

TRANSCRIPT

Space

When I was a high school kid learning to knit and sew garments, all of my knitting fit in a basket that I kept by the side of my bed. It was small, compact and perfect for one knitting project. But then I started to receive yarn and fabric stash donations from my mom's crafty friends. And I became interested in working on more than one project at a time. And I noticed that very quickly, my closet filled up with yarn and knitting projects, and my dresser drawers had filled up with fabric. Fabric that I still have. So now this past year I've been working through space challenges as we sort of move from a 2000 square foot dyeing studio to a 5,000 square foot dyeing studio. And it seems that no matter how much space you have, no matter where you are in the journey is still seems like the frustration of not having enough space is an ongoing challenge. It affects all of us. So one of the thoughts that has deeply resonated with me is a room of one's own. So this is a, it's an essay by Virginia Woolf that was written in 1929. And she talks about the necessity of a woman to have a room of her own if she is to write. Now, you can substitute the creative practice of writing with any other creative practice, whether it's painting quilting, sewing, spinning, knitting, or weaving, whatever creative activity you practice, you must have the physical space, the mental space and the financial space in order to do that activity. So Woolf asserts that in order to have that room, you must have the financial means to that room. And in today's age, I might suggest that this also means that a person needs to value themselves and their work in order to carve space out for creative activity, there needs to be a conviction that a person deserves to have space for their creative practice.

So now that we can all agree that you deserve space for your craft. Let's talk about the challenge of actually getting the space. And the way that I look at this challenge is actually four fold. The first is where is your creative space? The second is what is the size of your space? The third is what is the size of your gear? And four is what is the size of your stash?

I am very blessed that we found this house with this perfect finished attic space that I've taken over as a craft room, but things are not always what they seem. So on one hand, it's awesome that this physical space can hold my big 45 inch loom and my entire yarn stash. And it's located in the attic where I can close the door and leave my work, sort of my work in progress, an undisturbed. However, the fact that it's located here in the attic means that it's away, and it's separated from the rest of the house and my family. And in this phase of my life, my activities, my responsibilities and priorities all revolve around my family, which means that I don't spend a ton of time in the attic. Yeah. So if all of my creative and crafty tools and supplies were up in the attic and not around me in my life, then it would be unlikely that I would get anything done. It doesn't mean that you shouldn't have a separate space for your making. It just means that in my particular situation, in order for me to get my making done, my tools and supplies need to be integrated into my life and around me. So this is how I incorporate the idea of patchwork time with my space. If I have a five minute window, while I'm cooking to thread a few warp ends on my weaving loom, it's unlikely that I'm going to run upstairs to the attic and do that. But if the loom is sitting right next to the kitchen, then I can absolutely do that.

Integrating a dye workflow into my homelife doesn't work for me because of safety concerns. So that needs to have a separate space out in the garage. But this is also why I don't dye yarn in tiny slices of time. I have to preschedule and dedicate entire days to dying activities. So where to put your creative space is incredibly personal because it matters how you feel when you are in that space. If it feels messy or cramped or dark, it's unlikely that you'll want to go there or spend any amount of time there. So find a place that makes you feel relaxed and happy. That space might even be your favorite spot on the couch or a special armchair. If you put your tools and your supplies within arm's reach to that place, then that becomes your creative space. That's where you get things done. And so your space can be as integrated into your life as you need it to be.

So let's first talk about the physical size of the space that you have access to for your craft. This might be as big as an extra bedroom in your house, or as small as a corner of your apartment living room. You'll need a space for the actual act of making things. And you'll also need space to store your tools, your equipment, and space to store your stash. Now, if you have a dedicated craft space and you have the ability to spread out your spinning wheels, and weaving looms and knitting machines, and sock knitting machines, yarn winders, warping boards, then you are very, very lucky. And some people might say, you're living the dream, but if you were working out of a much smaller physical space, you'll need to maximize the space for efficiency. So one of the ways that I suggest doing this is similar to what I talked about in the focus section, and that is to arrange and organize your making space around the craft that you are focused on. So for example, several years ago, I was obsessed with quilting because I had developed carpal tunnel in my wrist because of my first pregnancy. I couldn't knit and I couldn't spin cause it, it physically hurt. The only thing that I could do without pain was sort of push fabric through a sewing machine. And so it was during that phase that I acquired a beautiful stash of quilting fabric that I absolutely love. I have half a dozen, half finished quilt projects going on as well, but then, you know, my wrists healed and I could knit again and the baby was older and he needed me more. And I found that I spent very little time here in the attic doing any quilting. And so what I finally decided to do was to pack up all my beautiful fabric stash into bins and the half done quilts, pack them all away, store them all the way. It's not gone but one day I will go back to making quilts again. But right now I've just rearranged my craft room and my studio to serve me as I am now. There's no point in dedicating a quarter of the real estate in this room to quilting if I'm not quilting. So you can go back and look at your mind map and what you were thinking about with all the crafts that you want to do and consider rearranging your space to dedicate it to the focus that you've chosen. And that way you can make your space much more efficient.

