

## RUTH LASKEY

04.01.16

**T**hese are Ruth Laskey's first prints since she became an artist. Considering that she's known for creating small linen weavings, the change in size, materials, and process represents a departure for her. She came to the studio thoroughly prepared and yet very open to the innovation that might take place. One of the surprises she found was how fast a single print can be produced after intense preparation. Laskey is an artist who likes making an object and its component parts slowly over time. In this medium, collaboration was a catalyst for something new.

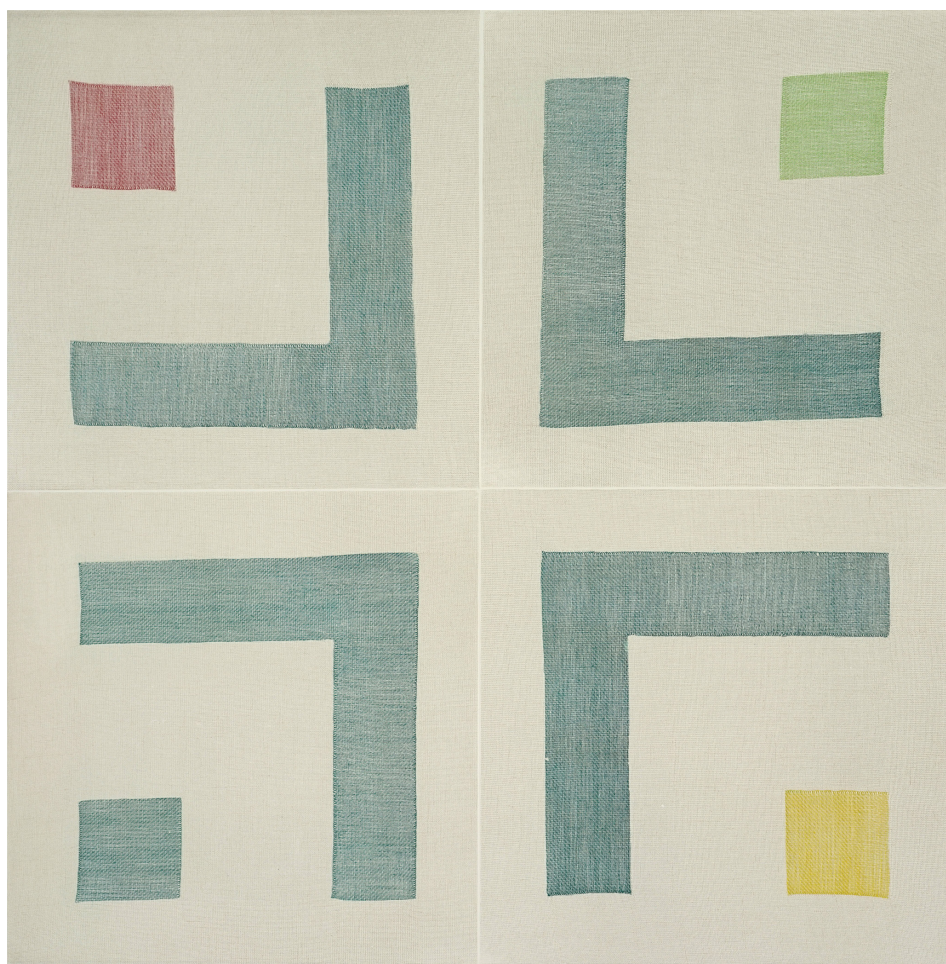
- Kenneth Caldwell

**Paulson Bott Press:** Did you know that you wanted go to in this general direction when you got here?

**Ruth Laskey:** We had done tests ahead of time with the woven material, so we knew that's where we wanted to go with it, to print the texture. We made a plate from the weaving itself because we liked the results of the texture coming through. I knew I wanted to weave something that we could print with. It didn't make sense for it to be a one-to-one thing, to just print a woven image. I wanted to do something I couldn't do in weaving. So the solution was to come up with kind of a modular weaving that we could play around with.

**Q:** Which threads are you coloring or dyeing?

**RL:** It's all linen. So I'm using one type of thread, and then I'm dyeing this thread to



get the color. I'm dyeing the weft. Any part that's colored is in a twill pattern. And then anything that's not colored is in the plain weave pattern. So I'm using two different patterns together.

