

## Alicia Forestall-Boehm



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### **Contact Information**

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Alicia Forestall Boehm, a mixed-media artist living in Chicago, is drawn to the innate sense of order and change that can define an urban existence. Her encaustic and fiber sculptures reduce larger images and concepts into elegant simplified forms that acknowledge and explore the physical and mental boundaries of the public and private spaces we inhabit. Her work is meant to engage the viewer in a conversation about physical space. Viewers encounter geometric shapes and forms found in modern urban architecture, surfaces embedded with gritty texture, and a dynamic use of color. Working with the familiar materials of wax, cheesecloth, wire and twine, Forestall-Boehm invites the viewer to approach each work and explore the elements of color, shape and movement in the same way they might approach their environment.

You can see the influence of the stories behind Chicago's urban landscape in many of these sculptures. *Unfulfilled Dream* was influenced by the ill-fated Chicago Spire. This twisting skyscraper was designed by famed architect Santiago Calatrava. He equated the design to an imaginary smoke spiral rising from a campfire built along the Chicago River by Chicago's earliest residents. *Frozen Music* considers the German writer, artist and politician Johann Wolfgang von Goethe who famously described architecture as "frozen music". Many believe that the graceful, flowing contours of the Baroque style of architecture so predominant in Goethe's time is responsible for this lasting quote. Chicago is a city of architecture. Architect Mies van der Rohe's influential twentieth century architectural style that is noted for its extreme clarity and simplicity followed a "less is more" philosophy. *Considering Mies* exemplifies how this influential architect sought structural order and balance in his architecture; seeking a balance between interiors and exteriors through the use of free-flowing open space. *The Mane* and *Dwell in the Now* speak directly to the evolving changes of Chicago as a tourist destination and as a community of urban inhabitants. The installation *Spaces We Inhabit*, with its interactive element, is a testament to the complex and yet simple beauty of an urban landscape.

Her mixed-media work includes wall-hung sculptures and paintings, pedestal displayed sculptures and wall and ceiling installations.

--from *Surfaces: Alicia Forestall-Boehm*, Critical Essay: Surfaces (and Deeper) by Andrew Jendrzejewski

## Alicia Forestall-Boehm - CV

### Solo Exhibitions

- 2018 **Leaving the Noise Behind**, The Victorian House Art Gallery, Olivet Nazarene University, Bourbonnais, IL
- 2016 **Reimagining Space and Surface**, Western Illinois University Art Gallery, Macomb, IL
- 2015 **Surfaces**, Art Space Vincennes, Vincennes, IN
- 2014 **Transformed Spaces**, Art on Armitage, Chicago, IL

### 2 and 3-Person Shows

- 2019 **Unbound: Exploring Possibilities**, Oliva Gallery, Chicago, IL, with Karen Tichy
- 2017 **Sculptures and Paintings by Alicia Forestall-Boehm, Sherry Denault and Margie Sula**, North Central College, Naperville, IL
- 2014 **Spaces We Inhabit: Sculptures and Paintings by Alicia Forestall-Boehm, Emily Rutledge and Mary Zeran**, Hairpin Art Center, Chicago, IL

