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Anne Bårdsgård

SELBU MITTENS

Discover the Rich History of a Norwegian Knitting Tradition
with Over **500** Charts and **35** Classic Patterns



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PREFACE

My godmother was named Inga Rolseth (1909-98), but was better-known as Inga Baklien. She was skilled at making good food as well as nice, warm bedclothes, and at chopping wood, raising hens, and doing handwork (*hainnarbe*). Every year meant new stranded colorwork mittens for Christmas, usually modern mittens in blue and white, and then black and white mittens when I was older. Every year, Inga delivered her mittens to the Mitten Headquarters.* When she died, her last inventory showed that, in February and March 1996, she had delivered 14 pairs of women’s mittens, 15 pairs of men’s mittens, and one pair of children’s mittens. When the price for the yarn was deducted, she’d earned a net sum of 951 crowns—for work she had, at a minimum, spent 14 days on. That’s how she made her income; together with a minimal pension and the money she made from the chickens, it was enough to give my godmother a good and secure life.

After each “entanglement,” the pattern “was difficult to see,” the stitches were bound off, and Inga finished knitting. A work life ended.



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3	damevotter	44,-	132,-
1	gutt/mike	33,-	33,-
mva 96 28		Sum:	515,-
- garn		Mva.:	176,-
Signatur: Inga Rolseth		Total:	339,-

Godmother Inga and her cat Rose. The word for “patterned” (*mønstrete*) is *rosåt* in Selbu dialect.

The daily pattern of Inga’s life was in no way special. Many people in the Selbu area have a great-grandmother or great-aunt who was skilled with her knitting needles, usually residents of the village. Inga’s story would have been familiar to many women who had to find ways to pull together a living for them and theirs. But together Inga and other knitters in Selbu, with their hard work and their creativity, their ingenuity and their love of knitting, made something very special indeed: a pattern tradition that would stand the test of time—not to mention a rock-solid trademark and valued export, a product now recognized far outside Selbu and far outside Norway.

Godmother Inga died, leaving a bag of finished mittens behind. Ten years after her death, many of the mittens have been given away, cherished, and worn (and worn out). There was no easy way for me to teach myself how to knit two-color stranded knitting, no one to ask. I began to collect patterns, and scrutinized the knitting exhibitions at the Selbu Bydgemuseum. I found many lovely and unusual mittens there, but my curiosity was awakened when I couldn’t find any of the patterns I remembered from the mittens I’d been given by Inga. What had happened to those designs? Where had the ones represented in the knitting exhibitions come from?

So many times, Inga said, “These patterns should have been written in a book.” This is the book I couldn’t find when I first wanted to learn to knit Selbu mittens and compose my own collection of pattern motifs. I decided to take three years and immerse myself in Selbu mittens, so I could collect as many as possible and produce the book both Godmother Inga and I wanted.

* Selbu Husflidsentral.

The history of Selbu knitting

BIRGITTA ODÉN

The kitchen at Håggabakken, 7 April 1934. Guru Hårstad (1888-1969), with her ten-year-old daughter Gunhild (born 1924; married name Gjønnes). This photo graced the front page of the magazine *Urd* in 1934.

Selbu is in the county of South-Trøndelag, Norway, about 43 miles / 69 kilometers east of Trondheim. County Road 705 connects the district with the neighboring communities of Stjørdal and Tydal. Selbu Lake is situated in the center of the district. In earlier times, the sea was an important waterway to Klæbu, and from there it was a short way to Trondheim. The municipality covers 484 square miles / 1,254.2 square kilometers, and it is divided into seven areas: Øverbygda, Innbygda, Selbustrand, Vikvarvet, Flora, Sjøbygda, and Mebonden.

The most essential industries have been—and continue to be—farming and forestry. From about 1500 until 1900, copper mining and especially millstone production were important sources of income. In the mid-1800s, about 300 men worked in millstone quarrying. Selbu has the largest concentration of millstone quarries in Norway, and millstones from Selbu were widely recognized for their good quality. The market was primarily within Scandinavia, but exports were also shipped to the rest of Europe. Revenue from millstones was mainly concentrated in the hands of three prominent businessmen from the village: Fredrik Birch, his son Paul Birch, and Gustave Christophersen. When Selbu millstones could no longer compete against cast concrete blocks and steel rollers at the beginning of the 20th century, two-color stranded knitting and the knitting adventure were already well underway. Knitting with two colors, preferably white and black, became the new source of income for the village—the primary income for some, and a supplementary income for others. Women and men, old and young, took up their needles wholeheartedly.

In the second half of the 19th century, Selbu's population fell. A total of about 2,300 people emigrated from Selbu and Tydal and went elsewhere. In proportion to its resident population, Selbu was one of the districts in Norway with the largest emigration to America. People from Selbu took their knitting and knitting techniques with them, and sources have revealed that many also knitted as a means of earning income in their new land.

TWO-COLOR STRANDED KNITTING

Today, Selbu mittens and their distinctive quality trademark are well-known around the world. Mittens with eight-pointed stars (or eight-petal roses) became a national symbol quite a long time ago. Today, as for several decades past, we recognize these mittens by their black eight-petal roses on a white background. However, as it turns out, the look of these mittens has changed over time, and the patterns have gradually been simplified. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, pattern traditions were considerably richer, with much more variation and complexity. Among other factors, the handspun yarn previously used was finer than the yarn most often used today. Two-color stranded knitting (*totråbindinga*) was passed on from old to young, and it was not uncommon for children to learn this technique when they were five or six years old.

OLDER SOURCES

One of the earliest written sources describing two-color stranded knitting is taken from “Village Stories” by the parish priest Ole Stuevold Hansen from 1873.¹ Among other aspects of village life, the parish priest wrote about wedding customs:

When the ceremonies were underway, they all went up to the bridal loft where the knitted gifts were displayed, and then the bride divided up her gifts. These consisted of knitted bands, stockings, and mittens. Her friends had helped her produce these, because it amounted to a considerable number of items. The girls participated happily and held knitting evenings (*dugnad-help*) so everyone could contribute. The Selbu girls are masters at knitting artfully. They have their own way of knitting, which is called two-color stranded stockings and two-color stranded mittens and are done with only roses

¹ Stuevold Hansen, Ole: *Bygderfortælling. Opptegnelser fra Tydalen, annex til Selbu*, Tromsø 1873, page 136.

and stars preferably. The bride gives her father-in-law a shirt, all the bridegroom's godchildren should receive stockings from her, etc.

