

FERNE JACOBS  
Threading Time: Five Decades



NANCY MARGOLIS  
GALLERY

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*Threading Time: Five Decades*

APRIL 4 – SEPTEMBER 24, 2023

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When I work, I enter a mysterious place where I don't know where I am, or where I will end up. There is some hidden reality to find. It is always present. It is up to me to remain open to it.

FERNE JACOBS



# Threading Time: Five Decades

NANCY MARGOLIS GALLERY

*Threading Time: Five Decades* is a celebration of Ferne Jacobs' fiber sculptures spanning more than 50 years. Since 1994, the Nancy Margolis Gallery has represented and exhibited Jacobs' work. This exhibit brings together, for the first time, a comprehensive collection of her multi-dimensional forms in thread, starting from the 1960s and carrying through to the present. The broad selection contextualizes Jacobs' role as a pioneer in taking fiber off the loom, and sheds light on how her practice has evolved.

Based in Echo Park, Los Angeles, Jacobs has been at the vanguard of the fiber revolution that blossomed in the 1960s. Her interest in textiles crystallized in 1965 during a weaving workshop with Arline Fisch (American, b. 1931). Inspired by the potential of thread, she furthered her education through mentorships with the country's leading experts, and in so doing, solidified her understanding of the medium. While this ancient practice appealed to her, it presented formal limitations that inhibited

her from realizing her vision. Jacobs aspired to construct three-dimensional pieces in thread that could stand on their own, unencumbered by the restrictions of the loom.

By 1970, after learning to coil, she had developed a methodology of coiling and twining waxed linen thread around cord, which she remains committed to today. Her innovative approach allows her to freely move between colors and manipulate form, while building solid, freestanding works using only her hands and thread.

*Threading Time: Five Decades* opens with three early weavings from the 1960s. Embodying subtle earth tones, these works were constructed on the loom and are intended to be hung vertically. An expressively woven rug from 1968 marks an important turning point in the artist's career. Although a couple of years away from her three-dimensional sculptures, the abstracted landscape signals Jacobs' increasing desire to find meaning through color, shape, and texture.



As the show progresses, Jacobs' exploration into the potential of thread elevates the scope and presence of her works. Moving from pieces seen upright to experienced in the round, the forms convey both exuberance and quietness. Bold hues and striking silhouettes impart energy, yet her labor-intensive wraps command contemplative attention. While some works are monochromatic, others reveal intricate patterns through her use of multi-colored threads. As though alive and breathing, her curvilinear sculptures swell and sink, oscillating between exterior and interior views.

As a visionary and master of her craft, Jacobs reinvented and recontextualized traditional basket-making techniques to devise a wholly original genre of sculpture. From her earliest explorations in fiber to the invention of her signature style, the constant thread in Jacobs' work has been her devotion to transforming an ancient medium, making it relevant in the modern world.



