

Yarn Bombing Glow In The Dark

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Abstract

Handicrafts are no longer limited to regular applications such as clothing, accessories, home decorations, etc. Recently, they are used as daily activities to express feelings and thoughts in public places on unusual objects such as trees, walls, street furniture like benches, and other surfaces to reconfigure the aesthetics of the public space through modern art called "yarn bombing."

Yarn bombing or Yarn graffiti is a type of street art that uses needlework (such as crochet, knitting, etc.) and textile techniques (such as quilting, sewing, etc.) for employing colorful displays and decorating objects. The yarn bombing appeared in 2005 in Houston, Texas, and then began to spread rapidly by means of contemporary social communications, but it remains obscure and largely unknown in Egypt.

This paper argues the applicability of yarn bombing in Egypt and studies the aesthetic aspects of using luminous yarn that glow in the dark to yarn bomb public places (gardens and sports clubs). It also includes a study of the individual response and the possibility of spreading and developing this art in Egypt to benefit from its expected practical advantages. Finally, the study shows different reactions and inspirations toward yarn bombing represented in the possibility of using yarn-bombed places and objects as an invitation to learn handicrafts, expanding relationships, and exchanging experiences between professionals and amateurs for developing the public sense of aesthetics.

Keywords: *yarn bombing, yarn graffiti, crochet, handicrafts, glowing yarn, luminous yarn.*

Introduction

Handicrafts became a fine art/design despite their ordinary uses for clothing and domestics (Turney, 2009). Yarn bombing is an exceptional art that uses crocheting/knitting to decorate unusual objects and makes unique expressions in urban places (Vachhani, 2013). Yarn bombing (UK) or yarn storming (US) is a skilled handicraft practiced by amateurs and professionals using street art strategies. Yarn bombing is made by wrapping crocheted/knitted fabrics around objects in urban places to brighten the environment. It is used for making a playful creation to express feelings and thoughts or even political interactions (Haveri, 2016). It is also called yarn storming, crochet/knit graffiti, guerilla crocheting/knitting, and urban crocheting/knitting (Pavko-Čuden, 2017). Magda Sayeg has been considered the innovator of the yarn bombing movement, starting from her yarn shop in Houston, Texas, in 2005. She talked about her idea revealing that the beginning was by covering her shop's door handle with a knitted blue and pink cozy (Sayeg, 2015). People began to take photos of her small creation then her fans copied the idea using leftover knitting to create similar projects (Hahner & Varda, 2014). Since then, yarn bombing has become a global phenomenon where social media and online connectivity have played an important role in publicizing yarn bombing activities which spread all over the world by sharing photos on the world wide web, which became the most place to be visited by crafters to share, see and discuss their work with thousands of people (Macbeth & Barber, 2015). They did not only share a visual sight of their work via the Internet but also transferred feelings about yarn-bombing gatherings and crafting circles (Greer, 2014). Nowadays, yarn bombing initiatives combine female craftivism and domesticity to express themselves in action and form social and political movements (Farinosi & Fortunati, 2018).

Needlework was usually seen as an indoor activity made by older women for domestic applications (Turney, 2009). Yarn bombing resurrects traditional handicrafts and makes street art not limited to masculine practices (Wollan, 2011). The so-called "grandma graffiti" allow ladies to spread their handicrafts arts to decorate urban places, and now it has become a full-on feminist movement (Grant & Charlotte, 2011); (Kelly, 2014). It is based on merging needlework with street art and attaching the handmade items to a street fixture or landscape, depending on the artist (Moore & Prain , 2009). Yarn bombing is also considered a way to exploit the yarn leftovers, incomplete handicraft projects, and the crochet/knitted samples made by beginners while learning (Abou Hashish, 2017).

A comparative study between yarn bombing and paint graffiti found that yarn bombing activity brings human qualities that rarely exist to landscapes (Butcher, 2012). It turns the cold, unfriendly, and hard urban environment with no life and color into a warm place, spreads beauty and peace, and enhances the sense of belonging to the community (Harris , 2017). On the other side, painting graffiti could raise a sense of fear and insecurity in most cases. Besides that, the artists of paint graffiti are liable for being accused as criminals and community destruction (Coates, 2011).

Although yarn bombing does not harm the environment, it is not permanent or destructive and is easy to remove without causing any lasting damage; yarn bombers need to take the required permissions if the object is on private property (Tapper & Zucker, 2011) or it will be considered as, so-called, an aesthetic crime (Millie, 2019).

This paper is concerned with yarn bombing art and how to apply striking designs in Egypt in a legitimate way to attract people. After having the necessary permits for the selected places to apply some designs, it was necessary to take the dimensions of the objects that will be covered and decorated with yarn to develop appropriate and

distinctive designs. Besides using ordinary yarn types (cotton, acrylic, etc.), luminous yarn has been used in designs to add the value of glowing in the dark to be more attractive, especially in the evening at dark or semi-dark places.

