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Artful Color, Mindful Knits: The Definitive Guide To Working With Hand-dyed Yarn



Synopsis

With expert instruction in the use of hand-dyed yarn, this pattern book gives knitters and crocheters the edge they need to stitch with confidence. Working with artisan hand-dyed yarn opens a world of possibility for a crafter, but problems can arise if the patterning is accidental, inconsistent, or unattractive. The author shows how to analyze the dye skein and reveal its color repeat, allowing the crafter to employ stitch gauge and stitch count to intentionally pattern the finished work. As a contrast, further strategies and stitch choices are shown that blend the colors to overcome unwanted pooling and create more gentle gradients. With 40 patterns for a wide variety of projects, this manual will have crafters constructing vibrant scarves, shawls, kimonos, and more.

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Customer Reviews

Spring 14 I have to confess, when I wanted to knit with a hand-dyed skein of yarn I would cast on a simple stitch pattern and hope. Sometimes it looked OK, but sometimes not as inspiring as the skein itself. No longer! Laura is quite a bit more scientific. In order to get the colours of a hand-dyed skein to fall predictably, she knits or crochets a multiple or fraction of the original dye repeat length, or magic number. An exact repeat gives colour stacking. One or two stitches difference from the magic number produces diagonal stripes or a diamond Argyle effect. Different stitch patterns and different placement of colour on the yarn also give surprising results. A limitation of this technique is that you can't increase and decrease stitches for shaping, but the author includes some example patterns showing how these straight widths can be joined into garments with panels of toning solids. If want something truly random or less bold - without any pooling or patterns, this also cannot be left to

chance - Laura details different techniques for achieving 'randomness' such as slip-stitch patterns, floats, and knitting into the row below. She combines handdyed yarns and solids on different rows and within the same stitch. The fabric that results is more homogeneous, but still retains the proportions of the original colours. Laura illustrates the various effects using case studies with commercially dyed yarn in different repeat sizes and colour configurations, showing her experimentation samples and the final garment. Hand-dyed yarn can also be used to achieve these effects. Before dyeing, yarn can be skeined to the correct size to achieve the fabric width that you want. Just to prove it worked, I had to dig out a hand-dyed skein from my stash immediately and cast on a cowl. Gretchen Roth, Online Guild Journal for Weavers, Spinners & Dyers

Laura Militzer Bryant is a designer and fiber arts crafting teacher whose work has appeared regularly in Interweave Knits, Knitterâ™s Magazine, and Vogue Knitting. She is the founder of Prism, a popular line of hand-dyed yarns and the author of A Knitterâ™s Template, Knitting with Novelty Yarns, and The Yarn Stash Workbook. She lives in St. Petersburg, Florida. Elaine Rowley is a former editor of Knitter's Magazine and the current editor of XRX Books. Alexis Xenakis is a photographer and the publisher for Knitter's Magazine and XRX Books. They both live in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

ARTFUL COLOR, MINDFUL KNITS is not a book for beginning knitters, but it's a major new technical reference for knitting with hand-dyed, multicolored yarns. It needs to be studied to be understood--but it's the first book I've seen that (1) clearly defines the important terms (striping, stacking, blotching, pooling, flashing, spirals, argyles, meanders) with photographs that show the real differences, and (2) fully explains how to control the look of the finished fabric when you're using one of those expensive yarns that looks so beautiful in the skein but so messy and ugly when knitted. Master dyer Laura Bryant is the genius behind Prism yarns (e.g., Wild Stuff). The key to understanding her book is the Magic Number, defined as "the number of stitches that will use an entire repeat of color exactly once". To determine a yarn's Magic Number, you must identify the color repeat by laying loops of yarn out on a table (photos and written instructions explain exactly how), measuring the length, determining whether the colors read across or around the skein (depends on how the skein was dyed), and calculating the stitches used by one repeat (use any of three methods--mathematical, counting, color-control cast-on). Once you have your yarn's Magic Number, you swatch, and swatch again, until you find the needle size and tension that works for the effect you want (e.g., stacking, lightning-bolt flashing, argyling). If you note down the gauge, it will

