



pixelated fabric

pixelated fabric is a meditation on society, and the role that social media has played in it.

For the past few years, we've seen increasing social and political polarization in our worlds; a process that has been facilitated, ironically, by social media.

As many of us have gotten our news from social media, we've seen our society "pixelate" into increasingly-divided social and political worlds – our 'bubbles,' so to speak – where mutually-reinforcing facts and opinions tend to protect and reinforce whatever our pre-conceptions are about the world and how it works.

In what I call the "pixelization" of our social fabric, the normal boundaries between us have become harder and less-permeable, interrupting normal social discourse and hardening our 'bubbles' into 'shells,' or 'pixels' as I call them, reducing, obscuring, even eliminating the civilized common ground of mutually-accepted facts and the values of decency and tolerance between us that have long characterized civil societies.

The driving force of this effect appears to have been social media's and online advertising's underlying mathematical algorithms, feeding users stories, news (real and fake), and advertisements based on prior choices and online behavior, rather than informing users broadly, as has traditionally been done, on the basis of mutually-accepted facts and an array of expert and journalistic opinion from left, right, and center.

This has resulted in news and social media networks that are largely derivative of users' pre-conceptions. In this "pixelated" social environment, prejudices are reinforced and learning and new understanding are less-likely to be achieved, on all sides of any issue.

As social media users are bombarded by such 'feedback loops' of reinforcing stimuli, hour after hour and day after day, and given less rather than more exposure to interpretations outside their own 'pixels,' what is created is more of an inward-looking, 'pitched-embattled' social environment than one conducive to learning and new understanding; an environment where new and innovative thinking tends to be pushed aside in favor of reinforcing facts.

As a call for progress through brighter and more-colorful central common grounds, and away from the dark edges of extremism and isolationism, I've combined the square format of social media platform *Instagram* with the banded colorfield work of Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman, to make *pixelated fabric* a call to reinvigorate our social fabric; to strengthen the neutral and nourishing spaces where people explore ideas and opinions, where they can engage, reflect, interact, hear one another, and be heard. It is, in my small way, a call for a return to civil society.