Glowing Yarn

This work used 100% polyester glowing yarn (Glow Yarn, 2019). It is white, but it glows green in the dark. Figure (1) shows the yarn color (a) in the daytime and (b) at nighttime. It works by charging with the natural, full daylight spectrum, then glowing for about two hours. The glow begins strong; then, it gradually fades to afterglow over time.

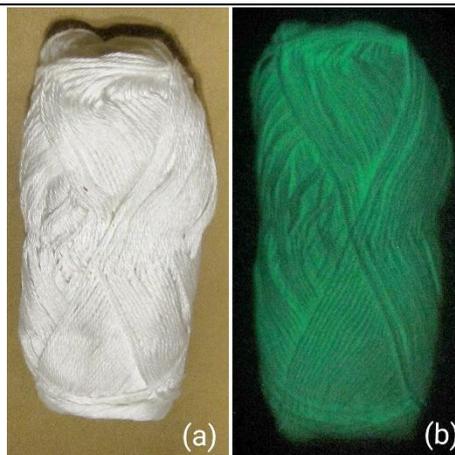


Figure (1): *Glowing yarn; (a) at daytime, (b) at nighttime*

Planning for the Yarn Bomb

To make a successful yarn bomb, work should be well planned. Planning for yarn bombs go through several steps; choosing the suitable place, finding the target object, taking measurements, determining the materials and the type of yarn art, visualizing

the final shape, creating the yarn bomb, and finally, taking photos to document the work.

1. Get permissions

In this work, a public park and a sports club have been chosen to bomb the yarn. There were no permissions for the public park to work it out. As for the sports club, approval had been obtained from officials before starting the work. It was necessary to explain what is "yarn bombing/yarn graffiti" and there were many questions that the top of them must answer: Will this work cause damage to trees? Will it leave an impact? Moreover, how long will it remain?

2. Get ideas:

Since this art had not been practiced in Egypt before, and there were no yarn-bombed places or objects to get inspiration, the inspirations were taken from online yarn-bombing photographs, videos, and events. Designs have been created and developed to suit specific places and objects.

3. Find an object:

The chosen place for yarn bombing should be studied very well to find a suitable object in a visible place. For example, searching for trees, signs, fences, and stones were preferred.

4. Measure the object:

An essential step in yarn bombing is to have the measurements of the targeted object (Hemmons, 2019). Measuring the objects ensures that the finished yarn bombs would fit suitably and accurately.

5. Draw a sketch:

A freehand sketch is helpful to clear out the measurements and dimensions of each section, including height, width, depth, and circumference (for rounded objects) by a standard fabric measuring tape. Figure (2) shows examples of sketches for some implemented yarn bombs.

