

BARBARA BLOOM
Works on Paper, on Paper
March 7 - April 18, 2020



Captain Petzel

Capitain Petzel

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Works on Paper, on Paper marks Barbara Bloom's second exhibition at Capitain Petzel. Composed of two parts, it features the series *Stand-Ins* in the main gallery space and *Objects of Desire* on the backside of the partition wall.

Bloom's *Stand-Ins* constitute an ongoing series from the 1980s. For *Works on Paper, on Paper* she presents two of her historical *Stand-Ins* – *Marriage on the Rocks*, 1986 and *Homage to Jean Seberg*, 1981 – alongside four new works. Each *Stand-In* consists of an unfurled roll of seamless backdrop paper on which is placed a piece of furniture, accompanied by object-props: books, open magazines, newspapers, pieces of clothing, and occasionally a framed image. The works hover somewhere between sculpture, mise en scène, and the clues left for a detective's perusal.

A photographer rolls down a swath of seamless backdrop paper in order to frame what is placed in front of it, so as to photograph the model and props in seamless, isolated color. The point of this color-field framing is to divorce the objects from the real world, rendering them contextless, spaceless. In Bloom's works, the backdrop papers function similarly as a framing device, but there is no photographer and no photographs taken. The viewer observes only the set-up, a scene that implies an event just happened or will soon take place. Though the objects physically stand before the viewer, they do not exist in the present tense; placed in the seamless color-field they become atemporal, timeless.

Bloom has spent years making works that explore what it means to pay tribute or honor a person or place, and she has given much thought to conjuring up the presence of an absent person or lapsed event. She has pondered extensively the many forms of memorial, tribute, commemoration, and homage. With her *Stand-Ins*, she approaches the subject of portraiture, but these works are not portraits. Instead, the stand-in furniture and props act as metonymic devices: the thing used or regarded as a substitute for someone.

On the backside of the partition wall, Bloom presents her new series titled *Objects of Desire*. For this she takes as starting point the idea of the coveted object and contemplates what grants it the allure and capacity to act as a carrier of meaning. What if we were to consider these objects not for their aesthetic, symbolic or metaphoric qualities, but as intermediaries (messengers) between people? Perhaps we should consider them, as described by the anthropologist Alfred Gell, as ambassadors. Here, Bloom presents a number of items that have over the years, as she says, "gotten their hold on me". These are not the originals and thus do not possess the aura of the item once touched by the hand of the famous person. They are facsimiles of particular objects that have called out to Bloom throughout her life. Each facsimile is housed and displayed in a custom-built case that infers the original owner's habits, actions, and interaction with it.

Bloom was born in Los Angeles, California in 1951 and graduated from the California Institute of the Arts in 1972. In 2020, she will have a solo show at the Kunsthall Aarhus, Denmark and in 2022 a large scale commission from The Shed, New York. Her work can be found in public collections worldwide including the Dutch National Collection, The Hague; International Center of Photography, New York; MAK Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna; Musée Cantini, Marseille; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago; The New School, New York and Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama.

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Works on Paper, on Paper

Works on Paper, on Paper ist die zweite Ausstellung von Barbara Bloom bei Capitain Petzel. Sie gliedert sich in die beiden Werkgruppen *Stand-Ins* im Hauptgalerieraum und *Objects of Desire* auf der Rückseite der dort eingezogenen Trennwand.

Blooms *Stand-Ins* bilden eine seit den 1980er Jahren fortlaufende Serie der Künstlerin. In *Works on Paper, on Paper* präsentiert sie daraus zwei historische Werke – „Marriage on the Rocks“ von 1986 und „Homage to Jean Seberg“ von 1981 – sowie vier neue Arbeiten. Jedes *Stand-In* besteht aus einem ausgerollten Bogen nahtlosen Foto-Hintergrundpapiers, auf das ein Möbelstück und Requisiten platziert wurden: Bücher, offene Magazine, Zeitungen, Kleidungsstücke oder ein gerahmtes Bild. Die Inszenierungen bewegen sich zwischen Skulptur, Bühnenbild und einem Setting, das einer Detektivarbeit zu dienen scheint.

In der Fotografie wird Hintergrundpapier benutzt, um das, was davor platziert wird, so zu rahmen, dass Modell und Requisiten in homogener Umgebung abgelichtet werden können. Der Sinn dieses Farbfeldrahmens besteht darin, die Objekte von der realen Welt zu trennen, sie kontext- und raumlos zu machen. Auch in Blooms Arbeiten fungiert der Hintergrund als Rahmen, doch gibt es weder einen Fotografen, noch werden Bilder gemacht. Zu sehen ist nur der Aufbau, eine Szenerie, die impliziert, dass ein Ereignis gerade stattgefunden hat oder noch stattfinden wird. Wenngleich sich die Gegenstände physisch vor den Betrachtenden befinden, existieren sie nicht in der Jetztzeit; durch ihre Platzierung in einem neutralisierenden Farbrahmen werden sie zeitlos.

