

The New York Times

Art in Review; Barbara Bloom "Takes One to Know One"

by Roberta Smith
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Barbara Bloom has operated in the gap between installation and photography for more than 20 years, raising questions about the place of art and women in society with a wry, implicitly feminine store-window elegance.

Her latest show begins with "Absence-Presence," a little tour de force of display conventions that consists of a four-way roundelay among eight objects, their shadows, related photographs and rectangles of color painted on the wall. The piece creates a poetic yet efficient cat's cradle of connections and cross-references.

Upstairs more objects, photographs of objects and mirrors that reflect both join the fray in a series of pieces that continue the absence-presence theme, while touching on the rites of confession, marriage by proxy and chickens confronted by their reflections.

In "Girls' Footprints," indentations in a gray carpet bring to a halt the fluttering movements of convent schoolgirls during recess. Ms. Bloom's work can be a little didactic and arcane, but this show still unleashes a mesmerizing sequence of riddles regarding people, things and levels of reality.