Oscar Tybring, a doctor and author born in Selbu in 1878, also described the Selbu women's knitting abilities: "They have a special expertise at knitting stockings and mittens with all sorts of figures and flourishes."²

The identity of the first Selbu resident to knit patterns with two different colors is unclear. Various sources suggest a few names. In an article in the newspaper *Nidaros*, 7 January 1925, Peder Morset wrote that Marit Sessengsjari was the first to knit patterns with two colors:

About 70 years ago, two young girls worked at Kjosnes. One was named Marit Sessengsjari ... she was a servant girl. The other was a girl named Marit Gulsetbrua, a goat herder. Concerning the first, I know that she was ahead of her time ... One winter she was asked to make a pair of stockings for the farmer Jo Kjosnes. The knitting on these stockings was anything but common. Marit had knitted with two strands of different colors, forming streaks and lines all up the stocking legs. It was simple but something completely new, and the farmer was so happy when he received these stockings that he called to the herd girl and said to her: "Maybe you could also make something as pretty, girl." This gave the young Marit Gulsetbrua something to think about. The next summer she worked at Andersgarden (Gulsett) together with the daughters at the summer pastures and the first true two-color pair was produced. It was knitted with two strands all the way through and with true colorwork stars in it.

Another source, Anne Hårstadli, was interviewed by a broadcaster in the fall of 1936 and, according to her, two other people were the earliest to knit patterns with two colors:

It was Old-Ragnhild Kulset who was the first with two-color stranded knitting. She made white wrist warmers with black patterning in about 1845. Around 1850, Jo Kjosnes had a servant girl named Stor-Innbær (Ingeborg) Sessengsjari. She knitted a pair of white stockings with two strands so that the black snaked all up the leg. Jo Kjosnes received them as a Christmas gift. He also employed a servant girl named Mærit Gulsetbrun. When he received the stockings, he was so happy that he said to his servant, "Maybe you can knit something just as pretty." In the village she came from, she had several sisters who were known throughout the village for their skill at sewing with linen and at weaving. During that summer at Kjosnesvolla, Mærit practiced to see if she could knit with two strands to make a pair of mittens with a white background and black stars covering the mitten. The stars were inspired by the *storbrurplagget* (the large bridal cloth) that they had embroidered. This was the first pair of mittens with true stars on them. They were small, but Jo Kjosnes was very happy when she gave them to him.³



Marit Emstad (1841–1929).

MARIT EMSTAD

According to oral tradition, it was the last person mentioned above, Marit Emstad (1841-1929; née Guldseth)⁴, who was given the credit for being the first to knit patterns with two different colors in Selbu, and she was called "the mother of two-color knitting." She was supposedly the first to knit star mittens in Selbu, with patterns adapted from a *storbrurplagget*.⁵ Marit was also one of the instigators for developing these patterns and organizing production and sales at the beginning of this knitting adventure. By 1897, she had already delivered the first Selbu mittens to sell to the Norwegian Friends of Handcrafts (*Norsk Husflids Venner*)⁶ in Trondheim. Marit Emstad was well versed in several handcraft techniques, and she won awards for her work a number of times.

² Tybring, Oscar: *Skildringer fra Fjeldbygderne*. Fra alle Lande [Sketches from the Field Villages. From all Countries], Part I, Copenhagen, 1878, page 412.

³ Hove, Per: *Selbubindinga* [Selbu Knitting]. A special publication by the State's Craft and Drawing School, Notodden, 1949-50, page 4.

⁴ Sources vary concerning the spelling: Guldseth/Guldset/Gullset/Gullseth, Gullsetbrua/Gulsetbrua ...

⁵ A *storbrurplagget* was an embroidered head covering that the bride wore on the way to church. At the churchyard, the head covering was replaced with a crown and the linen was worn folded over the bride's left arm as she walked into the church. The *storbrurplagget* could also wrap a child to be christened as the piece had already been blessed during the wedding ceremony.



Peder P. Hegseth's bridegroom mittens, 1886. Knitted by the bride, Anne Johnsdatter Røsset. Patterns: Star, twelve-cross block rose and hook panel. The roses are framed by the letters P P S H (Peder Pedersen Hegseth).



Extract or aniline dyes.

They continued on: “It was only the speediest who could produce a pair of gloves in an 8-hour day, so there wouldn’t be much to live on, when the price of the yarn was subtracted.” Knitters had to provide their own yarn, so their net earnings would have amounted to very little. Ingrid Aftret said that, as a six-year-old, she knitted her first mittens and sold them for 90 øre. The yarn cost 60 øre, and so her earnings were only 30 øre.²⁷ The actual wage this amounted to per hour, of course, depended on how fast one knitted. It also accounts for why the amounts differ.

In an article published in *Aktuelt* in 1986,²⁸ Berit Oline Krogstadmo reported that the payment for a pair of patterned mittens that year was 12 crowns. With her knitting speed, she earned about five crowns an hour. She began knitting when she was seven years old and it was not uncommon to knit three pairs of mittens a day, she said. Sofie Marstad added that they were better paid for animal motif mittens. “Before the war, I remember that we got 80-90 øre for a pair of mittens, and ten øre more if we knitted animal motifs—preferably moose, foxes, and dogs. That was a whole crown more for ten pairs.”²⁹

DYEING HISTORY

Even if Selbu knitters are best known for black patterns on a white background, through the years many different colors were used for both backgrounds and patterning. Synthetic dyes were used early on in the business, and registration materials show that these were already heavily used by the second half of the 19th century. Red and blue were especially popular.

The first synthetic dye for textiles was violet/purple, discovered in 1856 by the Englishman William Henry Perkin. That dye later received the name mauve. A breakthrough in chemical aniline dyes occurred around 1870, and after that a rich color spectrum quickly spread through the textile industry and local dyeworks around the country. The earliest dyes were industrially produced from stone coal tar in Germany.³⁰ Aniline dyes—or extracts, as they were also called—were soon sold over the counter in suitable proportions. That way they were also available for private use. Red was produced with madder and cochineal. For blue, an expensive dye, indigo was used, among other options. Blue colors were also synthetically produced starting around 1900.

