

# ARTFORUM

## Barbara Bloom Critics' picks: Milan

by Marco Tagliaferro  
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View of "Barbara Bloom," 2015-16

Los Angeles artist Barbara Bloom's solo show at Galleria Raffaella Cortese consists of separate installations in two of the gallery's three Milan spaces. In one, seven carpets seem to float at various short distances above the floor. Made of smooth moquette, each features a distinctive pattern of raised dots—Braille text, to be precise. Six of the carpets contain respective fragments of text from Bloom's favorite authors: Raymond Chandler, André Gide, James Joyce, Gabriel García Márquez, Cormac McCarthy, and Haruki Murakami. Her excerpts are universally relevant, containing descriptions of atmospheric conditions. Each is also a different color, all complex tones that bring to mind open skies, bodies of water, or grassy expanses. Bloom is interested in absence and its representations. Here she constructs a work in which Braille texts communicate color to those who cannot see it, while using color as a stand-in for literary experience for those who cannot read the tactile notation. Finally, the seventh carpet describes, with both color and text, the meteorological conditions in Los Angeles at 2 AM on July 11, 1951—the artist's time and place of birth.

The other gallery space contains the photographic series "Works for the Blind," 1988. Each is a photograph of an optical illusion, featuring a phrase in Braille typed over the image. The same phrase is printed in the Roman alphabet, white on black, at the scale of a postage stamp. Images and texts (by Ludwig Wittgenstein, Roland Barthes, and Dorothy Sayers) refer to the difficulty of seeing things for what they really are. But even while observing the enigmatic photographs of illusions, few will register the content of the corresponding text, which is too small to read. Bloom's visually impaired audience, however, are able to read her excerpts, as the Plexiglas covering each work, cut to correspond to the Braille text beneath, can be touched.

*Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.*