

VOLUME 17 · ISSUE 8
APRIL 2013

knitting Yarns



APRIL 17: SKILLS EXCHANGE MINI WORKSHOPS

April brings the return of our ever-popular Skills Exchange Mini Workshops. You'll have the opportunity to learn a number of useful new skills in short 15-minute sessions. It's always a fun evening, with many valuable skills being shared by our volunteer teachers. The following topics will be offered. To get the most out of each workshop, we recommend that you bring the items suggested:

▶ Cast-On for Double-Sided Knitting

Teacher: Diane Martin

No homework required—bring needles and yarn.

▶ Knitting With Beads

Teacher: Trish Denhoed

Trish will demonstrate a technique for stringing and knitting with beads—no homework required.

▶ Back Stitch Bind-Off

Teacher: Patrick Madden

This is the companion to the long tail cast-on and perfect for top-down, bottom-up and side-to-side garments, toe-up socks, shawls and other accessories or any edge where you want flexibility, yet a tidy edge. This bind-off can be worked either left to right or right to left, and can be worked over a provisional cast-on.

Homework: some swatches (provisional cast-on preferred). Bring a bent-tip darning needle.

▶ Backwards Knitting

Teacher: Gloria Williams

This is an invaluable skill to use when employing techniques such as entrelac and sock heels. No homework, but bring yarn and needles.

▶ Stretchy Cast-On

Teacher: Mary Pat McDonald

Mary Pat will demonstrate this amazing stretchy cast-on, perfect for ribbing. Bring yarn and needles.

COMING UP IN MAY: ROBIN HUNTER

Robin is a Toronto-based knitter, knitwear designer, teacher, blogger and a DKC member since its inception. Robin's patterns are available online on Ravelry and Patternfish. She teaches in the Toronto area and will have workshops at Vogue Live Chicago.

LAST CALL FOR EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS

Elections will occur at our May meeting, so this is the last call for nominations to the Executive. Several positions will be vacant, so please consider joining in to help make the DKC continue to be a great place to gather. We especially need a new Programme Coordinator to take Cristina's place.

Descriptions of all the positions were published in this newsletter last month, or you can contact Trish Denhoed at secretary@downtownknitcollective.ca as chair of the Nominations Committee. NOW is the time to step up and give back!

Upcoming Meeting Dates

Wednesday, April 17, 2013

Wednesday, May 15, 2013

Wednesday, June 19, 2013

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

\$8.00 for guests and Newsletter Only Subscribers

Free to 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

Close to a full house was on hand for our March meeting (coincidentally, the international Day of Happiness). There were eight newbies and about 120 members in attendance.

Announcements

The DKC will be well represented at the Spring CreativFestival (April 26-27), with both Flo Flory and Dr. Knit (Denise Powell) teaching classes.

The Frolic is now just a few weeks away! There are still spots left in some of the workshops. Robin Hunter, Denise Powell, Joan Kass, Kim Hume and Julia Bryant all came up to give a brief synopsis on their Frolic classes.

Edna spoke about World Wide Knit in Public Day. Volunteers are needed, but if no one signs up DKC's involvement is at risk of being cancelled. Two volunteers have now signed on, but more would be better.

Joan (Lovely Lace), Fiona (Twisting with the Cable Girl) and Robin (Band Practice, Buttonhole Boot Camp, Finishing School) are each offering classes at Linda's Craftique in Port Credit. Visit lindascraftique.com for schedule info.

Robin Hunter taught at Eliza's Buttons and Yarn in Barrie.

Robin has two new patterns, so does Fiona. Socks in spring issue of A Needle Pulling Thread.

Trish Denhoed spoke about the upcoming Executive Elections. There are always things that can be improved and changed—we need volunteers to make it happen! As the newest exec member, Trish says she's learned a lot and it's been a very interesting year with lots of new opportunities. NO ONE has yet offered to help with the nomination committee. Mary Pat agreed to assist, and has started asking around. This is a good start, but the election is in May so this really needs to be nailed down soon!

