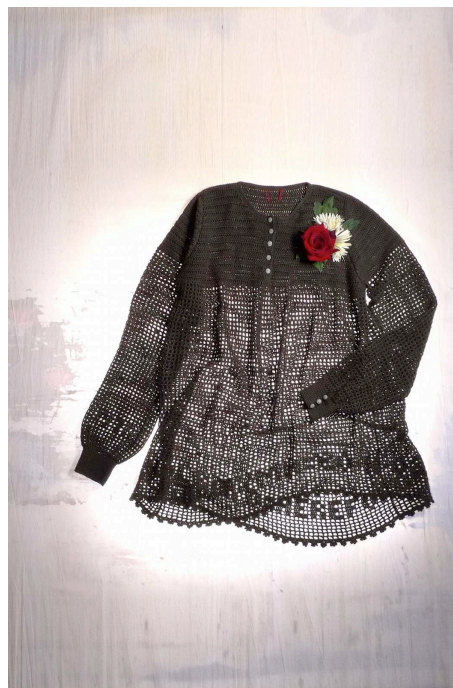


Stitch-Hacking and Pattern-Blagging: a manifesto

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'Who Made This?' stitch-hacked cardigan, 2009



'20.11.09 / 1976' crocheted smock, 2010

This paper outlines a new project which explores authorship and longevity in relation to the creation of emotionally significant knitted items. It seeks to inspire wearers and knitters through two new techniques – stitch-hacking and pattern-blagging – and an associated manifesto.

As a knitwear designer working towards a goal of sustainability, I am concerned about the prevalent attitude towards fashion consumption. We buy and discard huge quantities of mass-produced, identikit knitwear every year, thinking little about where and how the garments are made.

Meanwhile, many hand knitters follow patterns slavishly. They are 'passive' makers, aiming to create an exact copy of the photographed sample and lacking the confidence to make individual alterations. Making their items 'as good as something from the shops' raises a worrying question: could the process of knitting a garment from a pattern actually be a delayed-reaction version of the usual throwaway consumer process?

I propose two methods of working which encourage knitters and wearers to make creative decisions, and physically make their mark on their knitwear. 'Pattern-blagging' is the modification of an existing knitting or crochet pattern to create a personalised item, while 'stitch-hacking' involves the reconfiguration of stitches in an existing knitted garment.

The manifesto invites individuals to use these methods to 'hack' existing patterns and garments to create integral text and symbols, recording details such as maker, source, time, and place. The use of text – inspired by historical examples – is an unashamed attempt to foster long-lasting meaning and emotional appeal. It offers makers the chance to express themselves both personally and politically and to record the time invested in a piece; and it directs viewers to reflect on the origin, and individuality, of knitted garments in wider terms.