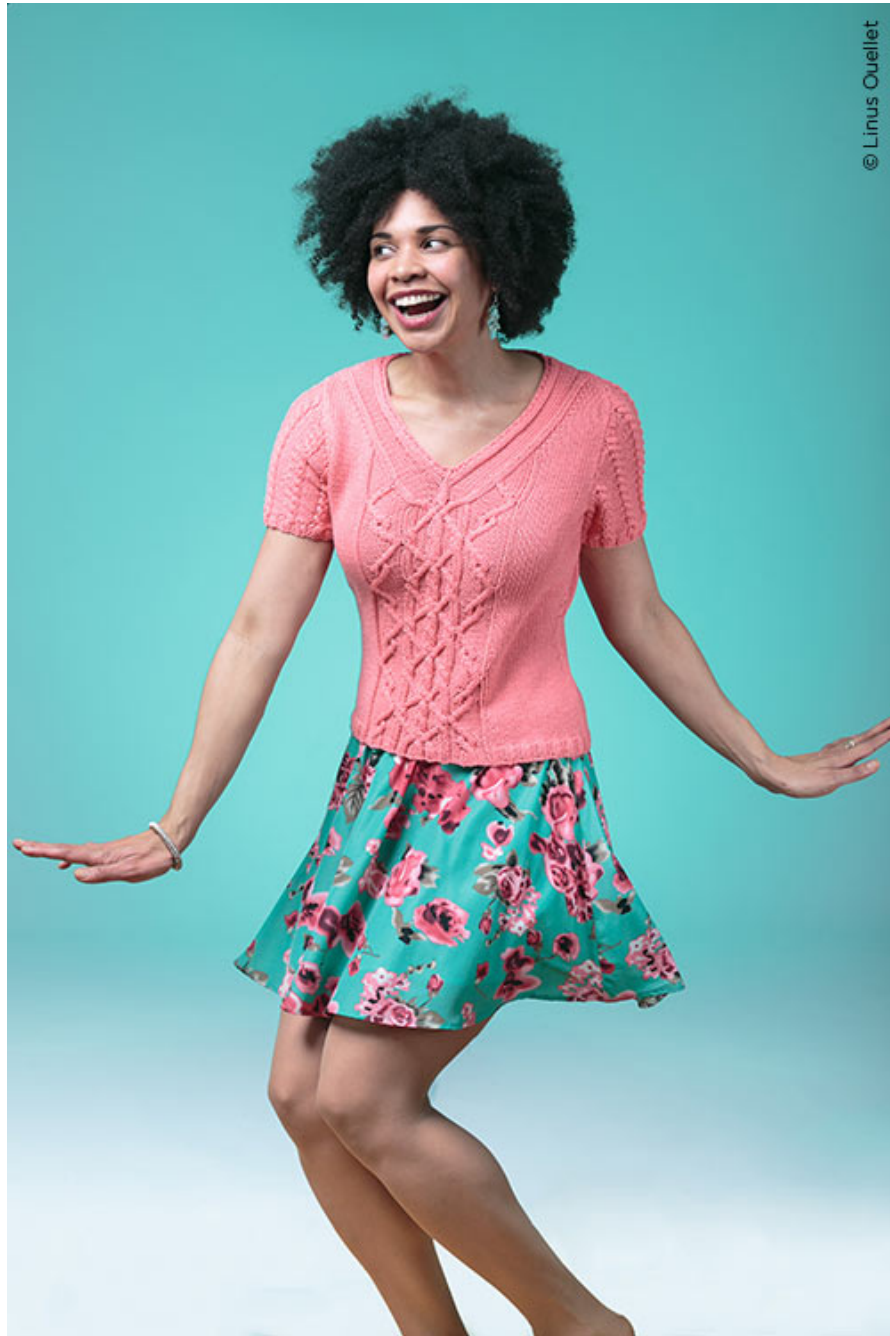




Today's post is from Fiona Ellis. Fans of Twist are no stranger to her work. In the nearly six years we've been publishing, she's produced 21 designs for us. Today, she talks about her latest, [Sugarbeach](#), as well as a few blasts from our publishing past.



Have you noticed that my [Sugarbeach](#) top has cables that divide and then flow around the V-neck to frame the face? It's a pet idea of mine that I often include in my sweater designs. It serves to create a focal point for the garment and shows that you have spent time and effort to create a

couture piece.

How does hand knitting differ from commercial practices?

Most commercially made garments are made by the cut-and-sew method. Each piece of the garment is cut from a length of fabric and then seamed together. So when it comes to the neckline there is already a cut edge and a break in the patterning. As hand knitters we are making custom made garments just as a couture house would do. We fashion each piece of the garment exactly the size it needs to be. So it is my belief that, as we are already engaging in couture practices (and harkening back to an age of elegance), we should continue this attention right into the details, edges, neatening and of course the neckline treatment. It's what makes our work stand out as beautiful custom hand-work rather than the thrown together pieces we find so often in main stream stores.

Why do we need a focal point?

By careful placing a change in pattern we can ensure that the first place a viewer's eye will be drawn to will be our best feature. Mostly I believe that the most interesting thing about all of us is what we think and say so it makes sense to draw the eye towards the face rather than say our derriere (unless you have a wonderful derriere of course).

How do we draw the eye towards the neckline?

Cables, generally speaking, create vertical lines (if we work them in the conventional fashion) automatically causing the eye to run up and down the piece. But we can utilize a number of different methods to further draw the eye toward the face.

We can choose lines that create arrow shapes with the tip pointing towards the face - [Rebecca](#) & [Chartres](#) are both examples of this.



We can add collars and worked in contrasting colours they are be especially eye catching, as with [Charleston](#).



Or we can add feature patterning in the yoke area, which creates an effect a little like placing a piece of jewelry there. [Merise](#) is a great example of this.



We can also continue the patterning around the neckline rather than just cutting into it to do the shaping, like in [Mehndi](#) & of course with [Sugarbeach](#).



With these design elements it is often important to finish on a specific row before beginning the change in patterning or shaping. So we need to pay attention to row gauge and the length that you need to make the piece. You can't just knit a few more rows to achieve the correct length and still end on the correct row of the pattern.

How do ensure that the correct row of the pattern is at the neckline?

In writing the pattern instructions I have taken care of this for you. But what if you need to make adjustments to the length from those I have offered?

1. Firstly we need to know our row gauge. I know that you all do gauge swatches right?
2. Then we need to know how long the piece needs to be. So measure a garment that fits you well and check it against the schematic measurements to see if you will need to make any changes.
3. We can then calculate the number of rows that will need to be worked to give your desired

- length. That is: the number of rows per inch multiplied by the length of the piece.
4. Divide this number by the pattern repeat to see if you will arrive at the correct row in the pattern at the neckline. You will need to check the instructions to see which row.
 5. If it doesn't work out quite perfectly we will need to adjust the pattern row we start from at the hem. The adjustment can be done one of two ways: To shorten simply begin on a higher number row, therefore subtracting rows.

OR to lengthen add extra rows before working row 1 of the pattern. These rows should be worked from the top of the chart as though you were ending a previous repeat before you begin working row 1.

I hope this has given you some food for thought and Happy Knitting!