

one cool knitter



eunny jang

If you haven't discovered the fabulous blog of knitter Eunny Jang, you're late to the show. See Eunny Knit (www.eunnyjang.com/knit) is a trove of knitting information packaged in precise and witty prose. Eunny (pronounced "OO-nee") offers a feast of photography—she's an insanely prolific crafter. Whether for her patterns, her detailed tutorials, or her writing, Eunny is a knitter to watch (and learn from).

Eunny lives in the Washington, D.C. area. Her first book, a stitch dictionary, will be published in 2007, and she is at work on a book of techniques and original designs for Interweave Press, to be released in Fall 2008.

by anne merrow

How and when did you start knitting? Have you always been interested in the technical aspects?

I actually corralled my grandmother into teaching me to knit when I was four or five—I pilfered chopsticks from the silver drawer, went to my dad's mom, and demanded that she teach me to "make loops." The technical interest came later. Every other thing I know about knitting, I learned from library books. I spent a lot of time with wonderful older books (Mary Thomas's slim volumes come to mind) that really emphasized craftsmanship. They all assumed the reader already knew the techniques we call "advanced" today: stranded knitting, lace, cables. . . . That got me started.

Do you design primarily what you'd like to wear, or more as a way of exploring and realizing ideas?

Most of the time, I treat a design idea like a proof-of-concept: There might be a certain stitch that has characteristics I want to explore and exploit, there might be a certain silhouette I want to produce with an unusual construction, and I want to see if it can be done. And sometimes an idea just makes me smile: heavy Aran textures born of a chilly, fog-wrapped island, scaled down into delicate Austrian-style twisted stitches, in a bright, Caribbean-colored yarn. Cute, right? All those things considered, I like things I'd wear myself—clean, modern, pretty things—and I hope that informs all my designs, too.

On your blog, you often seem to be setting a challenge for yourself—do you ever make plain, easy projects?

I do! I like wrangling with clever constructions and knotty techniques for the mental exercise, but I also appreciate simple things on their own level. For example, craftsmanship and

attention to detail become really important in a plain stockinette cardigan. There's a kind of Zen satisfaction to those kinds of knits, and I go to them whenever I have "knitter's block." Going back to the beginning is like a breath of fresh air.

Your designs are often inspired by historic or "retro" styles, and yet they're hardly old-fashioned. How do you describe your relationship to fashion?

I love the aesthetics of certain decades: the exaggerated silhouettes, the fluidity and grace, the deliberate decorative-ness of the clothing. My love of traditional knitting is a little different—I have much respect for the knitters themselves, for their ingenuity and cleverness, which built the craft. I like to use time-honed techniques to build garments that are richly detailed, ornamental, but clean and modern, too. My ground rules for "fashion" are pretty basic—if it's flattering, and fresh-looking, and beautiful in the bargain, I think it's fashionable.

You recently began spinning. How do you think this new craft will affect your knitting?

You know, I was starting to feel that I had a pretty good grasp of knitting—the hows and whys of what can be done with string and two needles—but now I realize that I never really understood much about the string itself. Now, I'm learning more and more about yarn construction and characteristics, about how yarn twist can affect a finished fabric, how strength or warmth or textural interest or color effects can start with the spinning, before you ever pick up the needles. It's changing the way I plan projects, hopefully moving me towards making every design an ideal combination of yarn, fabric and shape—I have a lot left to learn! ☐