Anne lavene text consuladation

Description

ell me about what you do?

I knit on a single bed knitting machine and I have been doing this for just under 37 years.

I started off by making a duffle coat for my three year old. I took him to play school, someone remarked on it and said â??make me one,â?• and Iâ??ve been doing it ever since! So it was just a garment that someone liked. It was a block pattern, simple. They hadnâ??t seen anything like it before and it looked different, so I made one and got paid for it. So it carried on. â??Can you make my daughter a skirt?â?• Iâ??d work out the pattern for that, and Iâ??d make the skirt. So, it was childrenâ??s clothes first as my children were growing up. I was also wearing the odd things that I was making for myself, which people liked, so I literally sold off my back!

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I know Annie that youâ??re interested in passing on some of your skills to other people to help them start up. So what made you get into it?

Basically I did a tailoring course, including doing pattern cutting so I had an eye for shape. Iâ??d always made clothes before, fabric clothes. I hadnâ??t much money, just bought fabric and made patterns and just made things fit me. So, I suppose without really realising it that was part of my training â?? I was able to turn two jumble sale dresses into a frock within a day or a couple of days. But, then having children young as I was, I realised that everything about sewing is dangerous for children. Thereâ??s the whole electric sewing machine, the needles, the pins, everything that goes with tailoring is actually not good to have lying around. My mother gave me a knitting machine and I suddenly realised that on this machine I could combine different yarns so not only can you make the shape of the garment but you are actually making the fabric. Thatâ??s the one â?? you can be a pattern cutter and a tailor but you still have to go and buy the fabric. Youâ??ve got to find, to source the fabric. And fabric is expensive. Even then it was more expensive comparatively so Iâ??d get old clothes and remake them. That was the thing that gave me the buzz, that this simple knitting machine thatâ??s not electric could create amazing fabrics. By casting on and by creating a shape and by feeding in different colour yarns youâ??re actually doing the whole story youâ??re actually making the fabric as well, to shape. Thatâ??s got an amazing benefit because itâ??s all contained within the one machine, the one space and then when your child wakes up or you have to do something else you can cover the whole thing with a sheet and you can walk away from it. You havenâ??t got to put anything away.

When the kids started going to play school, Iâ??d grab a couple of hours and Iâ??d sit at the knitting machine and sometimes Iâ??d complete a whole garment or half a garment and then finish it the next day. Then in the evenings, because knitting machines arenâ??t sociable, theyâ??re noisy, (as my family have told me over the years) Iâ??d crocheting the knitted shape together to create the garment. When youâ??re concentrating on the knitting you donâ??t hear the noise, that swishing sound.

So thatâ??s the important element, youâ??re creating the fabric and the shape and instead of sewing it youâ??re crocheting it together so thereâ??s still the no sewing machine.

The other thing that I tried to avoid was joining things on the sewing machine because youâ??ve always got a seam which means you got a right side and a wrong side. I realised that by crocheting something together the garment becomes reversible.

And that is really one of the important parts of your garments â?? that you can wear them inside out, upside down, back to front.

Yes, thatâ??s my USP if you like! For young children, itâ??s no problem â?? you can turn it inside out because the kidâ??s spilt something down its front â?? Iâ??ve even done it for myself! Turn it inside or out or wear it the other way! Often if you combine yarns you can get a different look on both sides so itâ??s like two garments in one.

So, I was just coming up with patterns for garments that were relatively easy to manufacture, but were also really flattering shapes too.

And thatâ??s where your tailoring background comes in â?? because you really know what works?

Yes!

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You just mentioned patterns and I know that one of the things youâ??re into at the moment is making patterns that other people can use so that they can re-create a House of Lavene look â?? using a revolutionary non-word approach to it?

Exactly!

Basically, itâ??s not revolutionary to me because itâ??s how Iâ??ve always done it. It started off again with the children. On a knitting machine every time you take the carriage from left to right or right to left youâ??ve got a row counter and it counts the number of rows automatically for you. And as a three year old, my eldest son realised that to get my attention all he had to do was to change my row counter. So if I sat back down at my work and the numbers didnâ??t correlate with my written pattern then Iâ??d have to recount all the rows and heâ??d definitely got my attention. So, to stop me losing my place I started drawing the patterns like a dress pattern, as in a shape. I added just small multiples of numbers wherever there was a change and I also realised that this was an easy way for me to reproduce a particular style and adapt it really quickly.

