



The objects are withdrawing,
2009, steel, aluminum and mixed
mediums, approx.
10 by 7 by 5 feet;
at Barbara Thumm.

Gregory Volk: SABINE HORNIG at
BARBARA THUMM GALERY
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With the three deceptively austere, quiet sculptures on view here, German artist Sabine Hornig created jarring effects of presence and absence, pure physicality and abundant emptiness. *Die Gegenstände ziehen sich zurück* (The objects are withdrawing), 2009, includes four black steel panels, almost 7 feet high each, forming a hinged, upright structure resting on the floor; it loosely conjures foldable furniture or functional design. All sides of the panels are monochromatic, and all flat save for one, which resembles a jumbo magazine rack. What makes the sculpture so marvelous is a big frame holding a photographic transparency; attached to the upper half of one of the black panels, it feels almost like an advertisement or flag. The image, of a great pile of discarded computers and keyboards, is framed to hang sideways, which makes it seem as if the machines are in freefall, a torrent of high-tech debris. The solidity and heft of the steel panels and all they connote (from the Industrial Revolution to various Minimalist and Post-Minimalist sculptures, such as Richard Serra's early upright steel panels) contrast with the sudden dissolve

into a flimsy scrim on which jumbled computers look gorgeous and ethereal but also suggest a glut of hazardous waste. In *Selbstgespräch* (Soliloquy), 2009, two rectangular structures of whitelacquered wood, resting on the floor, approach one another at an angle but don't meet. Instead, the gap between them reveals black-lacquered interiors. The work suggests low walls, some kind of furniture that you can't exactly place, or an outsize architectural model. As you peer into the black interiors, those dark depths tap deeply into unruly regions of the psyche, both personal and national (in the sense of the ruinous fragments of war). Perched atop the structure is a small wood construction combining two adjacent solid panels with a dark gap between them and two jutting, empty frames that bisect one another—a wonderful mesh of barriers and conduits. The tripartite ensemble *Drei Teile Leichtigkeit* (Three Parts Lightness), 2009, also resembling an outsize architectural model, seems to occupy the cusp between stability and collapse. All the components rest on the floor. Two attached, upright, white wooden squares of slightly different heights combine with a taller narrow rectangular panel to form an abstract structure that looks like a small chunk of a building's facade. Nearby are two large, empty, upright narrow wood frames that almost meet, but are slightly off-kilter, lopsided and precarious. They suggest picture frames without images, doorframes without doors, portals into the unknown or nothingness altogether. Two additional horizontal frames are attached by hinges, and stretched over both is the thinnest of fabrics, printed with an almost apparitional photograph of a building's corner and window, and the trees reflected in that window. Exhibited in a city famous for having been bombed into smithereens and then slowly reconstructed, Hornig's seemingly rickety sculpture was especially evocative. The austerities in Hornig's works are idiosyncratic and at times oddly profound. Solid in parts, empty, airy and semitransparent in others, all three sculptures shown here turned the viewing experience into an ever-shifting excursion.