

nara roesler

sheila hicks



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sheila hicks

b. 1934, hastings, usa. lives and works in paris, france

Sheila Hicks (b. 1934, Hastings, USA) is one of the most important artists of late modernism in the West. A pioneer in the use of textile techniques in the production of artworks, she has maintained a prominent presence in the contemporary art scene since the 1960s. Her practice began in the late 1950s, after she completed her studies at the Yale Art School, where she came into contact with the teachings of masters such as Josef Albers, Rico Lebrun, Bernard Chaet, and George Kubler. A global artist avant la lettre, Hicks undertook numerous journeys dedicated to studying the cultures and local practices of different places, with particular attention to those related to weaving and textile production in countries such as Mexico, Morocco, India, Korea, Japan, Peru, Israel, Sweden, and South Africa.

Her work is characterized by an investigation of scale, ranging from the minimal to the monumental, and frequently occupies a liminal space between art, design, craft, and architecture. Amid the multiplicity of her practice, Sheila Hicks consistently gives color a central role, evoking her early forays into painting. The artist understands weaving as an extension of painting—“a painter lost in a jungle of fibers looking for a way out,” she jokes when commenting on her relationship with textile techniques.

Hicks has also become known for her use of a wide range of materials, from pieces of slate and yarn to nurses’ and military uniforms. More recently, she has begun experimenting with biodegradable materials which, although destined to physically disintegrate, do not quite disappear, since the artist seeks to evoke—or construct—memorable and enduring experiences.

exposições individuais selecionadas

- *Sheila Hicks*, Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo, Brazil (2026)
- *Sheila Hicks*, West Bund Museum, Xangai, China (2026)
- *New Work: Sheila Hicks*, SFMOMA, São Francisco, Califórnia, USA (2025)
- *Hatano and Bill*, Linked Destinies, Shibunkaku, Tóquio, Japan (2025)
- *Sheila Hicks*, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, Germany (2024)
- *A Little Bit of a Lot of Things*, Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, St. Gallen, Swiss (2023)
- *Woven Wonders*, Coal Drops Yard, King’s Cross, London, UK (2022)
- *Reencuentro*, Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino, Santiago, Chile (2019)
- *Sheila Hicks: Lignes de Vie*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France (2018)
- *Sheila Hicks: Hilos libres. El textil y sus raíces prehispánicas*, 1954–2017, Museo Amparo, Puebla, Mexico (2017)

exposições coletivas selecionadas

- *Woven Histories: Textiles and Modern Abstraction*, The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, USA; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canadá (2025);
- 13th Liverpool Biennial, Tate Liverpool and RIBA North, Liverpool, UK (2025)
- *Weaving Abstraction in Ancient and Modern Art*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA (2024)
- *HARD/SOFT: Textiles and Ceramics in Contemporary Art*, MAK, Vienna, Áustria (2023)
- *Women in Abstraction*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, França; Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain (2021)
- 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, Veneza, Italy (2017)
- 20th Biennale of Sydney, Sydney, Australia (2016)
- 77th Whitney Biennial, New York, USA (2014)
- 30ª Bienal de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil (2012)
- *Douze Ans d’Art Contemporain en France*, Grand Palais, Paris, France (1972)
- *Wall Hangings*, The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, USA (1969)

coleções selecionadas

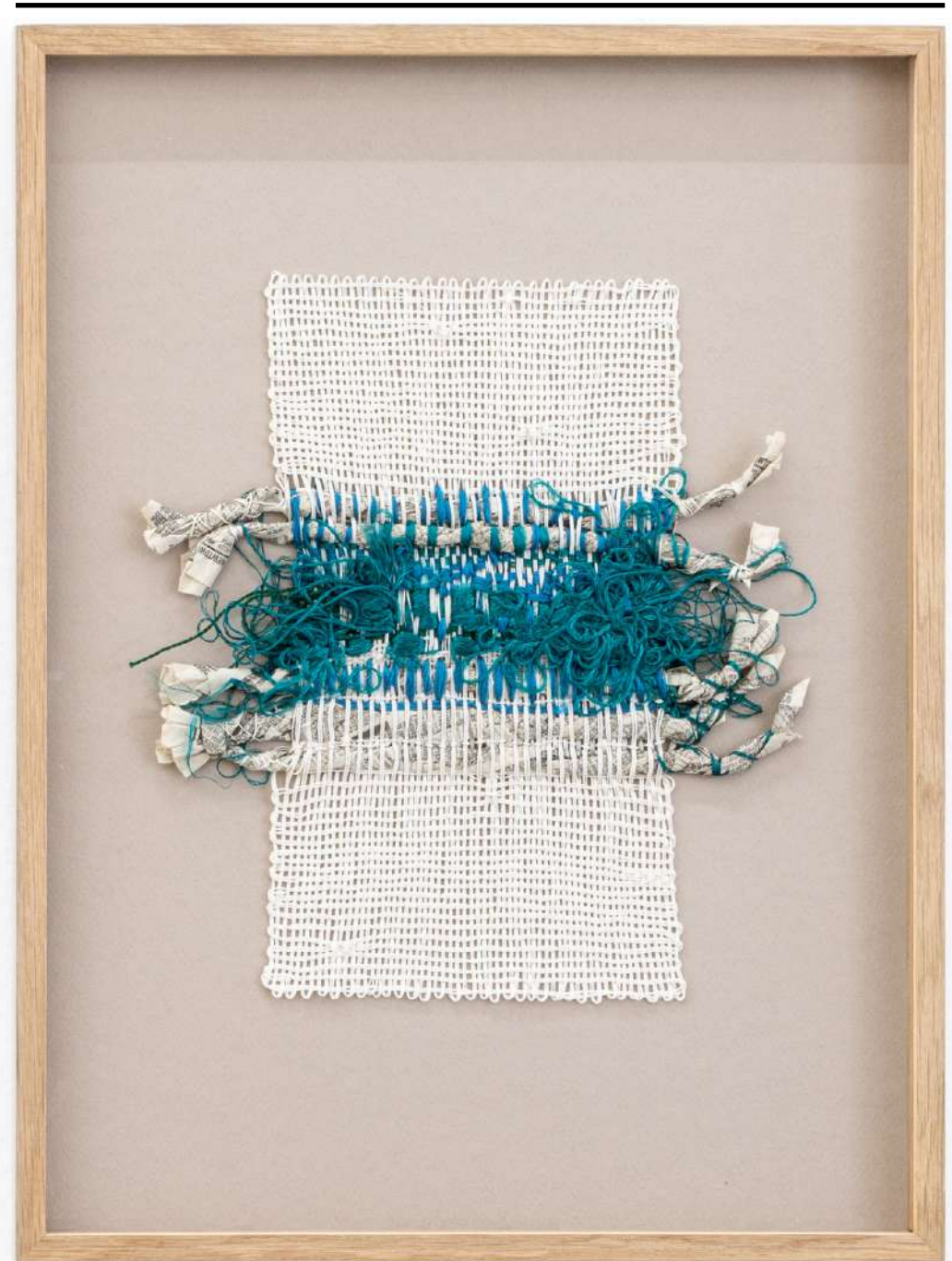
- Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France
- National Museum of Art (anteriormente, Museum of Decorative Arts and Design), Oslo, Norway
- Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, USA
- National Museum of Modern Art, Tóquio, Japan
- Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- Tate, Londres, UK

minimes

The most characteristic experimental works in Sheila Hicks's practice are found in the *Minimes* series, a diminutive laboratory of invention and composition. Like a draftsman who carries a sketchbook with them, Hicks carries her portable loom, which she has used to produce these small works since the beginning of her career. As its name suggests, *Minimes* is characterized by its reduced scale. Her investigation into textile fibers draws on sources from a range of nationalities and ethnic traditions, preserving at its core the experimental nature of craft.

