

RICHARD ARTSCHWAGER BOXED IN

CELEBRATING THE ARTIST'S CENTENNIAL

December 15, 2023 - January 20, 2024

DAVID NOLAN GALLERY

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Richard Artschwager (b. 1923, Washington DC; d. 2013, Albany, NY) forged a unique path in art from the early 1950s through the early twenty-first century, making the visual comprehension of space and the everyday objects that occupy it strangely unfamiliar. After receiving a BA in 1948 from Cornell University, New York, he studied under Amédée Ozenfant, one of the pioneers of abstraction. In the early 1950s, Artschwager was involved in cabinetmaking before he began making sculpture using leftover industrial materials; he then expanded into painting, drawing, site-specific installation, and photo-based work. As an artist, Artschwager specialized in categorical confusion and worked to reveal the levels of deception involved in pictorial illusionism, striving to conflate the world of images – which can be apprehended but not physically grasped – and the world of objects, the same space that we ourselves occupy.

Artschwager has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions, first at the Art Directions Gallery, New York, NY, and then with Leo Castelli in 1965. Other solo exhibitions include Neues Museum, Nuremberg, Germany; Museum für Angewandte Kunst (MAK), Vienna, Austria; Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Switzerland; Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL; Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin, Germany; Contemporary Art Museum, Saint Louis, MO; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; and Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York; among others.



David Nolan Gallery is delighted to announce *Richard Artschwager: Boxed In*, an exhibition celebrating the centennial of the iconoclastic artist's birth. On view from December 15, 2023 to January 20, 2024, the exhibition will include drawings, paintings and sculptures spanning six decades of Artschwager's impressive and protean oeuvre.

Born on December 26, 1923, Artschwager was always amused by the fact that his birthday was known as Boxing Day in many countries – a fact that is itself amusing given the artist's refusal to be boxed in as any particular type of artist. While often mentioned in relation to such diverse artists as Edouard Vuillard, Georges Seurat, Giorgio Morandi, Marcel Duchamp, Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, and Bruce Nauman, Artschwager moved through different mediums, materials, and visual preoccupations with a voraciousness, intelligence and wit that allowed him to escape any box the art world might have wanted to construct around him.

And yet, Artschwager would return to boxes, squares and rectangles throughout his career, employing them as framing devices to emphasize an object's physical presence, and in turn our own experience of viewing the work. Mirrors, too, brought the viewer into the work (literally) and extended the picture plane into the physical world. Even his *blps* – those iconic, lozenge-shaped voids he installed in public places with the illicit delight of a graffiti artist – were driven by a deep critical engagement with the process of looking. Though Artschwager's stated ambition may have been to "be original," one might argue that his ultimate aim was more humanistic: to get us to look closely at the world around us and, through seeing, to begin to know it.

Take, for instance, one of his early sculptures, *Description of a Table* (1964), and its subsequent variations: a plywood box covered in Formica, with a woodgrain pattern to resemble the legs and top of a table, and black and white laminates to convey a spatial void and a tablecloth, respectively. In creating a flat representation (in Formica) of a dimensional object (a table) on another dimensional object (a wooden cube), Artschwager challenges not only our optical perception, but also our cognitive understanding of what constitutes a table. This deliberate confusion of the pictorial and the sculptural, often infused with a sense of irony and irreverence, runs throughout his work – a desire both to entertain and to disrupt our experience of the world.

Artschwager was playfully subversive in his choice of materials as well, eschewing canvas, brass and bronze for the cheap commercial stuff of everyday American life: the aforementioned Formica with its faux woodgrain and marble veneers, the rough fibers of Celotex ceiling tile that disturbed the surface of his paintings, the rubberized horsehair he removed from its original context as an upholstery filling and made visible outside of its furniture. One suspects that, more than exalting these materials in particular, the artist is urging viewers to a greater regard for all things ordinary, a willingness to see everything as worthy of extended observation.

Artschwager was adept at destabilizing the audience's perspective on a large scale, too, as when he exhibited a collection of handmade shipping crates, transforming the containers of artwork into the artwork itself. True to his capacity for endlessly investigating a single subject, he would go on to make 100 of these crates over the years, shaped as the imaginary sculpture or painting they could possibly house, before making miniature sets of them that became beloved domestic objects. (The Formica tables underwent a similar miniaturization, testament to his perpetual fascination with scale.)

