

## INTRO TEXT

The history of twentieth-century art cannot be told without the inclusion of thread and fiber, cloth and clothing. This exhibition presents key moments when abstract art and textiles intersected, fundamentally reshaping conceptions of what was then considered the quintessential language of modernity. The efflorescence of textiles in today's globalized art world speaks both to modernist abstraction's multilayered heritage and to urgent social and political issues integral to textile production—above all, outsourced labor and sustainability. Woven Histories begins in the aftermath of World War I, with vanguard European artists, predominantly women, whose work in textile design and fabrication played a pivotal role—largely underrecognized today—in fueling a transformative vision of a more equitable society. Cross-disciplinary in their approaches, they undermined traditional art historical hierarchies in which textiles were categorized as an “applied” art and thus considered distinct from (and lesser than) the “fine” arts of painting and sculpture. As their legacy took hold in the Americas after the Second World War, emerging generations of textile makers and abstract artists probed the formal, material, and theoretical foundations of their work—line and thread, structural design and ornamentation, decorative and fine art—in order to ground their practices in the everyday. The countercultural, feminist, queer, and Black liberation movements of the 1960s and '70s assigned increasing importance to self-fashioning, with its nuanced social coding. Toward the end of the century, a cohort of women artists began mining this politicized heritage: disaffected with mainstream values, they found a rich seam in subcultural apparel. More recently, as transnational artists draw on diasporic, Indigenous, and vernacular cultures to build community and bring greater visibility to marginalized histories, debates around subjecthood have moved center stage.

Organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, in collaboration with The Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. The exhibition is curated by Lynne Cooke, Senior Curator in the Department of Modern and Contemporary Art, National Gallery of Art. The Museum of Modern Art presentation is organized by Esther Adler, Curator, with Emily Olek, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Drawings and Prints, and Paul Galloway, Collection Specialist, Department of Architecture and Design.

This exhibition is made possible by the Kate W. Cassidy Foundation.

Leadership support is provided by the Sandra and Tony Tamer Exhibition Fund.

Generous funding is provided by The Coby Foundation. For more information, visit [moma.org/wovenhistories](http://moma.org/wovenhistories).