
Magic Ball Color Play with Brandon Mably

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

- Hi, I'm Brandon Mably and we're here to do a little bit of an exercise playing with lots of color. And now the ambition I have is to get you all to play with lots of color without having to think about it. Basically, what we're going to do is take all your left over colors, we've all got left over colors, and we're gonna separate them into two different color groups. You're gonna put your lights into one area and your darks into another area and we're gonna knot them all together and we're gonna leave little two inch tails and we're gonna do a very simple little ferrar project. It's what we call a magic ball method. We're gonna show you how to knit your tail ends in at the back as well as carry the yarn that you're not using. It's amazing what happens. Every time I do this, I'm just blown away by the result.

Chapter 2 - Materials

Materials

- The materials you're gonna need for this project are basically any leftover yarn that you have that are particularly good colors that appeal to you. They can be a different weight of yarn. For instance, if you have some four ply yarn that's leftover and you also have some DK weight yarn then with the four ply yarn, what I would do is double it up. So that you can run that with the DK yarn. So we're gonna get lots of color and texture going on. It really doesn't matter for this project because it's just all about the color and how they work. So let's have a look. I've got my lighter colors in one area. I've got my darker colors in here. I'm gonna need a pattern. Very straight forward pattern which you can download from the website pdfpattern. And then your scissors, unless you have very sharp teeth that is. Of course you need you needles. I personally like to work on circle needles. The thing about pins, I feel like I'm a chicken when I'm knitting. The arms are going and I'm quacking away. Here with the pins, the needles, the knitting just sits in my lap nice and tidy. Often I hear about people getting pains in their wrists, what we call RSI, and I sometimes contribute that to the weight being taken on the needle with the knitting. With the circle needles, the weight is distributed in the lap and so you can just knit away and it's very straight forward. We're ready to go. Let's play.

Chapter 3 - Color Play with Persian Poppy

Color selection

- Okay, before we get into knitting, I'm just going to point out a couple of things here about what you should think about with your colors. So I've got a swatch here. I just wanna show you a couple of color balances. Now here, on this particular row, you can see there's a light area, and a dark background. These look like a row of Harley Davidson headlights coming at you in the evening dusk. They're nice and strong and bright. Where down here, you've got this row that is more of a subtle tones, and they're merging into one another so the eye is able to drift over the area without any hard interruption. So what I want you to think about when you're putting your colors together is harmony. Colors together that merge, that kinda blend, that don't fight. So, for instance, here, these colors are jumping at you. They're fighting for their own space. I want you to be putting colors together that have a nice blending when you're concentrating on one ball, and you do the second for your second ball. Here I have another swatch, where I've started to put the colors into the

pattern. I've tried to knit a swatch that actually would look quite boring, so I just took lots of different shades of pinks and put them into one ball, and then lots of shades of dark gritty tones into the background. And as I was going along, suddenly I popped in a bit of orange, and it was like putting a bit of sherbet on the tongue. So what I want you to reach for is colors that have a little bit of excitement. Don't just go for pink pink pink, lots of the same kinda colors. Put in something that has a little bit of excitement. A little bit of lemon that's gonna give it that (kiss) that little bit of sparkle, like this orange, that gives it a little bit of zest. So I'm going to show you how I would go about pulling the colors, and start time together to make these magic balls to play with.

