

TURNING BAMBOO DREAMS INTO REALITY



Donna Dodson & Andy Moerlein, collectively known as The Mythmakers, create monumental structures by hand that push the boundaries of large-scale bamboo art.

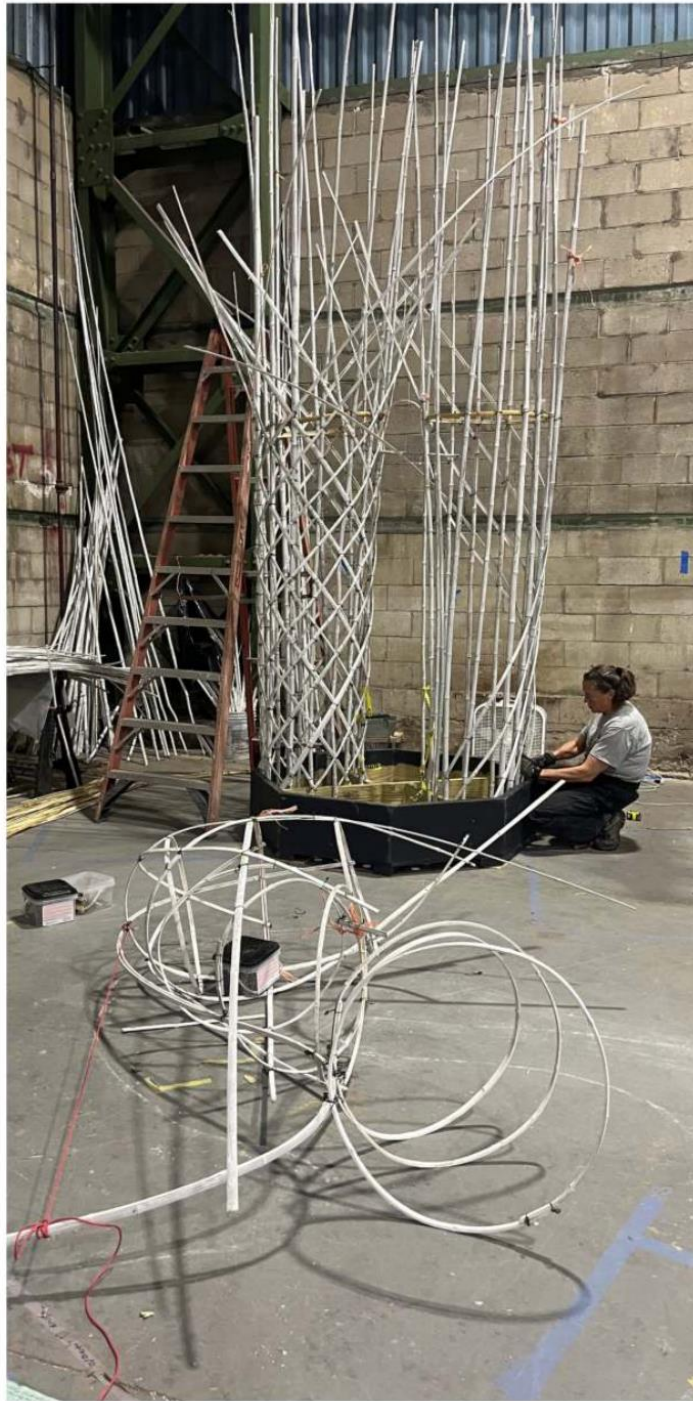
For over a decade of working together, The Myth Makers: Donna Dodson and Andy Moerlein have premiered their bamboo sculptures in a variety of exhibition venues. They continue to build their bamboo design skills and expand their visibility as artists. This bamboo art-making duo has created monumental public art experiences across the USA and internationally, with a portfolio of over 100 individual sculptures.

In the past year they created two notable immersive garden wide activations with 10 individual sculptures in the legendary McKee Botanical Garden in Vero Beach, Florida and 6 sculptures in the vibrant Pinecrest Garden in Miami.

Besides these garden venues, The Myth Makers also work with art museums and municipalities by responding to Calls for Art.

Working at a monumental scale with strong bamboo design techniques, the couple have made a reputation in the public art world for their larger-than-life avian avatar sculptures that combine the magic of birds with the wonder of bird lore.

Donna and Andy are never content to repeat themselves. As Donna says, "Each sculpture is a new beginning. We want our work to challenge our skills and excite us." This summer they tackled the mating dance of the Great Egret. These dynamic birds were hunted nearly to extinction for hat plumes, but their population has made a huge recovery. Back Cove Bay in Portland, Maine has a delightful resident summer population. TEMPOarts, a citizen-run funding organization, has built a dynamic partnership with the City of Portland to bring temporary art to the city parks. Donna and Andy were commissioned to place their work along an adored city hiking and biking trail.



The bamboo for the sculpture "Dancing for Joy, By the Will of the People" was purchased from American Bamboo Society leaders Kay and Jaap Koppedrayer. This partnership included an opportunity to see Jaap's electric Taiwanese bamboo splitter. The Myth Makers found the efficiency of this method was a vast saving of labor usually spent hand splitting. Buying American grown bamboo of the quality their groves provided, is important to Donna & Andy's dedication to art that has a "wow" factor with a low carbon impact.

For this project the Koppedrayers selected two types of bamboo. Small diameter but thick-walled *Phyllostachys nigra* 'henon' was used for vertical strength and robust attachment to the bases. Larger madake bamboo (*Phyllostachys bambusoides*) was split into 1/2 - 3/4" flexible strips and woven into delightfully organic and descriptive forms. "Over the years we have made many improvements in our ability to draw and design complex shapes in space," Andy says about this recent work. "We take missteps apart a whole lot less often now. We pretty much nail our ideas fluidly," Donna adds.



“Dancing for Joy” was built in Gardenship, an arts incubator in Kearny, New Jersey. “We need height to make work of scale for public spaces and Gardenship has ceilings that suit our needs. They invite us to work as artists-in-residence in their fabrication studio when we are building our monumental bamboo art projects. It is an essential partnership for our public art,” Andy notes.

This particular sculptural installation has two 25' tall sculptures that were built separately and hauled to Maine on lightweight 30' trailers. The trucking team Mark Rockwood & Co., Inc. is an experienced installer who works to tip the sculptures off the trailer directly into place. The lightweight sculptures are then secured in place with ground anchors and 2,500 pounds of round stone in each. Once on site, The Myth Makers completed an architectural enclosure that implied wings with the help of two fabulous Rhode Island School of Design student interns, Seamus and Fionn Fanning. This captivating site-built structure included doors of various sizes for audiences of all ages to delight in playing inside and around the sculptures.

This sculpture will be up for a year. If you are traveling through Maine, it is worth stopping by. Getting there is an easy on/off major highways. Back Cove Bay Trail parking lot has the best views of the sculpture. The adored 3.1 mile hiking trail is located beside a lovely urban estuary. This sculpture is already a smash art hit for the summer and a stunning ambassador for how innovative bamboo can be as a low carbon, high-impact visual art medium.