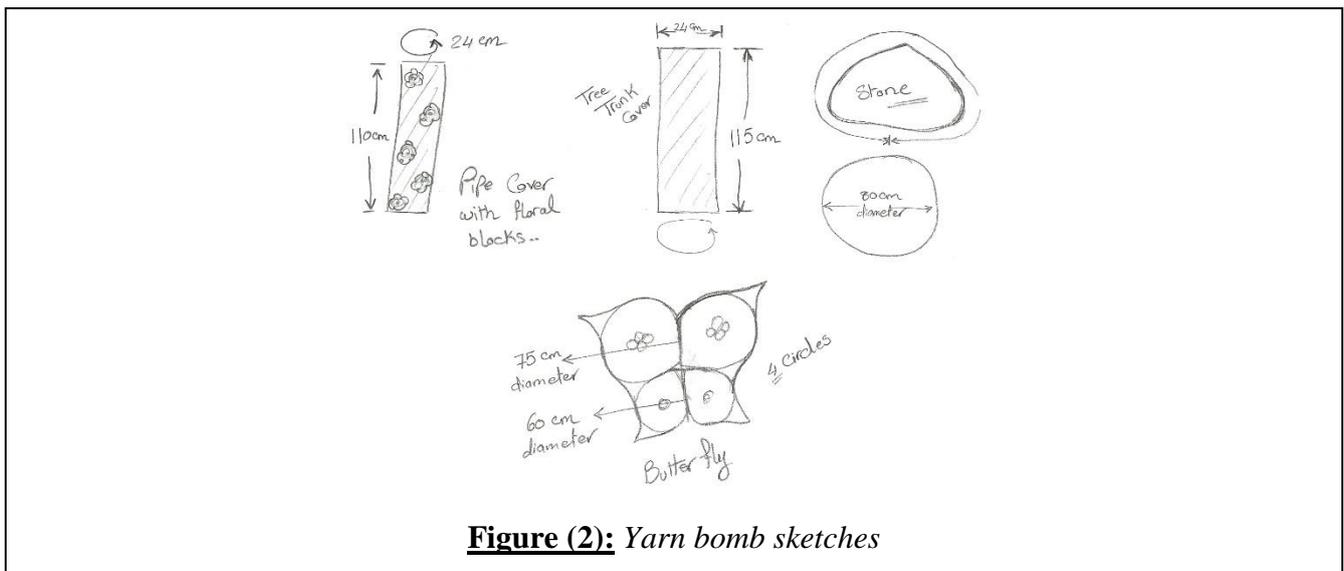


Figure (2): Yarn bomb sketches

6. Design the yarn bomb:

The design included choosing the type of needlework (knit / crochet), what are the additional materials that could be added (fabric, felts, etc.), the type of the working pattern (repeating pattern, patchwork, joining motifs etc.), and how these different pieces would fit together. Designing the yarn bomb also includes choosing the color; the project might be with single or multiple colors. Colors should be good when arranged together and with the final surroundings (Wikihow, 2019).

7. Create yarn bombs:

It is the step where the previously planned pattern is implemented, and assemble pattern pieces to fit the targeted object (Kuhnke, 2019). Stitching becomes easier when taking the previous 6 steps accurately.

8. Install yarn bombs:

Objects had to be covered by wrapping the yarn artwork pieces around them as sketched before. Sewing crocheted/knitted yarn bombs with additional yarn is the best way to fix the work to be easy to remove without harming objects when taking it off.

9. Taking & sharing photos

Yarn bombing is not permanent, so it is important to take photos to document the work and share them through suitable social communication means. In this work, Canon PowerShot A2200 HD - 14.1 Megapixels digital camera has been used to shoot yarn bombs in the dark using "Live" shooting mode without a flashlight (PowerShot A2200 Blue, 2019).

Installing the Yarn Bombs

Choosing a suitable time of the day to install pre-planned yarn bombs. It was preferred to install them during the early morning to ensure that the pieces would expose to daylight for adequate time to make them glow when it gets dark. Covering objects with yarn bombs needs a darning needle and matching yarn color by simple stitching to be easy to remove without damaging plants. Every yarn bomb was photographed twice, in the daylight and evening, to document the glowing yarn effect for every design.

Yarn Bombing Designs

Nine designs have been made in this work to show different yarn bomb types by mixing glowing yarn with an ordinary yarn type (cotton, acrylic, etc.).

1. *Yarn Bomb (1); Stones*

Figure (3) shows two yarn-bombed stones with integrated glowing yarn. This design depends on the circumference of the stone. The design at the right is based on a mandala's circular pattern (Linssen, 2016) and was executed using 100% cotton yarn beside the glowing yarn. The diameter of the crocheted mandala was equal to the circumference of the stone. It was fixed around the stone and sewn from the back side. The left stone's design is based on a mesh octagon pattern (Griffiths, 2007). The diameter of the octagon was equal to the circumference of the stone. The crocheted octagon was fixed by simple stitching at the back side taking the shape of the stone. Both patterns were chosen to be open lace designed to keep the identity and shape of the stones.



Figure (3): *Yarn bomb (1); Stones*

2. *Yarn Bomb (2); Flower Garden*

Figure (4) shows the yarn bomb (2), using a green worsted yarn to crochet the grass shape using the fundamental crochet stitches. This design depends on the circumference of the tree trunk. The flowers have been made separately using glowing yarn. The whole design is fixed on a plastic mesh to be easy to wrap around the tree trunk without causing any damage or harm to the tree. The figure also shows the glowing flowers in the dark.



Figure (4): *Yarn Bomb (2); Flower Garden*

3. Yarn Bomb (3); Tree trunk cover

Figure (5) is a crocheted tree trunk cover. The used pattern is known as corner-to-corner crochet (Coppom, 2018). This design depends on the circumference and the length of the tree trunk. The flat corner-to-corner crocheted fabric was 24 cm in width and 115 cm in length. The glowing yarn is integrated into the pattern design to make the diagonal glowing lines. The rectangular flat crocheted fabric was wrapped around the tree trunk using matching yarn and a darning needle.

