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Sabine Hornig

TANYA BONAKDAR GALLERY

A room on a stage is typically missing one side, the virtual "fourth wall" through which the audience peers; the rooms depicted in the photographs Sabine Hornig included in this show are, unexpectedly, absent two sides. In each of the photos on view, the street-facing window of a Berlin storefront (there are two images of one of these storefronts and a third of another) is presented at roughly two-thirds scale, the casement marking the edges of the otherwise unframed image. The second missing division is more unsettling. In two shots, the floor has been demolished; in the third, behind the small rectangular gaps in a metal roll gate, one discovers that the rear wall has been dismantled, giving onto a view of a courtyard.

All three pictures slot neatly into a practice that has seen Hornig exploit the peculiarities of visual perception—in particular the eye's comprehension of reflectiveness and slight changes in scale—to blur the boundaries between architecture, sculpture, and photography. But whereas the quirks of Hornig's earlier images could be accounted for through patient looking, here the interference between what one expects and what one encounters is a result of *what* was photographed, not *how* it was captured. *Fenster ohne Boden* (Window with No Floor) I and II (all works 2006), hung on perpendicular walls in an otherwise empty room, are also an essay in the passage of time. The gray northern daylight illuminating the first image's composition gives way to a darker picture seemingly taken in the evening; likewise, the trees reflected in the window shed their foliage from one photograph to the next.

Two sculptures were situated in the gallery's larger room. *Blechkütte* (Tin Hut) is a narrow steel box, slightly shorter than six feet tall. A rectangular steel armature extends from one open end, framing a truck-windshield-size panel of glass. It evokes, obliquely, a bus stop shelter, a form Hornig used more directly for a 2002 sculpture, *Bus Stop*, also exhibited at this gallery. Everything about the object is slightly off: The box is too small to enter; the glass panel, on which is printed a thin vertical slice of an image, is too large to function as a door; deep inside the structure's lightless interior, a small triangular ledge might imply seating were it not for a similar piece wedged a few inches below the ceiling. Stifling functionality, *Blechkütte* seems instead to embody the oft-recited claim that "all art is quite useless."

That particular line belongs to Oscar Wilde, who prefaced it by announcing, "The only excuse for making a useless thing is that one admires it intensely." *Landscape*, a five-panel steel-and-Plexiglas folding screen adorned with a photographic transparency depicting a landfill, is worthy of such admiration. It too repeals utility; the semi-transparent image does not obstruct sight. Its ostensible message, reminding viewers of the proximity of luxury (the elegant folding screen) and waste, is banal when expressed didactically. *Landscape*, however, embodies its lesson in an interestingly literal manner. As one circumnavigates the sculpture, the panels—set at varying angles to one another—are reflected in the Plexiglas like phantom limbs. The object visually proliferates, and so does its image of waste. In this sparsely installed exhibition, more economical than Hornig's previous three Bonakdar shows, one was tempted to view this lesson in relation to today's art market, the many inessential objects it accommodates mere kindling on a pyre.

—Brian Sholis

