

## Richard Tuttle

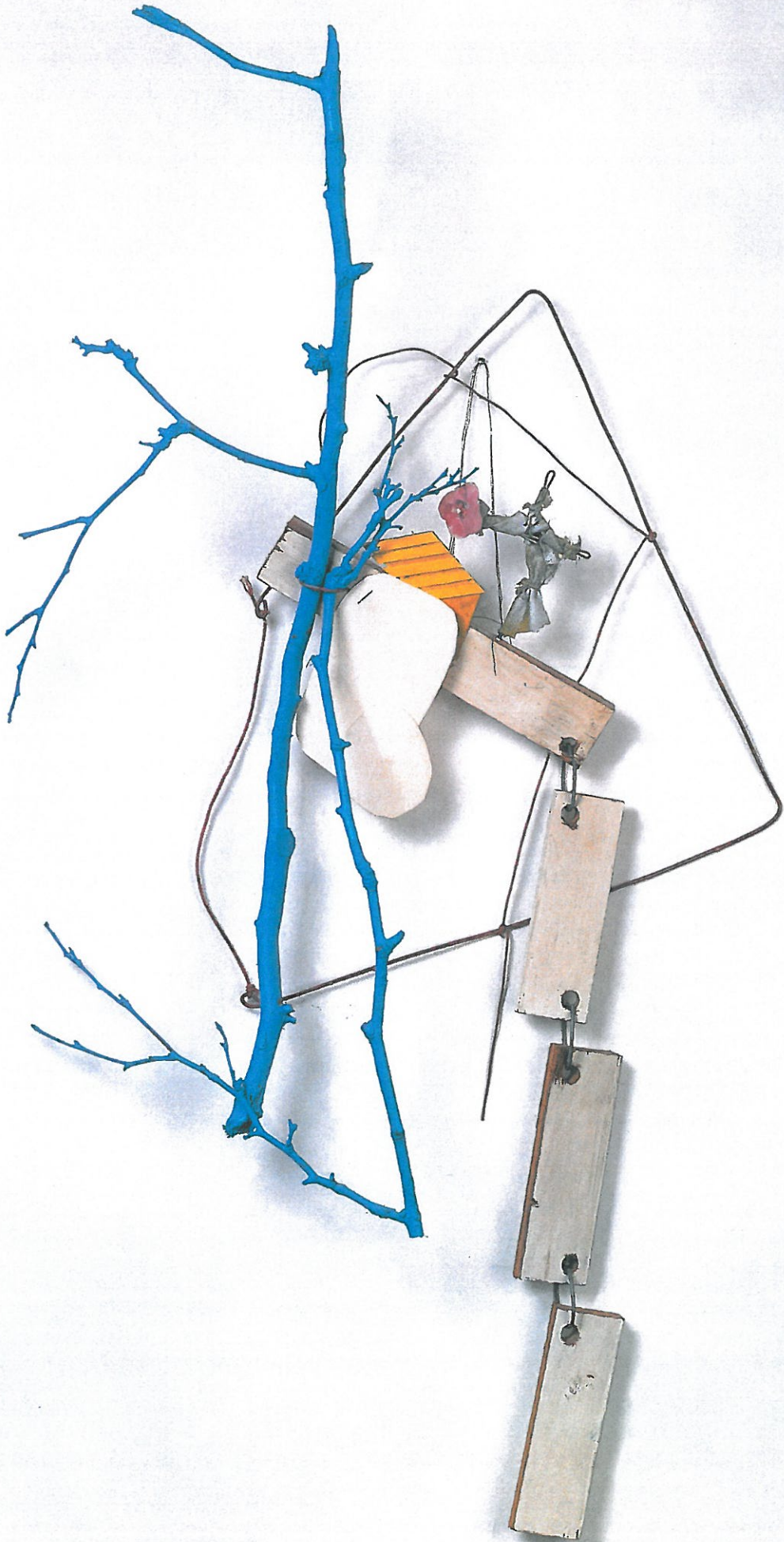


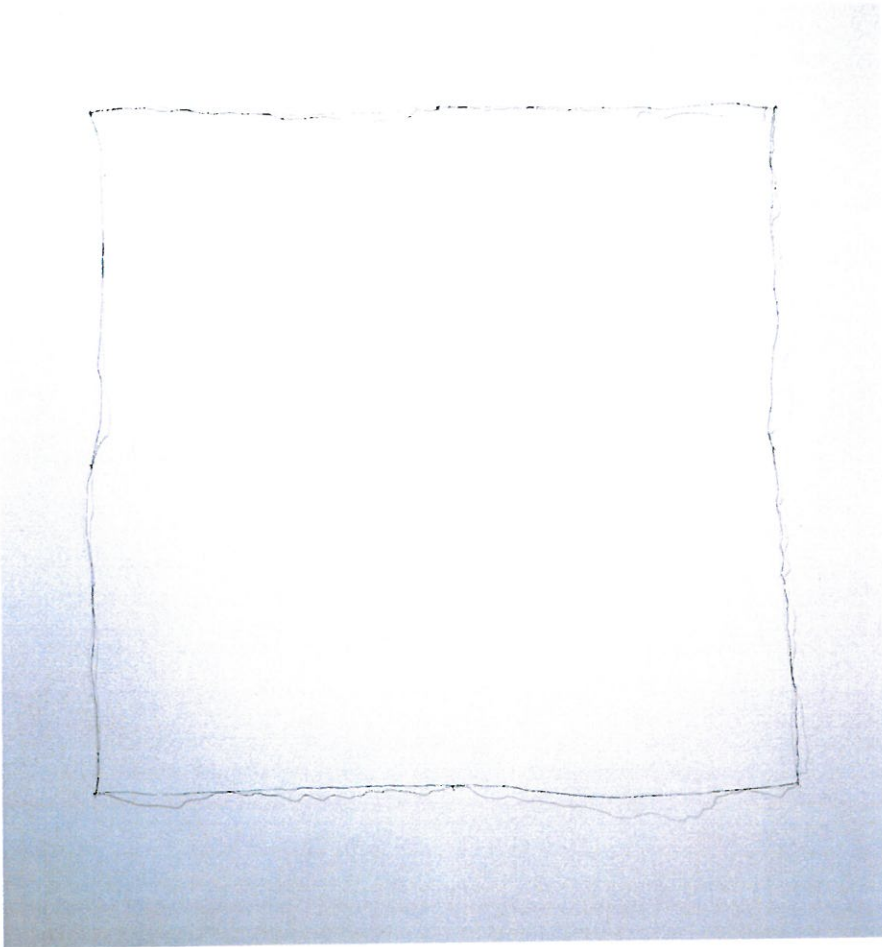
ABOVE  
*Stacked Color Drawing #1*, 1971  
 Watercolor and graphite on wove paper,  
 11¾ x 9 inches  
 Collection Angela Westwater, New York

OPPOSITE  
*Monkey's Recovery for a Darkened Room*  
*(Bluebird)*, 1983  
 Wood, wire, acrylic, matboard, string and  
 cloth, 40 x 20½ x 12½ inches  
 National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC,  
 The Dorothy and Herbert Vogel Collection  
 Gift of Dorothy and Herbert Vogel, Trustees,  
 2001.9.29

Before I went to kindergarten I really wanted to be an artist. Not that I knew what being an artist was, but on the first day of kindergarten the teacher handed out the paper and the colored crayons. And I just connected in my brain that this was the first day of my life, and that going to school was the start of everything that was important to me. I remember the drawing to this moment. I took a pencil and I just made this horizon line, and then I took the colored pencils and I made a rainbow there. And that was my drawing. I looked over and I saw that the other kindergarteners were doing their sun with the rays of the sun and drawing their flowers from the bottom of the page and all of that. And I knew that my drawing was more, say, advanced or sophisticated,

but I also knew that I had lost a kind of innocence—irretrievably—that they still retained. And so I was a little bit pushed back in a state of confusion. Then, when the teacher collected the drawings, mine was not put up as one that was highly valued. I had to adjust to that, and of course I did, but my respect for the teacher was forever erased. But the story goes on. When I had my first show at the Betty Parsons Gallery when I was 23 or so, I looked over on the wall at one of my pieces, and it was kind of the same rainbow which the graphite line had changed into. It was a big, startling moment to me because that really *was* the first day of my life and quite a way from kindergarten, which I had mistakenly thought was the first day, to my show in a New York gallery.





