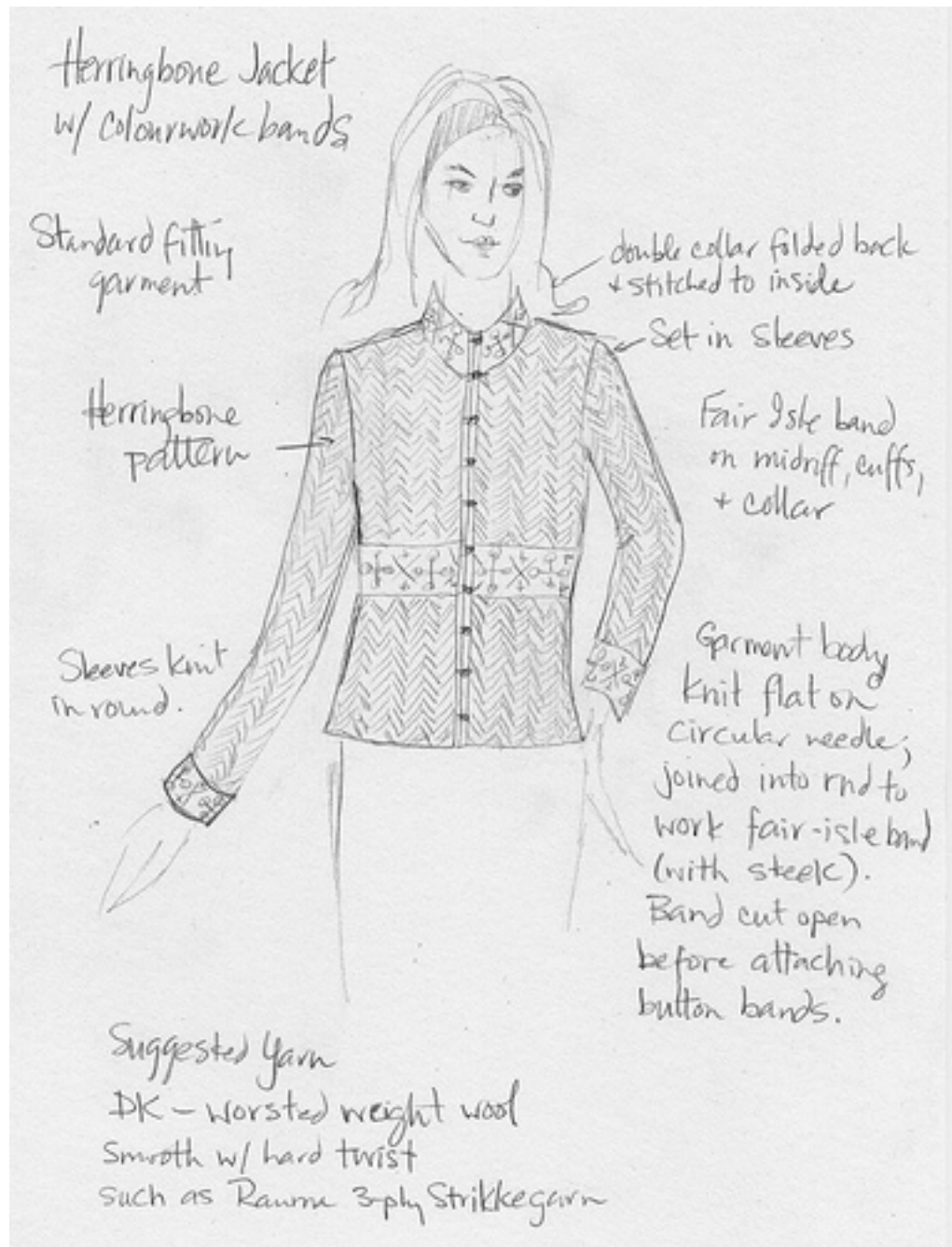


by Robin Melanson

When I design, mostly the ideas just sort of just pop into my head, nearly fully-formed as I go about minding my own business. It can be as simple as reading a line of a poem — then shazaam! Sweater! I enjoy drawing, so sometimes I will sketch out several different options before I decide which one it will become, but I have a weird secretive paranoia about showing sketches to anyone before they are accepted (you know—so they don't get the jinx on them). I like to look through my old sketchbooks to rediscover ideas I had forgotten about, I doodle mindlessly a lot, and sometimes I don't know what it is supposed to be until much later—but until then, it doesn't see the light of day. Like a secret cave of ideas. However, Stormsvale was one of the lightning-strike ideas; I knew exactly what it was going to be when I thought of it.



