

Mark di Suvero

Teaching Resource

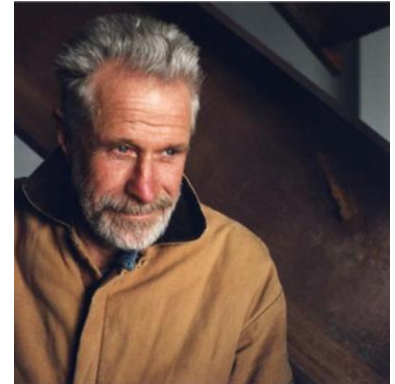
Mark di Suvero: Steel Like Paper | January 28 – August 27, 2023

About Mark di Suvero

(Pronounced dee-SOO-veh-row)

Mark di Suvero was born in Shanghai, China in 1933 to Italian parents. In 1941, his family immigrated to the U.S. and settled in San Francisco. Shortly after earning a degree in philosophy from the University of California at Berkeley, di Suvero moved to New York to pursue an art career.

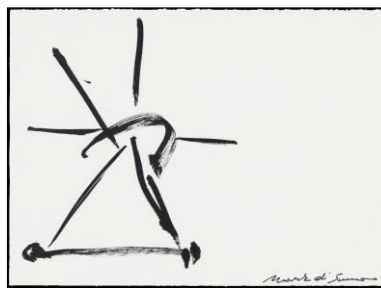
Mark di Suvero: Steel Like Paper combines 30 sculptures ranging in size from hand-held to monumental and more than 40 drawings and paintings spanning Mark di Suvero's career. The works are on view throughout the Nasher's main level and lower level galleries and in the outdoor garden.



Mark di Suvero. Photograph by Anne Leigniel.

Drawing

Di Suvero often makes rapid ink drawings before he begins sculptures and again after he completes them. The drawings are abstract with expressive, energetic lines. Rather than treating drawings as preliminary sketches, di Suvero says he makes them so that he can "remember what [he] saw in the vision of what the piece could be." His materials are simple: paper with various combinations of ink, pen, marker, and acrylic paint.



ABOVE: *Eviva Amore*, 2001. Steel, 424 x 564 x 360 in. Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection, Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas
LEFT: *Eviva I*; CENTER: *Eviva II*; RIGHT: *Eviva III*. Ink on paper, 22 x 30 in. Courtesy of the Artist and Spacetime C.C.

The drawings above relate to the sculpture *Eviva Amore*, which di Suvero designed for the Nasher Garden. How does di Suvero suggest a feeling of energy and expression?

Experiment with different ways of drawing a sculpture – small, big, fast, slow, with a pencil or a paintbrush. Which of your drawings feel the most energetic and expressive, and why?

Nasher Sculpture Center

Sculpture

At age 26, Mark di Suvero suffered a near-fatal accident that caused him to use a wheelchair for two years. During his recovery, di Suvero learned how to weld and made sculptures of wood and steel while seated in his wheelchair, protecting himself with an asbestos apron that covered his lap. These sculptures took the form of small, abstract compositions that explored concepts of mass, balance, and gravity through suspended and moving parts.

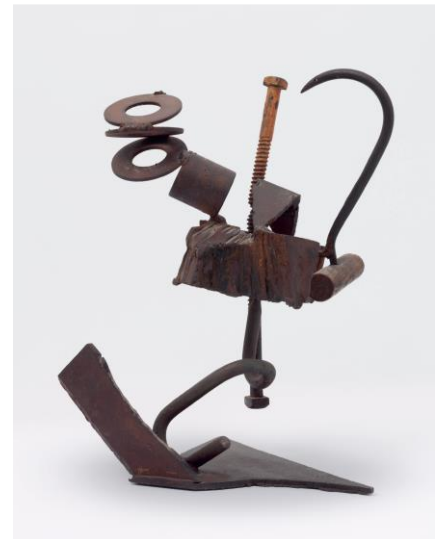
Di Suvero has made hundreds of small sculptures throughout his career, continuing even after he started making monumental steel sculptures in the mid-1960s. These small sculptures are not maquettes or models for larger sculptures but are independent sculptural experiments where the artist can test formal and structural ideas with relative ease. Di Suvero improvises as part of his process. He often uses steel scraps that he finds around the studio and allows for an element of chance as he combines pieces.

"I'm always conscious of balance and gravity's center point, like a dancer or acrobat, I'm feeling that invisible point. Gravity is about space and is an enabling force."

Read the quote from the artist and look at the sculptures pictured here.

Where do you see elements of gravity and balance? Imagine these sculptures have moving parts – which parts would move, and how?

TOP: Untitled, 1965. Wood and steel, 18 x 14 x 12 in. Paula Cooper. CENTER: Untitled, 1965. Steel and stainless steel, 21 x 30 x 20 in. Courtesy of the Artist and Paula Cooper Gallery. BOTTOM: *Reason and Chaos*, 2017. Titanium and steel, 21 1/2 x 38 1/2 x 9 in. Collection of Peter Marino



Untitled, 2017. Titanium, 24 x 23 x 24 in. (61 x 58.4 x 61 cm). Courtesy of the Artist and Paula Cooper Gallery.



For a recent group of works, di Suvero cuts shapes from titanium plate that can be arranged and rearranged, and he does not dictate how the sculptures are displayed.

Experiment with form and balance by cutting a sheet of cardstock into organic shapes, then using notches to fit them together into a three-dimensional sculpture.

Additional Resources

Collens, David R. and Nora Lawrence, editors. *Mark di Suvero*. Prestel, 2015.

Di Suvero, Mark, et al. *Mark di Suvero: Dreambook*. University of California Press, 2008.

Video: Gates of steel: Mark di Suvero and his path to welding
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gG3ijUI6-F0&spfreload=10>

Suggested Curriculum Connections (TEKS)

Fine Arts: Knowledge and Skills | §117.302. Art, Level I (b) (4)

Fine Arts: Critical Evaluation and Response | §117.4 (b), (d) and (e)

Fine Arts: Critical Evaluation | §117.52 Art, Level I (c) (3) and (4)

English: Reading Comprehension of Literary Nonfiction | §110.31. English I (b) (6)

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