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**ARTFORUM**

CHICAGO

## Richard Rezac

FEIGEN

Always meticulously crafted, Richard Rezac's small abstract sculptures just miss being a direct representation of something known from the natural or built environment; the twelve bronze and wooden pieces shown here suggested bones, twigs, and architectural fragments of architecture. For the past ten years, Rezac has depended on intuitive geometries—combinations of curves and squares, planes and volumes, plans and elevations—pitting two and sometimes more systems against each other in dense sculptures heavy with allusions. His sherberty palette of lime green and pale peach sets off another range of associations, a decorative and style-conscious antidote to the terse rigors of his minimal structures.

Rezac plays his endless variations on scale with skill and finesse, confusing usual expectations of size and significance. Distinctions between fragments and wholes are rendered ambiguous through proportional shifts and positioning. One recurring form suggests a vertebra, a partial object that takes on different associations depending on the perspective from which it is seen. Resting on the floor, this white, cast item resembles both a dog bone and a pillow, that is, something both hard and soft, earnest and jokey. *Cremona*, 1996, is an eight-inch-tall, carved, wall-mounted cherrywood form whose material and concave profile recall the neck of a violin—except that a simple cut has been made to complicate such an overt reference. More appropriately shown at eye level, *Moored*, 1996, cast in bronze and scaled like an architectural model, is immobilized on a concrete plinth on the floor, and the columns that support its pointed vaults are built idiosyncratically, like the high heels of women's shoes. Differences between scale model and finished project, between potential and concrete realization, are often underscored by reversals between the particular and the general, so that decontextualized architectural details become autonomous, albeit reduced in dimension and grounded.

Rezac compresses a great deal of art-historical references into his three-dimensional nuggets (he has previously alluded to Japanese temple structures and Shaker furniture in his work), and he does so without bombast or self-importance. Although *Plecnik's Plan*, 1996—a delicate cruciform carving set on a pedestal covered with the green plastic material of a drafting table—references the Czech architect, it looks a bit like a toy airplane, just as the couplet *Sun and Moon*, 1996, tabletlike forms the size of an orange and painted in a creamy lemon and buttery palette, might under other circumstances recall a childhood nursery as well as the fantastical quality of miniatures. As planets can become tablets, Rezac's simplicity and directness can be deceiving; his subtlety and sure technique is most evident whenever a reveal turns inexplicably into an overhang, or an edge becomes solid. So charged is his straightforward economy and compression that even a line or a slight indentation becomes a significant decorative adjustment.

Very keen on presentation, placement is crucial to Rezac's work. *Web*, 1996, which somewhat resembles two overlapping, crossed batons, is cast in bronze to delicately dominate the corner where it is poised. In the final installation, which slips between furniture, architecture, and decoration, there were nineteen identical, two-inch-tall nickel-plated bronze lozenges, in the same vertebra shape, gleaming on the floor. These pieces were arranged in a syncopated pattern that suggested an irregular grid, a disconnected chain of multiple units rather than a unified aggregate. On a wall in the same room Rezac attached paper sheets containing a repeating pattern of lines and dots printed in tangerine red on a white ground. Here again Rezac thwarted expectations of completion and predictability: the wallpaper piece, *Constellation*, 1996, stopped short of the corner. Like his elegant drawings, the simple pattern evoked an early modern style, but its repetitions and multiplicity reflected an uncertain orientation that promised rather than delivered on its metaphoric potential, in the process domesticating the shiny, uneasy pieces on the floor. Reminding us that architecture can be both more and less than building structures, Rezac's cunning formal engineering remains poised between grave modesty and stunning grace.

—Judith Russi Kirshner