More specifically, *Minimes* derives from pre-Columbian Andean techniques that Hicks studied during her years as a student at Yale, under the guidance of archaeologist Junius Bird and art historian George Kubler. In her university thesis, Hicks wrote about pre-Inca textiles, drawing on the research of Raoul D'Harcourt at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris. Her miniatures are not conceived as projects for future works on a larger scale, but rather as autonomous elaborations endowed with a singular aesthetic potency.

Expand or Disappear, 2014
linen, silk and newsprint
24 x 22 cm
9.4 x 8.7 in
courtesy of Sheila Hicks
and Galeria Nara Roesler







The *Minimes* series ranges from traditional weaving techniques to works incorporating various domestic elements and found objects. As the artist herself has stated, the significance of this body of work cannot be overstated: “I found my voice and my foundation in my small works. They allowed me to build bridges between art, design, architecture, and decorative arts.”

Adrift + Confident, 2018
silk
24,5 x 13 cm
9.65 x 5.12 in
courtesy of Sheila Hicks
and Galeria Nara Roesler

→
Small Chance, 2016
cotton and linen
23,5 x 15 cm
courtesy of Sheila Hicks
and Galeria Nara Roesler



Weaving with local women
in Mexico, 1960s
photo © Faith Stern
publicado em Lifelines
/ Michel Gauthier (ed.)
Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2018, p. 126

→
Asian Sobriety, 2016
algodão, silk
23 x 14 cm
courtesy of Sheila Hicks
and Galeria Nara Roesler









Considering Asia, 2016
monofilament and silk
24,5 x 14 cm
9.6 x 5.5 in
courtesy of Sheila Hicks
and Galeria Nara Roesler

prayer rugs

The *Prayer Rugs* series is highly representative of Hicks's practice in that it brings together traditional processes from different regions and vernacular cultural elements, questioning notions of space, clothing, and shelter while simultaneously engaging with the spiritual dimension of these artifacts.

“When I discovered the prayer rugs in Morocco, as well as the country's architecture, with its arches, I became fascinated by the idea of a sense of ascent: ascent through this arched form. It was a kind of religious feeling for me that was very all-encompassing. It could serve people of all religious beliefs who sought a way to communicate with something more important than themselves, something greater, more powerful, and beautiful.”

Tapis de prière
(*Gebetsteppich*), 1971
wool
photo Beatrijs Sterk





Prayer Rug, 1965
hand-spun wool
221 x 109,2 cm

Prayer Rug, 1972-1973
hand-spun wool
225 x 115 x 20 cm





Prayer Rug, 1970,
Wool on cotton warp
photo Beatrijs Sterk





In Islam, prayer rugs are individual objects used as part of religious rituals. The faithful perform their daily prayers upon them, positioning them toward the holy city of Mecca. These objects may feature rich decorative, figurative, geometric, or arabesque elements. The design of a prayer rug, in turn, is shaped by the village from which it originates and by the artisan who made it.

Sheila Hicks began this series in 1965, during her time in Germany. At the recommendation of Mildred Constanti, the distinguished curator of textile and decorative arts at the MoMA, CBS commissioned a work by the artist to decorate the entrance of its New York headquarters, designed by Eero Saarinen and Kevin Roche. In the years that followed, she became increasingly involved with this visual language, eventually receiving an invitation from the Moroccan government to develop works in the country's workshops.

During her stay in Morocco, the artist developed a group of wall works that were exhibited at the historic Bab Rouah Museum. She continued to investigate the vertical presentation of her *Prayer Rugs*, disrupting the notion of the rug as a textile surface to be walked upon while emphasizing the natural volume of wool fibers. Regarding these works, Sheila Hicks states: "I became absorbed in the history of what constitutes a tapestry, what is not a tapestry, what the new tapestry is, what a tapestry that projects into space is."

Prayer Rug, 1978
wool
143x 52 cm

Moroccan
prayer rug, 1972,
natural wool
558,8 cm x 469,9 cm x 220 cm





Dark prayer Rug, 1968
wool
304,8 x 172,7 cm



tapisserie d'aubusson

In 1983, Hicks received a commission to create a series of monumental works for several buildings of King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. She decided to produce them in Aubusson, France, following the region's traditional tapestry techniques, which date back to the Middle Ages. Unlike other works, in which the color and texture of the material have a predominant presence, in this series it is the image itself—drawn from the ornamental vocabulary of Islam and related to astrology and astronomy—that first catches the eye.



Untitled, 1984
silk and gold thread
embroidery on canvas
100 x 120

Le Palmier, 1984-1985
wool, cotton, rayon,
silk, and linen
275,6 x 364,5 cm
edition of 6