So, Iâ??ve always knitted, for my clients â?? theyâ??ve always had their ownâ?¦ in the sewing world itâ??s called a toileâ?¦ theyâ??ve always had their own block, their own shape that I can make in different colours and so on. So, I found that itâ??s just an easy way, itâ??s a visual way as opposed to rows of text. Because if youâ??re looking at lots of rows of text to tell you how to complete a task then you never get a visionary idea of where you are. Itâ??s always written row by row and you never get a sense of shape. You donâ??t know what you are making, you are just following a load of text. If you start off with a shape you can see how itâ??s supposed to be at least and itâ??s much easier to adapt. And to find your place when youâ??ve been distracted!

Iâ??m a very visual person and I find it makes a lot of sense when I see one of your patterns â?? you can see what you are approachingâ?¦

â?¦and where you are. So if you away from that particular design and then come back then itâ??s not rocket science â?? you can see the shape thatâ??s hanging on the machine and see the picture that is in front of you and you can look at the row counter so you know, at any point exactly where you are.

Regarding the patterns, it also makes it a simple way for people to learn. Several people who I have taught and who are now knitting their own clothes and running their own businesses have found that effectively they learned pattern cutting without having to go to college or without having any formal training â?? they just found their way through it because of the visual nature of my patterns.

One of the other things that youâ??ve mentioned before is about no seams. No shoulder seams.

Well, some of my designs have shoulder seams but basically, as a pattern cutter at the beginning, Iâ??ve always been attracted to bias cut things which means that a shape has to be cut across the bias and then joined together. To my great joy and delight after about two or three months of owning a knitting machine, I realised, I practically made it happen â?? someone actually showed me how you can actually knit a complete circle on a knitting machine with no seams. And thatâ??s it really. Itâ??s quick, youâ??ve got no wastage, you donâ??t have to cut anything or sew it together â?? you can do it all on a single bed knitting machine.

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And itâ??s flattering as well isnâ??t it?

Well clients seem to think so. Iâ??ve got quite a few clients that keep coming back wanting more and more in different colours and theyâ??ve had them for years sometimes. In fact at a recent exhibition two ladies turned up wearing clothes Iâ??d made them ten years ago. I make quite classic shapes really but theyâ??re unique as well. Knitwear is very forgiving as well because it stretches. So we can go in and out in shape and the fabric that the yarn makes is a stretchy fabric so that on thin and fat days we can still wear it.

The House of Lavene is very distinctive â?? youâ??ve told me that people can see someone else wearing one of your garments and they know exactly that itâ??s your work

Well again it all came from my style of knitting. Instead of just having it completely plain I started putting contrast colours and identified this sort of triangle effect that I created â?? making part of a circle really and including it a jacket or skirt or garment.

And this is what you call a Godet?

Yes. It looks like an inlet. People recognise it, they recognise the shape. Iâ??ve got about five different processes that I do and I just repeat them all the time. Every garment that Iâ??ve made for the last thirty years has actually got these five elements in them but they are just in different configurations, thatâ??s all. Itâ??s a formula and it works.

Yes, Iâ??ve noticed that you can create quite a lacy feel?

Yes, youâ??ve got on the knitting machine a way that you create tension, for using different ply of yarn. Youâ??ve got a tension gauge which can make the fabric tighter or looser and depending on the effect you want to get you play around until you produce a piece of fabric and then you show the client the piece of fabric and they like it and then you make it! And using different yarns itâ??s just bound to

come out different. I donâ??t buy five yards of material to make an outfit, I buy a kilo of yarn and combine different colours of yarn together. Youâ??re making a different fabric.

So you can have different fabrics within the same garment quite easily?

Yeah!

So going back to somebody new who wants to start outâ?¦ How long will it take them to create something that is of the same qualityâ?¦ if they buy one of your patternsâ?¦

It depends on their enthusiasm, itâ??s like everything isnâ??t it? But Iâ??ve had people, within a month, having never ever seen a knitting machine in their lives creating one of my designs. And Iâ??m just talking about an hour, a couple of hours a week. Iâ??m not talking about every day, itâ??s really quite quick.

Presumably itâ??s not a big investment?

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No, no, basically because the knitting machine industryâ?¦ because people didnâ??t show people how to use knitting machines about twenty years ago people were purchasing machines for about Â£500 (or more in fact). And the hardest part of starting to use any machinery is actually pushing the start button or actually in this case casting on and casting off, which is a manual process. So I make sure that people can actually do this and I wonâ??t even show them the next step unless they can confidently and are happy about doing those processes. Youâ??ve got to be able to start and youâ??ve got to be able to finish. The bit in between can be really quick. Itâ??s like a whole skirt can take two hours but if you canâ??t get the first row on and you canâ??t get the last row off, youâ??re in trouble!

So basically, you used to do this in Norwich. You had a textile centre and people used to come to you and you used to train people?

