

## Wall hangings weave their magic

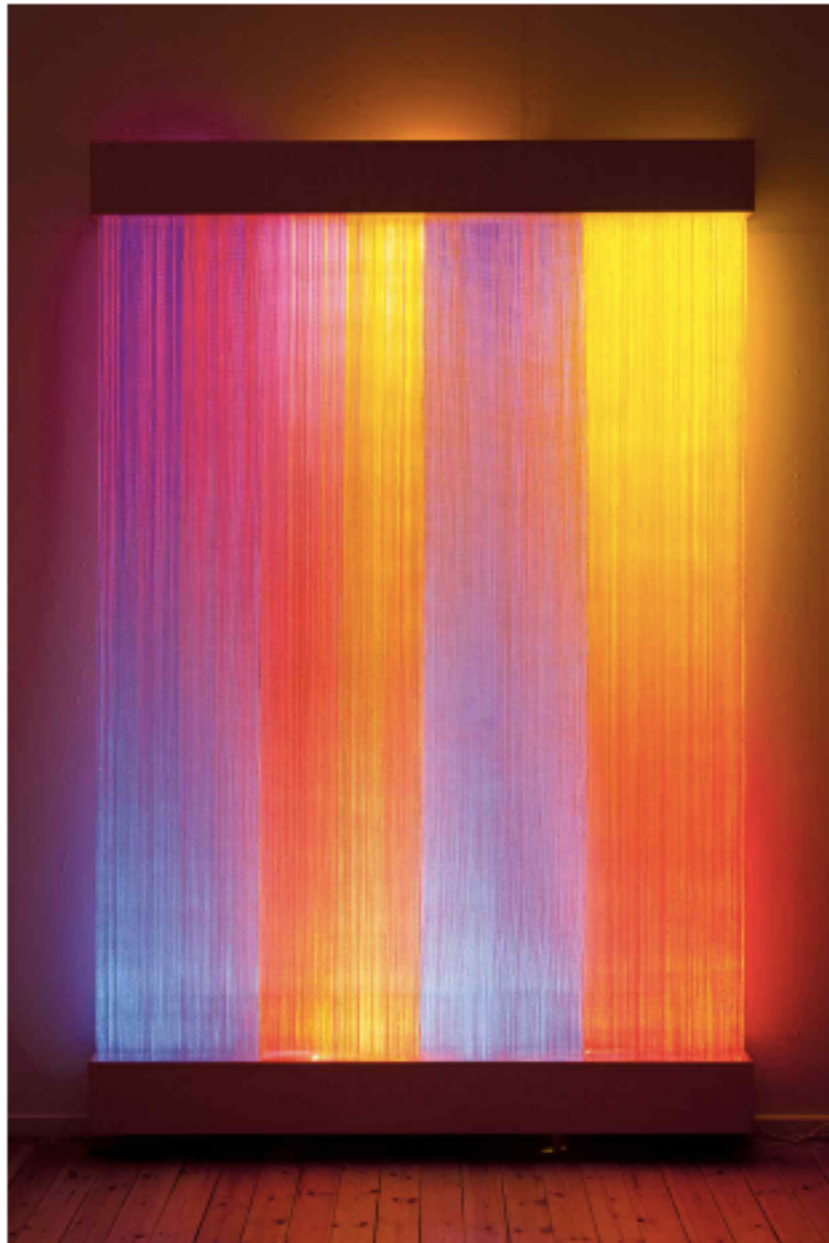
Contemporary wall hangings are turning traditional tapestries and rugs into alluring art. Helen Chislett reports

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As the stark lines of white-on-white interiors give way to a less prescribed approach to design, a new, softer aesthetic is becoming evident. This has nothing to do with a 1980s-style revival of fancy soft furnishings, but a subtler and more interesting narrative about what constitutes art. Wall hangings – once the preserve of small-town craft galleries – are now embraced by the international design elite, with fairs such as Design Miami/Basel, BRAFA and PAD increasingly throwing the spotlight onto the walls as much as the floors.

One of the first gallerists to embrace textile art as core to her collection was Maria Wettergren, who opened the doors of her Paris gallery in 2010. From the outset, she showcased work by gifted names such as the Danish artists Grethe Sørensen (winner of The Nordic Award in Textiles 2017; works from €22,000), Astrid Krogh (from €25,000) and the Swedish duo Brieditis & Evans of Studio Brieditis & Evans (from about €12,000) – all creating spectacular new versions of the traditional wall-hung tapestry.



Astrid Krogh optic-fibre and paper ikat II wall hanging, price on request | image: Torben Eskerod, © Galerie Maria Wettergren

Wettergren is interested in the innovative approach revealed by each artist's work. "Grethe Sørensen is a pioneer in the field of digital **weaving**, transforming video recordings of **city** lights or water reflections into pixellated weavings," she says. "Astrid Krogh discovered the possibilities of handweaving with optic fibres, which she uses as if they were wool threads, and her tapestries pulsate with a flow of beautiful, glowing, ever-changing colours. Katarina Brieditis and Katarina Evans, meanwhile, explore sustainability through their techniques in pieces such as Off Piste, a chain-stitch crochet work made from recycled cotton **T-shirts**."

Wettergren believes such art also expresses the zeitgeist. "These tapestries convey the antithesis of the consumerist, throwaway mentality that characterised the second half of the 20th century," she says. "More than any other art form, they are works that increasingly occupy our interiors in the double sense of the word – both in terms of our inner being and habitat."

The art form is also winning the attention of big institutions. Sørensen's work is in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian's Cooper Hewitt museum in **New York**, among others, and Krogh's is also part of important public and private collections worldwide. Over the past eight years, Wettergren has witnessed increasing attention from **art collectors**. "Time has become one of the most precious and rare things in our busy lives," she says, "and the fact that these **textile** works are often handmade by the artists over a long time, embodying the very presence of the person who create them, makes them very desirable."

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