



by Barbara Gregory

Why do I design using the mosaic technique rather than stranded colorwork?

For me the main attraction of mosaic knitting is that it is easy and quick to work. I love the ease of zipping along the rows with a single strand of yarn, knitting and slipping the stitches. It makes this technique a good choice for knitters new to colorwork; usually the pattern requires slipping only one or two stitches at a time, so tension problems are minimized.



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Some people think that mosaic knitting is slow because it seems that you work every row twice. My reply is that while the row gauge is somewhat compressed, it isn't double that of stranded knitting—you are making progress on those wrong-side rows. And all the rows are faster to work because many, sometimes 25% of the stitches, are slipped instead of being worked.

For knitters who are experienced enough to find stranded colorwork easy and quick to work, the benefits of mosaic knitting may not be evident. Here are some of the things I like about designing with mosaic knitting:

- can be easily worked flat or in the round

Perhaps influenced by my sewing background, I have a preference for knitted garments worked in flat pieces and seamed, often with a neatly fitting set-in sleeve. Mosaic knitting avoids the problem of having to read a color chart while working a wrong side row; instead the knitter reads the color of the stitches on the needle.

- can be worked in stockinette, garter stitch or some combination

I like having the ability to work all or some of the pattern in garter stitch. This is good for places where it is desirable to have pattern that won't curl, such as the yoke of the [Mimico Vest](#) and the sleeve and hip bands of [Ormolu](#).



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- works easily with intarsia

One of the things I find exciting about mosaic knitting is how easily and elegantly it combines with intarsia. As an example, consider the decoration that borders the neckline of Ormolu. The intarsia color-changes occur only on the contrast rows and the change of yarn always takes place behind the cover of a slipped stitch of the main color. And because the garment is worked in flat pieces (see above) no special “intarsia in the round” manoeuvres are needed.

- lighter than stranded fabric

Carrying a second strand of yarn as in fair isle or stranded colorwork results in a thicker fabric. While mosaic knitting does have short floats or strands every time stitches are slipped, no yarn is carried behind the stitches that are worked. The fabric is lighter and more flexible than that of stranded colorwork.

While I cheerfully admit that this technique has its limitations, I believe there is still plenty of unexplored territory within those limitations. I do knit and design with other techniques, but mosaic knitting remains a favorite.