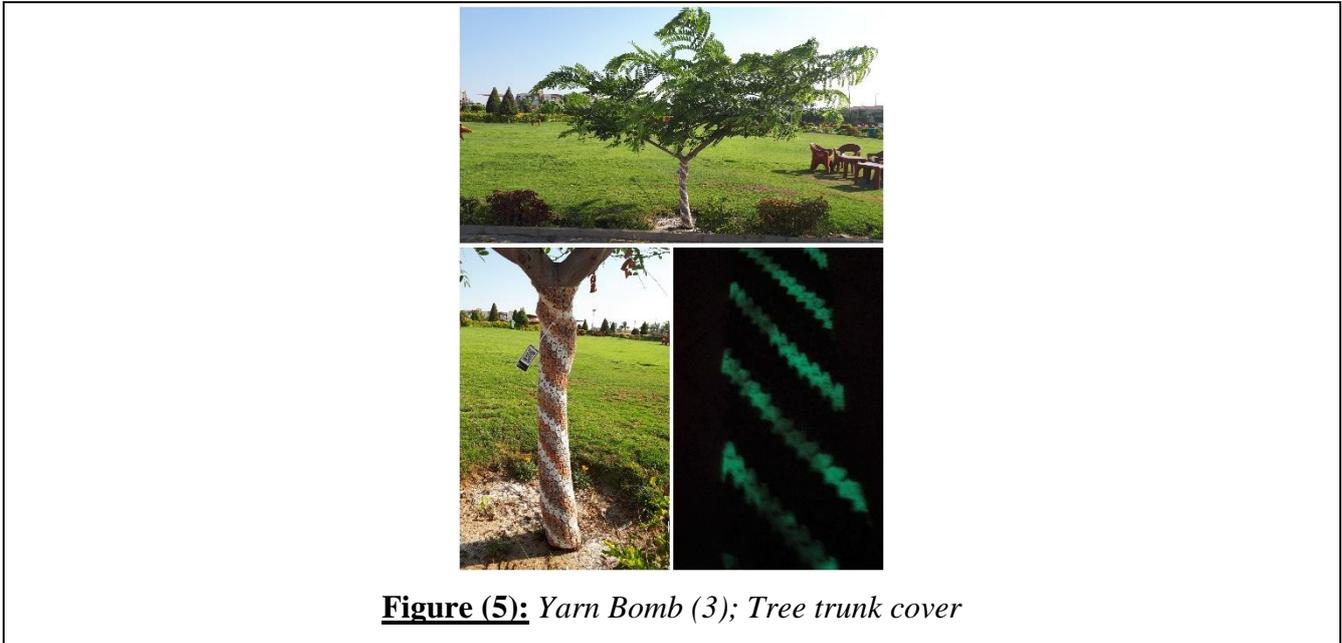


Figure (5): *Yarn Bomb (3); Tree trunk cover*

4. Yarn Bomb (4); Pipe cover

Figure (6) shows another corner-to-corner pattern (Coppom, 2018) crocheted as a pipe cover. This design depends on the circumference of the pipe and the length to be covered. The crocheted cover was made as a flat pattern using acrylic yarn leftover; its width is 24 cm and 110 cm in length. Five floral crocheted blocks (Schapper, 2008) were made using the glowing yarn, then fixed on the flat crochet fabric before wrapping it around the pipe and sewn using matching yarn and a simple stitch.



Figure (6): *Yarn Bomb (4); Pipe cover*

5. *Yarn Bomb (5); Spider web*

Figure (7) is a spider web design (Webflake Monday, 2010). This design does not need any particular measurement. Instead, it could be attached to a tree, wall, or other objects. The spider web was made of glowing yarn, and the spider amigurumi was made of black cotton yarn.

