

YARN BOMBING

The Art of Crochet and Knit Graffiti

Mandy Moore and Leanne Prain



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YARN BOMBING

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Table of Contents



- 9** FOREWORD
- 11** ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CHAPTER 1

13 WHY YARN GRAFFITI IS THE BOMB

In the beginning... / 20

Art and activism / 22

But is it art? / 29

Graffiti and street art / 32

AN INTERVIEW WITH MASQUERADE / 36

CHAPTER 2

41 HOW TO BUILD YOUR ARSENAL

Where to begin / 44

Equipment / 46

Plan your attack on the streets / 49

Some places are the bomb / 50

How to measure up / 51

Show your stealth / 52

AN INTERVIEW WITH INCOGNITO / 56



CHAPTER 3

61 BASIC TAGGING: RECTANGULAR TAGS

Gauge is your friend / 63

Swatching / 64

Blocking / 66

Put gauge to work for you / 68

Fun with swatches / 70

PATTERNS:

Stripes / 71

Chevron / 72

Bobbles / 73

Sewing it up / 75

PATTERNS: What else can you do
with a rectangular tag? / 75

Monster Feet / 76

Chainlink Weave / 79

"I Wasn't Here" Embroidered Tag / 81

AN INTERVIEW WITH KNITTED LANDSCAPE / 84

CHAPTER 4

91 GET YOUR CREW TOGETHER

XXL or XXS? / 93

Good reasons to build a crew / 93

How to recruit crew members / 94

Now what? Meet with your crew / 97

To name or not to name? / 98

PATTERN: Multimedia Appreciation Tags / 102

Write your manifesto / 106

Group projects / 106

AN INTERVIEW WITH EDIE OF

THE LADIES FANCYWORK SOCIETY / 108



CHAPTER 5

113 TAKING IT TO THE STREETS

Why we love to tag / 115

Get started / 116

Show your smarts / 116

Is Big Brother watching? / 118

Bombing with two—or a crew / 120

How to improvise if your tag doesn't fit / 121

What if you get caught? / 122

PATTERNS: Yarn bombing essentials / 123

Knitting Kninja Threads / 124

Convertible Biking Gloves / 130

Tagging Toolkit Cuff / 134

Hoodie Vest / 137

Switcheroo Sweater / 143

AN INTERVIEW WITH MICRO-FIBER MILITIA / 149

CHAPTER 6

157 MASTER TAGGING

PATTERNS: Inspired by nature / 158

Knitted Tulip and Mushroom / 159

Prickly Pear Prosthetic / 162

Mutha Earth / 164

Treesweater / 167

PATTERNS: Shoes on a Wire / 170

Hanging Shoes / 170

Bolo Balls / 174

Elf Stockings / 177

PATTERNS: Soft focus / 180

Knitted Poster Frame / 180

Crocheted Scallop Tags / 184



CHAPTER 7

187 YOUR INTERNATIONAL CREW

Connect with others / 188

Guerrilla knitting and crochet online / 189

 Inspiration: Graffiti / 193

 Online Craft communities / 194

Tutorials and crafty help / 196

Tag the world / 196

AN INTERVIEW WITH STICKKONTAKT / 198

CHAPTER 8

203 FLIGHTS OF IMAGINATION

Stupendous feats / 205

 The Pink M.24 Chaffee / 205

 The Hare / 206

 The Knitting Machine / 209

 The Longest Scarf in the World / 212

 The Knitted Mile / 212

Think bigger / 212

Go big, go fast, or go home / 216

AN INTERVIEW WITH MAGDA SAYEG OF KNITTA / 219

226 GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

229 INDEX

Foreword

AMY R. SINGER, EDITOR OF KNITTY.COM

My husband and I kayak. We're not the white-water rapids types—at least I'm not—but give us a bit of flat water and we can handle ourselves. We've paddled a strange assortment of places: a drought-season river in Vermont; a silent lake in the middle of Algonquin Park, quietly chasing the loons; an afternoon's jaunt along a quiet Cape Cod river that opened into the Atlantic Ocean, teaching us that we needed to do more research on tides before we ever tried that again; and the Don River on the one-day-a-year Save the Don eco-paddle and portage-fest. Our main launch point for a quiet afternoon's paddle is Cherry Beach, where we get to explore a tiny corner of Lake Ontario and then head over to Toronto Island for a popsicle.

Most of the things we've come across during our various paddles have been what you'd expect. We've seen huge carp, first noticed by the large splash they leave behind when they try to chase us out of their territory. Loons. Kelp. Things tossed overboard from pleasure craft that shouldn't have been. Seagull-poo-covered meeting places.

But the most notable sight on any of our trips was found close to home. We landed on the beach at Ward's Island, parked our kayaks, and on our way to grab our usual popsicle, we were stopped dead in our tracks by a crocheted tree. A linden tree, covered in intricate, delicate, perfect crochet.

It was as if the tree had slipped on an elastic lace bodysuit, the fit was so perfect. Except that the lace was done in fine, notoriously unstretchy

cotton yarn, which meant the skintight fit of the piece was due to painstaking, careful work. The design was symmetrical and not, reminiscent of nature in sections, and nothing that could naturally evolve on its own in other places. I had no idea who had created this work of art, but I had great respect for the artist.

