



Who's Who In Crochet

A focus of interest on those that have inspired crochet

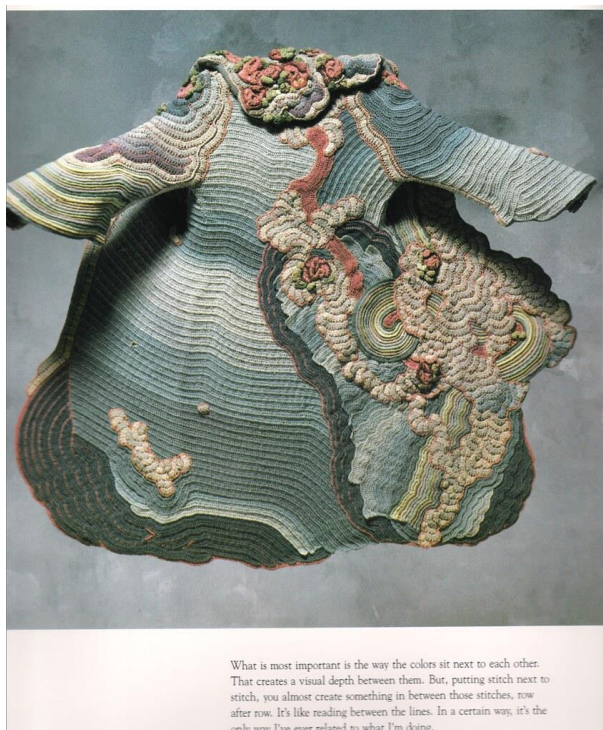
Sharron Hedges

Through May 17, 2020, the Philadelphia Museum of Art presents *Off the Wall: American Art to Wear*, a major exhibition that highlights a distinctive American art movement that emerged in the late 1960s and flourished during the following decades; and it includes the work of Sharron Hedges. "It examines a generation of pioneering artists who used body-related forms to express a personal vision and frames their work in relation to the cultural, historical and social concerns of their time."

"In 1970 Sharron picked up a crochet book and hook at Woolworth's and the rest is history! She recalls, 'I had no intention of making anything specific, but began making pieces and sewing them together.' She found that good friends she had studied with at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn were doing the same thing and they started sharing discoveries and influencing her. Soon, the group: Dina Schwartz Knapp, Janet Lipkin, Jean Cacicedo and Marika Contompasis, were caught in the excitement of being in at the beginning of a new kind of crochet. They moved from technique to concept; and within this process each found a personal direction. 'I don't think it could have happened without so much good energy,'

Sharron recalls. 'At first, my imagery was very geometric. Then I began to explore other shapes, and I came to an asymmetrical flow-a kind of floating quality. It's like landscapes-not literal, but dreamy. I'm excited by elements visually moving in and out, suggesting many levels of space.'

Sharron first worked at Pratt with welded sculpture, creating personal environments working point to point. Her unconventional approach and intimate sense of scale demanded that she seek more personal expressions of her vision. 'For me the crochet became a personal way to get my own insides out there, to release myself. There wasn't the same kind of necessity to make it *be* something. It just *was*- and I could perceive it. The work fed me, and it became more serious and a lot freer.' In the liberal environment of Pratt, Sharron felt free to combine welding and crochet by wrapping crochet around welded armatures, adding lines of color. Finally, though, she found the two textures incompatible



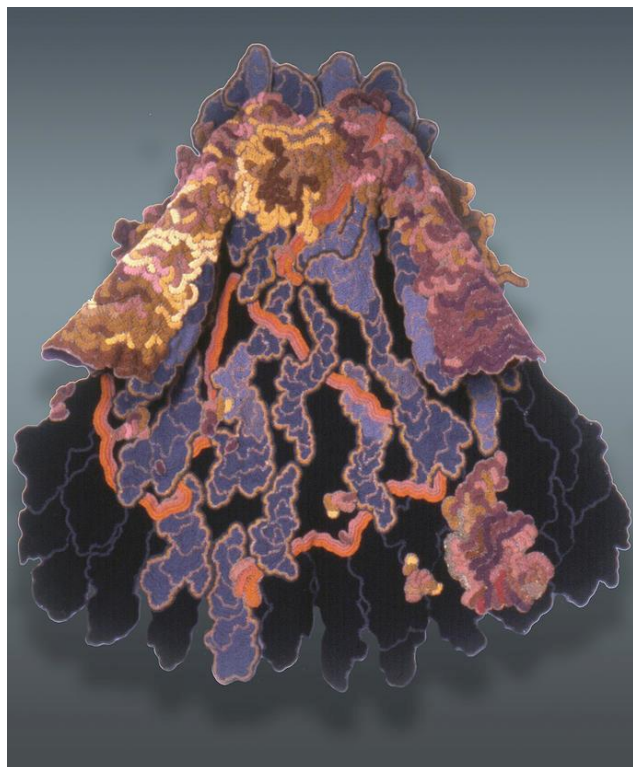
What is most important is the way the colors sit next to each other. That creates a visual depth between them. But, putting stitch next to stitch, you almost create something in between those stitches, row after row. It's like reading between the lines. In a certain way, it's the only way I've ever related to what I'm doing.



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Fully committed to crochet after graduation, Sharron was free to deal with color and three dimensions. The ritual of working back and forth, first flat then dimensionally, is at the crux of her creative process and integral with her success as an



artist who chose the body as a vehicle to animate and display imagery. Sharron's most cherished muse is color itself: the subtle optical illusions, the vibrancy achieved through juxtaposing colors, bouncing them off one another.

Hedges first commission, *Lydia's Coat*, grew out of a set of color problems. 'Lydia chose to wear only colors of a certain value. To compensate for the lack of contrast in color, I used the crochet to create a variety of textures. The ridges tend to catch light differently than the valleys, heightening the visual drama.' The imagery in the coats she creates is Sharron's; but each of the coats is essentially a portrait of the person for whom it was made. *Julie's Coat* was made for Julie Schafler Dale and grew from a feeling of earthiness realized in both color

and imagery. It evokes a painterly image, graphic quality with the addition of a sense of space, of floating, based on aerial landscapes.

'Originally, the crochet appealed to me, says Sharron,' because it gave me a chance to think as I worked. It's like doodling; it was free form. I just wanted to see where it took me, and that is what I really loved about the crochet. Time seemed infinite, each stitch was all-important, and the process, the involvement, was a valuable as the result: It was of a time; it was of that particular time. It was of me; it was of that particular me. And all of that has changed.' What has not changed is the consummate craftsmanship and discipline Sharron brings to all she touches. The grace and sensitivity so painstakingly instilled in all her work remains her artistic gift.

In New York City, Sharon founded a print design studio, selling original patterns to designers as well as providing repeats and colorings to the apparel industry. Today, she continues her work in both fiber and pattern design in her new home state of North Carolina."





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Images:

Lydia's Coat: wool yarn, crocheted; 1975

Julie's Coat: wool yarn, crocheted; 1977

Into Cloth: print design

Resources:

Artwear Archive/Sharron Hedges Textiles

Fiberarts Magazine. "Special Issue: Knit & Crochet." Albuquerque: volume 5, No. 3, 1978.

<https://www.sharronhedges.com/>

Schafner Dale, Julie. *Art to Wear*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1978.