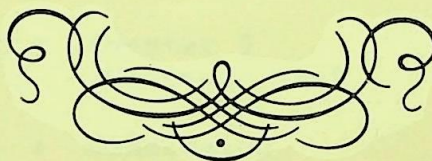


# CONTEMPORARY KNITWEAR DESIGN



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An essay submitted to :  
The Faculty of History of Art and Complimentary studies  
and  
in candidacy for a degree in Fashion Design.



Faculty of Design  
Department of Fashion and Textiles

by

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# INTRODUCTION

Knitwear has been the subject of an enormous amount of interest over the past decade. This has come from the Press and public alike, and the knitwear industry has been highly praised in recent times by both groups. The popularity of contemporary knits has not been equaled since the early years of this century. There are many different factors responsible for this renewed awareness. I intend to discuss these, and also to show how some designers in particular have played a major part in the revitalising of the industry.

I have chosen three designers who I feel are the backbone of today's knitwear industry. They are all contemporary European designers, living and working in Europe. The three I have chosen are Patricia Roberts, 'Missoni' (Ottavio & Rosita), which is a major European fashion house, and Benetton (Luciano and Guiliiana) which is another Italian company famous for its knitwear.

These three designers cater for different sectors of the market. Patricia Roberts' work is aimed at a much smaller market, as most of her designs are sold in Britain which is her home base. She does however, supply franchise shops in other countries, but this is comparatively small to the volume of garments 'Missoni' and 'Benetton' sell to export markets. Patricia Roberts' pieces are all handknit designerwear and she is different from the other two because she also supplies patterns and wool so that her garments can be knit by the customer.

'Missoni', as I have said already, is a large and well renowned fashion house. 'Missoni' deals in knitwear, clothing, furnishings, cosmetics and accessories. This company caters for the designer label end of the market. They are currently one of the most successful fashion houses. Their



work includes exclusive machine knitwear and fabric prints. The 'Missoni' empire exports an enormous volume of goods every year, as they are popular for their famous knitwear and quality of their goods.

'Benetton' caters for a wider section of the knitwear market with their mass-production garments. Theirs is the largest business and consequently they have the most outlets. Their goods include all aspects of casual daywear and they are now branching out into accessories. Their merchandise is aimed at younger customers than 'Missoni's, but an advantage of their garments is that they can, to an extent, be worn by any age group.

I shall also give an account of recent trends in knitwear, along with a discussion on some new up and coming designers, whom I feel will be enormously popular in the future due to their new, exciting, and innovative designs.

This thesis also incorporates a brief account of changes in the knitwear industry since the beginning of this century and I feel that this is very important, because it shows exactly when and why knitted garments have fluctuated in demand so frequently since its enormous popularity of the 1920's.

# chapter 1

©PAST TO PRESENT©

After the restricting boned and corseted clothes of the last century, there was a movement towards looser, more comfortable garments, hence there was a new interest in the knitted clothes. The instigator of this newfound popularity in knitwear was Elsa Schiaparelli who brought knitwear into vogue in the Twenties and Thirties. Chanel followed suit and to this day some of her most memorable designs are her loose, flowing jersey sportswear which she created for the women of the Twenties.

Jersey was a completely new concept in fabric design because unlike woven fabric, its knitted texture allowed more flexibility, therefore this fabric was suited to leisure and casual wear. Jersey was the most widely used fabric in womenswear in the early years of this century. It complemented the designers' styles, specifically in the way it could be draped and hanged, unlike any commercially available woven fabric.

The interest in knitwear and knitted fabric waned slightly in the Thirties, when the shape of clothes became more tailored once again. Designers began to use fabric cut on the natural bias to replace jersey. It had a degree of flexibility which was almost equivalent to that of jersey. Some hand knit garments were popular in the Thirties but few knitted garments were seen in designers' collections during this period. The cloth and yarn industries were very badly affected by rationing during the World War II. and the post-war recessionary period. The contemporary knitwear of the late Forties incorporated new shapes constructed in unravelled yarn salvaged from 'worn' garments. Short sleeved and sleeveless sweaters were common features in mens' and womens' fashions due to the war induced shortages of raw materials. Fairisle and patterned knitwear was popular because people could economise by using numerous scraps of various coloured wools.

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In a particular ladies magazine, Ladies Journal, (April 1950), an advertisement read: "Because 'Target' knitting wools are spun finer than most wools, you get more yards to the ounce. Therefore 'Target' wools are more economical. No wonder wise knitters aim for 'Target' wools." (fig 1.)

The Fifties, especially the latter half of the decade, saw the revival of the Twenties 'Boom' in knitting. There was an abundance of hand knits available, the most popular being chunky, folkloric, ski-sweaters, aran sweaters and cardigans. Finely knit pieces such as lambswool turtlenecks were fashionable items. Argyll patterned sweaters and cardigans were generally used as golfing sweaters for men. For ladies, there was a wide selection of crochet tops and dresses which were extremely feminine, delicate and luxurious. The garments of the Fifties were extravagant and expensive, which was an enormous change when compared to the knitwear of the previous decade.

In Woman magazine (17th November 1956) this advertisement for Lux soap flakes appeared, "In carefully chosen, small wardrobes, woolen sweaters like these are costly items, with an important fashion role to play". (fig 2). The garments mentioned were lambswool turtlenecks. This style of knitted sweater became popular worldwide, and the title 'Sweater girl' became a household name. Hollywood stars like Natalie Wood (fig 3), Lana Turner, Sophia Loren, Kim Novak and Doris Day were frequently photographed in what was then the height of fashion ie. tight-fitting finely knit sweaters which enhanced their physical assets, and inspired people to buy clothes similar to those worn by their idols.

Throughout Europe and America, and in the specialist knitwear country Italy, the trend in knitwear inclined towards traditional and simple garments knit in expensive yarns. These styles were in popular demand until the early Sixties.

During the Sixties, the knitwear industry suffered once again due to a revolutionary 'Space-age' attitude towards fashion in the early years of the decade. A positive occurrence was the developments in machine technology. This included more advanced knitting machines which could produce a greater volume of garments at a much faster rate. The machines, being able to handle intricate stitches and more than one yarn at a time, could cope with more complicated patterns. Knitwear entered a static era in the Sixties, it lacked vitality in the sense that it was merely a progression of the styles seen in the Fifties and relatively few new ideas were being produced during this period.

In the Sixties, the Italians, French and British proved themselves to be leaders in the knitwear field. The most popular styles in this era of design were slim-fitting knitted dresses which belted at the waist and came to just below the knee. They had simple collars which buttoned down the front. Three-quarter length sleeves were also a design feature of these garments. The dresses were generally knit in a stocking stitch, therefore it was the shape more than the pattern or texture that was the main feature of these garments.

Ski-sweaters became popular once again, but the pattern on them was bolder and the shape became much narrower (fig 4). One style in particular which I found attractive was in a Parka style, with a Mongolian fur-bordered hood (fig 5). This incorporated a fairisle vee-shaped yoke around the neck, zipping up the front. The garment was slim-fitting to the hips, which was the fashionable shape throughout the Sixties. It was an extremely chique shape which was popular on both sides of the Atlantic. These garments are similar to the knitwear seen in contemporary films of the Sixties, e.g. the 'Pink Panther' series, and some of Elvis Presley's films.

Eveningwear in crochet (fig 6) became increasingly popular, as did knitted Channel style suits. These usually consisted of three pieces, namely a sweater and jacket worn with a skirt and occasionally with matching stockings. (fig 7 & 8). These suits blended in well with the fashions of the Sixties, especially the garments which were created with an emphasis on the hourglass figure which was the rage of that period.

The yarns available could be sorted into two different categories. The first and more expensive area consisted mainly of natural fibres such as aran wool, shetland, mohair, angora, lambswool and 100% wool four-ply yarn. The second comprised of synthetic fibres, e.g. Bri-nylon, acrylic, nylon, nylon/wool etc. These yarns were less expensive and became popular because they were very easy to wash.

In the late Sixties the knitwear industry regained a lot of its lost popularity with the introduction of the 'back to nature/hippie' movement. Shawls, large multicoloured sloppy sweaters and chunky traditional garments were highly fashionable items of the era. During this period in particular, hand-knits became extremely popular.

The Seventies saw a slight decrease in the amount of knitwear worn. The knitted garments available were suited to the tailored styles of contemporary garments. The most popular styles in the early Seventies were tight fitting tank tops and polo-necks.

Towards the end of the Seventies, lacy stitches in sypsy style sweaters became popular. These sweaters were often adorned with satin or velvet ribbons around the neckline and cuffs (fig 9). Traditional stitches were incorporated into up-dated styles, such as frontal zip-fastening hooded Parkas in aran wool knit in aran stitches. Mohair and wool bouclé mixes were often knitted into sections of aran sweaters. Traditional fairisle patterns were knit into tight fitting tank tops.

The colours used in the Seventies were either earthy

natural shades, pale pastels and primary colours depending  
on the style of the garments. (fig 10)



More people buy  
**CHIVERS JAM**  
*(It's made in silver-lined jars)*



CHIVERS & SONS LTD.,  
The Orchard Factory,  
HISTON, CAMBRIDGE  
and at Monroes,  
Huntingdon, York and  
Newry.

*A line  
Target  
Knitting  
Wool...*

GOES A LONG WAY

Because "Target" Knitting Wools are spun finer than most wools, you get more yards to the ounce. Therefore "Target" wools are more economical. No wonder wise knitters aim for "Target" wools!

GEORGE LEE & SONS

fig 1.

**Lucozade...**  
*- it's got everything!*

Keep up the patient's strength, says the Doctor, keep it up with LUCOZADE. This sparkling glucose beverage has everything to sustain the strength of the weak. It is instantly absorbed because it needs no digesting. And because it is so wonderfully refreshing LUCOZADE, once tasted, is never refused. The result of taking LUCOZADE is heartening to see!

**Home Brightness**



Happy

fig 2.

new sweaters?

IN CAREFULLY CHOSEN, small wardrobe, woolen sweaters like these are costly items, with an important fashion role to play. Thanks to Lux-care, they keep their exciting new looks wash after wash. No wonder wise girls-on-a-budget use Lux.

These transparent diamonds are made from purest, baby-mild soap, so you see why Lux is so safe. Its super-silky lather is so thorough and yet leaves the delicate wool fibres springy and soft, the colour clear and true. Why, just look at these sweaters - the result of six Lux washings!



no, they're  
Lux-washed-  
six times!

**LUX**

IF IT'S SAFE IN WATER,  
IT'S SAFE IN LUX (and so are your hands)

These three sweaters are actually photographed after six Lux washings! All still looking as new - that's how Lux-care saves you money!

COMMON SENSE TWICE OVER. It makes even more sense to use Lux when you remember this: There is no smarter washing product in the world. No better value for your money ever than Lux! That's why you should get Lux today. It is made in three sizes - the Large, the Handy, and the Magnum packet that most people prefer, because it goes so far!



fig 3



fig 4



fig 5.



