

**Donna Sharrett**

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## **Work Info**

I work under the influence of that which I am by inheritance: artist, environmentalist, gardener, seamstress, social activist; accompanied by the sound track which bookmarks my memories.

### **2018**

#### **A Tailored Herbaria of At-Risk Forest Denizens**

After a nearly three-decade exploration of the objects and traditions used to remember human loved ones, I have adjusted my sights to record the existence of beloved trees imperiled by accelerated temperature and rainfall shifts, disease and insect introductions, landscaping trends, and commercial interests. The resulting objects replicate actual leaves from trees identified by their GPS (Global Positioning System) location. Materials and processes developed for my “Memento” and Arrangement” series are used in honor of my mother for whom tiny handmade stitches were love notes held in homemade clothing, for my brother with the use of guitar-strings, and for my father who fostered my love of trees.

### **1990-2016**

#### **Arrangements & Mementos**

Memory: Flowers, Music, Belongings

The shared human ability and desire to remember transcends self-differentiating definitions. My works are meditations on memory; where flowers, music and belongings serve as its repository, and are arranged within a numeric cadence inspired by the sacred geometry of Gothic cathedral rose windows, religious prayer beads, nature, and 6 & 12 string guitars. The circular forms and compositions reflect the seamless continuum of ritual that binds the past to the present, and the present to the future. Mirroring the Buddhist mandala form, the circular shape enveloped by the square background of the “Arrangements” characterizes the infinite within the finite. Nineteenth century memento mori hair jewelry and contemporary makeshift memorial shrines are referenced.

Clothing, jewelry and buttons are among the materials now used which join the ongoing repertoire of symbolically significant materials – rose petals, hair, rings, bone beads and handmade rose beads (inspired by a 13th-century recipe for rosary beads). Guitar-strings are used as a dedication to my brother, Scot Sharrett (1961-2001), as are the song titles chosen to name the works. His collection of hundreds of guitar-string ball-ends inspired my Arrangement series which was developed during my November 2001 residency at Weir Farm.

A variety of needlework techniques are used, including hand sewing, quilting, embroidery, crochet and needlelace. I am indebted to the venerable needlework sorority that joins women throughout history and is found in every culture; where knowledge of stitches and patterns are taught in intimate gatherings and are passed from one generation to the next; a sorority which includes my mother and grandmother who taught me.

The “Mementos” series (1998-2001), was dedicated to my mother, Virginia Sharrett. Phrases from her letters title the works. This series was developed during my 1998 residency at the Millay Colony for the Arts.

### **Working Process: Arrangements**

In honor of my brother, all the works contain guitar strings and/or guitar-string ball-ends, or these components from other stringed musical instruments. Objects are arranged in sets of six and/or multiples of six to reference the number of strings on a guitar. The objects, to include the musical instrument components, have all been previously used. They all contain history – memories. Song titles name the works. The works are all circular to reference the everlasting, the infinite. The objects are joined with traditional stitching techniques, almost always either a running stitch or a buttonhole stitch. The buttonhole stitch is used in honor of my mother who always said that a handmade buttonhole is a sign of a well-made garment.

It is a collaborative process with the donated materials and, by extension, with the previous owners who chose to own these objects, and with the donors – if in fact they are not the previous owners but rather the heirs of these belongings. The objects are received only after a series of choices by others.

Quite often new gifts suggest a potential relationship with one of the previous gifts-in-waiting. Usually there are several works-in-progress simultaneously in my studio. The works inform each other. The song title which names the work, my name and the date of the work is embroidered onto the finished work.

### **Acknowledgements**

**Natural Materials** (*Bone beads, Dirt, Garnet, Hair, Roses, Willow branches*): Gifts of: Bette Alexander, Lisa Breslow, Julie Brunner Cross, Jack Conrad, Nancy Curcio & Nicholas Mann, Suzanne Dunay, Marie Flores, Bruce & Dite Garrison, Melissa Green, Jennifer Johnson, Ken Kamber, Ronnie Kamber, Marion Wilson, Pavel Zoubok

*Notes: Dirt bases are created by embedding dirt into a lace support. Since 2001 dirt has been used as a material for the biblical reference, “for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” in response to the World Trade Center recovery effort occurring while I was sorting through my brother’s belongings following his death on 9/2/2001. Synthetic & human hair is used as reference to the 19th century Memento Mori hair jewelry. The hair is often worked in a needlelace stitch, an originating lace making stitch. My mother taught me this stitch to make handmade buttonholes. She would say, “The sign of a well-made garment is handmade buttonholes”. Both rose petals & handmade beads created using a 13th century recipe for rosary beads made from crushed rose petals are used in the works. Roses were first used in my work in 1998 as a reference to the present-day practice of creating makeshift roadside floral memorials. Images of Willow trees are symbolic in Memento Mori.*

**Guitar, Harp & Violin Strings:** Gifts of: Louise Beach/Brian Skarstad/Skarstad Violins, Paul Bloomstrom, Elizabeth Callen, Jessa Callen, Mike Corso, Tom Crandall, Larry Deming, Nekia Caprice Fox, Abby Gardner, Fred Gillen Jr., Lara Herscovitch, Jake Jones, Shane Konen, Nicholas Mann, Bill Massof, Rob Moore, Christopher Pappas, Scot Sharrett, Rod Teets, Brad Travis, Peter van Alstine, Jack van der Mark, Mark Wasserman, Tracey Wilson, Jenna Young

