



"I've always felt a need to push myself technically and I love to think out ideas that could potentially work and make me and other people smile," says Kate Jenkins. It is perhaps this prioritising of technique before humour and narrative that steers Jenkins' knitted, crocheted and sewn pieces away from being just fun to rather staggering.

After graduating in Fashion & Textiles at the University of Brighton Jenkins became a successful knitting consultant, selling designs to fashion labels such as Marc Jacobs, Missoni, Sonia Rykiel, Kate Spade, Whistles and Donna Karan before establishing her own label *Cardigan* in 2003. At the time she was making a few witty pieces on the side but now the side dish is definitely taking over... "I still like to do both, so end up dividing my time between fashion and art.

I think it's important for me to keep these both going as each area inspires and influences me in the design process."

Her first solo show of crocheted artwork in London, *Kate's Cafe* recreated a greasy spoon in a West End Gallery, complete with crocheted cigarettes, (*Soft Smokes*) sausages, fish, oh and of course, chips. Subsequent exhibitions have played on similar themes. *Come Dine with Kate* at the Rebecca Hossack gallery went upmarket and included canapés and crocheted champagne as well as an alarmingly active pork pie with escapee pigs.

The latest venture, *Kate's Plaice the Stitchmongers* made its debut at the Knitting and Stitching Show. It is an entire knitted and crocheted fish counter complete with crocheted crustaceans, knitted

mackerel, red mullet, sardines and octopus. Even the piece's assistants were suitably kitted out in costume with aprons and hats whilst standing behind a glass-fronted chiller cabinet with fake ice, ready to serve customers. The effect is remarkable, with practically no detail left unobserved – except perhaps the lingering smell.

Humour is never far away – this is comedy knitting at its best and there are visual gags and stitched puns aplenty; but the quality of the work and the presentation prevents it from becoming twee and has led to collaborations with the likes of cult cartoonists Modern Toss, as well as the styling of a Brighton hotel's interior completely with knitting. Sardines escaping from their tins are for sale but my favourite is a Swedish tin with sequined Abba emerging from it. www.cardigan.ltd.uk