

artist profile

Adrienne Sloane

name

Adrienne Sloane

based

Munroe Centre for the Arts
Lexington, MA, USA

web

www.adriennesloane.com
www.adriennesloane.blogspot.com

email

aonels@yahoo.com

"My work aspires to dissolve the boundaries between craft and art, mindful of the historical context of the medium." So says the artistic statement of American artist, Adrienne Sloane, who uses the age old form of knitting to produce moving works about everything from war to leaking urns, tutus and tea pots. She is also a sought after teacher, holding workshops in artful and sculptural knitting both at home and in far flung destinations such as Peru and Bolivia. She will be in Australia and NZ later this year.



Top: 'Fated Glory' 2008. Materials: linen. Technique: knit. 55" x 46".
Left: 'Uncle Sam's Tea Party' 2007. Materials: wire. Technique: knit. 12.5" x 18.5" x 20" variable. Above: 'Inaugural Necklace with bracelet' 2008. Materials: wire. Technique: knit. 15" x 15" x 2.5".
Opposite page: Adrienne Sloane.

It's always interesting to see the small steps that happen in one's life that go on to have significant impact over time. Adrienne Sloane is a knitter and artist who has produced works such as 'Cost of War' which the reviewer for 'American Craft, Fiberart International Review' described as "moving", "emphatically three-dimensional", and "immeasurably more poignant". Yet the well from where such art might spring from goes back to Adrienne's maternal grandmother, a painter, and a family who placed a high value on the arts.

"They enrolled my sister and me in a spectrum of art lessons starting when we were very young," explains Adrienne. "I learned to knit from my mother who was a hobby knitter and weaver. Before I learned to do it myself, I remember as a young child waiting for her to come home to fix dropped stitches."

In the USA Adrienne completed an undergraduate degree in anthropology and spent her early 20's travelling Asia and "revelling in the wonderful crafts that were abundantly available in the marketplaces". After returning home and learning to crochet, spin and do some weaving, she bought a used knitting machine in 1984 and taught herself to use it. She says that, "between Susanna Lewis's 1986 book, 'A Machine Knitter's Guide to Creating Fabrics: Jacquard, Lace, Intarsia, Ripple, and More', and a 1989 'Threads' magazine article on short rowing which profiled the work of Judith Duffey" Adrienne got hooked on the sculptural possibilities of knitting.

Today Adrienne's work is included in travelling exhibition and rests in Museums such as The Philadelphia Museum of Art and The Goldstein Museum of Design. It appears in countless publications and has earned her various awards, grants and prestigious teaching engagements.

In 2006 she travelled to Peru with her family and met the country director of a small NGO, Strategies in International Development (SID), who invited her back to work with the knitters on the Capichica Peninsula in



the Lake Titicaca area of Peru.

"In 2007 I had a fascinating experience working with these indigenous knitters in village cooperatives. I brought a number of fashion magazines for their perusal although most groups were nowhere near being ready to knit for the

**"In 2007 I had a fascinating experience working with these indigenous knitters in village cooperatives."
- Adrienne**

overseas market. I also brought a copy of 'Andean Folk Knitting: Traditions and Techniques from Peru and Bolivia' by Cynthia Gravelle Lecount. It is part knitting and part anthropological study which contained images of regional designs. The women were fascinated to see work of their own culture in print. We copied the design graphs so that they could reference them. I only wish that knitting wasn't such a high altitude art; I do acclimate but I don't like much feeling out of breath," she says.

Adrienne has been looking to combine her passion for travel and textiles since 2000, in fact, and is particularly interested in "opportunities to work on development projects in third world countries that involve knitting". Her very first trip was organised through a Bolivian group called Alma de los

Andes, which works with over 1000 women in the altiplano, forming cooperatives and improving knitters' skills. "I worked with the American leader, her Bolivian counterpart and five lead knitters for a week in the small town of Sorata - at a somewhat lower altitude than La Paz (which is at 12,500 feet)."

Adrienne says that, in some places, it is a hardship to afford good knitting needles, so she often travels with knitting needles to give away or trade. "In 2006, when we visited Taquile, the island in Lake Titicaca where the men knit, I asked our host if he would teach me their method of knitting. He didn't take me seriously until I pulled out my needle collection and asked him if he wanted to trade. Even then, he wasn't interested until he had checked out whether he could make crochet hooks at the end of them as they do with their own needles. Finding my needles acceptable, he then made me a set of five double pointed needles from bicycle spokes with hooks on one end which I treasure."

