

OKTOP

## SQUEAK CARNWATH

07.01.11

**S**queak Carnwath was one of the first artists to work with Paulson Bott Press and has made over twenty editions. Her highly personal work may reside within her own narrative, but she isn't too worried about whether that is conveyed to the viewer. The imagery is culturally familiar, yet also detached from context, allowing each person to be reminded of a memory or event in their own life.

—Kenneth Caldwell

**Paulson Bott Press:** You haven't made prints here in several years.

**Squeak Carnwath:** I come when I'm called. These guys have been really busy.

**Q:** Has your work changed since you were last here?

**A:** I'm doing more paintings that depict money and a lot of paintings that have candelabras. And some with flowers.

**Q:** The flowers remind me of those decals that they put on Volkswagens in the sixties.

**A:** Those flower power ones? They remind me of those anti-slip stickers that you put on bottom of the bathtub.

**Q:** Where is the flower pattern coming from?

**A:** I was looking at medicinal plants that would help with flus, or a cold.



**Q:** What about this one? Have you titled it yet?

**A:** This one is titled *Medicine*. Our medical-industrial complex is so unhelpful. If we need medicine, we can't get it. We limit what people can do to take care of themselves.

**Q:** And the money theme? Where is that coming from?

### **MEDICINE, 2011**

Color Aquatint Etching; 37" x 36"  
Edition of 35



**A:** When the economy went bad, I thought we should all literally be making money. I had been doing records—you may remember I did a small edition of laser cut steel records here in 2005—and the quarters grew out of the records.

**Q:** Where did the record imagery originate?

**A:** Years ago I was cleaning out old records and I put them up as a frieze in our hallway, where the ceiling meets the wall. They looked great. Then I just ignored them. After awhile, I started putting them in my work. They seemed to be about mortality, or how you only go around once. I only do side one, there is no side two. This happened around the time when Viola Frey died, as well as some other friends. It was as if this circle represented mortality.

**Q:** Does the money have anything to do with mortality?

**A:** Not that I'm aware of.

**Q:** When you're doing your work, is there a constant sketching of imagery and the unconscious?

**A:** I don't do any pre-drawings.

**Q:** Do you doodle?

**A:** I don't sketch. I find it all out on here, as I work. I can render, but I don't find it interesting. I write notes to myself and maybe draw a diagram of where something's going to go, or I'll make a color recipe or something like that. But I don't draw at all now. It's all in the painting. I don't want to know what's going to happen—I want to be surprised.

**Q:** You don't mind not knowing where something is going?

**A:** Not knowing is a great way to not be bored. I don't mind getting lost. Once, I took what should have been a five hour driving trip in France with a friend of mine. And it took us 18 hours to get to our destination. We ended up in places where no one had heard anyone speak English since the war.

**Q:** Do you ever get lost in your canvases and have to start over?

**A:** I cover things over, I leave things, and I unearth things. I'm also very repetitive. I have a lot of these candelabras right now. We'll see where that goes.

**Q:** The candelabras are new though? Are they nostalgic?

**A:** They are new. I love candlelight, I love candelabras; we have lots of them. It's a sort of Barry Lyndon candelabra. It's a mnemonic device, a clue for buried memories. When I was a kid, we had couches that were covered in damask that looked a little like this pattern. My grandmother had candelabras. But I'm mostly fascinated with how objects reside within our thought patterns and clue us to certain memories. Even if we can't articulate them, we feel them.

**Q:** Can you talk a little about the relationship between what you're doing here at Paulson Bott and your painting?

**A:** Well, the work is similar in terms of imagery, but it's dissimilar in terms of process. There are some techniques in painting, like transferring, that I gained from doing so many prints.

**Q:** In painting, it's very intuitive and, as you said, you unearth things—you don't always know what's going to happen. But in printmaking...

**A:** You have to have some idea.

**Q:** So you need a strategy don't you?

**A:** No, I don't. Very simply, I'm not sure how various things are going to happen. I can't visualize how the print order is



going to affect the work, for example. I knew I wanted to do the Alice B. Toklas recipe. I knew I wanted to use some coins, but the flowers came later. I knew I wanted to do the double candelabra, and use patterns somehow, but I didn't know what would happen.

If there is something you don't like you just scrape it out. There is an archaeological aspect of printmaking that I use.

**Q:** Will this group of prints trigger anything in your painting?

**A:** It might. I already have a painting started that has this blue checkered pattern.

**Q:** How many paintings do you have going at once?

**A:** About ten. When I get stuck, I move to another one. And if I'm stuck on all

of them, I'll start a new one. Then, pretty soon, what happens when you're working is that the one that you were stuck on is answered in the one that you're working on. So you can just go fix the other one.

**Q:** Will a subsequent painting tell you what to do in an earlier one?

**A:** It totally does. I don't know why more people don't use that strategy—it makes you so productive. And labor is very important to me. I really like labor. I like working. ✱



(above) Squeak Carnwath in the Paulson Bott studio.

(left) **LIGHT, 2011**  
Color Aquatint Etching; 15" x 12"  
Edition of 35

(opposite page) **I WISH, 2011**  
Color Aquatint Etching; 15" x 12"  
Edition of 35



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**NOT KNOWN, 2011**

Color Aquatint Etching; 37" x 36"  
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