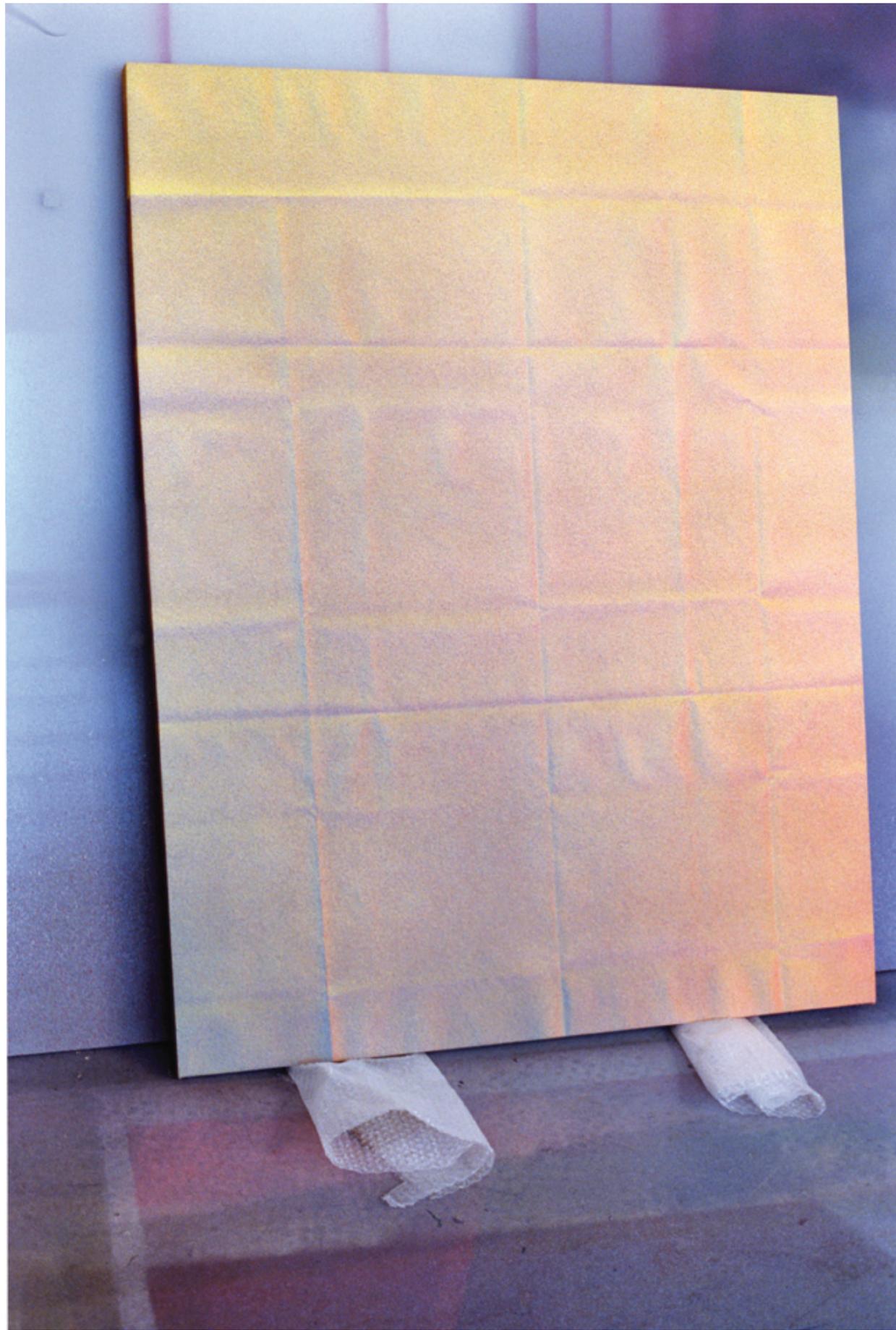


Tauba Auerbach

I met Tauba in San Francisco several years back. I have been following her work. One time, she invited me over to meet a mathematician who later made a program that generated a list of palindromic primes for me.