UNTITLED

1966

Weaving

48 x 5 ½ inches





UNTITLED I

1968

Weaving

68 x 7 x 4 inches



UNTITLED II

1968

Weaving

48 x 5 x 3 inches

RUG

1968

Weaving

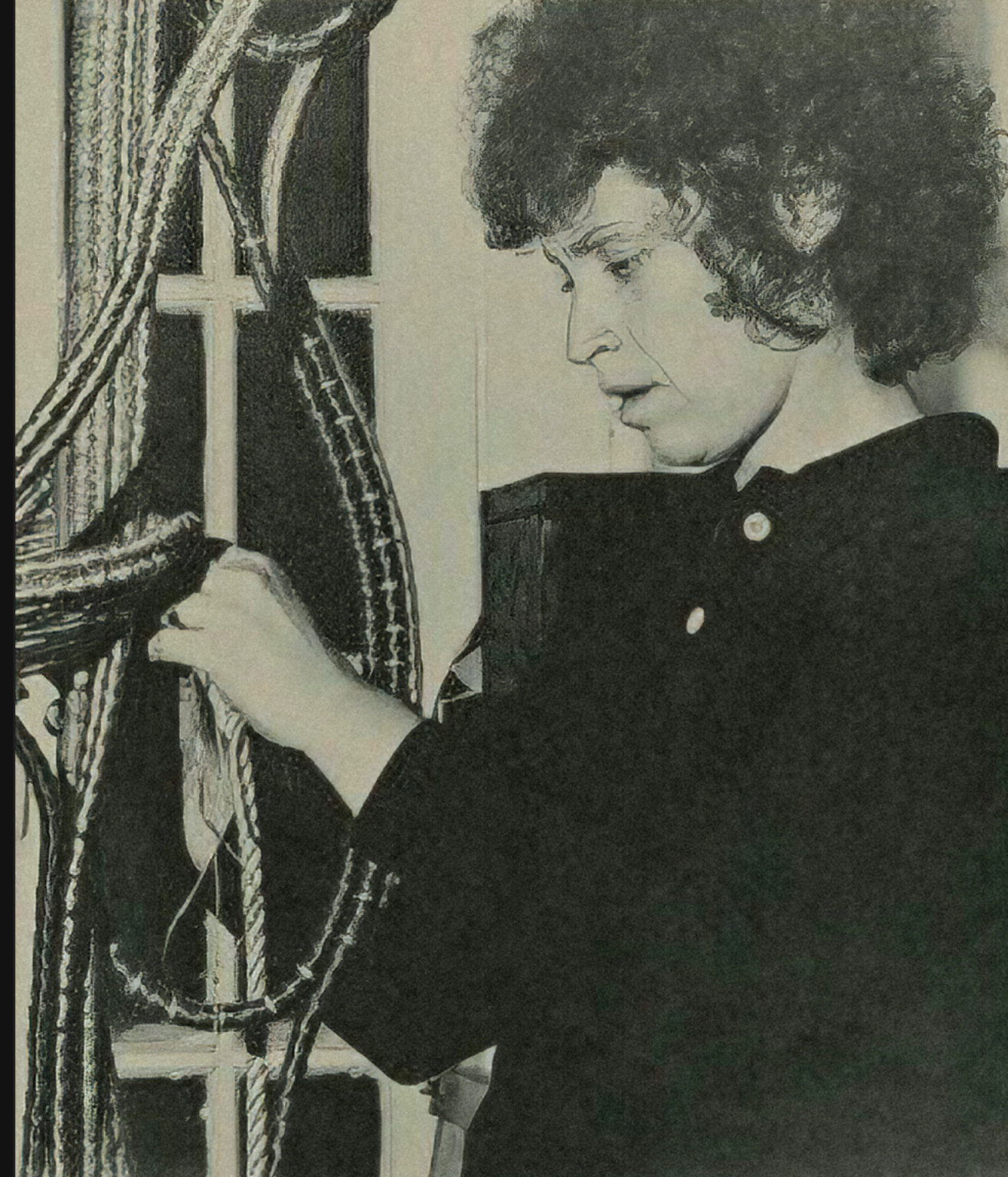
84 x 48 inches



In her hands, the inherently soft and amorphous materials become strong, resilient forms. She persists in using fine threads even though she extends the scale of some pieces beyond five feet in height and so leaves a moving record of patient, time-intensive work. What under other circumstances might be seen as obsessive becomes essential.

JANICE RAITHEL

American Craft Magazine, 1983







**SERPENT FIGURE**

1989-1990

Coiled & twined waxed linen thread

42 x 11 x 22.5 inches





BLUE WAVE

1994

Coiled & twined waxed linen thread

19 x 17.5 x 6 inches



OPEN GLOBE

2001

Coiled & twined waxed linen thread

13 x 13 x 13 inches



FLOATING WORLD

2007

Coiled waxed linen thread

16.5 x 12 x 9 inches





To my surprise, some of Jacobs' abstract-shaped sculptures made me think about human bodies hugging each other. And all of them, either hanging on the walls or sitting on a pedestal, refuse to stand still. They have a hidden personality and energy of dancers ready to perform.

EDWARD GOLDMAN  
Art Matters, 2022

THE ROUND

2007-2008

Coiled waxed linen thread

21 x 16 x 13 inches




**FLIGHT**

2011

Coiled waxed linen thread

16 x 20 x 13 inches





The excitement for me is in the details, going so slow that I spend a great amount of time in them. It is as if I can find the form through the details, creating a body that emerges by each wrap of the thread, cell by cell.

