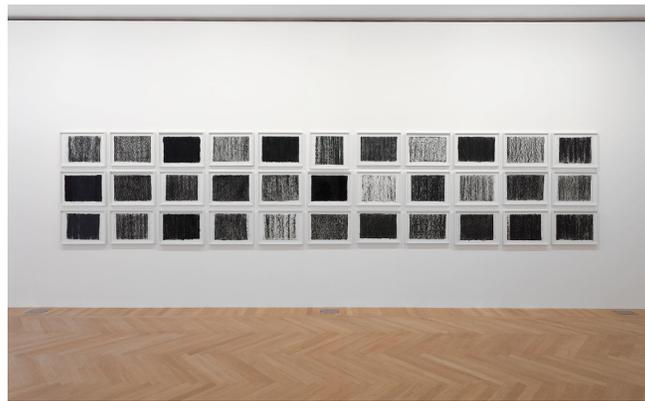


GAGOSIAN GALLERY

Wallpaper*

Grey matter: Richard Serra's 'Ramble Drawings' at Gagosian Gallery, Paris

Amy Verner



Richard Serra's 'Ramble Drawings' at the Gagosian Gallery in Paris are an abstract expression corresponding to the artist's fluctuating moods and impulses. Photography: Zarko Vijatovic. Courtesy Gagosian Gallery ©Richard Serra

Richard Serra's 'Ramble Drawings' – on show at the Gagosian Gallery in Paris – are neither accompanied by text nor any commentary from their maker. The new series, which follows a similar show last fall in New York, presents a meditation of sorts on Kazimir Malevich's black square; drawing after drawing in black lithographic crayon fills each plane of paper with varying degrees of intensity, tonal vibration and texture.

In some, the treatment appears coarse and linear; in others, the markings are randomised and soft like tweed. Some approach total blackness, while others marked up with powdered pastel resemble splotted stone. Perhaps you're looking at television static, or possibly a slab of slate. To look at the grid of 30 smaller works in the upstairs gallery (sold as one piece) is to realise how the repetition of an idea does not equal repetition of results.

In a way, they feel grimly impressionist, as if all those vibrant hues employed to capture a sunset more than a century ago have been newly de-saturated and stripped of color to reflect our times. But the works are also an abstract expression corresponding to Serra's fluctuating moods and impulses. Visitors are left to consider open-ended interpretations; and perhaps the only conclusion to accept is that the compositions are unreadable.

It is, however, interesting to note that there is no hierarchy to the works, and all harmonise completely together. Which, for those in the market to buy, poses a legitimate challenge: how to decide which one, or perhaps how many? A gallery representative suggested that people tend to go by instinct. So take cue from their title and wander around them a few times. Maybe one will hum a little louder.