In Blooms Werk spielt die Hommage an eine Person oder einen Ort seit Jahren eine herausragende Rolle. Sie hat sich vielfach mit unterschiedlichen Formen von Gedenken und Würdigung befasst und reflektiert, wie die Anwesenheit einer abwesenden Person oder eines vergangenen Ereignisses erfahrbar gemacht werden kann. Mit ihren *Stand-Ins* nähert sich Bloom dem Thema des Porträts an, ohne dass die Arbeiten selbst tatsächlich Porträts sind. Stattdessen fungieren bei den *Stand-Ins* die Möbelstücke und Requisiten als metonymische Übersetzer: Gegenstände, die stellvertretend für eine Person stehen oder verwendet werden können.

Auf der Rückseite der dort eingezogenen Trennwand präsentiert Bloom ihre neue Serie *Objects of Desire*. Dabei geht sie von der Vorstellung begehrter Memorabilia aus und reflektiert, was ihnen ihren Reiz und die Fähigkeit verleiht, als Bedeutungsträger zu fungieren. Was wäre, wenn wir Objekte nicht aufgrund ihrer ästhetischen, symbolischen oder metaphorischen Qualitäten auswählen würden, sondern als Vermittler zwischen Menschen? Vielleicht sollten wir Gegenstände – wie der Anthropologe Alfred Gell es beschrieben hat – als Botschafter ansehen. Bloom stellt eine Reihe von Objekten vor, die im Laufe der Jahre, wie sie sagt, „in mich eingedrungen sind“. Bei diesen handelt es sich nicht um die Originalobjekte; sie besitzen daher nicht die Aura derjenigen Gegenstände, die in der Vergangenheit von der Hand ihrer berühmten Besitzer berührt wurden. Es sind Faksimiles von Objekten, die im Laufe ihres Lebens für Bloom an Bedeutung gewonnen haben. Ihre Nachbildungen werden jeweils auf individuell gefertigten Trägern präsentiert, die ihrerseits Auskunft über die Interaktion des ursprünglichen Besitzers mit dem jeweiligen Objekt geben.

Bloom wurde 1951 in Los Angeles geboren und schloss 1972 ihr Studium am California Institute of the Arts ab. Sie lebt und arbeitet in New York City. Im Jahr 2020 wird sie eine Einzelausstellung in der Kunsthalle Aarhus, Dänemark haben, und 2022 in The Shed, New York. Ihre Arbeiten befinden sich in Sammlungen weltweit, unter anderem in der Dutch National Collection, The Hague; International Center of Photography, New York; MAK Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna; Musée Cantini, Marseille; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago; The New School, New York and Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama.



Barbara Bloom
Homage to Jean Seberg
1981
Dimensions variable

Unfurled roll of black backdrop paper, black canvas “butterfly” chair, reprint of the cover page of the International Herald Tribune, roll of pink backdrop paper

Probably the most famous image of actress and gamine American expat Jean Seberg, is that of her in Jean-Luc Godard’s first film *Breathless*. She is walking down the Champs-Élysées, selling copies of the International Herald Tribune accompanied by Jean-Paul Belmondo, the quintessence of male trouble.

This piece was intended as a memorial to Seberg, who died in 1979 in Paris, an apparent suicide. The announcement of her death in the International Herald Tribune formed a second bookend to her career; a poignantly symmetrical other half to the paper she sells in *Breathless*. The life in between was messy, unhappy, and public: three failed marriages, drug and alcohol problems, chronic depression that was perhaps the result of ongoing harassment by the FBI. (When she was pregnant, the FBI floated the story that the father was not her husband, but a member of the Black Panthers. The baby was stillborn.) All of this was dutifully reported in the press. The tragedy of Seberg’s life could not be disentangled from the romance of that early *Breathless* image—a smart and edgy beauty on foreign soil.

The International Herald Tribune was the journalistic accessory for a population transplanted by desire, ambivalent about home, exiles without a cause. *Homage to Jean Seberg* was the first of my chair/backdrop paper and prop works (not quite portraits): the black butterfly chair and paper are both stylish and elegiac; but it is the newspaper that breaks the heart.





