

**LANDMARK EXHIBITION – SUPPORTED BY THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS –
TO OPEN MARCH 2 AT THE MENIL COLLECTION**

\$50,000 grant awarded to *RICHARD SERRA DRAWING: A RETROSPECTIVE*

First critical overview of the artist's drawings

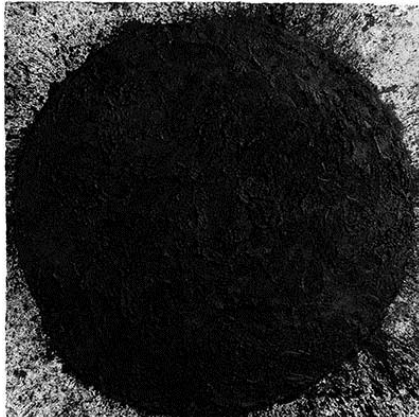
On View at the Menil March 2 – June 10, 2012

Preview events, Thursday, March 1:

5:00–6:00 pm: Book signing – the artist will sign copies of the exhibition catalogue

6:00–7:00 pm: Richard Serra in conversation with Menil Curator Michelle White

7:00–9:00 pm: Exhibition Preview



Houston, February 1, 2012 – ***Richard Serra Drawing: A Retrospective***, which concludes its national tour at its organizing institution, the Menil Collection, this spring, was made possible in part by a grant of \$50,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Rocco Landesman, chairman of the NEA, announced the grant when the exhibition opened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The celebrated exhibition then traveled to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

An independent agency of the federal government, the NEA advances artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. “I continue to be impressed with the creative, innovative, and excellent projects brought forward by arts organizations across the country,” said NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman. “Our grantees are not only furthering their art forms but also enhancing their neighborhoods by making them more vibrant, livable, and fun.”

“We are deeply grateful to the National Endowment for the Arts for its support of this important exhibition,” said Josef Helfenstein, director of the Menil. “Many people will see ***Richard Serra Drawing: A Retrospective***, and in so doing will further their understanding of the complex forms of drawing – a medium that is the very bedrock of visual art.”

Richard Serra Drawing: A Retrospective will be on view at the Menil from March 2 through June 10, 2012.

Organized by the Menil Collection, ***Richard Serra Drawing: A Retrospective*** is the first-ever critical overview of the artist's drawings, as well as the first major one-person exhibition organized under the auspices of the Menil Drawing Institute and Study Center. The exhibition – which the *New York Times* observed, “illustrates the sculptural and even architectural extremes (of) Richard Serra” – traces the crucial role that drawing has played in

Richard Serra's work for more than 40 years. Although Serra is best known for his large-scale and site-specific sculptures, his work has also changed the practice of drawing. This exhibition shows how Serra's work has expanded the definition of drawing through innovative techniques, unusual media, monumental scale, and carefully conceived relationships to surrounding architectural spaces. ***Richard Serra Drawing: A Retrospective*** is co-curated by Bernice Rose, chief curator emerita, the Menil Drawing Institute and Study Center; Michelle White, curator, the Menil Collection; and Gary Garrels, Elise S. Haas Senior Curator of Painting and Sculpture, SFMOMA.

Said curator Michelle White: "Serra's work takes us back to a fact that is as astonishingly simple as it is profound: drawing is a temporal art. It is an artist's body coming into contact with a surface and making a mark. The drag of a pencil on paper, a graphite gesture swept across a surface, the mark of a block of paintstick pressed against a support – these are traces of touch, time-based indications of one's physical movement across space."

The exhibition brings together more than 80 works, including 41 Installation Drawings, large framed works, and nearly 30 of the artist's notebooks. Exclusively for the Menil, the artist is creating a site-specific work, filling an entire gallery. Also on view will be four films by the artist. All of the work on view will unfold chronologically, tracing Serra's ever-evolving early ideas and methods.

Richard Serra Drawing: A Retrospective follows the artist's investigation of drawing as an activity both independent from and linked to his sculptural practice. The exhibition begins with work from the late 1960s, when the artist's drawings were made primarily with ink, charcoal, and lithographic crayon on paper. Over time, his drawings increased in scale, evolving into autonomous works of art that challenged the notion of drawing.

In the mid-1970s, Serra made the first of his large scaled Installation Drawings, some of which extend from floor to ceiling and extend in width to 20 feet. To make works such as *Pacific Judson Murphy* (1978), the artist attached Belgian linen directly to the wall and covered the entire surface with black paintstick—an oil-based pigment—to build stark, densely layered forms. These forms impact the viewer's sense of mass and gravity, making for an experience that is as visceral as it is visual. The Installation Drawings marked a radical shift, altering conceptions of what a drawing is and how it can interact with architecture. Serra has written of these works: "By the nature of their weight, shape, location, flatness, and delineation along their edges, the black canvases enabled me to define spaces within a given architectural enclosure. The weight of the drawing derives not only from the number of layers of paintstick but mainly from its particular shape."

