

May 17, 2023 Guild Meeting

Guest Panelists: Cathy Payson, Linda Pratt, Susan Mills and Kristin Nicholas

The Lasting Impact of the Ladies of Classic Elite



Kristin Nicholas was the Creative Director of Classic Elite Yarns from 1984 to 2001 helping it to grow into a presence in the hand knitting yarn industry. Since 2000, she has freelanced in knitwear and stitchery design. She has written 13 books on knitting, crochet, embroidery, crafts, and interior design. She and her husband have raised sheep since 1980 and currently have a flock of around 200 ewes at their Leyden Glen Farm in western Massachusetts. Currently, Kristin is working in ceramics where she makes colorful patterned pottery for the home. Most recently, she is featured on One Big Happy Yarn's YouTube Channel where she teaches crochet. You can also find her selling lamb, pottery, and tea towels at the Amherst Farmers Market every Saturday from 7:30 to 1:30.

You can visit her website www.kristinnicholas.com and sign up for her newsletter. Her home and family is featured in a video produced by Houzz.com.

Linda Pratt Hired in 1986, Linda Pratt was the New England sales representative and then Classic Elite's first Sales Manager, as well as the designer of several patterns for the company. In 1997, Linda became Product Manager, and later Marketing Manager for Needlework and Yarn at JCA, Inc. In 2000, Linda purchased Great Yarns, Inc., an established brick and mortar store in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Beginning in 2003, she began to consult for nearby Coats North America, specifically on their Moda Dea line of novelty yarns for the chain store market. In 2005, she sold Great Yarns and joined Coats North America, working for their Westminster Fibers distribution in the independent channel. She started the Nashua Handknits line. Linda also oversaw and worked with the Coats European teams for the Rowan, Regia, Schachenmayr and Gedifra brands. In 2016, after the sale of the Coat's European brands, she was hired as a consultant to Rowan, and now works part time as an independent sales rep for special accounts for DMC, the current Rowan brand owner.

Susan Mills has been a published designer and since 1992 she has worked for yarn companies including Classic Elite Yarns, JCA and Westminster Fibers, and currently works for Jagger Spun Yarns (<https://www.jaggerspunyarn.com>), worsted spun wools made in Maine. She served as Creative Director at Nashua Handknits and eventually returned to Classic Elite in the same role until the company closed in 2018. Susan now works as retail manager for Jagger Brothers in Maine. Since June 2018, she has collaborated with Classic Elite design team members Kim Barnette (Tian Foley) and Tonia Barry as KNITTING UNION. Her Ravelry page is Susan Mills Knits. You can check out new Knitting Union designs at: <https://www.ravelry.com/bundles/knitting-union-2>

Cathy Payson is a leading designer in the handknitting industry today. Over the years, Cathy has worked with Aarlan, Classic Elite Yarns, Susan Bristol, Inc. and Third Piece. She was the Design Director for Reynolds, JCA where she focused on creating patterns for real women that are inspiring, easy to knit, and fit all varieties of shapes and sizes. Cathy's designs have appeared in more than 113 books and magazines including: *Vogue Knitting*, *Interweave Knits*, *Cast On*, *Knitting Today*, *Creative Knitting*, and *Love of Knitting*