Create variegated yarn balls

- Now the fun begins. We're gonna be making our magic balls. So, what I'm going to start by doing is getting my basket of yarns, with my delicious colors, and I'm just going to take a color I feel comfortable with. So, for instance, I'm just gonna take this navy blue, the color of my denims. It's a thin yarn, so I'm going to double it up because I'm gonna be working with some thicker yarns and so forth. I'm gonna take approximately an arms length. Okay, this is just to play with. So, boop. Got it? And so what I'm going to do is I'm gonna, oh got a knot there, so I'm gonna undo this little monkey. What I'm gonna do is, I'm gonna take this now next to a color that I feel has a nice harmony. No, I tell you what, I'm gonna actually show you what I think is a bit of a no no. When I place it next to this lime green, what do I get? A real puncher. Because they're both fighting for space. What I want is this blue to go next to a color where there's a nice kind of harmony. So, this charcoal gray, they kind of have a nice kind of relationship, so let's just knot those together. Okay, what I'm going to do is, I'm going to leave a two inch tail after my knot. So there, I left my two inch tail. And I've gone from my blue and I'm just gonna take an approximate length of the gray. Alright, and then, I've forgotten about the navy blue. I'm now just gonna concentrate on taking this charcoal gray next to another color that I feel has a nice relationship. And I'm gonna see how those work together. Well those are rather handsome. And that wasn't rocket science, was it? We didn't have to turn to the textbooks for that. You can just say that these two have a lovely kind of vibration. Pop them together. And then, give yourself enough to work with. So take a long enough length. And now go from him to another shade or another color, again, that has a nice kind of balance. This blue, how about those two together? Now, that's not difficult, is it? You can just see that these two have a nice kind of ease. Even though they're a different color, this is a blue and that's a gray, they can still work together cause they're the same strength. Knot them together, leave yourself a two inch tail, cause remember, we're gonna be knitting these in as we go along later on in the exercise. And then from here, we're gonna go from this color to, what about that? Well, you know what, I think that's a little bit light. So, I'm gonna try it next to something like him. Now this lovely teal blue is beautiful. And again, because this is the thin yarn, I'm gonna double it up. And, see how those sit next to one another? If you're in doubt, just try this blue next to something else and see what you prefer. It's not a bad idea to move your colors around your other color yarns and see what you prefer and what you don't. Actually, I'm more comfortable with that. So, I'm gonna take that. So I'm glad that I did jump around and not just stick with my first choice. Alright. Give yourself a little bit of length on this. And now, you can go from him to that beautiful teal blue that we were admiring a little time ago. Okay, knot those two together, and before you know it, you've got six to eight colors on your ball, and you're ready to go. So, take those, and this is where your scissors come in handy because the glossy cotton can be a little tough on the hands. And just wind these up into your own variegated ball of yarn that you've made. This is gonna be so much fun when you start knitting these because

you just don't know what's gonna sit next to one another. It's amazing what happens. I get such a buzz every time I knit this project. I cannot tell you, and I think you're gonna agree with me. So here we have our first ball. These are primarily the darker colors. Notice I'm saying darker colors, not dark colors. Because we're now gonna make a ball of lighter colors, not light colors, but lighter colors. Cause you want them to have a separation. They don't have to be black and white. Like really contrasting, fighting. They can just be a slightly different tone so they have a little bit of a separation. Anyway, we'll see how that unfolds when the colors start working. And that's the magic of this. Let's start by taking the color that you feel comfortable with. This sort of deep magenta. And we're gonna put that next to another color where they have a nice kind of bridge. So we're gonna put these two together. Again, remember, little slip knot, leave a two inch tail. And give yourself an arms length to play with. And then take this color next to, oh, god that's gorgeous. Look at how the aqua blue sits next to that lavender. Oh they have a wonderful Mediterranean vibration there. Start thinking about your up and coming vacation. This needs scissors. This is the fix that I get from working with color. I get so many surprises and never, never stop learning because you're always coming up against unexpected color relationships. I mean, again, look at how beautiful these two sit next to one another. And if I was trying to concoct these color relationships on paper or in my mind, it just wouldn't work. You just have to sit down and do it and feel the colors as you're knitting. It's amazing what happens. I've doubled up that thinner yarn because it was too fine and it sits nicely with this cotton glossy now that it's doubled up. And I'm gonna take that next to, this Kelly green is kind of vicious on its own. But I think when it's put next to this cool grass green, it's gonna be nice and smoky. Look at those two together. Beautiful. And that wasn't difficult. Alls I'm doing is focusing on what one color does to the other then I move on. Now I'm not thinking about, I'm gonna make myself a sweater that's black and blue or to go with this kind of new pants that I just bought from Filene's Bargain Basement or anything like that. I'm thinking about what's this magical thing that I'm gonna make that's gonna be absolutely beautiful? You know what, if I make an arrangement of colors and I'm so pleased with it. Then I go and find something that goes with it, not the other way around. So leave yourself open to unexpected happenings. You know, for me, when I first started out in this world of working with color, I was encouraged to make mistakes. And learn how important those mistakes were. Because once you make a mistake, you realize okay, that doesn't work for me. And you move on. And you start building and bettering yourself. So, it's very good to make yourself do things that you're not comfortable with to see what comes out of that. It is extraordinary how you build your confidence once you have a go and see what you like and what you don't like. Now I'm gonna give you a little tip. How many of you actually, when you're working on something, pin up your work and stand back and have a look at it from a distance? I'd love to see the reaction. Anyway, for me, when I ask my classes, it's also fascinating to me to see how many hands go up to say they do and how many hands don't go up. You know, we all look better from a distance. And so will your work, I can tell you. Because when you're, it's very hard to assess what you're doing while it's on your lap. You have to stand back from your work and think about when you go into an art gallery. Or an interior shop. Or a fabric shop and so forth. Or you're in a lecture. You always see things from a distance. So when I'm designing, I have to think about what something's gonna look like from a distance. So again, when you're putting your colors together here, if you get too tasteful, it'll be boring. You know, for me, I don't want to look like Co Co the Clown or Walt Disney on acid, I want to look like, I want to create something that has a bit of intrigue. Doesn't look like I've just bought it from K-Mart. Looks like something that's been handmade and has a little bit of intrigue. I want to look at it for a second time and the third time and

