

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 references the objects, techniques and traditions used to remember loved ones and are made with donated materials.

2020 - ongoing

Tailored Herbaria

The subjects of this most recent series are plant species indigenous to Northeastern United States where I live. The magical ecological wonderment of the Southern New Jersey Pinelands, where I was raised, remains the strongest influence for my engagement with the natural world.

In a 2020 Pollinator Study conducted by Cornell University, 189 pollinator insect species were identified on the property where I live. This study brought into sharp focus the remarkable interdependencies between indigenous plants & insects. The potential loss of these species from the impacts of climate change, disease and insect introductions, landscaping trends, and commercial interests was the impetus for this series of work.

The sewing techniques used to join and repair the donated materials honor my mother, Virginia Sharrett, for whom handmade stitches were love notes held in handmade clothing. The inclusion of guitar-strings honors my brother, Scot Sharrett.

1990-2019

Arrangements & Mementos

Donated belongings 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.

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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; ***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; ***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; ***Passionate Kisses***, 1988, Lucinda Williams; ***Ramble On***, 1969, Jimmy Page/Robert Plant; ***Rosalita***, 1973, Bruce Springsteen; ***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; ***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