Craftivism is the practice of engaged creativity, especially regarding political or social causes. By using their creative energy to help make the world a better place, craftivists help bring about positive change via personalized activism. Craftivism allows practitioners to customize their particular skills to address particular causes.

Craftivism is an idea whose time has come. Given the states of materialism and mass production, the rise of feminism, and the time spanned from the Industrial Revolution, the beginning of the 21st century was the right time for the evolution of such an idea. Instead of being a number in a march or mass protest, craftivists apply their creativity toward making a difference one person at a time.

Through activities such as teaching knitting lessons, crocheting hats for the less fortunate, and sewing blankets for abandoned animals, craftivism allows for creativity to expand previous boundaries and enter the arena of activism. In the pre-Industrial Revolution era, craft skills were needed to clothe the family and maintain a working household. As mass production increased, there became no need to knit sweaters for winter warmth or weave baskets to hold vegetables. Crafts were bypassed by modernity.

The do-it-yourself spirit was stifled in the area of wardrobe creativity, and post-9/11, a rising sense of hopelessness to change anything in the world was unleashed. Feminism was still heavily rooted in theory and strength, but enough time had spanned between the economic and social disparities between women and men in the 1970s that women began to look again at domesticity as something to be valued instead of ignored. Wanting to conquer both a drill and a knitting needle, there was a return to home economics tinged with a hint of irony as well as a fond embracement.

The term craftivism surfaced in the first few years of the 21st century and gained an online presence with the website Craftivism.com in 2003 to promote the symbiotic relationship between craft and activism. After craft skills such as knitting regained popularity, the idea emerged that instead of using solely one’s voice to advocate political viewpoints, one could use their creativity.

By advocating the use of creativity for the improvement of the world, craftivists worldwide taught knitting lessons, sewed scarves for battered women’s shelters, and knitted hats for chemotherapy patients. In a world that was growing

increasingly large and unfamiliar, craftivism fought to bring back the personal into our daily lives to replace some of the mass produced. In promoting the idea that people can use their own creativity to improve the world, craftivism allows those who wish to voice their opinions and support their causes the chance to do just that…but without chanting or banner waving and at their own pace.

-Betsy Greer,
"Craftivism." Encyclopedia of Activism and Social Justice. 2007. SAGE Publications

CRAFTIVISM *MANIFESTO*

A craftivist is anyone who uses their craft to help the greater good. Your craft is your voice. Craftivism is about raising consciousness, creating a better world stitch by stitch, and things made by hand, by a person. It's also about sharing ideas with others in a way that is welcoming, not dividing, and celebrating traditional skills in new ways. As well as remembering and respecting the makers that came before us, adding to the dialogue and leaving something for the next generations of craftivists. Craftivism is about creating wider conversations about uncomfortable social issues. A craftivist is anyone who uses their craft to help the greater good or in resistance to a greater societal ill. A single individual crafting can make a difference. Or they can craft together and benefit from the fellowship of other crafters. Craftivists open minds and hearts. It's about connecting through by and with craft and creating a more compassionate community. Craftivists are makers, hackers, menders and modifiers of material things. My craftivism can be different than your craftivism and that's okay. Craftivism encourages people to challenge injustice and find creative solutions to conflict. Craftivism does not expect you to come with skills but with willingness. Craft is often seen as a benign, passive and (predominantly female) domestic past time. By taking these stereotypes and subverting them, craftivists are making craft a useful tool of peaceful, proactive and political protest. Craftivism is a way to make big issues tangible, so that we can build a better world together. Craftivism is about reclaiming the slow process of creating by hand, with thought, with purpose and with love. Because activism, whether through craft or any other means, is done by individuals, not machines. Craftivism is a tool to instantly create a small part of the warmer, friendlier and more colorful world we hope to see in the future.

This manifesto was written by Mary Callahan Baumstark, Ele Carpenter, Joanna Davies, Tamara Gooderham, Betsy Greer, Bridget Harvey, Rebecca Marsh, Manna Marvel, Ari Miller, Iris Nectar, Abi Nielsen, Elin Poppelin and Cat Varvis.

Crafting in Dissent

Protest through crafting is becoming popular in today's world. It is now known as Craftivism (craft + activism). What is craftivism? Coined by Betsy Greer, an artist, activist and writer from North Carolina, "Craftivism is the practice of engaged creativity, especially regarding political or social causes. By using their creative energy to help make the world a better place, craftivists help bring about positive change via personalized activism."[1]

However, protesting through craft is not new or even a recent phenomenon. In fact, women have been using knitting and other crafts, such as sewing and embroidery, in their activism for well over 100 years. In addition to advancing progressive causes, using craft as a political tool helps to rebuke patriarchal notions of femininity. Society likes to view craft-making as the dominion of docile, domestic ladyhood—but this has never precisely been the case.