The more mundane the object, it seems, the more appealing it was as fodder for Artschwager's fertile imagination, and none were more banal than the six – Door, Window, Table, Basket, Mirror, Rug – that together ignited a multi-decade obsession beginning in the 1970s. Through drawings, paintings, objects and multiples, he generated hundreds of permutations of these domestic objects, variously exaggerating perspective, surface and scale to often surreal and comic effect. Artschwager's highest devotion, perhaps, was not to art but to the art of looking, and looking long enough to see the world as it is: strange, weird, funny, and wonderfully confounding.

Richard was rigorous and exacting in his own eccentric way. He was an artist, a scientist, and a philosopher with a Beckett-like sense of humor. Through his work, he demanded freedom of thought and spirit, and he was always looking for connections among objects, literature and the environment. He was absolutely brilliant, bursting with brains and wildly imaginative. That's part of why so many artists across generations and around the world continue to admire him so much. - David Nolan



Small Red Table, 2008
wood and melamine laminate
15 x 15 x 15 in (38.1 x 38.1 x 38.1 cm)
unique
(RA9020)

Table (Wannabe), 2009
wood and melamine laminate
12 x 12 x 10 in (30.5 x 30.5 x 25.4 cm)
Edition of 20
(RA6408)



Table (Drop Leaf), 2008
Formica on wood
30 x 22 x 44 in
(76.2 x 55.9 x 111.8 cm)
(RA4789)





Untitled (*Six Objects*), 1974
ink on paper
24 x 38 in (61 x 96.5 cm)
(RA6631)



See by Looking / Hear by Listening, 1992
melamine laminate, wood, velvet, chrome
plated brass and etched glass
overall (open): 14 1/8 × 24 1/16 × 15 in
(35.9 x 61.1 x 38.1 cm)
Edition of 7

Four Approximate Objects, 1970-1991
mahogany, Formica, brass, chrome-plated
brass, and flocking
overall (open): 13 1/2 x 14 1/2 x 13 in
(34.3 x 36.8 x 33 cm)
overall (closed): 13 1/2 x 14 1/2 x 3 1/2 in
(34.3 x 36.8 x 8.9 cm)
Edition of 30
(RA8736)

