

tiny**Studio** creative life

TinyStudio creative life

2020

Year Two

Special Edition





Suzy Brown

tinyStudio Magazine

tiny **STUDIO**

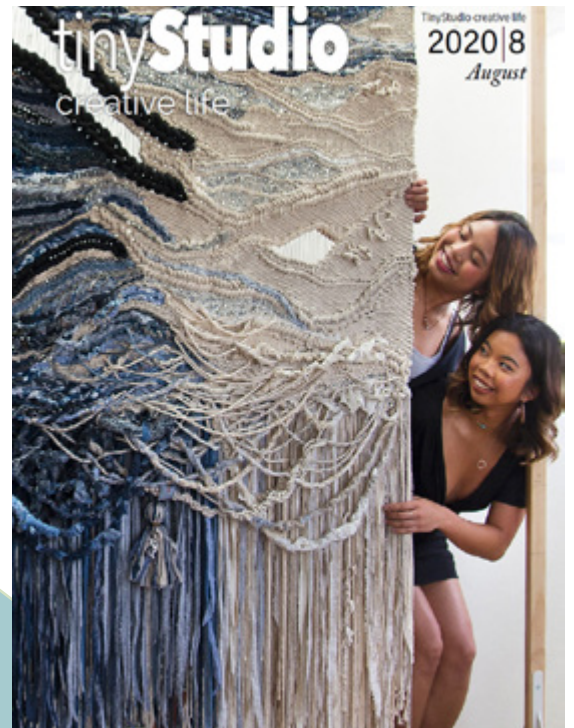
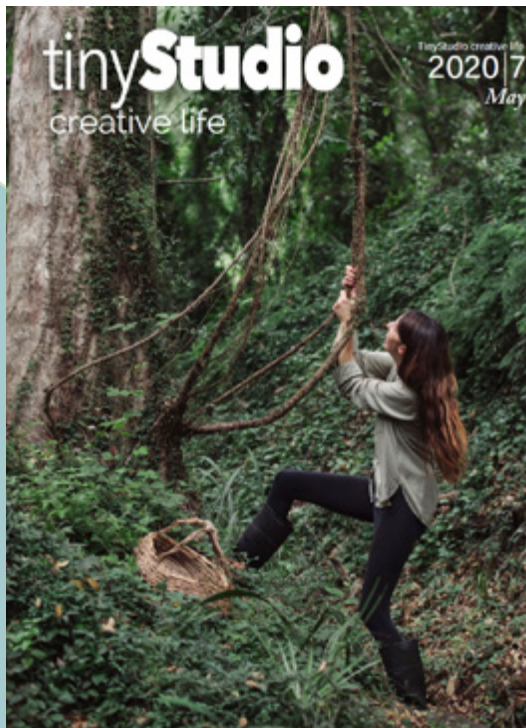
Creative Life

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Hello & Welcome

Welcome to the second Special Edition Issue of tinyStudio Creative Life magazine!

I have created this special issue for you as a celebration of our second year publishing this beautiful magazine. Enclosed in these covers is a selection of some of the awesome content that has been shared in our second year, issues five, six, seven, and eight!

My deepest thanks to all the amazing, talented, and inspirational content creators who have kept our pages filled with incredibly beautiful ideas and projects! I would like to also give a special thanks to the tinyStudio subscribers who have shared this entire year with us, and especially those who have been with us since the beginning in November 2018! Your support and ongoing loyalty has literally kept this all possible!, My biggest goal is to give you an amazing magazine experience every time you open each Issue, I hope to inspire, motivate, spark new ideas, and bring you a feeling of relaxation time to simply enjoy with the stunning eye candy, in depth articles and tutorials.

The end of our second year in publishing is also heralding the start of our next adventure into bringing you these magazine issues in print (on paper!) as well as digitally. This is a very big step for us and has been both scary and exciting, I hope you will continue to enjoy more of tinyStudio as either print or digital, we love to create these options for you! It is certainly a dream come true to see our tinyStudio magazine in print.

We are looking forward to our third year with great anticipation!

And now, without further ado - lets get reading!



Suzy Brown
Editor in Chief



tinyStudio
Creative Life Magazine



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Cover Image: Fox Painted vintage spinning wheel by Suzy Brown



STORYBOOK yarns

Kristine Flowers

*The Beautiful, Timeless Craft
of Spinning.*

Sometimes you come up against a moment where you pause and realize this could be the moment when a beautiful change occurs in your life. A moment which has you entering into the other side of a storybook dream of spinning, like in the fairytales you heard when you were a child. A moment of realizing a passion.

That's how it happened for me twenty years ago. I wondered if spinning wheels were still being made in this day and age. I wanted to try one like in the fairytales. I sat down at my computer and tried to figure out how to search for





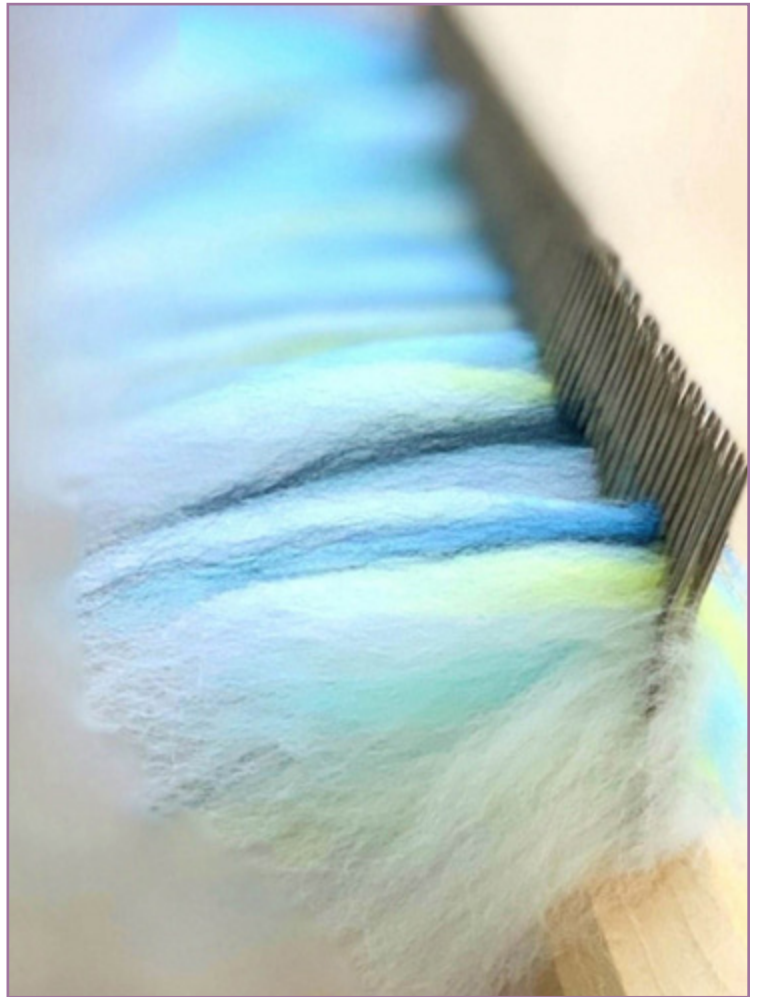
something. There it was, the internet search box. I typed in spinning wheels, took a breath and paused, then hit the enter key. To my surprise, a whole new world opened up before me. Yes, wheels were still to be had. It was a modern day industry.

As I sat at my first wheel, a Lendrum Saxony, I felt a sense of timelessness. A connection to those before us, to the rhythmic elements that go into making yarn. It felt magical.

A magnificent transformation takes place from the coats of the humble sheep and other animals to our hands and then wheels, knitting needles or looms. A transformation of beauty and warmth.

I had no idea spinning yarn would overtake me in such a way... the passionate swirl of the wheel or spindle... and I'm glad it has.

It's a thrill, a gift and a blessing to make yarn.









THINGS TO LOVE

L'Oeil de Loup



My name is Nathalie and I started spinning four years ago. I first discovered the spindle, and from there, the infinite possibilities of fiber work.

I spin wool and silk yarns on both a spinning wheel and spindle for weaving, and I use it for knitting and crochet art, embroidery, and tapestry. I work from hand dyed, carded fibre and combed top, and I also like to work with washed but otherwise unprocessed fleece.

I am fascinated by Shetland lace, both the beautiful shawls and the very thin lace yarns in one or two ply. This is why I chose to specialize in making very fine yarns, especially in silk and cashmere although I do spin other fibres as well.

I am currently working on a collection of fine cashmere yarns spun entirely on a supported spindle, one of my favorite tools.







I always work on unique pieces to create collections based on a particular fibre or a blend of fibres, often with a literary or pictorial theme, or a family of shades with technical variations (for example a single fibre in several yarns using different spinning techniques).

These yarn collections, illustrated with original texts and presented through photographs, are conceived of as all parts of the whole. I seek to marry fibers, words and photos in order to render the details of yarn and fiber.

I had the opportunity last year to publish a book, illustrating several of my collections in photos and texts. ([L'Œil de Loup, Fils au rouet et au fuseau, Editions Paleo - collection Arts Textiles, 2018](#)) (French)



You can find Nathalie and admire more of her exquisite work on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/loeildeloup>

Natalie spins stunning silk yarns and lace weights, and her eye for colour and design is fantastic, we love her work and also follow her on Facebook, every new yarn is a breathtaking delight!





Photo by Heather Barnes on Unsplash

Inspired Blending

WORDS AND PICTURES BY
DIA P. ROBINSON



I always find that there is something magical about working with wool and I love that I can use this magic to inspire, create and teach. I believe that creativity is like a muscle, and to grow in your creativity, you must nurture it through education and train it through practical application. My goal in starting the Inspire Blend Series was to train my eye to look at a photo and identify the various colors within the photo. I then take those colors and blend them in such a way that the rolags and spun yarn would be a physical representation the photo.

The first thing I do is find a photo that inspires me. I usually pick photos that reflect what I am feeling at the moment, or photos that are interesting to me. For this article, I chose to use a photo of macaroons because they fascinate me, and I just love eating them. To find photos, I will use Pinterest or stock photos from royalty free websites. If you are going to use stock photos from a royalty free website, please make sure you pay attention to the photo's license.

Once I have chosen a photo, I study it and pick out the colors that stand out the most to me. What I am looking for are the primary colors that are represented in the foreground of the photo. I then go back and study the picture again and pick out the background colors. I usually end up with two to three primary colors and two background colors.



The next step is to go through my fiber stash to see if I have those colors available. If I don't, I will blend fibers to achieve the color goal or I will go and purchase the colors that I need.

When deciding how to build the design on to the blending board, I usually work with the colors from the background first and then move up to the foreground colors, but there is no set rule. For this example, I decided that it was more important to work with the background colors first then move up to the foreground colors so that you can get an idea of how I build the layers.

In this example, the first thing I did was use some of the white wool and grey angelina to lay down the foundation. (Image 1)

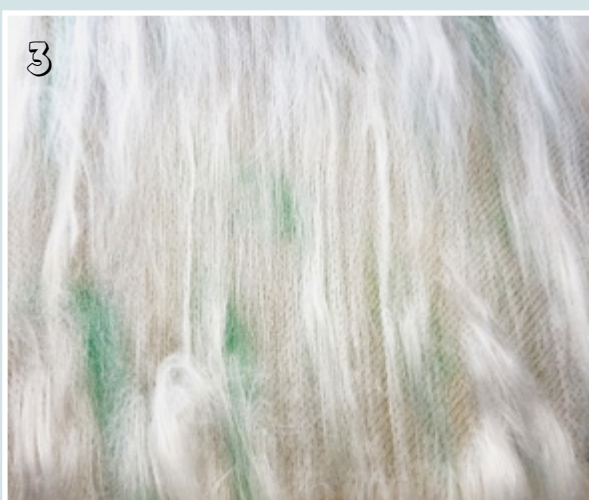
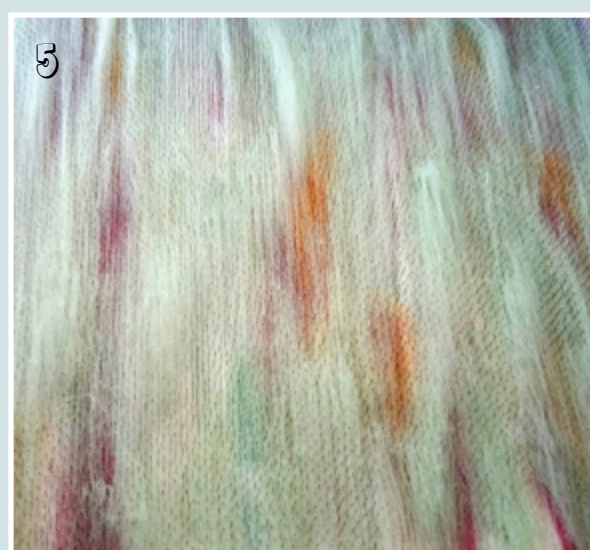
Now, if you take a look at the inspiration photo again, you will see in the middle of the macaroon that there is a darker mint color in the center, and since there is such a small amount, I decided to go ahead and add it to the board. (Image 2)

Next I added some silk to represent the luster that is represented in the plate. (Image 3)

If you look carefully back at the original picture, you will see that the crushed petals on the macaroon are not just red. There is a hint of brownish-gold represented. So, I added them next, making sure I placed them in such a way that when I rolled the rolags off the board, the colors were evenly distributed. (Image 4)

Next, I added the main mint color with some more silk. The reason I added more silk to the photo is because, if you look back at the source image, you will see there are patches of white light on top of some of the macaroons. (Image 5)

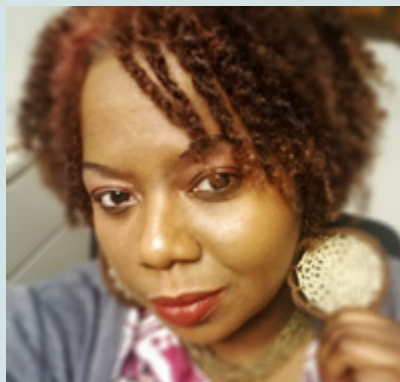
The last step is to create your top layer. I did this by adding the colors that are predominantly in the foreground. In this case, those colors are mint, red and the goldish-brown wool. To top it all off; I added some more angelina for the fun of it. (Image 6)



I then pull the rolags off the blending board and examined them to see if they were a physical representation of the photo. If not, I would start over and try it again. Ultimately, it is up to you, as an artist, to decide what that representation looks like and where you want to place your colors.

If you plan on trying this technique, remember that there are no rules and that these are just soft guidelines that I follow. Have fun and experiment!

I would love to see your photos and rolags. If you are on Instagram, please tag me using the hashtag #InspireBlend so that I can view your creations and share your awesome work.



If you would like to follow me on social media, you can find me on:

Instagram at <https://www.instagram.com/twistedurban/>

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For the Love of Gradients

WORDS AND PICTURES BY CAROL HODGSON

Since 2010 I have been an enthusiastic spinner. My favourite yarns to spin are two ply gradients.

I adore how I can produce lace shawls, with lots of colour interest, without losing the intricate lace designs.

