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Rafaël Rozendaal

Portraits

Steve Turner Gallery

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By Jody Zellen



Rafaël Rozendaal presents himself as a visual artist who uses the internet as his canvas. To that end, he has been creating websites with unique URLs since 2001. He has also created iOS apps making art for hand held devices. Among his recent websites are the URLs manualesequence.com, thisgrey.com, watchyourot.com. Each website is a single page and presents a looping animation in which shapes and colors morph indefinitely. Though not a programmer, Rozendaal engages with new technologies in sophisticated ways.

In 2015, he launched “Abstract Browsing”, an extension for the Chrome Browser that morphs the content of any webpage into an abstract pattern of colored rectangles. Rozendaal often uses this plug-in while surfing the web and collects screen shots of the compositions created by the algorithm.

Taking this project to another stage of metamorphosis, Rozendaal has fabricated large scale Jacquard weavings. In the 1800s, this type of weaving was created on a loom controlled by punched cards, but now they are generated via computer programs that allow for a seamless transformation. In 2016, Rozendaal presented a series of these weavings derived from the websites IMDB, Twitter, Gmail, Instagram, Pinterest and Tumblr; popular sites with recognizable formats. His current exhibition, *Portraits*, continues this investigation. The works on view are based on Google Image, Yahoo Calendar, Google Spreadsheet, Top Ten Reviews and iTunes Connect, websites that reveal personal information and define the user’s digital footprint.

Although the structure of the compositions are quasi-recognizable and familiar in the way they present information, they are devoid of content and become colorful abstractions.

The screen shots generated by Abstract Browsing contain vivid colors whereas the weavings are more subdued. For example, *Abstract Browsing 17 0608 (Google Image), 2017*, is a grid of yellow, purple, pink and magenta rectangles surrounded by a light blue frame. The algorithm changes the header information into a purple band populated with small squares and rectangles and the footer into a single line of color. To those familiar with the format of webpages, this composition is instantly recognizable. To those less familiar with the web, the weaving is a beautiful abstraction.

The question remains why an artist who uses the internet as his canvas and is known for his digital work would want to create weavings? Perhaps it is about creating a relationship between the pixel and the stitch. Rozendaal's screen-based works are bright, backlit and hard-edged. His weavings are large, soft and tactile. Yet they convey the same information. Rozendaal explores the myriad ways digital information can be presented, translated and re-presented. In doing so, he has expanded the pixels possibilities.

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