



Serra's Public Sculpture: Redefining Site Specificity

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I know that there is no audience for sculpture, as is the case with poetry and experimental film. There is, however, a big audience for products which give people what they want and supposedly need, and which do not attempt to give them more than they understand.

—Richard Serra, "Extended Notes from Sight Point Road"

It is better to be an enemy of the people than an enemy of reality.

—Pier Paolo Pasolini, "Unhappy Youths"

Fig. 1. Opposite: *Terminal*. 1977
Cor-Ten steel, four trapezoidal plates, each 41' x
12 to 9' (irregular) x 2 1/2"
Installed Bochum, West Germany
Stadt Bochum, West Germany

Author's note: This essay represents my position on site specificity as I was led to consider the issue in relation to the crisis over Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*, a crisis that pushed my earlier ideas in a new direction, redefining the very terms of the problem. That this position may be at variance with that of The Museum of Modern Art, indeed of most art institutions, will be obvious from the argument. Transcending the differences between the Museum and myself, however, is our shared conviction of the importance of Serra's work. D.C.

The site was an old warehouse on the Upper West Side in Manhattan used by the Leo Castelli Gallery for storage; the occasion, an exhibition organized by Minimal sculptor Robert Morris; the moment, December 1968. There, strewn upon the cement floor, affixed to or leaning against the brick walls, were objects that defied our every expectation regarding the form of the work of art and the manner of its exhibition. It is difficult to convey the shock registered then, for it has since been absorbed, brought within the purview of normalized aesthetics, and, finally, consigned to a history of an avant-garde now understood to be finished. But, for many of us who began to think seriously about art precisely because of such assaults on our expectations, the return to convention in the art of the 1980s can only seem false, a betrayal of the processes of thought that our confrontations with art had set in motion. And so we try again and again to recover that experience, to make it available to those who now complacently spend their Saturday afternoons in SoHo galleries viewing paintings that smell of fresh linseed oil and sculptures that are once again cast in bronze.

Of the things in that warehouse, certainly none was more defiant of our sense of the aesthetic object than Richard Serra's *Splashing* (fig. 2). Along the juncture where wall met floor, Serra had tossed molten lead and allowed it to harden in place. The result was not really an object at all; it had no definable shape or mass; it created no legible image. We could, of course, say that it achieved the negation of categories that Donald Judd had, some years earlier, ascribed to "the best new work": "neither painting nor sculpture."¹ And we could see that by effacing the



Photo: Peter Moore

Fig. 2. *Splashing*. 1968
Lead, 18" x 26'
Installed Castelli Warehouse, New York
Destroyed

line where the wall rose up perpendicular to the floor, Serra was obscuring a marker for our orientation in interior space, claiming that space as the ground of a different kind of perceptual experience. Our difficulty with *Splashing* was in trying to imagine its very possibility of continued existence in the world of art objects. There it was, attached to the structure of that old warehouse on the Upper West Side, condemned to be abandoned there forever or to be scraped off and destroyed. For to remove the work meant certainly to destroy it.

"To remove the work is to destroy the work." It is with this assertion that Serra sought to shift the terms of debate in a public hearing convened to determine the fate of *Tilted Arc* (1981).² Serra's sculpture had been commissioned by the General Services Administration (GSA) Art-in-Architecture Program and installed in the plaza of the Jacob K. Javits Federal Building in Lower Manhattan during the summer of 1981. In 1985, a newly appointed GSA regional administrator presumed to reconsider its presence there, to ask whether it might be "relocated" elsewhere. In testimony after testimony at that hearing, artists, critics, museum officials, and others pleaded the case for site specificity that Serra's assertion implied. The work was conceived for the site, built on the site, had become an integral part of the site, altered the very nature of the site. Remove it and the work would simply cease to exist. But, for all its passion and eloquence, the testimony failed to convince the adversaries of *Tilted Arc*. To them the work was in conflict with its site, disrupted the normal views and social functions of the plaza, and, indeed, would be far more pleasant to contemplate in a landscape setting. There, presumably, its size would be less overwhelming to its surroundings, its rust-colored steel surface more harmonious with the colors of nature.