help you change effects as desired. At this point, you can try the basic patterns for scarves (half magic, fisherman's rib, K1P1, bias garter) and begin studying--and understanding--how the colors in hand-dyed yarns move and shift as you knit through the color repeats. With understanding, you can control the effects, even within garments (see the "Siren's Song" poncho-style tunic, shown knitted in Miss Priss). In discussing the "Siren's Song" pattern (and various other project patterns), Bryant includes several "case studies" with photos that illustrate how skeins from different dyers (e.g., Prism Saki, Prism Madison, Lorna's Laces Haymarket, Twisted Sisters Zazu, etc.) will produce different fabrics for the same project. This book also explains how to get "windowpane" effects--how to control colors to produce blocks or squares of color (see the patterns for the Windowpanes hat, Twilight tunic, Painted Desert top)--or other effects (e.g., chevron, argyle, shaded ombre, softly edged rivers of color). It also discusses how to incorporate shaping (e.g., gussets) that changes the stitch count, in ways that won't mess up the color movement. The book's title comes from Bryant's classification of the three types of knitting with multicolored yarns: (1) "automatic" ("otto" for short), which requires no thought after the yarn colors have been swatched for a satisfactory result; (2) "mindful", which requires preparation by finding a Magic Number and then some attention to color paths during knitting; and (3) "attentive", which requires both preparation and constant attention to maintaining color paths with adjustments (increasing/decreasing). There are many project patterns for scarves, shawls, and garments included--each project is designated by its color knitting requirement (Otto, Mindful, or Attentive) and its knitting difficulty level (Easy, Intermediate). The full list of project patterns is as follows: Aegean Dream, Boardroom, Carnivale, Ciao Bella, Cockle Shells, Color Wave, Creme Caramel, Dice Checks, Firefly Cowl, Geisha, Herringbone Weave, Highlands, London Fog, Moonlight, Mosaic, Nautilus, Neon Rivers, Painted Desert, Peaks & Waves, Portofino Spice, Sampler Jacket, Sonata, Sun Shadows, Sunset, Trader's Bag, Tropical Garden, Tweed Checks, Twilight, Watercolor, Windowpanes, Winter Snow, Woodlands Flash. If you're new to knitting with hand-dyed yarns, you might want to start with either of these excellent, easier-to-understand but less complete books: Carol Sulcoski's Knitting Socks with Handpainted Yarn or Lorna Miser's The Knitter's Guide to Hand-Dyed and Variegated Yarn. But for me, this is the book I've been waiting for, that will enable me finally to make beautiful things from all those gorgeous skeins of hand-dyed yarn that I bought before I tried knitting with it, and learned the hard way that getting good results with hand-dyed yarns is not only difficult, but requires a lot of extra work in swatching, planning, and increasing/decreasing during knitting.

I have to think that the garments in this book were so beautiful, the book designer wanted to make it

an "art/coffee table" book rather than an educational one. I should have known just by looking at the cover. See how hard it is to read the title with the low contrast between type and background? Most of the pages in the book are like this. Who in their right mind thought it a good idea to print instructional information in soft brown type on a beige background? Even though I am very interested in learning how to work with hand-dyed yarns (I own and love many of Ms. Bryant's Prism yarns) I find this book frustrating to use. I can only read it when using a good quality reading lamp (Ott, Solux, etc.). I guess I will struggle through it. I wish Ms. Bryant would reissue it with another book designer that understands the need for contrast when trying to convey information.

I love Laura Bryant's "magic number" theory! It's a great tool for bending those variegated yarns to your will. :-) Again, though, one must unwind lengths of yarn to determine the variegation method and repeat, which means you are most likely going to have to buy the yarn and THEN figure out how to work with it. It would be so nice if the manufacturer would tell you the repeat right on the label, similar to how home decor fabric is notated! I didn't care too much for the patterns, but everyone's taste is different. So don't let that stop you from buying this book -- there's a ton of great information here!

I really love that someone went out of their way to analyze this category of yarns and went through all the trouble to figure out different things to do with it. To sort of tame it and use the innate tendencies to your advantage. However once I got to about page 33 and beyond I'm totally lost. My eyes are skipping around the page. No idea where I'm at. I went back to the table of contents and even there I found poor layout and formatting decisions. I think if this book were completely reorganized and reformatted it would be a 5 star book. As is I find it incredibly frustrating to work with. Fix anything that needs to be a title. Put a lot of contrast between the text and the background. Enlarge blocks of text so that they are more legible than the fine print on a product label. Arrange the information on the pages linearly and pick and choose what information goes in line with the rest of the text and leave only the most interesting highlights in side bars and blurbs. When side bars and blurbs are used outline them or use a different color background to differentiate from the regular flow of text. Treat it more like a textbook or a newspaper and less like a magazine or a coffee table book that people flip through leisurely and say "oh, that's pretty" and then move on with their life. It's difficult to learn a complicated new subject matter when you have to do mental gymnastics just to follow the train of thought.

you need this. It not only helps me as a knitter, but as a dyer. I think about the end use of my dye techniques more now. It's a part of a bigger whole and not just a pretty skein. I believe the patterns are a jumping off place for more designs and great inspiration. I find the colors to be clear, directions easy and the knits timeless. I cannot see selling it. Besides, it's full of notes. I use it once a week at least. I've read it like a novel and it helps me think more about end uses of colorways and shapes. It's informed the use of color in cloth and knits.

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