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## B. Wurtz: Monuments



*Untitled*, 2018, ceramic, red plastic object, blue plastic tacks, wire, metal and wood, 13 1/4 x 6 x 3 1/2 inches

Garth Greenan Gallery is pleased to announce *B. Wurtz: Monuments*. Opening Thursday, June 23, 2022, the exhibition will include a number of the artist's playful sculptures and mixed media works deconstructing elements of scale and monumentality. The show will be the artist's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

B. Wurtz is perhaps best known for his repurposing of everyday flotsam into joyous, humorous, and beautiful sculptural objects. The works in the presentation—spanning the past four decades of Wurtz's career—amount to transubstantiations of the commonplace, exposing the enigmatic relationships between grandiosity and scale, modesty and pomp, humor and seriousness.

At times, B. Wurtz's themes become explicit, as in *Untitled (East Village)* (1987). A simple found object is presented on a crude wooden pedestal. Behind the diminutive object is a print of it, scaled up and set against a gray sky. The viewer is positioned between two versions of the same thing, peering down at one and up at the other. In the print, the object is imbued with the monumental scale of an Aztec ruin. Wurtz's dramatic elevation of an object as unglamorous as rubble tends to generate a cascade of reflexive questions: Does the promotion of the commonplace come with a commensurate

downgrade of the much worshipped objects that sit behind reverent glass in museums?

The sculptures, pleasing in their visual immediacy, tend to reward even momentary reflection. In *HA HA* (1976), Wurtz encloses a handful of crumpled, Post-It-sized papers inside a clear plastic box. A note on top of the box discloses the work's eponymous title "HA HA," along with its author and date of completion. Despite scribbles that threaten to obscure it, the paper is still legible, unlike its crumpled cousins that are locked inside. There's a certain pleasure to contemplating the work: Are the locked papers discarded jokes? Or are they promising ideas lost to relentless self-ridicule? The diminutive box portends a drama of creativity and self-doubt.

Wurtz's forms are constantly probing at the nature of abstraction. In *Untitled* (1994), two metal hooks anchor wires that hold painted canvas flags. The flags are similar in pattern, but chromatically opposed. A narrative drama materializes with each hook resembling a boisterous partisan. The personification is typical of Wurtz's particular taste for the mock heroic, with two identical hooks absurdly locked in ideological or literal battle. In the work, abstraction and representation, often discussed as opposites, are revealed to be dimensions of the same phenomenon.

In all the sculptures, scale plays an indispensable role, modulating the materials and their impact. In addition to the diminutive sculptures for which the artist is well known, Wurtz creates in the other extreme. In 2018, the artist completed his now-iconic *Kitchen Trees* for the New York City Public Art Fund, transforming City Hall Park with towering columns of colorful colanders exploding with plastic fruit. Taken together, Wurtz's sculptures probe our conceptions of humor and profundity, reverence and play, scale and importance.

Wurtz has been the subject of over 52 solo exhibitions at prestigious venues, including: Feature Inc. (1987, 1991, 1992, 2001, 2003, 2006, New York); Gallery 400 (2000, Chicago); White Flag Projects (2012, St. Louis); Kunstverein (2015, Freiburg, Germany); and the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum (2015, Ridgefield, Connecticut). In 2015, the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, United Kingdom mounted a retrospective exhibition of the artist's work that traveled to La Casa Encendida, Madrid through 2016. In 2018, the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles mounted a major solo-exhibition of his work, *This Has No Name*.

Wurtz's work has also been included in over 174 group exhibitions, including: *Pandora's Box: Joseph Cornell Unlocks the MCA Collection* (2011, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago); *Building Blocks: Contemporary Works from the Collection* (2011, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence); and *Brand New: Art and Commodity in the 1980s* (2018, Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C.)

Garth Greenan Gallery is pleased to represent B. Wurtz.

*B. Wurtz: Monuments* will be on view at Garth Greenan Gallery, 545 West 20th Street (between Tenth and Eleventh avenues), through Friday, July 29, 2022. The gallery is open Monday through Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. For more information, please contact the gallery at (212) 929-1351, or email [info@garthgreenan.com](mailto:info@garthgreenan.com).

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