



LACIS MUSEUM OF LACE AND TEXTILES
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2005 - IRISH CROCHET TO FREEFORM

“NEW” KNITTING: THE EXTRAORDINARY EXPRESSIONS OF DEBBIE NEW

INVITATIONAL EXHIBITIONS OF CONTEMPORARY CROCHET AND KNITTING

ORGANIZED BY MELANIE GILL

All exhibitioners were invited to submit statements about themselves and their work as they felt appropriate. The following are the unedited statements received:

DEBBIE NEW

Debbie New was born in Australia and has lived in Canada since 1970. She shares her innovative knitting techniques in workshops around the world. Her knitted artworks include such oddities as a seaworthy boat and a ticking clock and range in size from knitted teacups to a walk-through labyrinth. Her book “Unexpected Knitting” (Schoolhouse Press) includes both galleries and workshops.

She and her husband spend their summers on a Narrow Boat barge in England, where Debbie works the locks and dreams of knitting.

I am sorry to have sent only a brief note in reply to yours. I take my turn on library computers to collect email while traveling. But I am writing this to disc on my laptop in the boat in the hope that I shall be allowed to use a disc in the computer at the next library I reach.

Your exhibit must now be in full swing and I wish you well with it. I know there has been much excitement about it. Although I cannot attend, I did see the gallery of Irish Lace on your website and it was beautifully done. It is an amazing collection and wonderfully displayed. It is both inspiring and humbling to see the skill and the response to desperate need of people who have gone before us.

I hope my note did not reach you before your display opened, as what you have to say about me is so much better and so much more readable than what I have to say about myself. But I will send you some thoughts.

When my husband became ill and I dropped other things to stay at home, I took to knitting and set myself to discover what I could do with it, since I felt that its possibilities had not been as well explored as those of the other fiber arts. Everything I do is really part of that exploration, whether I am expressing an idea, looking at the techniques of knitting or the structure of garments, or whether I am just playing with color, texture or language. I find the pursuit absorbing and diverting and though I am sometimes tempted to take off into the world of, say, quilting, I feel there is still plenty of fun to be had exploring knitting.

At present I am working on some kinetic knittings. I am interested in the relationship between vision and hearing. A visual representation of something is static. It captures and holds a moment. But sound is ephemeral and fleeting. I have never been happy with the idea of representing music visually in such a static way and that led me to think about creating knitted things that could be acted upon to cause some movement or change. At the moment, on the boat, I am knitting a windmill of color that may eventually be combined with some others of different colors. My trial run spins happily in the wind.

MYRA WOOD

Myra Wood, motivated from her youth by her natural creative spirit, studied oil painting with Maya Shock for 2 years and then went on to The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in the 1970s. She continued her artistic career doing graphics. She and her husband have owned "Woodworks" since 1990, where they do finished art for the movie industry in Los Angeles. Currently she has been exploring her own voice through fiber and bead art. Right from the start both her professional and private works have been acclaimed in shows and galleries across the nation.

MARGARET HUBERT

Margaret Hubert owned and operated her own yarn shop from 1963-1975.

She became the art needlework instructor for Bloomingdale's in White Plains, NY. She has had designs published in many magazines, such as Ladies Home Journal, Woman's Day, Good Housekeeping, Crochet, Hooked on Crochet, Quick and Easy Crochet, Interweave Knits, Crochet Fantasy and Belle Armoire.

During the 1980's Margaret wrote four books on knitting and crocheting: ONE PIECE KNITS THAT FIT, WEEK-END CROCHET PROJECTS, WEEKEND KNITTING PROJECTS (co-author, Dorothy Gusick) and MORE WEEK-END CROCHET PROJECTS (co-author, Dorothy Gusick).

Margaret and Dorothy Gusick had a successful hand knitting business for many years. After retiring she continues to teach and design.

Margaret has recently produced 2 teaching videos on Free Form Knitting and Free Form Crochet and Annie's Attic, has published two of her book: "Free Form Crochet" and "Fun with Free Form."