I worked from home basically, bringing up my children, so people used to come to my home and they would see garments hanging up, they would try them on. They would say if they wanted them longer or shorter, or thinner or wider or whatever and Iâ??d take my block like pattern and adapt that pattern for them and make it fit them. And that was all fine. But now Iâ??m getting older, itâ??s a physical thing, it does take a strength, a physical strength to knit something for three or four hours â?? although you donâ??t have to do it straight off, you can do it over two days, five days, however long you like. But itâ??s now got to the point where three years ago I saw how many people were interested in machine knitting, but learning how to do patterns and wanting to learn how to make the shapes I make, so, I opened a textile centre. I ran it for two years and people seeing the finished products hanging up, definitely wanted to learn how to make them but they didnâ??t believe that they could. So it was a quest for me, it was a quest for them. A young twenty one year old who could hand knit a bit, crochet a bit, looks at a jacket thatâ??s got a Â£400 price mark on it and says â??I could never make anything like that!â?• And it was like â??Yes you can!â?• And just slowly going through the paces.

And they did?

And they did and they are and they can! Because itâ??s not like there is a hidden agenda. Itâ??s just as simple as it is. Ok when anything is new itâ??s complicated because you arenâ??t familiar with it. I mean you cast on once and you think urgh! Do it ten times and you canâ??t imagine that you could

never do it. Itâ??s the same with anything.

Hereâ??s a video we did that shows how you cast on â??
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xfxIFfjMiSc

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And thatâ??s part of your success â?? that you have stuck to your formula?

Well itâ??s less about success. I needed to knock it out. I needed to make a dress that I could finish quite quickly so that person could come and pay me for it so I could make another one. I didnâ??t need to keep coming up with different ideas because that all takes time and you have to go through different learning curves. But, they all turn out as one offs because youâ??re using different colours in different combinations for that person. So effectively that person is getting a one off.

So itâ??s the same pattern using slightly different colours and yarns that can make the difference?

Exactly! Things I made two weeks ago, and something I made just before Christmas is exactly, well I changed it slightly but itâ??s the same garment that I was making ten years ago.

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A little bit of practice, a little bit of patience.

Totally, practice is the thing.

You didnâ??t finish off saying about the costs.

Oh sorry, yeah. So, all these machines were out there. No one showed anyone how to use them, and Iâ??m talking about thousands of knitting machines, in peopleâ??s houses, in their lofts, abandoned because of the economic thing. When women started going out to work, and then there were cheap imports, cheap clothes, so why bother to make your own? So, machines got abandoned and discarded. There are still plenty of old second hand machines out there â?? and they are very cheap!

It was popular in the idea of it, but it never really took off?

No. There is still the Guild of Machine Knitters but thereâ??s not many young people doing it. Not many young people taking it up.

Because it came from a time when a lot of women did make their own clothes and for their children.

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It came from a time when women were at home.

Well I remember my mum made, sewed a lot of clothes for us. She had a knitting machine but she didnâ??t use it.

And I think itâ??s like anything â?? itâ??s nice if we have encouragement. You go and invest in a piece of equipment and thereâ??s no-one there to say â??Thatâ??s great!â?• or that youâ??re doing it right or if you get stuck, how to get unstuck, then you are going to get stuck but if there is someone who can just literally unhook you, like I was at the Textile Centre.

Itâ??s like on a computer isnâ??t it? You want someone in the background who can help you out.

And basically what Iâ??ve said to other people is that Iâ??m saving people from a 35 year learning curve. Because like, theyâ??d have to work out what tension to put the yarn on but I can just tell them. They havenâ??t got to work it out themselves.

So this is all on your pattern. Where can someone get a pattern from?

They can get a pattern online from Etsy, Iâ??ve got one at the moment being sold.

Whatâ??s Etsy?

Etsy is an internet shop for people who make clothes or make handmade things. They take pictures of them and they sell them at their chosen price.

So all Iâ??ve done is take some pictures of the garments Iâ??ve made, talked about them a bit with the price and people can buy them online. But now Iâ??ve taken some of the designs that have proved to be successful and popular and have actually had patterns made for those designs with a view that people who have learned these different steps can actually look at any of my patterns now and in the future and they will be able to make it. They will have the skills and the tools necessary.

Can I take you to a different aspect of the House of Lavene? Do you have any prestigious clients?

We all are â?? we are all human beings!

But yes! A few that canâ??t be named! But yes I know for a fact that garments that I have made for people have worn them at different places like Ascot and most of the major venues and also one of my garments was worn at THE wedding in 2011.

The Royal wedding?

