

Unraveled

August 2005

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Dear Knitter

As I have been gearing up for this issue of Unraveled, I have been doing a lot of thinking about the content. And true to form, I have been having lots of ideas. First in this issue is an article about art, inspiration, and design as it pertains to knitting. It is a short article, written while inspiration was still fresh, after a trip to the Denver Zoo. Many knitters talk about their knitting being art, yet are somewhat shielded from that culture either by their own choosing as they cannot relate to what they see or understand how it relates to their knitting, or by the industry itself in the never ending cycle of getting the pattern out to sell yarn. It is within the reach of most knitters, certainly, to bring art as well as bits of themselves into their knitting, and this article is a glimpse into that process.

The second article in this issue was written by the mother of Katherine Misegades. I really wanted the first issue to have this article, which was printed in Popular Needlework in 1968. I did some very minor editing to the article, which includes line by line directions for an heirloom lace edging that Rachel discovered somewhere. She was a well known figure at Knitting Camp. I have many fond memories myself of visiting Katherine and her mamma. Rachel almost always had some intricate lace doiley in her lap that she was working on. When the season was right, she would often be watching the Chicago Cubs play baseball on television or dirt bike racing while she knit. I always loved that contrast. Rachel was fond of taking bits of antique lace that friends or family gave her and deconstructing the pattern. She then saved the directions after testing them in a three ring binder. I will be bringing you more of her goodies from the past in future issues.

Wrapping up the issue is news from Kristmen's Design Studio as well as news from the industry, including new designs and new yarns, as well as information on yarns that have been discontinued.

Tomorrow is the first day of Stitches Midwest. I cannot believe it is here already. After three days of computer woes, I am finally up and running again. I hope to share pictures from Stitches with you in the next issue, as well as an article called "Johnny Socks". My cousin belongs to a group of Civil War Reenactor, and I promised to "set him up" with some handknit items that a soldier might have received. That will be lots of fun!

Happy Knitting!
JoLene

Artful Knitting by JoLene Treace

I have just returned from Denver, Colorado. During the trip I had a chance to take a deep breath and take a break from the hectic schedules our lives have become over the last month or so. While there, I visited the zoo on the occasion of my 42nd birthday. I was reminded yet again that creativity and inspiration are all around. Many of you know I have a fondness for visiting zoo's and that I find they spark my imagination in many ways. I had some other ideas for this issue, but as the inspiration is fresh I thought I would share some pictures and thoughts about my inspirations with you.



I enjoyed taking pictures of the flamingos. I don't know how many times I have taken pictures of flamingos and never noticed they have black feathers on the underside of their wings. As an artist, there is a lot to be excited about visually. The beautiful color, the line of their bodies, the contrast between the very long straight legs compared to the lush curves of their bodies, and the slick texture of their feathers. There are a lot of different directions you can take with design.



Imagery that comes to mind suggests heat and the sun, sandy beaches, and palm trees. A fiber cool, and elegant with a fluid drape. I really love linen, so it is often my first choice when I want something elegant, that drapes well, and gives me a crisp texture

Pink Flamingo...

It might be fun to do a dressy little bag inspired by the flamingos. A round and curvaceous bag, that mimics the curves or overall roundness of the body of the flamingo. You could choose to focus on textures and perhaps pick a lace pattern, or do any number of things. You could incorporate touches of black in the design. It could have a black lining, for example. Or it could be a beaded bag, with the beads in black. There are a lot of different things you could choose to do.



I enjoyed taking other pictures, too. There were the peacocks, the polar bears, the tigers and lions, and various monkeys. What really excited me was getting some good pictures of the Komodo Dragons. We have one Komodo Dragon at our zoo, and I have never been able to get a good picture of him. Too much glare on the glass. The Komodo Dragon is I believe the world's largest lizard. He is a long, very muscular fellow with wicked looking claws. The youngsters spend a lot of time in the trees, which is something that could be a design element to consider.

Again, there is a sleek quality to the texture of this animal that tends to rule out wool and other fuzzy fibers. This is a predator that is to be respected. I won't get into a lot of gruesome detail, and the design that I do come up with will focus more on the habitat and other less lethal inspirations.

...Peacock

I will use Asian inspired influences due to the natural habitat of the Komodo. Typically this means favoring simplicity and elegance. Clean lines. This does not mean that it is without drama...just that there is not a profusion of high drama focal points.

