

Knitting yarns

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December 11: Work of our Hands

The annual Fashion Show is a guild tradition. This is the meeting when members get to strut their stuff— showing off their fabulous knitted and crocheted garments. And what an exhibition of talent it is. Dozens of members will model fabulous vintage, traditional or modern sweaters, skirts, shawls and accessories for us to admire. This is the time when we showcase ourselves, the knitters, at our annual Work of Our Hands Fashion Show. It will blow you away!

Come cheer on your fellow knitters and admire their creativity and technical skills. Then stay on to nibble sweets and drink holiday cheer at our fashion celebration. As always, the December meeting is **free to all**, so bring friends and family along.

January Meeting Preview

Our January guest speaker is someone who is probably familiar to most Toronto knitters— Jonathon Leonard of Romni Wools. You may not know that Jonathon is also an experienced spinner, as well as a yarn store owner. He's going to talk to the guild about yarn construction.

February Meeting Preview

Our ever-popular Skills Exchange Mini Workshops will take place in deepest, darkest February— a fun, social meeting where new skills are learned and new friends made.

We're looking for instructors, so if you have a simple technique that can be taught in about 10 minutes, please contact Catherine Osborne, our Programming Coordinator: programme@downtownknitcollective.ca

Upcoming Meeting Dates

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Wednesday, January 15, 2014

Wednesday, February 19, 2014

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

fashion show is

free to all in December



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

Highlights of the November Meeting *by Heather Brady*

We were pretty much at capacity for the November meeting, with close to 130 knitters in attendance (including six visitors). Lots of great raffle prizes were available, thanks to the generosity of our five yarn shop owners.

Announcements

The annual Fashion Show will be on December 11, because the week after is just too close to the holidays. We are always looking for volunteers to help out with the show.

Opinions on a name change for the guild is being put out there to the membership— if you have an opinion, by all means let us know. We'll be making a decision in the new year (January or February).

Raffle

A Fleece Artist thrum mitten kit from Linda's Craftique was won by Fay McKenzie. A flowered project bag from Ewe Knit was won by June Murray-Lum. A Purple Purl gift bag with two skeins of Turtlepurl yarn was won by Janet Hilson. A Denise needle set from Mary's Yarn was won by Barb Aikman.

Show & Tell

Pat showed the same sock done in three distinctive colourways. All her family has fallen in love with them. She knits them with a solid and variegated yarn to give them a good "snap." The pattern is called Wallflower (from Twist Collective), but she's not sure why. It's hard to miss them!

Julia thanked everyone who participated in Stash of the Century sale, which raised over \$4000 for charity. Considering the yarn all cost \$1 and \$2, that's really saying something. She then showed baby blanket made for a neighbour with purple, teal and yellow diamond-shaped squares. She also showed a River Maiden zig-zag patterned stole in lace and short rows, using bright

red merino silk, beautifully designed.

Trish showed an intentional colour pooled scarf last month, and this month showed three more— she is truly addicted! She also made a nice plain grey scarf so she doesn't go completely insane.

Past guest speaker Carla Canonico dropped in to show three sweaters: a cabled white one made for her daughter with v-shaped cables down the front (no pasta eating is allowed when the sweater is worn). With the leftovers, she made an owl sweater, using grey alpaca at the yoke for the owls. Her husband wanted Aran sweater so she made him choose a pattern. It took him a month to choose, and then a year to knit. Well worth the effort— all three were stunning.

Sammy (the self-described "Latvian mitten lady") also enjoys the knitting traditions of other nationalities. She recently completed a scarf covered with extra-large Estonian knupps. She also showed two bags with intricate patterns, one of which had large mitten thumbs all over the bottom. She hates doing thumbs, so did it as an exercise in self-discipline.

Raili showed beautiful socks made from a pattern she picked up in Estonia. She also had a small, bright red scarf made with the most expensive yarn she's ever used— \$96. Yes, it was Quivut.