fig 6



fig 7

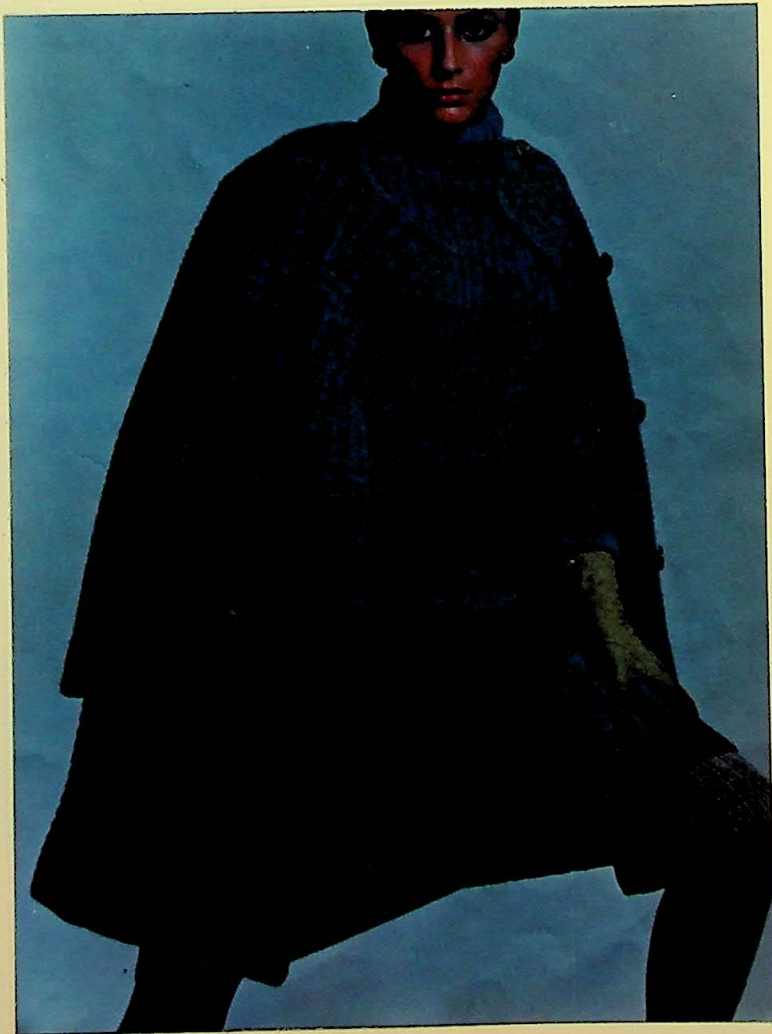


fig 8

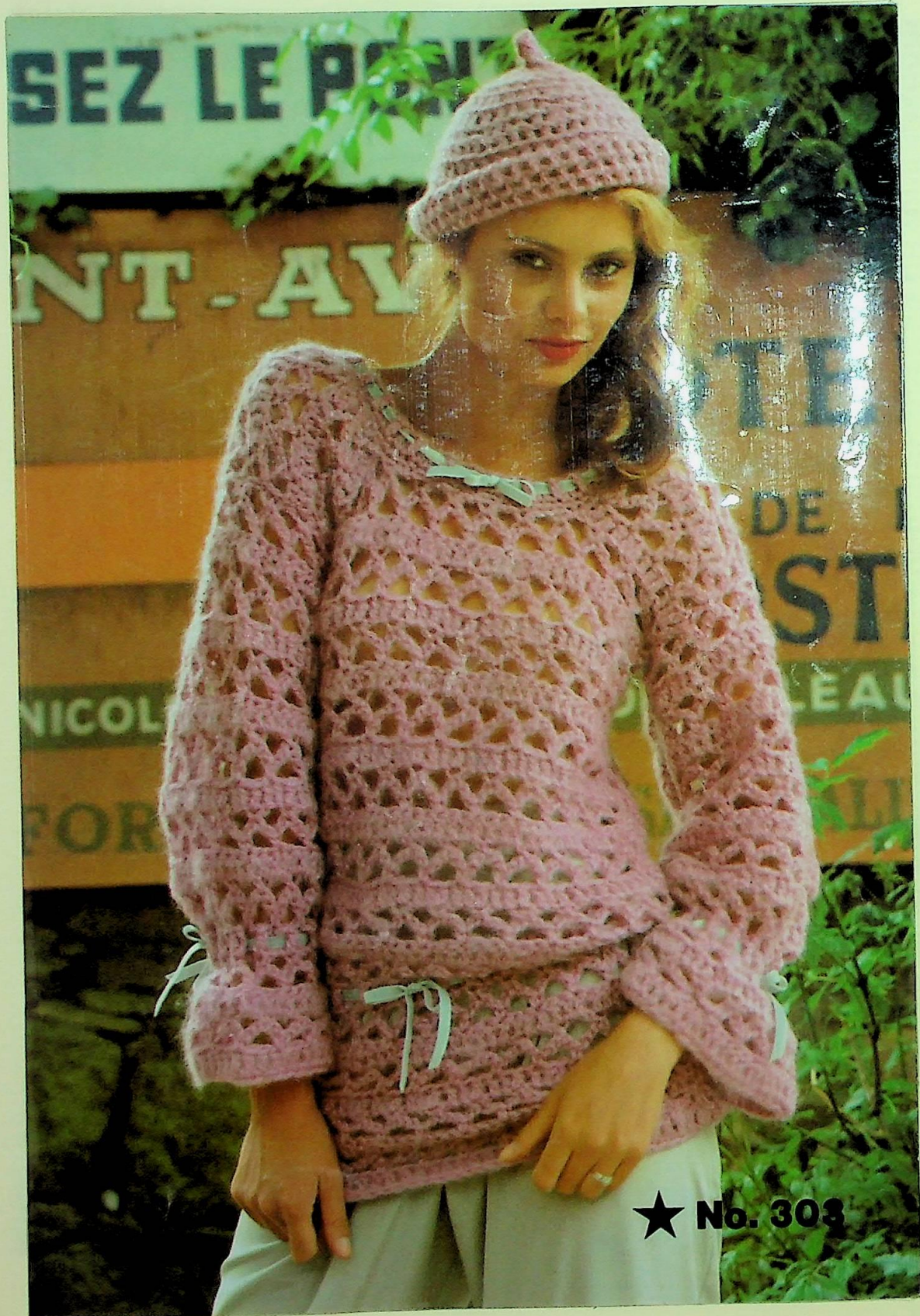


fig 9



fig 10

## chapter 2

PATRICIA ROBERTS





Patricia Roberts is regarded as Britain's most popular knitwear designer, which is a position she has held for more than a decade. She is a front runner of the designer knitwear industry in Britain, and was one of the first designers to produce a range of yarns to compliment her intricate designs.

Patricia Roberts was born on January 2nd, 1945, at Barnard Castle, Co. Durham, in England. Her design education consisted of four years at Leicester College of Art and Design. She received a Diploma in Art and Design - Fashion (1963-67). When she left Art College in 1967 she began her career by free-lancing in knitwear designs for magazines. Her first knitting pattern designs appeared in '19', 'Honey' and 'Petticoat'. She continued designing for fashion magazines until 1971.

Meanwhile in 1969, Patricia Roberts was invited by the Shetland Education Authorities to spend one month ostensibly teaching knitwear design to the Shetlanders. In return she learnt a great deal about the traditional Shetland knitting skills.

In 1972 Patricia Roberts continued to free-lance for various newspapers and fashion magazines. Later in the same year, her first made-up garments were sold to Browns, which was then the most fashionable boutique in London. The following year she began to receive orders from American stores such as Bloomingdales, Henri Bendel and Lord and Taylor.

Patricia Roberts became disillusioned with the yarn industry and she noticed the lack of natural fibres for the hand knitting trade. Not only were most of the available yarns in man-made and synthetic fibres, but also the yarns in natural fibres such as wool were flat, dull and with a total disregard for any attractive colour. Therefore, in 1974 Patricia Roberts filled the gap by producing her first knitting kits. These consisted of her exclusive patterns accompanied by her own brand of yarns which she used in the illustrated made-up garment. These yarns were

mostly natural fibres, i.e. lambswool, shetland, mohair, cotton and silk, and they came in a variety of very attractive shades.

Her first soft-backed knitting pattern book "20 Patricia Roberts Knitting Patterns" was published by Queen Anne Press in 1975. It proved itself inspirational to many young up and coming designers and wool spinners, due to its being the first book of its type ever attempted in Britain.

The most unusual aspect of this book was the way it was styled and compiled. Its' photography was similar to that of any high class fashion magazine, shot by a top class photographer. They also used some of the best models available. During that same year Patricia Roberts joined the newly formed 'London Designer Collections' and showed her made-up garments along with the other designers' garments at the bi-annual exhibitions for foreign and home fashion buyers.

During the following year she opened her first highly successful Patricia Roberts knitting shop, 60 Kinnerton Street, London, S.W.1., selling her own brand of yarns along with the Pattern Book she had already published.

In 1977 the wholesaling of her yarns commenced under the management of Keith Roberts, who is the designer's brother. Macdonald and Jane published a hard backed compilation of pattern books 1, 2 and 3 that same year.

The next year saw the independent publication of 'Patricia Roberts Pattern Book No. 4'.

A second Patricia Roberts shop opened at 1B Kennington Church Walk, London W.8, a year later in 1979.

Two years later in 1981, W.H. Allen published 'Patricia Roberts Knitting Book' which was a compilation of pattern books 4, 5 and 6, and in 1982 Patricia Roberts opened her third shop in

London. This shop is situated in Covent Garden, at 31 James Street, London W.C.2. Here they sell designer-label clothes which co-ordinate with Ms. Roberts' made-up Knitwear. Yarns and patterns are also sold in this shop.

Patricia Roberts' approach to her garments, display, packaging, and shop designs dispel any preconcieved ideas people may have of hand knitwear being old-fashioned. Her shop in Covent Garden proved so completely clean and modern and totally unconventional for hand knitwear shops that it is used as the model upon which the design of the franchise shops is based.

Her first franchise shop opened in Hong Kong in 1983 and in the following year her second franchise shop opened in Melbourne, Australia. That same year W.H. Allen published in hardback, 'Patricia Roberts Second Knitting Book', which again was compiled of a number of pattern books, on this occasion it consisted of Nos 7.& 8. with additional patterns.

'Patricia Roberts collection' was published by W. H. Allen in 1985 which was a compendium of the previous two hard-back books.

Patricia Roberts was awarded the Duke of Edinburgh's Design Council Award in 1986 for her outstanding achievement as a designer. This was the first time the prize had ever been awarded to a fashion designer. In the same year a sweater-only shop (franchise) opened in Hong Kong, and a fourth franchise shop opened in Nicosia, Cyprus.

A fourth hardback book is set to be published in February 1988 by W. H. Allen. Its title is 'Patricia Roberts Style'.

A fourth Patricia Roberts' sweater and clothes shop opened in London in February 1987, at 236 Brompton Road, London S.W.5.

Patricia Roberts' knitted garments consist of contemporary shapes, a great deal of texture, usually achieved through

a variety of stitches, an abundance of colour, and a lot of pattern. These factors put together become the trademark of her work.

Her garments are complex, and very difficult to knit, but her patterns are well charted with the aid of graphs, which simplify the process of knitting a little. Her designs are not suitable for inexperienced hand-knitters, and this is generally the one major fault people find with her designs.

Having said that, her designs are highly innovative and thoroughly original, and Ms. Roberts has, in my opinion, been the inspiration for many of today's knitwear designers.

Patricia Roberts does not design from one style or shape all the time, unlike some other designers. She changes her designs from year to year, incorporating some features which are current in street fashions, and in some cases these features are also apparent on the catwalks of the designer fashion scene. (Fig.11)

In my opinion, Patricia Roberts' work as a designer is outstanding and typifies 1980's knitwear, because it is completely new, highly inventive, and it shows a very young and bold approach to designing knitwear. When I asked Patricia Roberts where she found her inspiration for her many different themes, her reply was, "My inspiration comes from good old intuition". *rel*

"Romany" (fig 12) is a range of three garments based on a patchwork theme, which appears in "Patricia Roberts Second Knitting Book". Within these garments she uses a variety of vibrant colours, many different stitches, a great deal of pattern, and an abundance of differently textured yarns. The knitwear is worn over plaid or floral skirts and slacks, which enhances the young, bright, unique look of these garments (fig. 13). The photographs are very stylised and create a very effective atmosphere, therefore complimenting the knitwear beautifully.

Patricia Roberts likes to use a lot of texture in her designs (fig. 14). She achieves this through varying yarns and stitches, and also by knitting sections in raised stitches, or baubles which are almost knit in relief. By doing this she creates a third dimension in her garments, which make them more interesting and eye-catching.

Patricia Roberts does not always use a lot of colour, e.g. in her range named 'Scrabble', each of the garments is monotone. (fig. 15) But these garments incorporate texture, pattern, a variety of stitches, including some traditional Aran stitches. The overall effect is lacy and very feminine. To enhance the old-fashioned, delicate feel of the knitwear, the garments are worn with antique lace bloomers and petticoats. The photographs are taken in an earthy coloured surrounding with a slight sepia tint on the finished product. This is a perfect example of how Patricia Roberts has cleverly used styling and photography of the same quality used in top fashion magazines to promote her knitwear design.

Patricia Roberts knitwear from year to year is unpredictable, and that is an aspect that appeals to a lot of people, for example, you may find a mixture of very modern loose fitting garments followed by slimmer fitting, antiquated, more feminine shapes.

Colour in her garments is treated differently in every design. Sometimes she may have fairisles knit in browns and reds, which look back to the 1930's and 1940's and then she may show garments like her 'Valentine' (Fig 16) look which is a brightly coloured raised trellis in many vibrant colours, such as pinks, reds, blues, yellows, and green, on a plain or coloured background used on one sleeve and on the back of the garment. On the front she has bright colourful parcels widely dispersed over the area, and the second sleeve consists of a textured trellis stitch in the one main colour, incorporating a second colour where the trellis intersects.

In one particular set of garments called 'Crackers' (fig 17) the treatment of colour and pattern are the most important part of the garments. The base is knit in two-tone squares,

in beige and cream or black and white, with a highly colourful and textured overall pattern. These garments also have completely different shapes (to) any others shown in 'Patricia Roberts Second Knitting Book'. Both shapes are very young, modern, feminine, and appear cooling, as they are both knit in finer yarns. One garment is a sleeveless, roundnecked vest style sweater, while the other is a cardigan with elbow-length sleeves, slim fitting with a lacy collar. There is a variety of stitches used on both garments and a great deal of colour. Therefore these garments would only be suitable for quite experienced knitters.

Patricia Roberts also has designed some sweaters which picture certain things, instead of having one type of pattern repeated throughout the garment. The best example of this is a set of patterns called 'His Master's Voice' (fig 18). The garments are knitted in mohair in one main colour, with dots of another colour throughout the entire piece. The design shows a clock, a dog, a window with curtains, a kite, rose buds and flower pots. The garment has a very young appearance, as though Patricia Roberts adapted a cartoon into knitwear. In this book Patricia Roberts also shows some beautifully smooth, rounded, almost sculptured shoulder shapes, which at the time it was first published presented a very new revolutionary concept in knitwear. She also shows a wide variety of collar shapes, and some very complicated and original stitches.