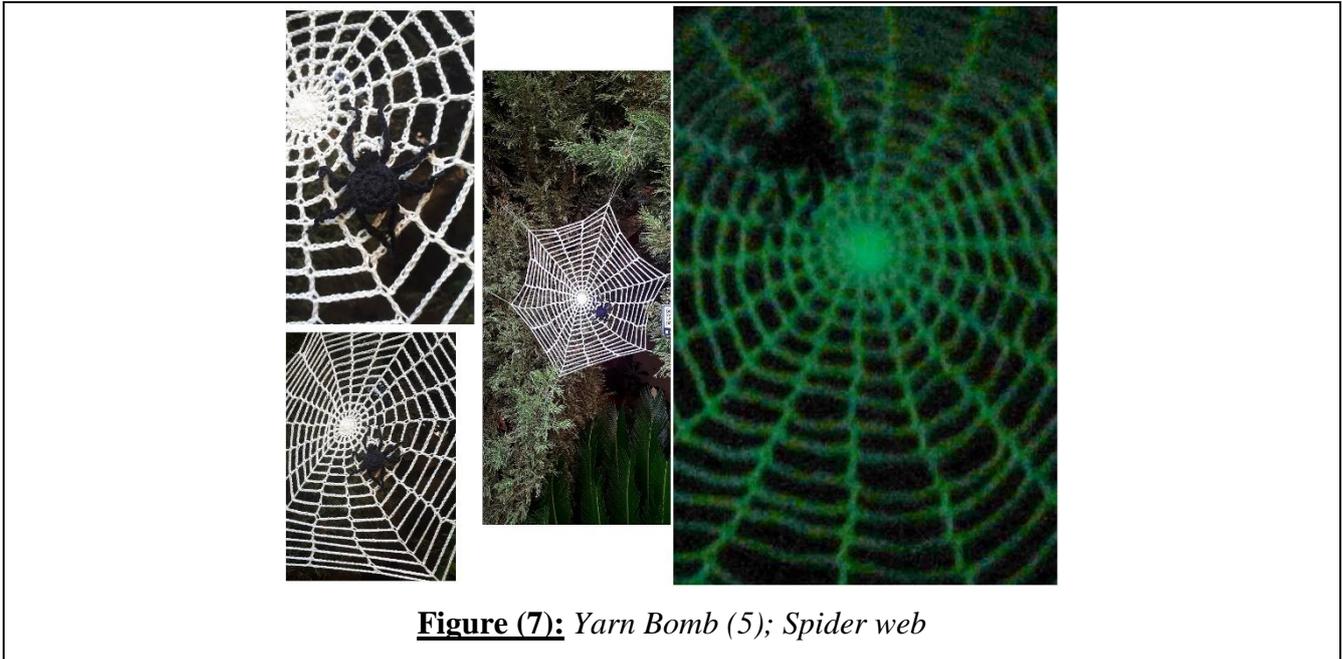


Figure (7): *Yarn Bomb (5); Spider web*

6. *Yarn Bomb (6); Mushrooms*

Figure (8) shows a different type of yarn bombing project. It is a mushroom amigurumi which do not need any fixation or special measurements, just put it on the grass, and that is it. The glowing yarn was used to make the stem of the mushroom and the scales of the cap made of red cotton yarn.



Figure (8): *Yarn Bomb (6); Mushrooms*

7. *Yarn Bomb (7); Turtle*

Figure (9) shows another amigurumi turtle. The head, legs, and lines on the shell are made of glowing yarn. This turtle's total length is 18 cm and can be made in many sizes and shapes.



Figure (9): *Yarn Bomb (7); Turtle*

8. Yarn Bomb (8); "Take One" design

Figure (10) shows the "Take One" interactive design. The background is a knitted piece of fabric; it was a part of an unfinished project, made of acrylic yarn and installed on a wooden board to be easy to hang anywhere. The "Take One" phrase's letters were made of glowing yarn and sewn on the knitted fabric (Griffiths, 2007). Several floral brooches with fringing hanging on the knitted board were made to be taken by the club visitors. Each brooch was made of two layers (Permann, 2011), a small flower and a large one, sewn together with a chain fringing at the back side, then the safety pin was fastened to a piece of broadcloth and then attached to the backside of the flower.

This design has created an interaction between the yarn bomb and the club visitors by getting a part of it as a gift to remind them of what they have seen.