²⁷ Christoffersen, Per: “Selbustrikking” [Selbu Knitting], *Norsk Ukeblad* no. 8, 1985, page 60.

²⁸ Aftret, Bjørg: “Selbuvotter” [Selbu Mittens], NTB, 25 July 1986.

²⁹ Stensrud, Arve: “Tradisjoner i strikkebygda” [Traditions in a Knitting Village], *Norsk Husflid*, 1991.

³⁰ Oscarsson, Ulla: *Kvinnomöda och skarparglädje* [Women’s Work and the Joy of Creating]. Jamtli 2012, page 73.

Several of the early synthetic dyes, however, had poor colorfastness. They were not true dyes, and quickly faded. Mauve faded into gray. The 1886 wedding mittens in the photo here were knitted in red and violet; the violet on the outside faded to silver-gray, but the inside shows that the color was originally a clear, strong violet.

At the end of the 19th century, it was traditional to dye festival and dress mittens red. In our registration materials, we have found several mittens and gloves from the end of the 19th century that still have their strong red color.³¹

For the most part, mittens were dyed red after they had been pattern-knit in unbleached white yarn and black yarn. We don't know whether red dress mittens in Selbu were dyed at home or taken in for dyeing at one of the two local dye workshops. No source reveals whether these two dyeworks dyed yarn by special order or for sale.

In Selbu, two dyeworks block-printed textiles. Peder Haldorsen (1848-1939)—*Baknesfargar'n* (“the Baknes dyer”)—was based at Baknesset. Jon Jonsen Fargarn (1836-1917) came from the *Fargargarden* dyework of Stor-Evja. Originally his farm was called Nigarden, but because of the place's long tradition of dyeing, it came to be called Fargargarden. In 1867, *Fargarn* took over the Hårstadråen farm (Råa) in Mebonden, which was called *Me Fargara*. Jon Jonsen ran the dyeworks together with his wife Sofie Jonsdatter.³²

Christening mittens included in our research materials from the end of the 19th century were knitted in a variety of colors. Most of them were knitted with two colors, but the knitting exhibition at the Selbu Bygdemuseum included a pair of christening mittens from 1899 knitted in red and violet, with turquoise lice. The oldest mitten pair worked with colors registered in Selbu dates to 1859 and is privately owned; they are christening mittens pattern-knit in red and blue.

Traditional Selbu mittens are, as noted, worked in black and white, with black patterning on a white background. The first written source mentioning colors other than black and white in Selbu knitting is a 1925 article by Peder Morset. He wrote: “To begin with,



1. Bridegroom's gloves belonging to Jon Tomassen Sind, 1872. Knitted by the bride Mali Olsdatter Aftret.
2. Christening mittens from Beret Jonasdatter Solem, christened on 9 February 1859. The mittens were knitted by Marit Pedersdotter Solem, mother of Beret. The oldest registered pair of mittens in Selbu.
3. Christening mittens belonging to Martin Hofslø, 1899.
4. Bridegroom's mitten belonging to Nils Nilsen Flønes from Tangtrøa in Flønes, 1891. Knitted by the bride, Gjertrud Olsdatter Sandvik.

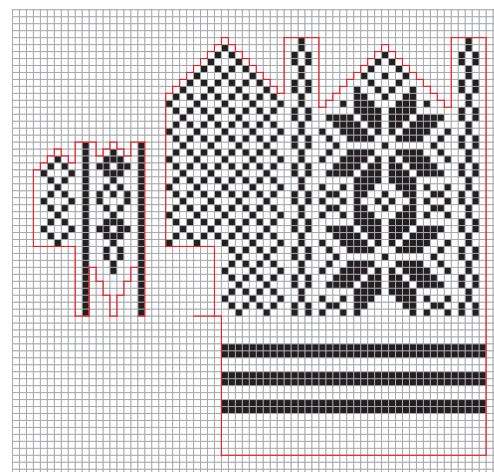
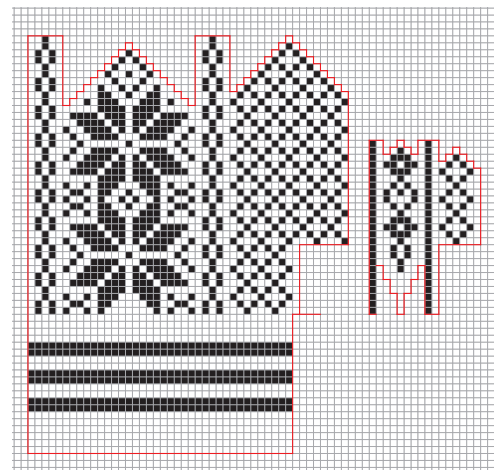
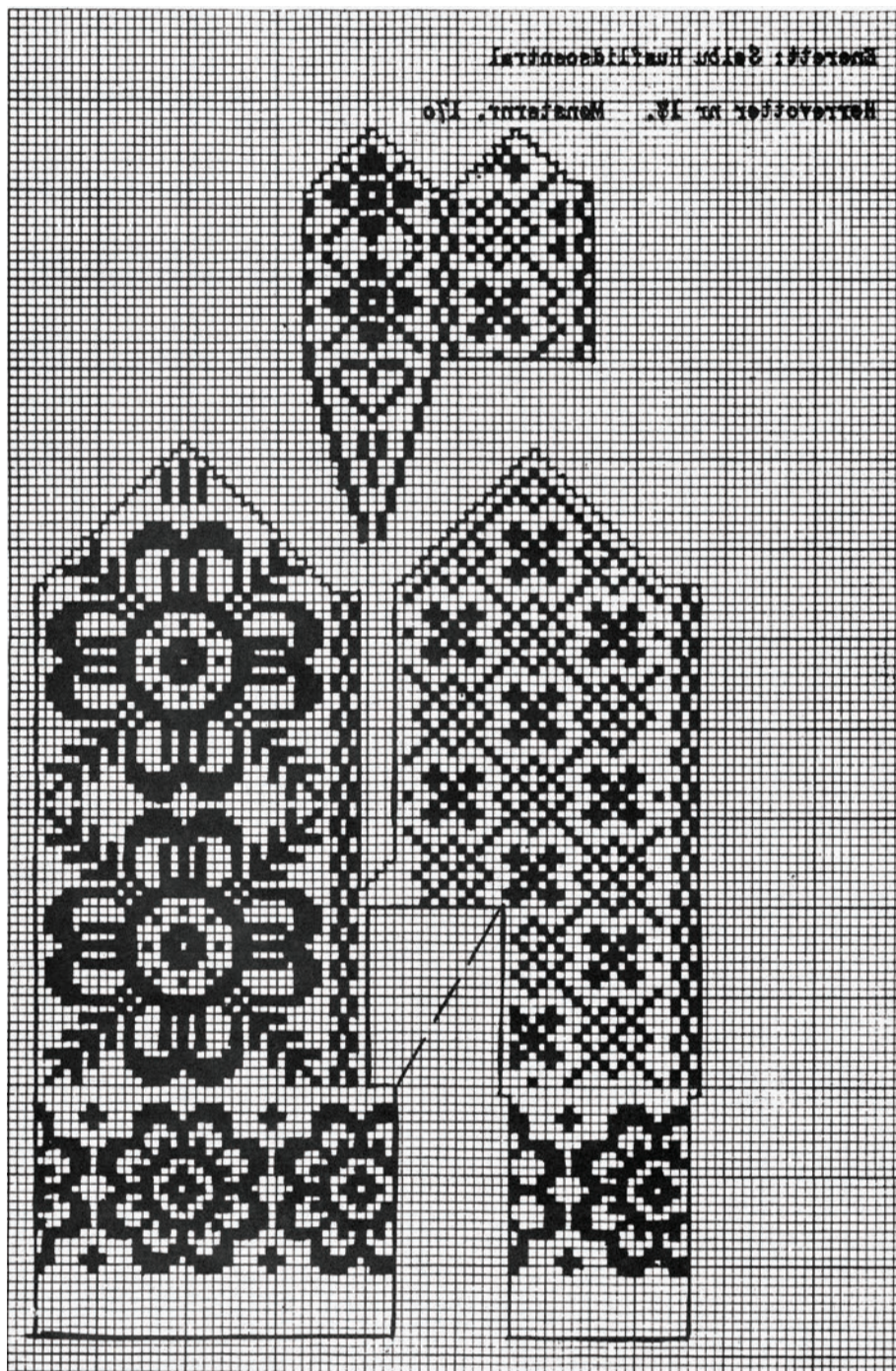
³¹ Several red dress mittens were included in the knitting exhibition in the Selbu Bygdemuseum.

