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TAUBA AUERBACH

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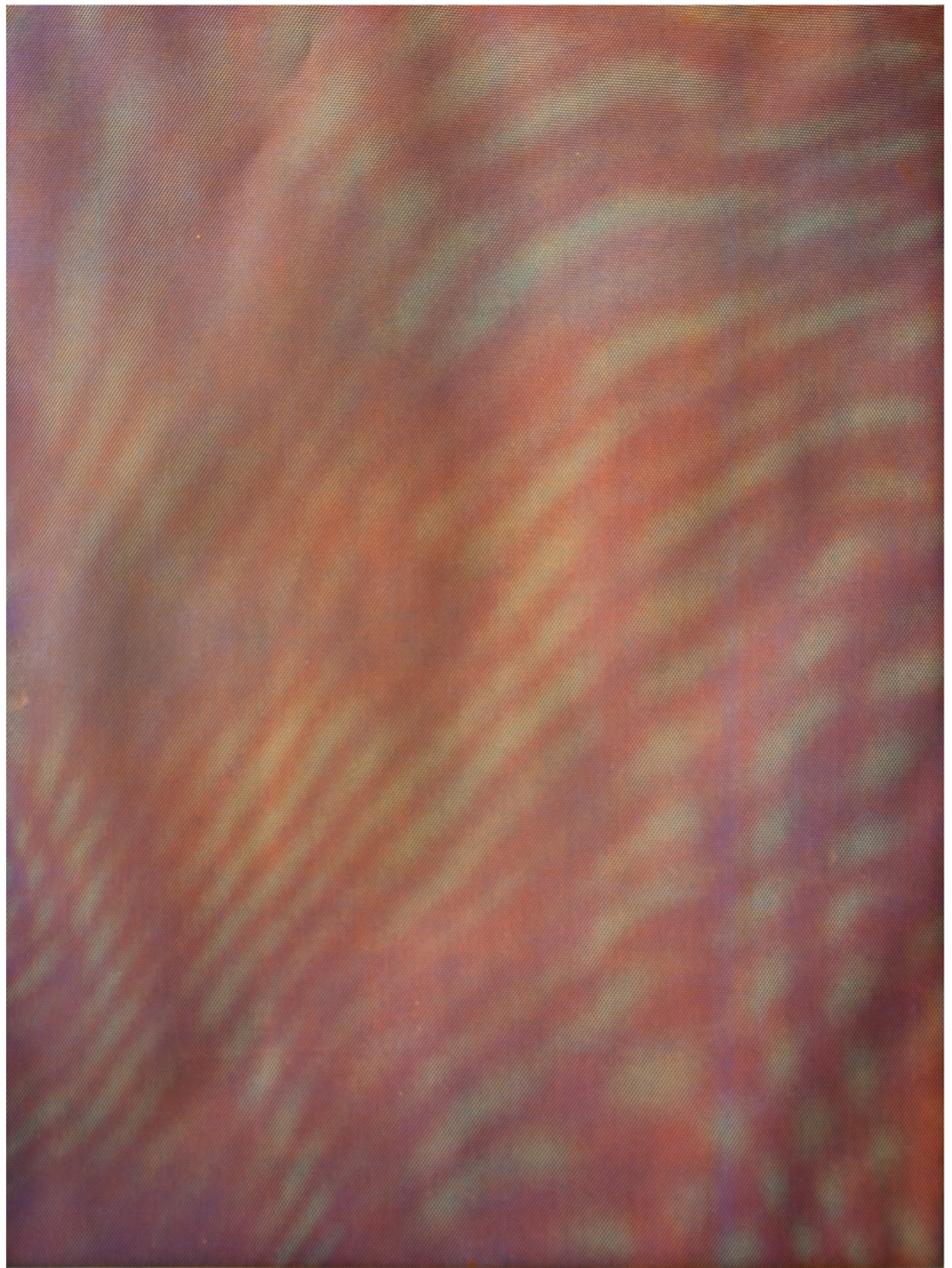
For this interview I visited Tauba Auerbach in her Brooklyn studio. It was tidy with a separate area for using an airbrush. On one surface there were several small samples of rope and similar materials. Nothing seemed placed by accident and yet chance continues to play a significant role in the artist's work. A lot of Auerbach's art is about the tension between an almost total control over what goes into a process and an absence of control about the result that emerges from that process. She explores her system and process thoroughly, with thought and experimentation, and then when she's ready, she lets go. At some point, Auerbach gives over power to the process and system that she develops. But that point of release is always moving.

