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# knits+that

## trunk Shows

BY CHERYL KREMENTZ

Civic leaders and artists are cozying up to an idea rooted firmly in community. Festooning trees with swaths of knitting isn't new—the Houston-based knitting-graffiti group Knitta and Ohio artist/crocheter Carol Hummel have both gained notoriety attaching fibery bits to bark—but if two recent attention-getting installations are any indication, the knitted tree cozy as public statement is a concept whose time has come.

### Exhibit A: The Knit Knot Tree, Yellow Springs, Ohio

Corinne Bayraktaroglu and Nancy Mellon, board members of the lively Yellow Springs Art Council, were researching street-scene art projects when they came across the work of Knitta. Duly inspired, they attached pieces of Mellon's spare knitting to the Bartlett pear tree she calls a "beloved" Yellow Springs landmark. A fellow council board member dubbed it the Knit Knot Tree. Bayraktaroglu and Mellon (who liked the name better flipped) felt the trunk was still a bit underdressed, and in February, says the former, they "started going crazy with needles."

As the pair affixed piece after colorful piece, the community got in on the action. "People would pass the tree, screech to a stop and come racing with their knitting still on the needles, wanting to add to it," says Mellon. "Or we would come the next day and find that someone had attached new knitting overnight." Kids learned to knit baskets, hanging them on the Knit Knot's branches; generous types left presents in its nooks. A betrothed couple even tied the knot under the Knit Knot, in the rain, with Mellon holding the umbrella and Bayraktaroglu snapping the wedding pictures. After three months the installation came down, on Arbor Day, before summer's heat overtook sweater weather.

"People love the tree; it resonates," says Mellon. "You'd see this blaze of color way down the street." Just because the Knit Knot Tree has shed its clothing does not mean the legend won't live on: Several pieces have been left intact in its branches, and the main rectangles have been, says Mellon (*shown right*), "redistributed" onto "textile totems," fiber-covered utility poles throughout town. "It went beyond the visual and became very interactive," Bayraktaroglu says of the tree. "It was such a cheerful, fun thing to do. I'm having tree withdrawal, and so is the rest of the town."



PHOTOGRAPHS BY CORINNE  
BAYRAKTAROGLU\_ZAFAGI@ART.COM