Initially, I was introduced to gradients when I purchased hand dyed combed tops, however, as a new spinner, I found it extremely daunting trying to prepare the long lengths of combed top into identical strips to spin from. Once I purchased a stunning braid and it took me months before I could pluck up courage to

separate it. The braid did spin up smoothly and made a wonderful yarn, which I made into another beaded lace shawl.

As I began to realise that I could not find the colour gradients I wanted, or that shipping to the UK was prohibitively expensive, I decided to try to find another method to make my gradient yarns.

I started working on my drum carder to put together some merino gradients. I did this by choosing different shades of plain merino top and blending together intermediate shades.





I found that using this method of using mini batts to make a gradient yarn was actually a little easier for me. This is because I can rip the batts into equal parts – and check that each half weighs the same before beginning to spin. All that is then required is to spin each shade in the same or for each single.



MAKING A TWO PLY GRADIENT

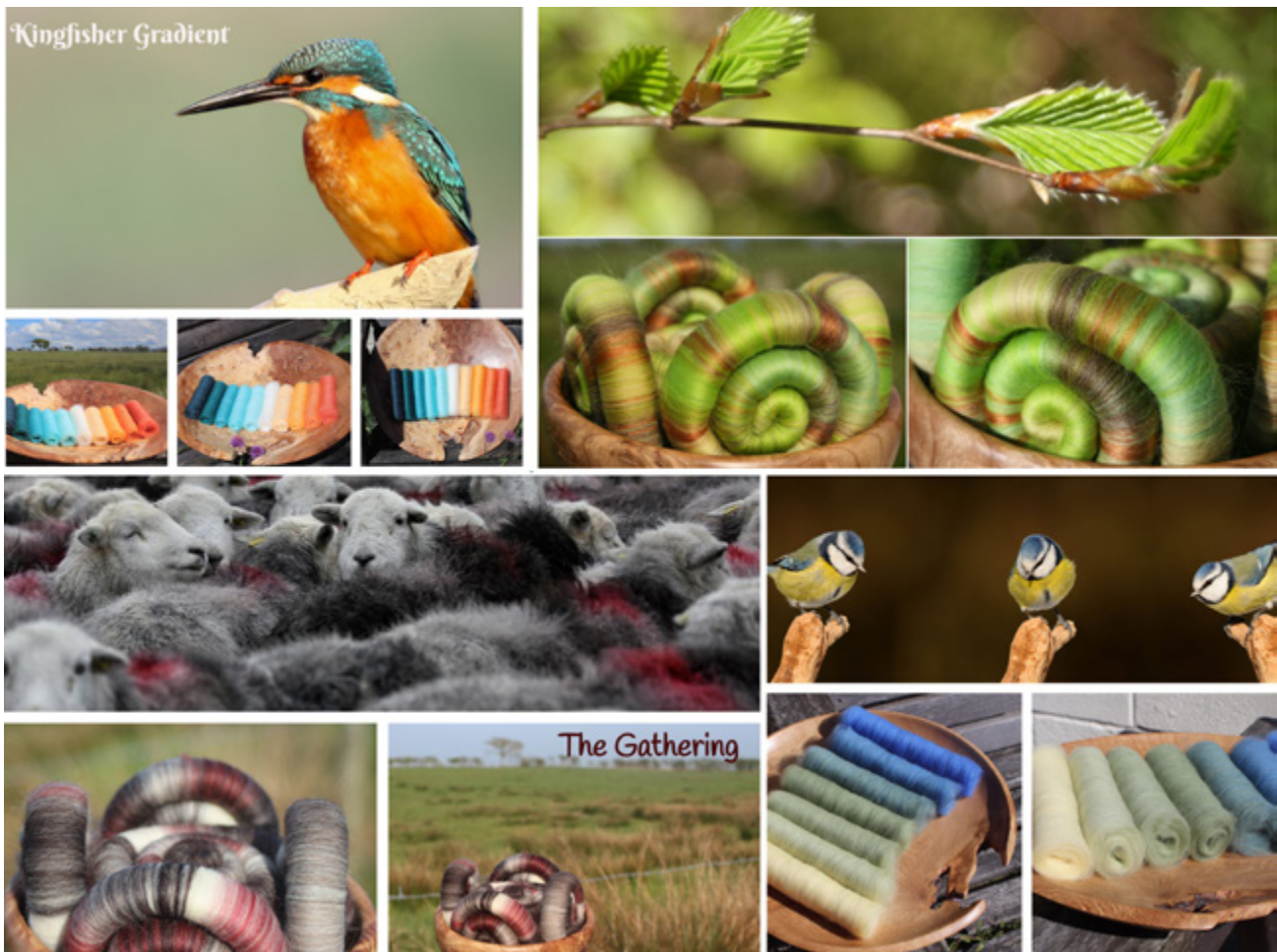


Eventually, in 2015 I was able to transform my hobby into a small, single woman business selling fibre blends worldwide, from my converted spare bedroom.

Most of the colourways I design are inspired by nature.



I am extremely lucky to live on the Cumbrian Coast in the UK, very close to the Lake District, of Beatrix Potter fame. I have easy access to a wide range of landscapes from beach to forest, lakes to rugged fellsides, from which I gain inspiration for a range of spinning preparations, including my beloved gradients, rolags and hand pulled rovings.



When setting out to produce a new colourway, I normally begin with an inspiration photograph. In this case, I decided to use this beautiful image of a fox.



Once this decision has been made, there are a number of considerations that I mull over.

Which dyed fibres am I going to use to form the colour palette of the blend? (normally this is 21 micron merino, but at other times it can be silks, ramie or cotton)

- What kind of texture do I want the yarn to have – soft or course?
- Do I want this blend to form a yarn that is bouncy – good for making hats or sweaters?
- Do I want this blend to form a yarn with loads of drape – excellent for shawls and stoles?
- Would I prefer the blend to have a misty halo or a shine?
- How evenly do I want the colours to blend?
Do I want the individual colours in the batts to be discernible, or do I want each batt to be homogenous throughout?

In this case, I decided to use dyed merino shades as the main source of colour in this blend. One of the benefits of using commercially dyed shades is that the colourway is easily repeatable once you have formed your 'recipe'.

The photograph below shows a range of colours that I thought may be a good colour base for the fox inspired blend. From this, I picked out the three most applicable shades.



Now to consider other facets of the blend. I wanted the blend to reflect the fact that it is representing the fur of an animal, so I wanted a bit more texture than is normally present in pure merino. Also, I wanted a yarn, once spun to be warm, with a bit of a halo.



To produce a yarn warmer than pure wool, we need to start considering the camelid fibres, which are said to be eight times warmer than wool due to the fact that the fibres are hollow. Therefore, I chose to add some wonderfully soft grey baby alpaca to the blend. The alpaca will also give any resulting spun yarn a little bit of a halo too.

Both the baby alpaca and merino fibres are extremely soft, so to give the blend slightly more texture – but still allowing most people to wear it close to the skin, I decided to add some medium grey Masham fibres.

The Masham sheep breed, is a cross bred of Northern England. Bred from a Teeswater or Wensleydale tup crossed with a hill sheep such as a Swaledale ewe. For a hill breed, the fleece was softer than I expected, but still would give this blend some extra texture, but has a staple length similar to that of the baby alpaca.

The photograph above shows the fibres that I decided to start blending to form the gradient. *From bottom left clockwise Merino, Masham, Merino, Baby alpaca, Merino (natural white)*



The next, and in my opinion, the most interesting and fun part, is to start blending the fibres together to make the different shades required for a gradient.

Successful blending on a drum carder.

In this blend, my aim is to blend smooth batts where all of the fibres are evenly mixed throughout the batt. To be able to produce batts that are well mixed, and easy to draft from, I believe in the saying that 'less is more'. So, I add small amounts of fibre at a time, well spread out over the feeder tray. I add thin layers of different fibres on top of each other, to build up my batt. The batts I make are small and easily fit onto the main drum. On this carder, I would only make batts up to 50g, and usually the batts I produce are between 20-30g



To ensure that I do not produce a batt with too many nepps I normally only ever blend my fibres a maximum of three times. After three passes through the carder, any improvements to the evenness of the blend will be cancelled out by the increase in damage to the fibres.



After one pass through the carder, a batt with lots of distinct layers is formed. For pass number two, I rip up the batt into thin strips. These are then opened out, to thin the mass of fibres, and then fed back through the drum carder.

Finally, as I wanted a well-blended mix of fibres, I repeated the process one last time. Tearing up the batt into small pieces and then passing them through the drum carder again.

The photographs to the right show the difference between two and three passes through the drum carder.

From here the process continues on to produce all of the intermediate shades. In most cases this can be more than a little bit trial and error, adding more or less of a shade to get the required outcome.

Normally I start with 100% of one colour and then transition by even stages. For instance, batt 1 with 100% white merino. If I work in steps of 25%, the next batt would contain 75% white merino and 25% golden merino.

Changing the colours in even steps does not always work. Especially if you are blending a pale colour with one which is much stronger in colour. This is where the experimentation comes in. Although starting with a logical, planned set of ratios is always a good place to start the process. The process also becomes more complex when you are working with three or more colours and fibres.

For example, in the case of the white shade, should I change my grey Masham for white? Only one way to find out...

...compare the two different blends and decide which looks best.

Left hand batt is with the grey, right hand batt with the white.



Two Passes



Three Passes





My first set of batts looked like this.

I was reasonably happy with the darker shades of the gradient, but at the lighter end of the gradient, the batts had a rosey/ pink tinge to them rather than a gingery golden shade, as they are on the inspiration photograph. This meant that the batts closest to the white batts had to be experimented with again.

Back to the dyed merino shades in my stash to try to find a solution.



These were two shades that I thought may be able to bring the more golden tones to the lighter shades of the gradient. However, the left-hand shade was too yellow, and the right-hand shade was too dark, more stash diving ensued!

In the end, I used a blend of the golden shade (second from the left) and the fifth from the left,



To create this:



The shade still has a ginger tone to it, but has a golden rather than pinkish undertone. This took a number of different experiments with different percentages of each of the coloured merino fibres (so I now have a nice box containing lots of batts each with a slightly different shade – but all foxy!)



The final test of the gradient is to photograph it and compare to the original inspiration photograph.

After a final check by comparing the images next to each other on the screen, this recipe became my final choice. It is a slightly larger gradient than normal, as it has eight rather than my normal 7 shades. This is because it was the only way I could produce the gradient with even differentials between each batt.

Vixen is the first in a series for my Gradient Batt Club. This series will have four gradients based on the following headings 'Animal, Vegetable, Mineral and Mythical'. This set of ideas was picked by

the lovely members of the Fellview Fibres Ravelry group. You can also come and join our group by clicking [HERE](#) to be transported there!

I love being set challenges to make new colourways to fit in with a theme. I am already well into the preparations for the next gradient in the list 'Vegetable' - which will not be as green as some may expect!

Hopefully, this will have ignited your enthusiasm to start blending up some of your own fibres. If that is the case why not have a go at an 'Animal' blend of your own.





Finding the Best Yarn For Your Next
Knitting Project



Finding the Best Yarn

For Your Next Knitting Project

WORDS AND PICTURES BY FRANCOISE DANOY

One of the biggest stumbling blocks in knitwear design (or just knitting in general) is finding the perfect yarn for your project. And for a good reason, there are SO many choices out there on the market that it can be a bit overwhelming to know where to look, plus figuring out which ones will match up with your vision. So, in this article, I'm sharing my breakdown on how to find the best yarn for your design.

This breakdown will be in four categories,

Colour, Weight, Fibre, Ply count.

The information I'm sharing here is one of the foundation basics to knitwear design that I teach in my signature knitwear design program, the SWATCH Studio Circle. Before I proceed further, though, I want to take this moment to clarify something. The tips that I will be sharing here are all subjective. These are not cold, hard facts set in stone. These are more like guidelines to help save you time, energy, and stress. But all rules are meant to be broken. This is ART we are talking about here. If you agree or disagree with any of the examples or images I share, that is cool! These are based on my experiences and mistakes I've made as a designer of 5 years, and tips I've found to be useful. The best teacher is experimentation.



Yarn Colour



Let's start with the yarn colour. Here I'm not explicitly referring to the colour of the yarn, but the way the yarn colourway has been dyed. Solid, semi-solid, tonal, variegated, gradient, striping, speckled, the list is endless!

A good rule of thumb here is: the more complex the stitch pattern you wish to use, the simpler the colourway should be. For example, if you want to use an intricate twisted stitch and lace pattern, you will want to use a solid, semi-solid, or tonal yarn.

The reason is simple: matching an intricate stitch with a variegated colourway will usually result in a muddy mess. I made this mistake

myself in one of my first designs, (Image 1) My mum was kind enough to point this one out to me, and I learned my first lesson in knitwear design that day!

This is not the worst-case scenario, but the leaf lace stitch gets lost in the beautiful colour shifts of the yarn, making it tricky to see what shape is being formed.

The Chrysanthemum Shawl above shows an *intricate* stitch, with a *simple colour*.

The Whakaahua Shawl pictured on the previous pages is an example of simple stitch, complex colour.



I prefer working with solids and tonal yarns as I love to express myself through the stitch patterns. In the few cases when I do work with variegated yarns, it's a slight struggle because I have to focus on other ways to make the design exciting and engaging, so I usually play with the construction of the piece, rather the complexity of the stitch patterns, and example of this is the 'Wifty Top' pictured left. Stockinette and garter stitch are always the best ways to make these kinds of yarns shine, so think outside of the box on how to make it engaging!

Yarn Weight

In this section (and throughout this article), I will be using both terminologies when referring to yarn weight, as I use the Fingering/DK/Aran system, but other countries use 4/8/10 ply.

Using a thicker yarn doesn't always mean that the project can't be drapery or flowing. Gauge does play a part in this. Tight or loose tensions can affect the fabric and how it falls.

I like working with fingering/4-ply yarns because I can work in a lot of delicate details into the fabric, but oh, sometimes, I curse the amount of time it takes to knit up a project in that weight.

To keep me happy, my rule of thumb is...

- Lace stitches in lace/2-ply, fingering/4-ply, sport/5-ply, and DK/8-ply.
- Cable/Brioche stitches in fingering/4-ply, sport/5-ply, DK/8-ply, and Worsted/Aran/10-ply.
- Textured/stockinette/garter stitches in sport/5-ply and all of the above.

But as I mentioned before, these are rules that are meant to be broken!



Left: A Work of Love worked up in DK/8-ply



The piece titled 'A Shield Against Grief', (above) is worked up in Worsted/10-ply (see, breaking the rules! The lace stitch is simple enough to work here). And right is the 'Taniko Cowl' worked up in DK/8-ply

Yarn Fibre

This is the trickiest part of the yarn selecting process because there are not only so many different yarn fibres, there are also blends! I will be keeping this section as simple as possible, but if you want to go in-depth, I recommend picking up ***The Knitter's Book of Yarn* by Clara Parkes**.

Animal Based Fibres

Animal-based fibres, such as wool, merino, or alpaca, are warm and perfect for the chilly months. Due to the natural crimp in many of these fibers they have nice elasticity and are the go-to for many designers. Elasticity means you can stretch the fabric, and it will return to its original shape



without much problem (blocking can overcome this when needed). Very elastic yarns, like most Merino or Polwarths for example, don't have a lot of drape (think of the silky nightdresses that fall on the body like water).

