

# HANDEYE



## In Your Dreams

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images: Courtesy of Susan Aaron-Taylor

Susan Aaron-Taylor's fantastical dream creatures or those who create art—whether it's visual art or the written word—the subconscious is a powerful tool. Dreams—either vignettes in black and white or full Hollywood productions with glorious technicolor and Dolby sound—can be a metaphorical palette, a storyboard, a shapeless piece of clay, a slab of marble ready to be chiseled, or skeins of yarn waiting to be woven, knitted, crocheted or felted. The messages that come from the subconscious can be complex symbols relating to emotions and that need further prodding and self-examination or as simple as a dog with a ball, reminding that it needs more play time.

Susan Aaron-Taylor is a dreamer who has long been fascinated by the symbolism in the stories her subconscious presents. Her mixed media sculptures are inspired by her dreams where a number of creatures—dogs, cats, tigers, and bears—have a starring

role and eventually are brought into the material world.

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“Most of my animals are derived either from dreams or more recently from shamanic journeys. Dream imagery has sourced my artwork for many years. I’ve been fascinated by my dreams since early childhood. Dreams come to tell me something I don’t know about the world and myself. The imagery is a language to be interpreted via symbols. Three decades ago, I began studying the work of Carl Jung and his paradigm for analyzing dreams. I researched the major characters, images, and symbols in my dreams utilizing dictionaries of folklore and mythology, fairy stories, and rituals and customs of numerous cultures. Eventually I became interested in other modalities that Jung also studied such as Alchemy, the tarot, and shamanism and how they overlaid psychology,” she wrote in an email.

As Section Chair of Fiber Design in the Crafts Department at College for Creative Studies in Detroit for 40 years, Aaron-Taylor has a basketful of fiber techniques and experience. For many years, her personal work was primarily created from wood and mixed media. “Then came a pivotal point when the concepts I was working with called for the addition of softer, more textural materials. So I began incorporating fiber with wood.”

The process, apart from the dreams, includes seeking tree limbs and roots, which she further carves and shapes to form the skeletal structure. Felt, which she makes herself, is used for the dermis and pelts. In the past, Aaron-Taylor with other fibers including kozo, gampi and raw flax fiber, but felt is her preferred material. “While I still occasionally use all of these fibers in my work, handmade felt seems to be the most constant fiber. I enjoy its flexibility and versatility. The felt serves as armor or a second skin. It can provide a buffer to protect my creatures from the outer world.”

Aaron-Taylor’s work is currently on exhibit at the Snyderman Works-Galleries in Philadelphia along with other artists also inspired by animals. In reaching out to her audience, her goal is to communicate at a heart level the many messages with her work, “...as each piece is sparked by a different concept. I know that a sculpture is successful when a viewer come up to me, looks me into the eye, and tells me they’ve been moved by a piece. That’s the heart connection. Then my work is complete.”

*For more information, please visit [www.susanaarontaylor.com](http://www.susanaarontaylor.com).*