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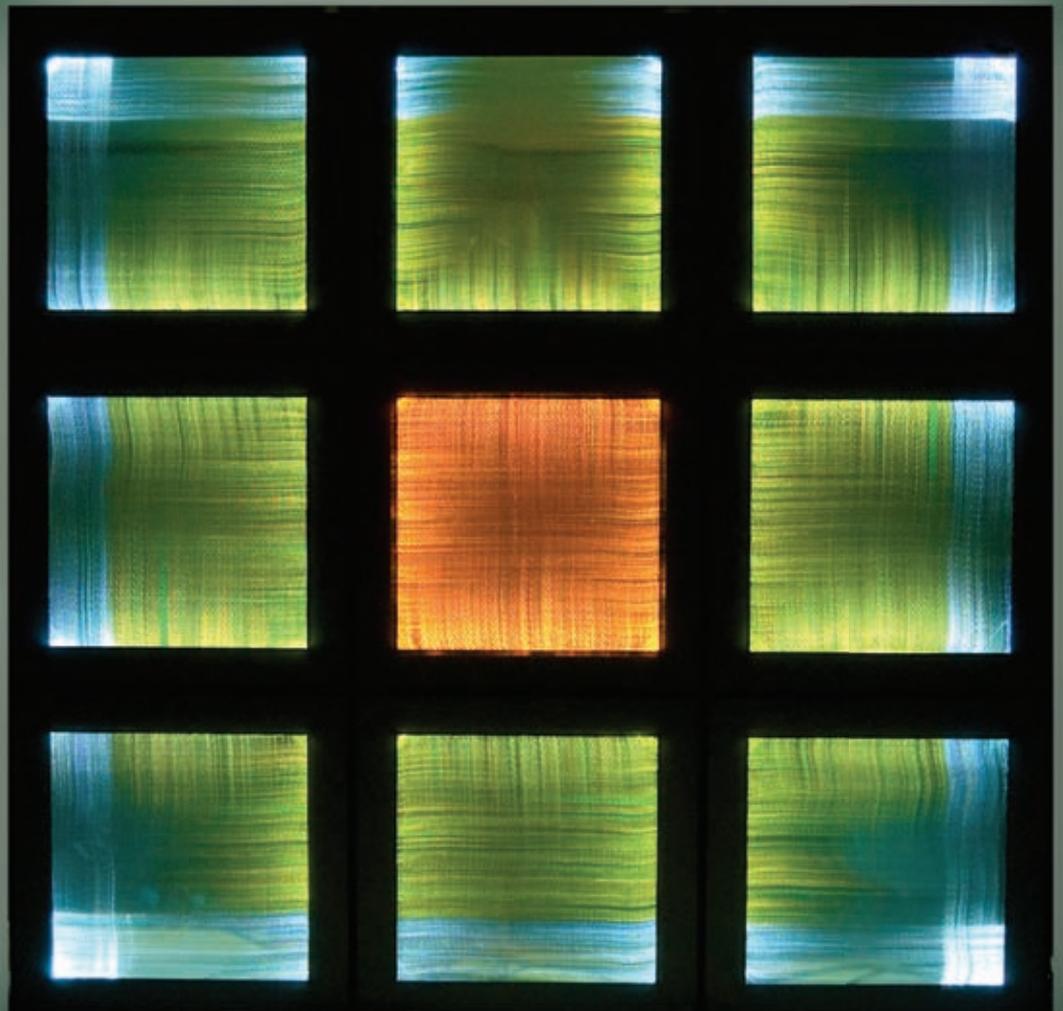
**Fiber-Optic
Tapestry**

**Handwoven
Money**

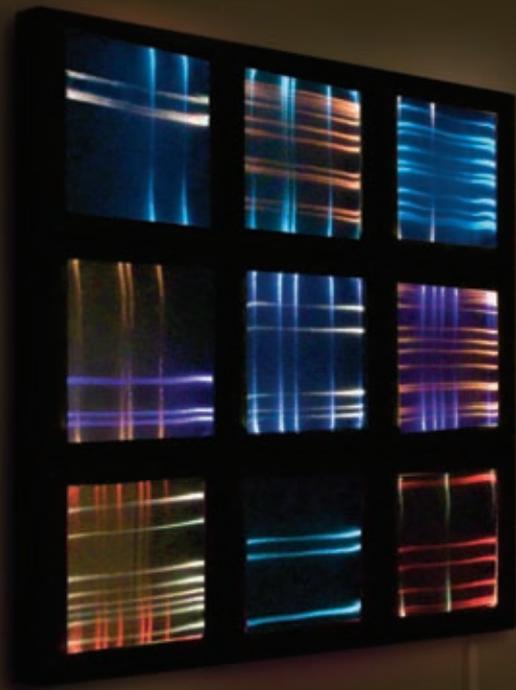
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Textile Tweets

by Susan Taber Avila

The collaborative art team of Nora Ligorano and Marshall Reese transforms text into textile designs using handwoven fiber-optic threads and information gathered from the Internet.

