

CHOSEN FOR REDESIGN DIY

WRECKED RIBBED KNIT – DYEING AND UNPICKING



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Photo: Aino Ahola



Hi!

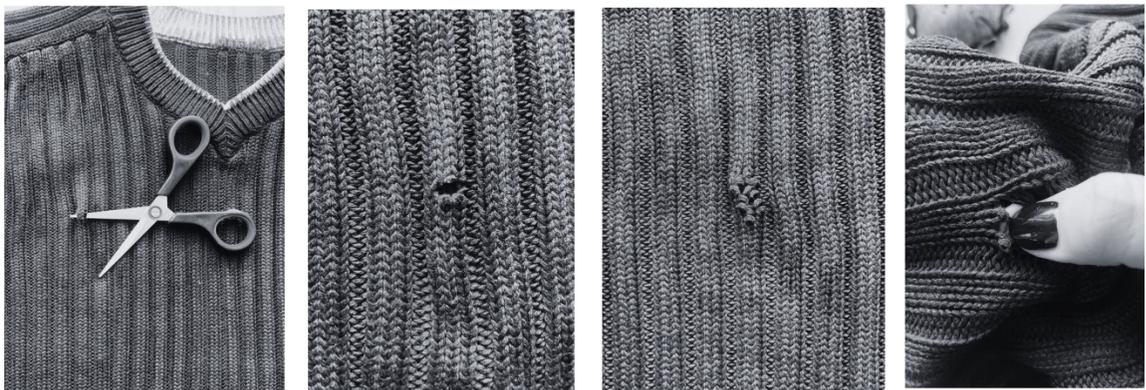
I am Saimi Parikka, a textile designer graduating from Aalto University. During my studies, I specialised in knitwear. In the summer of 2024, we did a project in collaboration with T-REX and Emmy.fi, where we came up with ideas and made new products out of the unsold clothes from Emmy's second-hand store. In the summer project, I was working specifically with cotton knitwear, unpicking and reworking these. In these tutorials, I'll show you some ideas I've come up with over the summer to revamp old knitwear.

The majority of secondhand clothes that are not sold are in small sizes. When knitwear is modified by unpicking, it widens as the stitches are dropped and at the same time increases in length as the remaining stitches are loosened. This way, a knitwear in size XS can be modified into a knitwear in size M-L. The unpicked surface becomes slightly transparent, lacy and in my opinion interestingly untidy.

These tutorials are particularly suitable for people who are already knitting enthusiasts, as they have a basic understanding of how the stitches and the structure of knitwear work. Unpicking, like knitting, is a repetitive movement that can even feel meditative. The brain likes repetitive and predictable movement, which is a good counterbalance to mental work, screens and hectic everyday life. Unlike in knitting in general, I think the more irregular and sprawling the surface becomes, the better.

For reworking, it is worth choosing good quality knitwear. For these tutorials I have used 100% cotton knitwear. Smooth-stranded knitwear, such as mercerised cotton or viscose, is easier to unpick than rough, industrially tightly strung cotton knitwear. Thicker yarns are faster to unpick than thinner ones. Fingernails are helpful when unpicking, they can "pluck" the structure open conveniently. When unpicking a garment, you learn to visualise patterns and structures at the same time, when you see what kind of pieces the garment is made of. Unpicking knitwear can feel a little scary - will the whole garment unravel uncontrollably when you cut a hole in it? However, most industrial knitwear is so sturdily made that it does not easily unravel in undesirable spots.

Plenty of great raw materials can be found second-hand. I hope these tutorials will inspire you to save old knitwear and enjoy making things by hand.



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Wrecked Ribbed Knit

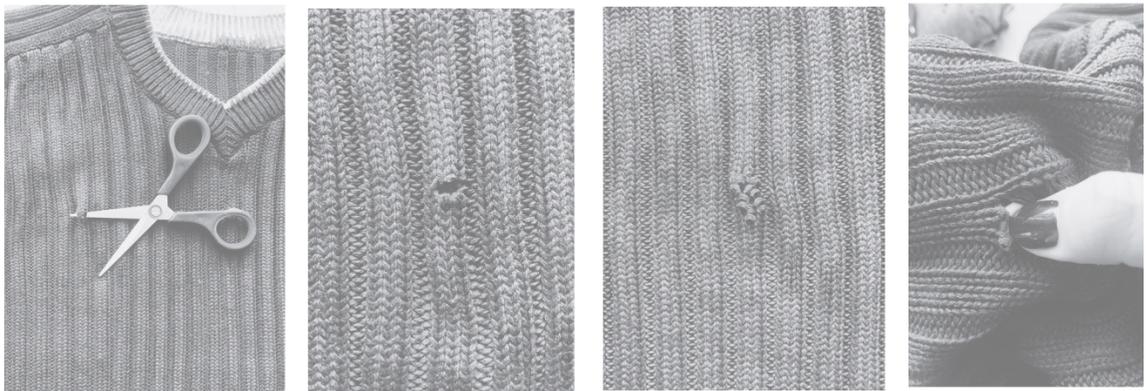
Technique: Painting with dye and unpicking

Painting with dye followed by unpicking creates a fun, uneven surface of colour. When the fabric dye is only applied on the surface of the knit, the yarn on the inside of the knit remains undyed. When you unpick it, you get a vivid, uneven surface of colour.

