



Today's post is brought to you by Sandi Rosner, [designer](#), [tech editor](#), and [writer](#) extraordinaire! You can also find it on her [blog](#). We get to learn about why hats make excellent swatches, and how ancient textiles can inspire modern knits. Enjoy!!

In case you haven't seen it yet, the [Fall 2012 issue of Twist Collective](#) is online. I'm pleased to have been included with a design for a hat and mitten set called [Sultana](#)



I wanted to share a bit with you about the inspiration for this design.

Last December, my friend Carson and I saw an [exhibition of Anatolian kilims at the deYoung Museum](#) in San Francisco. These tribal weaving were amazing, packed with complex geometric and figurative motifs in a riot of colors.

The oldest example in the collection was just a fragment of a 15th century kelim in only two colors -

natural and a faded tomato red (madder, maybe? Name That Dye is not a game at which I excel). I loved the interplay of positive and negative space, and the way the interlocking spear shapes were edged with little bubbles. The bold graphic seemed surprisingly modern for a textile more than 600 years old. Carson and I agreed that it begged to be reinterpreted in knitting. I pulled out my camera and snuck a picture.



Even though the photo is of such poor quality, it was a fairly simple matter to import it into Illustrator and trace the motifs. Overlay a grid, and it starts to look suspiciously like a knitting chart.



Here is my original swatch, made with some Cascade 220 I had on hand. Yes, I do tend to make hats as swatches for color patterns. Such patterns are easiest for me when knit in the round, and hats make good class samples, or can be donated to organizations like [Halos of Hope](#) if not needed. I love the contrast in these Gryffindor colors.

For the magazine, we chose a thinner yarn, [Romney Ridge Farms Sport Weight](#). This is a great yarn for colorwork. Grown in Maine, it is a nice "sticky" wool that knits easily and blocks into a beautifully cohesive fabric. The hand dyed colors have subtle variations that give the pattern extra depth and interest.





While you are looking at the magazine, don't miss [my article about shaping in pattern](#). Many knitters struggle with maintaining lace and cable patterns while shaping armholes and necklines. The article takes you step by step through the process.

Old textiles are a great source of inspiration, particularly for colorwork. The landscape that surrounds us can also serve as the spark for great ideas.