

AN INTERIOR

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Alexandra Mocanu weaves tapestries like paintings

Braided Strokes

By Adrian Madlener • Originally published as an Online Feature



At first glance, one might perceive Alexandra Mocanu's broad brushstrokes as mere brazen, single gesture applications of paint. But on closer inspection, these expansive pieces reveal themselves as woven tapestries; interpretative impressions of gouache *croquis*, the French Romanian-born artist paints as prompts for the highly complex works. Rather than standing as loud, one-note assertions of skill or trompe l'oeil gimmicks—a trend far too prevalent these days—these intricate tapestries satisfy the haptic and visceral desires of image-saturated, art-savvy audience.

On view till January 24th at New York's [Twenty First Gallery](#), the *Tapisseries* exhibition brings together 10 of Mocanu's latest *oeuvres*.



N31 (wool woven on cotton canvas, H94.5 x L70.9 in.)



N36 (wool woven on cotton canvas, H110.2 x L86.6 in.)

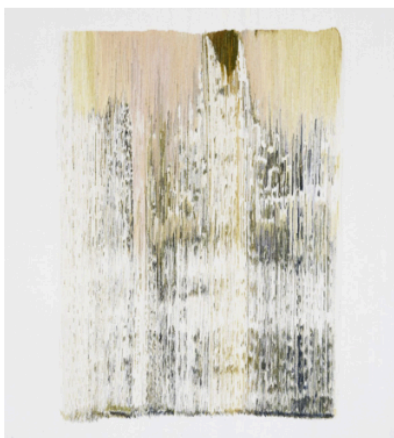
Capturing the painterly qualities and effects of such an ethereal medium in a coarse, fibrous application is no small feat. Mocanu has tirelessly mastered a bespoke technique that is as contingent on strong visual perceptibility as it is on manual aptitude. Developed over time, this approach has allowed her to meticulously perfect certain graphical nuances in the tapestries; the elucidation of rough edges, the resignation towards unexpected drips, the control of quick gestural movements, and the contrast between opaque and translucent coatings.



N37 (wool woven on cotton canvas, H63 x L87 in.)

“What I admire most in Mocanu’s work is the duality between the spontaneity of her brushstrokes and the patience, technical skills, and thoroughness embedded in her weaving,” the gallery’s director Renaud Vuillat said.

From a young age, Mocanu was surrounded by artisanal production. Her mother is a textile artist and her father, a furniture designer. Immersed in the scents, sounds, tools, and materials that shaped her formative years, the artist began to explore her own compositions; first through photography and then with painting, before arriving at tapestry.



N32 (wool woven on cotton canvas, H59 x L53 in.)



N33 (wool woven on cotton canvas, H59 x L53 in.)



N34 (wool woven on cotton canvas, H59 x L53 in.)

The artist’s ability to combine the seemingly disparate disciplines of painting and textile design stems from her training in both domains; a self-fashioned methodology that coalesces from fine art and artisanal production. Her work is a testament to the concept of adjacency put forward by American sociologist Richard Sennet: through close control of their process, craftspeople develop the ability to bring together two divergent elements or skillsets in the attempt of forging a new type of practice and achieving results that are entirely nascent.