



This green jumper is one of the first I ever made. It consists of green cotton on 3mm needles, both of which I scavenged from an unloved bag of bits in my mother's second house-move of what would turn out to be three in that year. I wore it to Easter Lunch.

The green was about new beginnings, and the sprouting possibilities of my new life art Oxford (I finished it two weeks before I came up).

This picture of me at the top, wearing the jumper is in my grandmother's garden in November. She has always loved green.



This is another one of my mother's yarns, yellow cotton woven through with a shiny acrylic gold-plastic thread. I was thinking when I made it, that the open back reveals exactly how vulnerable I often feel. I spent three days shaping the shoulders of the jumper so that they look like they're about to fall off my own. This jumper is about precariousness and experiment, and though it is not wearable for much of the year, it's one of my favourite pieces.

It took a long time, but I sometimes think about the hours of my life I spend trying to present myself to the world in other ways. Brushing, braiding, curling hair, rubbing in lotions, perfecting eyeliner, polishing nails and smiles and shoes and instagram captions, removing body hair -these all cumulatively take at least as long as knitting a jumper, per woman per lifetime. I for one am not a gifted enough chemist to make my own concealer , so I will have to participate in the creation of my image using bulkier materials, like 4mm yellow and gold cotton yarn.



Here are two men wearing a hat and a jumper I designed and made for them. Lochie, above, is pictured with it on inside-out. I gave it to him for Christmas of our first year, and though he loved it, he calls it 'the tea-cosy' lovingly. It was the first that I ever designed and made, and it took 40 hours.

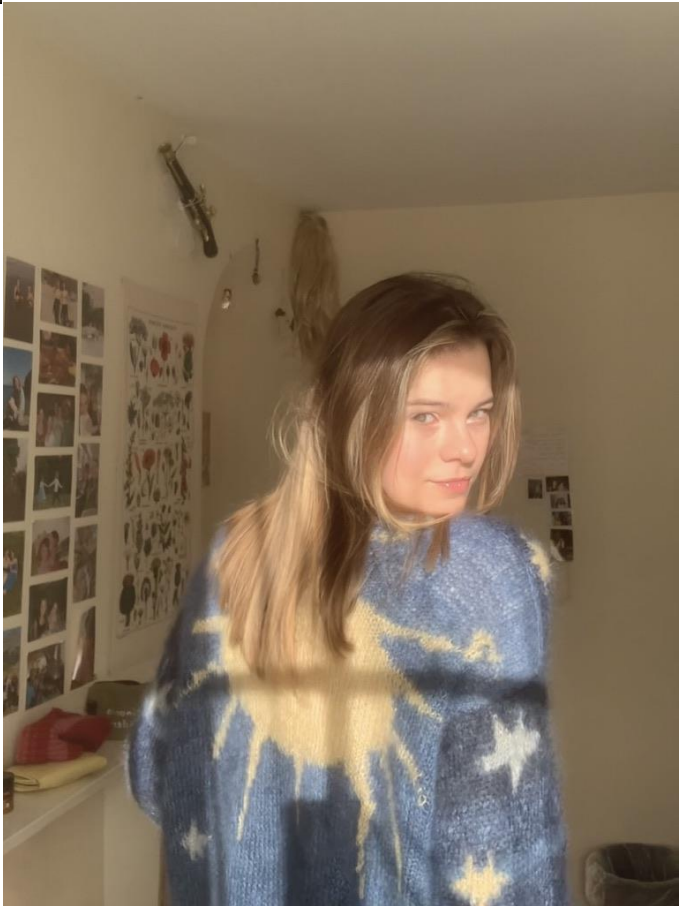
Below is my boyfriend Will, wearing his birthday present jumper. I made it on his request from 8mm merino wool yarn and it took me more than a hundred hours of work, not including the design. It might be the warmest garment the world has ever known. I decided to do two types of cabling to add interest, and a ribbed stretchy collar sewn with elastic to keep it from flopping about. I hope he'll wear it regularly this winter.

We have a plan for a new jumper for him, this one with specific requirements for a dinosaur design on the front, a stegosaurus whose back-spines will go all the way down the right arm, three-dimensionally. He wants the back of the jumper to feature a crude oil container, in a matching colour to a large comet flying through the skyscape on the front: a quirky critique of capitalism's unfair pressure on the Earth.



This is a jumper I made from some white and blue cotton I found in a dusty old-clothes-drawer. It is the second garment I made with intarsia words knitted into the fabric (the first one reads 'Yes Sir, I can Boogie', linen-cotton blend, 5mm. I heard that María Mendiola didn't know any English when she performed this song in the 1977 Eurovision competition, and the idea of what this means philosophically – the unconsciousness of linguistic communication in performance context, whose those words are - has intrigued me since).

There has always been a running joke in my family that I, Irie, the eldest grandchild and the gamest for a laugh, am hopeless at those activities that include coordination and/or athleticism. It also relies on the prerequisite idea that I can't commit to seeing a project through, for lack of competitive spirit, grit or nous. Along the bottom of the back of the jumper are knitted in the words 'except knitting'.



This is my most recent knit. It is made with ten shades of silk mohair donated to me by my grandmother who can no longer knit because her inflamed arthritic thumbs won't hold a needle in the right way. It's sad to see her try, so I decided to make a really special design to put her materials to good use – she always reminds me it might soon be too late. Since I was nine, she also often reminds me that it is equally important to be pretty and well-dressed as it is to be clever. A perversely obedient part of me hopes that this jumper constitutes the trinity of these things: prettiness, cleverness, and the quality of being intentionally-dressed.

I can sometimes feel my own thumb joints getting stiff in the mornings when I wake up and think of her. In the same way that earthly matter is knitted together from the same types of atom as are originally forged in the centres of stars, so I am made of the idiosyncratic experiences of the women who have given me the use of these yarns and the lease of this life. Every stitch is a thought for them; it's all just an unravelling and rearrangement of the same raw materials in the end.