³² Haarstad, Kjell, Rød, Per O.: *Selbu i fortid og nåtid*, volume IV, [Selbu Then and Now], pages 250, 447.

WHAT CHARACTERIZES A SELBU MITTEN?

HOW SHOULD YOU BEGIN KNITTING A MITTEN HAND?

After the cuff and its panels, you'll begin the mitten hand. Mittens will look their finest if the pattern is worked with the thumb on the side opposite the beginning of the round. That way, the irregularities that come with shifts in the pattern will land where they'll be least visible, on the little finger side of the hand. The classic patterns from Selbu Husfidsentral were always drawn with these finesses in mind. On newer patterns, this aspect is not so carefully considered.



A child's mitten by Helga Engen Buland. Pattern drafted for the easiest possible knitting.

The left-hand mitten is worked in reverse.



4. TWO DIFFERENT MOTIFS

These are mittens with two different main motifs where one motif is knitted completely before the next begins. It is most often used on older mittens, and especially on mittens with animal motifs.



5. LONGITUDINAL PATTERNS

This allows for several repeats straight up the mitten, with three or more motifs, often organized with a center field between two symmetrical panels.



6. ENDLESS PATTERNS

These are patterns covering the entire surface of the mitten. This method of arranging motifs is not very common, but can be found among both old and new mittens. The *spider/woodlouse* motif occurs frequently and is also often referred to as an *endless rose*. In Selbu, there are countless endless patterns and what they have in common is the ease of adapting them for stockings and sweaters—garments with larger pattern surfaces.



Materials used, from left to right.

Fin Gammel Selbu from Selbu Spinneri and needles U. S. size 000 / 1.5 mm.

2-ply Gammelseie from Rauma and needles U. S. size 0 / 2 mm.

Lofoten yarn spun at Hillesvåg and needles U. S. size 1.5 / 2.5 mm.

3-ply Strikkegarn from Rauma and needles U. S. size 2.5 / 3 mm.

Selbu Husflid yarn spun at Sandnes Garn and needles U. S. size 2.5 / 3 mm.

MITTENS SUITABLE TO WEAR

Knitting gauge is important to ensure the resulting textile will be ideal for its usage. A baby must have soft, elastic mittens to make it easier to pull them on, and to keep them in place so they don't fall off. Baby mittens do not need to be very durable, so you can use loosely-spun lamb's wool yarn, though it shouldn't be so loose that the baby catches the fibers on the face or in the mouth. Mittens for children at nursery school and in elementary school should be easily recognizable—for example, with special color combinations, or a name knitted in. If you are knitting for someone with a particular sports or work activity, the mittens must be quite strong, relatively windproof, and sturdy enough to tolerate hard wear. If the mittens are meant as special gifts, you can knit elegant mittens with fine yarn that is suitable for light wear.

Choose yarn appropriate for the purpose of the mittens. After choosing the yarn, decide on the needle size and gauge, and then choose the pattern and stitch count. Sometimes you might make your choices in a different order, but the usage and materials have to be taken into consideration and coordinated for good results. You should also think about whether to knit mittens or gloves, and for what age person: men's, women's, or girls'/boys'/children's mittens.

Now consider what they will be worn for. You can set yourself several ambitious goals. In Selbu one might talk about three types of knitting traditions: fine dress mittens, mittens for sale, and "school" mittens*.

DRESS MITTENS (STASVOTTA)

The *stasvotta* (dress mitten) symbolizes the oldest tradition in Selbu. These elaborate mittens were made as very special gifts—for a wedding or christening, for example. Among these mittens, we find the most original patterns, often including initials and the date to indicate the owner.

Dress mittens were skill tests; everyone joined in their production and tried to achieve perfection. These mittens involved the most expertise hand-knitters could show. The first steps in the process began with careful sheep shearing, wool sorting, and spinning of the finest wool to produce the finest and most even yarn possible. After that the pattern

* According to the mitten inspector Annepett Sandvik.



