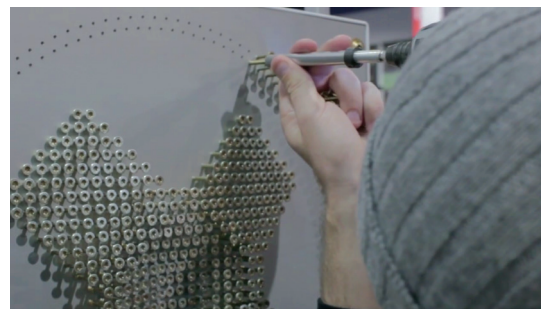
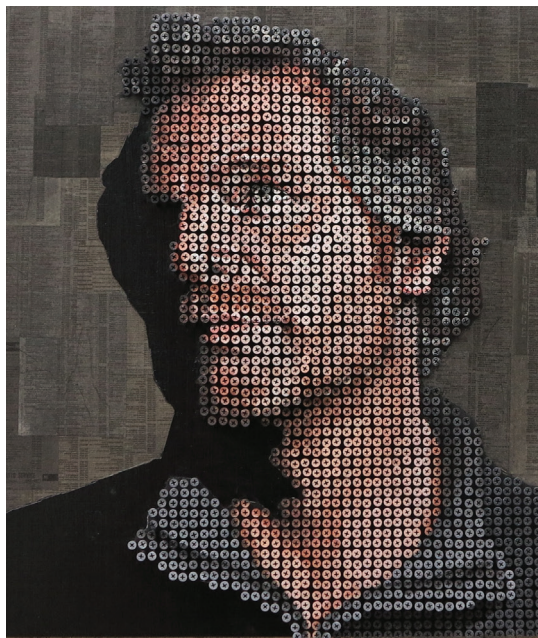


BY JON VARA

Sculptor Andrew Myers paints on a tight pattern of screws driven to different depths to create unique three-dimensional representations.



## Screw-Head Portraiture

**Although Andrew Myers** hasn't worked directly in the building trades since a two-year stint in commercial construction after college, he spends more time driving screws than most drywallers. But then, his specialty is an unusual one: He creates portraits that are a hybrid of painting and sculpture, using wood screws, birch plywood, and artist's oil paints.

The process begins with a pencil sketch that's transferred to a sheet of  $\frac{3}{4}$  birch plywood. After a  $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch-square grid pattern is lightly scribed on the panel, Myers drills a pilot hole at each of the grid-line intersections, using a portable drill guide to make sure that each hole is perfectly square to the face of the panel.

He then begins driving screws using a lightweight lithium-ion Milwaukee screw gun, choosing the length—anywhere from a  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch to 3 inches—and adjusting the depth by eye. Myers likes the quality and consistency of American-made Spax screws and uses them exclusively.

"If it's a frontal portrait, I usually drive the first screw at the tip of the subject's nose," he says. "That establishes the highest point and puts everything else into scale."

Once the 8,000 to 10,000 screws of a typical portrait are in place, Myers brings the artwork to life by creating a fully developed oil painting on the rolling surface formed by the screw heads. The result is both lifelike and remarkably responsive to the viewer's position. As the eye draws closer, the image transitions from a conventional portrait to an almost abstract combination of color, texture, and open space. (And, of course, a whole lot of screw heads.)

In fact, Myers notes, his portraits can be enjoyed from very close range indeed. He recalls a blind visitor to one of his shows who asked if he might feel a painting with his hands. Told to go ahead, his expression soon broke into a big smile.

"You could see that he completely got it," Myers says. "It was a great moment."

*Jon Vara is a writer in Cabot, Vt.*

**More Online:** See the online version of this article for a video interview with sculptor Andrew Myers.

Photo, left: Andrew Myers; photos, right: Hanley Wood Media