In much the same way, I stumbled into one of the co-authors of this book the first time through her work. Mandy Moore was introduced to me as a powerfully good knitter and designer, and brilliant at math. These are the essential characteristics of a successful technical editor (someone who makes sure knitting patterns are correct and knittable before publishing). So, based on a glowing recommendation, and without having met her first, I hired Mandy to be the Technical Editor for my magazine, Knitty. She's everything she was advertised to be and more, and we've worked together now from opposite sides of the country for more than four years. I'm thrilled and honored to be a tiny part of her first book. I haven't yet met Leanne, but any friend of Mandy's...

As I was writing this foreword, a quick web search provided pictures of the exact lace piece I'd found on Ward's Island, as well as the artist's name: Janet Morton (see [flickr.com/photos/karmakazi_/135134485](https://www.flickr.com/photos/karmakazi_/135134485)). Of course, she's one of the artists profiled in this book—Mandy and Leanne have written a rather deliciously comprehensive volume on this new subject.

I can't wait to see the final version of the book when it's released to the public. I've got a special popsicle set aside just for the occasion.



Linden in Lace, Janet Morton, 2003. Photo: Andrew Harris



CHAPTER 1

Why Yarn Graffiti is the Bomb





People have responded. They see this obviously hand-knitted piece that has been wrapped around something that is completely inanimate, and it turns alive. In fact, it not only turns alive, there is something comforting and loving about it. You don't look at the pieces we wrap and get angry or mad. You are happy.

—MAGDA SAYEG, FOUNDER OF KNITTA



PREVIOUS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM: Vancouver artist KnitGirl created this intarsia likeness based on a childhood photo of street artist Redrum that he often uses in his own work. Photo: Knitgirl. Wassup sign in Stockholm, Sweden, by Stickkontakt. Photo: Malin Larsson. A colorful hit by Stickkontakt in Stockholm, Sweden. Photo: Malin Larsson. Two yarn bombers scout their territory. Photo: Jeff Christenson. THIS PAGE, ABOVE: Yarn bombing in the downtown core of Vancouver, Canada.





ON CITY STREET CORNERS ALL OVER THE WORLD, yarn graffiti artists snake their work around telephone poles, wrap it through barbed wire, and flip cozies onto car antennas. Originally started in Houston, Texas, by a crew named Knitta Please (a.k.a. Knitta), there is now an international guerrilla knitting movement embraced by artists of all ages and nationalities. Knit and crochet graffiti has been seen in countries from Canada to Chile to China. This book has been written to inspire you to take up the needles (or hooks) and join us in world yarn domination!

Merging the disciplines of installation art, needlework, and street art, yarn bombing takes many forms. It generally involves the act of attaching a handmade item to a street fixture or leaving it in the

PREVIOUS PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM, LEFT TO RIGHT: Knitted Landscape leaves a mushroom in Slovakia. Photo: Rasto Meliska. Crochet work by Micro-Fiber Militia member Timeline, in Chicago. Photo: Micro-Fiber Militia. ArtYarn wraps a pole in crochet. Photo: Sarah Hardacre. A striped crochet pole cozy. Photo: The Ladies Fancywork Society. THIS PAGE LEFT TO RIGHT: Sparkly JafaGirl art, Yellow Springs, Colorado. Photo: Corrine Bayraktaroglu. A blossoming fancywork by The Ladies Fancywork Society, Denver, Colorado. Photo: The Ladies Fancywork Society



Yarn bombing can be political, it can be heart-warming, and it can be funny.

landscape; however, this varies from artist to artist. Yarn graffiti can be as complex as a sweater that has been created to cover a statue or as simple as a crocheted rectangle wrapped around a lamp post. Some artists tag items as tiny as door handles, others create works large enough to cover a public monument. Some yarn bombing works are elaborate, consisting of sophisticated stitch patterns; other artists create flat pieces in one type of stitch. Some people choose to tag their favorite hangouts, other people tag on a whim. Some knit graffiti is brightly colored and in-your-face, other pieces are placed in obscure locations with the hope that a sharp-eyed observer will spot them.

The first thing I did was a little black and pink, diagonal striped cozy for a snow gate. I was kind of on a mission because I wanted to start hitting my neighborhood pretty hard, and so I kept track of all the pieces I did. I know pretty much all of the early ones—I obsessively kept track of them. —KNITGIRL (VANCOUVER, CANADA)

People have various motivations to partake in yarn bombing. The juxtaposition of yarn and graffiti is humorous to some artists, while others see it as a more serious act that builds on a long-standing practice of renegade street art. Others do it to escape the boredom of tedious day jobs. Some want to liberate the needle arts from their long-held association with utilitarian purposes. Yarn bombing can be political, it can be heart-warming, and it can be funny. Most of all, yarn graffiti is unexpected, and it resonates with almost everyone who encounters it, crafters and non-crafters alike.

THIS PAGE: Magda Sayeg, founder of Knitta, attaches a tag in Seattle. Photo: William Anthony
NEXT PAGE: KnitGirl bombs Strathcona in Vancouver, Canada. Photo: KnitGirl