

These Artists Are Changing our Expectations of What Tapestry Can Be



BRENT WADDEN

Despite their resemblance to Color Field paintings, the majority of Brent Wadden’s fractured, geometric works are made up of woven panels that he sews together and stretches tight over wooden stretchers. The artist studied painting as an undergraduate before teaching himself how to weave, yet he hasn’t abandoned the abstract gestures that dominate the canvases of the great mid-century painters.

While prolific artists like Ellsworth Kelly, Frank Stella or Bridget Riley might produce a piece in hours or days, Wadden has taken abstraction in a slower-paced direction. These days, Wadden’s biggest challenge is the time it takes to produce a work: “It’s a big commitment,” he said. But weaving at a loom also satisfies the artist’s urge to make a tactile, one-of-a-kind objects by hand.

The influences Wadden cites are not the painters mentioned above. Traditional folk art from Nova Scotia, where he grew up, possesses “an honesty” that he tries to cultivate in his own practice. To that end, Wadden’s cardinal interest is in “embracing the mistakes that happen along the way.” As a self-taught weaver, he may find that his composition “doesn’t properly align,” or the yarn he’s using runs out, leading to variations in tone and color.

– Julia Fiore