Plant-Based Fibres

I like to think of plant-based fibres as the exact opposite of animal-based fibres. Cool, and so great for the warmer seasons (I know Clara Parkes would freak out if you designed a cotton winter pullover because if it gets wet... hypothermia!), and it has very little elasticity, so excellent drape!

For some strange reason, I put silk in this category even though it comes from silkworms... maybe because I find it acts more like a plant fibre, it has wonderful drape and sheen too.

Synthetic Fibres

Even though I have my preferred yarn to work with, synthetic fibres and yarns have a unique place in the industry, especially if you are allergic to animal fibres. Fibres like nylon are strong and sturdy, so they are great for babies and children's designs (and are more washing machine friendly).

Blended Fibres

Merino/Cashmere/Nylon. Merino/Alpaca. Alpaca/Mohair. Wool/Nylon. Cotton/bamboo. Merino/Silk. This is just a small sampling of the million combinations of blended yarns that exist (and I haven't talked about banana or qiviut yarn!). I like to think of blends as the best of both/all worlds.

An animal and synthetic blend is a great choice for an item that is worn very close to the body and will be experiencing a lot of friction, like socks. Can you imagine a sock knit up in a single-ply yarn? I'm sure it will look gorgeous, but the piling would be ridiculous! Or a beautiful lace shawl that is bouncy and shiny? A merino/silk blend is the way to go.

Pictured right is my "Aumangea Pullover", worked in a Merino/Cashmere/Nylon. This is my favourite blend because it combines all the best features of these fibres. Soft. Strong. Warm. Shiny and silky.

Yarn Ply Count

This part can be a bit confusing when you categorize yarn weight by the ply type, for example, single-ply fingering weight yarn. In this case, my vocabulary is 100% percent Americanized. But this is still important to recognize because the amount of plies in yarn or how tightly they are twisted together can affect the texture of the fabric. In general, the higher the ply count/twist, the more the stitches pop, which is perfect for textured, twisted, cable, and colourwork stitches. In a yarn like a single-ply fingering weight, the stitches won't pop out as much but could work well for a lace stitch pattern.

Sometimes I find with yarns that have a high ply count/twist; the lace doesn't "bloom" as nicely as I like.





Left: Three beautiful skeins of the colourway Ice Dreamer from Fully Spun Yarns. This is a fingering/4-ply self-striping, 75% Merino, 25% Nylon yarn.

Right: This was worked up in silk-like yarn, and the drape is incredible!

Putting it all Together

Yarn colour, weight, fibre, ply count. On their own, there are a lot of things to consider when trying to find the best yarn for your design vision or next knitting project. Together, it gets much overwhelming! But if you work backward, starting with the design and thinking about what yarn characteristics you are looking for, it can help narrow down your search. For example, if I am designing a cabled pullover, I know that I want the colourway to be a solid or tonal, DK or Worsted weight with a high ply count, in an animal-based yarn, maybe merino wool, with a bit of alpaca for extra warmth.

What if you impulse purchased a beautiful skein of sparkle variegated DK/8-ply yarn? Start by writing down what it could be best used for and let that be

a jumping-off point for a design. The possibilities are limitless. Take a look at the photo of the skeins of yarn above. What would you make with it based on your new knowledge?

When in doubt, you have two options! You can ask the yarn dyer what projects the yarn is best suited for, or you can swatch. Most of us don't like swatching, but in the long run, it can save us time, energy, and sometimes money because we are working with a small amount of fabric, rather than trying to jump into our full-sized yoked pullover design immediately.

Swatching can reveal to us so much information and whether the yarn is a "failure" or "success" we can learn a lot from it.

So, go forth and dive into the
wonderful world of yarn!
It's cozy down there.



Simple Wall Project

For Art Yarns and Stashed Left Overs

WORDS AND PICTURES BY SUZY BROWN

Use small embroidery hoops and warp your yarn in any direction around the inside hoop.

Put the outside hoop over the inside one and trap in your yarn, tighten to set in place firmly.

Make long lengths of your yarn in groups of three or four (depending on thickness) and knot them around the hoop in a half hitch.

Trim the ends to even them up if you want to.

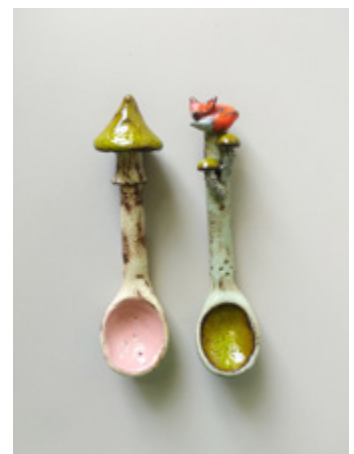
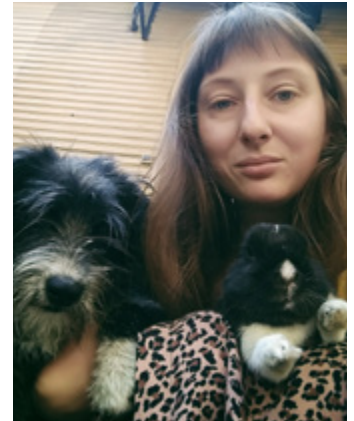


These hoops make awesome ready-to-hang yarn art for your walls! They look particularly effective in groups as a 'series' of yarn art works!



FOR YOUR TINY STUDIO

In this issue we have something a bit different for you in our 'For Your TinyStudio' section! Welcome to the nature inspired ceramic world of **Murava Ceramics**! These pieces by Victoria Khotsianovich would make a wonderful addition to anyone's creative studio! We found Murava on Instagram and so can you, ([CLICK HERE](#)) and you can also purchase her work on Etsy ([CLICK to be transported!!](#))







CATEGORISE!!

Split your stash into categories.

- Items you have plans for
- Items you have no plans for but you love and will use
- Items you are unlikely to use.
- WIP's

Pick up each item and decide if you want to keep it. Set up a series of boxes and storage containers to put items of each category into.

Keep the 'plans for' box in your studio. Store the 'will use' box, and destash the 'unlikely' box.

Give your creativity space to
grow AND *bloom*





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You can read more about Pen and see more of her work on her website
lalabugdesigns.com and follow her on Instagram [@lalabugdesigns](https://www.instagram.com/lalabugdesigns)



hello hydrangea

HOME SHOP WORKSHOPS GALLERY BLOG CONTACT SIGN IN



SUBJECT
CLASSES



PROJECT
CLASSES



ADJUSTABLE
LOOMS



BOOKS



Inside the Studio

Hello Hydrangea

WORDS AND PICTURES BY **LINDSEY CAMPBELL**



Please join me for this gorgeous glimpse into the workspace and studio in which Lindsey creates her beautiful macra weavings and punch need projects. This is a very inspirational space, full of colour and beautiful light. It is a pleasure for me to share with you the following interview with Lindsey.

Suzy

A Studio Tour With Lindsey Campbell

You are such a creative person with a range of interests. What is one of your most important considerations when you are designing a space in your studio?

Function. I like to have all of my materials where I can see them – it helps me to be more efficient and inspired because one of my biggest inspirations comes from textures and palettes of different materials. My space has open shelving across one wall where I store all of my yarns and fibers. I even have pipes jutting from one wall to hold my large looms. I have a large work desk against my open shelves, which is where I do most of my work. One day I was browsing craigslist and found a beautiful 1945 4x4ft floor loom. The moment I moved it into my small studio room I knew I could say goodbye to any floor space I had had before, so my desk is an important area to work on.

How would you describe your studio style?

Eclectic and cozy. My studio is a 7x10ft room in our small house in Silicon Valley. It seemed roomy when I first moved in, but little by little I have filled every corner and piece of wall space with materials and half-finished projects.

What are your favourite materials? Do you like to have them all on hand or do you also have an out of sight stash to dip into from time to time?

My favorite materials are fibers and beads. I love rope and yarn of all types! I like to keep them organized by color, where I can see them, so that I can grab from the shelves from where I am sitting at my desk and easily throw them back when I'm done.

What is important to consider when designing space for the kind of work you do?

The size of your weaving project is determined by the size of your loom, so it's not an artform you can hold in your lap. Although my studio is stuffed, my desk and bench are essential areas to stand up a large frame loom and work.

What are your inspirations in your studio? Have you chosen to work with specific colours?

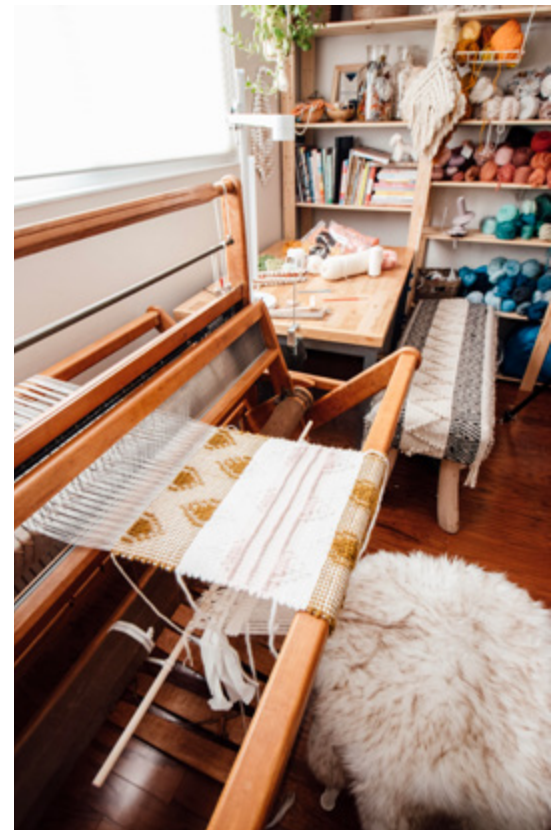
I gravitate to blues, mustard, pinks/red and neutrals. Color brings my joy and inspiration, so it was important to me to be surrounded by color, both by my materials and finished projects.

What is your favourite space to be creative in?

There are a few things that help me get in a creative groove. The most important is having good light. I have a large, east-facing window right above my desk, so it bathes my studio in the best light in the mornings, which is great motivation to get in and get to work.

I also love having music or an audio book playing in the background and having all of my supplies spread out around my workspace to help inspire me.





SPIN TIPS

BY SUZY BROWN

Here are a few tips I would like to share for anyone wanting to try their hand at...

tail and lock spinning!

First, do not be intimidated by your locks, or the type of yarn, and this is true for all of your spinning! Any new type of spinning will always require some practice and that's ok, so relax and keep your hands and shoulders loose and comfortable.

For lock spinning, prepare your fiber and put it beside you within easy reach. The best type of prep for lock spinning is "as little as possible!" Do not open out your locks, just remove any VM and short cuts, and keep it in a nice loose pile. The goal is to handle your fiber as little as possible, the more you mess with it, the more likely it is that the locks will lose their natural structure.

If you are tailspinning, separate the locks from each other at the base, and lay them all in the same direction in several piles beside you. Don't try and stack them into one big pile because they will want to stick together every time you try to take one off the pile. Smaller piles are easier to handle.

I recommend spinning your locks or tails around a core, it helps create a more stable yarn. Use a core thread that is fine and not slippery, and most importantly, stretches rather than snaps when you try to break it.

I also recommend that you ply your lockspun or tailspun yarn with a thread ply, this balances the yarn and creates a better attachment for your locks, and again, a more stable yarn.

Watch my Lockspinning Demo [HERE](#)

Watch my Tailspinning Demo [HERE](#)

SPin TiPS

BY SUZY BROWN

Here are a few tips I would like to share for anyone wanting to try their hand at...

Long Locks!

Teeswater or Wensleydale are the queens of length and curl! The beautiful Ladies in Waiting are the Mohair and Gotland locks, with their shorter locks that nevertheless are stunning for their sheen and structural lock formation. You will also find some wonderful locks from the Leicester breeds, these will provide you some long and shiny locks, often with more body and breadth in each lock than the other long locks.

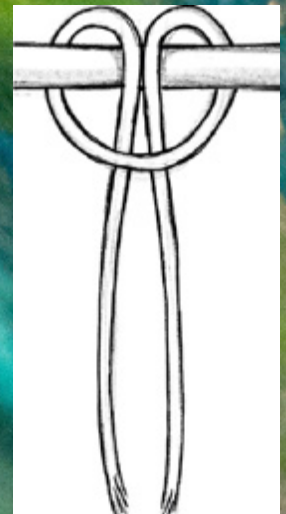
For the purpose of tail spinning, length definitely counts, but so does a well defined and regular curl that runs the length of the lock, as well as a fine, pointed tip. These qualities will help you create a striking and dramatic yarn!

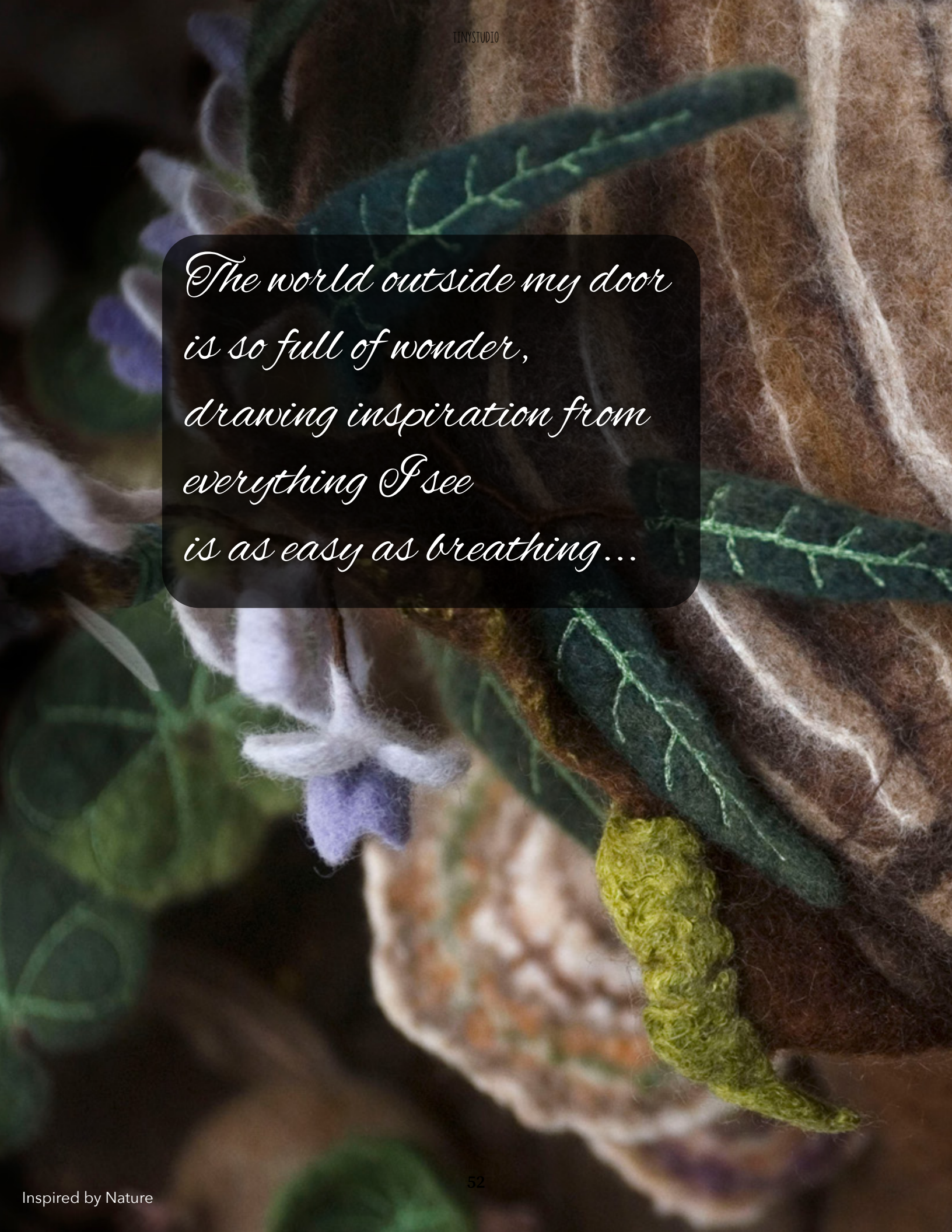
As well as the method described on the previous page for corespinning your locks, I do have another method for adding locks to yarns! The photo to the right shows you the result, which can be full and rich with texture, the locks placed into your finished project exactly where you want them. This is also a really easy method and doesn't require any fancy spinning technique!

