

The Selter family has been making tools in Altena, Germany since 1829



Family matters

We meet the mother and daughter shaping the future of addi, the knitting needle company which has been run by the Selter family in the German town of Altena for 200 years



THE MUCH-LOVED knitting needle brand, addi, has a remarkable history. Not only has it been manufacturing crafting tools in the same German town since

1829, but it has been run by successive generations of the same family, too – and its current manager, Claudia Malcus, has recently been joined by her daughter, Pauline Dörr, who has taken on a role as a junior manager.

Having worked at addi for more than 30 years, Claudia took over the reins from her husband Thomas Selter – known as ‘Mr addi’ – in 2020. Thomas had been

with the company since 1971, and was responsible for making the brand a world-leading producer of high-quality, innovative knitting needles and tools.

Thomas was building on the foundations laid by his forebear, Peter Heinrich Selter, who founded a company to manufacture steel crochet hooks in 1829 in the town of Altena, in the Lenne valley in North Rhine-Westphalia. By 1860, the company was producing around 600 different types of crochet hook, which were transported by basket over the mountain to the neighbouring town of Iserlohn and from there to exporters. Peter was succeeded by his son Heinrich Selter, and the company was later run by Heinrich Gustav Selter in

the late 19th century – the company name of Gustav Selter GmbH & Co. KG, which is still in use today, dates back to this time.

The company continued to evolve and expand under successive generations of the Selter family, and the name ‘addi’, which was the brainchild of Thomas Selter’s mother, Hella Selter, was trademarked in 1952. She wanted to create brand name that could be understood worldwide and pronounced easily. By the time her son, Thomas, took over the company, they were manufacturing a full range of needles, including circular knitting needles and crochet hooks.

Today, Claudia Malcus is committed to honouring the legacy of the Selter family,

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1 + 4 High-tech processes are used to make addi’s precision needles and tools 2 Manager Claudia Marcus (left) has been joined by her daughter Pauline Dörr (right) 3 The square shape of Novel Lace needles makes them comfortable to hold 5 CraSySnake double-pointed needles have a unique wavy design

and loves her work at addi. “I have been here for almost 40 years now, and it never gets boring – working with the people at addi is fabulous. We are a team, and I am committed to ensuring that we remain one. It makes me proud to produce something in Germany that others had long since written off – we are the only manufacturer with a full range of needles that is still produced in Germany.”

Given that addi is a family affair, was it always Claudia’s intention that her daughter, Pauline, would follow in her footsteps? “Absolutely not; I took over the company from my husband five years ago, which wasn’t something that had been planned; and for a long time, Pauline had other career aspirations,” Claudia explains. “But when it became clear that I would be taking over the company, she said very convincingly, ‘Then I’ll come too.’ And yes, I am very proud to have Pauline in the company. She does a great job here.”

Pauline herself is excited to have joined a brand that is so iconic in Germany and around the world. “It felt very special to join a company with such a long history and strong identity,” she says. “I was

excited to become part of a team that cares so much about what they do. Of course, I also felt respect for the responsibility that comes with it, but mostly I was motivated to bring in my own ideas and to help keep addi moving forward. It’s great to see how many people appreciate our products all over the world.”

As a junior manager, Pauline is focusing on commercial project management. “My role involves a lot of organisation and structure – two things that come naturally to me,” she says. “Order, structure, and empathy have always been important in my life, so it feels great to be in a position where these strengths are not only valued but actually essential. I really enjoy the mix of responsibility and teamwork. I get to bring in my own ideas while learning from the experience of others. There’s always something new to discover, and it’s a great feeling to contribute to the future of the company in a role that suits me.”

At the heart of everything Claudia and her team does is an emphasis on quality. “When our clients buy addi needles, they get the best quality – and because of this, their knitting is much more fun,” Claudia

says. “We have been producing knitting needles and crochet hooks in our city for almost 200 years, so we can confidently claim to be experts in this field. However, the true experts are our customers who utilise our tools. Therefore, our primary objective is to ensure that they enjoy their knitting and crocheting.”

