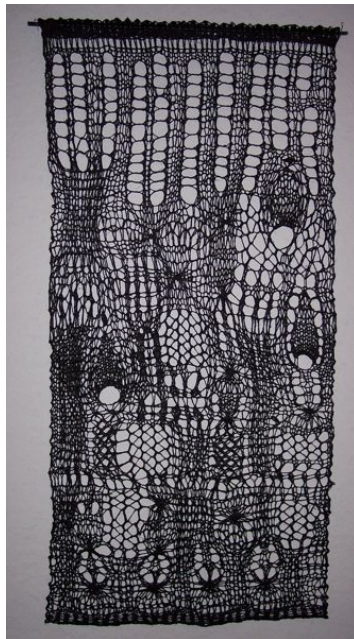


Knitting and Crochet

Knitting and Crochet are undoubtedly crafts, but they are also art forms. The art of knitting was revolutionized by Mary Walker Phillips (1923-2007). As her New York Times obituary stated, “What Miss Phillips did, starting in the early 1960s, was to liberate knitting from the yoke of the sweater. Where traditional knitters were classical artists, faithfully reproducing a score, Miss Phillips knit jazz. In her hands, knitting became a free-form, improvisational art, with no rules, no patterns and no utilitarian end in sight.” Phillips urged everyday knitters to stop blindly following patterns and instead use unstructured knitting as way to creatively express themselves. Phillips suggested plotting out one’s own designs on graph paper or simply letting the yarn do the talking, encouraging knitters to “translate with yarn the atmosphere of the inspiration. Phillips’s work is today on display at NYC’s Museum of Modern Art, the Smithsonian’s Cooper-Hewitt Museum and the Art Institute of Chicago. Below is an example of Phillips’ work, *Knitted Wall Hanging* (1965).



During the '70s and '80s artists like Louise Bourgeois ¹ and Rosemarie Trockel carried on the trend for creating art in yarn. They used knitting and crocheting as feminist tools as well as an art, a way to connect the craft as women's work with domestic repression. Many contemporary artists have carried on using knitting and crocheting to talk about an incredibly wide range of themes, from politics to ground-breaking social change. Other artists have used knitting and crochet simply as a fresh and exciting medium for creating beautiful things. One such artist is Kaffe Fassett (born Frank Havrah

¹ Louise Bourgeois is the sculptor who created *Maman*, the giant spider you saw in *Unusual Sculptures from Around the World*.

Fassett, 1937-present) whom The Little Wool Company called “probably the best-known knitter on the planet”. Here’s a fabulous Fassett original.



Fassett is also a quilter. This is Seed Packet Quilt.



A 2017 article from *Artsy.net* said “Subversive knitting. Radical crocheting. These phrases may sound contradictory, but marrying “craft” to “cool” has become commonplace in the last decade, as once-dowdy domestic hobbies have metamorphosed into trendy pastimes for the creative set. “

Orly Genger (1979-present) is a crochet artist who crochets without hooks, just her fingers. She has created massive installations using lobster rope. Her 2013 installation in Madison Square Park, NYC entitled *Red, Yellow and Blue* required 1.4 million feet of rope and 3500 gallons of paint.



Jim Drain (1975-present) started knitting as a student at the Rhode Island School of Design. Known for his vivid, abstract textile sculptures, he has also ventured into wearable art. He has, for example, created a collection of limited edition sweaters, two of which are shown below.



The Polish artist, Olek (1978-present), crochets powerful political messages, both overt and subliminal. Some of her work is known as “yarn bombing”. Yarn bombing (or “guerrilla knitting”) is part street art, part graffiti, and part activism, which combines the domestic crafts of knitting and crocheting with the civil disobedience of “tagging” of public objects, in order to make an artistic statement. The photo below is Olek’s yarn bombing of the Wall Street bull.



The following is a link to a short video featuring Olek and her work throughout the world, including her community-based crocheted murals honoring American women.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cp1EiX7oxjw>

One last artist: Jonah Larson, who has been called a child prodigy of crochet. He taught himself to crochet when he was five. He crochets every day. Now 12, he has his own Instagram account where he has 270,000 followers, has written books on crochet, and gives tutorials. He donates part of the proceeds from sales of his crocheted pieces to the small town in Ethiopia from which he was adopted. Here’s a link to an article about him from *Vogue*. <https://www.vogue.com/article/jonah-larson-crochet-genius>

This is a photo of Jonah and his mom with one of his creations.

