

ANGLES GALLERY

Cutajar, Mario. "Ross Rudel at Ace," Visions,
Spring 1991, p. 43.



Ross Rudel
Untitled # 46, 1990
Wood, nylon, aliphatic resin
10-1/2 x 9 x 5 inches

ROSS RUDEL at Ace

Sculpture has traditionally utilized the wall as a backdrop. Ross Rudel's objects not only depart from this convention but are primarily intended to activate and draw attention to what might be called the wall's anatomical presence, a presence that probably owes much to infantile memories of the mother's body as a nebulously desirable but indefinite field.

The objects Rudel formulates to reach his end are small, simple and subtly shaped, and in a different context might easily be taken for minimalist gestalts.

Clearly, his "perversion" of the minimalist object to serve anthropomorphic ends has its antecedent in the work of Eva Hesse; but unlike Hesse, who frequently employed serial elements placed on the floor or hung from the ceiling, Rudel limits himself to one-of-a-kind objects which require placement on a wall. The materials he uses vary: wood, plastic and shellacked cloth are some of the more obvious ones. What is consistent from object to object is the finish. Very cleanly fabricated, their surfaces vary within a narrow range of smooth to slick and this, it turns out, is what allows them to be so convincingly mated with

the wall. Rudel also effects this fusion by limiting the installation of his objects to one per wall. The few pieces in this show not hung alone reverted to mere sculpture.

As one might expect, Rudel's objects tend to be variations on two basic forms: the protrusion and the orifice. Of the protrusions, one shaped somewhat like a washing-machine agitator and placed low on the wall makes an obvious but nevertheless elegant phallic metaphor. An orificial work, black and disk-shaped, suggests nothing so much as a belly button. Rudel may be rigorous, but he is not without humor. The least definite in their allusions are those objects that, like snakes swallowing their tails, conflate into one form references to both apertures and extensions.

Rudel utilizes erotic allusion playfully but stops short of sophomorically belaboring it. Perhaps the most subtle and beautiful of his objects is in the strict sense not an object at all. I refer to two connected orifices, each one set in a wall in a different room, one of which sucked in air while the other expelled it. It is the simplest of devices, and yet its potential to animate the wall—literally—far surpasses that of any conceivable physical object.

—Mario Cutajar