MAGNOLIA EDITIONS Newsletter No.8, Winter '05 - '06

Ed Moses, *Bronze Man*, 2006, cotton and metallic thread jacquard tapestry, 105 x 80 inches, edition of 3

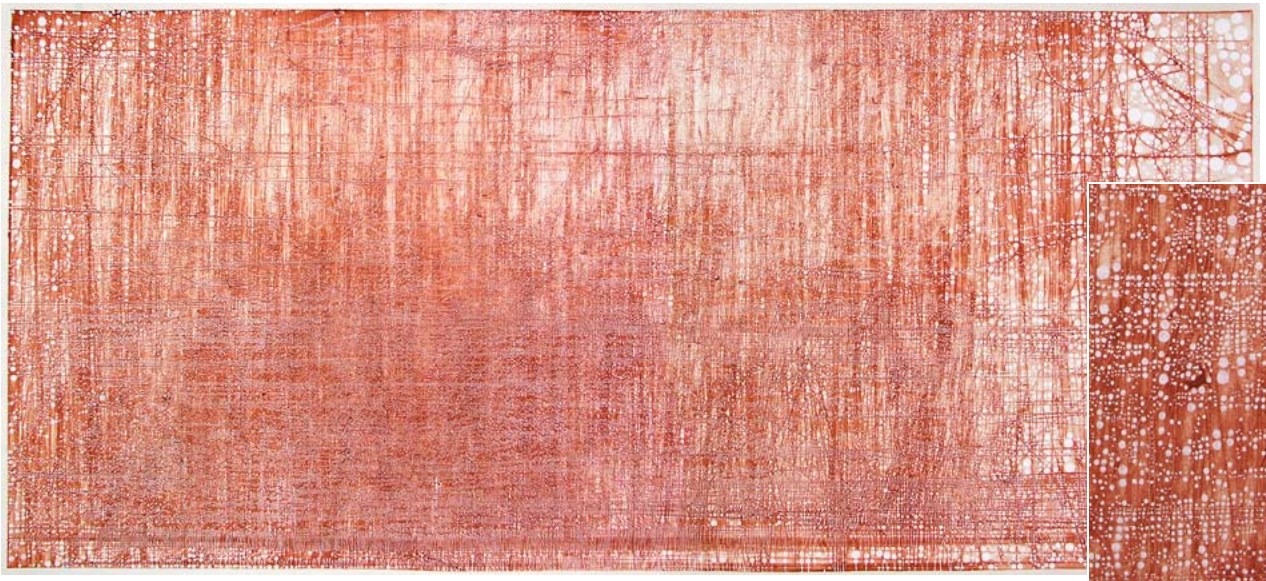
NEW EDITIONS:
Tapestries by Ed Moses

Renowned L.A. artist Ed Moses completed three tapestries with the Magnolia Tapestry Project in November: *Bronze Man*, *Twick* and *Sta-Morri*. All three works extend Moses' career-long investigation of the relationship between dynamic, spontaneous mark-making and a disciplined approach to composition. The strong formal balance of *Bronze Man*, *Twick* and *Sta-Morri* is offset by their uninhibited liveliness; to create the paintings on which the tapestries were based, Moses worked outside on a driveway, laying his canvas on wooden panels and zealously applying metallic paints with a mop. When it was time to weave, silver and bronze threads were used to capture the "pop" of Moses's metallic strokes against their dramatic backdrops of black and red. The reticulated golden islands of *Bronze Man* exude an appealing warmth, while *Twick*'s cool, lyrical washes of silver are powerfully offset by a glowing, volcanic ground. Moses is enthusiastic about the outcome; he and Magnolia Tapestry Project collaborators, John Nava, Matt Nava and Donald Farnsworth, have already started working with the artist on a series of unique tapestries based on manipulated elements from a number of his works.

