

The Crafter:

words from the craft world

Are'n't universities and colleges great? Full of bright people with ideas, youth and energy (on a good day). That's why I love going to shows to see students' work. They are wasted on the young. I think you should have to have a job and some time in the world before you are allowed the privilege of going. It was a luxury wasted on me when I was younger, but I'd love to go now and would make much more of the opportunity I'm sure.

The Royal College of Art in Kensington is a particular favourite. All the students are post-grad so they have already had to jump through lots of hoops to get there, so pre-selected if you like. Every year they have a great final show in June, which is fab if you can get there, and also during the year they have a show of their 'work in progress'. It's like watching someone's mind working.

The RCA's School of Materials includes textiles, fashion and, of course, knitwear. There are often themes that emerge that seem to echo things going on in fashion and elsewhere in the creative world. This year I noticed a lot of laminating of knitting, with metallic foils or plastics. The look is on the catwalks and in the shops and students are experimenting with it, so perhaps there is something in it? I've tried iron-on foil on woven fabrics, but not on knits, so that's a project I'm planning.

This month, however, I've been busy moving house and that inevitably throws up lots of things I had forgotten I had, including jumpers. For years I have tried to clothe the people around me in lovely warm woolly handknits, only to see the familiar look of resignation and slight disdain on their faces. But not any more.

Now, it seems, they can't get enough of them. Here is the lovely Elsa wearing a **Rowan** chunky tweed handknit circa 1989. My version of *Indian Summer*, another Rowan pattern has also gone off to a new home in her sister Connie's wardrobe. Better, of course, that they should get some wear, but what a turn around.

Sorting out the room that is to be my new studio (yes, I'm going to have a room of my own, at last!) also threw up my stash of old knitting and crochet patterns. Like browsing through a box of old photos, I spent an unhealthy amount of time reminiscing. It's easy to tell which are the patterns that I actually knitted, as the pages that have been used are so filthy and coffee stained. Some of the actual knits have survived, and some of them have gone the way of the moth. I knitted a classic 1980s double-breasted jacket with huge shoulder pads that used so much yarn it came in two bags. When I finally found it again, it was all I could do to save the buttons before resigning it to the bin.

That reminds me that my new studio will have to be fumigated before any yarn is stored there and a full complement of sticky pheromone pads and mothballs will have to be purchased. I've tried the conkers soaked in cedar oil, lavender bags and even the old-fashioned orange and clove pomander. Most of my yarn, or what's left of it, is now stored in sealed lavender-impregnated bags. I wasn't sure about how effective they would be, so have shoved a modern mothball in too, just in case. There have been too many casualties in this war and I'm not prepared to play nice anymore. It's chemical warfare now.



Laminated crochet by Jessica Hymas, 2nd year student at RCA



Laminated knit sample by Lauren Maun, 1st year RCA student



Elsa, wearing the handknitted chunky tweed jumper from circa 1989



Digging through my old patterns like *Nut Case* by Patricia Roberts, got me reminiscing

My version of *Indian summer* by Kim Hargreaves, originally published back in 1998



Foil knit jumper by Very.co.uk

Just the tip of the iceberg of my pattern stash