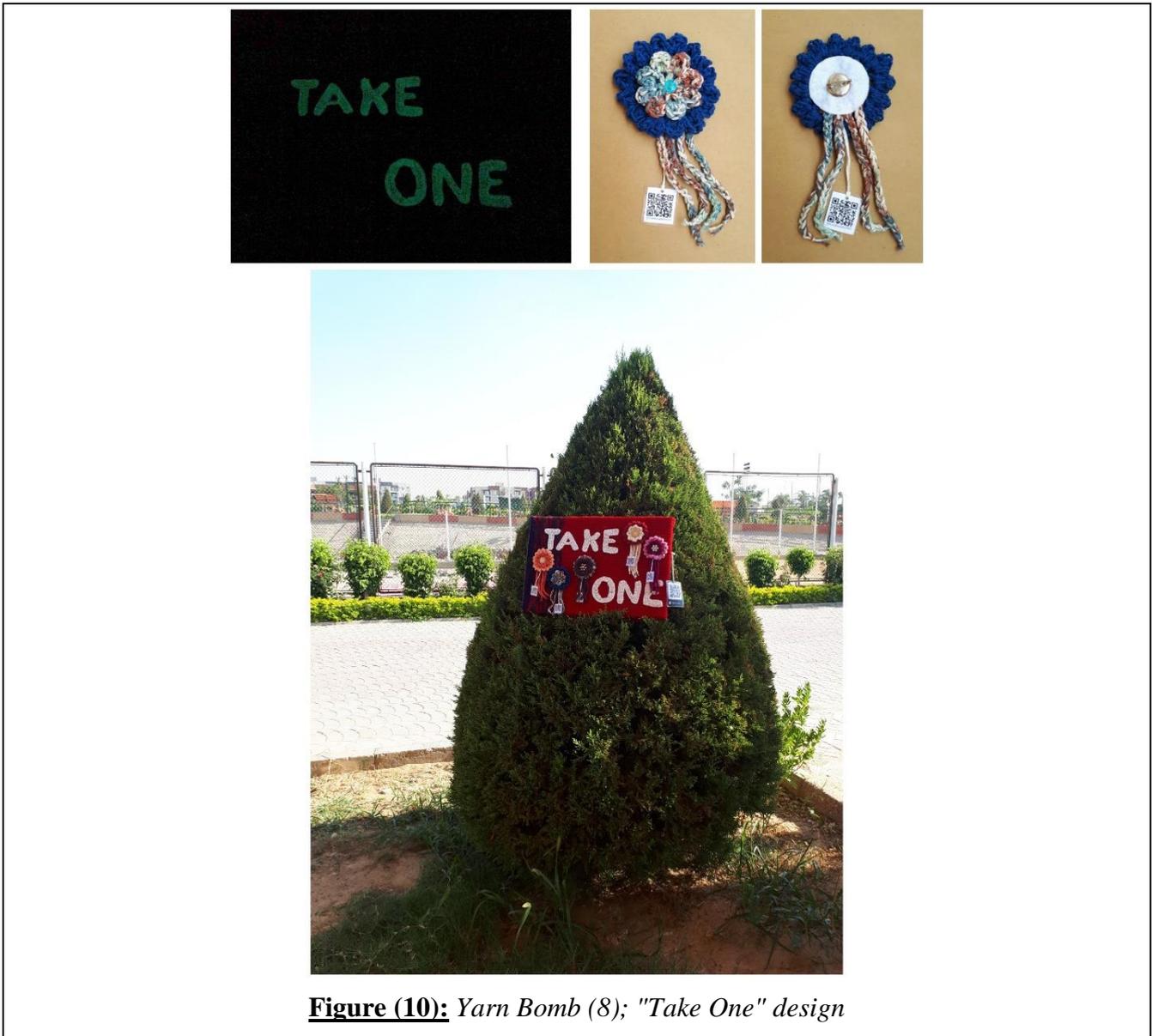


Figure (10): Yarn Bomb (8); "Take One" design

9. Yarn Bomb (9); "Butterfly" design

Figure (11) shows the butterfly yarn bomb fixed on the football playground mesh. It is another interactive design. People could be a part of the design; they could act as the butterfly's body and take photos for themselves. It consists of 4 basic crochet circles (Eaton, 2015), two circles are 75 cm in diameter, and the other two circles are 60 cm in diameter. The four circles were connected using single crochet (Sc) stitch. Spiral

shell motives (Griffiths, 2007) made of glowing yarn were added to decorate the butterfly wings.