I was doing white paper octagonals on a wall at a museum in Dallas. And the critic came along and made mock introductions, "Oh, this is Richard Tuttle. He's interested in impermanence in the arts." And she said that to Betty Parsons, and Betty just immediately snapped back, "What's more permanent than the invisible?" It fits in with the whole line that in any art form there has to be an accounting of its opposite condition. If you're going to be a visual artist, then there has to be something in the work that accounts for the possibility of the invisible, the opposite of the visual experience. That's why it's not like a table or a car or something. I think that that might even be hard for people because most of our visual experiences are of tables. It has no business being anything else but a table. But a painting or a sculpture really exists somewhere between itself, what it is, and what it is not—you know, the very thing. And how the artist engineers or manages that is the question.

My beginnings were with the abstract expressionists. Part of this artistic breakthrough, which perhaps I have some historical sensitivity to, means that in the making and the critiquing there is all of life and there has to be all of life because if you don't have all of life, then how can you make anything that really has importance? But I also abhor anything that reduces the scope of art. There's a division left over from the twentieth century where certain people might think that art is something that is made outside of any personal expression (Josef Albers or the Bauhaus), that it's really coolly detached. And then there's the other side, where art is full of personal expression. I guess the personal expression side is great—but then you can get an art which is just an expression of some twisted personal idiosyncrasy. In order to get over those polarities between no personal expression and personal expression, the only possible expression is one of some sort of sublimation. . . .

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### ABOVE

*1st Wire Bridge*, 1971

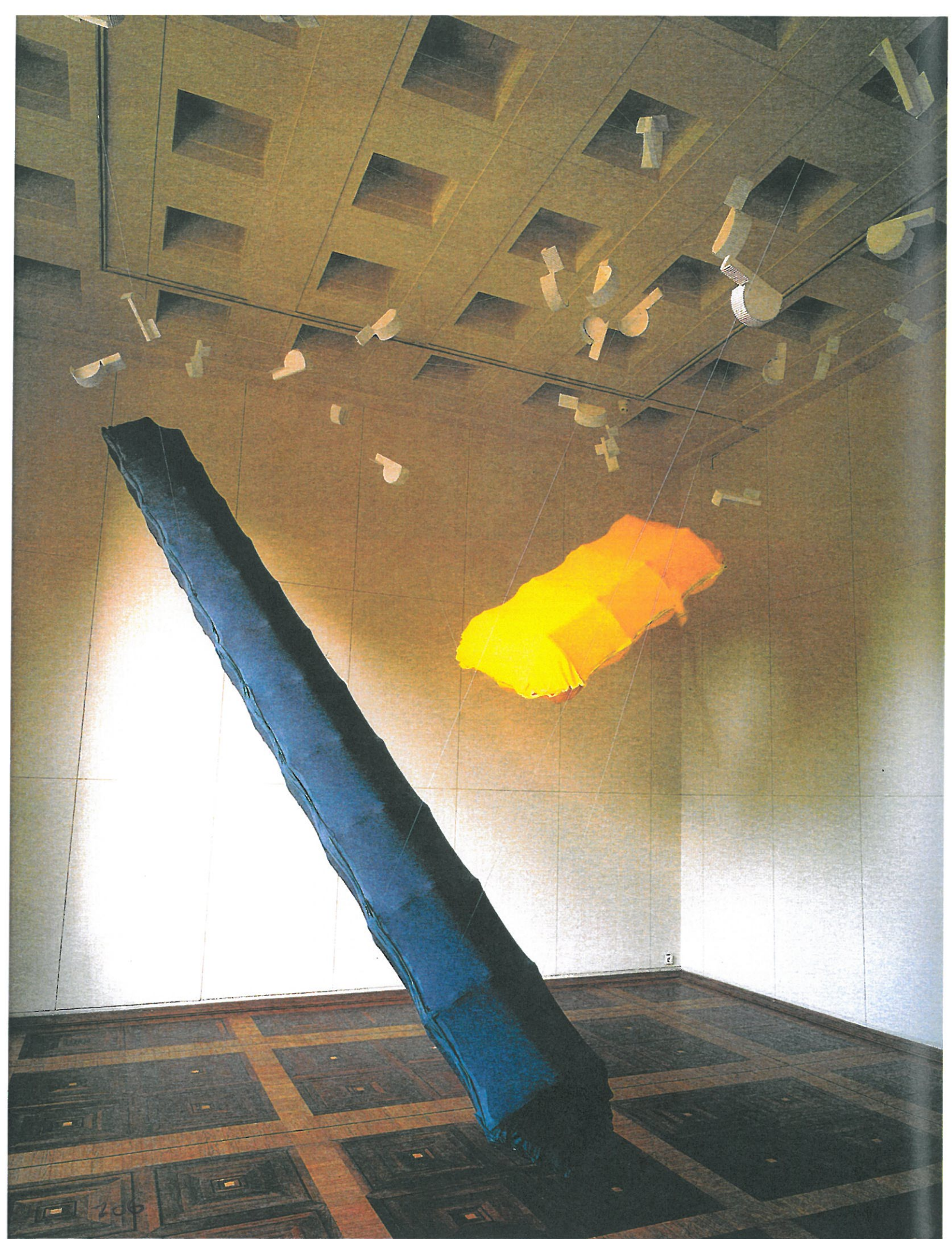
Florist wire, nails, 37½ x 38½ overall  
The Rachofsky Collection, Dallas, Texas