Barbara Bloom
Reflections on Mrs. and Mr. VN
2020
Dimensions variable

Photographic backdrop paper, digitally printed wallpaper, mirror, chair with digitally printed seat fabric, table, typewriter, digital reprint of Carl Mydans' photograph showing Véra Nabokov typing, and a reflection of her husband Vladimir Nabokov, possibly dictating, in their home in Ithaca, New York, 1958

Véra was her husband's first reader. She smoothed the prose when it was "still warm and wet," though later, when scholars questioned this she generally shrugged off any involvement. Véra submitted her husband's work to publishers; she typed and researched his lectures. From a list of the things Nabokov bragged about never having learned to do—type, drive, speak German, retrieve a lost object, answer the phone, fold maps, fold umbrellas, give the time of day to a philistine—it is easy to deduce what Mrs. Nabokov spent her life doing. A great many letters opened like this: "Vladimir started this letter but had to switch to something else in a hurry, and asked me to continue on my own."

Many of the hallmarks of Nabokov's fiction—the doppelgängers, the impersonators, the Siamese twins, the mirror images, the distorted mirror images, the reflections in the windowpane, the parodies of self—manifested themselves in the routine they developed for dealing with the world. In a perfectly Nabokovian way, their two identities began to blur on the page.





Barbara Bloom
Sad Grey Story: Marilyn
2020
Dimensions variable

Photographic backdrop paper; photographers posing bench, stack of six gray clothed books in varying shades dark to light; framed digital print of six photographs of Marilyn Monroe in reading poses; Benjamin Moore Paint color preview strip

I envision Color Preview Strip 2125 as a mid-century story. Maybe Joan Didion's *The White Album* tinted black in six degrees from dull black on the left to a smutty white on the right. The colors are ordinary, but the sequence of names is memorable.

Black Panther is not the feline symbol of prowling power and dangerous beauty, but the equally powerful and beautiful radical political activist fighting for the cause in Oakland, in 1966. Or, as The Stones sang that same year: "I've seen your red door and I want it painted black, No colors any more, I want them to turn black ..."

Gray Shower is the romantic mist that fogs the brain.

Shadow Gray is a doom cast over the story.

Then the mist slowly wraps itself around, and sullies any **Sweet Innocence**.

Marilyn's Dress is the one from the scene in *The Seven Year Itch*, an iconic 20th century image of Marilyn Monroe standing on a New York subway grate as her white dress is blown upwards by a passing train. The movie's title refers to declining interest in a monogamous relationship after seven years of marriage.

Wedding Veil wafts between Marilyn and either Joe DiMaggio or Arthur Miller, both were husbands in failed marriages, neither lasting anywhere near seven years.

A stack of six books, with dark to light gray covers, the saddest titles selected from a list of 430 books owned by Marilyn Monroe: *The Philosophy Of Schopenhauer*, *The Captive* by Marcel Proust, *The Ballad Of The Sad Café* by Carson McCullers, *Say You Never Saw Me* by Arthur Nesbitt, *Tender Is The Night* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sigmund Freud's Letters.





Barbara Bloom
Marriage on the Rocks
1986
Dimensions variable

Photographic backdrop paper; plywood construction in the shape of a double bed and bedside tables; photograph of his-and-hers watches, framed; found books with invented book covers

Despite its initial resemblance to the taciturn, narrative-obstructing objects of Donald Judd, this plywood approximation of bedroom furniture is the stripped down centerpiece of a storyline carried out with gleefully indulgent specificity through bedside books. Clues are left for the literate detective.

Scattered on the left side table are a number of books whose titles tend toward the conniving and suspicious (*The Devil You Don't*, *Gameplan*, *The Good Thief*). The cover of *Fateful Embrace* evokes the economy of sex, money, and power through gendered watches. On the right side, the titles speak of entrapment and disgust (*Vanishing Ladies*, *The Captive*, *Marriage on the Rocks*, *Sick Friends*) which shows a photograph of a group of sheep among which stands a woman who is being grabbed from behind by male hands).

This is by no means a happy story.





Barbara Bloom
The Idea of Glenn Gould
2020
Dimensions variable

Seamless backdrop paper with a faint (forensic) chalk outline of Steinway CD 318 piano, facsimile of Glenn Gould's "pygmy" chair, fingerless gloves, a compass pointing north

Standing to the side of the seamless paper is a music stand holding a stack of small programs/brochures that describe Glenn Gould's manner of playing, his belongings at death, his eccentric chair and favored piano, and his turn away from live performance to recording – most particularly his radio documentary *The Idea of the North*.