On Jan 28, 2010, at 5:35 PM, Xylor Jane wrote:

Hi Tauba,

Good afternoon. It is good to be home early, both for my cold and for the deltoid insertion on my painting arm! I am happy to ask you these questions, because there are so many things I don't know about you and I am curious. It's a mix of question marks. Textured is the way I think of it, there are things I want to know, some of which might be dorky and not for print. Your personality numerology for your first and last name is 2 1 3 2 1 1 3 5 9 2 1 3 8 = 41= 5. I am guessing you already know all this.

I don't know anything about numerology at all! Tell me more.

Five is an explosive number. Lots of activity swirls bouncing around. You get things going, you generate...

All of that sounds great and accurate except for the explosive part.

Do you have a middle name?

Yes, Katharina.

Do you collect anything?

Eyeglasses. Wood puzzles. Pop-up books. Klein bottles. Ostentatious jewelry. None of these are big or impressive collections.

Coffee or tea?

Both!

Do you remember your dreams? Do you write them down?

Yes, I usually remember at least one from every night. I don't write them down, but I inflict detailed accounts of them onto my friends. One of the best dreams I've had was one where I was John Lennon and I was fucking Paul McCartney. Then everything switched and I was Paul McCartney fucking John Lennon. The absolutely scariest dream I've ever had in my life is one that I had as a little kid when I was sick: It was just the image of a projected square of light with rounded corners, crumpling up, disappearing, and then reappearing as the original smooth square, again and again and again. It was the rhythm in the dream that was so scary... a sinister rhythm. I've wondered recently if my work with crumpling and folding has anything to do with gaining some kind of mastery over this mysteriously terrifying image.

Do you have a hobby?

I'm fuzzy on what defines something as a hobby. Let me look it up. OK, it says, "An activity done regularly in one's leisure time for pleasure." So, I would have to say a strong "Yes" and a strong "No." I don't have any clearly defined leisure time, but I spend most of my conscious hours making things or researching things I'm interested in, so that's very pleasurable. When I'm not making work for shows, I'm usually making something else, like sewing, making jewelry, designing furniture, making meals, doing album art for friends... and

quickly those extracurricular activities get absorbed into my studio practice over time. I guess everything is a hobby and everything is work. It's all the same.

I love your calendar. When and how did you get started on this project?

Yes! The calendar! I'm glad you like it. You've made some nice calendars, too! I started making calendars five years ago as an alternative to Christmas gifts. I much prefer New Year's gifts anyway, because even though January 1 might be an arbitrary point in time, marking the passing of time means much more to me than Jesus' birthday. So now, every year I spend a few weeks making the thing, usually designing a new font for the letters of the months, and then having it printed and giving it to all of my friends. Each year they get a little harder to decipher and a little fancier.

Do you prefer to walk or take the subway?

Both. And I take an embarrassing number of cabs. I love walking, but right now it's cold in a way that feels aggressive, like the air is attacking me and I have no choice but to take it personally.

What is your studio soundtrack?

Oftentimes, talk radio. Recently, a few friends of mine like Up Died Sound and Arp have finished recording albums and I've been listening to them a lot. A few weeks ago, I was on a lot of Daniel Higgs and Susan Cadogan.

How would you want to be reincarnated?

I like being a human, but I wouldn't mind being a creature that had a different type of vision, just to satisfy my curiosity about that. I think it would be fascinating to see ultraviolet like a bee, or to sense objects ultrasonically. I would also like to know what it's like to be a man.

What color is your bicycle?

I have two. One is white with a little bit of orange and one is green.

When was the last time you used an alarm clock?

I hate alarm clocks. I think they are wrong and bad and evil. I pretty much only use them as a back up when I have a morning obligation. I sleep better knowing there is an alarm to catch me if I sleep too long, but I usually just wake up before it anyway.

Are you a gambler?

