

# 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...

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## 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.