

PORTFOLIO 395

FOURTH EDITION MAGAZINE



CROCHET FOR THE MIND AND SOUL
Eve Gaal walks us through the ins and outs how to start on your first crochet masterpiece

ARTIST PROFILE
Artist Peter Skotnica presents a glimpse at woodworking in the local art scene

A JOURNEY OF SELF-IMPROVEMENT

*Written by Eve Gaal, M.A, Portfolio 395 Contributor
Special Thanks to Barbara Johnson for sharing her Crochet pieces*



Quick beanies for charity, by Eve Gaal

Studies have shown that crocheting releases natural antidepressants called serotonin and dopamine, which can balance your mood, and improve your relationships. It also reduces the levels of another hormone called cortisol, which causes stress. While cortisol is necessary for regulating our metabolism and blood sugar levels, even too much of a good thing can cause havoc in our bodies. Crocheting can help stabilize this hormone and improve our health.

As you take up crocheting and study the instructions, remember the plan is to relax. Take your time learning the repetitive movements. Whatever you do, don't get frustrated. This repetition is what lowers blood pressure and heart rates. Once you've held onto a hook and created that first chain, the rhythm of crocheting will fall into place, and seem like a natural extension of your creative process.



Adorable baby dress by local resident, Barbara Johnson

Supplies

First, you'll need a metal crochet hook. These come in many different sizes, but for starters it's best to practice with a larger one, such as a J or K sized hook. You can choose acrylic, cotton, bamboo or wool yarn, but don't forget wool shrinks, cotton stretches and bamboo is pricey. Soft, budget-friendly synthetic yarns are perfect for most projects and are available in a wide variety of colors. Avid artisans use everything from string, raffia, even old tee-shirts ripped into strips. Amazingly, some clever, kind-hearted artists, make a sort of yarn from recycled plastic grocery bags, in order to create sleeping mats for the homeless!

Abbreviations

When using a pattern, it will indicate the weight of the yarn and the hook size you'll need to maintain the proper gauge. There are beginner's, intermediate and experienced patterns available. For your first project, choose a beginner's pattern.

Written instructions on a pattern will say something like ch 26. That means chain 26. Every project begins with a chain of some length. If you're making a large afghan it might say ch 200.

Once you turn to the next row, you'll single crochet or double crochet, abbreviated as sc or dc. Basic abbreviations are ss for a slip stitch— (you don't put any yarn over your hook for a slip stitch.)

—sc for the single crochet, dc for the double crochet and a hdc which is a half double crochet, Sp means spaces, YO means yarn over and of course, st means stitch. (Online videos can help you master each individual stitch.)

Practice Makes Perfect

Next, you'll want to create the foundation chain. Guess what? If you make a mistake all you have to do is pull on the yarn and it unravels. So easy.

Make a slipknot, insert your hook, loop the yarn over, and pull it through the loop. Congratulations, you've made your first stitch. Keep going and before long you'll have a chain. Make 25 even stitches and you should have a 7-inch-long chain. When you turn to do the second row, make sure you place the hook through the second chain from the hook. Now, you're in the second row of what will become a 7-inch square. Loop the yarn over and draw through both loops on your hook. You just made a single crochet, which means you're on your way to having many comfortable, entertaining hours of creativity!

Once you've made the 7-inch square, you can keep going or change colors. You can make several of these squares, sew them together and make a blanket or scarf. Of course, you can learn another stitch, besides the single crochet—but only if you feel like you're ready to add more to your repertoire. The next stitch you'll want to master is called the double-crochet.

One Stitch at a Time

There are countless stitches, and learning the how-to part is fun, and good for you too. If you enjoy challenging yourself, crochet is a great way to expand and increase your concentration. Practicing new stitches and following patterns exercises your mind. Most patterns will tell you to count your stitches. The repetitive counting helps strengthen your concentration while improving your memory. Studies have indicated, that there is a correlation between crocheting and its positive effects on dementia.

With a variety of unusual stitches, such as the waffle stitch, shell stitch, moss stitch, the popcorn stitch, cluster stitch, snapdragon stitch, ripple stitch, fan stitch, etc. there's no way to get bored. Each stitch is happening in the now, making you mindful of the moment. It's a special journey only limited by your supply of yarn.



Afghan by local resident, Barbara Johnson

Enter the Zen of Crochet

There are thousands of novel ways to express yourself through crocheting. The lively colors alone can enliven your spirit. Will tonight be a hat, a blanket, a purse—maybe a gift?

Forget the horrible commute, the technological blunders, the high-end drama at work, even the litter-box upset, and enter into a natural form of meditation, while being creative. The phone will still ring, not much will change, but you'll know there's a pleasant evening ahead. Better yet, wear some noise-canceling headphones so you can focus on your own world of crochet, where every stitch is a prayer for peace, and your fingers work on a tangible piece of your heart.



Colorful baby cape by local resident, Barbara Johnson

THE LOVE OF ART: A CONVERSATION

Piece Written by Alec Parra-Miranda, Portfolio 395 Editor at Large



Artist Peter Skotnica posed with his piece titled "What a Day"

Peter Skotnica is what you consider an outdoorsy person when he grew up, being a kid from sunny Southern California area the outdoors was a must for his childhood. "I grew up in Orange County, playing football, baseball, basketball, riding waves and playing disc golf." A lot of Artists have interesting beginnings when it comes to starting their art journey. Skotnica was through his elementary school education, "Elementary school was my first exposure to arts and crafts. I remember that I would finish the teachers projects and always ask to do another one. Junior

high was around the time where I was first introduced to wood carvings." Through his primary education, the art scene intrigued Skotnica. Woodworking is a passion of Peter's. He looks at a piece of wood as an opportunity. "Each piece of wood is unique and I always try to create something new and different works that are one of a kind." Skotnica's thought process is also intriguing to look into. In a sense, he lets the wood figures speak to him. "The attractiveness of the figure and grain dictates whether to carve, paint, embellish and bring out nature's warmth



Blew by Peter Skotnica



Sailboat by Peter Skotnica



Sunset set 17th Street, Newport Beach

and beauty for each piece of wood.”

Skotnica has had his work featured in the local art galleries like the Wine Country Art Gallery. He wishes to take his work to more local galleries. “I am motivated to create, Selling my art has been trying lately, because of COVID. There’s not a lot of places where I can actively sell my art work. But I know It’s easier to sell my wooden letters.” A new venture he is taking on is the start of a new business, with a business name pending, he seeks to specialize in creating and selling cus-

tom rustic wooden letters, which can be used for a variety of decorative purposes. Ultimately, Skotnica’s pieces are deserving of recognition in the art scene as the simplicity of his wood figure pieces brings serenity to the eye. When asked what it means to be considered an artist, Skotnica replied, “When I have been in galleries, shows, art walks, etc. I think and feel like it’s the artist and people who appreciate what I do, and always, I love what other artists create.”



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“Our goal is to first gather the Artists, the rest will come to see what’s going on.”