

WEAVING SPACES

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DESIGN TEAM
architect: Prentiss Architects Inc
construction: Lowe Construction





OPPOSITE: Anderson's looms take up the light-filled main room of the studio. **THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** Detail of the loom. Sliding doors set each room—and their separate purposes—off from the next. Excavators had to cut a path from the house to the entrance of the studio. The loom at work, facing the dying room.



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rtists need space to work, and a weaver is no exception. For years, weaver **Mimi Anderson** struggled to make room for her multiple looms and piles of fabrics. In 2007, when she and her husband, Jim, bought a house on San Juan Island, they brought in **Prentiss Architects Inc** to design a 1,285-square-foot weaving studio dedicated to her craft.

The spot where the Andersons chose to erect the studio is behind the house that was originally thick with trees and difficult to reach from the house, which was sited 25 feet

below. So excavators brought in by **Lowe Construction** cut into the cliff and created a path from the house to the studio.

As the house was destined for a renovation, the firm was able to do as it wanted with the outside design of the studio. **Geoff Prentiss**, the firm's founder, says this was freeing. "In approaching the project, we had only the studio to think about. They wanted something with a contemporary, slightly industrial feel, but otherwise we were given a lot of free reign." The result is an airy, orderly design that invites light in from every angle, with each room having a dedicated purpose.

From above, the structure resembles a Tetris "T-Block," with a skylight that runs from one end of the building to the

to other. The roof is planted with the same grasses that grow naturally on the site, offering a nice view for the neighbors. Inside the studio, the main space houses the looms and displays some of Anderson's various works, which include garments, scarves, tea towels, and napkins. Behind that is the sewing room and a guest bedroom, set off by a few concrete stairs and a wall of sliding doors. The hidden doors, Prentiss notes, make the space unconventional, changing one's perception. To an artist, it signals entrance not into a home, but to a studio, where work is done—or to a guest, where a retreat begins.

There's also a bathroom, a streamlined office, and a dying room that can be closed off to the rest of the space, with

westward facing doors that can be opened to air out fumes. Outside, a patchwork of hardy concrete tiles does double duty: It's a place for drying tables to be rolled out as well as for relaxing with cocktails at sunset.

The studio's exterior is a palette of dark brown and light silvery shades made up of low-maintenance, weather-resistant materials such as white powder-coated steel panels and concrete that shows off the natural beauty of the island. "These materials give you a chance to express the hidden detail rather than the obvious detail," Prentiss says. Thinking for a moment, he adds, "Which I guess is like weaving; the weft and warp combine together to reveal the pattern." ❄