FERNE JACOBS





## STEPS

2012

Coiled waxed linen thread

17 x 5 x 5 inches





TWO ANGELS

2015

Coiled & twined waxed linen thread

28 x 14 x 6 inches





INTERIOR PASSAGES

2016

Coiled & twined waxed linen thread

54 x 16 x 4 inches





ORIGINS

2018

Coiled & twined waxed linen thread

51 x 17.5 x 4 inches





FIGURE/HEAD

2020

Coiled & twined waxed linen thread

13 x 7 x 9 inches



With their inescapable displays of ritual repetition in the fabrication of coiled thread, the works seem to function as intuitively generated emblems that don't describe things in nature but instead embody their spirit.

CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT  
Los Angeles Times, 2022



WHISPERING WHALE

2021–2022

Coiled & twined waxed linen thread

70 x 12 x 2.5 inches



**BREATH**

2022-2023

Coiled waxed linen thread

11 x 8.5 x 10 inches







## EDUCATION

- 1976 M.F.A. Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, CA  
1970 UCLA, “Off-loom Techniques in Fiber,” Neda Ali-Hilali  
1967–71 Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, scholarship student, Olga d’Amaral  
1967–68 Dominic DiMare, private lessons in weaving, San Francisco, CA  
1966–67 California State University at Long Beach, Weaving, Mary Jane Leland  
1965 California State University at San Diego, Weaving, Arlene Fisch  
1964–65 Pratt Institute, Painting, New York, NY  
1960–63 Art Center College of Design, Los Angeles, CA

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 *Threading Time: Five Decades*, Nancy Margolis Gallery, online  
*Ferne Jacobs: A Personal World*, Claremont Lewis Museum of Art, Claremont, CA  
2022 *Building the Essentials*, Craft in America, Los Angeles, CA  
2020 *Interior Nature*, Nancy Margolis Gallery, online  
2012 *Sculpture in Color*, Nancy Margolis Gallery, New York, NY  
2008 *Ferne Jacobs + Cheryl Thomas*, Nancy Margolis Gallery, New York, NY  
1999 Sybaris Gallery, Royal Oak, Detroit, MI  
1998 *Selections 1995–1998*, Nancy Margolis Gallery, New York, NY  
1996 Joanne Rapp Gallery, Scottsdale, AZ  
1995 *Uncommon Threads*, Sybaris Gallery, Royal Oak, Detroit, MI  
1994 *Ferne Jacobs, Recent Work*, Nancy Margolis Gallery, New York, NY  
1992 Sybaris Gallery, Royal Oak, Detroit, MI  
1991 *Recent Fiber Sculpture*, Franklin Parrasch Gallery, New York, NY  
1989 *Viewpoints*, Sybaris Gallery, Royal Oak, Detroit, MI  
1983 Miller/Brown Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
1980 *Ferne Jacobs, Fiber Work and Drawings, a Retrospective Exhibit of 10 Years Work*, Rex W. Wigmall, Museum Gallery, Chaffey Community College, Alta Loma, CA

- 1977 Hadler/Rodriguez Galleries, New York, NY  
1972 Galleria del Sol, Santa Barbara, CA

## GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 *NMG Summer Pop-Up*, Nancy Margolis Gallery, online  
2016 Nancy Margolis Gallery, New York, NY  
2015 *Extreme Fibers*, Muskegon Art Museum, Muskegon, MI, traveling to the Denno Art Center, Traverse, MI  
2013 *Repetition & Ritual*, New Sculpture in Fiber, The Hudgens Center for the Arts, Duluth, GA  
2011 *All Things Considered IV*, Fuller Craft Museum, Brockton, MA  
*Golden State of Craft: California: 1960–1985*, Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles, CA  
2009 Museum of Art and Design, New York, NY  
*High Fiber*, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Renwick Gallery, Washington D.C.  
2005 *Intertwined, Contemporary Baskets from the Sara and David Lieberman Collection*, ASU Art Museum, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ  
*Transitions/Translations: Innovations in Basketry*, Gallery One, Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, MI  
2004 *Contemporary Fibers*, Wignall Museum/Gallery, Chaffey College, Alta Loma, CA  
*Celebrations*, Nancy Margolis Gallery, New York, NY  
*Fiber Biennial 2004*, Snyderman-Works Galleries, Philadelphia, PA  
2003 *California Looms: Woven & Constructed*, Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles, CA  
*Transcending Process: Contemporary Fiber*, Brookfield Craft Center, Brookfield, CT  
*Generations/Transformations: American Fiber Art*, American Textile History Museum, Lowell, MA  
*Grand Opening Exhibition*, Racine Art Museum, Racine, WI  
2002 *Los Angeles Artists/Los Angeles Collectors: Contemporary Baskets*, Los Angeles International Airport, CA  
*Coming of Age*, Mint Museum of Art/Craft and Design, Charlotte, NC  
*Escape from the Vault: The Contemporary Museum’s Collection Breaks Out*, The Contemporary Museum, Honolulu, HI

