

Visiting MoMA and browngrotta arts

By Shoko Fukuda

MoMA “Woven Histories: Textiles and Modern Abstraction” (New York)

On the morning of May 2, 2025, I arrived at MoMA right at the 10:30 opening. I was there to see the exhibition “*Woven Histories: Textiles and Modern Abstraction*.” As the title suggests, the exhibition explores the relationship between textiles and abstract expression, featuring approximately 150 works including textiles, basketry, garments, paintings, and video works.

The exhibition spans from the early 20th century to the present, examining how textile materials and techniques have influenced the development of abstract art. It brought together works by artists from various eras and regions, including Anni Albers, Sonia Delaunay, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Ruth Asawa, Yayoi Kusama, among others. I was especially interested in how each artist engaged with textiles and how they shaped or were shaped by the medium. I was also curious about the curatorial perspective and the criteria behind the selection of such diverse works.

Among the works, Ed Rossbach’s pieces left a lasting impression. About ten of his pieces, using basketry and weaving techniques, incorporated unexpected everyday materials such as ash, lacquer, washi paper, newspaper, wood chips, packing string, raffia, silkscreened paper, cotton, polyester, plastic, commercial fabrics, and even silicone. Each work offered new discoveries, drawing me in

as I tried to understand how these unconventional materials were integrated into the pieces.

Rossbach’s work has the charm of a visual riddle—what fascinated me was not just the replacement of traditional techniques with unusual materials, but the act of weaving or interlacing itself becoming the expression.

In *Reconstituted Commercial Textile*, for instance, the piece initially looks like a regular woven textile. But on closer inspection, you notice that a striped fabric is sandwiched inside a transparent sheet, and the direction of the stripes differs on each side. This made me pause and consider how to interpret that structure. Many of Rossbach’s works involve humorous, experimental approaches to deconstructing and reconstructing the logic of weaving and basketry. Standing before the actual works, I found myself repeatedly surprised by details I wouldn’t have noticed otherwise. Just when I thought I understood a piece, another layer of mystery seemed to emerge, inviting deeper contemplation.

Other artists’ works in the show also drew inspiration from garments or baskets, with some even suspended in space, defying the idea of textiles as “just fabric.” Many pieces conveyed “weaving” not only as a technique, but also as a conceptual form. It was an exhibition that powerfully expanded my sense of what fiber art can be.

From New York to browngrotta arts

After spending about 90 minutes at MoMA, I walked to Grand Central Station. After a quick lunch in the

station, I boarded a train to Wilton, Connecticut. On the same train were fellow exhibiting artist Włodzimierz Cygan from Poland and his 15-year-old relative, Victoria. After another 90 minutes, we arrived at Wilton Station, where Tom, the owner of browngrotta arts, kindly picked us up and drove us to the gallery.

browngrotta arts is a gallery housed in a renovated barn in a quiet suburban neighborhood outside New York. The space had a warm, intimate atmosphere—like visiting someone's home to see art. I was kindly offered the opportunity to stay in the guest room attached to the gallery. After arriving, I was guided to the room and then received a detailed tour of the gallery and exhibition.

Over 100 works were exhibited across multiple open rooms, with additional spaces unfolding as I ascended the stairs. The open layout allowed for close interaction with the works and created an intimate environment. Although the main exhibition area was on the first floor, many pieces were also displayed upstairs, and I was introduced to those as well. I also had the rare opportunity to tour the office and production space used for creating catalogues and other publications. I was even shown the newly built pool and expansive garden—both impressively large in scale.

What struck me most was the thoughtful attention to the exhibition space. For example, the ceiling was designed so that the display hardware remained hidden, and wall-mounted works were slightly lifted from the surface. This delicate balance between space and artwork was carefully planned. I was told that many of the

display fixtures were specially made in Germany and rarely seen elsewhere. From the fixtures and captions to the lighting, every detail reflected a careful harmony of beauty and functionality, designed to enhance the presence of the artworks.