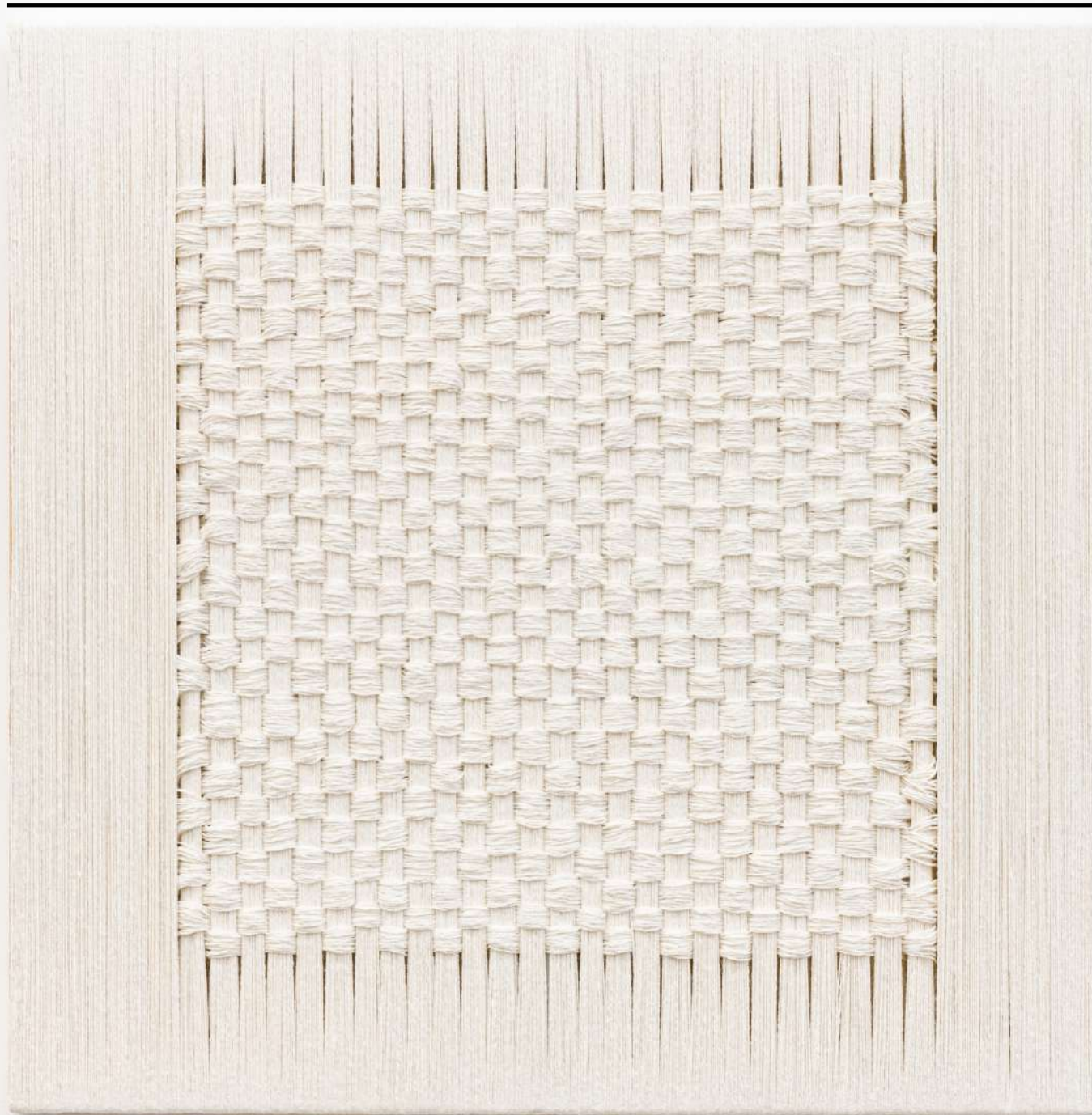


exhibition view
*Material Matters. Sheila Hicks
and Shi Hui, 2026*
West bund Museum, Shanghai

hieroglyphs

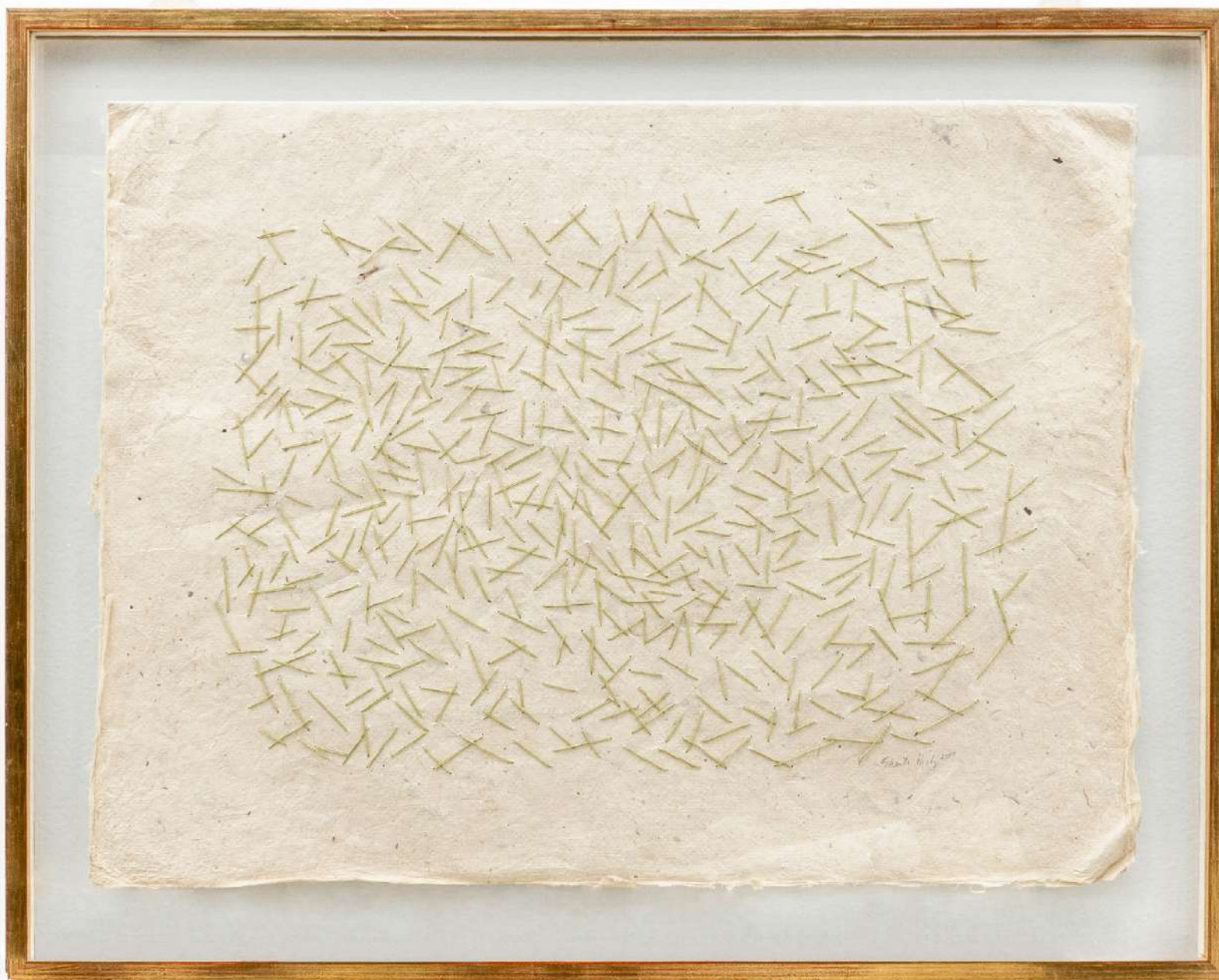
The *Hieroglyphs* series consists of a group of monochromatic works begun early in her career, around 1956, with the creation of *Slow Scribble*, an investigation that became exemplary of this practice. Hicks interweaves the axes of the warp and weft, creating surfaces and structures that evoke writing. The name given to this body of textiles refers to early writing techniques, such as those of ancient Egypt, in which graphic codes were inscribed onto walls. As in various techniques developed by traditional civilizations, the artist's work creates small patterns that, constructed in relief on a surface, acquire a scriptural presence. In the following decade, she deepened and expanded this investigation by developing different patterns of texture across a single plane.

