

PEDER LUND

Richard Artschwager. Sculpture / Eye / Painting / Touch

17 September – 19 November 2016

Peder Lund is delighted to present an exhibition of works by the American artist Richard Artschwager (1923-2013). Artschwager challenged assumptions about perception, and the aesthetic, material and spatial experience of art and everyday objects. Well ahead of his time, he investigated how media culture and the search for something more *real* has created disengagement between our social and physical experience of space, and he began to conflate the world of images with the tactile world of objects. The exhibition *Richard Artschwager. Sculpture / Eye / Painting / Touch* evokes the famous statement Artschwager wrote in his notebook in the early 1960s: "I wanted to make a sculpture for the eye and a painting for the touch." Seven works introduce Artschwager's remarkable exploration of the mediums of sculpture and painting offering a taste of the extraordinary breadth of subject matter, form and material in his practice.

Artschwager's voracious commitment to looking as a means of valuing the world is what motivated his practice as an artist for over half a century and led him to play with the materiality of his artworks. He began to explore with the viewer's experience through material incongruities using industrial building materials and unexpected interventions of line and colour. His sculptures are defined as much by colouration and their painterly elements as they are by their forms and materials, and his paintings rely on texture and surface to acquire meaning. Simple blocks of wood and Formica evoke the elemental forms of objects like tables, chairs, mirrors or pianos, but with a delineated and disrupted perception of depth and surface. The exhibited *Table / Table* (2008), reminiscent of his iconic *Table with Pink Tablecloth* (1964, Art Institute of Chicago), features a sheet of walnut-patterned Formica wrapped around a piece of wood that both depicts and *is* a wooden table with a tablecloth. The resultant table is furniture, sculpture, and image all at once.

The dynamic relationship between pictorial representation and sculptural practices in Artschwager's work is also evident in his paintings. Beginning in the early 1960s, he applied charcoals, acrylics, pastels and paints to roughly textured and fibrous surfaces made from Celotex insulation boards that, when painted on, produced a texture similar in appearance to the poor reproduction quality of images on newsprint and the tactility of handmade paper. The iconic *Running Man* series made between 1991 and 2013, is based on a photograph of a distant figure in profile as he is running through a snowy park that Artschwager had clipped from *The Boston Globe* in 1989. *Running Man (double lime)* (2013) is a mirror image of the silhouetted figure painted on a Celotex board, suggesting the original paper quality of the clipped image.

Artschwager's work prompts questions about things as they appear and things as they are, between expectations of experience and the lived reality of the world we encounter. His photo-realistic grisailles paintings on building materials were rarely painted from real life, and instead constructed from memory, or from photographs and newspaper images enlarged to the size of easel paintings. *Grandmother in Chair* (2007), a painting on fiberpanel, is based on Édouard Vuillard's *Large Interior with Six Figures* (1897). The fiberpanel adds a hyper-realistic, tactile touch to the original interior scene, and the painting now seems to penetrate the viewer's space. Artschwager's artist's frames were also used to emphasise the works' physical presence in the world, and many of the frames are made of a reflective silver metal that mirrors its viewers and the room around them, asserting the coextension of their realities (*Latinamerican*, 2008). These methods echo the greatly enlarged figures of punctuation (exclamation points, question marks, brackets) that he started to produce in the 1960s, and his "blps", small, black, oblong shapes, which he would recreate in various materials and install in unexpected places, such as galleries and parks and on city streets and skylines. These works punctuate their bystanders' everyday activities and interrupt the state of indifference when perceiving physical space and our everyday surroundings.

Richard Artschwager was born in 1923 in Washington D.C. He studied chemistry, biology, and mathematics at Cornell University, and later informal art studies under the pioneering abstract painter Amedée Ozenfant in New York. In the early 1950s he became involved in cabinet making, producing simple pieces of custom-made furniture, returning to art in the late 1950s. His work has been the subject of many important surveys, including two at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1988 and 2012-13). Two of the works on view in *Richard Artschwager. Sculpture / Eye / Painting / Touch* were part of the latter, *Richard Artschwager!*, which travelled to the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Haus der Kunst, Munich; and Monaco National Musée Nouveau. Artschwager is represented in numerous museum collections worldwide, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Art Institute of Chicago; and Tate Modern, London. His final project was to design the interior of the elevators in the Whitney Museum of American Art's new building (*Six in Four*, 2012-15).