the fourth time. You know, if you bust it late, and least you'll have something interesting to look at. Now, what we're gonna be doing in this exercise is making a swatch. I'm sure some of you care as well, how much do I know to break off to make a sweater or a waistcoat? Well, let's learn to take a first few steps. I want you to get your juices flowing. And we're just gonna make some swatches and start seeing what you like, what you don't like and so forth. So, now, you know I often say to people, you know when you make a fruit cake, you need a lot of good ingredients, don't you? Well it's the same when playing with color. Basically, what you're doing here is you're painting with yarn. You need a lot of variety. So, if you don't have a big stash, go raid your friends or go to any yarn shop and they'll have a bargain bucket or something. Or just use odd ends just to give yourself more than four or five colors to play with. Kaffe Fassett has this motto, if in doubt, add 20 more colors. And it sounds kind of like, 20 colors? But there is something in that. You know, here, when I first made my first ball, I got through six to eight colors just in the first winding. So, times that two, eight, 16, 18 colors, onwards. You know, you're nearly up to your 20, so world's your oyster. Once these balls run out, and you need more to go on with, that's when the fun really, really begins. You get to add in more colors and you've already started to see, oh I like this, I don't like that. And onwards and onwards and onwards. It is so much fun, I can't wait to see, I just wish I could see what you come up with. Anyway, here we go.

Persian poppy pattern part 1

- We're going to be working from this two color row graph, and for those who haven't worked from a graph before, it's quite straightforward. Basically, we have a graph broken up into two sections, the X's represent a certain palette, and the open squares represent another palette. So if you like, if it'll help you, you could say the X's are for the dark colors, and the open squares are for the background colors, the light colors. We have 33 stitches here, so you're going to cast on thirty three stitches. You're going to cast on 33 stitches in whatever cast-on technique you prefer, we all have our own preference, and you're going to knit two rows of the background color. On the third row you're going to put in two stitches at the beginning of the row of the darker colors, and then you're going to knit, you're going to go from the dark colors, you're going to swap to 12 stitches of the lighter colors, and then you're going to go five stitches of the dark colors, and then 12 stitches of the lighter colors, and two stitches of the dark colors. You might have noticed that the pattern repeats quite easily, so what is here, repeats over here. I'm going to be showing you, later in this exercise, how we avoid having to loop from when we go from this color to this color, how do we carry this color along the back. I'm going to show you how to knit in that color along the back as you go along. Very simple, easy technique. Jumping ahead, I've knitted up a swatch, so I'm up here on the pattern, and we're going to pick up from there and start adding those balls that I already made into my swatch. The excitement begins. So I've cut this to add new color, the new ball, into the knitting. I just do a little slipknot, put that in there, that's the darker ball attach. Now I'm going to add my lighter color, and see how nice that orange looks against that magenta pink, bubblegum pink. This is going to be very exciting together. Okay, and now I'm just going to start knitting. I knit with the right hand, the English way. Some people knit what we call the continental way, they knit with the left hand. We throw the yarn, they hook the yarn, so we call them hookers, and we're throwers. And so I'm just going to knit a row just to show you how I get the colors in. On the next row, I'm going to show you the technique. So here I'm just going to use both my hands. I'm catching the tail end in the way of the yarn as we go across. This might not make sense to you until we're on the purl row, and then I can actually show you the technique of how we're working in the tail ends as you're

