



Alexandra Bircken

10 October – 3 December 2011
Gallery 1

Alexandra Bircken has developed a unique sculptural language in which natural and synthetic materials are often knitted, knotted or strung together. Bircken's work is grounded in a deep connection with and understanding of her materials. This is informed by her background in fashion, which she studied in London at St Martins College. The acquired techniques of draping, knitting and threading create a particular formal approach to the construction of her sculptural objects. Bircken has described her constructions as 'units' that create internal tensions and dialogues between materials and then a wider conversation occurs between these units within the particularities of the space.

Bircken's sculptures take on many forms. In previous works, she created web-like structures that seem to have caught detritus and treasures alike or frameworks in which objects are suspended as if in mid-air. Materials range from fragmented mannequin limbs to tree trunks and from washing lines to netting. They venture into the body with tampons, human hair and wax. This interest in material substance and narrative threads places Bircken in relation to earlier artists such as the vitrines of Beuys and the sculptural works of Eva Hesse. These strange placements are not only based on the aesthetic qualities that materials may possess but also on a potency or power the individual elements have. In combination they form fascinating objects. Like wishing trees or dream catchers the objects are at once organic and ritualistic, like distorted talismans, they border on the spiritual. More recent works have shown a somewhat restricted language, -reduced down with use of harder materials such as metal, mirror and mortar. The New York critic Roberta Smith recently described the work as "a rather belated challenge to Post-Minimalist sculptors".

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About the artist:

Alexandra Bircken currently lives and works in Cologne and has had solo exhibitions at Kimmerich Gallery, New York (2011); Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne (2010); Stedelijk Museum CS in Amsterdam (2008) and Gladstone Gallery in New York (2007), with forthcoming solo presentations at Kunstverein Hamburg, Hamberg and Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (both 2012). She has participated in numerous group exhibitions including Kettles Yard, Cambridge (2010), Barbican Art Gallery, London (2008), New Museum, New York (2007) and White Columns, New York (2005). The artist is represented by Herald St, London, BQ, Berlin and Kimmerich Gallery, New York.