

BARBARA BLOOM

... the whole grand pattern of human endeavor

31 March – 20 May 2023

Galerie Gisela Capitain is pleased to announce Barbara Bloom's third solo exhibition at the gallery, for which she has created a body of work that frames, highlights, spotlights Pattern.

For decades Barbara Bloom's works have shown an underlying interest in decor and the grammar of display that structures meaning. Her genteel atmospherics are a form of conceptual interior decoration. In a time indebted to the strategies of rapid-fire technological communication, what could be more perverse than to surprise the eye, and slow things down, not with spectacle, but with an assemblage of minute details so understatedly controlled?

Bloom's work carries the fragrance of ideas; they tease specific, often unnamable "qualities of attention" into visibility. It isn't the objects themselves that are paramount, but how they manage to elicit a quality of attentiveness that we bestow upon them, thus highlighting that objects have agency.

Over time, Bloom has developed a working method of zeroing in on subjects, slowly researching, savoring all kinds of detours, in a blend of scholarship and pure hunch. Themes overlap and echo from one exhibition to the next. Though intentionally disparate in form, her exhibitions have conceptual threads running through. The subjects of framing and patterning have appeared in previous works, but have now been given center stage.

Vladimir Nabokov wrote of

... the selective and harmonious intensification of the loose patterns of chance and destiny, character and action, thought and emotion, existing in the reality of human life. ... Without such pattern one could feel that the whole of life seemed like a piece of filmmaking where heedless extras knew nothing of the picture in which they were taking part.¹

Every rich and varied moment of life offers something to observe and cherish. But one must find some means or method by which to uncover a pattern in the complex diversity of what is perceived. Without such a pattern, all experience would swim before one's eyes, would dissolve into an unceasing, senseless series, a concatenation of the unconnected. The recognition of pattern mitigates the anxiety that arises from a sense that the world lacks intrinsic order.

In these new works patterns seem to emanate from photographs and art historical imagery. Patterns frame and ornament, as footnotes or commentary. Patterns are found slipping from the surface, receding into the background, or willing themselves off of the two-dimensional plane and into the room.

Barbara Bloom is the 2022-23 Artist-in-Residence at The Design Library, New York. She has found inspiration in the free rein they offered her to dive into the vast pool of the archive's millions of surface patterns created from centuries ago to the present.

(Title from Joan Didion, The White Album)

¹ Leland de la Durantaye, „The Pattern of Cruelty and the Cruelty of Pattern in Vladimir Nabokov“, in The Cambridge Quarterly, vol. 35, no. 4 (2006), pp. 301–326

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