This is done while you are spinning. Stop treadling, then take a single lock, fold the cut end down by about an inch. Lay it across the single - or ply - or even directly onto the warp in your weaving. Fold it around the yarn and pull the cut end and tip together through the loop you have made with your fold. This is called a "Larkshhead" knot. Your locks will be well anchored and the tips will hang gloriously! The best part is you can add them to sit exactly where you want them to be in your finished yarn, making something you can wear right off the wheel!



TINYSTUDIO





*The world outside my door
is so full of wonder,
drawing inspiration from
everything I see
is as easy as breathing...*

Inspired by Nature

WORDS AND PICTURES BY **RENA HOOD LUNDRIE**



Observation rewards me with an abundance of inspiration and ignites my passion for conceiving ways to recreate what I see.

The world outside my door is so full of wonder, drawing inspiration from everything I see is as easy as breathing. diving deeply into the miniature world of moss carpeted stones, observing life cycles of wild roses, hunting for mushrooms on brisk autumn days, laying on my back and watching clouds dance across the sky... inspiration is everywhere and yet it is so easy to miss it. My habitual urge to rush through life often has me trapped in my head where my ego chatters away incessantly, leaving so little space to just be present. But that is where the magic is... right here. So, in an effort to rewire my busy brain, I practice engaging my senses by making a conscious choice to smell, hear, see, touch and even taste the environment around me. When I remember to do this daily meditation, it trains me ever so slowly to be aware of my surroundings and to notice subtle changes from day to day.

Observation rewards me with an abundance of inspiration and ignites my passion for conceiving ways to recreate what I see. For me, it is incredibly exciting to discover materials and create techniques that mimic the textures, colours, and shapes found in nature. It is a challenge that I find extremely humbling, leaving me in awe of the intricacies mother nature displays in the smallest of details.

But it would be a shame for me to speak of nature as merely a source of inspiration for my artistic pursuits. As I opened my senses to the present moment, the wisdom of the wild world began to transform more than just my work, it shifted my very foundation.

When I entered the forest in search of inspiration, I came with the values of my society whispering in my ear - ones that emphasize productivity, encourage the accumulation of status and wealth as a form of safety, demand long work hours and deny any emotions that interfere. Being present, I noticed my posture in the natural world was one of an outsider. Misguided patriarchal and religious structures see humans as separate from, even elevated over nature. This mindset leads humans to use the earth as a source of materials to be consumed. It creates a schism between us and the natural world, displacing the human race and setting us firmly behind brick walls and manicured lawns.

In 1928 D.H. Lawrence wrote, "vitally, the human race is dying. It is like a great uprooted tree, with its roots in the air. We must plant ourselves again in the universe".

When I followed my inclination to start working with wool fibres and stumbled upon the enchanting process of creating natural forms out of sculpted felt, my roots entered soil again. I began to notice the rhythms of the seasons.

As I observed them, I noticed my own rhythms - ones that had been drowned out by florescent lights and industrial work hours. Like nature, my body felt vibrant and new in spring, energetic and adventurous in summer, grateful for the slowing down of autumn and comfortably insulated in the darkness of winter. The anxiety I felt meeting expectations for machine-like productivity dictated by my society became more balanced in light of this revelation: I belong to the rhythms of the earth. My body, and my creative output, needs to undulate as much as the maple tree that grows outside my window. As I absorb this earth wisdom, it frees me to allow lulls in my creativity without shame or fear, and it helps me celebrate when spring returns, as it always does.

Our constructed world, full of straight lines, 90 degree angles and weedless gardens, generates a sense that for something to be good, it has to be perfect. For me, creating art can be a battleground of insecurities often pushing me to produce something that was acceptable rather than adventurous.

But as I stepped into uneven ground of the wilderness I saw that the natural world, while exceptionally beautiful and dizzyingly interconnected and intricately balanced, is not perfect.

Nature is always evolving to adapt to changing circumstances in a gradual trajectory towards self correction and improvement, but that journey is not always pretty. It involves death and decay among growth and life.

When I take creative risks that don't turn out as I would like them to and I fall into old patterns of self-doubt and perfectionist dissatisfaction, my connection to the natural world reminds me that mistakes and failures are a necessary part of the creative process. Like the forest floor is nourished by a fallen tree, my fallen projects provide guidance and life for future work. To acknowledge and expect this is not just a relief, it is freedom.





Earth wisdom is like a drop in the water rippling out in ever widening circles.

My journey started with a desire to be inspired by the natural world, but became a pilgrimage to reclaim my belonging to the earth. This reconnection has ignited my creativity, transformed the way I work and provided me with a sense of trust in the natural ebb and flow of life. As I grow in this new understanding, I hope to return the favour by showing glimpses of the wonder of nature in my own work and, by doing so, join others in the great effort to restore balance and health to our earth. And because humans are creatures of this earth, it will begin to heal us, too.





DESIGN AT MAJACRAFT

WORDS BY ANDREW POAD, PICTURES BY SUZY BROWN AND ANDREW POAD

In this feature, Andrew Poad, of Majacraft, answers the questions I asked him about his design process and in particular, how are new spinning wheels and tools dreamed up, developed, and turned into the practical and yet beautiful products that we know and love from Majacraft. I was curious about how the wheel has been re-invented! In reply, Andrew has shared with us some of his thoughts and reflections on creativity, as well as a description of the design principles he applies to his process when he is developing a new product.

Suzy

I have been smiling to myself this morning. It is 6:15am and very much nearing the deadline Suzy gave me for an article for this issue. The truth is, I have been really struggling to come up with any words to discuss “What is the design process like at Majacraft?”. I am going to diverge for a little while, but I promise I will come back to – hopefully – answering this question.

Firstly, a little bit of my history. Thanks to some experience in different areas, I have had the opportunity in the past to offer coaching to several young people to expand their skillsets. From that teaching, I have found that I prefer passing on information that provides tools to approach a range of problems, rather than “this is how I make/do/solve this singular problem”. So instead of a single technique, I like to teach “principles”. Hence, this is where I am struggling with this article. All my thinking about “Design at Majacraft” has not been able to produce anything that I would consider a “principle”. So...

Is it creativity or design?

I have been writing down notes and ideas for the Majacraft principles of design. I planned on expanding these ideas and generating a complete overview of the way our products are realised in their final form. In doing this, I have had a significant personal insight. The majority of the notes I had written down actually referred to CREATIVITY rather than DESIGN.



This was producing a lot of the friction I felt in writing, as I was not actually answering the question.

If there is one thing I have experienced in my life, it is that making a formula for creativity is very difficult and it is even harder to follow. The insight of my answering the wrong question allowed me to separate the ideas into what I have learned about creativity and ideas about design. This then led to a second personal revelation; in my experience, creativity and design are inextricably linked. As I reread these words, I am realising that these points are probably completely obvious, and people may have been teaching this forever. I did mention I was a something of a slow learner, didn't I?

So here is what I will do, write what I have learned about creativity and then lead that into my thoughts on design. All going to plan, there will be a coherent story and possibly something valuable for readers.

I don't think I can come up with any universal guidelines on creativity. In my experience, the “5-step plan to amazing creativity” may simply be a myth. I think a potential metaphor for creativity is more like the growing of a plant. If I had a seed I wished to successfully grow, the first thing I would do would be to find a good location. Ensure there was fertile soil, the appropriate amount of light, warmth and shelter. I would then prepare the soil, tilling as necessary so the roots can take hold and removing excess weeds that would overrun the plant. Perhaps I would introduce a little fertiliser to give the seedling a boost to encourage it to flourish. As it develops, I would prune unnecessary or wayward parts to make sure it establishes into a mature and robust plant.

Transferring this metaphor to creativity or the growth of an idea, I first find an environment or foundation where the idea can grow (a broad knowledge and range of interests), prepare it by removing things (people and distractions) that might squash it, add fertiliser (encouragement, people to bounce ideas around with) and prune it as it grows (don't be afraid to adjust and develop ideas as there will certainly be dead ends).

An addendum to this is that I have not had much success with trying to do creativity on demand. Ideas come with a good environment, but I know at Majacraft there are products I have worked on for years, doing a little on them when an idea comes and then putting it aside as I hit a road block and come back to it when the answer presents itself. Watched pots don't boil!



The creative environment list

I do not think there is a great deal of value in discussing how to develop ideas once they have germinated, but here is a list of ideas (hopefully principles!) that help set up an environment for creativity. They certainly make it easier for me to be creative.

Grow your mind

- I am a strong believer in the idea of exposing oneself to *as many ideas as possible*. Learning about a broad range of subjects gives me a much greater pool of experience to draw from when working on creative solutions. There is hidden value in this as well, learning new things also helps to me grow as a human.
- The majority of the really interesting solutions we have come up with at Majacraft have been based around *merging ideas from various fields*. Experience with the way something works in one area and running with the idea of “perhaps with a bit of tweaking, we could make it work for this problem”. This is where really innovative ideas spring from.
- While not setting myself up for grueling and boring ordeals, I try to *learn about subjects beyond my immediate interests*. The YouTube rabbit hole is a fun way to find new things. By that I mean finding suggested videos on the home page and after watching some of them, look through the list of recommended videos based on the viewings.



Find your muse

A muse is “a person or personified force who is the source of inspiration for a creative artist”. Humans seem to work better together and having someone to bounce ideas off and build a creative solution with, will often produce an idea that exceeds what was possible alone.

Be healthy

This is not specifically advocating for exercise and physical health, although obviously that is a really good thing. Rather I am talking about the value of mental health. I found, at times in my life when my mental health was not in a good place, my creativity and ability to come up with ideas and solutions seemed to completely shut down. A creative drought was what it felt like and coupled with what was already going on in my head, it seemed to amplify the unhealthiness.



I am a Kiwi guy and we are renowned for being somewhat stoic when faced with internal struggles. I have let myself down a little in this area however I strongly recommend getting help and talking to someone if things are not going well. While this is not my forte, I know from experience that it helps and makes a huge difference.

Got to start somewhere

Creative blocks SUCK. In fact, they suck big time. My suggestion is to just start! If purely contemplating the idea is not working, try writing or sketching, the mental flow created by writing ideas down can help shift the block. If using your pencil does not work, try making a prototype, if it is appropriate. If that does not work, chat with your muse. o I can struggle to come up with an idea for ages but sometimes just doing something different like making a sample (in this case, creating a document and pushing past the block) can help the ideas and creativity start to flow.

These are a selection of the principles in my life that help with my creativity and keep ideas flowing. When this creativity is inserted into the constraints for design that I use at Majacraft then the product of that is what you experience with Majacraft tools.

Mjacraft Design

I need to be careful about making gross generalisations on behalf of Majacraft; but for the most part, our creativity provides the ideas for tools and products and it is a series of design constraints that shapes them. The constraints are a list of questions that we ask about each idea in development.

Does is make the task easier for the user or enable them to do something that was not possible previously?

When we are building in the workshop, I regularly talk about using components and processes that "make it easy to get it right". Eliminating rework and mistakes internally, or simplifying assembly for Majacraft customers is a win for our overall quality, Although phrased slightly differently, we use this mantra in our marketing when we tell people how Majacraft tools should "make the task easier for the user" or be "almost invisible to the user". You may have seen words similar to this on the Majacraft web site and magazine ads. This idea is embedded deeply into everything we do and when it comes to creating products, it is one of our primary design constraints.

Does it look good?

Function is a vital aspect of Majacraft products but so are the aesthetics so the next constraint is that the product or tool must be pleasing to the eye.



Will it last?

The next constraint focusses on the build quality. Majacraft products need to be robust and durable because anything less than this would be a breach of trust with our customers. Nobody (especially us) wants to buy something that fails too quickly or that might elicit a feeling of being deceived or misled. We have an unofficial goal of creating products that are going to be future antiques and to do this they are going to need to be made well.

Will it be affordable?

The final primary constraint is based on being able to build the product to a standard we expect - meeting our constraints - at a price that people are happy to pay. We have several products that I am very happy with, but that still remain on our shelves because we can't come up with a cost-effective manufacturing process.

These four questions are asked again and again, at each iteration of the design process. However, constraints such as those related to affordability may be looked at later in development as there will be a lot of learning about how to make the tool along the way. We are also careful to try not to live in an echo chamber where we only congratulate ourselves on the amazing idea we have had! Where possible we will give out prototypes to others, allowing them to try it and watch how it is used. We also listen to their suggestions and feedback on it which can lead to further refinement of the product.

There are also secondary constraints and questions that we validate products against. It is sometimes hard to know what the needs are of users, although we are very lucky that people will often request new products from us. We do work hard to ensure that anything we create actually services a gap in what people are able to do. Answering the following questions can verify if a product is worthwhile.

Does it address a need? We try not to make something just for the sake of it. I don't really enjoy doing a facsimile design, but sometimes there is a need for something that is very difficult to make any functional difference to. At that point, I consider making an aesthetic variation or I try changing the materials or the manufacturing process. Something in the product needs to make it identifiable as a Majacraft product.

Is there a point of difference? I had a book recommended to me some time ago that influenced me greatly when it came to design. It is called "The Experience Economy" by Joseph Pine and James Gilmore.

The fundamental premise is about orchestrating memorable events and moving products beyond simply being a tool, to make them an "experience". We hope that things we produce are able to surprise and delight our users to the point of being a pleasurable experience.

We ask: What is there in this product that will delight a user (and make it extra cool!) If an idea passes all these constraints, then it is almost certainly ready to be released as a Majacraft product.