Etchings by William Wiley

William Wiley's fascination with buttons was the impetus for Magnolia Editions to go on a button-making rampage. Three button machines are employed daily to produce artists' pins of various sizes (visit www.fineartbuttons.com to see the results). Wiley, the creator of some of Magnolia's favorite buttons -- including a series of ancient alchemical symbols -- has recently taken button art to a new level with his series of 40 etchings mounted on pins. Each of the 1 3/4" diameter images was etched into a copper plate, printed onto paper using an etching press, and then attached to a backing with the button machine. Wiley's images are cartoon-like, playfully reinterpreting familiar motifs in witty and unexpected ways. The series has a carefree aura, as if it is a window into the artist's stream of consciousness, but reoccurring symbols -- birds, clefts, hourglasses, and poignant references: a wooden shoe with the word *sabot* scrawled across it -- reveal the intricacies of Wiley's practice.

William Wiley, 2006
a selection of some of the 40 different button images
etching on Arches paper mounted on aluminum pins
1 3/4 inches across



Andrea Way, *Passacaglia*, 2005, drypoint and ink on paper
37 1/4 x 83 inches

Detail from *Passacaglia*

Hung Liu, *Fu (Happiness)*, 2005, cotton jacquard tapestry
81 x 79 inches, edition of 8

Fu (Happiness) by Hung Liu

In Fu (Happiness), Hung Liu has explored the tapestry's capacity to unify its constituent elements by treating the digital weave file as a canvas. Liu's second collaboration with the Magnolia Tapestry Project combines motifs, marks, and portraits scanned from various sketchbooks and paintings; the woven version represents these elements engaged together for the first time. As Magnolia continues to refine and expand its woven color palette, the tapestries are becoming increasingly bright and sophisticated: *Fu (Happiness)* possesses a remarkable depth, as if Liu had hand-painted each layer directly onto the cotton. Its colorful flora and fauna bloom and wing with a stunning vivacity, and their sense of flowering and emergence finds an enigmatic counterpoint in the central figure's expression, which subtly hints at a secret joy.

20 Year Drypoint - Andrea Way

Magnolia Editions was founded in 1981 and shortly thereafter, a long polyethylene cutting board was laid out in the studio to be sliced, spattered and manhandled by some of the most creative individuals of our time. As participants in Magnolia's 20 Year Drypoint Project, artists use the cutting board drypoint as inspiration or context for their own piece. Andrea Way recently stopped by the studio to show us the second installment in the project: the magnificent *Passacaglia*. The work's title is a musical term referring to an instrumental work based on one melody which serves as a ground, repeating without variation while other lines may fluctuate and change. The cutting board drypoint serves as this static foundation, a terrain which the artist has colonized with thousands of hand-painted dots of white ink. Way, a naturalist who uses rules, systems, and patterns inspired by or derived from nature to steer her creative process, had only one rule in generating

this colony: each 'cell,' as defined by the intersection of the cutting board's score marks, would be populated by the largest dot that could fit within its perimeter. The staggeringly intricate work evokes a variety of natural phenomena, from snow-laden branches to mold spores; it resonates on both a macro- and micro- scale, recalling galaxies and subatomic particles alike.

Guy Diehl

For months Guy Diehl has been putting in one to two full days a week at Magnolia Editions, working on his new prints: *Still Life with Cezanne & MFK Fisher* and *Malevich and The Moderns*. Just as Diehl's 30 color lithographs helped Magnolia Editions' to fine tune the process of color lithography, his pigmented ink-jet prints require a mastery of the process. Diehl's experience in lithography informs his practice: from scores of proofs, he selects the colors and manipulates light and shadow to create digital prints with a remarkably traditional feel. Textures he had hand-drawn years before on mylar, originally used as a background in his lithographs, were laid on the scanner and digitally incorporated into the images. Diehl's new prints continue his exploration of the historical tradition of still-life, paying homage to the figures who have inspired him.

