Anderson Gallery of Graphic Art, de Young | July 16–October 23, 2016
The Paulson Bott Press Archive joins other significant holdings in the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts. These include the Crown Point Press Archive (acquired in 1991), the Anderson Graphic Arts Collection (acquired in 1996), and the Edward Ruscha Graphic Arts Archive (acquired in 2000). Together, these important collections extend the Museums’ commitment to preserving and displaying contemporary American prints.

Founded in 1996, Berkeley’s Paulson Bott Press has become a leader in intaglio print publishing over its twenty-year history thanks to the vision and leadership of press owners Pam Paulson and Renée Bott. The two met in 1987 while working as master printers for Crown Point Press in San Francisco. Over the years their friendship grew, and the two discussed establishing their own workshop. In 1993 Paulson left to establish a small press in Emeryville, California, where she provided contract printing for local artists. Three years later Bott joined her, and Paulson Press, as it was originally named, was born. In 2010 its name was changed to its present iteration to reflect Paulson and Bott’s partnership.

Within its first summer of operation, Paulson Press published its initial editions—four prints by Christopher Brown, including Start (fig. 2) and Window—selling out of each edition of forty within a matter of weeks. Bolstered by the success of their venture, Paulson and Bott were encouraged to expand their offerings, and were soon inviting multiple artists to come to their Berkeley workshop every year. During the early years, when the press was still finding its direction, many of its artists, including Brown, Squeak Carnwath (see fig. 3), and Hung Liu (see fig. 4), were based in the Bay Area. But the printers were reluctant to limit their practice to Northern California artists, and soon their reach would expand to include collaborators from around the United States. As Bott once explained, “We’re going to work with artists whose work we both respect and like personally.”

Paulson and Bott often seek advice on potential collaborators from their visiting artists. As a result, threads link many of the artists to one another. For instance, Margaret Kilgallen (see fig. 1), an artist of the San Francisco Mission School who was inspired by hand-lettered signs, American folk art, and street art, led the master printers to her friend Chris Johanson (see cover), another Mission School artist, whose work shares with Kilgallen’s a preoccupation with the vernacular.

As the reputation of the press has grown, so has the reach of its circle of artists. To date the press has produced more than half of its editions with creators outside of the art world’s mainstream. After first working with

Fig 5. Radcliffe Bailey, By the River, 2000
Atlanta-based artist Radcliffe Bailey (see fig. 5) in 1997, Paulson and Bott began to think about the underrepresentation of artists of color in printmaking. Sometime later, Bailey—in another example of linking threads between artists—introduced them to curator Matt Arnett, who had worked closely with Mary Lee Bendolph (see fig. 6), Louisiana Bendolph (see fig. 7), and other quilters in the community of Gee’s Bend, Alabama. Though these women had never made prints before, and might not have thought of themselves as artists in the traditional sense, Paulson and Bott saw in their work original voices, a criterion that must always be met when the pair selects a new artist to work at the press. Furthermore, the quilters’ practice—which involved an arrangement of materials that might be replicated on the soft ground of a plate—would easily adapt to the nature of intaglio printmaking.

When Mary Lee Bendolph arrived at the press for the first time, in 2005, she drew inspiration from familiar materials: second-hand fabrics, which she sourced from local thrift stores. She pieced together fragments of used pants and shirts, pushing them into soft-ground-covered etching plates, thereby capturing the textures, stitching, and seams of the fabrics when the plates were later etched in acid. Printing colors were then matched to the source material, resulting in the simulacra of quilts that the artist hoped to achieve.

Whether working with creators new to the medium or experienced printmakers, Paulson and Bott, known for their ingenuity and technical expertise in intaglio processes, push the boundaries of printmaking, developing new methods and using traditional methods in unconventional ways to accommodate the desires of their visiting artists. During New York-based artist Calo Fonseca’s third visit to the press, in 2001, he expressed a desire to create texture, which he described as “ridges,” in his artwork. Experimenting with formal printmaking methods brought no results he was satisfied with, and, as Bott later recalled, he kept saying, “I want something soft, like a string.” From that analogy resulted a series of works that share the title Seven String Etchings (see fig. 11), referring to the seven strings the artist collaged into each print, under layers of Hosho paper and etching ink, incorporating a dimensionality not often seen in prints.

Similarly, Tauba Auerbach found success through textual experimentation at Paulson Bott. Since 2009, Auerbach has been investigating surface and volume in a wide range of works, twisting, folding, and manipulating untreated canvases before applying pigment. The resulting artworks,
although stretched flat again, appear multidimensional through a trompe l’oeil effect. In 2011, a year after showing these “fold” paintings in the Whitney Biennial, Auerbach continued her artistic preoccupation with spatial exploration at the press, exploring new ways to create an image utilizing the tremendous physical strength of the printing press itself. Auerbach referred to her process in the title of Fold / Slice Topo I (fig. 8), which resulted from her flattening an irregularly folded sheet of paper in the press, slicing it into strips, and then reassembling it on top of the printing plate. Every second strip was removed, and those that remained were used as a stencil for aquatinting the plate. Each band of color in the finished print corresponds to the elevations of the original paper strips so that, in the artist’s words, “there is a graduated progression, like on a topographic map.”

