

The Swift

Can you win a ribbon at the LA County Fair? YES!

With less than three months to go before the call for entries for the Los Angeles County Fair, this is the perfect time to start planning (and knitting or crocheting) your fair entries.

Last year, we had an opportunity to chat with **Judy Row**, a six-year judge of knitting and crocheting entries in the Needle Art Division of the Los Angeles County Fair. Here's what we learned about the judging process.

The fair uses two judging systems:

- **The Danish system**, which is used to award ribbons in the first level of competition. Each entry is judged on its own merits against standards of craftsmanship. With this system, a lot of ribbons are awarded instead of just one first, second or third

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The Altered Stitch Fibre Bar and Boutique: a showcase of independent fiber designers

On a block of Magnolia Boulevard in Valley Village that looks as if it were designed by Walt Disney, you'll find The Altered Stitch Fibre Bar and Boutique.

When Leah Davidson and her husband James purchased the store in June 2014, two other owners had run yarn shops there during the previous 10 years under the name "Stitch Café."

Leah had a vision of a store that provided crafters high quality, unique yarn and fibers from independent fiber

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Calendar

March 2017

- 4 Saturday Stitches, 10 a.m. to noon at Starbucks, 1520 W. Olive Ave., Burbank.
- 6 Top-Down Sweater Class, Part 2 -- Members only, in a private home.
- 13 TGIFiber, 7-9 p.m. Monday, at TGIFriday's, 19855 Rinaldi St., Porter Ranch.
- 20 Yarn Club, 7-9 p.m., Monday at Panera Bread, 132 E. Palm Ave., Burbank.
- 27 Guild meeting, 7-9 p.m. Monday, at Police Headquarters, 200 N. 3rd St., Burbank.

Reserve your place for the guild's retreat in Julian

If you want to attend the guild's retreat April 21 through 23, get your \$50 deposit in as soon as possible.

We will be staying at the Julian Country Inn, in the heart of apple orchard country. We'll be enjoying wine, cider or craft beer, apple pie, the local yarn store and a proper tea -- with lots of knitting and crocheting in between. The retreat will begin with a wine and cheese reception, include a knit-along and a crochet-along and sharing or demonstrating a new skill or technique.

The guild is reserving two rooms – one for six and one for three or four. (Please note: you may have to share a bed or bring an inflatable mattress or cot.) While the final cost depends on how many sign up, it is expected that accommodations will cost about \$85 a person for both nights.

Your deposit is refundable up to April 13. You can give or send a check to **Tammy Takahashi**, our president, or **Sarah Smith**, our treasurer. You can also pay via PayPal; the directions are on page 4 in the article about membership renewals.

The Altered Stitch

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designers and dyers. After Leah's unexpected death at the end of 2016, James and The Altered Stitch team decided to fulfill her creative vision by keeping the store open.

"We enjoy being able to offer our customers independent labels that they have never heard of or have only ever seen on Instagram, and providing them information about the talented artists and dyers behind our products," said Maya Gooding, store manager. (Her last day at the store was March 25.)

Tucked in wooden bins along the west wall, you'll find rich, glowing, soft yarns from Malabrigo, Black Trillium Fibres, Mork Made Fiber Co. or toil & trouble (hand dyed in Salem, MA, no less). In racks near the front door, you'll find sock yarn splashed with confetti colors.

In a newly expanded section you may find students learning to spin, doing one-skein weaving projects, exploring lace or making a Fair Isle bandana.

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Rachel Decker, Charity Chair

Rachel Decker

has generously volunteered to be our 2017 Charity Projects chair.

This year we're knitting or crocheting knockers

-- handmade faux breasts for women who have had mastectomies. You can find details at KnerdyKnitters.com/charityprojects.

One of Rachel's first official acts was to recreate the recommended yarn list for the knockers, and build a list of where the yarns are available locally. Both are posted on the website, as well as where to find patterns.

A member of the guild since November, Rachel said, "I learned to crochet from my college boyfriend (yup!) in 2002. For Christmas that year, his mom got me 10 skeins of Red Heart solids and I was off!"

Her crocheting picked up speed after her two nieces were born.

In 2010, after earning a library science degree, she moved to California. She got a job at a post-production studio, organizing and transferring digital files. In 2015, the company relocated to Canada, laying off most of the staff. To stay busy while searching for a job, Rachel took up spinning.

"I love the dyeing process and enjoy seeing my improvements in the yarn I'm spinning," she said.



Fair judging systems

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place ribbon. It also means that even a simple project, well crafted, has a chance to win a ribbon.

- **The American system**, which is used to select the “Best of Show” award. The blue ribbon winners are judged against each other to come up with a single award winner.

“We realize that people put their heart into these pieces,” Judy said. “We’re all knitters or crocheters ourselves and we know how much these entries mean to the people who submit them.”

According to Judy, the judges look at:

- The **overall appearance** of the item.
- The **appropriateness of the yarn and other materials** to the project and its use. Was yarn from the same dye lot used throughout? Were hand-dyed yarns graduated in when a new ball was added?
- The **evenness of the stitches**, and
- **Finishing**.

“The finishing work can make or break a piece,” Judy said. “Did the creator do invisible seams? Did he or she use the Kitchener stitch where needed? Are the buttons right for the garment?”

How complicated a pattern is, is considered but doesn’t necessarily trump other factors, she said. “The judges do look at the difficulty of the pattern, but that doesn’t mean that a simpler, but better executed, entry can’t win.”

