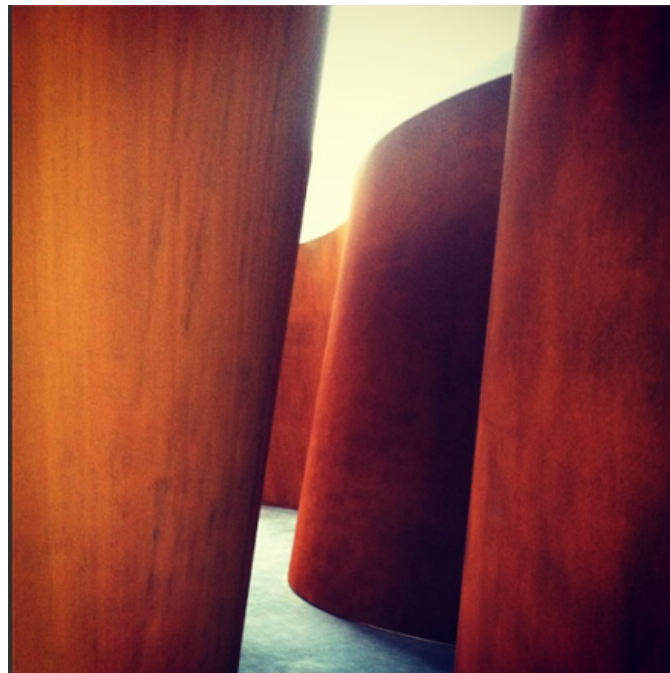


GAGOSIAN GALLERY

A R T O B S E R V E D

New York — Richard Serra: “New Sculpture” at Gagosian Gallery Through December 21, 2013

Daniel Creahan



Richard Serra, Inside Out (detail) (2013), via Daniel Creahan for Art Observed

Rounding out a gallery year that included exhibitions by Jeff Koons, Basquiat and more, Gagosian Gallery has opened the doors to both its Chelsea locations for a major showing of new work by Richard Serra, including an enormous new torqued steel structure, *Inside Out* in its 21st Street location, and a series of smaller, albeit no less impressive works at the gallery's 24th Street space.

Now into his mid-70's, Serra's work has continued to reshape and refine the artist's concerns with monumental sculpture and sheer industrial might, branching out into a mastery of his particular media (steel plates and concrete blocks abound here) that allows him to render ever more complex and evocative forms in the mediation of space and movement. His *6 Plates, 7 Angles*, taking up a full room at the 24th Street space, is a perfect example: hulking steel walls jutting out, or rather, converging in on a tightly negotiated point. Circling the piece, viewers are forced to work between the inability to reach a center, and the compulsion to consistently weave in and out of the steel corners, which divide the room up between impassable steel and completely empty spaces.

Other works explore Serra's preoccupation with space and expression in a smaller scale. *Grief and Reason (for Walter)* is a set of concrete blocks, almost tomblike in the somber lighting and stillness that their composition implies, a fitting piece dedicated to the late Walter de Maria. Unlike Serra's other works on view, which toy with potential energy and the implication of movement, the works here offer a brief moment of pause and reflection, meditating on the stillness that occurs with the loss of a loved one. Serra picks up the pace again in the next room with *Intervals* a set of alternating steel plates that create a rolling sense of movement from one wall to the other, all while blocking the visitor's way at each turn.

But it's the enormous torqued steel work *Inside Out* that is already commanding the attention of gallery-goers, and with good reason. Serra's signature rolled steel walls span the full length of the gallery space at 21st Street, rolling in and out of itself to create a set of wide cul de sacs both inside and outside of the piece. As the viewer passes through, the compulsion for movement is impressive, the walls creating powerful vectors through the work that not only dictate the pathways possible, but also dividing the gallery into flowing lines of floor and sky, surging and narrowing with the warped line of each steel wall.

Serra's works have grown increasingly complex over the past 15-plus years of his work in this format, and *Inside Out* is perhaps one of his most demanding. Viewed from above, a notable symmetry defines the rolling form of the piece. One imagines the artist in his studio, tracing line after line until a form compels him enough to raise it up to its final 20-foot high scale. It's quite a dichotomy for a work drawn originally from Zen concepts of revelation and unveiling: while Serra seeks to empower the work with its own language of reception, he's ultimately the only person capable of seeing its initial design, a notably omniscient perspective that his viewers can only grasp at. Even so, the wonder felt when passing through these sculptures can hardly be reduced.