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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

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, Carnevale, 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!

How many accomplished knitters have discovered to their dismay that those scrumptious skeins of variegated yarn don't translate easily to lovely garments? As I'm one of them, I'm guessing many have had my mixed experience with these beautiful but temperamental yarns. Enter *Artful Color*, *Mindful Knits* which first analyzes how variegated yarns are dyed, whether they tend toward muted kettle dyes of one or more complimentary colors or rainbows which will pool, splatter and splotch if not handled correctly. First the knitter must analyze the color pattern, repeat and dye pattern using the magic number. The first section of the book is devoted to analyzing various yarns, determining their color repeat and magic number and how to swatch with them. Variegated yarns can be used alone or in combination, in plain stitches or complex stitch patterns and more time is spent analyzing how and why different choices might be made. I own the other two books on using handpainted yarns to pattern garments and socks, and while both are worthy additions to the knitters library,

neither comes close to this book in terms of technical information and yes, genius. Then there are the patterns, which are pretty, but for me not the main source of utility and inspiration in terms of this book. I like to design my own patterns and will study the techniques assiduously but at most use the patterns as a jumping off point. Some of the kimono style jackets are lovely and could use virtually any handpainted yarn. From a technical point of view, I was deeply impressed with an argyle patterned skirt and shell. As for expense of materials, again, there are many independent users offering amazing handpainted yarns at good prices, in addition to the established companies. I have been impressed by technical information in knitting books before, especially as it relates to garment construction and design, but in *Artful Color*, *Mindful Knits* the information is unique and invaluable. Highly recommended to advanced knitters, or to those who simply have a stash of delicious hand dyed yarns and want to make the most of them as well as subsequent purchases. I also recommend picking up the previous books published about handpainted yarn as all have needed information and this book is the most technically challenging. A genuine masterpiece. XRX Books is to be commended for another amazing publication.

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