



Alexandra Bircken

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01.31.09-03.15.09 *Herald St*

Wood, stone, or metal scaffold with a woolen shell and the occasional stash of semiprecious objects—such are the sculptures of Alexandra Bircken. This exhibition features vitrines that contain signature details including articles of clothing, peach stones, twigs, moss, and knitted objects among simple structures that support an open weave of patchwork color.

Icarus Survivor (all works 2009) is a figurative pendant suspended from the gallery ceiling. Knitted arms extend phoenixlike from a hollow torso of skiwear, the yarn striped and fringed like a football scarf, the ends of the wool dyed to appear ember-hot. Bircken's constructions typically involve tokens of survival: nomadic living, stockpiling, preserving, insulating, and making-do. Under the wings of the sculpture, there are two tiers of cast-plaster foods: a row of grayed bananas scorched with red spray paint followed by a line of sugar-pink cupcakes. These stony amulets provide ballast for the pervasive optimism and countercultural leanings typical of Bircken's work.

Free-spirited, homespun creativity and camper-van aesthetics are tempered by something more impersonal, high resolution, or machine-finished. Wholesomeness is burned-out or made corrupt with toxic color, haphazard pattern, or hallucinatory fallacy. The highlights of the exhibition manage this through an economy of means. In *Runway*, *Receptor*, and *Insert*, three elegant steel frames are strung with a kaleidoscopic mesh of wool. Bircken's objects are often medieval in construction yet progressive in tone, and she asserts an ethos of self-sufficiency that adapts nature and technology to a purpose altogether her own.