

# GALLERIA RAFFAELLA CORTESE

PRESS RELEASE

BARBARA BLOOM



Barbara Bloom, *The Weather*  
Barbara Bloom, *Works for the Blind*  
Joan Jonas, *In the Trees*

via a.stradella 7  
via a.stradella 1  
via a.stradella 4

**Opening reception thursday, december 3, 7.00 – 9.00 pm**  
**december 3, 2015 | february 27, 2016**  
**tuesday - saturday 10.00 am-1.00 pm | 3.00-7.30 pm and by appointment**

Galleria Raffaella Cortese is pleased to present a third solo show by Barbara Bloom. The exhibition will involve two of the three gallery spaces simultaneously, with artworks conceived and realized expressively for the show and its venues.

Absence and its depiction has been, for nearly 40 years, 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 Barbara Bloom's work has been its relationship to literature. She uses books and texts from favorite authors as carriers of meaning, 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 the exhibition "The Weather."

In space n. 7 hovering in varying heights above the floor are 7 carpets, each in a subtle shade of gray-greenblue reminiscent of clouds and sky. 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, Andre Gide, James Joyce, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Cormac McCarthy, Haruki Murakami and the weather statistics of Los Angeles on July 11, 1951 at 2:00am (the place and the date of birth of the artist).

In space n. 1 is shown the photographic series *Works for the Blind*. In each Work for the Blind, a text about the nature of seeing (from Wittgenstein, Barthes, or Dorothy Sayers) appears twice, 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.

In this space is also shown the photographic series *Eyes Closed*. Bloom has spent a lot of time in movie theaters. She also lived in both America and Europe, so one way or the other, a great many of the films she has seen had words accompanying the image. Those words were always such oddly inadequate approximations of the spoken language, and yet their printed authority gave them a solidity that fleeting speech.

**Barbara Bloom** was born in 1951, Los Angeles. Lives and works in New York. Recently, the MoMA in New York acquired her photographic series *Framing Wall* (1977– 2015), which will be on show at the Museum through December 20, 2015. Bloom's work has been shown widely including exhibitions at: Museum Boymans van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Venice Biennale; Kunstverein München, Munich; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; The Serpentine Gallery, London; Kunsthalle Zürich; Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Leo Castelli Gallery, New York; SITE Santa Fe; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark; La Bienale de Venezuela, Caracas; Museum Friedricianum, Kassel; Parrish Art Museum, Southampton; Wexner Center for the Arts; Cooper-Hewitt Design Museum; International Center of Photography, New York; Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin; The Jewish Museum, New York.

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