

July Cablegram book review by Karen Jo Gustafson

Knit So Fine, Designs With Skinny Yarn
by Lisa R. Myers, Laura Grutzek, & Carol Sulcoski

Knit So Fine carries the subtitle *Designs With Skinny Yarn*. The emphasis here really falls on projects, all of which knit at a gauge of 5 1/2 stitches per inch or finer, for an audience who is just moving up from beginner bulky-weight patterns.

I only found one pattern in this book I might knit, and I'd change that one a bit. That's really not unusual as I mostly buy knitting books for information, ideas, and the occasional pattern I modify to my likes. I did also get an idea for a shawl based on the stitch used in their scarf pattern.

The patterns include sixteen garments, a scarf, stole, hat, legwarmers, and the currently essential fingerless gloves. Among the garments you'll find a bamboo skirt knit sideways with short-row shaping on the waist side, a cowl-neck sweater pulled down oddly on the model so that the shoulders don't fit but the neckline looks nice, a tweedy striped vest done in doubled Trekking sock yarn, and a simple wrap-front dress in Regia Silk.

The patterns aren't really bad; some could be quite good. I rather like the Bohus-Inspired Pullover done with two strands of Zephyr. I've looked at Zephyr with envy for the avid lace knitters who find lots to do with all the beautiful colors in this silk-blend yarn. Even doubled this knits at 7 stitches per inch. Here the striped yoke takes advantage of these colors and the doubled yarn to change just one strand per stripe, so melding the shifting hues together. I've done that in a sweater before and like the effect.

What the patterns do seem is too gimmicky or trendy. They suit the not-yet-out-of-high-school models better than they would me. The fingerless gloves reach elbow length here. Traveling stitch calf shaping has been translated from kilt hose to close-fitting legwarmers. The button band of the moss-stitch cardigan runs asymmetrically from one shoulder to the opposite hip. And I'd leave off the superfluous band of lace near the sleeve edge in the Bohus-y sweater. The dress is nice and simple but I'm sure I'd never knit a whole wrap dress at 7 stitches per inch and then sew yards of edging onto it.

Each pattern has several photos so, except for the cowl mentioned above, you get a good feel for what it should look like. Any pattern stitch more complex than Moss Stitch is charted only. At the back of the book are the glossary of pattern abbreviations, a section of techniques used in the book with Interweave's nice drawings, and a bibliography/recommended reading list that includes books not published by Interweave Press.

What I didn't find in this book was as much useful information as I expected from an Interweave Press book with the amount of publicity I'd seen for this one. Not counting full-page photos, the introduction and two non-pattern chapters only fill twenty-four pages. Much of what's there counts as common sense for most knitters who've done a few projects and own a few books. I know that fine yarn shows off lace and other stitch patterns better; that vintage and ethnic styles usually require a finer gauge; that it's easier to fit pattern repeats into a garment at more stitches per inch; that finer gauges are more flattering and the seams lay flatter. It's nice to be reminded of all these, but I'd like something new, too.

Options to improve fit came up repeatedly in the advantages of finer gauge. But in the actual section on fit they excused not covering any tips or techniques as beyond the scope of the book. Given the way they reiterated this advantage and the not-generous 142 pages in the book, I think they really should have included some basics. The beginners to finer-gauge knitting they obviously aim for aren't well-served by being told to wade through *Sweater Design in Plain English*, as good as it is, if they want to get full benefit from this book.

I wouldn't say not to buy *Knit So Fine*. I would say look at it first and then find a good deal on it. It's probably not one you'll keep as a reference or source of patterns years from now.