

LION BRAND YARN STUDIO

W.15th St., New York



“Lion Brand is a 130-year-old, family-owned company. This is the company’s first retail venture. Our challenge was to create a new design concept that would promote both yarn and the activities of knitting and crocheting. It had to be modern and functional but also comfortable and welcoming. The studio reflects that balance with clean design, innovative displays, state-of-the-art lighting and environmentally friendly materials—and it’s a great place for people to knit in a community setting. I believe this studio is the first of its kind.” That was the statement made by David Gauld, the NYC-based architect/designer, who created this Lion Brand Yarn Studio on W. 15th St., just off of the rejuvenated Union Square in NY.

The almost all-glass shop front allows the daylight to flood in and offers passersby the first view of the old rough brick back wall and the earth-colored bamboo flooring. The 1700 sq. ft. space occupies what was once offices in this 1920 loft building. A curved blue wall, up front, draws shoppers into a celebration of color and craft. The “breaks” in the undulating waves create zones for different activities. In one of these breaks—near the front of the shop—is a sampling area filled with cactus-like fixtures made of plumbing pipes and fittings. Resting on the provided spikes are





cones of yarn from which shoppers are welcome to cut off swatches for matching or testing. A unique display, on the opposite wall, offers visitors the widest variety of Lion Brand colors in one place. The ice-like, diagonal cubbies that hold the yarns are constructed of translucent polycarbonate panels and backlit and illuminated from above as well. Mostly fluorescent lamps have been used for general illumination, along with some metal halide lamps. A few sparingly placed low-voltage halogen lamps were added, but since energy efficiency and conservation was a prime consideration, the reduced heat emission from the lamps cuts down on the air-conditioning output.

A map-like grid on the ceiling and the bamboo flooring anchor and orient the waves and diagonal shapes. References to nature are reinforced throughout by the use of numerous recycled and renewable materials. The resin counters and ceramic tile floors are made from recycled glass, and the cabinets are fashioned from boards made of reclaimed sorghum plant stalks bonded to poplar (a rapidly renewable wood) with a formaldehyde-free



bonding agent. Only water-based paints were used and the ceiling tiles are free of formaldehyde-based resins. Even the bamboo floor has a water-based, solvent-free finish.

With a Learning Bar where the staff offers assistance on knitting and crocheting projects, as well as demonstrations on various yarn crafting techniques, there is access to free patterns via the computers available near the cash desk. "This is not just a store but a center of inspiration, education and service for those who knit or crochet," said David Blumenthal, president of Lion Brand Yarns.

"While certain raw materials refer to the past industrial nature of the building and the neighborhood, other elements are used to create a sense of comfort and domesticity associated with the art and craft of knitting and crocheting, contemporized for our time," said Gauld.

Design / David Gauld Architect, NYC
 Client Team / Karen Tanaka, Creative Director
 Photography / Interiors: Paul Johnson, Stamford, CT; Façade: David Gauld

