

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

IT WAS 50 YEARS AGO THIS SUMMER ...

Pop art's Jann Haworth is no face in the crowd

BY PETER JONES
NEWS EDITOR

It is little surprise that Jann Haworth's proudest contribution to the cover of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album is the little old lady sitting in the right corner.

"I wanted to make aging not so scary—if you brought color to the face and celebrated the wrinkles," the 75-year-old multimedia artist explained. "But when people saw it, they said, hmm, it looks like *Psycho*."

The "soft sculpture," based on a photo of Haworth's great-grandmother, lives for eternity on the iconic 1967 cover, where in multigenerational irony, the Civil War-era matriarch cradles a Shirley Temple doll, who in turn wears a striped shirt bearing the words: "Welcome the Rolling Stones."

Although prominently upfront, Grandma is often lost to the patchwork of famous faces in the accompanying collage—Edgar Allan Poe, Bob Dylan and Mae West, among many others. But the inclusion of the sculpture, independently crafted by Haworth in the early '60s, is part and parcel to the overall vision of the artist—not the Beatles, but Haworth, the cover's co-designer.

"She's a chair. Her two front legs are the front legs of the chair," the artist said of the sculpture, now sitting behind museum glass. "It kind of looks askance at the fact that older people become chair bound, but they also become furniture and insignificant. She's a little bit faded now, but in a way that's OK."

A retrospective of Haworth's work—including the aforementioned doll—is on display through Nov. 11 at Emmanuel Gallery on the Auraria Campus in Denver.

HOLLYWOOD TO LONDON

Born in southern California in 1942, Haworth's pop art was a meeting of parental influence and the superficiality that surrounded her. Her mother, Miriam, was a distinguished ceramist and painter. Her father, Ted, was an Academy Award-winning Hollywood art director, whose credits ranged from *Some Like it Hot* to *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

As a child, Haworth's father would take her to the sets, where she would meet the likes of Tony Curtis and Marilyn Monroe, both of whom wound up in the *Sgt. Pepper* collage years later.

"The transition of these beautiful women as they got older—I thought about this at age 20—how did they process it when society puts such a huge burden to be beautiful?" Haworth said of



Artist Jann Haworth stands by an original 1961 "soft sculpture" that appeared on the front cover of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. The work, based on an old photograph of her great-grandmother, is on display at Emmanuel Gallery on the Auraria Campus.

Photos by Peter Jones

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— Jann Haworth, pop artist

Monroe and others. "But I grew up in this very strange, advanced unreal world of art [with my parents] with no concept that there was anything called a gender divide."

It was only after Haworth moved to London that she fully understood that the shallowness of Hollywood was a reflection of reality, even—if not especially—across the Atlantic Ocean. Still, for a 20-something unknown woman artist, young Haworth inexplicably made her mark in "swinging London."

"I was a freak in London," she said. "I didn't have an accent that could be placed in any par-

ticular class. I guess I did something that kind of looked good in *Vogue* magazine."

Sgt. Pepper, a collaboration with her then-husband, pop artist Peter Blake, was the culmination of her higher-profile success, but the concept was largely a regurgitation of older ideas, she said.

"It's a film cheat to have cut-outs that 2D and 3D in the front row. That comes straight from my father," Haworth confessed. "Peter had done collages where he cut up people and put them together. It's an easy way for an artist to use different finished art products to assemble a crowd."

The now famous image of the Beatles as a sort of psychedelic Salvation Army band surrounded by culture heroes would redefine the album cover as being almost as significant as the music inside. The bright colors, the gatefold sleeve and even the presence of song lyrics on the back signaled the beginnings of rock music as not just poetry, but visual art in the truest sense.

The lack of external lettering, the placement of the album title on the drums, as well as the band's name in the flower arrangement came right out of the German Bauhaus art movement, according to Haworth. That is despite Beatle Paul McCartney's claim that he came up with such ideas.

"He absolutely did not," Haworth insisted. "The idea was you don't put typography on our artwork. There's no umbilical cord to Paul McCartney."

And as for "hints" of McCartney's demise on the cover—some who squint see the word "Paul" followed by "?" in the guitar-shaped flower arrangement—Haworth pleads not guilty, with a laugh.

"One of the florists said, 'I have an idea. I want to make a guitar in flowers.' Peter and I said, 'Sure, go ahead,'" Haworth said, noting the vintage rumors that McCartney had secretly died, leaving a pretender in his place. "The imposter doesn't know that he didn't have anything to do with the cover."

The work of Haworth and Blake was fully recognized by the industry when the duo took home a Grammy for Best Album Cover in 1968.

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