Barbara Bloom
Deconstructed (Blow-Up)
2020
Dimensions variable

Seamless backdrop papers, some intact, some crumpled; camera with playback monitor showing on an endless loop a scene from *Blow-Up*

The narrative of Michelangelo Antonioni's 1966 film *Blow-Up* covers a day in the life of a glamorous fashion photographer in "swinging London." After a fashion shoot, he finds himself wandering in a park where he comes across two lovers who are alarmed and furious to find that he is photographing them. The woman attempts to get the film from his camera. Curious, the photographer makes enlargements of the image of lovers in the park and discovers that there is perhaps a third person with a pistol lurking in the trees. At this moment the photographer is disturbed by a knock, and in come two young girls, wanting to pose for him.

When reading about the film's plot, the ensuing scene is described as "a romp with the girls in front of and amidst studio backdrop paper." I recall seeing the film as a teenager, and at the time I would have described the beautifully colorful scene as a "romp," and my friends and I aspired to dress just like those girls. It's only now, while thinking about backdrops, that I re-watched the scene, and saw something far more disturbing, predatory, and insidious. Hardly a romp.

Here on a pristine white seamless studio backdrop are a crumpled lavender colored backdrop paper and two smaller pink and green papers (stand-ins for the girls). These physical embodiments of the aftermath of the film scene's "romp." In front of the backdrop papers is a camera, whose monitor shows the *Blow-Up* scene: a recording not of this present static set, but a disturbing footage from the past, seen with present-day eyes.





Barbara Bloom
Jackie's French Verbs
2020

Wood desk display, pedestal, glass desk top, glass shelf, mirror shelf, digitally
printed and pencil marked book
105 x 61 x 48 cm / 41.3 x 24 x 18.9 inches
Edition of 2

In 1996, I came upon the Sotheby's auction catalogue for the estate of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. The catalogue did not aspire to the "whole Jackie," or even the "true Jackie;" it proclaimed the "residue of Jackie." As an homage to their absent subject, the objects and the photographs in the catalogue bore something of her aura with them in their elegance and solemnity. It was her absence, the inference of Jackie, that held the objects together.

There was a lot to shop for, but the single item I coveted most was Lot 166, Jacqueline Bouvier's schoolgirl French grammar book. Her name and class are written on the cover, and the book contains a double spread with her verb conjugations and girly cinch-waisted fashion sketches. The book was valued by Sotheby's at \$500-\$800, and sold for \$42,550. I was not the buyer.



Barbara Bloom
Joyce's Schema

2020

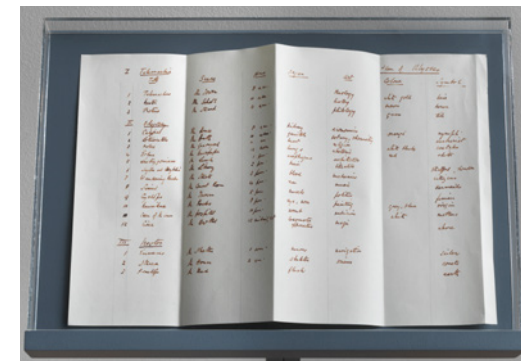
Wood stand, digital print with markings
117 x 48 x 35 cm / 46.1 x 18.9 x 13.8 inches

Edition of 2



The Gilbert Schema was produced by the author to aid a close friend in understanding the fundamental structure of his book *Ulysses*. A few of such charts produced by Joyce were given, in secret, with Joyce's explicit appeal that they not be published or distributed. In spite of his requests, more or less accurate typed copies of the authorized schemas were produced and circulated.

Regarding the chart Joyce wrote: "My damned monster-novel it would be better to send a sort of summary - key - skeleton - scheme (for home use only)... I have given only «Schlagworte» [catchwords] in my scheme but I think you will understand it all the same. It is the epic of two races (Israel-Ireland) and at the same time the cycle of the human body as well as a little story of a day (life). The character of *Ulysses* has fascinated me ever since boyhood... For seven years I have been working at this book - blast it! It is also a kind of encyclopaedia. My intention is not only to render the myth sub specie temporis nostri [in the light of our own times] but also to allow each adventure (that is, every hour, every organ, every art being interconnected and interrelated in the somatic scheme of the whole) to condition and even to create its own technique ..."





