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**VENICE REPORT: Sir Anthony Caro's Masterful Sculptures at Museo Correr**

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*Sir Anthony Caro, Museo Correr, 2013. Photo: Mike Bruce, courtesy Gagosian Gallery*

In concert with the Venice Biennale, St. Mark's Square's Museo Correr is presenting a virtually unparalleled retrospective of works by sculptor Sir Anthony Caro. Curated by the Museum of Fine Arts Houston's Gary Tinterow, the show offers 28 works that span 50 years of Caro's output, illustrating both the timelessness of his practice and his subtle ability to still innovate at 90 years old. In contrast to the other major retrospective of a UK sculpture in Venice this summer — Marc Quinn's exhibition at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, which falls about as flat as the deflated head of the artist's balloon sculpture "Alison Lapper Pregnant" — Caro demonstrates the lasting power of quiet, art-historically engaged work.

Visiting the exhibition after the art-world fervor of the Biennale's opening week has departed from Venice's canals, one finds that almost no other viewer is present to disrupt the charged atmosphere around each of the 13 sculptures. Each sits in its own cubby-like recess off of the wing's long hall and elicits a palpable energy, pressure even, via its bold color and magical ability to make steel look weightless. One of Caro's very first abstract sculptures, "Hopscotch" (1962), figures early on in the show, suggesting not only the British artist's initial reactions to the work of his American contemporaries David Smith and Kenneth Noland, but also the physical limitations he was facing at the time. Having only a single car garage to work in during the early '60s, Caro

constructed “Hopscotch” by wedging the pipes between the walls of his garage, welding and bolting them together with pieces of steel sheeting until the whole form would stand autonomously.

But even for an early experiment in abstraction such as “Hopscotch,” Caro developed a sculptural vocabulary that endures throughout his oeuvre. In “Cadence” (1968-72), a follow up to another of Caro’s most famous works, “Prairie” (1967), the corrugated, canary yellow steel forms a hydrofoil-shaped structure on which two pipes rest. Moving further down the exhibition’s length, even one of the newest works, “Venetian” (2011-2012), features weightier, more robust lengths of untreated pipe, which form the structural framework for steel sheeting and — a relatively new material for Caro — red-tinted Perspex.

To draw such a clear line through this show, however, is also to ignore the nuances of more loosely structured works like “Orangerie” (1969), a fluidly curved work of an almost spindly nature, or “Emma Push Frame” (1977-1978), a web-like entanglement of thin tubing reminiscent of contemporary architectural practice. Also present are nine ink on newsprint drawings from the '50s, dating from before his game-changing trip to the U.S. These illustrate vividly how, in the '50s, Caro’s clay-formed bronze case sculptures resembled his idol, Henry Moore, to an almost derivative extent.

But for all the talk of art historical weight and the great curatorial effort needed to bring together the works on view, it is their relevance today that stands out as most impressive. While steel — especially its rusted-over variant — is today not an especially novel material, Caro's particular forms and the surfaces of his matte-painted works remain incredibly canny and suggestive.