LUNCH-BREAK: *a Conversation with William Wiley*

As rewarding as working in the studio is, at Magnolia Editions everyone looks forward to lunch, when we all leave the 8000 sqf. warehouse and artists, printers, dealers, collectors, and whoever's around enjoy some relaxed conversation. Present at the BayWolf restaurant in Oakland, California, this lunch, October 5th, 2005, were: William Wiley, Mary Webster (Wiley and Mary were married a few weeks after the interview), Donald Farnsworth, Era Farnsworth; the conversation was guided by Marisha Farnsworth.

WW (William Wiley): Well, the image is based on a picture from a book of medieval woodcuts based on Sanskrit hieroglyphics. Each woodcut is offset by the little hieroglyph it's been translated from. So that's the basic source. And the little snake on the color side is

Guy Diehl, *Malevich and The Moderns*, 2006
pigmented ink-jet print on rag paper, 17 x 24 inches

the hieroglyph; the big snake is based on the woodcut. Somebody sent me the book because the images reminded them of my work. So I would go through the book and when an image would strike me, would just blow it up -- and words that developed just came along, as they do generally with my work, as I work. I did a number of pieces from that book -- *US Art Sure* comes from the same book, only on that one I didn't use the hieroglyph, I just used the main figure of the man with the bow. The thing I've messed with all my art career is the relationship of representation and abstraction. I just heard that aborigines don't have abstractions, like each tree is that tree, it's not just a tree that makes up a forest.

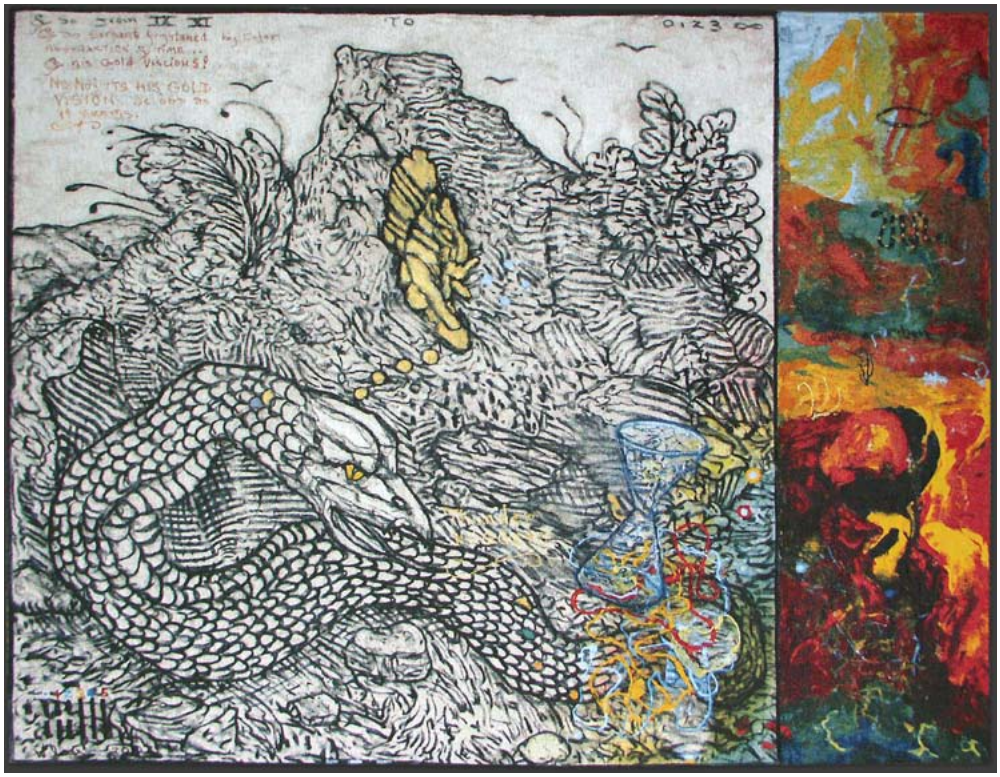
DF (Don Farnsworth): And I think there are people within our own society who can't deal with abstract concepts: like perhaps our president.