BONNIE PIERCE

Bonnie Pierce is an internationally renowned free form fiber artist, designer, author, exhibitor and bullion/roll stitch specialist. Her current works include "24 Blocks on a Roll" as well as items in four "On a Roll" books, and in several hard back books including Creative Partners, American School of Needlework, House of White Birches, Sterling Publishing, Leisure Arts, and Crochet! magazine and is a frequent contributor to Annie's Attic Scrap Yarn Club as author and designer. Bonnie has exhibited and won awards in Israel, Australia, Wales, Chicago, Craft Adventure and Big E in Massachusetts, earning a best of show award for her free form vest. Bonnie was chosen to receive the Interweave Press "Crocheter of the Year" award. She taught herself to knit at age 11, and to crochet holding both the yarn and the hook in her right hand, similar to what she does with knitting. Visit her websites: www.elegantcrochet.com and www.elegantcrochetfreeform.com

JENNY DOWDE

After learning the technique from the masters, James Walters and Sylvia Cosh in 1997, Jenny has been working in, and teaching the freeform technique ever since. She has had one book, "Freeform Knitting and Crochet" published in 2004 with another recently commissioned by her publisher that is to be released in mid-2006.

DEE STANZIANO

Dee Stanziano is known as an "enthusiastic cheerleader for crochet." An avid crocheter since childhood, Dee loves to learn new techniques -- from experimenting on her own, to reading books, and from studying with the "Masters." She takes great pleasure in being able to share her knowledge in her classes and workshops as a Certified Crochet Teacher, in her correspondences to those writing to the Crochet Guild of America requesting help, and on her popular website and Blog. Dee has even passed on her passion to her young daughter, who also is in the ranks of "Blue Ribbon winner."

Dee is rarely found without her hook in hand, working on a project for a local charity or helping others come out of what she calls the "Crocheter's Closet." Her lace piece featured in the exhibit was a result of being inspired after taking two classes with Maire Treanor on Irish Clones Lace. Afterwards, with Treanor's book in hand, Dee

dove further into this technique that allows for the crocheter to create various motifs, mostly flowers, leaves and scrolls that are attached with Clones knots to create beautiful lace fabric. It took Dee seventy-five hours to create this ribbon-winning work she calls "Irish Flower Basket."

www.crochetwithdee.com and www.CaseysCrochet.com

The BLOG: <http://journals.aol.com/crochetwithdee/CrochetWithDee>
CYCA Certified Crochet Teacher; CGOA & TNNA Member"

JEANNE TAYLOR
Nelson, NZ

I was taught to crochet at the age of seven by my Grandmother. I feel I have a gift for color probably evolving from my love of flowers, trees and animals. I have just successfully completed a 3 part Diploma in Crochet

Design with Pauline Turner of Morcambe in England. I also have a Diploma in Commercial Art through the Art Training Institute of Melbourne, Australia. I am an experienced feltmaker, spinner, dyer, knitter, crocheter, weaver, and artist. I have taught Art at an adult level and acquired my Adult Teacher Training Certificate from the Nelson Polytechnic in New Zealand.

I have won many awards in fibre craft, feltmaking and crochet both in New Zealand and Internationally. My ambition is to share my creative ideas with others, perhaps in book form.

SUSAN SETTLE

Susan was introduced to free form crochet in 1994 by a book by Sylvia Cosh and James Walters called The Crochet Workbook. She discovered that crocheting could be art. She adores discovering new ways to create something she sees in her mind, as well as the opposite way of working - letting go of any preconceived ideas, and letting her creativity lead the way. Free forming has taught her to simultaneously listen to the medium and her own inner creativity while treasuring the dance of hook and yarn.

JUDITH COMBS

Irish crochet techniques are my favorite way of working with fiber. Varying the size, flexibility, tension and translucency of the padding cord dramatically affects the texture and color of the working fiber, along with the sculptural aspects of the finished motif. This piece is a color study on the idea of retinal afterimage: that if I could stare at ivy vines with enough visual focus and shut my eyes, this is what I would see behind my eyelids.

