



Newsletter #25 spring 2014 *Twisted-Stitch Knitting*



“What is a ‘Travelling-Stitch’? ... no more than a miniature two-stitch cable which edges its way to left or to right.”
- Elizabeth Zimmermann, *Knitter’s Almanac*, 1974

New Patterns from Meg Swansen



SPP#37 **Twisted-Stitch Peplum Jacket**

This flattering, form-fitting jacket (knitted in our *Québécoise Wool*) features a ribbed peplum and beautiful Twisted-Stitch patterns from Maria Erlbacher’s wonderful book.

Free Shipping
(U.S. only) on Orders
over \$60. Use discount
code: PEPLUM



SPP#52 **North African Pullover**

The dazzling all over patterns inspired by classic carpet/textile designs from North Africa highlight this 2-ply *Unspun Icelandic Wool* pullover.

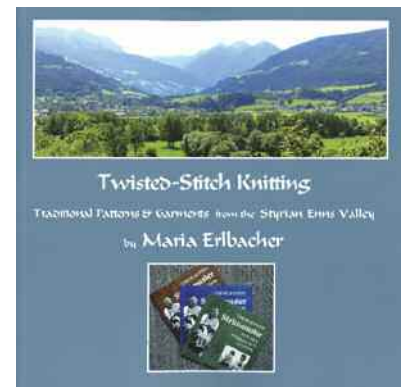
Dear Knitter,

Working Twisted-Stitch patterns is one of my favorite knitting activities. Years ago I designed a Peplum Jacket with Twisted-Stitch motifs. Knitters have asked for the instructions, so recently I knitted an updated version which is now available as SPP#37 (see above). The motifs are from Maria Erlbacher’s collection, *Twisted-Stitch Knitting*. Read more on page 2 about my meeting with Maria and the journey to keep her patterns in print.



Save 20% on Twisted-Stitch Collection!

Special offer: Save over 20% when you order SPP#37 together with *Twisted-Stitch Knitting* - now \$30 (retail \$38).



Meeting Maria Erlbacher by Meg Swansen

Over the past fifteen years, my sister Lloie and I have had frequent occasions to travel to Europe...but there is always a good *reason* for the trip - which is one of our rules.



Eight years ago, our quest took us to the Styrian Enns Valley in Austria, southeast of Salzburg, where we found the Castle at Trautenfels. We were in search of master knitter Maria Erlbacher, who, since 1975 had been teaching classes in Twisted-Stitch knitting at the castle and had collected 174 stitch patterns, which she distributed into into three

booklets, published and sold by the museum shop.

We imported the booklets, *Überlieferte Strickmuster Aus Dem Steirischen Ennstale*, for many years and provided an accompanying English translation. Suddenly, in the early 1990s the booklets became unobtainable. The museum said something about being unable to reprint them ever again as the plates had been lost...?

For many years, I wrote letters (and, eventually emails) to the head of the museum shop expressing my devotion to, and gratitude for the information encased in the books, and would they permit me to translate and re-publish the books here through Schoolhouse Press? This offer was met with skepticism and suspicion (or was it a language thing?). Finally I decided that I must meet with Frau Erlbacher in person -- and, anyway, our cousin Michael was getting married in Vienna, so there was a Double Purpose to our trip.

I made an appointment to meet with Maria; knitted a wedding shawl for Michael's bride Lili (a tablecloth pattern from Marianne Kinzel), and off we went.

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Lloie modelled Lili's wedding shawl just before our departure.

About Twisted-Stitch Knitting

For many years, we referred to this technique as "Bavarian", but Maria Erlbacher credits its origin to Austria - and specifically to the Styrian Enns Valley. Maria's mentor, Thekla Zeiler, contributed a majority of the 174 motifs collected in this book and, as with many knitting techniques, the actual genesis of this discipline has melted into the mists of time.

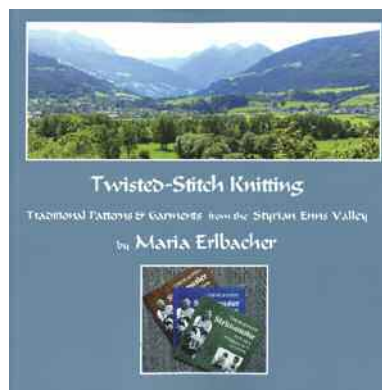
This type of knitting differs from Aran patterns in that there are no plain knit stitches involved (well, I can find *one* among the 174 motifs in the book); just twisted knits, purls, travelling sts, and cables. Because a twisted knit stitch is firm and stands out from the fabric, the resulting designs look as if it has been carved in wool. As you can imagine, it is a bit slower to work,

but there is a wonderfully satisfying rhythm to the process -- and the ultimate reward is spectacular. Many knitters use these patterns for socks, as twisted stitches add not only add great beauty, but also strength to the fabric.

