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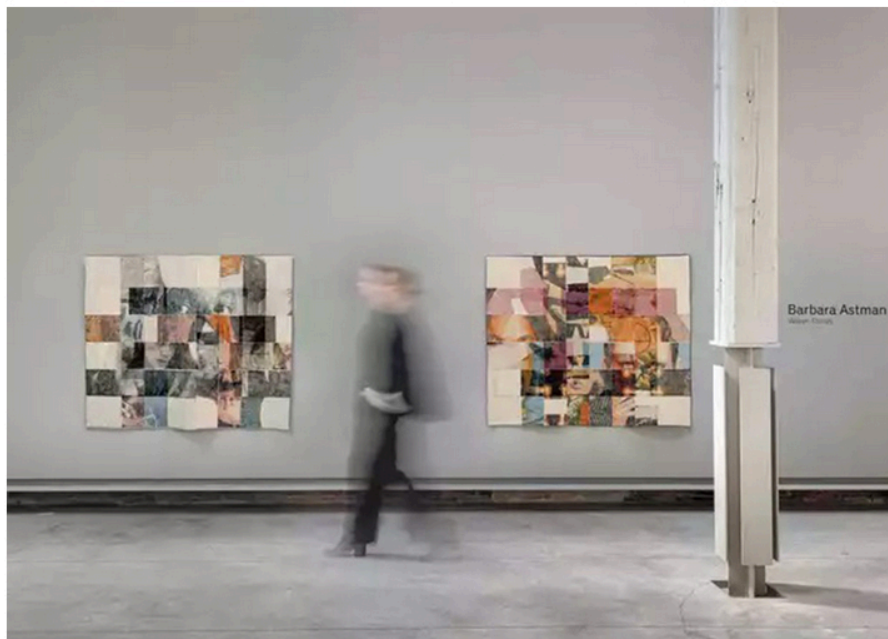
Woven Stories: Image consumption through the eyes of artist Barbara Astman

by [Stephanie Beattie](#)

How often do you think about your image consumption? Visual artist Barbara Astman is exploring the patterns and human experience behind our daily compulsion to scroll through pictures online. Open now through November 11 at Toronto's Corkin Gallery, Astman's

multimedia exhibit *“Woven Stories”* is an innovative translation of the images we see, exploring how we may absorb more than we think

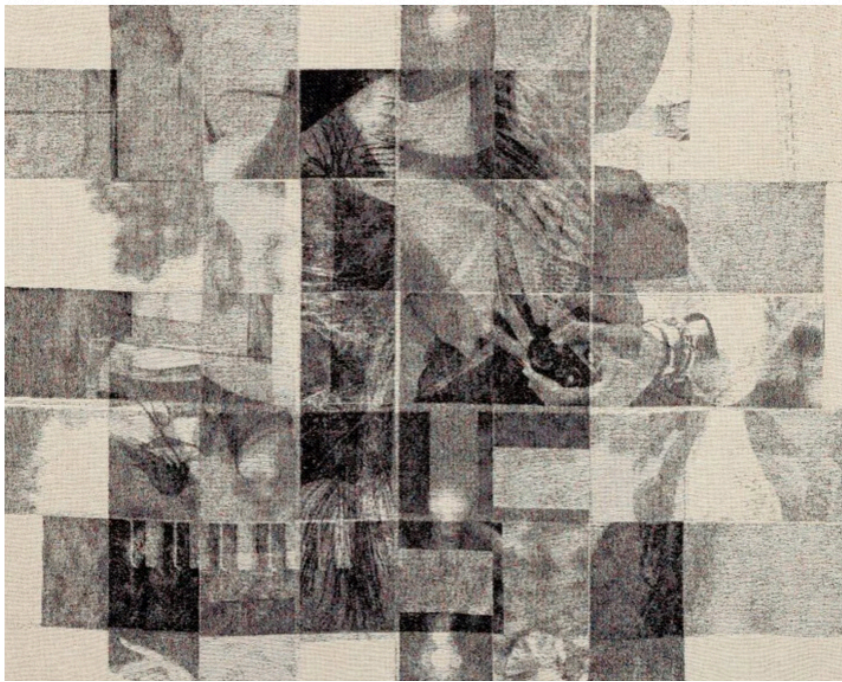
Astman is a photographer and multimedia artist who spent much of her career in Canada despite being born in Rochester, New York. Since coming to Canada in 1970, Astman’s work has been driven by themes of technology with prestigious solo exhibits like *“Looking: Then and Now”* at Corkin Gallery in 2016 and *“I as artifact”* at McIntosh Gallery in 2014. Astman’s work has also been included in major group exhibitions such as *“Toronto: Tributes + Tributaries, 1971-1989”* in 2016 and *“Beautiful Fictions”* in 2009 at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO). Astman is also known internationally with collections and installations in places like the Wall Gallery in New York, the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and a public installation for the new Canadian Embassy in Berlin. Today, the artist continues experimenting with technological themes in innovative ways with her *“Woven Stories”* series



Barbara Astman *“Woven Stories”* 2023 at Corkin Gallery.

Woven art

Made of cotton and nylon thread, the medium of the exhibition contrasts against the works’ overall message. Astman’s technique is meticulous and time consuming, unlike the fast-paced nature of looking at photographs. With the woven technique, each tapestry displays intricate human-made detail rather than the pixelated images we are used to consuming. Although the collection revolves around a technological theme, the physical technique of each piece adds an element of complexity to the series itself.



Barbara Astman "#25 BW", Woven Stories 2023.

The "#25 BW" tapestry is a black and white storytelling piece highlighting the complexities of digital perception. Images are intertwined together like a collage and range in depth and value tones on a grid, mimicking the appearance of pixels. This piece subconsciously reminds the viewer of digital photographs, but once they recognize the difference in material and texture, the method and technique becomes the prominent focus.



Barbara Astman "#33", Woven Stories 2023.

Shifting to colour, “#33” brings vibrant images and shapes to the eye. The contrast of human features and miscellaneous shapes further resemble the mind’s ability to perceive images. Each tapestry has a unique way of blending and fading images into larger shapes and stories.



Barbara Astman “Collage #3” (from the series Daily Collage) 2011.

Mixed media

Astman is no stranger to mixed media collages. Over a span of four decades, the artist experimented with polaroids and other projects under the vast mixed-media umbrella.

Among her long list of public and private art collections and commissions, Astman remains true to her thought-provoking style with “Woven Stories”. Her passion for human-technology interactions is proven through her eye-catching mixed media method that remains relevant in the digital age. With the current landscape of rapidly-growing and shifting technology, to stand back and contemplate our image consumption is comparable to taking a breath of fresh air.

Perhaps “Woven Stories” provides a new opportunity for contemporary art lovers and curious viewers to slow down and look closely at what is in front of them. The idea that our lives are made of stories, both real or imagined, drives the meaning behind this exhibit and encourages viewers to explore the stories they may be living, documenting and absorbing.

Stephanie Beattie is a Glossi Mag contributor. In her final year of journalism school at Toronto Metropolitan University, Stephanie loves painting, Bob Dylan and caramel lattes.