Exhibition Overview

(Excerpt from the gallery website)

“Field Notes: an art survey” was held at browngrotta arts in Wilton, Connecticut, from March 3 to 11, 2025. The exhibition brought together the work of 52 artists from different generations and world regions - each with their own approaches and influences, passions, and practices. Fiber art is a powerful medium for storytelling and innovation in today's art landscape.

This exhibition also marked the gallery debut for six artists—Sophie Rowley, Yong Joo Kim, Ane Lynsgaard, Sun Rim Park, Jennifer Zurick, and Misako Nakahira.

Like the other artists we champion at browngrotta arts, these six are experimenters — educated in textile technique, who have then stepped away from the expected to innovate with unique materials and approaches.

In addition, we've gathered selected works by five pioneering artists — Sheila Hicks, Masakazu Kobayashi, Mariette Rousseau-Vermette, Ed Rossbach, and Kay Sekimachi. Some 60 years ago, artists began making works that transcended our existing concept of textiles. While based on traditional techniques, these works, collectively known as fiber art, incorporated metals, minerals, and many other materials in addition to natural and synthetic fibers. For the

first time, textiles came off the wall, expanded from two to three dimensions and into the surrounding space. The five artists we will include in *Field Works* were not just pivotal in the emergence of contemporary fiber art in the 60s and 70s, but are significant contributors to the art form's current popularity.

Opening and Artist Reception

The opening reception on May 3 attracted many visitors, making the venue lively and vibrant. The works were displayed creatively throughout the spacious gallery—in the entrance hall, dining room, living room, and kitchen—each piece matched thoughtfully to its environment. Visitors enjoyed walking through the space with exhibition lists in hand, searching for and discovering each artwork in a way that added to their experience.

I exhibited four pieces in this show. Many people spoke to me about them, and I was deeply moved by the genuine interest they showed. Refreshments and drinks were served, creating a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere for the reception.

Encounters with Artists

At the artist reception on May 3, I had the pleasure of speaking with fellow exhibiting artists such as Blair Tate, Kari Lønning, Christine Joy, Norma Minkowitz, Wendy Wahl, and Włodzimierz Cygan. Christine Joy told me about assisting Professor Toshiko Horiuchi MacAdam during her time teaching at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts. I discussed the unique qualities of *Akebia* (a type of vine) with

Kari Lønning. With Norma Minkowitz, I was able to express how much her work had left an impression on me since I first saw it at the *Weaving the World* exhibition at the Yokohama Museum of Art in 1999. It was a meaningful moment for me.

Hearing directly from the artists about the backgrounds and techniques behind their work was a rare and valuable experience. Many displays showed works from different periods by the same artist, allowing me to observe how their materials, techniques, and themes had evolved over time. It was a deep dive into their expanding worlds of expression.

Reflections on My Time at the Gallery

During my stay, I was warmly welcomed by Tom, Rhonda, and the entire gallery staff. I enjoyed various opportunities to connect with the artists, including shared meals. Observing how the gallery staff interacted with visitors and managed the exhibition deepened my appreciation for the care and meticulous planning that supported this event.

Each morning, I spent time in the spacious garden, enjoying a peaceful breakfast accompanied by birdsong. Tom served fragrant cinnamon café au lait, bagels with cream cheese, salmon and salmon roe dip, chocolate cake, and melon—each delicious and indulgent. The gallery's charming dog, Cassidy, always alerted us cheerfully when guests arrived. I am truly grateful for the richness of this experience.