MF (Marisha Farnsworth): The serpent in this piece always struck me as a kind of comical figure. Traditionally, in most cultures, the serpent is a powerful figure associated with the cyclical nature of time and knowledge, both in Egyptian and Christian traditions. It seems to be afraid of itself and its own powers.

WW: The woodcuts with the medieval iconography are very cartoony, too. The golden mask is some kind of protection -- protecting him from the colors and abstractions that might take over. The struggle between realism and abstraction is relevant in so many areas of our culture. For example, it never occurred to me, at the time, that the intelligentsia was

quite happy when art shifted from social realism to abstraction. They were happy when things went totally abstract, like the New York School, and there no longer had to be any critical or political content, except occasionally in the titles.

DF: Speaking of abstract work with political titles, Peter Voulkos told me about a sculpture he was commissioned to create for the Hall of Justice in San Francisco -- the piece looks like twisted tubes on a vertical set of cubical forms. When it was unveiled, he was asked "Mr. Voulkos, what is the title?" And he replied, "Twisted Justice." (laughter)



William Wiley, *Serpent Frightened by Color, Abstraction & Time*, 2004
cotton jacqard tapestry, 76 x 105 inches, edition of 6

MW (Mary Webster): The serpent was part of pagan, pre-Christian, pre-monotheistic religions. And when the monotheistic religions came in, the serpent represented the thing they were trying to overthrow. And of course in Christianity the serpent was Lucifer, the dark god who had fallen and went to hell. There is really a connection -- think about the Goddess images in Crete, who pulled their hands out and they're holding serpents. And the Medusa image also refers to the powerful female; to me, cyclical time and the serpent are related to the feminine.

WW: The Alphabet vs. The Goddess -- have you ever read that book? Leonard Shlain, interesting writer, lives in Mill Valley, he's a surgeon. The first book he wrote was Art and Physics, and the second was The Alphabet vs. The Goddess. And he just noticed that anytime in history that language became abstracted, with the advent of print form, for example, women were disenfranchised and the feminine separated from knowledge. Religious domination began because knowledge was no longer woven into daily life, no longer integrated into the living community, but abstracted.

MW: And the actual body became an abstraction of the body.

WW: Shlain's latest book has a serpent on the cover, too; he basically speculates that consciousness and verbalization came about because women made the connection between the moon and menses. Loss of blood and childbirth created a need for proteins and iron, consequently women would align with the best hunter. The hunter thinks babies just happen; for him there was no connection between the sex act and the child. And so a sort of bargaining started to take place between men and women. Women could wield some kind of power over the men -- demanding more than just the meat on the floor; how about some flowers as well? And maybe a poem would be nice. And so grew consciousness and communication.

MF: And how does time fit into the birth of consciousness?

WW: Well, the time connection -- rather than just being loose and chaotic in the universe -- pregnancy, menstruation, the moon, all that started to link up in the female consciousness. Men aren't connected to anything in that way.

EF (Era Farnsworth): The Dalai Lama Portrait Project is divided up into different sections; the section that this tapestry will be part of is called "Commodity, Globalization, and Spirituality".

MW: Do you want to say something about how your tapestry is

William Wiley, The *U.S. Art Sure*, 2002
cotton jacqard tapestry, 82 x 104 inches, edition of 6

related to that topic?

WW: No. (laughter) Well, all those words fit what I think about -- those are the main preoccupations of my work. That piece in particular, unlike a lot of pieces, came out of working with images, rather than from a particular literary subject -- it could just as well be blocks; I've always struggled with the literary and the abstract.

DF: Well, I always interpreted it as a political piece. The snake, this narrow-minded figure who only sees in black and white, has this golden mask: the golden shield of money. He is afraid of abstract ideas. Right off the bat I loved the piece, for the way it contrasts this shallow, greedy impulse with a more ambiguous, colorful side of human nature.

MF: This piece confronts me personally more than I see it challenging or criticizing society. Perhaps because you deal with the relationship between the literary and the abstract, and black and white and color. It seems like an inward struggle, and functions on a spiritual level rather than a political level. With our society today, you can't blame one person; it's so much more complicated. Everything we do, buy and consume is adding to the predicament we are in. Even if we have the best intentions, there's the brutal reality of our existence. For me the serpent is a testament to a personal, yet universal struggle.

