

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

Movie Review

Richard Serra: Thinking on Your Feet



Lorenz Kienzle

Richard Serra's sculpture "Sequence," on display in Germany.

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Watching as Richard Serra Thinks Big and Does Big

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Listening to Richard Serra talk about sculpture is like listening to Russell Crowe talk about acting: after a while you feel you're either in the presence of genius or the victim of an elaborate con.

Fortunately for both, their work speaks for itself. "Richard Serra: Thinking on Your Feet" follows the construction and 2005 installation of "The Matter of Time," the sculptor's gigantic, eight-piece commission for the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Spain. (No rush: it's guaranteed to be there for at least another 22 years.) As static and unadorned as the sculptures themselves, the movie gazes with rapt attention as Mr. Serra expounds on his love of steel mills ("Like bakeries that have gone into alchemy") and as he maps the complex layout of each piece with tape measure and paper templates. Perhaps he distrusts 3-D computer software?

Operating at the intersection of art and industrial engineering, Mr. Serra — whose father worked in shipyards and whose sculptures can suggest the inverted hulls of tankers — is an informative if unanimated guide. Leading us through the massive metal spirals and gracefully curved rectangles that seem to defy gravity, he explains the spatial philosophy

behind each mind-boggling piece (“We start with the void”), but all I could think was how the Lilliputians must have felt when confronted by one of Gulliver’s discarded apple peels. The style may be minimalist, but the vision is gargantuan.

RICHARD SERRA

Thinking on Your Feet

Opens on Wednesday in Manhattan.

Directed by Maria Ana Tappeiner; in English and German, with English subtitles; directors of photography, Jürgen Behrens, Patrik Busam, Tom Kaiser, Holger Russek and Alexander Thorbecke; produced by Westdeutscher Rundfunk in association with ZDF. At Film Forum, 209 West Houston Street, west of Avenue of the Americas, South Village. Running time: 1 hour 34 minutes. This film is not rated.