Exhibition Information

**MoMA: The Museum of Modern Art,
New York**

**“Woven Histories: Textiles and
Modern Abstraction”**

April 20 – September 13, 2025

Catalog: Available now on Amazon

browngrotta arts

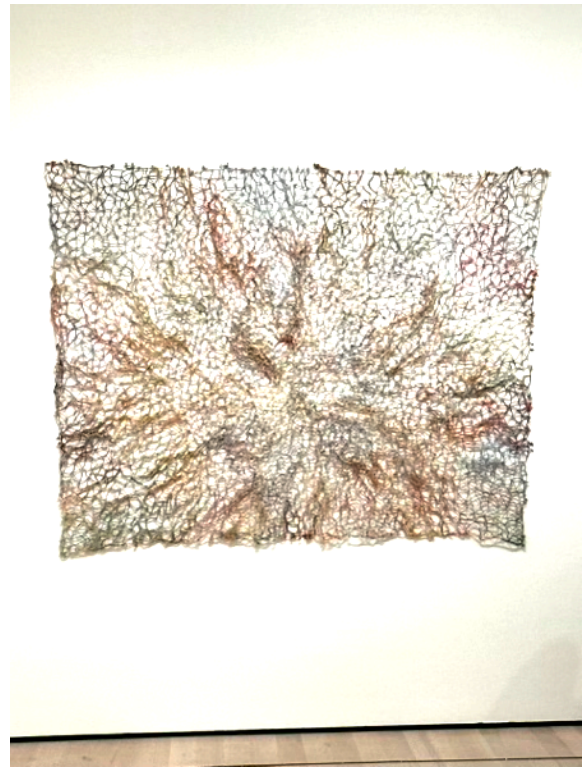
276 Ridgefield Rd, Wilton,
CT 06897, USA

“Field Notes: an art survey”

May 3 – 11, 2025

Catalog: Available at
store.browngrotta.com

**MoMA “Woven Histories: Textiles
and Modern Abstraction”**



Ed Rossbach

《Constructed Color Wall Hanging》

1965, Synthetic raffia



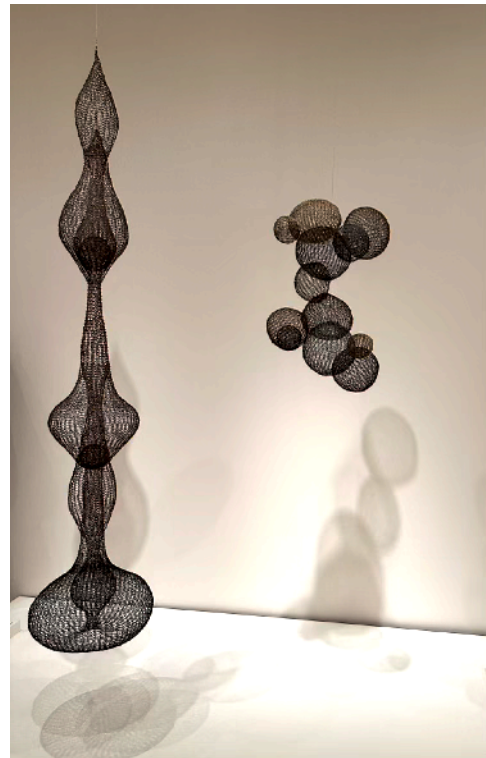
Ed Rossbach

《Reconstituted Commercial Textile》

1960, Cotton, polyethylene



Various basketry works by Ed Rossbach



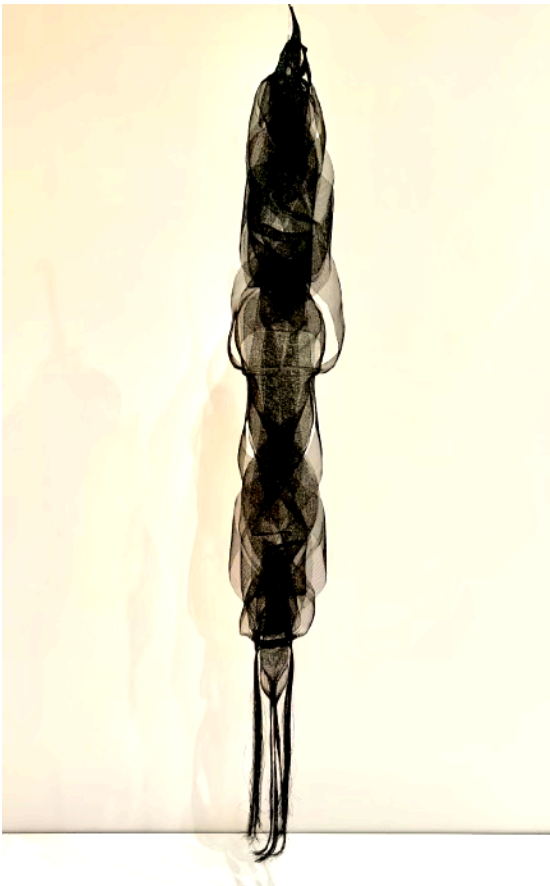
Ruth Asawa

Untitled (S.089, Hanging Asymmetrical Twelve Interlocking Bubbles)

