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**Denver Art Museum presents *Confluence of Nature:
Nancy Hemenway Barton* in February 2025**
*Celebrating the unique and refined textures of the acclaimed
textile artist*



DENVER – November 22, 2024 – The Denver Art Museum (DAM) eagerly presents *Confluence of Nature: Nancy Hemenway Barton*, featuring twelve textile wall sculptures and five works on paper by artist Nancy Hemenway Barton. *Confluence of Nature: Nancy Hemenway Barton* will be on view at the DAM from February 16, 2025, through October 8, 2025, in the Textile Arts & Fashion galleries on level 6 of the Martin Building and will be included with general admission.

Hemenway (1920–2008), a multidisciplinary artist, found her voice as she traveled the world, experiencing rich colorful cultural traditions from the Andean weavers in Bolivia to appliquéd textiles by the Fon in Benin. She described these cultural traditions as natural art. Between 1966 and 1997, Hemenway created large-scale wall reliefs made from handloomed fabrics, primarily sourced from indigenous weaving communities, where she had lived and worked. Barton folded, tucked and embroidered her fabrics to create richly textured abstract works that reflected her deep connection to the natural world. This artistic philosophy stems from the backdrop of her home in Boothbay Harbor, Maine.

Hemenway's past words speak to the core of where she finds inspiration. As she explained, "Each artist develops his or her style from the environment. Usually, it is the place of birth and childhood that burns brightest in the expression of a creative need, sometimes the development comes from circumstances of life."



"We couldn't be prouder to bring the incredible work of Nancy Hemenway to the DAM for the very first time," said Christoph Heinrich, Frederick and Jan Mayer Director of the Denver Art Museum. "Our visitors will enjoy the chance to explore the stunning locations around the world that informed Hemenway's artistic process."

"With the current interest in contemporary textile art, this is an opportune time to revisit the textile wall sculptures and writings of Nancy Hemenway," Jill D'Alessandro, Director and Curator of the Avenir Institute of Textile Arts and Fashion states. "Working in relative isolation, she created a unique body of work. One informed by a meeting—a confluence— of two seemingly divergent places—Latin American textile traditions and the rhythms of Maine's natural environment."

Confluence of Nature explores Hemenway's five major bodies of work: *Ancient Images of Mexico and the Andes*; *Textures of Our Earth*; *Aqua Lapis*; *New England Light*; and *Late Works*.



Ancient Images of Mexico and the Andes – While living abroad, Hemenway studied the art of the ancient Americas in both museums and through private collections. This inspired the first of the five series that make up her body of work, with her move to Bolivia in 1966 playing an instrumental role. While waiting for her art tools to arrive, she dove into the rich culture of the Indigenous Andes Mountains region in South America. This experience is what led her to create *Bayetage*, a portmanteau of the Spanish word for handwoven lambswool and collage.



Textures of Our Earth –

Hemenway's return to the United States in 1972 spurred a new wave of creativity. She became deeply influenced by the landscapes around her. Works of this period convey a sense of being alive with movement. In this series, she develops her thoughts about nature creating oversized realistic depictions of flora and fauna. She writes, "Much of my world is tender and loving.

Some of it needs strength. In my hangings I think these contrasting elements are present. Each work brings to you a segment of my life."



Aqua Lapis – In the series Hemenway states, "*Aqua Lapis* is not just a title. It is a whole new way of thinking about source material, about handling the wool yardage and the accomplishment of a new technique. By process of elimination, I have narrowed my inspiration to two sources, water and stone." Working towards a major solo exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1983, Hemenway developed a new body of work; a close examination of water and stone that define this era. Here she contemplates, "Rocks have no gender for all their strength and beauty, but almost all that is glorious in nature if it has gender is feminine." It would often take the artist months to find the right flow before a piece was finished.



New England Light – Hemenway would often start a new body of work in words. Here, she writes about a day sailing in Maine - "an azure day, the blue of exhilaration... It is the nurturing color of sunlight, the buoyancy of clouds." In this series, she captures the vivid hues of New England. This marked a new era for her work which was defined by bold new shapes and vivid colors.

