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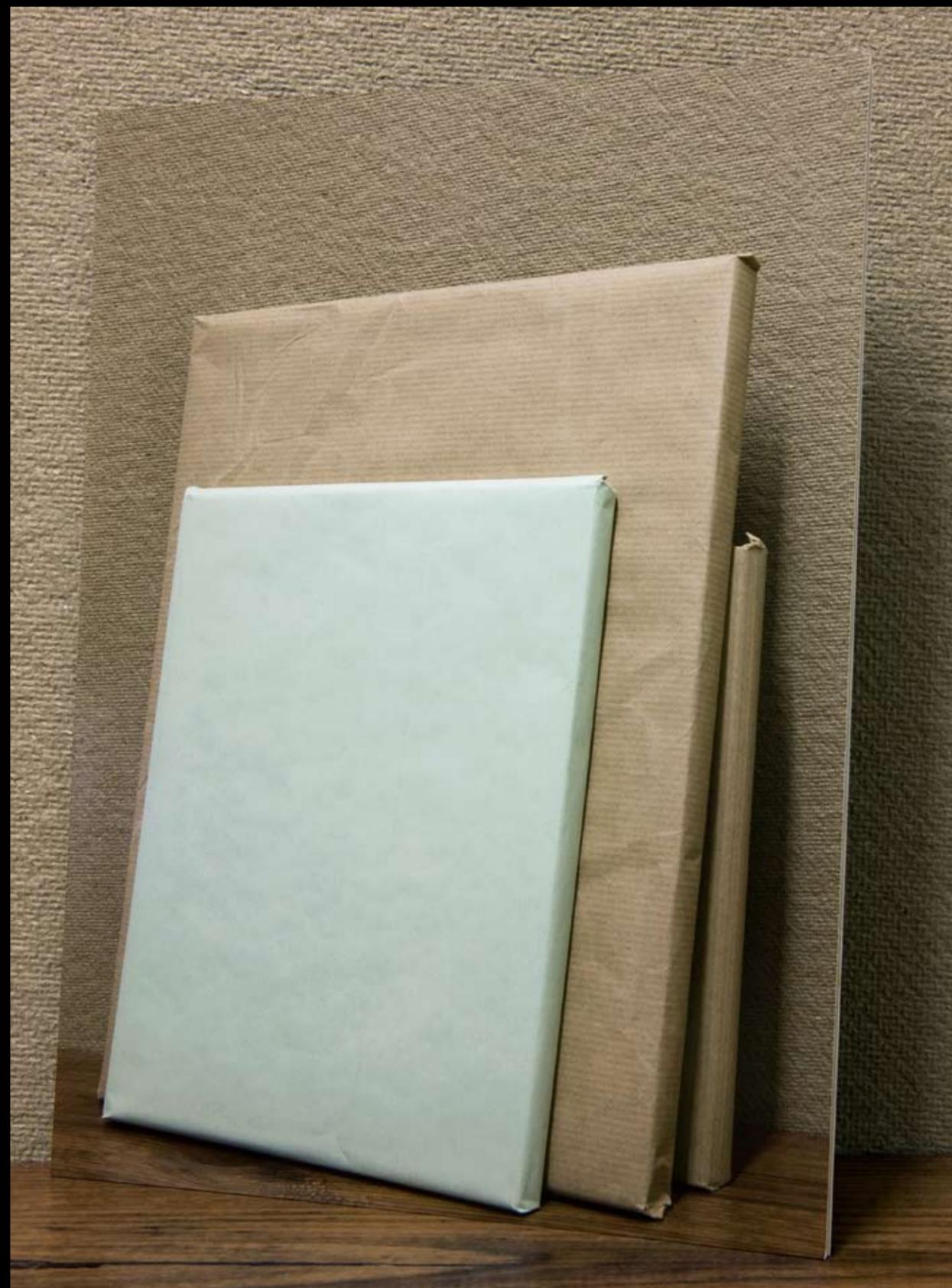


MIRIAM BÖHM Inventory There are many ways this series could elicit reactions from its viewers: perplexing, in the form of a cocked brow or furrowed forehead; confusion, as necks crane closer and closer to the images, clearly looking for something; or perhaps boredom. The subjects of her photos, after all, could be described as mere packages in brown paper, placed on top of a generic surface.