	<i>Exhibition of the Permanent Collection</i> , Smithsonian American Art Museum, Renwick Gallery, Washington D.C.		<i>Material Images: 15 Fiber Artists</i> , Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH
	<i>Fiber Arts Today</i> , Mobilia Gallery, Cambridge, MA	1987	<i>The Modern Basket: A Redefinition</i> , Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Pittsburgh, PA
	<i>Threads on the Edge</i> , a selection of works from the Daphne Farago Collection, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Boston, MA		<i>The Ritual Vessel</i> , Twining Gallery, New York, NY
	<i>Survey Fiber 2002</i> , Snyderman-Works Galleries, Philadelphia, PA		<i>New Work by Artists</i> , Craft Museum, NY
2000	<i>Surface-Strength-Structure: Pertaining to Line</i> , Snyderman-Works Galleries, Philadelphia, PA		<i>The Eloquent Object</i> , The Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, OK
	<i>Miniatures: 2000</i> , Helen Drutt, Philadelphia, PA		<i>Fiber Synthesis</i> , Brea Gallery, Brea Civic and Cultural Center, Brea, CA
	<i>The Nature of Fiber</i> , Stone Quarry Hill Art Park, Cazenovia, NY		<i>Baskets as Sculpture</i> , Miller/Brown Gallery, San Francisco, CA
1999	<i>The Art of Fiber</i> , Stone Quarry Hill Art Park, Cazenovia, NY	1986	<i>Poetry of the Physical</i> , American Craft Museum, New York, NY
1997	<i>Vessels</i> , Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena, CA	1985	<i>Fiber Re/Evolution</i> , Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI
	<i>Contemporary Art Basket</i> , Ohio Crafts Museum, Columbus, OH		<i>Textile Constructs</i> , California State University at Northridge, Northridge, CA
1996	<i>Life Work - Individual Expression in Fiber</i> , El Camino College Art Gallery, Torrance, CA		<i>Selection '85</i> , American Craft Council Benefit, Windows on the World, World Trade Center, NY, NY
1995	<i>Exploring Along the Outer Edges</i> , Sculptural Basketry, Craft Alliance Gallery, St. Louis, MO		<i>Fiber: Small Scale Works of Art</i> , Modern Master Tapestries, Inc., NY
	<i>Fiber: Five Decades</i> , from the permanent collection, American Craft Museum, New York, NY		<i>American Basket Forms</i> , Brookfield Craft Center, Brookfield, CT
	Denno Museum Center, Northwestern Michigan College, Traverse City, MI	1984	<i>American Craft Traditions</i> , San Francisco International Airport, CA
	<i>Arduous Happiness</i> , Santa Monica College Art Gallery, S.M., CA		<i>Basketry</i> , Gallery Eight, La Jolla, CA
	<i>Sculptural Baskets</i> , Joanne Rapp Gallery, AZ	1982	<i>Tradition in New Form</i> , Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA
1993	<i>Linen</i> , Fashion Institute of Technology, New York, NY		<i>Other Baskets</i> , Craft Alliance, St. Louis, MO
	<i>Baskets</i> , Mobilia, Cambridge, MA	1981	<i>Made in L.A., Contemporary Crafts '81</i> , Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles, CA
1992	<i>Pro-Art Fiber Group Exhibition</i> , St. Louis, MO		<i>Old Traditions / New Directions</i> , The Textile Museum, Washington D.C.
	<i>Fiber Art - New Directions for the Nineties</i> , Manchester Institute of Arts and Sciences, NH		<i>The Masters</i> , Gallery Eight, La Jolla, CA
	<i>Sensibilities: Substance and Surface</i> , Biada Art Gallery, Mount St. Mary's College, Los Angeles, CA		<i>Beyond Tradition: 25th Anniversasry Exhibition of the American Craft Museum</i> , NY
	<i>Four Artists Reflect 1971-1991</i> , The Society for Contemporary Crafts, Pittsburgh, PA		<i>Fabrications</i> , Riverside Art Center and Museum, Riverside, CA
	<i>Craft Today USA</i> , organized by the American Craft Museum, NY	1980	<i>Mandell Gallery</i> , Los Angeles, CA
1988	<i>Up From L.A.</i> , Palo Alto Cultural Center, Palo Alto, CA		<i>Synopsis Gallery</i> , Winnetka, IL
	<i>Frontiers in Fiber: The Americans</i> , organized by the North Dakota Museum of Art (traveling exhibition through Japan, Korea, and mainland China)		<i>The Contemporary Basket Maker</i> , Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN
	<i>Basketry '88 / Evolution into Sculpture</i> , Wita Gardiner Gallery, San Diego, CA		<i>Opening Invitational Exhibition</i> , Greenwood Gallery, Washington D.C.
			<i>Elizabeth Fortner Gallery</i> , Santa Barbara, CA
		1979	<i>The Basket-Maker's Art</i> , The Elements Gallery, New York, NY
			<i>Clay &amp; Fiber Gallery</i> , Taos, NM
			<i>Recap - Anderson Ranch</i> , Visual Arts Center, Aspen, CO

