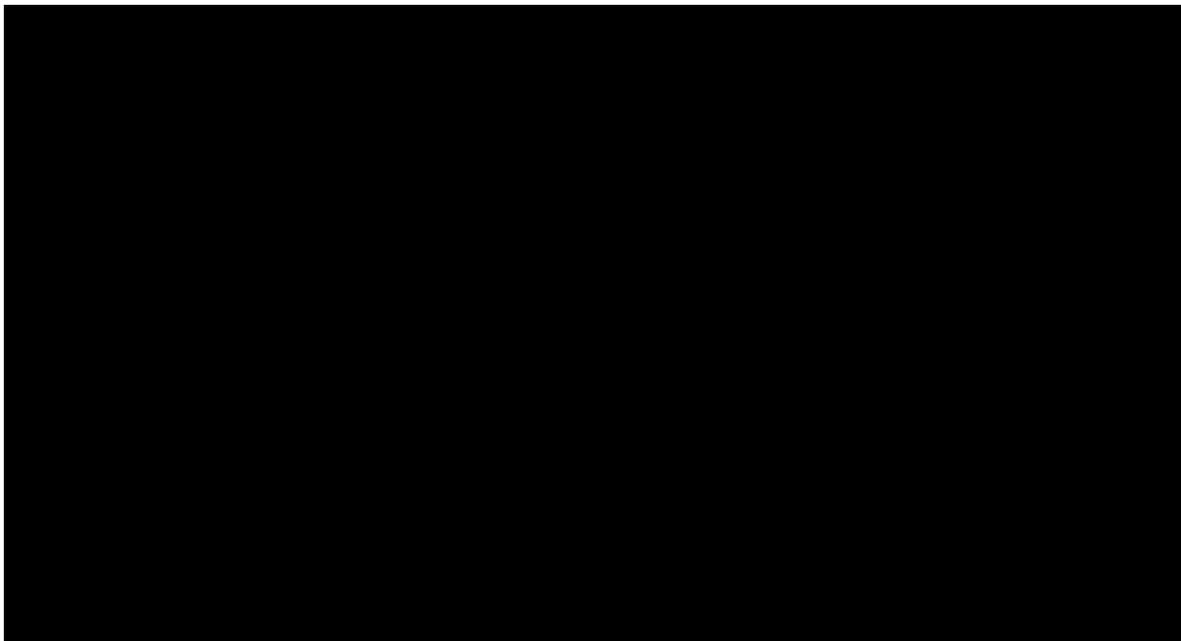


Image 9: The interface of Schedule

When Pluto Got Kicked Out

A single strand of yarn makes a loop after a loop, so builds a network, in knitting. It is a process of transformation and transgression, where singularity becomes plurality, in the order of the Matrix. Another singularity—a new strand of yarn— is introduced and forms a matrixial network from the edge or the middle of an existing network. The two borderlines certainly affect, and get affected at their meeting point. Like manipulating the timeline of your daughter with many fragments, the joint of the two pieces appears difficult to define, seamless, yet not quite because it leaves a tail as a hint of singularity.

Here, joining in knitting differs from seaming. Dormor explains seaming as “passage”, “suturing”, and “trace”. It is to connect different two together the way in which the activity of seaming and the seam itself as a third party, attain new meanings.²⁸ On the contrary, knitting does not solicit a third party when joining and being joined. The joint is a “threshold”; it is rather a parasite-host relationship, however you cannot tell which is which; and it accounts for:

“Metramorphosis is an out-of-focus passage of non-definite compositions along slippery borderlines becoming thresholds, which transform together but differently, allowing relations-without-relating between the I and the unknown non-I.”²⁹

In such a threshold, knitted fabric embodies multiple layers of a generative domain where new meanings are born. In *Thetis* (2023) (Image 10, 11), I draw from the anime series, *Sailor Moon* (1992-1997) among others. One of the villains called Thetis in the show, was an important point of departure. (Image 12) What is striking here is that I could not at all find any logical and reasonable connection between the villain and its name, which is obviously derived from a nymph of the same name in Greek mythology. This outwardly random match brings about not only juxtaposition, but also accumulation, reconfiguration and imagination; and it consequently resists hierarchies, binaries, and polarities. The joining of knitting as a threshold, materializes these encounters, and accommodates such a mode of thinking.

²⁸ Catherine Dormor, *Ibid.*, p. 41-63.

²⁹ Bracha L. Ettinger, *Ibid.*, p. 141.