Artists are inspired at the press to discover alternative forms of expression, which they use to extend their regular practices. When New York—based artist Gary Simmons (see fig. 9) came to the press in 2012, he had long been apprehensive about making prints, believing the process (in which ink is typically added to paper) to be incompatible with his usual "erasure" technique, in which he wipes away or blurs parts of his images. However, reflecting on his experience of making prints at Paulson Bott, he later remarked, "It does force me into thinking about [my usual practice] from another direction. . . It’s kind of great to put yourself in a situation where you’re not comfortable and you almost relearn certain things that you take for granted in your studio, that you just do, and that’s been a joy.”

The opportunity to reflect on habitual practice may also explain in part the enthusiasm with which so many artists return to Paulson Bott Press. Sculptor Martin Puryear (see fig. 12) began making prints there in 2001, revisiting intaglio print processes for the first time since his student days in Stockholm. Over the last fifteen years, he has worked at the press seven times, appreciating that his time there permits a sustained investigation of his drawing practice, without the temptation to escape into sculpture. Of the role of printmaking within his oeuvre, he has said, “I think I try to make work that’s about the ideas in [my] sculpture without making pictures of the sculpture.”

With such a wide variety of artists making it their temporary studio, Paulson Bott Press avoids having a “shop lock,” or common aesthetic, in its output. Prints made there do, however, tend to reflect the enthusiasm that Paulson and Bott bring to their craft, with many resplendently printed in an array of colors. Certainly Spencer Finch brought this aspect to the fore in one of the press’s most recent projects. For Back to Kansas (fig. 10), the New York artist specified that more than forty colors be printed in a grid of seventy squares, with each hue matching one the artist selected from the classic 1939 film adaptation of The Wizard of Oz. In this way, Finch, too, was able to expand upon his practice, using printmaking to translate the transitory wall painting on which this print was based into a permanent work of art with the same proportions.

2. ibid, n.p.
WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

All prints are from the collection of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Dimensions indicate the size of the sheet, height preceding width.

Teuba Auerbach (American, b. 1981)
*Foot / Slice Topo I*, 2011
Color aquatint, printed in eleven colors 45 x 35 in
Printed by Renée Bott
Published by Paulson Bott Press, Berkeley
Gift of Paulson Bott Press 2015.42.9

Radcliffe Bailey (American, b. 1968)
*By the River*, 2000
Color photograph, aquatint, spit-bite and sugar-lift aquatint, soft-ground and hard-ground etching with scraping and burning, and drypoint, printed chine colle in fifteen colors 40 1/2 x 49 in
Printed by Scott Brubach
Published by Paulson Press, Berkeley
Foundation purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions 2015.37.17

Louisiana Bendolph (American, b. 1960)
*As I Leave Shall I Return*, 2013
Color soft-ground etching and aquatint, printed in seven colors 34 x 26 1/2 in
Printed by Sam Carr-Prindle
Published by Paulson Bott Press, Berkeley
Gift of Paulson Bott Press 2015.42.31

Mary Lee Bendolph (American, b. 1935)
*Past and Gone*, 2005
Color soft-ground etching, aquatint, and spit-bite aquatint, printed in ten colors 40 1/2 x 35 in
Printed by Pam Paulson
Published by Paulson Press, Berkeley
Gift of Paulson Bott Press 2015.42.38

Rosa Blecker (American, b. 1949)
*Leader Sequence*, 2002
Color aquatint, printed in two colors 37 1/4 x 35 1/4 in
Printed by Renée Bott
Published by Paulson Press, Berkeley
Foundation purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions 2015.37.59

Christopher Brown (American, b. 1951)
*Start*, 1996
Color soft-ground etching and aquatint with scraping, burnishing, and roulette, printed in nine colors 16 x 17 in
Printed by Pam Paulson
Published by Paulson Press, Berkeley
Gift of Paulson Bott Press 2015.42.47

Christopher Brown (American, b. 1951)
*Window*, 1996
Color soft-ground etching and aquatint with scraping, burnishing, and roulette, printed in five colors 16 x 17 in
Printed by Pam Paulson
Published by Paulson Press, Berkeley
Gift of Paulson Bott Press 2015.42.48

Squeek Cornwath (American, b. 1947)
*Random Events*, 2002
Color aquatint, sugar-lift aquatint, and etching, printed in sixteen colors 35 x 34 in
Printed by Emily York
Published by Paulson Press, Berkeley
Foundation purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions 2015.37.163

Kota Ewazawa (active United States, b. Germany, 1969)
*Kato*, 2005
Color aquatint, printed in eight colors 19 1/4 x 23 in
Printed by Renée Bott
Published by Paulson Press, Berkeley
Foundation purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions 2015.37.187

