

Part 1

Zoé Whitley (Rail): The authoritative study of your art, co-authored by Chika Okeke-Agulu and Okwui Enwezor, is titled *El Anatsui: The Reinvention of Sculpture*. The tome examines in detail the contexts that nurtured your revolution of form. From your earliest explorations in wood reliefs, across your less well-known terracottas, and to the worldwide acclaim of your metal cloths, you have taken the noun “sculpture” and made it a verb. Indeed, most of your oeuvre is polymorphous and cannot be displayed in precisely the same manner twice: the metal will contort at different angles, pool at new circumferences, the wood achieves balance in subtly different choreographies each time. Did you set out to change the meaning of sculpture?

El Anatsui: I would not say that I consciously set out to “change the meaning of sculpture” but rather to question and extend its possibilities. Each material I work with—be it metal, wood, or any other—carries its own memory and energy. And when they are reconfigured or installed in different contexts, they begin to converse with their surroundings and, in that process new meanings emerge.

For me, sculpture is not a fixed object; it is a living form that can shift in response to light, space, and the people who encounter it. I am interested in that fluidity, in allowing the work to breathe and transform rather than remain confined to a single interpretation. In this sense, the act of installing also becomes part of the sculpture’s life, a moment when its meanings are renegotiated rather than predetermined.