Ann Rippin, a researcher at the University of Bristol in the UK, who specializes in the role of cloth in society, explains that although craft was historically used to oppress women, it also gave them a creative outlet. "Traditionally, women were taught embroidery as a way of learning 'feminine' characteristics," she says.

"It taught them to follow a pattern, to be neat and docile, to be inside the home rather than out in the world. You learned embroidery to advertise your marriageability." But, she adds, "there was no way of controlling what women were actually thinking about while they were stitching."[2]

Historically, needlework and textiles were considered women's work… the level of contribution by women to the subsistence of a particular society was dependent on the compatibility of the labor with childcare. Child rearing was exclusively the domain of women and, in preindustrial societies, food preparation and textile production were two activities that women could do simultaneously with child rearing. Throughout history, women have also used needlework subversively to convey social and political messages. For example, popular themes in needlework in the 17th century included biblical stories about women's power within marriage – such as the story of Esther, who successfully advocated for the Jew's survival before her husband, the king of Persia.[3]

Subversive crafting also shows up in classic literature. In Ovid's "Metamorphoses", Philomena, who was raped and had her tongue cut out in an

effort to silence her, wove a tapestry in which she identified her brother-in-law Tereus as her rapist.[4] In Dickens' "A Tale of Two Cities", the character Madame DeFarge knits and her knitting secretly encodes the names of aristocratic people to be killed during the French Revolution.

History of craft as a means of dissent in America

"Knitting arrived in North America along with seventeenth-century European immigration, and … it long and principally existed as the means of women's household garment production. But knitting has also always and often exceeded the domestic space. In the Revolutionary period, women resisted the strictures of British taxes and regulations on imported goods by joining together in spinning and knitting bees; therein they produced the homespun and hand-knit garments necessary to the colony's comfort."[5] "Spinning, sewing and knitting circles existed primarily as social work gatherings in America's early colonial period, until Britain imposed increasingly hefty taxes on her colonies, culminating with the Stamp Act of 1765. To discuss the Stamp Act, and to prove they could and would purchase no more British goods until it was repealed, women's "spinning bees" were restructured as "spinning meetings", political demonstrations where women would compete to spin, weave, and knit the most fiber goods, to compensate for the boycotted material. These demonstrations became well-attended, festive spectator sports that the men of the community would observe and cheer. Those industrious women who could clothe themselves and their families in homespun and recycled garments from head to toe were deemed "patriots" – a term usually reserved for men.[6]

The War of Independence, in turn, prompted the organization of widespread efforts to clothe the army with woolens.[7] Industrious women would collect blankets, yarn and worn-out clothing which they would patch and darn, unravel and knit into stockings, shirts, breeches and blankets. They would often transport these to the front to distribute as it was easier for women to slip past the British.[8]

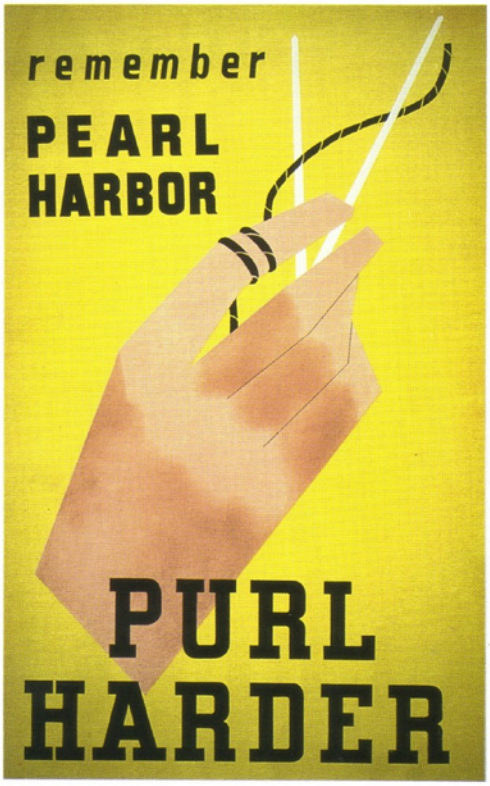
In her "No Idle Hands: The Social History of American Knitting", Anne Macdonald argues that the same impulse to knit for the Revolutionary troops propelled patrician women with leisure throughout the nineteenth century to stitch for other causes, from poverty to temperance to abolitionism. The Civil War, in its

time, divided blue and gray knitters, but each side joined in small, conversation-rich knitting circles and plied their needles for their cause.[9] During the Civil War, Sojourner Truth traveled to refugee camps of freed people where she demonstrated sewing, knitting, and cooking to teach people skills that might allow them to be financially independent.[10]

World War I and II again prompted women's participation through national propaganda that sought to lead women to patriotic knitting for "the boys" as well as affirm normative gender roles. In brief, during each of these national conflicts, women have altruistically knit for a cause that exceeded their public participation or excluded them from combat."[11]