Kota Ewazawa (active United States, b. Germany, 1969)
*Polaroid Land Camera*, 2006
Color aquatint, printed in nine colors 20 1/4 x 21 1/4 in
Printed by Renée Bott
Published by Paulson Press, Berkeley
Foundation purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions 2015.37.189

Spencer Finch (American, b. 1962)
*Back to Kansas*, 2015
Color aquatint, printed chine colle in forty-two colors 43 x 60 in
Printed by Renée Bott
Published by Paulson Bott Press, Berkeley
Foundation purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions 2015.37.200

Caio Fonseca (American, b. 1959)
*Seven String Etching No. 1*, 2003
Color aquatint, spit-bite and sugar-lift aquatint, and soft-ground etching, printed chine colle in ten colors; and string 38 x 48 1/2 in
Printed by Pam Paulson
Published by Paulson Press, Berkeley
Foundation purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions 2015.37.219

Icsea Greenfield-Sanders (American, b. 1978)
*Blue Suit Bath*, 2006
Color aquatint with scraping and burnishing, printed in thirteen colors 32 x 31 1/4 in
Printed by Renée Bott
Published by Paulson Press, Berkeley
Gift of Paulson Bott Press 2015.42.49

Lonnie Holley (American, b. 1950)
*Our Journey*, 2013
Color soft-ground etching and aquatint with roulette, printed in four colors 40 1/2 x 34 in
Printed by Alexander Groshong
Published by Paulson Bott Press, Berkeley
Foundation purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions 2015.37.263

Chris Johnson (American, b. 1968)
*Forever Is Both Ways For All Time (Perceptions #2)*, 2007
Color sugar-lift aquatint, printed in twenty colors 37 x 45 in
Printed by Renée Bott
Published by Paulson Press, Berkeley
Foundation purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions 2015.37.299

Amy Kaufman (American, b. 1956)
*Loos Knot 1*, 2009
Color soft-ground etching with spit-bite aquatint and drypoint, printed chine colle in seven colors 35 1/2 x 31 in
Printed by Pam Paulson
Published by Paulson Press, Berkeley
Foundation purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions 2015.37.335

Marguerite Kligerman (American, 1967–2001)
*Sloe*, 1998
Color sugar-lift aquatint, printed chine colle in eleven colors 36 x 24 1/2 in
Printed by Renée Bott
Published by Paulson Press, Berkeley
Gift of Paulson Bott Press 2015.42.56

Hung Liu (American, b. China, 1948)
*Shui-Water*, 2012
Color soft-ground etching, aquatint, and spit-bite aquatint with gold leaf, printed in twelve colors 47 x 36 in
Printed by Sam Carr-Prindle
Published by Paulson Bott Press, Berkeley
Foundation purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions 2015.37.341

Kerry James Marshall (American, b. 1955)
*Vignette (Wishing Well)*, 2010
Color hard-ground and soft-ground etching with spit-bite and sugar-lift aquatint and drypoint, with scraping and burnishing, printed chine colle in thirteen colors 53 x 41 in
Printed by Pam Paulson
Published by Paulson Bott Press, Berkeley
Foundation purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions 2015.37.367

Marvin Puryear (American, b. 1941)
*Three Holies*, 2002
Color spit-bite aquatint and soft-ground etching, printed in three colors 29 x 34 in
Printed by Pam Paulson
Published by Paulson Press, Berkeley
Gift of Paulson Bott Press 2015.42.66

Marvin Puryear (American, b. 1941)
*Unfied (State II)*, 2014
Color soft-ground etching and drypoint, printed chine colle in three colors 35 x 28 in
Printed by Renée Bott
Published by Paulson Bott Press, Berkeley
Gift of Paulson Bott Press 2015.42.83

Claire Rojas (American, b. 1976)
*Bleeding Hearts*, 2009
Color sugar-lift aquatint, printed chine colle 22 x 18 in
Printed by Renée Bott
Published by Paulson Press, Berkeley
Foundation purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions 2015.37.395

Claire Rojas (American, b. 1976)
*Forget-Me-Not*, 2009
Color sugar-lift aquatint, printed chine colle 22 x 18 in
Printed by Renée Bott
Published by Paulson Press, Berkeley
Foundation purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions 2015.37.397

Claire Rojas (American, b. 1976)
*Tuias*, 2009
Color sugar-lift aquatint, printed chine colle 22 x 18 in
Printed by Renée Bott
Published by Paulson Press, Berkeley
Foundation purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions 2015.37.401

Gary Simmons (American, b. 1964)
*Storite Theatre*, 2012
Color soap-ground aquatint and aquatint, printed in three colors 32 x 40 in
Printed by Pam Paulson
Published by Paulson Bott Press, Berkeley
Foundation purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions 2015.37.407

Cover Image:
Chris Johanson, *Forever Is Both Ways for All Time (Perceptions #2)*, 2007

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