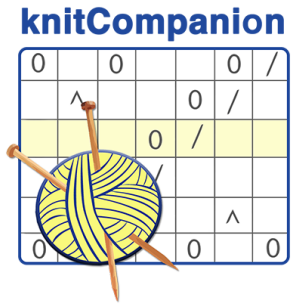




Inside the Designer's Studio

Laura Patterson

Fiber Dreams



I first learned about Laura's work when I saw her fabulous Lalique lace sweater. At the time, I wasn't an experienced enough knitter and knitCompanion wasn't even an idea so I didn't cast on right away. But a few years later, it all came together and I found myself test knitting the kCDesign for Lalique. Not long after that, I had the opportunity to meet Laura in person at Madrona. I also love to follow her on twitter, her backyard is filled with lovely things and her feed lightens up even gloomy snow days. You can tell from her patterns how much her surroundings inspire her imagination.

Sally:

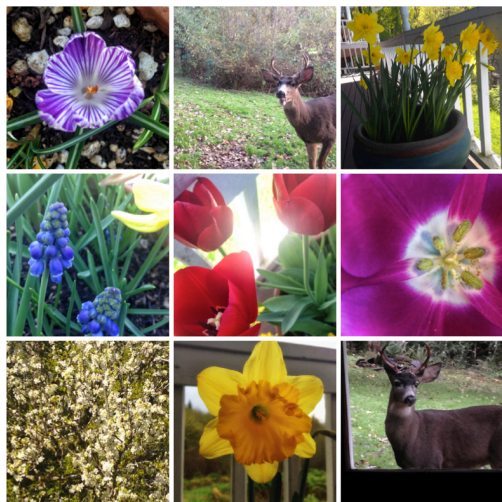
You have such a prolific collection of designs, with inspiration drawn from many different places. Tell us a bit about your journey to becoming a designer.

Laura: We hadn't been together all that long before my husband, Dave, noticed that I always seemed to change something on almost everything I knit—lengthen here, add a pocket there, change the neckline from rolled to ribbed, and more than once I used a yarn with a drastically different gauge than the pattern called for and had to interpolate all stitch and row counts to meet my gauge. From that time on he encouraged me to try my hand at designing from the ground up. Though we lived in southern California at the time, our house was always cold in the winter, especially his office, and he wanted a lap blanket. Knowing his life-long love of quilts, I decided to knit him one. I pulled a bunch of similar yarns left over from odd projects decades before out of my stash, and knit him a small blanket ([Pinwheel](#)). About six months later I designed a sock, and released that pattern too. After that I did a lace shawl, then a pair of socks for Dave. More socks and more lace followed, cables too, whenever the mood struck me. I was hooked. This designing thing is fun, and I seemed to already have a good number of the skills required to make a go of it.

I know you and your husband, Dave, enjoy exploring craft beer. Do you have a favorite brewery or style?

Neither of us can pick a single brewery or style as favorite, always above everything else. It depends on so many things. What's the weather like? Am I eating, or just enjoying a quiet beer? What time of year is it? What's my mood? Generally speaking I enjoy ales and lagers equally well, either light or dark in color, or anything in between. I don't mind a hoppy beer, so long as there's enough malt to balance out the hops. I go for balance, regardless of the style. We have been lucky to enjoy the friendship of a number of brewers over the years. One, a man named Jack, used to have an interesting method of testing his own beers. He'd brew up a new recipe, let it be sold in the pub. He'd go sit at the bar, and drink the beer. If he wanted another one after finishing the glass, that was good. If he wanted another one a couple glasses later, then the recipe was a winner. If not, he'd tweak the recipe until it passed muster. Ultimately, that is our test of a good beer. If we want another one after finishing the first pint, it's a winner. Today.

Many of your patterns are inspired by things in nature, and I've seen some lovely pictures taken right in your own garden. What is your process to move from inspiration to pattern?



Images from Laura's Garden

My process? I don't really know. It varies. A lot of my ideas start with me browsing stitch dictionaries with a particular yarn or project type in mind. I'm always drawn to flower and leaf designs, lace, cables, singly or in combination. It also depends on the time of year, the yarn I have to design with, the purpose of the design (as a self-published piece, or a submission to a magazine or yarn company), my mood, what I've designed recently, and how I felt about it, holes in my portfolio that need to be filled... But then, sometimes ideas, thoughts, directions just pop into my head. I occasionally wake up from a dream with a design fully formed. I wish that happened more often! My most recent design, [Tea Leaves](#), was more work than some, but far less than others. I knew I wanted to do another pullover sweater, and a t-shirt sounded good. I wanted an all-over lace pattern for it though, one that's easy to knit, but not

flowers this time, and I wanted the sleeves to be different than the body. Once I found the right combination of stitches it clicked, and I knit the model in less than two weeks.

I've heard you SCUBA dive. Do you have a favorite dive location or dive experience that sparked a design?

One year we lucked into a dive trip to the Solomon Islands. This island string can be found in the Pacific Ocean northeast of Australia, east of Papua New Guinea, and northwest of Fiji—basically in the middle of nowhere. We flew from southern California to Hawaii, then the flight from Hawaii to Fiji was 19 hours. The next day we took another plane from Fiji to the Solomons via an even smaller island nation called Vanuatu, where we stopped for an hour or so to gas up the plane. The trip was in November, and the Solomon Islands are south of the equator, so it was spring down there. Once there we traveled from island to island on a live-aboard dive yacht. The air was pleasantly warm, the sky was a brilliant blue (except for the daily squall), the sea caressed the skin, and the waters were so clear it seemed that you could easily reach out and touch the bottom, which was actually many feet below the surface. The color of the water changed constantly, depending on what was nearby and how deep it was, ranging from deepest blue to brilliant turquoise. You know those travel shots that entice you to go on a tropical holiday where the soft turquoise water laps gently against white sand beaches? Those pictures don't lie. That's what it's like there. Years later I saw a yarn in a light but brilliant turquoise, a color that took me back to those magical days. [Pacific Islands](#) is the result.



[Pacific Islands](#)



[Canterbury Bells](#)



[Tea Leaves](#)



[North Coast](#)



[Lalique](#)