

AGENT'S  
IMPRESSIVE  
LOGO ☺

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(Note: yes I work with an agent, though it's by no means necessary and not a typical practice, I think, for knitting books.

**KNITTING TOGETHER:**  
*knitalongs, stitch-n-bitches, bees,  
and 15 classic projects to knit among friends*

by  
**Larissa Brown & Martin John Brown**

## SOME KNITALONGS PAST AND PRESENT



## Knitting Together: The Pitch

As 2,573 athletes schlussed and stumbled their way through the Torino Olympics, back in North America one blogger decided that knitters should play along with them. On a whim she declared that any knitter starting and finishing an especially challenging project during the 16 days of the games would get a digital gold medal.

More than 4,000 knitters responded. The "Knitting Olympics" was one of the biggest—and quickest—knitalongs in history, and the blogger, Stephanie Pearl-McPhee, reached thousands of potential new readers for her books (e.g. *Yarn Harlot*, Andrews McMeel 2005).

It wasn't just a freak event. As the popularity of knitting has surged and the age of the typical knitter has fallen, the social aspect of knitting has expanded like lightning and taken on a life of its own. Yarn shops are transforming into knitting cafes where friends meet, drink, eat, and knit. Bars are adding craft nights. And the Internet is a constant source of advice, feedback, and collaboration, from hundreds of user-created tutorials on crafster.org to in-person meetings of The Church of Craft—a quasi-spiritual craft swap meet—held all around the United States. Internet-hosted lists, such as the "SNB Portland" yahoo group, help knitters in one community connect in real life. Portland's group of 519 knitters lists more than 50 monthly knitting "meetups" at bars, yarn shops, and homes around the city.

In 2005, more than 140 online knitalongs were held, with entrants from around the globe, and 48 have already formed online in 2006 as of March. Two years ago, Larissa put out an online plea for volunteer knitters to contribute to an art installation that involved more than a hundred hats. The response was overwhelming, with knitters contributing from as far away from Oregon as Australia.

Despite the abundance of pattern books (*Stitch N Bitch* series, 400,000+ sold, Workman, 2004-2006) and knitting memoirs (*Compassionate Knitting*, Tuttle, 2005) produced for these new knitters, *no non-academic work has focused on this amazing collective and communal aspect of knitting.* (Note: I think we take too long to get to this point, now that I read this again years later.)

*Knitting Together: knitalongs, stitch-n-bitches, bees, and 15 classic projects to knit among friends* fills that void with friendliness, intelligence, and style.

It's a book about the rich world of collective knitting, from Red Cross sock-making drives of World War I to today's stitch n bitch sessions over Cosmopolitans and online knitalongs among hundreds and thousands of friends who've never met in person. The book shows the reader how collective knitting has been done in the past and how it's exploding today, exploring the whys and hows of knitting alongside friends, the community that develops around knitting projects, and the repetitive and subtle beauty of the handknitted items that can result. Along the way, the book delivers tips about the various kinds of knitalongs (there are many!) and how to successfully focus and organize your own collective knitalong, either online or in the flesh.

At the heart of *Knitting Together* are 15 patterns and projects, chosen and edited especially for use in the knitalong or communal setting.

Not every knitting pattern in the world is right for knitting among friends, but author Larissa Brown has found the keys. "It has to be something you can riff on," she says—patterns that are complete so they can be followed as is, yet flexible enough to stimulate the reader's own improvisations, and the fun of sharing and comparing. "What I call a 'pure' pattern is elegantly simple. It provides a structure, so that each knitter brings his or her own imagination and hand to the outcome, creating something uniquely their own."

A perfect example: *Knitting Together's* round "pinwheel blanket," a pattern by designer Genia Planck, based on an old Mary Thomas design that has been adapted by contemporary knitters. The blanket is at once down-to-earth and graceful, easy enough for all skill levels, yet still engaging for advanced knitters and those who want a simple project for some very special yarn. In the pinwheel pattern, knitters find a remarkable amount of room for expressing themselves with variations in materials, colors, and decorative edgework.

Other proposed original patterns for *Knitting Together* include a choose-your-own-lace-pattern baby bonnet, a striped chevron shawl that can be made with scraps or several colors of new yarn, and an afghan that can be made as a single work by several knitters or that each knitter can make on his or her own, varying the yarn and needle sizes used to bring their own signature to the pattern.

Interspersed with the projects are three kinds of chapters and sidebars about the history, culture, and art of knitting in the company of others.

- **Two essay chapters** frame the book, fascinating with the rich and occasionally controversial history of collective knitting, from peasant bees to Red Cross sock drives to today's world-wide, web-enabled projects. The introductory chapter includes a discussion of the many kinds of knitalongs there are today (e.g., pattern-focused, yarn-focused, art installations, charity-focused knitting\*<sup>1</sup>, competitions, swaps) and a brief discussion of the qualities and challenges of each.
- **Profiles** tell the stories of actual successful knitalongs in light, magazine-style mini-essays. Each profile contains a main story, photos, and a sidebar pointing out what this project did right. The profiles entertain, while also acting as a forum for the authors to deliver specific tips about knitting along, helping readers to make their own collective knitting fun and satisfying for all. Examples could include the Knitting Olympics (hosted by yarnharlot.ca) the Afghanalong (hosted by masondixonknitting.com), and Sockapalooza (a world-wide knitted sock swap, currently in its third generation with hundreds of swappers, hosted by alison.knitsmiths.us). Examples would also include a handful of knitalongs carried out by Larissa herself, including the online Pinwheel Blanket knitalong that sparked the idea for this book, and plans for a State Fair Knitalong and Afghan Square of the Month Club. **(Note from 2011: Huh? I don't remember that idea.)**
- **Photo galleries** break up the book, or cap new sections of the book, with two-page montages showing the repetitive beauty and subtle (or not-so-subtle) variation of works produced in recent knitalongs. These galleries take the reader's breath away without any writing, just the power of repetition. They visually highlight the most fascinating and wonderful aspect of collective knitting—the fact that even a single pattern and similar yarn can produce an amazing variety of interpretations.

