

GAGOSIAN GALLERY



Richard Serra Curves and Angles: New Sculpture at Gagosian in Chelsea

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"Intervals", 2013, as: "© Richard Serra. Photograph by Robert McKeever". courtesy Gagosian Gallery NY.

I made my way to Chelsea through the piles of snow left from the previous day's snowstorm, amidst the many other art lovers braving the cold to see Richard Serra's show in both the W 21st and W 24th Street Gagosian galleries. Richard Serra, an American minimalist sculptor, specialises in large-scale work focusing on the relationship between artwork, site and viewer.

Serra's ambitious sculpture, *Inside Out*, at the W 21st Street, Gagosian Gallery fills the entire gallery space. Serra manipulates steel to twist and loop on a grand scale as if it were a supple ribbon. From an aerial view the sculpture looks like a biomorphic form, however, looking at it from a human perspective in the Gagosian Gallery is quite different. Serra forces the viewer to interact with his work by walking both along it, as if it were a massive wall, and even venturing into the sculpture through his somewhat daunting passageway. It is a joyous and unique experience to enter into the heart of the sculpture through these narrow openings. Serra further manipulates the viewer's experiences through subtly concaving and widening the steel. Though the material is industrial, the experience of the sculpture seems organic, like entering a forest or exploring a canyon. My mind boggles at Serra's ability to envision such an ambitious piece from its overall aerial view to a tiny human's exploration of the titanic work.

Serra's *7 Plates, 6 Angles* exhibited at the 24th Street Gagosian, also made from weatherproof steel, is on a similar scale as *Inside Out*, but it is easier to envision the entire piece beyond what

is visible on a human level. The viewer can walk into the crevices of the angles and alongside the waterproof steel, which is so beautifully treated that it could be an abstract expressionist painting on a wall. Walking next to or actually into Serra's sculpture makes the viewing experience happen both in front, behind and beside the spectator, and completely deconstructs the traditional viewer's perspective.

Intervals, also at the Gagosian on W 24th Street, is a series of steel rectangles set up with various widths between them. The viewer can meander through the steel blocks and step back to look at Intervals as a whole, though it is impossible to look at the overall sculpture without a person popping into, view since no single rectangle is larger than a human. Looking at the clean gray rectangles from afar with their methodic placement and cool grey color comes off as serene, but the experience of actually walking through Intervals takes on a somber tone and recalls the experience of visiting a cemetery.

Richard Serra, born in San Francisco in 1938 is one of the most significant artists of his generation. His sculpture and drawing has been marked with two retrospectives at the Museum of Modern Art, twenty years apart. Serra has produced large-scale, site-specific sculptures for architectural, urban and landscape settings spanning the globe, from Iceland to New Zealand. He recently exhibited drawings at the Courtauld Institute in London, created using compressed black lithographic rubbing ink applied to both sides of a clear plastic sheet. These works, which he calls 'Transparencies', were extraordinary in that they challenge preconceptions of what constitutes a drawing. Richard Serra's new sculptures are as much about the experience of the work as the work itself, and I highly recommend a trip to the Gagosian galleries in New York's Chelsea. The show has been extended to Saturday March 15th for W 24th Street, and February 8th for W 21st Street.