

Lin-Lin Mao

ARTIST STATEMENT



Mandala Reigns 2 by Lin-Lin Mao, 2018. In 110 Cherry St., Seattle, WA.
Yarn. 130 inches wide, 56 inches deep, 70 inches tall

Through making art, I explore the nature of the human condition which we try to control and the nature of the universe which we cannot control. What I have discovered during the creating process are new ways of seeing things emotionally, intellectually and visually. I combine a mix of symbolism, metaphors, and materials which each person will interpret in their own way.

I work in 2-dimensional and multi-dimensional spaces and see painting as the act of putting marks onto or into a space. Beyond pencil marks and brushstrokes, a mark can be a strand of yarn, a loop of crochet, an origami crane, or a dirty plate from last night's dinner. Like pencil marks and brushstrokes, all marks manipulated by human hands possess characteristics and memories which can evoke a human response.

My art work invites a viewer to investigate and discover, and to interpret the work with what they bring to the conversation. My multi-dimensional "paintings" occupy spaces that allow viewers to move around or underneath the piece in order to investigate the work from different perspectives. Though I try to control what a planned work will represent, the finished work is usually more interesting if I just let the art work speak for itself with the viewer. I love hearing each viewer's interpretation and often times it is enlightening.

I use crochet in my work because hard materials such as metal and rock abound in contemporary art. I want to contribute softness, warmth, and etherealness to the visual language. Unlike hand-knitting which I respect, no machine currently exists that can replicate hand-crochet. Because of this, crochet represents for me the handmade and therefore human creativity and effort, in particular those of the unsung heroines in our lives and throughout the past who I refer to metaphorically as grandmothers. The wheel is always lauded as a great invention of man, probably by a caveman. But who invented yarn? I'll say a cavewoman, since its invention is rarely talked about, rarely recognized. It is my metaphor for the silent contributions of women.



Bumberlove by Lin-Lin Mao, 2019. Armory, Seattle Center.
Origami cranes on yarn. 12 feet wide by 12 feet tall, each.

I use origami cranes in my work to represent good fortune and peace. In the Japanese culture, one folds 1,000 origami cranes for good fortune. I combine this practice and its meaning with other materials and ideas to convey a new message related to being mindful of the world and its inhabitants.

I had the privilege to create a collaborative multi-dimensional painting at the 2019 Bumbershoot Festival in Seattle. I crocheted two 12-foot wide by 12-foot long yarn supports on which was added 200 origami cranes folded by festival-goers. Each origami crane is a mark which contains the energy and thoughts of the person who folded the crane. This collaborative piece is a message to the world that we love and care for it. I asked each participant to illustrate or write on their square sheet of origami paper what they are doing to contribute to the world's well-being. Photos were taken of each sheet of paper prior to folding. A slideshow of these photos will be shared on social media. After COVID-19 physical distancing restrictions are lifted, I would like to find opportunities to finish this piece with new groups of people folding the paper cranes. The piece needs 800 more cranes added to reach 1000 cranes