



by Neale Whitaker

Let's have a yarn

Call your great aunty and start raiding Mum's craft cabinet – because crocheted items are back in vogue



I honestly never imagined a day when I would be typing the words “crochet” and “trend” into my laptop – and in the same sentence. Or, come to that, talking to a Melbourne artist who has become a social media star for his crocheted outfits based on everyday food and drink. Phil Ferguson, aka ChiliPhilly (chiliphilly.com), has more than 137,000 Instagram followers and profiles in the HuffPost and BuzzFeed under his (crocheted) belt. “My recent wearable pieces such as the chip packet, salad, charcuterie platter and fruit loops are some of my favourites,” he tells me. “I purposely made those things with the intent of

comes to the home, crochet – for me – will always spell charity fetes and school bazaars. Toilet roll covers and peg bags. Or your great aunt's favourite bedspread.

Ferguson believes crafts like crochet owe their newfound popularity to the current “cost-saving, recyclable, homemade aesthetic”, adding that “whether it evolves into something beyond wall hangings or throws will depend on who is willing to apply out-of-the-box creativity to those sorts of pieces”.

I think it's happening already. A quick online search reveals crocheted cushions, blankets, baskets, cacti – even doorknob covers. Crochet is incontrovertibly, undeniably a *thing*. And that same online search indicates the return of something far more sinister from my past: candlewick. I'm suddenly very afraid. Nylon sheets cannot be far behind. ★ Neale Whitaker is co-host of Foxtel's *Love It Or List It Australia* on Lifestyle, and a judge on Nine Network's *The Block*.



OFF THE HOOK (from top) Wool from New Zealand was used to craft this beanbag by Zilalila; a crocheted light shade can add warmth and texture to a space; this macramé hanging shelf from Mocka is put to good use as a plant holder – although that particular combination gives Neale Whitaker a flashback to the '70s.



“I struggled with plants and macramé; now I'm wrestling with crochet”

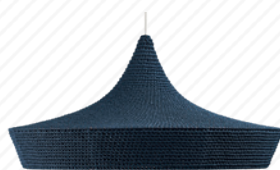
wearing them out to events and the reaction has always been positive.”

Ferguson says he taught himself to crochet as an art school student in order to “create large scale abstract sculptures”. I just wish he and Katy Perry had hooked-up pre-Met Gala. He could have crocheted that hamburger outfit for her.

Depending on your point of view, the '70s is either the decade that keeps on giving or one that refuses to die. The problem, though, when you've actually lived through it (apart from being quite old) is that it's sometimes hard to see '70s trends in a new context.

I struggled with house plants and macramé – especially when they occurred together – and now I'm wrestling with crochet. True, there were a few women who might have rocked a crocheted dress back in the day – Jane Fonda springs to mind – and I know that fashion runways are once again abuzz with retro-style knits. But when it

★ NEALE'S OBJECTS OF DESIRE



NAOMI PAUL light shade, from \$1655, naomipaul.co.uk



BAREFOOT GYPSY throw, \$100, barefootgypsy.com.au



PILLOW TALK cushion, \$54.95, pillowtalk.com.au



GAN knitted stool, from \$1017, gan-rugs.com

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