

METROPOLIS M



Hedendaagse kunst /
Contemporary Art
N° 2-2010
april / mei € 10



NTJ/TNT

Scouting USA
Anna Tilroe over
engagement
De 'uncoole' Pere Llobera
De opkomst van
de kunstenaarsroman
Lima: exporteur van
toptalent

Organized Randomness Tauba Auerbach

Organized Randomness Tauba Auerbach

Although the young American artist Tauba Auerbach is still at the beginning of her career, she has successfully shifted her attention from her earlier series of artworks – in which she explored typography, language and their systems in a personalized fashion – to a more varied practice that uses pattern and optical illusion combined with the exploitation of mechanical processes.

Her brainy form of visually pleasing conceptualism has landed her in the *2010 Whitney Biennial* in New York, curated by Francesco Bonami and Gary Carrion-Murayari, scheduled to open on February 25. Born in 1981 and living and working in San Francisco and New York, Auerbach, a former professional sign painter, had a tentative connection with other Bay Area natives who also used hand-drawn letterforms in their work, such as Barry McGee and the late Margaret Killgallen.

Auerbach, however, has an analytical approach to her studies on language and its codes, going so far as to design new mathematical symbols in a collaborative project with Byron Cook, a principal researcher at Microsoft's laboratory at Cambridge University in the U.K. and a professor of computer science at Queen Mary, University of London. Asked how math relates to her art, the artist states: 'When I think about things like truth or reality, I naturally think about numbers. The only things I can point to as objective presences in my physical world are quantities. Everything else is subject to qualitative assessment, interpretation and misrepresentation. Numbers seem to be real things.'

Auerbach's earliest works were elegant and complex ornamental hand-drawn calligraphic representations of the alphabet that verged on the undecipherable. She continued her exploration of the symbols of language with works such as the gouache painting *Yes No Morph II* (2007), with letters from each word forming part of the next, in addition to a strong utilization of a colour-coded formula that added not only another layer of meaning, but also a visual punch. Integrating language and mathematics, *Letters as Numbers II* (2008) mixes signifiers and signs in a left-brained exercise of visual playfulness made more absorbing with the addition of lines of a different colour to change the reading of the forms.

Her most recent work, on view at her solo exhibition at Deitch Projects in New York in 2009, moved away from this territory and delved into the broader and more visually arresting opportunities that result from analyzing patterns and happy accidents utilizing different mediums, while investigating concepts of illusion and abstraction.

For the *2010 Whitney Biennial*, Auerbach will be showing three paintings from her current 'fold' series, which were part of her Deitch show. Based on the idea of *trompe l'oeil*, or tricking the eye, these works

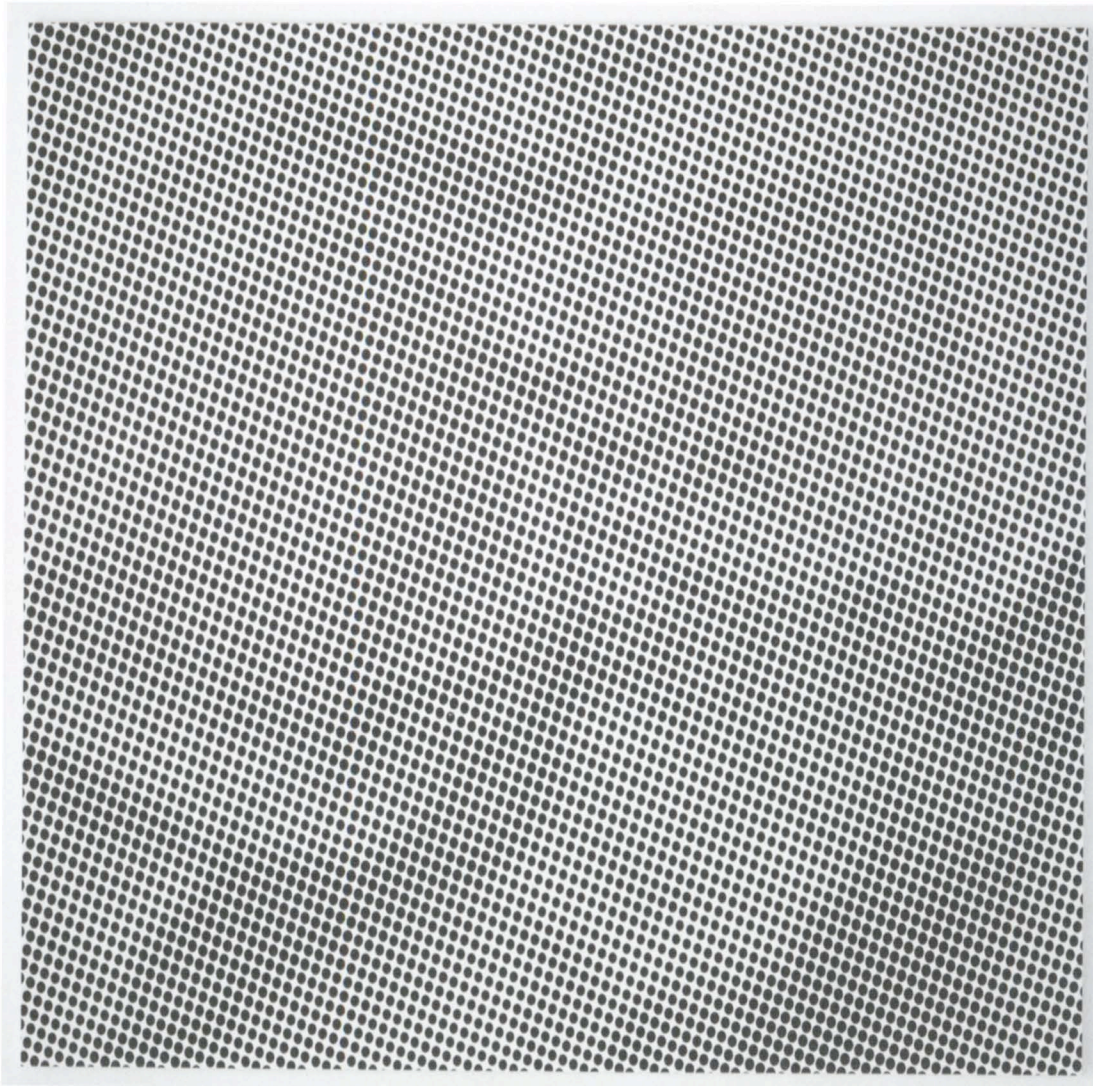
look like canvasses that have been folded in multiple sections and then stretched taught, but they are actually made by a careful airbrush technique using an industrial sprayer. While essentially monochromatic, the tonal rendering of the folds suggests a three-dimensional state. Discussing this juxtaposition of surface, illusion, and colour can easily begin a discourse on the history of modern art, the flattened quality of web-based graphics and the disappearance of the physical object, as printed material succumbs to the cost-savings and the ease of digital media.

