

MY INSPIRATION

Sasha Kagan

Patron of the Knitting & Crochet Guild, Sasha is an iconic knitwear designer



A TRUE legend in the world of knitting, Sasha Kagan has been designing colourwork knits for more than 40 years. She is a patron of The Knitting &

Crochet Guild, and makes regular appearances at textile events around the country. We chatted with her about her design influences.

Who inspired you to take up knitting?

"I was inspired to knit by my mother at the age of four. She was a very talented knitter, embroiderer, weaver, rug maker, potter and dressmaker. She was also expert at crochet, patchwork and smocking. She saw it as her mission to teach me all the crafts she knew. For this I am eternally grateful; to inherit a strong creative gene and love of making means that you are never bored, because the next project is always on your mind!"

Do you have a favourite artist, writer, poet or musician who inspires you?

"William Morris is my favourite artist. He put his creative spirit to work as a designer, writer, political activist and conservationist. He designed tiles, furniture, stained glass, fabric and wallpaper, he painted murals, and set up the Kelmscott press to produce books and type. His fabric and wallpaper designs are still for sale today at Liberty in London over 100 years after his death! I discovered the whole Arts and Crafts movement as a teenager, and I'm still under its spell."

Which knitwear designer has most inspired you, and why?

"Originally I was inspired by the many unnamed designers of the 1940s. As a child, looking through copies of *Stitchcraft* and *Needlewoman and Needlecraft* magazines, I was

fascinated by the patterns, colours and textures of the sweaters and home furnishings. Traditional Fair Isle has also been a constant inspiration, and I was a fan of the fashion house Missoni when I was at art school."

Tell us about the colours, landscapes or architecture that inspire your work.

"I have lived in Mid Wales for the past 45 years, and never cease to be inspired by the colours of the changing seasons. Spring flowers and autumn leaves provide wonderful colour-drenched motifs for my intarsia patterns. I choose colours according to the season: light, fresh and crisp cottons for spring; deep, moody, colour-saturated tweeds for autumn."

Which design from your portfolio are you most proud of?

"The 'Hawthorn' coat from my book *Country Inspiration* means a lot to me, as it is in the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum, and was originally designed for Rowan's Magazine no. 10 - the Kate Moss issue!

"The 'Pansy Chain Pashmina' from *The Classic Collection* is a recent incarnation of the pansy motifs that have been with me since my first book in 1984. The 'Poppy' cardigan in my *Knitwear* book continues to be a popular design."

Are there any techniques or styles of knitting you'd like to explore further?

"I'm starting to explore the big wide world of lace, and incorporate this delicate fabric into my designs." ☺

Find Sasha's patterns, books and kits at www.sashakagan.co.uk

She will be the keynote speaker at the Knitting & Crochet Guild Convention and 40th AGM at Warwick University on 6-8 July - for more details visit <http://bit.ly/kgagm>



'Oriental Flowers Kimono' from Sasha Kagan's Classic Collection



- 1 Sasha's 'Hawthorn' coat is now in the V&A Museum
- 2 Her favourite knitting book is Barbara Walker's *A Second Treasury of Knitting Patterns*
- 3 'Pansy Chain Pashmina'
- 4 'Argyll Leaf' from *The Knitter* issue 10