



# The Crafter:

*words from the craft world*

I'm not sure what an axolotl is but I want to knit one after meeting Max Alexander at the Spring Knitting & Stitching show at Olympia. She introduced me to her own private **Max's World** where you can enjoy knitting eyeballs, octopi and other unusual things. She even makes jewellery with the knitter and crocheter in mind. She must have seen me coming as the 'Crafter' necklaces were obviously made for me.

I also met a lovely young man and his spinning machine. Artist **Dan Chilcott**, for it was he, was knitting an installation with Kerry Lord of Toft, described as "the most magnificent cultural construction that has ever been imagined," which it was, of course, because it was woolly and knitted. He was just putting up the knitted signage for the Wilderness Festival where he runs a knitting table (he also does Secret Garden Party in the summer). It wasn't clear what happened once the wheel stopped spinning. Come to think of it, it never did, it just kept on going, much like Dan himself, a man full of energy, inspired to teach the world to knit.

Spinning of another sort was Irem Arig of **Sheep of Steel** whose unique handspun yarns brightened up my day. She has an artist's approach to spinning which is really refreshing. Irem's day job is at iconic haberdashery Prick Your Finger in London's Bethnal Green and you can see the influence in her yarns.

The Thames Valley Textiles group had its own exhibition. Among the interesting exhibits was one by artist **Jane Glennie**. Her towers are knitted on a knitting nancy, or French knitting bobbin, using old video tapes. Usually shown out of doors they are a great use of knitting as sculpture, a much underrated genre in my view.

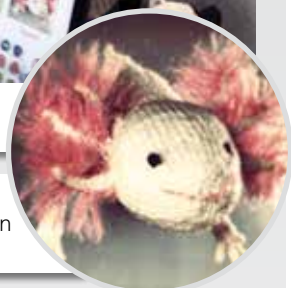
For a little light relief, I took myself off to the **Heritage Craft Association** annual shindig held at the astonishing Carpenter's Company Hall. Much fun was had during lunch talking to Amy Twigger Holroyd, of **Keep and Share** fame, who is now a Dr of Knit, having completed her PhD. She has been exploring the nature of Folk Fashion and how as consumers we can participate more in our clothing choices by manipulating the things we already have (as well as making new things). One of the ideas that caught my imagination is her use of Elizabeth Zimmerman's pockets. Not that she had her hands in Elizabeth's pockets, you understand but rather... Oh, let's start again.

**Elizabeth Zimmerman**, knitting guru and all round marvellous woman, designed an 'afterthought' pocket that could be added to a sweater after it had been knitted. Amy has gone one step further adding pockets to readymade garments, thus making them your own, though of course now with more pockets. The instructions on how to do this are on her website. I think I'm definitely going to have a go.

I was at Tate Britain for an *Arts Works* conference talking about participatory artists. I love conferences and always get so much knitting done while I'm studiously listening in the back row. It happened to be the first day of the **Phyllida Barlow's Dock** installation. Inspired by Tate Britain's location beside the River Thames, *Dock 2014* is constructed from bits of old wood, pallets and heaps of stuff taken from her studio. Looking up at the precarious piles tangled on the top here reminds me of the piles of wool on top of my wardrobe. One day the cat will get lost up there and we will have to send in a search party.



Max Alexander of Max's World



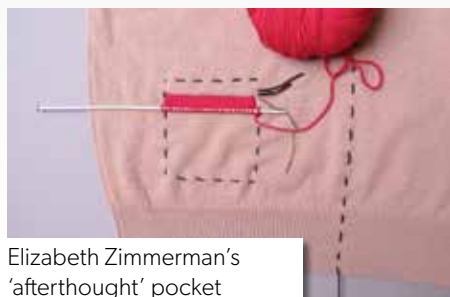
Max's knitted axolotl, or Mexican walking fish



Irem Arig of Sheep of Steel and Sheep of Steel necklace



Artist Dan Chilcott and his spinning machine and Dan's sign for the Wilderness Festival



Elizabeth Zimmerman's 'afterthought' pocket