

# A CONVERSATION WITH ARTIST FAY WOOD

Interviewer: Janice Weber  
Photography By: Michael Dale Nelson

**H**ow does one adequately describe a lifetime of making art, transcending genre distinctions, continuously pushing forward with new ideas and fresh approaches? Artist Fay Wood has been making such art for some 60 years and continues to create new works in a vast variety of genres.

*“Arrange whatever  
pieces come your way.”*

**Virginia Woolf**

“My prime interest, especially in my early days, was to develop my ideas using mostly organic and found materials with natural colors, shapes and textures. I felt compelled to rescue from the refuse pile some of the elegant pieces of wood and other objects I had come upon. In a sense, in my ‘found art’ I found myself.”



I began to carve in oak and cherry wood, and as the work progressed, I added a variety of objects and abstract figures to the mix: a mahogany turntable, a pair of carved lion's feet rescued from an old Victorian sofa, a wooden spindle, a chance find of old buttons in a bag while looking for something else – a treasure trove of found objects waiting to become a part of a complete work of art. And so they did, and more.

"Matriarch" began with some of these pieces, along with my 'imaginary space,' a three-dimensional visual awareness that differs from what you normally perceive just looking 'at' an object. Imaginary space is where you look 'into' the object, perhaps becoming part of it as if in another spectrum. As the pieces came together I could see the start of a seated figure. 'She' began to resemble someone dear to me: my amazing Irish grandmother!

I learned to deeply appreciate work in three dimensions, using my own imaginary space.



*Matriarch*  
Found Object Assemblage  
17" x 17" x 21"

*Living With These Changes*  
18.5" x 9.5" x 15.5"



*Walk For Two*  
15" x 9.5" x 13"



*Trapped Dancer*  
18" x 12" x 11" (Hanging work)





*Flying Alone*  
17.5" x 14" x 13"



Fay Wood in her studio



*All That Was Good Has Died*  
16" x 7.5" x 11"

*Mantis*

Found Objects, wood, paint, copper tubing.  
60" x 16" x 18"



Collecting the best objects for a particular work takes time and patience. It's then that I turn to drawing or painting, creating collage or returning to a tapestry that needs a second look. This method of daily work on various projects has resulted in 6 quite different portfolios: Sculpture, both free-standing and wall hanging; Drawing, the basis of all the work; Oil Painting, on canvas and reversed on vintage glass; Collage; and finally, Tapestry.

This is the way I have worked all of my life—at least three works, in multiple genres, in varying stages of completion.

*"I came upon a bag,  
this curious bag in the  
bushes. Several things  
went through my mind  
when I found the bag  
of bottle tops."*

**Artist El Anatsui**

Found Objects have a certain esthetic quality because of textural and color qualities, social meaning, or history. They also carry many meanings for me. The beauty, joy and mystery of Found Objects often reveal themselves only gradually.

Usually I will get an idea, and after thinking about the possibilities, I collect a group of the objects and materials I would like to use and layout everything that might work in the piece. First, (the music to work to: Pink Floyd, Philip Glass, a dash of the classics), and I begin. Next, deciding on the base which is critical for stability, then the selection/ rejection of object after object. I try to keep the rhythm of the original idea, while allowing 'accidental' changes to become part of the shape, color, texture, cast shadows, and all of the technical design techniques that will allow me to arrive at the look I want.

When do I decide it is a finished work? It is intuitive. When a piece is balanced, when I feel it's right, it's finished, but that can take a long time.



*Storm 1*

Mixed media tapestry  
wool, silk, cotton fibers, paint,  
found objects. 53" x 33" X 2"

*Birds & Beasts*

Collage- vintage engravings, found papers, found target, wasp's nest paper, rag paper, pvc glue. 18" x 31"





*Reunion (in Process)*  
Found Objects, including  
Sousaphone base. Rag Paper  
approx. 48" in diameter, 30" high

I have a work called REUNION—a very complex piece—that is very close to completion after many years of work, but it is not quite right yet. I leave it alone for months and work on other pieces while I think about it, then correct the color or texture until I'm satisfied."

Size, simplicity vs. complexity, ease of joining objects together—all contribute to the speed of finishing. And that brings up the final work on a sculpture: the finish. I am very particular about the finish, especially on wood. Finished wood, even if it's aged, can be so beautiful, but it requires a good deal of attention to sanding and the materials used to finish. I now use oil and beeswax to work up a gleaming, smooth finish. I also work around and with interesting blemishes. ➤

## A NOTE FROM FAY WOOD

I am pleased to have been invited to show my latest work at Emerge Gallery in Saugerties, NY, one of the Hudson Valley's gallery gems.

I will introduce my 'cast' of hand-wired sculptures, "Three-Ring pandemic Circus"—each unique and seemingly in constant motion.

Please come visit the work at Emerge Gallery, 228 Main Street, Saugerties NY 12477  
In the gallery, September through November.