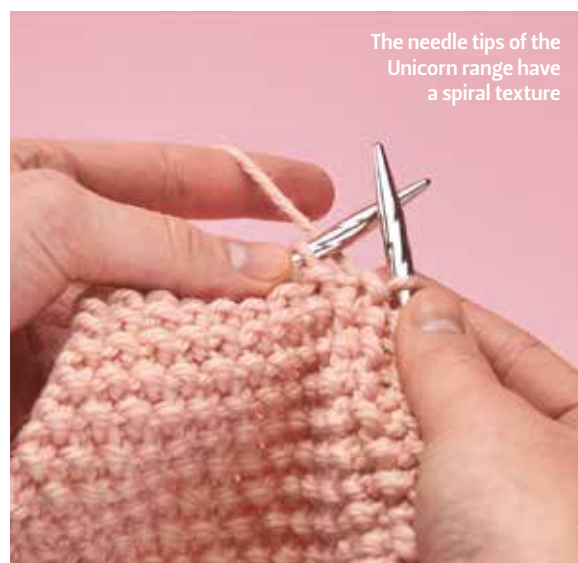
Exciting innovations

The team never rests on its laurels, and is always looking to innovate and create better products for knitters. “We are confident that we are the innovation market leader and want to remain so,” Claudia says. One significant development in recent years has been CraSy Trio, the revolutionary DPN design with flexible middles. “It was definitely our CraSyTrio needles that revolutionised sock knitting, and they are also perfect for knitting gloves, sleeves and hats,” says Claudia. “We developed them with Sylvie Rasch, a knitwear designer and crafting

Knitting tools



- ❶ Polishing ensures a super-smooth finish
- ❷ Claudia's husband, Thomas Selter, worked at addi for 50 years
- ❸ The company is based in the small town of Altena, in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia



YouTuber. And immediately afterwards, we set another milestone with our ergonomic addiNovel needles."

Novel needles have a square shape with rounded edges to help them fit snugly in your hand, and to minimise strain and tension while knitting. The fine, pointed tips have a distinctive textured surface which prevents stitches from slipping. These needles are available in 16 tip sizes (2mm–8mm), and six cable lengths (40cm–150cm). CraSyTrio, meanwhile, come in bamboo and metal versions, and in a range of lengths and needle tip sizes.

"The CraSySnake sock knitting needles have been another highlight for us this year, and these were also developed with Sylvie Rasch," explains Claudia. The unique wavy design of these DPNs helps to prevent stitches from slipping off the needles. They have precision tips which are ideal for lace knitting, and they're made from smooth anodised aluminium. Sizes range from 2mm to 3.5mm.

We also enjoy knitting with the addiUnicorn range, whose metal needle tips have a spiral textured surface which gently massages the fingers while knitting. They are very comfortable to hold, and the tips slide through the stitches easily while providing lots of grip. They're available as fixed circulars and interchangeable needle

sets, in 14 tip sizes from 2mm to 8mm, and in five cable lengths from 60cm to 150cm.

Lace fans will appreciate the addiMystic needles, which have ultra-fine tips, an incredibly smooth finish, and a warm, almost wood-like feel despite being made from metal. The colour-shifting finish which moves between deep violet and bronze is very attractive, too. They're available as DPNs and fixed circulars.

Customer care

Here in the UK, James McIntosh sells addi needles and tools through his online store McIntosh – and the decision to stock addi was as much because it is a family company as the fact that he loves knitting with its products. "When I discovered that addi was a real family company, run by the Selter family, I was drawn to find out more, mainly because things matter more in family companies," James tells us. "Before I knew it, Marc from the sales team was sitting at my dinner table and explaining to me about the 'haptics' of a knitting needle. It's that gentle feedback of feeling, like when your phone buzzes – addi have built this into their knitting needles. The addiChristmas and new addiMystic ranges have this: a gentle 'rub' as one knits that

can be felt. The addiNovel needles have little groves and pits on the needle, and the texture and square shape certainly make summer knitting easier if your hands are a bit clammy. The addiNature olivewood range is the pinnacle of knitting needle luxury, and is by far my favourite.

"In my experience, addi products are a joy to work with. The company is easy to talk to, they care, and they make all their needles and hooks in Germany while having impressive sustainability certificates. What addi has taught me is that if you invest in the best for your crafting, it will reward you – your hands and stitches will thank you."

So, what plans do Claudia and Pauline have for the future of addi? "We want to continue manufacturing in Germany, which is a major challenge," says Claudia. "We want to supply all knitting and crochet enthusiasts with addi needles, and we want to remain committed to our traditions while still being a leader in innovation. And in four years time, we want to celebrate our 200th anniversary as a family business." ❧

– www.addi.de
– www.knitmcintosh.com

