

Christopher Brown New Releases

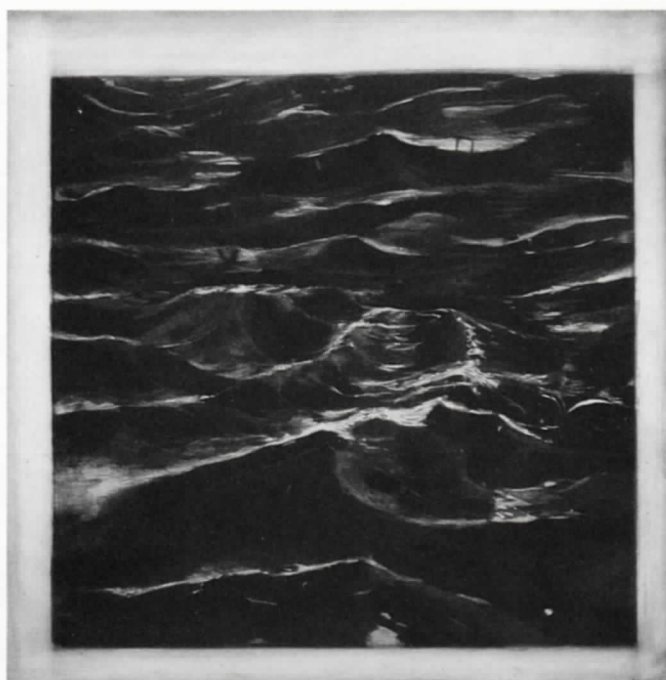


Velázquez Hands, 1995, color aquatint with soft ground and hard ground etching and burnishing; 29½ x 29½" on 38 x 37½" sheet.



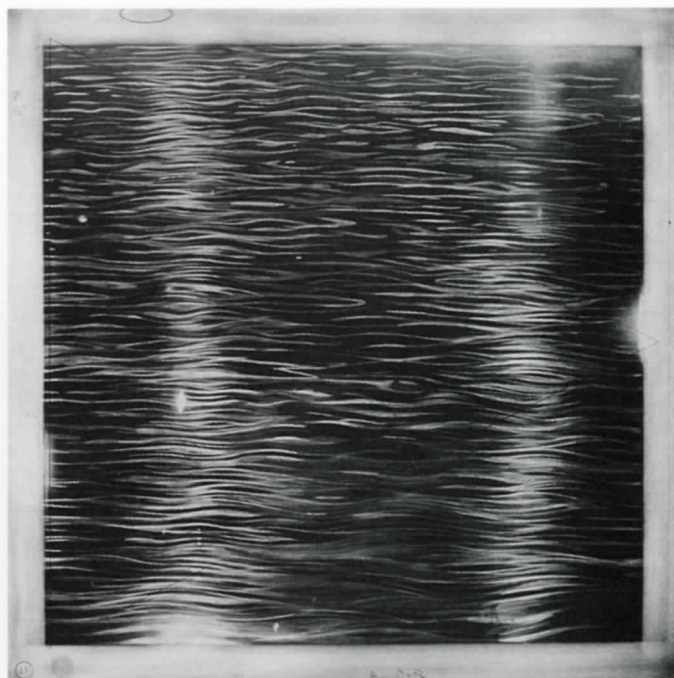
Rain, 1995, color spit bite aquatint with aquatint and burnishing; 29½ x 29½" on 38 x 37½" sheet.

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Atlantic Crossing, 1995, soft ground and hard ground etching with spit bite aquatint, aquatint, and burnishing; 29½ x 29¾" on 38 x 37¾" sheet.

Christopher Brown is a hands-on dreamer. He loves touching materials, using tools, polishing and probing his images till they seem to begin to move under his hands. Because he works with pictures from history and memory, the word "nostalgia" sometimes is connected with him. But it is the wrong word. Brown's dreams of the past are melancholy, not wistful; sensual, not sentimental. We are enticed by richness of surface or color, seduced toward the picture. Yet we cannot enter. We are observers, almost voyeurs, kept at a distance by what Brown calls a "memory screen." At the picture-plane there are snowflakes in one work, hats in another, and in the two black and white prints in this group something more subtle. Because of the borders, or the tilted perspective, or some other magic, it is as if the depicted waves press against glass. There are some scratches and reflections on the glass, and some notations in the margins. *Atlantic Crossing* and *Full Moon* are like portions of a notebook or journal brought to life by a dreamer's concentration.



Full Moon, 1995, aquatint with hard ground etching and burnishing; 29½ x 29¾" on 38 x 37¾" sheet.

The color etching, *Rain*, the third in the series of three water images, resolves tension in lyricism. The rain is a relief, the raindrops like flower petals. Yet the melancholy remains. *Velázquez Hands*, the fourth etching shown here, is different. Brown has for some time been fascinated with painting ruffles and ruffs, and says he does not know why they are so interesting to him. Is it their lack of utility, their indication of vanity, of the extremes of fashion? And why should they affect us, in an age far removed from the time of Velázquez? They are affecting, when portrayed by Brown. Perhaps they supply us with a link to the past, or a reminder of human folly. In any case, Brown has made them beautiful, lively, and a lasting pleasure to see. These qualities are stubbornly embedded in the best art of the past, back at least as far as Velázquez, whatever philosophic meanings seem also to be present. Could it be that beauty is the constant, the one essential?