

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

ARTnews

Richard Serra

Gagosian: 555 West 24th  
*Through March 15*

Gagosian: 522 West 21st  
*Through February 8*



*Intervals*, 2013, weatherproof steel, 24 plates, 72" x 336" x 570". Gagosian 24th Street.

It's hard at this time in Richard Serra's formidable career to pinpoint exactly what his recent works are all about. Sheer tonnage? Unadulterated power? Sublimely enveloping space? Or the disequilibrium of a perceptual conundrum in which volume can equal velocity?

The tonnage is mind-boggling. But so is the purely abstract visceral expressionism that has developed in the work. The

preeminent Minimalist long ago became, in his own way, a baroque maximalist, inspired by Renaissance architect Francesco Borromini as well as by the shipyards in which Serra's father worked. The artist's massive weatherproof-steel hulls, while retaining their heft and gravitas, went baroque, rubbery, and sensual. Their tilted curves and unpredictable ellipses suck us in and spit us out. He proved that

so-called Minimalism could dispense with perpendicular logic. His work also demonstrates that Minimalism, elaborated into what historians used to call a late style, can function as relational art—that is, art that incorporates the viewer.

There is one single work on view at Gagosian's 21st Street space: a grand culmination of Serra's previous "Torqued Ellipses" series, aptly titled *Inside Out* (all





***Inside Out*, 2013, weatherproof steel, 158" x 982" x 482½". Gagosian 21st Street.**

works 2013). Over 13 feet high, 80 feet long, and 40 feet wide, weighing 207 tons, with rusty steel surfaces undulating precariously almost like a Möbius loop, it squeezes viewers between narrow channels, deposits them in womblike chambers, and disgorges them. "What does it feel like?" shouted an excited little kid as he rushed at the walls to slap them. Even a disoriented dog on a leash leaned into the tilting wall.

But perhaps Serra's baroque maximalism wasn't his late style after all. At the 24th Street space, he returns to issues of weight and counterweight, intervals and balance, with blocky cubic sarcophagi and tombstone-like slabs of dark-gray steel.

*Grief and Reason (For Walter)* pairs two stacks of two blocks of steel, one the inverse of the other, in memory of his friend Walter De Maria, who died last summer. Does the top-heavy stack signify Grief and the bottom-heavy stack Reason, or vice versa? The cemetery-like *Intervals* is a dense array of 12 pairs of steel slabs of differing heights. They appear absolutely irrational yet consummately logical, adding to their somber complexity.

Serra outdoes himself with *7 Plates, 6 Angles*. Filling the largest gallery, it accords wildly across the space: seven weatherproof steel plates, each eight feet high, eight inches wide, and 40 feet deep,

weighing in at roughly 300 tons. These implacable slabs provide a shifting experience of foreshortened space and elongated depth, with constantly changing vanishing points. At the work's midpoint, one perpendicular plate zooms straight into depth, implying that indeed, volume can equal velocity. The surface marks left by the process—rusty drips and woodsy patinas—provide an elegant painterly experience. Within the environmental enormity of Serra's work, one can glimpse the infinite acceleration of which French cultural theorist Paul Virilio wrote, as well as the curvatures of space and time that are said to exist at the heart of reality. —Kim Levin