### OPPOSITE

*1st Paper Octagonal*, 1970

Bond paper and wheat paste,  
53½ x 59 inches overall  
Collection of the artist





200

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### OPPOSITE

*Memento Five, grey and yellow, 2002*

Wood, fabric, corrugated cardboard, latex paint,  
monofilament, 16 x 24 x 193 inches, 20 x 39 x 79 inches  
Collection of the artist

### BELOW

*3rd Rope Piece, 1974*

Cotton and nails, 1/2 x 3 x 1/2 inches  
Collection Dorothy and Herbert Vogel, New York

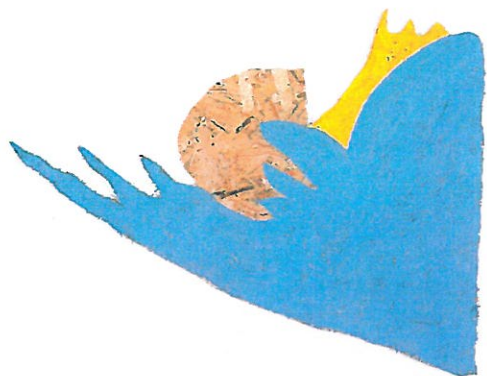
A kind of strange part of my work is that one instant is the same as all time, all eternity: microcosm, macrocosm. One of my favorite artists is Jan van Eyck who gives you a picture that satisfies all attentiveness to the smallest of the small and all attentiveness to the largest of the large. That's one of the things that a picture is supposed to do for us. Ultimately, you have to come to that flash instant which is almost un-measurably short and then un-measurably large.



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TOP

*Waferboard 3*, 1996  
Acrylic on waferboard, 20¼ x 26 inches  
Collection Marion Boulton Stroud,  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

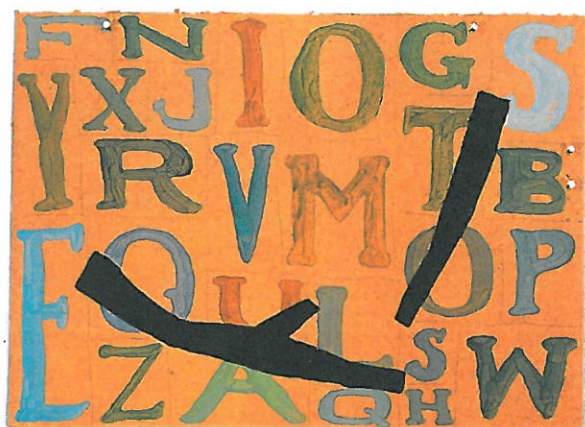


CENTER

*Warm Brown (92.1.94)*, 1994  
Acrylic on masonite, 14 x 20 inches

BOTTOM

*"20 Pearls (8)"*, 2003  
Acrylic on museum board and archival  
foam core, 19¾ x 16¼ inches  
Collection Byron R. Meyer, San Francisco,  
California



OPPOSITE

*There's No Reason a Good Man is  
Hard to Find III*, 1988  
Chicken wire, wire, wood, plaster, fabric,  
spray paint, plastic bucket and enamel,  
53¼ x 45 x 30 inches

How can someone have sculptural ideas? I can have an idea how to play a Mozart sonata; I can have an idea how to make baked potatoes. But a sculptural idea is different. It's like a different mind, where I suppose we dig up some three-dimensional sense. We have an ability to step back . . . and we use that third dimension to take a distance.