As I have already mentioned, Patricia Roberts won the Duke of Edinburgh's Design Councils' award for "the designer of one of the award winning products in the current year, who, in the panels opinion has made the greatest contribution to design".<sup>\*1</sup> The 1986 prize went to Patricia Roberts for "her outstanding achievement as a designer. Her original approach to design has brought a virtual revolution to the knitwear industry".<sup>\*2</sup>

The garments that appear in her tenth pattern book show a new approach to design. Instead of the brightly coloured

patchwork garments seen before in 'Romany' (fig 19) Patricia Roberts produces a range of garments in a similar style, which are much softer, and knit in tones rather than in different colours. The effect is as eye-catching as her bright jumpers, and would appeal to a wider range of people. The garments are knit in greys, black and white, again incorporating numerous different stitches, a fair amount of pattern, and a mixture of yarns.

In this book Patricia Roberts showed knitted garments with peplums, which were very important fashion features in 1986, when the book was first published (fig.20). Even though she was incorporating a modern concept her garments appeared timeless, and though trends in fashion change, her work will never, in my opinion, appear dated. The garments always appear modern and can be worn with almost any current and future fashions.

Patricia Roberts uses colour and pattern frequently throughout this issue, but she uses a more subtle base colour, therefore she makes the colour and pattern more defined. She also shows some mono-toned textured garments incorporating new shapes, giving the garments a very modern appeal.

Patricia Roberts has a very wide capability span, which enables her to design garments which appear to be quite fitted, but are not as they seem, because they have to be knitted slightly bigger than they appear, as the wool used (shetland) is quite coarse on the skin. She uses flecked wools to give an earthy feeling to some of her garments. She achieves this through designing pieces with no apparent pattern, but with an overall texture, which emerges through the positioning of the many different stitches. The overall effect is much subtler than some of her earlier designs and pattern is also less noticeable.

One very attractive and eye-catching feature in Pattern Book No. 10 was the way Patricia Roberts treated the pockets on a long textured garment knit in one colour only. She places

emphasis on the pockets by using a stripe of another colour, which stands out and breaks the fluidity of the line of the rest of the garment, and gives a completely new look to an otherwise predictable garment . I feel this feature is very important because it shows a break-up of two concepts in one garment, ie. the texture of the garment is distracted by the limited use of vibrant colour; this small detail makes the garment very unusual and striking to look at. (fig 21)

Patricia Roberts' books also show a range of designs especially created for children. The emphasis within these styles is placed on colour and pattern, and though texture is shown through varying stitches, it does not appear as important as it is in the adults' garments (fig 22).

Some garments designed by Patricia Roberts are adaptations of traditional stitches and colours, with added up-dated features, which makes them more suited to modern times (fig 23).

Photography enhances the use of colour in all Patricia Roberts' books, the styling is also very effective, and the garments worn with the knitwear co-ordinate in such a way that they complement the particular statement of the knitwear whether it is the texture, pattern or colour. Highly patterned brightly coloured knitted tops are worn with vibrant, floral-patterned skirts, which evoke a feeling of Latin American or Hispanic costumes. (fig 24). The shapes in these garments are much more fitted which show an awareness of trends in the clothing industry.

Patricia Roberts also designs evening wear in lurex, which incorporate figure hugging hourglass shapes, tight fitting waists, and hip length peplums. The garments appear feminine and seductive. She also shows fairisle knits in lurex, which is far removed from the traditional wools used in fairisle patterns.

As you can see Patricia Roberts has achieved a great deal and contributed enormously to the knitwear industry, and therefore her position as one of Europe's top knitwear designers is justly deserved.