The larger public's incomprehension in the face of Serra's assertion of site specificity is the incomprehension of the radical prerogatives of a historic moment in art practice. "To remove the work is to destroy the work" was made self-evident to anyone who had seen *Splashing's* literalization of the assertion, and it is that which provided the background of *Tilted Arc* for its defenders. But they could not be expected to explain, within the short time of their testimonies, a complex history which had been deliberately suppressed. The public's ignorance is, of course, an enforced ignorance, for not only is cultural production maintained as the privilege of a small minority within that public, but it is not in the interests of the institutions of art and the forces they serve to produce knowledge of radical practices even for their specialized audience. And this is particularly the case for those practices whose goal was a materialist critique of the presuppositions of those very institutions. Such practices attempted to reveal the material conditions of the work of art, its mode of production and reception, the institutional supports of its circulation, the power relations represented by these institutions—in short, everything that is disguised by traditional aesthetic discourse. Nevertheless, these practices have subsequently been recuperated by that very discourse as reflecting just one more episode in a continuous development of modern art. Many of *Tilted Arc's* defenders, some representing official art policies, argued for a notion of

site specificity that reduced it to a purely aesthetic category. As such, it was no longer germane to the presence of the sculpture on Federal Plaza. The specificity of *Tilted Arc*'s site is that of a particular public place. The work's material, scale, and form intersect not only with the formal characteristics of its environment, but also with the desires and assumptions of a very different public from the one conditioned to the shocks of the art of the late 1960s. Serra's transfer of the radical implications of *Splashing* into the public realm, deliberately embracing the contradictions this transfer implies, is the real specificity of *Tilted Arc*.

When site specificity was introduced into contemporary art by Minimal artists in the mid-1960s, what was at issue was the idealism of modern sculpture, its engagement of the spectator's consciousness with sculpture's own internal set of relationships. Minimal objects redirected consciousness back upon itself and the real-world conditions which ground consciousness. The coordinates of perception were established as existing not only between the spectator and the work but among spectator, artwork, and the place inhabited by both. This was accomplished either by eliminating the object's internal relationships altogether or by making those relationships a function of simple structural repetition, of "one thing after another."³ Whatever relationship was now to be perceived was contingent upon the viewer's temporal movement in the space shared with the object. Thus, the work belonged to its site; if its site were to change, so would the interrelationship of object, context, and viewer. Such a reorientation of the perceptual experience of art made the viewer, in effect, the subject of the work, whereas under the reign of Modernist idealism, this privileged position devolved ultimately upon the artist, the sole generator of the artwork's formal relationships. The critique of idealism directed against modern sculpture and its illusory sitelessness was, however, left incomplete. The incorporation of place within the domain of the work's perception succeeded only in extending art's idealism to its surrounding site. Site was understood as specific only in a formal sense; it was thus abstracted, aestheticized. Carl Andre, who made the claim that sculpture, formerly equated with form and structure, was now to be equated with place, was asked about the implications of moving his works from one place to another. His reply: "I don't feel myself obsessed with the singularity of places. I don't think spaces are that singular. I think there are generic classes of spaces which you work for and toward. So it's not really a problem where a work is going to be in particular."⁴ And Andre enumerated these spaces: "Inside gallery spaces, inside private dwelling spaces, inside museum spaces, inside large public spaces, and outside spaces of various kinds too."⁵

Andre's failure to see the singularity of the "generic classes of spaces" he "worked for and toward" was the failure of Minimal art to produce a fully materialist critique of Modernist idealism. That critique, initiated in the art production of the following years, would entail an analysis of, and resistance to, art's institutionalization within the system of commerce represented by those spaces listed by Andre. If modern artworks existed in relation to no specific site and were therefore said to be autonomous, homeless, that was also the precondition

of their circulation: from the studio to the commercial gallery, from there to the collector's private dwelling, thence to the museum or lobby of a corporate headquarters. The real material condition of modern art, masked by its pretense to universality, is that of the specialized luxury commodity. Engendered under capitalism, modern art became subject to the commodification from which nothing fully escapes. And in accepting the "spaces" of art's institutionalized commodity circulation as given, Minimal art could neither expose nor resist the hidden material conditions of modern art.

