



BRENT WADDEN



pirated), and saw a connection between the torrent community and the oral traditions of weaving. The method has historically been a verbal lineage of knowledge, passed through the generations: a history Wadden became a part of in his lessons from Meinolf. Since then, however, Wadden's work has taken a more insular approach, riffing off of his past pieces to create circular re-assessments of his combinations of panels, geometrics, and colour. Their position as stretched textiles—using the same technique used to stretch canvas—further expands the constraints of the medium.

By connecting weaving and painting, Wadden is breaking down confines on both fronts. Weaving is a traditionally female-dominated art form in North America and Europe, placing Wadden at an unusually lonely spot for a male artist. It's a consideration not made explicit in his work, but the conversation hovers around the entire medium. "I never considered weaving to be a gendered practice before, but it comes up a lot now—especially in North America," Wadden says. "I was defensive at first, but have accepted that that's how it's perceived because of its history. I was grossed out by painting in the beginning—well, not the act of painting—but I was turned off by how it was all tough guys flexing their muscles in art school. It was a bunch of dudes taking up space, and I couldn't relate to that." Apparitions of paintings are still visible in most of his work, but instead of brush strokes, small glitches within the fabric are noticeable—a result of Wadden's attempt to use as much recycled material as possible. But for the artist, the development overrides the aesthetic. "There hasn't been any time

where I decided not to show a work. Because I'm kind of neutral about it. It's more about the process," he says. "Compositionally, the mistakes in the weaving are important. They're part of it." Working on his weavings nearly every day, Wadden has undoubtedly improved his skills, but those new techniques don't necessarily make it to the loom. Instead, Wadden reduces his form to more simplistic methodologies. "It was never my intention to become a skilled weaver, but the more I work with the medium, the more curious I become with how it all works," he admits. "It's cool to understand the various ways you can work and then step back again to the simplest methods." If he runs out of a certain kind colour of yarn, Wadden will simply pull out another spool. He opens up a two-panel piece to display a spread across the floor, its yellow accents off-kilter. The hand-stitched panels are about a half-centimeter off, but these inconsistencies never disrupt the harmony of the whole.

There is an instinct to attribute Wadden's work to one medium or another. The two methods are so disparate in materiality and application that there are few similarities to be found at face value. Yet Wadden's textiles buzz and reverberate as the soft waves of weaving connect the graphic elements. The disconnected components spread further apart when stretched between the frames, and yet, each woven line can be followed through the spool like an elongated brush. Up close, the painted threads are exposed. —AS

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