“If one says Red—the name of color—and there are fifty people listening, it can be expected that there will be fifty reds in their minds. And one can be sure that all these reds will be very different.”

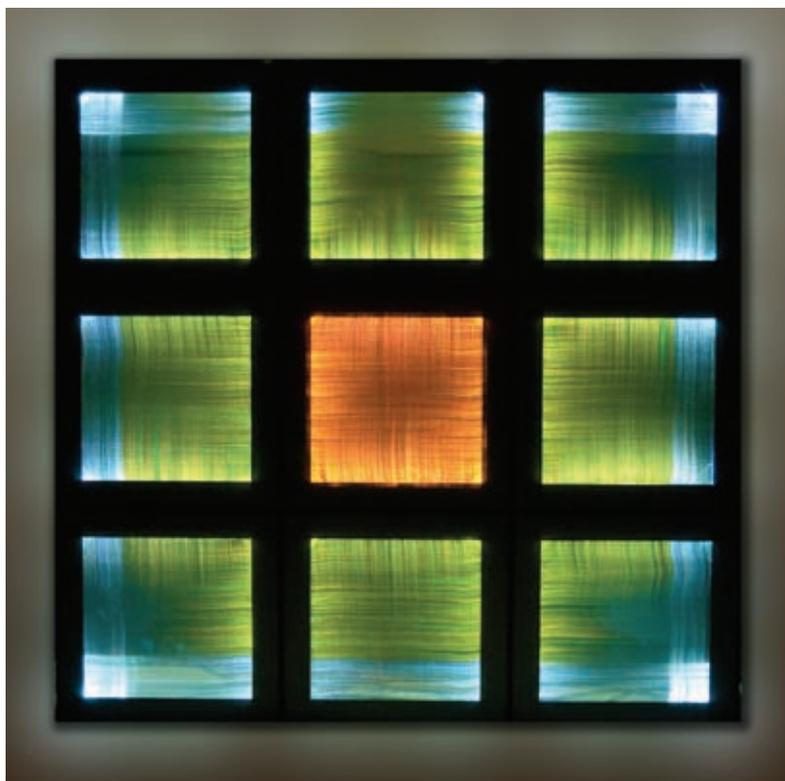
—Josef Albers

This quote by the influential Bauhaus painter and color theorist Josef Albers sparked a creative dialogue for Ligorano/Reese, the New York-based collaborative art team of Nora Ligorano and Marshall Reese. What if Josef and his wife Anni Albers, the celebrated Bauhaus weaver, had access to twenty-first-century technology? How might they investigate the perception of red/green/blue (RGB) additive color after a lifetime analyzing the theory of subtractive color? These intellectual musings resulted in *50 Different Minds*, a fiber-optic tapestry and the first piece in an ongoing exploration of color, perception, and language.

50 Different Minds is created from handwoven fiber-optic thread, custom electronics and software, and RGB full-spectrum LED lights. Nine handwoven panels form a mounted surface that connects to the Internet. Real-time data transforms the tapestry, resulting in varied colors and patterns. This intriguing interactive weaving made its debut at the International TECHstyle Art Biennial (ITAB) at the San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles in California (August 17–October 31, 2010), in conjunction with the city’s biennial ZeroOne: A Global Festival of Art on the Edge (01SJ).

The piece is composed of four sections, or chapters, which run for 3 to 4 minutes before cycling on to the next. It begins with “Prelude” by searching the Twitter.

LEFT: 50 Different Minds, 2010; fiber-optic threads, Internet feeds of information; handwoven; computerized; 50" x 50". ABOVE: During the “Comings and Goings” chapter, the tapestry displays arrivals and departures from airports. Photos by the artists.



com social networking website for specific color terms based on primary colors. For example, in addition to red, other words include crimson, blood, fire, and pink. As the words appear, the piece is programmed to display bands of color, one screen at a time in a random fashion, across the woven panels. As the color words shift from reds to blues to yellows, each of the nine panels takes on the color of the dominant words.

The chapter “50 different minds” is designed as an iconic Josef Albers square within a square study of color proximity and perception. Live Twitter feeds decide the color selection, but this section uses nine salient words drawn from the Albers’s quote. The configurations of each colored light square constantly change as the frequency and occurrence of the nine words vary.

