

Hampshire.edu - Professor Andrea Dezsö: "The Metal is Paper"



Andrea Dezsö, *Blueberry Garden*. 2012, Glass and ceramic mosaic

Three mosaics for the U.S. embassy in Bucharest, Romania, are only the most recent of numerous large scale public art pieces by Andrea Dezsö. Although she works in multiple media, it's these large pieces that she says seem to draw the most attention. They are also the ones that used to take Dezsö, interdisciplinary as she is, out of her comfort zone.

"Originally," says Dezsö, "I wanted to do mostly small work, and portable work." "I moved around a lot," she explains, "and I emigrated twice, once from Romania to Hungary and once from Hungary here, so portability was very important to me." "I never really had a studio where you can go up and make a mess," she adds.

That "made it possible for me to always be around my work, to never have that separation." So, at first, large scale public pieces intimidated her. She recalls applying for a public art project for the railing in a New York City subway station. All of the other applicants worked in steel, a medium unfamiliar to her. Still, when Dezsö made a paper model of the station, she realized something. "I can think of it as really big and scary stainless steel, or I can think of it as paper cutting," she recalls. "The moment you have a small scale model made of paper, the metal is paper."

"Thinking about it in those terms, something small that gets scaled up industrially, really helped me," Dezsö adds. "That's something that I can do, again, even in my living room."

The result was Nature Rail, five steel panels laser cut into silhouetted scenes of plants and small animals, all in the style of traditional cut paper art.

The idea for Nature Rail came from the plants and animals that manage to live in the city, along the edges of the elevated train tracks. For Dezsö it was a rare instance of drawing on what was available near her home in New York. "I do a lot of work that is representational, and that finds its root in nature and natural form," she explains, "but I always relied on vacations and artist residencies to do a lot of that work."

That includes Blueberry†Garden, the set of mosaics for the embassy. "I was traveling in Maine last year, and I came across these blueberries that are just so amazing," she recalls. "Depending on how ripe they were, on the same plants some were pink, orange, purple or blue. Every color was in there."

Dezsö says becoming a professor at Hampshire, and moving to Amherst, has changed what's available to her. Instead of relying on travel to find inspiration, she says, "You can just look out your window or sit in your back yard."

The previous is an excerpt from a hampshire.edu article by Michael Samuels. For the full article visit: <https://www.hampshire.edu/news/2012/12/20/professor-andrea-dezsö-the-metal-is-paper>