



The Fabric Workshop
and Museum

ARS
NOVA
WORKSHOP

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Living Temple: The World of Moki Cherry
September 25, 2025–April 12, 2026

A retrospective exhibition on the work of Swedish visual artist and designer Moki Cherry (1943–2009), presented with new works created with Artist-in-Residence Lisa Alvarado (b. 1982)



Moki Cherry, *Title Unknown (Dragon)*, 1975. Textile appliqué tapestry, 78.75 x 137.75 inches. Photo credit: Anders Sune Berg, Galleri Nicolai Wallner.

Philadelphia, PA, June 24, 2025—The Fabric Workshop and Museum (FWM) and Ars Nova Workshop (ANW) are pleased to present *The Living Temple: The World of Moki Cherry*, a major retrospective centered around Swedish visual artist and designer **Moki Cherry** (1943–2009). The exhibition brings together textiles, tapestries, paintings and drawings, concert posters, clothing, ceramics, sculpture, music, video, and archival materials to explore her omnivorous and omnipresent creativity. Building on the artist’s collaborative and multi-sensory approach, this presentation tells the story of Moki’s visionary process. In addition to works by Moki, the exhibition will be accompanied by new works and performances created with FWM Artist-in-Residence **Lisa Alvarado** (b. 1982) along with a robust schedule of live events organized by Ars Nova Workshop. *The Living Temple* runs September 25, 2025 through April 12, 2026.

Kelly Shindler, Executive Director at FWM, said, “this partnership between The Fabric Workshop and Museum and Ars Nova Workshop connects two Philadelphia organizations dedicated to contemporary creative practice through artistic collaboration. Moki Cherry was an artist who exploded the boundaries of art in compelling and ever-surprising ways. We are honored to present the largest ever survey of her work in the United States and delighted to develop new work with Lisa Alvarado in a rich continuum of Moki’s legacy.”

Moki Cherry began her decades-long career as a practicing artist in the mid-1960s, continuing until her death in 2009. She created art both for the gallery and as an act of living—incorporating wildly colorful and inspired pieces made of fabric, clay, and wood into her everyday life. The result is a “living temple”—a domestic space both ordinary in function and extraordinary in spirit.

Central to Moki’s artistic production was her family life with her life partner, American composer and performer Don Cherry (1936–1995) and their children Neneh, Eagle-Eye, Jan, Christian, and David Ornette. Moki’s guiding mantra was “home is stage, stage is home.” It informed the integration of paintings, furniture, ceramics, and textile arts (from clothing design to large wall hangings), as well as video, audio, and live performance into their shared residences in New York and Sweden.

Beginning in the 1960s and continuing for nearly two decades, their alliance entwined music, theater, performance, and art in visionary ways, forging hybrid audiovisual spectacles brimming with life and social consciousness. They coined the terms “Movement Incorporated” and “Organic Music,” evoking both new experiences and their roots in the natural world. Together, they challenged hierarchies embedded within contemporary music and art.

“I’m thrilled to be working with The Fabric Workshop and Museum to bring Moki Cherry’s groundbreaking and long-overlooked work to Philadelphia,” said Mark Christman, Executive & Artistic Director of Ars Nova Workshop and co-curator of the exhibition. “*The Living Temple* will showcase Moki’s striking, large textile creations, which provided a rich, fluid, and mobile context for the couple’s art and life. Moki’s moveable art transformed otherwise unremarkable spaces into the setting for the ‘happening’-like concerts she and Don organized. As part of the exhibition, visitors will enter into this artistic immersion—not only to see Moki’s creative eye but to understand the role that the works played in creating a total experience.”

Moki Cherry’s art was shaped by an itinerant life, both geographically and conceptually. Her work integrated global artistic traditions—Swedish folk motifs, South Asian and African textiles, and Indigenous craft practices—without being confined to a singular cultural lineage. The Cherrys’ lifestyle

itself was an act of defying borders, creating an art practice rooted in fluid, transcultural exchanges rather than nationalistic definitions of identity.

"Their work anticipated contemporary conversations about migration, diaspora, and cultural hybridity that emerges from global movement," said Christman.

Lisa Alvarado: Talismans for a Theater of Resilience

Joining this presentation of Moki Cherry's work is Chicago-based artist Lisa Alvarado, whose approach to artmaking and music shares affinities with Moki's. Alvarado is known for her free-hanging abstract textile paintings that draw on her Chicana/Mexican American perspective as well as her interests in vibration and the cyclical rhythms within music, nature, and the body. Her works operate as stage sets and artworks simultaneously, as a mobile setting for the band Natural Information Society (NIS), for which she plays harmonium.

"It's an honor to have my work in conversation with Moki Cherry," said Alvarado. "There is a through line that bridges creative expression within everyday life, a path between visual art and musical performance that is woven within both of our works."

As an Artist-in-Residence working in collaboration with the FWM Studio, Alvarado will experiment with sculptural fabric assemblage, screenprinting, and dyeing techniques to create an immersive environment of textile and sound. The project brings together Alvarado's interests in creating settings for performance with research that considers the present historical moment alongside layers of the past. As part of her research, Alvarado and the FWM Studio team have visited mineral collections at educational institutions in Philadelphia to learn more about the history of the region in terms of geological time.

