

Knit in the news

Yarn Forward *brings you all the news that's fit to knit.*

KNIT PLASTIC

An artist wearing her recycling credentials with flair

Cathy Kasdan worries about plastic bags: how many of them we're using, and what to do with them afterwards. For her thesis project, art student Cathy used over 400 plastic bags to handknit a 1950s-style ensemble of circle skirt and fitted shirt accessorised with pillbox hat, belt and handbag. The buttons and trimmings were all made from old credit cards. This postwar homemaker's costume is a reference to the beginning of consumer culture – “a society that embraced the Plastic Age without reservation for the possible ramifications”, says Cathy.

Her latest project is an Icelandic yoked sweater made from plastic bags and old newspaper, bringing together traditional techniques with trash materials. “I used a pattern from an Álafoss pattern book that I purchased while in Iceland. I've actually knit one using the wool but wanted to make one that drove a point home as well.”

Knitting with plastic can be tricky: “Plastic bags are difficult if they get static. Cutting the bags can be very time consuming – I don't cut them into loops and then knot them, I cut each bag into one long strip by cutting around the bag.” But in other ways, plastic is a co-operative material. “The nice thing about the bags is that they can take a beating. They stretch but don't break often, and you don't have to worry about the ply splitting around your needle. They make for smooth knitting – I've found that my bamboo Clover needles work best.”

It's slow work, though. Making one piece of a garment can take Cathy months between her other commitments: “the big blue circle skirt took forever to knit and was knit in four sections by casting on the bottom row and decreasing to the waist line.” Many of her other pieces are improvised. Cathy says she works “kind of by the seat of my pants! Hats and purses I made up as I knit.”



Left: the plastic 1950s ensemble. **Right:** detail from the Icelandic sweater.



MORE INFO...

More about Cathy's polythene creations

The artist's website
www.cathykasdan.com

An alternative to plastic bags
www.morsbags.com

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“Plastic bags stretch but don't break.”
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Her work has been featured in venues including Cleveland Fashion Week's wearable art show and the Ohio Art Education Association's annual convention. Cathy says that she really enjoys seeing viewers' reactions: “I like it that they have to get close to my work to see what it is. Then they can appreciate the message, or the time and work put into it. Then they start to think.” SW

Right: polythene evening gown.



HANDS FOR HIRE: FAIR TRADE KNITTERS

Handknitting a decent wage.

The Fair Trade Knitters cooperative based in the Andes mountains of South America offers a stitches-for-hire service to knitwear designers, yarn shops and other knit-pros who need to commission samples.

The cooperative is owned by handknit childrenswear businesswoman Meredith Kubicki. Looking for a way to keep her knitters employed year-round, she hit on the idea of knitting for hire. The area in which these knitters live is very remote, and well-paid employment for women (especially women with children) is hard to find. With Fair Trade Knitters, they can fit knitting work into the amount of time they have available, and receive additional training at the cooperative's headquarters.

Offering fair wages and other benefits for her workers while helping professional knitters to work smarter, Fair Trade Knitters seems to have hit on a business model that's good for everyone. *SW*



Below: one of the cooperative's knitters at work.

MORE INFO...

More about Fair Trade Knitters

The cooperative's homepage

www.fairtradeknitters.com

TNNA'S WINTER TRADESHOW

Needlework's big winter event reveals what's next for knit.



Above: YF editor Shannon Okey (centre) does lunch with Eunny Jang and Marcy Smith of Interweave.

MORE INFO...

More about the National Needle Arts Association

The organization's homepage www.tnna.org

Watch TNNA fashion shows online www.youtube.com/user/YarnGroup

Yarn Forward editor Shannon just returned from the National Needle Arts Association (TNNA) tradeshow in San Diego, California. This show is where yarn companies, publishers and designers gather to check out what's new, take classes, line up for book signings and meet up with their industry colleagues. It's not open to the public, but of course we had our eyes and ears on the floor to let you know what's going on.

The winter show forecasts trends for spring and summer, while the summer show (in June) tends to include more new product launches and a larger crowd. This year it was all about lace stitches and empire-lines, judging from the number of them on display. There were more organic products than ever before, and a fashion show with – gulp – knitted boxer shorts on the runway.

Mid-tone colors seem to be the rule – nothing too bright, nothing too dull, and the jewel tones have gone away for a little while. The most covet-worthy booths? Rowan, South West Trading Company, and Malabrigo, whose new sock yarn was a magnet for everyone. *SO*