

Gagosian & Richard Serra: On Environment

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This fall, Richard Serra and Gagosian launched an ambitious trio of exhibitions throughout New York City – *Forged Rounds*, *Triptychs and Diptychs*, and *Reverse Curve* – each commandeered its own gallery space. Weighing upwards of 50 tons, these mountainous metal sculptures loom ominously in Gagosian’s galleries. Typically made for outdoor spaces, Gagosian’s decision to shelter these works of art within a gallery setting – white walls, hushed tones, no touching – is a decision to appropriate the function of these sculptures; to remove large, public works from accessible spaces and place them instead in areas where interaction is restricted.



Richard Serra, *Reverse Curve*, 2005/2019. Weatherproof steel. Overall: 13' 1 1/2" x 99' 9" x 19' 7"; Plate: 2" thick © 2019 Richard Serra/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo by Robert McKeever. Image courtesy of Gagosian gallery.

Visitors are not allowed to touch the works, but are rather asked to quietly observe. While the sheer size of Serra’s forged steel creations is groundbreaking in itself, there is

not much else to understand about these sculptures except that they are large and heavy. Within the gallery walls, these lumps of metal have no purpose and serve less as a work of art and more as a monument to humanity's ability to waste resources at an alarming scale.



Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc*, 1981, The Federal Plaza, New York City. Photo courtesy of *GSA Art in Architecture: Selected Artworks 1997 to 2008*, 30.

As scientists make clear the terrifying effects climate change will have on our future, citizens from around the globe are taking charge in an attempt to slow humanity's destruction of our environment. Countless works of art using both materials and themes related to the environment and climate change have been created over the past few years. Yet Serra, an established artist, chooses to continue his work with forged steel. The transformation of iron ore into steel is an intensive process that requires large amounts of energy – energy predominantly produced by coal. If these

massive steel creations were applied to a specific purpose; shelter, protection from the elements, etc..., perhaps the sociological benefits might outweigh the environmental footprint left by these sculptures. Instead; however, Gagosian – not known for its kind and welcoming nature – and Serra chose to exhibit these works inside a highly restricted space of privilege.