

By Kay Gardiner and Ann Shayne

Really? One Project at a Time? Really?

Dear Problem Ladies,

In the yarn store the other day, I overheard a lady telling the owner that she was “looking for a new project,” because she had “just finished that sweater.”

“That sweater.” As in, one sweater. “A new project.” As in, a single serving of project.

Now, I’m as open-minded as the next person, but I don’t mind telling you that I felt sick to my stomach, as I realized that only a few bins of 20 percent-off bamboo away from me stood a knitter who works on one project at a time.

I thought this primitive practice had been outlawed a long time ago, like polygamy and draining people’s blood when they had a head cold. Is serial knitting monogamy making a comeback? What’s next, wet nurses?

Not Ready for the Stone Age

Dear Stoner,

You were right, and prudent, to ostracize this throwback to a dark, dark time in knitting history. Today, we have the freedom to work on as many projects at a time as we want to. Like all rights, if we don’t use it, we don’t deserve it, and we are in grave danger of losing it. But fear not, there does not seem to be any trend toward knitters working on fewer simultaneous projects. Quite the contrary. Knitters are starting more projects, before finishing more projects, than ever before. We are living in a golden age of knitting around.

Your question makes us think of a related topic, however, and that is that some knitters routinely express mock guilt about the number of WIPs they have going. They pledge to finish at least one project before starting the next six, and other draconian measures. They talk about “startitis” as if it’s a bad thing. We think this kind of rhetoric, while perhaps intended as “humor,” is unnatural and unhealthy.

We have always maintained that knitting is spoze to be fun. Working on one project at a time, and finishing that project right down to the button bands and weaving the last stinkin’ end is nobody’s

idea of fun. Starting is fun. Knitting is fun. Finishing, even, is fun, when you find some old project at the back of the closet and realize that you could finish it in one hour and wear it to that Eighties-themed party tonight. But there is nothing as fun as getting the back, front, and one sleeve of a sweater knitted, starting something completely different, and then losing the pattern and/or forgetting what size we were making before we get around to finishing that sleeve. They can't take that away from us.

We seriously believe that working on multiple projects fills us with creative energy. If you work on one project at a time, knitting starts to feel chore-ish. So much else in life is task followed by task, each to be slogged through and checked off the list before we move on to the next. If we do our knitting in such a dull and dutiful way, we will miss out on a big chunk of joy.

It is said that in Henri Matisse's younger years, he would whitewash canvases that didn't please him, and make new paintings on top of the old. This story is interpreted as illustrating how hard Matisse was on himself, and how poor. But the truth of the matter is that Matisse, like all who are blessed or cursed with an artistic (or knitterly) temperament, had a wicked bad case of startitis. He was not as interested in the painting leaning against the wall of his studio as the beautiful new one that was in his head, waiting, like a Fair Isle mitten, to be started. Eventually, Matisse did finish a few great pictures and manage not to paint over them. And that pair of mittens will get finished, too, even if a couple of other things get started in between.

It's not a race; it's a ride.



Knit Strong! Keep those cards and letters coming in to problemladies@twistcollective.com