Hieroglyph, bas relief, 2019
linen, wool and wood support
100 x 100 cm
39.4 x 39.4 in
courtesy of Sheila Hicks
and Galeria Nara Roesler



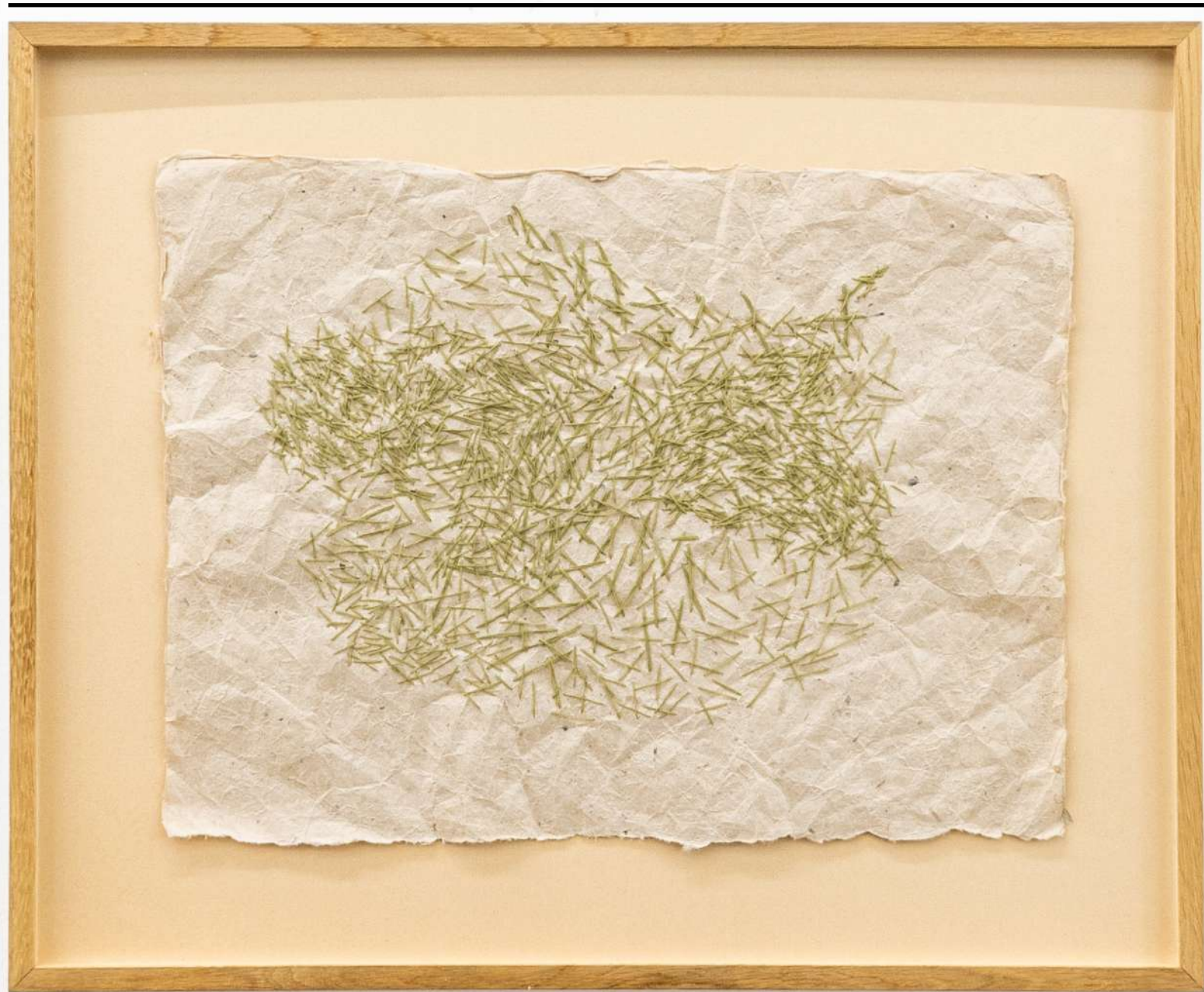






Threads Drawing, 2000
paper and linen
37,5 x 50,2 cm
14.8 x 19.8 in
courtesy of Sheila Hicks
and Galeria Nara Roesler





Threads Drawing, 2000
paper and linen
37,5 x 50,2 cm
14.8 x 19.8 in
courtesy of Sheila Hicks
and Galeria Nara Roesler



menhirs

A menhir is a type of prehistoric monument made of stone, elongated in form, like a column rising directly from the ground. Such objects can be found in various parts of the world, particularly on Easter Island (Chile), in the United Kingdom, Portugal, and France. Although the precise meaning of these structures remains unknown—and is often associated with early astronomical observations—Sheila Hicks draws on them to create works that investigate verticality and vectorial interventions in space. Many of her propositions are installation-like in nature: suspended from the ceiling of the exhibition space, they extend toward the floor, connecting the two.

“My greatest fascination has been the infinite and flexible nature of fiber. I became addicted to this material very early on, but I never followed its rules,” Hicks says. The beautiful waterfalls she creates with threads are like warps detached from the weave. Her long braids, rhythmically wound into bundles, invariably divide at their ends. Throughout her work, the vertical and horizontal vectors characteristic of weaving veer off course, resulting in what Frédéric Bonnet, curator of the exhibition *Open Field*, held at The Bass Museum of Art in the United States, describes as a “cunning and even rebellious geometry.” In other words, this is where she finds herself, at the juncture between “fiber” and “non-fiber.” The series also includes smaller works made with thousands of meters of thread, which can be displayed on pedestals. The material employed, with its colors and textures, contrasts with the materiality of the millennia-old structures to which they refer.

Menhir, 1998/2004
courtesy: The Bass, Miami Beach
photo © Zachary Balber



Sheila Hicks

Pillar of Inquiry/Supple Column, 2013-14
exhibition view *Surrounds: 11 installations*,
MoMA New York, USA





In 2014, on the occasion of the Whitney Biennial in New York, Sheila Hicks presented *Pillar of Inquiry/Supple Column* (2013–2014), a monumental column of vividly colored fibers that descended in a spiral form from the ceiling of the building designed by Marcel Breuer. The work recalled, through its relationship with the Bauhaus, the beginnings of the artist's career.

Sheila Hicks developed a series of works based on the volume and weight of masses of textile material as part of her ongoing effort to conceive of color as material. In *The Open Rule*, Michel Gauthier writes: "This sums up the manifestation of Sheila Hicks's passion for color. *Pillar of Inquiry/Supple Column*, *Atterrissage*, *Banisteriopsis*, or its sumptuous blue variant, *Banisteriopsis–Dark Ink* (1968–1994), thus appear as sculptural oxymorons, a collision between the purely optical phenomenon of color and the hyper-tactility of fiber. In other words, these works make us want to touch color. The towering mass of yellow fibers known as *La Sentinelle de Safran* plays with this confusion between the optical and the haptic to consummate its effect."

installation view
Pillar of Inquiry/Supple Column, 2013/2014
Whitney Museum of American Art | New York, 2014
courtesy Whitney Museum of American Art



exhibition view
Ligne de vie, 2018
Centre Georges Pompidou,
Paris, France
Photo:Philippe Migeat

boules and chromatic investigations

Boules is a body of works by Sheila Hicks characterized by their rounded forms and made from textiles and threads in a variety of materials, including hand-dyed synthetic fibers, which are then shaped through the addition of cotton, linen, nylon, silk, and other materials. Hicks often encloses personal objects within these structures, in a post-Duchampian gesture of creating imperceptible secrets and hiding places.