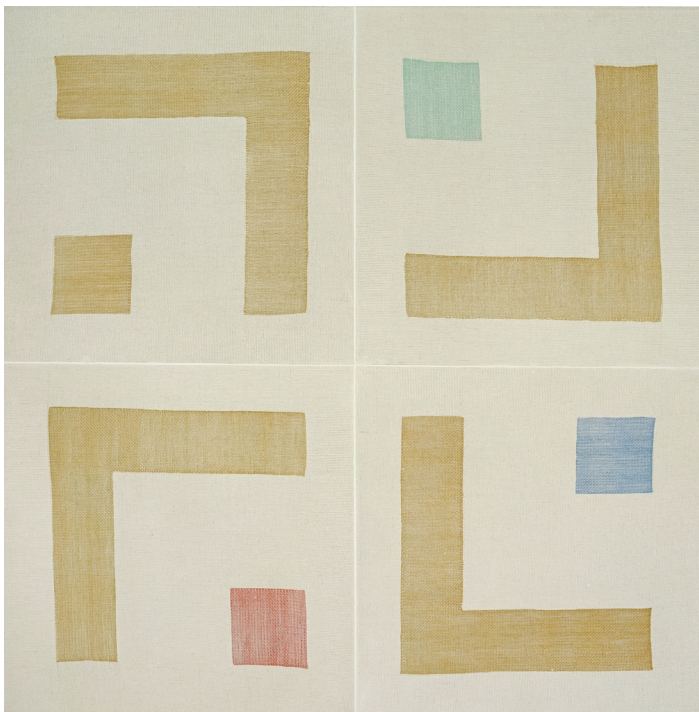
**Q:** How do you get such precise edge? Are you diagramming this all out ahead of time?

**RL:** Yes. The weaving is a grid itself. To create the twill pattern, you're creating a diagonal.

### PLAIN WEAVE GRID (EMERALD GREEN/RUBY RED/SPRING GREEN/PRIMROSE YELLOW), 2015

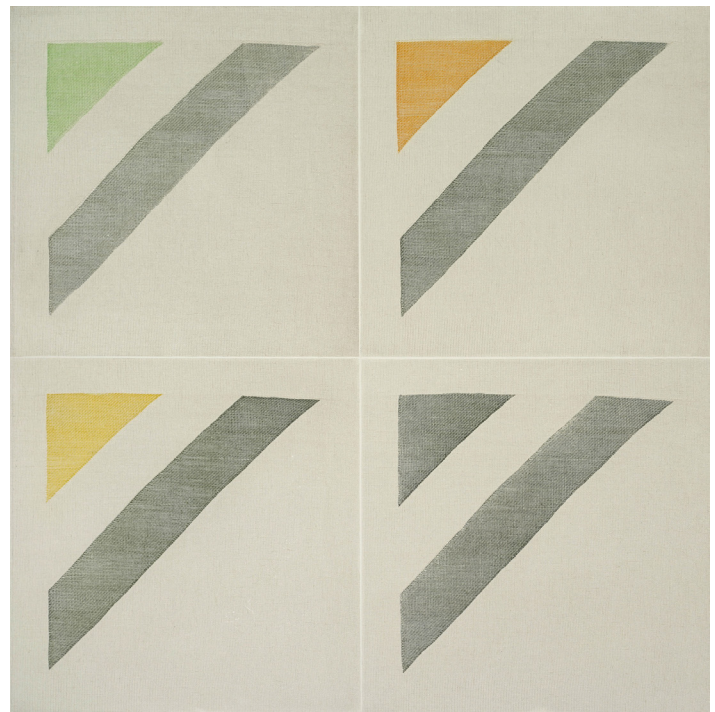
Color softground etching;  
29" x 29"; Edition of 35





**PLAIN WEAVE GRID (YELLOW OCHRE / VIRIDIAN GREEN / CERULEAN BLUE / VERMILLION RED), 2015**

Color softground etching;  
29" x 29"; Edition of 35



**TWILL WEAVE GRID (OXIDE GREEN / SPRING GREEN / INDIAN YELLOW / PERMANENT YELLOW LAKE), 2015**

Color softground etching;  
29" x 29"; Edition of 35

These are just points on a grid that create the diagonal. I'm actually using a tapestry technique, but not with a tapestry pattern. I might be using seven different spools of threads at the same time on one line.