*Intimate Statements*, Univeristy of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM  
*Art Renewal Show I, Fall*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA  
 1977 *Fiber Works, an International Invitational Fibers Exhibition*, Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH  
 1976 *California Design '76*, Pacific Design Center, Los Angeles, CA  
*American Crafts*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL  
*California Women in Crafts*, Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles, CA  
 1975 *Craftsman's Art*, Fairtree Gallery, New York, NY  
*Opening Exhibition of the Hadler Galleries*, New York, NY  
 1974 *First World Crafts Exhibition*, Ontario Science Center, Toronto, Canada  
*First International Exhibition of Miniature Textiles*, British Crafts Centre, London, England  
 1973 *Three Artist Exhibition*, Fairtree Gallery, New York, NY  
*Fiber Works*, Lang Art Gallery, Scripps College, Claremont, CA  
 1972 *Sculpture in Fiber*, Museum of Contemporary Crafts, New York, NY  
 Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, WA  
*Fiber Structures*, The Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO  
*Fiber Art by American Artists*, Ball State University, Muncie, IN

## HONORS & AWARDS

2005–06 Flintridge Foundation Award for Visual Artists, Pasadena, CA  
 1995 Named a Fellow of the College of Fellows, American Craft Council  
 1991 Artist in Residence at La Napoule Art Foundation, La Napoule, France  
 1977–78 National Endowments for the Arts Fellowship  
 1973–74 National Endowments for the Arts Fellowship

## PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Contemporary Museum, Honolulu, HI  
 Detroit Institute of the Arts, Detroit, MI  
 De Young Museum, San Francisco, CA  
 Erie Art Museum, Erie, PA  
 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY  
 Mint Museum of Craft and Design, Charlotte, NC  
 Museum of Arts and Design, New York, NY  
 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA  
 Oakland Museum, Oakland, CA  
 Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA  
 Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI  
 Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, Scotland  
 Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American Art, Washington D.C.  
 The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX  
 Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT



**M**y work has gone from painting to weaving. In 1970, I began to create three-dimensional fiber works using ancient basket making techniques, which I remain committed to today. This commitment grows out of a fascination that thread can be made solid, that by using only my hands and the thread, a form can be made that will physically stand on its own.

I see this piece in my mind that is never finished. It is constantly in motion and changing and yet is one and the same. To stay with the form each time until it becomes itself is my goal, knowing that this is the current moment and then the shift will occur again. The excitement for me is in the details, going so slow that I spend a great amount of time in them. It is as if I can find the form through the details, creating a body that emerges by each wrap of the thread, cell by cell.

Doing work of this kind makes me feel a deep connection to a timeless past that emerges out of the earth. I am a link in bringing this ancient way of being into my own time and helping nurture it into the future.

FERNE JACOBS