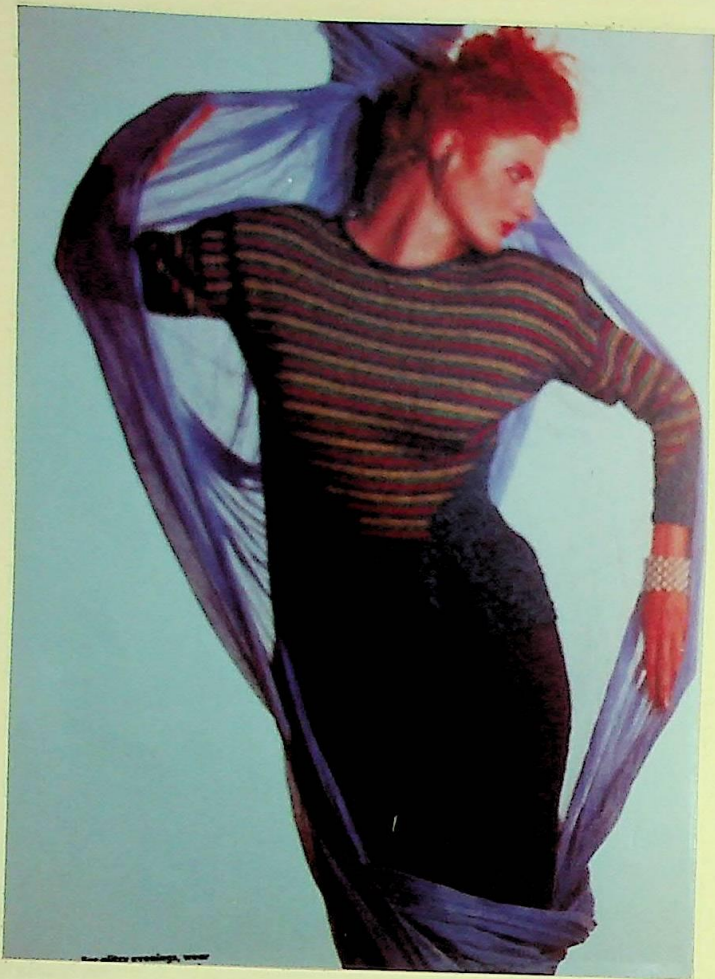


fig 11

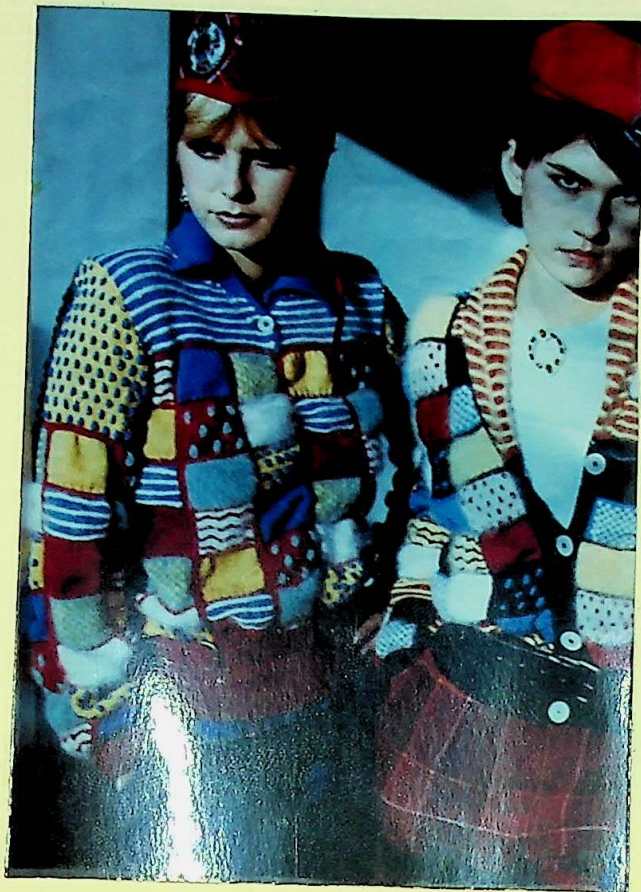


fig 12



fig 13



fig 14

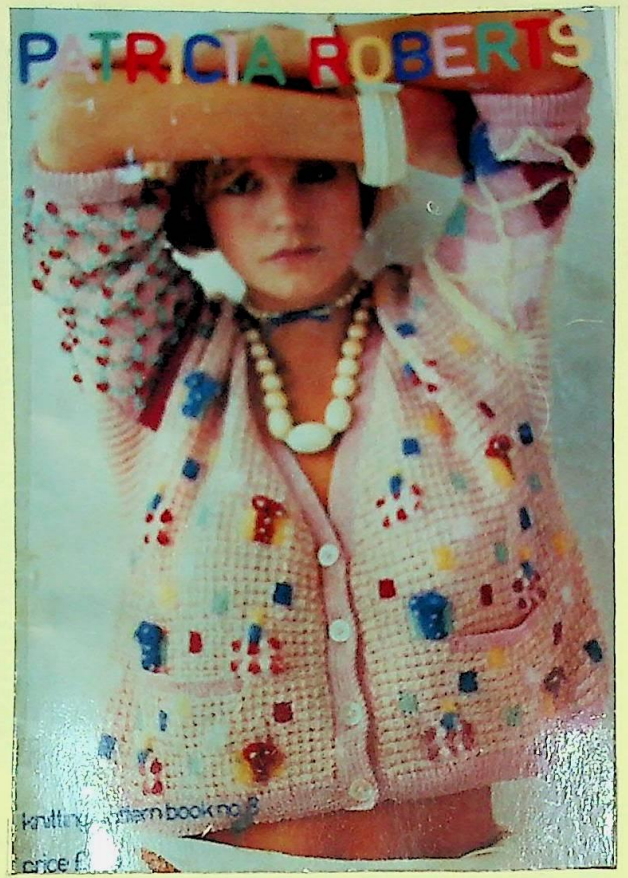


fig 16



fig 15



fig 17

fig 18

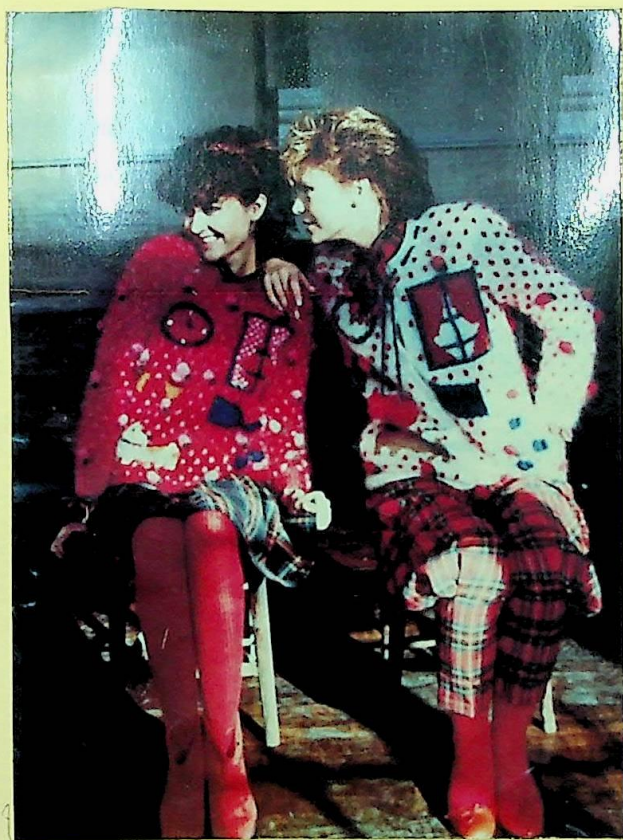


fig 19



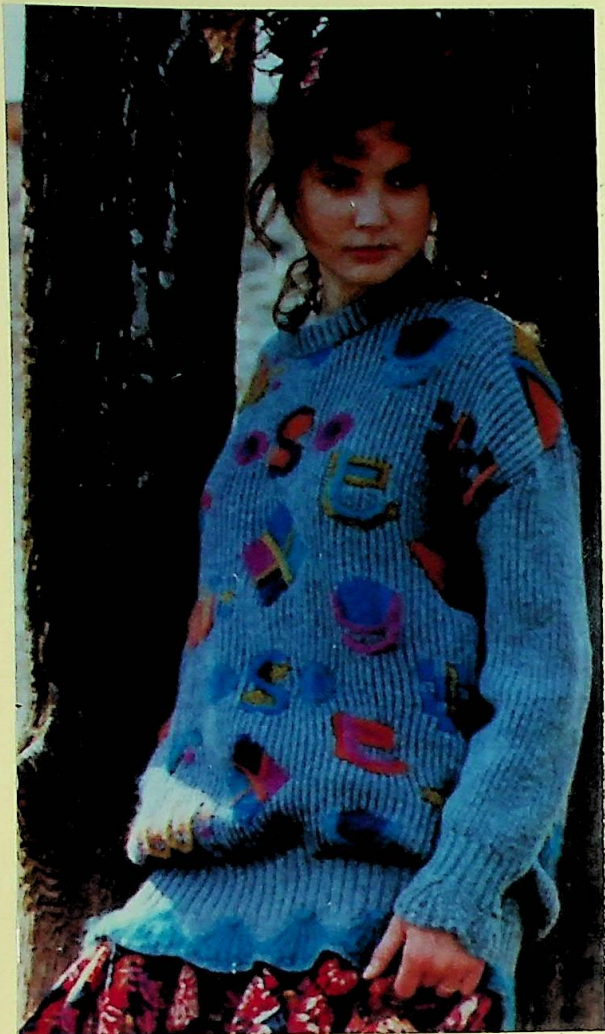


fig 20



fig 21 ,

"Flow" the big cotton  
cardi to wrap yourself up



fig 22

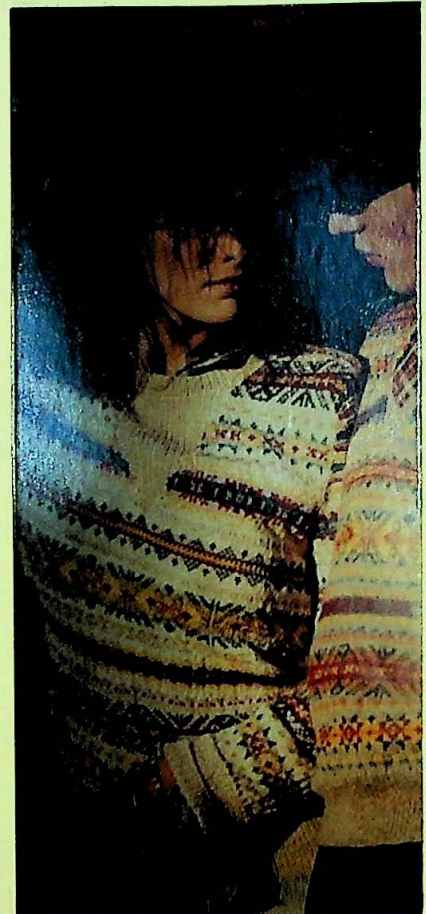


fig 23



fig 24

# Chapter 3

## MISSONI



Ottavio and Rosita Missoni are a husband and wife team who run an enormous fashion empire set in the heart of the Italian countryside. They deal in knitwear, home furnishings, and clothes, and their label generates in the region of 80 million dollars a year. The majority, which is approximately 42 million dollars is due to their clothes, and the remaining 38 million comes from home furnishing and cosmetic lines.

Ottavio Missoni was born in 1921, in Dubrovnik. His father was an Italian sea captain and his mother was a Yugoslavian Countess. He studied in Zara, Trieste and Milan, but he proved to be more interested in sport than in academic studies. He was a champion swimmer and in 1937 he beat the American Champion in the 400 metres. He was the Italian Champion in 1938 and he also won the World Student Championship in Vienna the same year. When war broke out in 1939 he was drafted into the Italian Army, and was taken prisoner by the English, and as a result he spent four years in a desert prison camp. When the war ended he competed in the London Olympics. It was in London that he met his Italian wife Rosita who was over in England studying English.

When the Missonis married, Ottavio (Tai) was working in Trieste with Giorgio Oberweger who was another athlete turned manufacturer. The two men had teamed up to produce wool tracksuits for athletes. They started out with two knitting machines and a few part-time workers. Rosita's parents loaned the men a basement outside Milan, which was the headquarters of what is now one of the largest fashion houses in the world. Because the machines available were very limited in capability they could only knit with one or two colours at one time, therefore, according to Rosita Missoni \* 3 "We had two knitting machines that could only make stripes if you wanted to use more than one colour .....

..... so we made stripes".

After a while the Missonis started working for the 'Biki' boutique in Paris. The manager of the boutique, Louis Hidalgo, and a buyer called Anna Fillippini along with the Missonis developed a small collection which was called 'Post Paris'. It was sold to clients who wanted a high fashion look, but also wanted it ready to wear, or off-the-rack. This was their first contract apart from their knitted sportswear and they gradually grew in demand, and by the end of the 50's they were working steadily producing designs for big stores, but had not yet started producing garments under their own label.

Rosita Missoni met Parisian designer Emannuelle Kahn soon afterwards and it was their collaboration which led to the launching of the very first 'Missoni' collection which was presented at the Gerolamo cabaret-theatre in Milan. This collection did not pass over as smoothly as the Missonis had hoped it would and, according to Ottavio, \*4 "The best part was the nude models changing behind the canvas, back lit like giant Indonesian shadow puppets. If the police had seen it they would have closed the theatre". This was forgotten after a while and was only a mild incident compared to the following year's scandalous collection.

Rosita Missoni was not pleased with the way some of the garments looked and decided that the problem was because the models' bras were too dark to be worn under the sheer metallic knits. She told the models to remove them and sent them out with nothing underneath. She did not realise, however, that the ramp lights were three times stronger than usual because they were coming from the side. Much to the dismay and embarrassment of the Missonis the tops became completely transparent. As a result the media declared the Missonis' clothes to be more suitable to Paris nightclubs than Italian



fashion shows and it was some time before Florence received the Missonis with open arms.

In 1967 "Elle" fashion magazine began to display clothes by the Missonis on its cover, and 'Womens Wear Daily' followed suit by giving them front page coverage, and with the help of Vogue's Diana Vreeland the Missonis brought their clothes over to New York for a show in 1969. They were immediately scooped up by the major American store, Bloomingdales, and the American ready-to-wear market had its gates wide open to receive the Missonis. Throughout all this success in America, 'Missoni' was fast becoming one of the most popular fashion houses in Europe.

Since 1974 the Missonis have branched out into household goods such as towels and upholstery prints, and they have also produced cosmetic lines and accessories. They have been extremely successful in their ventures, and now hold franchises with many smaller companies (fig 25).

During the years Missoni has operated as a fashion empire it has always remained a family business. The second generation of Missonis all take an active part in the company. Luca, who is the eldest son, is a computer wizard and helps his father in the development of yarns, fabrics and colours. Ottavio takes care of the sweater designs. Vittorio, who is a younger son, takes care of the commercial aspect of the business, while Angela, their only daughter, handles public relations.

Ottavio and Rosita remain unaffected by all their fame and fortune, and are very modest about their work; according to Ottavio they were lucky to have made "the right things at the right time for a world that was craving beautiful clothes that were easy to wear, easy to fold, and stuff in a suitcase" \* 5 (fig 26 + fig 27) and according to Rosita \*6 "Our work is our hobby, it is a way of expressing our reactions

to the external world. Ideas come from our trips, books, friends, art and music."

One important factor of their work is the fact that they have no particular typical client, and therefore they design clothes that can be worn by anybody. Another point just as important is the fact that the Missonis believe people should be free to invent their own fashion, therefore Missonis' mix and match separates are suited to this theory.

In the early Sixties when the first Missoni garments were shown, their style of designing was completely revolutionary due to the way they layered knit patterns, textures, stripes, dots and zig-zag's together in one outfit. Their production of any one piece is limited and is purposely kept that way to avoid being copied, and also to give somewhat more exclusivity to their customers.

Their clothes are exhibited at The Whitney Museum, New York, Dallas Fine Arts Museum, The Costume Museum in Bath, and in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

The colour, texture and shape of a Missoni knitted garment are unique to Missoni, and it has been said that it is "The Missonis who have given sweaters the status of sables" \*7 (fig 28).

When the Missonis started out as knitwear designers, they were more or less the first people to give designer knitwear the status it deserved over the past few decades. Their competitors were mainly clothes manufacturers such as Chanel and Dior, who sometimes showed knitted garments within their collections. There were many mass production knitwear manufacturers, but none besides the Missonis whose claim to fame lay specifically in the area of designer knitwear. Therefore, they were the pioneers of the entire realm of designer knitwear, and they filled an obvious gap in the market with their designer garments. Today, however, their

competitors include the likes of Sonia Rykiel, Kaffe Fassett and other well known names in the knitwear field such as Patricia Roberts. (fig 29 & 30).

Within the Australian Bi-Centennial celebrations a major fashion show was held to promote Australian wools. The idea of this show was to invite the world's top designers to show a collection they had created specifically for this occasion. They were asked to design a range of garments in wool only, which were suggestive of some aspect of Australia. In my opinion Missoni's clothes outshone the other designers' garments, due to the simple shapes which complimented the highly decorative pattern, and subtle hues which were reminiscent of the Australian landscape.

The Missoni collection in this show was outstanding, and more so than some other designers who also took part in it, they showed that they had put a lot of thought into their work to relate it to the suggested theme through their mastery of colour and pattern.

The Missonis are known worldwide as the 'Kings' of knitwear design, which is an honour duly merited by their work. (fig 31 - 33)



