

knitting Yarns



MAY 19: ROBIN HUNTER

Knitting has been such a big part of Robin Hunter's life, she doesn't even remember learning. Her career as a designer started when she began making garments for herself in her teens, and later branched out into sewing, tailoring and millinery. Her goal is teaching people about fit and flattery, and believes every knitter can find their inner fashion diva.

Robin's talk, entitled "The Barbie Factor" will focus on body image as it relates to our knitting projects, why clothing and fashion are important, why we feel uncomfortable with our appearance, what we can do to feel better, and how this all relates back specifically to the knitting community. It is bound to be an inspirational evening, and we hope everyone can attend.



JUNE MEETING PREVIEW

We are very excited to have knitter, designer and textile artist Kirk Dunn back again to speak at our June meeting. Many were awestruck and inspired by Kirk's presentation about his "Stitched Glass" project from the June 2006 meeting. Kirk works alone, and each of the four windows he's making are 6 x 9 feet and done in intarsia on 6mm needles. Needless to say, this project is still ongoing. We look forward to hearing an update from Kirk in June.

SUMMER HIATUS

The conclusion of the June meeting marks the suspension of the DKC season until the Fall. What's a knitter to do during the summer? Don't panic—there are lots of things going on in and around the city to keep you and your needles busy. Baseball, festivals, Relay for Life and more. Stay tuned for the summer scoop in the June newsletter.

Upcoming Meeting Dates

Wednesday, May 19, 2010

Wednesday, June 16, 2010

Wednesday, September 21, 2010 (fourth Wednesday)

Location

Innis Town Hall, 2 Sussex Ave.

NW corner of St. George St. and Sussex Ave.
on the University of Toronto campus.

TTC Access

Five-minute walk south from St. George subway station.

Parking available at several nearby locations.

Meeting Time: 7:30 p.m.

Doors Open: 6:45 p.m.

Admission

\$6.00 for guests and Newsletter Only Subscribers

Free to Full Members (please show card at door)

All Downtown Knit Collective meetings, functions and events are governed by the Rules of Conduct as determined by the Executive.

To read a copy of the Rules, please visit

www.downtownknitcollective.ca/dkc_conduct.html

Announcements

The **Bata Shoe Museum** (right near our meeting space at the corner of Bloor and St. George) has a new exhibition sure to interest our members—*Socks: Between You and Your Shoes* is on now.

Sue Sheedy of Toronto Bodyworks (a massage therapy clinic) has a new business idea and is looking to hire a **machine knitter** to help her realize it. You can contact her at info@torontobodyworks.com

Show and Tell

New knitter Susan Shone seems to be doing very well so far. She unfurled an enormous Inukshuk Afghan (Mary Maxim pattern) which she will bestow upon her English son-in-law who is about to become a Canadian citizen. She added a red maple leaf in the corner in honour of this fact. She's also been working on an adorable child's frog hoodie.

Elena dazzled us once again with her prolific knitting. After showing us her shawl with the mistake at the last meeting, she decided to rip it back and knit another. Twice. She started it with #3 needles, but changed her mind, ripped back again and switched to #2.

Irene Reed made a green men's sweater for her grandson, which she worked on whenever she watched TV. As soon as he returns home from university, she will give it to him. We hope he doesn't subscribe to this newsletter, or the surprise will be ruined.

Del Hersey displayed what she titled "Bee's Knees" Longies, which were indeed very long and very yellow. She admits they highlight all the wrong areas of her body, but loves them all the same. She also showed "Fraternal Socks" and had a touching story to go along with them. A friend passed away having knit only the first sock of a pair (green with beige toe and heel) but there wasn't enough green yarn to make the second. Del completed the project by making an opposite of the first sock, beige with green heel and toe.

Jolanta Prochnouski had a show-stopping "sexy black mohair dress" which was covered with scorpion and snake motifs. She advises that such a dress is suitable only for very cold weather.

Krystyna Perron displayed a peaked summer hat and scarf, made from bits and pieces of leftover cotton yarn in a feather and fern design. She claims it's "all the rage on the golf course."

Maggie Newell showed a hat made of homespun alpaca (dark yarn) and camel (brown yarn). She titled it her "Camel-Lid" for all the biologists in the room.

Raffle

Rosa Tarle—Knitting Mystery Novels
Krystyna Perron—*New Knits on the Block*
Susan Shone—Bag of mystery yarn

Guest Speaker

Denise Powell cycled in to the April meeting to give her very well-received presentation, "A Knitter Visits Peru." She was lucky enough to embark on a fibre-focused tour last fall. Denise took us on a fascinating trip through this country which is so rich in textile history, and brought a treasure trove of knit and woven articles with her to peruse after the presentation.

