



¿Me da mi calaverita?

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Knitting is not a widespread hobby in Mexico City, especially in comparison to Finland, where textile crafts hold a strong cultural presence. My first contact with knitting happened in secondary school, when I unexpectedly joined a knitting workshop and learned basic techniques using a loop board. More than twenty years later, after moving to Finland, this early experience re-surfaced, leading me back to textile making.

Participating in the VillaInno project offered an opportunity to explore the intersection between Finnish knitting traditions and my own cultural background. For this project, I designed a knitting

pattern inspired by the Mexican Day of the Dead (Día de Muertos), a celebration that has always held deep personal meaning for me.

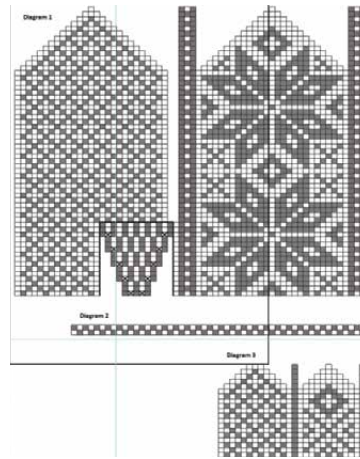
Día de Muertos is celebrated on November 1st and 2nd. During these days, many Mexicans believe that the souls of deceased loved ones return to visit their families. Altars (ofrendas) are prepared with photographs, food, drinks, *pan de muerto*, *cempasúchil* (marigold) flowers, and sugar skulls. This celebration transforms the idea of death (often associated with fear) into a moment of joy, memory, and connection.

The title of my project, “¿Me da mi calaverita?”, literally means “Would you give me my little skull?” Children use this phrase when asking for sweets during the celebration, similar to “trick or treat” in Halloween. Some anthropologists trace the expression back to the 18th century, when people with



▲ **FIGURE 1.** Sugar skulls at the market in Mexico City. Photograph: Carmen Oseguera Moreno, 2025.

▲ **FIGURE 2.** Beginning of the project, getting used to knitting. Photograph: Mayeli Moreno Oseguera, 2025.



▲ **FIGURE 3.** Pattern (Berg, n.d.) used as a base to redesign on top. Source: <https://ko-fi.com/s/2b7a6c4040>

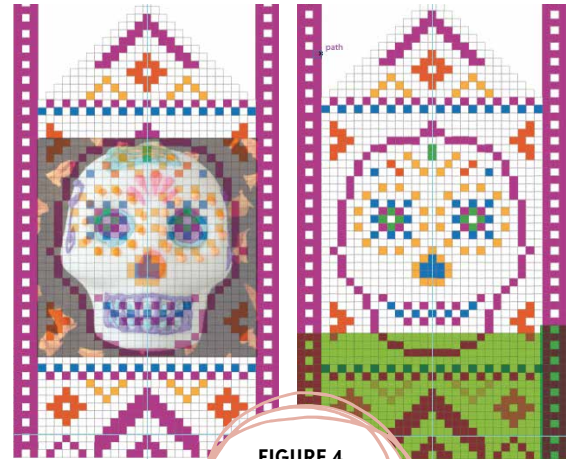


FIGURE 4.
Pattern design.
Photographs: Mayeli
Moreno Oseguera,
2025.

fewer resources asked wealthier families for small offerings so they could also honour their deceased relatives.

For my knitted pattern, I selected the sugar skull as the central symbol. Sugar skulls are iconic elements of the celebration and, for me, their sparkling surface visually echoes the brightness of Finnish snow. This connection made the symbol especially meaningful in the context of my life in Finland (Figure 1).

I chose to design a mitten because it represents a practical and culturally significant knitted object in Finland. It also allowed me to symbolically unite two cultures that shape my identity: Mexican traditions and Finnish textile practices (Figure 2).

As a beginner, I searched online for free patterns and tutorials. I eventually found a mitten pattern on Inger Berg's website (Figure 3), which served as the structural basis for my design. My initial idea was to adapt the floral motifs into snowflakes and use colours associated with *Día de Muertos*. Later, I decided to include sugar skulls and cempasúchil flowers, which I consider the most representative elements of the altar (Figure 4). Sugar skulls symbolise the deceased, while marigolds guide their souls back to the altar.

To refine the pattern, I first knitted a draft version and marked each completed row to keep track of the sequence. After creating a base structure, I traced it in Adobe Illustrator, which allowed me to adjust the motifs while maintaining the original proportions. I used a photograph of a sugar skull as a reference and translated its shape into the grid of the pattern. The colour palette was inspired by traditional altars, focusing on pink, purple, orange, and yellow.

For the knitting itself, I used 15 cm wooden needles (KnitPro Symfonie, 4.00 mm) and beginner-friendly yarns. Although I initially chose the yarns for practical reasons, they gained personal significance: the violet and white yarns were the first ones I bought after moving to Finland, the orange yarn was a gift from my Finnish mother-in-law, and the remaining colours came from recycled materials from previous school projects.

The first challenge was my limited knitting experience. Fortunately, my Finnish mother-in-law taught me the basics during a visit. This moment became an important intercultural exchange, as we communicated without a shared language, yet still learned from each other (Figure 5).

The second challenge was realising that my initial design did not fully express the cultural blend I



◀ **FIGURE 5.** First loops at my mother-in-law's place. Photograph: Mayeli Moreno Oseguera, 2025.

▼ **FIGURE 6.** Redesign and adaptation of the pattern to be used in the rectangular loop board. Photograph: Mayeli Moreno Oseguera, 2025.



FIGURE 7.
Final product.
Photographs: Mayeli
Moreno Oseguera,
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intended. Restarting the project allowed me to clarify my concept and focus on the symbolic elements that mattered the most.

The third challenge involved working with yarns of varying thicknesses, which affected the mitten's consistency. Despite this, the process helped me understand how patterns function and how to adapt them. I later simplified the skull design and tested it on a loop board, which produced a clearer result, even if the yarn was not thick enough to fully cover the loops (Figure 6).

This project deepened my appreciation for the role of knitting in Finnish culture and strengthened my connection to it. I gained new technical skills, explored the creative potential of pattern design, and experienced meaningful cultural exchange. Working with an international team also broadened my understanding of how different cultures express themselves through textile practices. Overall, the project was enriching both personally and artistically, and I wish I had joined the VillaInno Project earlier (Figure 7).