

# CHEEKY, KNITTY KITTY

# Oh!

BY K. WHEELER



Soft knit caresses form like getting all in a juicy, warm body of water. Fluid coverage. Wrapped around every curve and motion. Intimate. Let Knitty Kitty's designs show sassy or playful. Let them be chic and classy. Put on some knit undies or a halter top. Appreciate how they hold you. Discover your new favorite pants or bikini. Indulge in sexy comfort, as this sensuous clothing affects you. There is a deep satisfied rumbling. Mmmm. Purr. Wonderful discoveries are best when shared.

Lisa Roberts is all that. Blonde, sunny, lithe knitty kitty. Eyes full of sparkle and twinkle. A smile that has stories it could tell. She exudes a quality of life. Originally from the Connecticut

side of New York City, she is one of those HSU draws. Came for college, discovered surfing, met her husband Chris and became part of the community. After graduation they moved to San Diego to use their degrees – but it wasn't long before they missed their friends, missed the surf and missed Humboldt. They have lived in Trinidad for the last 20 years. Their son Collin and daughter Sophie were both born here.

"When you come here, you have to make a job. That is the kind of culture in Humboldt. If you don't have a specific skill then you have to make a job for yourself." And she and her husband have. Over the years they have created

and sold a few businesses. Muffin delivery in Eureka, Maple Creek – an organic maple syrup company, they traveled in South America and imported goods to sell. She knows street fairs and walking into businesses to show her wares. And the travel business could be based around surf trips. "We have always been interested in having businesses of our own." It seems natural for Lisa.

Just as a jellyfish uses jet propulsion to move. Their bell pulses the rhythm of the most efficient swimmer of all the animal kingdom. Release of contraction leaves 2 perfect smoke rings of current in its wake, vortex rings swirling. Propelling the freely

flowing, graceful shape. Spinning water is carried along with their specialized ease. And so the medusian swimmers rival the winds and moon as ocean mixers and movers. Such a simple design, so perfect. More of the ocean than in it. And infinite design variations, all the bright amazing colors and frills of billowing delicacies. Ripple effect.

"I've been knitting since I was 9. I am a mad knitter. I knit all the time. So, in the summer at the river I always have knitting with me and I was making myself a bikini and that's how this all came about." That was the summer of 2010, when she wore said bikini to bed and her husband let her know how much he liked it. All of a sudden it was knit lingerie. "The first thing that came to mind then was Knitty Kitty. It's a sexy, smitten kind of name." Splash.

So Lisa handmade enough to sell to one store. And they bought them all out and sold them all out. Then she took all that and bought a knitting machine. Now, instead of taking 2 days to make a panty it took 4 hours. Which allowed her to make a couple dozen, those sold out quick too. It was time to look for a manufacturer. The currents undulate in exponential power.

"I looked online. I met with someone from Los Angeles, I talked to people in the US, but I was so small no one would give me the time of day. I was trying to figure out how to find a place in China that would work with me but I didn't even know how to go about it. Then my husband was like, why don't you look into Bali?" This was familiar surf trip territory for them. She found a guy online, showed him a picture of one of her panties and asked him if he knew anyone who could make it. Maybe he could be her agent because she had no idea where to go. He made her a sample and – again – her husband Chris said "you should go". Chris is her 'go for it' man, her CPI (Chief Panty Inspector).

"My oldest was 13 and I hadn't ever left my kids before." Off to Bali for three weeks in November of 2011 where she met with Yudi for the first time. And the ripple keeps going. Later on she learned that Yudi had gone and bought a knitting machine and had someone teach him how to use it after her initial email inquiry. He saw an opportunity and made it happen. Yudi's mom had a crochet warehouse in the city that she had put together for all the mountain villagers to be able to sell their crocheted wares from. So, Lisa put in an order and Yudi used it to buy four more knitting machines. "Then our orders were getting



larger so I bought some more machines for the warehouse. Then we had 10 machines and we were ready to expand."

Yudi with the blessing from the village elders, got funding and Lisa put her profits in too. Last January the new two story warehouse was built and housed 40 knitting machines. Their goal is 100 machines, Lisa can get more product and Yudi can do knitting for other clients now too. "The families have been working with me since the beginning. They are real loyal and I really appreciate them."

Lisa goes to Bali and works with everyone regularly. She may pay a little more, but she gets to feel good about her global economy synchronicities. "We just did a video, that will be up on the website soon, of the factory for transparency. To show that we are a family run factory. I had to submit it to Etsy, along with proof that I make all the designs – they don't like manufacturing companies and they don't allow unethical practices."

And it keeps going like magic. Her business grew 400 percent last year. Granted she is still reinvesting everything trying to keep up with the potential, but you can see the wheels in her head turning and dancing. It is a creative endeavor for Lisa. She is all effortless propulsion. She has been going regularly to a trade show in Las Vegas called Magic, twice a year. Last year she was so inundated she couldn't go pee. Urban Outfitter gave her an online test, then four store accounts, now she has 10 stores. She flew to Philadelphia to present her stuff at Nordstrom headquarters.



"I'm at the point now where it's not being fearless. It's just, if you don't try, then it's already a no. So I am going for it." Nordstrom is going to give her the online tryout too.

Knitty Kitty's Arcata warehouse shares space with Hot Knots. "They are my mentors. I just knew I wanted to share space with them so I asked." Local company Gypsy and Loic is across the open rafters. She sells locally at Hot Knots and the Linen Closet. She takes orders from all over Canada and the US. Her crunch time is fall and Christmas, cozy knits and all.

Back to the designs. All Lisa. "I like the design best. I am obsessed with keeping files of things that inspire me. Pop culture, symbols – ideas I can go back to and make a design." And the simple products vary like the jellyfish. So many colors and intricate patterns. Coffee, bikes, hearts, foxes, skulls, Christmas, so many cheeky ideas Lisa. "An alternative to mainstream lingerie – that's my niche. I'm filling the niche with something different."

To learn more about Knitty Kitty, visit [www.knittykitty.com](http://www.knittykitty.com)