

The Gilbert Stuart

Birthplace and Museum

April 2023

815 Gilbert Stuart Road
Saunderstown, RI 02874
Phone 401-294-3001
Fax 401-294-3869
www.gilbertstuartmuseum.org

Woven Art: Two Contemporary Weavers

An Exhibition of the work of
Norma Smayda & Jaimee Veronneau Roberts

April 30 - June 25, 2023



The tradition of handweaving threads its way through the social, economic and cultural history of Rhode Island. While the craft itself is as old as human civilization, Rhode Island has provided a particularly fertile soil for the tradition to take root and grow, becoming the cradle of the American industrial weaving and hand-loom traditions. Producing figures such as William Henry Harrison “Weaver” Rose and Bertha Grey Hayes, the Rhode Island handweaving tradition has resisted industrialization, maintaining the elevated value of individual, artisanal creation. Throughout the nineteenth century, much like the Arts and Crafts movement of the United Kingdom, the hand-loom tradition worked to preserve and elevate traditional craftsmanship and find beauty in the integrity of materials.

Even into the twentieth century, the handweaving

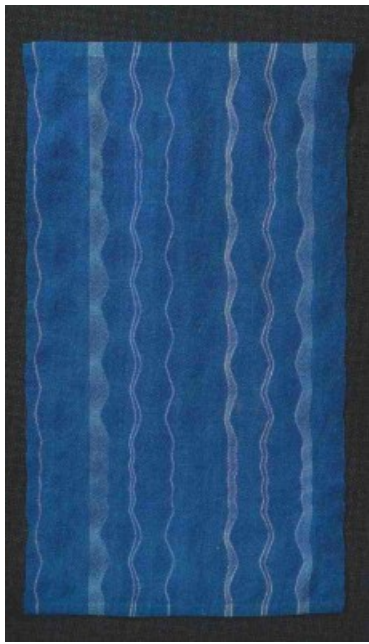
tradition has continued to test the boundary lines of craft and art, exploring the materiality of fibers, of warp and weft. As Anni Albers said in the 1950s, “Weaving in any form is a constructive process; it is also a combinative process demanding aesthetic judgement as to surface, form and color qualities of the materials. Other problems enter, such as functional and social demands. All of these factors engage intellect and imagination if the craft is looked upon as still in formation.”

Norma and Jaimee are inheritors of this artisanal tradition, continuing the formation of the craft and testing its boundaries. While the linearity of the warp and weft would seem limiting, their work abounds with curves and diagonals that both embrace and defy the grid structure of the medium. Norma Smayda literally wrote the book on Ondulé weaving, a technique that enables her

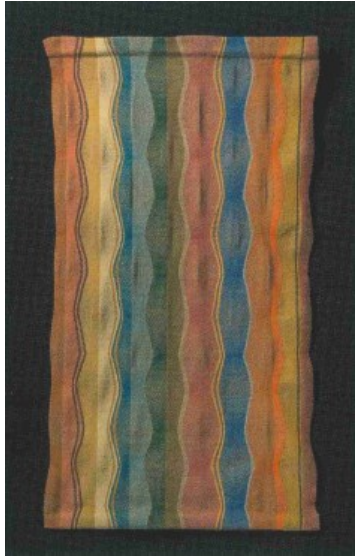
Annual Membership Drive ~ Help preserve this Rhode Island treasure

Memberships can be purchased on our website at www.gilbertstuartmuseum.org/support

Memberships can also be purchased by mail using the enclosed envelope



Take a Marine Blue Line for a Walk
Norma Smayda



Lagoon City
Norma Smayda

work to abound with sinuous, organic curves that ripple through her works. Jaimee Veronneau Robert's work, on the other hand, achieves its curvature with geometric precision by assiduously leaning into the rigid linear structure native to the loom.

Norma and Jaimee's explorations of color run along similar lines. Norma's use of natural, bright, almost watercolor hues pulls both from her organic, natural lines, and from the evident influence of Bauhaus artists such as Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky. Her work aspires to capture the personal. Many of her works reference passions, experience and emotion, they seek to transmute feelings and sensations, to share the individualized experience through a visual medium.



Radiant 5
Jaimee Veronneau Roberts

Similarly, Jaimee, with her bold, bright colors and mathematically precise lines shows the influence of minimalist artists such as Frank Stella and Mona Hatoum. The stark focus on color and line, on repetition and variation, plays upon the eyes and encourages the viewer to engage with the work intellectually. By embracing the grid structure, the flatness and materiality of the warp and weft, she invites the viewer's understanding through composition and pattern recognition. This is most evident in her chessboard series, where the parallels between chess and weaving – a rigid and limited system that presents an infinity of possibility – are playfully highlighted.