Image 10: Bogil Lee, *Thetis* [Cotton, polyester, dye, double-jacquard, sublimation printing], 2023



Image 11: Bogil Lee, *Thetis* [Cotton, polyester, dye, double-jacquard, sublimation printing], 2023

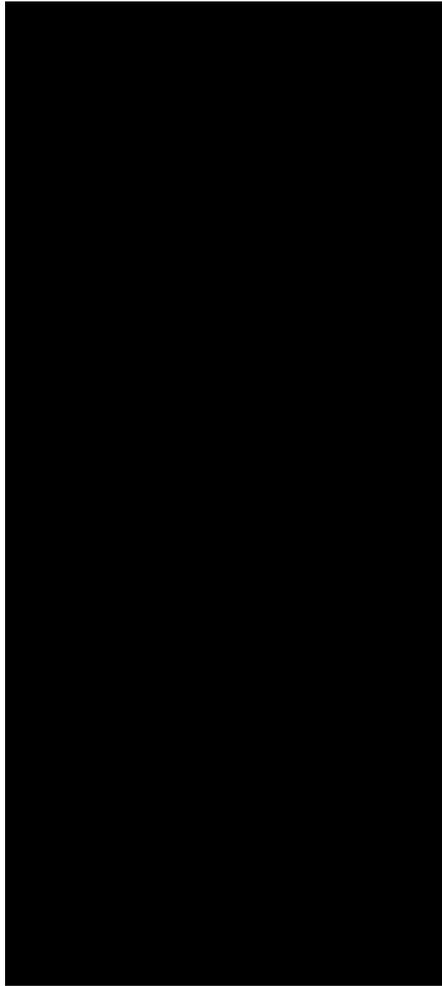


Image 12: Thetis after transforming into her true form

Moon Tiara Action

What happens then when the stitches are disjointed and unraveled? In frayed and fraying cloth, spawns the subversive power of transition, Dormor claims. Frayage offers a haptic way of thinking by which one can resist and refute single-lined narratives; it baffles the notion of center and edge, and goes forward to multi-centers; it arches over interior and exterior, subject and object while investigating the entangled strands of the world together and individually.³⁰ Disjoining in knitting resembles frayage.

When the structure(s) of knitting is collapsed by unraveling, it returns to strands. However, each strand materially expresses as a memory or a trace of the (ex)change that it underwent; it wiggles. Thus, unraveling and the unraveled are not regression to singularity, but transgression to come, and contingency to become a new meaning; it is a “passage” to “create and redistribute traces of joint transformations in the encounter.”³¹ A passage that leads to nowhere and everywhere.

³⁰ Catherine Dormor, *Ibid.*, p. 81-97.

³¹ Bracha L. Ettinger, *Ibid.*.