There's a side of things where you can just make yourself crazy following some idea of what perfection is, but at a certain moment you remember play—that this is supposed to be fun. And I always have this phrase—"If it ain't fun, it's not alive"—to get a sense to draw back. There's the form side of things, but there's also chaos. I think that a sculpture or a real work of art has to be a truth that has to position us so that the formal side (when we are trying to be awake and ordered) is going to tell us that's how we should be. And it's going to look poorly upon the chaotic side. . . . But there's a super sort of awareness when we can stand back and see that we ourselves are trying to balance the chaos and the formal, and that the chaos is actually good for us and in fact absolutely necessary to our well-being.







## Richard Tuttle

LEFT, TOP

"Village V, No. 1, 2", 2004  
Graphite, acrylic, paper, maple wood, museum board and glass, 18 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 15 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 1 inches

LEFT, BOTTOM

"Village V, No. 1, 1", 2004  
Graphite, acrylic, paper, maple wood, museum board and glass, 15 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 18 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 1 inches

RIGHT

"Village V, Sculpture", 2004  
Styrene, fir plywood, vinyl, acrylic, canvas, fluorescent lamp, straight pins, brass wire, charcoal, 61 x 31 x 62 inches

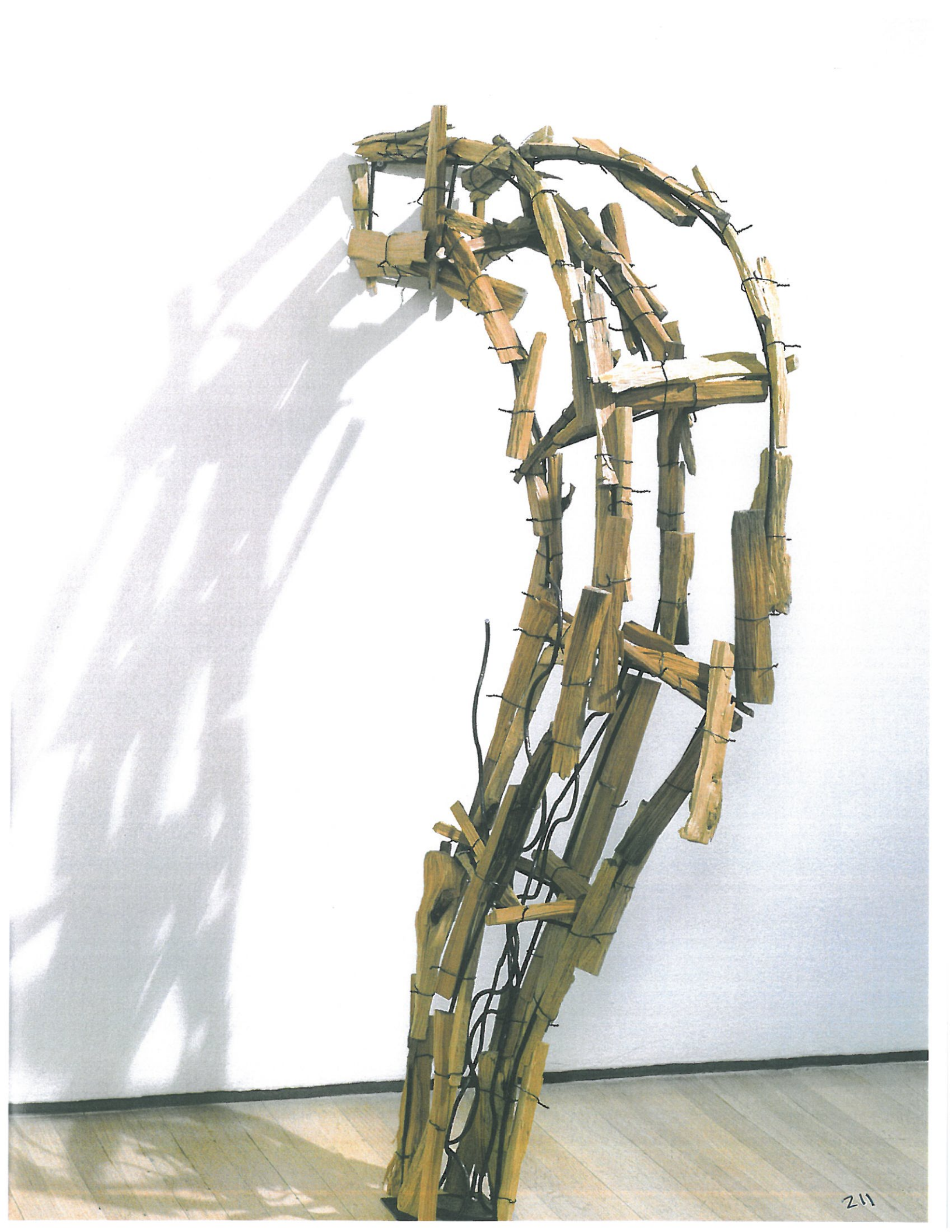
OPPOSITE

"Village I, Sculpture I", 2003  
Steel, iron, wire, piñon and juniper wood, 60 x 16 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 31 inches  
Collection Deedie and Rusty Rose, Dallas, Texas

