

Knitting is Reflective

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Knitting is reflective.

Every day I take the bus to and from my job as a Web designer. Before I taught myself to knit in March '04, I would bring a book to occupy myself during the half-hour commute. A group of rowdy women usually sit at the front of the bus, so I would station myself as far to the back as possible. Attempting to immerse myself in fascinating stories written by people with far more exciting lives than mine, I'd settle myself and crack open the latest novel. I wouldn't get more than two paragraphs in, however, when I'd be interrupted.

"Cawwwwwwwwwkkkkkk....oohh oohhhooohh.....ahhhkkk!"

That's Chicken Woman, known to everyone else as Pat, a portly woman who seems to be the ring-leader of the group of rowdies. At 7:15 A.M. everything is funny. Even if it isn't. Pat laughs every morning, loudly, sounding like a chicken having a heart attack (or perhaps choking on an errant bit of feed). Losing my place in the book, I look up at Chicken Woman sitting in one of those seats reserved for the handicapped and slapping her knee at her latest attempt to ridicule the lone man in her band of idiots, and give her the Evil Eye. Then I turn back to my book and attempt to go on.

Despite the interruptions, and they were daily, I managed to finish about a book a week. Then I discovered the joys of yarn and knitting.

Several of my girlfriends claimed to knit, and I had seen the Mobius scarf Melinda had started. We'd all go to Borders and they'd ooh and ahh over the latest knitting books and discuss felting (sorry, fulling!) while I'd go find something else for the bus. I was jealous. I wanted to knit too! Especially since I had just found an elderly pair of knitting needles, size 9, when I was cleaning out my mother's sewing stash. Mom never knit, but her father did crochet. They may have belonged to my paternal grandmother, but I'll never know for certain. So I found myself purchasing some cheap acrylic yarn and a copy of *Stitch and Bitch*. I was going to knit!

Once I got going, I was hard to stop. I soon amassed a prodigious stash (who'd have thought yarn was so sexy?) and lots of finished scarves, hats, and felted purses. My friends later confessed that although they had learned to knit some time before me, they had not gotten much farther than garter stitch scarves. Forget fulling. I was a bit disappointed, since I figured I would be learning from them and not the other way around. But still, I was knitting and I was enjoying it and I was pleased.

I'm not one of those folks who needs to always be doing something with her hands in order to pay attention to the world around her. On the contrary, I can sit quite still and do nothing for hours at a time. That's what television is for. But I am a crafter, and I enjoy producing finished items. For many years, I've spent time holed up in my office/studio, laboriously stitching together beads and gems to make elaborate

neckpieces. It was fun when I was single, it whiled away the time. Now that I am married however, I want to spend more time with my husband and less time with the beads. And his idea of a fun evening is sitting in front of the boob tube, zoning out with The West Wing. Beading isn't exactly a portable project, especially not with three curious and often needy cats. Knitting, on the other hand, is eminently portable, and can be done everywhere (except in the shower, although I have never tried using waterproof yarn). So now I spend time with hubby AND continue to create. (Everyone is getting something knitted for Christmas!)

Some weekend afternoons I can sit in the living room for hours on end, knitting. And while I knit, I cogitate, reflect, and occasionally vegetate. What should I make for dinner? What font should I use for the buttons on that real estate site? Do I have enough pairs of earrings made for the Christmas craft show? If I ever sit down to finish my novel, how can I fit in the part about...? As I produce scarf after scarf, I also can piece together my next steps in the many other creative projects that make up my life.

I started taking my knitting on the bus. Reading is great, but how much more knitting can I squeeze into a day (not to mention how much more of my tons of yarn can I use up) if I use that hour of travel time wisely? I remembered admiring the work of a woman I had seen on the Light Rail one morning. She appeared to be knitting a sweater of brown wool, and I was fascinated watching her fingers move quickly and gracefully while creating her fabric. Watching her work made the commute seem shorter, and I hoped watching my own hands work would do the same.

Ah, but that meditative quality of knitting gets in the way sometimes. As a reader I was mostly interrupted by loud or obnoxious sounds. With my nose in a book, I could escape from most of what surrounded me. But as a knitter, and one who can multitask by combining mental work and flying fingers, I find myself distracted by everything. Whereas before I would find myself fantasizing about smacking Chicken Woman over the head with my latest hardback, now I contemplated how much damage a plastic knitting needle would inflict should I choose to stab the woman with it. And that woman who sounds like Yaphet Kotto and listens to her headphones too loud (come on, Mariah Carey at 7:30 in the morning? Is this really necessary?) – should I poke the needle in MY ear when she starts to sing along?

As I mentioned, knitting is reflective. Let's hope it isn't also potentially dangerous.