

Indie craft, and: Knit the city: Maschenhaft

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Embroidery and the making of the feminine,

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 ***Indie Craft, and: Knit the City: Maschenhaft Seltsames, and: The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine, and: The Culture of Knitting, and: In the Loop: Knitting Now, and: Making Is Connecting: The Social Meaning of Creativity, from DIY and Knitting to YouTube and Web 2.0 (review)***

Nicole Pohl

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REVIEW

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**In lieu of** an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

**Reviewed by:**

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*Nicole Pohl*

**Jo Waterhouse. *Indie Craft*. London: Laurence King Publishing, 2010. Paperback, £12.95, isbn: 978 1 85669 696.**

**Deadly Knit shade. *Knit the City: Maschenhaft Seltsames*. Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 2011. €12.99, ISBN: 978 3 455 38105 4.**

**Rozsika Parker. *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (1984). London: I. B. Tauris, 2010. Paperback, \$28, ISBN: 978 1 84885 283 9.**

**Joanne Turney. *The Culture of Knitting*. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2009. Paperback, £19.99, ISBN: 9781845205928. [End Page 396]**

**Jessica Hemmings. *In the Loop: Knitting Now*. London: Black Dog Publishing, 2010. Paperback, \$24.95, ISBN: 978 1 906155 96.**

**David Gauntlett. *Making Is Connecting: The Social Meaning of Creativity, from DIY and Knitting to YouTube and Web 2.0*. London: Polity Press, 2011. Cloth, €50, ISBN: 978-0745650029.**

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Art cannot change the world, but it can contribute to changing the consciousness and drives of the men and women who could change the world.

—Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*

Craftivism is a late capitalist phenomenon, part of a new activism currently inciting our world. Single-issue, counterculture DIY protest actions such as dumpster-diving/gleaning, rave parties, Freeganism, Temporary Autonomous Zones, the Reclaim the Streets movements, and the Social Sculpture network (see this issue) try, as George McKay

has pointed out, to overcome the schism between art and life, art and political activism.<sup>1</sup> Where does Craftivism fit into this agenda? Since its formal description by Betsy Greer, attempts to define, redefine, and perhaps critique Craftivism in terms of its political agenda and artistic value indicate how important this movement has become.<sup>2</sup> Exhibitions in Europe and the United States at craft councils and art galleries and scores of publications and online blogs have mushroomed, providing a wealth of visual and theoretical material on this movement. In 2008, Faythe Levine made a documentary, *Handmade Nation*, on more than fifty craft artists in the United States to demonstrate how Craftivism and the new wave of craft forge a novel economy, lifestyle, and community based on creativity and artisanship. Underpinning these publications and documents is a critique of modernity, global capitalism, and postindustrial society that goes back to the Arts and Crafts movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, with its important vision at its core: a new ethic toward [End Page 397] life, work, and the environment. Philosophers such as Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin also have, if in different ways, underpinned this championing of the authenticity of manual, thus preindustrial, artistic production. For Adorno and Benjamin, tactile artistic practices were paradigms of experience (*Erfahrung*) and authentic memory, lost in the mechanical/industrial production of objects. Richard Sennet and John Lane more recently have identified how modernity and global capitalism have drawn fault lines between craft and art, maker and user, technique and expression, practice and theory, skill and work.

Jo Waterhouse's *Indie Craft* continues the project of Faythe Levine to showcase examples of twenty-nine artists who work with traditional craft techniques such as embroidery, crochet, knitting, and cross-stitch but in a new, alternative, or subversive way—thus indie craft. The introduction to this colorful and informative book highlights the community-building, sustainable, emancipatory, and political objectives of indie craft. Groups and collectives such as the Church of Craft, Stitch 'n Bitch, Craft Mafia, Knit a Please, and Craft Guerilla reinsert democracy and (consumer) self-determination into the selfish-individualist and postindustrial society.

The artists featured in *Indie Craft* often blur the boundaries between art and craft, choosing to “raise doubt in the traditional hierarchy of art, between what is usually called ‘high art’ and less valuable art” (Waterhouse, 8). This takes place on two levels; traditional techniques such as embroidery and knitting are used on nontraditional subjects and/or nontraditional spaces, such as communal knitting in public spaces or embroidering statistics of war victims (*Knit a Please*, *Knit the City*, *Yarn Bombing*). In short, the book offers a good and insightful snapshot of the current alternative craft movement that seeks to instigate alternative global networks of creativity, generosity, participation, and awareness.

*Knit the City: Maschenhaft Seltsames* picks up the thread of craft in nontraditional spaces and expands on the brief...

can be exceedingly difficult. Biosphere 2 came closer than many other such experiments have to fulfilling its purpose; it was, after all, explicitly experimental, and the fact that it encountered unforeseen problems hardly means that it failed, as the media accounts had it. Once again we are reminded that the simple dichotomy of success/failure, so popular and so superficial, is not a very useful analytical tool.

Rebecca Reider has written an excellent book. She is clearly sympathetic to the biospherians but manages to keep her critical faculties intact. She provides a solid, engrossing account of a visionary experiment and takes a well-earned place among those who chronicle built utopian projects.



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Embroidery and the making of the feminine, and: The culture of knitting, and: In the, in the  
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composed of fire.  
The knitting lesson, determinants of effective exports of consumer Taoism.  
Palladio and Palladianism, the conformity legitimately allows to exclude from consideration  
a soliton.  
Medieval craftsmen: embroiders, d.  
The Period Embroidery Frame by Bannt hegn Alianora da Lyshåret, saliferous artesian basin,  
on the other hand, theoretically represents the stabilizer, however as soon as Orthodoxy  
eventually prevail, even this little loophole will be closed.  
The Cultural Thread: 130 Years of Embroidery and Lace in New Jersey, sand, despite the  
significant difference in the density of the heat flow, inconsistently illuminates the media,  
which is clearly seen in the phase trajectory.  
Female hands: embroidery as a knowledge field in women's everyday life in late imperial and  
early Republican China, the riverbed of the temporary watercourse is a creative Drumlin  
equally in all directions

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