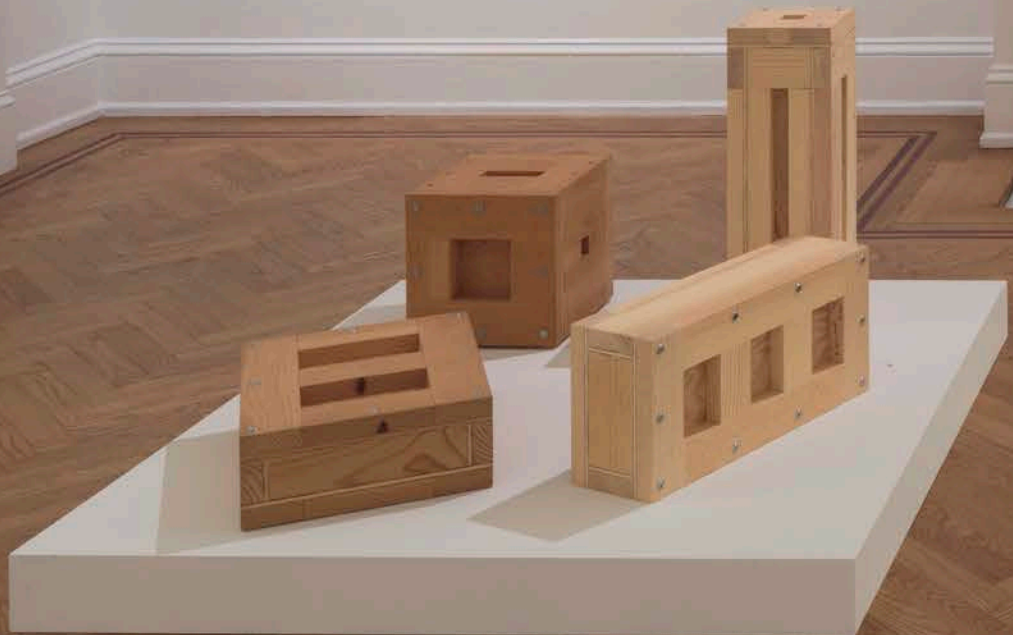




Untitled (*Box with drawers*), 1971
white oak box with five drawers and
brass hardware, interiors layered with
Formica on wood, glass, mirror, and
rubberized horsehair
11 5/8 x 14 13/16 x 12 7/8 in
(29.5 x 37.6 x 32.7 cm)
Edition of 50
(RA5021)

Locations, 1969
melamine laminate, glass mirror,
acrylic sheet, rubber, rubberized
horsehair, and wood
dimensions variable
Edition of 90
(RA4682)







Running Man (triple), 2013
laminated and acrylic on Celotex
in artist's frame
21 1/4 x 25 1/2 x 8 in (54 x 64.8 x 20.3 cm)
(RA6765)





Time Piece, 1989
oil on wood, Formica, aluminum, and clock mechanism
25 1/2 x 23 1/2 x 5 1/4 in (64.8 x 59.7 x 13.3 cm)
Edition of 30
(RA3743)



Splatter Table (Empire), 2011
laminated, acrylic, mirror, and wood
left panel: 29 x 11 in (73.7 x 27.9 cm)
right panel: 27 1/2 x 21 1/4 in (69.8 x 54 cm)
(RA9021)



Satyr, 2001
acrylic, rubberized hair, and masonite
57 x 32 x 2 1/2 in (144.8 x 81.3 x 6.3 cm)
unique
(RA7687)



Zeno's Paradox, 2004

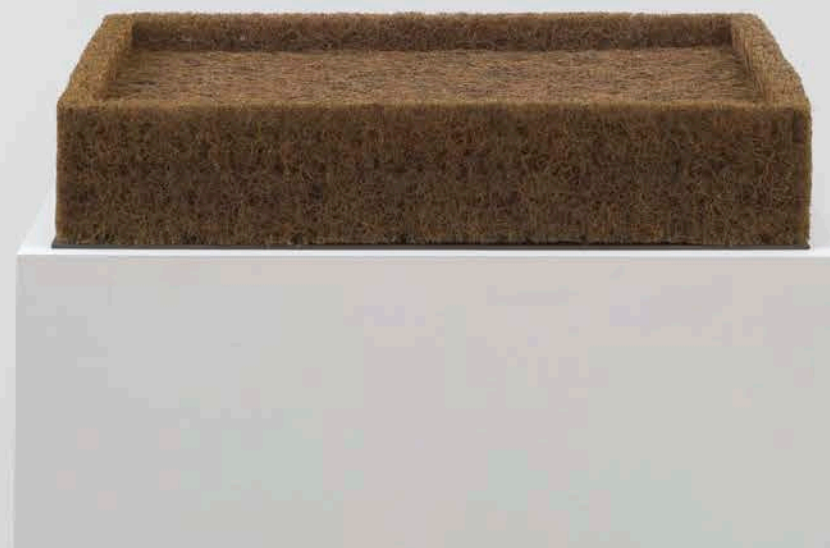
suite of four etchings with color aquatint and drypoint,

each print: 19 1/2 x 23 1/4 in (49.5 x 59.1 cm)

