

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013

The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW: Beth Campbell

Following Room

By Martha Schwendener

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Beth Campbell's "Following Room" looks at first glance like one of Dan Graham's installations — if Mr. Graham were partial to Ikea products — with a plain wood chair, a lamp, a red pillow and a cheap laminated bookshelf stocked with knickknacks reflected in multiple mirrors. On closer inspection, however, one sees that there are no mirrors. (The giveaway: You can see through the installation without encountering your own reflection.) Ms. Campbell has instead created a dozen copies of the same tableau and arranged them to mimic the effects of mirrors reflecting one another.

Why is it a bit disappointing to discover that Ms. Campbell is more interested in replication than reflection? Perhaps because the work fits so neatly into the current vogue for extreme verisimilitude, as practiced by artists like Gregor Schneider and Ron Mueck. (Ms. Campbell's work also includes the uncanny overtones of Surrealism found in photographs by Jeff Wall and Gregory Crewdson.)

In previous decades the same installation would have been couched in the language of Baudrillard and the simulacrum, while today the wall text and gallery handout assert its links to biography and subjectivity and "mimesis as the labyrinth of self-discovery." The only real evidence of this is an overturned book in the tableaux titled "The Other Side of Me."

Ms. Campbell's installation ultimately runs into the same problem that haunted Photorealist painters: beyond showcasing a meticulous, mimetic virtuosity, what does it add up to? Her installation might be a meaningful exploration of reproduction in the age of virtuality, but it's hard to shake the feeling that substance here is subordinate to eye-dazzling style.

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