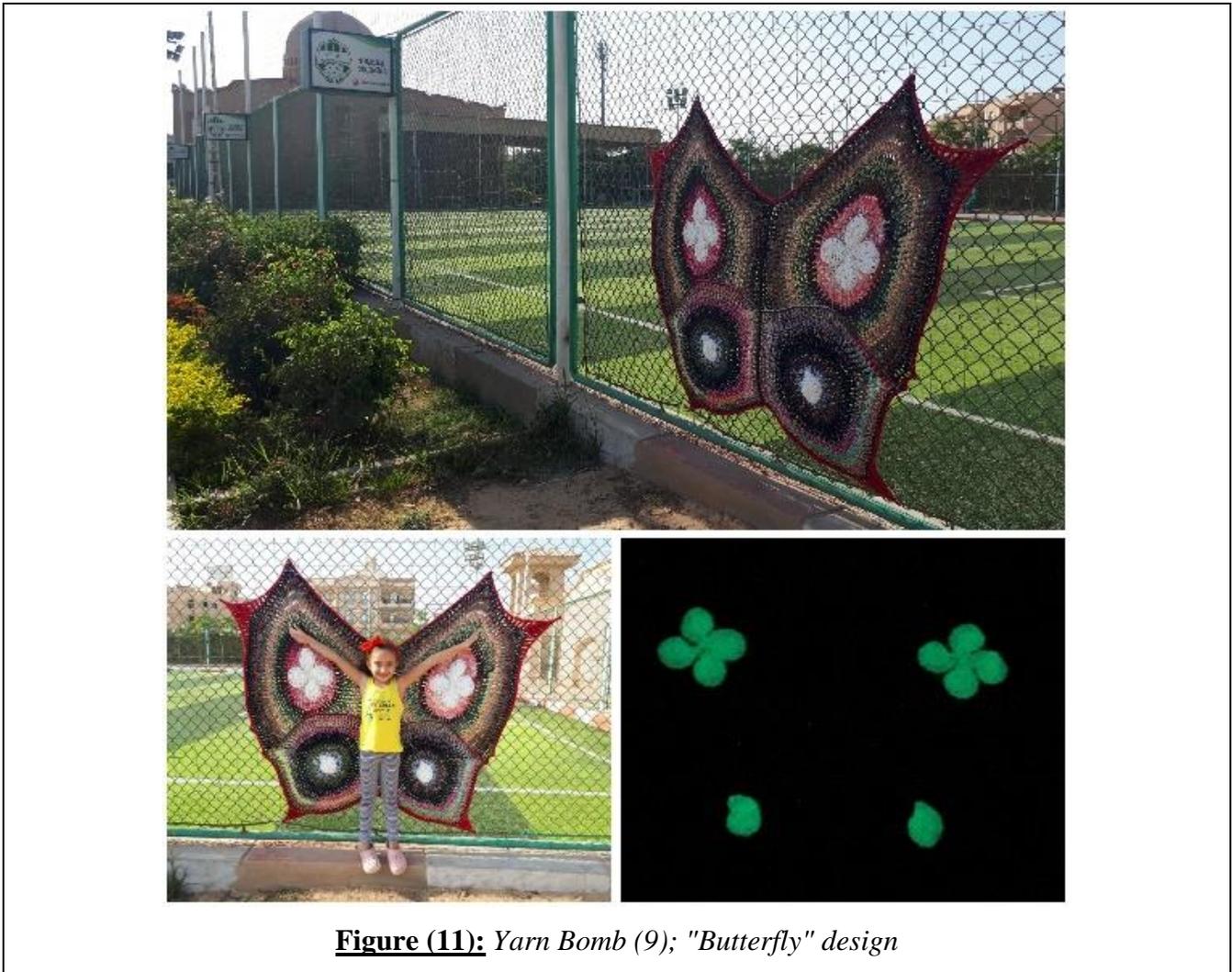


Figure (11): Yarn Bomb (9); "Butterfly" design

Sharing the Yarn Bombs

Since the art of yarn bombing has spread all over the world through the Internet among online crafting communities, this study is concerned with sharing the work online to be one of these communities by creating a Facebook page on the Facebook website, which lately considered the most widespread and influential website in

marketing and advertising (Lacap, 2014). The Facebook page "Yarn Bomb EGYPT" (Abou Hashish, 2019) was created to contain basic information about yarn bombing, photos and videos of executed bombs, and further projects. The goal of this page is to introduce yarn bombing to Egyptians, spread the idea by sharing photos of the implemented bombs, reaching other crafters, exchange experiences, establishing a competitive field in handicrafts, and create a yarn bombing crafting community in Egypt by reaching amateurs and professionals to cooperate on the implementation of future projects.

The QR code has been used to link the executed yarn bombs and the Facebook page. Quick response or QR code is a two-dimensional code with a large storage capacity that is increasingly used for marketing purposes (Parabhoi, Bhattacharjya, & Dhar, 2017). It is a square grid with black dots arranged in a particular order. It contains information about the object attached to it to express a specific URL, E-mail, text, images, Facebook, PDF, MP3, SMS, and app stores (Singh, Singh, Gambhir, Taneja, & Litoria, 2015). QR codes have become more popular nowadays by the widespread of smartphones characterized by cameras and internet connection which enable access to the Internet anywhere. It creates an interactive response between the viewer and the object (Ahmed & Alam, 2017); (Ozkaya, Ozkaya, Roxas, Bryant, & Whitson, 2015). The QR code reader software is free to download from the Play Store smartphones (Durak, Ozkeskin, & Ataizi, 2016). Anyone with a smartphone with a camera, QR reader and an internet connection could easily interact with the QR optical label by scanning it to get the direct link to the Facebook page. In this work, the QR code has been generated through a free QR code generator website (Drescher & Engelking, 2009), printed out in two designs, and attached to each yarn bomb in a visible place to

be easy to reach and scan by the viewers. Figure (12) shows the two QR designs generated and used in this work.

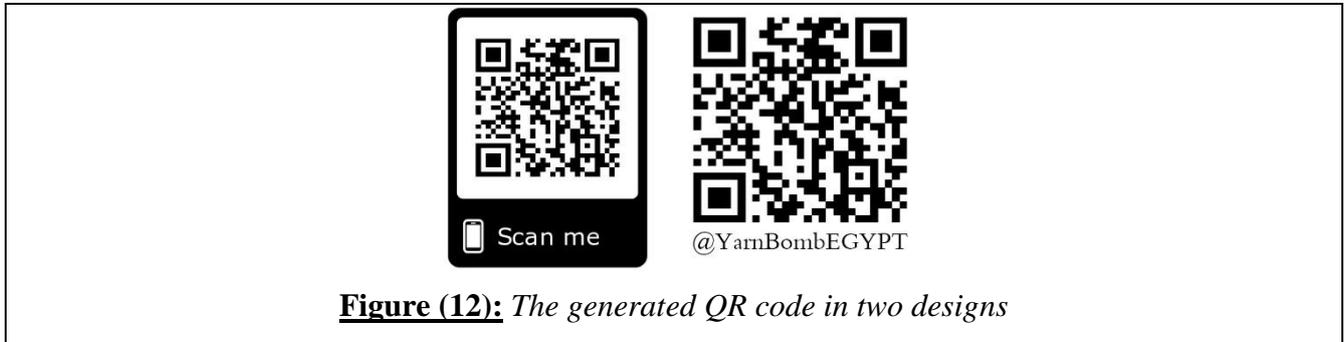


Figure (12): *The generated QR code in two designs*

Conclusion

This work uses ancient handicrafts (crochet/knitting) to make contemporary applications (yarn bombing) with the help of modern communications technology (Internet) to reach people all over Egypt. Yarn bombing is a modern outdoor yarn art used to express feelings and decorate public places to eliminate monotony and boredom. It is a way for people to go out and do something fun, beautiful, creative, and colorful displays of knitted or crocheted yarn rather than paint or chalk. It is also an innovative way to use yarn leftover and uncompleted crochet/knitted projects.

