

ARTFORUM

VANCOUVER

Brent Wadden

CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY,
VANCOUVER
555 Nelson Street
January 12–March 25, 2018

The surfaces of Brent Wadden's large woven geometric abstractions repel one's attention. The combination of chroma and line prevents one from becoming fully absorbed in either element, similar to the interaction of color and pattern in the compositions of Bridget Riley. Lines waver in the warp and weft of these works, which the artist calls paintings. Even though pieces such as Score 1 (Salt Spring) (all works cited, 2018) resemble the hard-edge abstractions of the previous century, and although the artist usually stretches the weavings around a support, that classification seems strangely anathema, if not wholly self-limiting. What is lost in the discussion of such medium-specific particulars are the peculiar ways in which the works' nonrepresentational maneuvers intersect with the poetics of everyday life.



View of "Brent Wadden: Two Scores," 2018.

Score 2 (16 Afghans) comprises a woven piece and a surrounding band of framed photographs of found, secondhand weavings. Wadden photographs them, coldly, as if they were forensic evidence. Their designs and patterns are brilliant and confounding, yet whoever originally created them remains unknown. These blankets and crocheted granny squares are testaments to the fact that formal abstraction and pattern are not merely the purview of the art historical but are part of another tradition that decorates our kitchens, tables, and beds. For Score 2 (16 Afghans), the artist took apart each used textile and recycled its threads in order to make this large-scale fabric assemblage that lies, without base or support, in the middle of a room. The juxtaposition of documentation and upcycled product serves as a before-and-after comparison, but in both, the colors of his materials are slightly faded, indexing the hours, days, and years of use and handling. Their appearance insists we consider this object not as a painting or picture, but as dust collector.

– Andrew Witt