Gray troender sheep.



Copy of mittens from Tänn dalen, Sweden, knitted in gray troender sheep's wool by Anne Bårdsgård.

with yarn from Rauma in colors as close as possible to natural sheep's wool colors, using 2-ply Gammelserie, Finullgarn, and 3-ply Strikkegarn. About 50 pairs were knitted in various other yarns, including Lofoten yarn spun at Hillesvåg and Selbu Husflid yarn spun by Sandnes Garn.

GRAY TROENDER SHEEP (GRÅ TRØNDERSAU)—A LOCAL CURIOSITY Selbu Spinneri began its wool processing project in cooperation with the Breed Association for the Gray Troender Sheep (*Raselaget for Grå trøndersau*). This sheep breed is probably a result of a crossing between the Old Norwegian Gray sheep and the Tautra sheep (now extinct) at the end of the 1800s. Tautra sheep were considered descendants of merino sheep from the cloister at Tautra in Trondheim's Fjord. The breed died out in the 1970s. The merino element is likely the reason that the gray troender sheep have such fine wool, which comes in various shades of gray. This wool is a crossbreed type, soft and lustrous, and works very well for handcraft production of all kinds, including knitting, weaving, and felting; the results will all be warm and soft.

The resulting yarn is soft rather than strong—the yarn spun from the wool of the *spæl* breeds has greater strength, but at the same time feels harder against the skin, though it is also more lustrous. Such yarn is decorative in weaving and can be used for garments that will get a lot of wear.



New Kallarstrø rose.



Neppåjars rose.

article number an assortment of, for example, article 1/00 with different types of star patterns and article 1/15 with various animal motifs: moose, reindeer, dog, etc.” One could certainly say that artistic freedom prevailed among the suppliers.

It has been very important to collect what we could of the pattern names. Designs often had everyday names, and there doesn’t appear to have been a tradition of deep symbolism in Selbu. The use of these patterns was more often dictated by the knitting technique, the mitten size, and how the various knitters liked to knit. Many of my sources emphasized that the pattern should be straightforward to knit, logical, and repeatable, so the job could be done effectively. Others liked variations and wanted to knit new designs regularly so as not to get bored.

Ingulv Røsset wrote in the book *Selbu-målet*:

The profusion of roses (*røser*; two-color stranded knitting, a radiant rose) developed between 1900 and 1940, when Selbu knitting was a large home industry in the district. Many patterns are named for their originator; that is, the motif bears the name of the person who composed it, or the farm they were from. Others are associative names, based on a similarity or memory of something. Some of the design names varied from one neighborhood to another.

Some originator names are: Ane-Berg rose, Blikstad rose, Guri-hook, Innbær rose (or Kølset rose), Kallarstrø rose, Pal-Innbær hook (or large hook), Vølset rose, Luggu rose.

Associative names: flower (on the cuffs and fingers), flowerpot, dancers (many variations), heart rose (several variations), coffee beans, “fly wheel” rose (several variations), wheel (several variations), small H and large H, opposing hearts, ant’s path, star rose, two-, three-, four-star rose, etc. up to twelve-star roses (depending on the number of stitches), spider,* spitball, spruce* branch-rose (or spruce tree), a three (patterns with various arrangements of the number 3, several variations), twelve-cross block rose*, ram’s horn rose, orange (a reminder of an orange cut in half).

Many mitten roses, according to folklore, bore the names of the knitters who used or invented these special roses. At Kallarstrø, they apparently began knitting a new rose at a certain point in time. This became the New Kallarstrø rose (*Nye Kallarstrørosa*). This rose was also called the *Neppåjarsrosa*, because it was often knitted at the Neppåjardet farm in Øverbygda. Likewise, the M-panel or letter M was also known as the Blikstad hook (*Blikstadkrokin*) because it was knitted so often at Blikstad.

We haven’t found patterns for some of the names Ingulv Røsset wrote about. The list includes the Blikstad rose, Gurina Trø’n rose, Brynhild Ås rose, birdwing, and Velvan’s hook. If there are explanations for these, or multiple names, it is our hope that readers will register the names and their origin.

As we worked on this book, the same patterns have been found with different appellations, and new nicknames for the designs have popped up. Despite the risk of referring to something with the wrong name, we have attempted to give the correct names to patterns that are visually related to each other. If there are several names in use, it will be explained in the text.

The star or rose motif (*sjennrosa*) is discussed first. The earlier sections are arranged according to the variations within the stars, and the later sections discuss what is going on around the stars.

Designation as, for example, “a star with a square or block in the center” is not a suggestion for a name, but rather is used to visually group similar motifs and to acknowledge similar details. Some mittens serve as examples in several places, because they have varying characteristics that can best be highlighted in different contexts. The pattern headings are not intended as conclusive but as a helpful means to assess the details and differences of the mitten stars and roses. Mitten examples and pattern references do not show identical mitten roses on all the photo spreads, but should be seen as illustrations of variations belonging to the same pattern group.

PRIMARY MITTEN MOTIFS

On the following pages, you'll find a pattern "dictionary" with an overview of the primary mitten motifs (main motifs on the front of a mitten). The motifs are illustrated with photos of the mittens. More information about the various mittens can be found on pages 288-291.

SJENNROSA MOTIF (ALSO CALLED STAR, EIGHT-PETAL ROSE, SELBU ROSE, AND SELBU STAR)

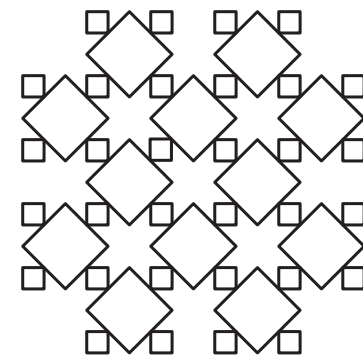
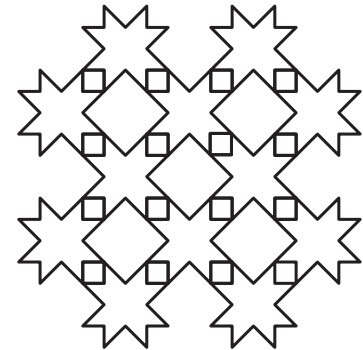
Although the star motif has essentially become a national symbol, and outside the region is often called a Selbu star, this pattern can be found in many parts of the world. In her book *Everyday Knitting*, Annemor Sundbø wrote that the motif is a Latvian national symbol, called the "freedom star," and is also found on Indian handcraft pieces, in addition to being seen in Coptic, Islamic, and Byzantine textiles. She continues:

A star is a symbol of the highest rank one can reach. In the world of Christian symbolism, the star is a symbol of triumph and victory, and also a symbol of God's son, Jesus Christ; in navigation it is the guiding light. To follow a star is to be graced by divine guidance. "I am the bright morning star," says Jesus (Revelations. 22:16).