Deep Blue and Hot Pink
Jaimee Veronneau Roberts

2023 Spring Fair

The flowers are blooming, the fish are running and spring has sprung!

Join us at the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum on

April 30, 1-4pm

Seasonal festivities, including:

Reduced price admission: \$10 Adults, \$5 Children age 6-12

Grand opening of our Spring Exhibition *Woven Art: Two Contemporary Weavers*

Arts & crafts for the whole family ☞ Nature trail scavenger hunt

Demonstrations of weaving, spinning, rug hooking, and more!

Under water fish camera ☞ Narrow River Land Trust ☞ RIDEM eel & fish experts

Running of the grist mill, & grinding corn ☞ Freshly made Johnny Cakes

Live Music from Farm Dog



Artist Statements

Norma Smayda

I have long been enamored of the work of historic weavers, especially RI's Bertha Gray Hayes and Weaver Rose. I explore ways to use their woven motifs as a starting point or inspiration for my work, which might startle, and perhaps even delight them. Recently an area I have become entranced with is the use of a fan reed in my loom to allow me to weave undulating lines vertically. Graceful curving lines are not easily obtainable with traditional weaving equipment, and I have explored this in many weaving projects.

Five years ago Jaimee Veronneau Roberts found the school and has been weaving with me ever since. I was immediately impressed with her flair for color in clothing and accessories, and soon saw it in her weaving. Her use of bright primary colors and crisp angular lines, both verticals and diagonals, is such a contrast to the often more subtle colors and less precise shapes of my weavings.

Jaimee Veronneau Roberts

After studying Apparel Design at the Fashion Institute of Technology, my family's move to Rhode Island gave me an opportunity to take new classes, explore different local museums, and find a balance between myself as an individual and a new parent. Weaving became a new challenge and infatuation. It freed my brain to spin with endless textile possibilities. Weaving in a state with such a rich textile history inspires me to embrace tradition while personalizing the craft with my bold colors, geometric shapes and a bit of sparkle.

I've been weaving with Norma Smayda at The Saunderstown Weaving School for 5 years. She's a handweaving vanguard and walking weaving encyclopedia. Her generosity of knowledge, extensive library, and catalog of stunning work have encouraged me to experiment more, learn from my mistakes, and find solutions to create exactly what I imagined. We've developed a special friendship and deep mutual respect.



2023 Membership Raffle

This beautiful, hand-woven, cotton table runner and four placemats was woven by our weaver Sharon Smith on the 1812 loom in the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace during the 2022 season, and it can be yours!



All memberships at the Associate level and above (\$100) purchased on or before our opening day and Spring Fair on April 30 will be entered into a raffle to win this beautiful, one-of-a-kind set.



Membership at the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace & Museum has so many inherent benefits:

- ◆ Free admission to the Birthplace, Art Gallery & 23 acres of beautiful nature trails during open hours
- ◆ Free or reduced price tickets to our 2023 calendar of programs & events
- ◆ 10% off at the Gilbert Stuart Gift Shop
- ◆ The opportunity to rent our row boats and take advantage of the beautiful Carr Pond

And most importantly, the knowledge that you are supporting this jewel of Rhode Island and enabling us to continue to offer an exciting program of inspiring and educational events.



Keeping the Wheels Turning

I am so excited about the 2023 season; we have a truly exciting schedule of events ahead of us. In addition to a stunning exhibition of woven art, this summer will also see an exhibition of contemporary portraiture—looking at the legacy of Gilbert Stuart’s work among artists today.

In addition to exciting exhibitions, our program of events includes the return of our “high teas”, nature programming, art and craft workshops and fascinating talks.

Just as sampling of our upcoming programming includes:

May 21 – *Woven Art*: Artist Talk

June 4 – High Tea in Elizabeth Stuart’s Herb Garden

June 11 – Flax in New England: Seed, Flower & Fiber

June 18 – Flax spinning workshop

August 13 – Botanical Illustration Workshop

September 3 – Printing with Plants: Monoprinting & Cyanotype workshop
with Out of the Box

September 24 – High Tea & High Fashion: 18th Century Hairstyling

October 15 – ‘A Tour of Scotland’ Whiskey Tasting

These programs and so much more are made possible through your continuing generosity. Your membership not only enables you enjoy the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and all that it has to offer, it also provides the support we need in order to keep growing, developing new programming and promoting the history, nature and art of Rhode Island.

I look forward to seeing you!

~ Michelle Lee Leonard, Executive Director

Save the Date

August 4, 2023

Gilbert Stuart Birthplace & Museum

6:00-8:00pm

Treat your Tastebuds

Summer Soiree