



The Fabric Workshop
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The Living Temple: The World of Moki Cherry
and
Lisa Alvarado: Talismans for a Theater of Resilience
September 25, 2025–April 12, 2026

A retrospective exhibition on the work of Swedish visual artist and designer Moki Cherry (1943–2009), presented with a new exhibition created by 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—UPDATED August 26, 2025—Ars Nova Workshop (ANW) and The Fabric Workshop and Museum (FWM) 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 conjunction with *The Living Temple*, FWM Artist-in-Residence **Lisa Alvarado** (b. 1982) will present *Talismans for a Theater of Resilience*, an exhibition of new fabric, light and sound works. The two exhibitions will be activated with a robust schedule of live events organized by Ars Nova Workshop. *The Living Temple* and *Talismans for a Theater of Resilience* run 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 exchange of visual art and experimental music.”

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.

Connective Ties Between Art and Music

Alongside this presentation of Moki Cherry’s retrospective is a new exhibition by Chicago-based artist and musician Lisa Alvarado. For the past 15 years, Alvarado has played harmonium in the band Natural Information Society and created mobile stage sets for their performances with her abstract free-hanging paintings. Alvarado’s use of her artwork on stage precedes her awareness of Moki’s contributions to Organic Music Society. While their artistic styles and perspectives are very different, the two artists have been recognized for their engagement with musical performance. Organic Music Society and Natural Information Society are the connective ties between the two artists, whose lives are woven into the vibrant continuum of creative music.

Lisa Alvarado: Talismans for a Theater of Resilience



Lisa Alvarado, in collaboration with The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia. *Talismans for a Theater of Resilience* (process images), 2025. Photo credit: Joshua Abrams; Carlos Avendaño.

Lisa Alvarado's practice spans painting, murals, fabric, light, sand, sound and musical performance. In her work, she explores the notion of liminality—or in-betweenness—as a generative space where rhythm, movement, and history intertwine. Drawing from her Mexican American heritage, ancestral memory, and suppressed histories, she has developed a multi-sensory language that resists boundaries and opens new modes of connection. Guided by what she calls “vibrational aesthetics,” the artist draws from bodily pulses and earthly cycles alike, creating works rich with visual and sonic resonance. In staging her vibrant paintings alongside sound installations and live performance, Alvarado transforms galleries into spaces that offer moments of resistance, community, and renewal.

“For me, the works are material vessels of time, processed through lived experience and charged with the vibrations of life, music and love. They continue to absorb, transform, and build a record of time and place,” said Alvarado.

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

“I think about the way that the landscape can offer textural impressions of memory and the history of change. I like to view resilience from a geologic perspective that relates to the earth's cycles and systems,” said Alvarado.

Alvarado connects her research into land and notions of time to the present-day resurfacing of suppression that recalls her family's experience in the 1930s and the Chicano civil rights movement of the 1960s. In her new large-scale works, which she describes as *talismans*, Alvarado forms ties to the 1965 flag used for Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers (UFW). The flag is now widely adopted as a symbol of unity and empowerment. Alvarado evokes these histories through the stepped contours of her canvases, carrying personal and collective reverberation.

For this exhibition, Alvarado debuts two monumental hanging works—each over 19 by 10 feet—that create dynamic intersections of space. Composed of multi-colored fabric bands that collide with stepped and curved shapes, they echo natural forms such as rock strata and the circle of the gallery's windows. Alvarado outlines her drawings in yellow trim over dye-saturated grounds split with combinations of yellow/red and red/blue. Translucent mesh fabrics and tinted window gels channel shifting daylight into projected color, syncing the work with the rhythm of the day and season. Layered with kinetic sound, these immersive pieces operate on both architectural and bodily scales, inviting visitors into a meditative environment where light, pattern, and vibration converge. In bringing together these diverse elements, Alvarado sets the stage for FWM's eighth floor gallery to become, even temporarily, a theater of resilience.

Performances

Throughout the run of these shows, the galleries 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 for *The Living Temple* will include contributions by Danielle Jackson, Harmony Holiday, Neneh Cherry, Evie Ward, Magnus Nygren, Hettie Judah, and others (estimated publication date Fall 2026).

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.

Lisa Alvarado: Talismans for a Theater of Resilience is organized by Ars Nova Workshop in partnership with The Fabric Workshop and Museum, with artwork created by Lisa Alvarado in collaboration with The FWM Studio team.

About Moki Cherry

Swedish, 1943–2009. Lived and worked in London, New York, and Tågarp, Sweden.

Moki Cherry was a Swedish artist and designer who worked in tapestry, painting, music, clothing, collage, sculpture, and ceramics. Born Monica Karlsson in Norbotten, Sweden, Moki moved to Stockholm in 1962 to study fashion design and drawing, but life redirected her career towards a broader creative practice integrating painting, tapestry, costume, set design, and collaborations with her partner, jazz musician Don Cherry (1936–1995). Moki's artworks incorporate functional materials and traditional crafts, seen in her textile appliqué pieces, woodcarvings, paintings, furniture, and ceramics. Exploring themes of ecology, environmental and spiritual awareness, caregiving and the home environment, Moki envisioned her art as a holistic way of life she described as "home as stage, stage as home." Her interdisciplinary works reached audiences through performances, workshops, schools, galleries, and in her own home. Moki met Don Cherry in 1963 in Stockholm during his tour with Sonny Rollins. Over 20 years, they lived between Sweden and New York, raising their children and collaborating on projects such as Organic Music. In 1970 they bought a former schoolhouse in Skåne, which became a base for their semi-nomadic lifestyle. This space was central to their artistic and family life and acted as a creative and educational hub for musicians, artists, friends and children. Moki exhibited her work for over four decades, dividing her time between Sweden and New York until her death in 2009.

About Lisa Alvarado

American, born 1982, San Antonio, TX. Lives and works in Chicago, IL.

Lisa Alvarado is a visual artist and musician that bridges vibrational forms and reimagines collective space. She works with painting, wall murals, light, sand, sound and musical performance, creating works that engage with abstraction as an ancient and global tradition that precedes European modernism. Her pulsating works draw on her Mexican American perspective as well as her interests in vibration and the cyclic rhythms within music, nature, and the body. Alvarado plays harmonium in the band Natural Information Society and uses her free-hanging paintings as mobile stage sets in their performances. Her work has been shown at the Whitney Biennial, New York, NY; The Kitchen, New

York, NY; The Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, PA; The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum, Hartford, CT; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; MOCA, Jacksonville, FL; REDCAT, Los Angeles, CA; Moody Center for the Arts, Houston, TX; Marfa Ballroom, TX; Bergen Kunsthall, Norway; and Kunsthalle Münster, Germany; among others. She has performed at the *Pitchfork Music Festival*, Chicago, IL; Inhotim Museum, Brazil; *Le Guess Who Festival*, Utrecht, The Netherlands; Pioneer Works, New York, NY; Palais De Tokyo, Paris, France; and Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art, Porto, Portugal, among others. Alvarado has recorded on albums released on Eremita, Drag City, and Aguirre Records. Her work is represented by Bridget Donahue in New York and The Modern Institute in Glasgow.

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* and *Lisa Alvarado: Talismans for a Theater of Resilience* 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.



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