

## Margaret Chodos-Irvine

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I was born in Southern California in 1961, the grandchild of Jewish garment workers, the daughter of a potter and a painter. In 1979, I moved to Eugene, Oregon to study Anthropology at the University of Oregon. My first semester there, I added Art as a second major with a focus on printmaking. I graduated in 1986 with BA degrees in both after taking time off to illustrate a book for Ursula K. Le Guin. Later that same year, I moved to Seattle, Washington to pursue work as a professional illustrator. Once motherhood happened, I moved from editorial/commercial illustration to picture books, most notably receiving a Caldecott Honor award in 2004 for *Ella Sarah Gets Dressed*, a story inspired by my eldest daughter.

While I've worked as a professional artist/illustrator since my 20s, designing and sewing clothing has always been my creative refuge. I didn't begin to consider it as an artistic medium until seeing the work of Sonia Delauney and Louise Bourgeois in my late 50s. After the 2016 presidential election, I began a textile piece that represented the confusion I felt. This led to my arranging "What Would Betsy Ross Do?" a community-based art exhibit showcasing creative redesigns of the American flag.

In 2018, I began working with the theme of Memento mori. Out of that came my first garment-based piece, "Correspondence," in memory of my late mother. "Generation" contemplates how we hold our lives as women. "PPE: 14 Days With My Father In Assisted Care In 2020" was my way of processing the experience of witnessing my father's isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Mourning" is my expression of grief after his death.

Though I design, cut, sew, knit all the work myself, I strive to make these garments appear store-bought. Garments such as denim jeans and men's shirts require a high degree of labor and skill that most people take for granted. I want viewers to look twice before they realize that this clothing could not have been made in a factory. I use these forms and alter them, not to change the style or fit, but to surprise us with new perceptions.

Using familiar clothing forms as structures on which viewers may hang their interpretations, my work provides an opportunity to explore - visually, psychologically, spatially - how we relate to others and to ourselves. Within each of our cultures we grow up learning this language of apparel. I enjoy using that language to reflect our own stories back to us.



Photo by Tom Collicott



*Entwined, 2019*

Photo: Tom Collicott



*Correspondence, 2019*

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