

BREAKING BOUNDARIES

BREAKING

BREAKING

BOUNDARIES



Meet three local artists
who are redefining what it
means to be creative
in a post-pandemic world.

Photography by Justin Buell



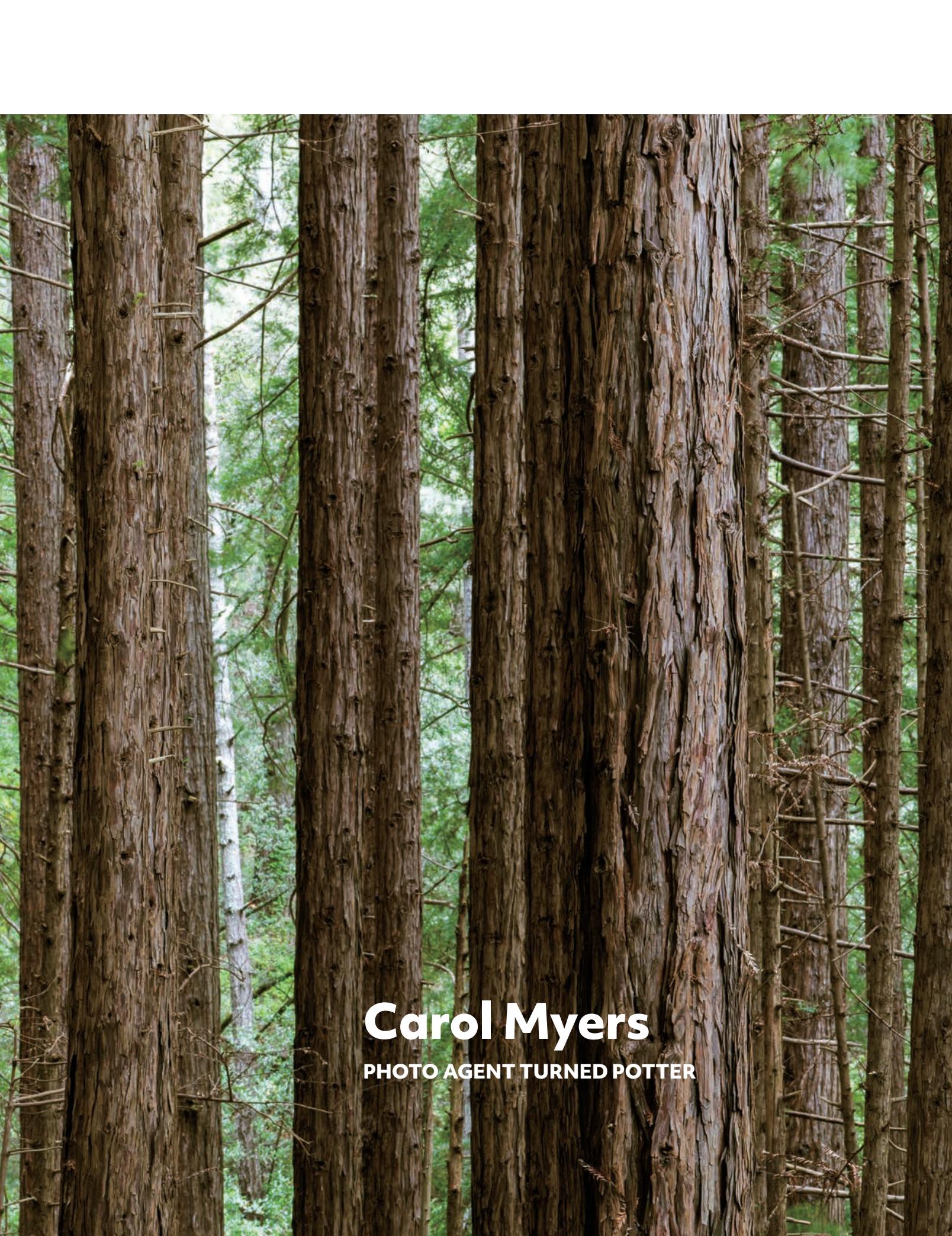
Britt-Marie Alm

SUSTAINABLE FIBER ARTIST



BREAKING // BOUNDARIES





A photograph of a dense forest of tall, weathered redwood trees. The trees have thick, dark brown trunks with prominent vertical grain and some horizontal lichen or moss growth. Several branches hang down from the upper canopy, creating a sense of depth and texture. The background is filled with more trees, though they appear slightly out of focus.

