

ART | 2 DAYS AGO | BY [JESSICA KLINGELFUSS](#)

Riotous colour, terrific textiles: Sheila Hicks: 'Off Grid' at The Hepworth Wakefield

Fibre art icon Sheila Hicks' much-anticipated show at The Hepworth Wakefield is a career-spanning celebration of voluminous form and vibrant colour



Sheila Hicks at The Hepworth Wakefield, 5 April 2022. *Photography: Joanne Crawford*

At 87 years old, Sheila Hicks is showing no signs of slowing down. The [textile artist](#) has been the subject of solo exhibitions in Dallas, Miami, Vienna, Milan, Paris and Riyadh since our paths last crossed – in 2018 at the preview of her show in Tel Aviv. Now at The Hepworth Wakefield, putting on the finishing touches to her first major UK survey ahead of the opening on 7 April, the exuberant and ever-disarming artist has wrested creative control of her own portrait shoot from a flustered but obliging photographer.

This is the first time Hicks has been able to visit the [David Chipperfield-designed museum](#) in person, having worked on it remotely for the past couple of years (a scale model of the galleries, she explains, lived in her Paris studio throughout). 'Off Grid' traces Hicks' prolific output, from the 1950s to new site-specific commissions, spanning intimate woven images to towering installations. 'It was fascinating to watch her enter the space, mapping and reading it in ways that I hadn't seen other

artists do, looking at the light sources, thinking of the angles,' explains the museum's chief curator Andrew Bonacina. 'Across the exhibition, you'll see an artist who has really explored the endless possibilities of fibre and thread as a sculptural material.'



Sheila Hicks: 'Off Grid' The Hepworth Wakefield, until 25 September 2022 Installation. Image Credit: Tom Bird / Courtesy The Hepworth Wakefield

Hicks is famously adamant about looking forwards and even now, her sculptural works are adapted for the space. 'So many of the historical works, those made in the 1960s and 70s, will never be installed the same way twice – they will always transform, they will always change,' adds Bonacina. 'And so much of our conversation has been how these works might respond to the spaces they are being presented in.' The final space, for example, is dedicated to works made over the past decade including a multi-part installation created in response to the architecture of the Hepworth. Many of the ideas explored here nod to motifs established earlier in her career, such as wrapped linen cords (found in the previous *Lianes* works), or the stacking of textiles (a nod to her *Banisteriopsis* and *Evolving Tapestry* series).

And it's not just Hicks' terrific textiles that prove a draw. The artist's photography offers a view into a rarely-seen side of her creative practice – not least because the black-and-white images are in many ways the antithesis to her riotous textile works. Her interest in the medium formed early in her career during trips to South America between 1954 and 1961, which included extensive travels throughout Chile with Magnum photographer Sergio Lorrain. 'The camera was a way in which to think about framing the world – they became another frame in the way the stretched canvas or the loom became within which she could capture her experiences,' explains Bonacina. Hicks has said: 'I was using the camera's positionings for looking, not always to take photographs.'

The show continues in the Hepworth Wakefield Garden with a monumental new work – a five-metre-tall column of cascading ribbons. *Gabriel Reaching for Heaven* (2022) mirrors its immediate surroundings, including the landscaping by Tom Stuart-Smith, Chipperfield's architecture, and the newly redeveloped Rutland Mills (itself a former textile factory) adjacent to the museum. In London, meanwhile, an outdoor installation at Coal Drops Yard commissioned by the King's Cross Estate will open to the public from 26 May. Hicks' work here will respond to the Victorian architecture, creating a gently moving garden in the sky and threading King's Cross – the starting point for many to reach Wakefield – with the exhibition at the Hepworth. ✨



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INFORMATION

Sheila Hicks, 'Off Grid', until 25 September 2022, The Hepworth Wakefield. hepworthwakefield.org

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