

ARTFORUM

Erica Baum

BUREAU

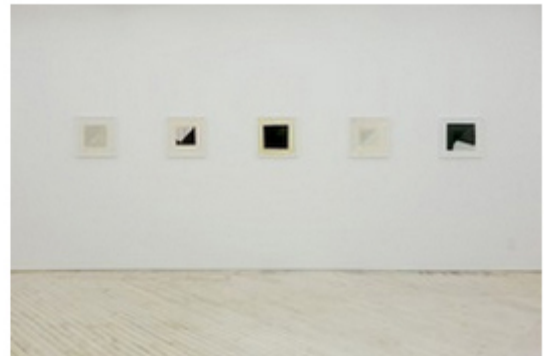
178 Norfolk Street

September 7–October 26

Find. Fold. Photograph. These actions form one of the basic strategies of Erica Baum's exquisite practice, for which she mines outmoded, moribund printed material, such as library card catalogues and yellowed dime-store paperbacks from the 1960s and '70s, to create simple yet infinitely engrossing "found collages." For "The Paper Nautilus," this bibliophilic artist has brought together new works from three distinct series: "Stills," "Viewmasters," and "Naked Eye," which capture the halftone, molecular blueprint of their subjects.

Though her well-known concrete poetry constructions are not on view, text (and the literary pleasures associated with it) remains instrumental to her recent pictures. The exhibition itself, for instance, takes its name from a 1940 poem by modernist writer Marianne Moore (1887–1972), who, like Baum, is known for having recycled and explicitly recontextualized the words of others. Meanwhile, despite the oftentimes abstract and elusive quality of Baum's imagery, her redolent titles, such as *The Warren Commission*, which is coupled with a grisaille Josef Albers lookalike, and *Kent State*, which accompanies a more conspicuously bifurcated image (one half of which pictures silhouetted soldiers against leafless trees), not only color her mostly black-and-white compositions, but also allude to their sources.

Whether image- or text-based, Baum's pieces are replete with references both familiar and obscure—the Suprematist paintings of Kazimir Malevich, the graphite grids of Minimalist Agnes Martin, and the rule-based Conceptual work of Sol LeWitt are but some of the most frequently cited. However, the very richness of her production resides in the considerable space it leaves viewers to fill in the gaps, to free associate visuals and narratives of their own making, and, most of all, to engage in such intimate ways with material on its way—or perhaps already—out the door.



View of "Erica Baum: The Paper Nautilus, 2014.*

— Natalie Musteata