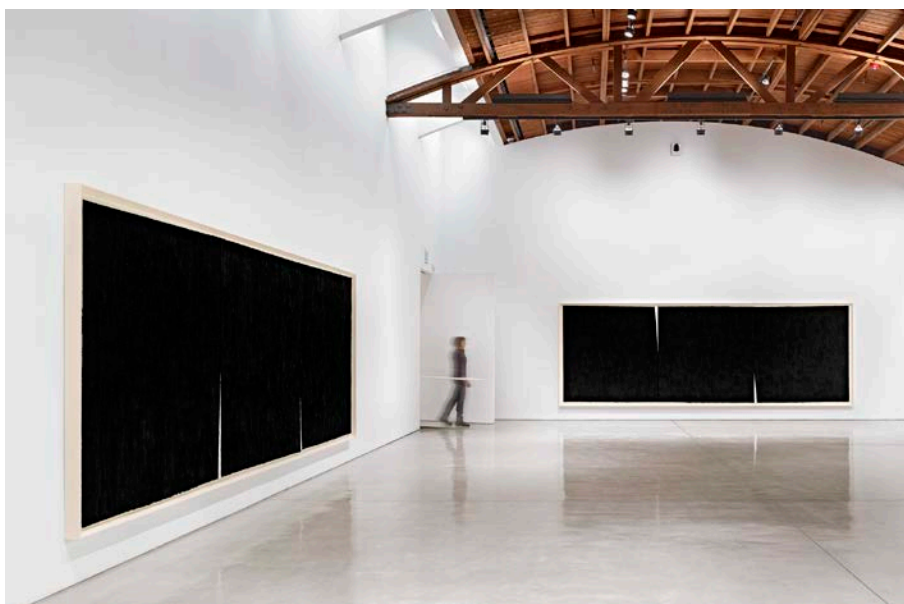


GAGOSIAN GALLERY



LOS ANGELES – RICHARD SERRA: DOUBLE RIFTS AT GAGOSIAN THROUGH JUNE 1ST, 2013

A. Wilkinson



Richard Serra, Double Rift #9 (2013), ©Richard Serra Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian Gallery

On view at Gagosian Beverly Hills through June 1 is Richard Serra's Double Rifts series. Known for his immense sculptures, Double Rifts showcases a selection of recent drawings that are clearly related to, yet remarkably independent from Serra's sculptural practice, welcoming new insights into the artist's creative worldview.

A viewers' relationship with a Serra sculpture is usually one of awe, curiosity and anxiety, and the drawings quietly echo this experience. Standing before one of these large-scale drawings (many of which measure over eight feet high) is a physical experience: the texture of the tar-black surface pulls you into its mesmerizing display of dripping and congealed paintstick. The composition also presses back, forcing its menacing presence upon the space around it.

Akin to Serra's sculptures, both geometric and torqued, the material pushes the boundaries of gravity; the weight of the thickly coated paintstick on the handmade paper is palpable, clearly laid on in thick, brusque layers. However, even with this sense of density, the works are also quite intimate, activated with the physicality of pigment being rigorously applied onto the surface of handmade paper. The fissures that extend across Double Rift #4 in particular rupture

the blackened surface so entirely that the tip reaches the far edge of the paper. The far right plane tilts slightly, in danger of collapsing away from the composition if it is fractured any further.

The converging planes of pigment call to memory the composition and psychological tension of early sculptural works in which gravity and friction hold precarious arrangements of geometric slabs of steel in place. Triangular white rifts pierce the absorbent black surface of the drawings, and it is uncertain whether planes are leaning in or breaking away.

There is an exhilarating tension between stability and instability of the massive flattened compositions on view at Gagosian's Beverly Hills location. Will the rifts continue to expand and force each plane to drift apart like tectonic plates? Or perhaps they will remain leaning in, perpetually transfixed in a delicate balance.

—A. Wilkinson