OKTP

In her work Tauba Auerbach links beauty to the conceptual. Her earlier prints at Paulson Press involved embellishing letters until they almost disappeared. In these new works she looks at her subjects from another perspective. She begins with something completely abstract and uses a computer program to generate random placement until the pixels become almost representational. Working with a few simple foundations of contemporary life, letters, binary systems, she reveals another world of endless inquiry.

– Kenneth Caldwell

**Q:** How did you get so focused on language and individual letters?

A: I think there was a symbiotic relationship with sign-making. When I was in high school, I spent a lot of time around people who did graffiti, and then I worked at a sign shop and started to take language more seriously as a formal object. I began to think about it less aesthetically and more conceptually. I got into analyzing the structure of language and the logic that's represented, or misrepresented, by it.

"YES OR NO" AND/OR
"YES AND NO", 2008
Color Aquatint Etching;
Paper size: 39" x 30"; Edition of 30

Auerbach working in the Paulson Press Studio.
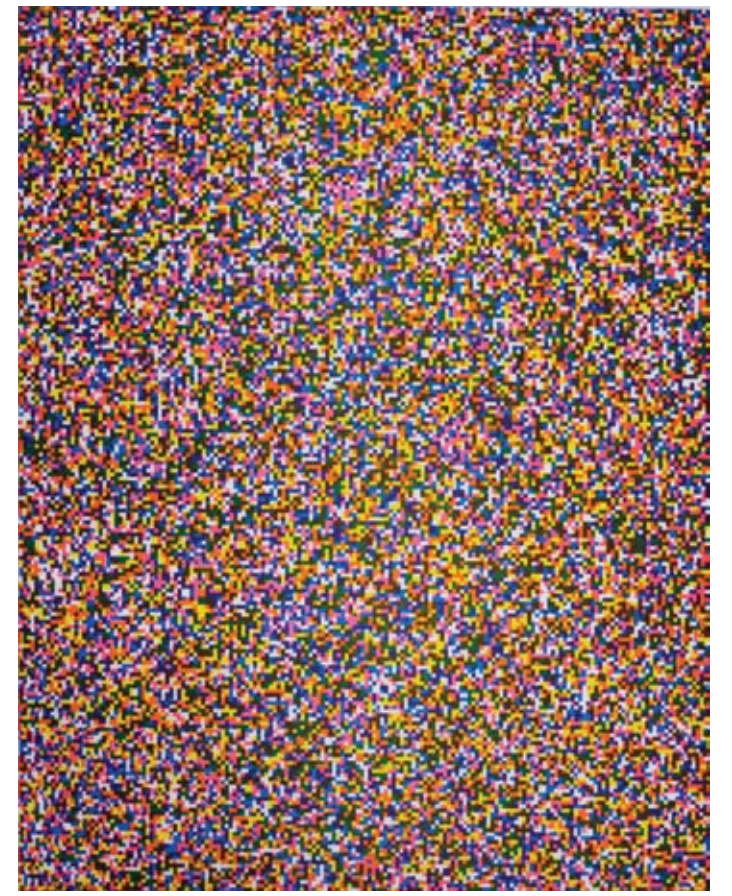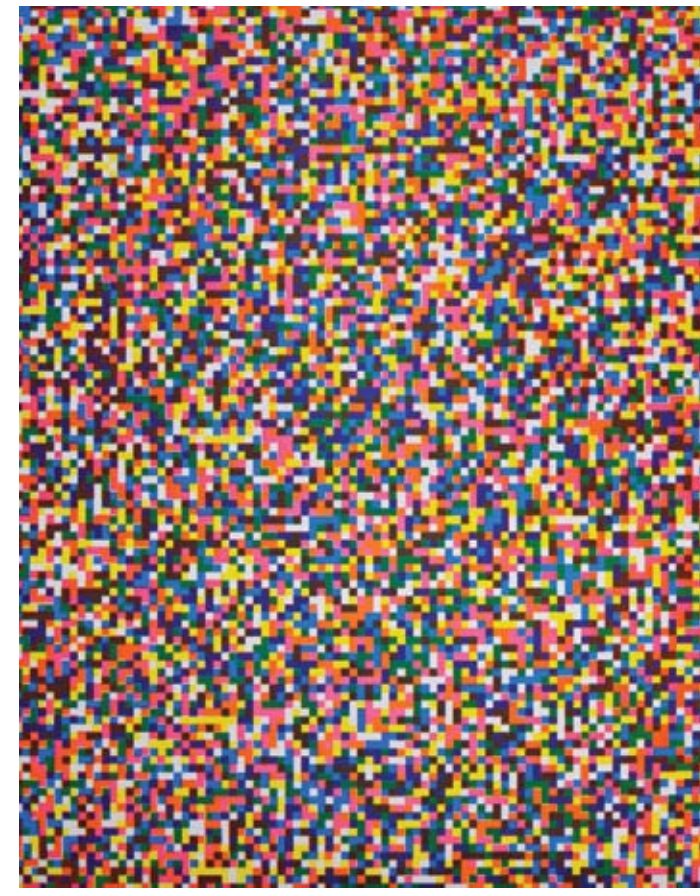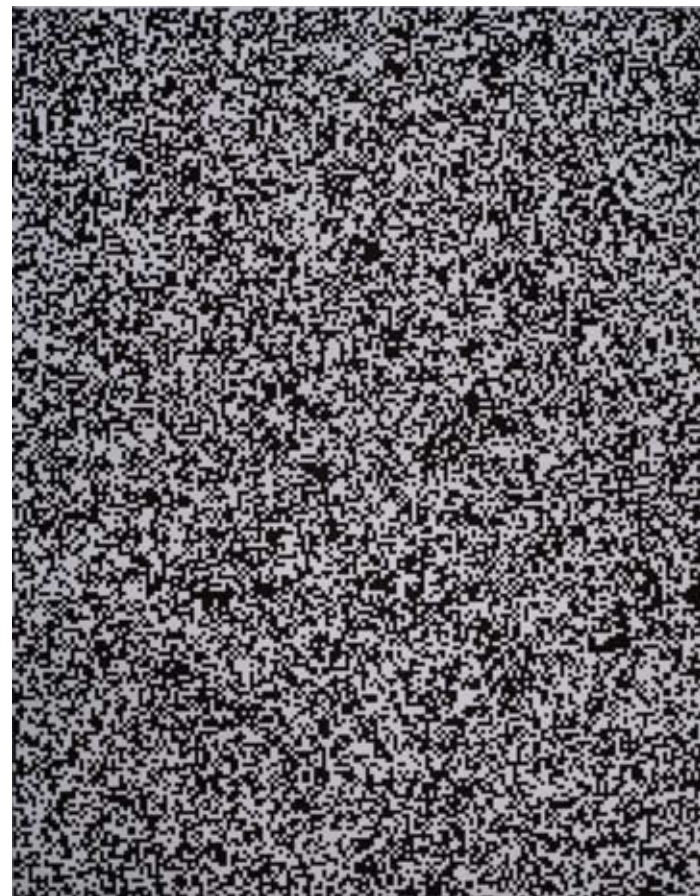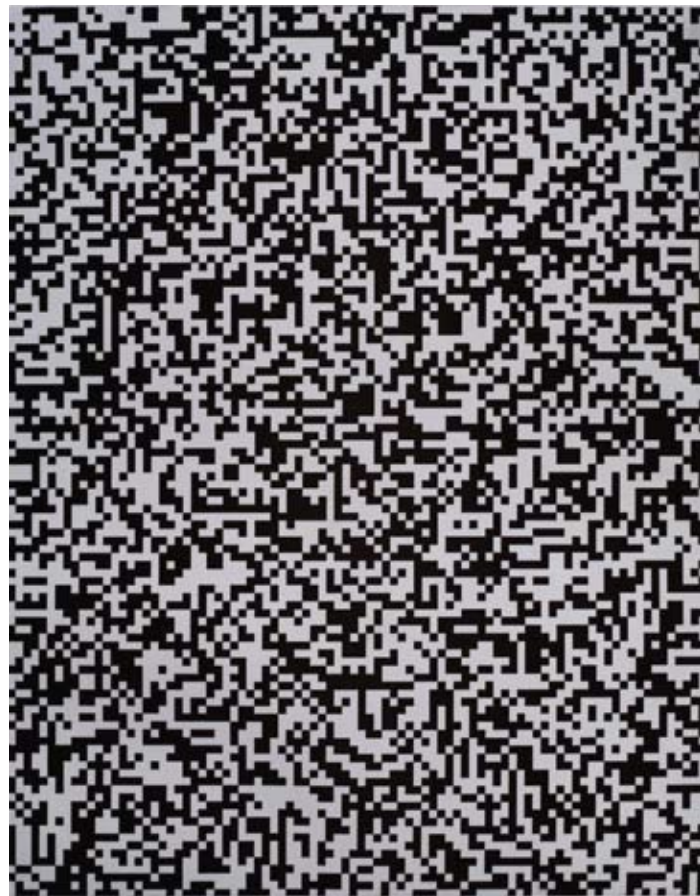
Q: Talk a little bit more about the structure that's misrepresented.

A: Well, there are so many binaries in language. A lot of the framework of constructing how you express your ideas is based around these opposites. And sometimes you're sold short by that because you're forced to compartmentalize your thoughts into words that don't represent a spectrum of thought, but more just yes or no, or this or that, or a particular tense, for example.

Q: And so, in your work, you wanted to push that, explore that restriction, disassemble that restriction?

A: All of the above. Maybe disambiguate some things and make more ambiguous other things.

Q: How does the tension between beauty and concept play out in your work?

A: I hope to get rid of that tension. I think the most effective conceptual art is something that makes you want to explore it further. I am trying to walk a line between something that's mysterious and something that gives you at least a clue, or some

incentive for inquiry, because, hopefully, it's beautiful. The aesthetics might be your incentive to find out that there is a system to something that seems chaotic.

Q: You are using computers to generate imagery to make intaglio prints. Can you talk about your concept of time and art?