The eight-pointed star is also connected with the Virgin Mary. Another name for this star is "The Star of Mary." As early as the year 390, the church father Hieronymus used the Latin word for sea, *mare*, and called the star "Stella Maris"—"star of the sea."

E. H. Gombrich, in his book *The Sense of Order*, wrote about how we comprehend patterns, depending on the visual context the elements are set in. Gombrich shows an example of the star motif taken from Gestalt psychology, which was very much concerned with the same theme as Selbu knitters: how to vary the perception of the same decorative element in different settings.

The star motif works well for textile techniques such as knitting, embroidery, and weaving. Selbu knitters have used the pattern on mittens ever since two-color stranded knitting was established in the district, and no pattern is used as much as the star. Anepett Sandvik writes in the article "Om selbustrikking:"* "One must reckon that the first Selbu mittens to come onto the market had the star motif. The star motif and the development of later patterns were based on the eight-petal rose."



"The Sense of Order" (W. Metzger, 1975).

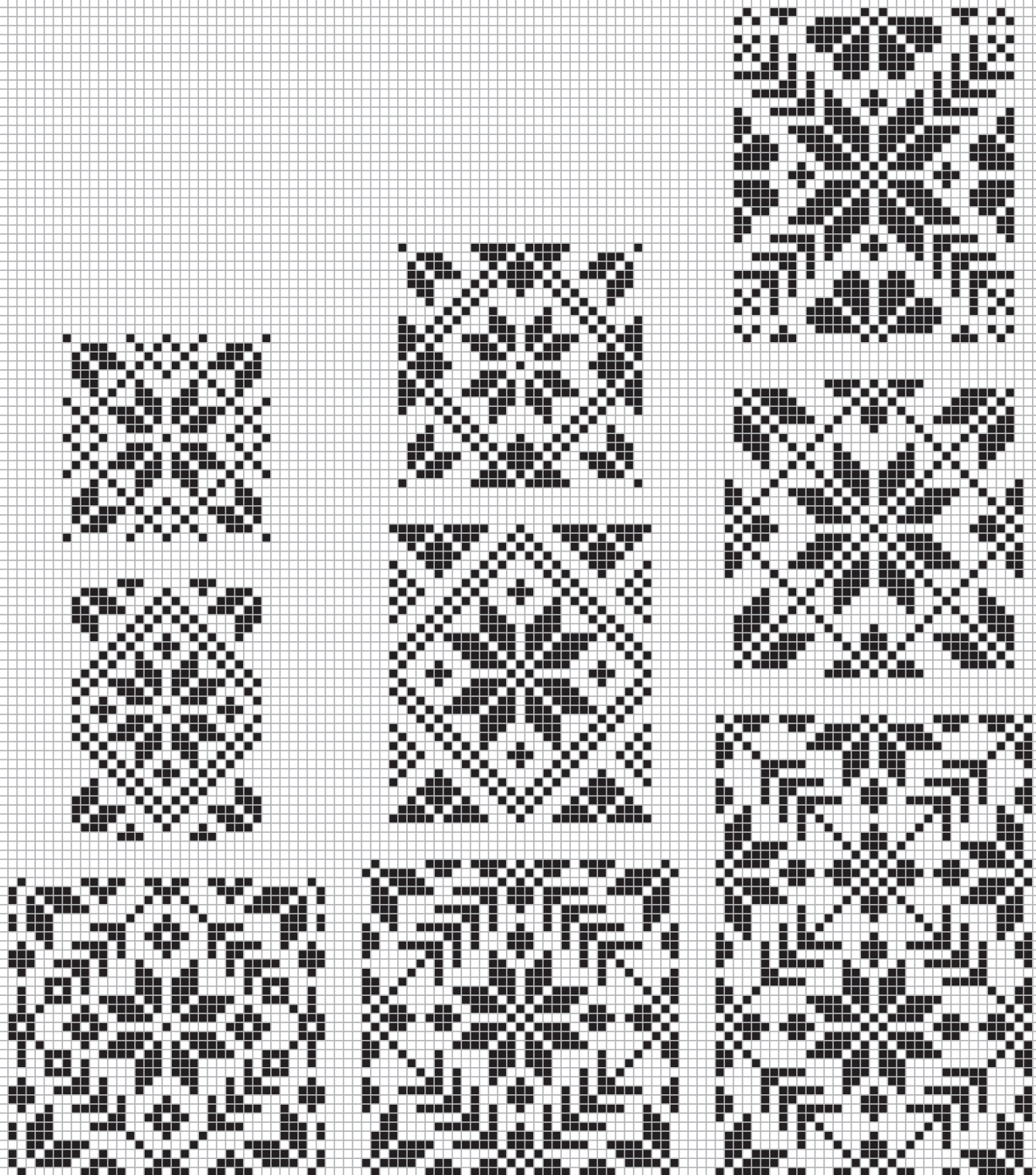


The two pictures to the left show a quadruple fourteen-star motif with simple two-star motifs in the corners. The stars can also be grouped according to single, double, triple, etc., or whether they are single-color, or whether they stand alone versus if there are multiple fields within each other.

* "Om selbustrikking," [About Selbu Knitting], article in *Norsk Husftid*, number 1, 1984.

