

Donna Sharrett

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Work Info

I work under the influence of that which I am by inheritance: artist, environmentalist, gardener, seamstress and activist. My work is an exploration of the objects, techniques and traditions used to remember loved ones.

2020 - ongoing

A Tailored Herbaria of At-Risk Forest Denizens

The subjects of this most recent series are the flowers and leaves from the indigenous plant species which exist on the one-acre piece of land where I live.

In 2020 Cornell University conducted a season-long Pollinator Study on this property which resulted in the positive identification of 189 pollinator insect species. This study required an intense level of observation, opening the door to a remarkable and vast world of relationships & interdependencies between indigenous plants & insects. The tenuous existence of these species is threatened by climate change, disease and insect introductions, landscaping trends, and commercial interests. The potential loss of these plants and insects was the impetus for this series.

The works begin with my sketches of flowers and/or leaves. Donated materials are sewn together to create the flowers and/or leaves, and the landscape backgrounds. The works reference mandalas in both their composition and their spirit.

Repair and preservation of the donated materials used in my works inform many of the sewing processes, processes developed for my "Memento" and Arrangement" series to honor my mother for whom handmade stitches were love notes held in handmade clothing. The inclusion of guitar-strings honors my brother.

1990-2016

Arrangements & Mementos

Memory: Flowers, Music, Belongings

Flowers, music and donated belongings serve are arranged with a numeric cadence inspired by the sacred geometry of Gothic cathedral rose windows, religious prayer beads, nature, and 6 & 12 string guitars. The circular forms and compositions reflect the seamless continuum of ritual that binds the past to the present, and the present to the future. Mirroring the Buddhist mandala form, the circular shape enveloped by the square background of the "Arrangements" characterizes the infinite within the finite. Nineteenth century memento mori hair jewelry and contemporary makeshift memorial shrines are referenced.

Guitar-strings are used as a dedication to my brother, Scot Sharrett (1961-2001), as are the song titles chosen to name the works. His collection of hundreds of guitar-string ball-ends inspired my Arrangement series which was developed during my November 2001 residency at Weir Farm.

A variety of needlework techniques are used, including hand sewing, quilting, embroidery, crochet and needlelace. I am indebted to the venerable needlework sorority that joins women throughout history and is found in every culture; where knowledge of stitches and patterns are taught in intimate

gatherings and are passed from one generation to the next; a sorority which includes my mother and grandmother who taught me.

The “Mementos” series (1998-2001), was dedicated to my mother, Virginia Sharrett. Phrases from her letters title the works. This series was developed during my 1998 residency at the Millay Colony for the Arts.

Acknowledgements

Natural Materials (*Bone beads, Dirt, Garnet, Hair, Roses, Willow branches*): Gifts of: Bette Alexander, Lisa Breslow, Julie Brunner Cross, Jack Conrad, Nancy Curcio & Nicholas Mann, Suzanne Dunay, Marie Flores, Bruce & Dite Garrison, Melissa Green, Jennifer Johnson, Ken Kamber, Marion Wilson, Pavel Zoubok

Guitar, Harp & Violin Strings: Gifts of: Louise Beach/Brian Skarstad/Skarstad Violins, Paul Bloomstrom, Elizabeth Callen, Jessa Callen, Mike Corso, Tom Crandall, Larry Deming, Nekia Caprice Fox, Abby Gardner, Fred Gillen Jr., Tim Grajek, Lara Herscovitch, Jake Jones, Shane Konen, Nicholas Mann, Bill Massof, Rob Moore, Christopher Pappas, Scot Sharrett, Rod Teets, Brad Travis, Jack van der Mark, Mark Wasserman, Tracey Wilson, Jenna Young

Linens, Clothing, Notions & Jewelry: Gifts of: Amy Albam, Jorge Arango, Louise Belevich, Margaret Mathews Berenson, Nancy & Sylvia Curcio, Miriam Donn, Bruce & Dite Garrison, Edward M. Gomez, Tim Grajek, Donna Harkavy, Ken Kamber, Mirijana Kocho, Nicholas Mann, Dara Meyers-Kingsley, Kim Levin, Lucy Mann, Julie & Jim O’Shea, Suzie Ross, Dayle Vander Sande, Meagan Shein, Susan Singer, Elisabeth Sinsabaugh, Maritta Tapanainen, Phyl Zekauskas
Note: Thread from American & Efird Mills, Mt. Holly, North Carolina, where my mother was employed, is used.