The size of your space can absolutely influence the size of your gear. If you have a small space, it might not be feasible to have a 45 inch wide floor loom, but it might be possible to put in a 16 inch table loom that folds up and goes into a closet when you're not using it. There's such a wide range of tools and equipment. Now that you can find the perfect thing to fit your existing space, where you might not have space for a big Saxony style spinning wheel, but you'll have space for a tiny little e-spinner that might fit in the palm of your hand or a spindle that you can tuck into a bag. I feel very strongly that finding tools to fit your physical space doesn't necessarily mean compromising on quality or functionality. There are plenty of space saving tools that work beautifully, but might require you to adjust your expectations. So if I really need to weave a big wide blanket, I will weave double width cloth on my existing loom rather than being super sad that I can't get a 72 inch wide loom into this space. So there's the size of your equipment. That is a consideration. And there's also the number of items. If there's any way that you can consolidate equipment or pare down the number of tools that you have, that will all help you save space. For me, I had to choose to review and destash my single knitting needles and switch to an interchangeable system. So rather than having 30 circular knitting needles of all different lengths and sizes, I switched to just having one kit. I've also

pared down sort of my spinning gear so that it all fits on one rolling cart from Ikea. So I put the e-spinner on the top level with the foot peddle and the battery pack. And then I also keep things like spinning wheel oil and maybe like a wraps per inch tool in there. And then on the second shelf, I put all the fibre that I'm currently working through. And then on the bottom shelf, I can put things like extra bobbin, storage bobbins, and lazy Kates so pretty much everything I need for spinning is right here on the cart, stacked vertically to save space. Now this does not include my complete fibre stash since a lot of that is stored in the attic, but it's a very functional setup for daily spinning. In terms of weaving I also carved out a little corner of my dining room to be a weaving area. So this corner holds a Schacht baby Wolf loom, a bench, and a bobbin rack. The bobbin rack is more just for decoration. It's not super functional. I store random things here like shuttles and bobbins. I also put them together in a, another rolling cart. And so I'll put things like scissors, warping tools, my fringe twisters in there now, and it's all very compact and contained. Of course, this doesn't include storage of the small warping board or yarn winding equipment, but I could probably position those things in this area too And it would be very workable. My dining table can double as a place for me to wind bobbins or to wind a warp. So I'm making it work just within the context of my life

Stash. Oh, stash. Let's talk about your stash. I believe in maintaining a stash, I think it's really important. How can you not have a stash, your yarn and your fibre, your fabric, it's your raw materials for making things. It's like being a chef with no food ingredients it's just not possible. So I believe that it's important to build yourself a stash that represents you and your personal style. You can include materials that have the kinds of colors and textures that sing to you. Things that you look at and you drool over. These are the colors and textures that will make up your work. So pick and choose with your eye, like curate your stash so that every inch of it feels like something that you would pick up and use in a project. So having said all that, let's go back to what I said at the beginning when I said that I kept a basket of knitting next to my bed. And somehow unintentionally, I began acquiring a stash of yarn that has followed me through my life since I was in high school. I am blessed that my mom's friends gifted me with yarn when I was learning to knit, I received donated yarn in all different colors, weights, textures, and it allowed me to learn how to wind a ball of yarn by hand manually, how to knit color work and what different wool fibres feel like. I think because this yarn was a gift, I became very emotionally attached to it, somehow the box of yarn became the physical manifestation of my journey into learning how to knit. And so, because I gave so much meaning to it, I couldn't let go of it. I think carrying around yarn that you've acquired 10 or 15 years ago can be heavy on your creative spirit, maintaining and storing yard that doesn't speak to you anymore, feels wasteful and that kind of yarn it needs to be moved out and recirculated back into the world. Protect your stash and include only the things that really inspire your creativity. When you pick up a skein of yarn, does it set off sparks of new ideas of things that it could become? If not, I would consider putting it aside into a set of yarns that you can donate to another crafty kid who is hungry to learn to knit or to weave. So in the past several years, I have decided to intentionally review my stash yarns and decide whether or not I will keep it in my stash or not the yarns that de-stash I generally pass to friends or family who could use them for either themselves or for charity, knitting and donations. I'm also passing a lot of extra leftover yarns to my kids, for them to play with as they experiment with making things too. And I still have yarns in my stash that I acquired while I was traveling in Japan more than a decade ago, but they still stay in my stash because I continue to get energy, just looking at them and dreaming about what they could become.

Having physical space for your craft is important, but so is keeping it in working order. I appreciate that creativity is messy and that when we're in the zone and in a state of flow, doing things like tidying up and picking up bits of yarn fabric off the floor are not a priority, but I also appreciate that creative energy flourishes in a clean and tidy space, when a space is messy or it's packed with stuff, our energy suffers from the weight of seeing the mess. So I

encourage you to be creative, get messy, blow up your studio with all the craft materials and move your equipment around to wherever it needs to be, to catch the window light or whatever, and then go through and clean it all up. In the cycle of the creative process I talk about the stages of ideation execution and more importantly, review. So in the review stage, I would encourage you to take that time and energy to reset your space. Think about that mind map of creative projects that you want to tackle. And if you're ready to move to the next project, take a moment to clean up your space, prepare it for the next adventure. Put like with like, to have a place for everything and put everything in its place. Just simple habits to keep your space well-maintained so that it can serve your creative soul.