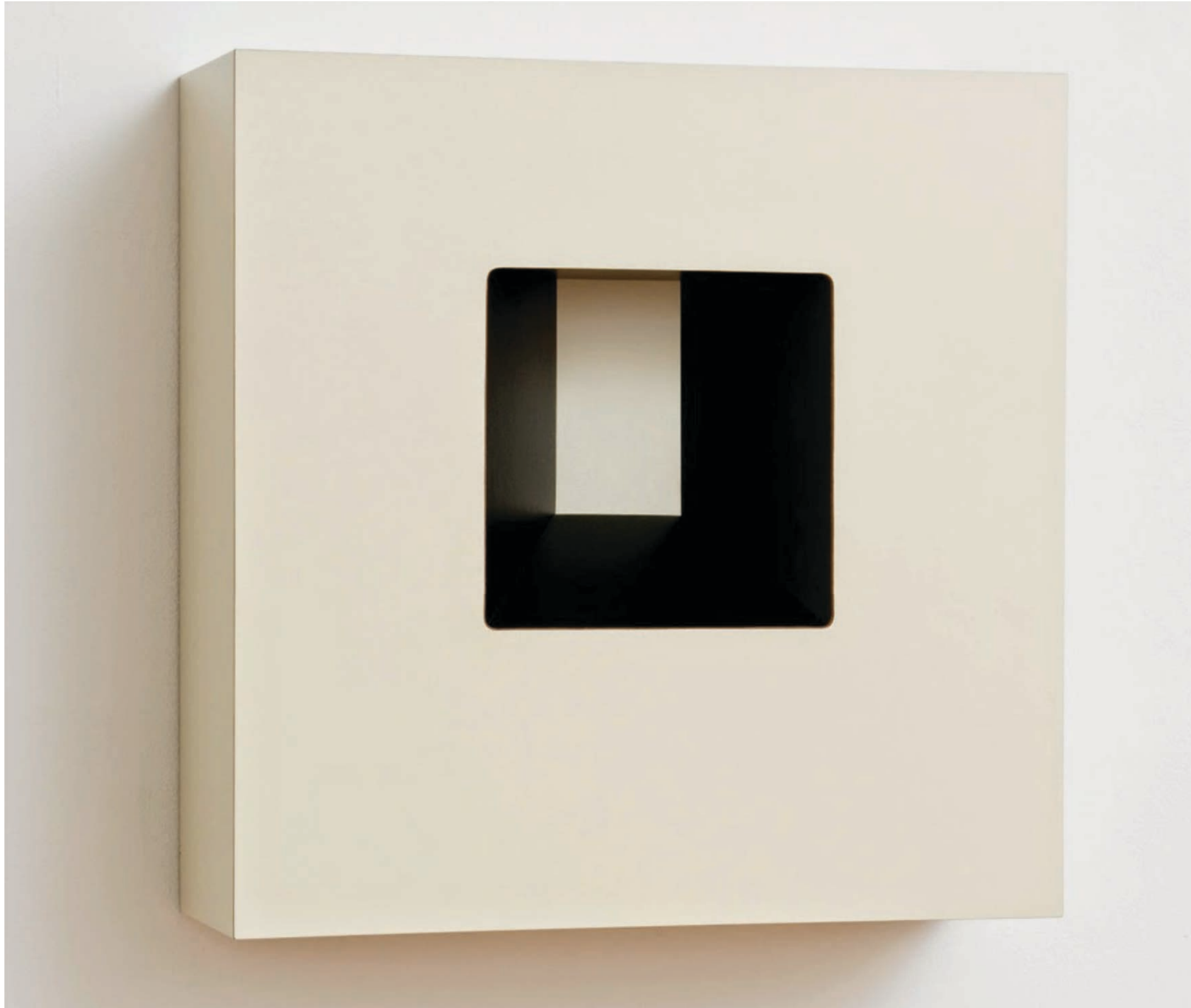
sculpture: 25 1/4 x 22 1/8 x 5 in (64.1 x 56.2 x 12.7 cm)

Edition of 25

(RA8836)







Fractal, 1987
Formica and wood
17 x 17 x 5 3/4 in (43.2 x 43.2 x 14.6 cm)
Edition of 25
(RA8940)

Hair Box, 1969
rubberized hair
12 x 9 1/4 x 11 3/4 in
(30.5 x 23.5 x 29.8 cm)
(RA9041)



