ECSU’s Koczý exhibit features rarely seen works


Koczý was a childhood witness to the Holocaust who found salvation in art. Deported to a slave labor camp at age 3 and deprived of family, education, basic needs for human life and dignity, Koczý survived to forge a life as an internationally recognized artist, and to bear witness to the trauma and loss experienced during and after World War II.

The exhibit features works rarely seen together or in the United States, including drawings from the early 1980s on loan from the Musée de la Création Franche in Bègles in France, paintings and sculpture from private and public American collections (including significant loans from the CUNY/QCC Art Gallery at Queens, N.Y.), and personal journals, photos and art tools from her estate.

“Koczý’s passion for making art was complete,” said exhibition curator Marion Callis, director emerita of the Akus Gallery. “Her work and teaching married tradition with innovation, invariably taking an unconventional approach to quotidian materials, with the goal of illuminating the intensity and beauty of life and expression for herself, her students and her viewers.”

Initially self-taught in art, Koczý ultimately graduated cum laude from the École des Arts Décoratifs in Geneva, Switzerland, and later, the École des Beaux Arts in the same city. She launched her career as an in-demand fiber artist, specializing in complex and often free-standing hybrid tapestry-sculptures, until her discovery by influential mentors, including the Venice-based expatriate art impresario Peggy Guggenheim, Jean Dubuffet, the artist-founder of the Collection de l’Art Brut in Lausanne, Switzerland, and Thomas Messer, director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York from 1961 to 1988.

Callis will speak about the artist on Thursday, Nov. 6, from 3 to 4 p.m., followed by a reception from 4 to 7 p.m. at the gallery.

The exhibit will be on display until Dec. 11.