ENDLESS PATTERN STAR MOTIFS





FLY WHEEL ROSE (*KJINNTYRILLROS*) AND GOAT'S HORN ROSE (*BUKKHÅNN*)

The fly wheel and goat's horn roses are rather typical examples of a fruitful use of associative names for motifs. One and the same name pops up here for relatively different patterns. All the roses on the next page are called the fly wheel rose, so there are clearly several possible meanings. Knitters in Selbu and several sources were certain that the rose to the right (example 3) is a pure fly wheel rose, and that it was named for the ring around the dasher of a butter churn.* Another explanation is that the rose in the center (example 2), with the same appellation, was named for an old pattern which occurs in cream as it is churned into butter. This rose is given the title of "kjinntyrollros" in both pattern notebooks and the Husflid Association's collection materials from the 1980s. The rose below, which does not have the same diagonal square in the center, is called a goat's horn rose (*bukkhånnros*). The horn is represented as it looks when the goat shakes its head. The rose in example 1 is labeled both as a reverse-3 and a fly wheel rose in the Selbu Husflid Association's pattern records of the 1980s. Several of these patterns are repeated in the section on the number 3.



*The dasher of a butterchurn (*kinnestaven/kjinnestaven*)—an old tool that was used for churning butter when butter was still churned by hand.

MESSAGES, INITIALS, AND DATES

From early on, mittens given as personal presents had messages, initials, and dates. During the war, a stylized H was often used for patterning. A coincidence? Maybe not. It was well-suited for anyone whose name started with an H, just as A and M were appropriate for those with A or M initials. Might it also have been interpreted as a secret symbol for King Haakon VII of Norway? Some patterns bore disguised flags—and mittens with swastikas were also knitted.





MEN'S MITTENS WITH MITTEN ROSES BY INGEBORG EVJEN BRENNÅS



Ingeborg Evjen Brennås (1908–96) was awarded the Marit Emstad medal in 1966. This medal was bestowed on “knitters who have done particularly valuable work for promoting quality handicrafts and small industry in Neadalen.” The mitten rose preserved by Ingeborg is most likely her own design.



Skill Level: Experienced

Measurements:

Length: 11 in / 28 cm

Width: 4¼ in / 11 cm

Gauge: 16 sts in 2 in / 5 cm. Adjust needle size to obtain correct gauge if necessary.

Materials

Yarn:

CYCA #1 (fingering) Gammel Selbu 2-ply from Selbu Spinneri (100% Norwegian wool, 361 yd/330 m / 100 g), black and white

OR CYCA #3 (DK, light worsted) 3-ply Strikkegarn from Rauma (100% Norwegian wool, 118 yd/108 m / 50 g), colors 101 natural white and 116 dark brown-black

Needles: U. S. size 1.5-2.5 / 2.5-3 mm: set of 5 dpn

Instructions: With white, CO 60 sts. Divide sts onto 4 dpn and join. Following the chart, work 3 rnds k1, p1 ribbing and then 2 rnds stockinette.

Work following the cuff chart, ending with 2 rnds stockinette with white before beginning hand. On the first rnd of the hand, increase 4 sts evenly spaced around. Continue charted rows, shaping thumb gusset. Place the 17 thumb sts on a holder (halfway up the star) and CO 10 sts over gap. Complete mitten following chart.

Thumb: Place 17 held sts onto dpn and pick up and knit 9 sts across top of thumbhole = 26 sts total. Work following thumb chart.

Make the second mitten the same way, reversing shaping and thumb placement to correspond.

Finishing: Weave in all ends neatly on WS. Block by gently steam pressing under a damp pressing cloth.

FLOWER POT FROM ROLSET

This is an old pattern recorded by Jorunn Rolseth. The mittens with this pattern were reconstructed from these pattern drawings. The same pattern can be found on gloves in the Selbu Bygdemuseum (SE 2456), knitted by Anne Lien (née Almåhaug), Liheim.

Skill Level: Experienced

Measurements:

Length: 12¼ in / 31 cm

Width: 3¾ in / 9.5 cm

Gauge: 17 sts in 2 in / 5 cm. Adjust needle size to obtain correct gauge if necessary.

Materials

Yarn:

CYCA #1 (fingering) Gammel Selbu 2-ply from Selbu Spinneri (100% Norwegian wool, 361 yd/330 m / 100 g), black and white

OR CYCA #1 (fingering) 2-ply Gammelserie from Rauma (100% wool, 175 yd/160 m / 50 g), colors 401 natural white and 410 black

OR CYCA #2 (sport, baby) Ask from Hillesvåg (100% wool, 344 yd/315 m / 100 g), colors 316057 natural white and 316058 light brown heather

Needles: U.S. size 1.5-2.5 / 2.5-3 mm: set of 5 dpn

Instructions: With white, CO 60 sts. Divide sts onto 4 dpn and join. Following the chart, purl 3 rnds and then knit 1 rnd. Work the 2-rnd rep of the chevron pattern as follows:

Rnd 1: *P1, k2tog, k2, M1, p1, M1, k2, k2tog*; rep * to * around.

Rnd 2: *P1, k4*; rep * to * around.

Work a total of 23 pattern rnds, following charted stripe sequence. Knit 2 rnds, before beginning hand.

Continue charted rows, shaping thumb gusset as shown. Place the 17 thumb sts on a holder and CO 12 sts over gap. Complete mitten following chart.

Thumb: Place 17 held sts onto dpn and pick up and knit 12 sts across top of thumbhole = 29 sts total. Work following thumb chart. Make the second mitten the same way, reversing shaping and thumb placement to correspond.

Finishing: Weave in all ends neatly on WS. Block by gently steam pressing under a damp pressing cloth.







ANNE BÅRD SGÅRD

Anne Bårdsgård (born in 1966) is an artist-craftswoman educated at the Institute of Textiles of The State College for Arts and Crafts and Designs in Bergen, Norway. She has had several solo exhibitions of her work and participated in a number of group exhibits both in Norway and abroad. Her work has been purchased by several institutions, including the Norwegian Art Industry Museum, the Cultural Council, the Royal Hospital, and the Art in Public Buildings Fund. Anne grew up in Selbu and Trondheim and now lives and works in Klæbu.



BIRGITTA ODÉN

Birgitta Odén (born in 1950) majored in art history and is a certified curator at NMF (Norges Museumsforbund). Since 1999, she has worked as the regional conservator in Malvik and Selbu (and in Tydal, 1999-2006), and was the project leader for establishing the knitting exhibition in the Selbu Village Museum and at the Johan Nygaardsvold Museum in Hommelvik. For 13 years, she has been a working artist and a member of a collective workshop.



