

FIBER : DEBORAH CROSS



MEET Deborah Cross and **WATCH** a video that features the artist at work and shows her connection with the Wearable Art Movement. **MAKE** an artwork inspired by these artists and **REFLECT** on your finished artwork as you consider what you might want to make next.

MEET

MEET DEBORAH CROSS,
fiber artist.

"...being creative is who I am, ...making clothes is who I am.."

—Deborah Cross



Top: Deborah Cross, Silk Jacket, 2007. Paul Schraub photo. Above: Deborah Cross, Woman's Blouse. Alexandra Felix photo.

DEBORAH CROSS EMERGED as a fiber artist in California in the wake of the 1960s when reverting to natural and handmade was a motivating factor in creative communities. In the Craft in America segment featuring her work, she reflects on her journey as a maker, highlighting the importance of her process which involved sourcing Cardiff cashmere and raw wool and spinning her own yarn to create her own woven textiles. She attributes her introduction to sewing and fiber arts to her mother who taught her how to sew as a young teen. Her words echo a lasting love of the craft that sustains her in the duration of her career.

Deborah Cross communicates that she is "...drawn to the interplay of fabric and the body." Her originally conceived wearable art addresses the relationships between color and texture, and the final unique creations reside at the intersection of high end, one-of-a-kind fiber design and expressly crafted works that possess a genuine ease of wear. She states, "I believe that art and comfort can coexist in beautiful pieces that express harmony between materials, form, and function."

The wearable art movement propelled the notion of dress and fabric into an object of art. Born of this movement, these pieces intertwined the idea of handmade textiles with a sense of creative purpose and intention. This notion of "art to wear" ushered in the idea that textiles could be elevated as works of art that functioned as tools of communication. The one-of-a-kind objects created by these artists, whether on display or publicly worn, garnered attention as statement pieces often propelling an artistic or political point of view. Wearable artworks emerged in our culture as objects with a purpose beyond merely aesthetic body coverings, rising to become pieces that operated as agents of expression and change.

WATCH



WATCH Deborah Cross and her fellow fiber artists taking part in the creation of Wearable Art. Listen to her discuss her passion for the media and observe the connections she makes to her life as a creator and her place in the fashion industry.

<https://youtu.be/t8Tb1aOydVY>

After viewing the segment, consider the following:

- Deborah Cross began working in this tradition after being taught to sew by her mother. What might inspire you to explore this art making process?
- After viewing the pieces showcased in the segment, was there a work of wearable art that you enjoyed the most? If that item was a part of your own personal collection, where might you wear it?
- When viewing the works in the segment what ideas, symbols or design motifs stood out to you?
- How would you describe the artist's use of color, pattern and form in their pieces? How did the artists use these aspects of design to communicate a message to the viewer?
- Which type of garment do you find most intriguing? Which type of garment might you be compelled to attempt in your own art making?
- What statement might your work of wearable art convey?

MAKE

"Mass produced clothing is soulless"

—Melissa Leventon

Make your own original wearable art! The artists of the Wearable Art Movement highlighted their passion for designing and creating unique works of art that also happened to be functional clothing. In the segment, we are exposed to scarves, coats, hats, and exquisite coverings for the body in all forms and fabrics. These works act as statements while also being functional. What might you create?

Gather materials to create your work by beginning in your own closet or a local thrift store.

Search for a piece or pieces that inspire your creativity based on their color, texture or pattern. Do you already own a piece of clothing that could be transformed into a new piece of wearable art?

Allow your creativity to lead as you consider what you might make out of the fabric. What might your piece say to the viewer of your garment? What might the wearer feel wearing your piece? Guided by form, texture, color, pattern, and an idea, select a few coordinating fabrics to begin your adventure in the fiber arts!

Gather fabric shears, straight pins, tailor's chalk, fabric markers, fabric paint, fabric glue, embroidery floss, and any additional embellishments (beads, patches, etc.) that could enhance your design. Additionally,



Janet Lipkin, *Untitled*, c. 1972. Courtesy of Garry & Sylvia Bennett, M. Lee Fatheree photograph

decide whether you would like to incorporate hand-stitching or machine sewing into your exploration into wearable art. You may also refer to the “FIBER: MEDIUM & METHODS” sheet in your packet for more information, or consult the internet for additional tutorials on hand-stitching techniques or machine sewing instructions.

Here are some things to think about as you prepare to make your own wearable artwork:

- What article of clothing most appeals to your sense as a designer and maker? What kind of wearable piece will you create?
- You could express a feeling, tell a story, or make a statement. You may use words or imagery in your design.
- Ideas can come from many sources—things you see all around you. It might be a memento from a family trip, a novel you just finished reading, or a special moment in time you’d like to remember. Let your interests guide your choices and inform your work.
- You may embellish your garment with symbols. Consider beads, appliques or patches to embellish your final piece.
- Use tailor’s chalk or fabric markers to begin to mark your textile for design elements, cutting or alteration.
- As necessary to suit your design idea, use fabric shears to alter areas of your garment or to make changes to coordinating textiles that you will incorporate into your artwork.
- Glue, stitch or sew your pieces together as you construct your work.
- Consider how your piece will be worn or displayed once completed. Envision the final product and consider the way in which you might incorporate the piece into your wardrobe. Does your work coordinate with any existing article of clothing you typically favor?
- Proudly wear your new wearable art piece at an upcoming event.

REFLECT

AS YOU CONCLUDE the creation of your work, think about your process.

- How did it feel to step into the role of fashion designer? Did you find the process satisfying, or more challenging than you predicted?
- Describe how you would want the wearer of your garment to feel. Summarize the energy it holds using one word.
- What do you hope your garment communicates to those who will view it on the body?
- Are you pleased with your finished piece? Why or why not?