

WOW! WE'VE

By: Leah Killian

fabric of Art



Jean Selvy-Wyss

“Find the tool you want to use to express yourself- any medium- music, writing, cooking, gardening. These are all acts of creation. But to be a tapestry weaver, you need to be a maker.”

Over 400 hours. That is how long it took gifted weaver and artist, Jean Selvy-Wyss, to create one of her largest tapestries. Countless hours of preparation, over the course of 5-6 years, went into her new exhibit and first solo show, *Over Under*, featured at the Dahl Arts Center from March 3-May 27. The reception is from 5-7 p.m. with the artist's talk starting at 5:45.

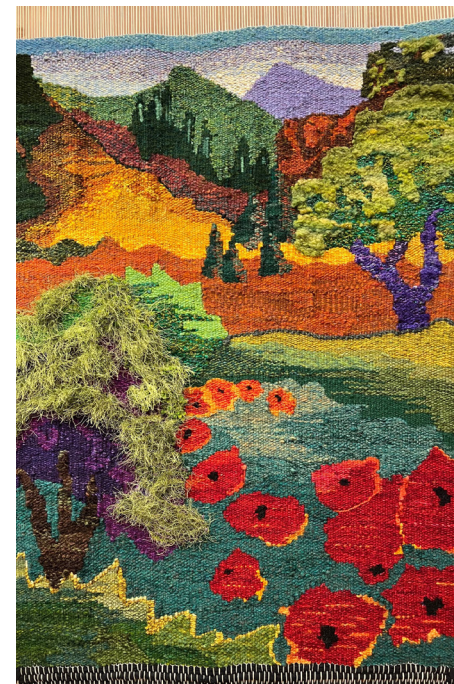
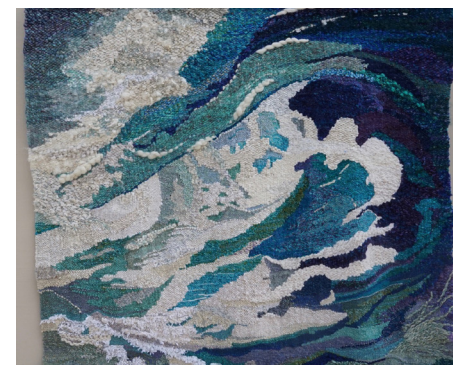
“Weaving is a rhythm, repetition, watching the color changes. You need a personality that can be sucked into a project,” explains Selvy-Wyss.

Fiber arts have been a family affair, with many of her loved ones being quilters. As for her love of weaving, she shares, “I love the fact that I'm creating the fabric, not just working on the fabric.” Selvy-Wyss attended college pursuing an art degree, and during the course of earning her B.S. in Fine Arts, took classes in every medium they offered. It wasn't until her last semester that a class on weaving was on her schedule, and it ended up being the medium that was most suited to her artistic expression. With some time off to raise her children, she soon found herself back at it and filled with inspiration.

Selvy-Wyss was fortunate to spend 2.5 years apprenticed to master weaver, Grete Bodogaard, one of South Dakota's greatest and most accomplished artists. Of her time with Bodogaard, Wyss said simply, “It was a gift.” Selvy-Wyss spent this time working with Bodogaard at her home every day. “Grete needed an apprentice. It was a win-win.”

Over time, Selvy-Wyss has found inspiration through her travels, and her interest in finding old items and repurposing them in new and creative ways. “I like whimsical things,” she says, and certainly shows it by experimenting with weaving old netting, natural fiber, conduit and wire. She usually has a few projects going at a time, so if she gets stumped on one, she gives it some space and turns her focus elsewhere for a while.

“My work has progressed and is moving away from structures like buildings or landscapes, and more into expressing movement within the weave. Now when I design, it is less about what image I am making and more about the essence of what the woven structure can do, such as get distorted or lean more toward abstraction, more of an awareness



of the woven structure and its possibilities.” She completed a workshop with a Scottish weaver and started experimenting with a pulled warp technique that really spoke to her and created interesting depth and movement in her pieces.

For those who are interested in trying weaving or any kind of art, Selvy-Wyss counsels, “Just do it. You've got to do the work before you can break the box. Totally embrace the work. Don't be afraid of it. Everybody should discover their passion so they can lose themselves in it.”

This talented artist will be giving a talk at the Dahl Arts Center on March 3, at 5 p.m. No cost of admission.



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