No, not at all. There is no thrill for me in risk-taking just for the sake of it. But I guess in some ways I take risks all the time—just by trying out new things—but those risks are based on intuitions about might what come from it, so, in that case, there is some traction to the hope.

Do you have any phobias?

I have plenty of run-of-the-mill fears, but nothing I would consider a phobia. I once found myself doing something that

might be a bit hard to describe, but I think it's in the category of irrational thought connected to phobias: I was on a roof one time with a friend and he walked very casually right up to the edge. I immediately without thinking sat down and got as low to the ground as possible. It was a reflex, as if I went through some kind instantaneous physical logic that demanded that I do my part to pull our collective center of mass into a less precarious position.

Favorite film?

I have trouble picking favorites. High on the list are *Zabriskie Point*, *The Five Obstructions*, *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*.

Apple or orange?

Apple. Big time. I like an orange when it's put in front of me, but I rarely seek one out.

What books are you currently reading?

Joseph Albers' *Interaction of Color* and *Netherland* by Joseph O'Neill. I like to have one non-fiction and one fiction book going at the same time.

Are you a deep sleeper?

I am the lightest sleeper ever. You could whisper my name from another floor in the house and I'd wake up.

Please free-form on your ideas about scale in relationship to the things you make.

Right now, I'm trying to make a bigger version of a painting that I already made small. It isn't working. I don't know why. Maybe it's because I am remaining the same size. It's a little reminder that scale matters. I think it's fascinating that, when you zoom in on a tiny thing, like a single atom, all the rules of physics sort of change. Things that are contradictions on our scale make perfect, harmonious sense on another. I guess it makes me think that scale isn't just relative. Maybe there is a biggest thing and a smallest thing, and they're qualitatively different in ways other than just their sizes.

Cook, eat out or order in?

Cook and have friends over. Eat out the rest of the time.

Describe a great vacation.

I'm going to describe a fantasy vacation, one in which I see the north-ern lights, Walter De Maria's *The Lightning Field* lit up with lightning, The Great Barrier Reef from up close, and the monolith churches in Lalibela, Ethiopia.

What is your studio success/failure ratio?

Right now, I am operating with a high built-in failure rate. I'm making these "Fold" paintings that involve a lot of trial and error. I paint and paint and paint on un-stretched canvas and then edit which ones are worth stretching. It's full of disappointments and surprises. I think I throw out about ten of them for every one I keep. The folded canvases I am standing on in the photo are a bunch of discarded ones. Sometimes I walk on the good ones, too, when they are folded to press in the creases. It works better than ironing.

Have you ever built a snowman?

No, I grew up in San Francisco, where there isn't any snow. But if I did, I think I would make a snowwoman.

Do you still make your own clothes?

Yes, but more often I draw designs that are too complicated for my sewing skills and I have them made. I'm also just starting to work on some jewelry pieces for the Spring 2011 runway show for my friends' label, *Ohne Titel*.

How have your thoughts about randomness evolved?

I'm tired of it in a way. It is so illusive that it almost requires you to stop looking, because if you look for it, you'll see it when it's not there. Its lost cause nature is part of what makes it what it is.

What do you do to relax?

I try to forget relaxing. Then I relax.

When and where do you get your ideas? How do you record them?

There isn't a method to the madness.

Sometimes, it's in the morning right after I wake up. Sometimes, I have really inconvenient bursts of ideas when I'm in a movie or in the middle of a conversation with someone about something else. I try to write everything down, even my really bad ideas, because trying to hold it all in my head just gums up the works and writing things down makes space for new things to come in.

How do you prefer to spend time with friends?

At home, listening to records, eating, laughing. Going on adventures.

Since your move to the East Coast do you have a favorite season?

Spring. The light changes and optimism feels appropriate again. I go back and forth to San Francisco a lot though. I'm kind of half and half right now.

What are your best hours of the day?

The wee ones. No one is calling or e-mailing, there is a particular kind of quiet. For the first time in the day, I don't feel like I'm in a rush.

