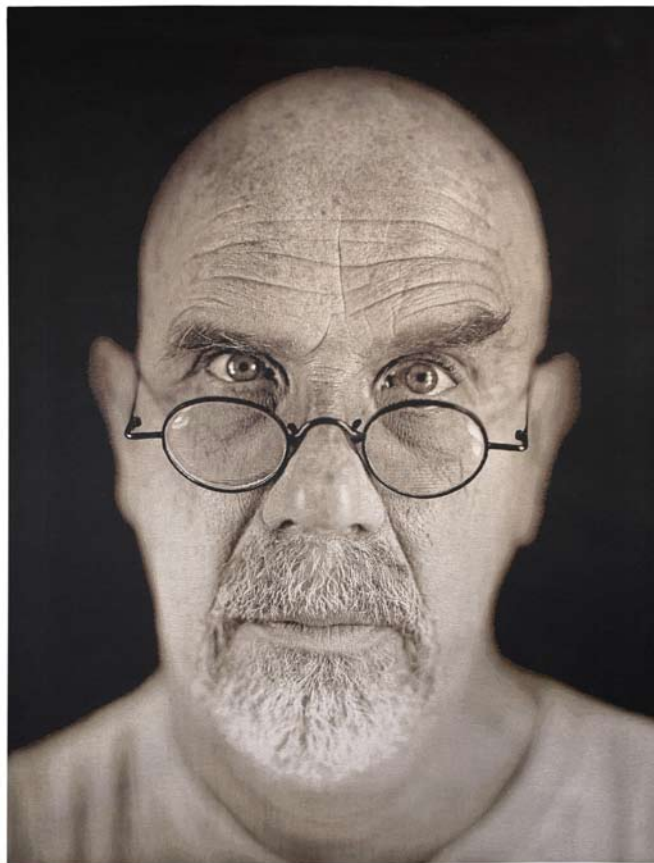


Think of them – at first, and only in theory – as large-scale prints; enormous-scale prints, in some cases. Le Corbusier once mused that tapestries were “nomadic murals,” and in works such as Leon Golub’s 14-foot-long *Reclining Youth*, this muralistic quality is undeniable. Too, the Magnolia Tapestry Project’s woven works are editioned multiples, much like the lithographs, etchings, and other print editions executed at Magnolia by artists like Bruce Conner, Robert Arneson, Mel Ramos, or Rupert Garcia. These woven editions undergo the same lengthy proofing process as a lithograph or an etching: a series of trial proofs are inspected by the artist, who works with Donald Farnsworth to correct colors and accent lights or darks until the final work fits their vision exactly. The tapestries also tend toward the same rectangular format one associates with works on paper (with a few exceptions – notably Jeff Sanders’s convex, three-dimensional tapestries of moons and planets). And they are created by an alchemical transformation akin to that powerful alchemy which makes printmaking unique: the transformation of an image created via one method – a metal plate engraved by hand, a collage of cut paper elements, a series of brushstrokes – into an image created by another method: the pressure of a printing press and the ensuing interaction of plate, ink, and paper. The tapestries begin as one



Chuck Close - *Self Portrait*, 2006
Jacquard tapestry, 103 x 79 in.
Edition of 10

thing – a digital composition, comprised of drawn, painted, or photographed elements, visible on a computer screen as a series of pixels – and end as another, as a three-dimensional textile; by virtue of this transformation they are, at least in spirit, part of the printmaking tradition.

Now consider them as something else entirely: a matrix of thousands and thousands of colored threads; a kind of “print” created without press, plate, ink, or paper. The fact is that no printing goes into the creation of the tapestry editions. As Marshall McLuhan says, “the medium is the message.” They are not pigment on a ground; the ground is the image. Every color and detail is the result of the interaction of the colored threads which comprise the object itself, the vertical warp interlaced with the horizontal weft. As textiles, they are familiar and easily understood: textiles surround us (literally, in the case of clothing) in our daily lives. The tapestries create an environment, evoking a somatic response simply by their presence.



Ed Moses - *Crema de La*, 2006
Jacquard tapestry, 103 x 79 in.
Edition of 6

Artists have used these warp and weft threads to create images which vary greatly in their content, from dynamic to reserved, abstract to figurative. The layered warp and weft threads in Ed Moses's editions are in their own way as sculptural and topographic as the impasto of Moses's paintings. Scale emerges as a key factor: Chuck Close's translations of daguerreotype portraits transform the delicate intimacy of reflective silver plates into a confrontation with an epic human landscape. The dramatic scope of Doug Hall's *Piacenza Opera House* conveys the vastness and high spectacle of an Italian theatre. In Lewis deSoto's *Security*, the minute printed pattern inside a security envelope is blown up into an interlocking geometric field, reminiscent of printed fabric. Deborah Oropallo uses the warmth and organic unity of the medium to offset her digitally layered figures, weaving together multiple traditions into portraits which are at once arresting and familiar. Bruce Conner's enigmatic black-and-white tapestries began as tiny cut-paper collages sourced from 19th century engravings; reinterpreted digitally by the artist and woven into nine-by-nine-foot textiles, the new scale of Conner's images infuses them with a profound sense of gravity and classicism.



Jeff Sanders - *Moon*, 2007
Jacquard tapestry, 72 in. dia. x 8 in. deep
Edition of 12

Classicism is aligned in the Magnolia Tapestry Project with a fresh and adventurous attitude toward technology, resulting in a handshake between the art of the past and the art of the future. Tapestries are an ancient medium, with antecedents from centuries past including Chinese kesi, Middle Eastern kilim carpets, and Medieval European wall hangings; yet these editions are created using cutting-edge software on state-of-the-art Macintosh computers and hot-rod industrial looms. Unlike reproduction tapestries and traditional hand-woven work, which divide an image into solid areas of color, these tapestry editions use a mosaic-like network of color combinations that the viewer's eye perceives at a distance as modulations of color. This method could be likened to pointillism, in which tiny dots or points of color are optically blended. Pointillism is typically associated with painting, but the origin of the method lies in the work of Eugene Chevreul, a French chemist who served as director of the Les Gobelins tapestry works in Paris. Chevreul developed the color wheel and was the first to formulate what he called "simultaneous contrast," the notion that the eye perceives a particular thread's color based on the color of its surrounding threads. One sees Chevreul's simultaneous contrast at work today in



Bruce Conner - *At the Head of the Stairs*, 1987/2003
Jacquard tapestry, 90 x 82 in.
Edition of 6

television and computer displays, which use tiny dots of red, green, and blue to render color.

Computers and tapestries are not as far removed from one another as one might think; the perforated punch-card system used to create the first computers in the early 20th century was developed by Joseph-Marie Jacquard in 1801, not for a computer, but for the loom which now bears his name. Magnolia Tapestry Project tapestries are created using these machines: digital Jacquard looms, receiving instructions from the modern version of a perforated punch-card – in this case,

digital weave files of extraordinary complexity, sent directly from Magnolia Editions in Oakland, CA to the looms in a small mill in Belgium. Each pixel of the weave file represents a weave structure; each unique weave structure (a combination of colored threads) results in a unique color. The gamut of available colors provided by two Jacquard “heads” (the devices which lace warp threads over or under the weft), 17,800 warp threads, and the sophisticated, proprietary color matching technique developed by Farnsworth are unprecedented. Correspondingly, the editions of the Magnolia Tapestry Project are at the vanguard of fine art textiles, ushering a time-honored medium into the next century. ■



Doug Hall - Piacenza Opera House, 2007
Jacquard tapestry, 78 x 96 in.
Edition of 9