INGVILD SVORKMO ESPELIEN

Ingvild Svorkmo Espelien (born in 1963) is the day-to-day coordinator of the Selbu Spinneri, which was established in 2010. She is an agronomist, biologist, and teacher. Ingvild has taught courses on wool improvement and has raised sheep for many years.



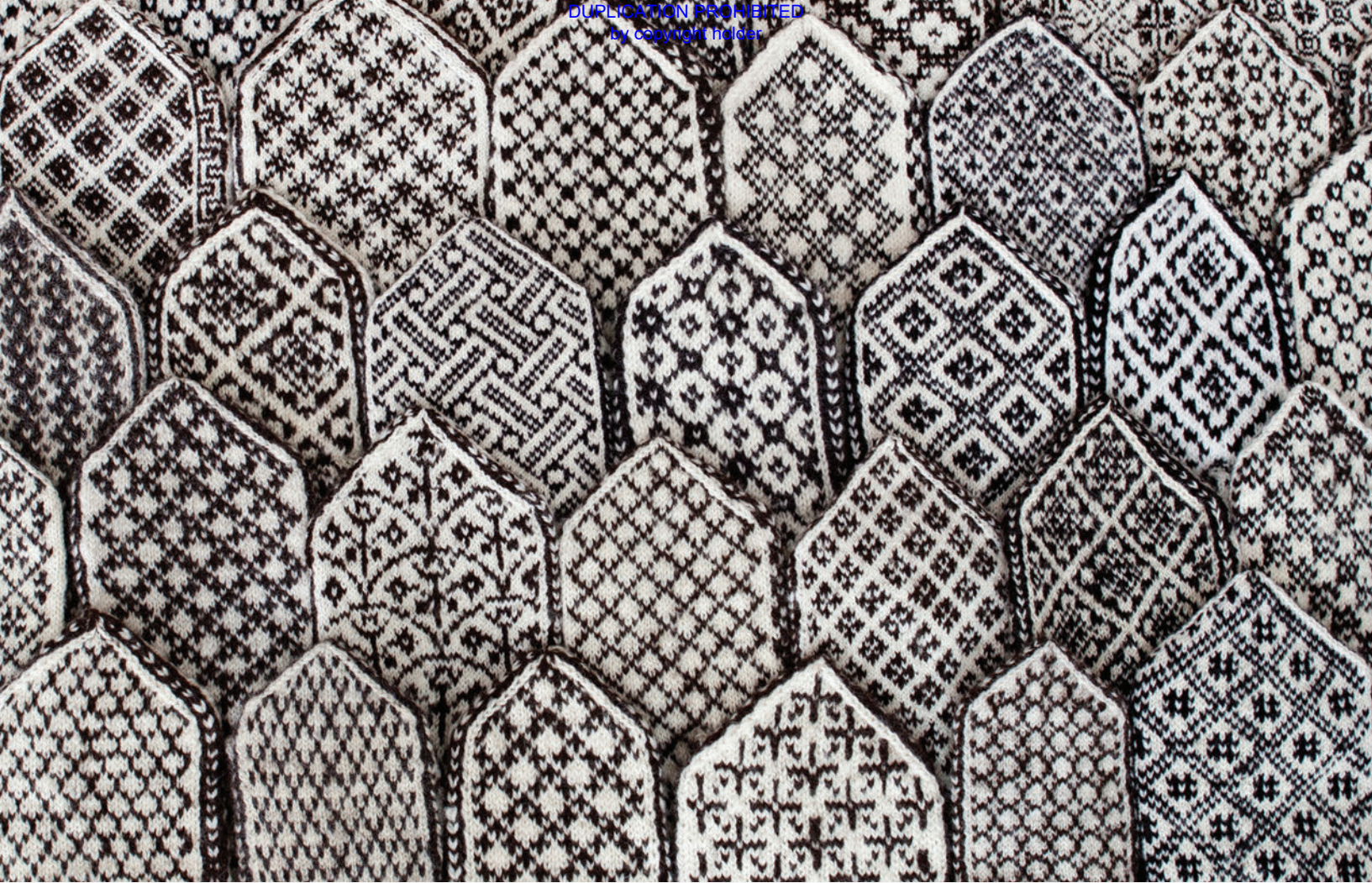
BODIL MOSTAD OLSEN

Bodil Mostad Olsen (born in 1961) is a prize-winning book and identity designer, with a Master's Degree with Excellence in Sequential Design from the University of Brighton. Based in Tondheim, Bodil works with various national and international projects, from Namsskogan, Norway to New York and Beijing.



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SELBU MITTENS are well known all over the world, instantly recognizable for their dramatic contrasts and intricate motifs. But where do they come from? Who makes them, and how? What defines a true “Selbu mitten,” and why?

Now the answers are at your fingertips, compiled into the ultimate compendium for any Norwegian knitting enthusiast. This gorgeous and inspiring resource was produced in conjunction with a one-of-a-kind exhibition of hand-knit gloves and mittens from Selbu at the Sverresborg Trøndelag Folkemuseum and includes reconstructions by the author and a team of experienced volunteer knitters. A thoroughly researched and illustrated account of the rich history of Selbu patterning covers the development of the designs themselves

and the essential role these knitted accessories have played in the cultural and economic development of the Selbu region. Readers can then dive into over 500 colorwork charts, organized according to the source of each pattern’s inspiration—from the classic, such as stars, snowflakes, and flowers, to the surprising, like elk, spiders, and coffee beans.

In addition, these pages feature complete patterns for 35 mittens and gloves from the museum collection, accompanied by short biographies of the original designers. Or knitters can choose from an overflowing selection of motifs for palms, thumbs, cuffs, and even patterned edging techniques for joining around the hand, to create their own distinctive combinations, firmly rooted in the heart of Selbu tradition.

ANNE BÅRD SGÅRD is a handcrafting expert who studied textiles at the Bergen University College of Art. She has presented several solo exhibitions and participated in multiple public exhibitions as well, both within Norway and abroad. Her works have been featured by Norwegian art museums, Norway’s national arts council, and more. She was raised in the village of Selbu and has always loved knitting mittens; preserving the traditional patterns that have made her home famous worldwide has been her mission since 2013.

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