Song Titles:

Against the Wind, 1980, Bob Seger; ***Alison***, 1977, Elvis Costello; ***Always***, 1925, Irving Berlin; ***Angie***, 1973, Mick Jagger/Keith Richards; ***Anywhere***, 2002, Beth Orton; ***A Song for You***, 1969, Leon Russell; ***Beth***, 1976, Kiss; ***Bluebird***, 1967, Stephen Stills; ***Born to Rock***, 1984, Scot Sharrett; ***Box of Rain***, 1970, Phil Lesh/Robert Hunter; ***Buckets of Rain***, 1974, Bob Dylan; ***Changes***, 1971, David Bowie; ***Clocks***, 2002, Coldplay; ***Dancing Barefoot***, 1979, Patti Smith and Ivan Kral; ***Destiny***, 2001, Henry Binns and Sam Hardaker; ***Dream On***, 1973, Steven Tyler; ***Faded Memory***, 2001, Scot Sharrett; ***Fever***, 1956, Eddie Cooley/Otis Blackwell; ***Fields of Gold***, 1993, Sting; ***Fire and Rain***, 1969, James Taylor; ***For a Dancer***, 1974, Jackson Browne; ***Forever Young***, 1974, Bob Dylan; ***Freebird***, 1973, Allen Collins/Ronnie Van Zant; ***Get It While You Can***, 1967, Jerry Ragovoy; ***Gloria***, 1964, Van Morrison; ***Guinnevere***, 1969, David Crosby; ***Harvest Moon***, 1991, Neil Young; ***Heart of Gold***, 1971, Neil Young; ***I Think of You***, 1986, Scot Sharrett; ***Ice Cream***, 1993, Sarah McLachlan; ***Imagine***, 1971, John Lennon; ***In My Life***, 1965, John Lennon/Paul McCartney; ***In the Sun***, 2000, Joseph Arthur; ***Isis***, 1975, Bob Dylan; ***Jane Says***, 1987, Jane’s Addiction; ***Jessica***, 1973, Dickey Betts; ***Just Breathe***, 2009, Pearl Jam; ***Little Wing***, 1967, Jimi Hendrix; ***Lola***, 1970, Ray Davies; ***Long May You Run***, 1976, Neil Young; ***Love and Affection***, 1976, Joan Armatrading; ***Love is a Rose***, 1974, Neil Young; ***Lovesong***, 1989, Robert Smith, Lol Tolhurst, Purl Thompson, Roger O’Donnell, Boris Williams; ***Maggie May***, 1971, Rod Stewart/Martin Quittenton; ***Magnificent***, 2008, U2/Brian Eno/Daniel Lanois; ***Michelle***, 1965, Paul McCartney/John Lennon; ***Moondance***, 1970, Van Morrison; ***No Longer Mine***, 1985, Scot Sharrett; ***Nothing Else Matters***,

1992, Metallica; **Ooh Child**, 1970, Stan Vincent; **Ophelia**, 1975, Robbie Robinson; **Poetry Man**, 1974, Phoebe Snow; **Praise You**, 1998, Norman Cook/Camille Yarbrough; **Passionate Kisses**, 1988, Lucinda Williams; **Ramble On**, 1969, Jimmy Page/Robert Plant; **Rosalita**, 1973, Bruce Springsteen; **Roundabout**, 1971, Jon Anderson/Chris Squire; **Scarlet Begonias**, 1974, Robert Hunter/Jerry Garcia; **Sexy Sadie**, 1968, John Lennon; **Silence**, 2007, PJ Harvey; **Simple Twist of Fate**, 1974, Bob Dylan; **Smooth**, 1999, Itaal Shur/Rob Thomas; **Spoonful**, 1960, Willie Dixon; **Suzanne**, 1966, Leonard Cohen; **Sweet Jane**, 1970, Lou Reed; **The Circle Game**, 1966, Joni Mitchell; **The Long Black Veil**, 1959, Marijohn Wilken/Danny Dill; **The Wind**, 1971, Cat Stevens; **This is Love**, 2000, PJ Harvey; **Tiny Dancer**, 1971, Elton John/Bernie Taupin; **Turn the Page**, 1973, Bob Seger; **Turn, Turn, Turn**, 1959, Pete Seeger; **Victoria**, 1969, Ray Davies; **Wicked Game**, 1989, Chris Isaak; **Wild Horses**, 1970, Mick Jagger/Keith Richards; **Wild World**, 1970, Cat Stevens; **Will the Circle Be Unbroken**, 1907, Ada Ruth Habershon/Charles Hutchinson Gabriel; **Wing**, 1996, Patti Smith; **Wish You Were Here**, 1975, David Gilmour/Roger Walters; **Without Her**, 1971, Harry Nilsson; **Yellow**, 2000, Coldplay; **Your Song**, 1973, Elton John/Bernie Taupin