

Textile Curator

Waking up the World to Contemporary Textile Art

Tracy Krumm



Charmed (2015)

102 h x 60 w x 24 d inches

Crocheted steel, blown glass (by artist Michael Boyd), fabricated and found steel



Plaid (Madras) (2015)

44.5 h x 40 w x 3 d inches

Crocheted steel, stainless, flax, cotton, paper thread and gimp, woven fabricated steel and patina



Double Chain (Sleeve) (2011)

73.5 h x 13 w x 14 d inches

Crocheted copper, found and fabricated metal, patina and resin



Stripes (Guate) (2015)

48 h x 39 w x 3 d inches

Crocheted steel, pigment coated wire and paper thread, woven fabricated steel, patina



Index (Autobiography) (2015)

68 h x 60 w x 7 d inches

Crocheted metal, fabricated steel, found objects, patina, pigment, resin, nails, thread



Draped (Screwed) (2012)

81 h x 57 w x 11 d inches

Crocheted bronze, nickel and copper, found and fabricated steel, found wooden quilt frame,
pigment, patina, resin



Cavity (Strainer) (2013)

52 h x 9 w x 13 d inches

Crocheted silk covered wire, mx dye, found and fabricated steel, resin



Strapped (Funnel) (2013)

45 h x 15 w x 7 d inches

Crocheted bronze and nickel, found and fabricated metal, leather strap, patina, resin



Portrait (Pantaloon) (2015)

68 h x 11 w x 11 d inches

Crocheted brass, blown glass (by artist Michael Boyd), found and fabricated steel, pigment, resin

Tracy Krumm lives in Saint Paul, Minnesota and has been an artist for over twenty years. She specialises in crochet using among other things wire, metal and found objects to create tactile and fascinating pieces that are in many private collections.

Were you interested in textiles from a young age?

Yes! As far back as I can remember, my grandmothers crocheted, tatted, stitched and sewed. I would watch with fascination as their fingers flew and beauty emerged. I learned to crochet around age seven, and did lots of “camp crafts” in the 60’s—macramé, woven hot pad holders, coasters on circular looms, pompoms, bead stringing.

Can you tell us about your background in textiles

While I was a student at the Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, I took an extension class in weaving. It was the first time I used a multi harness loom, a table loom—and I made a huge, heavy serape by sewing two matching woven panels together. By the time I was a sophomore, I had switched my major from the natural sciences to a program called Visual Design and Craftsmanship, and I got to work on a large floor loom. I was in heaven. My mentor there, Gail Tremblay, recommended I check out the textile program at the California College of Arts and Crafts (now California College of the Arts) in Oakland, California. When I found out I could get a degree in textiles, it all made sense. I knew it would be a lifetime of challenges, to try to survive as an artist, and it seemed like a crazy choice. So, I took two years off, sewed a lot of clothing and did beadwork and cleaned houses for a living—and then I went to CCAC. I received my BFA in Textiles with High Distinction in the end of 1987. In 1995, I received my MFA in Visual Art from Vermont College of Fine Arts. That's when I started working sculpturally with textile processes in metal.

How do you describe your work?

It is easiest for me to put my finger on materials and process – textile techniques in metal, found objects, forging, manipulating, hand-constructed, 100% handmade with some kitchen sink experiments and magic thrown in. I work all the time, even if it is just in my head, and sometimes my studio practice feels erratic; sometimes it is totally systematised; sometimes it is prolific. As for the content, this is much more elusive. I see everything in colour and in three dimensions, in both my waking mind and in my dreams. Throughout my life, my interests and skill sets have been broad, I have traveled countless miles, and my experiences are all still amazing. Everything is so connected for me; I wouldn't even venture to try to put my finger on what my work is about, specifically. I do know it is always about making connections with something that I have already known or experienced – and it's about perspective and interpretation, which are constantly refreshed and in flux as time marches on.

Were you always drawn to crochet or was it a gradual process?

I have always been drawn to crochet. It works like I think – building block on building block, but fluid and dimensional. One atom becomes a molecule; things grow and mutate. I tried to knit when I was little, but I kept dropping stitches, so I would have to count them every row. That lasted about a week – long enough to make my grandpa a scarf. Then someone showed me how to crochet, and I never had to worry about dropping a stitch again. Learning how to crack the code and read a pattern without adult supervision when I was seven or eight, so I could make a friend a hot pink floral doily vest for her birthday – it was love, love, love.

Do you use a fine gauge of wire and does it hurt your hands?

Everyone always asks about my hands. I use a fine gauge wire, usually 26 or 28 and the wire is always soft. If I need it to be heavier, I just use multiple strands, so that it stays

flexible. I wear fingerless spandex support gloves from the drugstore, and wrap first aid tape around my fingers if my skin gets sensitive.

Can you talk us through designing a piece of work please?

I keep a sketchbook, but it mostly looks like a lot of scribbles and simple line drawings, notes, measurements and formulas. I make samples and do a lot of calculating. And sometimes I just make material if I don't have an end result in mind. I always work on multiple pieces at a time because it helps to be flexible. Sometimes I play with the found materials and refabricate things by forging and grinding and then I hang or set these things around my studio and live with them. I use tape, clothespins, and string to hold parts and pieces together. Eventually something emerges through the combination of thinking and making and experience. My work is an odd sort of document. It is not really the manifestation of planning or capturing a certain vision, rather it emerges from doing.

I know it's a hard question but how long does a piece generally take to make?

Let's just say anywhere from a couple of days to several years...I have pieces I started a decade ago that I still have not finished, and I am constantly reworking things until they get worn out or sold.

There is much debate about the difference between craft and fine art. What are your thoughts on the subject?

I have lived through this debate more than once in my career. It is like a Mobius strip. Whatever craft was in the 60's, it got me to be a maker, which led me to become an artist. I prefer the term "art" in the context of my work. If I spent time getting caught up in the debate, I wouldn't get any work done. Let's say I am a crafter at heart, but an artist by trade and leave it at that.

What has been your proudest career moment?

I was awarded a McKnight Visual Arts Fellowship for 2015-2016. I screamed when I found out I won. The recognition, connections and financial support from the award have been incredible.

What advice can you give aspiring textile artists?

Take time to master something. Try everything, but really dive into whatever makes sense and makes you feel good. Embrace the meditation of it, and be patient. Pay attention to the inherent properties of materials when you are problem solving. And be sure to do your research! Know your source material, what exists in the world and what has come before you. You may not be inventing anything new, but you are making new relationships, creating relevance and making meaning. That's what it's all about.

Where can we see your work?

I currently have two pieces included in the exhibition, "Interconnections: The Language of Basketry" at the Hunterdon Museum in Clinton, New Jersey through September 4.

<http://hunterdonartmuseum.org/portfolio-items/interconnections-language-basketry/?portfolioID=2352>

On the 4 – 6th of November I will be exhibiting work at "Vogue Knitting LIVE" at the Minneapolis Convention Center in Minnesota. They have invited me to set up shop, work on my art and chat with textile lovers all weekend.

<https://www.vogueknittinglive.com/minneapolis/12985>

My work is always on view at Andrea Schwartz Gallery in San Francisco, California. www.asgallery.com

www.tracykrumm.com

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