But clearly, the latter party fails to look hard enough. *Inventory* may not shine and dazzle the way other photographs do, with visually elaborate subjects or noteworthy techniques. Instead, it nudges the viewers, stirring their ability to detect something off kilter. The lines of the wooden floor upon which the packages are mounted suddenly veer in unexpected angles. A corner lies exposed when it should seemingly be covered by bubble wrap. There is a silent but noticeable disruption in photographs that, at first glance, look mundane, if not drab.

Inventory's strength lies in the creation of irritation by means of visual paradox - presenting images that give and take at the same time, and are photographed in ways that make them complete but arranged so that they are simultaneously incomplete. The subject matter, while inherently unassuming, has been manipulated in ways that alter the experience of observation. It seems as if the mundane holds the most interest for Böhm: the sensation of realizing something bland has gone awry is a unique and insidious one. The angles are quite strange, but not glaringly so - this subtle 'off-ness' may inspire some viewers to feel as if they want to adjust the parcels themselves. But they soon discover that shifting the packages and fixing placements do nothing to reconcile the image. Böhm achieves this effect with clever arranging. Everything is leaning - but on what? On actual items? On photographs of actual items? Of photographs of other photographs of actual items?

The term 'generations' describes the number of reproductions within the same photograph. Böhm's work possesses the ability to house different moments and spaces within the confines of a single image; multiple generations coexist within the same frame. When items are photographed, then placed in relation to the image of itself, the foreground and background become





unreliable as a usual gauge of distance and depth. Moreover, her play on dimensions - for instance, the role of the foreground and background, or her own take on the idea of mirroring - creates deliberate inconsistency. Items may be placed in a logical manner, but not entirely. The foreground and the background may match in one corner while another may be blatantly amiss. Parcels, green felt, and bubble wrap seem to slip out of themselves, sparking the question of where reality stops and illusion starts.

Chris Perez, owner and director at Ratio 3 in San Francisco, where *Inventory* was shown this spring, comments on Böhm's interest in the documentary capacities of photography and pictorial space: for example, how photography can redefine the way viewers look and understand photos, as well as how to construct images that are deliberate, but not outwardly so. Yes, there is something intentional about the arrangement of the parcels, and perhaps it may seem mischievous, nonchalant, humorous or outright indifferent - but no, there is no deep meaning to be read. If anything, *Inventory* is notable simply because it exists as a series of images to look at and react to. There is a markedly casual detachment present in her pictures that hint at a complete absence of purpose: Böhm does not believe that her art pieces have any. Instead she has created images that those experiencing her work can fall into or attempt to take apart.

Böhm understands that it is the observer's prerogative to react how they so choose with her work, be it an attempt to solve her photos, to figure out which parcel was real and which was a photograph, or which board was leaning on which wall; similarly, the viewer must understand that, while the setup of the installation itself was a product of the artist's intention, the development of questions that arose from experiencing her work and exploring its nuances were not. Many walk away with a lingering irritation, leaving these series of images in their quiet disarray. *Inventory* may stoke the neuroses of some of its viewers, sparking a desire to fix what is amiss. But it would be impossible to do so without feeling as if something would be ruined. - Miriam Böhm, 1972, lives and works in Berlin. (*Erin Tao*)



Pages 10-11 Unfinished V, 2009, C-print, cm 45 x 64.67. *Page 13* Inventory IX, 2010, C-print, cm 69.85 x 52.32. *Page 14* Inventory VI, 2010, C-print, cm 69.85 x 52.32. *Page 15* Inventory III, 2010, C-print, cm 80 x 60. *Right top*, Areal IV, 2009, C-print, cm 49.53 x 74.93; *bottom* Areal V, 2009, C-print, cm 49.53 x 74.93. All images © the artist, courtesy of Ratio 3, San Francisco