

KNITWEAR WORKSHOP DESIGNS

DUETS & INSPIRATIONS



SHIRLEY PADEN

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Knitwear Workshop Designs:
Duets & Inspirations

Published by Shirley Paden Custom Knits
414 E 52nd St, New York, NY 10022

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Photography: Yeon J Yue

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Cover and Interior Design: Anne Shannon

www.ShirleyPaden.com

ISBN: 978-1-7371194-1-8

FOREWORD

*“A thing of beauty is a joy forever. Its loveliness increases.
It will never pass into nothingness, but still will keep a bower quiet for us,
and a sleep full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.”*

—John Keats (1795-1821)

No matter how far we have evolved since the days of admiring cave painters, today, as in the beginning, something in the human psyche forces us to stop and stand in awe when we observe excellence in craftsmanship. It is a deep respect that we feel when we see something meticulously made by hand. The reality is that the ability to achieve that excellence is present in each of us, and there are few modern-day art forms more readily accessible for us to experience and connect to that side of ourselves than in hand knitting.

After years of teaching hand-knit garment design and watching the magic of the creative process, as well as the joy and excitement of even the newest knitters as their first-time design ideas came to life, I decided to translate that class into a book. The goal was to reach an audience well beyond my classroom. With that in mind, in 2010, Knitwear Design Workshop (KDW) was released as a major comprehensive design reference work. The widespread interest in KDW became the basis for a series of online worldwide design events called Design-A-Longs (DALs). Those events were where most of the pieces shown in this book were created. This is the story of our maiden DAL voyage.

A few months before Knitwear Design Workshop was released, one of my students started an online group for people to come together to knit and discuss my designs. Although I had a large body of published work, I had no prior knowledge of the group being formed. You can imagine both my surprise and joy when I received an invitation to join. Since it was newly forming, the direction that it would take was open, and that founding student, who was also the moderator, welcomed my input. When planning for the book release, I had been busily exploring ways to invite knitters to join me online to experience design. As luck would have it, the newly formed group was the perfect platform for launching a worldwide design event. Therefore, plans got underway for the first DAL.

People had heard of Knit-A-Longs (KALs) where everyone worked on the same project together, perhaps selecting different yarns. However, the question that I was asked over and over during the signup phase was, “Exactly what is a DAL?” I could only describe it as a cross between a design workshop and a design “boot camp,” where everyone would be invited to work through the four steps of my Design Process, as introduced in Knitwear Design Workshop, and create their own masterpieces. With everyone signing up responding to that explanation with “great!”, I knew it was going to be lots of fun, and unlike anything that any of us had ever before experienced with our knitting!

A few weeks later, we took off with 30 intrepid and eager design students, holding hands and eagerly anticipating this new type of creative experience. I began by posting a chart and a swatch that I had used to design a scarf, then announcing the DAL equivalent of, “Ready, set, go!” which was “Profile, sketch, swatch!” And the design process had begun!

Since the group was composed primarily of American and Japanese knitters, we posted instructions in both languages. People would visit the American group site and wonder if they were at the right place, with large passages of text posted in Japanese. However, between the participants, no one seemed to notice that we spoke different languages. We all spoke knitting, and were eager to design. That kept the atmosphere charged with excitement.

Four months passed quickly with everyone interpreting the DAL stitch pattern to create their individual designs. Some were designing garments and some accessories. As in-progress photos were constantly being posted to the group, there was lots of visual stimulation. This resulted in nonstop virtual chatting and learning as we walked together through each step of the process. Each time we completed a step, there would be a burst of energy that would fill the air for weeks. It was that constant creative energy bubbling over that continued to propel us forward. Finally, the participants began crossing the finish line by posting photos of their completed pieces. At that point the group atmosphere became electric! It was then that I realized that the worldwide design experiment had been a wonderful starting point for bigger and better design events.

In the years that followed, four additional Design-A-Longs were held. They were all truly memorable experiences. As you turn the pages here, you will see some of the different “things of beauty” created in those virtual “Design Workshops”. They brought out true excellence in design craftsmanship in all of us.



