

Anne Patterson - Artist Statement

My work is inspired by the concept of multiplicity, and my fascination with the connection between parts and their whole. What happens when you start with one simple material or shape and multiply it? Why is the whole so much greater than the sum of its parts? What is the space between the parts and how does that space contribute to the whole of the piece? How are these concepts of one and many a metaphor for individuals and communities in our society?

My art explores the answers to these questions by utilizing one material in great multiplicity – 200 strands of piano wire, 1,000 metal mesh birds, 7 miles of aluminum wire strands, or 34 miles of satin ribbon – to create awe-inspiring, multisensory, and immersive works. I am interested in how using one shape, material, or form over and over again can create something larger than the sum of its parts – something great and overwhelming in its scale and beauty. As such, my artworks aim to be a metaphor for the transformational power of group dynamics. As individuals come together, person by person, organism by organism, connections are forged, and magic happens between the art and the viewer. As these profound connections amass, they together take on qualities that transcend those of the parts, resulting in powerful visual and kinetic effects that amaze, astonish, and uplift.

As a synesthete (when I hear sound I see color and shape) my goal is to create an experience where my viewers' senses can overlap, producing a constructed synesthesia. I bring the skills I have learned from my years as a theater designer – manipulating light, projected imagery, music, and even scent - and my artist's sense of the color, light, shadow and movement to transport visitors to a multi-sensory realm. I aim to create immersive experiences so that a visitor "sees" newly, into the spaces between materials, the places where one sense suggests another. I want the viewer to become so immersed in the piece as to become integral to it, seeing the light reflecting off the materials onto her skin, feeling the silkiness of the ribbons on her arms, experiencing sensations of flight and movement, and completing the piece because she has joined it.

The belief that the viewer is an integral contributing element of my artwork is one way in which I try to engage the relation between parts and the whole. The other way is through actively including the community in a work's creation. From my very first public artwork at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, to my most recent projects in Florida, community involvement has enriched my work. My experience is that people love to be a part of the process, and that community ownership is especially important when creating art for a public space. I have had groups of up to 70 volunteers working with me on public art installations – the work becomes like a sewing circle where people of different ages and backgrounds come together to share the experience of creating artwork, ultimately contributing to a lasting source of community pride and connection to the work itself.

I truly believe it is possible, through these multiple interconnecting parts, to create work that is so beautifully immersive that we disconnect from everything except for what is in front of our eyes and hands. The experience of art makes us whole. In these moments of disconnection, we connect back to our true essence, the place of peace and joy within us, thereby making something larger than ourselves. As the great writer, John Steinbeck once said: "The fascinating thing to me is the way the group has a soul, a drive, an intent, an end, a method, a reaction, a set of tropisms which in no way resembles the same thing possessed by [those] who make up the group. These groups have always been considered as individuals multiplied. And they are not so. They are beings in themselves, entities."