Even in colorways you see control and restraint. Kimono's are a good example. There are some very rich and vivid colors, but there is a controlled use of color.

In all this fits the Komodo, as he has a lot of simple clean lines, and his coloring tends to be subdued and colorful at the same time.

Leaf motifs and simple clean lines will form the basis of the design. As for what is to follow, well, I will keep you posted. This is a design in progress. I actually already had one done, and ended up selling it to Louet (Fei). That was my original Komodo Dragon Design.



Komodo Dragon...

In my opinion it is this kind of background inspiration and thought process that makes a design interesting. It is often the stories behind something that add value and meaning to our lives. They add ritual and texture, taking our knitting to a whole new level. You see, it can be very abstract without appearing to be. You can push the boundaries without knitting with something like strips of garbage bags. Admittedly I do not get into that and have trouble relating to it and appreciating it. One thing that I find vastly amusing, I will tell you right off, is when artistic people get so wrapped up with “pushing the boundaries” or “pushing the envelope”, that the process they are so keen on becomes trite and overused. What I am saying, is if everyone pushed the boundaries in the same way, well, that isn’t really pushing the boundaries, now is it? What is the point behind the boundary being pushed?

Who is to say that a beautiful fairisle inspired by whatever has touched the mind and soul of the knitter is not art? And who is to say that their inspiration is less artful because they have not “pushed the boundaries” because they chose a traditional method of expression? Art is communication, a tool, by which the artist conveys how something has impacted them. Let’s face it, there are easier ways to communicate, and we choose creative endeavors because that creativity touches in us a responsive chord that adds depth and richness to our lives. So, the next time you see some very artsy knitting in an exhibit, by all means enjoy it...but don’t assume that your own knitting cannot be just as artful.

Heirloom Lace

The Art Of Knitting Lace,
by Rachel Misegades,

edited by JoLene Treace

Originally published in *Popular Needlework*, 1968.



Knitting is an immigrant. It came here with people from other home lands. It hasn’t changed as it is too simple and too old. Actually it consists of knotting and a loop being pulled through another loop. Yet this simple loop can be made into a variety of textures and patterns. Six thousand years ago in Egypt, a piece of knitting as plain as any you ever did, was put into tombs with the dead, for their use on their journey. It hasn’t changed. How could it?

My grandfather taught me to knit. He had been one of nine boys in his family, and his mother could not keep that many in stockings – so each boy learned to knit the legs and she finished the feet. He decided to teach me when I was six, because he felt I had too much spare time. I have that first piece yet. It was package twine on lace needles. It is straight garter stitch, about 3 x 14 inches. My favorite doll wore it was a scarf.

I am interested in the history of whatever I am doing. I have traveled many a romantic road following the steps of a craft. In this way it becomes much more alive. Patterns can be found, now and then, in knitting books. The library will help here, too. A lot of new pleasures were mine visiting the library, for it is a rich store house of patterns.

As I go through my knitting file, I find an old book of my Mother's published over 70 years ago, by Leisher yarns and threads. It's rich in ideas. I have clippings from Home Arts-Needlecraft, The Workbasket, Women's Day, Women's Home Companion leaflets, McCall's Needlework magazine leaflets, Good Housekeeping Pamphlets, and leaflets put out, now and then, by yarn companies. You see, the "school teacher" in me has made me into a collector. Even after many years, I use them. Chances are, patterns are lying hidden, near all of us. Give a look. Ask friends, and check old bookstores.

Don't pass up a piece of old lace. It is the best source of old patterns that work. Even though it may be very old and yellowed, the stitches can be taken off, writing them down, by rows. Then try knitting your instructions, step by step. Don't unravel it, this loosens it forever. Count and write what is done to each stitch. I did this to a bit of heirloom lace. From it I was able to reproduce the lace, and write down a pattern (directions are at the end of this article). I toyed with the edging a little and came up with this leaf edge. I like it better because it carries the leaf from the body of the lace. That was a matter of taste, of course.

A real interest in knitting can keep you fascinated for life. There are so many angles of it to follow. At no time in all the long history of this craft has there been such a variety of threads, needles, colors, patterns and styles to help you. The "frosting" of this thread craft, to me, is lace knitting. If I have a weekend alone, my family knows what I'll be doing. Out come the fine needles, thread, and the doily patterns. I have German, Spanish, and English, as well as American. This is an adventure, reading the pattern and causing the needles to carry the thread, as instructed. The doily unfolds like a spider web.