Final words

I hope this article has been both informative and entertaining, as well as offering a little insight into the nuts and bolts of producing some of the innovative tools at Majacraft. I seem to be developing a habit of listening to music as I write, so musical credit for this article goes to Oasis (Wonderwall), Red Hot Chili Peppers (Dark Necessities) with additional support from Pink Floyd (Shine On You Crazy Diamond).





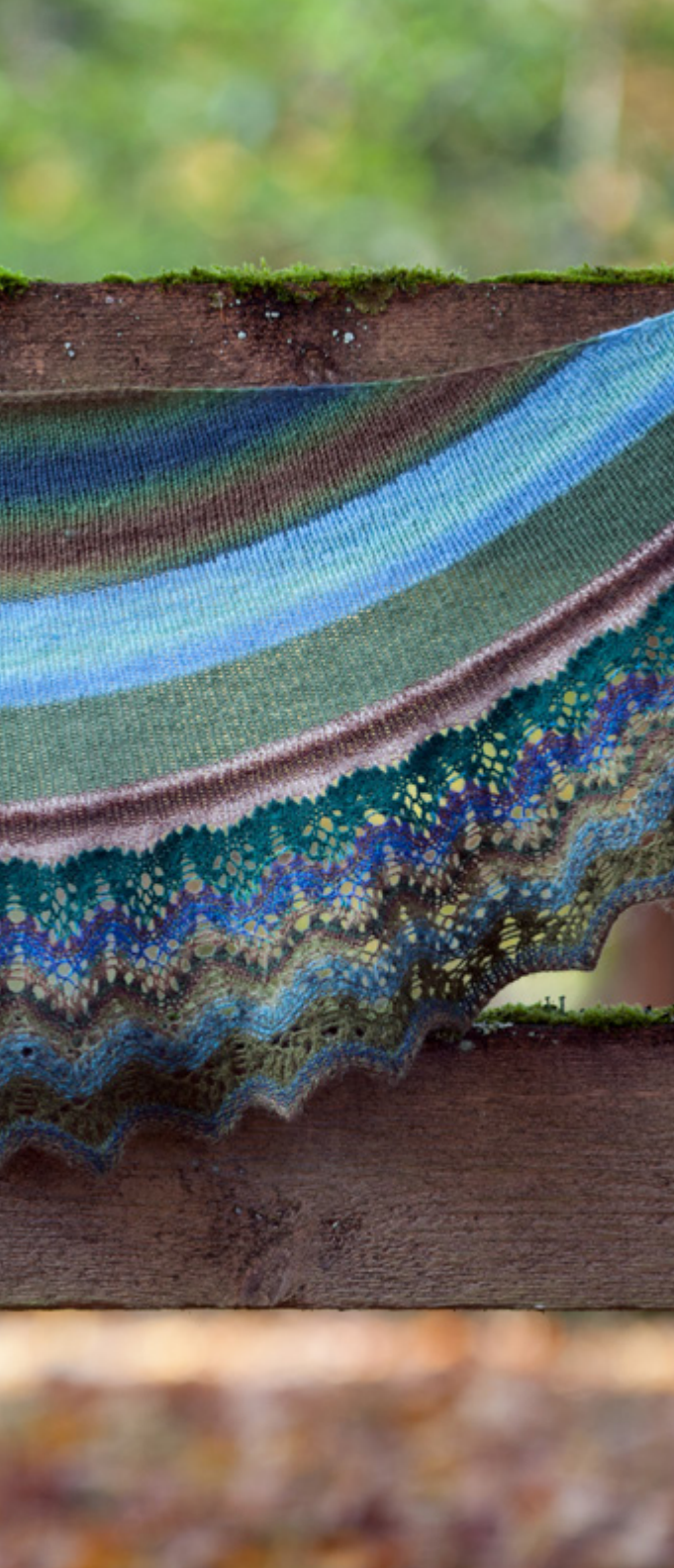
Back to Nature

USING NATURE AS A FIBERY BACKDROP

WORDS AND PICTURES BY **EVANITA MONTALVO**



Photographing my projects out in nature
feels like bringing them back home



Nature and Fiber Arts, two things that I feel go hand and hand. My primary subject matter for my photography is nature so when it comes to shooting my fiber arts projects, when I can find a way to photograph them with nature it makes my heart sing. For most spinners, we spin fiber that comes from nature whether it be from a variety of wonderfully fluffy animals, silk making caterpillars, or fiber-producing plants. Photographing my projects out in nature just feels like bringing them back home.

The world of nature is all around us and can provide such an amazing backdrop to photograph all sorts of fibery goodies against. Finding a beautiful place to photograph your projects can be as close as your own backyard! Many of the places I like to shoot my projects are within my own property and a few places around my neighbors, but sometimes going on a little adventure through the neighborhood or even a neighboring park can provide gorgeous settings.

My favorite places to take photos are often overlooked, sometimes even found unwanted or ugly like excessive moss growing on a fence. Moss is amazing, it comes in so many varieties of greens, it has such cool texture, and often it's plushie!



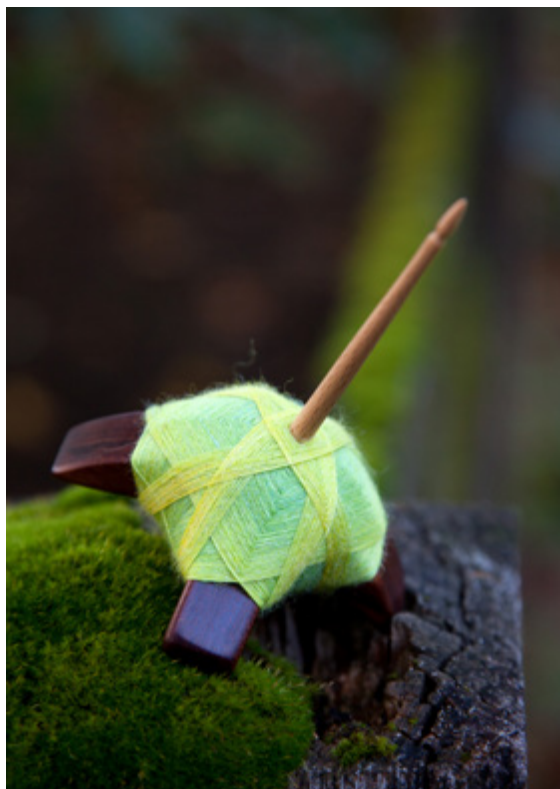


One of my neighbors had some incredible moss and pixie cup lichens growing on their fence that I absolutely loved to use as a backdrop for my yarns. It was such a stunning span of fence in all it's weathered beauty with lovely green accents. Sadly earlier this year they power washed it all off so all I have are the memories through my photos. I will cherish this photo, in particular, the most. The background provides such depth to the photo but doesn't take away from the beauty of the yarn.

I'm absolutely crazy for moss and consider myself fortunate that in the Pacific Northwest it's quite abundant! It's always at its greenest during the rainy season which can make the windows of opportunity very limited for getting those perfect photos but it's always completely worth it even if it starts to sprinkle a wee bit during the shoot.

We have an old wood railing fence that runs alongside part of our property line. It's certainly seen better days especially with the woodpeckers who have made quick work of some of the posts. Some folks would take one look at it and think it might be time to replace it with a new fence but for me, it's become my new favorite place to take photos of my shawls as well as my spindles.

The moss has grown quite quickly over the past couple of rainy seasons and this year it's looking quite spectacular with plush clumps of gorgeous green moss which forms the perfect little pillows to rest my spindles on. I'm looking forward to seeing how nature takes over and staging more photos with it.



Nature provides such wonderful backdrops all year round provided that the weather is holding up for actually taking the photographs without my subjects getting wet or being blown away by the wind. In Spring I always look forward to when my Bleeding Hearts and other springtime flowers bloom. I adore accenting my photos with flowers. They can provide such beautiful complimentary colors to my subjects.

In the summertime, there is always an abundance of possibilities for photos. Even something as simple as photographing a project on the lawn provides a nice visual contrast.

Summer is also prime time for flowers and beautiful sunshine. We don't have too many flowers in our yard which is something I'd love to work on, more flowers to admire and more for the bees!

A couple of blocks down the road we have an elderly couple who own The most incredible Dahlia garden that takes up a large portion of their front yard. I befriended them last year and they've graciously allowed me to take photos there anytime and even let me take home a few flowers whenever I visit.

If you have neighbors with beautiful gardens don't be afraid to reach out and get to know them. Many gardeners with flower gardens have them not just for their own personal enjoyment but also so others can adore them as well. I can't imagine how many smiles their garden must bring to all the people who drive through the neighborhood.

Flower gardens can be a perfect place to shoot photos of a model wearing finished items and single flowers or even bouquets can be a great pairing with works in progress, yarn and spindle photos. One of my favorites with the Dahlias is my little Bee Hummingbird spindle nestled in one of the giant Dahlias. (previous page)

In the Fall the leaves from the Big Leaf Maples glow so brilliantly and provide a lovely surface to shoot on and also a lovely yellow glow in the background.





In the Winter on rare occasions, we get snow. It can provide a beautiful stark contrast allowing the colors of yarns to stand out brilliantly.

More often than not our winters in my area are gray and rainy. With those rare moments of sunshine, it's a great time to admire the beautiful green moss that thrives and brings so much green vibrancy to what can tend to be a bleak time of year.

Nature isn't always the most cooperative so when it comes to shooting out in nature you are at the whim of mother nature as well as the sun. Knowing the locations you want to shoot and when the sun is just right is essential to success.



For new locations, I want to shoot at or even as the seasons change I have to keep an eye out on how the sun is affecting the area in order to know when the optimal time to shoot is. I found a new cool area to shoot out in the backyard. A large limb had fallen down from the neighbor's Big Leaf Maple tree. It's covered in bountiful masses of moss forming the perfect resting place for a bale of turtles. I've never shot in this particular location as it's typically fully in shade but with the fallen leaves there are small pockets of time where the sunlight passes through.



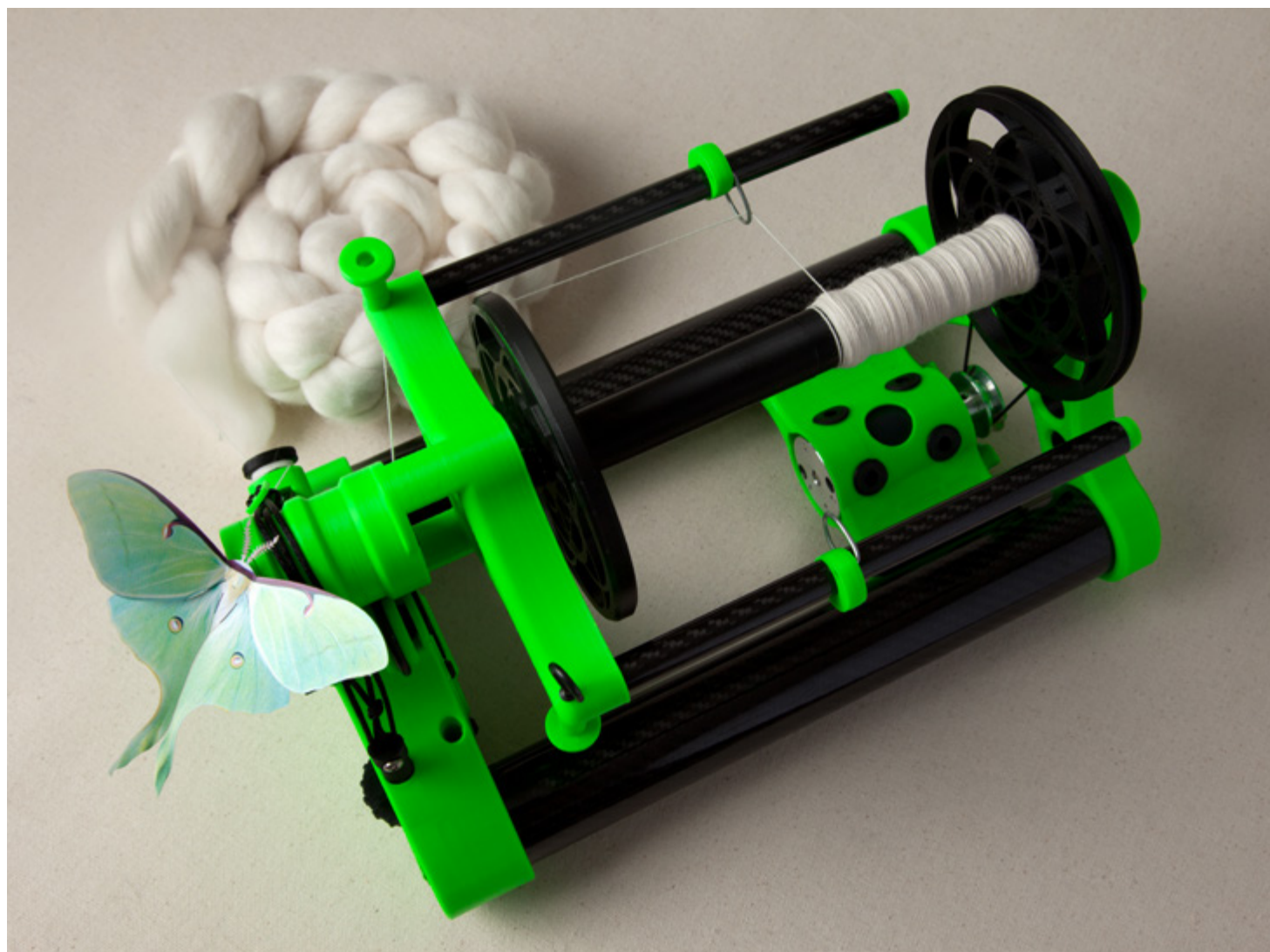
The sunlight heating that area caught my eye through a window. The lighting was was gorgeous so I immediately rushed out to take photos but sadly I missed the best light while setting up the shot. It's hard to believe that these two photos are only 5 minutes apart. I'm hopeful the next time the sun is out I can get some beautiful photos of this project at just the right time with lighting towards the front of the turtles while still providing a beautiful glow to all the golden leaves.

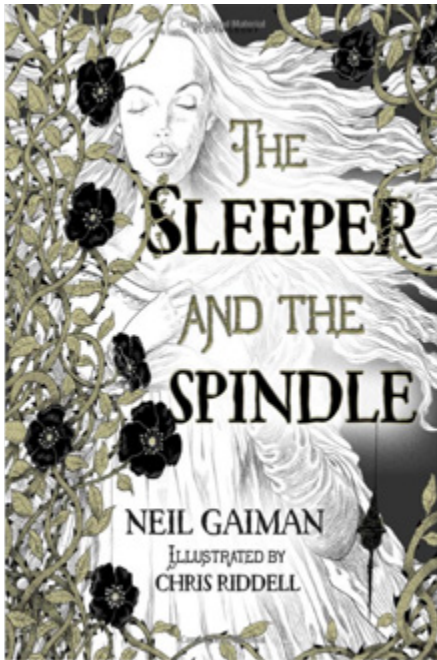
Nature isn't always very cooperative especially in the PNW where Fall, Winter, and part of Spring is gloomy and rainy for most days. Even when I can't make magic happen outside I can always bring nature inside whether it be some golden leaves from the Big Leaf Maples, to flowers from the florist, or even flowers from my own Tropical Hibiscus. I love to be able to incorporate these elements in my studio photography, to add a little something extra to my photographs.