DF: We also have to be introspective -- are we the snake that can't see color, that's afraid of abstraction and the passage of time?

WW: I just wanted to make a design here, an abstract design, but I can rarely stay with something that simple. Something else always enters into it -- I contrast it with an actual thing, or literature, or -- blocks of color, but they stand for the blockhead that runs our government -- there's almost always a comment or something specific that's married to it. And so now and then I get something that's free of all that, and it's kind of a relief, because I can't stop pointing my finger at George Bush or whatever it is. It's good when the thing can just exist and just exist as is, so I can say (adopts cowboy drawl): "I don't know what it means, I just did it. You figure it out!"

MW: One other thing about this topic is that these tapestries are only possible because of globalization.

DF: It's true, there is an aspect of that. We got to know our neighbors -- in Belgium. And we have an agreement with another country to import these textiles. If globalization stops, we won't be able to weave them in Belgium unless we leave them there.

MW: So it's a global commodity, and it's also a multiple, which is a different kind of commodity than a one-of-a-kind. It has something to do with the time we live in, we're surrounded by multiples.

WW: I keep thinking about that Paul Virilio book *Pure War*. What's happening right now was so predicted in that book 20 years ago. We used to live in space, and now we live in time. Paris used to be in Paris, NY in NY, now they're just points in time. What happened with globalization and electronic communication is the ubiquitous, everything is everywhere, consequently nothing is anywhere. In the past what mattered was presence, now it's absence.

MW: The actual has to be absent for the representation to be present.

WW: Another important element is the military's job is to go out and conquer new lands, but there are no new lands to conquer, so what you end up with is endocolonization: the military starts conquering its own people.

MF: How do you deal with the pressure of addressing political topics, or global situations in the personal process of making art, and how do you reconcile yourself to finishing a piece and letting it go free in the world? I'm

thinking of something you quoted in your *Smithsonian* interview: "In art everything still has to happen. It is not enough to have something or be somewhere. One has to show by doing. Something must be done."

WW: It's hard. (laughing) It's a hard job, being an artist! That's a quote from Elias Canetti: "The sharpest and most ruthless hierarchy is in art." Because it rests on what hasn't happened yet. That's the thing that's maddening about it, and the thing that keeps it fresh and alive, and keeps it from being commodified. You may make a success out of Andy Warhol, but the art won't stay there very long; it goes on to somewhere else, because once it's been commodified it kind of loses something. It doesn't matter anymore whether it's good or bad, as long as that signature is on the bottom. The teeth kind of fall out at that point. So that's what keeps me at it and drives me crazy about it, that question: 'Have I done enough?' In a sense, what Buddhism allowed me to do is cut through that and say, 'This is what I did, and now I'll try another piece.'

MF: What is your relationship to Buddhism?

WW: Oh, I've had an arbitrary relationship to Zen over the years... I've identified with Buddhism to some degree more than any other philosophy...

DF: Yeah, avoiding suffering has always been big for me... (laughter)

WW: Yeah, that's a major preoccupation. I used to give out Suzuki Roshi's *Beginner's Mind*, and I used to read from it regularly when I was teaching at Davis. I fell into Zen almost by accident. I had taken a break... at lunchtime I would go up to this bookstore on the corner, Paul Elder's Books on the corner of Sutter and Stockton. One day in there I saw this little book, an interesting book, looked a little more handmade, although it probably wasn't. It was called *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* by Paul Reps. I opened it up and started reading and went, "yeah, yeah, this is what I need to read, to hear, to see." So I bought the book, and that was kind of my introduction to Zen. There were these koans in there, and the kind of thinking that was going on to make these koans work was highly attractive to me -- I totally identified with it and thought, "This is the kind of stuff I need to know about." And Paul Reps, before he died -- he was a Caucasian who studied Zen -- he said that his one ambition while he'd been here was to try to land a human being on Earth.