fig 25

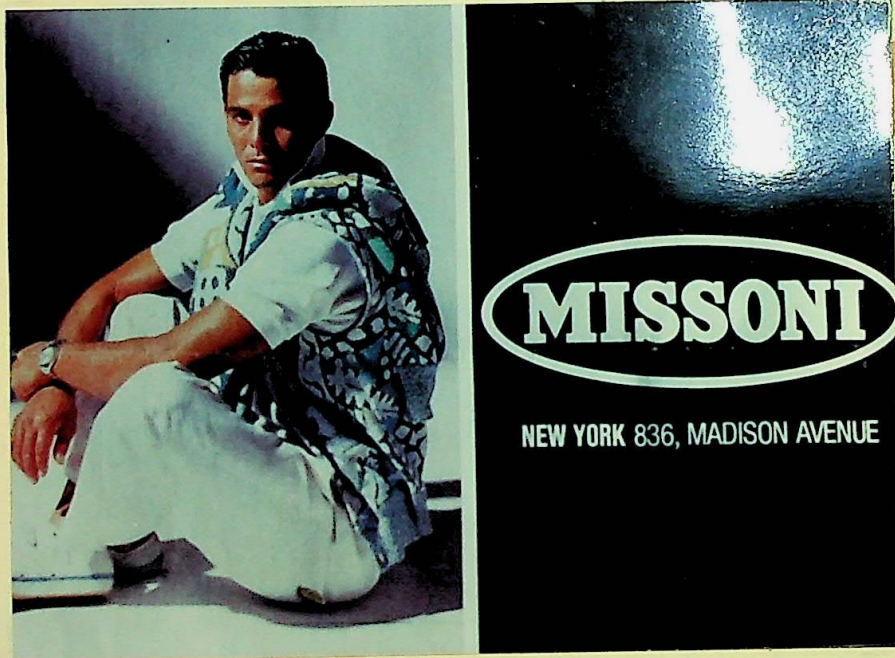


fig 26



fig 27

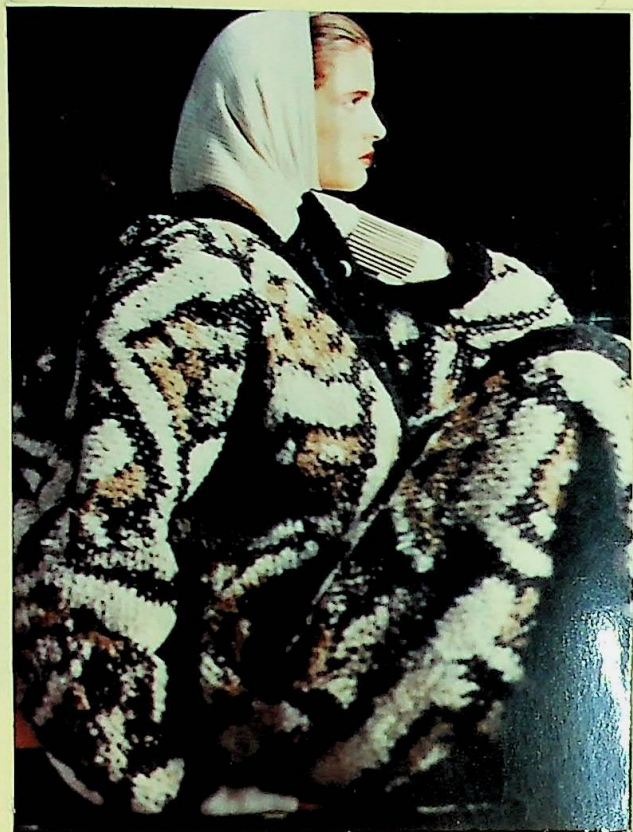


fig 28



fig 29

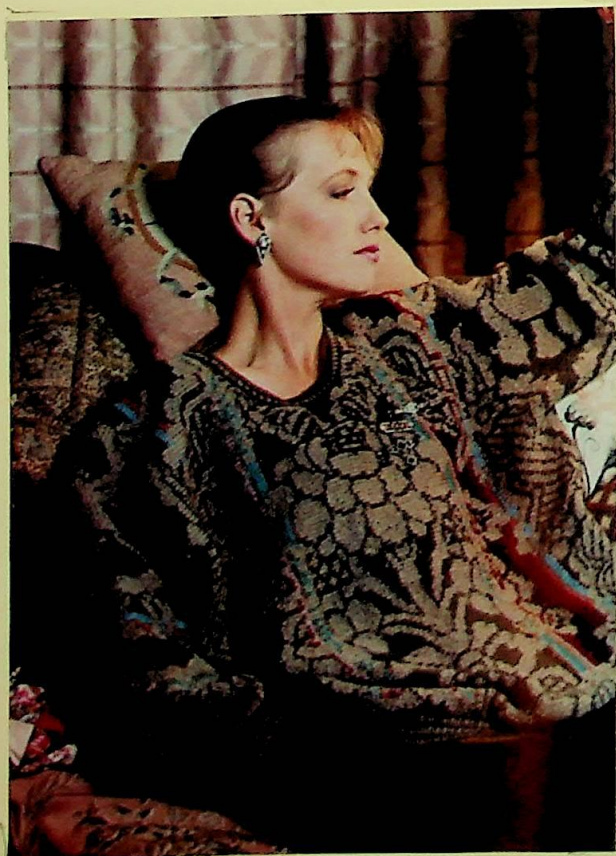


fig 30

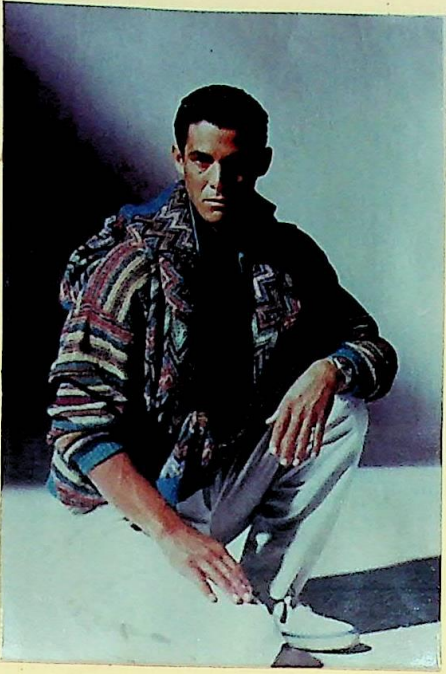


fig 31



fig 32

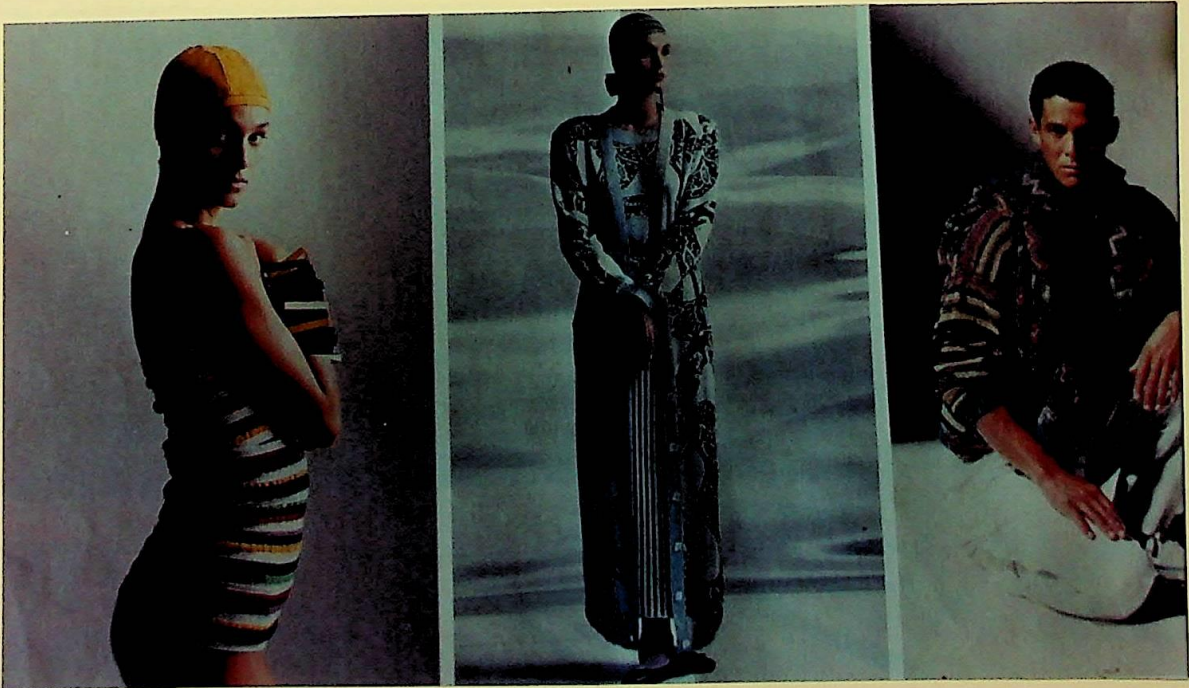
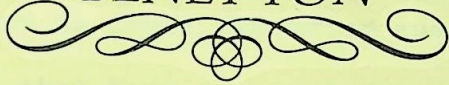


fig 33

# Chapter 4

## BENETTON



Benetton, like the Missoni empire, is a family run business and therefore, the production of their garments is very closely supervised by each of the four family members. Like the Missoni family, each of the four Benettos are directly involved in the running of the company. Luciano, the eldest, is the managing director, Guiliana, the only sister, handles the designing of the garments. Gilberto the next in line is the financial strategist, and finally Carlo, the youngest, is the production chief.

Benetton was formed originally in the Sixties just after the death of their father. To help finance their cost of living, Guiliana began knitting sweaters, which Luciano carried with him on his bicycle from place to place, trying to sell them to local factories and shops.

Like Missoni they have come a long way since then, they now have ten factories, one in Great Britain, one in both France and Spain, seven in Italy, and they are currently in the process of setting up another in the United States of America. In April, 1987, the Benettos had 4,000 outlets in almost 60 countries. They trade under three brand-names, namely, Sisley, Benetton and O12 which is solely for childrenswear. In 1987 their sales reached 700 million dollars, with a net earning of 78 million. Benetton is Europe's largest clothing manufacturer and the world's largest consumer of wool.

Benetton and Missoni, though they cater for two completely different sections of the market, have over the past few years, been the reason why Italy has earned such praise. Italy is now considered the country which produces the best woollen garments in the world.

There are many similarities between the two companies, which stretches from the method of design and production to the type of unusual surroundings they each use as the location for their headquarters. In Missoni's case their company



headquarters is in the heart of the Italian countryside, and Benetton's headquarters is in Villa Minelli (fig 34) which is a Seventeenth Century villa in Milan.

As I have already mentioned, the Missoni designs and production are all done on computer. The same applies to Benetton, however, their use of computers is much more widespread, due to the size of their production. Benetton has more computer programmers than seamstresses, and the designs for shirts and pants are done completely on computer. Computers also lay out patterns, reducing all wastage to 5%. Some computers are coded up with 300 colours, which enables programmers to work a print out entirely on computer.

Luciano explained to the reporter for 'Time' magazine, Walter Galling, in an interview dated January 15th, 1986 , "We turned out well designed clothes, keeping the cost down, through mass production and an efficient distribution system".\* 8 Benetton also tries to even their prices out worldwide so that the garments will cost more or less the same in every country. They have bi-annual collections which consist of at least five hundred garments each.

Benetton, like Patricia Roberts, is based on franchise shops in each country, and they have established outlets in communist areas such as Budapest, Prague, Belgrade and they are currently negotiating stores for the U.S.S.R. It doesn't matter where these shops are, they are still very similar, for example the store layout is almost exactly the same in every shop, also each cash register is computer coded so that every time a garment is sold, its style number, size and colour is registered and this information is automatically sent to headquarters through a link-up with the central computer in Milan. The most popular styles are then dyed up in the necessary colours and rushed out to the stores within ten days. This is an example of efficiency and control which is essential in a company this size. In 1985 Benetton opened a 25 million dollar distribution centre in

Castrette di Villorba which they claim is the most modern in the world. This may well be true, because there is only a handful of employees working in this centre, <sup>who</sup> these cater for security and maintenance only. The centre and its functions are run solely by robots and computers.

Although Missoni is not as large as Benetton there are still many similarities between them. Missoni has captured its market in the area of 'Designer Knitwear', as has Benetton in the area of high-class mass-produced garments. Both companies are known for almost always using basic shapes but decorating their garments through pattern and print to make them different from all others. Neither Benetton, nor Missoni is solely a knitwear company in the area of clothing manufacture. They also produce cloth garments, but they are better known for their knitwear. Like Missoni, Benetton has branched out over the past few years into new areas of design. Benetton now produce perfumes, watches and accessories such as belts, umbrellas and bags.

Each company puts a lot of time and effort into advertising and this has been proved an effective tactic, especially with regard to Benetton. Their campaign was masterminded by Oliviero Toscani just before President Gorbachov visited Paris for a Summit Meeting with the government leaders of Europe. Toscani's idea was to promote world peace through having children from different nations photographed holding each others hands, and their countries flags. The children were all dressed in bright Benetton clothes and the slogan read "United colours of Benetton" (fig 35 & 36). The response to these advertisements was so great that during the past three years Benetton has opened shops at the rate of one a day worldwide.

In the United States of America alone Benetton has six hundred stores, thirty of these are located in Manhattan alone, and eight of these are situated on 5th Avenue. Benetton

employs 1750 people. Benetton also use indirect advertising to promote their goods, they currently sponsor a Formula One racing car, and basketball teams in Italy and Switzerland.

Recently due to the size of their business Benetton has offered shares in their company to the public on the stock exchange. The demand for these shares has been enormous which shows the extent of their success in the eyes of the public worldwide. Their company strategy is studied in the major universities of the world.

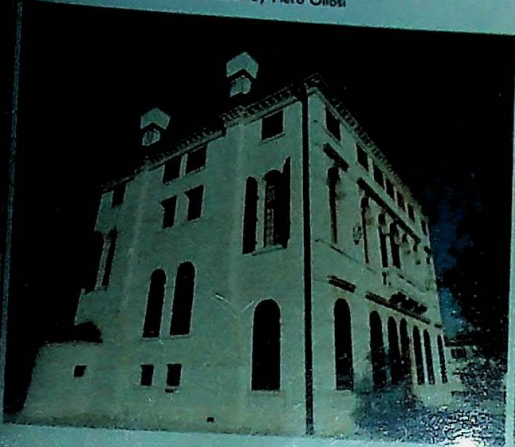
The main differences between Benetton and Missoni are the price and the quality, both of design and in the garments themselves. Missoni produce limited amounts of particular styles which means the garments are more exclusive and therefore can be sold at a higher price. The wool and fabric designs are all created from the most luxurious yarns and these cost a lot more than the yarns and fabrics used by Benetton in their garments. Because Missoni cater for a select few instead of the general public, the people who buy from them expect high quality, well-finished garments for the amount of money they pay, therefore the quality of their goods has to be very high to fulfil the demands of their customers.

Designwise Missoni can also afford to be a little more adventurous than Benetton because they are producing a smaller amount of garments. While remaining within their cost bracket they are still able to produce garments which can have details which are labour intensive, therefore adding to the production costs.

Benetton and Missoni have been leaders in the knitwear market over the past two decades, and this must have something to do with the many similarities between the companies, as well as their renowned quality of design and marketing. Both companies are extremely efficient, and they adequately fill the needs of the public through producing exciting original high class designs. (fig. 37 & 38)

# Luciano Benetton

by Barbara Church  
photos by Piero Orosi



Above, Villa Minelli, the 17th century villa which serves as the Benetton corporate headquarters. On the opposite page, Luciano Benetton looks from the balcony of Villa Minelli.

Luciano Benetton wants to finish in the Guinness Book of World Records. Odds are he'll succeed. One of the four Benettons who control the famous knitwear business based in Treviso (population 120,000 and 012) reached 200 million in sales with net earnings of 75 million. Benetton is Europe's largest knitwear manufacturer and the 20th largest consumer of wool in the world.

fig 34



fig 35



fig 36



fig 38

## Chapter 5

### KNITWEAR NOW

There are many ways of finding out what styles are in fashion, the most popular way, of course, is through fashion magazines. However, in the area of knitwear there are special magazines which deal solely in knit fashions. The most renowned of these magazines is 'Knitting in Vogue', but I feel that the most informative, and true to fashion is an Italian magazine called 'Filatura Di Crosa! It gives an account of mens, womens and childrens patterns, as well as showing the new trends in yarn types and colour. The magazine shows designs for young and old, casual wear and classy evening wear, and most of the designs in the magazine are accompanied by a pattern.

Another factor that would appeal to a lot of people is the fact that some of the garments in 'Filatura Di Crosa' are designed by the famous Italian designer Valentino, as are most of the wools. The yarns are new and exciting, a great many of them being mixtures of two or more different fibres. Most of the yarns are also natural fibres. They are all also available in the form of knitting kits. The most up to date issue of this magazine is the Winter 1987/88, and in my opinion it is the best example of the different trends in the latest knitwear fashions, therefore I feel it is important to discuss some of the garments in this issue to give an idea of the most recent changes in knitwear design.