The tour's first stop was in the capital city, Lima, and the Museo Amano. There they were privileged to spend an hour in a storage room not on public display, viewing a rare collection of pre-Columbian textiles. Denise reports there was a lot of ooohing and ahing in that room.

The samples consisted entirely of weaving, embroidery and cross-loop embroidery (dating to about 700 CE), as knitting was unknown in Peru until the arrival of the Spanish in the 15th century. Also called loop-stitch, she noted it has many similarities to Scandinavian nålebinding. Most pieces from the collection were funerary items, and due to the preservatory effects of being buried in a very dry climate, were in remarkable condition. The colours and patterns were dazzling, and in many cases, surprisingly modern. Men's tunics that looked very Art Deco were actually dated to about 650 CE.

From there Denise's tour moved on to Arequipa for workshops, where they were instructed in the finer points of Peruvian braiding and knitting. Their knitting instructor, Rufina, made everything that was used in the course herself—from the yarn (hand dyed and plied) to the needles themselves. Though there was a language barrier, Rufina definitely knew the word

"error," which she proclaimed each time she made Denise rip back her work and try again. Eventually she did manage to turn out an error-free *ch'uspa*, or traditional bag for carrying coca leaves (not included).

The Peruvians knit in a very distinctive style, working on the purl side with hooked DPNs, and tensioning the yarn around the back of the neck. Each village has its own unique earflap hat pattern, called a *chullo*. The examples Denise showed were as intricate on the inside as they were on the outside. She purchased as many as she could from local vendors, and estimates that the guige is approximately 12 stitches per inch. When knitting was introduced after the Spanish colonization, traditional weaving design elements successfully made the transition from weaving to knitting.

The next stop on the tour was Cusco, and the Centre for Traditional Textiles. This non-profit workshop was founded to enable Andean artisans to focus on their handcrafts, and offers them a fair wage in return, allowing them to support their families and communities. For this reason the textile traditions of the region are not just surviving, but thriving. Denise reported a return to traditional dress in the community, not just to dress up for the tourists, but because of a resurgence of genuine pride in their own heritage.

The method used by the Quechua weavers is backstrap weaving. The artisans tie their looms to a pole and then use the resistance of their own body weight to pull the warp tight. Denise showed a couple of videos of the technique, which was truly mind-bending. Using a series of wooden sticks, they create the shed and pick out the intricate patterns by hand, all at blinding speeds.

Denise's group was encouraged to bring plain yarn from home so it could be hand-dyed at the centre. Everyone's skeins were dumped into the vats, and then delivered the following day right to their hotel. If only such a service existed in Toronto!

Denise has a great number of books on Andean textiles, but many of them are no longer in print. She recommends the book *Andean Folk Knits*, readily available at bookstores, for those who are interested in learning more. Thank you, Denise, for sharing your journey with us.

The Canadian Cancer Society Relay For Life is more than just a fundraiser. It is our opportunity to get together with other Knitters and celebrate cancer survivors, remember and fight back in the hope of finding a cure for this terrible disease.

The Downtown Knit Collective Relay team exudes a combination of enthusiasm, dedication, creative fundraising... and knitting! This will be our 6th year of participation in the Toronto Central Relay for Life. Initially, our team was formed to honour past DKC president, Annabelle Dawson, who died of brain cancer nine years ago. It was from watching Annabelle's courageous cancer journey, that the knitting pattern book Annabelle's Caps became a reality. Money from the sale of these books was donated to cancer charities in Canada and the U.S. This would be Annabelle's legacy. In an effort to expand and continue this legacy, the DKC entered a team in the Relay for Life. The first year, our tent was decorated with the original Annabelle's Caps and the Knitting for a Cure programme was launched.

Last year, the theme for our Relay site was "Think Pink for Patrick". Our inspiration—our dear friend and the vice president of programming for the DKC, Patrick had just been diagnosed with lymphoma. The team knit a pink scarf for Patrick throughout the evening. After the Relay, the scarf was delivered to him so he could have his own personal hug from the Downtown Knit Collective. This year, we hope Patrick will join us as a survivor.

Patrick was not the only DKC'er to encounter cancer last year. Both Mary Pat and Carol had their own personal cancer journeys. Cancer is not selective. It can strike any one of us.

Knitting for a Cure is an ongoing initiative. Scarves, caps and shawls are knit by our members and donated to the Cancer

Society for distribution to those undergoing treatment for cancer. Although we initially knit pink for those undergoing treatment for breast cancer, we have now expanded and accept all colours for the many types of cancer.

