

Brent Wadden

Banks / Bars

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Almine Rech Brussels is pleased to present the third exhibition of Brent Wadden with the gallery.

In his third solo show at Almine Rech, Canadian artist Brent Wadden is presenting a new series of paintings in which he further interrogates his relationship to time.

Brent Wadden has always been slightly outside the mainstream. After studying painting and drawing at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, in an age when most spent their time in front of a computer screen, he took an interest in weaving. He learned the trade from Travis Joseph Meinolf, an artist from San Francisco who was working in Berlin at the time. The connection with the Bauhaus school seems obvious, although Wadden's curiosity was originally sparked by the quilt makers of Gee's Bend, Alabama, well before he deepened his knowledge of the movement. The interest of his work lies essentially in the sectorisation of different media, as he says himself: "to me, the Bauhaus movement seemed more based on notions of industrial design, while I was more focused on what it meant to weave. I actually continued to paint murals, or to mix both types of work in my first exhibitions, but I found it disturbing, so started to think about transforming weaving into what could be considered a painting."

In these large-scale pieces, Brent Wadden expands the relative flatness with dynamic geometric shapes, sometimes spreading beyond the frame. Some have already likened his work to the paintings of Ellsworth Kelly or Bridget Riley, but this new series takes us even further back in the history of art. When faced with his energy-filled, warm blue and red triangles, one cannot fail to think of futurist Luigi Russolo and his peers, as they sought to depict the speed of light as it fragments. Every point in the weave seems to stop time, but Wadden's work is still infused with rhythm, musicality almost. The artist has much to say about combinations and palettes of colours; some of his other paintings feature soft shades blending, even though the technique itself forces a clear cut between colour tones. He may in fact be drawing us closer to the sources of Orphism, which Guillaume Apollinaire called a language of light, or to the designs of Sonia Delaunay. "I really like her art", says Wadden, "even though painting allows for more freedom and spontaneity than weaving, which by nature takes longer and is more tedious. I can produce sketches or preparatory drawings quickly, but creating the work itself is a regular and assiduous task in response to a composition elaborated beforehand". Every morning, Brent Wadden goes to his studio and listens to podcasts as he constructs his unhurriedly body of work, but denies all interpretations of it as meditative. Instead, it is totally focused on the transition from one colour to the next, on observing progression in the interplay of shades. He openly defines himself as an "art worker" dedicated to purely visual issues. A few years ago, Brent Wadden discovered the *Supports/Surfaces* movement at an exhibition in Los Angeles. He particularly enjoyed Claude Viallat's treatment of materials: in an unending return to the essence and sources of the medium, Viallat also often used the language of hardworking labour to describe his work, based on the same iconic pattern since the late 1960s to allow him to focus on pictoriality alone.

"My true subject", Wadden concludes, "is work itself. It boils down to the organization of my tools and evolution of my compositions, the pace of which is dictated by the action underway. I am exclusively absorbed in the process: at the end of the day, I experience the satisfaction of work accomplished". Every morning, he revives an almost ancestral process, and leaves interpretation to others.

- Marie Maertens