### Select Group Exhibitions

- 2024 **Materiality**, McCord Gallery and Cultural Center, Palos Park, IL
- 2023 **Connections**, ARC Gallery, Chicago, IL, Juror Barbara O'Brien
- 2023 **ArtPrize**, Grand Rapids, MI
- 2022 **The Small-Scale Sculpture Survey**, Addington Gallery, Chicago, IL, Curators Susan Aurinko and Susan Blackman
- 2022 **Conglomeration**, Visual Arts Gallery, Governor's State University, University Park, IL
- 2022 **VISIBLE/INVISIBLE**, Noyes Cultural Art Center, Evanston, IL, Jurors Indira Johnson, Fran Joy, and Lisa Degliantoni
- 2020 **BUILD - A Sculpture Show**, Oliva Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 2019 **SOFA Chicago, Oliva Gallery**, Navy Pier, Chicago, IL, invited
- 2019 **Anything but Flat**, Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill, Provincetown, MA, Juror Joanne Mattera
- 2019 **Painting With Fire**, Zhou B. Art Center, 2nd Floor Gallery, Chicago, IL, Curator Sergio Gomez
- 2018 **Anniversary Show**, Art Space Vincennes Gallery, Vincennes, IN
- 2018 **RED**, Jackson Junge Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 2017 **Midwest Sculpture**, Indiana University, Kokomo, IN
- 2017 **Small But Mighty**, Christopher Art Gallery, Prairie State College, Chicago Heights, IL, Juror Aron Packer
- 2016 **Eleventh Annual Encaustic Invitational**, Conrad Wilde Gallery, Tucson, AZ
- 2016 **Fourth Annual Competition Exhibit**, Bridgeport Art Center, Chicago, IL, Jurors Mary Ellen Croteau and William Lieberman
- 2015 **The Notion of Motion**, Jackson Junge Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 2015 **Textual Encounters**, ARC Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 2015 **Expansive Visions**, Christopher Art Gallery, Prairie State College, Chicago Heights, IL, Juror Beth Shadur
- 2014 **SOFA**, Surface Design Association, Chicago, IL
- 2014 **So Much More**, Swedish Covenant Hospital, Chicago, IL, Juror Nnenna Okore
- 2014 **70th Annual Wabash Valley Exhibition**, Swope Art Museum, Terre Haute, IN, Juror Carter E. Foster
- 2014 **Oil and Water**, Woman Made Gallery, Chicago, IL, Juror Sarah Krepp
- 2013 **From the Earth**, Woman Made Gallery, Chicago, IL, Jurors Mary Stoppert and Carmen Perez
- 2013 **Encaustic USA**, ARC Gallery, Chicago, IL, Jurors Paul Klein and Shelley Gilchrist
- 2013 **Eighth Annual Encaustic Invitational**, Conrad Wilde Gallery, Tucson, AZ
- 2013 **Cotton**, Fountain Street Fine Art, Framingham, MA, Juror Joanne Mattera
- 2012 **WAX**, Trestle Gallery, Brooklyn Art Space, Brooklyn, NY
- 2012 **Seventh Annual Encaustic Invitational**, Conrad Wilde Gallery, Tucson, AZ

- 2012 **Crafts National**, Mulvane Art Museum, Topeka, KS, Juror Gail M. Brown
- 2011 **Illinois State Museum Illinois Artisan 25th Anniversary Exhibition**, James Thompson Center, Chicago, IL
- 2011 **Brainstorm 2011**, Visual Arts Gallery, Governors State University, University Park, IL, Jurors Allison Peters Quinn and Whitney Tassie
- 2011 **Wax-Inc.**, South Shore Art Center, Cohasset, MA, Juror Brian T. Allen
- 2010 **Luminous Layers**, Lake Oswego, OR, Jurors Cari Hernandez, Tom Burns and Kristin Butters, Curator Linda Womack
- 2009 **Metamorphosis**, Hayden Art Center, Lincoln, NE, Juror George Neubert

### **Public Art**

Deaconess Hospital, Linda White Hospice House, Evansville, Indiana, 2017

### **Publications**

- Chicago Gallery News, 2019 Arts Guide, featured artist, Oliva Gallery, Chicago, IL
- HAND/EYE Magazine, "Conversation Pieces", interview feature, 2018
- Voyage Chicago, interview feature, 2018
- "The Tactile World", Miles Conrad, Conrad Wilde Gallery, Surface Design Magazine, Winter 2015-2016
- ArtSlant, Under The Radar, featured artist profile, January 2016
- Surface (and Deeper), Art Space Vincennes, by Andrew Jendrzewski, 2015
- Embracing Encaustic: Advanced Techniques for Mixing Media, by Linda Womack, 2015
- Surfaces: Alicia Forestall-Boehm, 2015
- "Encaustic' sculptures and Vietnam-era photos highlight First Friday Art Walk", front page, Vincennes Sun-Commercial, Vincennes, IN, September, 4, 2015
- Cottoning to a Second Anniversary Theme, by Joanne Mattera, Fountain Street Fine Art, Boston, MA, 2013
- Encaustic Works '12, Internationally juried exhibition-in-print, R&F Handmade Paints, Kingston, NY, 2012
- The Writer's Eye: Linking the inspired works of writers to the creative vision of artists. York Arts, York, PA, 2010

### **Awards, Grants, Honors**

- International Encaustic Conference Scholarship Grant, Provincetown, MA, 2019
- Individual Artists Program Grant (DCASE), City of Chicago, IL, 2018
- "The Artists Monument" by Tony Tassett, New York, Whitney Museum of American Art, 2014, Chicago, IL, Grant Park, 2016
- Award of Recognition, 70th Annual Wabash Valley Juried Exhibition, Swope Art Museum, Terre Haute, IN, juror Carter E. Foster, Steven and Ann Ames Curator of Drawing, Whitney Museum of American Art, 2014
- Juror, Illinois Artisans Program Fall Jury Session, Chicago, IL, 2013
- Honorable Mention Artist, Water Street Studios Gallery, Batavia, IL, juror Staci Boris, Chief Curator and Director Of Public Programs, Elmhurst Art Museum, Elmhurst, IL, 2013
- Illinois Arts Council Grant 2012
- City of Chicago Community Arts Assistance Program ("CAAP") Grant, Chicago, IL, 2012

