

METRO PICTURES

R.C. Baker, "Best in Show: B. Wurtz at Metro Pictures," **The Village Voice**, July 6, 2011



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What is beauty?

Does it emanate from Botticelli's 1486 painting of a lissome Venus enveloped in flowing blond locks? Or perhaps it resides within the grand piano that Joseph Beuys encased under a thick layer of gray felt in 1966, a gorgeous, if elegiac, evocation of thwarted potential and muted promise.

B. Wurtz's impossibly slight sculptures have wafted through this indefinable realm for decades. These constructions—maybe too robust a term for materials such as shoelaces and broccoli nets draped over bent coat hangers—oscillate between prosaic materiality and representation of natural forms. Bunch #2 (1995) offers a short pole sprouting thin metal rods festooned with plastic grocery bags—a tree fashioned with detritus often snagged by the branches of the real thing. And while I haven't laughed in a gallery since John Waters's last solo show skewering Hollywood pretensions, Wurtz's 1986 concoction of a barrel bolt, the male pin eternally separated from the female latch by a scrap of lumber, delivers a jolt of surrealist whimsy. Although he and Richard Tuttle share a Zen-like veneration for the world's neglected scraps, Wurtz moves beyond his elder's constraint with insightful playfulness. In Garden (1983), corrugated plastic lawn edging encircles green sprinkler valves atop orange wooden blocks in a Lilliputian circus ring.

The suspension of a candy-striped hula hoop above a wooden dowel may not impart the immediate drama of Botticelli's pagan vision or Beuys's paean to our age of anxiety, but Wurtz's sleight-of-hand aesthetics unveil beauty hiding in plain sight.