**Q:** Why were you drawn to weaving?

**RL:** I didn't study it. I was painting, and what I was most interested in was paying attention to the materials. So I was making my own paint and putting these blobs on the paper. It was all about the body of the paint and the feeling of the paint and not really about image. The medium was as strong a component as the image.

I was painting on raw linen so you would see the texture of the weave and that would be part of the painting, too. But I didn't really like using the store-bought linen, because it was such a major part of a painting. I wanted the paint and the ground to have an equal amount of intention.

On a whim, I took a weaving class just to see if I could achieve what I wanted to in that direction. I started by weaving linen squares

that I could paint on. But by learning the techniques of weaving, I realized I could create imagery through the weaving itself.

I was creating a linen square, a section of tapestry, and then painting it. So there were two things going on at once. The paint felt like too much extra. I was putting it on top, and that didn't feel right.

**Q:** Was it hard to sacrifice the weavings to make the prints?

**RL:** That was definitely a consideration in terms of what size weaving I wanted to make. Conceptually, I didn't want to just reproduce a weaving, but also it didn't make sense in that way, to make a whole weaving and then destroy it. It made more sense to create these modular pieces. That worked perfectly in terms of what made sense to do on the loom in relationship with what's happening in the print.

**Q:** How many plates for a single print?

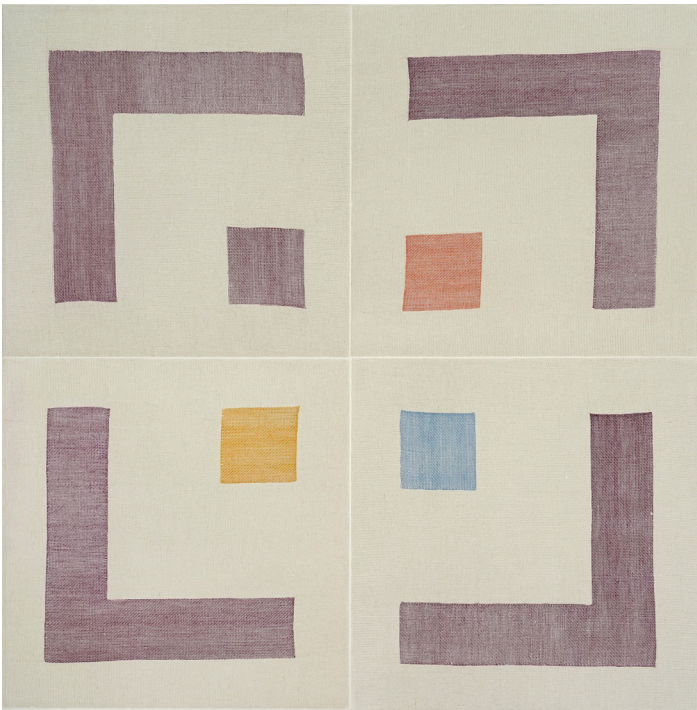
**RL:** Eight. Four for the background and then four for the colors.

**Q:** Both weaving and printing take so much patience.

**RL:** That draws me to it. It's interesting to have this experience within a print studio because when it's right it can happen so fast. Obviously I've been thinking about them for a long time, and the setup takes a while, but getting them to be physically produced was so fast compared to working in my studio.

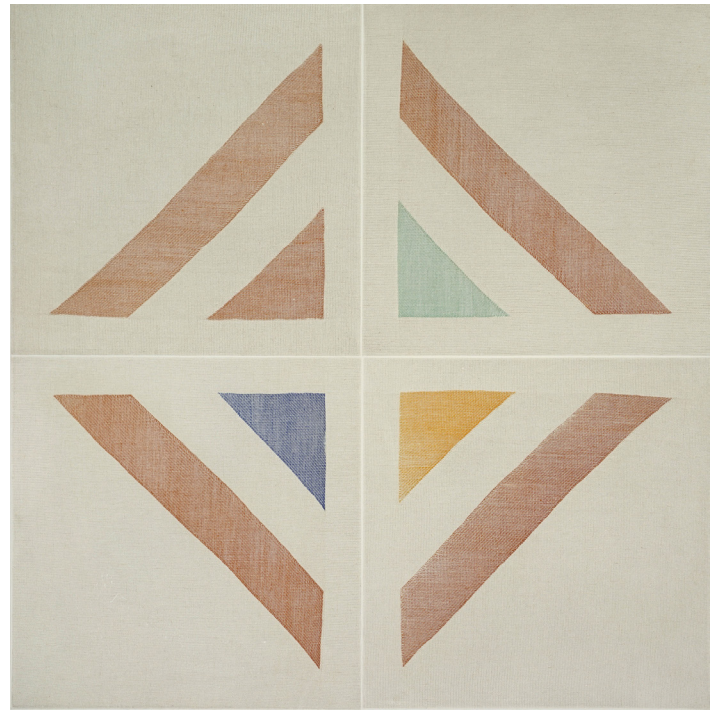
**Q:** Here you can change your mind about the colors quickly, but not so in the weaving itself.

