

## PRESS RELEASE

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### ***Wendat Women's Arts* by Annette W. de Stecher, Honored With the 2024 Melva J. Dwyer Award**

WESTFORD, Massachusetts – *Wendat Women's Arts*, a groundbreaking study in Indigenous art histories, was presented with the 33rd annual Melva J. Dwyer Award by the Canada Chapter of the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA). Written by Annette W. de Stecher, the book was published in 2022 by McGill-Queen's University Press. The Dwyer jurors selected *Wendat Women's Arts* out of 22 publications on art, architecture, and museum studies from across Canada.

*For centuries, women artists of the Wendat First Nation of Wendake in Quebec have created artworks of intricate design and complex meaning in moosehair and quill embroidery. Their work records and transmits ancestral knowledge across generations of artists and remains a vibrant and important practice today ... Wendat Women's Arts is the first book to bring together a full history of the Wendat embroidery art form. Annette de Stecher challenges the historical anonymity of Indigenous women artists by arguing for their central role in community history and ceremony. Through their art, these women played an important part in the diplomatic strategies that advanced the sovereignty of their nation, work that was an extension of their position of authority in their families and clans. – Wendat Women's Arts, back cover.*

"I explore both the imagery that women produced and women's egalitarian status in Wendat society in the period prior to and during early contact, together with the role of women and their arts in economic development and diplomatic relations," writes de Stecher (p. 10).

Well researched and beautifully illustrated, this book fills a critical gap in our art historical understanding of Wendat embroidery, an art form long neglected because it was considered as craft. De Stecher's important research emphasizes the role of women and the place of Wendat artistry in the cultural heritage of Wendake, opening a door for scholars, learners and members of the public to walk toward greater understanding of the significant contributions of Indigenous women artists, and can contribute toward a greater understanding and recognition of the past and future cultural heritage of all Indigenous peoples.

**Annette de Stecher** is Associate Professor, Critical Museology, Visual Arts of America at the College of Art and Sciences, University of Colorado Boulder. She holds a Ph.D. from Carleton University. Her teaching and research focus on histories of integrated visual arts across cultures and politics of representation, with a special interest in women's histories and critical museology.

#### **Honorable mentions**

Many of the 22 books nominated for this year's Melva J. Dwyer fill a gap in our knowledge of underrepresented cultures and art practices and, for their exemplary research, the jury awarded honorable mentions to:



Michele Hardy, Timothy Long, and Julia Krueger, ed., *Prairie Interlace: Weaving, Modernisms, and the Expanded Frame, 1960-2000*, University of Calgary Press, 2023.

Tammy Gaber, *Beyond the Divide: A Century of Canadian Mosque Design*, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022.

Liv Valmestad, Vice-President/President-elect, ARLIS/NA, presented the Melva J. Dwyer Award. Pierre B. Landry was the 2024 ARLIS/NA Melva J. Dwyer Award Sub-Committee Chair, and jury members were Mary Gordon, Liv Valmestad, and Christine Walde.

The Melva J. Dwyer Award was established in recognition of the contribution made to the field of art librarianship by Melva Dwyer, former head of the Fine Arts Library, University of British Columbia. It is given to the creators of exceptional reference or research tools relating to Canadian art and architecture. Dwyer was a champion of the arts and of art librarianship who mentored a generation of ARLIS/NA colleagues.

#### **About Melva J. Dwyer (October 29, 1919 - November 13, 2017)**

With a diploma in piano and a master's degree in history, Dwyer joined the University of British Columbia Library after completing her MLIS at the University of Toronto. Dwyer quickly set to work building the first major art library in western Canada, relying on her expertise and helped considerably by a large monetary donation. In 1967, she became the first chair of CARLIS, the Canadian Art Libraries Section of the Canadian Association of Special Libraries and Information Services Division. This group later migrated to ARLIS/NA to become the Canadian Chapter. Throughout her career, Dwyer was active in ARLIS and IFLA, and traveled extensively to further develop connections with colleagues and book dealers. She retired from the University of British Columbia in 1984.

#### **About the Art Libraries Society of North America**

Founded in 1972, the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA) is a thriving international organization of more than 1,000 individuals devoted to fostering excellence in art and design librarianship and image management. The membership includes architecture and art librarians, visual resources professionals, artists, curators, educators, publishers, students, and others interested in visual arts information. To serve this diverse constituency, the society provides a wide range of programs and services within an organizational structure that encourages participation at every level.

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