

GAGOSIAN



RICHARD ARTSCHWAGER

Opening reception: Thursday, January 14, 12–8pm
January 14–March 11, 2021
Via Francesco Crispi 16, Rome

Richard Artschwager, *Sliding Door*, 1964, Formica on wood with metal handles, 41 5/8 × 66 1/8 × 6 1/8 inches (105.7 × 168 × 15.6 cm) © 2020 Richard Artschwager/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Roland Schmidt

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Form always begins with a something. And then if that something occurs in another place, there is slippage involved and what is created as a result develops a parallel existence to the original thing.

I have located my art in terms of reducing all objects to the attention they demand. This gives me a good shot at innovation, to put it boldly.

—Richard Artschwager

Gagosian is pleased to present an exhibition of works by the late Richard Artschwager from a key period in his career, 1964–87.

Associated with many genres but conforming to none, Artschwager's art has been variously described as Pop, because of its incorporation of quotidian objects and commercial materials; as Minimal, due to its crisp forms and solid geometric presence; and as Conceptual, owing to its cerebral engagement with information. This rare survey of the early decades of Artschwager's varied career demonstrates his ability to rearrange the structures of perception, bringing the deceptive pictorial world of images into direct confrontation with the concretely human world of objects.

Through shifts in scale and transpositions of form and material, Artschwager's artworks prompt an ongoing reassessment of space and time, suggesting compound narratives and compositional

complexities, often at once quotidian and surreal. Employing synthetic, commercial, and industrial materials, Artschwager transformed his sources with a deadpan visual wit that makes the familiar strange. In 1962 he began working with Formica, a radically unconventional and “low” material, then most closely associated with the slippery surface of lunch counters. Its high-shine, typically marbled finish is both recognizable from everyday life and bears an abstract resemblance to expressionist painting. The early 1960s also marked the beginning of Artschwager’s experiments with Celotex, a heavily textured compound board made from compressed sugarcane fiber, which he used as a ground for his singular grisaille paintings, the waywardness of the industrial material blurring and obscuring his hand-drawn lines. These compositions were often based on subjects both arcane and mundane; *Interior* (1964), for example, is a semiabstract, diagrammatic perspectival image of a domestic setting, narrowing as depth perception progresses.

Artschwager’s sculptural works demonstrate the ways in which he integrated artisanal skills into intellectual and formal experiments in perception and composition. In *Sliding Door* (1964), the door of a cabinet casts a shadow within the work’s pale interior, generating a constantly changing pattern that shifts along with light and the motion of the viewer around the object. *Untitled* (1965), made from Formica and wood, uses a circle’s curvature in the same way; while nonfunctional, it mimics the utilitarian aesthetic of an audio speaker or household appliance, demonstrating Artschwager’s ability to meet our expectations of an object or picture only to then subvert them.

A fully illustrated bilingual catalogue will be published on the occasion of the exhibition, with an essay by curator Dieter Schwarz.

Richard Artschwager was born in 1925 in Washington, DC, and died in 2015 in Albany, New York. Collections include Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany; Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany; Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Germany; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Tate, London; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and Art Institute of Chicago. Exhibitions include *Painting Then and Now*, Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, FL (2003); *Up and Down/Back and Forth*, Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin (2003); *Hair*, Contemporary Art Museum, Saint Louis (2010); *Richard Artschwager!*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2012, traveled to Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Haus der Kunst, Munich; and Nouveau Musée National de Monaco); and *Punctuating Space: The Prints and Multiples of Richard Artschwager*, Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY (2015).

A retrospective of Artschwager’s work curated by the late Germano Celant opened at the Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto, Italy, in October 2019, and traveled to the Guggenheim Bilbao Museum in February 2020.

#RichardArtschwager

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