

Artist takes unique approach to knitting

Local jewelry maker creates one-of-a-kind pieces using beads and thin copper wire

By Holly Pupino
Special to the Beacon Journal

Many people knit sweaters and hats, but Sharon Hessoun does something a bit different. She knits necklaces.

Hessoun uses a basic knitting technique. Instead of yarn, she uses thin wire -- and beads -- to create one-of-a-kind jewelry.

The resident of Franklin Township in Summit County calls her one-woman jewelry business, Beadecked and Beaddicted.

She got into jewelry making about a decade ago, first stringing beads. A brief mention of the wire knitting technique in a book caught her interest, and she began exploring it. Three years later, Hessoun wrote her own book on the subject, and now she is considered an authority on this relatively unknown jewelry-making technique.

"I just got a phone call from someone with a great accent from United Kingdom wanting my book," Hessoun said recently. "I've also shipped it to Australia, the Philippines and China."

The book, *Wire Knitting On a Spool*, is featured on Hessoun's Web site -- www.beadeckedonline.com -- along with the spool kit, which she designed with ergonomics as a top priority. She said about 3,000 copies of the book have been sold.

Holding a small maple spool in her left hand, Hessoun uses a stylus to wrap thin, 28-gauge colored copper wire around three prongs protruding from one end of the spool. As the wire interlocks, a long knitted chain emerges. Often, she strings beads, small crystals or pearls onto the wire before beginning the knitting so they are worked into the chain.

Hessoun's necklaces are made using various patterns, such as the single knit, double knit and star knit. The latter requires a heavier wire but creates a lacier weave.

The wire comes in about 30 different colors, and Hessoun loves to combine it with other materials, especially beads. One of her favorite pastimes is visiting bead shows and bead stores across the country, looking for unusual and eye-catching beads. Her husband, Denis, often accompanies her.

Her large collection of beads, neatly stored in drawers in her workroom, includes antique Swarovski crystals, glass beads crafted by lampwork artists and ceramic beads fired raku-style.

Hessoun, who recently returned from the West Coast with beads, appreciates the art of those who make them.

"Look at this one," she said, pointing to the bead at the center of a necklace dangling on her wall. "Most artists use glass rods to make their beads. This artist from New Hampshire actually makes his own glass."

For one popular necklace, Hessoun knits together wire and eyelash yarn. The result is a feathery -- and sometimes sparkly -- necklace with long fibers shooting out in all directions as they circle the neck.

"For me, jewelry making is all about color," the artist said.

Hessoun sells her jewelry at about seven art shows a year in Ohio and out of state. She will be at Art in the Park, held Sept. 6-7 at Fred Fuller Park in Kent. Her work is also featured in a showcase at Warehouse on the Canal, an antiques and art gallery, which recently opened in downtown Canal Fulton.

Prices range from \$10 for a simple ankle bracelet to more than \$100 for long chains and those featuring large numbers of beads, pearls and crystals. For teachers, hospital employees and office workers who are required to wear identification tags, Hessoun sells knitted wire cords for \$20.

Hessoun, supervisor of special education programs for Stow-Munroe Falls City Schools, is about to begin her last school year. She plans to retire next June from a 30-year career in education, having taught and led special education programs for Cuyahoga Falls Public Schools, the Six District Educational Compact, which operates in northern Summit County, and Stow-Munroe Falls.

"I've been known to knit at professional meetings," Hessoun said with a laugh. "My hands always have to be busy, and knitting seems to help me focus better. It's a creative outlet."

Retirement will only open up more hours for Hessoun to devote to jewelry making and teaching. At 59, she looks forward to being able to teach more jewelry-making workshops at national bead and embellishment shows and in the 100 or so bead stores that sell her book across the country.

Hessoun can be reached at 330-730-8124.