

In my current practice I am working on "Woven Faces: Mapping the Emotional Brain" a collaborative project with neuroscientists to explore the nature of the emotional response to the tactile quality of woven faces. Using the imaging tools of the neuroscience laboratory and direct behavioral studies, I am pursuing both scientific answers and artistic responses to the research process.

For the science investigation I compare the emotional reaction to viewing a woven face with a photo print of the same image.

For the art response-

1. I integrate images of the neural connections between parts of the brain, "fiber tracts" with the actual fiber connections that make up the woven translation of a face. In these large weavings, I use my face as a child and my own "fiber tracts". The extended project will include existing images of these connections in the brains of others, interviews and their personal snapshots.

2. Video art piece. "Su Brain Tracts" -Animation of woven faces and "fiber tracts". Video documentation of the laboratory experience.

3. Public participation in neuroscience studies located within the exhibition itself.

Much of my neuroscience interest comes from feedback I get when people directly encounter the work. At a distance it looks very much like a photograph, moving toward the work the face dissolves into pattern and finally up close the discovery that it is created not from pixels but from individual crossing threads. The intensity of emotion seems to be elevated by a strong desire to touch but which is not allowed.

In my recent exhibition at UW Madison, I looked at how the "desire to touch" affects the experience of the work and have included a study in which the viewer is actually asked to touch an art work and record their response. In each of my exhibitions in the last year I have involved the public voluntarily as part of a study. The public has been very enthusiastic about participating and are willing to write about their personal responses to the work.

At other times the public has been allowed to experiment with some of the scientific imaging technology as well with a scientist and/or artist available to answer questions. In the past I have done large scale commission works for public spaces. The last was a GSA commission in a Federal Courthouse in Pittsburgh PA of 4 large scale images of children looking intently at the viewer and placed in waiting space between the courtrooms.