The result of the lace does not show whether you threw your thread with your right forefinger, like the English, or with your left forefinger like those on the Continent. It is just like other knitting, you use the method that suits you better. You're interested in results. If you can read other knitting patterns, you will have no trouble with lace patterns. Some people have the tendency to look at a pattern, as a whole, and are overcome with the arrangement of instructions. You must not let that happen. A directions sheet was not meant to be taken in all at once, but one phrase at a time. Like going up stairs, just because the last step up at the top is so far away, it does not keep you from getting there. You take it one step at a time.

Lace knitting cannot be made well if there is a lot of confusion around you or if you expect interruptions. I never lay lace down, unless it is at the end of a row, or unit, if I can help it. It is too difficult to keep track of where you left off. I have my pattern secured to a heavy card board, or anything that you can stick pins into. I keep track of my rows with the pins. It will build up a row at a time. After a while, the set of rows that are repeated for the pattern can be retained in your head. Even so, I mark where I am on the pattern now and then. (note from JoLene: nowadays we have some tools such as post-it notes and other devices that can be used...interesting though to read about how it used to be done before we had those things!)

Pretend you are sitting by me, if this is your first piece of lace, or if you have been having trouble. I would suggest that you have a ball of Knit-Crosheen and a No. 1 set of needles. Cast on a number of stitches and knit back and forth, until you have an inch or more. This is done for several reasons, first to get the feel of small needles, and fine cotton thread. This is important, for both these items control the tension of your lace. People have the tendency to knit too tightly with cotton thread. This will take away from the beauty of your lace pattern. Another reason for practice is to make neat turns at the end of the rows. Cotton thread will not hug a turn like wool. So always slip the first stitch of each row. I even do this with wool, sometimes. It makes a neat snug turn, without a sagging thread. It also will give you a piece of knitting to hold on to while you practice the lace stitches. Many times in regular knitting you have made lace stitches. The basic one is yarn over, knit two together (yo, k2tog). This forms a hole and that is what lace is, making holes.

Some patterns will say (at the beginning of a row) slip 1, knit 1, and pass the slipped stitch over. This will stretch the slipped stitch over 2 rows – so I accomplish the same thing (which is actually cutting down the number of stitches in the row by 1) by simply knitting the first two stitches together. Making sure they are on the needle at the same slant. This will also make the edge stitches lay like shingles, one a little over the other and makes a nice edge. I use this method in all my knitting, not just lace.

Suppose you are making a leaf pattern; this method could be used to make a nice right edge to your leaf. Now – when you narrow for the left hand side of the leaf, and your pattern says narrow, and you do just that (note from JoLene: narrow is an old term for decrease, as in k2tog) you will find that the left side of the leaf will not be clear and neatly formed as the right hand side. So – the 2 stitches involved in the narrowing can be turned around (or taken, one at a time, off the needle and slanted the other way), so that they overlap, like shingles, up that side of the leaf (note from JoLene: we work this as a SSK, or slip, slip, knit).

One thing to keep in mind, lace is softer and prettier if the tension is not too tight. When planning a lace project, the size of thread chosen will depend on the use given it. Size of needles and size of thread can not be measured by a rule. I make a swatch of lace with the thread and needles I want. Sometimes I change one or the other, or both – just as I make

swatches in other knitting, when I want to hold to a size. Swatches are the best time ever spent, when you are in doubt.

Just remember that lace is within the ability of any knitter. Some do not like to knit so small. Lace can be made with yarn for the bottom of sweaters for collars, or around shawls or afghans. This can be done on any size needle that will fit your project.

Heirloom Lace

Cast on 41 sts. K across plain for 1 row.

Row 1: K6, (YO, k2tog) 5 times, YO, k12, YO, k1(YO, k2tog) 5 times, YO, k2..

Row 2 & all even numbered rows: Purl

Row 3: Sl 1, k1, YO, k2tog, YO, k1, (k2tog, YO) 6 times, k2, k2tog, k4, k2tog, YO, k3(YO, k2tog) 5 times, YO k2.

Row 5: Sl 1, k1, YO, k2tog, YO, k2, (k2tog, YO) 6 times, (k2, k2tog) 2 times, k2, YO, k5, (YO, k2tog) 5 times, YO, k2..