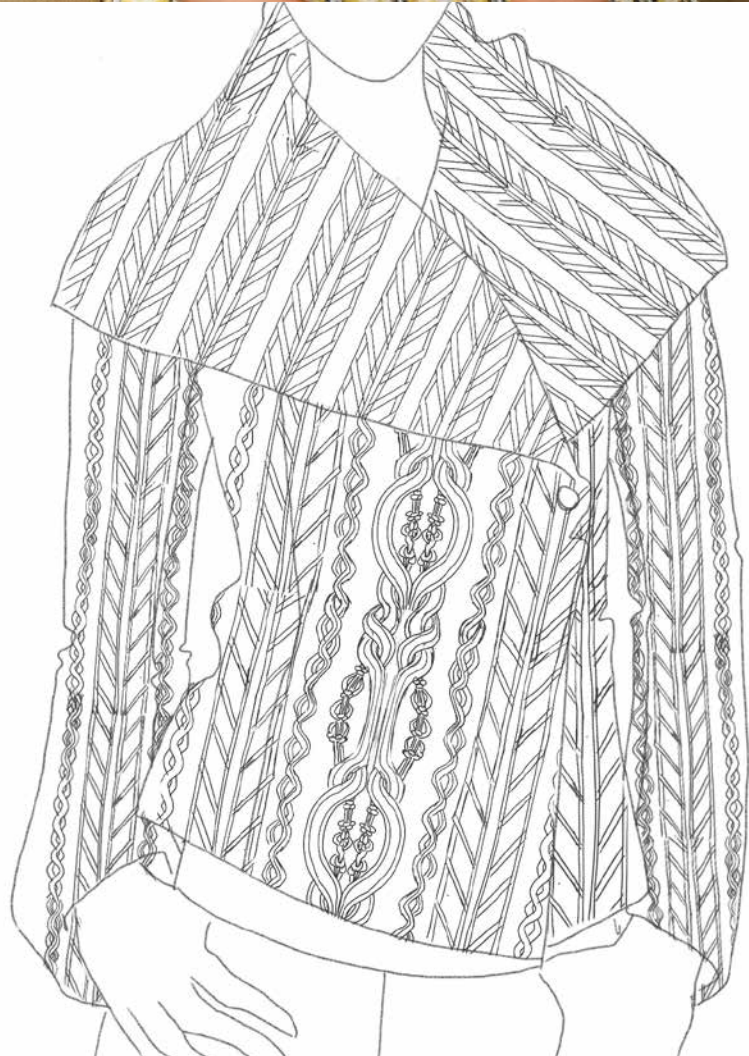


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INTRODUCTION

In our fast-paced, mass-produced world, few things remain more cherished than a personal item that has been made by hand.

Hand Knitting is a cloth-making art form that predates the beginning of the last millenium. Because the fabric is created as the piece is shaped and sized, masterful skill is necessary. However, the possibilities for techniques creation are endless. Therefore, with a craft that has been around and in constant evolution for over one thousand years, we see contributions from regions and/or cultures from most countries on earth with deep historical specialties in different types of knit fabric construction. Some examples include fine lacework from Russia, Germany, Italy and Great Britain; colorwork from the Baltic States and Great Britain; cables from Ireland; twist stitch patterns from the Alpine region of Germany, etc. They also include regional specialties in different types of clothing construction such as shawls, hats, gloves, and socks. Many items also represent specific moments in time with the highest examples on display in museums around the world.

Every knitter enters the creative process in their own way. My fascination has been with hand-knit clothing design. Within that realm, my design journey has always begun with a stitch pattern. For me, there is a particular joy in tapping into visually and structurally balanced stitch patterns created in different cultures and especially in different centuries. The joy of design is in wrapping a modern silhouette around them and bringing them forward into my time and place.

In this book, I have asked a group of students to join me in a series of design Duets as a way to celebrate the rich heritage of our art. The concept for Duets was formed in the Design-A-Longs where participants were asked to begin their design journey by selecting a stitch pattern that spoke to them from a collection that had spoken to me. Their assignment was to use my pieces as inspirations or starting points for their own creations. In that way, we get to see two different design perspectives whose inspirations were gathered from a single stitch pattern as the source. As you examine both the inspiration and the Duets pieces that accompany them, you will see that the end result is a beautiful display of creativity that will inspire a sense of awe and spark your own design imagination.

