



Who's Who In Crochet

A focus of interest on those that have inspired crochet

Kaethe & Jules Kliot

Influential in the textile community, Lacis was established in 1965 by Kaethe and Jules Kliot. It was first known as *Some Place in Berkeley* and grew to be *the nonprofit Lacis Museum of Lace and Textiles* (LMLT) in 2004. Today it is a community resource dedicated to the memory of Kaethe who died unexpectedly in Berkeley at age 72 in 2002.



“Co-founder, Kaethe, emigrated from Germany with money she made knitting lace doilies for GIs in the early 1950s. Born in Cologne, she described her childhood home as a strict European household that required girls to become skilled in the needle arts. At age 6, Mrs. Kliot was making her own nightgowns. ‘It was all hand sewn,’ she told *Creative Needle* magazine in an interview. ‘If it wasn't perfect, it was ripped apart and done over again. Doilies covered every surface in the house,’ she said; and she was twelve!

During World War II, Cologne was hit heavily by allied bombings. Kaethe lost much more than the family possessions, including many relatives and her mother in the bombing. She decided to leave Germany at some time in the future. After spending 6 months knitting doilies to raise \$1,500, she was able to leave and arrived in Windsor, Ontario at the age of 23. There she met Jules, an architect and they were married two years later.

Operated by Kaethe Kliot, a textile and lace expert, until her passing, the museum is a haven for the textile community, and all involved in virtually every aspect of the textile arts. It is a place where she provided support, encouragement and knowledge to all. Aleso Gourhan, one of Mrs. Kliot's daughters, said her mother was a devoted teacher. ‘She made everybody feel special. She just loved learning and sharing what she learned.’

Kaethe's husband Jules, a successful architect was always at her side supporting her and helping with the business in any way he could. As time went on, he became envious of the fun and freedom she had with her business; and he eventually gave up architecture to work with her full time. A constant inventor and innovator, Jules was



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always tinkering in the garage developing new products and tools with Kaethe as his biggest cheerleader.

Jules and Kaethe always had a unique bond with their creativity; they always worked outside the box and never thought that it couldn't or shouldn't be done. They wanted to try everything with their own unique twist. While working with bobbin lace, instead of working with fine thread

Kaethe used heavy rope and made amazing hangings that were upwards of 10 feet tall! When the two of them put their heads together they were unstoppable! In 1974 they got the idea to cover the bottom 4 floors of the Transamerica Pyramid in San Francisco with Sprang netting. 'Back in 1974 you could actually get away with things like that... So, with the help of a few dozen friends and 35 miles of donated rope it was done,' they mused.



When the couple realized how much demand there was for their unique products across the country, they began offering mail order to retail customers and eventually to wholesale customers. Today, Lacis is a major manufacturer and distributor of books, tools and equipment in the needlework industry. Kathe was a presence in her retail store daily while Jules kept the mail order side of the business going strong. In the early 1980's their son Perrin Kliot joined and has been instrumental in keeping the mail order business growing and up to date with technology. He still works side by side with Jules.

The collection of the Kliot laces and textiles represents forty years of dedication to the preservation of the finest of human handiwork. It includes thousands of specimens from pre-Columbian Peru, the finest from the 17th century European courts, and examples of the machine laces exemplifying the 19th century industrial revolution. An extensive library, focusing on lace, textiles and costume includes over 10,000 items of books, patterns, articles and other ephemera. Related tools of the textile craft include those for all varieties of lacemaking as well as an extensive collection of sewing machines.

In the windows are parasols, handkerchiefs, dresses, lacey gloves, doilies, aprons, hats, knickknacks. Inside, lace and silk dresses hang from the high ceiling; a display case by the cash register houses vintage beaded bags; upstairs, classes are held in such obscure crafts as Victorian corset making. There are shelves and shelves of



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vintage tablecloths and other linens; lots of jewelry; loads of buttons and ribbons, both vintage and contemporary; and a wall full of beads so you can make your own baubles. Another room houses hundreds of bolts of lace.



Not actively soliciting donations, LMLT is supported solely by sales from the Museum Shop and Lacis Wholesale. Contributions in any form are welcome for purposes of preserving cherished heirlooms as well as to support Museum operations.

Visitor to Lacis say:

'Our tour of the museum made such an impression on our artistic leanings; and Jules was so very happy and enthused to share his pride and joy collection. Thank you, Jules, for everything you saved for us to treasure with our eyes.' Kathleen, New York

'They are very knowledgeable at Lacis and helpful. It's still my go-to place - though I

moved out of state - for ordering hard to find needlework tools of all kinds.' Linda

'I have been a customer at Lacis for decades; and you can find things here that can be found in few other shops. There is no place like Lacis...it's a treasure!' Eric

Images:

Jules & Kaethe

Lacis Museum storefront

Sprang: TransAmerica Pyramid; 1974

Resources:

Algeo, Erin. *Jules Kliot with Erin Algeo: Lace in the Architecture of Life*. Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. Berkeley, California; 2/18/2016.

Herrel, Suzanne. *Kaethe Kliot—Lacis co-founder*. San Francisco Chronicle: August 30, 2002.

Rubin, Sylvia. San Francisco Chronicle; May 7, 2006.

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