



## Who's Who In Crochet

A focus of interest on those that have inspired crochet

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### Sylvia Cosh and James Walters

"Together with Sylvia, James coined the word, *Scrumbling* for 'an easy approach to free-form crochet (that is, making things up as you go along). This involves making lots of different pieces at random, changing colors, textures and stitches often, and then joining them.

There is a range of different techniques and philosophies behind the idea – probably as many as there are people doing it. Ours have usually been about finding what suited us and took us in new directions. It is all about peeling off the layers of household grime which have accumulated around the infinitely popular, painting-by-numbers tradition of domestic crochet and discovering underneath a brilliantly simple and expressive technique. Starting with a hook and a continuous thread, each of us can make fabrics and structures in two and three dimensions, allowing our eyes, hands and heart all to work together to create intuitively and immediately.

Considered together as a magical creative team, Sylvia and James formed a partnership in the United Kingdom (UK) in 1977, and it lasted for twenty-three years! They worked together designing, making things, doing commissions, writing books, appearing in films and on television, and teaching.

Virtually anyone who has a serious interest in arts and crafts has heard of Sylvia Cosh, and many met her. She did lecture and workshop tours around America, Australia and New Zealand with James; and they had many stories of the wonderful people they met and interesting places they visited. Sylvia died of cancer on July 30, 2000, but her work lives on.



She learned to crochet as a child from her grandmother; and in her twenties, she was the director of her own company making trimmings and accessories for the fashion trade. She didn't limit herself to crochet and her creativity included the study of color and texture. Her genius in garment design resulted in an entire window at Harrod's dedicated to her work one Christmas season! When Sylvia was commissioned to do



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*The Crochet Sweater Book*, it was the favorite designs from these collections that she was asked to include.



Sylvia's teachings, designs and books have influenced thousands to look at crochet in a new way. From the viewpoint of the color and beauty of nature, one is inspired to create from within instead of depending on the guidance of others' written patterns. Untainted by the potential lucrative income, she was more interested in sharing the beauty of crochet with a wider audience. The result was her authorship of 8 books, countless teaching documents and articles, and several videos."

Those who have had the honor of meeting James know the following to be true: He is kind-hearted, funny and is determined to be crochet cheerleader who encourages the self-worth of every creator! James writes: 'What we have always tried to teach are down-to-earth, practical approaches to help people to develop their own creative personalities, rather than always to be measuring themselves against someone else's crochet *recipes*. It is my plan to use our website to help de-mystify the things that often confuse or intimidate people about crochet, so they can really begin to fly ...'

He did not pick up a crochet hook until he was thirty. Earlier he studied music for a short time in Heidelberg; then, between various lowly administrative jobs at The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and The National Theatre, he formed a modern dance company. Later, he was general manager of a graphic design group and then in 1971, as an impulse-driven self-taught crocheter, winning a nation-wide knitting and crochet design competition! He moved to a cottage in Wales and immersed himself in hand spinning, natural dyeing and experimental crochet, while producing freelance crochet garment designs for yarn manufacturers. In the autumn of 1976, he participated in Pam Dawson's BBC television series, *Knitting Fashion*.

While raising a family, Sylvia also lectured, taught in adult education, and did freelance designing for magazines and yarn manufacturers. In 1986 she was featured in the JP Coats film, *All in a Day* about crochet around the world. At that time she also produced ready-to-wear collections of crochet garments, with a commissioned team, for retail as well as her own one-of-a-kind originals, using brushed and loop mohair, cotton/rayon chenille and silk - some of them involving dozens of different yarns in carefully prepared



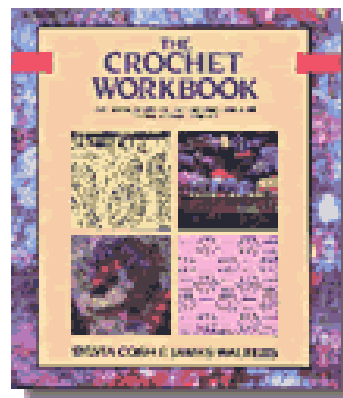
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shades, tints and textures, which she achieved by hand-dyeing all her own yarns. The majority of those were exported to the USA, Germany and Japan. When Sylvia was commissioned to do *The Crochet Sweater Book* in 1987, it was the favorite designs from these collections that she was asked to include, but in versions requiring ready-made yarns, so that people anywhere in the world could make them themselves.

Some of Sylvia's favorite things were her rich and exotic *moth* capes and landscape coats, which may become sumptuous wall-hangings when not being worn. She also had great affection for her cardigans and sweaters, which were similar, both in variety of texture and miraculous subtlety of color.

In 1995, '96 and '97, Cosh and Walters described themselves as 'doing crochet workshops in the USA, Australia and New Zealand. In our travels we were lucky enough to meet many wonderful textile people all over the world, who love innovative and expressive forms of crochet. It was always our intention through our website to keep in touch with all of them and to share what we did with new people, too'.



In an interview in 2011, James had this to say: 'Collaboration is a new phenomenon, thanks to the internet that has people freely inspiring each other daily through blogs, photo albums and social networking. In fact, some of the most astounding recent work has come out of that very phenomenon.'

Images:

1-Dancing picture-James

2-Moth Coat-Sylvia

3-The Crochet Workbook

Resources:

The Crochet Workshop (1979)

[www.crochet.nu](http://www.crochet.nu)

Blakley Kinsler, Gwen. The Fine Art of Crochet. Bloomington, Indiana: Author House, 2013.