'Wence and Sandra Martinez: Woven Together'
Art without borders

The topic of borders looms large in the media, and had a wall actually been built bordering Mexico and the United States, perhaps the Museum of Wisconsin Art would not have mounted an exhibition such as "Woven Together" (through Nov. 6). Like the dazzling white bridge linking Downtown West Bend with the museum, the work of Wence and Sandra Martinez serves to link two countries. He hails from Teotitlán del Valle, Oaxaca, Mexico, where his family ran a textile business. She's from Wisconsin. They met south of the border and wed in Dane County.

When artists work each other, it sometimes signals heavy competition. For these two, such is not the case. Sandra's works in both soft hues contribute to and mirror the images of Wence's exquisite weavings. Beautifully curated by Erika Pettersson, the exhibit is installed on the first floor in the west gallery, and is sparse and uncluttered with a great view of the aforementioned white bridge spanning the Milwaukee River. My art education experience tells me that art should both illuminate and educate, so you'll be advised to linger and seek out the details in each piece. For example, in one of Wence's several weavings, a tiny red thread, barely visible, snakes its way through the warp and weft. In a stroke of pure coincidence, several fine abstractions by the late Wisconsin artist, Charles Thwaites, are installed on floor two. And though his concepts were birthed at least two decades prior to those of the Martinez duo and bear no direct influence on their work, time has not erased the symbolism.

If you are bound for Door County, visit www.wisconsinart.org for more about their working space. If you can't make that trek, at 6 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 20, Sandra and Wence will be panelists to discuss their lives as artists.

Sandra and Wence Martinez, 'Convergencias,' (2011), Undyed handspun Churro wool and aniline dyes, 2016, Lent by the Martinez Studio