

# TRACY KRUMM

CERVINI HAAS GALLERY / GALLERY MATERIA

SCOTTSDALE, AZ

DECEMBER 17, 2005-JANUARY 14, 2006

Fashioning sculptures from crocheted, epoxied and patinated metal wire, the artist Tracy Krumm has transformed crochet, once considered a genteel feminine pastime and a craft historically associated with lace-making, into complex postindustrial art making challenging statements about weighty issues. These include the conventional assignment of labor and materials by gender, economics and social class, nature, obsession, fashion, finding beauty in the ordinary and the mystical quality of repetition.

Having learned to crochet in elementary school, Krumm was seduced early on by the beauty of the handmade and the potential elegance to be found in even the most pedestrian materials. By her second year of college, she had veered from a career in science to one in art, though her lifelong fascination with physics, mathematical sequences and patterns, and organic biological forms clearly informs much of her current work.

With open, bare-bones spaces and polished concrete floors, the recently remodeled space of the gallery was an appropriately muted foil for Krumm's spare, yet intricate, wire constructions. Highly ordered, usually symmetrical, the meticulously executed works, dramatically lit to cast shadows as palpable as the pieces themselves, emerged from ceilings and walls as if growing there. The ethereal, netlike forms belie the ruggedness of their materials. Though tantalizingly ambiguous and susceptible to multiple interpretations, Krumm's sculptures are neither didactic nor philosophically rarefied.

Such works as *Bloom (Lock)*, 2004, a bulbous purple floral form connected to, and weighted down by, an old lock, *Blooms (3)*, 2004, a trio of airborne exclamation points tethered to a large rusty hook, and *Bloom (Lime)*, 2004, a crocheted tube that emerges from a solid black metal disc, elongates and explodes into a lacy, lime-green flower, suggest extraterrestrial plant or animal life. Or perhaps they are botanical subjects existing only in the shadowy recesses of the artist's mind, or maybe Granny's lovingly made doilies gone terribly awry.

Other Krumm sculptures resemble components of clothing and fabric home accessories (both supposedly quintessential female preoccupations). *Pleated*, 2005, straightforwardly resembles a heavily pleated curtain crushed together on an industrial-strength U-ring. *Gathered, on Ring*, 2005, a skirt-like construction crocheted onto a heavy metal ring dangling from a wall hook, evokes a frilly castoff from a ghostly ballerina. A handkerchief morphed into a small-winged angel is suggested by *Pair*, 2005, while *Bag (Fin)*, 2005, calls to mind an haute couture handbag resembling a hanging fish.

Both *Fourfold Curtain*, 2005, a wedding veil-like construction employing a spartan grid pattern, and *Collar/Coil*, 2005, a long crocheted see-through tube, weighted by an enormous metal coil and topped by a fringed crown attached to heavy metal hooks, conjure up not only domestic decoration and lace collar associations, but also ritual headgear, with connections to cultural rites of passage and emblems of royalty.

Krumm's crocheted forms, some rigid and others collapsible, also hint at darker interpretations. *Cone (Sleeve)*, 2005, which ends in a fringed point, reminds us not only of a shirt sleeve or a fashionista's reticule but also of medieval chain mail armor, worn only by nobles who could afford the cost of such labor-intensive metal protection against sword-wielding enemies. Instruments of torture used during the Spanish Inquisition also come to mind.

Exploiting a venerable needlework technique, one that is highly repetitive, meditative and typically associated with domesticity, Krumm masterfully creates works that shed the gender affiliations assigned to the technique she employs and the objects customarily produced by it. It is her ingenious combining of the contemporary with the historical, the avant-garde with the traditional, the conventionally feminine with the conventionally masculine, that imbues Tracy Krumm's sculptures with the power to make us think as well as admire. —KATHLEEN VANESIAN

A solo exhibition of Tracy Krumm's work is at the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, Colorado (May 12-July 29).

Kathleen Vanesian is a freelance arts writer and photographer in Phoenix.

BOTH TRACY KRUMM SCULPTURES  
ARE CROCHETED, EPOXIED AND  
PATINATED METAL WIRE. RIGHT: *BAG*  
*(FIN)*, 2005, 39 BY 7 1/2 BY 7 INCHES.  
BOTTOM: *BLOOM (LIME)*, 2004, 12 1/2 BY  
5 BY 5 INCHES.

