

For Immediate Release
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Exhibition, *Woven Threads, Woven Lives*, Opens at Clare Gallery

Hartford, CT — The Clare Gallery will start the new year celebrating community by exhibiting the Hartford Public Library's (HPL) community weaving project, *Woven Threads, Woven Lives* from January 30 to February 23, 2020. Artist and weaver, Sandy Fromson, began the project in 2016 and completed it in 2018 with contributing artist Charmaine Craig. The culmination of the project produced a beautifully colored twenty-four foot woven banner, with nearly 200 people taking part in its creation. Each weaver could choose various yarns, threads, or other material to add to the banner, along with a wish written on a tag. 188 tags flutter and hang providing an additional unique texture to the piece. Along with the banner, a map and photographs help tell the story of who the participants were and where they lived. **An artist talk and reception will be held on Sunday, February 9, 1–3 p.m.** where artist, Sandy Fromson, will be the main speaker about this community art endeavor. (The snow date is Sunday, February 16.)

Sandy Bender Fromson was an UConn adjunct professor teaching in Urban and Community Studies. Presently, she is a community volunteer and has been a long-standing supporter of HPL. She conceived the idea for *Woven Threads, Woven Lives* in 2016, while exhibiting with artist Ellen Shiffman in a joint exhibition for the HPL's ArtWalk. Charmaine Craig, an activist and close friend of Fromson's, was integral to the project's success by working closely with Fromson to execute the project.

Fromson's love of sewing and artful creation of textiles, was learned from her mother. Over her lifetime, Fromson has created a variety of textile projects, from quilts to artistic clothing to her recent woven works. For *Woven Threads, Woven Lives* Fromson brought a loom to HPL and invited visitors to weave a short section. In 2018, HPL invited Fromson back for a solo exhibition. She decided to host multiple weaving workshops in three locations: HPL's Albany Library, Real Art Ways, and HPL's Main Street Library, where a diverse number of people wove their choice of material into the banner. Additionally, the participants were asked to write their first name on a tag, as well as a wish they desired for the Hartford community. The tags were then attached to the places where participants did their weaving. Besides Craig's contribution, another instrumental partner was the Hartford Artisans Weaving Center, where by volunteers regularly helped with weaving instruction.

The completed banner is a vibrant reflection of the multi-cultural nature of Hartford. Craig stated: "When we sit and create this project, there is no class, or gender, or color...It's a unification process." She continues describing the banner as "locking in our differences and our similarities in one piece of tapestry." Director of Real Art Ways, Will Wilkins, sat at the loom and wove in a sparkly thread. After, he stated: "This is a physical manifestation of that variety and beauty." Other weavers included Poet Kate Rushin, Library Director Bridget Quinn-Carey, Hartford Mayor Luke Bronin, and Hartford Public High School teacher Nancy Otter.

HPL now owns the work and it is with great pleasure that the Clare Gallery will exhibit *Woven Threads, Woven Lives* with Fromson's blessing. The hope is that the more the community sees this project, the more the community will learn about itself. As Fromson notes: "It's really to show we are all quite different and at the same time quite beautiful...we don't have to be homogeneous."

The Clare Gallery primarily features exhibitions that emphasize world religions or interfaith themes, as well as social justice themes, on either a global or local level. The Gallery is housed in the Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry at 285 Church Street, Hartford, CT. The Center is part of St. Patrick – St. Anthony Church, a vibrant and active downtown faith community.

The Clare Gallery's hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays; 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Fridays; Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Sundays from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The Gallery and all related events are open to the public. Free parking is available directly across from the church, and the facility is handicapped accessible. More information may be found at www.spsact.org/clare2.