

FRIEZE

"Marilou Schultz Treats Weaving as a Technology"

By Mathilde Walker-Billaud

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The artist's show at CCS Bard's Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-On-Hudson, connects Diné textiles to histories of computing



Textile artist Marilou Schultz disarms with technical and optical tricks. Take her triptych *Three-piece blanket* (1995–96), featuring large, contrasting horizontal bands framed by diamonds of acid red and indigo blue. The wool panels can be shifted vertically, with straight lines broken into dynamic zigzags and two dimensions converted into three. Referencing the Diné (Navajo) 'third-phase wearable blanket', a 19th-century striped design with large geometric shapes in the centre, Schultz turns a historical garment typically worn on the shoulders into a sculptural wall piece.

Three-piece blanket is among the works on view in Schultz's solo exhibition at Hessel Museum of Art, 'Replica of a Chip: The Weaving Technology of Marilou Schultz', which traces the artist's rich dialogue with Diné weaving traditions that sit at the core of her practice. From the show's outset, it is clear that Schultz weaves in concert with her community. The first gallery includes the thick woven piece (*untitled*) *double twill sampler* (ca.1974), a sequence of tiny geometric shapes interlaced into a two-faced design (traditionally used for saddle blankets). Modest in size, it is presented as a teaching tool, made by the artist to memorize this complex Diné pattern.

Juxtaposed with a sampler featuring the same design by the artist's mother Martha Schultz, this early work grounds her in an artistic matrilineage, or what art historian Julia Bryan-Wilson has termed 'mother-taught'. Schultz's weaving represents a methodology and a way of life that has never ceased to be and to evolve, even in the face of violent colonial oppression. During the *Hwéeldí* (the Navajo Long Walk) between 1863–68, when the Diné were forcibly displaced and imprisoned at Fort Sumner in New Mexico, their flocks of Churro sheep decimated by the

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US army, Diné women invented a vibrant new design: the Germantown revival style, made with commercial yarn from Germantown, Pennsylvania.



'Replica of a Chip: The Weaving Technology of Marilou Schultz', 2026, exhibition view.

Courtesy: Hessel Museum of Art; photograph: Alon Koppel

This community-rooted sense of innovation surfaces in *Multiple Rugs* (ca.1980), an asymmetrical work that embeds multiple historical designs into a 'two grey hills' pattern. A 'sampler of samplers', it resembles a computer desktop full of open windows. The variegated, earth-toned composition showcases Schultz's mastery of natural dyeing, for which she largely harvests local plants. An undated *Dye Book*, also on display, details her experiments with ingredients and

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formulas. Schultz's skill as a colourist and geometer (as shown in an untitled piece from the 1990s and an accompanying process book, she is capable of perfectly reproducing a 19th-century *beeldléi* [Navajo serape]), combined with her taste for challenge, led her to accept a 1994 commission from Intel Corporation to replicate the Pentium chip. The resulting *Replica of a Chip* (1994) – which lends the exhibition its title but is only represented in the form of a corporate pamphlet – was pivotal for the artist. She has since introduced various symbols within this design that underscore the connections between integrated circuits, her land and her people – including the many skilled women weavers who worked at the Fairchild semiconductor plant on the Navajo Nation in Shiprock from 1965–75 and contributed to the manufacture of the first microprocessors, playing an integral role in the history of computer engineering.

