

Unraveling, Repairing, and Creating

A look into the art of Carol MacDonald



Hello Carol, welcome to the Crochet Foundry Community. We are so glad you agreed to talk with us. Personally, I became a fan of yours from the moment I saw your art at Vogue Knitting Live last year.

Please tell us a bit about who you are and what you do.

I am a printmaker, teacher and community arts organizer living and working in Colchester, Vermont. My work as a printmaker takes many forms including unique monoprints and hand pulled original limited edition prints. I have been exhibiting my work since 1980 in galleries, museums and juried exhibitions nationally and internationally. My knit work has been shown through Vogue Knitting Live in NYC, Chicago, Seattle, and San Francisco and was recently shown in the 11th International Print Biennial in Portugal. My art is in many museums as well as public, private and corporate collections.

I am married and have two amazing daughters and three wonderful grandchildren. It has been quite a life journey to put together an art career while raising a family, teaching and being active in my arts community. I feel very fortunate to have found my path and followed my intuition to create a rich and fulfilling life.

Which came first, the print art, or knitting?

Knitting came first. My mother and grandmother taught me to knit when I was young. I knit some scarves and lost interest. Then I took it back up in my early 20's and got sunk by a cable knit sweater. I finished the back and maybe a sleeve, but I couldn't keep the concentration to ever finish it. Meanwhile I went to art school in Baltimore and studied drawing and painting. After I left, I moved to Vermont and took my first etching class which began my deep love of printmaking. Fast forward 30 years and I started to knit again and had this



idea that I could print the knitting. In 2007 I was at a month long residency at the Vermont Studio Center and took the time to explore the possibilities of printing knitting. I thought about the beautiful metaphors of creating fabric from a single thread, to dropping stitches, the textures and the rhythm of knit coming out on paper. It took a lot of experimentation to find out which yarns would print and what size needles I liked. I taught myself how to draw the stitches and how to make them in ink.

Previous page: Inner Riches I, Monotype, Thread, Beads, Colored Pencil, 16" x 16"

"This piece was done during the pandemic when we were all stuck in our houses having to rely on our inner selves to keep life interesting as the world continued on without us. I was knitting fabric with big holes that allowed layers to emerge."

Above: Carol MacDonald in her studio.

What inspired you to first mix yarn and printmaking?

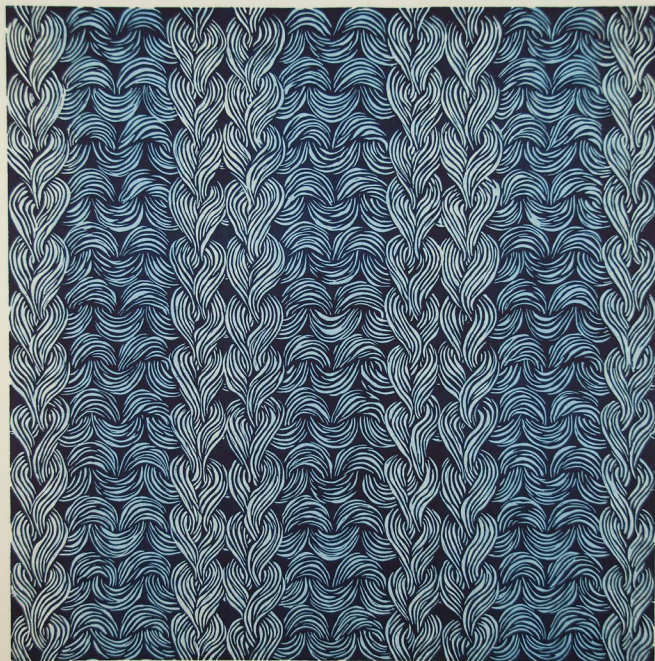
I realized that the process of knitting was very soothing. That the repetitiveness of it brought me back into my soul. I am a person who likes routines. They afford me a way to get into my thoughts and ideas. I was interested in bringing those qualities into my art work. With knitting I could work metaphorically, abstractly and narratively. I also became fascinated by the color, texture and structure of skeins and balls of yarn.

There's something about your "Repair" series that I find fascinating. Can you tell us a bit about the process to create them?

The "Repair" work was done in 2020 for a large one person show at the Rokeby Museum in Ferrisburgh, Vermont called "Mending Fences". Rokeby was a stop on the underground railroad and homesteaded for three generations by the Robinsons who were Quakers and abolitionists. My exhibition explored the idea of repair in light of abolition being a repair of slavery, and repair being a necessary piece of running a homestead. It is also a contemporary issue as we deal with our throw away society. For the exhibition I repaired physical objects from the museum such as a fishing net, rug, chair, broken pottery. The museum deaccessioned some antique clothing and lace from their collection that were torn and ripped. I made a series of monotypes from these garments and lace. I went back into many of the prints and sewed with red thread to mend them or incorporated beadwork from the clothing into the finished artwork.

Did you always know you were an artist?