When I was putting together colour combinations for Stormsvale, I thought it was really great that I

actually had a lot of input in the colour choices, which is not always the case when working with a magazine. Sometimes your palette is etched in stone (with someone else's chisel), or you must tailor your ideal choice to fit the available colours in a given yarn. When choosing yarns for colourwork, it's a luxury to use a yarn that comes in at least fifty colours, though I understand that yarns with large ranges can be a stockist's nightmare.

I kind of like it when I have some parameters for choosing colours, because otherwise the colour wank could go on and on for eternity. For example, 3-Ply Strikkegarn comes in seventy-five colours. I would like to use five colours. The number of possible permutations of five colours from a set of seventy-five is 2,071,126,800.

$${}_n P_k = n!/(n-k)!$$

where  $n$  is the number of colours, and  $k$  is the number of slots you have available. That is over 2 billion choices, as long as I am not picky about what colour goes where. However, I **am** picky, and we know that not all of the colours will work together. Some smarty-pants mathematician could probably tell me how many useable combinations there could be if I divided up the colours into value groups and made up some kind of rule set, like no mixing pastels with safety-orange, or no white and off-white together. I know of someone who could eat an equation like that for breakfast. However, I spent a good deal of math class at Tim Horton's (*the* donut chain store in Canada) — where, if you could pick two doughnuts out of a field of fifteen flavours, you would have 210 possible choices (actually that would be 105 combinations, because I consider Boston cream + honey cruller to be the same as honey cruller + Boston cream).



With yarn (as with doughnuts) everyone has their favourite flavours. So I narrowed my choice of 2,071,126,800 combinations down to about six (I am indeed very picky) and then I thought about it a while longer, and added five more, parameters being:

1. Main Colour does not equal red—because although I adore red and variations thereof, red was already assigned.
2. Will look good photographed on a New England shore.
3. Good combination for winter.
4. Pleasing to Kate.
5. Pleasing to me.

Below are the last five. Actually, I lie—there are thirteen here if you count the various options. We went with number four (eleven?). I tend to favour strong colour combinations, and deeper tones. And I love a good gunmetal grey. And alliterative verse. And I managed to sneak in some red anyhow. The numbers refer to the Strikkegarn colour cards which you can see [here](#).

1.

MC: 1387 Dk. Steel Grey

A: 141 Red Violet

B: 128 Cranberry Red

C: 124 Bright Red

D: 150 Old Gold

OR the inverse of this (with the Old Gold at the outer edges and the RedViolet in the centre)

2.

MC: 1387 Dk. Steel Grey

A: 146 Gold

B: 160 Orange Gold

C: 124 Bright Red

D: 141 Red Violet OR 173 Deep Magenta OR 33/66 Deep Aqua Blue OR 138 Med. Grey Blue

3.

MC: 8/60 Very Dk. Olive Green

A: 7/61 Olive Green

B: 150 Old Gold

C: 120 Lt. Yellow

D: 140 Old Rose OR 7/71 Dk. Rose

4.

MC: 1387 Dk. Steel Grey

A: 33/66 Deep Aqua Blue

B: 138 Med. Grey Blue

C: 1287 Steel Grey

D: 144 Berry Red OR 173 Deep Magenta OR 174 Red

5.

MC: 133 Deep Brown

A: 127 Dk Rust Red

B: 181 Cinnamon

C: 146 Gold

D: 120 Lt. Yellow OR 43/61 Tan