

Editorial:

When you step into Robert Dewey's studio you know instantly that you are in the workspace of a man who is fascinated by light. His glowing geometric sculptures hang from rafters emitting a warmth that makes it seem like his industrial space has captured the setting sun. Even in a past career as a successful film director his projects included experimental pieces that engaged his ability to fuse light and art. Over the years this talent has landed him several commissions including a recent installation for one of Vancouver's leading architects.

Dewey's multifaceted creative career has spanned from design, film, video, performance arts and digital media. When he's not in his studio he spends his time running Hotfusion Communications, a marketing and event company that he co-founded 19 years ago. As CEO and creative director he has built an impressive client list - one that includes Microsoft, Google, SAP, Symantec, VMware and an array of the world's leading software and technology companies. He is also current president of Theatre Conspiracy Vancouver, director of the Vancouver YWCA Women of Distinction Awards Gala, and on the advisory committee for the Vancouver Roundhouse Community Arts Centre.

Dewey's success is the result of a refined ability to lean in the direction of his strengths. A skill that he learned early in life and, surprisingly, developed within the context of failure. As a severe dyslexic he struggled to learn how to read and write and his disorder was misinterpreted as an intellectual disability. He was ostracized and taunted by his peers. "I failed at everything" says Dewey, "I failed all the way through high school except at woodworking and art and places where I didn't have to read". Ironically, the challenge of dealing with dyslexia served to orient him and no doubt gifted him with some of the very skills that have led to his success. Apart from being highly creative visual thinkers dyslexics tend to have an above average 3D spatial aptitude. They are often outside the box thinkers with a knack for seeing complex patterns- skills that can come in handy when your running a marketing company or creating 3D geometric sculptures.

As a third generation woodworker Dewey is inspired by natural elements and the majority of his pieces are made from paper and wood veneer. The tools he uses were inherited from his grandfather and his material supply is minimal. Influenced by origami and traditional Japanese woodworking he embraces the practice of working with a single raw material. He approaches each piece with the intention of allowing it to emerge rather than shaping it strictly through the exertion of his own will. "Western woodworking takes such a brutalist approach" explains Dewey, "I'm more interested in working with the natural curvature and grain of a wood".

What emerges repeatedly in Dewey's work is the natural curve of a geometric form called an infinity knot or love knot. Many of his lights are intertwined in the symbolic shape of eternity. It's a shape that captures the essence of the place that initially inspired his work and it's a shape that reflects his ongoing commitment to it.

Artist Statement:

I have always been drawn to light, to geometric forms, and to the immediacy of nature. I have a background in film, video, performance art, digital media and I am also a third generation woodworker. While I have a modern design aesthetic, it is deeply rooted in an affinity for natural materials and my work is created using handcrafting skills and tools passed down from my grandfather.

My light sculptures were conceived when I was working on a residential design project in the coastal mountains of BC. Surrounded by natural elements, I was faced with the challenge of constructing an interior space that would mirror the beauty of the surrounding property. After an unproductive search for suitable lighting I realized that if I wanted fixtures with an integrated and organic feel I would need to invent them myself. Initially I set out to build a couple pieces that would lend themselves to the project. Four years later I continue to produce my 3D light sculptures and my enthusiasm for the process is unrelenting.

I have a minimalist philosophy and I am drawn to traditional Japanese woodworking and origami. The notion of allowing nature to lead, of following the natural grain of a wood, or creating from a single element resonates deeply in me. I work with wood veneer and paper and try to stretch my capacity to create forms from these primary materials before introducing other components. I am also intrigued by geometry and many of my lights reflect the shape of an infinity knot. This geometric form embodies the harmony and continuity of nature. It reminds me of the world that I found in the mountains and connects me to the energy that inspired my designs in the first place.