The ladies garments are very feminine and completely in touch with current trends in the clothing industry. In a sense some of the designs are rediscovering traditional handknits, simplifying and modifying them, making them adaptable to current shapes and trends. The shoulders are in some cases large and structured, while in others they are softer, and an emphasis is based on shapely waists. Some garments are noticeably designed to cater for business women, which is a new concept, depicting the modern woman of the Eighties. These garments are designed to be worn under coats or jackets

and are therefore very shapely, chic, simple and attractive, both in pattern and texture. (fig 39) The yarns used in these garments are angora, alpaca, cashmere and some bouclé type yarns to give a tweedy effect. These garments have very little pattern, and therefore a lot relies on the shape and balance.

Valentino's designs for women in this magazine are very elegant and sophisticated while remaining simple and uncluttered. His designs include three piece knitted suits which are composed of a slimfitting sweater, a knitted jacket, and figure hugging knee length skirts. The colours he uses are described as "appeasing", such as navy blue teamed up with a greeny mustard, or brown flecked yarn used with red.

Some of Valentino's designs are quite authentic in appearance and look like some of the clothes worn in the 50's and early 60's. These ensembles include long turtle neck sweaters with slim-fitting skirts. The garments are textured with raised stitches and cables, and they are all knit in flecked wools to give the garments a tweedy look. (fig 40) Another appealing idea in this magazine is the long knitted coat which appears a few times in different forms. This, again, is a concept associated with the Eighties and it replaces big bulky coats with a warm, light, and comfortable knitted garment (fig 41, 42) There is a very noticeable use of stripes, checks and plaids which all add colour and pattern to garments.

The evening wear is extremely elegant, knit mainly in lurex and lamé type yarns, it emphasizes shoulders and fits snugly on the hips. This area also includes garments with peplums, which proved so popular as a fashion feature in 1987 (fig 42)

The casual wear for women is bright and bold, with cartoon-like patterns on the garments, the shapes are very young, ie, knee length dresses, or sweaters with mini skirts.



This area also includes mono-toned textured garments in much more subtle shades, such as dusty raspberry pink and pale petrol blue.

The menswear designs for winter 1987/88 are very adventurous compared to previous years; the shapes are not very different, but the pattern, texture, yarns and colour are completely new, and symbolic to the new found awareness of fashionable men's designer knitwear. Up until now there has been a lack of exciting knitwear available for men, and men's sweaters have generally been associated with arans, fisherman's rib, argyll and other traditional styles of knitting. However, knitwear today is catering for all types of men with varied tastes in clothes. (fig 44)

This is seen in the knitwear which is specifically designed for the 'new man'. By the 'new man' I am referring to the young businessman who likes to appear neat and tidy at all times and therefore requires a wardrobe that is in a sense tones-down, eg. casual garments will not be so casual that they cannot be worn with suits, yet still can be worn with less formal clothes. This is similar to sports jackets which over the past while have been worn in the same manner. In this category one of the most eye-catching designs I have seen is a black and white houndstooth style jacket/cardigan, trimmed with black cuffs and bands. This garment is both *chique* and business-like but is adaptable to any occasion. This garment was designed by Valentino (fig 45 )

Armani and American designer Ralph Lauren have also designed ranges for men with this idea in mind.

Cashmere, wool and alpaca are the new yarns associated with menswear, and the new colours are wedgewood blue and dark grey with gold, as well as traditional navy, red and black.

The 1950's feeling creeps into men's knitwear through

casual ski-sweaters in fairisle, which were very popular thirty years ago. The yarns used in these sweaters are alpaca and wool mixtures thereby giving the garment a much softer finish (fig 46).

The casual knits for men are more outlandish and much bolder, therefore much more eye-catching than ever before.

The only disappointing area of the Italian knitwear shown in 'Filatura di Crossa' was the childrens wear. There were few original designs to be seen, and the garments themselves lacked style. However, Angela Kennedy's designs and those of Patricia Roberts which were not specifically designed for 1987, but could be worn during any season, more than made up for the lack of design content in the Italian designer children's knitwear. The designs by Angela Kennedy are young, lively, playful, colourful, and fun, and are obviously designed to please both children and adults. The traditional knitting styles such as arans are knit in bright colours such as scarlet, or canary yellow, thereby giving a new younger feel to the garments.

All the garments discussed so far are either designer knits or hands knits, and therefore I feel it is important to discuss what is available in the market place in the area of mass-produced machine knit garments. To do this I have chosen two specific chain stores, one of which distributes garments to its franchise stores world wide, and one British company with stores scattered throughout Great Britain and Ireland. These stores are Benetton/Sisley, the Italian company and 'Next'.

Both of these stores are offering current styles and shapes in knitwear and competitive prices. They change their stock quite frequently, and have many different styles of knitwear to offer, especially Next. Like Benetton, Next caters for men, women and children, and often is considered a fashion leader more so than a fashion follower. Their garments are up to date in colour, style, shape and they use a mixture of natural and synthetic fibres. Having said this

the majority of knitwear offered is knit in natural fibres. They use traditionally inexpensive yarns such as wool, lambswool and cotton, which is a noticeable difference when compared with the yarns used by designers.

The pattern on the machine knits available in mass quantity is generally in keeping with the trends in fashion, e.g. if there is a strong nautical look predicted, sailor collars, anchors and ropes will more than likely appear on the knitwear. In 1987 there was move towards traditional knits such as aran and fairisle, and 'Next' stocked aran style knitted garments, while the 50's influenced fairisle and argyll was available in Benetton and Sisley.

Because the garments are so inexpensive to buy and are mass produced in such large quantities, the quality is far inferior to designer knitwear both in yarn and in some cases design content. However, in the money-conscious Eighties these mass produced garments are fashionable and very reasonably priced, which is very important to the greater majority of shoppers. Overall, machine knitwear has had a lot to do with the re-introduction of knitwear as one of the most important of all fashion items in the 80's, and indeed, there is a lot of money being generated by this industry in recent times.

Another aspect of machine knits is knit jerseys which over the past few years have been extremely popular in the area of leggings and leotards which go back to the health and body-conscious revolution of the Eighties. (fig 47)

Finally, one area of both machine and hand-knit, as well as designer knitwear, that has helped the move towards knitwear in the eighties is the use of cotton. Cotton was always considered a fabric yarn and therefore was not used very much in knitwear until the late 70's. It was a new yarn that was light, fresh and cool as well as being comfortable to wear and most important easy to wash. Therefore it appealed to many people and knitwear designers, and so became one of the most popular yarns currently available. One aspect of this yarn that is completely unique to the 1980's is the use of pearlized cotton, and cotton bouclé, which were completely

new textures, and extremely popular in knitwear design over the past few year. The reason for this is because they created new textures and were especially successful when used in the aran styles which as I have already said were so popular for the past few seasons. These cottons could also be spun quite fine, which also enabled them to be used in mass-produced machine knit garments. Cotton was also cheaper to produce than wool and made knitwear very popular in the warmer months of the year, together with the fact that the wool available beforehand was too warm for the summertime heat.

Another point which is important when comparing designer hand knits, such as those created by Patricia Roberts or Christian de Falbe, to mass produced machine knits is the fact that when a machine knit garment is patterned it is flat (i.e. no textured stitches) which is not the case in some hand-knit designs.

Some of the latest designers to make an impact on the knitwear scene are Alain Derda who designs for the wool company Pingouin, Kaffe Fasset, Christian de Falbe, Sue Bradley, Annabel Fox, Richard Torry and America's foremost knitwear designer Alexander Julien.

ALAIN DERDA is the French designer who works for the knitting company 'Pingouin'. He has produced some very effectively proportioned garments. His designs are sometimes technically difficult to knit due to his preference for having a variety of stitches on each garment. His clothes are designed to suit all age groups and the shapes are always very contemporary without having very fitted garments (fig 48 & 49).

Some of his garments which are obviously aimed at a younger section of the market are very adventurous in colour, shape and pattern. Overall his work consists of very effective designs, which are very eye-catching and beautifully treated in the areas of colour and texture.

KAFFE FASSET was a Painter in his native city San Francisco until he was 28 years old and therefore his knitwear was inspired by sources such as tiled floors, ancient walls, murals and mosaics, carpets and early maps. He uses a combination of colour, texture and yarns. He is known as the master of colour, which is proved by his work. He specialises in knitting packs i.e. the wool and pattern can be purchased from his company and therefore this process cuts down on waste. (fig 50, 51 & 52).

CHRISTIAN DE FALBE is currently enjoying enormous success as a knitwear designer. He stocks Liberty's of London with his knitting patterns and is popular both among young and old. He uses a lot of updated classic looks and stitches, such as, arans in mini skirts and in long fish-tailed, fitted coats. His work is designed for hand knitting only. He has had both knitting kits produced and books published. These books are very well

styled and photographed, creating an atmosphere and mood. There are no studio shots included which makes the garments more eye-catching and hence more appealing.

SUE BRADLEY is highly regarded by the British knitwear industry as an up and coming designer. In my opinion her design concepts are highly original and exciting, however, I feel that she pays too much attention to her inspirational theme, and her garments often end up looking like costumes. She treats knitwear in a new way by incorporating beads, lace and linen to give a new look to a sweater.

ANNABEL FOX left leicester Art College in 1980. Since then she has designed clothes as well as knitwear. She has recently formed a company which enables her to market garments under her own label. She has done freelance designs for stores such as Liberty and also for magazines. The colours she uses are bold and are an important feature in her designs. Her shapes are always loose and comfortable, and she likes to mix yarns but she places an emphasis on colour and pattern rather than texture. Her main technical difficulty is the amount of colour she uses in an overall patterned jumper. She generally uses very basic stitches and therefore, she has no texture in her garments unless they are knit in a mixture of yarns (fig 53, 54 & 55). 53, 54, 55

RICHARD TORRY is a young British designer who doesn't like being called a 'knitwear designer', but the financial aspect of the fashion business appeals to him because as a designer of knitwear he is very successful and earns a substantial amount of money. He graduated from Middlesex Polytechnic in the early 80's. He specialised in men's knitwear which he brought with him to New York where it was well received by designers and fashion critics. Susan Bartsch, who is a fashion entrepreneur in New York took Torry under her wing and guided him while he stayed there. He was immediately snapped up by the Japanese fashion company, Hanae Mori (Tokyo). He does all his design work in England, and makes his garments up in calico

first and then cuts a basic pattern for the yarn . (fig56)

A great many more designers are showing knitwear in their collections now. The most noticeable ones are Sonja Rykiel, Richmond Cornejo, English Eccentrics, Karl Lagerfeld and Ralph Lauren (fig 57 )

Outside of Europe, one of the most successful designers in the knitwear field is American designer Alexander Julien. His sweater designs for men have the same status in the States as Missoni's have worldwide. They are worn noticeably by the rich and famous, such as America's foremost television personality, Bill Cosby. He wears some of the most colourful, cleverly designed, highly patterned sweaters around. In one of his shows a line directed at him read "One of your designer jumpers cost as much as my whole wardrobe". \* 8 This gives an idea of how expensive Julien's garments are, and just how highly regarded they are. His designs are mainly menswear for the American market. His garments are very striking, and are easily recognisable as being his designs because he has a very distinctive style of his own. His designs show a thoughtful use of colour and pattern although his shapes are quite conventional; his use of colour and pattern make his garments completely different from any others available on the American home market.