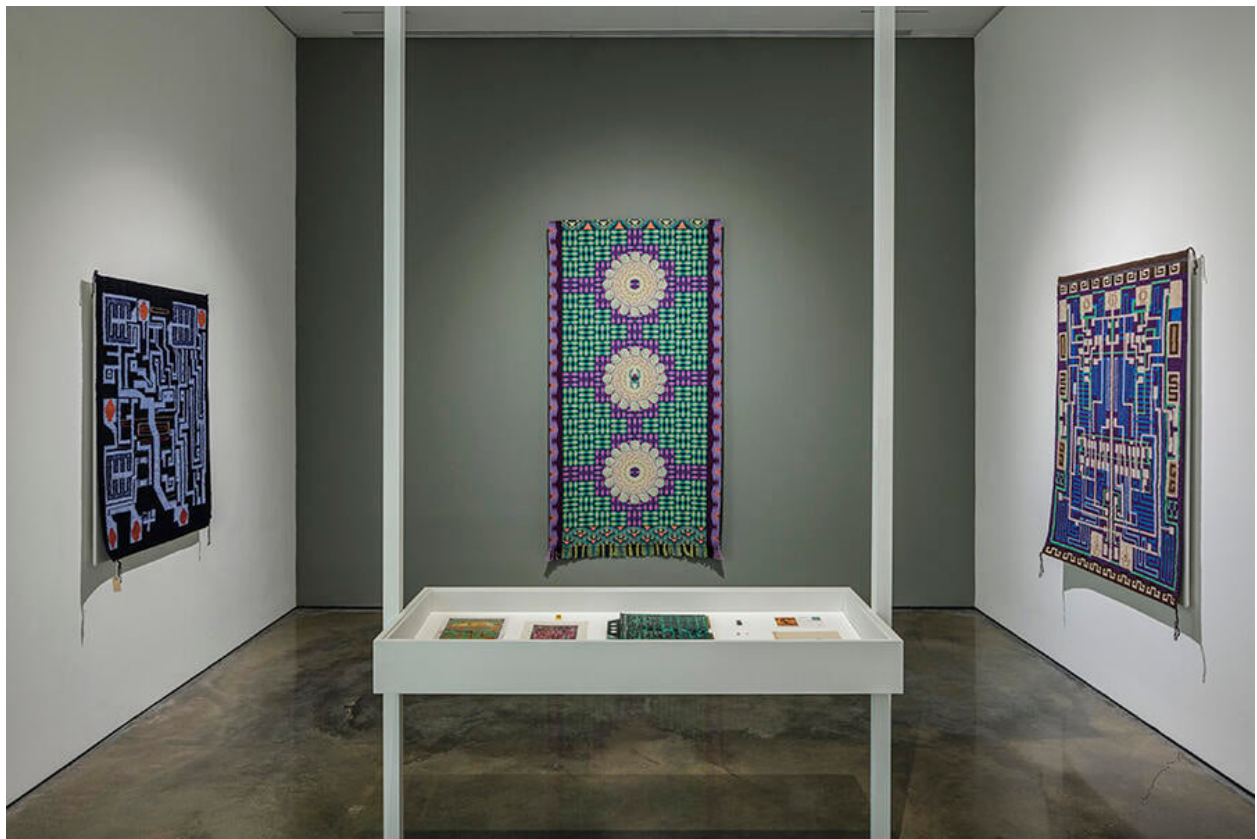


Marilou Schultz, *Multiple Rugs*, ca.1980, wool, aniline and vegetable dye and natural wool yarn, 1.6 x 1.3 m.
 Courtesy: Hessel Museum of Art and the Gochman Family Collection; photograph: Thatcher Keats

Schultz's work suggests that Diné weaving techniques are forward-looking, anticipating our globalized technological ecosystem. Hammering this point home is the recurring form of the zigzag, which symbolizes a lightning bolt in *Storm Pattern* (1982): an abstract map of the Diné homelands in which electric energy connects the Four Sacred Mountains (stylized here as rectangles) that border the Navajo Nation. Threaded through the survey, this motif is more than a visual effect: It helps to reposition the engineering and artistic legacy of Schultz's practice, locating the story of the artist's ancestral culture firmly in the digital age.

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'Replica of a Chip: The Weaving Technology of Marilou Schultz', 2026, exhibition view.
 Courtesy: Hessel Museum of Art; photograph: Alon Koppel

'Replica of a Chip: The Weaving Technology of Marilou Schultz' is on view at CCS Bard's Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-On-Hudson, until 29 November

Main image: Marilou Schultz, 3rd Phase Wearing Blanket (detail), 1977, aniline, indigo, roving respun in the 1970s, processed wool, 142 x 77 cm. Courtesy: Hessel Museum of Art and the Collection of Patrick and Catherine Maher; photograph: Alon Koppel

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