Holly showed an infinity scarf made from yarn that came with flowers felted right into it. She wasn't able to block it large enough to fit around her shoulders, but it does work as a cowl. She also showed a button technique she invented that doesn't require a button hole. Instead of a thread shank, she uses a bead as a spacer. It works almost like a cufflink, laying flat on a bulky sweater without stretching.

Yarn Store Panel: Living the Dream

We welcomed a group of five yarn store owners to our December meeting: Mary Cullen and her daughter Lynn from **Mary's Yarns** in Unionville, Linda Benne of **Linda's Craftique** in Port Credit (which just celebrated its 30th anniversary), Miko Schechter of the **Purple Purl** in Leslieville, and Claudia Quintanilla of **EweKnit** in Mirvish Village. The guests sat in a semi-circle and had an informal chat with moderator Catherine Osborne about the ups and downs of the yarn business.

What makes your store special?

Claudia: Our knitting supplies, crochet supplies, and we've just started to carry fabric supplies for quilting in the last few months.

Linda: Space is a luxury I really appreciate. There's lots of room to have people in to knit. I call it "Linda's home for wayward knitters".

Miko: Our stock has evolved over the years. It's tripled. We have a small café component and a dedicated centre for just hanging out and knitting. We feature primarily natural fibres and are proud of our "Canadian content" component, as well as carrying favourites like Noro and Debbie.

Mary: We're in an old house (1876) and the whole main floor is yarn. Each room has a different theme (baby, natural fibres). We have a Wal-Mart and Michaels next door, so we try to keep popular yarns in stock. We also sell eggs on the porch from our chickens.

Do you have advice for those who are thinking of opening a yarn shop?

Claudia: There's a lot of paperwork, accounting, and working on the website. You have to learn to deal with all these things. It's more work than I expected, but a lot of beautiful things have happened.

Miko: Accept that “the dream” (sitting and knitting all day) is not necessarily the reality. There are obviously a million perks, but there is a lot of organizational stuff that goes on on the side. Did I ever want to know about accounting? No! Did I want to sit and touch yarn all day? Yes! There’s been more of a learning curve, but it’s been a great experience. It’s still the best thing I’ve ever done. Find your own passion and define it.

Linda: Be prepared for a lot of hard work, a lot of joy, and VERY little money (at first). I slung burgers for the first few years to make ends meet, but would not give up those days for the world.

Lynn: You need to love the public– that’s something you have to keep in mind. There’s tons of customer service and interaction.

What are some of the other challenges with running a business?

Linda: Inventory control. There’s a very fine line between not enough and too much. If you’ve got too much, you’ve got to pay for it and it sits there. This is my biggest challenge. You often feel that you’re two balls short of any amount that a customer needs.

Miko: Shipments. Since so many products come from outside

Canada, duty on any package can be overwhelming, and change from order to order. You have to run a consistent price in the store, but it can change from day to day at the border. Discontinued yarns are also a cause of heartache. We don’t often get much (or any) notice.

Claudia: Yes, the US sells cheaper, the internet sells cheaper– this is a huge challenge. You have to be fair to the buyer and try to offer the best prices you can, but it can be hard to compete. I’ve been trying to stock more products that aren’t available online.

How do you decide what yarns to carry?

Linda: For me, it has to be natural. I have to like the way it looks and feels. Then I smell it– I have to like the smell. I would taste it if I could! I try to take colours from every quadrant of the wheel to appeal to everybody, without too much duplication. You want variety and new things, but if you’re filled with staples there won’t be much room for new stuff.

Claudia: I have to fall in love with it in order to stock it. I try to have a range of expensive to cheap: some \$40 a ball, some \$8 a ball. I want to appeal to everyone but still have quality.

Lynn: With our competition from Michaels and Wal-Mart, we have to keep those customers in mind. We do have an “acrylic crowd” and we try to appeal to them as well as carrying the higher-end fibres.

What’s the best part about owning a yarn shop?