For a show at the Drawing Center in New York in 2004, I divided the space into 'villages', each one with sculpture and drawings. Each set of drawings can be classified as having to do with where the form meets the wall, or where the form meets the floor. For me this is all about illusion, creating an illusion, not creating an illusion, being a victim of an illusion, being free of illusion. And then the piece on the floor has to do with reality and the concrete. In some sense they're both concerned with perception because whereas each *Village* has a particular subject, it's trying to address certain issues about drawing and why we think drawing is what we think it is. And in its component parts, you can look and see which drawing has to do with which issue. . . . We just naturally have come to think that drawing is about what we can see. But I think people are just naturally more interested in what they can't see.

One of the first things you see in *Village I* (2003) is that this curve is a certain kind of movement or flow and categorically speaking falls into a type, which we might know because of calligraphy, or from looking at water at the beach, or from the way fabric flows. It's a whole category, and to draw that or to bring that all into one new form is something that this piece is about. And the interest of that particular category is the way it starts and becomes larger and then comes back to smaller. And all the time it's undulating like that, it's also moving in a third dimension. Why that fascinates me is that how to draw something is very often a case of suggesting, stopping, and then letting what has gone before simply complete that. There's an extra little kick at the end there, where you get something that comes out, flows, and doesn't just go to the ground straightaway in a dull way, but has this little kick at the end, like a thoroughbred or a ballerina with an extra little gift.





## Richard Tuttle

LEFT TO RIGHT

"Village III, No. I, 18", 2004

Acrylic and graphite on paper, 17<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 14<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches

"Village III, No. II, 6", 2004

Acrylic, acrylic medium, balsa wood, bass wood, sawdust, 4 x 4 x 1/2 inches

"Village III, No. I, 21", 2004

Acrylic and graphite on paper, 17<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 14<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches

"Village III, No. II, 7", 2004

Acrylic, aluminum foil, balsa wood, bass wood, ink, metal pins, wire, wood dowels, 4 x 4 x 1 inches

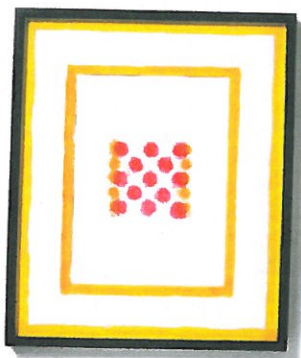
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Peter Shaw, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

OPPOSITE

"Village III, Sculpture," 2004

Stainless steel, rebar and industrial oil paint, 60 x 84 x 24<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inches overall

Collection Mr. and Mrs. Peter Shaw, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



One might say that in order to draw, you have to be able to see. Well, what about making drawings about an area you can't see? Oddly enough the drawings that go with this piece have a part in them of what you can't see. As obsessed as I am about the experience of seeing and details, what I find most interesting is the part which I can't see. And that's what I want to do—I just want to look at those kinds of places. For example *Village III* (2004) is in general about color, but in specific it's about a certain color—blue. Ask somebody to draw blue, to make a drawing of blue. You know you can't do that. It's not linear, and it's not even symbolic, not a concept, and it can't be registered in any parallel notation, but there is some way, something you can do, to create the definition of what that drawing must do in the mind of the

viewer or the maker that is equivalent to that color blue. I'm not philosophically-based, but you immediately get into areas where you ask, "Is that blue?" And that, indeed, gets us to this delicious subject of the wall and the floor—an old division between realism and idealism. In terms of blue—if we're going to try to draw blue—then the concrete is going to contribute and so is the ideal. But the division of the real and the ideal is basically about the ideal saying that the experience happens inside of you, which would mean that everything—from the conception of drawing to the color itself—is inside you, and the real saying that everything is outside you. I think the truth is that, yes, those are polarities that one can discuss and they can be useful, but finally it's art and art alone that can actually say what is the truth.

