



a newsletter from
Meg Swansen

Dear Knitters,

People often ask what type of knitting I love best. For the past 4 or 5 decades, my answer has always been the same: **Knitting with Two Colors**. When working a geometric chart, as an OXO from Fair Isle, there is a soothing rhythm - a song - in each round of pattern; it is hypnotic and relaxing. On the other hand, if you knit a "picture" in the Armenian mode (hawk's head below right), it is an exciting prospect with no two rounds the same. For these projects, I get up early and stay up late – anxious to see what will emerge from my needles next.



During the past year, I have been at work with Amy Detjen and Cully Swansen, on a new book about color techniques. **Knitting with Two Colors** is the result of our combined decades of color knitting experience. Not only do we present techniques gathered through our knitting practice, we also offer a generous amount of original material developed by Elizabeth Zimmermann, Amy Detjen, Joyce Williams, Cully Swansen, and me.

Think of the varied and splendid panoply of color pattern knitting extant in the world: Turkish stockings, Latvian mittens, Icelandic yoke sweaters, Peruvian Chula caps, Swedish Bohus sweaters, Armenian garments, Norwegian Lus jackets, Estonian mittens and socks, British Fair Isle patterns, Macedonian tent socks, Faroe Islands sweater, etc. Such riches.

In **Knitting with Two Colors** our objective was to offer you tools to sharpen your two color knitting skills so that none of the world's traditions are out of reach to you – and that you may be inspired to become your own designer. The book is indeed a companion to the multitude of color patterns and color charts available to knitters today.

Surely the pinnacle of color knitting skill and beauty is reflected in the Swedish Bohus tradition, and I want to share with you some historical knowledge about that tradition, images of my small Bohus collection, and questions and answers about techniques related to color knitting.

The following is from an article I wrote for Vogue Knitting:

**Schoolhouse Press
Web**

Featured Books

*Knitting with Two
Colors*

Knitting with Two Colors
Techniques for Knitted Knitting and Dyeing Color-Flavored Garments



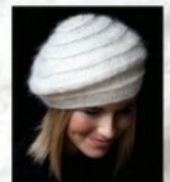
Meg Swansen & Amy Detjen

[Pre-order/Free
Shipping](#)

Knit One Knit All

KNIT ONE KNIT ALL

ELIZABETH ZIMMERMANN'S GREATEST STITCH DESIGNS



Diagonal Knitting

The extraordinarily beautiful knitting that resulted from a thirty-year period of Bohus Stickning in Sweden (1939 - 1969) began out of necessity. During the depression, unemployment among the stone cutters of Bohuslän was rampant. Since that occupation was the main source of income in the region, the situation became desperate when the company, Krueger, went bankrupt in 1931. A strong and politically active woman, Augusta Johanna Teng (who, in 1929 had initiated the Social Democrat Women's Club: "Unite and We Shall Prevail") travelled to Gothenburg to visit the wife of the governor, Austrian-born Emma Jacobsson. Augusta sought support to start a home-based industry among the stone cutters' wives to help them provide for their families.

Emma Jacobsson dove into the project and started the Bohuslän Domestic Industry. She organized classes to teach women to sew stuffed animals and to make other small craft items; they did not sell particularly well. Since nearly all the women could knit, Emma supplied wool for them to knit stockings and gloves. These items fared slightly better, so Emma established Bohus Stickning and, to assure excellent quality, provided specific training to the knitters.



Emma travelled extensively to secure outlets for the knitted goods - which had expanded to include hats, scarves and sweaters - and gradually demand increased. The organization advertised for knitters throughout Bohuslän; they had to prove their skill by producing samples of their work. Emma was very demanding and fastidious; in order to receive a Bohus Stickning label, a garment had to be knitted perfectly or it was rejected. With no specific traditional patterns or motifs in the knitting history of that part of Sweden, the possibility for new design was wide open.



The early sweaters were designed by Emma, but gradually others were drawn to the movement and Emma chose 5 talented designers to join the organization: Vera Bjurström, Anna-Lisa Mannheimer Lunn, Annika Malmström-Bladini, Kerstin Olsson and Karin Ivarsson. To the very fine wool - from the Swedish Landrace breed of sheep, now being bred specifically for length and luster - Emma added Angora. The wonderful softness and the halo of fiber on the surface of the fabric, resulted in the breathtakingly beautiful garments that we associate with Bohus Knitting.



What had begun as a cottage industry became a thriving business, moving from "relief work" to an artistic status symbol. A shop was established in Gothenburg, and, so highly valued were the sweaters that - when Nikita Krushchev and his wife paid a diplomatic visit to Sweden, their daughter was presented with a Bohus sweater; compliments of the Swedish government.

