



museum of arts and design

FROM STUDIO TO SCULPTURE, DANA BARNES'S FIBER WORKS TAKE ROOT AT MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN

Dana Barnes: Untamed Gestures
May 31, 2025–October 11, 2026



Dana Barnes, *Entwined* (detail), 2023. Wool (merino, yak, Bluefaced Leicester, Gotland, camel, and alpaca), silk, flax, bamboo, hemp, copper, and wire. Photo: Daniel Root Photography.

NEW YORK, NY (May 15, 2025)—This summer, the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) unveils *Dana Barnes: Untamed Gestures*, the first major museum exhibition spotlighting the singular vision of artist Dana Barnes, whose fiber-based sculptures dissolve the boundaries between art, architecture, and the organic world. Opening May 31, the exhibition presents Barnes's monumental hand-formed works alongside a fully immersive recreation of her Lower East Side studio in New York City—an environment in which experimentation with raw materials fuels transformative acts of creation.

“The exhibition is a culmination of a material-led process—where fiber and natural elements give rise to forms that feel alive and breathe with a quiet energy. I like to let the material itself guide me—structures emerge such as vines, tracing their own paths through space, growing beyond

themselves,” said Barnes. “I hope the pieces invite the viewer to encounter them not as objects, but as living entities—shifting, beating, and unapologetically alive.”

Barnes’s sculptural landscapes, inspired by the slow, persistent forces of nature, are composed of fibers such as merino, yak, alpaca, and silk. Barnes twists, knots, and fuses her materials into sprawling, living forms that sag, climb, and unfurl across the gallery space. Her works pulse with a quiet vitality, inviting viewers into a dialogue between materiality and metamorphosis. In *Untamed Gestures*, monumental works including *Entwined* (2023), *Wild Thing* (2025), and the collaborative *Between Us: Tête-à-Tête* (2024), created with sculptor Christopher Kurtz, immerse visitors in tactile environments where motion and stillness, as well as strength and fragility, coexist in dynamic tension.

“The materiality of Dana Barnes’s work is both fearless and tender,” said Elissa Auther, Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs and the William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator at MAD. “Through ancient techniques and radical innovation, she reveals fiber’s capacity to reshape space, perception, and emotional response. Her work aligns beautifully with the Museum’s mission to champion the transformational possibilities of craft and material practice.”

The exhibition’s immersive studio experience meticulously replicates Barnes’s original workspace, a former 19th-century synagogue once home to Abstract Expressionist painter Pat Passlof. Within the space, visitors will encounter a laboratory of creativity: overflowing sacks of colorful fibers, experimental maquettes, geological fragments, and handmade tools bearing the patina of daily use. A self-directed drawing exercise invites visitors to participate in the same spirit of wonder and material exploration that animates Barnes’s practice.

“Dana’s work contains magic and awe, with nature embodied, not imitated, and time folding inward, forever in motion,” said Barbara Paris Gifford, MAD’s Senior Curator of Contemporary Art, Craft, and Design and co-curator of the exhibition along with Elizabeth Koehn, MAD’s Associate Curator.

Dana Barnes: Untamed Gestures will be on view at the Museum of Arts and Design through October 11, 2026. During its run, the exhibition will be extended through a series of related public programs, including talks, workshops, and more.

For more information about *Dana Barnes: Untamed Gestures*, visit madmuseum.org.

EXHIBITION CREDITS

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ABOUT DANA BARNES

Dana Barnes creates textural and sculptural works, objects, and site-specific installations by hand, exploring the visceral possibilities of fiber, material, and transformation. Working from her Lower East Side studio in New York City, housed in a 19th-century former synagogue, Barnes pioneers innovative wet-bonding techniques to mold masses of exotic fibers into large-scale sculptural expressions. Her practice fuses the tactile with the architectural, often melding wool with concrete, stone, copper, wood, and found materials. Her work has been exhibited at major art and design venues around the world, including The Armory Show, the Museum of Arts and Design, the Museum of Craft and Design in San Francisco, TEFAF New York, Design Miami, and

R & Company's *Woven Forms* show at Palazzo Benzon, Venice Biennale. She is represented in prestigious private collections across the U.S., Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Barnes studied at Parsons School of Design and the New York Studio School, and her career spans both fine art and high fashion.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN

The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) champions contemporary makers across creative fields and presents the work of artists, designers, and artisans who apply the highest level of ingenuity and skill. Since the Museum's founding in 1956 by philanthropist and visionary Aileen Osborn Webb, MAD has celebrated all facets of making and the creative processes by which materials are transformed, from traditional techniques to cutting-edge technologies. Today, the Museum's curatorial program builds upon a rich history of exhibitions that emphasize a cross-disciplinary approach to art and design, and reveals the workmanship behind the objects and environments that shape our everyday lives. MAD provides an international platform for practitioners who are influencing the direction of cultural production and driving twenty-first-century innovation, and fosters a participatory setting for visitors to have direct encounters with skilled making and compelling works of art and design. For more information, visit madmuseum.org.

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