

# Overview

MARY WEATHERFORD



*The Walls of Dis.* Color spit bite aquatint on gampi paper chine collé.

"If you think you see another artist in it, it's there. Georgia O'Keefe is there, Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, de Kooning..." Mary Weatherford said in an interview on the website of the Gagosian Gallery, which represents her.

Weatherford "for more than two decades" had been "dabbling in appropriation," Roberta Smith wrote in *The New York Times* (September 2018). Now, Smith continued, Weatherford has developed "her signature device: finishing her lyrical stain paintings with one or two lengths of neon that extend up or across their surfaces, their draped cords and adapters on display. The paintings are lighted from within and alive."

"I'm not painting a painting that's finished and then putting neon on it," Weatherford has said. "I'm painting it with the expectation that this element will be added."

Each print measures 28-x-22-inches on a 35¼-x-28½-inch sheet in an edition of 25. All images printed in 2018 by Sam Carr-Prindle. Visit [crownpoint.com](http://crownpoint.com) for prices and information.



*The Frog*. Color spit bite aquatint on gampi paper chine collé.

In the etchings, there was no such expectation. The paper, however, provides a bright element, and the artist's brushstrokes, made directly on the copper plate, testify to her activity. We recognize the work as hers because of its combination of gesture with strong interior light.

Before she arrived at the Crown Point studio in San Francisco, Weatherford spent some time in the town of Point Reyes on the northern coast of California. She went there, she explained, "for inspiration," and quoted artist Mary Heilmann as saying that she "worked hard to make it look easy."

Mary Weatherford did not re-do images from her paintings in the print studio. To make her etchings, she worked mainly in aquatint. She painted diluted nitric acid on copper plates that our printers had prepared with a ground of powdered rosin, an extremely acid-resistant material. Each granule of rosin maintains its individuality, and the acid, when applied, bites into the copper around the grains. Working quickly with a large loaded brush, Weatherford layered extra acid into some areas, biting those areas



Mary Weatherford with Kathan Brown in the Crown Point studio, 2018.



*The Bather*. Spit bite aquatint on gampi paper chine collé.



*The Robot*. Spit bite aquatint on gampi paper chine collé.

deeper; these are the darker parts of the print. As I write this, I am remembering something Richard Diebenkorn said to me long ago as he engaged in the same activity. "Ah," he said, as the acid he had painted on a plate began to reveal the image, "The bones of Ocean Park."

Acid begins as a clear liquid, but it turns blue as it bites into a copper plate. Although black dominates in Weatherford's new prints overall, one of her images (*The Frog*) employs a background plate in blue, and another (*The Walls of Dis*) is printed in blue except for one small black dot. Her paintings are generally colorful (though tempered with black), and the neon tubes she mounts on them also have a range of colors. Blue and black, however, are the only colors she chose to use at Crown Point.

What does *The Walls of Dis* mean? I don't know, but the other three titles Weatherford gave to the aquatints she created this year at Crown Point are unambiguous: *The Frog*, *The Bather*, and *The Robot*.

—Kathan Brown



# Crown Point Press

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*Mary Weatherford: The Neon Paintings.* This richly illustrated book presents Weatherford's neon paintings (through 2014) along with essays by Robert Faggen, Katy Siegel, Jennifer Peterson and an interview with the artist. 216 pages, many color reproductions, hardcover. Published by Gould Center for Humanistic Studies and DelMonico Books/Prestel, 2016. \$100



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