

# PORTRAIT OF A CREATIVE

Interesting People Living a Creative Life

Diana Balmori | Landscape Designer, Principal at Balmori Associates

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Photos and Interviews by  
Kristin Gladney



With a curious mind and a love of travel, adventure, people, food and culture,

Brooklyn based photographer Kristin Gladney can be found exploring and photographing the globe for commercial and editorial assignments, and non-profit organizations. She is available for comissions outside of Portrait of a Creative. Check out more work at [www.kristingladney.com](http://www.kristingladney.com) and contact her at [kristin@kristingladney.com](mailto:kristin@kristingladney.com).

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Diana Balmori | Landscape Designer, Principle at Balmori Associates

*Diana Balmori is one of the most forward thinking and innovative Lanscape Architects, merging landscapes with urban environments. Her new book, Drawing and Reinventing Landscape, will be published this spring.   Photographs by Kristin Gladney.*

Q&A with Diana Balmori:

Tell me a little bit about yourself, who you are, and where you are from.

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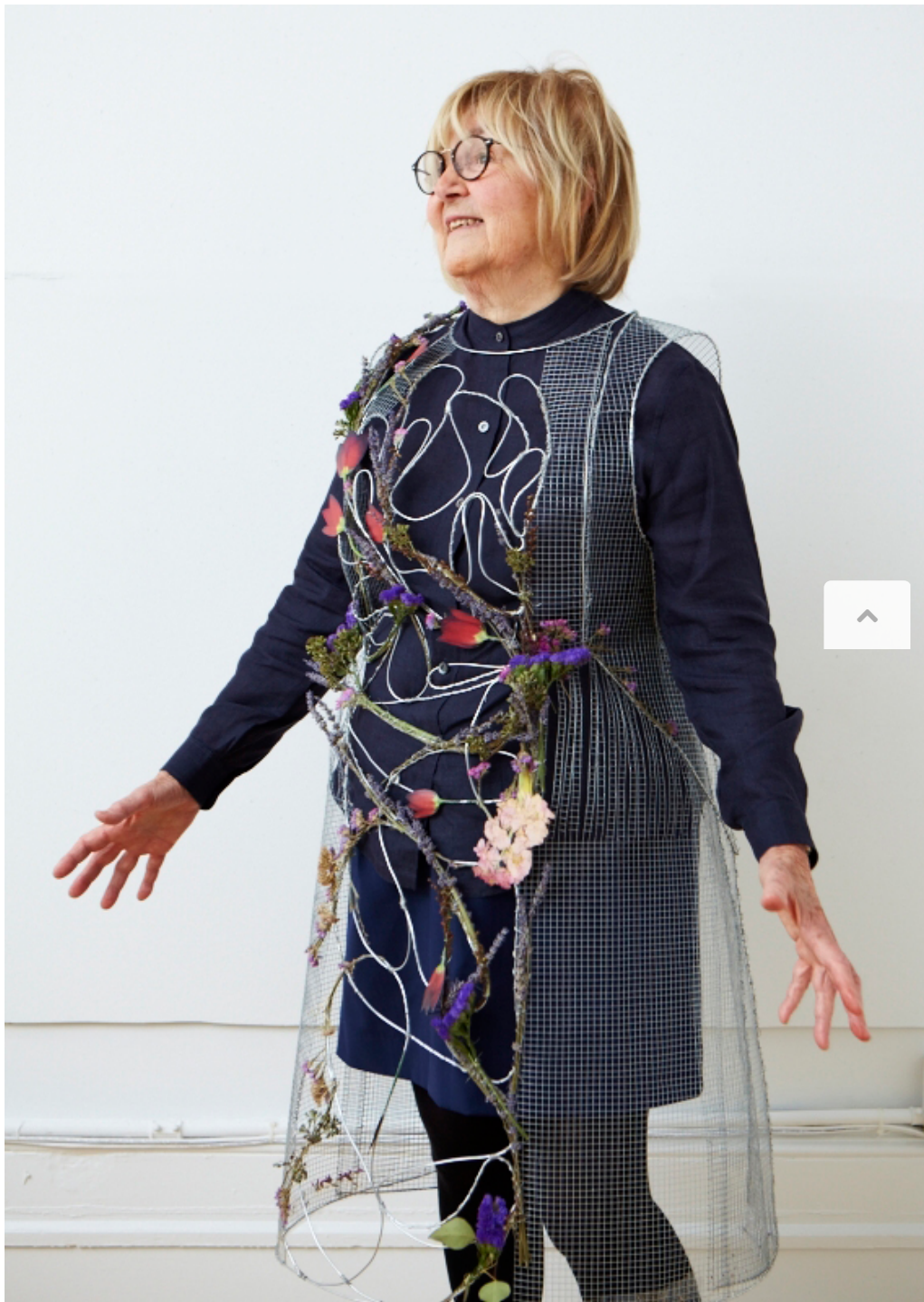
I am Diana Balmori and I come from many different parts of the world. Born in Spain, brought up in England, Argentina and the US.

#### How do you describe yourself as a creative and the kind of work you do?

I describe myself as a creative person. But everyone in the world is born creative. The difficult thing is to keep creativity alive after childhood.

#### As the founder and principal of Balmori Associates, what does your job entail?

My work entails setting a direction in the different projects that we have, while allowing to be interpreted by the designer's creativity. But it does mean thinking theoretically, it does mean sketching, drawing.



Your firm focuses on the interplay between landscape and architecture. What is your unique creative approach or philosophy to combining these two fields?