"In my practice I think about the way that the landscape can offer textural impressions of memory and the history of change," said Alvarado.

Recalling movements that began as gathering spaces of solidarity, such as the 1965 formation of The Farm Workers Theater (El Teatro Campesino), *Talismans for a Theater of Resilience* will function as a stage that is activated through sound, light, performance, and visitors inhabiting the space. Throughout the exhibition's run, the gallery will serve as the setting for extended programming curated by Ars Nova Workshop, such as Hamid Drake, Naima Karlsson, and Natural Information Society, among others.

Publication

A fully-illustrated catalogue will be published in 2025 and will include contributions by curators Mark Christman and Danielle Jackson, Silvana Lagos, Evie Ward, Hamid Drake, Hettie Judah, and others.

Organizing Credits

The Living Temple: The World of Moki Cherry is organized by Ars Nova Workshop in partnership with The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia. The exhibition is curated by Mark Christman, Executive and Artistic Director at Ars Nova Workshop, and Danielle Jackson, Curator at Artists Space, New York.



Moki Cherry, 2006. Photo: Sveva Costa Sanseverino. Courtesy of the Estate of Moki Cherry.



Moki and Neneh Cherry, in their home in Gamla Stan, Stockholm, 1967. Photo: Sven Åsberg. Courtesy of the Estate of Moki Cherry.



Moki Cherry, *Title Unknown (Fabric Sculpture from Utopias & Visions)*, 1971. Silk, satin, polystyrene balls. 84.65 x 23.62 inches. Photo credit: Anders Sune Berg, Galleri Nicolai Wallner.



Moki Cherry, *Dina Kanagina*, 1972. Textile appliqué tapestry (silk, cotton, mixed fabrics), 107.48 x 59.06 inches. Photo credit: Anders Sune Berg, Galleri Nicolai Wallner.



Lisa Alvarado, *Spiral Yellow 4*, 2024. Acrylic, canvas, fabric, wood, 99.25 x 96.75 inches. Photo credit: Tom Van Eynde.



Lisa Alvarado, *Spiral Yellow 1*, 2024. Acrylic, canvas, fabric, wood, 97.25 x 96.75 inches. Photo credit: Tom Van Eynde.

About The Fabric Workshop and Museum

The Fabric Workshop and Museum (FWM) is an internationally acclaimed contemporary art museum devoted to the creation, presentation, and preservation of innovative works of art. Its mission—*Collaborating with artists, revealing new possibilities*—embodies a 48-year commitment to helping artists experiment with the expressive possibilities of a broad spectrum of new materials and techniques. Through its renowned Artist-in-Residence Program, FWM provides artists at all stages of their careers with the opportunity to collaborate with its studio staff and take their work in fresh and often unexpected directions. FWM presents large-scale exhibitions, installations, and performances, utilizing innovative fiber and other media including sculpture, video, painting, photography, ceramics, and architecture. Founded in 1977, FWM brings this spirit of creative investigation and discovery to an eager audience, broadening access to art and advancing its role as a catalyst for innovation and social connection.

About Ars Nova Workshop

Ars Nova Workshop (ANW) is an award-winning presenter that elevates the profile and expands the boundaries of jazz and contemporary music. ANW cultivates connection and curiosity through deep listening, improvisation, and joyous creative expression. Winner of the ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming and Philadelphia magazine's "Best of Philly" award, ANW is an internationally recognized jazz and creative music presenter. Since its inception, ANW has programmed more than 1,000 unique events throughout Philadelphia, often in partnership with leading cultural institutions. ANW performances have featured many of the most significant contributors to modern music over the last 50+ years, including Cecil Taylor, Pauline Oliveros, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, John Zorn, Brandee Younger, Jason Moran, and countless others. ANW is more than a presenting platform: it is a site of deep engagement, where artists are invited into a network of thinkers, makers, and listeners who recognize the power of creating fugitive spaces and the ways they sustain artistic and communal life.

Through major festivals, traveling exhibitions, and archival recordings—such as recent ones featuring Marshall Allen and the work of Muhal Richard Abrams—ANW preserves and extends the legacies of avant-garde and improvisational traditions. ANW creates opportunities through publishing, residencies, estate work, wellness activities, and podcasts for artists to develop their work and explore the radical potential of Black creative music and improvisation as living, evolving forces.

Support

Major support for *The Living Temple: The World of Moki Cherry* has been provided by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, with additional support from the Coby Foundation, the Pennsylvania Department of Economic & Community Development, the Robert D. Bielecki Foundation, and the American-Scandinavian Foundation.



THE COBY FOUNDATION, LTD.

ROBERT D. BIELECKI
FOUNDATION

###

Media Contacts

Justin Rubich
FWM Communications
Tel: 215.561.8888 x224
jrubich@fabricworkshopandmuseum.org

Mark Christman
Exhibition Curator/ Executive & Artistic Director of Ars Nova Workshop
Tel: 215.805.3376
mark@arsnovaworkshop.org