

# ARTFORUM

## New York

### Erica Baum

BUREAU

178 Norfolk Street

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The red-, blue-, and green-stippled book edges in Erica Baum's new photographs bring to mind the paperbacks that encumber used-book stores, thrift shops, and family libraries: faded film adaptations, celebrity biographies, and the occasional art monograph. In this exhibition, she walks a fine line between documentation and concealment, presenting pictures of eight such books fanning out and close-up, open but not completely exposed. Fragments of text and cheaply reproduced images—Goldie Hawn in a scene from *Shampoo* (1975), Art Garfunkel, Richard and Pat Nixon—are evident between the bars. Although these images appear to mine a specific American decade, the 1970s, Baum shirks nostalgia for abstraction. Previously her work (in black-and-white) examined card catalogs, from which she derived a form of clinical and concrete poetry (SEX DIFFERENCES—SHIRTS, reads one). Here, the pulsating hues create geometric patterns, which appear painterly from a distance and recall a colorful version of Gerhard Richter's "*Vorhang*" (Curtain) series from the mid-'60s. The fine red vertical lines in *Art*, 2008, for example, neatly frame the seated, youthful musician and echo the saturated crimson blocks in *Nixon and Pat*, 2009, which seem to split the image in half. Without entirely displacing the subjects of these photographs, Baum shrewdly extracts image and text from source, pushing language, both visual and verbal, to unstable, higher ground.



Erica Baum, *Shampoo*, 2008, color photograph, 19 x 14".

— Lauren O'Neill-Butler