

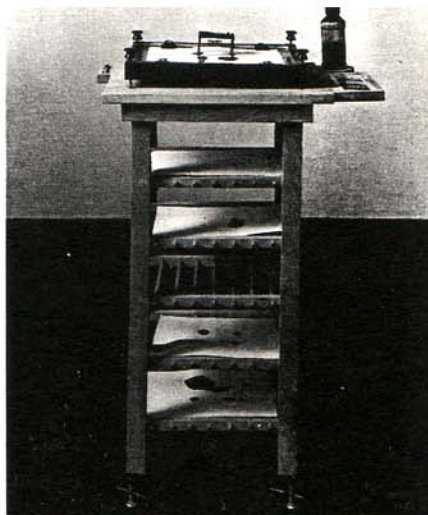
ALLAN WEXLER
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FINE ARTS

During Allan Wexler's exhibition entitled "Table/Building/Landscape," the gallery resembled a laboratory in which the individual works appeared less as discrete objects than as the proliferating evidence of invention. The main gallery was dedicated to 30 propositions Wexler developed last spring for the DeCordova Museum Sculpture Garden. Each glass-and-wood vitrine contained a small model for an outdoor eating space tailored to the hilly museum grounds. Table and chair legs were extended with strapped-on appendages, wheels, or other peculiar amendments to accommodate the demands of the tipped site. The ordinary conventions and simple materials of model-building yielded uncommon solutions to the requirements for a stable, horizontal eating surface.

In a separate series, incongruous arrangements of objects on six rectangular tables with white clothes proposed a witty meditation on communal dining. On each side of one table, four cups of black coffee were attached by an arterial system of plastic tubes. Unless all four diners drank cooperatively, coffee from one raised cup quickly drained into the adjacent cups and caused them to overflow, frustrating the convivial ritual.

In the adjacent gallery, Wexler included a series of small, pseudoexperiments constructed for specific if useless tasks. They spoke of the passion of invention and the fortuity of process, rather than the purpose of result. On top of *Ink Leak Table*, 1990, a small, flat easel displayed a piece of paper and little fixtures held pipe cleaners, a bottle of black ink, and other tools. A small cardboard table with a hollow top could be filled with ink. The legs served as channels that directed flow to the paper's surface. All of these objects had adjustable bases to create an absolute level condition, but regardless of these efforts the ink spots were dramatically asymmetrical. They seemed to follow some other force or logic. Beneath the tabletop, drying racks displayed the evidence of each "failed" experiment.

Across the room, *Uncertainty Principle*, 1990, consisted of six jars arranged by size.



Allan Wexler, *Ink Leak Table*, 1990, ink, paper clips, plastic, paper, pipe cleaners, and wood.
22 x 15 x 36".

Lying on their sides in a carefully constructed rack, containers that once preserved mayonnaise or pickles housed identical specimens of a generic table, presented for review in slightly varied environments. Nearby, a large photograph of this same banal dining table (*Table*, 1990) was coated with finish, paint, and turpentine normally used to embellish ordinary furniture.

Each object in the exhibition provided an occasion for a thoughtful, humorous encounter with the elements of common ritual. Wexler places more emphasis on the process of invention than on the results. Even the apparently unnecessary gadget offers special insight into both creative and quotidian processes. Wexler constructs situations that pose sophisticated questions about the cultural conventions revealed in the encounter between art and utility. —PCP