> Ad Agency

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> Architect

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> Art Director

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> Artist

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> Author

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> Blogger

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> Caterer

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> CEO

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> Chef

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> Chief Creative Officer

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> Cinematographer

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> Culinary Instructor

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> Designer

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My firm seeks an interface between landscape and architecture. However, all through the twentieth century they have been kept apart.

#### How did you figure out what you wanted to do?

You have to keep figuring that out your whole life. I'm still figuring it out.

#### How did you get to where you are today? What has been career path?

I don't see my life as a career path. I have no idea of where I am today. I see life as a pilgrimage, not in the sense of a religion, but as a constant sense of discovery, and it is never completed, completing it is death.

#### Has anything or anyone influenced your life, therefore gave you direction or helped steer you along on your professional path?

Many people influenced my work and my life. Over-all the greatest influence has been that of my Dorothy Ling, a major intellectual and artistic figure and my mother. In my discipline, Beatrix Farrand. I should also mention many writers, painters, sculptors and poets who have been important to my work.

› Director

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› Editor-in-Chief

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› Engineer

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› Entrepreneur

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› Executive Director

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› Fabricator

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› Fashion

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› Fashion Designer

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› Filmmaker

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› Food Writer

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› Founder

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› Front End Developer

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› Illustrator

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› Inventor

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› Jeweler

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› Journalist

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› Landscape

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› Magazine Creative

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› Makeup Artist

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› Media Publisher

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› Mixed-Media

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› Mixer

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› Musician

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**Of all the projects you've worked on, what is one of your favorites?**

Favorite projects are those related to rivers. Why, because it allows me to work on land and water, and their interface.

**What are you currently working on?**

Projects on water: Memphis, Hoboken. ( HUD Team), Argentina on the river (Paraná) as well experimental project on Gowanus canal.

**You've published a number of books, and your office is also filled with books. How do books play a role in your life and work?**

- › Nail Artist
- › Painter
- › Performer
- › Photographer
- › Photography Agent
- › Pianist
- › Private Chef
- › Producer
- › Public Relations
- › Puppet Maker
- › Recipe Developer
- › Singer
- › Song Writer
- › Sound Designer
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- › Stylist
- › Textile Design
- › Tour Guide
- › Traveler
- › Uncategorized
- › User Experience
- › User Interface
- › Visual Effects

I am a book lover. The book is a most extraordinary invention. It is a very accessible form of storage of human activity, more accessible than that of electronic media.

**You've conceptualized and had two very unique dresses created. One is made of paper (with the pages of your book *A Landscape Manifesto*) and one made of wire mesh. How do these dresses serve as a metaphor?**

It strange to call what I have done dresses. It has nothing to do with fashion or clothing. It has to do with concepts. I wanted to illustrate a Manifesto point "putting the city in nature". When I came to the point in two separate public presentations, I put on these costumes. They were a metaphor for nature. And I was putting myself into nature. Melissa Kirgan was the executor of these costumes based on these ideas. One, made out of paper, had the text of 'A Landscape Manifesto' printed all over it. The other was a wire frame with dried flowers and live leaves attached to it.

› Writer

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**When are you most creative? When do the best ideas come to you?**

Complete concentration is always critical to being creative. I have noticed I can develop great ideas when I'm in total quietness. And when swimming I have noticed that one goes into a sort of dreamlike state conducive to thinking. Also when walking, without a destination or a time constraint.

**What is your creative process for starting to conceptualize and work on a new project?**

Concentrating.

**What is something important that you want people to know about you?**

I don't want people to know about me. I want people know about my ideas and my work.

**Who inspires you? Where do you get inspiration?**

Inspiration is a complex process. Art inspires me, poetry, architecture and landscape inspire me, people inspire me.



**Any aspirations? Something you've always wanted to do or a dream assignment?**

I have many aspirations. My office has a separate section called BAL/LAB, separate from our commissioned projects, in which we pursue such things as dreams and aspirations.

**Please describe how your creative brain works.**

I have no idea how it works. I know that I have a daily battle to keep myself working creatively.

**Any interesting stories about the work you've done or an experience you've had?**

Choosing one at random: the experience of looking for trees for a special project in Japan. Japanese colleague and landscape architect Masahiro Soma set up a day trip to northern Japan to look for trees that had grown naturally in a forest and not in a nursery. This is highly valued in Japan unlike the choosing of trees grown in the US nurseries where all have the same size and form. For this we needed to get a permit to look for these trees on private land, something akin to a hunting permit. You have to find trees no farther than 200 feet from the access roads so that they can be reached by equipment and trucks for removal. You pay the owner for quantity and size of trees removed. Some great maples were what we took from here.

**How do you define success? What has helped you to become successful?**

I don't define success; exteriorly I suppose it is being known. Interiorly I suppose it is feeling you are on the beam when you work on something.



What is the best advice you've ever received in general, or about how to be more creative?

How to remain creative is the main issue. Advice from Dorothy Ling: singing, painting, drawing, writing. And surrounding yourself with creative people.

To learn more about Diana Balmori and Balmori Associates, please go to [www.balmori.com](http://www.balmori.com).

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About the Author: Kristin Gladney

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Kristin is an international photographer based in Brooklyn. An artist since she could hold a crayon, it wasn't clear what direction she would take until she discovered photography. While studying at Brown she took an introduction to black and white photography course at RISD. In the darkroom, watching her first print develop, she felt the magic, fell in love. At that moment she decided she would pursue photography as a career. Some of her clients include Food & Wine, Travel + Leisure,



Starwood Hotels and Resorts, Sweet Paul Magazine and Verizon Wireless. She is available for editorial and advertising commissions. Contact Kristin at [kristin@kristingladney.com](mailto:kristin@kristingladney.com). See more of her work at [www.kristingladney.com](http://www.kristingladney.com).

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