

GAGOSIAN GALLERY



ART TALK

Welcome to a Big, Small, Strange World of Art

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Host: [Edward Goldman](#)



The art world is such a fascinating place: it's big and small, intimidating but, on occasions, also surprisingly cozy. Just three weeks ago, I visited the studio of Chris Burden, an internationally known Los Angeles artist, to see his newly completed, monumental sculpture, *Metropolis II*, on which he and a bunch of assistants had been working for several years.

You have to see it to believe it. It is a poetic mess of L.A. freeways meshed together, with hundreds of toy cars running crazily any which way. A small crowd of invited guests -- collectors, museum curators and journalists -- roamed the studio and one couldn't help but notice happy, slightly silly smiles on their faces. Michael Govan, director of LACMA, looked especially happy and he had a good reason for that.



This new, amazing work by Burden was acquired by a private collector, [Nicolas Berggruen](#), who happens to be a LACMA trustee. Berggruen is known for his rather unconventional way of collecting. Whatever he buys ends up on display in various public museums, and not as gifts but as long-term loans. For the next ten years or so, LACMA will be displaying *Metropolis II*, most likely on the ground level of the Broad Pavilion, where it will replace one of the two monumental sculptures by Richard Serra currently on view there.

As a result we Angelenos will have the privilege to see and enjoy two major works by this great artist displayed, virtually, side by side. The other work by Burden, *Urban Lights*, has been gracing the museum plaza since 2008. As coincidence would have it, only four days after visiting the artist's studio in Malibu, I found myself traveling to the ancient city of Antwerp to pay homage to one of my favorites, Peter Paul Rubens. And what did I run into while walking the grounds of the [Middleheim Museum](#), with its vast collection of outdoor sculpture? Yes, it was another phantasmagorical, unruly, gigantic sculpture by Chris Burden called *Beam Drop* — a collection of steel I-beams dropped from a crane and stuck in the ground, creating a strange, aggressive bouquet of aging metal.



If there is poetic justice in the world then, hopefully, another eccentric billionaire-collector will step up to commission the artist to do a version of this *Beam Drop* for LACMA, thus creating the perfect trifecta of Burden's most seminal works for our City of Angels.