The task was taken up in the work of artists who radicalized site specificity, artists as various as Daniel Buren and Hans Haacke, Michael Asher and Lawrence Weiner, Robert Smithson and Richard Serra. Their contributions to a materialist critique of art, their resistance to the "disintegration of culture into commodities,"⁶ were fragmentary and provisional, the consequences limited, systematically opposed or mystified, ultimately overturned. What remains of this critique today are a history to be recovered and fitful, marginalized practices that struggle to exist at all in an art world more dedicated than ever before to commodity value.

That history cannot be recovered here; it can only be claimed as necessary for any genuine understanding of Richard Serra's *Splashing* and what he was to make afterward. We need hardly be reminded of the dangers inherent in divorcing art practices from the social and political climates in which they took place; in this case, the very mention of the year 1968 as the date of *Splashing* should serve sufficient notice. The following paragraphs, written in France by Daniel Buren just one month after the events of May '68 and published the following September, may provide a reminder of the political consciousness of artists of the period.

We can find challenges to tradition back in the 19th century—indeed (considerably) earlier. And yet since then countless traditions, academicisms, countless new taboos and new schools have been created and overthrown!

Why? Because those phenomena against which the artist struggles are only epiphenomena or, more precisely, they are only the superstructures built on the base that conditions art and is art. And art has changed its traditions, its academicisms, its taboos, its schools, etc., at least a hundred times, because it is the vocation of what is on the surface to be changed, endlessly, and so long as we don't touch the base, nothing, obviously, is fundamentally, *basically*, changed.

And that is how art evolves, and that is how there can be art history. The artist challenges the easel when he paints a surface too large to be supported by the easel, and then he challenges the easel and the over-large surface by turning out a canvas that's also an object, and then just an object; and then there is the object to be made in place of the object made, and then a mobile object or an untransportable object, etc. This [is said] merely by way of an example, but intended to demonstrate that if there is a possible challenge it cannot be a formal one, it can only be basic, on the level of art and not on the level of the forms given to art.⁷

