



This blog post is cross posted from [Leah Thibault's blog](#) and is about her charming Carmel Clutch.



*Photo Credit: Caro  
Benna Sheridan*

As I hinted at a few posts back, I have pattern in [2010 Spring/Summer issue of Twist Collective](#).

It's my first professionally published pattern and I'm thrilled to be in such a great magazine in the company of designers I really admire. I'm super excited about the whole thing, so I thought I'd talk a bit today about the [Carmel Clutch](#) came to be.

It started with a hat.



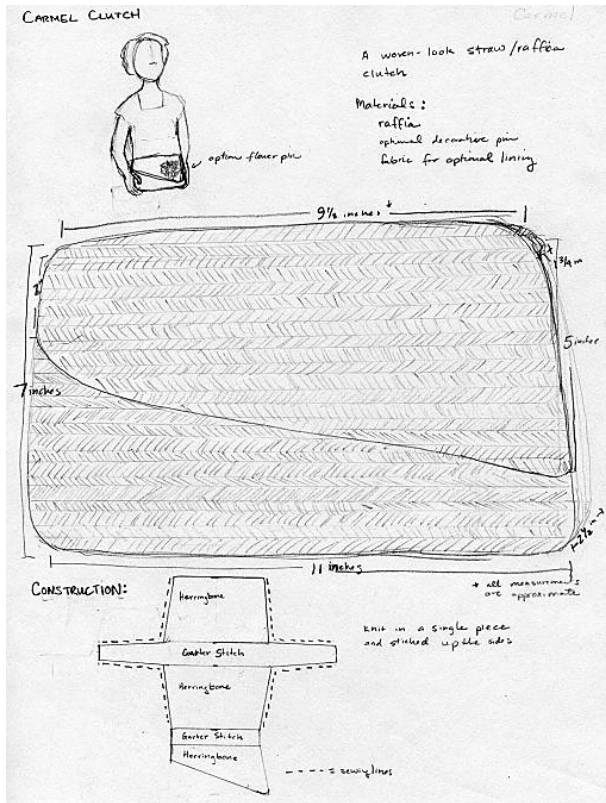
This hat.

Which I bought on out-of-season clearance at LL Bean a year or so ago. After I bought the hat I spent some time looking at it and realized that it was crocheted. This got me thinking, surely if you can crochet with raffia, you can knit with raffia. So I went out to a craft store on my lunch break and bought a cheap bag of raffia to give it a try.

I wanted it to have a woven looks, so I flipped through a stitch dictionary or two and came up with a swatch of herringbone stitch.



My original swatch had a half dozen knots on the back, since the raffia from the craft store came in pieces of about 3 feet long, but it was enough to know that the concept worked. So I worked up a sketch, named the pattern after the beach community in California that I visited a handful of times in my teenage years, sent it off to Twist, and crossed my fingers.



I got the okay from the Twist folks and we decided to work up two samples, one in raffia and one in a more standard yarn, which I was more than happy to do. While I waited for the [Elann Coto Canapone](#) to come in I ordered a few spools of raffia from Raffit Ribbons and got to work.



Here's where you may ask, what's it like knitting with raffia? And the answer is not too bad. It's about equivalent to working with any other plant fiber yarn I've worked with (cotton, hemp, linen).



It's stiff off the spool and there's not a lot of give when dry and I'll admit that the purl stitches in the garter stitch sections of the bag were kinda pokey, but believe me – I've never had so much fun blocking a piece of knitting. the texture changes dramatically after it's wet and softens into something lovely!



I had finished version 1.0 of the bag, but wasn't happy with the front flap, which was done with decreases. It was too pointy and bumpy – so I set it aside for a day to decide how to fix it. I picked up some personal knitting, and while working on a version of Laura Chau's [Just Enough Ruffles Scarf](#), the solution presented itself to me – short rows! So I pulled out the front flap and reworked it in short rows with the addition of the garter stitch border seen in the final photos.

Around this time the Elann yarn arrived and it was Christmas and I went to California for a week and did no knitting at all so by the time I was knitting the Coto Canapone version I completely forgot to take pictures. Oops! But suffice it to say, I reworked some numbers for gauge. We also made the second sample shorter to combat potential flopiness (which if you find is an issue with your yarn I'd suggest lining it with fabric backed with interfacing or putting a book in the bag – both work)



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A big thanks to Twist for including me in this issue and to Caro Benna Sheridan for the lovely photos! If you have any more questions on the [Carmel Clutch](#) – let me know!