

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**October 7, 2010**

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**THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO REOPENS TEXTILE GALLERIES**

**The Elizabeth F. Cheney and Agnes Allerton Textile Galleries**  
**Open to the Public on November 3, 2010**

**Inaugural Exhibitions Feature Narrative Tapestries by Visual Artist June Wayne and Contemporary Fiber Art from the Permanent Collection**

As part of the Art Institute of Chicago's third phase of its most ambitious renovation and reinstallation project—to be completed in winter 2011—the museum will reopen its **Elizabeth F. Cheney and Agnes Allerton Textile Galleries (Galleries 55, 57–59) on November 3, 2010**. The newly refurbished galleries—which occupy nearly 3,500 square feet and include a seminar room for lectures and classes—will once again be devoted to rotating exhibitions of the museum's vast collection of textile art. These spaces, located in the lower level of the Hutchinson Building of the Art Institute, were closed for more than five years due to the construction of the Modern Wing. The reopening of the Elizabeth F. Cheney and Agnes Allerton Textile Galleries will be celebrated with two inaugural exhibitions: ***June Wayne's Narrative Tapestries—Tidal Waves, DNA, and the Cosmos*** and ***Contemporary Fiber Art: A Selection from the Permanent Collection***, both on view through February 7, 2011.

“Reopening the textiles galleries is another milestone for the Art Institute as we complete our reinstallation program,” said Jim Cuno, President and Eloise W. Martin Director of the museum. “With the arrival of Daniel Walker as the new chair of the department and two stunning exhibitions to inaugurate the renovated spaces, we will certainly be refocusing our efforts on this significant part of our encyclopedic collection.”

The holdings of the Department of Textiles at the Art Institute comprise more than 66,000 sample swatches and 14,000 textiles ranging from 300 B.C. to the present. Extensive holdings of ecclesiastical textiles, 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century velvets, 18<sup>th</sup>-century silks, 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>- century printed fabrics, and lace are among the department's impressive collection of European textiles. Other notable holdings include American quilts and woven coverlets, historical fashion accessories, dress and furnishing fabrics, Japanese and Chinese holdings, and 20<sup>th</sup>- century textiles and fiber art. Encyclopedic in nature, spanning many countries and cultures, the collection is constantly growing.

### **June Wayne's Narrative Tapestries—Tidal Waves, DNA, and the Cosmos**

A pioneer in the revival of lithography during the early 1960s and a relentless explorer of the possibilities of paint, June Wayne has been a major national and international figure in the Los Angeles art scene for decades. *June Wayne's Narrative Tapestries: Tidal Waves, DNA, and the Cosmos* brings together 11 dynamic tapestries inspired by Wayne's innovative graphic designs and woven between 1970 and 1974. Magisterial in their conception and extraordinary in their refined beauty and execution, these works showcase not only Wayne's unique vision but also the rich possibilities of uniting contemporary ideas with a centuries-old medium.



Known as the founder of the Tamarind Lithography Workshop as well as for her work as a lithographer, painter, and writer, Wayne turned her innovative eye actively to tapestry in the early 1970s. This ancient medium attracted Wayne foremost with its limitless dimensions; even the largest sheet of paper and lithographic stones were small and confining in comparison. Additionally, the material offered a unique sensuality; spun yarns were soft and pliable and so different from a printed line. While divergent in many ways, tapestry and lithography did have a commonality that was central to Wayne's work—both were art forms built on modules. The modules of each are miniscule—the stitch in the case of weaving and the pores in the stone of the lithograph—but these small units were capable of carrying Wayne's aesthetic message.

After a friend and leading tapestry scholar introduced her to some of Paris's most revered weaving

ateliers in 1970, Wayne embarked on her four-year tapestry project, involving herself intimately with each and every aspect of the process. From adapting and reworking full-scale cartoons of her lithographs to selecting the precise shading of colors and thickness of the yarns to checking the weavers' progress weekly, Wayne took a very hands-on approach to seeing that her designs were carried out precisely to her wishes. On December 4, 1974, her tapestries were unveiled to great success at the noted Galerie la Demeure in Paris. Eleven of these celebrated works are reunited in this exhilarating exhibition at the Art Institute.