The Royal wedding in 2011 in fact! Yes, there are a few well know clients!

One story that came to light recently was that one of my clients was wearing her green dress to work and a writer in fact, was so amazed by how incredibly stunning my client looked that she decided she wanted one of these garments herself. She then included the dress in one of her short stories in her book which has just been published!

Your clothes are very, very unique and very different and very amazing.

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Annes listing in the souk.uk

Anne, revolutionised machine-knitwear, making it accessible to all with a unique **â??Visual Patternâ?? system**, based upon 10 core machine knitting and supplemental processes, creative individuals wishing to learn a new skill or develop their own machine knitting skills further can download her Designer Directâ?? patterns, and watch her step-by-step YouTube video guides, completely free of charge.

Anneâ??s legacy lives on within her â??Designer Direct patterns and unique system of Visual Patterns, helping others discover the joy of knitwear creation. Annes, visualisation of domestic machine knitwear creation stands as a lasting inspiration, showing how creativity bridges generations and cultures.

Read more about Anne and her journey as a designer and mother of three.

a post in the souk.uk about annes visual machine knitting patterns

Machine Handloom Knitwear

Visual Patterns offer a groundbreaking way to create **designer knitwear and accessories** using just **10 core machine knitting processes** and a few simple extras. Perfect for both **complete beginners** and **experienced makers**, this visual system works on **affordable, single-bed hand-operated knitting machines** and unlocks **professional, creative results**.

Learn by Doing

- Instantly download each **Designer-Direct** guide in PDF from the Upskilling & Reskilling section.

- Guides double as both **instructional manuals** and **learning resources**.
- Accompanied by **free YouTube educational video series**.

Free Video Guidance

- **Anneâ??s five-part YouTube series** demonstrates every step, making the process easy to follow.

Creative Portfolio

- Every Designer-Direct pattern covers:
  - **Yarn selection and weight**
  - **Joining and sizing techniques**
  - **Pressing and aftercare tips**

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Empowering Others

- **Visual Patterns** make machine knitting **simple** and **affordable**.
- Learners have progressed from their **first garment** to **designing their own pieces** or even **launching businesses**.
- Anneâ??s method is about **creativity and empowerment**, not just making clothes.

A Lasting Impact

- Anneâ??s mission continues through her son, **Jason**, supporting knitters via the **SoukUK community**.
- Widely available resources foster an **inclusive and transformative experience** for all knitters.

Ready to Start?

Eight of Anneâ??s Designer-Direct patterns are available to **purchase and download** from the **SoukUK online shop**.

Blogging

Honouring Anne Lavene: A Founding Spirit of The Souk UK

It is with deep regret that The Souk UK announces the passing of **Anne Lavene**, one of our earliest members and a principal shaper of our creative initiative. Anne sadly passed away on 15 September 2026.

A Lasting Legacy

While Anne is no longer with us, her impact remains woven into the very fabric of The Souk UK. Her unique, accessible â??Designer Directâ?• collection of visual pattern portfolios continues to inspire makers and learners alike. These resources remain available for download in PDF format through The Souk UK online shop, and her invaluable free training videos can still be found online.

Anneâ??s innovative, design-led garments live on, not just in her patterns, but through her generous spirit. Her YouTube video series, created in collaboration with The Souk UK, personally guides students through the twelve essential processes of single-bed, hand-operated domestic knitting.

Anneâ??s clear, supportive instruction made it possible for anyone to learn the fundamentals and then use those skills to create not only her Desiner Direct garments and accessories, but also create their own their own designs.

Creating as You Learn

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What set Anne apart was her passion for empowering others. Drawing from years of home-based work and teaching, she showed students not only how to make her original designs, but also how to unlock their own creative potential once they had mastered the basics.

The Souk UK is proud to keep Anneâ??s creative spirit alive. Her patterns remain freely available in our shop, and her training resources are open to all. We are deeply grateful for her guidance, encouragement, and unwavering support â?? her legacy will continue to inspire and educate generations to come.

Thank you, Anne, for helping shape The Souk UK and for sharing your gifts so generously with our community.

A anne related post

Anne is a visionary creative entrepreneur whose passion for knitwear design has left a lasting mark on the fashion industry. After graduating from the prestigious Southend School of Fashion Design, Anne set out to turn her creative vision into reality. In 1984, she founded The House of Lavene, a bespoke couture knitwear design company dedicated to exceptional craftsmanship and innovation.

The House of Lavene has revolutionised the world of machine knitwear, making it accessible to both experienced craftspeople and beginners alike. Their innovative Visual Patterns system empowers individuals to create stunning handloom knitwear on inexpensive domestic machines.

Category

1. Images

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