Barbara Bloom

Andy's Doodles

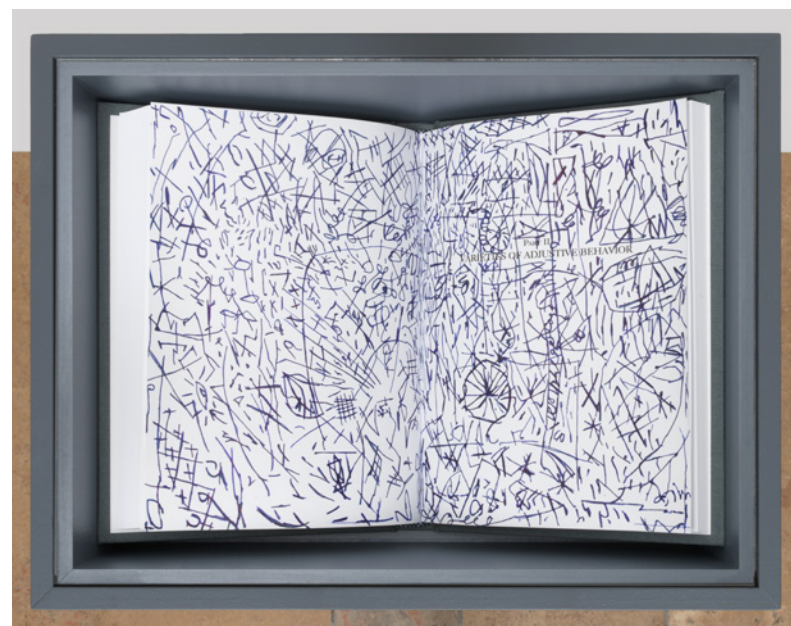
2020

Display, digitally printed and pen-marked book

107 x 37 x 29 cm / 42.1 x 14.6 x 11.4 inches

Edition of 2

The original of Andy's book was seen in the exhibition "Warhol By the Book," at The Morgan Library, New York in 2016. The book is opened to a page reading: "Part II Varieties of Adjustive Behavior." According to the author, "In a most general sense this book deals with applied psychology. The problems which it treats are those which must be faced by the lawyer, the teacher, the physician, the salesman, and the parent." So Andy!





Barbara Bloom
Nabokov's Collection
2020

Wood standing desk, butterfly case with digital prints, pins
130 x 66 x 50 cm / 51.2 x 26 x 19.7 inches
Edition of 2

These “specimens” are pinned into a print of Nabokov’s diary from September 18, 1954, written while on a butterfly-collecting trip in the Western U.S. The diary page contains a memo (to whom? to himself?) about the whereabouts of the manuscript of *Lolita* (“in locked table in office key in small box with flowers on lid”) At this stage he planned to publish the book pseudonymously and was apprehensive that someone might find it.

Admirers of the great novelist Vladimir Nabokov know that collecting and classifying butterflies was for him not so much a hobby as an obsession. He was the master of the minuscule and the particular, the perfect telling detail through which everything else comes into focus (a trait as critical in an entomologist as in a writer). Nabokov generally wrote in the mornings at a standing desk, composing his texts on lined note cards.





Barbara Bloom
Barthes' Exercises
2020

Wood Stands, glass tops, digital gauche print, photograph
85 x 85 x 35 cm / 33.5 x 33.5 x 13.8 inches
Edition of 2

Working on paper, and always at a convenient tabletop scale, Barthes drew in the afternoons in-between writing and on vacation. Perhaps we can refer to these drawings as “exercises.” Their simplicity and the lack of deviation suggests less an exploration of drawing, more an exercise in drawing. Like a child completing their homework when they return home from school, the drawings are the work of a writer who has slipped out from the study, and whose handwriting and concentration are allowed to wander.

Barthes wrote extensively and beautifully about drawing, particularly the drawings of Cy Twombly. When discussing his own drawings, Barthes pointed out that these are the work of an amateur, noting that the amateur engages in painting, music, sport, science, without the spirit of mastery or competition ... The word amateur comes from the Latin *amare* meaning to love. It is used to refer to someone who does something purely for the love of it.





Barbara Bloom

Austen's Pins

2020

Display, pedestal, digitally printed and pencil marked page with pins

128 x 33 x 31 cm / 50.4 x 13 x 12.2 inches

Edition of 2

The original editing pins and the manuscript of Austen's novel *The Watsons* (abandoned in 1805) are housed in the collections of the Bodleian Library at Oxford University.

The full pages of *The Watsons* suggest that Jane Austen did not anticipate a protracted process of redrafting. With no calculated blank spaces and no obvious way of incorporating large revisions or expansions, she had to find other strategies. She made her corrections on small pieces of paper filled closely and neatly. With straight pins she attached these papers to the manuscript at the precise spots where erased material was to be covered, or where an insertion was required to expand the text.





Barbara Bloom, *Works on Paper, on Paper*, March 7 - April 18, 2020, Photo: Jens Ziehe