

Knitting: The Sweater is done

written by Holly

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By Holly Lisle

The wrists and hands are edging back toward being useful again—I've been writing and editing, and last night I was finally able to thread yarn through needle and put together THE SWEATER, a.k.a WristKiller. I've been working on this thing since last October, though not constantly. There have been socks, after all. A number of little items. Another sweater.

But this is THE Sweater. Done with wonderful yarn and lots of it, worked out on graph paper, swatched and calculated. There has been knitting. There has been ripping back, redesigning, rethinking. There has been profanity in amounts calculated to turn the air over the entire Deep South a rich and hair-curling shade of blue. There have even been injuries.

The knitting squeamish need to look away now. This was my first true knitting Everest, and at great personal cost I have conquered it, and now I'm going to bask for just a little bit in knitting geek talk.

This is, bar none, the best piece of knitting I've ever done, and since it is also the best piece of finishing I've ever done, and since it is ALSO my own design from top to bottom, without pattern or picture to spur me on, and since, when I got it all put together, it fit like a dream and looks good on me (something of a first there), I took pictures. Lots of pictures.

The little pictures are here. If you click them, you will see really big pictures. For those of you who are knitting geeks, I've also included finishing detail CLOSE-UPS. (Finishing detail close-ups make me shiver. I am a knitting geek.)

Yeah, I really like this sweater.



This was The Sweater last night at around seven p.m. At this point all the pieces have been blocked, the button bands have been knitted on and the handmade buttons are in place, and the collar is finished. (All that stuff was done weeks ago, before The Sweater got mean.)

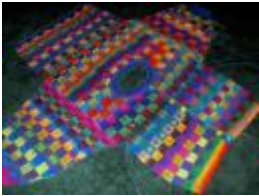
You see that collar? That collar is what got me. I knitted in three other collars before it, three different styles, and with all of them, I was working with small needles, in a cramped position, and with all of them I picked up stitches inside and outside in order to give the sweater the best possible finish.

By the time I finished the fourth collar, and then did the Kitchener stitch bind, off, my hands and wrist would no longer move. I had the weight of a good bit of the front and back of the sweater hanging off of them the whole time.

But I'm not doing the collar here. I'm marking center stitches in order to make sure the sleeve goes in where it's supposed to.



Bottom left corner of picture to the right—the book that taught me how to finish a sweater. This is a translation of the German version, by Katerina Buss, and I've used it to learn the right way to do about a hundred different things. How to invisible-stitch a sleeve into place was just the most recent.



The seaming technique, which involved the sort of counting that will put you in a trance (“one, one; two, one; three, one; four, two; one, one...”) kept the sleeves flat and prevented bulges from the differences between the horizontal and vertical stitch counts. I was enthralled watching the whole thing coming together.



CLOSE-UP #1. Buss’s technique worked beautifully.



This was my first experiment with Fair Isle on a large scale. I decided on a very simple pattern because I wanted to show off the yarn and the long color changes in it. The yarn, by the way, is **Noro Kureyon** in three colorways: 40, 95, and 182. I alternated two rows of blocks in one color, then removed the first color, added the third, removed the second, added the first, and so on. It gave the whole sweater a nice coherence, which considering the number of colors involved, was a challenge. When picking out the yarn (my big birthday present last year) I looked for nice contrasts in the colors, and avoided greys or blacks, which would have taken a lot of life out of the design. And I threw in random blocks within blocks just because it was fun.



I was really happy with the way my scoop-neck design turned out. And if you look closely, you can see a bit of the Kitchener-stitched button band and the hand-made button.

And then, the finished sweater.



And...



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