

## TAUBA AUERBACH

PAULA COOPER - NEW YORK



TAUBA AUERBACH, *Bent Onyx*, 2012. Digital offset printing, Mohawk superfine paper, Japanese tissue, hand painted edges, 43 x 16 x 16 cm. © Tauba Auerbach. Courtesy Paula Cooper, New York.

In her first exhibition at Paula Cooper, Tauba Auerbach shifts from her punchy Op abstractions and performance to more contradictory questioning in these seventeen works from 2012. Here paintings with a trompe l'oeil dimension are contrasted with “paintings” woven from canvas strips that form low-relief patterning. Sculptures swing from clear, colorless and light refracting to illusory blocks of solid stone.

The twelve paintings, hung low on the wall in the manner of Dan Walsh, take two forms. The “Fold” series, created by spraying folded fabric and re-stretching it, generates three-dimensional effects of depth that are strikingly believable. The colors are bright, and most have an angular geometry. While the technique is gimmicky, the paintings are surprisingly controlled and composed: *Untitled (Fold)* has beautiful color gradation with its yellow and gray verticals.

The “Weave” paintings use woven canvas tape to create a patterned effect that is subtle, monochromatic and crafty, with an Agnes Martin presence. The modulated patterns absorb light and create surface staccato. Some works have a symmetrical repetitive weave

while others take surprising shifts from predictive arrangement. What emerges seems a dry, thoughtful strategy for the consideration and reconstruction of the picture plane. Four pedestal sculptures are modest in scale; *Double Prism* is made of cast crystal encased in clear resin; the feel is elegant and modernist, with slick, refractive surfaces. *Double Prism II* has an intriguing angular tension.

In contrast are two works titled *Bent Onyx*. Printed on paper with hand-painted edges, the images are reproduced from successive scanned slices of stone and assembled in the exploded form of a bound book. The weighty presence, an unreadable tome, questions form, function and substance.

Auerbach’s approach seems thoughtful and almost scientific as she creates objects that posit illusion and physicality through a distanced, hands-off approach. Expressing numerous possibilities, the works transition from the topographic to the microscopic and seem part of something larger.

Gregory Montreuil

## LUCIAN FREUD

ACQUAVELLA - NEW YORK



LUCIAN FREUD, *Head of a Man*, 1986. Charcoal on paper, 64 x 47 cm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Agnes Gund, 1988 (36.1988). © The Lucian Freud Archive. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, New York.

Lucian Freud’s idiosyncratic cast of characters beckons and repels in this extensive drawing exhibition. William Feaver worked with Freud over four years to select the pieces presented here. Spanning Freud’s entire career from 1922 to 2011, the variety of works and mediums give depth and insight into what motivated Freud, the grandson of Sigmund Freud.

The show is arranged chronologically, which enables a fascinating look at the development of Freud’s technique and choice of subjects. An early work, *Man With Folded Hands* (1944), has a cartoonish quality with an Alice Neel feel. Some early drawings contain surreal elements. *Dark Coat II* (1948) shows a wide-eyed beauty with deadpan expression and exaggerated proportions.

Animals, both dead and living, and sleeping figures emerge as recurring themes: *Dead Monkey on a Dish* (1943) is one of the first carcasses here, but faces are the most frequent content. These human exteriors are economically rendered with astute observation and sureness of hand. Typically floating and often detached from the rest of the body, most subjects are drawn with a certain gravitas.

A large variety of techniques and materials are used — pastel, chalk, ink, pencil, crayon, watercolor and charcoal — though Freud seems most comfortable with line and crosshatching. The exception is a series of watercolors from 1961 where the figures are unusually loose and watery.

The human subjects in the drawings range from the known to the unknown: Harold Pinter, Francis Bacon, a “Dark-Haired Neighbor” and a “Boy on a Sofa.” Freud’s individual parents are often drawn. Self-portraits are numerous; *Self Portrait* (1981) in charcoal is particularly haunting in its penetrating, smudgy visage.

In all of these works there is a calm sense of sureness; no drawings feel rushed or even hurried. There is the sense that Lucian Freud took risks and pushed boundaries, trying new materials and ways to portray his subjects. This show is proof that a substantial journey can begin with a mark on a page.

Gregory Montreuil