If Auerbach's earlier hand-painted work and her illusionistic, process-oriented paintings seem all about control, she has countered that with a series of photographs of the abstract patterns from the static of television screens to keep the viewer constantly guessing what exactly is going on in her art. This freezing of time results in a colourful wave-field or a pointillist landscape created by shooting the TV screen with a film camera, scanning that negative into the computer and outputting it digitally; a process that straddles both the analogue and digital worlds. Creating a luscious abstraction from a device that has for better or worse shaped American culture over the past several generations, Auerbach delves into the territory of pop culture without using any of its most recognizable characteristics. Auerbach admits, 'Looking for randomness is almost like rebelling against yourself – I think humans have an ordering, pattern-finding tendency. So it's counterintuitive as an object of desire, and it's also remarkably difficult to find.'

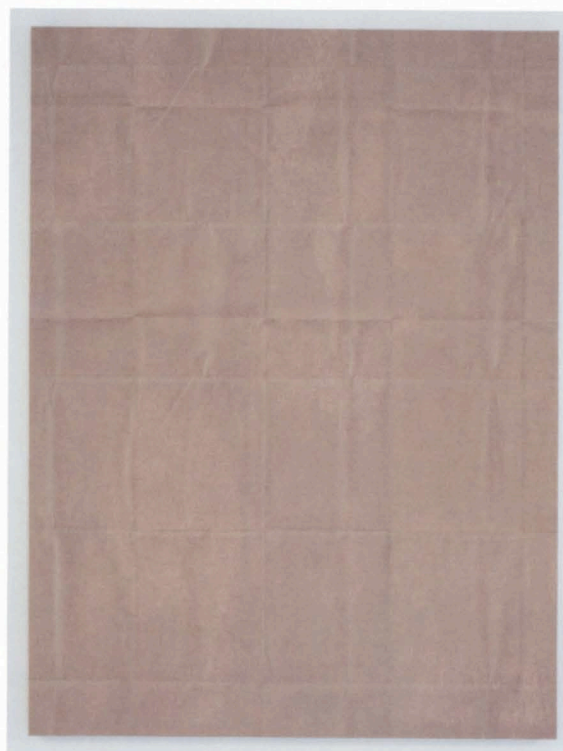
Whether painting or taking a photograph, Auerbach retains a careful balance between the concept behind her work and the final product, which more often than not is an unmistakably desirable art object. She confirms that 'the visual and the conceptual are of equal priority to me, but the concept is always the impetus behind the work.' Whether Auerbach returns to her earlier language-based work, continues dealing with issues of process, illusion and surface, or looks elsewhere for a new conundrum, she is on a quest to find the right approach for a given idea.

Chris Bors is an artist and writer, New York

The work of Tauba Auerbach is included in the *2010 Whitney Biennial*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, from 25 February through 30 May.



Tauba
Auerbach,
Crumple VII,
2009, acryl
en inkjet op
canvas, 243.8
x 325.1 cm,
courtesy
Deitch Projects,
New York



Tauba
Auerbach,
*Untitled
Fold Paint-
ing II*, 2009,
acryl op
canvas,
132.1 x 101.6
cm, courtesy
Deitch
Projects,
New York

Tauba Auerbach. *A Hail Times a Hail Times a Hail (Course)*, 2008. courtesy of kunstenaar. Paulson Bot Press. Berkeley en Jeffrey Deitch. New York

