

Michael Rohde

Work over the past decades has addressed the impact of human and natural causes on the homes and lives of people. These include houses that disappear into the sands of war, are filled with rising flood waters, or simply vanish as the natural consequence of time.

A more recent set of work is a group of tapestry woven, pixelated faces, touching on abstraction and reality at the same time. An extension of this pixelation process can be seen in ***Xolotl Blue***, where the starting image was a building facade in Oaxaca City. This is one of several I've explored, pushing the pixelation to make the woven image less recognizable. Instead, the work captures the subtle shift in color and tone of the building wall, due to light and shadow variations.

Occasionally, ideas come from existing textile in publications or collections. ***Royalty*** is an example of this. For years I'd had a book of African textiles, with a notable chief's robe woven in strips, later sewn together. The hard edged geometry in the design is striking, as is how the makers chose to play with or use variations in the strips. For me, this was an exercise in loosening up my tendency to only work with more rigid designs.

Interrogative and ***Florid*** are two of a set of ten tapestries executed over the last six years. I refer to the series as *Imagined Languages*, after the ideas of some scholars that are trying to decipher language in patterned Inca textiles. These Inca textiles have repeated shapes with varied colors and orientations. Rather than copy the motifs in these older textiles, I created a basic unit of a square, made up of small 5x5 squares. These individual units might be thought of as letters, words, or ideas. However, my process of arranging colors and shapes was random, so the relation to bigger ideas comes about from the color choices and their arrangements. For the whole set, each individual tapestry is intended to represent some sense of how language is used, for example, in politics. Other titles in the series, not on view here, are *Inflammatory*, *Derogatory*, and *Mysterious*.

Even without the foreknowledge of what is behind the creation of these images, the works stand as objects of quiet beauty. I begin with white yarns of wool, silk, linen, and other fibers and then add my own dyes to achieve a range colors and contrast not available in commercially dyed materials. Like a painter, I mix my own colors to create something new.

Bio

Michael F. Rohde has been weaving since 1973. His formal training in drawing, color, design, and art history was at the Alfred Glassel School of the Houston Museum of Fine Arts. His career has included numerous lectures, service on arts boards, as juror, exhibition organizer, and exhibitor in many local, national, and international juried and invited shows.

Rohde's work has been included in the United States Department of State Art in Embassies Program and exhibited extensively including at the Textile Museum, Washington, DC; the American Craft Museum, New York; Fiberart International, Pittsburg, PA; the Triennial of Tapestry; Lodz, Poland; From Lausanne to Beijing; the Janina Monkute-Marks Museum, Lithuania; the Mingei International Museum, Balboa Park, San Diego; and the San Luis Obispo Museum of Art. His work is held in the permanent collections of the Textile Museum, the Mingei Museum, the San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles, the Ventura County Museum of Art, the Racine Art Museum, and The Art Institute of Chicago, where his work is currently on exhibit in *Threaded Visions*, through August 26, 2024.