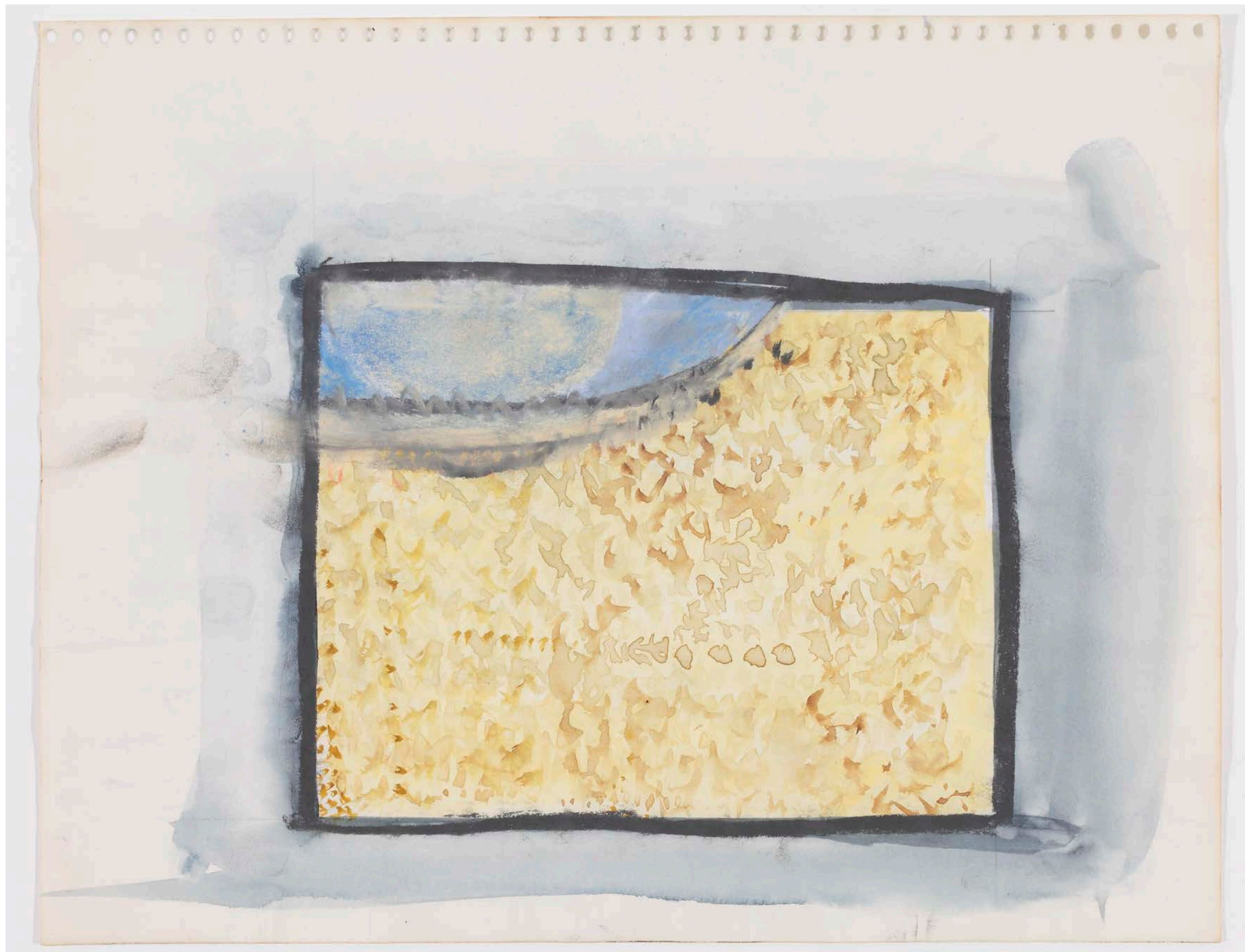


Yellow Window, 2007
pastel and charcoal on paper
37 3/4 x 25 in (95.9 x 63.5 cm)
(PP0563)



Hair Box, 1990
acrylic, rubberized hair with wood backing
9 x 5 1/2 x 14 1/2 in (22.9 x 14 x 36.8 cm)
Edition of 100
(RA8961)

Untitled, c. 1958/59
watercolor and graphite on paper
10 7/8 x 13 7/8 in (27.6 x 35.2 cm)
(RA3808)





Brush Blp, 1988
wood and bristles
13 x 16 x 24 in (33 x 40.6 x 61 cm)
Edition of 6
(RA4797)



Door, 1987
Formica and wood with metal hardware
overall (closed): 17 x 25 x 3 7/8 in
(43.2 x 63.5 x 9.8 cm)
Edition of 25
(RA8835)