The format of the book should reflect the themes of equality, friendship, collaboration, and repetition. Therefore, we envision a square, graphically approachable book of comfortable size in the hands. When opened, a full spread layout would be twice as wide as it is tall—a unique movie-like frame that offers two square pages for an arresting display of three-by-three or five-by-five photo galleries (such as the samples enclosed).

**(Note: While this is relatively buried in this proposal, I think that an idea of what the book might look and feel like, while still being flexible, is an important point. The Cash & Joy blog had this**

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<sup>1</sup> Charity knitting is not a major focus of this book. However, a book about knitalongs would be incomplete without at least mentioning the big ones, such as the Dulaan Project and Afghans for Afghans.

quote on it the other day: If you can make me imagine your work as a reality in my life, I'm already half sold.)

Author Larissa Brown is a perfect match for the project. An artist and knitter, her work has always been about repetition and variation, and about the beauty and individuality that can be found in a sea of similar items. Her repetitive, labor-intensive paper and fiber works have been featured on National Public Radio's *Studio 360* and in *FiberArts* magazine. She writes regularly on knitted art for the online magazine *knitty.com* (25,000+ readers/day), on the subjects of family and crafts for the AOL-owned *bloggingbaby.com* (50,000+ readers/day), and is beginning in spring 2006 to contribute weekly to the "who's who of the online craft world"—*whipup.net*. Co-author Martin John Brown has written for *Air & Space/Smithsonian*, *American Spirit*, *SAIL*, *Cat Fancy*, and has won an Oregon Literary Arts award. Together Larissa and Martin authored a successful business book from Wiley, *Demystifying Grant Seeking* (2001).

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

(removed silly picture of self that was here when we submitted the proposal)

**Larissa Brown** is an artist from Portland, Oregon, whose work mixes materials and themes of the corporate workplace with traditional, repetitive craft techniques such as knitting, weaving, and quilting. Her work has been featured on NPR's *Studio 360* (you can listen to it at <http://www.wnyc.org/studio360/show022104.html>) and in *FiberArts* magazine. You can see her sculptures at [www.larissabrown.net](http://www.larissabrown.net) and her knitting at [her personal blog \(http://larissmix.typepad.com\)](http://larissmix.typepad.com).

Larissa's promotional platform includes regular writing jobs for several influential online magazines and blogs. She writes:

- A column on knitted art for the online magazine [knitty.com](http://knitty.com), which has more than 25,000 readers per day and 1,000,000 visits per issue.
- Daily entries on the AOL-owned portal [bloggingbaby.com](http://bloggingbaby.com), which has more than 50,000 readers per day. Her "beat" includes family and children's crafts.
- Weekly entries on [whipup.net](http://whipup.net), a new crafts portal hosted by the publishers of MAKE magazine, the hip DIY print publication.

Some additional opportunities and ideas for promotion include:

- Exposure in *Interweave Knits* (a popular magazine for knitters), since Larissa works with *Interweave Knits* columnist Amy R Singer on [knitty.com](http://knitty.com). Singer has published several pattern books (e.g., *Knit Wit*, HarperCollins, 2004).
- Exposure in *FiberArts* magazine. Lynn Jablonski, a frequent contributor to *FiberArts*, has already done a piece about Larissa's paper art.
- Independent public radio producer D'Mae Roberts, who produced the piece about Larissa for NPR's *Studio 360*, which is fairly frequently re-aired on Oregon Public Broadcasting and NPR.
- Exposure on the incredibly popular blog *yarn harlot* ([www.yarnharlot.ca](http://www.yarnharlot.ca)), whose author, Stephanie Pearl-McPhee, has authored three recent knitting related books, including *Knit's End, Meditations for Women Who Knit Too Much* (Storey Publishing, 2005).
- Another idea is to pitch a knitlong-focused episode on the DIY Network's *Knitty Gritty*. Larissa is a natural and engaging teacher who regularly presents at fundraising conferences to audiences numbering the hundreds. She would be happy to make presentations about the book to any kind of audience.

Co-author **Martin John Brown** has written for *Air & Space/Smithsonian*, *American Spirit*, *SAIL*, *Cat Fancy*, and won an Oregon Literary Arts award.

Together Larissa and Martin have also authored a successful business book from Wiley, *Demystifying Grant Seeking* (2001).



## EXAMPLE GALLERY

*Pinwheel blankets made in one knitalong. Just a sample of the repetition and variation; these are amateur photos and just a few of the 50+ blankets made in the knitalong.*

