

Absence and its depiction has been an ongoing theme of exploration in the work of Barbara Bloom. Fingerprints, lipstick traces, watermarks, tea stains, footprints, invisible texts, erasures, cross-outs, Braille, and ellipses... are her favored forms and objects. These flirtations between visibility and invisibility have been frequent presences in her work. Another equally strong aspect of Bloom's work has been its relationship to literature. She uses books as carriers of meaning, uses texts from favorite authors, and often suggests implied narratives. Bloom has often said that she was meant to be a writer, probably a novelist, but somehow ended up standing in the wrong line (and inadvertently "signed up" to be a visual artist).

The Literary and the Absent come together in Bloom's latest exhibition "The Weather". Hovering in varying heights above the floor are carpets, each in a subtle shade of gray-green-blue. The carpets have raised-dot patterns forming texts in Braille. It seemed to Bloom that the texts should be descriptive ones, as this would accentuate the complexity and melancholy in "reading" the work. A blind person would not be able to see what was being described, and a sighted person cannot read the Braille. For the texts Bloom settled on descriptions of the weather, as weather is something we all can imagine. And there is a vast variety in styles of description of the weather. The Braille texts are indeed a wide range of descriptions of the weather by Raymond Chandler, André Gide, James Joyce, Gabriel García Márquez, Cormac McCarthy, Haruki Murakami, Daphne Du Maurier and the weather statistics of Los Angeles on July 11, 1951 at 2:00am (the place and the date of birth of the artist).

Eight carpets are hovering on platforms at various heights above the floor, each in a different hue reminiscent of clouds and sky, and each with a different text about the weather. The walls are painted only part way with a gray-green-blue color, so that one has a sensation vaguely reminiscent of flying above, and looking down at the clouds and land below.

Upstairs Barbara Bloom presents the series "Works for the Blind". Each of the seven works contains a text about the nature of seeing. The text is used once in Braille typed over an image, and once – the size of a postage stamp – in five point type printed white on black. Accompanying each text is a photograph of an illusion – a magician levitating a matchbook, a UFO landing, an egg floating in midair. The pictures and the texts all speak to us of the difficulty of seeing things for what they are, but very few people will be able to make sense of both. Sighted people can see the illusionary photograph (though not how the illusion is accomplished), but most will only be able to squint and guess at the too-small text. The blind will be able to read the text (the plexiglass is cut away over the Braille so it can be touched), but unable to see the photograph. The one thing that is clear to all is that everyone is blinded.

Barbara Bloom was born in Los Angeles, California in 1951 and graduated from the California Institute of the Arts in 1972. She lives and works in New York City. Last year she presented the twelve-part installation “Framing Wall” (1977 – 2015) at The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Solo exhibitions include, among others, “As it were...So to speak”, Jewish Museum, New York (2013); “The Collections of Barbara Bloom”, Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus (1998); later shown at Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin and the International Center of Photography, New York (2008); “The Reign of Narcissism”, Serpentine Gallery, London, also exhibited at Kunsthalle Zürich, and Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart (1990). Bloom was a DAAD Berlin Artist-in-Residence and lived in Berlin between 1986 and 1993.

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