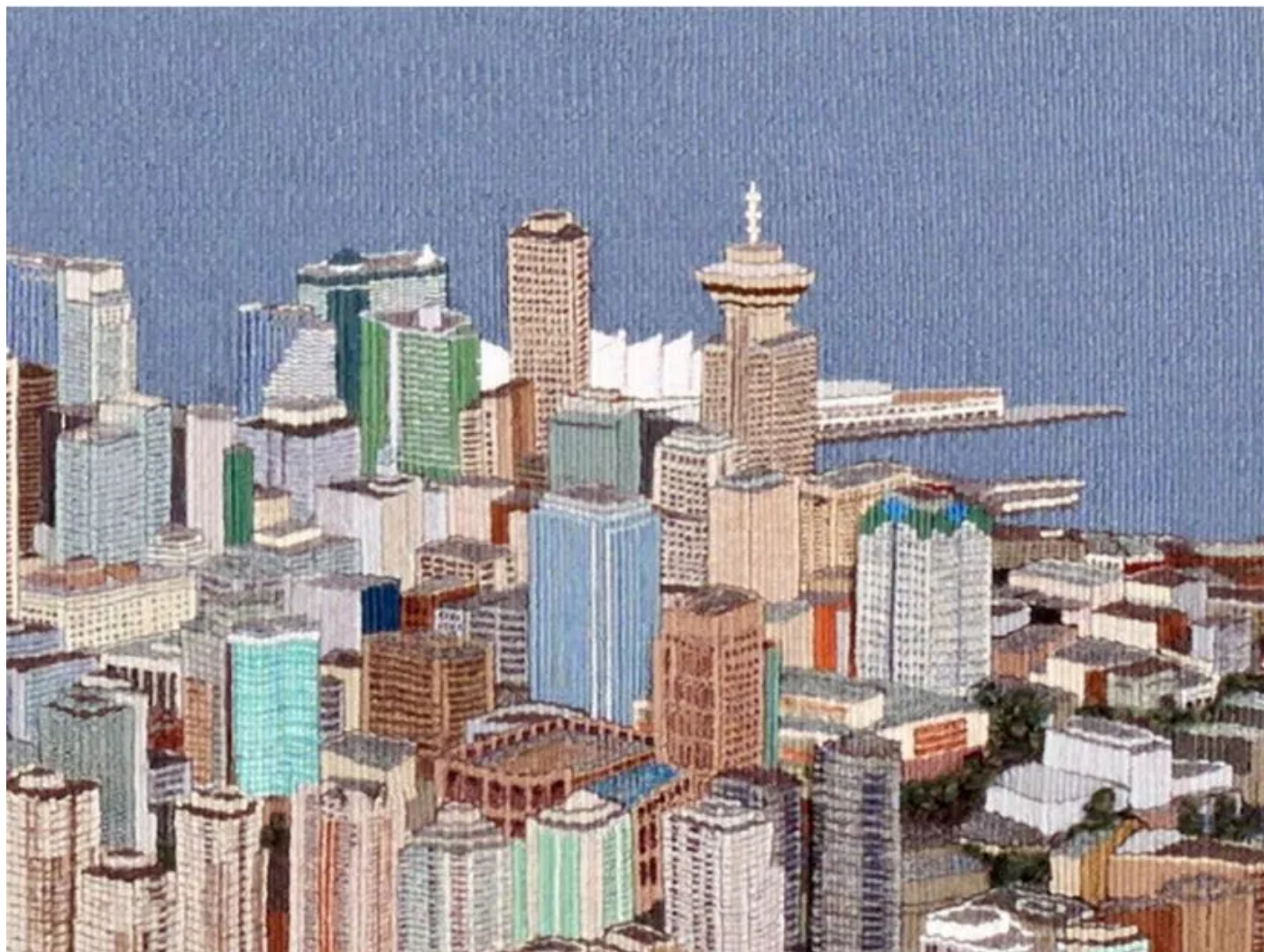


Tapestry artist captures cities at height of their celebration

Leap and the Loom Will Appear is the first major retrospective of Sola Fiedler's work

SHAWN CONNER ([HTTPS://VANCOUVERSUN.COM/AUTHOR/THATSHAWNCONNER](https://vancouversun.com/author/thatshawncorner)) Updated: September 12, 2018



Detail from Sola Fiedler's Vancouver tapestry (2014). An exhibit of her work runs from Sept. 20 to Oct. 2, 2018 at 1359 Cartwright St. *SOLA FIEDLER / PNG*

Leap and the Loom Will Appear

When: Sept. 21 to Oct. 2 (opening reception Sept 20, 6 p.m.)