In the mid-1960's, the amount of currency Americans were permitted to take abroad was restricted. Sweden began to tax 'home' work so it was difficult to find new knitters. Machine knitting was ubiquitous, and people didn't want to pay \$300 for a sweater. The knitters themselves moved into higher paying jobs and sales dropped



Spinning Around

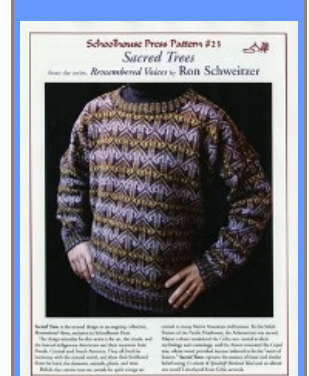


Featured Designs

[If I Could Fly](#)



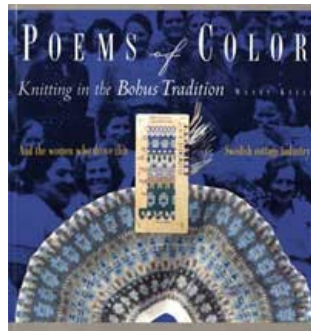
[Sacred Trees](#)



drastically.

With great reluctance in 1969, Emma, who was 81 years old and unable to find a successor, closed the business. Emma still attempted to maintain strict control over the Bohus patterns to protect them from being "...vulgarized in mass production," but she was unable to prevent several companies from plagiarizing the designs.

In 1986 an American knitter, Wendy Keele, was enchanted by the magic and myth of Bohus knitting. Over the ensuing nine years, Wendy studied, researched and travelled to Sweden to interview Bohus knitters. She received permission from Emma's daughter, Ingrid Mesterton, to reproduce the original charts and instructions - and when Wendy's book, *Poems of Color*, was published in 1995, a glad cry went up through the knitting community... we had thought the information unattainable.



In 2008, Swedish film producer, Kjell Andersson, put together a three-part DVD series depicting the stone cutting era of Bohuslän. The second part, *Bohus Knitting - From Relief Work to World Success*, is devoted to the history of this halcyon period in the annals of hand-knitting. The DVD is beautifully done, with an English voice-over and subtitles. I found it very moving to meet some of the Bohus-knitters who had worked so hard to help their families, and to see the exceptionally elegant knitting they produced. For all readers interested in knitting tradition and history, the book and the DVD are, indeed, a gift.



The steady stream of queries I receive feed this electronic Newsletter beautifully; thank you—and keep 'em coming.

Q&A

Q: The pattern I am working on has a 9 stitch stretch between colors. Elizabeth said that in most cases you shouldn't knit more than 5, any help?

A: Dear Mary, You have several choices for dealing with the long space between patterns. You may add a small tara-diddle between the flowers; just a simple single stitch, or a diamond of stitches over 3 rounds. That will break up the 9-stitch carry to 4, 3 and 4 in successive rounds. Or you may "trap" the carried color on the 4th of the 9-stitch carry. Indeed, my mother's rule was not to carry more than 5 stitches, but I go by measurement and do not carry greater than one inch. Thus if I have a gauge of 7 sts to 1", I will permit myself a 7-stitch carry. Now, with the advent of Armenian Knitting, all rules are out the window... you can have a 20-stitch carry and trap the carried color periodically across that span. Here are the instructions for trapping the right hand color when carrying one color in each hand (excerpted from the new book *Knitting with Two Colors*):

Wool Gathering



[Mitered Jacket or Vest](#)



[Keep on Knitting Tote](#)

As you knit along with the left hand color, you naturally hold the right hand color out of the way. To trap the right hand color, you must get it in the way of the stitch: 1. Insert tip of right needle into the stitch. 2. Wrap the right hand color around the needle as if to knit. 3. Wrap the left hand color around the needle as if to knit. 4. Unwrap the right hand color, back the way it came. 5. Complete the stitch with the left hand color.



Q: I'm knitting the Fair Isle cardigan from Meg Swansen's Knitting book. I have finished the body, and it really looks stunning, but I'm a bit confused knitting the sleeves. You mention to mark three stitches after the increase round above the border. Do you knit these stitches in background colour or just incorporate them with the main pattern? My seam looks rather bulky when I just knit them in the background color.

A: Dear Pamela, I keep the 3 underarm stitches in light, dark, light (or dark, light, dark) throughout the entire length of the sleeve; they are never interrupted by color pattern or shaping. The increases are worked before and after the 3 marked sts. This makes a very tidy underarm as the vertical stripes prevent the motif from meeting at the beginning of the round and eliminates the annoying "jog" one usually gets in circular color patterns.



Q: How do you add new yarn while knitting pattern work? I have the Knitting Glossary DVD, but I must have missed that particular part. I know you mention just picking up the new yarn and continuing on and later coming back and making a square knot. Is that the way or is there another that might be better?

A: (from Cully): Dear Melissa, There is information on the [Glossary](#) under 'Joining In' - perhaps you were looking in a different spot. That should help you, but here is a brief sketch of our methods: We prefer to splice in the new color (as shown on the Glossary). Even if it is a different color but close in tone, you can splice the new color to the old when it is an overall pattern because the few stitches that would be knit with the combined colors will not be noticeable within the pattern. If the two colors contrast greatly (say red and white), it might be better to leave a tail of the new and a tail of the old, then later darn those tails diagonally across the inside of the fabric with a sharp sewing-up needle. We never use knots in our knitting; darning looks better and is more secure.

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If you have questions you wish to see answered in a future newsletter, please write to us at info@schoolhousepress.com.

Onward,
HSP