Show & Tell

Flo Flory showed a beaded lace bracelet. She was working on a copy of a pattern from the early 90s for a bulky sweater, and

it occurred to her the stitch pattern would make a perfect bracelet. She was right!

Trish showed two beaded "Bergamo" sweaters— one a pullover she made 25 years ago, and one brand new. The old one was starting to get a little out of shape, so Trish decided she wanted to make it again. This time she used Heritage Silk sock yarn to make a fire-engine red cardigan version.

Karen Wold showed a sweater made of yarn with lovely lumpy bits. It's plain knit, but gives a definite bobble-like effect. The yarn is called Gedifra Tradition. She also showed an "Eco Vest" from the book *Knitting Green* by Ann Budd, made from two balls of Cascade. Construction is very interesting—knit to the armpits in one piece, then divided, stitches picked up and knit sideways.

Julia Bryant showed a very cool purse in Tunisian crochet. She said she and Mary Pat were looking through her stash and found an assortment of odds and ends that coordinated perfectly. Julia says that the great thing about looking through your own stash is that you're guaranteed to love the colours you find.

Elizabeth Hilton showed a couple of hats using Mairi's pattern for two ended knitting (twist as you knit). She says they were both very fun to knit, and the warmest hats in the whole world.

Cristina Simionovici is a member of the Fictionistas group on Ravelry, and was paired up with mystery author Judith Alguire. Cristina knit her a Runway Vest with no frills and no lace in keeping with Judith's own personal style, to be mailed off after the meeting. What a cool project!

Sammy Vilks brought back a ton of yarns from a factory in Latvia and made a number of cell phone bags using Latvian mitten patterns. Having discovered bead knitting about a month ago, she also took a beaded cuff from a Latvian mitten and turned it into wristlets—quite stunning, with beads forming the diamonds and zig zag patterns. She also made an around-the-neck cell phone case with close to 1000 beads that is as good as jewellery as far as Sammy's concerned!

Raffle

Speaker Michelle drew for prizes, saying she might as well make herself useful. A skein of Patons lace sequin yarn was won by Judi Hanninen. Judi hit the jackpot once again, winning a skein of Handmaiden Silk moments later. A hand-made indigo woven scarf was won by Catherine Dowell.

Guest Speaker

Designer and DKC member Michelle Porter was our March guest speaker. Cristina referred to her as a "young designer" although she's now been working in the industry over 20 years, and started knitting at age six. Michelle comes from New Brunswick (St. Stephen, to be exact) and says knitting is very big there—everyone knits

Michelle creates designs for yarn companies, and has gained a real feel for all the ins and outs, and knows what knitters and yarn suppliers are looking for. Technically a freelance designer, she works from home and takes on assignments from various yarn companies. Her main client is Diamond Yarns, and they bring in yarn labels and sell them to yarn stores. Many yarn brands you'll recognize fall under their umbrella, including Debbie Bliss and Noro, as well as their own Diamond "house brand". Michelle also has her own design label, Fondle Patterns (fondlepatterns.com), and offers dozens of her own designs for extremely reasonable prices—most are \$6. She says she designs things she herself would want to wear, then types up the patterns and sells them. They're also available through Patternfish and Ravelry.

If the patterns she's designing are for yarn companies, they become printed leaflets and get distributed with the yarns. Michelle usually designs garments with the career woman in mind, both for business and casual life. She tends towards body-conscious designs, and prefers clean, unfussy lines. Her goal is to create wardrobe staples that knit up quickly without fuss, and stitch patterns that are easy to knit and memorize (nothing too decorative, complicated or time-consuming). She designs for a wide variety of sizes, typically ranging from small to 3XL. She always has different figure types

in mind while designing. Above all, Michelle wants knitters to succeed! She wants us to be done, be happy, and then go back and buy more yarn. Above all, this is the goal of the garment—not to sell patterns, but to sell yarn and to support yarn lines for the company in question. Her designs show off what the yarn can do—the texture, the colours, the stripes. The pattern must make the yarn shine.

