

THE MANE ATTRACTION



WHEN IT COMES TO FEARS, MOST PEOPLE would put insects in their top 10. Hairy insects? Those might even crack the top five. But for **Adrienne Antonson '04**, they are the most beautiful things in the world.

The 29-year-old artist/designer has recently made a name for herself on an international scale by creating one of the odder, yet surprisingly beautiful types of art: scale models of insects ... from human hair.

Yeah, read that last phrase again.

But here's the best part: She's actually normal. Married. Has only one cat. Loves clothes. She doesn't sneak up on homeless people who are asleep at the bus station and cut their hair. She actually gets it from loved ones and friends.

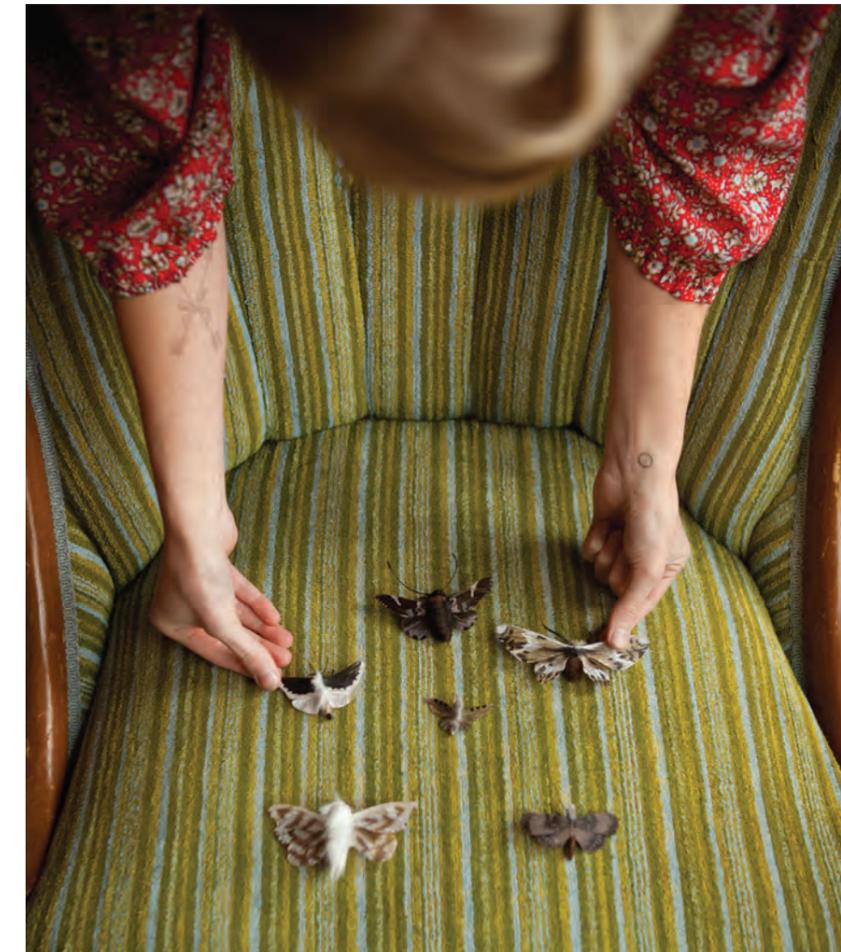
"It's not like I just take any hair," Antonson laughs. "It has to be somebody I'm connected with. Basically, I have to be comfortable enough to say, 'Save me your hair.'"

How this whole thing started was back during her college days when her roommate at the time would shed all over the apartment. Antonson, a studio art major, hated the idea of throwing the beautiful blond locks away, so she creatively repurposed it. Naturally, she used it to make lingerie. (And you thought making bugs out of hair was, well, *different*.) It was the challenge of working with such a stubborn material that Antonson relished. Eventually, lingerie turned into insects, which she had loved ever since she was a little girl.

Last year, her insect sculptures caught the eye of the folks at Ripley's Believe It or Not, who were so enamored by the hairy creatures that they bought the remaining six.

"At first I thought it was a joke," Antonson recalls about the phone call with Ripley's. But after determining they weren't pulling her leg (the check they wrote went a long way in helping that), she was over the moon. "I love the idea. I love strange, odd, reality-defying things and objects. So to have my work there is really very cool."

Each of Antonson's insects takes several days to make: a labor of love that actually left her feeling a little sad when all of them were bought by Ripley's. But now



she's back up to about 30 and says they keep getting better and better.

Although Antonson's insects – which range in price from \$350 to \$2,000 – have become increasingly intricate, her method is simple and methodical: She uses adhesives to manipulate the hair into forms, making each body part separately. Once they're dry, she assembles them together like a puzzle.

"I'm like an old man in his basement building model trains," she jokes. "Only I don't use one of those giant magnifying-glass-light things."

Then, Antonson meticulously paints it, using insect books and her imagination as a guide. The end result is a sculpture so insanely real you might be tempted to squeal or step on it.

Obviously, Antonson prefers you buy it instead. 🐛

– Bryce Donovan '98