In conjunction with the special exhibition at the Art Institute, June Wayne will present "**Chicago in the '30s—The WPA, Marshall Field's, and the Launch of My Zany Career**"—an enlightening discussion about her life and works. The event will take place on Friday, November 5, 2010, 12:00–1:00 pm, Morton Auditorium. Free with general admission.

*June Wayne's Narrative Tapestries: Tidal Waves, DNA, and the Cosmos* is also accompanied by a full-color catalogue of the same title, available November 2010 in the Art Institute's Museum Shop. Included is an essay by Christa C. Mayer Thurman, exhibition curator and curator emerita of the Department of Textiles, the Art Institute of Chicago, and beautiful color plates of Wayne's works.

### **Contemporary Fiber Art: A Selection from the Permanent Collection**



The companion inaugural exhibition celebrating the reopening of the Elizabeth F. Cheney and Agnes Allerton Textile Galleries, *Contemporary Fiber Art: A Selection from the Permanent Collection* explores how fiber art has developed as an art form from the middle of the 20th century through today. During the 1950s, as a battle was waged against the hierarchical distinctions between art mediums and “high” and “low” art, more and more artists began to incorporate fibrous materials and textile techniques in their works. The flexibility and variability of the medium encouraged artists to explore the potential of different fibers and methods, and, by the 1960s, fiber art had entered the international stage. *Contemporary Fiber Art* charts this exciting trajectory with 61 works by 52 artists including Magdalena Abakanowicz, Peter Collingwood, Lissy Funk, and Jolanta Owidzka as well as artists with strong Chicago ties such as Lenore Tawney and Claire Zeisler, who both studied under Alexander Archipenko at the Illinois Institute of Technology.

For almost 50 years, the Art Institute has proudly embraced fiber art by offering exhibitions such as *Woven Forms* featuring Lenore Tawney in 1962 and Jan Groth's tapestries and drawings in 1973. At the same time, the museum's fiber art collection has grown extensively since acquiring the works of Claire Zeisler and Sheila Hicks in the 1960s. *Contemporary Fiber Art: A Selection from the Permanent Collection* showcases both an art form and a collection that have flourished with works of woven and non-woven structures (e.g., tapestry weave versus knotting and macramé), using traditional (cotton and wool) and non-traditional fibers (sisal, jute and metal).

*June Wayne's Narrative Tapestries—Tidal Waves, DNA, and the Cosmos* and *Contemporary Fiber Art: A Selection from the Permanent Collection* are both curated by Christa C. Mayer Thurman, curator emerita of the Department of Textiles.

**IMAGES:** June Wayne. *Grande Vague Noire (Black Tidal Wave)*, 1973. Woven at Atelier de Saint Cyr. Photo by Jim Frank.

Designed and executed by Magdalena Abakanowicz. *Brun Rouge*, 1970/73. Gift of Dr. Anne Baruch in memory of George Overton.

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**MUSEUM HOURS**

10:30 am–5:00 pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday

10:30 am–8:00 pm Thursday, Friday

10:30 am–5:00 pm Saturday, Sunday

**TARGET FREE THURSDAY EVENINGS AFTER 5:00 pm**

Closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day.

**ADMISSION**

Adults \$18.00 Includes all special exhibitions

Children 14 and over, students, and seniors \$12.00 Includes all special exhibitions

Chicago residents receive a \$2.00 discount with proof of residency

Children under 14 always free

Members always free

**Free Evenings are free to all. City of Chicago residents with Chicago Public Library cards can borrow a "Museum Passport" card from any library branch for free general admission to the nine members of Museums in the Park, including the Art Institute of Chicago.**