Boules became a device for carrying out acts of expressive accumulation marked by rigorous seriality and, above all, for creating colorful, monumental, and playful site-specific installations and sculptures. Compositions made from these elements offer infinite combinatory possibilities, capable of occupying an entire wall. An example of this type of proposition is permanently installed at the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris.

In 2015, Sheila Hicks became the first artist to present her work in the Waterloo Sunset pavilion at the Hayward Gallery in London, United Kingdom, designed by Dan Graham. The artist occupied the space with works from the *Boules* series, creating site-specific sculptures that responded to and activated the surrounding architecture. By producing circular, soft, and malleable forms, Hicks offered a counterpoint to the rigid materials of the metal structures that make up the space. The artist's vivid, colorful tangles of pigmented fibers could be seen through the pavilion's curved, transparent walls, establishing an interaction with the flow of traffic along Waterloo Bridge.



Witnesses, grand boules, 2016/2018
linen, cotton, wool and synthetic fibers
20 pieces of 24 to 30 cm
courtesy Sheila Hicks e Galeria Nara Roesler



exhibition view
*Material Matters. Sheila Hicks
and Shi Hui, 2026*
West bund Museum, Shanghai



我的想法，也是我想表达的东西，在于我创作每一件材料的时候，它都是一个过程，一个与材料和材料的互动过程。

—— 希拉·希克斯

My intention and my subject are making the most of the potential of every material to produce a work that is a part of my world, my life and mine.

— Sheila Hicks



Hicks also presented her *Boules* at the 57th Venice Biennale. Speaking about the work, the artist comments: “I am always thinking, looking, seeing, observing colors and colored environments wherever I go, and I gravitate toward those that have power, that seduce, that possess a particular kind of aura, while avoiding color combinations that I find unpleasant [...] At the Arsenale [the Biennale’s venue that year], with its brick walls, it was the architecture that led me to think about texture, in addition to the impression of sound that color is capable of conveying on an emotional level. This installation is about an overwhelming amount of color and how it affects its surroundings. The space becomes a sculptural environment, like a bas-relief within an even deeper carving, in which you can walk and lose yourself.”

installation view
Arsenale | 57th Venice Biennale
Escalade Beyond Chromatic Lands, 2016/2017
natural and synthetic fibers, fabric, slate, bamboo
6 x 16 x 4 m
photo © Cristóbal Zañartu



installation view
Arsenale | 57th Venice Biennale
Escalade Beyond Chromatic Lands, 2016/2017
mixed media, natural and synthetic
fibers, fabric, slate, bamboo
6 x 16 x 4 m
photo © Cristóbal Zañartu



Córdoba, 1968/2011
photo © Centre Pompidou, 2017/Adg, Paris, 2018



‘Are we still up to it?’ – Art
& Democracy, 2025
Königsklasse – Schloss
Herrenchiemsee,
Munich, Germany

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exhibition view
Sheila Hicks: *Foray into Chromatic Zones*
Hayward Gallery | London, 2015
photo © Michael Brzezinski

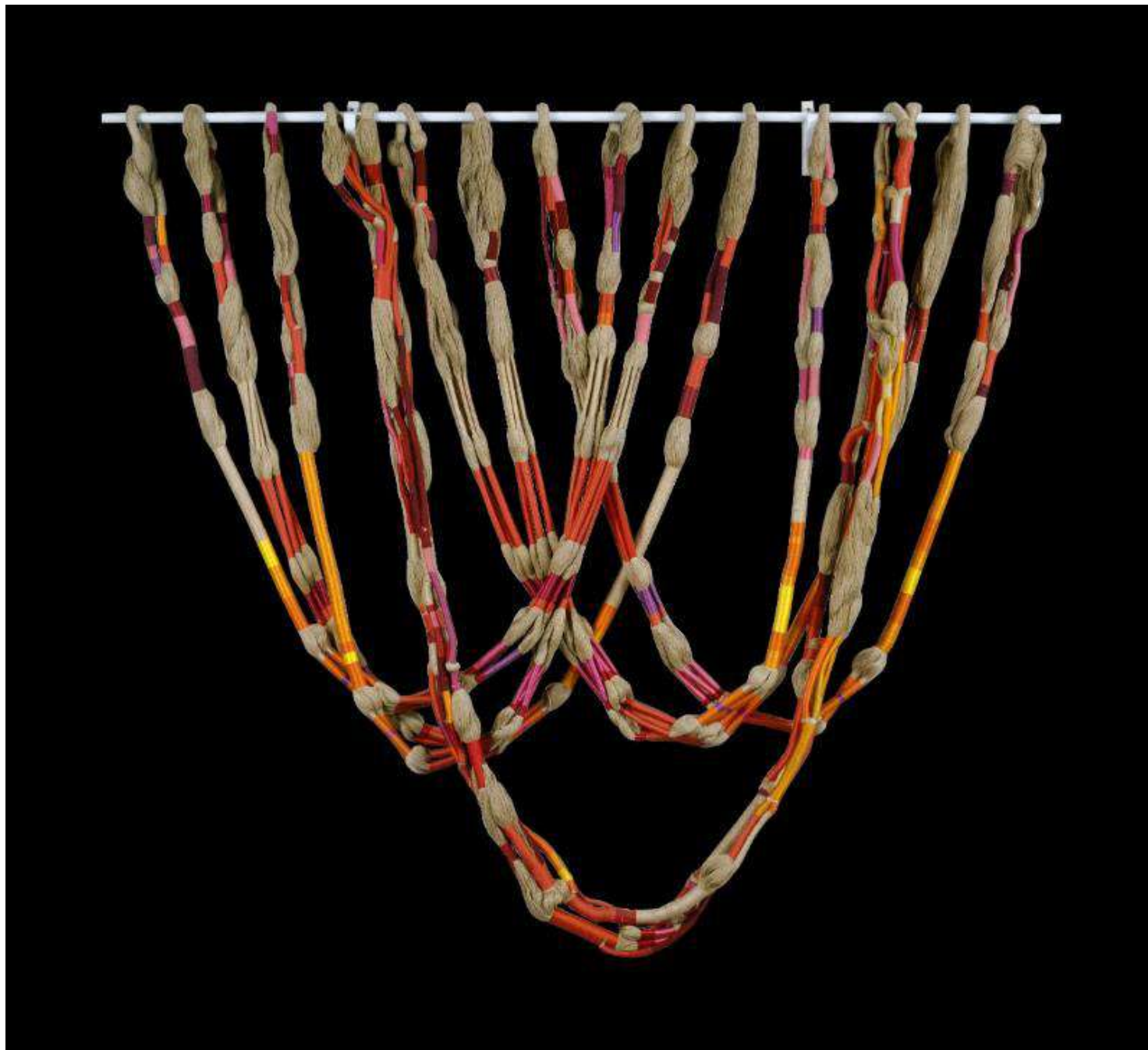




exhibition view
A Little Bit of a Lot of Things, 2023
Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, St. Gallen, Switzerland



installation view *Baoli*
Palais de Tokyo | Paris, 2015
photo © Cristóbal Zañartu



