

Richard Serra Drawing: A Retrospective

Final U.S. presentation and home to the largest-scale work completed for the exhibition.

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

Preview events, Thursday, March 1:

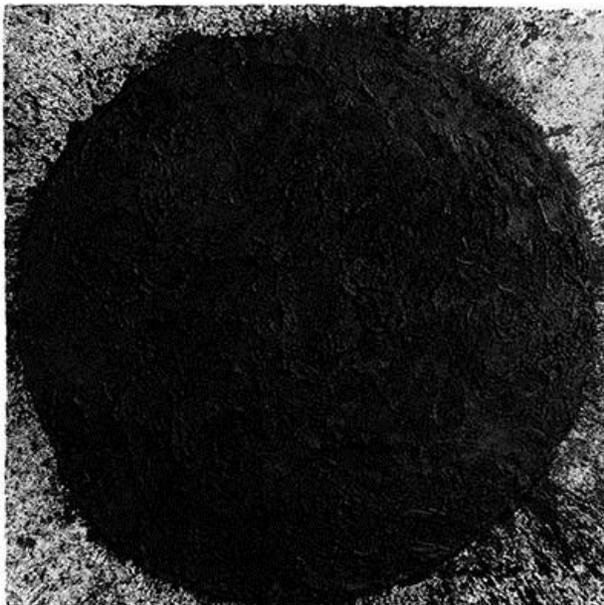
5:00-6:00 pm: Book signing – the artist will sign copies of the exhibition catalogue

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

7:00-9:00 pm: Exhibition Preview

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" – Michelle White, Curator, The Menil Collection

Houston, January 17, 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 opened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, traveled



to San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), and now concludes at the Menil Collection – 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. Installed in reconfigured galleries at the Menil, the exhibition opens on March 2 and will remain on view through June 10.

This landmark traveling 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 new 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 Shiff, the 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. 230 pages. 149 quadratone illustrations. HC \$50, SC \$40.

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Image: Richard Serra, *out-of-round X*, 1999, paintstick on handmade Hiromi paper. Collection of the artist. Richard Serra © 2010 Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Rob McKeever

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

EXHIBITION PREVIEW:

Thursday, March 1, 2012, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

preceded by book signing at 5:00 p.m. and, at 6:00 pm, Richard Serra in conversation Michelle White

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 Magli 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 Shiff, 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.

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