

A Ten Minute Brain Picking With Local Art Icon Martha Sturdy



By [Andrew Morrison](#)

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Martha Sturdy is an iconic figure in the history of Vancouver's artistic identity. Recognised internationally for her work as a furniture designer and sculptor, Sturdy's [sought after style](#) merges warmth with clean lines, softness with strength. Basically, she is mind-blowingly talented and as Vancouverites we get to claim her as our own. She will be showing at [IDSWest](#) – which goes down from October 14th to the 17th – so in advance we thought we'd finally catch up with her between flights to ask her a few quick questions...

SCOUT Q&A

Three things about the Gleneagles neighbourhood that make you want to live there: The ocean, the quiet and the eagles.

The moment you realised you were an artist: As far back as I can remember, I drew everything.

What is different about showing your work internationally versus here at home in Vancouver? Internationally is more open-minded.

You began your career in Vancouver in the late 1970's. What three words would you use to describe the design scene in the city at that time?: Very Very Exciting.

Favourite Vancouver bridge: Lions Gate.

Best Vancouver park: Black Mountain, above Horseshoe Bay.

Favourite place to see live music: The Orpheum

Book you're reading: *Half a Yellow Sun* – by Chim Ngozi Adichie

Last place traveled: NYC.

Best movie ever: Doctor Zhivago.

Your paternal grandfather's personal story: He was the first printer and book binder in Vancouver in 1880 (Roedde House).

How has your upbringing influenced your work: Structure.

The thing that bugs you: Entitlement makes me irritated and frustrated.

The view from your favourite window: The ocean/the fields.

Favourite ice cream flavour: Butter Pecan.

Most beautiful body of water: The ocean on the south side of Preston Island (Barfleur Passage).

You had a bold and very unique style from the very beginning of your career and that style has stayed with you. Where does it come from? Learning how to edit and maintain simplicity. Simple, clean lines are harder because there is nothing to hide mistakes.

Talent you wish you possessed: Happy the way I am.

The fashion trend you wish you never followed, but did: I marched to my own tune and feel that I don't follow any trends.

Which fashion designer's work do you feel best corresponds with your design sense? I Like [Ann Demeulemeester](#).

How do you choose which pieces to include in a show like IDSWest? I love all white right now.

The game you're best at: I don't like games.

Mac or PC: PC.

Favourite book as a child: Anything by English writer Enid Blyton.

Would you say that designing/ creating is a compulsion or a passion? Both.

What aspects of Asian culture are present in your work? Simplicity, clean and edited.

What aspects of West Coast culture are present in your work? The forest – watch for a new log sculpture to be unveiled in Tokyo this Fall.

The thing of no monetary value that you will keep until you die: A stone my mother found on the beach that I have always liked.

Through your career thus far you have moved from jewelery to furniture, sculpture and wall art. Is there a reason for this gradual increase in size? Actually, I started in sculpture then downsized due to a small working environment and now I am back up to where I started.

If you could harness one of the elements (earth, wind, water or fire) to use as a material for sculpture, which would you choose and why? Water – it is strong but also has a great sense of peace.

Best concert experience ever: Pemberton Music Festival.

When you can't sleep: I create in my mind.

Best garage sale score: Never been to one. You end up buying stuff you don't need.

Town you were born in: Vancouver.

First memory: Going for a walk with my brother alone – when we weren't supposed to – we were 4 & 5 years old.

What first made you love music: My sisters and I used to always listen to classical music when we were young doing the dishes.

What are you listening to as you answer these questions: The CBC.

What sort of music do you listen to when you work? Amy Winehouse, Madame Butterfly, Bach, and other classical music.

Favourite Pemberton establishment for a good meal? The Black Squirrel.

Favourite Whistler restaurant for dinner: Araxi Restaurant.

The career path you considered but never followed: Moving to Milan where I had a job offer designing for Krizia and Gianfranco Ferré.

Thing you miss most about home when you're on the road: My grandchildren, dogs and horses.

Best Vancouver place/show to be inspired by emerging artistic talent: Main Street.

Last art gallery show anywhere that really moved you: The Tate Modern in London.

Favourite Vancouver event? The Olympics, which I thought was fabulous. I loved how downtown was full of so many people.

What are you most excited to be working on right now and why? The wood sculpture for Japan because the scale of the logs and the color inspires me.

Why is Vancouver a good city for design? Surrounded by very dramatic environment.

Is there a local designer or artist that you admire above all others? Why? [Peter Cardew](#), he follows his own path.

One thing you would change about the art + design industry in Vancouver: Should be more passionate, dramatic and free, not so restrained.