

# ***Susan Bamford***

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## ***Crocheted Borders: The Drive to Create and Hand-Crafted Geometry***

I crochet. Crochet has the distinct advantage of being easily portable and so I crochet on train journeys back and forth from College. This makes me visible as a 'crafter'; people regularly ask 'what I am doing?', or 'what am I making' as it seems clear that as a culture we are increasingly isolated from how textiles are actually created. This paper is to explore some of the issues surrounding concepts of craft and hand-making I have identified through the various conversations with fellow travellers I've engaged in over recent months.

Firstly, it is useful to describe the type of crochet I am currently working on. I am making a coral reef from yarns donated to charity shops to become part of the UK Hyperbolic Crocheted Coral Reef. The fact of using second hand 'waste yarn' is important to my making, in that I am turning waste into a functioning art product.

The Hyperbolic Crocheted Coral Reef itself is Crafts Council project, and sister reef to the original created by The Institute for Figuring in the US. It is the product of many hands, originally born out of a mathematical modelling of non-Euclidean space through crocheted forms that expanded into a textile recreation art work designed to highlight marine devastation due to oceanic plastic waste. The Reef is intentionally collaborative, with crocheters' of all skill levels and engagements with the aims of the project contributing pieces. As well as a high profile exhibition in the Hayward Gallery last summer, the Reef has also travelled around the UK to a multitude of craft shows; at each location crafters are encouraged to bring in their own contributions, and 'Reef Wranglers' are on hand to talk about the project and teach people 'hyperbolic crochet'.

Currently, the Reef is physically in limbo, awaiting installation in a permanent home at the Eden Project in Cornwall where one of the conditions of its placement there is that it must continue to grow and act as a nexus for educational outreach regarding crochet as a craft, the mathematics behind the 'hyperbolic' element of its production and the destructive human impact on marine environments.

In other words a very simple craft is used to explore complex scientific, environmental and social issues, through textiles that physically engage with the viewer. I highlight the physicality of the project as it is fundamental to the creation of these forms as useful mathematical forms and in that people are drawn to handle them; the tactility of the forms themselves is seductive, with the intellectual component of their creation acting as an additional condition to their appeal.

In conclusion, I will discuss how the resurgence of craft is coded within specific media as 'de-grannified', a term that removes many of the multiple negative associations craft has collected, and allows a generation that did not grow up making things to reconnect with the haptic, human pleasure of creativity for personal use or profitable exchange, and seeing these skills as more than a simple, mechanical process but one that engages complex social markers and intellectual debates.