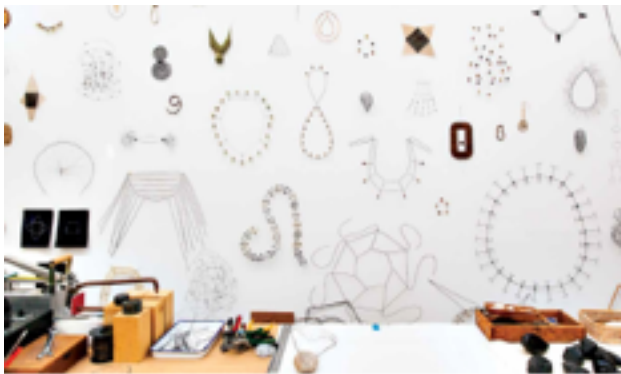


Written by Tate Gunnerson
Photography by Alanna Hale



At the end of almost every day, Mari Andrews sits on her large sofa and looks out at the view of paper and wire she's creating. She's surrounded by the tools of her trade: a palette of paint, a bowl of wire, and a tray of found objects. She's surrounded by the tools of her trade: a palette of paint, a bowl of wire, and a tray of found objects. She's surrounded by the tools of her trade: a palette of paint, a bowl of wire, and a tray of found objects.

Andrews recently happened upon a beautiful bunch of dead shells and stones, for example, and placed them in a shallow dish to give the elements a space. "It's a nice kind of drawing," she explains. The kind of sculpture approach and Andrews' repeated use of natural and man-made found objects creates a study of earth that relates to itself in unexpected ways, allowing her individual pieces to be grouped into compositions that create a broader meaning. "It's like a particular language or an alphabet that's used, and people can bring their own meanings to the groupings," she explains. "The pieces are different but still related."

Inspired by a wide variety of influences, including Native American artistry that she has studied in detail in the Museum of Modern Art, Andrews' style of sculpture is deeply rooted in her own experiences. "I've always been interested in the way things are made, and people can bring their own meanings to the groupings," she explains. "The pieces are different but still related."



At the end of almost every day, Mari Andrews sits in her bright white loft-like studio with a pile of paper and simply draws, sketching multiple iterations of the same basic idea or form. "There's kind of an evolutionary thing that goes on," she explains. "They become the seeds of new work." For nearly two decades, her drawings themselves were the final product. But as they became more intricate, the artist left the page behind in favor of the third dimension. "I realized that I didn't need the rectangular form of the paper or even a background, so I started drawing with wire," Andrews explains. "Many people call this sculpture. To me, these are all still drawings."

Using annealed wire that has been blackened to make it softer and more malleable, Andrews creates intricate and detailed shapes, which she punctuates with found elements, including acorns, seeds and pods. "I knot, twist or weld the wire, depending on its gauge," she explains. "The elements are manipulated and glued together to add density or interest." Hundreds of jars filled with these found objects line the shelves of Andrews' studio—located in a non-profit artists' cooperative in Emeryville—and provide a ready-made source for artistic inspiration. When

Andrews recently happened upon a bountiful bunch of dried dahlias and zinnias, for example, she ground them in a blender and glued the remnants to paper. "It's a new kind of drawing," she explains. This kind of inventive approach and Andrews' repeated use of natural and man-made found objects creates a body of work that relates to itself in unexpected ways, allowing the individual pieces to be grouped into installations that create a broader meaning. "It's like a private language or an alphabet that's mine, and people can bring their own associations to the grouping," she explains. "The pieces are different but still related."

Inspired by a wide variety of influences, including Native American petroglyphs that she has scouted on visits to New Mexico, Utah and Nevada, many of Andrews' shapes have been stripped down to their essence. "I'm always trying to find new forms," she explains. "Reductive work holds whatever meaning you bring to it. To me, that is the mystery that makes it interesting." According to Andrews, there is a definite ecological message underpinning her work, as well. "Pay attention to the things around you," she explains. "Hiking, walking, enjoying nature. It's about seeing what's out there and what makes the world so fascinating and wonderful. Let's not destroy it." ■

Emeryville artist Mari Andrews (opposite, top left) works with wire and found objects, which she stores in jars and bowls (opposite, top and bottom right) around her studio, to create her three-dimensional pieces (above and previous pages, right).