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Richard Serra, A Master Of Giant Art

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By Sidonie Sawyer



Imposing Art of Steel, And Linen

Strikingly physical in the sheer force of their presence, Serra's pieces are primarily focused on large-scale work, usually site-specific works relating to their surrounding architectural and urban landscape setting.

Starting working with prints in 1972, cerebral Serra explains his use of drawing and printmaking as a means of envisioning a finished sculpture, as "a method for me to bring sculpture to definition, i.e., to understand the work in totality after its completion."

The rare drawings shown in Dallas' Nasher gallery are all of soft and powdery dark coal-like color, with an evasive feel of cloudiness.

At the beginning, austere Serra drew with ink,

charcoal, and lithographic crayon on paper, to discover the relations between his sculpture and the spectator. Then the drawings became art pieces of their own.

Prints On Linen

Subsequently, by the mid-1970s, Serra made the first of his monumentally scaled installation drawings made on Belgian linen directly attached to a wall.

Later, Serra continued to invent various drawing techniques, and in the late 1980s he thought of articulating the tension of weight and gravity of his drawings with saturated paper, using paint stick in horizontal and vertical compositions.

Since the 1990s, he now uses different surface effects, by working directly on the floor using a mesh screen to transfer pigment to the paper. His discovery of applied techniques has changed the way artists manipulate their desired effects.

When studying at Yale University, Serra took a lot of his inspiration from the artists who taught there themselves – such as Philip Guston and Morton Feldman.

Europe Calling

A Fulbright grant helped him get to Paris in 1964 where he visited Brancusi's studio and hoped to mingle with one of his heroes, Alberto Giacometti.



In Spain he discovered Velazquez' astonishing painting *Las Meninas* - a complex and enigmatic composition mixing reality and illusion to offset the relationship between the viewer and the figures in the painting.

Serra said "I was still very young and trying to be a painter, and it just knocked me sideways - I looked at it for a long time before it hit me that I was an extension of the painting.

This was incredible to me. A real revelation. I had not seen anything like it before and it made me think about art, and about what I was doing, in a radically different way. But first, it just threw me into state of total confusion."

In the Sixties in New York, Serra belonged to an underground art scene. He hung out with composer Philip Glass and radical dancers from the Judson Church group – who showed him how to use space, movement and gravity .



Still a revolutionary artist, Serra adds that age has not withered him: "I have a certain obstinacy, a certain willfulness that has got me in trouble but it has also got me through."

His monumental Cor-Ten steel sculpture *My Curves Are Not Mad* (1987) is also in view at the Dallas Nasher Garden.

More info:

"Richard Serra: Prints."

The [Nasher](#) Sculpture Garden, 2001 Flora Street, Dallas, Texas 75201214.242.5100

On view through April 30, 2017

Note: Cor-Ten is a trade name for a steel alloy material, resistant to corrosion; the weathering steel, when left un-coated, develops an outer layer patina, which protects it from additional corrosion. The material eliminates the need for painting, and creates a rust-like appearance when exposed to the weather for several years.