ALMINE RECH

Brent Wadden
The Decline

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Brent Wadden takes “The Decline of Western Civilization” as inspiration for “The Decline,” his first exhibition in Brussels’s Almine Rech Gallery. The Canadian-born and Berlin-based artist’s new paintings from his ongoing “Alignment” series embody the counterculture rejectionist spirit documented by Penelope Spheeris for her 1981 chronicle of Los Angeles’s punk scene in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Spheeris, however, recorded a subculture dedicated to destruction. By contrast, Wadden’s resistance takes shape through renewal, revision and attention to sustainability.

The punk rock movement and Wadden’s form of anti-consumerist creativity share rejection for immediate, cheap and disposable commodity culture. An often overlooked aspect of the punk aesthetic was a visual emphasis on reusing discarded goods and prolonging the life span of ephemeral material. Wadden weaves tactically rough geometric abstract tapestries constructed from second-hand synthetic and natural textiles. He sources his material from today’s cyber and real world last stop shops, such as eBay, Craigslist and thrift-stores.

Interwoven with these anonymous and abandoned items are scraps of fabric donated by Wadden’s family and friends. He juxtaposes light and dark sections to create a disorienting sense of positive and negative space. As the works evolve during the final stretching process, Wadden embraces the aesthetics of decay by encouraging the warp and weft to mold into awkward, imperfect formations. The resulting work combines Wadden’s folk heritage from the Canadian east coast with an irreverent challenge to the ethics of consumption.

Born in 1979, in Nova Scotia, Canada
Lives and works in Vancouver, Canada