This work is an individual work made to describe and clarify the idea of yarn bombing in selected public places in EGYPT to spread the culture of handicrafts, show their beauty, and be a part of everyday life.

Yarn bombing is an unusual art in Egypt; it is striking when using ordinary yarn types. By using luminous yarn in bomb designs, that glow at night and in low-light areas, the attraction of yarn bombs increases because glowing yarn reveals the design's details and adds value. Due to the high price of the glowing yarn, they have been used as a part of the designs, not the entire design, to focus on specific details to glow in the dark. The implemented designs varied between dress-up designs (tree trunk, pipe, and stone covers), amigurumi (spider, turtle, and mushrooms), and interactive designs (butterfly and "take one" design).

Planning for bombs and choosing the right time and suitable places are important factors for work success and reaching people. This work was made to introduce Egyptians to a new international trend in arts that uses handicrafts to decorate urban

places and to bring together talented and professional handcrafters to participate in upcoming projects.

Photographing yarn bombs and sharing them via social communications means and online crafting communities keep the idea for a long time. Modern social communications became an integral part of everyday life and played an important role in publicizing the idea. For example, the choice of the Facebook website to create a Facebook page named "Yarn Bomb EGYPT" was for its popularity to ensure that the idea would reach as many people as possible in Egypt. However, the Facebook page still needs some advertising to reach more people who cannot see the bombs in real. QR codes played as a link between yarn bombs and the Facebook page that contains information and photos. However, QR codes have been used in many stores in Egypt, and a large group of people is still unaware of how to deal with these codes or do not recognize their importance, services, and information they could provide.

It can be said that the idea has been communicated to visitors of the park and the club and has reached many handicraft professionals, some amateurs, and people who're interested in learning how to crochet/knit. Some have expressed willingness to participate in the yarn bombing in other places. This work is a first step towards introducing the idea of yarn bombing in Egypt and studying how to make the most of it.

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جرافيتي الأشغال اليدوية يتوهج في الظلام

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الملخص:

لم تعد الحرف اليدوية تقتصر على التطبيقات العادية مثل الملابس والإكسسوارات والديكورات المنزلية ، إلخ. في الأونة الأخيرة ، يتم استخدامها كنشاطات يومية للتعبير عن المشاعر والأفكار في الأماكن العامة على أشياء غير عادية مثل الأشجار والجران والمقاعد وأثاث الشوارع وغيرها من الأسطح لإعادة تكوين جماليات الأماكن العامة من خلال فن حديث يسمى "قصف الغزل" أو "جرافيتي الأشغال اليدوية".

جرافيتي الأشغال اليدوية يعتبر نوع من أنواع فن الشارع الذي يعتمد على أشغال الإبرة المختلفة (مثل الكروشيه التريكو، الأميجورومي وما إلى ذلك) وتقنيات النسيج (مثل التطريز ، الخيامية وما إلى ذلك) لرسم لوحات بالخياط و الأقمشة المحاكاة على الحوائط و تزيين الأشياء. تعتبر بداية هذا الفن في عام 2005 في هيوستن ، تكساس ، ثم بدأ ينتشر بسرعة عن طريق وسائل التواصل الإجتماعي المعاصرة و لكنه يظل غامضاً وغير معروف إلى حد كبير في مصر.

تناقش هذه الورقة قابلية تطبيق فن جرافيتي الأشغال اليدوية في مصر وتدرس الجوانب الجمالية لاستخدام الخياط المضيفة التي تتوهج في الظلام و استخدامها في الأماكن العامة (الحدايق والنوادي الرياضية). كما يتضمن دراسة لإستجابة الأفراد وإمكانية نشر وتطوير هذا الفن في مصر للاستفادة من المزايا العملية المتوقعة. تُظهر الدراسة ردود أفعال و استجابات مختلفة تجاه فن جرافيتي الأشغال اليدوية و التي تتمثل في إمكانية استخدام هذا النوع من الفنون كدعوة لتعلم الحرف اليدوية وتوسيع العلاقات وتبادل الخبرات بين المحترفين والهواة من أجل تطوير الإحساس العام بالجماليات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: جرافيتي الأشغال اليدوية, فن الشارع, الكروشيه, الأشغال اليدوية, الخياط المضيفة