The Principal Wife, 1965
silk, linen, wool, synthetic fibers;
spliced, grafted, wrapped
243,8 x 218.4 x 20,3 cm
Credit: Museum of Arts and Design, New York



The Principal Wife Goes On, 1969
linen, silk, wool and synthetic fibers

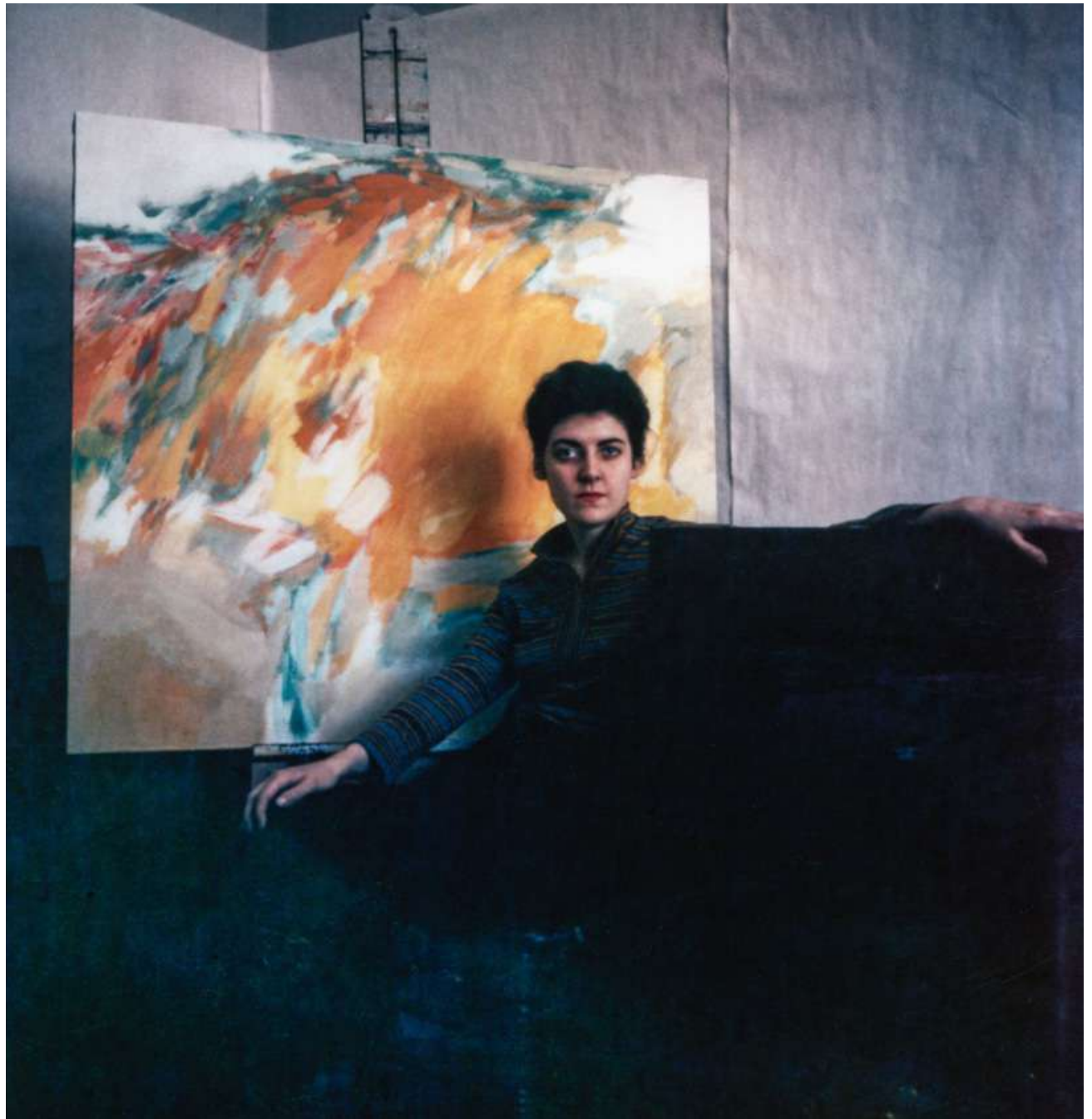


Lianes de Beauvais, 2011-2012
Centre Pompidou, Paris,
© ADAGP, Paris

Crescendo, 2026
cashmere, wool, cotton and linen
120 x 133 cm
47.2 x 52.4 in







Sheila Hicks na Yale University, 1958
photo © Ernest Boyer

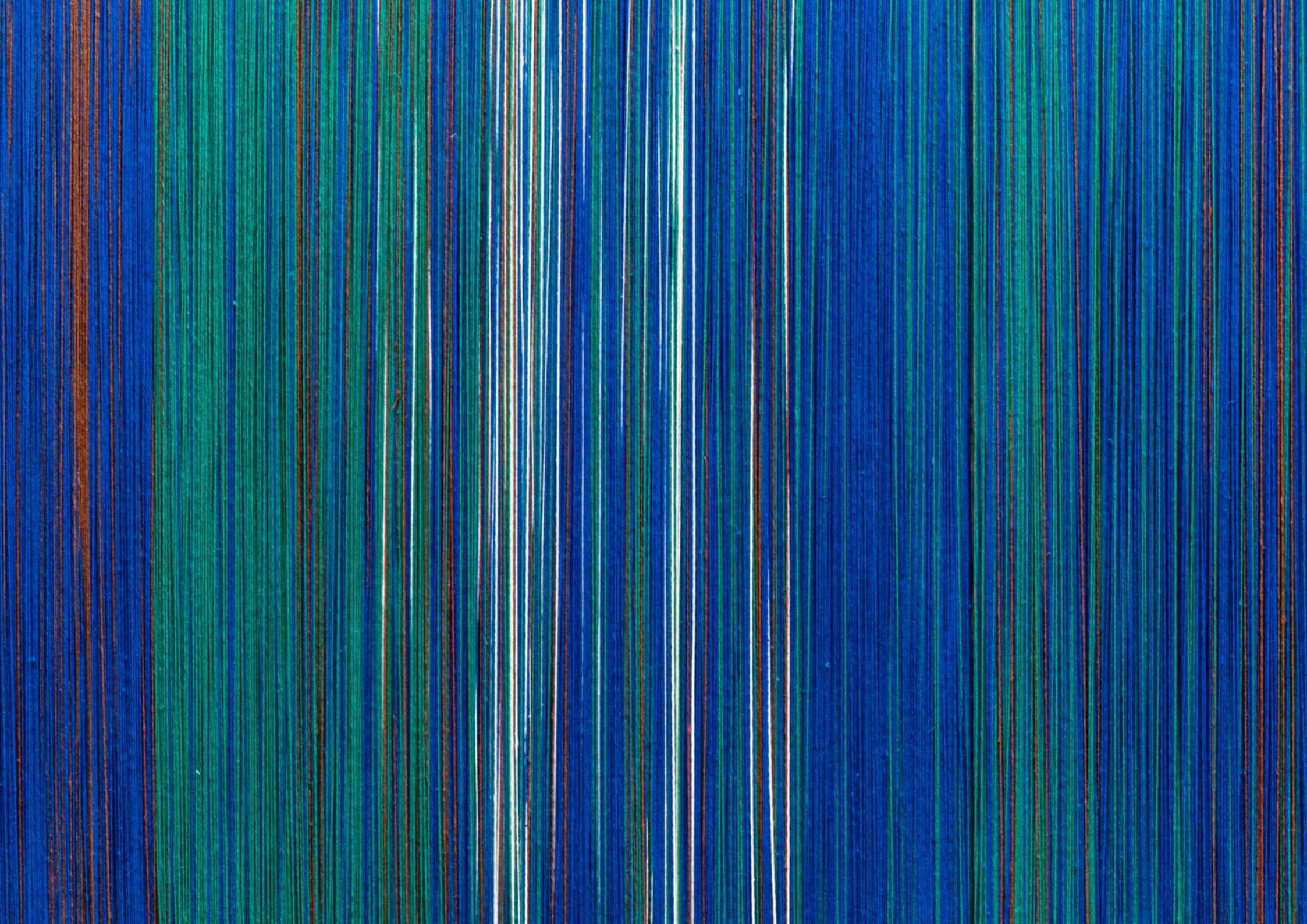


Talking Sticks, 2017/2018
bamboo, cotton, and synthetic fibers
20 pieces of 65 to 150 cm
courtesy Sheila Hicks e Galeria Nara Roesler



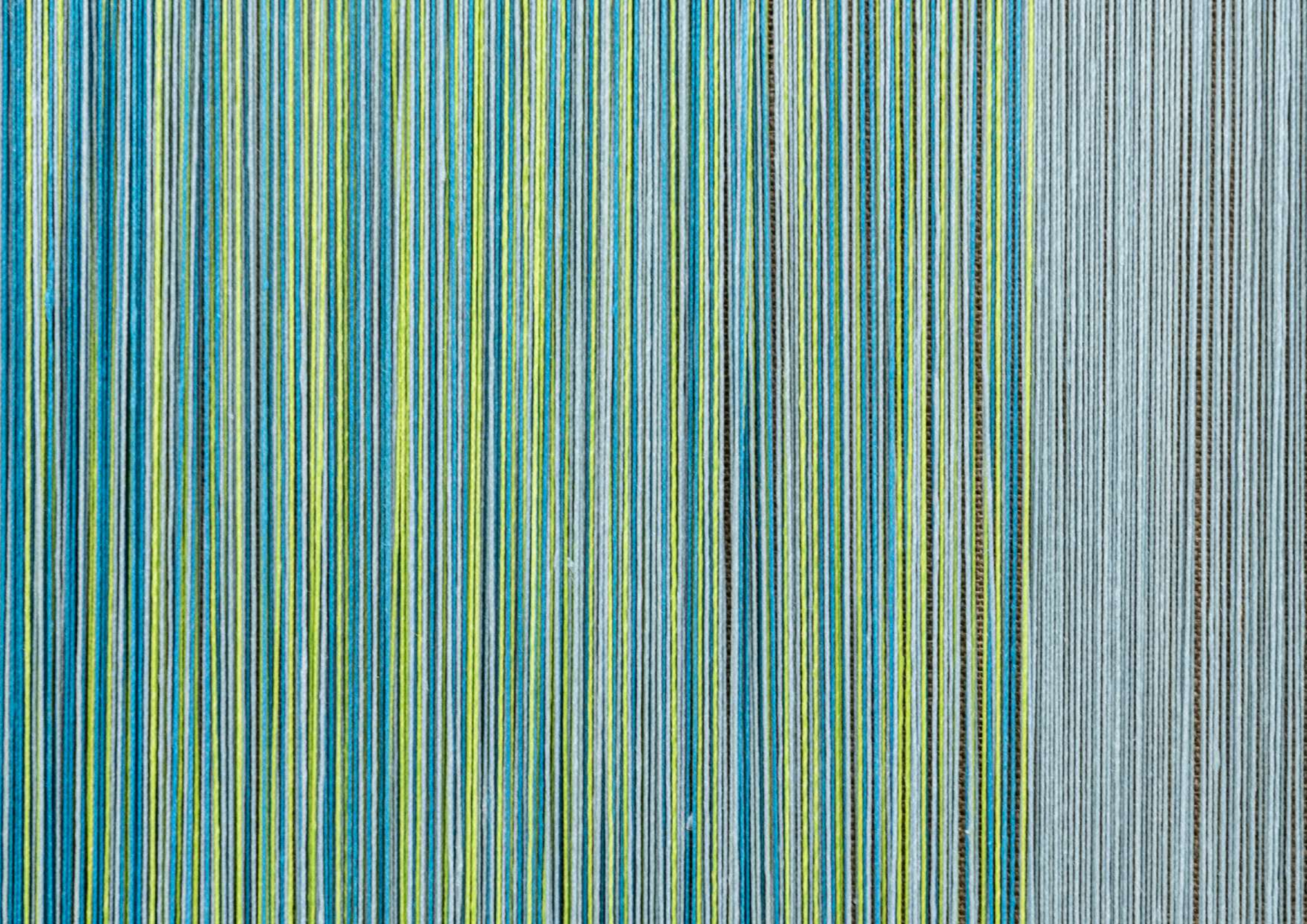


Point of Departure, 2018
linen and wood support
2 pieces of 39.4 x 39.4 x 1.4 in (each)
courtesy Sheila Hicks e Galeria Nara Roesler





Ida y vuelta, 2019
wood, linen, silk
and synthetic fiber
39,4 x 38,1 x 2,5 cm
15.5 x 15 x 1 in
courtesy Sheila Hicks e Galeria Nara Roesler



open spaces

Sheila Hicks addresses the wide variety of possibilities of open spaces in her work, as well as the creation of outdoor site-specific installations. A tireless traveling artist since the 1950s, Hicks established a familiarity with expanded and outdoor spaces early in her career, understanding the meaning of art and its symbols as part of a broad context and open environments. As a keen witness to global vernacular techniques and traditions, Hicks's familiarity with art in the open field—as well as in the expanded field—is structurally consubstantial with her compelling and adventurous poetics. Her interventions in numerous public spaces and outdoor locations are, therefore, logically proportionate to the ambition that led her to expand the legacy of Modernism. As Luis Pérez-Oramas recently stated: "Sheila Hicks has intensified and expanded the elementary forms of modern abstraction to an unprecedented degree: compositional geometry, chromatic planes, the monochrome, composition that transcends signifying hierarchies between figure and ground, visibility and invisibility, etc."

