

CARL ANDRE

(Quincy, USA, 1935)

Art is the exclusion of the unnecessary.

Carl Andre was born in 1935 in Quincy, Massachusetts. From 1951 to 1953 he attended the Phillips Academy, Andover, where he studied art under Patrick Morgan. In 1957 he settled in New York and worked as an editorial assistant for a publishing house. He shortly started writing poetry and making drawings and some abstract sculptures in perspex and wood with geometric forms.



Carl Andre, New York, 2015. Photo Bill Jacobson studio.

Andre attended prep school with artist Frank Stella and shared his studio in 1959, during the creation of Stella's black paintings. The self-generating and self-contained structure of Stella's work had a strong impact on André while he was developing his first floor and wood pieces. This period of his life was also determined by his experience working as a brakeman on the Pennsylvania Railroad, from 1960 to 1964. This episode has often been interpreted as influencing his boxcar replication of bricks, blocks and tiles, "confirming him in his use of regimented, interchangeable units"^[1] and, as André himself stated "relieving him of the typical American sculptor's romance with the gigantic"^[2]. In addition to his artistic education and further evolution in the city of New York, his trip to the prehistoric archaeological site of Stonehenge accentuated Andre's will to work with modular units using ordinary, factory finished raw materials such as wood, copper and lead.

Andre was strongly influenced, from the beginning, by works of Brancusi like the well-known Endless Column, and he emulated them in sculptures such as Last Ladder, Pyramid, Cedar Piece, and Chalice, all dating from 1959-60. The floor piece Lever was described as André himself ^[3] as "putting Brancusi's Endless Column on the ground instead of in the sky"

Andre's first solo show took place in 1965. His most original contribution to the minimalist movement, according to the critic Edward Strickland, was the fact of "taking the removal of sculpture from the pedestal a step further, by conceiving of floor-level art more

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unconventional that even the columns, slabs, and boxes that had by then been placed on the floor without pedestal by Morris, Smith, and Judd”

The main theme of Andre's floor-work is its essential redefinition of perceptual and symbolic space, particularly in the context of a museum or a gallery, in which the eyes of the viewer are traditionally raised above the purely functional space of the floor to the ritual space, the transcendental realm of “high” art. Andre has constantly aimed to demythologise sculptural space by literally abasing it.^[4] In 1989 Andre provided a more minimal analysis of his work “My sculptures are masses and their subject is matter”. Along with the mentioned influence of Stella's and Brancusi's work, Ellsworth Kelly's panels, - which, in a way, Andre revived horizontally- and the structure of Jean Arp's checkerboard collages were determinant references in his evolution as an artist.

In 1970 he had a solo exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. In 1972, Britain's Tate Gallery acquired Andre's Equivalent VIII, an arrangement of firebricks. Over nearly 50 years, Carl Andre's work has continued to explore the real space of sculpture. In 2014 Dia:Beacon, in New York held a major retrospective of his work, the first one in more than 30 years, followed by another retrospective in Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain. “The simplicity of Carl Andre's work conveys a striking complexity; it naturally reveals the multiple 'conditions' that determine not only the artwork as such, but also the material itself in relation to historical and economic conditions. Andre's long-lasting impact on contemporary art is often reduced to the realm of sculpture, when in fact his process and methodology are palpable across various disciplines and generations of artists”. said Yasmit Raymond, Curator of the Dia Art Foundation.

His work can be found in the permanent collections of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, The Tate Gallery in London, the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin, Museo Reina Sofía in Madrid, and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, among others.

[1] Bourdon, D., “The Razed Sites of Carl Andre” *Artforum*, New York, USA, Oct 1966. 15.

[2] Baker, Kenneth. *Minimalism: Art of Circumstance*. Abbeville Press, New York, USA, 1988. p 42.

[3] Marshall, R., *Inmaterial/Objects*. Whitney Museum, New York, USA, 1991. p 18.

[4] Stickland, E., *Minimalism: Origins*. [1st ed.] Indiana University Press. Indiana, Bloomington, USA, 1993.



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