Where: 1359 Cartwright St.

Sola Fiedler was having a root canal done in 1983 when she had what she calls “one of these this-changes-everything moments.”

“I was on the 19th floor looking down on Vancouver, and I knew we were going to get Expo 86,” the 82-year-old said.

“And I knew the whole city was going to change. We didn’t have any of those beautiful aerial shots we have now. I thought, ‘We need a picture.’ But I couldn’t paint, and I couldn’t draw. But I could knit.”

Fiedler has been creating tapestries with fabric ever since. Leap and the Loom Will Appear is the first major retrospective of her work. It will be on display as part of the Textile Walking Tour on Granville Island. The tour and exhibition are presented in conjunction with the Textile Society of America’s 16th Biennial Symposium, which takes place at the Sheraton Wall Centre Sept. 19 to 23. (Among other events to coincide with the Symposium, the grunt gallery hosts Woven Work from Near Here, a showcase of textile creations by Pacific Northwest weavers, until Oct. 20.)

The exhibit includes 17 of Fiedler’s pieces, including a recent one of Granville Island. Most feature host cities for the Olympics; while working on that first tapestry, Fiedler realized that what she enjoyed was “capturing that moment of celebration in each city.”



Sola Fiedler's Las Vegas tapestry will be on display at 1359 Cartwright St. from Sept. 20 to Oct. 2, 2018. *SOLA FIEDLER / PNG*

She usually spends two years on each tapestry. They are large (Salt Lake City is 10' x 7'; the biggest, Las Vegas, is 11' x 7.5') and composed of different types of fabric. For materials, she frequents thrift stores, picking up sweaters on the cheap and unravelling them.

She says that it's important that the material matches the type of building.

"Linen looks like limestone, cotton like wooden buildings that have been painted," she says in a promotional video on her site, solafiedler.com (<http://solafiedler.com>). "I can always find the material that looks like the building I'm trying to portray."

Years after completing her Salt Lake City tapestry, she used the same dark green chenille sweater for evergreen trees in Stanley Park for her second Vancouver tapestry.

Recycling comes naturally to Fiedler, who was born in London before the First World War.

"We had very little and so we recycled everything. All my tapestries are from recycled material."

In 1971 she was on her way from the Canary Islands to Japan when, on a stopover, she fell in love with Vancouver. She stayed, eventually establishing the Soft Rock Café in Kitsilano. The coffeehouse hosted musicians such as Ravi Shankar, Dexter Gordon, and Dan Hill.

That building is gone now; gentrification has become a theme in her work.

"I read an article saying they were going to blow up a lot of the hotels on the Strip, the lovely old ones like the Stardust and the Sahara, and build condominiums," she said of the inspiration behind her Las Vegas tapestry.

"I was horrified. So I raced to Las Vegas to try to capture all those beautiful old hotels. It took me three years. But I captured them all. They blew up five of them while I was actually working on the tapestry. They've blown up another five since. So most of my tapestries turn into historical documents. They capture a place at a certain moment in time."

The tactile nature of her work makes it more accessible in some ways than photographs. For example, she encourages people to touch the work, which helps the blind "see" them.

"I can tell them the story of each piece," she said. "I can guide their hands six-and-a-half miles up the Las Vegas Strip and they can feel the palm trees and the street lights and each hotel."

"I always allow people to touch my work," she added. "Especially children. Most parents say, 'Don't touch. Don't touch.' I say that's quite all right. This is how they experience things."

Looking forward, she is excited for 2028, when Los Angeles hosts the Olympics.

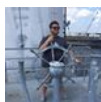
"I know I'm going to be standing in front of my finished tapestry for the L.A. Olympics on my 92nd birthday," she said. "I'm so excited my hands are shaking, my heart is racing just talking about it."

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