

# Former KU art teacher, student team up for major installation at Spencer Museum

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Ann Hamilton, a 1979 Kansas University textile design graduate, and Cynthia Schira, her former teacher here, became internationally recognized successes in the art world.

In a homecoming of sorts, the two artists are teaming up and returning to KU to create an exhibit for the Spencer Museum of Art. "An Errant Line," featuring large-scale installations in multiple galleries, opens Saturday.

The exhibit is shaped by Hamilton and Schira's decades-long conversation and shared textile history. Guided by curator Susan Earle, the artists use digital tools to cast a new lens onto the Spencer's unique architectural features and existing artworks.

"The artists' use of objects in the collection brings new life to the objects in poetic and unexpected ways," the Spencer's exhibit announcement explains. "Hamilton's prints fill the Museum's Central Court with the haunting presence of the Spencer's rarely seen 18th-century Italian Presepio figures. Gigantic and at turns in-focus and out-of-focus, images of body parts and garments seem to reach — gesturally — across the space, reflecting Hamilton's ongoing interest in the relationship between the visual and the tactile.

"In the adjacent gallery, Schira has organized the space to address the museum activities of making, preserving and exhibiting. Her labyrinth of monumental black-and-white textiles draws its abstracted imagery from textiles and paintings in the Spencer's collections. The result combines shoe buckles from the Presepio figures, hand-written documents, and woven fields of words."

The Spencer's famed Bechstein piano, played by Franz Liszt in 1886, also will feature prominently in the exhibition, as will found texts about cloth and clothing.

The title of the exhibition refers to a weaving technique in which the thread that has been winding over and under taut fibers is suddenly pulled free and allowed to float on the surface of the textile, where it makes an independent pattern, according to the Spencer. Likewise, Hamilton and Schira followed "threads" from the museum's collection to inspire their new works.

Schira taught at KU from 1976 to 1999. An influential figure in the contemporary textile world, she was one of the first to fully utilize the potential of computerization for the textile artist, according to the Spencer. Schira's work has been exhibited internationally for more than 40 years and is represented in significant public collections.

Hamilton is widely recognized for large-scale, multimedia installations that respond directly to the sites they occupy and immerse viewers. She recently completed a Park Avenue Armory installation, which became a cultural phenomenon in New York City, inspiring crowds of people to return daily to the site.

"An Errant Line" runs through Aug. 11. For more on the exhibit and updates on related live performances, to be scheduled in upcoming months, visit [spencerart.ku.edu](http://spencerart.ku.edu).

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