

ANDREW RAFACZ

info@andrewrafacz.com
+ 312 404 9188

1749 West Chicago Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60622

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact:

Jenal Dolson

+ 312 404 9188

jenal@andrewrafacz.com

www.andrewrafacz.com

Chicago, IL, April 18, 2025 – ANDREW RAFACZ is thrilled to announce *Resonating Color*, a solo exhibition of new and historical textile works from Jana Vander Lee, in Galleries One & Two. The exhibition opens Friday, April 18th and continues through Saturday, May 31st, 2025. This is the artist's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

At the center of *Resonating Color* is *That Great Day 'A Dawning*, a large-scale tapestry completed in 1982 and measuring nearly 10 x 19 feet. With its constellated geometries and scintillating colors, it anchors the exhibition with vibrant, pulsating energy and creates a conversation with the rest of Vander Lee's more recent work. The balance of the exhibition is comprised of small to medium-sized tapestries that were produced in the last three years, as well as the debut of several of the artist's 'tubular works,' each consisting of multiple fiber-wrapped tubes installed vertically and next to each other, where sections of distinct colors are arranged and ordered to reveal abstracted images of landscapes and flower forms. The exhibition is a document of Vander Lee's pioneering achievements as an artist and advocate in the fiber arts, as well as her unexpected detour from her own art-making as a result of personal physical challenges.

Born in Hammond, Indiana, Vander Lee grew up in Lansing, Illinois, in a small Dutch farming community just south of Chicago. She took a summer weaving class at Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois in 1963, and it ignited her lifelong commitment to the woven form, as she became immediately enamored with the tactility of her material and the act of weaving.

After receiving a BA in Education from Calvin College in 1967, Vander Lee moved to Houston, Texas, where she began her career as an artist, educator, writer, and curator. She quickly became a champion of fiber arts and artists, and was instrumental in organizing notable exhibitions that brought more awareness and visibility to them within the mainstream art world. She spent a number of years exploring weaving, and in 1979, began to exhibit her large and medium-scale tapestries. Her multifaceted practice, honed over the last 50 years, is born from her Dutch heritage, as well as her travels to the American Southwest where she learned about Diné weaving, and the knowledge of the American Fiber Arts tradition that she gleaned through her own research.

Experiencing firsthand examples of Diné textiles on a trip to Ghost Ranch in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1973, Vander Lee's incipient desire to weave was reignited. After studying on her own and taking workshops with prominent handspinner Persis Grayson and British weaver Theo Moorman, she began to build her own, uniquely amalgamated approach. Vander Lee also attended a color theory class taught by Arthur Turner at The School of Art of the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston in the mid-seventies, which further crystalized her lifelong investigation of color and the lyrical geometric abstraction that figures prominently in her work to this day. Vander Lee continued to weave throughout the 1970s and '80s, creating her own aesthetic, as well as championing the work of

other important artists. She wrote reviews and essays, curated numerous exhibitions, and chaired a nationally recognized symposium on the fiber arts, all in an effort to further the visibility and recognition of its participants.

Losing most of her eyesight in the early 1990s, Vander Lee's ability to produce work was significantly diminished. After decades of struggling with near-blindness and with profound advancements in eye surgery, Vander Lee moved to Chicago in 2019 and found an eye surgeon who could correct her vision. After four surgeries, her vision was restored and she started weaving again in 2021. Undaunted by this overwhelming obstacle, Vander Lee has returned to a full-time fiber arts practice.

While Vander Lee's formal compositions have a strong focus on geometric shapes, they also hold deeply personal meanings and capture her unique poetic sensibility. The artist's Calvinist background, spiritual experiences, as well as an interest in sub-atomic physics have all played a role in her exploration of the order and energies of the natural world. Her newest works, all produced in Chicago, are indebted to her view from her home window looking out on Lake Michigan, where she has intimately and expansively experienced the changing of the seasons. She is documenting her own immanent relationship to the natural world and its way of marking time, and these works draw directly from nature and its cyclical rhythms. For her, truth lies in these changes— winter to spring, day to night, night to day. Vander Lee notes, 'my work is a personal state of being with existential spiritual nature.'

Resonating Color is, in many ways, a celebration of the return of spring, with many of the included works' range of colors and titles directly referencing the season. It also alludes to the artist's own recent rebirth of her practice.

The story of American fiber artist Jana Vander Lee is one of unabashed optimism and determination in the face of personal and professional adversity, working in the fiber arts long before it was embraced by the broader art world and persevering with new found dedication today.

JANA VANDER LEE (American, b. 1945) lives and works in Chicago, IL. Vander Lee received her BA in Education from Calvin College (Grand Rapids, MI) and continued her studies at Michigan State University at Grand Rapids Art Museum (Grand Rapids, MI) in 1967-1968; The School of Art at The Museum of Fine Arts (Houston, TX) in 1975-1977; and The University of North Texas (Denton, TX) in 1988. Solo and group exhibitions include Inman Gallery (Houston, TX); The High Museum of Art (Atlanta, GA); Mattingly Baker Gallery (Dallas, TX); The Museum of East Texas (Lufkin, TX); Lawndale Annex, The University of Houston (Houston, TX), and Blaffer Art Museum at The University of Houston (Houston, TX). She was included in 'Perspectives,' curated by Nora Burnett Abrams, at the Armory Show, with Inman Gallery (New York, NY) in 2020. Vander Lee curated *Fiber Fusion* at The Art and Fashion Institute of Houston (Houston, TX) in 1987; *American Fiber: A New Aesthetic* at DiverseWorks (Houston, TX) in 1984; *American Fiber Art: A New Definition*, at Blaffer Art Museum at The University of Houston (Houston, TX) in 1980; and organized the symposium, 'Fiber in the 80's,' at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (Houston, TX) in 1980. Her work is currently on view in *Thinking Eye, Seeing Mind: The Medford and Loraine Johnston Collection*, at The High Museum of Art (Atlanta, GA). She has written for many publications including ARTSPACE, Fiber Art Now, FIBERARTS, and Surface Design Journal. Vander Lee's work is included in the collections of The Whitney Museum of American Art (New York, NY); The Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago, IL); Savaria Museum (Szombathely, Hungary); The Houston Public Library (Houston, TX); and The Women's Hospital of Texas (Houston, TX) among numerous other public and private collections.

