

NATIONAL REVIEWS

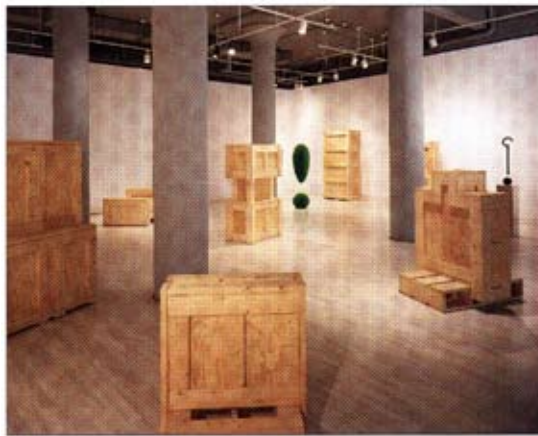
Richard Artschwager

LOCKS

Philadelphia

Like much of Richard Artschwager's sculpture and painting of the past four decades, this selection—consisting mostly of sculptures from the 1990s that resemble wood crates—amused and perplexed. As Minimal objects, the structures have a purity of line and integrity of form. As Pop art, they appear as deadpan reproductions of ordinary objects, like Warhol's

Brillo boxes. To further complicate things, though, many of the crates are not typically boxlike but assume the shapes of furniture—a china cabinet, a bed, an organ complete with pedals. Trained as a cabinet-maker, Artschwager made furniture in the 1950s before devoting himself to art. With these works, impishly skipping from Pop to Minimalism to carpentry, he muddles distinctions between art and ordinary objects. It's hard to tell if he's mocking furniture's aspirations to art or art for not serving a functional purpose.



Richard Artschwager,
installation view,
1999. Locks.

More emphatically Pop are his punctuation-mark sculptures—an exclamation point and a question mark were on view here. The dot in *Bristle Exclamation Point* (1995–96) sits on the floor like a ball waiting to be kicked, while the vertical dash hovers above, suspended by a string from the ceiling. This two-part sculpture is covered with green polystyrene bristles that look like Astroturf.

The crates have a psychological dimension that the punctuation marks lack. Artschwager takes the tradition of the Minimalist cube and invites speculation as to what's inside.

These works also encourage multiple interpretations: one can view them as hulking and inert, like refrigerators, or resonating with suggestions of death and absence, like coffins. With the latter association, his influence is most evident in the sculpture of Rachel Whiteread, the young British artist who casts the empty space, the interiors of objects. Although he doesn't have a strong foothold in the histories of either Minimal or Pop art, Artschwager, at 76, continues to leave a legacy for conceptual artists working today.

—Katie Clifford

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