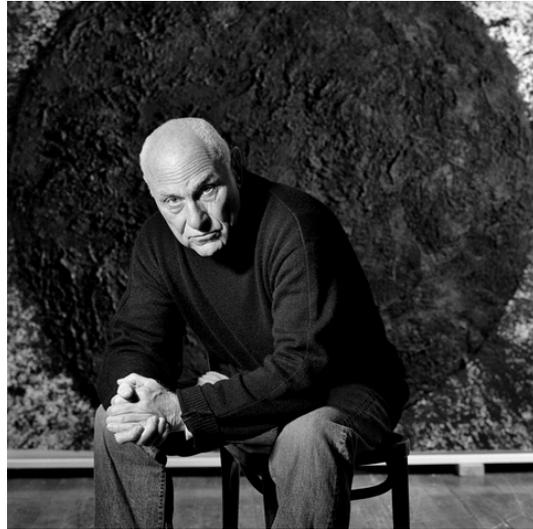


## RICHARD SERRA

(San Francisco, USA, 1939)

*What interests me is the opportunity for all of us to become something different from what we are, by constructing spaces that contribute something to the experience of who we are.*

Richard Serra was born in San Francisco in 1939. With a Spanish father and a Russian mother, Serra worked in steel mills to support himself while attending the University of California at Berkeley and Santa Barbara from 1957 to 1961. This experience helped him to understand how to work with metal, especially with steel, a material he has continued using throughout his career. Serra graduated in English Philology in 1961. The industrial and constructive aspect has continued to be present in his work throughout his career.



Richard Serra © Jason Andrew/Getty Images

From 1961 to 1964, while studying Fine Arts at Yale University, Serra expanded his social circle and got close to other artists such as Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Ad Reinhardt or Frank Stella. In the following years he travelled around Europe; a scholarship from Yale University allowed him to visit Paris and shortly afterwards he won the Fulbright scholarship and travelled to Florence and around Italy. His first individual exhibition took place in Galleria La Salita, Rome. Serra began to use materials that are not often used in sculpture, such as rubber or fibreglass. On his return to the United States he settled in New York and frequented artists such as Carl Andre, Walter De Maria, Eva Hesse, Sol LeWitt, Robert Smithson, Robert Morris or Bruce Nauman.

Following a six-week trip to Japan in which he visited and admired the Zen gardens of Myoshin-ji, Serra became interested in the wandering space and the peripatetic vision. "Location determines my way of thinking about what I am going to build, whether it is an urban place or a landscape, a room or any other architectural enclosure". In addition to the metal engineering, his use of space as a sculptural material is also result of Serra's interest in modern architecture, from Eiffel to Mies van der Rohe.

Serra's early work can be inscribed in the process art movement, which considered process the central aspect of the piece, more important than the final result. Aggression and physicality, combined with a conscious treatment of the material and a real commitment to the space. Influenced by his experience in Italy and his contact with

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povera, Serra started experimenting with the plastic properties of materials such as leather, neon or lead. In addition, he designed and starting using a list of principles to create: to hurl, to split, to roll and to heap. As Nancy Spector explains, this list of verbs in infinitive tense served as a catalyst for his subsequent work, to which he added the prop series, with pieces resting on each other - a personal explanation of the principles of equilibrium - and Belts - belts suspended from a wall like soft, twisted figures - both from 1976.

Discarding conventional methods for delineating volume and ensuring mass, such as carving and welding, Serra started creating precarious sculptures that are sustained by virtue of balance and gravity. Works in a constant state of tension that reveal the process of its own production. Serra includes in this series of compositional verbs the action of "cutting" and realizes a series of large-scale steel sculptures, variations of which he continues to produce. Serra progressively approached sculptures of increasing size and weight, creating site-specific pieces for commissions in the nature and in the city. Preserving its initial minimalist aesthetic, Serra's work acquired recognition for its physicality, which gets emphasized by its impressive size and weight and by his proposal of sculpture as an experience in itself.

Serra's sculptures and drawings have been celebrated with two retrospectives at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, twenty years apart: *Richard Serra/Sculpture* (1986) and *Richard Serra Sculpture: Forty Years* (2007). He has had solo exhibitions at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1977–78); Kunsthalle Tübingen, Germany (1978); Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, Germany (1978); Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands (1980, 2014, and 2017); Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (1983–84); Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld, Germany (1985); Louisiana Museum, Humlebæk, Denmark (1986); Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Münster, Germany (1987); Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich, Germany (1987); Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, Netherlands (1988); Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, Netherlands (1990); Kunsthaus Zürich, Switzerland (1990); CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain, Bordeaux, France (1990); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain (1992); Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, Germany (1992); Dia Center for the Arts, New York (1997); Centro de Arte Hélio Oiticica, Rio de Janeiro (1997–98); Trajan's Market, Rome, Italy (1999–2000); Pulitzer Arts Foundation, St. Louis, USA (2003); and Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, Naples, Italy (2004).

In 2005 *The Matter of Time* (1994–2005), a series of eight large-scale works, was installed permanently at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Spain. For *Monumenta* 2008, the major site-specific installation *Promenade* was shown at the Grand Palais, Paris. Three years later the large-scale, site-specific sculpture *7* was permanently installed opposite the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar. A major traveling retrospective dedicated to Serra's



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drawings was presented at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Menil Collection, Houston (the organizing venue), from 2011 to 2012.

In 2014 the Qatar Museums Authority presented a two-venue retrospective survey of Serra's work, and *East-West/West-East* (2014) was permanently installed in the Brouq Nature Reserve, Zekreet, Qatar. In 2017 the Museum Wiesbaden, Germany, presented *Richard Serra: Props, Films, Early Works*; an overview of Serra's work in film and video was shown at the Kunstmuseum Basel; and recent drawings were featured at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen.

Serra has participated in numerous major international exhibitions, including Documenta (1972, 1977, 1982, and 1987), and the Biennale di Venezia (1980, 1984, 2001, and 2013), and his work has been included in many Whitney Annuals and Biennials (1968, 1970, 1973, 1977, 1979, 1981, 1995, and 2006). He is the recipient of the Leone d'Oro for lifetime achievement, Biennale di Venezia, Venice (2001); Orden Pour le Mérite für Wissenschaften und Künste, Federal Republic of Germany (2002); Orden de las Artes y las Letras de España, Spain (2008); President's Medal, Architectural League of New York (2014); Chevalier de l'Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur, Republic of France (2015); and J. Paul Getty Medal (2018).



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