Sometimes I can't always get my hands on real nature or at least the kind of nature I would like to add to my photographs because it's simply not the right time of year or the nature I want simply doesn't exist in my area of the world. I named my Daedalus Blackbird spinner after one of my favorite giant silkmoths the Luna Moth. They are native to where I grew up but alas are not native to my current residence.

I found a wonderful maker Moth & Myth <http://www.moth-and-myth.com/> who prints on special paper and laser cuts out beautiful realistic moths. I purchased some on a whim because they looked so beautiful and later realized they would be perfect in my fibery photos. This moth may not be real but it still makes me smile and remember the beautiful Luna moths I remember seeing as a child.

Incorporating nature into my fibery photos feels magical. I love the natural aspect of the fibers I work with and being able to bring them back to nature brings so much harmony within my photos.





The Sleeper and the Spindle

By Neil Gaiman
Review by Suzy Brown

Did you ever wonder about the world of Sleeping Beauty? I mean, what was really going on there, what happened to everyone else while she and her fellow castle inhabitants were sleeping? Life does go on, doesn't it?!

In his usual imaginative and creative style, Neil Gaiman brings us another masterpiece of storytelling that will captivate and entrance. And to top it all off, it has spinning in it too!

I purchased the first edition of this book in 2014, and it has been on the 'treasures' shelf of my library ever since. I am really happy to see that it has continued to be a loved book for many and is now out in its second edition version.

This is a retelling (quite loosely) that combines the stories of Snow White and Sleeping Beauty, or rather, winds their backstories into a new telling of what happens after everyone falls asleep.

The story begins with a Queen, realising she has choices she can make for herself. At this moment, she chooses to leave on her own rather than marry and face a life that does not fit her dreams. She is joined by some dwarves (of course!) and armed with the experiences she has gained in her past, surviving her stepmother's cruelty, the Queen journeys on to discover the source of the sleeping plague that is spreading across the land.

For all us spinners, be warned, the spindle in this story is not your usual, beloved, treasured, sometimes magical item. The spindle in this story is dark, and dangerous, nothing like my own beautiful sleek and friendly spindle. The spindle in this book (and I would love someone to make a replica!) is powerful, something to be wielded rather than cradled, and the yarn that is spun with it is secondary to its role.

There are many twists in this yarn, some unexpected, and some familiar. This is a fairy tale, with all the classic hallmarks of the genre, an evil witch (fairy), a princess, and the modern take that includes a female hero. I would not call this a feminist book, however, there are strong elements of feminism in it that make it something to read to your daughters.

The entire story is carried along in a really stunning manner by the magical illustrations from Chris Riddell. He has created a world of endlessly fascinating detail and rich characters that enhances the story brilliantly.



The Sleeper and the Spindle, by Neil Gaiman,
Illustrated by Chris Riddell. Reprint edition
May 2019



**Epic Spinning?
Epic Wheel.**



Majacraft





Weaving

INTO THE WILD
WITH JUST TWO HANDS

WORDS BY TANI CROTTY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BAMBI



We are about to take a magical journey into the Australian wilderness with Tani, of 'Just Two Hands'. This is an inspirational story that speaks to me of living simply and mindfully, and is an exploration of the mingling of nature and creativity and the ways we can really live into every part of the process. I hope you will enjoy this as much as I have, and feel inspired to find something in your own environment you can create with or incorporate into your own crafting!

Suzy

**WORDS BY TANI CROTTY
AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BAMBI**

I wander down to the creek on my childhood property, the sound of a thousand cicadas chorusing me. The same creek I swam in, where I watched turtles hatch and snakes slide by, the creek we tried to dam with rocks, made fires beside, cooked damper [Australian soda bread] and ate it warm, dripping with butter and honey. My wild. So familiar. Here, vines dangle from every tree, cloaking them in a veil of green, their evergreen runners covering the ground in a thick foliage carpet; it's the place where fairies are real and you can hear them whisper, if you're listening. This is where the magic is, the weaving magic.



Today, this is where I come to forage a lot of my fibres; wild vines and native grasses. Vines are such an amazing fibre to work with, their flexibility and strength, the twists and bends, their whimsical beauty captivating. Here, in this part of Australia, wrapped in the Queensland warmth, the earth knows how to nurture vines well, particularly the pesky kind. In my wild, the invasive cat's claw creeper (*Dolichandra unguis-cati*) is an aggressive thief of the bush but an ally to my weaving. Its strength, robustness, reliability and aesthetic render its place as a primary fibre for most of my basketry work.

I've always loved the word forage. On nights when my Mum was exhausted from a full-time job, full-time parenting the four of us, and inspiration for preparing dinner totally evaded her she'd say, 'let's just forage tonight.' We loved it...mostly, I think. It meant we could eat just about anything we could find or be

bothered to make. To forage becomes a kind of low stakes treasure hunt; expectations are managed but adventure is high.

Armed with a pair of secateurs [one-handed garden clippers], gloves and boots, I don't have to go far to find fibre gold. It really depends on the purpose of what I am creating or the shape I have in my mind which vines I will hunt for harvest. Hanging from the trees in gorgeous loops are the thick chunky vines that hold the shape of a big floor basket, wreaths or even a planter vessel.

Parting the glossy green leaves underfoot reveals a labyrinth of veiny runners streaking across the forest floor running from one tree to the next. The ground runners are excellent for finer or tighter style weaves (fewer claw's as they are not climbing trees), their pliability when being worked into a basket allowing



the weaver to manipulate the form more easily. I get to work harvesting.

For me, the enjoyment is the whole-body experience. The physicality of venturing into the bush, working your arm and leg muscles pulling the vines; it's hard work but the rewards are bountiful. Swatting mosquitoes, sweat beading on your skin, your eyes scanning the trees and forest floor, the thrumming of insects ringing in your ears. It's rough on your hands too.

When I look at my hands these days as I'm weaving, I often see my mother's hands. Lined and worn, dirt resting in the crevices carved by time and use. Those hands that explored, gripped, kneaded, carved, cradled, soothed, created, dug the soil, twisted the fibres...I always wondered as a child

how my mother's hands could be so cracked and seemingly dirty. And now, I love my own version, each mark creased with a story of my journey to now. All you need is just two hands... (seriously, hands are amazing!! We should all thank our hands daily.)

One of the things I love about natural fibres is their texture, they feel real. The roughness of wrangling the gritty exterior of cat's claw vines, the smooth waxy leaf of *Iomandra longifolia* (an Australian native grass), the glossy stems of scythed grasses with their earthy, hay-like aroma.

The versatility, flexibility and strength of these fibres astounds me each time I go to use them, how they can be worked in various ways - twisted,



woven, braided, split, stitched – manipulated into a completely new creation each time. A vessel with a unique shape, energy and purpose.

Determining what fibres I can weave with is pretty simple. If it can be wrapped around my finger a couple of times without breaking or splitting, then it has weaving potential. I find native and wild paddock grasses and sedges are perfect for finer detailed work as they can be worked tighter and in varied ways like twining, braiding and cordage.

There are a few other pest vines readily accessible in my local area too. Introduced species of climbing 'ornamentals' like the notorious morning glory (*Ipomoea indica*), corky passion vine (*Passiflora suberosa*) and balloon vine (*Cardiospermum*

grandiflorum) can also be harvested from local waterways and neighbourhood areas like sporting fields.

I believe weaving is a conversation; between the weaver's hands and the fibres as they twist, a conversation with the environment. All good conversations both give and receive. By working with invasive climbing vines that devastate native vegetation, re-purposing these troublesome but beautiful weeds, weaving also becomes a sustainable practice – a chance to give back to the bush. You might take home a little basket with which to collect eggs or hold letters, but success in sustainable weaving is also about what you've left behind. A tree able to flourish. A flower able to bud.



I grew up a bush kid, and the thrust, the utter compulsion to take my kids on a similar journey is central to all that I do, and it is a cornerstone in my weaving practice as well. Like my mother before me, I have four kids, and I hope they grow up wild. By involving them in my weaving journey I want to teach them to listen to nature, to have that conversation with the environment – how we can interact with it, respect it and really learn from it. Showing them how they can create objects that inspire more joy, knowing they came by your own hands, from materials in your backyard. Teaching them to take their cues and inspiration from nature; the curve of a stick or branch, a fallen bird's nest, the shape of a stone.

Most days (when I'm not foraging in the forest), you'll find me doing the school run; pushing a double pram, laden with kids and school bags, but also a plethora of earthy neighbourhood debris hanging over the handle bar or stuffed between or under a child, the bottom basket on the pram bursting at the seams with whatever fallen branch or mottled leaf inspired us that afternoon. It's hectic and full. It's real life. Once you open your eyes to weaving, you'll never look at your environment the same way again. Long grasses, fallen palms sheaths, grape vines, passionfruit vines, seed pods, feathers, climbing, scrambling plants of any kind, they –like the children running ahead of me– all hold potential.

The broader community of weavers I've experienced is one of great sharing and support. I've learnt so much from other artists and crafters in that space. There is power and hope in sharing sustainable ideas with each other. I study their work and think about how I can apply it to fibres I have access to.

It's these small challenges that makes a life full, and makes it fun. Weaving is where I find my breath in the busy-ness of life. I'm not the best weaver, I'm always learning, but weaving is a non-judgemental craft. When we weave with natural collected fibres a basket is as celebrated for its precision, as it is its unique asymmetry; in the same way no two vines would ever wrap a tree in perfect mirror image, no two hands will work them the same.

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*Suzy's Energised
Shawl*

ENERGISED SHAWL PATTERN

WORDS AND PICTURES BY **SUZY BROWN**



In previous issues we have shared some of the most gorgeous lacey knit patterns from Francoise's Aroha Knits, ideal for commercial or traditional spun yarns. So just for a change, in this issue I am bringing you something you can create very simply with art yarns!

For this project you will need:

A bobbin full of **fine spun, energised single** yarn (simply spun with a normal amount of twist and not wet or steam set). This is fast and easy as there is no plying, just spin till your bobbin is full. You will get great texture if you spin this from a gently textured batt, allowing some of that character into the yarn for extra interest.

You will also need a **chunky lockspun yarn**, or you could replace this with any other highly textured art yarn. If you are spinning this yourself I would suggest waiting till you have finished knitting your main shawl section then measuring the top edge, multiply that by four and spin approximately that length of textured yarn.

You will need some really **BIG** needles, I suggest a minimum size 15 (US) or 10mm needle, I used size 20 needles for mine.

You will also need a **large** crochet hook for the edge.

The purpose of using the big needles with the fine spun energised single is that the energy will open up the big stitches and make them look really lacey and as though you have knitted something a lot more complicated than just garter stitch! If you later wash this garment, do not block it stretched out, just gently spread to shape and dry flat and allow the energy to return and keep the stitches open.

Method

Row One: Cast on three

Row Two: Knit one, yarn over increase one, then knit to the second to last stitch on the row, yarn over increase, then knit one.

Row Three and all subsequent rows: repeat row two

It's that simple! Garter stitch all the way! Keep going and adding stitches at each end until you have used all your single. This will make a long scarf and when you stretch it out against the stitches you will find quite a nice shawl width as well.



Now you should cast off loosely. Measure out your lockspun or textured yarn for the edge, making sure you have at least three and a half times the length of your knitted edge, I always try to have more rather than less, to be on the safe side, and for the scarf pictured left, I used the long ends as additional length to the shawl, simply chain stitching the extra yarn.

The edging is a simple crochet chain. Start by making a single crochet stitch into the end corner of your shawl, you will be picking up stitches and chain stitching into them along the top/long edge of the knitting. If you have extra length you can chain stitch your tassel length first then attach at the corner to continue from there to start picking up stitches.

Make a single chain, followed by the next single crochet back into the shawl edge. You do not need to single crochet into every knit stitch, instead you will need to gauge the size of your chain stitch, which depends on the thickness of your yarn, and space your needle insertion to match. Alternate single chain and single crochet along the length.

This is a fun and fast project that is a wonderful use for art yarns.



In this design, I choose to use energized rather than plied for a reason, even though it can be a little tricky to handle because of the twist. The reason is that when you knit a very fine spun single (I don't wash and set it) is that the energy in it actually opens up the stitches, creating a really neat lacey look. I used size 25 needles for this, so I think the bigger the better. It also creates a really wonderfully stretchy fabric when knitted, just great for a scarf/shawl!

If you wanted a more triangular shape rather than a longer scarf shape you can add your increases at the start and finish of every 'other' row instead of every row.





The Gift of Crafting

WORDS BY ARLENE THAYER

PHOTO BY SUZY BROWN

Crafting brings comfort. And, it brings comfort in a number of forms. There is the crafting we do for ourselves to relieve stress, keep our hands busy, and take our minds off of our troubles. Then there is the crafting we do for others who are going through a tough time. And, finally, there is crafting to bring aid to a cause.

Crafting to bring comfort to ourselves is a safe haven. Besides the soothing feeling of using our hands to produce something, it allows our minds to shift away from what causes us stress. It gives us a sense of control and accomplishment. While I can practice many forms of fiber art – spinning, weaving, crocheting, embroidery, sewing – ultimately, I define myself as a knitter because that is the craft that gives me the most comfort. This, to me, is the true measure: what do I turn to in my crafty world most often when I want a temporary escape?

And, then there is crafting to comfort someone we care about. When faced with what to say to someone who is going through a tough time, many times we feel at a loss for words. Often, I find that I can show my concern easier than I can express it. One of the best ways I have found to do that is by giving something I have made by hand. Recently, I put together a care package for a friend who is going through her third bout with cancer. It is very scary and she is suffering a lot from the radiation treatments.

The care package contained several items including a knitted cotton hand towel and wash-cloth that I had made. Every stitch of those items had passed through my hands. It wasn't just a hand towel and a wash-cloth that she found when she opened the package. It was a sense of me being there, of her knowing that I had spent hours thinking of her and

praying for her safety and full recovery. I had made an investment well beyond a post on social media, or even a call or a get-well card.

But we don't have to personally know who we are crafting for to bring light and love to someone in need. There are efforts to provide handcrafted items such as hats for underprivileged school children or premature babies, for example. In these circumstances, we get the benefit of having a larger sense of purpose as it comes to our crafting. We are part of a team moving towards a goal. We are no longer just crafting for the sake of crafting for our own enjoyment.

I'm also a yoga teacher and sometimes I include the practice of loving-kindness meditation in my classes. In this tried and true form of meditation, we start by offering loving-kindness to ourselves: May I be happy, May I be healthy. May I be safe. May I live with ease. We then offer the loving-kindness to someone it is easy to extend it to: May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you be safe. May you live with ease. From there we keep moving out and extending ourselves; to someone, we feel neutral about and then someone who is difficult for us, and finally to the world at large. We keep expanding and widening who we wish to comfort.

I believe we have the same opportunity with crafting for comfort. We can engage in creating, with the intention of extending comfort and loving-kindness beyond ourselves and beyond those whom it is easy for us to love. This takes us to creating for those from whom we might turn away, ignore or don't know.