### **Lectures, Workshops, Speaking Engagements**

- Marketing Your Art, League of Milwaukee Artists, Milwaukee, WI, 2024
- Marketing Your Art, Mamaroneck Artists Guild, Larchmont, NY, 2023
- Marketing Your Art, International Encaustic Conference, Provincetown, MA, 2023
- #FusedAtHome, virtual art exhibition design, 2020
- The Art of Online Self-Promotion -Understanding How To Use Social Media In Your Art Practice, The International Encaustic Conference, Provincetown, MA, 2020
- Unbound: Exploring Possibilities workshop with Karen Tichy, Oliva Gallery, Chicago, IL, 2019

Intro to 3-D Encaustic artists talk and workshop, with Helen Dannelly, Hirst-Dannelly Studio, Bridgeport Art Center, Chicago, IL, 2017, 2018

Current Strategies and Future Realities: Growing your Brand for Creative Professionals, Chicago, IL, 2017

Access Lab: Developing Your Social Media Presence and Online Branding, Lake FX, Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago, IL, 2017

Artists Talk, Reimagining Space and Surface - Alicia Forestall-Boehm, Western Illinois University Art Gallery, Macomb, IL, 2016

Social Media for Artists, Chicago, IL 2016

Encaustic, Vincennes University, Center for Art and Design, Vincennes, IN, 2015

Social Media for Artists, Chicago, IL, 2015

Encaustic for Children, Batavia, IL, 2014

Encaustic for Children, Chicago, IL, 2014

### **Affiliations**

Vice President – FUSEDChicago, Chicago, IL

Member Support Team Member – Catalyst Art Lab, Chicago, IL

### **Collaborative Projects**

**The Dot Show**, Collaborative art installation with Amy Van Winkle, Chicago Arts District showPODS, Chicago IL

### **Curatorial Projects**

**#FusedAtHome**, online exhibition, 2020

**FUSED**, with Michele Thrane, Cindy Lesperance, Carol Hamilton, Union Street Gallery, Chicago Heights, IL, 2019

**PROCESS: How Three Artists Approach the Canvas**, with Emily Rutledge, Hairpin Arts Center, Chicago, IL, 2015

### **Professional Background & Education**

Owner, AFB Fine Art, Chicago, Illinois

Co-founder, Managing Director, Chicago Social Media Marketers, Chicago, Illinois

Marketing Manager, Northshore Concert Band, Evanston, Illinois

Marketing Director, Gray's Distributing Company, Inc., Chicago, Illinois

Visiting Artist, Montessori Academy, Batavia, Illinois

Visiting Artist, Franklin Fine Arts School, Chicago, Illinois

Art Teacher, Children's House Montessori School, W. Dundee, Illinois

### **Education**

DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois M.B.A.

University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, Illinois B.A.

## **Alicia Forestall-Boehm – Artist Statement**

### **Artist Statement**

As a mixed-media artist living in Chicago, I am drawn to the innate sense of order and change that can define an urban existence. My encaustic and fiber sculptures reduce larger images and concepts into elegant simplified forms that acknowledge and explore the physical and mental boundaries of the public and private spaces we inhabit. My work is meant to engage the viewer in a conversation about physical space. Viewers encounter geometric shapes and forms found in modern urban architecture, surfaces embedded with gritty texture, and captivating hues of color. I work with the familiar materials of wax, cheesecloth, wire and twine. By paring down basic elements of color, shape and movement I invite the viewer to approach each work in the same way they might approach their environment.

My decision to push the conventional parameters of the use of the encaustic medium by uniting it with fiber has resulted in innovative 3D forms often employing traditional weaving techniques in a way not previously utilized. My work elevates the humble cheesecloth and, when married with encaustic, it becomes surprisingly malleable allowing for a broad range of sculptural treatments. Over time, my sculptures have gone beyond their initial traditional forms and have developed into new forms for expression. Exploring the infinite sculptural possibilities has proven to be a welcome challenge. I have developed this process for fiber and encaustic and enjoy improving upon it.

