



**Stanley Museum of Art**

University of Iowa  
160 W. Burlington St.  
Iowa City, Iowa 52242  
[stanleymuseum.uiowa.edu](http://stanleymuseum.uiowa.edu)

**NEWS RELEASE**

**Contact:** Mahvish Farid  
[mahvish-farid-1@uiowa.edu](mailto:mahvish-farid-1@uiowa.edu)

**University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art Showcases 220-foot Tapestry**

Artist Sandra Sawatzky Hand-Embroidered an Epic History of Oil

**Iowa City, Iowa** – Beginning February 3, 2026, visitors to the Stanley Museum of Art will have a unique opportunity to experience a monumental work of art created by the Canadian artist Sandra Sawatzky. Hand embroidered over the course of nine years with wool-silk threads on linen, *The Black Gold Tapestry* uses an ancient craft to narrate a global history of fossil fuel extraction.

“*The Black Gold Tapestry* is like an antidote to AI and tech overlords,” stated Sawatzky. “In a future worldwide power shortage, the tapestry will abide and keep on trucking, since it’s plugged in without needing to be plugged in.”

The phrase “black gold” first appeared in connection with the oil industry in the early twentieth century, indicating oil’s relative rarity and value. Sawatzky, who resides in Calgary (the oil capital of Canada), debuted the immersive textile at the Glenbow Museum in Alberta in 2017.

“Sandra’s cross-disciplinary research was exhaustive, and she condensed an overwhelming chronology into vignettes,” noted Diana Tuite, visiting senior curator of modern and contemporary art. “What results is a profound reminder of the geological history that binds together all species on earth and the ways our geopolitical world order is designed around resource extraction. It expresses our ecological interdependence beautifully.”

*The Black Gold Tapestry* takes cues from the Bayeux Tapestry, an eleventh-century textile that recounts the conquest of England by the Duke of Normandy. Sawatzky modeled her composition after this celebrated piece of medieval art, organizing the design into three pictorial bands overflowing with arresting details. The top and bottom borders enclose over four hundred dinosaurs, populating what Sawatzky refers to as her “film on cloth.”

“We are showing this piece in what will be a momentous year for its source material,” Tuite added. “In September 2026, the Bayeux Tapestry will go on view at the British Museum in an unprecedented loan brokered with the French government.”

Included in the exhibition are touch labels that illustrate the four stitches used by Sawatzky. Designed by Iowa fiber artists Linzee Kull McCray and Codi Josephson, these labels will offer visitors an opportunity to physically appreciate the materials, labor, and techniques involved in the fabrication of this immense work of art.

*The Black Gold Tapestry* will be on view at the Stanley Museum of Art through June 14, 2026.

**Editor's Note:** Please note that the entire tapestry measures 219' 9 5/8" in length. High-resolution installation photographs will be available to all media outlets to help convey the work's monumental scale.



###

### About the artist

Sandra Sawatzky has lived in Alberta for over forty years. After two decades of working in the field of film, she embarked on a path to create *The Black Gold Tapestry*. Another embroidered installation, *The Age of Uncertainty*, was unveiled at the Nickle Galleries in Calgary, Alberta, in February 2022. In November 2022, she received the Doug & Lois Mitchell Outstanding Calgary Artist Award at the mayor's Cultural Leaders Legacy Arts Awards. She is currently working on her newest installation, *Back to the Garden: An Altarpiece to Nature*.

Learn more at [theblackgoldtapestry.com](http://theblackgoldtapestry.com)

### About the University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art

The University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art is a leading university art museum that serves as a focal point for members of the public as well as a multi-disciplinary tool and creative hub for students across campus. The Stanley has one of the most important university-owned art collections in the country, including significant holdings of African art, 20th-century painting and sculpture, works on paper, textiles, and ceramics.

Learn more at [stanleymuseum.uiowa.edu](http://stanleymuseum.uiowa.edu).

For high-resolution images, contact:

**Mahvish Farid**

Communications and Marketing Coordinator

Stanley Museum of Art

[mahvish-farid-1@uiowa.edu](mailto:mahvish-farid-1@uiowa.edu)

(319) 335-1047