Like most modern artists, to make a living Adrienne must be as creative with her work skills as she is with her needles. She started off selling her own sculptural hats through retail craft fairs but, when her studio burned down in 1999, she began volunteering on a number of arts related projects, and ended up as a founding member of a



Left: 'Line of Fire' 2007. Materials: wire. Technique: knit. 74" x 79" x 55" variable. Centre: 'Pencil Box' 2004. Materials: cotton yarn, pencils. Technique: knit vessel with knit on sculptural elements, pencils as structural and decorative elements. 7" x 8" x 8". Right: Inside and lid of 'Pencil Box'.

rather ambitious arts centre in her local community.

"When my dining room at home filled up with fibre, it became clear to me that I needed to have a studio again," she says. "After I returned to knitting I wanted to approach the intent of my work from a different perspective and started to explore sculptural knitting as an art medium. I supplement my income other ways but am again starting to support my passion for fibre arts through a combination of showing and teaching.

"Currently I am looking for the right medium to execute larger pieces that can be structurally sound while withstanding ongoing public exposure."

Today Adrienne maintains a studio in an arts building in a neighbouring town where you will find her almost every day while her teenage son is at school. "I bring my dog and listen to National Public Radio almost exclusively," she says. "I sometimes feel I am channelling an interpretation of the news into my work. That was certainly true for my anti-war pieces. I do turn the radio off when I need to concentrate on technical or design issues."

She says the recent political changes in the USA left her elated and so she knitted "an exuberant wire necklace" which she tried to offer to Michelle Obama to wear to an inaugural ball.

In the end Adrienne wore it herself to celebrate inauguration day but the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian Art Museum is currently considering this piece for its collection.

"I have another side in which I love to play with colour and texture and often humour" - Adrienne

"I am still processing the enormous impact of this change of administration and have yet to understand how this new hope for peace and intelligent government might impact my work. However, I remain interested in visually commenting on many aspects of the world around us," she says.

Not all of Adrienne's work is political or 'heavy' with meaning. "I have another side," she says, "in which I love to play with colour and texture and often humour such as with the Pencil Box piece I did. This was the aspect of knitting that I most enjoyed during the years I was knitting hats and continue to enjoy today."

Australian and New Zealand students will have the chance to study with Adrienne this year when she heads to Geelong in Victoria for the TAFTA Forum in September amongst other engagements.

"At the 2009 Geelong Fibre Forum I will be teaching sculptural knitting with a political bent," says Adrienne. "I am very excited to be able to see the WOW show in Wellington and I hope to be able to see as much of both Australia or New Zealand as time and money allow." 

Adrienne's schedule:

ATASDA (Australian Textile Arts & Surface Design). 19, 20 and 21 September. Epping Creative Center, Epping, NSW. Workshop: Artful Knit. www.atasda.org.au. PO Box 709, Turrumurra NSW 2074.

TAFTA - The Australian Forum for Textile Arts. The Geelong FORUM 2009. 27 September 27 to 3 October, 2009. Class: Pins and needles – What a little knitting can do. www.ggcreations.com.au/tafta. PH: (07) 3300 6491.

Aotearoa Creative Textiles Textile Fiber Forum NZ. 5 – 9 October 2009 Wellington, NZ. Class: Artful knit - a sculptural approach to knitting. www.aotearoacreativetextiles.blogspot.com/ For an e-newsletter, timetable and enrolment details email Mary.Wilson@whitireia.ac.nz of a rather ambitious arts centre in her local community.

follow your passion

'hope' bag

The name of the yarn used in this project is 'Hope' but the colour we've chosen is on the rosy & positive side too!

materials

- 3 x 100g balls 'Moda Vera' Hope
- 1 pair 9mm knitting needles
- scissors, yarn needle, tape measure

abbreviations

- st/s = stitch/es
- dec = decrease
- K2tog = knit 2 sts together
- garter st = knit every row

bag

Cast on 28 sts. Work in garter st until the bag measures 54cm or desired size. *Dec 1 st at each end of next row. Knit one row.* Repeat from * to * until 14 sts remain. Dec 1 st at each end of every row until 10 sts remain. Cast off.

ruffles

Cast on 70 sts and work 8 rows of garter stitch. **Row 9:** K2tog across. Cast off.

cord

Cut 3 lengths of Hope yarn twice the desired length of the strap. Place the 3 strands together and tape or tie one end of the strands onto something. twist the strands until they cannot be twisted anymore then carefully fold in half, letting the cord twist together.

finishing

Sew the ruffles onto the shaped part of the bag. Fold the bottom edge up and sew the sides of the bag together. Sew on cord. Finally sew the edge of the ruffles onto the sides of the bag.