

ARTNEWS

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reviews: new york

Richard Wentworth

Peter Freeman

British sculptor Richard Wentworth is thankfully back after a hiatus, and is once again asking us to revel in the charm of simple absurdity—of familiar objects and images not doing what they're supposed to be doing.

However unruly or unfathomable his constructions appear, they are far from arbitrary, and they always seem to connect to the actual world. His blurred photographs of streets, for example—homing in on the dotted highway divider line or a red ball near a car tire—give us license to speculate on the randomness of events and connections.

Although his assemblages often extrapolate from real things and ideas, they are not necessarily about them. They are more like free-floating facts, subject to combination and recombination as in experimental unpaginated novels designed to be shuffled.

Especially to the point here is *Going Native* (for Tom Sachs), 2010—a dictionary

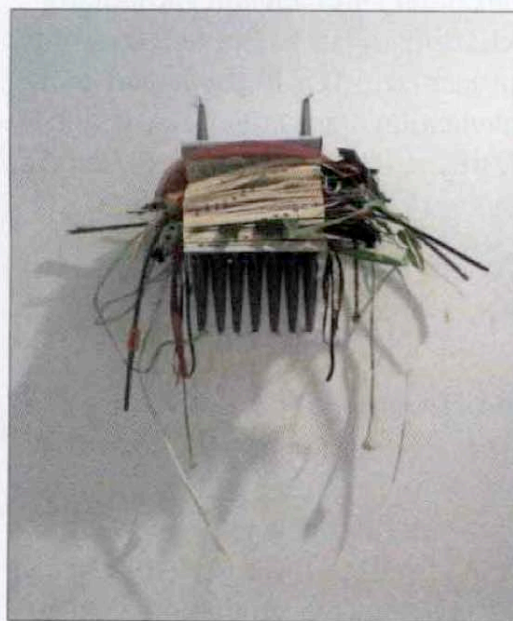
with found materials sticking out from its pages, literalizing the content but not divulging meaning. Wentworth's sculpture is poetry translated into images.

In a Duchampian riff, *The Exceptionally Long Letter* (2010), Wentworth took the earlier artist's iconic metal bottle rack and parodied it by wrapping the rungs with clear plastic and appending

white wood supports. More homespun than the original (non-original) thing, Wentworth's is also more allusive.

Here were sight gags as well, like *Terra Firma* (2009), consisting of a dictionary, broken dishes, and bricks, suggesting the opposite of its title.

The political, too, came into play in *Hobsbawm's Choice* (2010), which addresses the historian Eric Hobsbawm's willingness to support Communism in spite of the cost. The installation consists of sheets of chicken wire atop a barely visible atlas held down with two steel bars, calling to mind the Gulag.



Richard Wentworth, *Going Native*
(for Tom Sachs), 2010, dictionary and found materials,
43" x 35" x 15½". Peter Freeman.

Throughout, one was struck by Wentworth's elegance of thought, wit, and economy of materials and methods. The ends in his work do justify the means.

—**Barbara A. MacAdam**