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

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

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.