1957, Galvanized steel, brass, iron wire

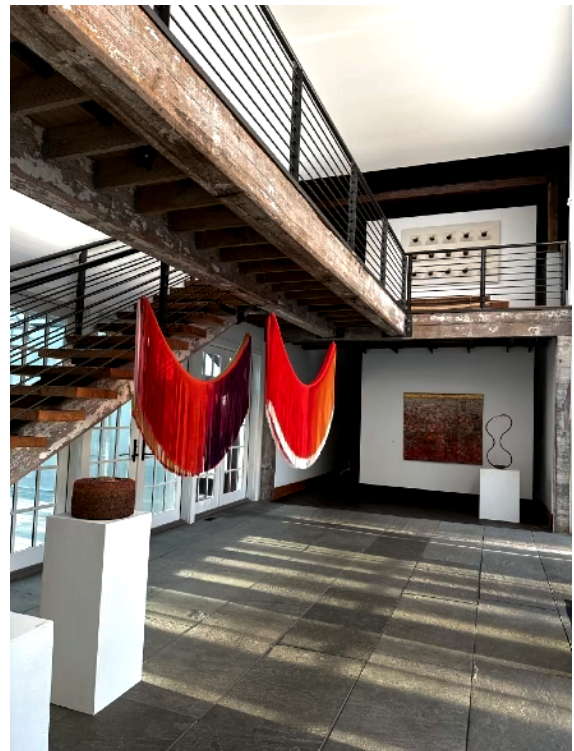
browngrotta arts

“Field Notes: an art survey”



Kay Sekimachi

《Nagare III》 1968, Nylon monofilament



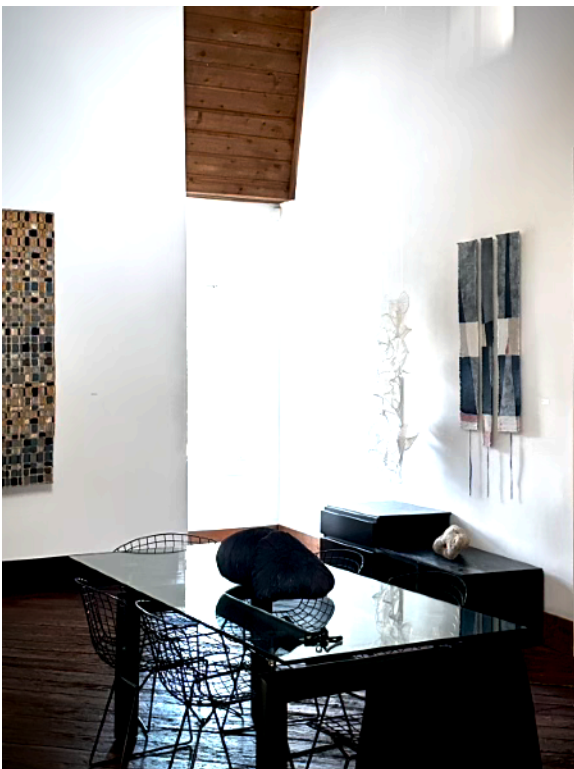
From right: Jiro Yonezawa, Jin-Sook So (1st & 2nd floors), Grethe Whittrock, Norma Minkowitz



From right: Christine Joy, Jennifer Zurick, Misako Nakahira, Hisako Sekijima, Jennifer Falck Linssen



From right: Anneke Klein, Noriko Takamiya, Young-ok Shin, Pat Campbell



From right: Caroline Bartlett, Noriko Takamiya, Shoko Fukuda, Sheila Hicks, María Dávila



In the gallery garden: From right – Tom and Rhonda (browngrotta arts), Wlodzimierz Cygan