**RL:** Yes. It's set. I've been sitting with these for a month or two. That's how it works in my studio. I make the drawings, and then I sit with them for a long time to work up the courage to weave them. So the choices happen pretty quickly and intuitively, but then there's this process that happens where I commit to them. That already happened with these, because I'd been sitting with them for a long time. But when I got here on Monday, I was back to working colors for some of the other arrangements.



**PLAIN WEAVE GRID (SOLFERINO VIOLET/ VERMILLION RED/ CERULEAN BLUE/ INDIAN YELLOW), 2015**

Color softground etching;  
29" x 29"; Edition of 35



**TWILL WEAVE GRID (SANGUINE/ VIRIDIAN GREEN/ INDIAN YELLOW/ COBALT BLUE), 2015**

Color softground etching;  
29" x 29"; Edition of 35

Now that I've sat with them for three days, they are fine. But when those first came off the press after only a day or two, looking at that color combination, I was like, "Ooh, I don't know about that one."

**Q:** Can you see how this experience might inform something you'd do next?

**RL:** I've ended up creating patterns within the image, which is something that I don't do in weaving. One of the characteristics of weaving is patterning. But I create an autonomous shape. This process took me out of that. One of the things that we were talking about is using these prints as possible installations. Perhaps we could tile them to make a larger pattern on the wall? A larger pattern has the potential to get quite large, if a situation arose. It will be interesting to go back to weaving and think about this.

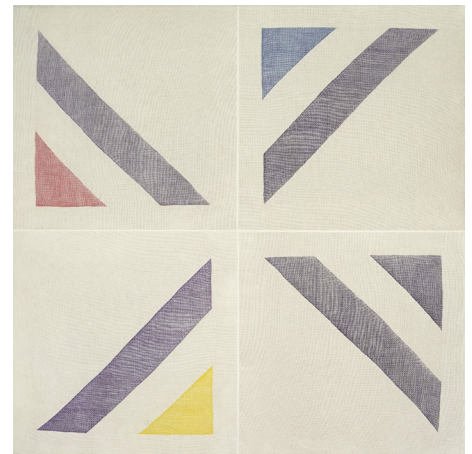
**Q:** Can you talk about inspirations for your work?

**RL:** The first person I thought about when we talked about doing prints was Anni

Albers. When I got closer to what I wanted to in terms of doing the modules, I started to think about Frank Lloyd Wright and his textile blocks. I wanted the weaving to be simple enough that the texture was the main component. If it got too intricate or detailed, you might be more focused on the image and not see the texture or pay attention to it. It also had to be something that could be rotated or had a lot of variety in the different combinations.

**Q:** In choosing this method of practice, was it a conscious response to this overwhelming technological age?

**RL:** Not consciously, but I love slowness. I'm always drawn to things that are slower. When I was a painter, the process was faster where you would do something and you would just see it, it materialized. As much as I love painting, there was something lacking in that for me. It was too fast.



**TWILL WEAVE GRID (PERMANENT VIOLET/ RUBY RED/ COBALT BLUE/ PRIMROSE YELLOW), 2015**

Color softground etching;  
29" x 29"; Edition of 35





PAULSON BOTT  
PRESS

2390 C FOURTH ST. BERKELEY, CA 94710  
T 510.559.2088 • F 510.559.2085  
WWW.PAULSONBOTTPRESS.COM

First Class Mail  
US Postage Paid  
Berkeley, CA  
Permit #559

Ruth Laskey at Paulson Bott Press, 2015

