

ETN

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textileforum



Jacquard 'Tapestries'
Digitale Bildgewebe

The **Factum Arte** company perceives itself as a digital mediator of facsimiles in the museum and cultural mediation sector. Similar to Magnolia Editions, they consider their woven jacquard images as art prints, produced in co-operation with the respective artists and the Flanders Tapestry weaving workshop. Sales of those images are handled by 'The Paragon Press Publishers of Contemporary Art in Print', a company specialised in printed work, in operation in London since 1986 and in contact with several print studios in the UK and Continental Europe (<http://www.paragonpress.co.uk>). For Grayson Perry's "The Walthamstow Tapestry" dating from 2009, they state "jacquard weaving" as the medium, produced in an edition of 12 that comes in two sizes: small, 140 x 710 cm, and large, 290 x 1460 cm. Online contributions by some British art critics give "embroidery" as the medium, probably because in the UK textiles are primarily associated with embroideries, and also because the medium is considered strange in the art business in the first place.

While the conception of Factum Arte's pieces is associated with Flanders Tapestry as the production company (or performing "craft enterprise", as it were), Paragon Press Publishers as dealers dispense with any such reference. "Artist" Grayson Perry – the eccentric ceramicist and Turner Prize winner – had no clue about textiles until he was taught the basics of structure, feel and physical appearance in Belgium; now art dealers guided by market value consider him an "author".

continued on page 26 →

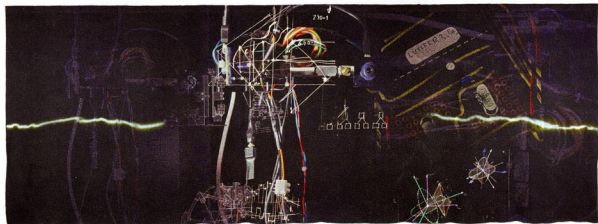
Right: Lara Baladi/Egypt, "Sandouk El Dounia", 2007; photo collage with 900 single images, woven by Flanders Tapestry, edition 3

Below: Manuel Franquelo, "Palimpsest and Palindrome", installation with double-faced Jacquard weaving, 2011, 750 x 275 cm, woven by Flanders Tapestry, edition 3



Photos from page 24 by Factum Arte © Copyright 2013

View at the exhibition "Penelope's Labour" of 2011 at the Cini Foundation in Venice with wallhangings by Craigie Horsfield and Grayson Perry





Left:
C. Horsfield,
"The Arciconfraternity of
Santa Monica,
Chiesa SS.
Annunziata,
Sorrento, Apr.
2010", 2012;
20,4 x 4,60 m

Exhibition
"Slow Time
and the Present",
Basel
Summer 2012

Photo © Kunst-
halle Basel

FACTUM ARTE

Established by artist Adam Lowe (born in 1959), this company based in Madrid and London works in the museum and cultural mediation sector. It employs more than 40 staff, including artists, technicians and conservators who largely produce facsimiles for digital mediation of cultural assets. Many of the objects in museums or private collections are extremely valuable and cannot be displayed on a frequent basis. Reproductions or visual media are employed so that their existence and production methods can still be conveyed to the public. In addition, the responsibilities of Factum Arte include conservation work. Its staff are active in six areas of endeavour: technology, art, conservation, exhibitions, publications, texts & magazine articles.

The facsimiles are woven jacquard pictures, series of which are increasingly sold in the art market, like those commissioned from Magnolia Editions. However, in the case of Factum Arte sales are handled by an art dealer, Aragon Publish-

ers of Contemporary Art in Print. Here, too, the mediator's work facilitates the production of art prints.

The first so-called tapestry was created in 2007 for Egyptian artist Lara Baladi and woven as a jacquard tapestry by Flanders Tapestries. In this case Adam Lowe – like Donald Farnsworth at Magnolia – acted as the mediator between the artist and the Belgian weaving workshop.

Probably the largest project in the textile sector was an exhibition entitled "Penelope's Labour", held at the Venice building of the Cini Foundation in 2011. Here, the company worked on jacquards by Lara Baladi, Manuel Franquelo, Craigie Horsfield, Manuel Franquelo, Carlos Garicoa, Azra Aksamija and Marc Quinn*).

Since then a close co-operation with Grayson Perry has developed. Initially the artist had no inkling of the possibilities offered by jacquard weaving. Now he has produced more than eight of these pictorial weavings – their weaves and surface designs proposed by Flanders Tapestries – and many of those serially produced items are on the art market.

Factum Arte's clients include the Paris Louvre Museum, the British Museum, the Berlin Pergamon Museum, the Prado Museum and National Library in Madrid, the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, the Supreme Council of Antiquities in Egypt and further cultural heritage institutions in Europe, North Africa and the USA.