What do you want done with your body when you die?

I love this question! For a long time, I thought it would be nice to be turned into a gem, using that process in which a diamond is created from all the carbon in your body. But then I'd have to pick a person to take possession of that diamond, and I don't even like diamonds, anyway. I suppose the right thing to do is to donate one's organs. But maybe there could be some nice things done with my hair, like some fancy knotting. And I would like all my friends to ingest a little piece of me.

What is your latest invention?

I'm not at liberty to say. Soon though... **Did you get the bugs worked out on the Geometry Playground Project at the San Francisco Exploratorium? Can you explain it and tell me what you named it?**

The project is basically a scaled-up

Spirograph, the children's drawing toy, but much easier to use, and with some additional features that expand on the mechanism. For example, there are gears that go within ring-shaped gears, which give you the ability to draw more complicated patterns. Or, it can be used very simply to draw star shapes, triangles and things like that. I think this is only the second exhibit at the Exploratorium where you can make something and then take it home, and what you walk away with is a drawing that is about 18 inches in diameter, so it feels like a substantial accomplishment. We are still debugging, but it's very close. I'm going to San Francisco on Thursday to hopefully finish and name it. Maybe we'll put it out on the floor for testing and let the kids name it.

Tell me anything you want about the "Shatter" pieces you make.

The "Shatter" pieces are fun, but tedious paintings to make. I lay a panel on the floor with a piece of glass on top of it and a piece of cardboard over that. I smash the glass through the cardboard with a hammer. Then I take off the cardboard and one by one, pick up a shard of glass and spray paint in the hole it leaves behind. The glass left behind acts like a stencil. Then I replace the shard, moving on to the next one, until the whole panel is filled in. On "Shatter" pieces where each shape is a half black and half white gradient, the whole painting is theoretically half black and half white as a whole, but in a hectic formation just determined by the break of the glass. P.S.: What is a deltoid insertion?

On Jan 30, 2010, at 9:57 AM, Xylor Jane wrote:

Good morning Tauba. Great fun reading your answers. Especially appreciate the generosity of your response to the last one. It made me wonder about the tools in your studio. And I was thinking about how lucky you are to recall dreams on a daily basis, maybe it's related to being a light sleeper. The deltoid insertion is a muscle/tendon anatomy, where your

muscle comes to a V-shape and attaches to the middle of your upper arm, the Humerus. Mine gets aggravated because I paint my panels on the wall combined with the repetitive jiggling of a round brush. It hasn't been this bad since 2007. When I am not working, I sling my right arm and go left-handed. This is an enjoyable therapy, but surely slows everything down. I may try painting flat soon. The personality number is derived from the numerology of the letters in your name. "Explosive" is in a context of the other numbers one through nine and the number 11. Four represents stability, security... then it's "Boom" for five. Six is the calm after, a perfect number and seven is the magic number. You are a 7 when your middle name is included in the calculation. Very auspicious to be a 5 and a 7 and not just because they are consecutive primes. Have a swell Saturday.

On Jan 30, 2010, at 10:40 AM, Tauba Auerbach wrote:

Good morning to you, too. Did you know I also have right arm issues, and as a self-imposed therapy do some tasks left-handed? Tooth brushing, mouse-at-computer using. Maybe I should try a sling. I can also feel it making my brain work differently, which is fun. I work flat these days, spraying big, unstretched canvases on the floor, and it has its own set of problems. There is a lot of leaning, which is hard on the back. I was instructed to put a leg out behind me as a counterweight by someone who does body work, and it really helps, so now I look like a real weirdo while I'm painting, with a heavy duty respirator, a shower cap, and knee pads, standing on one leg with the rest of my body parallel to the ground, the other leg stretched out behind me. I think in yoga it would be a pretty good Warrior III pose that I've got going. I probably look like a psychotic, dust-covered ballerina surgeon. I'm off to the studio to spray. Have a great Saturday as well and thank you again for being the one to ask me questions. They were so good.

