

ARTNEWS

Beg, Borrow, Steal: With Several Exhibitions Involving Appropriation, New York Has a Second 'Pictures' Moment

by Alex Greenberger
08/21/17

On Louise Lawler, Dara Birnbaum, Robert Longo, Rachel Harrison, Barbara Bloom, Leslie Hewitt, Marlon Mullen, Jef Geys, Tabor Robak, Sara Cwynar



Barbara Bloom, *Vanity*, 2017, vanity mirror and lighting, mirrored vanity, table, photograph-etched small vanity mirror, digital archival photograph, and movie scripts, 72½" x 42½" x 19". David Lewis. MAX YAWNEY/COURTESY THE ARTIST AND DAVID LEWIS, NEW YORK

At Barbara Bloom's exhibition at David Lewis, a clever use of mirrors made it appear as if viewers were part of the artworks. A reflection on reflections, this elegant show appropriated photographs of Vladimir Nabokov, Elizabeth Taylor, and Marilyn Monroe. (The images were mostly shot by Magnum photographers.) The most touching work was *Vanity* (2017), a dressing table upon which sits a bound screenplay and a round magnifying mirror on a stand. Under the table's glass top is an Eve Arnold photograph of Joan Crawford, who is shown reading a script. Within the Arnold picture, a tabletop mirror, similar to the one in the sculpture, reflects Crawford's hand moving through her hair; Bloom blew up that detail (the benday dots are left visible) and placed it in *Vanity*'s real mirror. Crawford was obsessed with her own image, and no doubt Bloom was interested in the picture for that very reason.

The Bloom show was oblique, but it felt lucid compared to Leslie Hewitt's elusive Sikkema Jenkins & Co. exhibition, which brought together recent works about photo editing. In one series, the same image of two dahlias—fresh, yellow, weirdly rubbery, and paired with leaves from another kind of plant—was presented in both color and black-and-white, and cropped in different ways. Another work, *RAM* (2017), features a well-worn object set against a white background, all other details around it having been removed in Photoshop. An archival note stuck in its lid identifies it as a bible box—but the photograph tells us little more. Works like *RAM* intrigued, but were ultimately too opaque to engage this viewer.

<http://www.artnews.com/2017/08/21/beg-borrow-steal-with-several-exhibitions-involving-appropriation-new-york-has-a-second-pictures-moment/>