I can think of no better way to be conscious in our creating.

FIBER LOVE

WORDS AND IMAGE BY SUZY BROWN

Fiber. Soft, tactile, comforting, warm, pliable, face-plantable, cuddly, colourful, pure, organic, sculptural, smooth, rough... it has the almost magical property of being transformable, from single fine fibers to strong warmth-giving fabric. It has been part of our lives since prehistoric times in one form or another, is it in our DNA that we love it?

What is it about fiber that makes us love it so?

Is it the sheer sensuousness of it? The tactile have-to-touch message that fiber sends out... have you noticed how people can't keep their hands off it? The first thing we want to discover about our fibers is, what do they feel like? A desire to touch the fluffs exudes from the essence of the fiber itself, it doesn't seem to matter if its raw wool, washed and dyed, carded, combed top, or spun yarn, even knitted or made into something. We have to touch it. Fiber is a tactile experience,

Or maybe it is the colour that draws us? Do we love the excitement of dyeing some fiber and the constant surprises we can get when it's done, the way fibers take up the hues so incredibly and allow them to blend and merge in fascinating ways. Is it the thrill of overdyeing a naturally dark fiber and getting a deep rich colour like it has come up out of the depths of the earth to enrich our vision, or the bright cheerfulness of strong colour on a white fleece, it can be such a feast for the eyes.

Perhaps it the way we use it? We can felt, spin, sculpt, knit, crochet, weave, put it to use on our own bodies as clothing and decoration. We can create warm blankets for our family to protect them from the cold of winter, we can make people smile by gifting them something we have created with our imaginations and our own hands.

I think it's very much to do with all the above, but also in the way we use it as individuals, because it gives us the means to express our creativity in so many different ways. Fiber is used by so many people and yet every time becomes something utterly unique and personal and a part of someone's self expression. It is a way to show we care about others, that we enjoy colour and love to handle these tactile objects. Working with fiber is a deeply satisfying activity that has been around forever and continues to exist and evolve despite so much artificial factory-made produce circulating our globe. It's pretty impressive isn't it! It's like gold for the soul.



The Art of Colour Selection

Bringing the right hues to your weaving projects.

WORDS AND PICTURES BY INEKE DE BROUWER

Ineke is one of our regularly featured fiber artists. As we have seen in previous issues, she has a wonderful eye for colour, and her weaving projects always display her artistic flair beautifully. In this article, Ineke shares the method she uses to choose gorgeous combinations of colours and textures for each of her weavings.

METHOD

I always encourage my students to choose their materials and yarns themselves. I guide them to their choices by teaching them to "watch" the materials and colours through a process of sorting, adding and/or removing materials, colours and

structures. At some point during this process everything falls into place and harmony is created in colours and structures.

When I started preparing for this article, it seemed like a perfect opportunity to find the "words" to describe this process of combining colours and textures.

The intention was that I would dive into colour theory, texture and structure, then write some very wise words about this. But what happened?

Very competent people have preceded me in this. Beautiful books and websites with good information, ready to use.

A good example is "The Big Book Of Fibery Rainbows" by Suzy Brown and Arlene Thayer. It would be presumptuous to think I can do better. So for those of us who are more doers than readers, trusting their intuition; I have written a brief description of the process of "Watch and Choose", complete with some tips and tricks.

THE ART OF WATCHING... (AND CHOOSING)

Looking carefully takes time. Time is the basic condition for learning to look well. Watch and get inspired. There is magic in everyday life. In and around your house, in nature, animals, people, light beams, a scene in a film, a book, music or a feeling. There is so much to discover that can inspire you. Your own stock can also be a good source of inspiration.

Photography is a good way to learn to look; create an image bank.

Watch and Collect

When you have found your inspiration, the next step is to collect all the materials that will fit nicely with your idea. Gather up all types of yarn: smooth, textured and art yarn.

Also think of patches, ribbons, felt, lace or objects such as beads, shells, feathers or smoothly cut pieces of wood. Keep the project you want to make in mind. You don't want "hard" yarns which could irritate your neck in a shawl. For a rug, choose wear-resistant yarns and for a tapestry, colourfast materials are important.

Watch and Sort

Display all your collected valuables on a neutral surface. Sort your treasures by colour and texture. There are several ways to sort by colour. You can sort purely on base colour, for example; all reds and all blues together; all materials of the same tone together; the same shades together from light to dark; or even in the order of the rainbow (ROYGBIV).

Set aside colours or textures that are "out of tune", but don't be afraid to take them back during another sorting process.



All the colours and textures together



Sorted into a rainbow range



Sorted into browns and purples

Sorting the materials several times in different ways will eventually put colours aside that are not suitable for the project. The leftover yarns should form a harmonious entirety. That does not mean that nothing interesting can happen. A contrasting colour adds tension as long as the other colours are not drowned out.

Try not to weave too much art yarn into a project. It is important that these yarns get the attention they deserve.



Rejected



Selected

Watch and Choose

There are a few things to consider when choosing which yarns to use in the warp and which to use in the weft.

I measure my yarn in length, not in weight. Calculate that approximately 4/5 of your warp will be the actual length of your workpiece due to shrinkage. If you want a shawl of 2.00 meters, make a warp of 2.50 meters. For the warp in this case, you would multiply the number of warp threads by 2.50 m. Of course it is always a good idea to have a little extra. I prefer loosely woven smooth garments; so beat the reed gently while weaving. Try to make the warp and the weft thread form a square.

When you continue this way of weaving, you will find that you need about as much yarn for the weft as for the warp. Again, a little extra is wise.

Choose which yarns to use for the warp, and which for the weft.

Warp

If you are in possession of a dynamic heddle loom from Majacraft (with different sizes of reed segments), it is possible to use yarns of varying thickness for the warp, including art yarn. You can set up a particularly varied warp.

When using any other rigid heddle loom or shaft loom with the same size and generally smaller reeds, you can use micro art yarns in the warp provided that these yarns can pass through the reed. You can use thick-spun art yarns as the first or last warp thread by running them along the outside of the last reed.

Multiple colours in the warp will create vertical stripes. It is preferable not to use singles, or "sticky" such as mohair yarns, in your warp. Singles are prone to wear and breakage, while sticky yarns are irritating and time consuming as they make beating difficult.

Weft

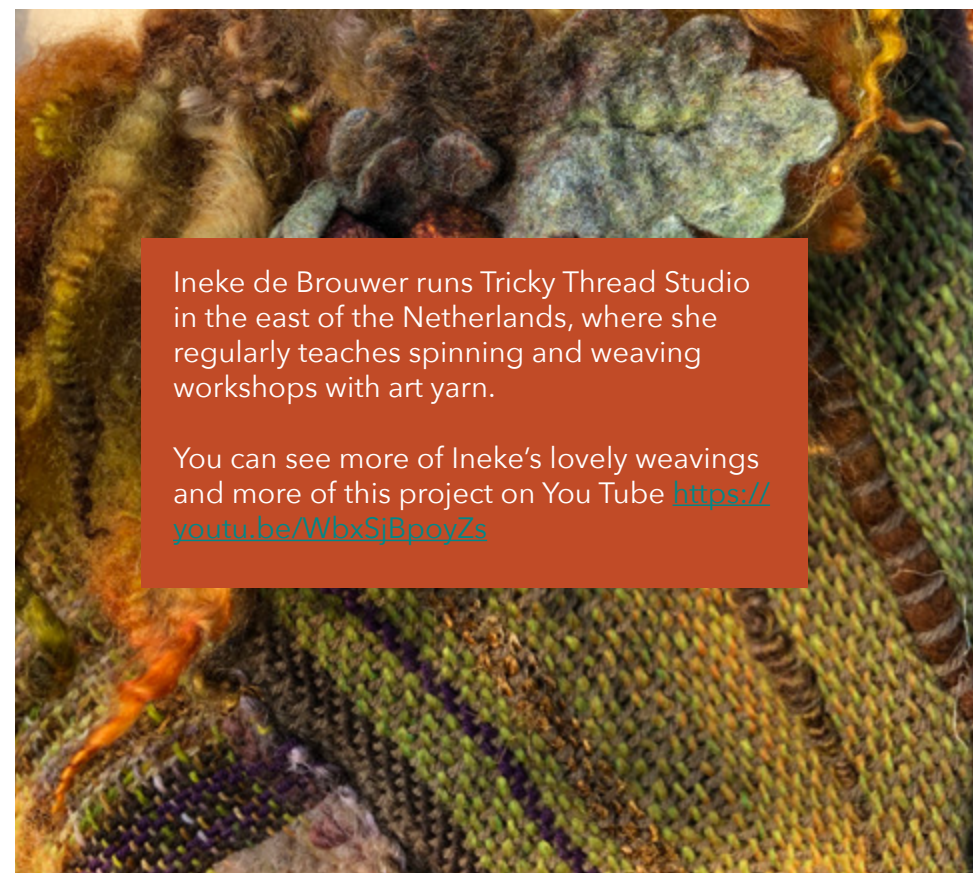
In the weft it is possible to use all kinds of yarn of different thickness, including art yarn. Different coloured yarns in the weft produce horizontal stripes. Different colours in the warp and weft can produce a checkered pattern.

White yarns in the warp add a lighter shade to the weft thread. Black deepens the colours and the shade darkens. Other colours that mix change the hue.

Watch and Weave Tips

- If you are not completely sure about a particular choice, use that yarn in the weft, which is less difficult to remove than a warp thread.
- Prevent your beautiful (warp) art yarns from disappearing under weft thread by not weaving all warp threads with each weft.
- If your weft art yarns are in danger of disappearing between the warp threads, use a pickup stick and pick up several warp threads at the same time.
- When you use locks or curls, it is sensible to weave a regular yarn every other thread, which gives the locks more space.
- Trust your intuition and have a lot of fun!
- "I have never tried that before, so I think I should definitely be able to do that." Astrid Lindgren, Pippi Longstocking
- Hue is the pure base colour without black, white or gray. In principle, this can be an infinite number of colours. The 3 primary colours (blue, yellow, red); 3 secondary colours (orange, green, purple); 6 tertiary colours (combination of three primary colours); and all other mixed colours. This is commonly referred to simply as "colour".
- Tint is a mixture of a basic colour with black, white or gray. For example, a pastel is a colour mixed with white; a tone colour is a mixture with gray and a shade colour is often a mixture with black.
- By mixing colours together without adding white, gray or black, you can create a new colour hue. By adding white, gray or black you get a different shade of that colour.





Ineke de Brouwer runs Tricky Thread Studio in the east of the Netherlands, where she regularly teaches spinning and weaving workshops with art yarn.

You can see more of Ineke's lovely weavings and more of this project on You Tube <https://youtu.be/WbxSjBpoyZs>



A TALE OF TWO PASSIONS

Striking a Balance



WORDS AND PICTURES **CHARAN SACHAR**

It seems obvious that one needs to create a balance in what we do. Sometimes it is conscious and sometimes it just happens. Throughout my life most of the time, I have not consciously known about the balance I was creating. But looking back, it seems obvious. So, join me on my journey as I recollect striking a balance.

It was very early on as a child I realized I wanted to be more than just good at school. I had good grades and didn't mind studying, but always had an itch to do something else. I remember spending countless hours drawing, painting, playing with art kits right after my exams were over.

This back and forth between handcrafting and education continued into my engineering days. I was obsessed with cake decoration and I used to try to learn every technique in baking and decorating cakes.

I thought I must be a true Gemini, who has two sides and needs to be doing two things at a time. Little did I know that I was just trying to strike the right balance.

The other thing that surrounded me in India was fabric and color. My mother ran her boutique shop in Mumbai, designing clothes for brides and bridesmaids. The colors, patterns, and textures of embroidery always fascinated me but at that time I couldn't visualize doing anything with fabric, or bridezillas for that matter!

After completing my engineering degree in India, I moved to the United States in 1998 to pursue my Masters in Computer Science. I wanted to pursue a career as a chef or do something in the cooking or creative field, but parental pressure and being good in school, getting good grades, translated to doing what is popular and upcoming and will give you a good source of income.

It was only after I landed a job at Intel in Washington State in 2000 that I felt I had checked all the boxes for my parents and could now do something in my free time. It was then that I started working with clay.

Essentially, I was looking again to find that balance. In Washington there were a lot of resources to learn and I took workshops and classes to study

different techniques in throwing on the wheel, slab construction, hand-building, and surface decoration. I did all of this while working full time as a software engineer.

Working at Intel was stressful and I needed my time away from the computer to sit on the wheel and just make pottery. I was glad to have something to strike that balance and being able to work with my hands. It was during this time I got married too and when I met my to-be-wife for the first time, she asked me if I was happy with my job. I told her what I felt, that it was great to make a living but I would rather be making pottery full time. She just smiled and said that I should be happy that I knew what I was so passionate about.

So, I continued making pottery at a local studio and doing my full-time work as a software engineer. The more I worked with clay the more I started developing my own style of work. I truly believe that every aspect of my formative years came together during this time.

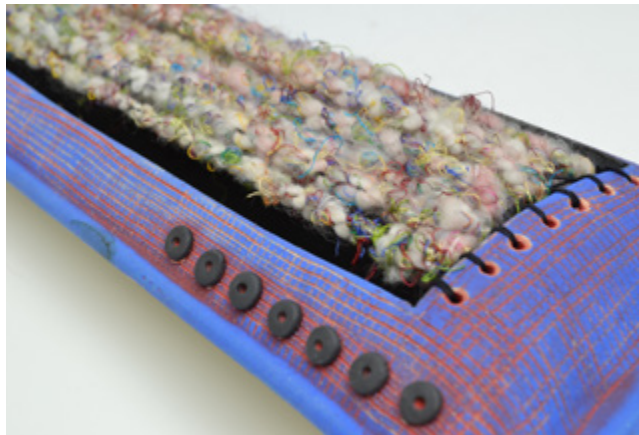
Drawing, painting and playing with color on my pots took me back to my childhood.

I recalled my fascination with fabrics at my mother's shop, those paisleys, and patterns of embroidery were what I wanted to incorporate in my pots. My cake decorating skills came in handy to create those embroidered looks on my pottery. I piped these patterns freehand with slip and underglazes to give them the pop of colors which reminded me of Indian weddings and the colorful and diverse life in India.

Making pottery has its drawbacks... not really... but you end up making a lot of pots. First, you cherish them and use them every day. Then you begin gifting them, but slowly my pile of pottery kept growing. My wife suggested selling some of the pottery because we were running out of room in our small apartment.

I started off by doing a few local shows and then selling online on Etsy and my website www.creativewithclay.com. Very soon, I had galleries contacting me and I started dabbling in selling wholesale to shops. Once I got into the thick of





things, I had to figure out how to be productive too. Sitting behind a computer desk all day for work and then hunched over a wheel in my spare time was not my idea of fun. This is when I started focusing more on hand building. The hand-building techniques reminded me so much of how fabric was handled at my mom's shop. Cutting templates, seaming them, adding embroidery, buttons...

After quite a bit of struggle trying to evaluate if I could quit my full time IT job, I decided to take the plunge and pursue pottery full-time. I started doing a lot of fine art shows and was happy to know that people were really connecting with my work and design style. One would think this is great, but remember I need to find that balance.

