

Chuck Close: *Brad*

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.



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



Detail from *Brad*, showing the thousands of individual weave structures which make up the image.



Brad, 2009 - Jacquard tapestry, 104 x 78 in. Edition of 10

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 Farnsworth. A color palette must be developed for each tapestry edition containing all of the necessary values. A weave file is then constructed based on this palette. "There is more raw data in one weave file," explains Farnsworth, "than if you combined the text of all of Shakespeare's plays."

Close's *Brad*, depicting the actor, film producer, and philanthropist Brad Pitt, is available exclusively through PaceWildenstein in New York. ■