Row 7: Sl1, k1, YO, k2tog, YO, k3, (k2tog, YO) 6 times, (k2, k2tog) 2 times, k2, YO, k7, (YO, k2tog) 5 times, YO, k2.

Row 9: Bind off 3, k5, (yo, k2tog) 5 times, yo, k1, yo, k2, k2tog, yo, k6, k2tog, k2, (yo, k2tog) 6 times, k1.

Row 11: sl 1, k1, yo, k2tog, yo, k2, (yo, k2tog) 5 times, yo, k3, yo, k2, k2tog, k4, k2tog, k2, (yo, k2tog) 6 times, k1.

Row 13: sl1, k1, yo, k2tog, yo, k3, (yo, k2tog) 5 times, yo, k5, yo, k2, k2tog, k2, k2tog, k2, (yo, k2tog) 1 times, k1.

Row 15: sl 1, k1, yo, k2tog, yo, k4, (yo, k2tog) 5 times, yo, k7, yo, k2, k2tog twice, k2, (yo, k2tog) 6 times, k1.

Row 17: Bind off 3, k4, (k2tog, yo) 6 times, k2, k2tog, k6, k2tog, k2, yo, k1, (yo, k2tog) 5 times, yo, k2.

Repeat rows 3 through 17 as often as you wish for length desired.

Heirloom Lace, Leaf Edging Variation (not shown)

Cast on 14 sts. P all even numbered rows.

Row 1: yo, k1, yo, k2, k2tog twice, k2, yo, k2tog, k1, yo, k2 tog.

Row 3: yo, k3, yo, k1, k2tog twice, k1, yo, k2tog, k1, yo, k2tog.

Row 5: yo, k5, yo, , k2tog twice, yo, k2tog, k1, yo, k2tog.

Row 7: yo, k3, k2tog, k2, (yo, k2tog) twice, k1, yo, k2tog.

Repeat rows 1 through 4.

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Yarn News

Plymouth Yarns: *Suri Merino*, a worsted weight wool blended from Suri Alpaca, the finest micron adult alpaca fibers, and wonderfully soft merino wool.

Alpaca Yarn Company: The name is new (I forget what the previous company name was, I think it was America's Alpacas) but they do have some of the same yarns in their line. *Classic Alpaca* and *Classic Lite* are 100% superfine alpaca and come in over 60 colors. Lite is a fingering weight yarn, and the classic is a DK weight. *Glimmer* is 95% baby alpaca and 5% holographic fiber which adds a little sparkle. It comes in 10 colors, and knits up at 6 sts per inch on #3 needles. *Suri Elegance* is a lace weight yarn that comes in 11 solids and 6 handpaint colors. You can see them on the web at www.thealpacayarnco.com

Brown Sheep: *Cotton Fleece* and *Cotton Fine* new colors include Pink-a-boo, Wisteria, Gold Dust, Willow Leaf, and Olivette. Lamb's Pride Superwash has a new color, Cinnamon Twist, in both worsted and bulky weight. Nature Spun, available in worsted, sport, and fingering weights, has three new colors: Blue Fog, Limestone, and Bamboo. Lamb's Pride has five new colors that will be out in the fall. They include 2 heathered colors and 3 solids. The colors are Mulberry, Wild Violet, Pistachio, Midnight Green, and Chocolate Souffle.

Knit One, Crochet Too: *Ambrosia* is a soft blend of 70% baby alpaca, 20% silk, and 10% cashemere. It is slightly heavier than Richesse et Soie and comes in 15 colors. It can be substituted quite nicely for Richesse et Soie, which has been discontinued.

Louet Sales: Three new yarns and some new colors were introduced at TNNA in Columbus. This trade show gives vendors a chance to strut their stuff to local yarn stores and others in the industry. *LS Kid Mohair* is a beautiful lace weight blend of 70% Mohair and 30% Nylon. *MerLin Tristan* is a sport weight addition to the MerLin (Merino and Linen) line. The blend is 60% Linen and 40 % Merino. It comes in 28 colors. *Euroflax, Gems, & MerLin* have added the following new colors: Soft Coral and Shamrock in all weights of Euroflax Linen and Merlin, and in all weights of Gems Merino Soft Coral, Shamrock, Caribbean Blue and Bright Red have been added.