Using a firmly-spun and -plied wool to enhance the appearance, try the technique on a hat (SPP #7) and see if you aren't pleased and impressed with the result. A sample chart can be found in the Q&A section, ahead.

P.S. The charts developed by Mrs. Erlbacher are unique - but I have permission to tell you that one of the foremost Twisted-Stitch teachers in this country - Candace Eisner Strick -

considers Maria's charting method to be superior to all others, and worth learning.



Twisted-Stitch Knitting
by Maria Erlbacher.

have the kind of restless curiosity that itches until it gets a solution, especially anything involving knitting ...of course I feel the same way so that's why I appreciate you!]

(Latvian Braid is beautifully and traditionally used on many of the mittens in the book by Lizbeth Uptis, *Latvian Mittens*, plus SPP#12, *Acorns & Tumbling Blocks* by Joyce Williams.)

Q: I am wondering if you folks have any tips or suggestions when making a seamless yoke sweater in cables. I am familiar with yoke sweaters but *not* with cables; I was hoping to stay slightly in my comfort zone.

A: Dear Debbie, Adding cables will create more interest - both in the final appearance of the garment, and for the knitter.

If cabling through the entire body, plan the cable locations carefully, allowing for the 8-10% of underarm stitches and, especially for whatever decrease you have planned for the yoke section. Vertical decreases may narrow the spaces between the cables and be very handsome. Or, depending upon the cable, the decreases may mysteriously narrow the cable themselves.

Allow for the fact that cables "take in"; work your gauge swatch in pattern, and block judiciously.

Do not work the first cable-crossing too close to the lower edge; it will make a blip in the border.

If you choose a wide cable, cast on fewer sts for each cable at the very beginning and increase up to full cable width during the first crossing; this will prevent both scallops *and* flaring-out along the lower edge.

[Follow up: Thank you Meg! I'm really glad I asked!...I never thought of "blips and scallops" along the lower edge!]

Q: I have long adored your Twisted-Stitch Saddle-Sleeved Cardigan pattern (from the book, *Meg Swansen's Knitting*, now oop) and have finally embarked on knitting it for my husband in celebration of our 25th anniversary. All has gone well up to the yoke, and this is where my imagination and the directions seem to have fallen short.

I was really hoping to incorporate the beautiful cable down the sleeve & across the back yoke of the sweater, but there doesn't seem to be enough room (# of stitches planned for the yoke pickup is only 10 stitches, and the cable alone is 16 sts). It seems from the picture on page 102 that less than 10 sts were picked up at the yoke and stitches enough for half the arm cable as well. Then, maybe the other half of the cable is added in at the

second set of cast on sts, as well as some more garter sts. Again, there seems to be a whole lot more sts than 23 by that point.

I would so appreciate a bit of guidance at this point, if you have some pointers.

A: Dear Erin, For the saddle: cast on (in the middle of the neck-back) slightly *less* than half the wanted saddle width - including *half* the cable.

Work back and forth making a selvedge at neck edge, and knitting the last (back) saddle-stitch together with 2 raw body sts - until you reach the edge of wanted neck opening. Then cast on the other half of the cable plus more saddle sts to achieve total wanted saddle-width.

Knit across the full saddle, uniting it to raw body sts at front and back, until you reach the armhole.

Knit up sleeve sts -- and, as written in the book and demonstrated on the dvd (*Saddle Sleeve Jacket and Twisted Stitch Hat*), about every 10 ridges, work an extra Garter-ridge each side of the cable, as the uneven ratio of stocking-stitch (cable) to square Garter stitch will make the cable hump up if no allowance is made.

Q: A quick question about the Nancy Bush *Birch Leaf Socks* in your book, *A Gathering of Lace*.

I'm confused about the instruction for 1/2 RT ('knit in to 3rd stitch and then work first and 2nd sts'). Am I not to use a cable needle? and do I hold 1 and 2 in either front or back?

A: It is a bit awkward, dear Janice.

With the 3 sts in question on your left needle, skip past stitches 1 and 2 and knit into stitch 3.

Now twist the right needle a bit and knit into 1, then 2 - and slip all 3 sts off the left needle.

If you'd rather use a cable needle, hold sts 1 and 2 in back as you knit 3.

Or, slip all 3 sts to R needle. From behind, insert L needle into 1 and 2. Slide all 3 sts from R needle and, with R needle pick up 3; insert L needle and knit it; knit 1 and 2.

They are beautiful stockings; good knitting.