Group Exhibitions

2005 San Diego County Fair Exhibition of Art, San Diego, California, USA

2003 Scrumblers Unite!, Geelong, Victoria, Australia

2003 Gallery Seamgallery, Megadim, Israel

Upcoming:

2005 The Lace Guild "Worldwide Lacemakers' Census, West Midlands, U.K.

2005 Lacis Museum of Lace and Textiles, Berkeley, California, USA

2006 Gallery Seamgallery, Megadim, Israel

2006 Accord Crochet Pattern A Day Calendar

MAIRE TREANOR

Máire Treanor, who has 3 daughters - Máiread, Áine and Cáit and is a primary school teacher, has been crocheting and researching Clones Lace since 1989, when she realized that this beautiful craft, first introduced to Clones as a famine relief scheme in 1847, would become extinct if she didn't learn it from the older crocheters in the area, several of whom have since died. Along with Mamo MacDonald, who is famous as a spokesperson on Irish Women's affairs, she formed Clones Lace Guild and for several years, a group of 15 crocheters made and sold

Clones Lace. They also established the Cassandra Hand summer school of Clones lace in 1990.

Máire has also traveled abroad to teach Clones lace at workshops in the USA, France and most recently in Lacis, SF. Máire's book on The Story and Patterns of Clones Lace, has become a best seller to people over the world interested in Irish Crochet.

Author of 'Clones Lace'. Mercier Press 2002

ALISON VINCENT

Australia

It has taken me some time to get these pieces to you. I have been agonizing over whether or not they would be suitable for your exhibition but decided in the end that it would be easiest to send them to you and let you decide.

I have included a bit of information on the jewelry pieces. The two hats - 'Midnight' and 'Green Thumb' and both made from scrumbles stitched together - the 'traditional' freeform technique. These were both originally art of a series of thinking hats based on the ideas of Edward de Bono. De Bono associates green with the generation of new ideas, with creativity and 'lateral thinking.' My green hat expresses everything I enjoy about freeform crochet. The wearer of the black hat on the other hand takes a logical look at things and is both cautious and judgmental - which is not to say they aren't without a bit of colour in their lives. Both these hats were experiments in how to make a head covering. The whole de Bono project was an exercise in using colour and thinking about colours, where they come from and their associations.

I have known how to knit and crochet for as long as I can remember. Discovering freeform crochet has liberated my thinking and made me more creative in a whole range of activities - knitting, sewing, patchwork and jewelry making. Some of my other freeform work is featured in the gallery in Jenny Dowde's 'Freeform Knitting and Crochet' publication and two of my ideas are included in the projects in that book.

All my wire and bead pieces are made of 'scrambles' - little freeform chunks which are then joined together to make a whole. The final shape of the piece is determined by how the individual bits fit together. Each project presents its own challenge when it comes to joining the scrumbles to one another and then producing a wearable piece. In most cases I work without any preconceived idea of the end result. 'Surfing' and 'Claire's necklace' were both made this way - taking colours I wanted to work with, making a few wire and bead doodles and then joining them together. 'Rajasthan' as the name implies was inspired by the colours and by the jewelry worn by Rajasthani women. It was deliberately worked around circular motifs. Again the finished piece was put together from a series of motifs which were then crocheted together.

'Opulence' uses a few left over beads from another project to display just one scramble. This is an experimental piece and still a work in progress - I can see more crochet and more strings of beads being added. I love necklaces and adore beads and find working with wire both challenging and therapeutic. There are no mistakes with wire - there is no going back - so the challenge is to make each scramble work as part of the whole. The process is therapeutic because it involves first quietly sitting and threading the beads on to the wire and then working slowly and patiently to produce each little component. You can work at whatever pace suits and make each piece as big or as small as you want. The only real drawback is that unlike working with yarn these are not projects you can tackle in front of the television or take traveling with you. I like to use fine wire - 32 gauge - and a correspondingly fine hook and work almost exclusively with chain stitch and single crochet. I use my limited knowledge of jewelry making techniques to put the finished pieces together. I especially like the three dimensional affect of working with wire which gives a depth and richness to the pieces. I have also worked with combining other beading techniques - weaving and peyote stitch - with wire crochet scrumbles to enhance the three dimensional look of the piece. My latest experiments combine wire crochet, found objects and polymer clay.

MARTHA SHERICK SHEN

With humility,

Reborn and inspired by the spirit of Lacis.