



Crochet Nurse Logs

sofie larsen-teskey



## My voice as an artist

I think part of my artistic voice is the desire to have my pieces provoke my viewers to engage more deeply with the world around them, particularly to encourage a more direct engagement with the systems of nonhuman life that surrounds us. My fiber nurse log installations spoke to this wish because their location within nature allows for a higher articulation of the real nature that surrounds them. I hope after witnessing my installations, people might have the heightened awareness to see mushroom, lichen, and moss life existing on real nurse logs.

# Concept of my fiber nurse log installations

Nurse logs are a profound attestation to the regenerative capacity of the forest, where cycles of birth and death are inextricable and benefit each other. The concept of this piece was to create mushrooms, lichen, moss, and ferns out of yarn using crochet and knitting techniques, arrange these parts into nurse log compositions, then place these compositions into nature for people to engage with. I also wanted to document this piece in a book.



## Materials



I chose to use only natural fiber-based yarn, including wool, cotton, and silk blends. I did not want to use synthetic materials because I was going to put these pieces into nature. It felt antithetical to my piece to use acrylic yarn that is literally made of plastic. I also used wire to ensure the structural stability of my piece.

# Technical skills

I had to engineer crochet patterns for the mushrooms and lichen. I figured out a basic small mushroom pattern with help from a crochet lady on youtube that I was then able to modify to make other mushroom shapes. The lichen all are very free form, where I didn't know what shape they were going to form but just let myself have fun making tendril shapes. I engineered my crochet ferns from scratch, which proved to be quite challenging because of all the small segments I had to attach.

I also had to relearn how to use both Photoshop and InDesign to format my book.





## Audience & Participation

I want my audience to just be people passing by who happen to notice my piece. I like that it is subtle enough, camouflaging into the nature that surrounds it, so that it will take an attentive looker to find it.

The book I created documenting the installation is another way for people to participate with my work.

I tried to include participation in the creation of my piece but it turns out it is very challenging to teach someone to crochet, let alone teach them complicated organic mushroom shapes!!

# Inspiration!



I was inspired by Margaret and Christine Wertheim's "Crochet Coral Reef" project and its emphasis on drawing attention to the environment.

I was also inspired by Mark Dion's installation piece "Neukom Vivarium" which is a human-made nurse log that is located in the Olympia Sculpture Park in Seattle, where people are encouraged to discover the sheer variety of life that a nurse log hosts.



# Video of My Book

I wanted my book to feature photos of my installation within nature as well as the real life-forms that it mimics. I also wanted to make my book informational, teaching the reader about the crucial role nurse logs play in supporting the next generation of life in the forest. (also sorry for the shaky video, poor lighting, and my utter inability to turn pages hehe)