

# I N M A N G A L L E R Y

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 4, 2023

Inman Gallery is pleased to present

**Jana Vander Lee**

***Still Time***

May 5 – July 1, 2023

**Opening Reception**

**Friday, May 5, 6–8pm**

**SPECIAL EVENT**

**Jana Vander Lee in conversation with**

**Kerry Inman**

**Saturday, May 6, 1:00 pm**



Jana Vander Lee, *On The Horizon*, 2023  
warp: 8/5 linen; weft: acrylic, cotton, rayon, wool, mohair,  
viscose, cashmere, 33 1/4 x 37 1/4 in (84.5 x 94.6 cm)

Inman Gallery is pleased to present ***Still Time***, a solo exhibition of work by **Jana Vander Lee**, on view May 6 – July 1, 2023. This will be Vander Lee's second solo show at the gallery and is concurrent with the exhibition, **Loc Huynh: *Western Bootleg***. The show comprises a selection of new, small-scale tapestries produced between 2021–2023. In this most recent body of work, Vander Lee heightens the interplay of Diné (Navajo) and Lowland/Dutch tapestry traditions. The pieces explore various facets of time: seasonal transitions, timelessness, and tributes.

The story of American fiber artist Jana Vander Lee (b. 1945, Hammond, IN) is one of optimism and triumph in the face of adversity, both personally and professionally, having maintained an artistic practice long before fiber arts were embraced by the broader art world. Vander Lee grew up in Lansing, IL, a small Dutch farming community just south of Chicago. A summer program in fiber at Illinois State Normal in 1963 sparked her lifelong commitment to the woven form; she was immediately passionate about the tactile quality of the material and the act of weaving.

After receiving a BA from Calvin College (1967), she moved to Houston, TX, where she began her career as an artist, educator, writer, and curator. She quickly became a champion of fiber arts and was instrumental in organizing important exhibitions that introduced fiber art into the mainstream art world. She spent a number of years studying weaving, and then in 1979, began to exhibit large and medium-scale tapestries. Her weavings arise from her Dutch Heritage, her travels to the American Southwest to learn about Diné weaving, and the knowledge of the American Fiber Arts tradition she gained through self-education.

She was represented by the vaunted gallery Hadler/Rodriguez, a fiber arts gallery from New York that opened in Houston in 1977. Vander Lee credits the gallery for supporting her when others in the region did not accept weaving and fiber as fine art. Hadler/Rodriguez represented fiber artists such as Claire Zeisler and Lenore Tawney, affording Vander Lee exposure to these pioneers in the field.

The artist had her first solo show at Inman Gallery, *Again and Again*, in the summer of 2019, which featured her tapestries from the late-1970s and 1980s. At the time of the opening, Vander Lee was emerging from a multi-decade-long struggle with eyesight problems, which had impacted her ability to produce new work. Following surgery and experiencing significant improvements to her vision, Vander Lee was able to begin producing new tapestries. We are thrilled to debut these new works that are evidence of her rejuvenated artistic practice.

Vander Lee's tapestries appear at first to be formal engagements in fiber with a strong focus on geometric shapes, yet they also hold deeply personal meanings and iconographies. The artist's Calvinist background, ecumenical experiences, as well as an interest in sub-atomic physics all play a role in her exploration of the order and energies of the natural world. The new weavings are also a product of her new environs in Chicago, where she relocated to in 2019. For example, *On the Horizon* (2022) is one of many recent works inspired by the view from her home window of the sky over Lake Michigan. Her Seasons series likewise references the distinctive change of seasons that Midwesterners experience each year.

In her most recent Tribute Series, Vander Lee weaves to honor important figures who have had an impact on her career as an artist. The work *Upholding: Persis Grayson* (2023) honors



Jana Vander Lee, *Upholding: Persis Grayson*, 2023  
warp: 8/5 linen; weft: handspun /dyed cotton and wool, wool, cotton, acrylic,  
19  $\frac{1}{8}$  x 14  $\frac{3}{8}$  in (48.6 x 36.5 cm)

Grayson, who was a President of the Handweavers Guild of America and wrote the spinning column for the group's publication *Shuttle, Spindle and Dyepot*. Vander Lee attended Grayson's workshop for the Contemporary Handweavers of Houston in 1976. There they spun 30 different fibers and Vander Lee subsequently learned the *feel* of fiber through this experience. As she notes, "Persis was essential in transmitting the oral traditions of handspinning and weaving when they had almost died out and, more importantly, the nature of being in touch with the thread of life." Vander Lee pays tribute to Grayson and other figures influential to her in these new tapestries.

Jana Vander Lee has overcome numerous obstacles on her way to enjoying a successful career as an American fiber artist. She has repeatedly commented that her goal as an artist is to inspire and bring hope in the face of adversity. Her weavings are imbued with deep and thoughtful iconographies that reference both the spiritual and natural worlds.