When designing around a yarn store's inventory, Michelle has to take into consideration how many balls a particular pattern is going to take. For example, she can't design something that uses 30 balls, as the average LYS will not usually stock that many. Even in the 3XL sizes, she can't go too wild. She's also restricted to only three pages, which can be tricky (and yes, this includes the schematic). Repeating stitch patterns help save space on paper as well as being easier to memorize.

Diamond Luxury Collection is Diamond's own house brand. Michelle started working with Diamond because she had worked with so many of the yarns before—mostly European yarns that didn't have accompanying patterns. When Diamond picked up the yarns, they needed all new patterns created. Part of her job also involves giving photoshoot support for the patterns she's created. Michelle says it's amazing how often the model will put the sweater on backwards, or her hair will be covering the neckband or another key feature. It's very important for a knitter to be present on the photoshoot! An audience member asked—what happens to the test garments when photography is done? They get boxed up and go on the road as part of trade show displays with pieces from other designers. Michelle's designs get out and see the world.

Michelle has the enviable task of testing new yarns that no one has seen before, and sending samples back to the company. The garments she creates helps them decide which lines they'll be carrying. She showed many photos of amazingly thick, lumpy and colourful yarns under the Manos Artesanas label, and what she made with them (hats, stoles and scarves). She then converted her samples into patterns, and they were taken on the road by the yarn reps. Some of the yarns in question

include chunky Copitos and think-and-thin Dancing Queen (a yarn which features small woolly flowers here and there in the skein). Michelle even came up with some small accessories to help use up the remainder of the skeins—quite an exercise in creative thinking.

You've no doubt heard of Mirasol—another yarn brand under the Diamond umbrella. One great aspect of the line is that part of the proceeds go to the education of Peruvian shepherds' children. Mirasol decided to undertake a new approach in 2012, and put together a design team including Michelle and two other designers. The team had one month to produce full-colour sketches for salespeople to take to stores along with swatches, without ever having laid eyes on the actual yarn. As it turned out, Michelle's quick sketches using Crayolas turned out to look quite a bit like the finished garments, to her great relief!

Knitwear designers generally work a year ahead, and the restrictions they're given (like number of skeins they're allowed to use, and the types of garments required) often call for very creative solutions. The yarn itself often presents challenges of its own—Michelle showed one tubular, i-cord-like yarn that she likened to knitting with a cloud. The test sweater, though ripped out and re-knit many times, unfortunately still gave the rather undesirable appearance of "boobs on the back". Michelle's second approach was a huge improvement—plain knit with an attached cabled capelet that was really quite stunning. The model loved it too, which was a great sign for the distributor.

Michelle showed many slides of her designs, as well as having a table full of garments on display. The audience was very appreciative, and no wonder—many of the garments are real show-stoppers. DKC members also lucked out by getting a sneak peek at new yarns, many of which won't be available until the fall lines come out. New Mirasol yarn SAMI has long, tweedy colour transitions and is really quite beautiful. Michelle's Crossover Vest highlighted the colour changes dramatically. Her SAMI knot-front pullover was also very impressive (and one of Michelle's favourite designs).

What's Michelle working on right now? The Diamond Luxury Collection for Fall needs to be finished by Frolic time! Right now she's working with Pima Lino Lace and a new (and so far nameless) yarn made of baby llama which she says is absolutely divine.

Michelle says Winter 2013 is going to be great. Bramble stitch, cables, stripes, and lots of drape—start looking for the patterns starting around August or September (salespeople will start seeing them in April). They will then prepare their pitches and make presentations to yarn stores. Mills haven't even started producing yet, they're waiting to see how big the order is going to be.

An audience member asked Michelle who does her knitting. She does almost all of it herself, but has a really good friend in Kingston who often helps with the tedious parts, as well as proofreading patterns. When Michelle only has one month to do five sweaters, she really needs to outsource. She's also free to give her opinion on the new yarns she's given, which are often nameless and arrive at her doorstep in large cones. This goes a long way to determining whether or not the yarn will be carried at all. If it's too splitty, hurts her fingers or smells bad, she lets the company know. If she doesn't want to knit with it, chances are, no knitter will!

We'd like to thank Michelle for this fascinating glimpse into the world of pattern drafting and yarn testing. The garments were beautiful, and DKC members flocked to the sample tables afterwards to touch and admire. We're proud to have Michelle as a part of our guild.