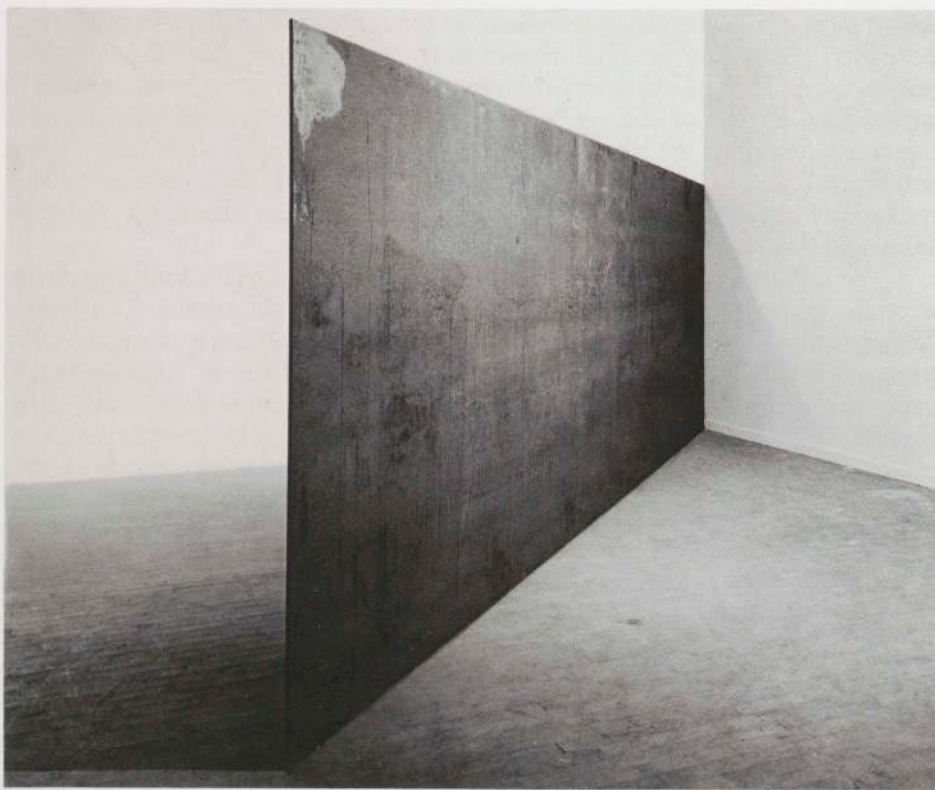


Photo: Peter Moore

Fig. 3. *Strike: To Roberta and Rudy*. 1969–71
Hot rolled steel, 8 x 24' x 1"
Installed Lo Giudice Gallery, New York, 1971–72
Collection Giuseppe Panza di Biumo, Varese, Italy

The Marxist terminology of Buren's text locates him in a political tradition very different from that of his American colleagues. Moreover, among the artists of his generation, Buren has been the most systematic in his analysis of art in relation to its economic and ideological bases, and thus he has reached a far more radical conclusion: that the changes wrought upon art within practice must be "basic," not "formal." In spite of Richard Serra's continued work with the "forms given to art," however, he has incorporated important components of a materialist critique. These include his attention to the processes and divisions of labor, to art's tendency toward the conditions of consumption, and to the false separation of private and public spheres in art's production and reception. Although Serra's work is not systematic or even consistent in this regard, even the contradictory manner in which he has taken a critical position has produced reactions that are often perplexed, outraged, sometimes violent. Determined to build his work outside the confines of art institutions, Serra has met opposition from public officials who have often been quick to manipulate public incomprehension for the purpose of suppressing the work.⁸

The extraordinary status that has accrued to the work of art during the modern period is, in part, a consequence of the romantic myth of the artist as the most highly specialized, indeed unique producer. That this myth obscures the social division of labor was recognized by Minimal artists. Traditional sculpture's specialized craft and highly fetishized materials were opposed by Minimalism with the introduction of objects industrially fabricated of ordinary manufactured materials. Dan Flavin's fluorescent lights, Donald Judd's aluminum boxes, and Carl Andre's metal plates were in no way products of the artist's hand. Serra, too, turned to industrial materials for his early sculpture, but at first he worked those materials himself or with the help of friends. Using lead, and working at a scale proportionate to hand manipulation, his early torn, cast, and propped pieces were still evidence of the artist's activity, however much the processes Serra employed differed from the conventional crafts of carving, modeling, and welding. But when, in 1971, Serra installed *Strike* (fig. 3) in the Lo Giudice Gallery, New York, his working procedure was transformed. *Strike* was only a single plate of hot-rolled steel, one inch thick, eight feet high, twenty-four feet long, and weighing nearly three tons. That steel plate was not, however, the work. To become the sculpture *Strike*, the steel plate had to occupy a site, to assume its position wedged into the corner of the gallery room, bisecting the right angle where wall met wall. But there is no operation of the artist's craft that would accomplish this simple fact. The steel's tonnage required yet another industrial process than the one which produced the plate itself. That process, known as rigging, involves the application of the laws of mechanics, usually with the aid of machinery, "to put [material] in condition or position for use."⁹ Beginning with *Strike*, Serra's work would require the professional labor of others, not only for the manufacture of the sculpture's material elements but also to "make" the sculpture, that is, to put it in its condition or position for use, to constitute the material *as* sculpture (figs. 4–7). It is this exclusive reliance on the industrial labor force (a force signaled with a very

particular resonance in the sculpture's name) that distinguishes Serra's production after the early 1970s as public in scope, not only because the scale of the work had dramatically increased, but because the private domain of the artist's studio could no longer be the site of production. The place where the sculpture would stand would be the place where it was made; its making would be the work of others.