World War I poster



World War II poster

Crafting Dissent Internationally

There are examples of dissent by crafting in other parts of the world also. In 1947, Mohandas Gandhi used nonviolent protest to help India gain independence from British rule. One of the overlooked ways he did this was by promoting khadi, or homespun, handwoven cloth. The term khadi also means all the processes of production (cultivation, picking and ginning of cotton, spinning and weaving of thread) and display (attire, public and private décor, touring exhibitions). Communications scholar Peter Gonsalves noted, "Khadi (and all the sartorial elements that were connected with it) was that nucleus, that central symbol, that weapon of subversion, around which Gandhi's strategy for liberalization would be realized." Gandhi initially encouraged those in the independence movement to weave and wear their own cloth to protest British textile laws, so khadi additionally came to signify the boycott or burning of foreign cloth. Wearing khadi attire served to visually identify and unite individuals in the independence movement and create a common national identity.[12]

Craftivism Today

Crafting is enjoying a resurgence with third-wave feminists. Whereas second-wave feminists scorned knitting and crafting as "symbols of women's oppression: work that bound women to their homes and occupied them in invisible, unrewarded labor… women in the post 9/11 era have begun incorporating large-scale knit and crocheted pieces into political public art statements. Knitting is a component of the DIY movement where… women reclaim old-fashioned skills to rebel against 'the sleek, the mass-produced, the male.' There continues to be a clash between those who view knitting as necessarily feminist, anti-capitalist, and radical, and those who read it as *anti*feminist in that it is a marker of feminine repression as relegated to domestic drudgery."[13] Debbie Stoller, who published the best-selling *Stitch 'n Bitch* and *Stitch 'n Bitch Nation* books, railed against second-wave feminists. "All those people who looked down on knitting – and housework, and housewives – were not being feminist at all. In fact, they were being anti-feminist, since they seemed to think that only those things that men did, or had done, were worthwhile." Stoller and a range of other fiber artists recognized the political opportunity that the practice of knitting presented.[14]

Many types of craftivism have emerged, including stitch 'n bitch meetings, public knit-ins, and guerilla knitting, also known as yarn bombing or yarn graffiti.

Crafters are protesting many issues, including environmental, anti-capitalism, anti-sweatshop, anti-war, and social justice issues.[15]

The bright pink Pussyhat was a striking visual symbol of global dissent at the Women's Marches across the globe on January 21, 2017, the day after Trump was inaugurated. The project was conceived of, broadcasted, and launched through online networks during the 6-week period from November 2016 to January 2017. This craftivism project resulted in a massive social protest movement where millions of women and men wore Pussyhats in reaction to Trump's misogynist comments about sexual assault in the infamous 2005 *Access Hollywood* tape at the height of the heated presidential campaign against the Democratic candidate, Hillary Clinton.[16]

Within a day of the November election, plans were being made for a march in protest. The Women's March began to cohere into a unified day of protest for women's issues in Washington, with six hundred sister marches across the country and around the world. Social scientists now estimate that between 3.6 and 5.2 million women participated in one of the events on January 21, 2017. While the exact number of crafted Pussyhats remains unknown, images from across the nation are awash in pink.[17]







[18]

The Pussyhat Project was co-conceived by activist and design architect Jayna Zweiman and Hollywood screenwriter Krista Suh to create a hat that was a collective visual statement for the marchers and a way for those who were unable to march to participate by knitting for a sister marcher. The duo teamed up with Los Angeles knit shop owner Kat Coyle who created the actual rectangular, cat-eared cap. While detractors on the right seemed confused by the hat's representational unlikeness to female genitalia (they didn't, it seems, get the pun), the intent, of course, was to playfully call up the pussycat as an ironic reminder of Trump's infamous remark.[19]

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The Violet Protest is a public effort to send 50 hand-made textile squares to each and every member of Congress in support of these core American values:

• Civility and Respect • Citizenship • Compromise
• Country over party and corporate influence
• Courage • Candor • Compassion • Creativity

Whether we knit, crochet, quilt, or embroider all 26,750 of these squares — through this social action, and from every corner of America; we as makers of all political persuasions, believe we can employ our willing spirit and our talents to contribute to healing divisions that threaten our country. This collection of textile squares will be first displayed at the Phoenix Art Museum, Fall 2020, before they are sent to the new 117th Congress in 2021.

Focused on the values we hold dear as Americans, rather than any political beliefs, the color violet symbolizes the literal combination of red and blue, long held as symbols of our nation's differing ideologies. Our common goal is to send a physical message of friendly protest through this colossal visual expression to demonstrate that if we as citizens are willing to come together, so then must our elected officials.

Visit our website for details on how you can participate.
www.violetprotest.com

Join the Ravelry group https://www.ravelry.com/groups/the-violet-protest?s=tab