

Brent Wadden

Best Before

Nov 7, 2025 — Jan 10, 2026 | Brussels

To weave: to cross one thread with another, to bind fragments into form, to create tension, pattern, structure. It is one of humanity's oldest gestures — domestic, ritual, artisanal. In Brent Wadden's hands, weaving is not only a method but a process, an artistic language. It binds past to present, solitude to community, work to trance, matter to memory.

This autumn, Almine Rech will present two exhibitions of Wadden's work: an intimate presentation of three pieces in Paris, and a larger constellation in Brussels under the title 'Best Before'. Together, these exhibitions map a return — a weaving towards one's origins.

Wadden's practice unsettles categories. His handwoven textiles, stretched onto canvas, move between painting and craft, between the studio and the loom. The grid of warp and weft becomes a place where color and line accumulate, where small irregularities grow into structures of their own. Each work contains both order and disruption, precision and accident, repetition and deviation.

For Wadden, weaving is not only the making of cloth but the production of form — a way to push material to its limit, to discover meaning in imperfection, to let process speak as powerfully as image.

Each of Wadden's new works is constructed from three panels. Each panel, in turn, is divided into six sections. A rigorous structure, a pared-down palette, a concentration of motif. By exhausting its limits, form becomes force. By exhausting material, a deeper necessity is revealed.

The act of weaving is daily, mechanical, repetitive — and therefore transformative. Wadden weaves alone. He builds his own frames. He shifts color gradually, knot by knot, until rhythm becomes trance. The gesture is at once humble and radical: an endless repetition echoing the punk ethos of his youth, a strict DIY ethic carried forward into art. Nothing outsourced. Nothing wasted.

Born in 1979 in Nova Scotia, Canada, Wadden comes from a working-class background. His father and uncle were fishermen, bound to the cycles of the sea. He grew up watching them repeat gestures, day after day — hauling, knotting, mending, repairing. Skills passed down, inherited through repetition. For Wadden, the loom becomes a parallel stage: the choreography of labor translated to canvas.

Each summer, he returns to Nova Scotia — a ritual, almost a pilgrimage, to the land where his identity was first woven. Last summer, a wrong turn on a coastal road led him to an unknown beach, untouched and paradisiacal. This accidental discovery opened onto an image both real and imagined: the vision of his native land as he had always carried it within himself, both origin and horizon. It is no coincidence that the Paris exhibition bears the title 'Main-à-Dieu' — the name of the nearby fishing village — as if to anchor this return to his roots in the very name of the show.

For Wadden, weaving is not only structure but survival. He speaks of exhausting the material — using fabric until nothing remains unused, nothing is thrown away. No titles for the works; the gesture is enough. In Brussels, the exhibition ‘Best Before’ invokes the expiry dates stamped on the tins found in his father’s fishing cabin, as well as a punk album cherished in youth. Both references signal impermanence, but also persistence: what survives, what remains.

As a teenager, Wadden worked as a janitor in office buildings. From 5 to 7 pm, he emptied bins, swept floors, and witnessed how quickly people discarded things of use. “Every time something was thrown away, I felt I had to save it — or use it.” That compulsion remains. Wadden’s practice is one of salvage, an insistence upon what others discard. In this, he is close to the folk traditions of his native Nova Scotia: makers who work only with what is on hand, transmuting necessity into craft.

Weaving, for Wadden, is more than a technique. It is a way of inhabiting matter. A way of refusing waste. A way of binding one’s own history — childhood, punk youth, working-class origins — into the patient fabric of art.

To weave is to return. To return is to repeat. And in repetition, transformation occurs.

— Boris Bergmann, writer.