She recalled when two christening sets using the same pattern were submitted. “One was very nice. The other was exquisite: the fabric felt nice; the ribbons were threaded through the knitting and tied perfectly. Attention to the details really counts.”

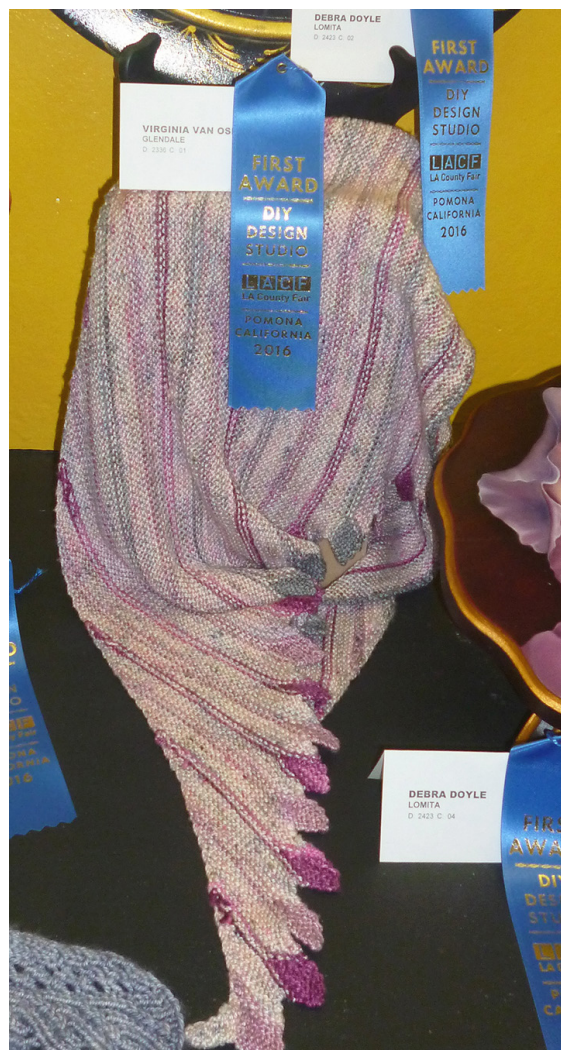
When it comes to the Best of Show award, the judges zoom in on the details, Judy said. “That can make or break whether a piece wins. Complexity really matters here.”

The judges put comments -- strive for more even tension, explore other finishing techniques -- on cards as they evaluate the entries. “We hoped to help people to understand why one garment made it

and another didn’t.”

Judy stopped serving as a judge in 2006. After a stint working for Alamitos Bay Yarn Co., she retired and now volunteers at her church.

“I would encourage every knitter or crocheter to enter the fair,” she said. “You get a good look at how you measure up against other knitters.”



L.A. County Fair 2016 -- Shown above, a blue ribbon-winning shawl knit by Knerdy Knitter Virginia Van Osdel. This was one of many award-winning entries from our guild.



Maya Gooding (left) and Mary Casale inside The Altered Stitch

The Altered Stitch

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“We recently expanded our store, which we are very excited about,” said Maya. “We’re now able to offer a larger variety of classes than we were previously able to due to size restrictions! We kicked off with a two-day trunk show and workshop with StevenBe. This expansion was something that Leah already had in the works, so we are happy to complete that in her honor.”

In March alone, according to Maya, The Altered Stitch offered a beginner brioche cowl class, a beginner cable knitting workshop and a natural dyeing workshop with Jessie Love of The Bonvivant and founder of LA Fibershed.

March Membership Renewals

If you see your name below, your membership is up for renewal this month.

Give your check for \$24 to Treasurer Sarah Smith, President Tamala Takahashi or Vice President Stacie Rasmussen at a meeting or send money via your PayPal account.

- Krystal Poole.

You can pay your dues or event fees through your own PayPal account this way:

1. Log into your PayPal account.
2. Click on the “Pay or send money” button.
3. When the window opens up, click on the “Send money to friends and family” panel.
4. Enter info@KnerdyKnitters.com in the box. Hit the “Next” button.
5. Type in the amount of money you are sending. Write a note about what you’re paying for if you wish. Then hit continue.

Other members of the store’s team include Rachel Barish, in charge of classes, programming and social media; Mary Casale, manager, fibre specialist and knitting and crochet instructor; Christina Dejonge, fibre specialist; and instructors Samantha Foster and Anna Zinsmeister.

“We always have different classes, workshops and events going on at the store,” Maya said. “We love gathering our fiber community, so we’re happy to regularly offer new and fun events for all our customers!”

The upcoming Yarn Crawl L.A. on April 6 to 9 is a perfect time to visit The Altered Stitch. Maya promises that, in keeping with the store’s theme, “this year will be magical!”

In addition to the physical store, The Altered Stitch has an online store that lists exclusive colorways and collaborations with the dyers they work with. It can be reached at www.thealteredstitch.com/yarn-shoppe. You can also sign up for the shop’s newsletter at www.thealteredstitch.com, at the bottom of the home page.

The store is open from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays; From 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Wednesdays; from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Fridays; and from noon to 6 p.m. on Sundays. There is parking behind the store, at 12443 Magnolia Blvd., in Valley Village, near the intersection of Whitsett Avenue.