**Alicia Forestall-Boehm - Exhibition Images**



Wall Installation – Infinite Possibilities

On pedestals - (l-r) Power of Place, Passages, Make No Little Plans, Vessel 6, Vessel 27



Wall-hung sculpture – The Pillow

Ceiling-hung – Vertical Lines

Pedestal – Considering Mies



Pedestal – The Mane

Wall-hung sculpture – Persistence of Vision



Wall-hung sculpture – Unfulfilled Dream





Wall-hung sculpture (left) – Look Behind Me to See the Steps I've Taken

Ceiling-hung – Spaces We Inhabit

Wall-hung sculpture (right) – The Paths We Choose

Pedestal – Interpretations (left), The Mane (right)



It's Your World For The Moment – Deaconess Hospital Linda White Hospice House, Evansville, IN

## **Essay on the work of Alicia Forestall-Boehm**

Alicia Forestall-Boehm's medium of choice is encaustic, a mixture of pigment and melted beeswax. This ancient process dates back to the Egyptian Fayum mummy portraits of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Though not widely seen in the history of western art, a resurgence of interest in encaustic occurred in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, for example in the work of Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky and Jasper Johns. Forestall-Boehm combines encaustic with fabric, which enables her to construct three-dimensional forms and uniquely textured two-dimensional surfaces.

Forestall-Boehm lives and works in Chicago, and her art is influenced by the urban landscape with its intense energy, large scale buildings and constant compelling presence of visual imagery.

Forestall-Boehm begins her works by drawing out ideas and constructing paper models based on these sketches. She uses cheesecloth as a support for the encaustic, as its wide weave creates random gaps in the painted surface which she finds energizing. Sometimes she dyes the fibers a neutral hue, which enables the viewer to focus primarily on the form and its implied movement. In other cases she paints the fabric with colors that support the concept of the piece. Three-dimensional forms are built on wire armatures. The painted or dyed fabric is woven into or wrapped around the wire support.

Forestall-Boehm has had a life-long interest in art. After a 20-year career in marketing, which involved retail design as well as advertising and marketing, she left the business world to devote her efforts to art-making beginning in 2008.

In discussing her work and her process, Forestall-Boehm emphasizes the importance of her materials. While she begins with an image concept, the interactions of wax and fiber often surprise her. Once started, her approach is intuitive. The work speaks back to her, and "tells her" when she's reached completion. She prefers to work on one piece at a time, concentrating her attention and energy in a single direction.

While Forestall-Boehm works in both two and three-dimensions, she particularly enjoys the interaction that occurs when viewers encounter her sculptures. She works with a variety of sizes and installation modes, and is interested in offering experiences beyond the traditional or expected. Encaustic is not commonly used as a sculpture medium, some of her works are surprisingly small, and most have evocative titles that enlarge meaning for the viewer.

Forestall-Boehm notes the significance to her of remarks that Chuck Close made during a talk given at the Art Institute of Chicago. His advice was to "always do something that makes you slightly uncomfortable; don't let yourself get comfortable with your art-making". At the same time, this artist acknowledges the deep satisfaction that art-making offers, stating that in the studio she finds "the sureness and joy that creating brings" to her life.

The content of this essay is taken with permission from the interview  
*In Other(s) Words: Alicia Forestall-Boehm* by Lisa Goesling  
<http://www.lisagoesling.com/in-others-words/>

## Critical Review of the work of Alicia Forestall-Boehm

### Space and Surface

Andrew Jendrzejewski, former Chair of the Art Department, Vincennes University

Alicia Forestall-Boehm lives and works in Chicago, a metropolis rich in history, culture, industry, ethnicity, wealth, and resources. She is involved deeply with the surfaces of her works, developed from simple, delicate materials that result in colorful, tightly controlled forms that bridge between organic and geometric structures. In her statement she speaks about exploring the “history of private and public urban spaces”. It is worth looking deeper into what she might mean by that, and what does that have to do with her preoccupation with the encaustic (wax) surfaces she uses.

Chicago consists of manmade canyons walled by giant grids of brick, glass, steel and concrete, with narrow valleys of rushing streams of humanity and machinery. The city is a museum of important architectural history. After the Great Fire of 1871, it had to rebuild. The tough spirit of Chicago industry created new energy that led to the First Chicago Style and the first “sky scrapers”, the idea of which the architect Louis Sullivan refined. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the work of a later architect, Mies van der Rohe, typified what is called the Second Chicago Style. His minimalist buildings provide another expression of the city’s powerful global leadership, offering a colder, corporate face to the world.

