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Britany Salsbury, "Critics Picks: B.Wurtz," **Artforum.com**, Summer 2011

ARTFORUM

Critics' picks – New York

B. Wurtz

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For over four decades, B. Wurtz has produced sculptures made from the neglected artifacts of daily life, presenting objects similar to each other primarily in their improbability as works of art, typically within minimalist exhibition contexts that seem equally unlikely to contribute aesthetic value. In addition, the affinities in form between some early and late work in this retrospective—Handbag, 1970, for instance, includes a transparent plastic bag suspended from an arched wire, while Untitled, 1997, differs only in the color of the bag and the addition of a piece of plywood—suggests the single-mindedness of the artist's attempt to locate a point of intersection between everyday objects and artworks, while forcing the viewer to question the use value of each.

Seen within the historical context of its development, Wurtz's production is particularly remarkable in its quiet acceptance of and experimentation with the mundane. Breaking from the physical and theoretical heft of sculpture in the 1960s and '70s, his pieces seem, at first, self-evident or even blithe. Their deeper significance lies not in monumentality but in the artist's clever revision of typically neglected or rejected materials, producing a quieter yet equally decisive impact. In these works, recycled materials—such as suspended colored binders in five works from 1980 titled Notebook—become intermediaries between banality and pure form. This promotion is particularly successful when combined with the intelligent and subtle irony characteristic of Wurtz's work: Untitled (food wrappers), 1976, for instance, includes two plastic squares cut from a bag of carrots on which the words THEY'RE DIAMONDS are printed. This wry and telling allusion to the latent value in the detritus of daily life points to the effectiveness and creativity inherent in Wurtz's transformation of these materials throughout his career.



View of "B. Wurtz: Works 1970–2011," 2011