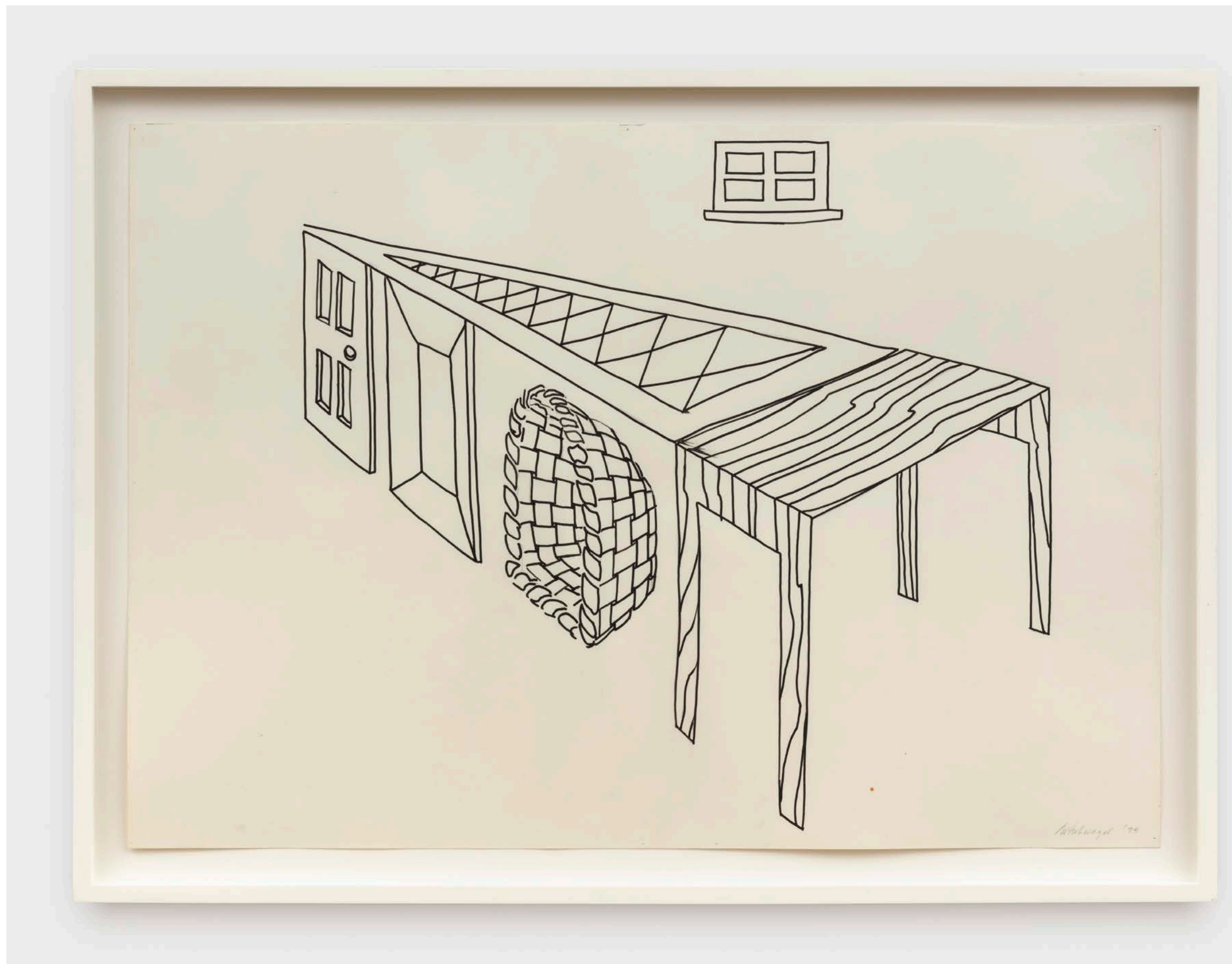
Book, 198,
Formica on wood
12 x 20 1/16 x 5 1/16 in
(30.5 x 51 x 12.9 cm)
Edition of 40
(RA8796)

Untitled (*Red bookcase*), 2006
pastel on flocked paper
27 1/4 x 39 in (69.2 x 99.1 cm)
(RA0701)