Factum Arte runs a highly instructive website that provides information on its jacquard projects in the "art" and "publications" sections. Unlike Magnolia, textile objects play a minor part in the company's scope of work. ■

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Note

*) The exhibition "Penelope's Labour – Weaving Words and Images" was accompanied by a catalogue, eds. Adam Lowe & Jerry Brotton; Factum Arte, 2011; 96 pages, English text; ISBN 978-84-615-1642-1

THOUGHTS ON GRAYSON PERRY'S JACQUARD , TAPESTRIES'

AGAINST/CON Thomas Cronenberg

Grayson Perry has turned his hand to textiles with a series of designs for monumental tapestries which critique consumer society and the vagaries of the British class system. As a craft-based artist, his move to the loom is considered an appropriate step, and the ethos of tapestry as an ancient art form – like pottery based on the skills of the hand – is duly noted. This comparison does not stand up, however. Perry has his designs woven by a (digital) Jacquard process in Belgium. This has very little to do with crafts and much more in common with commercial art, or said in a more extreme way, colour photocopying.

For one there is the crucial element of time and with it the engagement with the tapestry during its production. While a hand-woven tapestry can take thousands of hours, a Jacquard loom, once prepared and programmed, can roll out even a large tapestry in a number of hours. Weaving a tapestry is not about reeling off the design in a sort of weaving-by-numbers process. A tapestry is the result of a myriad of design choices made at every turn, choices that bring an image to life.

In pottery terms, it is as if Grayson Perry had his pots produced commercially with his pre-drawn designs attached by transfer, and then sold in lots of 10 or 20. In both cases, the artist has little control over the design once he has finished the drawing or illustration. Just as a commercially produced pot would be a poor substitute for the subtlety of a Grayson Perry original, the tapestries produced by this crossover artist are a far cry from hand-woven tapestries.

The Grayson Perry Jacquards fail to convince me. Though bright enough, the colours are somehow sludgy and lifeless. The colour element, a key component of a tapestry, falls flat here as colours cannot be blended with great subtlety in this ultimately mechanical process. These monumental Jacquards are also unpleasantly lumpy and bumpy, reminiscent of machine-loomed carpet bag fabric or fake Gobelins chair coverings. The chunkiness of the textile is at odds with the clear graphic nature of the original drawings and saps them of some of their power. I kept looking at the texture, not the image.

There is place for computer-assisted Jacquard textiles in modern art. Grethe Sørensen and Lise Frølund use the medium to great effect for stunning tapestries which pack a visual punch in strong, graphic language. Machine-woven, but designed with that process in mind and the visual language adjusted accordingly.

FOR/PRO Anne Jackson

Grayson Perry is a contemporary artist, working in a range of media including ceramics, printmaking and textiles.

In the former two, the use of his own "skills of the hand" is essential to the finished work. In textiles, however, he has always involved other people and processes in the production phase. This began with his dresses (Perry's transvestism is an integral part of his life and practice), which are made in conjunction with fashion designers. They are often embellished with his characteristic designs, including footcases, fighter jets and winged phalluses in machine embroidery, which is also produced by others.

Much of Perry's work is engaged in the exploration of the British class system, its ideas of taste and culture. His imagery is often coloured with memories of his unhappy and oppressed childhood. In this context, Jacquard production of tapestries to his design makes perfect sense. Its traditional association with outmoded taste, and stuffy, slightly unpleasant domestic interiors, creates a feeling of unease. Its industrial nature, and consequent disconnection from the sensuous joys of hand-making, can evoke a sense of distance, even alienation.

Perry shows little interest in, or awareness of, the contemporary development of woven tapestry as an art form. His approach looks back to the historic European tradition of woven tapestries, which were essentially large-scale, flexible paintings, produced at enormous expense for kings and princes. The emphasis was on the drawing, imagery and content, the message being conveyed. As a hand-maker, he will be aware of the intertwining of time and skill required in the production of any crafted artefact. In his Jacquard works he explores the possibilities of producing large-scale tapestries, redolent of castles and great, crumbling aristocratic traditions, with an industrial process, and modern, computer-assisted technology. I believe this juxtaposition of object and mode of production is absolutely deliberate, and reflects his skill and subtlety as an artist.



The Walthamstow "Tapestry", 2009; 15 x 2.90 m; edition 3 pieces and 12 pieces in a smaller format; managed by Factum Arte, produced by Flanders Tapestries and edited by Paragon Press in London

About the authors

Thomas Cronenberg (German-American) and Anne Jackson (British) are members of the European Tapestry Forum (ETF) Steering Committee. The ETF is organizing regular international juried exhibitions. At its third edition both tapestry artists take part in this show currently to be seen in Finland.

Top: "The Upper Class at Bay", Nr. V, 2012; 4 x 2 m, edition 6 pieces

Centre: "Lamentation", Nr. VI, 2012; 4 x 2 m, edition 6 pieces

Right: "Expulsion from 8 Eden Close", Nr. III, 2012, 4 x 2 m; edition 6 pieces

The series "A Vanity of Small Differences" was managed by Factum Arte, woven by Flanders Tapestries and edited by Paragon Press, London

Material: wool, cotton, acrylic, polyester and silk