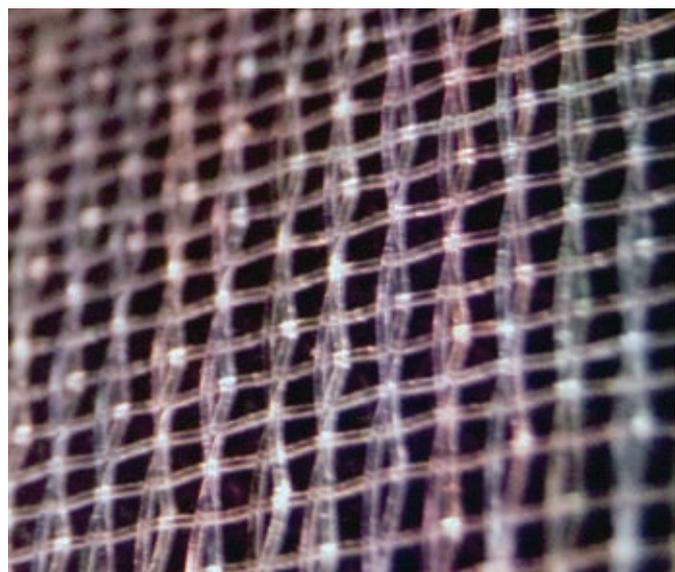
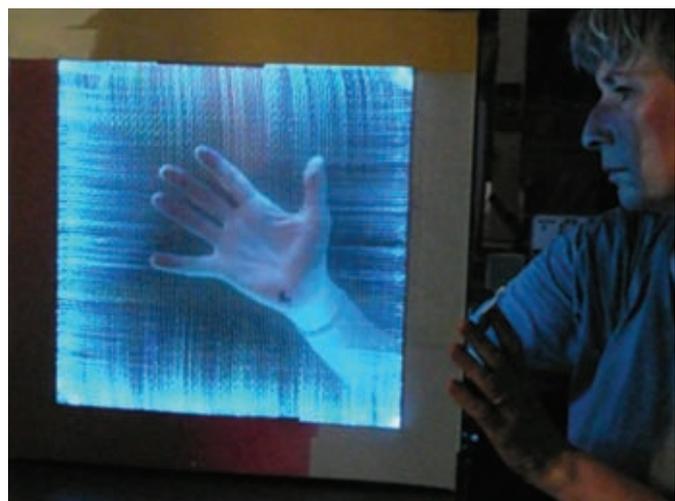
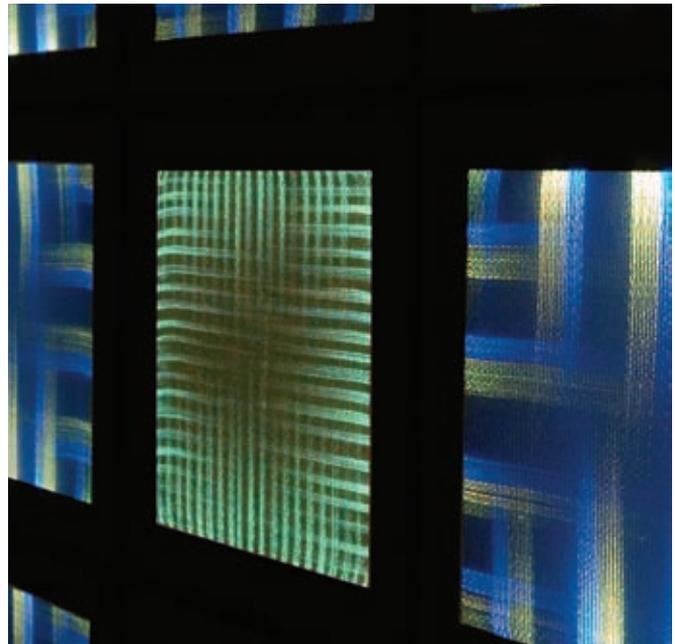
“Comings and Goings” honors Anni Albers by animating the warp and weft of the structure, essentially weaving with light. Real-time flight data from nine of the busiest airports in the world inform the color choices. Very thin groups of thread light up as vertical or horizontal lines when planes take off and land. The resulting plaids resemble the distinctive Bauhaus style.

In “Tweet Suite,” individuals can directly impact the colors and patterns of woven light by sending in tweets using the specific expression *#optictapestry* in front of primary, secondary, and tertiary color words, up to 140 characters in length. The tweets can come from anywhere and are read in the order they are received. Up to fifteen tweets can be displayed at once, creating the illusion of surface ripples as the colored light flows outward from the center panel.

Ultimately, the piece visually describes language, perpetuating the ancient tradition of textiles as text. Before written communication, the semiotic patterns and colors of textiles provided pivotal information about culture and social beliefs. In *50 Different Minds*, Ligorano/Reese invert this idea by converting the actual words of a twenty-first-century phenomenon, Twitter, into textile designs. Acknowledging the role of weaving and social interaction throughout history, the artists play on the metaphor of weaving information as well as the connections between textiles and technology. While the Jacquard loom, with its programmable punch cards, is often considered the first computer, textile terms permeate the Internet as users follow *threads* of information and *network* on the *Web*. 📍

The artists’ website is www.ligoranoreese.net.

TOP: Detail of the tapestry during the “Comings and Goings” chapter. MIDDLE: Nora Ligorano with an illuminated tapestry panel. BOTTOM: Detail of the handwoven tapestry structure.



To watch a video about the making of *50 Different Minds* and learn how the project was funded, visit fiberarts.com.