Late Works – In the last decade of her career, Hemenway's work became increasingly architectural as she created free-standing sculptures. The exhibition will include one of the last works that Hemenway completed. Measuring approximately 45 feet in length, *Thaw* is a testament to her strength and determination. She worked through her recent diagnosis of Alzheimer's, a disease that cut her art career short and ultimately took her life.

Confluence of Nature: Nancy Hemenway Barton is organized by the Denver Art Museum. Support is provided by Avenir Institute of Textile Arts and Fashion and Lula Faye Fiber, the donors to the Annual Fund Leadership Campaign, and the residents who support the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) Promotional support is provided by *5280 Magazine* and CBS Colorado.

Planning Your Visit

The most up-to-date information on planning a visit to the Denver Art Museum can be found online under the [Plan Your Visit](#) tab. Use this page to find details on ticket pricing, public transit options and access information. General admission for museum members is free every day. Youth aged 18 and under receive free general admission everyday thanks to the museum's Free for Kids program. Free for Kids also underwrites free admission for school and youth group visits.

About the Denver Art Museum

The Denver Art Museum is an educational, nonprofit resource that sparks creative thinking and expression through transformative experiences with art. Its mission is to enrich lives by sparking creative thinking and expression. Its holdings reflect the city and region—and provide invaluable ways for the community to learn about cultures from around the world. Metro residents support the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD), a unique funding source serving hundreds of metro Denver arts, culture and scientific organizations.

For museum information, visit www.denverartmuseum.org or call 720-865-5000.

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Image 1: Nancy Hemenway, 1976, Forsdick Studio on Mouse Island, 1976. Courtesy of Wheaton College: Gift of the Barton Family Foundation. Folder Title: Nancy Hemenway Barton Collection. Marion B. Gebbie Archives and Special Collections. Wallace Library. Wheaton College (MA).

Image 2: Nancy Hemenway with Salt Shadow, unknown date. Courtesy of Wheaton College: Gift of the Barton Family Foundation. Folder Title: Nancy Hemenway Barton

Collection. Marion B. Gebbie Archives and Special Collections. Wallace Library. Wheaton College (MA).

Image 3: Nancy working and one of her art works behind her, unknown date. Courtesy of Wheaton College: Gift of the Barton Family Foundation. Folder Title: Nancy Hemenway Barton Collection. Marion B. Gebbie Archives and Special Collections. Wallace Library. Wheaton College (MA).

Image 3: Studio of Nancy Hemenway, unknown date. Courtesy of Wheaton College: Gift of the Barton Family Foundation. Folder Title: Nancy Hemenway Barton Collection. Marion B. Gebbie Archives and Special Collections. Wallace Library. Wheaton College.

Image 4: Nancy Hemenway Barton (American, 1920–2008), *La Paz, Bolivia II*, 1966. Mixed media; 17 x 13 1/2 in. Courtesy of Wheaton College, Gift of the Barton Family Foundation, 2018.009.015. © Estate of Nancy H. Barton

Image 5: Nancy Hemenway Barton (American, 1920–2008), *Epiphyte*, 1972–77. Cotton; 95 x 162 in. Denver Art Museum: Gift of Brad, Bill, and Rick Barton—the artist's sons—and their families, 2023.534 © Estate of Nancy H. Barton

Image 6: Nancy Hemenway Barton (American, 1920–2008), *Talus*, 1981. Alpaca, twill, lamb's wool, mohair worked in open and closed satin, open buttonhole stitch embroidery with couched handspun overplied yarns; 100 x 71 in. Denver Art Museum: Gift of Brad, Bill, and Rick Barton—the artist's sons—and their families, 2023.532 © Estate of Nancy H. Barton

Image 7: Nancy Hemenway Barton (American, 1920–2008), *"I" IOU*, 1983–88. Cotton and wool; 110 x 78 in. Denver Art Museum: Gift of Brad, Bill, and Rick Barton—the artist's sons—and their families, 2023.533A-B © Estate of Nancy H. Barton