going along. But as you can just see from looking over my shoulder, all these scrappy little tail ends are getting nice and tidily woven in at the back. So you can see, alls I'm doing is I'm just catching them in the way of the stitch. When you do this yourself, it might seem a lot more comfortable to do, but it's just getting used to doing it. It's really the name of the game. And then, with this technique, you don't have to go along with the needle at the end of a garment and sew in all those scruffy little ends. If you do them as you're going along, then it's done. It's out of the way, tidied up. Somebody should be singing a song for me, help me get across this row. Nearly there. You can start to see little hints of how this orange is adding a little bit of spice to that bubblegum pink we were looking at earlier on. Okay, just around this corner. See how easily I slipped across the row with those colors. Now what all of you are long waiting to see is what the back looks like. See, it's not half as untidy. Now the one thing I wanted to point out to you is I don't wear my garments inside out to the supermarket. You might do, but I don't. Now I do have one of these moms that has to enjoy, has to have the back as neat and tidy as the front. But for me, if I'm going to do something, I want to enjoy myself. I tidy up my ends as I'm going along, and it's tidy enough. I mean, I think that's quite presentable. I mean, if you do have little eyelashes like this, you can just take the scissors and, as long as they're sewn down, give them a little bit of a snip to tidy them up and, you know, I don't think that looks far off like a field of long-grain rice. Nice and tidy. Anyway, this is what you get when you learn to do this technique that I'm going to try and impart into you.

Persian poppy pattern part 2

- Pick up where you left off on the graph here, and I'm on the last row here. So I'm just gonna come in two stitches on the very top with the background, either side of the dark poppy. And away we go. Just knit your five stitches of your background color. And now, I've finished with the background color, so I'm gonna knit that in. Then I'm gonna catch in the way of the stitch. Now to avoid myself having to hold between the dark and the light, I put my needle into the next stitch, I pull the color that I was knitting with up in between the two needles. They're not going around the needles. All I'm doing is I'm going up between the two needles. I form a stitch. I pull all the tail ends back so they're lying on top of the yarn. I pull the stitch through and off the needle. The next stitch is an ordinary stitch and that gets held down. Now I'm going to repeat that for you again. So I pick up with the tail ends, that I'm not knitting with, I put them in between the two needles, I form the stitch with the new yarn, pull the tail ends back, and so pull the needle through and off. And the next stitch is an ordinary stitch. This is the one that does the work cause it strangles it down. See how that's got nice and tidy caught in. So here you can see that the tail ends are getting woven in as you've gone along. Now I'm gonna point out to you, I've gone from one color to another. I don't have a hole. I'm knitting in any tail ends that I want to catch in. I'm also weaving in any yarns like the dark yarn so it's gonna be carried over here. Now, the most important thing is you need to use both hands. The hand that you're knitting with doesn't lead the yarn that you're forming a stitch with. The left hand doesn't have anything to do. You have to give it something to do because it will fall off. It might do it anyway. You just don't know. That is the hand that's just gonna take anything that you wanna carry, like the little tail ends, you put them up in between the two stitches, you form the stitch, you pull them back. So do this with me in front of the camera. Up, down, up, down. That's all you're going to be doing. You're not going to be going around the needle. Around the needle. Around the needle. I sound like Lady Gaga. You're just gonna be going up and down with the yarn that you want to carry every other stitch. So give those tail ends to pick up, put it in between the two needles, form the stitch, pull them back. Second stitch holds them down. We're just gonna