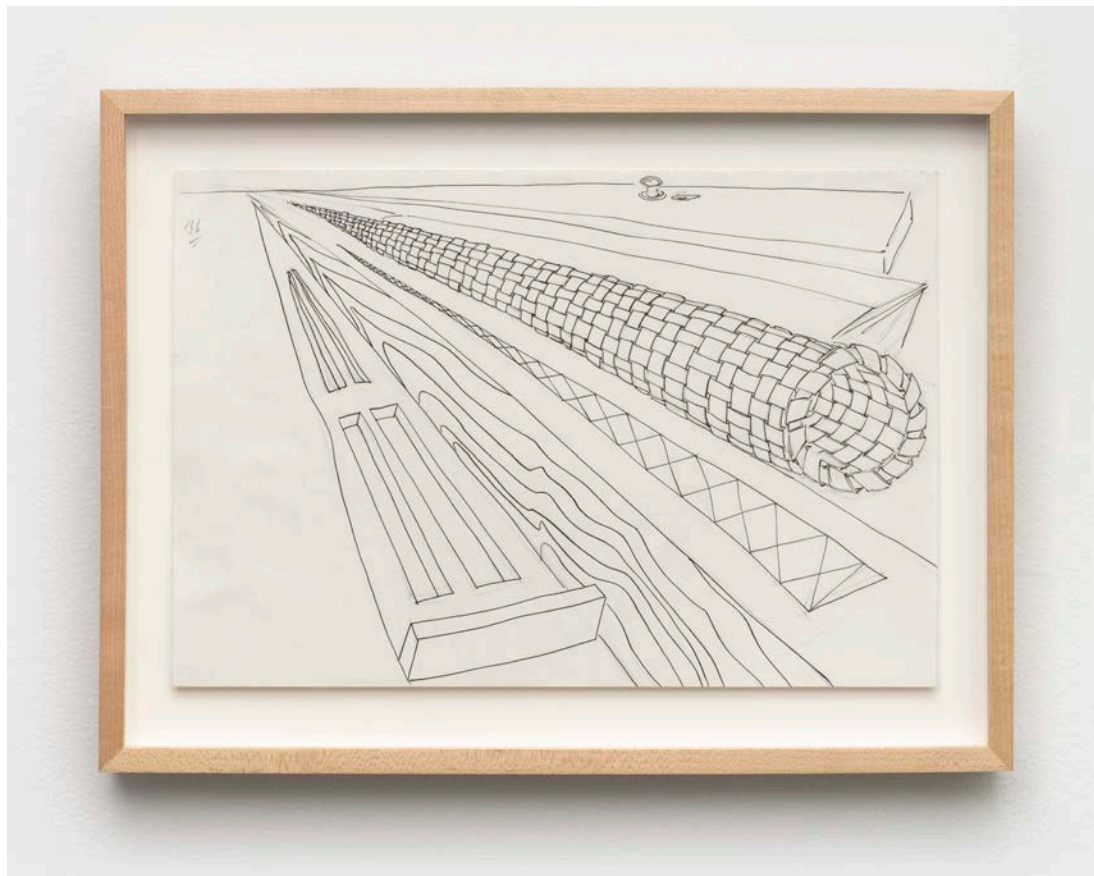


Mirror, 1988
Formica and enamel on wood
30 3/8 x 24 3/8 x 4 in (77.2 x 61.9 x 10.2 cm)
Edition of 25
(RA8374)





*Door, Window, Table, Basket,
Mirror, Rug, 1974*
ink on paper
19 1/2 x 28 in (49.5 x 71.1 cm)
framed: 23 x 31 1/2 x 1 1/2 in
(58.4 x 80 x 3.8 cm)
(RA5598)



Six Objects, 1975

triptych

each drawing: ink and graphite on paper

each: 7 7/8 x 11 5/8 in (20 x 29.5 cm)

or 11 5/8 x 7 7/8 in (29.5 x 20 cm)

