

Andy Diaz Hope

Art + Technology = Tapestries

Posted by Andrea Martin on January 18, 2013

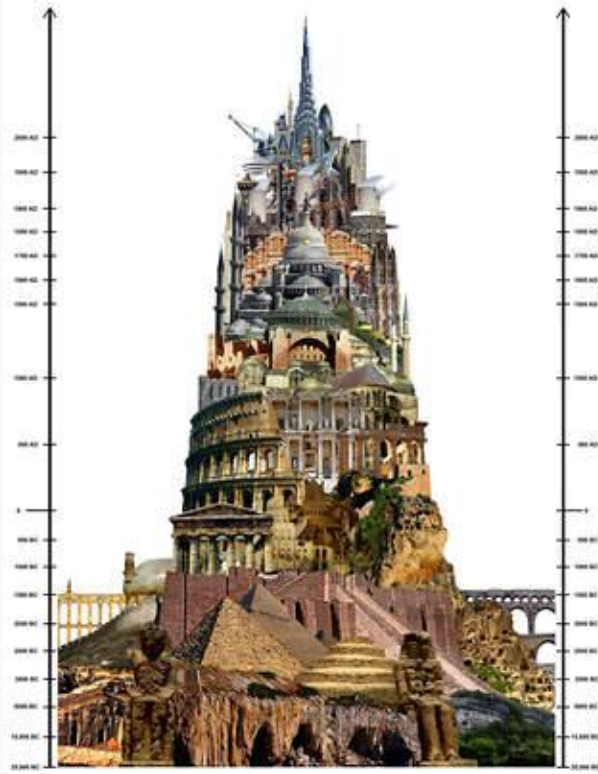
*De Young Artist Fellows Andy Diaz Hope and Laurel Roth are preparing for the final installation of their monumental triptych **The Conflicts**. Get a sneak peek at the culminating exhibition of their fellowship in the group show **Punch Card**, opening at Catharine Clark Gallery this Saturday, January 19, 2013. Hope and Roth will present the completed tapestries at the de Young in the Artist Studio throughout the month of March. In this blog post, Hope and Roth examine the role technology has played in the process of creating this work.*



In 2008 we put together a show that featured both our solo and collaborative work, called [*Future Darwinist*](#), at Schroeder Romero Gallery in New York. One of the centerpieces of this show was the first tapestry of what would eventually become a triptych entitled *The Conflicts*. *Allegory of the Monoceros*, a 6-by-8-foot tapestry woven on a computer-controlled jacquard loom outside of Bruges in Belgium, explores how natural selection is giving way to human-centric evolution in our current age.



After hand painting the individual elements of each tapestry, we scanned and composited them digitally in Photoshop, manipulating the image until we felt it was finished. Next, we worked with [Don Farnsworth](#) of the [Magnolia Tapestry Project](#) to create a weavable digital file, which was finally sent to weavers in Belgium.



Jacquard looms were the first machines to run on punch cards, which are often considered to be the original computer programs. Today the programming is much more sophisticated, but the weaving process remains similar. In this way, the span of technologies used to create our tapestries ranges from those that have been available since the dawn of mankind to those only available in recent years, and thus coincides perfectly with our themes of evolution, the age of discovery, and modern science.

We completed *Allegory of the Prisoner's Dilemma*—the third and final tapestry of *The Conflicts* triptych—during our residency in the Kimball Gallery, and it was subsequently exhibited last September at Bergarde Galleries near Rotterdam in the Netherlands. We had always wanted to see the looms on which the tapestries were woven, so when we went to Rotterdam to install the show we extended our stay in Europe to visit the weavers.



Flanders Tapestries is a family-owned mill outside of Bruges. We rented a car and drove through the Belgian countryside to the loom where we were greeted by the owners, Roland and Christian. After examining the colors and weave patterns used by various artists in the tapestries displayed in the front room, we went to see the looms at work.



There were two enormous looms in the back room, each with a metal stairway to second story walkways around the upper parts of the machines. The sound was rhythmic and all-encompassing, and fiber dust drifted slowly through the air. Each loom can handle a tapestry approximately 80 inches in width and uses 17,800 warp threads that run vertically from the second story platforms.



Small metal shuttles flew back and forth with the weft threads, woven patterns emerging at about an inch every minute. Rows and pallets of thread of every color were stacked on warehouse racks around the room.



We retired to the quiet of the front room after photographing and videoing the looms at work. Over cups of coffee brought in by his daughter and co-worker, Roland continued to talk with us about running looms in the modern age. Roland learned to program with punch cards when he started in the business, and knew them so well that he could interpret weave patterns from reading the punch cards himself. And although the foundation of his business resides in the centuries-old technology of jacquard looms, he remains committed to making his company flexible and current, constantly adapting to evolving technology and fashion trends, and finding new ways to work with artists. We left the loom with a better understanding of the exact processes involved in weaving each tapestry and excited about the possibilities of future collaborations.

Learn more about Andy Diaz Hope and Laurel Roth on the [Artist Fellows web page](#), where you can also check back for upcoming events. [Punch Card](#) is on view at Catharine Clark Gallery through February 23.