

Jamilla Ives

Bath Spa University/ University of Gloucestershire

Thread Counts: Fashion and textiles forum for sustainable and creative futures

Thread counts is a collective of practitioners brought together by their skills and knowledge within textiles, design and fashion. A panel of academics, technicians, business owners and artisans. Each member is brought together through shared values around the value of making, widening concerns around sustainability and a clear sense of design.

Geographically located within Gloucestershire and connected through growing social, cultural and environmental concerns, the collaborative seek to address these challenges not just in conversation, but through direct problem solving, social action and individual change. If we take the understanding that thought in action is praxis then we aim not just to commodify skills and sell products but nurture a more holistic lifestyle, in turn valuing phenomena and tacit skills involved in the production and education of fashion and textiles. Praxis' can be understood as the relationship between action and thought, encompassing not just the practicality of doing; but art, science, ethics and politics as integral activities for those who are free to do so. Bernstein, R, J. (1999: xiii.) Theory can be seen to be passive, Bernstein, R, J. (1999: xiv.) as an observer, the theorist can come across as a bystander, critiquing but not offering change or results. This project aims not to 'create knowledge or practical wisdom for its own sake, but doing through living well'. Bernstein, R, J. (1999: xiv.)

Using quantitative research methods to create an ethnographic research study the research initially documents those who have engaged with the project, but continues to create more in-depth studies around choice practitioners. The ethnographer examines what others say and do in more detail than they do themselves in order to see the wider context. The researcher maps these local ecologies and creates a clear picture of the geographic landscape for making, design, fashion and textiles. Thread Counts works together with members of the public, non academic panel members and practitioners to move towards more sustainable outcomes. These events including a repair café, reading group, exhibition and makers day interact with students, established practitioners, beginners and hobbyists, and recognizes the value of this broad community to impact both regional GDP and the cultural value of the region. Thread Counts moves between the normal confines of pedagogy, design or retailing and are working to create a regional maker culture that's promotes community, sustainability and collaboration.

Thread Counts does not sit wholly within the commerce or education but is both physically mobile and digitally hosted. Our business members reach new audiences of both peers and customers and are able to gain support in developing their existing business models. The University becomes a facilitator supporting, informing, training and developing practitioners whilst maintaining an enriching conversation with the community's they sit within. This mutually beneficial approach allows each party to contribute a unique perspective, whilst gaining skills and insight into each others practice. The key aspect is this recognition of each member to be autonomous in their practice, transparent in their desires whilst using the support of Thread Counts to facilitate change.