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FIRST MAJOR RETROSPECTIVE HONORING WORK OF SHEILA HICKS OPENS AT THE ADDISON

Sheila Hicks: 50 Years bridges distinctions between artist and artisan

Andover, Mass., November 2, 2010 – The Addison Gallery of American Art, the art museum of Phillips Academy, presents *Sheila Hicks: 50 Years*, an exhibition organized and co-curated by independent scholar Joan Simon and Addison curator Susan Faxon. The comprehensive exhibition, running November 5, 2010 through February 11, 2011, marks the first museum retrospective devoted to this pioneering figure. Sheila Hicks is an artist who builds with color and thinks with line. From her earliest work of the late 1950s to the present she has crossed the bounds of painting, sculpture, design, drawing, and woven form, and has been a critical force in redefining the domains of contemporary art-making. While challenging the relation of fine arts to commercial arts and studio practice to site-specific commissions, Hicks has, above all, re-imagined the profound, vital relation of artist to artisan.

Sheila Hicks: 50 Years addresses the artist's conceptual, procedural, and material concerns via five distinct, though intimately related, fields of inquiry: bas reliefs and sculptures; small weavings and drawings; site commissions for public spaces; textiles; and process works made of recuperated textiles, clothing and other found objects.

“When our respected colleague and friend Joan Simon arrived at the Addison to share images of Sheila Hicks’ work, the curatorial staff and I were mesmerized by what we saw,” notes Brian T. Allen, the Mary Stripp & R. Crosby Kemper Director of the Addison. “Each work was more jewel-like than the other, dazzling in its complexity and artistic mastery, and the staff immediately embraced the idea of a comprehensive exhibition of Hicks’ work of the past 50 years. In this retrospective exhibition, we celebrate Hicks’ constant exploration of – and experimentation with – materials and methodologies, the bravado and conceptual force of her sculptures, and her reverence for – and openness to – the diverse cultural traditions that energize and transform her own work.”

Born in Hastings, Neb., Hicks received her BFA and MFA degrees from Yale ('57; '59), studying painting with master teacher and theorist Josef Albers and history of art with George Kubler, a pivotal figure in the rediscovery of Mesoamerican art. Hicks's self-described practice of "linear thinking" and "composing texture" reflects the Bauhaus tradition of finding the expressive voices of different materials and the dynamic interactions of color. Equally, her work reflects her studies with Kubler, in particular the juxtapositions she first saw in his class of small Pre-Incaic weavings with the colossal structures of Machu Picchu.

From her earliest experiments with woven forms, Hicks has explored processes that skew the traditional grid, incorporating traditional and new materials or integrating found objects, even deconstructing her own works and reusing the elements to create any number of others. She has explored the role of the artist's hand and the use of technologies to create works that range from the size of a page to that of a football field. In addition to her studio works and commissions, Hicks is noted internationally as a teacher and mentor of several generations of artists and designers.

The Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA, is open to the public from Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Sunday 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on Monday. Admission to all exhibitions and events is free. The Addison Gallery also offers free education programs for teachers and groups. For more information, call 978-749-4015, or visit the website at www.addisongallery.org

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About the Addison Gallery of American Art

Devoted exclusively to American Art, the mission of the Addison Gallery of American Art is to acquire, preserve, interpret and exhibit works of art for the education and enjoyment of all. Opened in 1931, the Gallery has one of the most important collections of American art in the country that includes more than 16,000 works by prominent American artists such as George Bellows, John Singleton Copley, Thomas Eakins, Winslow Homer, Georgia O'Keeffe and Jackson Pollock, as well as photographers Eadweard Muybridge, Walker Evans, Robert Frank and many more. The Addison Gallery, located on the campus of Phillips Academy in Andover, offers a continually rotating series of exhibitions and programs, all of which are free and open to the public. For more information, call 978-749-4015, or visit the website at www.addisongallery.org.

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