

Close Knit

Michael David Sturlin crochets with gold

BY SUZANNE WADE Michael David Sturlin is fascinated by the fluid look and feel of crocheted wire. "When people pick up and feel my jewelry, they're really attracted to it, and that, to me, is the thing that's ultimately satisfying," says Sturlin.

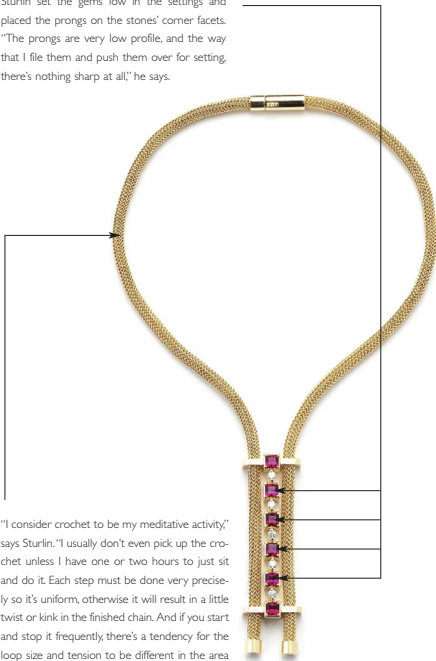
This crocheted necklace is created by weaving interlocking loops of 18k gold wire into a chain, using a needle. Because the chain is built loop by loop, it is a time consuming process: It can take up to three hours to crochet one inch.

Annealing the woven necklace can be one of the most challenging steps. The fine wire is easily overheated and can quickly melt. This very real danger of destroying a laboriously constructed piece has driven more than one jewelry artist away from the technique, says Sturlin. "I know people who tried [gold wire crochet] and they spent eight or 10 hours creating a piece. Then when they tried to anneal it and finish it, they melted it." Practice and experience are Sturlin's keys to heating a piece enough to anneal, but not enough to melt.

For this piece, setting the stones was another design challenge. Because Sturlin wanted this piece to be reversible, he had to be certain that the prongs would not catch on fabric or skin when the pendant was worn stone-side down. "If someone put on one of my necklaces, and it tore their gown or snagged their sweater, that wouldn't reflect well on the maker," he says.

To keep the prongs from grabbing, he set the gems low in the settings and placed the prongs on the stones' corner facets. "The way the tips are done, it's not something that would catch on fabric—or on a bare neckline." ♦

To keep the prongs from catching on fabric when the necklace is worn stone-side down, Sturlin set the gems low in the settings and placed the prongs on the stones' corner facets. "The prongs are very low profile, and the way that I file them and push them over for setting, there's nothing sharp at all," he says.



"I consider crochet to be my meditative activity," says Sturlin. "I usually don't even pick up the crochet unless I have one or two hours to just sit and do it. Each step must be done very precisely so it's uniform, otherwise it will result in a little twist or kink in the finished chain. And if you start and stop it frequently, there's a tendency for the loop size and tension to be different in the area where you started and stopped. It takes a great degree of focus and mindfulness."