A: I was against computers for a long time. I took a lot of pride in doing everything by hand. There's a big part of me that still does, but resisting technology is just being stodgy.

I could have made these prints quickly on a laser printer, but they would have a completely different quality. You can see there's slight warping, and things don't line up completely perfectly. That works with this idea, because basically this is about chaos. There's a quality in something handmade that can't be replaced.

Q: I'm curious how you've moved beyond just the handmade and added this other layer.

A: My work has changed to be a little bit less about craft and more about concepts. The calligraphic drawings that I used to

do are all about craft, and about ornamenting something to the point that it's pretty much invisible or obliterated.

But now, my ideas are more about something systemic. So, using a computer makes a lot of sense because there's logic and system, and it can help you iterate those ideas over and over. If you make small changes many, many times you get some big results.

Q: Is your process one where you actually spend a lot of time just thinking?

A: I spend a lot more time planning than painting.

Q: Is that changing now?

(Left)
50/50, Random (Coarse), 2008
Aquatint Etching
Paper size: 39″ x 30″; Edition of 30

(Right)
50/50, Random (Fine), 2008
Aquatint Etching
Paper size: 39″ x 30″; Edition of 30

A: These prints are the beginning of a new body of work that allows for chaos to happen. I'm going to have to give over to chance somewhat. I'm not sure exactly how that's going to play out. I made this series of drawings and they're exactly half black, half white, but they're different patterns to represent those proportions. I was thinking about binary as a language, like binary code for computers, as well as just the binaries within the English language, and how in binary code there's just zeros and ones.

You have to represent everything, including the ambiguous, with just those two components. And to break it down to a really simple visual representation, I'm representing one with black and zero with white, and making the same middle gray over and over and over again in different ways out of those two extremes. This is the first time that I'm doing that in a random way, so there's no pattern, but it's the same gray.

Q: Explain why in "50 50 Zoom in Zoom out" the squares at the top are much

larger, and those in the bottom half are much smaller.

A: If you were to make these squares very small, which is how the pixels are on your computer screen, it would just blur together as a continuous, ambiguous color. I'm zooming into different scales of the unambiguous parts.

Q: How did you determine what to fill in?

A: With a computer formula for randomness. It's how credit card companies encrypt information.

Q: What about the colored prints?

A: I've created three plates. And these three pigment primaries are like the process primaries used for printing — cyan, magenta, and yellow. And on each plate there's a random pattern of colored squares and blank squares, and they overlap at various probabilities to create seven possible colors — or eight if you include the white. So, the three primaries, the three secondaries, and then a seventh color where all three overlap, and then the white where none overlap.

(Left)
**A Half Times A Half Times
A Half (Coarse),** 2008
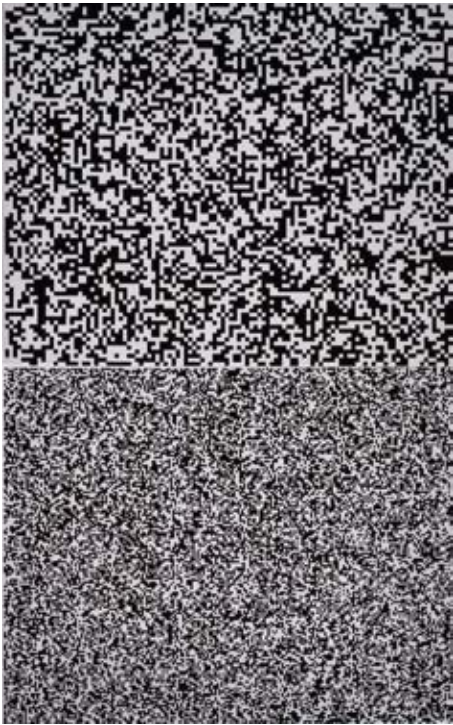Color Aquatint Etching
Paper size: 39″ x 30″; Edition of 30

(Right)
**A Half Times A Half Times
A Half (Fine),** 2008
Color Aquatint Etching
Paper size: 39″ x 30″; Edition of 30

Q: There is another tension between something that's so precise on the computer screen and the handmade quality of intaglio printing.

A: It's going to be different every single time.

Q: So, in a way we're talking about chance at two layers — the automatic layer that's created by a computer program that generates the placement of the squares and the manual layer created by hand?

A: Exactly.

50/50, Zoom In/Zoom Out, 2008
Aquatint Etching
Paper size; 54" x 36"; Edition of 15

Auerbach is represented by the Jack Hanley Gallery in San Francisco, Deitch Projects in New York and Standard (Oslo) in Norway. She is a recent recipient of the SECA Award given by SFMOMA and she will be part of an upcoming group show at the Gladstone Gallery in Brussels. A native of the San Francisco Bay Area, Auerbach received a bachelor of arts degree in visual art from Stanford University in 2003. The artist currently lives and works in New York City.

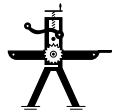**PLEASE JOIN PAULSON PRESS AT THE FOLLOWING ART FAIRS:**

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