

ARTFORUM

Alexandra Bircken

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KIMMERICH
50 White Street
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Twigs, steel, rope, mortar, and leather are Alexandra Bircken's materials of choice for her second solo show in New York. The limited earth-toned palette represents a stark departure from her recent colorful knit installations—a new direction that draws due attention to her sculptures' organic forms and haptic qualities.

Bircken's interest in the activity and texture of knitting is unremitting. The most interesting piece on view is Twitter (all works 2011), the result of a collaboration with Thomas Brinkmann. The work began with a performance on the opening night of the show, in which Bircken knitted audiotape as it unspooled from a cassette player. The glistening flow of the black and tan magnetic tape was beautiful in its own right; the performance and knit piece served as tribute to what is essentially an obsolete medium. Beyond the purely aesthetic qualities of the tape, Twitter has implications that are sentimental, art-historical (Bircken cites Robert Morris's Box with the Sound of its own Making, 1961), and—as the title suggests—critical of contemporary culture.

Other works show Bircken breaking further away from her background in fashion design. In addition to the neutral palette, she explores alternate means of binding and connecting materials. For example, Calories consists of tidy bundles of twigs displayed on a low pedestal, and Runner in the Woods is a sturdy grid constructed out of larger branches. Both of these works are held together with pleasingly thick gray mortar—refreshingly, there are no traces of Bircken's knitting needle here.

— Mara Hoberman