

Publication: June 2008

Inspired to Knit: Creating Exquisite Handknits

By Michele Rose Orne

Get inside the artistic mind of talented knitwear designer Michele Rose Orne and discover her secrets to creating beautiful handknits for any season. *Inspired to Knit* (Interweave Press, \$24.95) features four mini workshops and twenty-one patterns to help knitters think creatively, find inspiration in their surroundings, and shape those elements into garment design. Along the way knitters will pick up invaluable tips and tricks Orne has never shared before.

Stunning patterns are photographed beautifully throughout the book and arranged by season, reflecting the colors and beauty of nature that inspires Michele's feminine designs. This remarkable year of knitting begins in Autumn, when Orne says, "The knitter's year begins . . . it's a time when I come indoors and begin to think about richly colored sweater coats, shawls, hats, wraps, and gloves to stave off the chill."

With poetry and charm, Orne makes a classic case for finding knitting inspiration in the environment around you. From an amber beaded cardigan that captures the feeling of hay fields drying in the sun to a long, belted coat with a spray of feminine coral roses inspired by flowers in her local market to an intarsia jacket that evokes memories of a fall hike in a forest, each pattern is rich with color, detailing, and romantic knitting style.

Included are design workshops that guide and challenge readers to exercise their creativity:

- **Workshop #1 Finding Inspiration** offers ideas for crafting a mood board from collected objects to create a theme for design work.
- **Workshop #2 Building a Color Palette** is a continuation of the mood board workshop, where knitters are guided into mixing color combinations using their yarn stash, embroidery threads, and paint chips to represent the images on the mood board.
- **Workshop #3 Swatching and Sketching** translates the mood board and color palette into knitting. Knitters will make a series of swatches and sketches that capture the feelings in their mood boards. This is a different kind of swatch—a "creative swatch" that lets one test ideas and stitch patterns without investing in a full-size garment.
- **Workshop #4 Styling and Fitting** is the final step in designing a knitted piece, making a working pattern from the original swatches and sketches created in Workshop #3. Here Michelle offers practical advice on applying specific size requirements to a silhouette to make a schematic and then translating those sizes into numbers of stitches and rows.

These unique exercises and beautiful patterns will inspire knitters to think more creatively about their knitting, enjoy the rewards of experimentation, and to see the possibilities of knitting with the seasons.

About the author: Michele Rose Orne has been designing for more than 20 years in the garment and handknitting industry. She has designed for Westminster Fibers, Classic Elite, Tahki, and was a design director for a large sweater importer. She has designed for many publications including *Interweave Knits*, *Vogue Knitting*, and *Handknit Holidays*. She lives in Camden, Maine.

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Michele Rose Orne

Interweave Press • June 2008 • \$24.95

Paperbound with flaps • 9 x 9 • 160 pages • 120 photographs • ISBN 978-1-59668-041-8

Distributed to the book trade by Independent Publishers Group

☀ Get Inspired by the Seasons, excerpt from *Inspired to Knit*, by Michele Rose Orne

AUTUMN: Autumn is all about harvesting, saving, and collecting. It's about savoring the light as days get shorter, about soaking up the warmth of Indian summer days, and about preparing for the long gray coldness ahead. It's a time when I come indoors and begin to think about richly colored sweater coats, shawls, hats, wraps, and gloves to stave off the chill. I fill my design baskets with nature-inspired palettes of wools, alpacas, and cashmeres that beg to be combined in Fair Isle and intarsia designs. I'm drawn to classic yarns—heathered alpacas, vegetable-dyed handspun wools, tweeds, marls, and other natural blends—in hues of gold-toned neutrals, vibrant reds and oranges, rich browns, and woodsy greens. I love to collect leaves, pinecones, grasses, seedpods, and dried flowers for texture and color ideas. I like to arrange them in different designs and patterns that inspire my knitting—its color palettes, textures, and shapes.

WINTER: Winter is the perfect time of year for knitting. Quiet indoor time encourages us to unwind to the rhythm of clicking needles. The world outside slows to a calmer, more serene pace inspired by the landscape outside, I turn to more subdued colors as well. My designs revolve around mostly solid-colored textures—cable patterns inspired by the grays, creams, whites, beiges, blues, and browns that reflect the various textures of barren trees, fields covered in drifted snow, cloudy skies, and the tiny patterns in snowflakes and ice crystals. Sometimes simple and sometimes complex, the patterns of winter often emphasize softness and warmth and focus on natural fibers that imbue a sense of coziness.

SPRING: Spring's freshness and its lengthening days inspire knitting that's light, both in color and texture. Crisp greens, whites, ivories, and shades of pink erupt all around. The dainty first flowers of spring, wet with drops of rain, shift my design sense to all things light, wispy, and feminine. I turn to open, airy stitches in fresh pastel colors as buds bloom and delicate ferns unfurl their new leaves. Spring is definitely the time for knitting lace. . . . Look closely at the shapes and colors of spring flowers, birds, and insects to get ideas for embroidery and lace accents you can add to your own knitting projects.

SUMMER: In summer, we want to slow down, relax, and take pleasure in this long-awaited season of respite. Yet we also try hard to enjoy every moment of sunlight and outdoor fun in the all-too-short weeks between the end of one school year and the beginning of the next. It's a time for weddings, reunions, and vacations. Not surprisingly, knitting tends to slip closer to the bottom of our to-do lists as other activities take over. For the most part, my summer designs are simple enough to work on at the beach or a baseball game. This is the time I reach for shimmery handdyed silk, nubby raw silk, natural linen, and lightweight summery cotton yarns in crisp colors.

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Linda Ligon founded the company in the 1970s when she began publishing *Handwoven* and *Spin-Off* magazines. Since then, the company has grown to employ more than 100 people throughout the country, with corporate headquarters located in Loveland, Colo. For more information on Interweave Press, please visit interweave.com or call (970) 669-7672.

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