Characterizations of Serra's work as macho, overbearing, aggressive, oppressive, seek to return the artist to the studio, to reconstitute him as the work's sole creator, and thereby to deny the role of industrial processes in his sculpture. While any large-scale sculpture requires such processes, while even the manufacture of paint and canvas require them, the labor that has been expended in them is nowhere to be discerned in the finished product. That labor has been mystified by the artist's own "artistic" labor, transformed by the artist's magic into a luxury commodity. Serra not only refuses to perform the mystical operations of art but also insists upon confronting the art audience with materials that otherwise never appear in their raw state. For Serra's materials, unlike those of the Minimal sculptors, are materials used only for the means of production. They normally appear to us transformed into finished products, or, more rarely, into the luxury goods that are works of art.¹⁰

The conflict between the product of heavy industry, unavailable for luxury consumption, and the sites of its exhibition, the commercial gallery and museum, intensified as Serra developed the implications of *Strike* toward the total negation of the normal functions of gallery spaces. Rather than subserviently taking their cues from the formal conditions of room spaces, as site-specific works increasingly tied to purely aesthetic ideas began to do, Serra's sculptures worked not "for and toward" but against those spaces. The enormous steel-plate walls of *Strike*, *Circuit* (1972, pl. 66), and *Twins* (1972, pl. 67) took on new dimensions with *Slice* (1980, pl. 87), *Waxing Arcs* (1980, pl. 86), *Marilyn Monroe-Greta Garbo* (1981, pl. 91), and *Wall to Wall* (1983, pl. 102). These dimensions were also assumed in the horizontal steel-plate works *Delineator* (1974-75, pl. 74) and *Elevator* (1980, pl. 88), and by the forged-steel block pieces *Span* (1977, pl. 78) and *Step* (1982, pl. 96). Testing and straining against the outer limits of structural, spatial, visual, and circulatory capacity, these works pointed to another sort of specificity of the site of art, its specific historical origins in the bourgeois interior. For if the historical form of the modern artwork was conceived for its function in adorning that private interior space, if the museum-goer could always imagine the painting by Picasso or the sculpture by Giacometti transposed back inside the private dwelling, it was hardly so comfortable a thought to imagine a steel wall slicing through one's living room. "Inside private dwelling spaces" would no longer be congenial sites for Serra's sculpture, and thus another of art's private domains was defeated by Serra's use of heavy industrial materials and their mode of deployment. At the same time, art's institutional exhibition spaces, surrogates of the private domicile, were revealed as determining, constraining, drastically limiting art's possibilities.

By the time Serra installed these later works in commercial galleries and museums, he had already transferred much of his activity out-of-doors into the



Fig. 4. Pile driver preparing the foundation for *Sight Point* (pl. 71), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1974

