



Prism Scan I (2012) by Tauba Auerbach.



## What You See Is What You Get

TAUBA AUERBACH: 'FLOAT,' AT PAULA COOPER GALLERY; 'SCREW YOU,' AT SUSAN INGLETT GALLERY

By Will Heinrich

### GALLERIES

Hanging on the walls of Paula Cooper's sky-lit gallery on 21st Street, as if projected by the two small prism sculptures made of lead crystal cast inside urethane resin that stand on white pedestals in the middle of the floor, are 12 evanescently unstable new disruptions of the idea of disrupting the picture plane.

Seven of Tauba Auerbach's new paintings use no paint at all. *Slice I*, *Bend I*, *Slice II*, *Ray I*, *Ray II*, *Glass I* and *Shift Wave* are instead woven from strips of raw canvas—about a centimeter to an inch wide, depending on the piece—into complicated patterns and calculated, gestural divergences from pattern, directly over wooden stretchers. Whether you can see the patterns depends on the angle of light coming through the skylight and how far away you stand. From an ordinary distance in the early afternoon, *Shift Wave* looks like nothing. But over time, and from top to bottom, there emerges a complex of overlapping right angles that create rows of triangles in alternating directions, which themselves form descending sine curves with their peaks and troughs flattened out, like a Marimekko shower curtain or sea serpents in an early video game. Stand closer, and you notice that the canvas itself is made with a kind of houndstooth weave that catches the light differently on either side, so that each strip is a subtle, two-toned off-yellow and gray; stand right by the wall, to the side, and the depth of the overlapping strips may bring to mind Wayne Kasy's matchstick Lusitania in the American Visionary Art Museum.

Because the strips themselves are all straight, and all vertical or horizontal, it's only the way they overlap that makes an image of pixelated flurries and curves, and this profusion of overlap makes you want to peek through and see the frame that supports it. But the pattern has no gaps—its openness is also an illusion.

The five paintings that are made from paint, all called *Un-*

*tilted (Fold)*, use sprayed-on acrylic in neon-pastel colors to create similar patterns of trompe l'oeil creases and folds. The colors are garish—bright green contrasted with pale, maddy pink, cyan with magenta, a waspy yellow fading to dungaree black. They're like the insides of a prism rendered in the appearance of cloth, artificially colored electron microscope images, or a cyberpunk "Masque of the Red Death."

But these pieces, too, alter in appearance depending on where the viewer stands. The details of tromperie are all impeccable, but only locally—from across the room, they don't quite add up. From across the room, the baldness of the illusion itself becomes an illusion, and you begin to see a steady, slow shifting, like the sifting of an inexhaustible dune. In traditional Zen art, there's a motif called the Ox Herding Pictures, in which the search for enlightenment is symbolized by the search for an ox. In the last picture, the successful herder, having found, recaptured and forgotten what he was looking for, re-enters the marketplace with open hands. How can you tell he's really gone anywhere? The answer, briefly, is that it takes one to know one. You can only see it if you look.

THERE'S NOTHING NEW under the sun, it's not what you do but how you do it, and there's no accounting for taste. Yet another place where art and pornography overlap is in the tense and hostile neediness of provocation, of the act of exhibition that tries to seize attention, disavow the need for it, and disparage the viewer for giving it up, all with a single raspberry. "Screw You," a group show curated by David Platzker at Susan Inglett Gallery, shines its light right down into this sticky, eye-catching, sick-making area of overlap—and into the moment, in late '60s and early '70s New York, when avant-garde art and avant-liberation nude magazines were pushing very nearly the same buttons, and such titles as *Screw*, *The East Village Other* and *Kusama Presents an Orgy of Nudity, Love, Sex & Beauty* made the overlap concrete. The show's title is written in big black letters in the gallery windows above a black-and-white portrait of *Screw's* founding publisher, Al Goldstein. "No," you may think, "screw you," but still you walk inside.

In this show, it's the pictures that serve as a beard for the text. Videos by Yayoi Kusama, Andy Warhol and Stan Brakhage; photos by Carolee Schneeman, John Chamberlain and Brigid Berlin; a few adorable small etchings by Picasso; and even R. Crumb's second-most famous incest cartoon, which ran as a centerpiece of *Kiss*, can't really compete with the brash, bizarre, dated, typographically gleeful, frequently ridiculous covers of *Rat*, *The New York Review of Sex or Cockoo: The Paper with Nuts*. The *Los Angeles Free Press* illustrates its article "Are Mexican Abortions Dangerous?" with a picture of Ms. Kusama naked and covered in polka dots; the 11th issue of *Avant Garde* published the pleasantly indifferent erotic lithographs of John Lennon, as well as an interesting story about a Black Panther sentenced to six months in New Jersey for calling a cop a "motherfucker" and his lawyer's attempt to contest the presumption that this was necessarily an insult; and the second issue of *Gay*, published in 1969, asks, "Is Mick Jagger On Top?"

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Voyeur (1969) and Screw: The Sex Review (1969).