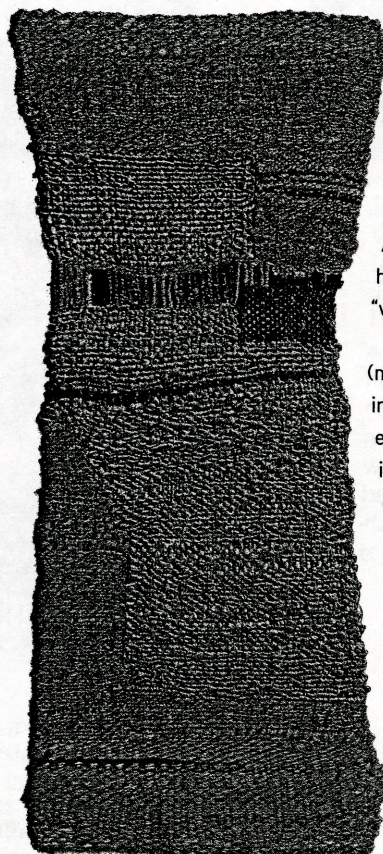
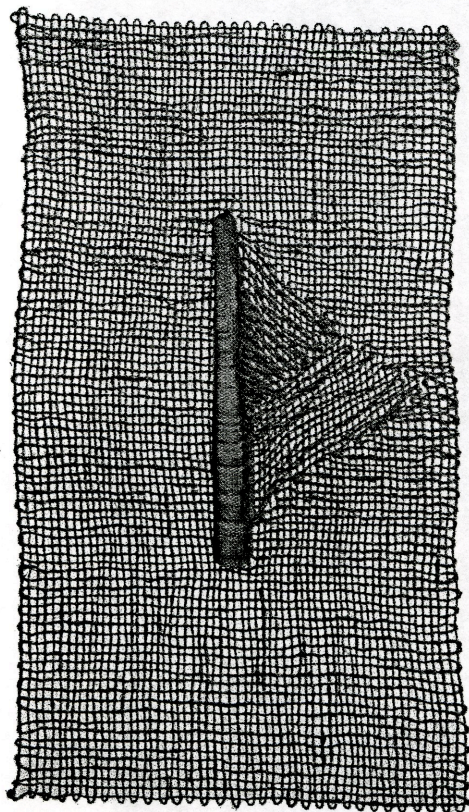


# SPINNING YARNS

SHEILA HICKS'S STORYTELLING RELIES  
ON COLOR, TEXTURE, AND INTUITION.

BY JULIE SINCLAIR EAKIN PHOTOGRAPHS BY BASTIAAN VAN DEN BERG



*Sheila Hicks: Weaving as Metaphor*, on view at the Bard Graduate Center in New York City through October 15, deftly connects textiles and text, while investigating age-old ties between weaving and architecture, wherein warp and weft are equated with post-and-lintel construction. The artist, who studied painting under Josef Albers at Yale in the late 1950s, considers her hand-held loom "a page of inquiry" upon which she "writes her own invented language."

Approaching the 150 intimately scaled works (most about 6 by 9 inches, in keeping with her small instrument) feels like happening upon a stranger's extraordinary diary. Perhaps it's because her hand is so present, and we're able to view them up close, or Hicks's notation for each of where they were made; and certainly it's a function of some less conventional materials—tags from hospital pajamas belonging to her son, newspapers, shoelaces, cellophane noodles, stainless steel, and razor clamshells. More traditional fibers contributing to her abstract designs include cotton, silk, and wool.

Beyond referencing the arched doorways of Moroccan temples, or lighthouses encountered during her travels (Hicks began weaving after visiting Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Chile on a Fulbright scholarship and keeps a studio in Paris), she also regularly displays the process of making in her work, often progressing simultaneously from top and bottom. *Constellations of Threads* is a meditation on darning, while the irregular forms of silk cocoons in another piece are evoked in alternating thin and thick weft threads.

In a thoughtful, 10-minute video accompanying the exhibition, Hicks speaks of her desire to further "intelligent play" in her art. She equates the resulting seamless integration of the utilitarian and purely expressive as an approach also undertaken by ethnologists, archaeologists, and architects. Honoring the quality and depth of Hicks's storytelling technique is an accompanying catalog, exquisitely designed by Irma Boom. It contains an essay by Columbia University professor Arthur C. Danto, who extends the metaphor of the exhibition's title to address weaving as a model for political thought, tracing the link to Plato—the kind of conflation of scale and chronology that reveals the capacity of the artist's work to resonate beyond time and place. □