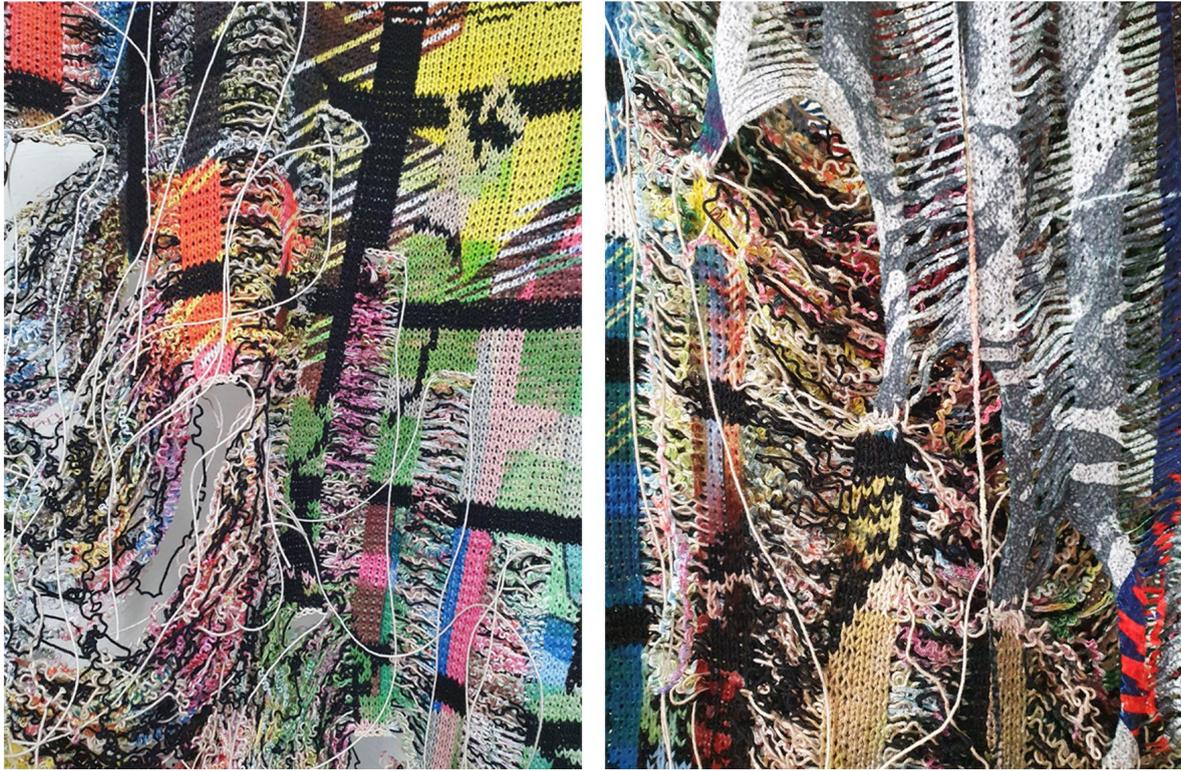


Image 12: Bogil Lee, *Thetis*, detail

Conclusion: Bind Off

Textile is an enigma. Frustrating, yet fascinating one to solve. The more you try to decipher it, the more hidden layers of it you discover. This is because textile embraces and encompasses all sorts of aspects of life; from history to culture, material, symbols, language, and so on. As we speak of it now, it grows bigger and bigger, devouring everything around and far from it, and puts on more layers of coats. Therefore, to understand what textile is—if it is a possible task at all, or if it can be concluded to one thing, even to begin with—is to be carried out cautiously as well as eclectically; practice and theory; expression and facilitation; materiality and activity. To perceive knitting in particular, is then to navigate it not only as one of the components that constitute textile as a whole, but also as to shed a light on the unique properties of the technique.

Initially, I took a look at some examples of how knitting has been fashioned, concerned, and utilized in the context of art and (studio) craft. Drawing from an article of one of the key figures of the Bauhaus weaving workshop, Gunta Stölzl, I claimed that recognizing knitting in an holistic approach is necessary, and by doing so, knitting can become an agency of generating new meanings. I subsequently argued further in a dialogue with Catherine Dormor, who proposed, in her book *A Philosophy of Textile*, a useful guideline to understand textile as both practice and theory, even though the majority of her discourse failed to cover knitting. With an aim for this text to be not only supplementary to, but also expanding Dormor's thoughts to a broader plane including knitting, I have dissected, applied, reconfigured, and refuted her arguments. Dormor delivered a discussion, touching

upon both the construction and the behavior of textile, suggesting three terms: the Matrix, (Inter)relationship, Techne. These three proved loyal needles, extroverted and introverted, as I knitted this paper together; I drew more in depth from Bracha L. Ettinger who proposed the Matrix as a concept at first, since I found it particularly helpful in order to explain both knitting in general, and my own practice

My journey of investigation on knitting started from TV, as written in the introduction: How can one reconcile the flat surface of the screen and the materiality of knitting, which seemingly are completely unrelated to each other? How can the surface of knitting simultaneously embody multiple layers of time and space?

Exemplifying various TV series, a film, and a computer game, I looked closely into the production of (machine-)knitting, the surface, joining and disjoining in knitting in each chapter of the text, on the side of Dormor. With their focus slightly shifted on the technique, each chapter testified: Knitting successfully embodies multiple layers of time and space; Knitting is therefore a meaning-making device whose produced knowledge helps us escape from the Lacanian phallogocentric trap.³²

A question, then, emerges: What meaning does such a device generate? How does this new meaning improve our life? These questions are to be examined, assessed and answered along the progress of my practice. I also want to add that my practice in the future will branch out from TV, to interrogate the visual, symbolic environment of a smartphone and other digital phenomena, for instance, metaverse. Such an environment evidently forges and renews the way we see and configure the world; yet it completely negates the hands. For this very reason, it is a peril but, at the same time, a chance of breakthrough to me or any maker with material-based disciplines.

Epilogue

The Matrix of knitting has taken its path in my practice under the course of time of my education at Konstfack.

The series of *Stockinette-Plain* (2022) was the starting point of the journey. (Image 14, 15) The works examined the structure and surface of knitting, in relation to those of weaving, as well as abstract painting. The top half of each piece was put into multiple cycles of knitting, painting, unraveling, weaving, and knitting back. Such a process accumulated, blurred, interpreted, and reconstructed the geometric shapes on the surface. *Stockinette-Plain (Wrong Side)* in particular, concerned the wrong side of stockinette fabric.

The series was followed by *Frame Study* (2022), which expanded the interest of the research, to include three different suggestions of frames as a condition of the knitted structure. (Image 16, 17, 18)

With a reference to works of Anni and Josef Albers, *Cotton Picture* (2022) examined the properties of knitting as a membrane: dense and loose; stiff and stretchy; between a wall and a window. In this compositional work, the squares and the grid dance, revealing its architecture. (Image 19, 20)

In *Thetis* (2023), I explore knitting as a meaning-making device within the structural language of the technique as a reflective ground, integrating various associations attached to it. By printing, deconstructing, joining, and mending, the surface generates and bears meaning on the matrixial sphere. (Image 21)

³² Bracha L. Ettinger, *Ibid.*, p. 114.



Image 14: Bogil Lee, (left, middle) *Stockinette-Plain*, (right) *Stockinette-Plain (Wrong Side)* [Dye on cotton], 2022



Image 15: Bogil Lee, *Stockinette-Plain*, detail



Image 16: Bogil Lee, *Frame Study* [Dye on cotton, wood], 2022



Image 17: Bogil Lee, *Frame Study* [Dye on cotton, wood], 2022



Image 18: Bogil Lee, *Frame Study*, detail



Image 19: Bogil Lee, *Cotton Picture* [Cotton, wood], 2022



Image 20: Bogil Lee, *Cotton Picture*, detail



Image 21: Bogil Lee, *Thetis*, progress

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- 21 Lee, Bogil, *Thetis*, progress.