

The Crafter:

words from the craft world



PHOTO BY ROSELLA VANONI

Grace Hamilton's crocheted jewellery, photographed for Haute Magazine

It's been **London Fashion Week** so we are all aflutter. There were more parties and receptions than you can shake a knitting needle at. First stop was **Fashioned at Craft Central**, a satellite exhibition to showcase the amazing work by young designers who are making it themselves. First up was the lovely **Grace Hamilton** – remember her from *One to watch* in issue 126? – with her fantastical crocheted necklace creations. She was exhibiting alongside **Alison Willoughby**, queen of the embellished skirt. I had the pleasure of working with Alison on her book *49½ Skirts* that comes with its own pattern in the back so that you can have a go at making one yourself. She has branched out into embroidery in wools, which are tactile and an oddly wearable way of using up all those scraps of yarn. **Yvette Estelle Jeffrey** is fresh from Gray's College of Art leaving there this time last year. It's not knitting, but this cowl would translate into a structured knit beautifully. I might leave out the rusty nails though if I was making it for myself...

Somerset House courtyard was a-buzz with fashionistas. The **Esthetica** showcase is selected by the British Fashion Council and included two great knitwear designers Devika Dass and K2TOG. As the name suggests Esthetica designers are chosen for their commitment to working in a sustainable way. All designers adhere to at least one of the key Esthetica

principles: fair trade and ethical practice in the production process; the inclusion of organic fibres or the use of up-cycled and recycled fabrics and materials.

Devika Dass studied at Central Saint Martins before starting her eponymous label in 2012, following a trip to the Andes where she discovered South American knitwear. Devika works with the skilled local hand-knitters in Peru using traditional artisanal skills. The resulting garments are soft and luxurious. I can't wait to see the influence of these shapes on the patterns we're knitting next year.

K2Tog is the brainchild of designer **Katie Jones**, previous Gold winner of the Knitted Textile

Devika Dass's South American-inspired ethical knitwear

Awards. Katie also studied at Central St Martins (what is it about that college?) and is up-cycling sweaters to make them super-modern. I can see a whole new neon lease of life for my old Aran sweaters after this. I love these 'high fashion' ideas that can be so quickly and cheaply replicated by us mere mortals in the real world. I would definitely wear that to the supermarket and another way to use up scrappy ends of yarn.

Another bit of excitement this week was the launch of **Kirstie Allsopp's** new venture, **The Handmade Fair**. This is a new Fair with pedigree: organised by Brand Events responsible for bringing us the Country Living Fair, New Designers and Top Gear. Oddly I haven't made it to that one, but perhaps they will get The Stig to come and we can teach him to knit. The idea is that the Handmade Fair will be more than a selling event, although there will be a 'shopping village' too. The emphasis will be on the experiential, and to that end Kirstie had us all making as she talked (in between the cups of tea and cupcakes that is). I chatted with Jamie Chalmers aka **Mr X Stitch** and **Emily Peacock**, she of the lovely cushion tapestries while we made our professional-looking (ahem) pompoms in record time.

The new Fair will be at Hampton Court Palace in September, where they usually have the Flower Show. We are promised Craft Banquets where 100 people at a time can learn from experts like Sue Timney, Annie Sloan and Jane Means as well as a Theatre for demonstrations with a 600 seat capacity. Tickets go on sale in May and you can find out more at www.thehandmade.com. It will be a great day out, I can't wait.

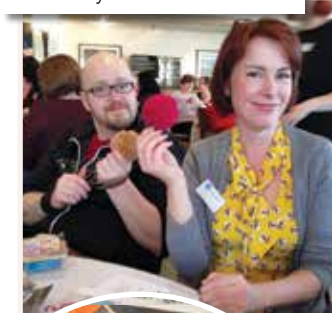
Alison Willoughby, queen of the embellished skirt



Yvette Estelle Jeffrey's structured cowl



Schmoozing with Mr X Stitch and Emily Peacock



Katie Jones of K2TOG and her up-cycled knitwear



1. Kirstie Allsopp launches The Handmade Fair at Hampton Court Palace 2. Two of Kirstie's 'experts' Annie Sloan and Sue Timney 3. Kirstie got us making pompoms