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AN ACCENTUATION OF THE SPACE

BERLIN

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Alicja Kwade's second solo exhibition at Johann König, *In Circles*, was comprised of an expansive sculptural installation and an accompanying video work, which continued her investigations into material properties through the unconventional manipulation of form. The central sculptural installation, entitled *Die Gesamtheit aller Orte (the totality of all places)* consisted of a wide array of found material components, such as wood molding, mirrors, glass panels, brass rods, wood panels, all of which were positioned alongside a variety of quotidian objects such as a bike, euro coins, and a door. As if the entirety of

the installation were put on the spin cycle, each material element in the work was bent in a slight curvature and arranged in a circular composition, extending outwards from an unmarked central axis.

The manipulation of many of the material components in Kwade's work clearly recalls post-minimalist sculpture, such as Richard Serra's curved steel plates, or Dan Graham's pavilions of curved glass walls, as well as Bruce Nauman's investigations into circular form prominent in so many of his sculptures. Yet, Kwade's work moves beyond these historical citations through the variety of these vernacular materials as well as the insistence that through assemblage and uniform treatment they combine to form an entity. The

slight bow in each of the material components in combination with their compositional arrangement suggests a gravitational force, enacting a physical influence over the installation; thus, activating the imagination and inviting a negotiation of the experiential possibilities of sculpture. The clever inclusion of the bicycle, steered in the direction of suggested motion, yet positioned as if caught in a static moment in time, evinces this implication even further. Moving through the installation, one quickly realizes that the vantage point is never stable. Each position provides a dramatically different composition of formal layering, especially with the inclusion of a variety of transparent and reflective materials, urging a continuous movement through



Alicja Kwade, *In Circles*, 2012. Johann König, Berlin.
Photo: Roman Wörz, courtesy Johann König, Berlin.

the rotating labyrinth and causing a sensation in the viewer of becoming inadvertently absorbed into the work's cycling movement. Along the periphery of the gallery, a number of orbiting elements were positioned to appear as if they were puncturing the walls and moving beyond, no longer contained in the given space. For example, a copper hoop standing on its side, was bisected by the wall of the gallery as if half of the object had moved through and beyond the wall, in a

manner made culturally familiar by certain of Robert Gober's iconographic works, which utilize the support of the gallery as a space of insinuation. By virtue of this heavy reliance on the support structure of the gallery walls, it seemed as though the sculpture was denied the opportunity to exist as an autonomous entity and as such veered, perhaps unnecessarily, into the domain of installation art, invoking an overarching cosmology. This simple accentuation of the space beyond the

gallery only becomes a superfluous gesture, in contrast to the "down to earth" materiality that is so appealing and striking upon the work's initial encounter.

The video component of the exhibition, which was situated in a small, darkened room that could only be accessed by traversing the material installation, consisted of a monitor placed on the gallery floor. The video, playing on a continuous loop, was simply that of a spin top, rotating in space yet fail-



ing to adhere to its natural logic of eventually loosing momentum and toppling over. The barely audible soundtrack was nothing more than static white noise, further insinuating the idea of uninterrupted motion as well as an invisible magnetic force. The soundtrack effectively relayed the motif of an unrelenting homogeneity; its residual insinuation having the effect of leveling out all the inherent distinctions among the material components of the work in the main space.

The ability to weave through the work and look back in this way proffers the possibility of an encounter that is quite unconventional. Unlike the experiential encounter of traditional sculpture in which the viewer orbits around the work, Kwade in this instance offers the possibility of a reversal: here, it is the work that does the orbiting, while we are left spinning.

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Alicja Kwade, *In Circles*, 2012. Johan König, Berlin.
Photos: Roman März, courtesy Johann König, Berlin.



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