

TRANSCRIPT

Money

One of the top three challenges I hear about from fellow fibre artists is how fibre equipment, tools and materials are so expensive. This is perfectly understandable because as creative people and fibre people, we appreciate aesthetics and find materials we can admire and appreciate a spinning wheel or spindle that is carved from solid, exotic hardwood and how beautiful it is. I think we're the kind of people who gravitate to natural and luxury textiles and can differentiate between what Falkland wool feels like versus what Polwarth wool feels like. We are the kind of people who enjoy working with the texture and the feel of fibres like silk or cashmere, and like a good bottle of wine. These are literally the finer things in life, but somehow, because these materials and tools are in the hobby and craft realm, they are devalued. Somehow we believe that a ball of extra fine Italian merino knitting yard shouldn't cost as much as a bottle of fine Italian wine. So if we can agree that beautiful, natural and handmade materials and tools are expensive, how are we going to resolve this feeling that we can't afford all the things. So let's break down some of our strategies for managing our budgets for our materials and tools.

The first is to upgrade your tools as you upgrade your skills. So when I first started knitting, my first sets of needles were Aero, aluminum, straight knitting needles that were given to me by my mom and her knitting friends. These are needles that are very accessible. You could get them at the local department store when department stores had craft sections and when department stores actually existed. Uh, you could get these needles for just a dollar or two. This was back in the eighties, but as time went on and my knitting skills improved, I started to buy my own needles and I migrated to get several, multiple sets of bamboo circular needles because they were what I could afford. And then having more needles in different sizes allowed me to do more knitting and work on multiple projects at a time. The more I knit, the more my skills grew and the more I knew what I wanted to knit. And so I knew that I could let go of double pointed needles and DPNs because I didn't really like knitting with them that much and I could move towards interchangeable circulars. And so I knew what kind of needle materials I enjoy knitting with. And so I finally finally find that you migrated into using a stainless steel interchangeable set of knitting needles and at \$200 a set, it's not something that I would have invested in at the very start of my knitting journey. Instead, I think it's perfectly fine to use inexpensive yarn and dollar store knitting needles just to get started. So I encourage new knitters or spinners or weavers to get the tools and equipment that are in easy reach for you. There's no need to lust after a \$5,000 loom, if you're just getting started and it's way too much pressure, you just get your foot in the door and then see where it takes you.

So when you know, you're a committed weaver or spinner or whatever, then invest in the best quality you can afford. I am a firm believer in buying quality gear that will last you a long time, if not a lifetime, but that only makes sense if and when you're ready to go all in on a particular craft. In my mind, working with a few well loved and high quality tools will be far more satisfying than hoarding an army of tools that are always breaking down and not serving you well.

Yes, a single skein of fine yarn can easily cost 30 or \$40, just like a good bottle of wine. A whole sweaters worth of yarn might cost a few hundred dollars. So it's not a small investment. So when I think about juggling a craft budget, I think about planning for the big things that you would like to make. This is part of the reason we encourage you to

check out the Make Nine workshop: Planning Your Make Nine and also the Epic Cloth workshop, both are focused on helping you plan projects with the outcome in mind. What is it that you would really like to make at the end of the day, start with those big projects and budget for those first. Then you can fill in with smaller projects here and there. It's basically the same, like knitting eight or nine, single skein shawls versus knitting one sweater. They might take the same amount of yarn, but you can decide which idea sounds more appealing to you based on your knitting or making goals.

As knitting trends come and go. There was a big movement away from fine lace yarn towards fingering weight and heavier weight yarn. And I think it's partly because we really enjoy making things that are faster to make. They make us feel productive and they give us almost instant gratification, but honestly, knitting or weaving with fine lace yarn gets you more bang for your buck. A project knit with lace yarn will take more stitches to create and you'll spend more time knitting. If you enjoy the feel of making those stitches, it could be the ideal solution just to enjoy more knitting time. It's the same with weaving weaving with a lace yarn or a thin yarn working at a fine set is going to take more warping time, more threading, time, more weaving time. So you'll spend more time with that yarn for the same amount of money that you would spend on a heavier weight yarn.

One of the things I have noticed in the fibre arts is the flow of weaving looms and equipment from weaver to weaver, generation to generation. While big pieces like weaving looms are very expensive. It is very possible that there are, that are being destashed all the time. If you're part of a spinning and weaving guild, you might catch wind of any equipment that is available and up for sale. I've had a number of weaving looms, generously given to me, and also given looms to others as well. There's a generosity among fibre artists that I haven't seen elsewhere. And I think it's because this, this equipment is so expensive and we've all been there wanting to weave something and not being able to, because we don't have the equipment. And so there is this shared, shared pool of equipment that is always circulating.

When I was researching cameras and photography equipment for making videos for the school, I read a lot of forums and reviews about people choosing certain cameras or looking for whatever features, all of these things. In one of the forums, I came across a line in someone's signature block. And at the end of his post, it basically said, lives are ruined by gear acquisition. You think about it, like the \$500 or the \$5,000 that you spent on yarn or photography equipment that didn't go towards rent or groceries or tuition. So that's crucial. One of the principles that we try to work with at SweetGeorgia is to try to be good stewards of the resources that we work with. And so that means being really level headed about what we need in order to be creative. It's not about having everything that we want at our fingertips. It's really about visioning and planning and carefully considering what tools or materials are really necessary, as opposed to everything that we'd like to have.