

# Guy Diehl: *Still Life with Kasimir Malevich*

Guy Diehl's first tapestry edition of 2007 finds the artist refining his ongoing quest to fuse concept and form into a single, streamlined composition. *Still Life with Kasimir Malevich* is quintessential Diehl: an austere horizontal ground; a palette ranging from intense shadows to practically glowing highlights; a spare, geometric set of shapes; and an underlying theme which draws the work into conversation with voices from the pantheon of modernism. Diehl's pleasure in tackling an artistic challenge is also present here, as he teams with the Magnolia Tapestry Project in an attempt to equal both the impenetrable, inky blacks of a lithograph and the subtle color shifts of an oil painting from within the tapestry medium.

The challenge extends to the work's concept as well, as Diehl paradoxically draws from the object-based still life tradition to address an art movement to which objects were anathema. As is often the case, Diehl recreates the work of an artistic hero within his own composition: here he returns to the work of Malevich, letting the Russian Suprematist's relentlessly concise visual vocabulary inform his own art practice. Malevich's 1915 painting *Black Rectangle, Blue Triangle* is an early work from a highly influential pioneer of modernism, one who championed "pure art" and what he considered its highest form: the square.

Diehl's tapestry pays homage to Malevich not only by reproducing *Black Rectangle, Blue Triangle* but by surrounding it with a host of square and rectangular forms, among which the flap of an envelope plays avatar to Malevich's solitary blue triangle. Malevich once wrote that "the... square and the forms proceeding out of it can be likened to the primitive marks (symbols) of aboriginal man which represented, in their combinations, not ornament but a feeling of rhythm." As the viewer's eye traces *Still Life's* continuous repetition of angles, from within Malevich's painting outward, this sense of rhythm emerges as the key to Diehl's image. His objects are unadorned and simple; reduced to planes of color and light, the crisp and precise parallels of their shapes and shadows act as a fitting tribute to Malevich and his contemporaries in the guise of a classical still life.



*Still Life with Kasimir Malevich*, 2007  
Jacquard tapestry with fabric paint, 54 x 76 in., Edition of 8

## About the Magnolia Tapestry Project

The Magnolia Tapestry Project originated from a collaborative effort between John Nava and Donald Farnsworth to realize Nava's images as sophisticated woven works for a Los Angeles cathedral commission. Years of painting, printmaking and digital media experience informed their unorthodox approach to the medium. The weaving techniques and procedures which the two developed, including the use of custom color palettes and a hot-rodged, double-headed Jacquard loom (courtesy of a partnership with a mill in Belgium), laid the foundation for a renewed inquiry into the fine art potential of tapestry.

In the same way that Tamarind and Gemini put the commercial lithographic technology of the 19th century into the hands of artists in the fifties and sixties, the Magnolia Tapestry Project is putting the electronic Jacquard loom to work in unexpected ways for contemporary artists. The Project has grown to include woven editions representative of several generations and numerous art movements: participating artists to date include Squeak Carnwath, Enrique Chagoya, Chuck Close, Bruce Conner, Lewis deSoto, Rupert Garcia, Leon Golub, Hung Liu, Ed Moses, Mel Ramos, Nancy Spero, Darren Waterston, William Wiley and others. ■