

WHITNEY

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PRESS RELEASE



The Whitney Unveils Designs for Elevators Commissioned from Richard Artschwager for Future Downtown Home

New York, June 6, 2013 –When the Whitney Museum of American Art opens its downtown home to the public in 2015, one of the most striking features of the new building will be its four distinctive elevators. Bringing visitors into contact with art as soon as they enter the Museum, the four elevator interiors comprise an artwork designed by the late Richard Artschwager (1923–2013)—the only commissioned work of art in the Whitney’s new Renzo Piano-designed building, which is currently under construction in downtown Manhattan at the corner of Gansevoort and Washington Streets.

Adam D. Weinberg, the Whitney’s Alice Pratt Brown Director, noted: “Similar to the way in which *Calder’s Circus* was for many years a touchstone for our visitors in the Whitney’s uptown lobby, we hope that the Artschwager elevators will become a uniquely memorable and unexpected part of the experience of coming to the Whitney. They will be a reminder of the centrality of our relationships with artists and in particular of our longstanding history with Richard Artschwager, who died earlier this year, shortly after completing the design for this final installation. These elevators are a way of putting the art first and foremost and an invitation to the visitor to experience art even before ascending to the special exhibition and permanent collection galleries.”

Six in Four, the title Artschwager gave to the Whitney elevators, is the last major artwork he created before his death. Employing materials such as plastic laminate, glass, and etched stainless steel, the four elevators are the culmination of a body of work based on six themes that occupied Artschwager's imagination since the mid-1970s: *door*, *window*, *table*, *basket*, *mirror*, and *rug*. These themes became the subject of hundreds of drawings and numerous sculptures the artist made throughout his career. Each elevator is designed as an immersive installation featuring one or more of these themes; visitors entering an elevator will have the extraordinary and somewhat disorienting experience of standing under a table; being on a rug in front of a mirror; finding oneself opposite an unexpected door and next to a window; or contained in a giant floating woven basket.

Throughout the day the four elevators will be used by the Museum's visitors; the largest, nearly fifteen-foot wide, will also be used to transport art. After Museum hours, all four elevators will be "parked" in the lobby, doors open and lit from within—presenting the entire installation each night in full view of anyone passing by the glass-enclosed ground floor of the Whitney Museum.

Richard Artschwager was commissioned for this project not only because he was a major figure in twentieth-century American art, but also because of his history with the Whitney. In 1966, nearly five decades ago, the Whitney included Artschwager's work in *Contemporary American Sculpture: Selection I* and in the 1966 *Annual Exhibition*. That same year, the Whitney acquired its first Artschwager sculpture, *Description of a Table*, and today it has the largest holdings of his art of any museum. The Whitney demonstrated its commitment to Artschwager's art by organizing two comprehensive surveys of his work—the first in 1988, and another that opened in October 2012 and ended in early February 2013, just a few days before the artist died.

The commission takes a cue from *Janus III (elevator)*, the first large-scale interactive sculptural installation Artschwager created, in 1981. It is a non-functioning chrome and Formica elevator cab with its own interior lighting. The viewer can enter and press buttons that activate a chorus of sound and recreate the feeling of ascending and descending. *Janus III* is in the collection of the Museum Ludwig in Cologne and was exhibited in the Whitney's 1988 retrospective. Artschwager also previously worked on architectural commissions including the design of the façades of Georg Kargl BOX in Vienna and the David Nolan Gallery in New York.

About the Artist

Richard Artschwager (1923–2013) had his first solo show in 1965 at Leo Castelli and appeared in the *Primary Structures* exhibition at the Jewish Museum in 1966. Select solo exhibitions included Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis (2010); Sprüth Magers, Berlin (2009); Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami (2003); Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin (2003); Arts Club of Chicago (2002); MAK, Vienna (2002); Serpentine Gallery, London (2001); Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris (1994); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1992); Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (1979); Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston (1979); and Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (1973). He began appearing in Whitney Annuals in 1966 and was shown in the 1968, 1970, and 1972 Annuals as well as the 1983 and 1987 Biennials. In 1988, the Whitney organized a mid-career retrospective of his work, which debuted at the Whitney and then toured to numerous national and international venues including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Palacio de Velasquez, Madrid; Centre Pompidou, Paris; and Städtische Kunsthalle, Dusseldorf. In 2012, in association with Yale University Art Gallery, the Whitney organized *Richard Artschwager!*, which ran until February 2013 before traveling to the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, where it is on view June 16–September 2, 2013.

About the Whitney

The Whitney Museum of American Art is the world's leading museum of twentieth-century and contemporary art of the United States. Focusing particularly on works by living artists, the Whitney is celebrated for presenting important exhibitions and for its renowned collection, which comprises over 19,000 works by more than 2,900 artists. With a history of exhibiting the most promising and influential artists and provoking intense debate, the Whitney Biennial, the Museum's signature exhibition, has become the most important survey of the state of contemporary art in the United States. In addition to its landmark exhibitions, the Museum is known internationally for events and educational programs of exceptional significance and as a center for research, scholarship, and conservation.

Founded by sculptor and arts patron Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney in 1930, the Whitney was first housed on West 8th Street in Greenwich Village. The Museum relocated in 1954 to West 54th Street and, in 1966, inaugurated its present home, designed by Marcel Breuer, at 945 Madison Avenue on the Upper East Side. While its vibrant program of exhibitions and events continues uptown, the Whitney is moving forward with a new building project, designed by Renzo Piano, in downtown Manhattan. Located at the corner of Gansevoort and Washington Streets in the Meatpacking District, at the southern entrance to the High Line, the new building, which has generated immense momentum and support, will enable the Whitney to vastly increase the size and scope of its exhibition and programming space. Ground was broken on the new building in May 2011, and it is projected to open to the public in 2015.

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art

I, YOU, WE	Through September 1 2013
Stewart Uoo and Jana Euler	Through August 2013
David Hockney: The Jugglers	Through September 1 2013
Hopper Drawing	Through October 6 2013
Robert Irwin: Scrim Veil—Black Rectangle—Natural Light (1977)	June 27-Sept 1 2013
T.J. Wilcox: In the Air	Sept 19 2013-Feb 9 2014
Robert Indiana: Beyond Love	Sept 26 2013-Jan 2014
Rituals of Rented Island: Object Theater, Loft Performance, and the New Psychodrama—Manhattan, 1970–1982	Oct 31 2013-Jan 2014

The Whitney Museum is located at 945 Madison Avenue at 75th Street, New York City. Museum hours are: Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m., closed Monday and Tuesday. General admission: \$20. Full-time students and visitors ages 19–25 and 62 & over: \$16. Visitors 18 & under and Whitney members: FREE. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 6–9 p.m. For general information, please call (212) 570-3600 or visit whitney.org.

Image credit:

Richard Artschwager with *Chair Table*, 1980. Image courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY