

Jan Smith, enamel + metal artist

Artist Statement

I walk to my studio and gather objects; I am drawn to the complexity of the patterns, surfaces, and colours. As the structure of the home we are building began to rise out of the hillside in front of my studio, I found myself fascinated with the linear marks in the earth and the repetitive sculptural structures created by the rebar. I found myself searching books for models and drawings of buildings; studying the abstract shapes and patterns within them. The combination of my found objects and the suggestive qualities of the building are the influences of my work.

I love to make things...I think with my hands. Collecting ideas, bits and pieces, making models is the way I work. I never start with a complete concept, nor do I have a formal drawing or plan that I follow, but rather I have a feeling or sensation. The suggestion transforms itself to a complete piece through a series of trial and error compositions. My work table becomes littered with paper and metal shapes, partial and incomplete pieces; much like that of the building site. I explore the assemblage, seeking the combination which allows the work to transform itself, to become complete. The process and journey are as significant to me as the finished work.

The acting of making is of great importance, it is my connection to the wearer and viewer. I use enamel, metal, and patinas to build layers of colour, images, and texture into my pieces; the individual pieces forming a series. I work intuitively with the materials, excited by the imperfections in the surfaces. Washes of glass layers allow for experimentation with nuances of colour and the exploration of surface subtleties through the combination of luminous transparent and solid opaque enamels. With much the same consideration that is given to how the house is placed on and within the earth, I consider how the finished objects work on the body. I am fascinated by the movement and the sound made while the piece is worn. I call attention to and thereby commemorate the erotic and seductive qualities of the shapes and surfaces of my studied objects and forms. I want the observer to be pulled into my sensual world and to feel the suggestion of that moment of discovery and wonder.