MF: So Buddhism has been an influence on your work, as well as politics. I like the idea of coming of age as an artist in California in the '50's and '60's, when there weren't a lot of galleries, economic pressures, or canonized art theory determining what artists did, and there was all this energy around social change: the civil rights movement, Zen... I'd like to know how you think that affected your development as an artist and how you feel now, being a well-known artist, about participating in the art market?

WW: A lot of the people teaching at the Art Institute back then were ex-GIs: Lobdell, Bischoff, Diebenkorn, a lot of them had been in the service. So I was thinking that to be an artist in that era, the '50's or '40's, it was definitely not considered a 'manly' occupation. So I think some of the attitudes of the teachers I studied with had to do with being macho doing something that was considered more feminine. Lobdell had this thing about putting New York down: all that was going on over there was social stuff, they weren't serious about art, all they cared about was who's who and the galleries. Lobdell told some student, "I've striven to remain obscure." And Bill Geis said (not to him, but to me), "Well, Lobdell, you've made it! Nobody knows who you are. Congratulations." And there was a real thing about, if you're really dedicated, then you don't show your work and you don't sell it. Most of the people I knew survived by teaching, that was a way to avoid acquiescing to

William Wiley, *Canister Under the Banister*, 2003
cotton jacqard tapestry,
68 x 83 inches, edition of 6

William Wiley, Robert Hudson & Richard Shaw, in collaboration
Rescue, 1997
collagraph/mixed media, 22 x 30 inches

anything you didn't want to. I had early success; there was interest in showing my work and I thought, Why not? If all I am is a commercial artist, then the sooner I find out about it, the better. Before I finished school the Staempfli Gallery in New York began to show my work, Joan's, Bischoff's, some West Coast artists. I was put down for being willing to show or sell my work.
In New York there was an actual market and an audience to support artists, whereas out here people just did it because they wanted to, because they had to. Without having anything to win or lose in the galleries out here, people were more open. There was more camaraderie and a lot of cross-fertilization. People were not precious about their ideas. I didn't really know any different until I spent a year in New York and understood it for the first time. The winters for one thing make you want to go into a museum just to get out of the cold. Big abstract paintings that were all one color were a relief from the street. I went to a Kenneth Nolan show and there was nothing but stripes, it was relaxing. My work in that context is just more of what's outside. When you went in Alan Frumkin's gallery in NY -- he represented a lot of west coast artists -- you stepped in the front door and there was all this stuff going on: UUUUUR, unnnNNNH, Grrrrrr! There was no other gallery quite like that.

MF: You've said that you like your audience to have different inroads to your work, which is part of what makes the work so complex: the images, the text, the political, historical, mythical and comical. Using materials that go back to the roots of art, like charcoal, has been a tactic for communicating with your audience. At Magnolia, you do a lot of work with digital technology, how does that fit in to your practice?

WW: Well, in the mid-sixties, Donald Judd was having things manufactured, Bruce Naumann was having neon signs made, and the artists wouldn't even touch the work. So I dabbled with that way of working for a bit and I reached the point where I had to ask myself, "Should I get rid of all this everyday equipment and get a vacuum forming machine?" And I just decided that I didn't want to do that -- that I wanted to keep, at least in my studio, the technology really simple, so I wouldn't be dependent on some machine which would break down and I wouldn't have enough money to fix it. But outside of that, having the opportunity to work with digital things is fine with me. I like the magic it can do to my work. And the tapestry for me, to translate something I did into a totally different medium, is magic to me.

DF: Well, the process involves this contemporary digital technology, which is less than a decade old. But it also involves 200-year-old Jacquard technology, and it's part of a centuries-old tradition of loom weaving. We have updated what is essentially a medieval medium. So we are almost going back to charcoal.

MF: Yeah, good point. With *So, Serpent,* tapestry adds a whole new level to the medieval imagery.

