

## GAGOSIAN GALLERY

# Los Angeles Times

### Critic's Choice: Anthony Caro's 1960s work -- the thrill is still here

David Pagel



*Anthony Caro, "Month of May," 1963, steel and aluminum, painted, 110 1/16 x 120 1/16 x 141 1/8 inches  
(Courtesy Barford Sculptures and Gagosian Gallery, photo: Mike Bruce)*

Great art, like the surface of a Teflon pan, prevents things from sticking to it, particularly criticism.

That's true of Anthony Caro's ebullient sculptures at Gagosian Gallery, which look as fresh as the day they were made. In the 1960s, all kinds of nutty stuff was said about the abstract sculptures Caro (1924-2013) composed.

For a handful of critics, his welded steel structures embodied the best Western Civilization could deliver: true meaning and authentic experience in the face of a culture increasingly overrun by prepackaged sentiments and alienating distractions.

That led to a backlash that lasted well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For nearly 40 years, Caro's brightly colored arrangements of I-beams, bars and chunks of metal were seen as vacuous baubles that steered clear of social issues to preserve the illusion that art exists apart from everyday life.

Today, neither view comes close to the pleasures—both physical and intellectual—that Caro's sculptures serve up in abundance. At a time when so much of what we see comes to us via small screens, it's thrilling to come across a sculpture by Caro. Three galleries filled with works made from 1960 to 1976 is an event not to be missed.

To begin, all you need to know about Caro's sculptures is that they take fun seriously—and share it generously. The fun he had in the studio—putting parts together as if just kissing one another—is palpable. You feel an adventuresome intelligence at work, saying to itself, "How far can I spread a form out in space and still have it hold together as a single entity?"

To walk around Caro's pieces is to see their compositions shift radically. His capacity to transform construction-site leftovers into stimulating compositions sharpens the senses, boggles the mind and attunes us to our surroundings, not to mention our memories of other situations.

For me, Henri Matisse and ice hockey come to mind.

The efficiency of Matisse's cutouts—particularly the way they play positive and negative space off each other—lies behind Caro's forms, which make space expand and contract. The same goes for the speed, power and precision of hockey, especially when each teammate's swooping movements coalesce into an unplanned ballet.

That's how your eyes move through Caro's sculptures. Too quick for words, his abstract arrangements elicit unanticipated twists and turns best experienced in the flesh.

Gagosian Gallery, 456 N. Camden Dr., Beverly Hills, (310) 271-9400, through May 30. Closed Sundays and Mondays. [www.gagosian.com](http://www.gagosian.com)