

Primary Structures

May 17 - August 7, 2011



Black by Yvette Kaiser Smith

Primary Structures examines the way artists through the medium of contemporary knit and crochet are creating graphic abstractions, sculptural objects, and large-scale architectural pieces. Following on our provocative 2008 exhibit, *Beyond Knitting: Uncharted Stitches*, the current exhibit reveals how the artists employing simple linear and looping elements of knit and crochet, in combination with unconventional materials, broaden our understanding of the familiar by transforming these basic structures into large-scale art.

The exhibition includes work from the pioneers of textile art to emerging and established contemporary artists. *Primary Structures* showcases the current renaissance of knitting and crochet into compelling sculptural and graphic art, challenging the usual perceptions of these quintessential, domesticated techniques.

Included in this exhibit are four elegant pieces by **Mary Walker Phillips**, known for her seminal work in changing public perception of knitting as art. Her work provided an important context in paving the way for contemporary knit artists who continue to stretch the boundaries of the medium. In her graceful hangings Phillips uses natural linen and colors combined with complex knit patterns to create lacy, textured, improvisational pieces that fill space with intertwined webs and asymmetrical grids. Her innovative work of the late 1960's through the 1990's is free form, original patterning that resonates with the jazz riff. The artists in this exhibition, like Mary Walker Phillips are pushing the boundaries and exploring the flexibility of the knitted and crocheted medium.

Like Phillips, **Tracy Krumm** creates intricate patterning and texture with crochet, but using decidedly different and unusual materials. Her elegant pieces have a diaphanous look but her material is a thin copper wire that appears as a shimmering fabric. Her use of found objects incorporated into the composition of the piece adds a level of tension to the work, symbolically suggesting duality, identity and relationships.



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British artist **Susie Freeman** more directly addresses the fabric of our lives through her delicate pieces composed of monofilament pockets which encapsulates pills, packaging, and smoked cigarette stubs. In these works her themes explore consumerism, the pharmaceutical industry and the span of a person's life. This multitude of small objects protectively enveloped in knit, are a profound and evocative reminder of the tenuous human predicament.

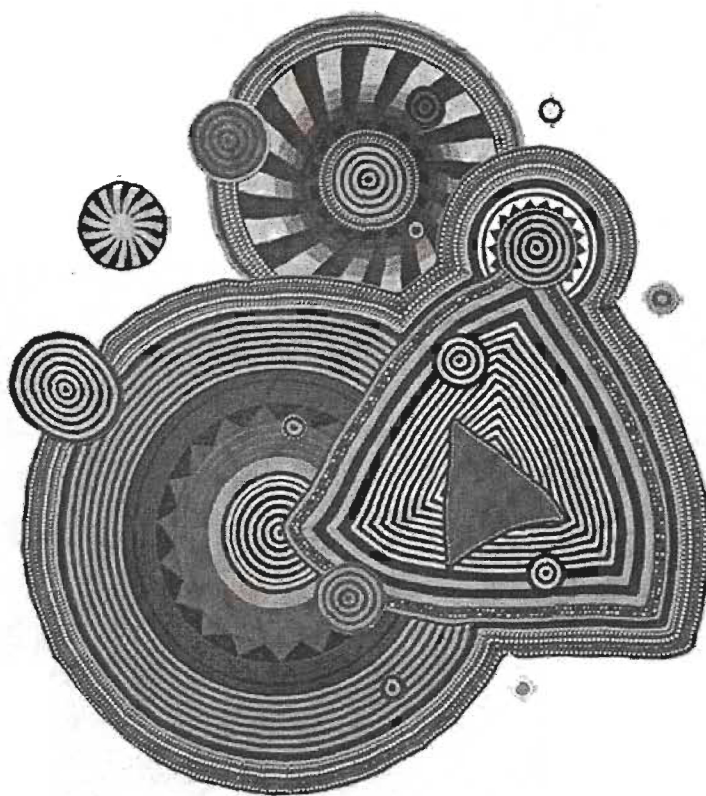
Lori Goldman's crocheted graphic sculptures, inspired by organic forms, are a study in repetition. These expressive shields are metaphors of a woman's role as comforter while being pulled in all directions with family, children, and obligations. The soft curved shape of the body of the form is in stark contrast to the protruding, prickly, growths sprouting from it. Like Freeman's work it evokes self-reflection and identity.

Using industrial materials, mathematics, and the language of art and architecture, **Yvette Kaiser Smith**, crochets continuous strands of fiberglass into large geometric shapes with resin applied to retain the form. Using math as an underlying life principle, and as a structural foundation for her work, the translucent repeated fan-shaped or conical forms curve out from the wall to define space and showcase the delicacy of stitches, while expanding the scale of the work and the medium.

Sheila Klein's work refers to architectural space. The negative spaces between the columns and lattice are an important compositional element of the work. Her series, *Hall of Architecture*, alludes to the geometric structure of buildings and lattice porticos, but blurs the boundaries between a realistic structure and a fantasy space.

Other artists' works inspired by nature include **Arline Fisch**, **Tatyana Yanishevsky** and **Adrienne Sloane**. Fisch creates exotic floral arrangements that delicately float upside down in an imaginary hanging garden. Using coated copper wire, this piece gives a fanciful perspective of natural beauty while evoking the legendary Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Approaching flora from a perspective of scale and realistic detail, Yanishevsky knits flowers for an oversized garden in which each sculpture uses a variety of fibers, colors, and stitches to describe the organs of a real plant. Her anatomically correct plants defy any usual perceptions as we gaze on these gigantic botanical specimens.

Inspired by current events, **Adrienne Sloane's** Asian styled triptych, *Troubled Waters*, engages us viscerally through the movement and shadows of its distorted stitches. While referencing recent devastating environmental occurrences, places and dates of major earthquakes and tsunamis on the floor below, remind the viewer of other disasters that



Trilogy by Xenobia Bailey

have occurred over millennia and the fragile relationship of humans to natural forces.

Xenobia Bailey uses crochet to psychologically map her identity—a way of visually communicating who she is. The contemporized mandala-like format is a symbolic microcosm of Bailey's world perspective. Her graphic patterns and bright colors are bold, rhythmic declarations of exuberance, celebration and joy.

In **Valerie Molnar's** abstract expressionistic wall installation, the knitted forms playfully spew around the wall in a delightful freeform movement. The knitted piece is like an abstract, hard edge painting.

The intent of *Primary Structures* is to present a view of art knitting and crochet that pushes the craft and stretches the limits of the medium. From its long history as a domesticated, utilitarian, women's textile activity to its transition, as seen here in the hands of these contemporary artists, knitting and crochet are enjoying a renaissance and the techniques and content are a multi-faceted creative force.

~ Co-curators

Deborah Corsini
Adrienne Sloane