move now on to the background section after first putting in a little bit of the poppy. What I need to emphasize to you all is the technique is very straight forward and quite simple. All you're doing is you're weaving in the tail ends enough for them to be held in, about four to six times, and then you can cut them off of the back. They're just like little eyelash lens. Anything that you're gonna carry at the back, you obviously keep there, don't cut that off. I often find that people struggle with this technique because they're not getting used to using both hands. As you can see, the hand that I'm throwing the yarn with to form the stitch doesn't leave that yarn at all. It's the left hand is the hand that goes up and down that's carrying those tail ends and any yarn that wants to be carried. That's what's the most important thing about using this technique because I'm just going to show you for the devil may sake for idiot's sake. If you go up there with that and then you go around with this look at how clumsy and complicated that is. It won't work. You'll be getting yourself into trouble right off the bat. This hand sticks with the yarn that it's knitting with. This hand doesn't have anything to do so give it something to do. Give it a bit of a responsibility. That's the one that carries the tail ends. So, now we're gonna swap into the poppy and so we've finished with the dark yarn. The background color. And we're gonna pick up where the color of a new color. Now, to avoid ourselves having a hole, we're gonna throw the background color up in between the two needles, form a stitch, pull it back. The next stitch is an ordinary stitch. That's the one that holds it down. I'm gonna repeat that for you. So needle into the next stitch. Pick the color you're not knitting with, pull up in between the two needles, form the stitch, pull it back down. Next stitch holds it in. I'm telling you, once you get this technique down underneath your belt, you will be flying. I can't tell you. So again, we're gonna go back to the background color. And so finish with the green, back to the black and we're just about to finish our row. And you know what's exciting about this? Is that you can start seeing how these new colors are starting to come in. And these colors here were the new balls that we were making with. And look at how that kind of makes those bubblegum pinks start looking quite luminous and jolly. Where as down here, we were just playing with paws of pink and they look like old pieces of bubblegum. These have life and start looking like nice juicy Christmas ornaments.

Persian poppy pattern part 3

- So now that we've finished this last row, we're going to start back here to repeat the pattern. And we're going to do two rows of background color. Now if you're finding the graph a little bit challenging to follow, take a scrap piece of paper, and place it on top of the graph, and use it as what we call a liner tile. So each row, you just move up one row, one row, one row. And that will help your counting, so you don't go amiss. I'm one of those people that, if you a little bit astray from the graph, it just makes it more interesting. Move on. Just correct it all on the next row. Don't worry about ripping out, ripping out, ripping out. Think about your progress. And just think about what's going to come next, what's going to come next. Just try with it. Stick with it. And just see your development. There's nothing more rewarding. I can't tell you how much I've learned from working this way. I don't like to call myself a teacher. I like to say I'm an encourager. And I've learned by my mistakes. I want you to make mistakes. And I want you to find what works for you, and build on top of that. It's so rewarding. And as far as I'm concerned, if I'm going to do something, I want to enjoy myself. I want to really see the fruits of my labor. And have a good time while I'm doing it. And I want you to, too. It is so empowering. What we're going to do, here, is see how you knit-in your ends on the knit side. We've already seen how it's done on the pearl side. It's exactly the same principle. You finish with any color that you don't want to knit with anymore. So basically, needle into the next stitch, pull the color in between the two needles to form the stitch, pull back the yarn

