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RICHARD FLEISCHNER

KNOEDLER

For the past 45 years, Richard Fleischner, like many artists of his generation, has been practicing art "on a lofty and cerebral plane of a quotidian materiality," to use Yvonne Rainer's felicitous phrase. His materials range from sod, hay, plantings and wood to granite, marble, limestone and Cor-Ten steel. Among his more ambitious site-specific works are an extensive maze executed from chain-link fencing on the campus of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst (1978-79, now destroyed) and an extant plaza for MIT (1980-85) that features walkways made of granite inlays in a checkerboard pattern. Fleischner has said that he shares the values of architects such as Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn in their concerns with the expressivity of materials and the particularities of place.

"Material/Process/Place: Richard Fleischner Works, 1963-2011," the artist's first exhibition at Knoedler, surveyed his career through a selection of his drawings, photographs, gouaches and tabletop sculptures. A continuous digital slide show surveyed his past and present large-scale sculptural projects.

One untitled graphite drawing, ca. 1980, depicts three nested rectangular enclosures in perspective from slightly above, reflecting the quietly insistent character of his projects. The cross-hatching approximates a kind of woven fencing or thatch,

Intelligent juxtapositions among mediums brought a diversity of sculptural propositions to life. A dozen or so gouaches from 1998 to 2008 were executed in built-up layers of white that were allowed to dry and then repainted. The drawings aspire to the quality of a whitewashed masonry wall scratched, pitted and marked with age. Nearby was a silver gelatin print, *Untitled (Mali)*, 2007, presenting the corner of just such a wall. Clearly, Fleischner was seeking striking resonances from the start. The earliest piece on display was a photo of a checkerboard taken on a New York city street (1963). Nearby was a gray gouache grid that echoed the worn surface of the photographed object.

Among the tabletop sculptures were several made of old library boxes. Wood lattice and metal divide the interiors into compartments—a benign architectural confinement. Also present were works in sticks and wax shaped into simple forms such as those of a nest, corral or mound. There were several cast bronze pairings, as well, including *Wedge and Cube* (2009/11) and *Two Squares* (2010/11) which, like the other works here, achieve something of a platonic, meditative state despite their robust materiality.

—Joe Fyfe