



Let's Hear It for the Littles

What's cozier than merino handknits in muted tones like nutmeg, persimmon and ink? Quite possibly merino handknits in muted tones, with a few signature popcorn stitches and shrunk down to toddler size. We can almost taste the hot cocoa. Here, a visit to the studio of our favorite micro-knit brand, Misha and Puff.

BY LIZ LEE
PHOTOGRAPHED BY SUSIE CUSHNER



The inspiration board at Misha and Puff studios is pinned with the physical bits and pieces of designer Anna Wallack's interior life: a black and brown owl print by Cape Dorset Inuit artist Lucy Qinnuayuak; a wrinkled magazine photo of a Darger-esque model draped in an orange-gold cloak; bits of cream, steel blue, and sand-colored wool knit into small squares; a faded photo of a young girl against a red chipped wall. The objects mirror components of Misha and Puff's genesis story—impeccable craftwork, an astute fashion sensibility, materials and colors cultivated with intention, and a nostalgia for the simplicity of childhood.

Wallack started Misha and Puff out of her Boston home in 2011 after the birth of her first child. The idea was simple: to create high quality, hand-made knit goods for babies and toddlers that were beautiful, durable, and fun. She'd taken the year off to spend time with her newborn son, and it was during this time she designed and knit the first Misha and Puff line, selling it door-to-door at the shops and boutiques she'd grown familiar with during her previous nine years as a stylist.

"I had maybe eight stores out of the gate, and the order was shocking for me," says Wallack of that first season. "It was around five to seven hundred pieces and I was like 'I have to do this—how am I going to do this?'" Together with a team of about thirty knitters she found on Craigslist, Wallack filled the orders and the impossible was done. "I don't think I slept that first year," she says. "It was crazy."

Now based out of a small studio in a former brewery building in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood of Boston, Misha and Puff is seven seasons in and has just finished filling an order of about ten

thousand pieces for buyers as far away as Australia and South Korea. In order to accommodate the increase in demand, Wallack eventually shifted production to Lima, Peru, a place where she says the existing infrastructure for high-grade handwork and materials has helped her ease the brand out of its infancy without sacrificing any of the quality. In Peru, she says, "Craftwork and making things is just built into the culture. I am always struck by the quality of the work."

Today, Wallack works closely with a group of between two and three hundred knitters in Peru, visiting the production facility several times a year to instruct them in crafting new pieces she designs with her small team in Boston. Items like hand-knit playsuits, rompers, vests, and pullovers in signature colors like persimmon, nutmeg, lilac, and ink are custom-made with hand-dyed Merino wool, a variety she favors for its combination of softness and durability. All of the pieces are machine washable, a detail that, as a mother of two, Wallack knows is especially important.

"Part of me starting Misha and Puff was really a reaction to having a baby, and entering this new marketing strata that can be really overwhelming," says Wallack. "I didn't want to fill the world with more disposable stuff in that way, especially after bringing a new person into the world." Instead, she's helping fill it with long-lasting items that are as sturdy and well made as they are soft and pretty. "The hope is that twenty years from now I'll be able to spot some kid on the street wearing vintage Misha and Puff," she laughs. "We really do try to think about how we can make things in the most thoughtful way—in the nicest and most sustainable way—I think that's really what Misha and Puff is all about." [misha-and-puff.com](#)



