

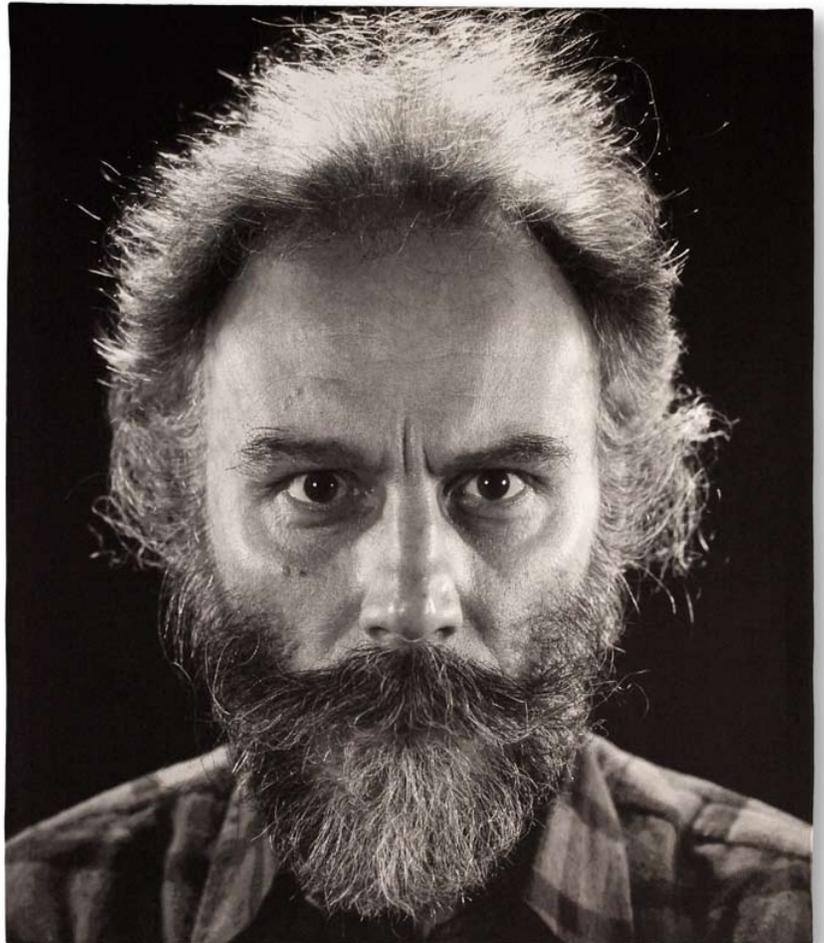
Chuck Close: *Lucas*

For almost four decades, Chuck Close has created portraits from tonal grids of fingerprints, pointillist dots, brushstrokes, paper pulp and countless other media. It was only natural that the artist's ambitions led him to tapestry, a classical and difficult medium possessing Close's signature tension between abstracted units (woven thread combinations) and a legible, unified surface. A series of daguerrotypes begun in the mid-1990s provided a uniquely suited pool of images for transformation into tapestry: each daguerreotype plate contains an enormous wealth of visual information in the tiny grains of its silver surface. This level of detail and intimacy is amplified by Close's use of the large scale tapestry medium, as every line, freckle, twinkle in the eye, or slight tonal variation in his subjects' faces are faithfully transmitted via thousands of colored threads.

To create his woven editions, Close works with Magnolia Editions' Donald Farnsworth to develop a digital instruction set, called a weave file, translating the daguerreotype image into data which can be read by an electronic Jacquard loom in Belgium. This customized Dornier loom uses 17,800 Italian dyed cotton warp threads woven at 75 shots per cm, generating colors via different combinations of eight warp thread colors and the ten weft thread colors selected by Close and Farnsworth.



Although the tapestry appears to be black and white, a variety of colored threads were actually used in its construction.



Chuck Close - *Lucas*, 2011 - Jacquard tapestry, 87 x 74 in. Edition of 6

Close's *Lucas* is woven at a more intimate size than his previous tapestries, and the unprecedented detail in its matte surface is due to a higher thread count and a new palette which includes wool fibers for several of the black values in the work. With darker blacks and brighter whites than any of Magnolia's previous tapestry publications, this work has an exceptionally photographic quality appropriate to its subject.

Lucas depicts the groundbreaking photographer Lucas Samaras, who (like Close) is perhaps best known for his steadfast commitment to self-portraits. Samaras's work often involves one of Close's favorite photographic media – the Polaroid, which Samaras manipulates in innovative ways to produce “photo-transformations.” Together with Cindy Sherman and Andres Serrano, also subjects of Close tapestries, and the painter Alex Katz (another artist who has created a tapestry with Magnolia Editions), Close and Samaras are largely responsible for redefining contemporary portraiture; the extraordinary detail of Close's image and the sheer intensity of Samaras's gaze leave no doubt that both artist and subject are masters of their craft. ■