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Ladders Covered with Prostate Cancer at the Chelsea



If someone on your gift list has requested a crocheted ladder covered with prostate cancer you need to talk to [Agata Oleksiak](#).

Earlier this year, Oleksiak's work was part of the "Back to Bohemia" exhibit which was on display in the Hotel Chelsea's Grand Ballroom.

What do you do?

I make art. I crochet and watch movies or crochet and listen to one song over and over again. Writing this, I am listening to Silvio Rodriguez's "Suen Serpientes". My everyday life is like a crochet pattern, it is infinite repetition, and a pattern itself, those loops are strong, unbreakable, but one could take the end of the material I am working with and by ripping it apart, could destroy everything. But then I will start remaking it. The new is - like art itself - the eternal return of the old.

So, what do I do? I work and live in an asylum: a safe space where the mad are kept. Sometimes my friends will visit me in my shelter, to watch movies with me - they do not appreciate listening to the same song the whole day. And I suspect they visit me when they worry about my obsessive-compulsive actions. But I am protected, I am constantly protected by the crocheted comfort zone, where I am getting sometimes entirely too comfortable and content as people do in their lives. Waking up from this pattern is for me to design costumes or sets for dance companies, and then again I crochet and I will crochet and crochet- even if I feel like I cannot continue any longer-- until I have reached a point where I know I could go on forever. Currently, I have been working on crocheted prostate cancer. I want to create a man world - all covered with their biggest fear - prostate cancer.

How Did Your Art End Up In the Chelsea Hotel?

When my work was shown at Oliver Kamm 5BE Gallery, I brought with me my crocheted ladder to be able to install my installation. When I hung my mixed media crocheted piece to the ceiling and dropped part of it outside the gallery window, the crocheted ladder was thrown into the gallery storage room. Then, one day before the opening, two collectors came to 5BE, two ladies who, after buying shoes, visited Chelsea to buy some paintings to match their previous purchases, and they took my precious crocheted ready made out of storage and placed it in the middle of gallery. And I think that the curator was not very happy about it, but then she said that we could leave it for the reception, so the people can rest their drinks on it. No comments.

So, during the opening somebody saw it, and bought it. It ended up in the Marshall Allan collection, who was (maybe still is) living in the Chelsea Hotel. He decided to show his collection in the Chelsea Hotel ballroom in April 2005, and the curator of this event, Renee Vara, contacted me and asked me to bring some of my new work to this event. So, I installed some of my crocheted ready-mades, and I made a new piece - crocheted orange camouflage suit of armor, and I put a performer inside of it. It actually started my camouflage obsession. But the ladder was not shown. Marshall Allan, as he said, uses my sculpture to change the bulbs. I miss this object - it has romantic, sentimental value to me. My friend told me a story that came to her mind after she saw my crocheted ladder: When she was a little girl her parents did not have enough money to buy new presents for Christmas every year. Her mom simply repacked the old gifts. The sensation of seeing the new wrapping, the action of opening, rediscovering the old is the investigation, which for me, means the way in which past form and function continue to shape the new. By the way, I created new ladders - one is covered with prostate cancer.

Do you think there is a creative energy in the Chelsea Hotel?

Ghosts have energy - and Chelsea is surrounded by them. Besides them, Chelsea is like a big shopping center. And you cannot find creative energy in the malls, but you can create creative energy anywhere you want to. Chelsea people are like Vermeer woman. And as it is said about the lady from Vermeer's *Music Lesson* in the Peter Greenaway film "A Zed & Two Noughts": "She is not standing really; she is trapped in stitch to the music instrument." She will be seen this way forever - they/we can still escape from this stitch, or carry scissors like I do.



What is your favorite Hotel Chelsea story? The one that it is not yet written.