WW: The fact that it's made now, but it has an ancient quality to it -- the first one, the *Art Sure*, I love the translation of the charcoal into the fabric, and how the machines and your translation of it -- it's like English turned into Japanese or German or something. I think I told you after the first one, "I'm going to get rid of all the paintings and have them all in tapestry!" The first one, from North Carolina, the fact that the color was so off -- I loved it, because I would never think to use color that way.

DF: Our early experiments altered pieces in strange and interesting ways. *Art Sure*, with its woven charcoal and subtle blushes of color certainly show our progress. We couldn't say we translated from English to Japanese in the early experiments--maybe from English to Pig Latin.

WW: Yeah, but I love the difference. Vive la difference!

BUTTON CONTEST WINNER:

M.S. Hove

Magnolia Editions would like to thank all the participants of the Fine Art Buttons competition of 2005. The competition invited anyone to submit original button designs for the staff of Magnolia Editions to review. *Acorn* by Oakland artist, M.S. Hove, was chosen as the winning design. More of M.S. Hove's work can be seen on his website: www.mshove.com. Buttons by other contest participants and other artists are on view at www.fineartbuttons.com.

SHOWS & EVENTS:

Robert Hudson: The Sonoma County Years, 1977 – 2005
November 19 - April 2, 2006
Wed - Sun: 11 - 5
Sonoma County Art Museum
425 Seventh St.,
Santa Rosa, CA 95401
(707) 579-1500
http://www.sonomacountymuseum.com

Andrea Way: Drawings At Brian Gross Fine Art
Brian Gross Fine Art presents a series of Way's organically patterned drawings. The show features Way's contribution to the Magnolia Editions 20 Year Drypoint project.
December 15 - January 28
Tues - Fri: 10:30 - 5:30; Sat: 11 - 5
49 Geary Street, 5th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94108
(415) 788-1050
http://www.briangrossfineart.com

Majestic Tapestries of Magnolia Editions: Woven Works by Contemporary Artists
24 tapestries from the Magnolia Editions Tapestry Project. Artists include: Squeak Carnwath, Chuck Close, Bruce Conner, Lia Cook, Lewis deSoto, Guy Diehl, Don and Era Farnsworth, Leon Golub, Rob Keller, Robert Kushner, Hung Liu, Alan Magee, John Nava, Nancy Spero, The Art Guys, Katherine Westerhout, and William Wiley.
November 30th - February 12, 2006
Tues - Sun: noon - 5, and in addition Thurs - Sat: 6 - 8
Dean Lesher Regional Center for the Arts, Bedford Gallery
1601 Civic Drive
Walnut Creek, CA 94596
(925) 295 - 1417
http://bedfordgallery.org

Dan McCleary *Small Paintings* at Carl Berg Gallery
January 3 - 28, Tues - Sat: 11-6
6018 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90036
(323) 931-6060
http://www.carlberggallery.com

Ed Moses at Margo Leavin Gallery
Jan 14 - Feb 4
Tues – Sat: 11 - 5
812 North Robertson Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90069
(310) 273-0603

Visual Alchemy I & II Oakland Art Gallery
A 2-part exhibition focusing on the artists' shared approach of the Alchemist, transforming common materials into works of art. Works by 4 of the Bay Area's pre-eminent print houses: KALA Art Institute, Magnolia Editions, Paulson Press and Trillium Press.
Visual Alchemy I, Feb 1 - March 11, 2006
Featuring William Wiley, among other artists;
Visual Alchemy II, March 22 - April 29
Featuring Christine Eudoxie, among other artists.
Reception: Feb 16, 5-8 pm
Artist Talk: April 20, 6-8 pm
199 Kahn's Alley
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 637-0395
http://www.oaklandartgallery.org/

Inforestation
A multimedia installation in reaction to the urban environment in which we live. Brian Caraway, Julia Bernstein, and Joshua Churchill.
March 1 - April 24
Addison Street Window Gallery
2018 Addison, Berkeley, CA

Majestic Tapestries of Magnolia Editions at the Bedford Gallery