

# Berlin Gallery Weekend 1/7: Brent Wadden

INTERVIEW BY JESSE MCKEE



KALEIDOSCOPE REPORT:  
BERLIN GALLERY WEEKEND

A painter working between Berlin and Vancouver, Brent Wadden produces weavings that draw on the histories of abstraction, Bauhaus textiles and folk art. His large-scale works stitch together geometric forms that are woven on a loom in his studio. Presented in the gallery, they invoke bold colour and form, while also accentuating the artist's labour.

*Interview by Jesse McKee / Photography by Franziska Sinn*



**Where does the title for your exhibition, “zerodayolds,” come from? It makes me think of a bakery, where the day old fare is often sold off at very cheap prices, nodding to the way you often source materials.**

“Dayolds” is a reference not only to how I gather materials but also to how I was brought up and to some extent how I still live my life. I’m thrifty I can’t help it. It’s in my blood. Although I rarely buy anything, it’s difficult for me to walk past a thrift shop and not go in. “Zeroday” has a few different meanings, but it’s a term primarily used when a hacker finds a hole in software that a developer missed and then shares it online for others to use. I’m not well versed in the weaving terminology, but I figured out how to weave two panels, one on top of the other at the same time. It’s a technique called double weave. I have my loom set so the two weavings are attached on one side, so when the fabric is unfolded it’s twice as wide as the loom can normally weave. With this process you can also make two separate weavings or attach both sides, which would form a tube. I see this process as a kind of weaving hack, far from anything “zeroday,” but it was new to me and isn’t such a common method. It took me some months to figure out how to use the new technique and the results are much different from my previous works.

**You do a lot of planning for your exhibition in the space, often making maquettes to consider the layout and flow of the works. How have you considered the space this time now that this is your third exhibition at Peres Projects?**

I made these works over a longer period of time than usual. The productions spread over two or so years, which is more than I would typically spend on production for an exhibition of this scale. I went deeper into the process and created a variety of different kinds of works that show a wider range of developments. I’m hoping to create a flow between the two wings of the gallery.

**Can you describe the way you gather materials in your studio and how you work from a very vividly colored stock when producing your work?**

In Berlin, I typically buy second-hand or refuse yarns from eBay. If the auction looks interesting I will set an auto bidder and in most cases I will win the auction because who in their right mind wants a bunch of random yarns? This is a natural process for me, but it also sets an important restriction, I’m responding to the materials on hand rather than controlling every detail.

**We’ve worked together a few times on exhibitions and most recently it was with the exhibition “Vancouver Special: Ambivalent Pleasures” at the Vancouver Art Gallery. It surveyed 40 artists working in the city over the past five years. Many noted that lots of the artists were working with textiles. What drew you to with this medium and would you venture an explanation as to why we are seeing many artists taking an interest in fibers and learning about their production processes, as a way of working today?**

There is an increased interest in production and consumption of objects that are more tactile and handmade. There also seems to be an increase of support for these mediums, which has a domino effect as well. In the Canadian context, I think there has been an aversion to exhibiting saleable or commercial art such as oil paintings, maybe these textile works are joining the conversation, but from a slightly different angle. These new methods of production are more accessible to the public at large as they are part of our everyday lives.

**In an earlier body of work that you made for an exhibition that we did at the Banff Centre, you made a massive floor work, *Keystone XL rag rug* (2014) that measures about 12 meters long. The piece was made in grey, pink and cream stripes, reminiscent of the patterning of the French and Romanian artist André Cadere’s *Barre de Bois Rond* from the 1970s. The piece also measured the width of the proposed circumference of a then potential oil pipeline that would export oil from Alberta’s tar sands to US refineries. Now that Trump has approved the pipeline, a project that was essential scrapped by Obama, how do you consider this work?**



It is very disappointing that the pipeline has been approved. I often use external perimeters or measurement restrictions that refer to my life and the times. The piece used the pipeline as a physical reference point; since they are a standardized size. That weaving can wrap around any pipeline they build. The *Keystone XL rag rug* spoke to the place of the exhibition and the political moment in time.

**When I read about your work, sometimes writers remark on the notion that your work draws attention to mistakes or errors in the weaving process on purpose. I find it hard to accept these qualities phrased this way, just because they go against the tradition. You are self-taught in these processes and have made your own practice dependent on materials, space and available equipment. I think it is important to reframe self-learned techniques as hybrid practices that can't always be measured against the schooled or well-trained approach. How do traditionally trained weavers perceive your work?**

I recently scored 400 skeins of wool from a weaver on Salt Spring Island in British Columbia. She was curious about why I was so eager to purchase the whole lot and looked up my work. After a few emails back and forth, she ended up sending me images of her own weavings and was really excited that her yarn would live on in my art. This made the whole transaction feel special; it was more of an exchange. This is not the first time this has happened. In this way it was about sharing, which is very supportive and there is much less ego involved than in the art world.



Currently on view at Peres Projects is "zerodayolds," a solo exhibition of new works by Canadian artist Brent Wadden for Gallery Weekend 2017. Wadden's third solo exhibition at the gallery consists of a new series of works which furthers his investigation of color and form. Open through 9 June.

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