The DKC Relay Team is passionate about the fight. We have come up with creative ways of fundraising throughout the year. Denise Powell, a.k.a. Dr. Knit wearing a white coat offers her expertise in solving knitting problems for a small donation at the DKC Knitter's Frolic. Team members have also wound skeins of yarn into balls ready for knitting and a draw is held for a sweater kit.

But we need your help too. If you are free overnight on June 11-12, please consider joining our team. We really have fun knitting throughout the night at our lantern-lit site. Contact events@downtownknitcollective.ca or speak to Joan Kass at a DKC meeting.

The DKC team has raised over \$20,000 at the Relay. Please make a pledge to one of our team members. Go to the Canadian Cancer Society, Relay for Life site, select the "Downtown Knit Collective" team and pledge your support. Or, support a team member at a DKC meeting.

Donate scarves, chemo caps and shawls to be delivered to the Canadian Cancer Society at the end of the Relay. The Relay for Life is fun, fulfilling and raises funds for cancer. As Knitters, we get together and knit at the same time as raising money for cancer. Join us, support us and knit for us as we participate in this 12-hour overnight event and come together in the fight to make cancer history.



Knitting Styles

Part VIII— Portugese-Style Knitting



Last month we looked at Peruvian knitting; this month we look at Portuguese knitting, which is closely related.

Portuguese knitting also traditionally used hooked needles, although this appears to be less common nowadays. Certainly, unless you are knitting to a very tight gauge, there is no particular benefit to hooked needles.

Portuguese knitting is also tensioned around the neck, or through a knitting pin. A knitting pin is a brooch which has a smooth hook at the bottom. The yarn is placed in the hook instead of going around the neck. Since the yarn can be placed in the hook or removed from it very rapidly, and with the knitting pin you do not have the yarn rubbing or pulling against your neck, it is comfortable to use. I don't have a proper knitting pin, but did find a brooch in my collection that could be used.

Purling in the Portuguese style is identical to the Peruvian style. Since Portuguese knitting is more likely to involve flat knitting, however, we need to look at how to do the knit stitch. The yarn must go either around the neck or through the knitting pin hook from the left to the right. It is then tensioned by wrapping around or through one or more fingers on the right hand. This differs from Peruvian style, where the yarn is simply dropped on the floor and the weight of the ball provides the tension. The yarn is flicked around the needle with the left thumb.

To knit, the right hand needle goes UNDER the yarn from the hook, is inserted into the front leg of the stitch from right to left, as you are used to, but the point of the RH needle is kept in front of the LH needle.



1. Inserting needle for knit stitch 2. Completing knit stitch

The left thumb flicks the yarn around the point of the RH needle and pulled through towards the knitter. This action leaves the yarn in the correct position (above the RH needle) for another knit stitch.

Since purling is easier than knitting with this style, garter stitch is done as purl every row.

Circular knitting in the Portuguese style is usually done with the purl side outside, which means that it is also all purl. This is different from Peruvian knitting where circular knitting is done with the right side out, but on the far side of the circle; it is also all purl. On completion of a circular garment in Portuguese style knitting, you must turn it right side out. In Peruvian knitting, it is always right side out.

UPCOMING EVENTS

More Than Just a Yardage Sale

May 28-29, at the Textile Museum of Canada.

Yarn, decorator fabric, notions, thread, ribbons, quilting supplies, books, patterns, linens, fur trim, buttons, oddments, crafts... you name it, this sale has got it. The sale will be held in the parking lot to the south of the TMC rain or shine, and supports the exhibitions and public programs (also accepting donations!) Address, hours and info at www.textilemuseum.ca

Canadian Cancer Society Relay for Life

June 11-12, 2010, 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. at Forest Hill Memorial Park in Toronto. Contact Joan Kass (events@downtownknitcollective.ca) if you wish to join the Downtown Knit Collective Relay Team and knit all night for a great cause.

Crafting Spring Get-Away

May 28-30, 2010 at the Five Oaks Centre near Paris, ON. Carole Thomas is organizing a knitting (or quilting, sewing, beading, embroidery or whatever you enjoy). It will be a lot of fun and the scenery is beautiful! Total cost is \$210 double, \$250 single, all meals and snacks included. For full info, please email mcgaudet@rogers.com and include "Five Oaks" as the subject line.

DKC Executive

President: Carole Adams

416-621-9820

president@downtownknitcollective.ca

Past President: Denise Powell

V.P. Programme: Patrick Madden

programme@downtownknitcollective.ca

Treasurer: Wendy Mauzeroll

treasurer@downtownknitcollective.ca

Secretary: Wendy Eng

secretary@downtownknitcollective.ca

Special Events Coordinator:

Joan Kass

events@downtownknitcollective.ca

www.downtownknitcollective.ca