WoolPak Yarns, NZ formerly distributed through Baabajoe's, is now being distributed through Wool Around the World, the American wholesaler for WoolPak Yarns NZ. For those of you who have never tried this yarn, there are only two types of sheep used in this yarn. Either a Perrindale or a Romney, or a cross of both. It Natural black and gray fibers are mixed to gain the palette of 5 natural colors. They also have 41 dyed colors. The yarn is available in three weights: DK, Worsted, and Bulky. There are also 7 stipple blends of natural colors.

Discontinued Yarns:

Berroco Yarns: Furz, Pleasure, Softwist Bulky

Brown Sheep: Country Classic

Coats & Clark: Knit-Cro-Sheen and Speed-Cro-Sheen

Knit One Crochet Too: Richesse et Soie, Velvety Chenille, Melange, Meringue

Patons: Anna, Bella, Bumble Bee, Country Garden D.K., Fresco, Look at Me, Pixie, UpCountry.

Plymouth Yarn: Sunsette and Indiecita Worsted Weight (which has been replaced with Suri Merino).

Kristmen's Design Studio News

I will be attending Stitches Midwest as usual this year. I will be enjoying the market on Friday and taking classes on Saturday (all day) and a Sunday afternoon class.

Hopefully I will have a new design, Zambesi River, ready to go to Stitches Midwest. It will Debut with Black Water Abbey Yarns, and is knit out of their new 2/8 weight (a fingering weight) organic undyed wool. The 2/8 weight yarn comes in ecru, Jacob, and a marl.

Calliope is a new design that is supposed to be in the next catalog from Knit Picks. It is knit with their cotton yarn, Shine. Knit Picks has many nice yarns and I have had some fun playing with them.

Magazine Articles you have been hearing about will finally begin in October. Last I heard, the British magazine "Knitting" editor has told me that is when the garment and articles will begin. The design is a pullover knit in garter stitch in intarsia, out of Shetland jumper weight wool. While I do understand it is somewhat insane to knit intarsia in garter stitch with that weight of yarn (unless you really love knitting intarsia) the reason that I did so was that it seemed to me to give a velvety appearance to the surface of the fabric, and I felt that the garter stitch would be easy to learn intarsia with. I really did like the results. Knitting is available at Barnes & Nobles.

Wheelsmith Wools (their retail store front is the Knitter's Underground) kindly donated a lot single skein colors to me for the articles. I had generally 5 or 6 swatches for each article, with a minimum of 4 and sometimes 6 or 8 colors for an individual swatch. There were a few overlapping colors, but not many. Their service is excellent and they also have a web site. I mention them because I know knitters like to know good sources to purchase their yarns...and I feel one good turn deserves another. Their contact information is as follows :For a free catalog, contact us with your name and snail-mail address at yarnshop@aol.com or write at 308 S. Pennsylvania Ave. Centre Hall, PA 16828 1-800-693-7242. Their web site is <http://www.reliablehost.com/yarnshop/>

Handknit Holidays, by Melanie Falick, will be out in October. You can see it, along with a description of the book, on Amazon.com (the review of the book says it even has a cookie recipe, and unless someone else had a cookie tied in to their design, that one is my Grandmother's cookie recipe). I have three designs in this book: a family gansey (inspired by walks in the woods at my grandparents log cabin on Palestine Lake in Indiana), a shawl inspired by New Harmony, and a pair of Mittens inspired by my Grandmother's cookie that she always made at Christmas. Sorry, I don't know what the designs will be called in the book (or the cookie, for that matter...we always knew them as Keefleys).

I have been insanely busy with Elizabeth I, a scarf pattern now carried by Knit Picks Infact, it is their all time best selling pattern thus far. Other vendors include: Black Water Abbey Yarns, Kirtland's Yarn Barn, and Threadbear Fiberarts Studio. My patterns are not on the Threadbear web site, but they do have them in stock. Other vendors include InfiKnit of Canada (a distributor to local yarn stores), and The Knitting Vault. The Knitting Vault has patterns that are downloaded and printable from your computer. I do not have all of my pattern leaflets on their site as yet, but will soon. As always, I encourage you to support one of the vendors when you see a pattern you want. I do understand the frustration when a vendor does not carry everything, so if you are unable to obtain the pattern from your vendor let me know.

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