I have made art for my whole life and in high school I decided to go to the Maryland Institute of Art to see where that love



Indigo Rib, Linoleum Block print on background ink, 17.5"x17.5"

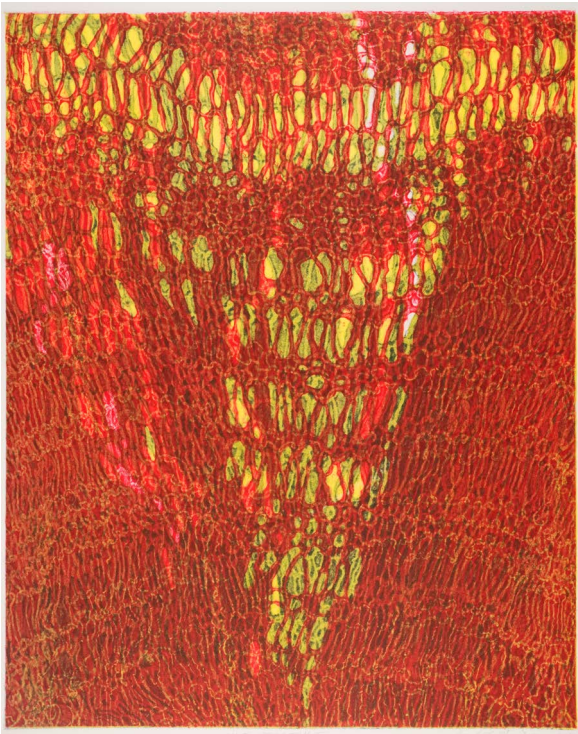
"This image was cut into a large linoleum block and then printed. I was interested in the way that knit and purl stitches read visually and the abstract design that results."

Repair I, Monotype, Copper Wire, 11.75" x 11.75"

"After getting my first physical "replacement" part, I made this piece by printing from fabric and wiping out part of the fabric. Then I repaired it by knitting a patch out of copper wire and sewed it into the print."



YI REPAIR I



Left: Knit Stratum II, Monotype, 19.75 x 19.75

"I like being able to look through the pink fabric to see what is behind it. This is made by getting the knit pattern into the ink and then wiping ink away to create the open space."

Right: Symbiosis I, Silkscreen, 12.25" x 5.5"

"This is my latest silkscreen print, thinking about the energy that is created when we come into relationship with each other."



would take me. I'm still at it more than 50 years later. I discovered printmaking in 1975 and have had a deep love of the various processes and possibilities that these mediums make possible. There is a physical making of plates and then printing with them and discovering what works or doesn't. I work in a variety of mediums including monotype, etching, silkscreen, mezzotint, and linoleum or relief printing.

Where do you find your inspiration?

I tug at the threads of our shared humanity. I look into my life and the issues that are up for me and give them visual form. I believe that the personal is universal, so the things I am grappling with or cherishing are also resonating in others. Lately I have been thinking about the act of unraveling and the vulnerability of doing that. Allowing others to witness and hold us in that space. The intimacy and trust that creates. We are in this time where so much is unraveling around us and yet out of that new paths are forming.

What advice do you have for aspiring yarn artists?

Do your vision. Keep experimenting and play around with your ideas.

What are some of your favorite aspects of being an artist?

I like to dive into an idea and work with it and be in the liminal space of not really knowing where it might go or even what it is telling me. I have found that if I trust my intuition and my process, eventually the images and words and ideas will become clear to me. Sometimes a body of work will take years to make sense. Then when it eventually goes out into the world, to hear how it affects others and to see what it evokes in them is exciting and rewarding. I love the reaction I get from many of the knitters that see my work and understand the beauty and what goes into each piece.

Part of my practice is to teach and create the space for other people to explore their creative process. I do this through monoprint workshops that I run out of my printmaking studio. Mentoring and guiding is very satisfying and a way to give back.

Is there anything else we should know about you or your art?

I did a large installation in a grove of cedar trees as part of a show at the Kent Museum in Calais, VT. I am interested in capturing the space in the crooks of trees and transforming it in ways to draw us into those spaces.

Where can our readers find you and all your amazing art and products online, and maybe even offline?

I will be exhibiting in the Artist Gallery at Vogue Knitting Live, NYC - January 16-19 2025

My website is: www.carolmacdonald.com - there is a link to sign up for my email list and I send out occasional posts of my latest projects and exhibitions.

Facebook: [carol.macdonald.900](https://www.facebook.com/carol.macdonald.900)

Instagram: [carolmacdonald7](https://www.instagram.com/carolmacdonald7)

My work is also in a number of galleries in Vermont including Frog Hollow Gallery, Burlington, VT; Artisans Hand, Montpelier, VT; Artisans Gallery, Waitsfield, VT; Millers Thumb Gallery, Greensboro, VT.

Below: Knit Installation in a Cedar Grove, Kent Museum, Kent's Corners, VT

photo by Susan Teare

