

# ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS NEW YORK

## Erica Baum

Bureau

112 Duane Street

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By Theo Belci

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Erica Baum, *Woolens*, 2023, archival pigment print, 19 x 16". From the series "Fabrications," 2023–.

Erica Baum presents twenty-one photographs in "Off the Cuff," her sixth solo show with New York's Bureau gallery, which recently moved to a spacious prewar storefront in TriBeCa. This exhibition, which features the first public presentation of the artist's ongoing "Fabrications" series, 2023–, offers a meaningful expansion of Baum's previous forays into anachronistic print techniques. Like "Patterns," a 2018– series of meticulously photographed old pulp-paper sewing guides, "Fabrications"

seeks to imbue the artist's ink-jet printer with the aura of a mid-century letterpress. For this body of work, the artist scrupulously collaged, then took pictures of, vintage graphic, fashion, and advertising designs. Together, the works produce a technical survey, accenting a beautifully bygone era of aesthetics via the artist's careful editing and reconfiguration of her source materials. Made with a high-resolution scanner and outputted on luster paper, these images conjure and manipulate the tactile qualities of their subjects—in this case, magazine pages from the 1960s and '70s—as intently as they reproduce their likenesses.

An example of her materiality-first approach is *Woolens*, 2023, in which four similar halftone black-and-white images of wool sweaters are cut into strips and spliced together, assembling a gawkish, disjunctive torso. Despite their intentionally crude amalgamation, the individual fragments retain a feeling of homogeneity, as differences in knit and texture get usurped by the uniformity of the dot constellations that render the lights and shadows of the divided forms. By foregrounding such shared methods of representation—which abound in her source materials—Baum flexes her strength as an editor by stretching her subjects to their breaking point. She cleaves and elides sections of magazine pages until they are little more than vessels for print and photographic techniques. Baum's manufactured fissures deftly utilize repeated textures, silhouettes, and patterns to make one believe that she pulled all her imagery from a single exemplary volume of context-free postwar design, accessible only to the artist herself.