INSPIRATIONS

DESIGNS BY SHIRLEY PADEN



Vogue Knitting Winter 2004 / 2005

1

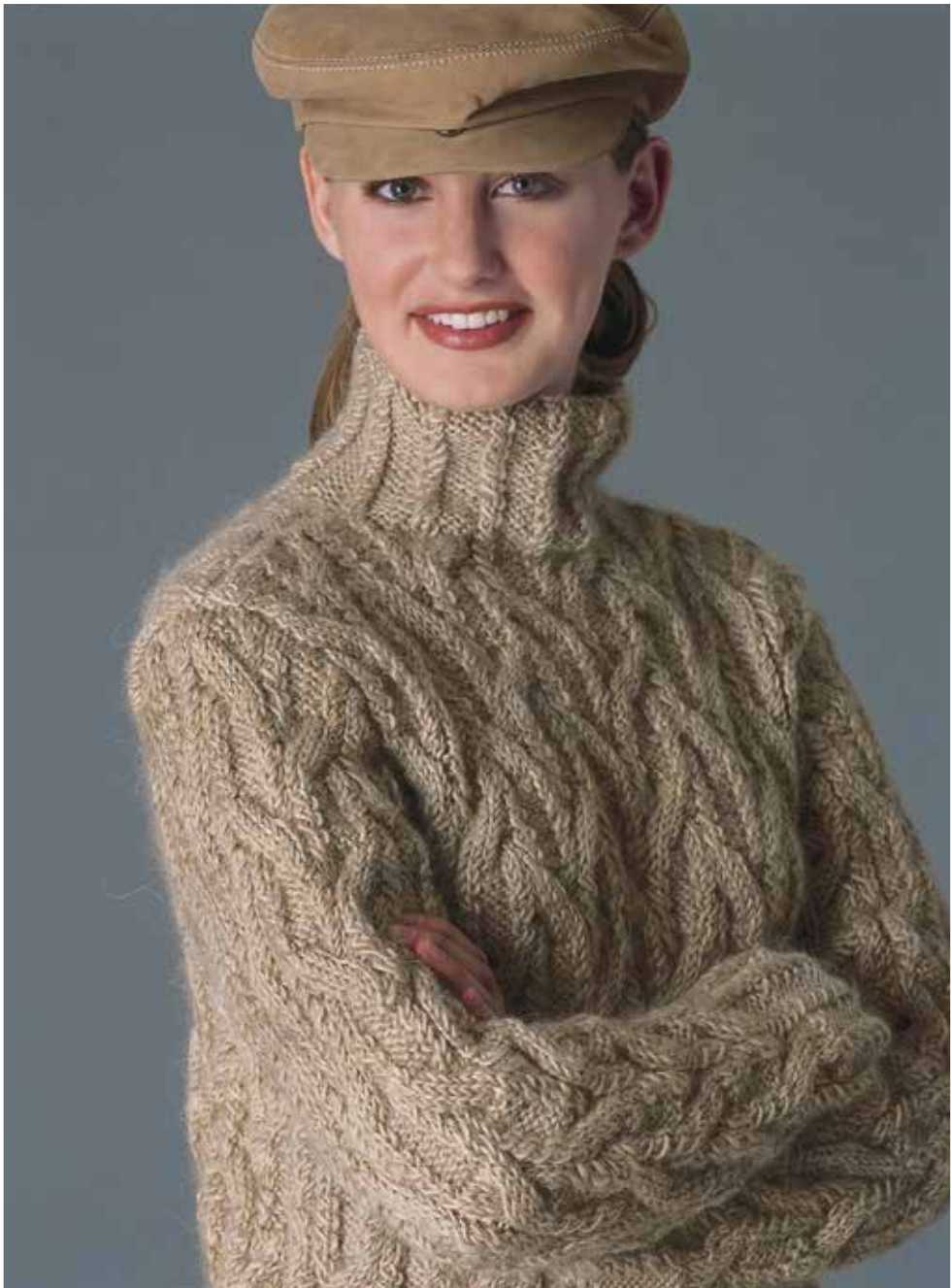
INSPIRATION



Vogue Knitting Fall 1999

2

INSPIRATION



Vogue Knitting Winter 2002

3

INSPIRATION



Interweave Knits Winter 2006

4

INSPIRATION



Vogue Knitting
Fall 2007

5



Vogue Knitting
Winter 2009 / 2010

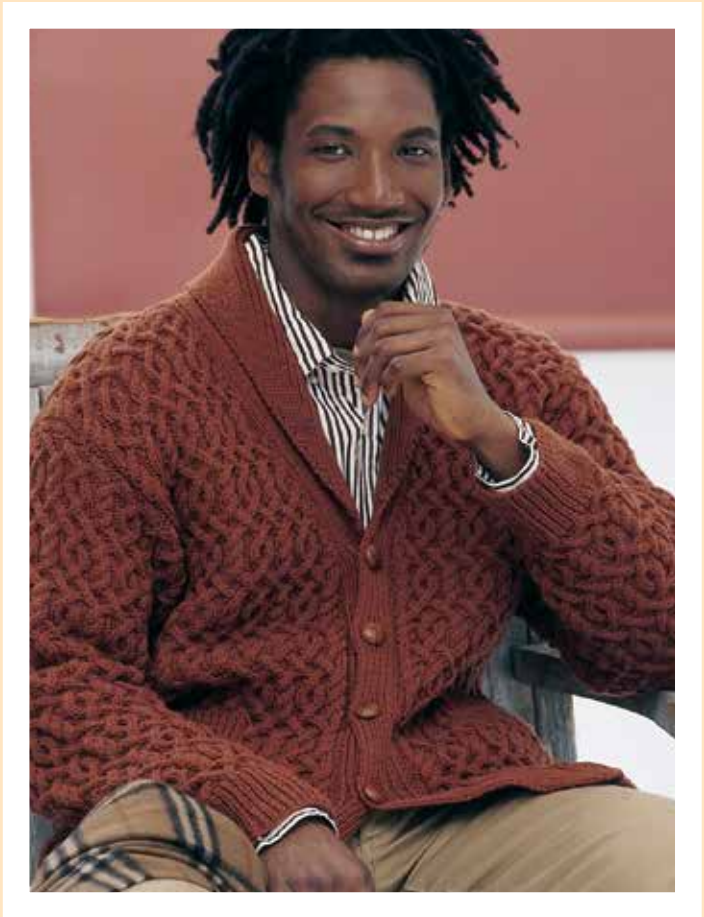
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INSPIRATION



Vogue Knitting
Fall 2007

8



Vogue Knitting
Men's Special Issue 2002

9

INSPIRATION



SWATCH
INSPIRATIONS

AUTHOR NOTE

All the designs featured here are classics. That is a design criterion that I believe in. That means that the pieces can be worn for different occasions and by different generations. To show examples, several projects have been styled in different settings and are shown in more than one story. – *Shirley Paden*



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Evening ELEGANCE

There is always an aura of elegance when a woman wears a piece that she loves, it makes her statement.

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KNITWEAR DESIGN AND THE CREATIVE EXPERIENCE

In this new book, Shirley Paden asked a group of students to join her in a series of design *Duets* as a way to celebrate the rich heritage of knitting. The concept for Duets was formed in the Design-A-Longs where participants were asked to begin their design journey by selecting a stitch pattern that spoke to them from a collection that had inspired Shirley.

Using Shirley Paden's pieces as a starting point for their own creations, we now get to see two different design perspectives whose inspirations were gathered from a single stitch pattern as the source. As you examine both the inspiration and the *Duets* pieces that accompany them, you will see that the end result is a beautiful display of creativity that will inspire a sense of awe and spark your own design imagination.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shirley Paden is the owner and founder of Shirley Paden Custom Knits. Her designs and articles have appeared in *Interweave Knits*, *Knitters*, and *Vogue Knitting*. She has been featured in the *Interweave Knits Designer Interview* series, in the *Vogue Knitting Designer Notebook* series, and on HGTV. Shirley also teaches and lectures on various aspects of handknitting, including lace, entrelac, cables, color knitting, and finishing techniques. She lives in New York City.



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ISBN: 978-1-7371194-1-8