-Kenneth Caldwell

**Q:** What were you were up to when you came to Paulson Bott over the holidays?

**Tauba Auerbach:** We got into a nice work habit together. I really enjoy being there. Every time I do a project with them, I learn something that I couldn't have learned in my studio, because they have different skills and tools available. They're really great to collaborate with.

A while ago, we organized a play date for one day, where we ran a bunch of different materials through the press. And we embossed a bunch of things just for fun. I had this idea to ink up some plastic meshes and run them through the press directly onto the paper. I did this several times and



**MESH/MOIRE I, 2012**

Color softground etching; 40-1/4"x30"; Edition of 40



stretched the mesh and wiggled it around differently as it was running through the press each time.

It showed some promise for making moiré patterns. But it was hard to ink the mesh evenly. And there was no repeatability.

In the intervening year, between that day and when I returned, we talked about it more, what we could do with this idea. I asked Renee how we could make plates with the mesh in a way that still allowed for spontaneity in creating each plate, the same kind of spontaneity that we were employing in running the mesh directly through the press.

She suggested that we roll the plates out with softground, lay the mesh on top of it and run the whole thing through the press. The mesh would pick up the soft ground where it touched it, and because the soft ground acts like a resist, the plates would then only etch in the areas where the mesh had been. So this is what we did and it worked really well. On every plate I stretched the mesh differently so that the grid was distorted in a unique way each time.

We tried a bunch of different meshes and a bunch of different stretches. I landed on a pretty elastic fabric mesh that I could

pull and manipulate without it buckling. We made seven plates with this particular mesh and then they printed every possible combination of two plates, including flipping one of the plates each time.

From this group I edited it down to what I thought were the six most interesting compositions and started color tests. I arrived at these very contrasting color combinations, which—when printed on top of one another combine to make something kind of neutral. I think that the complementary colors together are really interesting.

**Q:** Can you explain the moiré pattern?

**TA:** The pattern is generated by the way the different patterns on the two plates interact with each other. If you were to just print one plate, it would look like a wonky grid. When you put two together, you get these bands of light and dark. The light comes from where the meshes on the two plates stack up almost perfectly on top of one another, and the white of the paper is visible through all the holes. The darker areas are where the patterns are shifted off from one another by one half of its period—the period is the distance between the parallel lines of

the mesh. When the meshes align this way each one sort of fills in the holes left by the other, so less of the white from the paper is visible. These areas are also where you can see that there are two colors at work in each print. You get orange shining through blue, for example and it kind of vibrates.

**Q:** How many times do each of these prints go through the press?

**TA:** Just twice.

**Q:** In different combinations?

**TA:** Right. A lot of these plates will share one plate but not the other. Plate C might

be used on that print and that print. But this print combines plate C and D, and this one combines plate A and C. Each combination will give me a totally different image, because it just has to do with how the two prints interact with each other. You don't really see the image of plate C in each one.

**Q:** How many plates are there?

**TA:** Seven.

**Q:** Is any pattern repeated?

**TA:** No. And neither is a color combination. We worked with this orange and blue a lot to test the compositions, and if I liked them, we would move forward and try it out in different colors.

**Q:** Were there some combinations that just didn't work?

**TA:** Absolutely. Some of the patterns were not compelling, and some were just ugly. And another feature of this particular mesh is that the size of the period is very small. You know, its maybe two millimeters. So registration and paper stretch make every print unique. The paper stretches a millimeter which makes a pretty big difference in how these tiny marks align with each other.

**Q:** So was part of your decision about the plate and color combination based on tolerance?

**TA:** Yes. There are some that I saw printed a few times, and the composition changed in ways from print to print that I didn't always like.

**Q:** Did this directly impact anything you were doing here in your Brooklyn studio?

**TA:** That remains to be seen. I had some ideas about using this mesh with some paintings, but I don't know yet.

**Q:** As an artist, do you embrace a change in technique?

**TA:** Yes I'm looking for new ways to make things all the time. ✂

(above)

**TAUBA AUERBACH:  
MESH/MOIRE I-VI, 2012**



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