Alicia Forestall-Boehm’s work makes the idea of *place*, both in a private and public sense, a direct and indirect motif for many of her pieces, especially these as indicated by their titles: ***Power of Place, Place, Space We Inhabit, Moving Day, and Considering Mies***. These elegant, small sculptures are made of simple materials—wire, and cheesecloth, the loose weave of which creates an armature for the application of encaustic (pigmented wax).

In ***Power of Place***, Forestall-Boehm creates two organic planes using strips of various colors creating a pattern. These were all then unified with a coating of an earth tone “glaze” of semi-transparent wax. One plane arches downward, the other upward, connecting at one end like a clamshell with what appears to be a simple bend in a single sheet of material. These planes intersect each other near the opposite end with a slotted joint. This results in a partially enclosed volume, relatively smooth on the outside, but with spike-like textures on the inside made with wire or filaments of fiber coated with wax. We are drawn to the inner space, but also threatened by its uncertain surface. This interior is private, organic, partially because of the material, but more importantly because of how the planes broadly shelter the space.

In ***Considering Mies***, Forestall-Boehm clearly makes reference to the glass and steel buildings of Mies van der Rohe,. She appropriates his style by constructing a geometric, square frame with channeled space inside the frame. The back and front sides mark the corners of the frame with unfilled spaces, recalling van der Rohe’s windows. The planes are created with the same woven strips of wax-coated fabric in various shades of yellow. These hand-made organic materials contradict the psychologically repelling feel of the anonymous glass and steel of van der Rohe’s architecture, with an invitation to touch and feel the surface.

Boehm also contemplates the spaces between forms, as with the sculptures ***Passages, Fluidity, Moving Day, Reversing the Flow, Frozen Music, The Point of Balance, Reflecting on their Course and Coming Together***. With these, she considers pathways and their transitions between spaces (or realms, or states).

**Passages** references an archetypal boat form used for thousands of years as a metaphor for transcendence from this life to another. The copper looking green wax coating over the entire form complements the copper red wires poking through the upper rims of the vessel, defining an open, implied plane through their repetition. The rhythmic pattern implies the forward motion of the vessel.

**Reversing the Flow** creates contradictory rhythms and other visual forces that move the viewer's eyes both forward and backward. It consists of strands of wax-coated fibers tinted with variegated chromatic bluish grays. These fibers are looped to a single wire, looking like fringe suspended in a moment of centrifugal force. Each end of the wire is fastened to a wall by nails, one directly over the other as if to create the beginning of a spiral like the number six, or an incomplete form of a handwritten letter "o". The initial stroke of this configuration begins with the upper end, which visually holds a state of suspended muscular energy. While we follow the curve down and around, it spirals to the lower end, which by comparison seems visually weighted down toward the spiral's center, reversing the eye movement back to the left. Forestall-Boehm is always aware of the space, as much as the form itself. Considering the space surrounded, the fact that the two ends do not meet visually implies a kind of open fence through which the negative space escapes, reversing the flow. The stiffened fringe recognizes both the forward motion of the stroke and the backward motion of the space. Either movement could account for the centrifugal force. The piece is exquisitely subtle, but powerful.

Another group of works, including **Vessels 3, 6, 10, 26** and **27**, scales down the space to the volume and outer surface of small, but monumental vessels. These are bulky, geometric, rhomboid-like forms that speak about their volume through an outside "skin" of woven patterns of squares suggesting irregularly shaped basket-like forms.

One might even suppose that the pieces **The Accumulation of Small Moments, Make No Little Plans, Infinite Possibilities**, and **Unfulfilled Dream**, are about kinds of conceptual spaces in time, conceptual scale or certain spatial dynamics found in natural phenomena. **Accumulation of Small Moments** is a small square painting of loosely defined converging grids of heavily textured, richly multi-colored patches. They might remind one of the geometric/organic patterns of landscape seen from a plane. The grid units make a whole topography.

Other pieces do not necessarily fit the categories of concern with space above. They may be germs of ideas for future works. They share certain characteristics, like the materials used and the modest size, though some also have a monumentality that yearns for larger scale. Often the use of concrete form suggests abstract, ethereal and transient qualities found in the natural world. Through ideas ventured in such pieces as the **Persistence of Vision** and **The Memory of Water**, Boehm intuitively mines the surfaces of physics, philosophy, and other realms, potentially grounding us, in a sense, back to basic classical concepts of the world, offering respite from the world we, as a culture, have created.

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## Social



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