so it's lying over the top of the stitch. The next stitch is an ordinary stitch, and that's going to hold it down. So here we go. See? It just held it down at the back. So I'm going to repeat that several times so it's held in nice and tidy. So up and away of the stitch, form the stitch, pull it back. Next stitch, pull through. Next stitch holds it down. So there you can see it's gotten woven in nice and tidy. So at your leisure, you can just take a pair of scissors and cut it off, because it's just a nuisance. That I've knitted it enough that it's nice and tidy. It's not going to slip out. And so you can knit away at your pleasure. A little bit untidy, here. So now I'm just going to knit two rows of the background color. And I'm going to show you, then, how to put it a color at the beginning of a row to start the new section of poppies at the beginning of the graph. So we just start all over again. You don't need to carry the poppy color through the two rows of background color on the graph. Otherwise you're just wasting your yarn. You can break that off. And then just reintroduce them as I'm going to do when I introduce the next two colors at the beginning of the row. Some people wonder about, "What about these knots?" When you come up against these knots, you just knit past them. They disappear in the back. And so, any tail ends there, you just catch in the way of the stitch, like this. The next stitch will hold it down. Up and away of the stitch, down, next stitch holds it in. Coming onto the second row of the chart, here. Just running the background color, we're going to end up here where we're going to cast on two new stitches of poppy. And then we're going to carry that along in the background so we're introducing the first row of the new set of these poppy colors, okay? So we're going to the end of the row, here, and then we're going to tidy up the back of the knitting before we cast on the new colors. You always want to keep the back of your knitting nice and tidy, because are there any ends hanging at the back, they just become a distraction. Last couple of stitches. And I'm going to take my pair of scissors, and take off any little loose ends are just hanging there. These are a nuisance. I'm going to get rid of them. Those are woven in enough so they won't come out. Any tail-ends that I've knitted in. See, I think even my mother would be proud of me, with this. Okay. So what we're going to do here is we're going to take the same ball of colors that you had wound up. Just cast on. Use those, and cast on with the first two stitches. So leave a two-inch tail. Hold it at the back as if it was already attached. Let's see where we are on the graph, actually. We're here. Leave your two-inch tail, and just do the first two stitches. Now you're going to go back to the background color. So needle the next stitch, color that you don't want to use, and the tail-end that you want to catch in the way of the stitch, pull between the two needles. Form the stitch, pull them back. The next stitch holds it down. So again, needle into the next stitch. Up in between the two needles, the yarn you want to carry. Form your stitch with a background color. Pull the tail-ends back that you don't want to use. The next stitch holds it down. And this way, you've gone from one color to another. You don't have a hole. You're also knitting in any tail-ends that you don't need. And you're weaving in the yarn that you want to carry at the back. And we're going to do 12 stitches of the background color. Just count this. 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12. And we held five stitches of the background color. One, two, three, four, five. One of the things that I allow myself to do that, if I find that I've got a length of yarn that's the color is boring, or it's going on too long, I break that yarn and I get to the next color, just to give myself a little bit of excitement, or not to get too bored or stuck in a rut with the same color. Like for instance, this gray mass color I'm knitting with, it isn't really lifting my boat as much as I'd like it to. So I might be tempted to just break it and get to this lovely blue, which has a little bit more excitement for me. So I'm just going to break that. And I want to use that at the beginning, here. Now, you can see that I did an error. I forgot to put the last two stitches of the green on the end, here. So I need to go back a couple of stitches. That's what happens when you get excited. So just pick it with the green. There we go. We're back in place with

the graph. Onto the next row. We can see we now have four stitches of the background color. So now you're on the fourth row of the graph. What's beautiful about this graph is, it just repeats. And repeats, and repeats. From sideways, upwards, and onwards. The more that you play with it, the more you'll come across totally unexpected happenings. Have a lot of fun. It's really a joy. That's why we call it the magic ball method.

Chapter 4 - Variations

Persian Poppy examples

- Now that you go to the stage where you've gotta have a repeat graph section, keep on going. It's amazing what unravels from this project. The more that you start knitting, the more you will start seeing different color happenings unfold. For instance here with this scarf, you can start seeing that the colors were kind of boring and safe and the colors just started to explode and get richer and softer and more jazzy and cooler. You know it just adds the spice of why this project is so exciting. You might even get to the stage where you feel like you wanna make yourself a waist coat. Look at this little number. And it's kind of timeless. You just wanna stroke it. You certainly feel like there's a lot of warmth in there anyway. What I hope that you'll get out of this project is that it'll get you over the fear of working with lots and lots of colors. The most important thing that you need to think about is what one color does to the other and then move on from that last color to the next color and then the next color. Every color is affected by what it's next to. This is such a great project to get over the fear of just having a go. All you need to do is sit down and knit all your colors together and just knit. It's also a great way to get children to play with lots of color too. I'm loving it that more and more children are getting into knitting and they're loving the stimulation of that. Color is a psychological element and when you find colors that you feel really comfortable with, for me, there's nothing more life enhancing. I'm constantly learning all the time. When I come up against a combination, color combination, that makes the hair stand up on the back of my neck, I feel like a million dollars. I feel like, wow, this is so exciting. I wanna impart that into you because I found it. Now I want you to go and find it yourselves. Have fun.