Carol Myers

PHOTO AGENT TURNED POTTER

BREAKING // BOUNDARIES

Patrick Nelson

MIXED-MEDIA ARTIST





BRITT-MARIE ALM

Making Craft Cool Again

Obsessed with the Tibetan Plateau since she was a teenager, Britt-Marie Alm says the “slingshot weaving technique” she learned from nomad women during many years spent living and studying in the remote region is a tangible symbol of their culture. It’s also one she feels passionate about preserving. “I’ve taken this wonderful, very utilitarian object that farmers and nomads use to herd and protect their animals and supersized it into this visually fascinating structure that works as a stand-alone art piece or when incorporated into furniture,” she says. With an aesthetic informed by her part-Scandinavian heritage, Alm’s “earthy Northern Californian home” also serves as inspiration for her eye-catchingly executed designs. Originally from Chicago, she settled in San Francisco’s Sunset neighborhood with her husband and toddler daughter, although the dream was to move to Marin. “It’s just so beautiful up there. I love the curvature of the hills and the way the mountains meet the ocean,” she says, adding

that the valleys and peaks of Tibet make their way into her designs a lot, too. Alm’s favorite piece to date? A custom 8-foot-wide commission called “Bringing The Mountains to the Sea” that she created for a private client in Colorado. The founder of Love Fest Fibers, a soft goods company that sources yak, alpaca and organic cotton-based yarns from artisan communities and women-owned businesses in Tibet, Nepal and here on the West Coast, Alm sees her art as an opportunity to create connections and share stories while learning from others. “I’m fascinated by the process and stories behind my materials,

the incredible women making these hand-felted yarns or living a nomad life on the plateau, and hope these are the kind of conversations looking at my work might start, too.” Around San Francisco, her tapestries grace the walls at Nordic cafe Kantine in the Upper Market/Castro neighborhood and The Mill, an Alamo Square bakery. Fiber art fans can admire more custom pieces by Alm, shop the Love Fest Fibers yarn collection (www.lofestfibers.com) or take a weaving class at her first brick-and-mortar storefront and studio, which opens this month in the Outer Sunset at 3300 Judah Street. —Keri Bridgwater



Alm uses a slingshot weaving technique.





"Valley Lines"



PATRICK NELSON **The King of Collage**

"The busy graphic characteristics of retro print media plays an important role balancing out the simplified approach that I take in my illustration style," says Patrick Nelson. "It's the sweet spot to my aesthetic, my secret sauce." Drawn to "dated typefaces, old illustration styles and funky layouts," the Marin-based artist scours thrift, antique and military surplus stores to keep his vintage newspaper archives fully stocked. He says crossing over from a decade-long career in the branding and advertising world felt like his "Karate Kid moment" — years spent bringing old graphics to life in new ways inherently guided his style and chosen medium when he was making the move to fine art. "My career as a graphic designer honed my creative process and taught me about problem-solving, layout and countless other design principles



"Beach Chair"

I've been able to use as an artist," he says. "I took the leap of faith and made this a full-time career in 2020. It was a story of the pandemic doing good by pushing me to turn my passion into a profession." Currently exploring illustration styles and collage techniques more than focusing on specific subject matter, his work features casual beach scenes inspired by California summers and growing up around Marin as recurring themes. "There's a sense of comfort from the land here that I channel in my imagery. My family rented up a storm and I've lived all over the county, but am particularly partial to the stretch of coastline between Mill Valley and Sausalito." Surrounded by fellow artists and crafters a stone's throw from the water, Nelson calls a live-work studio in Marinship home and says while his often color-dyed newspaper clips convey a sense of history frozen in time, they allow viewers to unplug, too. "In our modern, often complex lives, unfolding a newspaper and reading it is one of the most analog things we can do. My work aims to help balance some of this overstimulation we're all dealing with." Select pieces by Nelson are on display at AERENA Galleries & Gardens in St. Helena. View more online, including engaging behind-the-scenes process videos, at www.tricksf.com. —Keri Bridgwater



"Beach Cluster"