Since the 1980s, Serra has continued to invent new techniques and to explore a variety of surface effects, primarily on paper, including a series of large diptychs. The exhibition will also include works from several of Serra's drawing series made in the 1990s, such as *Deadweights* (1991), *Weight and Measure* (1994), *Rounds* (1996-97), and *out-of-rounds* (1999-2000).

In Serra's recent drawings, such as the *Solids* series (2007-2008), the accumulation of black paintstick on paper is extremely dense, and nearly the entire surface of the paper is covered in a layer of viscous pigment. To make these drawings, Serra pours melted paintstick onto a table, puts a layer of wire mesh or screen on top, and then transfers the pigment on to a sheet of paper by pressing a hard marking tool onto the back of the paper.

Richard Serra (b. 1938, San Francisco, California) studied at the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of California, Santa Barbara, graduating with a B.A. in English literature. Serra then received an MFA from Yale University. The artist's first New York exhibition was at the Leo Castelli Warehouse in 1967. His work has been the subject of major exhibitions at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1977); Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris (1983); The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1986 and 2007); Serpentine

Gallery, London (1992); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid (1992); The Drawing Center, New York (1994); Dia: Chelsea, New York (1997); Guggenheim Bilbao (2005); Grand Palais, Paris (2008); and Kunsthaus Bregenz (2009); among other museums.

The artist has received numerous awards and accolades for his achievements. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and has received honorary doctorates from Yale, Harvard, and other universities. In 2008 he was named a Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters of the French Academy and was decorated with the Order of the Arts and Letters of Spain. He received the Praemium Imperiale for Sculpture from the Japan Art Association in 1994, the Orden Pour le mérite für Wissenschaften und Künste in 2002, and the Prince of Asturias Award for the Arts in 2010.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with essays by the three co-curators and Magdalena Dabrowski, as well as contributions by Richard Schiff, Effie Marie Cain Regents Chair in Art at the University of Texas at Austin, and Lizzie Borden, the Los Angeles-based filmmaker and writer. Also included in the catalogue are Serra's "Notes on Drawing"; an illustrated chronology related to the artist's drawing production; a selected exhibition history; and a selected bibliography. The catalogue is published by the Menil Collection and distributed by Yale University Press. It is available for sale in the Menil Bookstore.

This exhibition is generously supported by Laura and John Arnold, National Endowment for the Arts, Sotheby's, Eddie Allen and Chinhui Juhn, the Frances Dittmer Family Foundation, Paul and Janet Hobby, David and Anne Kirkland, Emily Rauh Pulitzer, the Taub Foundation: Marcy Taub Wessel, Henry J.N. Taub II, and H. Ben Taub, the Four Seasons Hotel Houston, Clare Casademont and Michael Metz, Invesco, Janie C. Lee and David B. Warren, Skadden, Arps, eEvents Group LLC, Scott and Judy Nyquist, Lois and George Stark, W.S. Bellows Construction Corporation, Michael Zilkha, and the City of Houston.

The Menil Collection, a modern landmark designed by the architect Renzo Piano, opened in 1987 to house, preserve, exhibit, and grow the art collection of the late philanthropists John and Dominique de Menil. Housing treasures from prehistoric times to the present day, the Menil presents its large collection in rotation – as well as special exhibitions throughout the year – in a tranquil, contemplative setting. Admission to the Menil and all of its exhibitions and public programs is free of charge.

*The **National Endowment for the Arts** was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government that has awarded more than \$4 billion to projects of artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector. To join the discussion on how art works, visit the National Endowment for the Arts at arts.gov.*

PUBLIC PROGRAMS PRESENTED IN CONJUNCTION WITH RICHARD SERRA DRAWING: A RETROSPECTIVE

Cinematic Graphite

Friday, March 23, 2012, 8:00 p.m.

Inspired by the exhibition, Aurora Picture Show Curator Mary Magsamen has organized a selection of short films that explore mark-making. Videos include work by Magali Charrier, Mary Ellen Strom and Ann Carlson, Cheryl Donegan, and Robert Todd. Co-presented with Aurora Picture Show.

Panel Discussion

Wednesday, April 11, 2012, 7:30 p.m.

Michelle White is joined by scholars Richard Schiff, Effie Marie Cain Regents Chair in Art at the University of Texas at Austin, and Gordon Hughes, Mellon Assistant Professor of Art History at Rice University, in the discussion of Richard Serra's drawn work.

Image: Richard Serra, *out-of-round X*, 1999. Paintstick on handmade Hiromi paper. Collection of the artist, Artwork by Richard Serra © 2012 Richard Serra. Photo: Rob McKeever.

For more information write to press@menil.org or call 713-535-3170