



Who's Who In Crochet

A focus of interest on those that have inspired crochet

Norma Minkowitz

"Norma believes that her early work as a student, with a primary focus on drawing with pen and ink and sketching with pencil, was an intimate record of an artist's imagination. Inspired by linear elements, she pursued the human body as a subject matter. These earlier works, she believes, led to her mature work in fiber (also a linear element). 'In 1983, I crocheted around a shoe, removed the shoe, and discovered that I had created a transparent form. I felt that I was still drawing, but with fiber instead of pen and ink.' Del Pitt Feldman in 1972: 'Crochet has been a responsible field for Norma; and I applaud her ability to develop a unique art form which respects and celebrates the materials and the technique.'



In 1986, *Fiber R/Evolution*, a major

re-examination of fiber as an artistic medium, opened at the Milwaukee Art Museum. 'Although in existence since the 1960s, fiber art had escaped the notice of the art world. If art can quote the great crafts traditions, why cannot present-day explorations of these materials and techniques be art too? Minkowitz was included among the eighteen artists who have done innovative and influential work and are celebrated.'

Over time, her pieces got bigger, and more figurative. 'I always crocheted around something to get the form, whether a dress form or mannequin, or handmade shape,' she says. I was actually casting the fiber like you would cast in bronze.'

An iconic fiber artist whose medium is crochet, Norma Minkowitz is in twenty-seven museum collections, and she has won many awards. A monograph of her work was published by *Telos Art Publishing* in 2004. Norma states, 'Creating sculpture in fiber has been my long-time commitment to the numerous possibilities of interlaced forms stiffened into hand mesh-like structures. The web-like forms define volume and space. The process becomes a part of the content, and both structure and surface are



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achieved simultaneously. My sculptures often make statements about enclosures and entrapment, suggesting the safety of a shelter or the confinement of a cage.'



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'For many years I have been exploring the possibilities of crocheted, interlaced sculptures stiffened into hard mesh-like structures. The web-like fabric defines volume and form. Process becomes a part of the content, and both structure and surface are achieved simultaneously. The vessels take the form of human bodies and body parts, as well as natural and geometric shapes. Interaction between the forms and the themes of containment create work that is both personal and psychologically complex.

I often dwell on the mysterious cycles of death and regeneration. In many of my works, twigs and branches are left inside and are visible in an eerie way through the exterior of the sculpture, often suggesting connections to the human skeletal or circulatory systems. The outer netting obscures the shape within creating a sense of ambiguity in the shadows of the work. On the surface, paint and stitched lines appear and disappear depending on the light and viewing position. Intricate and random patterns are created by the nature of the open mesh structures. All these elements combine to convey a sense of energy as the viewer moves around my sculpture. Conceptually, the interlaced fibers can lend a wonderful duality—simultaneously creating a delicate quality, but also implying the strength of steel mesh—symbolic of the human condition.

Recently, Minkowitz has been filling in her hollow structures with claylike modeling paste, an approach that shifts focus to line and texture. In *Inner Sanctum*, a bowl-like shape appears almost to have small spheres growing from within. These Minkowitz created by tying a piece of crocheted fabric around beads of different sizes, hardening it, then removing the ties and beads. Rendered in dark colors, the effect is elemental and organic, dark and dreamlike.



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Drawing continues to be important to me and I find that the threads and wires I use mimic the cross hatching and irregularities of my pen and ink drawings. My sculpture evolves into a three-dimensional drawing. Recently I have been filling the open spaces of the fiber's netting with modeling paste having plaster-like consistency. This process creates a surface that focuses on and highlights the lines I draw with stitches, introducing a bas relief of concept, energy and movement. I often highlight these drawn lines with colors of paint.

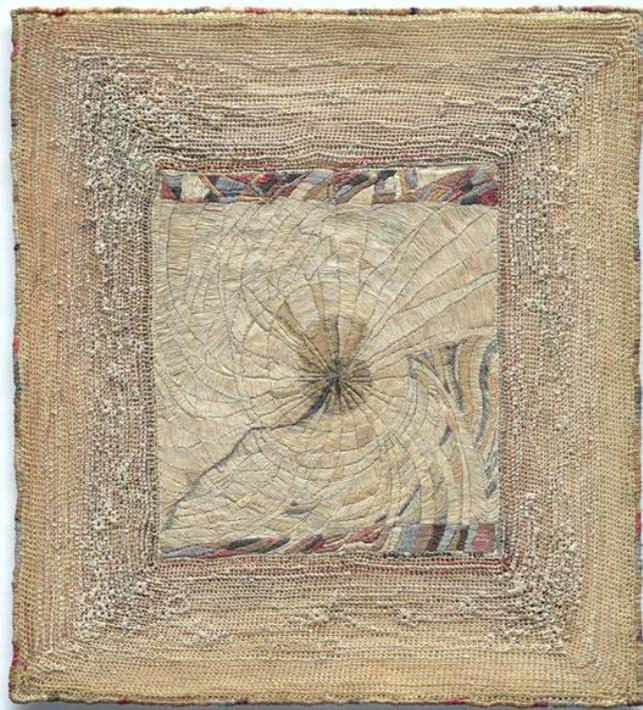
As my work evolves, one thing remains consistent: I am engaged in creating works that weave the personal and universal together.”

Images:

1-*Uh Oh...We Must Have Skipped a Stitch*: crochet, 4 x 8.5 x 8; 1981.

2-*Inner Sanctum*: crochet, fiber & mixed media; 2012

3-*Cyclone Coming*: crochet, mixed media; 2019.



Resources:

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