Knitted Design #5

Cast on any number of stitches divisible by 6, and knit across plain.

Row 1: Knit, wrapping yarn 3 times around needle as each stitch is knit.

Row 2: *Slip 6 stitches to right hand needle, dropping the wraps (6 "long" stitches). Pass the first 3 stitches over the last 3, being careful not to twist them. Carefully return them

(all 6 stitches) to the left hand needle and knit them. Repeat from * across row.

Rows 3 & 4: Knit. **Row 5:** Repeat Row 1. **Row 6:** *Slip 6, dropping the extra wraps and return all 6 to the left hand needle. Pass the last 3 stitches over the first 3, then knit the 6 stitches. Repeat from * across row. **Rows 7 & 8:** Knit.



Source: The Art of Knitting, 1892, Facsimile Reproduction of the Original Edition from The Butterick Publishing Co. [limited], London and New York, No.4, 2003, Piper Publishing LLC. **Note:** In the Mary Thomas book, this stitch is called Interlacing Cross Stitch or Indian Cross Stitch. **Note 2:** Mary Thomas uses a multiple of 8 stitches, and sets of 4 x 4 stitches.

Spring Focus Group Update

Since there has been little interest from members, the Spring 2013 Focus Group has been cancelled. Next year's executive will decide on future plans.

I would like to thank all the members who participated in the previous three Focus Groups. It was a privilege to meet you and have such wonderful discussions. Thanks too to Elizabeth Hilton who hosted the last two events at the Mess Hall at Canadian Forces College and Jody May who hosted the first group at Creative Yarns.

Edna Zuber
Coordinator, Promotions

Location Search Update from Mary Pat

As a result of Edna's focus group last spring, Susanne Tabur and I decided to investigate other meeting places for the guild. Neither of us liked Innis College very much— we found it dark and hard to circulate for purposes of chatting. Because the focus group was discussing volunteerism, it seemed that if we were complaining, we should step up and address the issue. After three months of wearing out shoe leather and burning up phone and internet lines, we discovered a home truth— be grateful for what you have. The number of alternate DKC venues is zero.

There are no real contenders for our meeting place. All U of T sites (many very inviting) are booked to capacity for lectures, or not big enough, or something else that eliminates them. The same is true of Ryerson. Our old venue, the Central YMCA, is refurbished so that the seats now work, but wireless internet was not guaranteed. We tried big churches, theatres, you name it! So now I appreciate Innis College - they've improved the lighting, but that's not really why. I realize it's tough to accommodate a group our size that meets once a month. The search is still on, but in the mean time, I'll see you at Innis on the third Wednesday of the month.

Please contact Edna Zuber at promotion@downtownknitcollective.ca to let her know how you can help.

UPCOMING EVENTS

15th Annual Knitter's Frolic
Mark your calendars for April 27-28, 2013. This massive event will feature workshops, food, fibre and fun. Our keynote instructor will be **Ann Budd**.

- **Marketplace:**
Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- **Workshops:**
Saturday 9:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Sunday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- **Location:**
Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre, 6 Garamond Court, Toronto



The proceeds from our monthly raffles are donated to our chosen charities, including the Canadian Cancer Society and Sistering women's shelter. We have raised **\$1094** so far this year, with a goal of \$1500. Thank you for your support!

DKC Executive

President: Carole Adams
president@downtownknitcollective.ca

Programming Coordinator: Cristina Simionovici
programme@downtownknitcollective.ca

Promotion Coordinator: Edna Zuber
promotion@downtownknitcollective.ca

Communications Coordinator: Donna Lyons
communications@downtownknitcollective.ca

Treasurer: Wendy Mauzeroll
treasurer@downtownknitcollective.ca

Secretary: Trish Denhoed
secretary@downtownknitcollective.ca

Special Events Coordinator: Joan Kass
events@downtownknitcollective.ca

www.downtownknitcollective.ca

 [@DKCtoronto](https://twitter.com/DKCtoronto)

 facebook.com/DKCtoronto