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*Note: Thread from American & Efird Mills, North Carolina where my mother worked is used.*

**Song Titles:**

***Against the Wind***, 1980, Bob Seger; ***Alison***, 1977, Elvis Costello; ***Always***, 1925, Irving Berlin; ***Angie***, 1973, Mick Jagger/Keith Richards; ***Anywhere***, 2002, Beth Orton; ***A Song for You***, 1969, Leon Russell; ***Beth***, 1976, Kiss; ***Bluebird***, 1967, Stephen Stills; ***Born to Rock***, 1984, Scot Sharrett; ***Box of Rain***, 1970, Phil Lesh/Robert Hunter; ***Buckets of Rain***, 1974, Bob Dylan; ***Changes***, 1971, David Bowie; ***Clocks***, 2002, Coldplay; ***Dancing Barefoot***, 1979, Patti Smith and Ivan Kral; ***Destiny***, 2001, Henry Binns and Sam Hardaker; ***Dream On***, 1973, Steven Tyler; ***Faded Memory***, 2001, Scot Sharrett; ***Fever***, 1956, Eddie Cooley/Otis Blackwell; ***Fields of Gold***, 1993, Sting; ***Fire and Rain***, 1969, James Taylor; ***For a Dancer***, 1974, Jackson Browne; ***Forever Young***, 1974, Bob Dylan; ***Freebird***, 1973, Allen Collins/Ronnie Van Zant; ***Get It While You Can***, 1967, Jerry Ragovoy; ***Gloria***, 1964, Van Morrison; ***Guinnevere***, 1969, David Crosby; ***Harvest Moon***, 1991, Neil Young; ***Heart of Gold***, 1971, Neil Young; ***I Think of You***, 1986, Scot Sharrett; ***Ice Cream***, 1993, Sarah McLachlan; ***Imagine***, 1971, John Lennon; ***In My Life***, 1965, John Lennon/Paul McCartney; ***In the Sun***, 2000, Joseph Arthur; ***Isis***, 1975, Bob Dylan; ***Jane Says***, 1987, Jane's Addiction; ***Jessica***, 1973, Dickey Betts; ***Just Breathe***, 2009, Pearl Jam; ***Little Wing***, 1967, Jimi Hendrix; ***Lola***, 1970, Ray Davies; ***Long May You Run***, 1976, Neil Young; ***Love and Affection***, 1976, Joan Armatrading; ***Love is a Rose***, 1974, Neil Young; ***Lovesong***, 1989, Robert Smith, Lol Lolhurst, Purl Thompson, Rger O'Donnell, Boris Williams; ***Maggie May***, 1971, Rod Stewart/Martin Quittenton; ***Magnificent***, 2008, U2/Brian Eno/Daniel Lanois; ***Michelle***, 1965, Paul McCartney/John Lennon; ***Moondance***, 1970, Van Morrison; ***No Longer Mine***, 1985, Scot Sharrett; ***Nothing Else Matters***, 1992, Metallica; ***Ooh Child***, 1970, Stan Vincent; ***Ophelia***, 1975, Robbie Robinson; ***Poetry Man***, 1974, Phoebe Snow; ***Praise You***, 1998, Norman Cook/Camille Yarbrough; ***Passionate Kisses***, 1988, Lucinda Williams; ***Ramble On***, 1969, Jimmy Page/Robert Plant; ***Rosalita***, 1973, Bruce Springsteen; ***Roundabout***, 1971, Jon Anderson/Chris Squire; ***Scarlet Begonias***, 1974, Robert Hunter/Jerry Garcia; ***Sexy Sadie***, 1968, John Lennon; ***Silence***, 2007, PJ Harvey; ***Simple Twist of Fate***, 1974, Bob Dylan; ***Smooth***, 1999, Itaal Shur/Rob Thomas; ***Spoonful***, 1960, Willie Dixon; ***Suzanne***, 1966, Leonard Cohen; ***Sweet Jane***, 1970, Lou Reed; ***The Circle Game***, 1966, Joni Mitchell; ***The Long Black Veil***, 1959, Marijohn Wilken/Danny Dill; ***The Wind***, 1971, Cat Stevens; ***This is Love***, 2000, PJ Harvey; ***Tiny Dancer***, 1971, Elton John/Bernie Taupin; ***Turn the Page***, 1973, Bob Seger; ***Turn, Turn, Turn***, 1959, Pete Seeger; ***Victoria***, 1969, Ray Davies; ***Wicked Game***, 1989, Chris Isaak; ***Wild Horses***, 1970, Mick Jagger/Keith Richards; ***Wild World***, 1970, Cat Stevens; ***Will the Circle Be Unbroken***, 1907, Ada Ruth Habershon/Charles Hutchinson Gabriel; ***Wing***, 1996, Patti Smith; ***Wish You Were Here***, 1975, David Gilmour/Roger Walters; ***Without Her***, 1971, Harry Nilsson; ***Yellow***, 2000, Coldplay; ***Your Song***, 1973, Elton John/Bernie Taupin

**Technical Support:**

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