

For each issue of *Knitscene*, we choose a designer to create a special collection. Here we take a look at the work of an art student turned LYS owner turned indie dyer turned fulltime designer and teacher.

Taking Shape Mercedes Tarasovich-Clark

By Clair McLafferty

Unlike a lot of knitwear designers, Mercedes Tarasovich-Clark has not been knitting since she was a kid. In fact, it was not until her mid-twenties that she really got into working with yarn. Now, she is the owner of Mercedes Knits, an online business that encases her knitwear designs and, until recently, was the sister to Kitchen Sink Dyeworks, her now disbanded yarn company. With an almost untenable work schedule of designing, dyeing, and teaching, she recently decided to pursue more design work—and to do that work with other dyers' yarns.

As a fiber art and textile major at Savannah College of Art and Design, Mercedes learned how to shape and design garments from textiles, and there became familiar with spinning and dyeing fibers. From 2004 to 2009, this parlayed into ownership of Knit Nouveau, a local yarn store in Homewood, Alabama. During this time, she developed the knitting-specific skills she has parlayed into her designs and her effective instructing on particulars of the subject.

Though she had designed and tweaked patterns for her own personal use before this point, it was in the shop that she began writing patterns for others' use. A few of these patterns were published in an online setting, but most of those fashioned during this time were sold in the store itself. Because Mercedes had tailored these patterns to the demands of what the local population would want, she was able to begin publishing more



Cory Norrion



Fleurette Camisole

Mercedes says: This camisole was inspired by historical garments, with its sweet color palette and delicate floral embroidery. Done at a larger scale than the tiny handwork of yesteryear, this is a modern interpretation of a cool linen chemise, with a duplicate stitch pattern and fluid short-row shaping in a simple A-line shape.
Yarn Classic Elite Yarns Firefly Pattern page 00

Seberg Sweater

Mercedes says: Inspired by Jean Seberg's striped wardrobe in the 1960s French film *Breathless*, this boatneck has a dramatic collar and curvy shaping. Hemmed edges keep the detailing crisp and modern, while internal waist darts add a sleek tailored fit.

Yarn Brown Sheep Cotton Fleece
Pattern page 00



experimental patterns and hand dyeing yarn after Knit Nouveau closed its doors. This change presented her “a lot more freedom. I can design to a broader base and do more of what I want because of the world-wide audience,” she said

It is not surprising that the freedom she has so enjoyed has translated into having designed patterns for yarn companies, online venues, and print. Further, she has more than 60 patterns posted on Ravelry, some with upwards of 2,000 likes, and an *Interweave Knits* cover feature already under her belt. Mercedes' distinctive style has been fleshed out by her numerous designs and shines through in the pieces she designed for her *Knitscene* collection.

Focusing on creating what she dubs “classic silhouettes with modern detailing,” the curves in the detailing on her work draw the eye to the curves created by the shaping in so many of her designs.

In her *Knitscene* collection, Mercedes describes each piece as being individually “tied back to a retro vibe” that seems to stem from a different era in each design, with a color palette to match the style. The first is a camisole-type garment. With closely crafted detailing and “color play that makes it look like an undergarment is peeking through,” the shirt is laid back enough to be flower child chic. The second, she says, was “inspired by having watched a lot of 1960s French movies, *Breathless* in particular. It's very curvy, with a high, dramatic collar.” The last, knit in a vibrant mustard yellow, is her 1950s sweater girl sweater. “It's fitted, it's nipped in at the waist, and it's meant to be close fitting.”

Despite having kicked around plans to create a compilation of designs for a book for quite a while, Mercedes is now focusing on creating mini-collections like the one shown here. These collections will allow her to experiment further with some of her favorite techniques, such as brioche knitting, colorwork, and embroidery. Grounded in her teaching experience, she has also forayed into writing technique articles and she recently produced a DVD workshop with *Interweave: Knitting Brioche Basics with Mercedes Tarasovich-Clark*.

The play of color that features strongly in Mercedes' designs is reflected in the colors of the walls of her home and workspace in Bessemer, Alabama. She shares the space with her husband Chris and a small passel of animals that serve as her cheerleaders and a constant source of entertainment.

Clair McLafferty is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Alabama who is still learning to knit. Find her on Twitter @see_clair_write.



Beulah Cardigan

Mercedes says: I'm in love with retro fashion—this slim-fitting cardigan channels the spirit of 1950s “sweater girl” looks. Scallop embroidery adds detailing without being overly sweet and a modern color palette makes it a classic for today. This is the kind of garment I love to have in my wardrobe to layer over camis.

Yarn Kitchen Sink Dyeworks Seacell Merino Fine (see *pattern Notes*)

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