These are just some of today's new breed of knitwear designers. There are many others but I have chosen these because I feel that they are some of the most successful, exciting and inventive of contemporary knitwear designers.



fig 39



fig 40

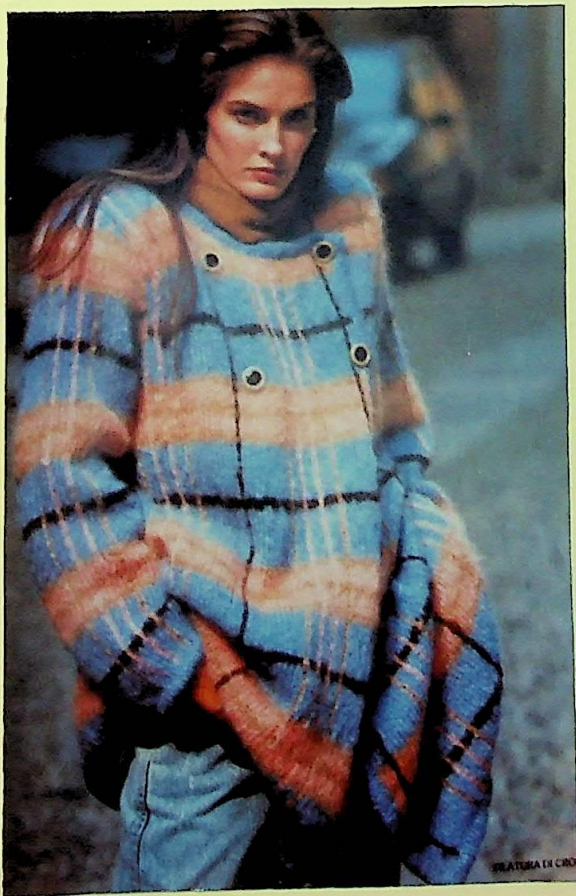


fig 41





fig 42

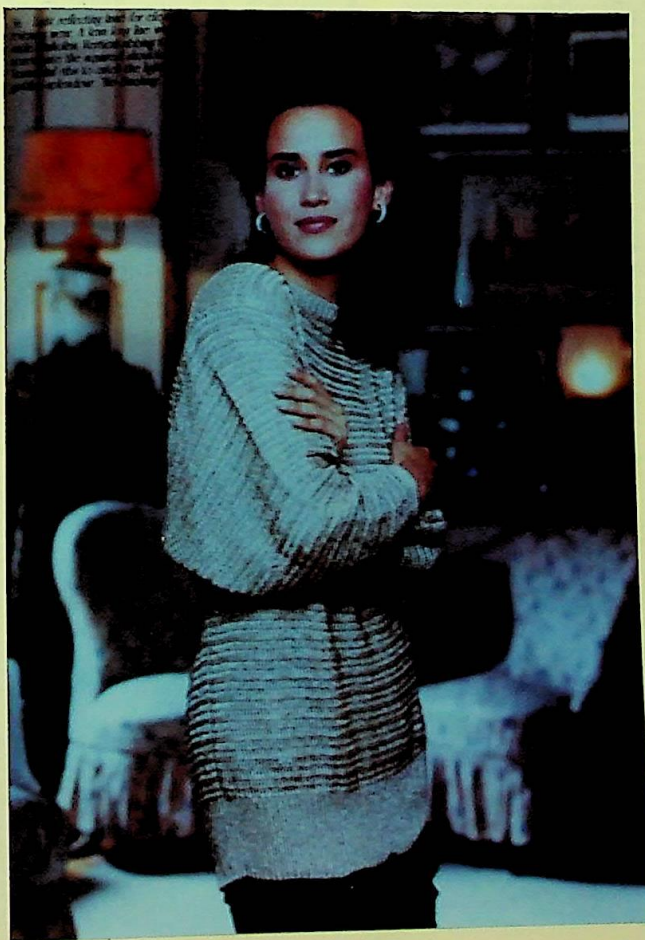


fig 43

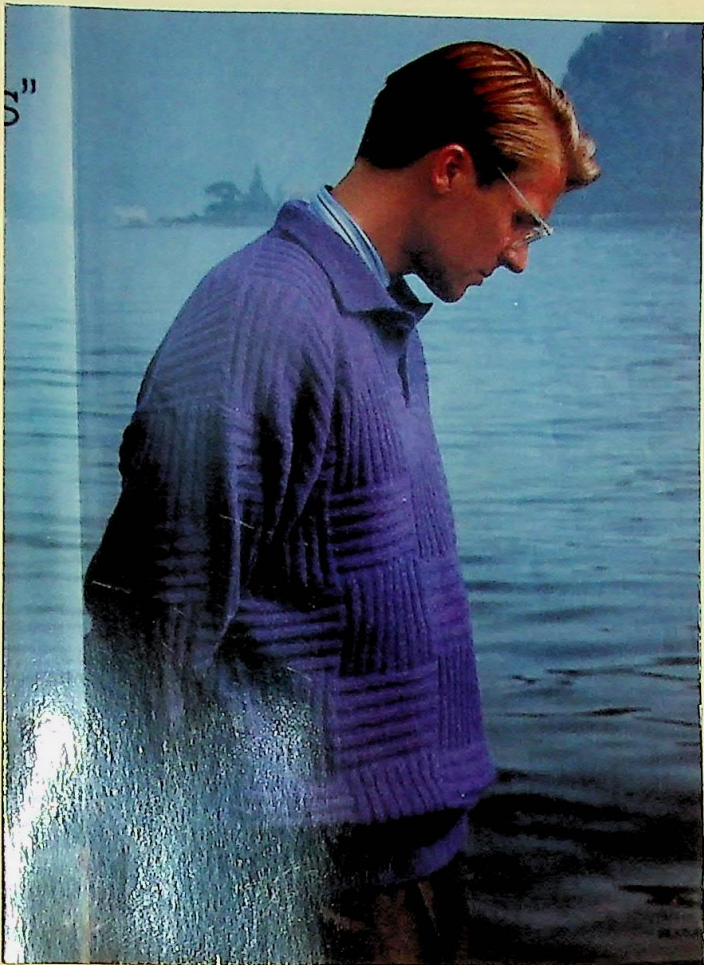


fig 44

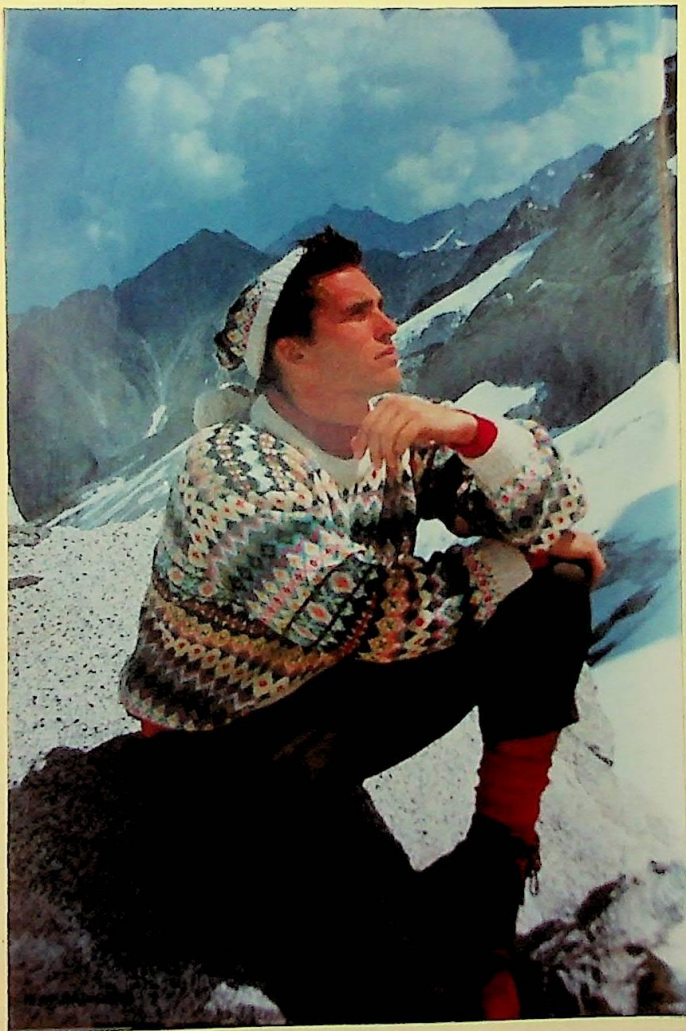


fig 46



fig 45

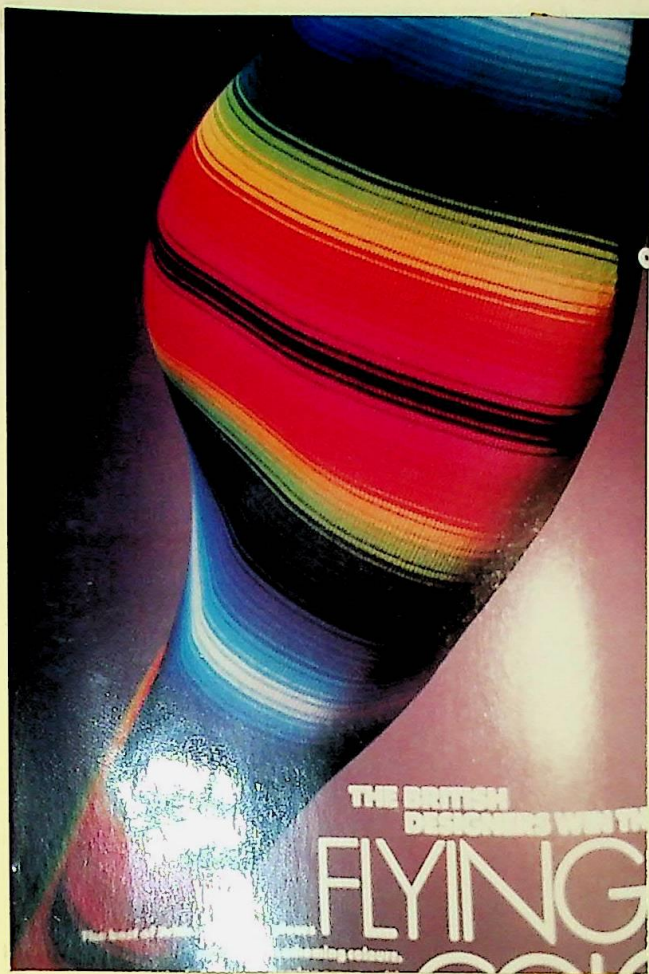


fig 47



fig 48

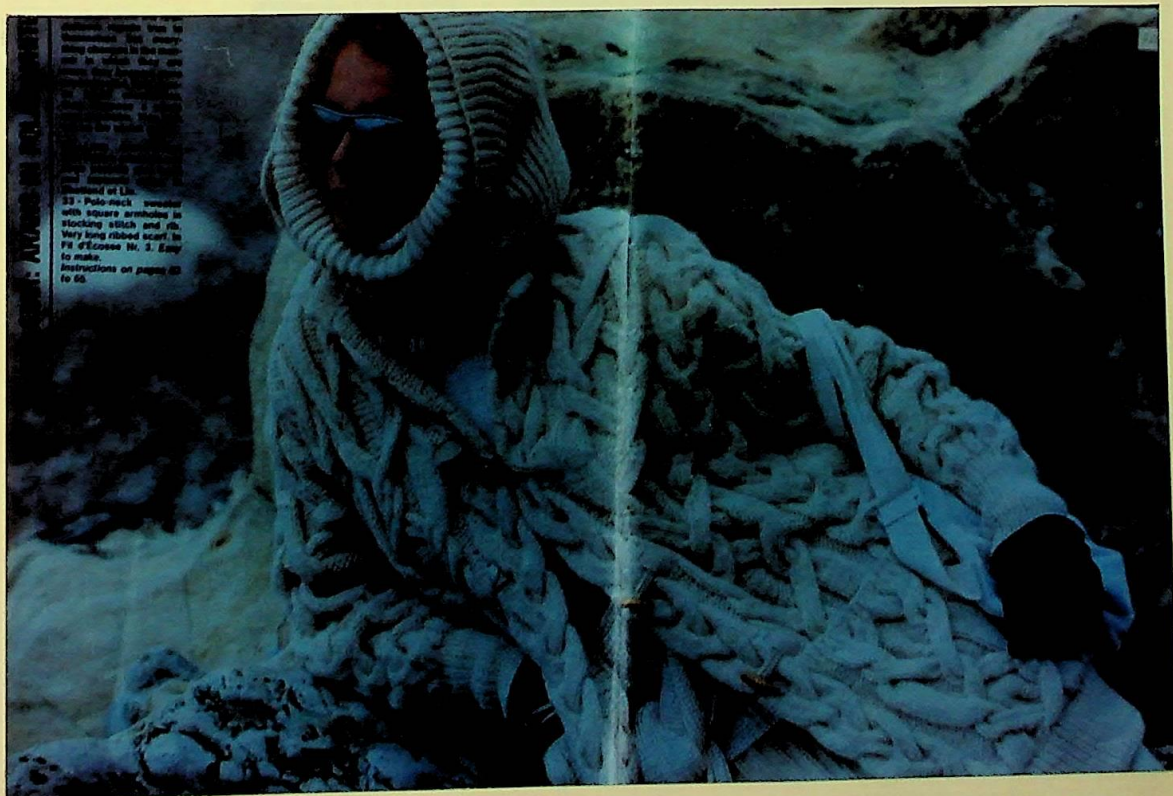


fig 49

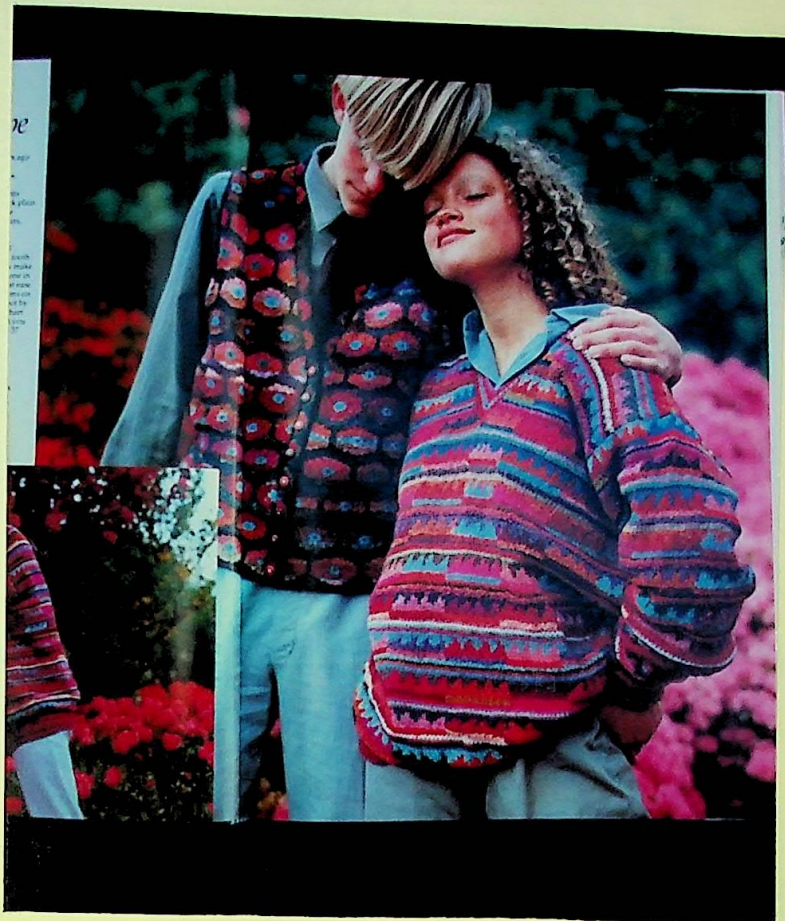


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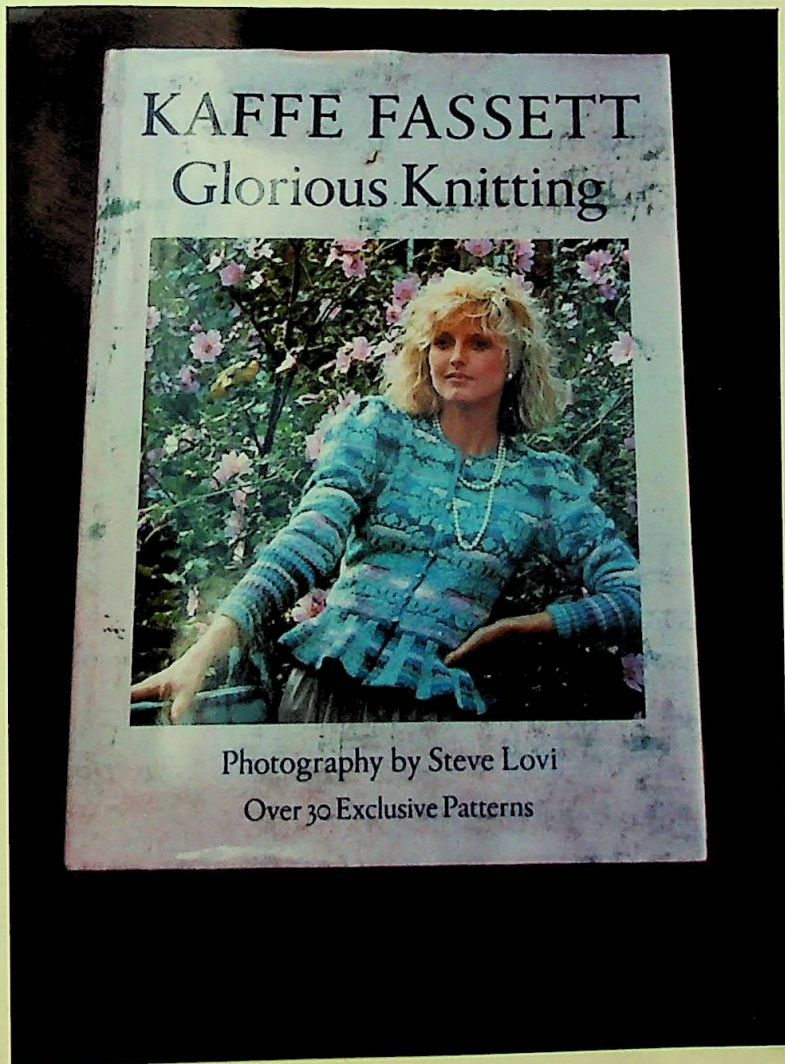


fig 51

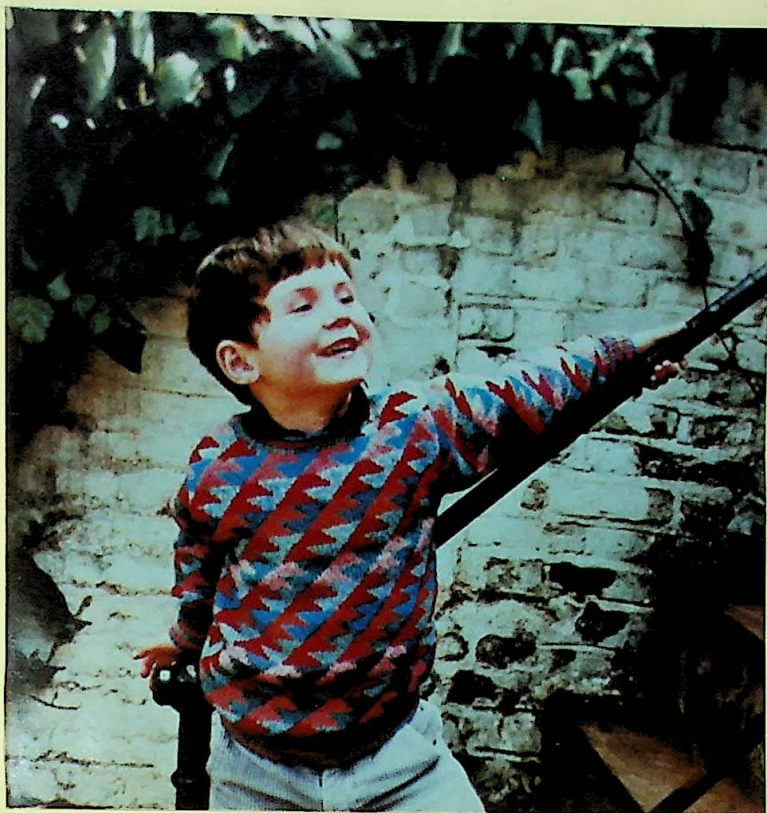


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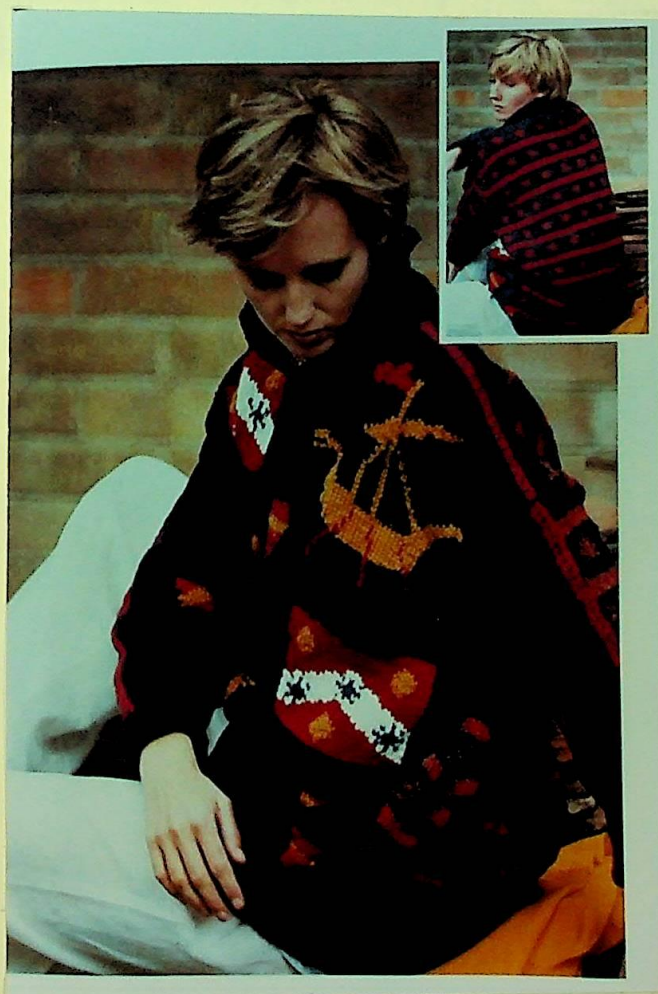


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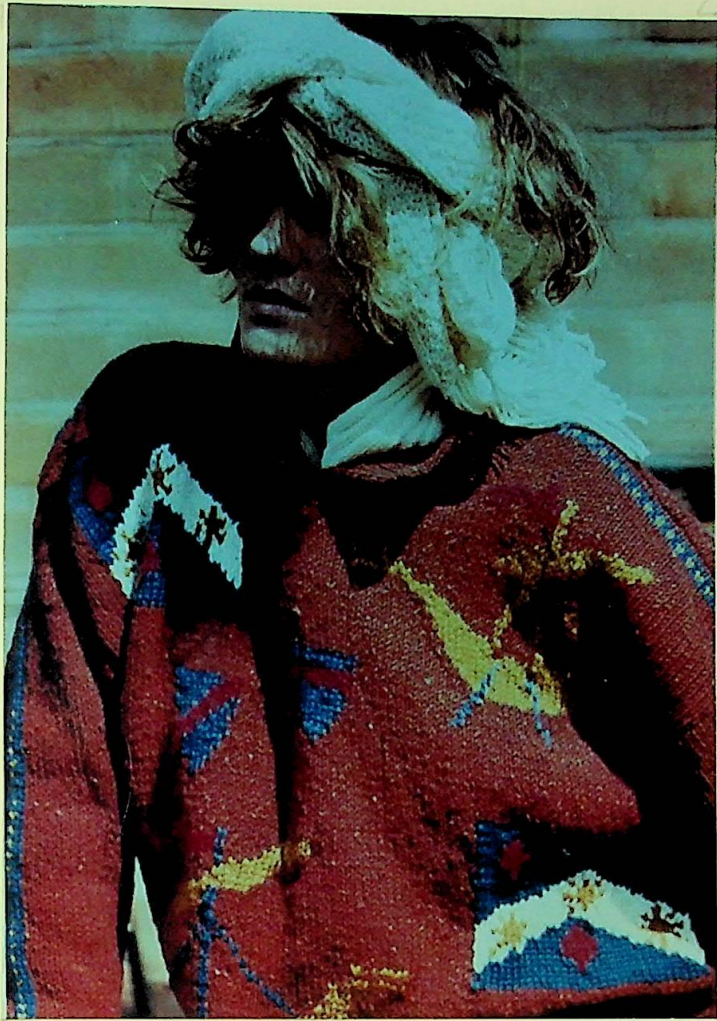


fig 54



fig 55

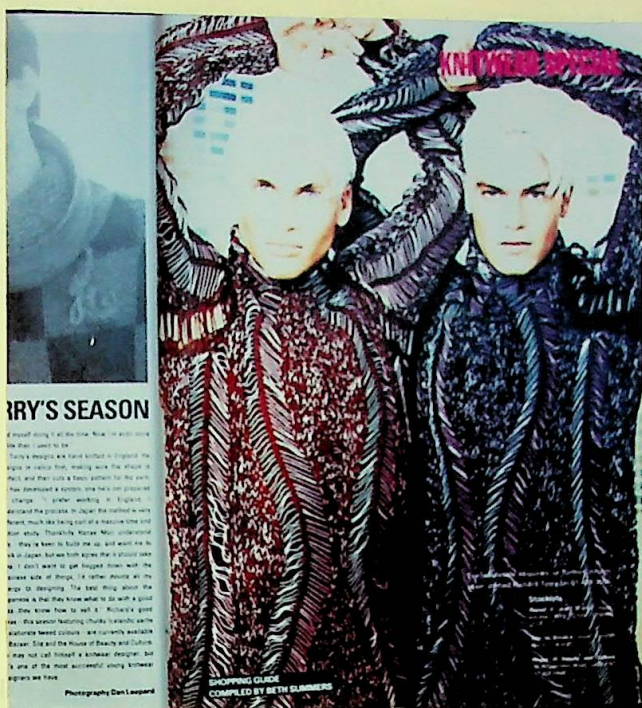


fig 56



fig 57

CONCLUSION



Knitwear has become so popular in recent years that it has created a new market for itself, separate from the clothing or garment industry. Until now people bought clothes and knitwear from the same designer. Customers now have a choice, because a new breed of designers have emerged onto the fashion scene. These are the 'knitwear designers', who specialise in knitted garments. Though they may also design other types of clothes, they are renowned for their knitwear.

There are many reasons why knitwear has become so popular in recent times, but I believe this is as a result of the original and modern designs created by contemporary knitwear designers. In my opinion, the most influential designers who have received through their knitted garments much deserved international recognition are Missoni and Patricia Roberts. They have been an inspiration for many aspiring young designers who model their approach to design on Missoni's and Patricia Roberts' creations.

In the area of mass production knitwear, Benetton is outstanding and is currently the most popular of all knitwear companies. This is due to the originality of their designs, their marketing strategy and the efficiency of their operations.

Knitwear has come a long way since the beginning of the century and I hope I have illustrated why it has become such an innovative and lucrative area of design in recent years.

In this thesis I have recorded the development in knitwear design and technology, along with the importance of knitted fabrics. I have also selected some designers whom I feel have laid the foundations for a very colourful and exciting future in the knitwear industry.

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