I was getting tired of being on my feet all the time. Talking to one of my customers at a show, I was telling them how I couldn't just sit on the couch, watch TV and make pots because clay is messy. She recommended I take up knitting. I remember my exact words being... "isn't knitting like making knots?" ... I was that clueless. I looked up a YouTube video, picked up a pair of chopsticks I had laying around and with some jute twine, I knit a square. This was in October of 2013.

I then spoke to my friend, Ann Meersman, about my knitting adventure. She called me home and gave me a pair of knitting needles and some yarn. I couldn't stop. I have an amazing pottery mentor, Ginger Steele, who is also an amazing knitter. She drove three hours to my house and wanted to make sure, I wasn't picking up any wrong practices in knitting, like doing twisted stitches when I shouldn't be.

As soon as she left, I went to a big box yarn shop, bought a sweater's quantity worth of yarn and started my first sweater which I finished in 3 weeks.

I didn't really follow a pattern, because I immediately realized it was just math, which I loved and connected me back to my engineering days. So here I had found the balance between my pottery work life and a hobby, knitting.

Since my pottery was so inspired by fabrics, (Indian embroidery mostly), I thought I should try to figure



out if I could incorporate knitting patterns in my work. It isn't as simple as pressing your sweater on clay to get a pattern. The engineer in me got into problem-solving mode, and with a lot of trials and failures, I developed ways to carve the negative of the patterns and use those master slabs to create knitted textures.

I got a really good response on those. I then realized that several of my previous customers from the fine art shows were knitters and they bought my work because it was inspired by fabric. And now I created actual knitted fabric patterns on my pottery.

It was really magical finding that connection and I did a few fiber shows and my work was very well received. I sold out of my work at the shows and online requests kept coming in. I then decided to try wholesaling my work to yarn shops in addition to fine art galleries.

This was another good transition for me. Not only was I trying all kinds of yarns and knitting shawls, socks, sweaters while resting my feet, I was also getting inspired to work in the pottery studio. I also

used knitting as an incentive to reward myself for working long hours in the studio.

And like what usually happens, one fiber craft leads to another. I got hold of a knitting machine next which my engineering mind fell in love with. My acquisition of lots of yarn from fiber festivals led to buying a table loom and then a floor loom.

At the men's knitting retreat, when I mentioned I bought a floor loom, they gave me a spinning wheel, which goes to any attendee who wants to try spinning. I had no interest in spinning at the time and I even made excuses for not taking the wheel, but it was so beautiful and I thought I can at least try.

The dive into spinning made my head spin.

When I sat on the wheel the first time, it was like sitting on a potter's wheel. Since my pottery is mostly hand-built, I now missed sitting on the wheel. But with spinning, I could sit on a wheel



again... not a potter's wheel but a spinning wheel! I loved how the fiber felt in my hands, got its twist, piled on to the bobbin, making yarn. I was mesmerized and I still am.

I took every opportunity to sit and talk with spinners, take online classes and learn as much as I could. I had all the newbie questions about spinning, like what fiber is good for what, how many plies, what gauge to knit, how to color manage, etc. etc....

I then found so much in common with fiber and clay. When one sticks to one clay body and works with just that for a long time, you realize its potential... what you can and cannot do. Like how wet or dry you can work with it, how big or small a piece you can make with it. It is the same with fiber. Every fiber, like every clay body, had its own nuances.

My love for spinning went on to art yarn spinning and I thoroughly enjoy creating unique yarns. I had knit a few projects with my art yarns, but I really wanted to do something more. And when I began to dye fiber, I loved the instant gratification of color.

Glazing ceramics is a long process, lots of chemistry, glaze the piece, fire it, wait for 24+ hours and

repeat. With dyeing fiber and yarn, I could tweak colors visually which is very gratifying.

I wanted to showcase the art yarns I spun in a way other than knitting/weaving. I made ceramic pillows which seemed like the perfect way to show these art yarns. I weave the yarns in the pillows, which create a conflict of hard and soft textures and bring my love for the two mediums together.

The two mediums coming together has been conflicting too. If you recall, getting into knitting and fiber crafts was a way for me to get a break from the pottery studio and enjoy a hobby for what it is. I now find myself dyeing fiber for the kind of art yarns I want to make. I then keep thinking if I should make this yarn for a sculptural piece or just for the joy of spinning. I do enjoy the fiber arts, but I also feel guilty at times for taking time away from clay. Throughout my life, I know that balance is needed. It is the yin and yang we need in our life. I have to keep reminding myself, that I need this time away from the clay studio to indulge in my hobby. The rest and relaxation I need is achieved when I knit, spin, weave.



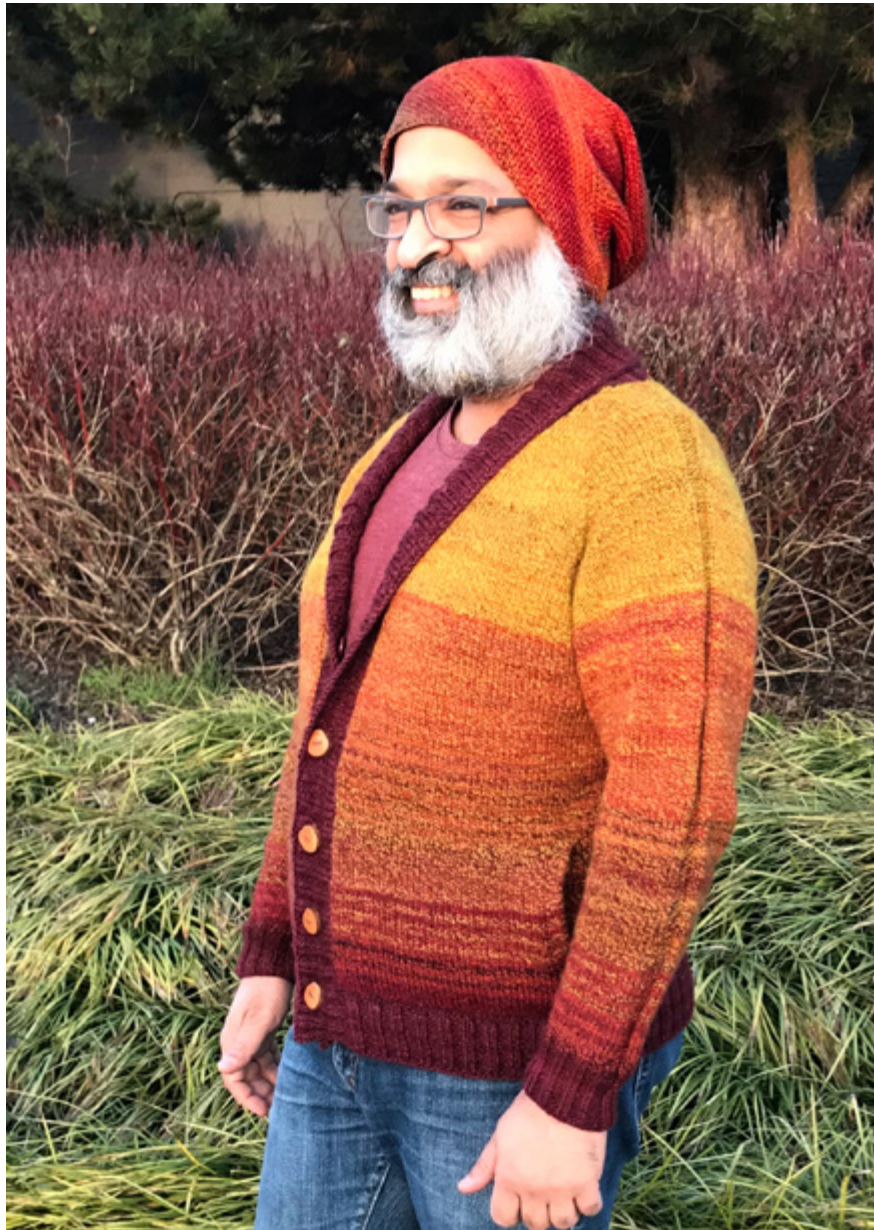
I weave the yarns in the pillows, which create a conflict of hard and soft textures and bring my love for the two mediums together.



It is fascinating how circumstances change but at the core, they are still the same. When I was doing my full-time software job, I looked at pottery for respite and relaxation.

When I took up pottery full time, I thought that was all I needed, because I love making pots. But again, I still need to relax and the fiber arts have come to my rescue. I am glad I have the opportunity to work in a medium I love and can indulge in a hobby that inspires my work.

I recently came across the following quote from Roger Martin that captures the conflict and the love I have for the two mediums. I hope I can keep finding the resolution and keep creating while striking a balance.



The ability to face constructively the tension of opposing ideas and, instead of choosing one at the expense of the other, generate a creative resolution of the tension in the form of a new idea that contains elements of the opposing ideas but is superior to each.

- Roger Martin





TINYSTUDIO Community Makes

From now, we will be bringing you some of the gorgeous creations shared by the talented people of our online tinyStudio Creative Life Facebook Group! One of our BIG goals in tinyStudio is to make a magazine that is truly a part of the fibery community, one that reflects our collective interests and inspirations and shares our stories. I can't think of a better way to do that than to dedicate a section to the people who support and share in tinyStudio and make our Facebook group the marvelous and caring place that it is. THANK YOU to everyone who has generously shared their work and their thoughts with us. You are an inspiration!

You can find our group on Facebook [HERE](https://www.facebook.com/groups/tinyStudioMagazine/) (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/tinyStudioMagazine/>) Please join us!



Diedre Dreams built her own blending board and it works wonderfully!

Sara Snell created these stunning gradient rolags with her drum carder!



Sonja Broekhuizen - see also the next page!



Sonja Broekhuizen brought us all a bit of sunshine with this wonderfully textured yarn



These stunningly filled spindles belong to the talented Tonya Althiser



Beautiful finished items from (left) Odediah Skolnick's stunning shawl, and Kim Chase's (right) striking wall art stitchery!





Trish Kipe has made some wonderful handspun, which looks just lovely when woven!



Alyse Middleton has matched her fiber to her spindle beautifully!



Erica Lineman's yarn to shawl!



Above: Vicky Brown spun this striking yarn complete with flaming pigtails!



Tanya McAllister has a relaxing spin happening on her pretty spindle



Su Jolly has spun up some gorgeous naturals into these squishy skeins.



Sue Hopkins created some lovely pastel thick and thin.



This amazing weaving is by Deb Lucero, what a great design with these shades of grey.



The talented Charan Sachar provided us with this stunning mini fiber and yarn feature!



Corset

A CREPE YARN RECIPE

WORDS AND PICTURES
SUZY BROWN



This yarn can be made with either a smooth fibre preparation, or with a more textured option in place of the coloured single that runs through the centre, for example a lockspun in which the tips are left sticking out to show between the smooth singles it is plyed with.

1. Spin a thick single of any kind (Z direction)
2. Spin a thinner black single in the Z direction
3. Spin another black single of the same thickness as the last one, but this time in the S direction
4. Ply the first single and the Z spun single in the S direction. Very important - over twist these so the yarn plys gently back on itself when you pull some off the bobbin. Ply as evenly as you can.
5. Ply the two ply you just created with the last (S spun) single, in the Z direction, adjust your treading so your third ply criss crosses with the other fine spun single to create the corset effect.



Learning Lab

A Sticky Situation with CAMEL/Silk 50/50

BY EVANITA MONTALVO

I picked up some gorgeous Camel/Silk 50/50 to spin up during this past Tour de Fleece for a colorwork cowl. I wanted to spin it woolen, but I found spinning it directly from the top or from the fold was not easy for me. So, I decided to try creating rolags. I love to spin freshly made rolags. They draft so smoothly. However, this blend threw me for a loop. When I tried using the dowel rods that I normally use to roll the fiber off my hand carders; I found that the rolags refused to come off, resulting in quite a mess. The culprit in this frustration was the high concentration of silk in combination with a surface that simply wasn't smooth enough.

After this attempt, I decided to make a new set of dowel rods that I sanded from 120 to 3,000 grit. I was amazed at how smooth they were but, alas, the silk still wanted to latch onto the surface for dear life. I reached out within the various fiber communities that I'm part of and got a lot of great ideas. I ended up picking up a pair of metal and bamboo needles to see if one of those options would provide an easy solution.

I tried out the metal needles first thinking they would be the best bet and those were a slight improvement from my dowel rods, but not by much. After that, I held my breath and tried the bamboo needles... it was like magic. The rolags slid off the needles so easily without bunching up or catching! It was a night and day difference.

Now, after finding out what tool worked for me to create my rolags, I've found that the whole experience of working with them is so much better. As they say, prep is truly everything when it comes to spinning. The rolags that I had difficulties removing were not fun to spin, but the ones I made with the bamboo needles drafted so smoothly and effortlessly. I am so thankful I persisted and found a way to make spinning this project work for me. Long draw is not my strong suit, but I can already see a huge difference in my spinning with this project and I hope that maybe there will be more long draw projects in my future.



Spinning Thread for Stitching

BY SUZY BROWN

If you would like to try spinning some thread for embroidery or stitching, you can! This is spinning SUPER fine, so you will need to set your spinning wheel up with the smallest whorl on the pulley to maximise your twist, and your tension band should be loose for a super light take-up. The thing I have found most difficult when spinning thread is getting started! If your take-up is even a bit too strong, or your treadling speed too fast (or both), your thread will snap before you get started and you will be forever rethreading your wheel. So, keep everything light and every time you start spinning, be sure to start off very slowly, then gradually increase your speed. The same for stopping! Slow down, then stop.

Your fiber selection will also make a difference. For your first experiments, you could make it easier on yourself by choosing a fiber that will be easier to spin finely. I suggest a fine wool blended with some silk. The silk is very strong and long, which will help your thread hold together. The fine wool will give it some softness and some "toothiness" when spinning, that will help you keep it fine and even.

Once you have your wheel set up and the right fiber to get started with, it is then simply a matter of practice. Focus on drafting very tiny amounts at a time, this will be only a few strands at once! Your singles need plenty of twist, as I also recommend plying it for balance. You do not want your thread to twist up as you are pulling a stitch through your fabric and make knots! Keep your drafting and treadling as even as possible. This will create a stronger, more even thread that does not have thick and thin areas, will make it easier to ply without breaking and make it easier to stitch with.



If you have a fat core bobbin, or can pad one out, it will help you gain the lightest possible take-up



I use empty spools for winding my threads onto



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tinyStudio Magazine

703A Beech Road, Hastings 4122, New Zealand
email info@fiberygoodness.com

Editor Suzy Brown

Assistant Editor Evanita Montalvo

Editorial Assistance Arlene Thayer

Information

For more information about tinyStudio Creative Life Magazine visit our website at www.fiberygoodness.com/tinystudio or email info@fiberygoodness.com

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A close-up photograph of a light-colored, woven basket filled with dark, curly wool. Interspersed within the dark wool are several small, colorful flecks of wool in shades of pink, blue, and green. The basket is resting on a surface of grey, smooth stones, with some dry twigs and debris visible in the background.

tiny**Studio**

creative life

Woolwench: Suzy Brown