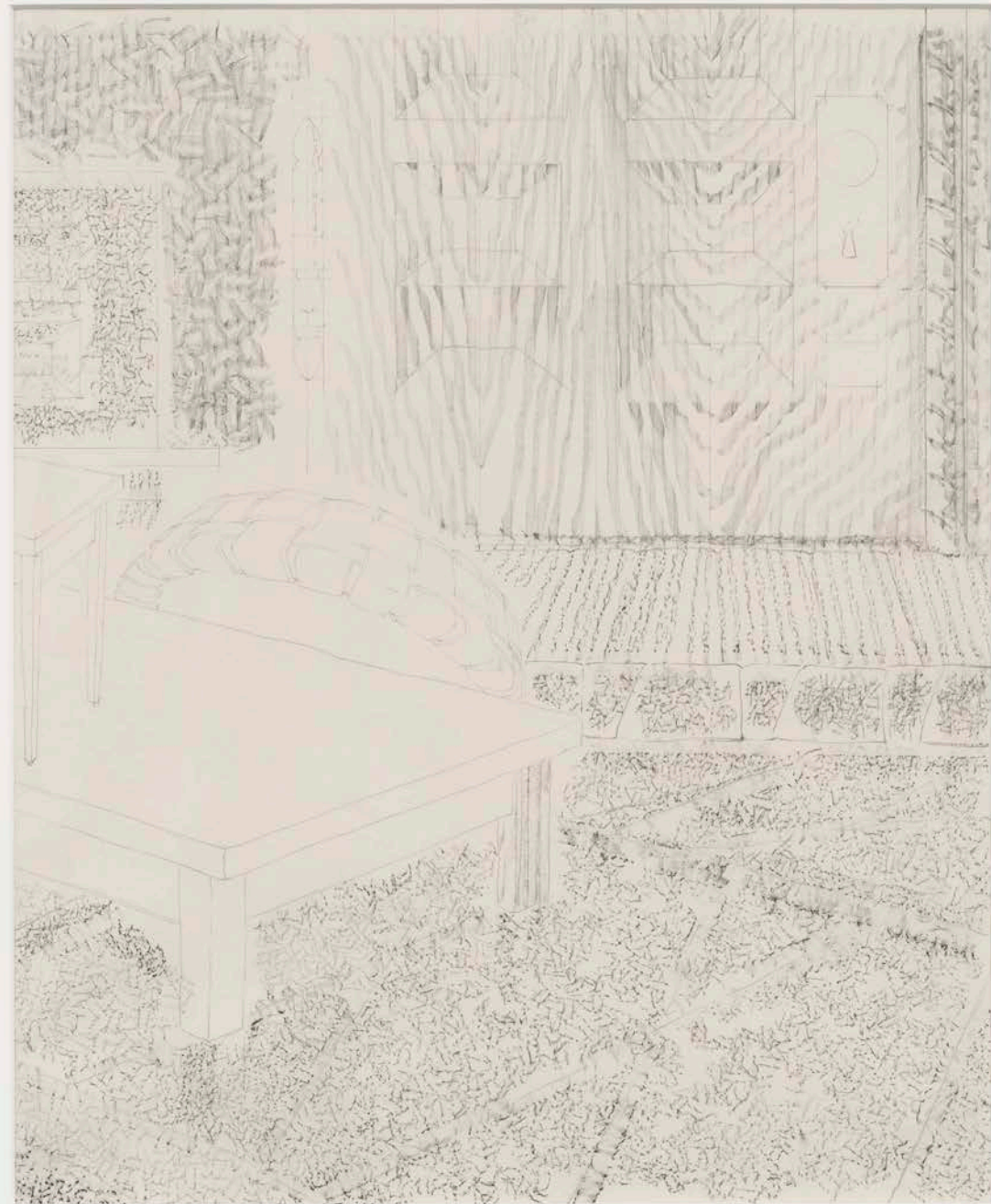
framed: 10 3/8 x 13 3/4 in (26.2 x 34.9 cm)

or 13 3/4 x 10 3/8 in (34.9 x 26.2 cm)

(RA8820)

Untitled (*Weave*), 1978
charcoal on paper
18 x 22 in (45.7 x 55.9 cm)
framed: 28 x 32 x 1 1/4 in
(71.1 x 81.3 x 3.2 cm)
(RA0525)





Untitled [*Interior*], 1977
pencil on paper
33 x 23 in (83.8 x 58.4 cm)
(RA8214)

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