For the tutorial, you need to know how to

- sew a straight stitch on a sewing machine and
- understand what a stitch is in knitwear.

Supplies: Knitwear to be worked, fabric painting dye, small foam roller, a plastic box for the dye, trash bag to protect the work surface, iron, seam rippers, scissors, sewing machine



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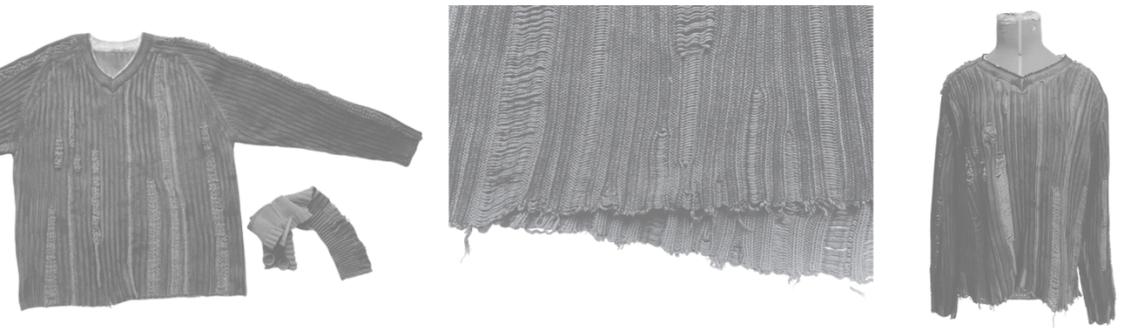
Starting point: Red L-size men's knit. 100% cotton. The logo of a bus company embroidered on the hem.

1. Dyeing

Protect the workbench with, for example, a cut-open trash bag. Spread the knitwear over the protective cover. Take out the dye paint and the small foam roller. Pour a small amount of dye paint into a container where the roller can easily rotate. Rotate the roller in the container until the colour is evenly distributed on the surface of the roller.

Use the roller to brush light, long strokes on the surface of the knit. Treat the whole shirt in this way. Repeat the treatment if necessary to evenly distribute the colour all over the surface. The dye is meant to stay on the surface of the knit, not soak through. This ensures that an interesting, vivid pattern will form on the surface after unpicking.

Allow the dye paint to dry completely before the next step.



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2. Fixing the dye and washing

Fix the dye by ironing according to the manufacturer's instructions. To protect the surface of the knit, place a piece of protective paper between the knit and the iron.

Wash off the excess colour in the washing machine. Use a programme suitable for knitwear.

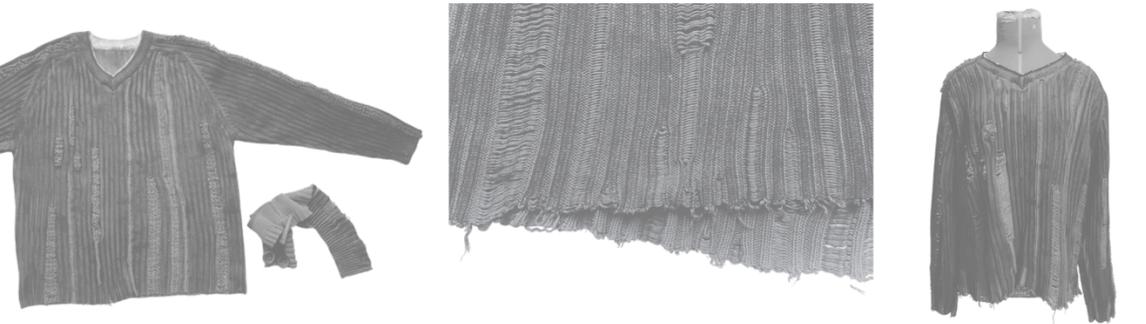
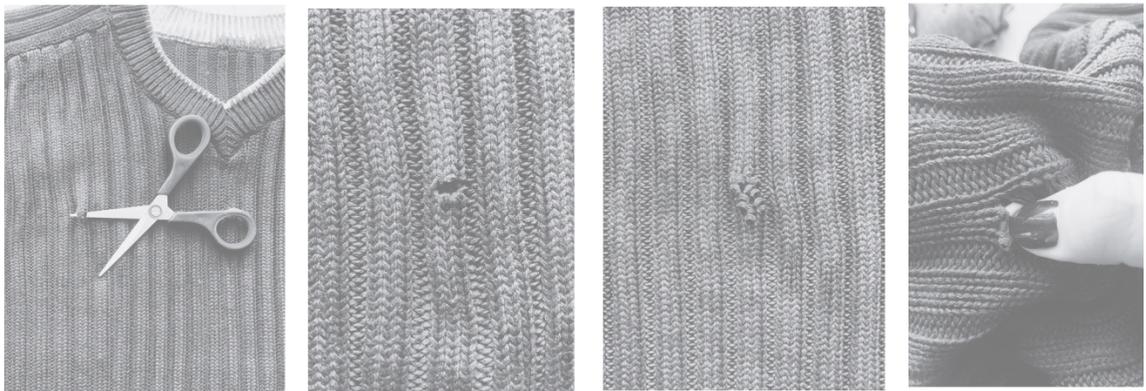
Allow the knit to dry completely before the next step.

