

# Press Release



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## Unique, Large-Scale Sculptural Work Focal Point of Gabriel Dawe Exhibition at Newark Museum

*The Shape of Light: Gabriel Dawe*

September 19, 2015 – January 10, 2016

**NEWARK:** This fall, the Newark Museum will present *The Shape of Light: Gabriel Dawe*, featuring large-scale, site-specific installations, as well as textile-based sculpture and works on paper by internationally known artist Gabriel Dawe. Dawe's installations for Newark are part of his ongoing series titled *Plexus*, a reference to the network of nerves within the human body and the connections between the body and its environment. Dawe's installations for Newark, *Plexus no. 30* and *Plexus no. 31*, will engage with the Museum's historical architectural spaces, taking over the main galleries for the run of the exhibition. Working with several hundred thousand feet of colored thread at a time, Dawe creates luminous abstract environments that explore connections between textiles, architecture and people.

“Gabriel Dawe has a way of reading physical spaces and creating installations that both animate and open up the architecture they inhabit,” said Steven Kern, CEO and Director of the Newark Museum. “We are thrilled to be able to bring his brilliant installations to the New York-Newark region for the first time and for people to encounter these wonderful works firsthand.” The exhibition will open September 19, 2015 and run through January 10, 2016.

Each of Dawe's *Plexus* installations is a unique form that transforms and illuminates its architectural setting and invites extended looking. Designed to be encountered from multiple vantage points, Dawe's finely layered planes of color appear to shift and change under the viewer's gaze. The taut angular forms are built up from fine lines of thread that, through repetition, create a monumental presence. Reconceiving the structure and materials of

weaving on a grand, inventive scale, Dawe's *Plexus* works question constructed notions of masculinity and femininity, art and craft, strength and fragility.

"These installations are related as well to the human need for shelter and man's ultimate vulnerability," Dawe has written, "One thing fashion and architecture have in common is their function of protecting the individual. By taking the main component of clothing—sewing thread—and generating an architectural structure with it, scale and material are reversed to create a new construction that no longer shelters the material needs of the body, but instead creates something that is symbolic of the non-physical structures humanity needs to survive as a species."

The most extensive museum presentation of Dawe's work to date, *The Shape of Light* will allow visitors to experience two large-scale installations in sequence, along with smaller works that highlight the artist's inventive process and engagement with a wide range of materials. Dawe's early embroidery work and sculpture explore the power of clothing to express identity as well as personal and collective histories. Altering textile fragments and garments—sometimes beyond recognition—with straight pins and other materials from the world of fashion, Dawe creates expressive and highly textured objects. Some are poetic and narrative and some purely abstract, with a surreal and slightly animate quality.

Dawe was born and raised in Mexico City and now lives in Dallas. His studio practice has been shaped by his childhood in Mexico as well as by his studies of international abstract art and his experiences living abroad. After training to be a graphic designer in Mexico, while living in Montreal Dawe decided to make a shift to a studio art practice. His earliest works incorporate hand embroidery, a form of art he was drawn to as a child, but felt excluded from, given the rules of traditional Mexican culture identifying embroidery as women's work. As Dawe's practice evolved he continued to combine textiles and abstract forms to question social constructs. Along with an obsessive interest in pattern built up from repeated linear forms, Dawe's production is defined by his keen interest in the study of light—both its scientific properties, made up of the spectrum of color—and to the evocative atmospheric qualities light can create. He cites the wide open skies of Dallas and rural Mexico, and the luminous environment of Mexican churches as some of the sources for his *Plexus* series.

*The Shape of Light: Gabriel Dawe* is curated by the Newark Museum's Curator of American Art, Tricia Laughlin Bloom, Ph.D.

Opening in conjunction with *The Shape of Light*, the Newark Museum will present related exhibitions of modern and contemporary works from the permanent collection exploring color and surface pattern in a range of media. *Outside the Lines: Color Across the Collection* will bring together

new acquisitions and rarely seen works from all four of the Museum’s major curatorial departments—textiles, ceramics, and paintings from the African, Asian, American and Decorative Arts collections. In the American contemporary galleries, color will be further explored in an ongoing exhibition, *Chromatic: Minimalism and Color Field Experiments*.

“Gabriel’s inventive approach to layering color and repurposing conventional materials presents a perfect opportunity to highlight our strong holdings of modern and contemporary abstraction and color field works in the American collection and across the collections,” Bloom said.

Dawe’s work has been included in numerous museums and galleries throughout America and Europe, including Dallas Contemporary, Galerie Lot 10 in Brussels, Belgium, and most recently at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville Arkansas. Dawe is represented by Conduit Gallery in Dallas.

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