



Stylish Change

Stacey Lee Webber likes her work long, repetitive, and painstaking. Just look at the life-sized carpenter's tools she silver-soldered out of pennies.

Only pre-1982 coins — minted from 95% copper — would survive her acetylene torch's high heat, so Webber spent hours flipping and sorting bucketfuls of mixed years.

"It's a mindless task to do while you're watching TV," she says. "I have a lot of those little tasks in my studio, it seems."

She spent months just twisting silver wire into the sheets of ornate filigree she used to build a set of jeweler's tools. When she moved on to screwdrivers, a hammer, and a handsaw, she meticulously cut her pennies (no, it's not illegal) and fused them together into panels with little gaps, so they rolled easily into the forms she desired. Darts cut in the flat swaths helped them to fold into the right shapes.

"A lot of the art is just figuring out the material and how to mold it into what I want," Webber explains. As she worked on the carpenter's tools, which showed this past August at San Francisco's

Velvet da Vinci gallery, she says, "I was thinking about labor that my grandpa would understand, about how we value it, and about putting labor back into currency."

While preparing the pennies, she laid them between towels to shield the decorative textures of their faces from her hammer blows. For looks, she plated the finished objects lightly with copper and added a patina using liver of sulfur.

She confesses, however, that the final pieces are not as exciting for her as assembling them.

"The act of making something can be what a piece is about. That's why tools themselves keep standing out to me," she says, adding, "I love the penny — it's doing well for me."

—Eric Smillie

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