3. Unpicked detailing

Decide where you want to create the unpicked detailing.

Carefully cut open 2-4 stitches. Be careful not to let the stitches unravel sideways uncontrollably. Cut yarn can start to unravel sideways, so keep it under control. The goal is to only drop the stitches downwards.

The stitches drop easily when the knit is stretched horizontally. You can help the stitches to open by “plucking” them with your fingernails.



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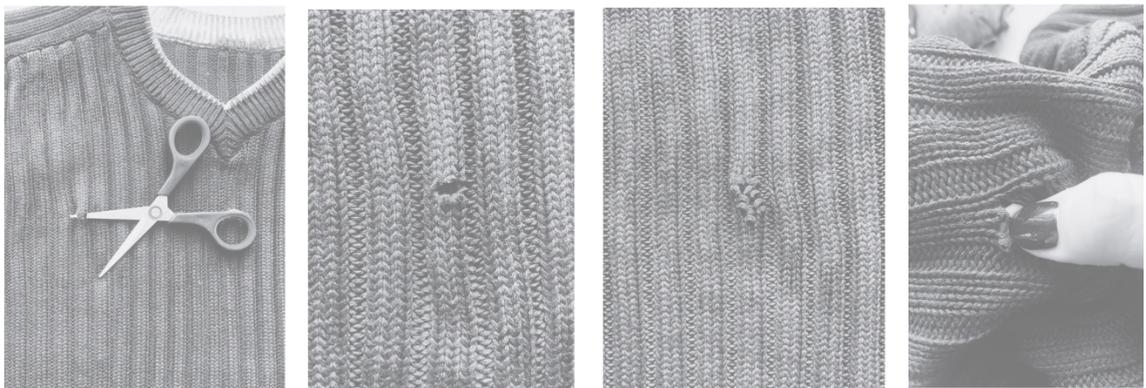


4. Finishing the unpicked detailing

Each cut strand and open stitch should be finished by running the sewing machine back and forth over it with a straight stitch. Finish the starting and ending point of the unpicking by stitching back and forth from the points marked by the black line with a straight stitch. In the vertical direction, the stitching finishes the cut strands and in the horizontal direction it finishes the open stitches.

Arrange the unpicked parts on different sides of the knit to get a balanced and interesting composition.

The unpicked sections create an uneven, fun colour surface, as the undyed yarn underneath the unpicking reveals itself.



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5. Final touches

The bus company logo on the hem of the knit didn't fit the end result, so I cut the hem off completely. I unpicked the hem a little and finished the edges on the sewing machine as shown by the black lines in the picture.

I didn't like the white collars, so I also cut a strip off the neckline for a cleaner look. The open stitches on the neckline were stitched with a zigzag stitch to keep the edge neat.

Wet the knit to straighten the "noodle-like" curls in the unpicked areas and to make the surface settle nicely.

Done!



personalisation CHOSEN FOR REDESIGN DIY



How can you vary the appearance of your product?

The starting point of the knitwear has a lot to do with the end result. You can choose to work with thick or thin knitwear - thin yarn will give a more graceful finish and thick yarn will give a more ragged one.

There are endless possibilities for dye and knitwear colour combinations - only creativity is the limit!

There are many ways to compose the unpicked sections of a knit and this always creates a one-of-a-kind result. The surface can be unpicked sparsely or densely according to your preference. The more densely you unpick the knit, the more it expands. It's fun to destroy and break a clean surface, with love.

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