

ARTFORUM

Barbara Bloom Critics' picks: Captain Petzel

by April Elizabeth Lamm
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Barbara Bloom, "There was a desert wind blowing that night." (Chandler), 2015, wool carpet, 108 x 72".

In Barbara Bloom's "The Weather," eight monochrome hand-tufted carpets in a mood-ring palette that shifts from black to pale gray, green, and blue all hover slightly above the ground at different levels. Though each is peppered with a pattern of raised dots, even a blind person couldn't interpret the Braille embellishments here, not even on the one carpet featuring the exact weather stats on the night of artist's birth, at 2 AM with zero precipitation and "8.0 miles visibility"—Weather Statistics at Birth (BB), 2015. A booklet at the gallery counter reveals that the other unreadable texts—since they can't be touched—are excerpts from Haruki Murakami, James Joyce, and Daphne du Maurier, among others. The Raymond Chandler passage, for instance, on *There was a desert wind blowing that night.* (Chandler), 2015, is about "one of those hot dry Santa Anas that . . . curl your hair . . . On nights like that every booze party ends in a fight. Meek little wives feel the edge of the carving knife and study their husbands' necks."

But like the weather, a cosmic slot machine, Bloom's pieces hint at a greater blindness in our safe communities of likes. Upstairs, a redoubling takes place in the seven "Works for the Blind," 1988. The Braille typed over most of these black-and-white photographs of illusions or UFOs is accompanied by a rectangle of text so minute it requires a magnifying glass to decipher. It's not the metaphor for the impossibility of reading the surfeit of information and fiction surrounding us, but rather the suggestion of a much-needed new acuity that evinces Bloom's spot-on forecast.