Miko: Being a part of the community. Little babies that took their first steps in the shop are now learning to knit and feeling comfortable with the store and the tools. It’s exciting to see.

Claudia: Seeing generations come together to the store. Grandmother, mother, grandchildren, all choosing yarn together. I just enjoy looking at yarn and stay even after the store is closed, choosing things, organizing things, touching yarn.

Linda: The best thing about my store is getting up every morning and wanting to go to work. It’s always been like that. Not just for monetary rewards, but for the “other” rewards. I go to work sick with a mask on and a bottle of Purell, and a warning sign on the door. It never occurs to me not to go to work.

We’d like to thank our panelists for sharing their insights with us! It was a lively and fun discussion.

December is the Month of Giving

Spun Studio our textile studio is Sistering’ s newest social enterprise program. Involvement in the studio builds community, a sense of belonging as well as increased self worth and self esteem offering women training in sewing, knitting, weaving and micro business development.

How can you help? Bring a donation of yarn, needles, fabrics, etc. to our December 11th meeting and we will ensure that the materials get delivered to Spun Studio, Just a small way for the DKC to show our support.

For more information about Sistering and Spun Studio, please contact: spunstudio@sistering.org



SPUN STUDIO

Stitch of the Month by Diane Martin

Grace Note Panel

Panel of 15 stitches

- Row 1 (WS) and all WS rows: Purl
Row 2 K4, k2tog, yo, k2, k2tog, yo, k3, yo, ssk.
Row 4 K2, k2tog, yo, (k1, yo, ssk) twice, k1, k2tog, yo, k1.
Row 6 K2, k2tog, yo, k3, yo, ssk, k1, yo, ss3k, yo, k2.
Row 8 K1, k2tog, yo, k1, yo, ssk, k2, yo, ssk, k2tog, yo, k3.
Row 10 K2tog, yo, k3, yo, ssk, k2, yo, ssk, k4.
Row 12 K1, yo, ssk, (k1, k2tog, yo) twice, k1, yo, ssk, k3.
Row 14 K2, yo, sl1- k2tog- pssso, yo, k1, k2tog, yo, k3, yo, ssk, k2.
Row 16 K3, yo, ssk, k2tog, yo, k2, k2tog, yo, k1, yo, ssk, k1.

Repeat Rows 1 to 16.

ss3k: slip as if to knit, slip as if to knit, return the 2 slipped stitches to left hand needle in reverse order, k3tog. (left dominant, centred double decrease)

alternative to sl1- k2tog- pssso: sl 2 sts as if to k2tog, sl 1 as if to knit, and k3tog (right dominant, centred double decrease)

Source: Barbara Walker, *A Second Treasury of Knitting Patterns*.





Join us for High Tea and Artisans Fair
at the 1st Annual Holiday Bazaar!

Presented by Relay For Life in Toronto Central
Supporting Sunnybrook Hospital

When: Sunday, December 8th, 2013 12:00- 4:00pm
Where: Lawrence Park Community Church
2180 Bayview Avenue, Toronto, ON. M4N 3K7

Admission to the Artisan's Fair is FREE!
High Tea Tickets are: \$20 per person

First Seating: 1:30- 2:30 pm
Second Seating: 3:00- 4:00 pm

To purchase tickets for the high tea contact:
Shireen: 416-454-0473 or shireen_rangwala@rogers.com



UPCOMING EVENTS

TMC Members Holiday Sale

Tucked away on the second floor of the Textile Museum of Canada, the Museum Shop is a marketplace of both new and traditional textiles from around the world. The shelves house original works by over 50 Canadian artisans. From December 1-24, the TMC is holding its annual Holiday Sale. Museum members receive an additional 10% off regular-priced merchandise. 55 Centre Ave., Toronto.

Knitter's Frolic 2014

Mark your calendars—planning for next year's Frolic is already well underway. It will take place **April 26-27, 2014** at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre. Our keynote instructor this year is internationally renowned teacher, author and knitwear designer Candace Eisner Strick.

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