More recently, Hicks has developed several site-specific installations created for the gardens of the Château de Versailles; for a 13th-century castle in Belgium on the occasion of the Horst Festival; for the Musée Carnavalet in Paris; as well as for the High Line in New York.

installation view *ApprenTissage*
Musée Carnavalet | Paris, 2016
courtesy: Festival d'Automne à Paris



installation view
Vers des Horizons Inconnus, 2023
Photo: Claire Dorn





installation view *ApprenTissage*
Musée Carnavalet | Paris, 2016
courtesy: Festival d'Automne à Paris



installation view *ApprenTissage*
Musée Carnavalet | Paris, 2016
courtesy: Festival d'Automne à Paris



installation view
Horst Arts & Music Festival,
Holsbeek, Bélgica, 2018

commissioned works

Since the late 1960s, Sheila Hicks has created commissioned projects for various institutions and corporations. In these cases, she explores the architectural dimension of her practice while establishing a dialogue with the textile tradition of decorative art, observable in the ancient technique of tapestry.

In an interview with Monique Lévi-Strauss, a researcher of textile techniques, the artist explained that when reflecting on the relationship between weaving and architecture, she observed how they “were interdependent, complementary, and rested on knowledge of material, construction, visibility, scale, texture, and color.” She added, “architecture shelters people. People are adorned and dressed in textiles. They are sculptural volumes in motion within defined spaces.”

In the process of developing such ambitious projects, Hicks has collaborated with a range of exceptional architects, from Luis Barragán to Tadao Ando, as well as several other agencies.

In one of these projects, carried out in 1966 and 1967, Hicks created a work of unprecedented scale for the Ford Foundation headquarters in New York, designed by Roche. The artist designed two panels, measuring 9.80 x 4.07 and 12.23 x 3.04 meters; each composed of golden thread modules arranged in the form of medallions. In an interview about the project and its commission, she stated: “Weaving is a universal language; in every culture around the world, it is a crucial and essential component.

So if you start working with thread, you are halfway home. There is a level of familiarity that immediately breaks down prejudice [...] Certain spaces you can enter and leave are conceived to offer shelter, so that when you sit in them, you feel welcomed for a period of time [...] I worked for many months on different motifs, some geometric with hard edges, which didn’t feel as comfortable as something curved and soft—we had to be careful with what the round shape might suggest; to me, it denoted something like a beehive, and the Ford Foundation, as such, represented the distribution of its wealth and honey for humanitarian endeavors.”

Since this work, Hicks has continued using this medallion pattern in other projects, including those for the airline company Boeing and the retail store Target, among others. Notably, in 1972, Hicks executed two of her most spectacular commissions: one for the headquarters of the Morgan Guaranty Insurance Company in Milwaukee, and another for the IBM headquarters in La Défense, Paris—in addition to the spectacular and monumental intervention at the Fuji Cultural Center in Tokyo, Japan.



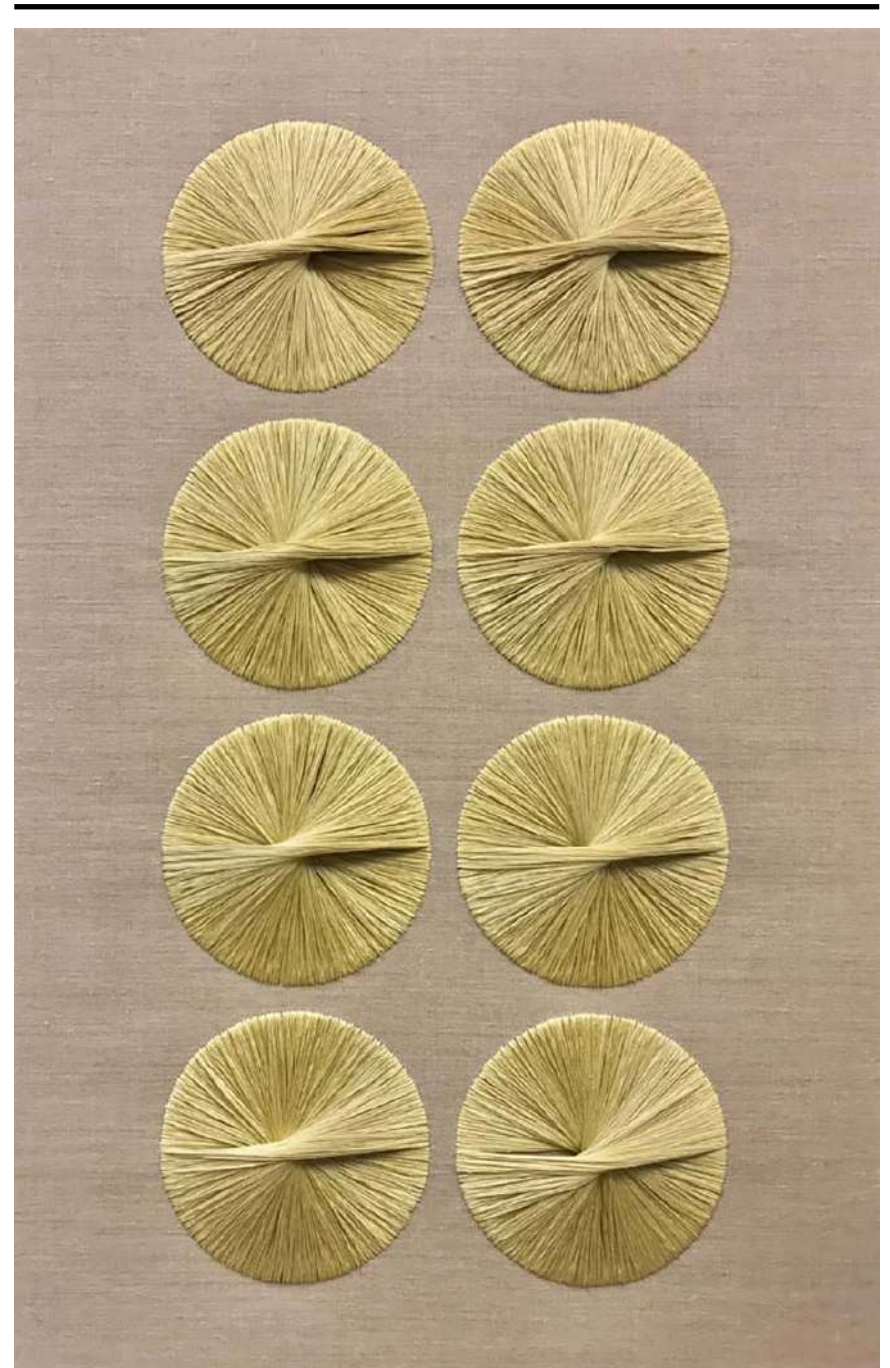
Sheila Hicks, Bas-relief for the interior of the Air France Boeing 747 aircraft, 1969
Wild silk and polished cotton knit
Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach
exhibition *Open Letter*, 2013
photo © Matthieu Lévi-Strauss

→
Sheila Hicks: Begin with Thread, 2014
short documentary
dir. Mackenzie Fegan, 4’56”, Ford Foundation
disponible en: <https://www.fordfoundation.org/about/library/multimedia/sheila-hicks-begin-with-thread/>



←
installation on Ford Foundation, 2014
photo © Kelsey Keith [detail]

Medaillons, 2014
cotton, linen, and wooden support
100 x 65 x 3 cm
courtesy Sheila Hicks e Galeria Nara Roesler





Sheila Hicks, Paris, 2020
photo © Cristobal Zañartu

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