



COLOUR ME INSPIRED

Artsy Amber has always loved creating, and it was one fateful stint in a yarn shop that led to designing her own fabulous colourwork

earning to crochet is a process of trial and error for many of us. A struggle with hook and yarn can lead us to believe it's not our thing, and we stick rigidly to other hobbies. But for crochet designer Amber Millard, it's not an either/or situation. Despite not taking to crochet until her 20s, her love for drawing, painting and doodling, harking back to her childhood, has had a profound influence on her crochet style.

Amber learnt the basics from her mother when she was around seven years old. "I'm pretty sure I wanted to make a blanket with one skein of Red Heart Super Saver and a 4mm hook," she reflects. "As you can imagine, that didn't turn out well." Further attempts were made, but it wasn't until her mid-20s that Amber truly caught the crochet bug. "I worked at a craft store and all that

pretty, pretty yarn started whispering to me. By then YouTube was a thing and with my little bit of prior knowledge, I was able to pick it up quickly and started following every pattern I could find online."

Crochet is a broad medium, and no two crafters have the same experience. What draws one person in can have the opposite effect on another. Some like granny squares, chain spaces and lacy drapes, while others are partial to a firmer fabric, like mosaic crochet. For Amber, it was colourwork that really appealed to her.

"I like to call it 'painting with yarn' because during the design process, it reminds me a lot of how I'd approach drawing or painting," she explains. "Making a mess, finding a style that works for me, and lots of erasing (frogging)." In fact, the way Amber works with yarn and hooks mirrors how she works

with pencil and paper: "It's a pretty active process for me. I'd have sketches of the same thing on four pages until I liked how it looked."

INSPIRATION EVERYWHERE

As she became more confident as a designer, and got a feel for what styles and techniques she enjoyed, Amber started her blog, *Divine Debris*. It's a treasure trove of striking motifs that channel her signature cosy, spooky vibes. "My most popular pattern by a long shot is my Glenda Ghost Bag," she remarks fondly. "The response to that was incredible, and I think I'll be chasing that high for the rest of my crochet career."

She's also designed patterns for Pride Month, which are available all year round, with discounts and new designs released in June. During this time, the proceeds are donated to LGBTQ+ charities like The Trevor



Project and Trans Lifeline. "As a queer woman myself, this is an issue close to my heart," she says. "I'm glad I can do what I can."

Amber's blog also rounds up patterns from other designers, grouped by occasions such as Halloween, Christmas and Valentine's Day. "It's fun to share the work of other people with my followers. There are so many crocheters, knitters and designers I just adore!" @tlyarncrafts, @crochethighway and @thedreamcrochet are a few of her major inspirations. "Recently I got to see @crochet.or.cry's book," she adds. "As a fellow tapestry crochet lover, it blew me away."

So what inspires Amber's own designs? "I try to draw inspiration from everything," she tells us, "from the world around me to holidays (especially Halloween, as it's my favourite)." A peek at her autumn-hued jumpers, skull-embazoned cardigans and ghostly granny squares is a case in point. "One of my biggest inspirations is my mood," she adds. "I struggle to design or create when my heart isn't in it."

DIGITALLY DIVINE

Crafting has been a mainstay in Amber's life for over a decade now, and she's quick to point out the mental health benefits. "Crochet as both an art form and meditative practice just seemed so appealing. I can't believe there was a time I wasn't crocheting, or at least had my 'emotional support skein' in my bag with me." How does the slow, mindful nature of crochet stack up against

the pressure of maintaining an online presence? "I have such a love-hate relationship with social media," Amber admits, "but I try to maintain a feed that inspires me. Sometimes I get a little jealous and wish I could be more creative, successful, professional – you name it. But right now I'm really happy following cool people who make cool stuff."

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With YouTube helping her get to grips with crochet, and an uplifting community on social media, it's fair to say *Divine Debris* embraces the digital world. But like many fibre artists, Amber knows exactly where she draws the line. "I really want to make a design that makes it clear my stance on AI," she says.



A few of her favourite things

When Amber's not crocheting...

"I just adore relaxing before bed with a book and still weekly catch-up with my favorite comic books (fun fact, I have a Wonder Woman tattoo). And when we dare to venture out, my husband and I love to find and try craft beers." Visit www.divinedebris.com or head to Instagram (@divinedebris) to find out more about Amber.