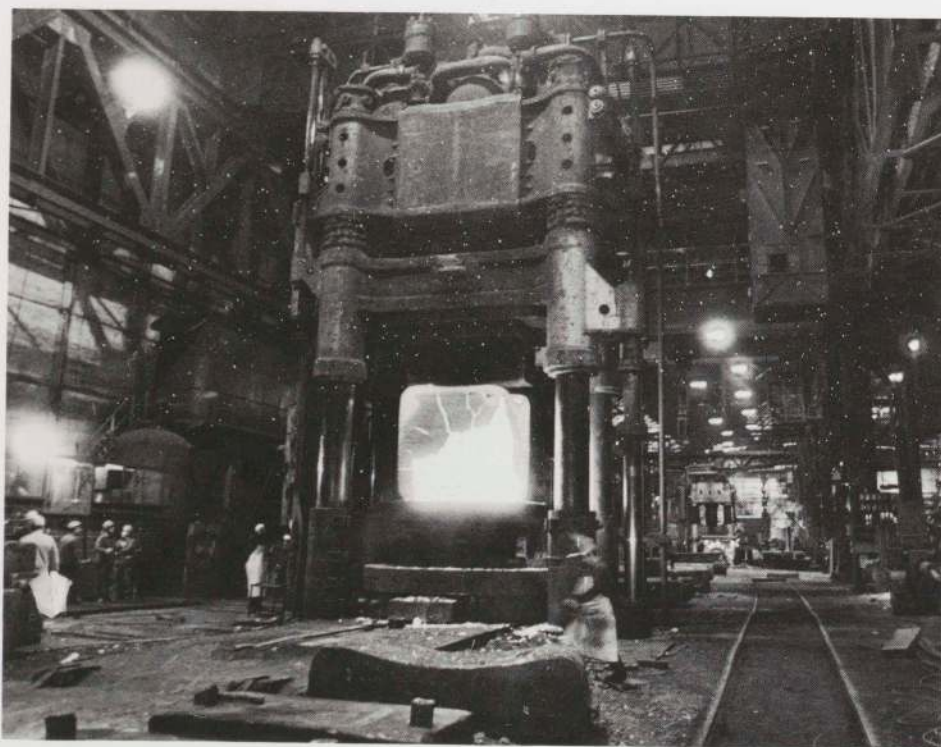


Fig. 5. Forging of *Berlin Block* for *Charlie Chaplin* (pl. 80),
Henrichshütte, Hattingen, West Germany, 1977

landscape and cityscape. The sheer implausibility of the indoor works, shoehorned as they are into clean white rooms, imposes the terms of a truly public sculptural experience within the confines of the usually private site. In effect, Serra reversed the direction generally taken by sculpture as it ventures into public space, the direction concisely spelled out in one critic's statement of resignation: "All we can ever do is put private art in public places."¹¹ Unwilling, as we shall see, to accept this calcified idea of private versus public, Serra insists rather upon bringing the lessons learned on the street, as it were, back into the gallery. In the process the gallery-goer (*Marilyn Monroe–Greta Garbo* is subtitled "A Sculpture for Gallery-Goers") is made excruciatingly aware of the gallery's limitations, of the stranglehold it exerts on the experience of art. By turning the tables on the gallery, holding the gallery hostage to sculpture, Serra defies the gallery's hegemony, declares it a site of struggle. That the terms of this struggle hinge in part upon questions of the private versus the public site of art is demonstrated by *Slice* (fig. 8), installed in the Leo Castelli Gallery on Greene Street, New York, in 1980. A continuous curve of steel plates, ten feet high and over one hundred and twenty-four feet long, the sculpture sliced through the gallery's deep space and lodged itself into the two corners of one of the long walls. The room was thereby divided into two noncommunicating areas, an area on the convex side of the curve, which we may designate as public, and a concave interior "private" area. Entering the gallery from the street, the gallery-goer followed the curve from an expansive open space through the compression where curve closed in closer to the long wall and then opened out again into the gallery's back wall. The sensation was that of being on the outside, cut off from the real function of the gallery, unable to see its operations, its office, its personnel. Leaving the gallery and reentering through the door off the lobby, the gallery-goer was now "inside," confined in the concavity of the curve, privy to the gallery's commercial dealings. In thus experiencing the two sides of *Slice* as extraordinarily different spatial sensations, neither imaginable from the other, one also experienced the always present and visible but never truly apparent relations between the gallery as a space of viewing and as a space of commerce. In installing a work that could not partake of the commercial possibilities of commodity circulation, Serra was nevertheless able to make that condition of the gallery a part of the work's experience, if only in abstract, sensory terms.

But possibilities of disrupting the power of galleries to determine the experience of art are exceedingly limited, dependent as they are upon the willingness of the contested institution. This is also true, of course, for museums, even though the latter might claim greater neutrality with respect to all art practices, even those that question the privatization of culture as a form of property. The museum, however, in the benevolence of this neutrality, simply substitutes an ideologically constituted concept of private expression for the gallery's commercial concept of private commodities. For the museum as an institution is constituted to produce and maintain a reified history of art based on a chain of masters, each offering his private vision of the world. Although his work does not participate in this myth, Serra is aware that within the museum it will be seen that way in any case:

In all my work the construction process is revealed. Material, formal, contextual decisions are self-evident. The fact that the technological process is revealed depersonalizes and demythologizes the idealization of the sculptor's craft. The work does not enter into the fictitious realm of the "master."...My works do not signify any esoteric self-referentiality. Their construction leads you into their structure and does not refer to the artist's persona. However, as soon as you put a work into a museum, its label points first to the author. The visitor is asked to recognize "the hand." Whose work is it? The institution of the museum invariably creates self-referentiality, even where it's not implied. The question, how the work functions, is not asked. Any kind of disjunction the work might intend is eclipsed. The problem of self-referentiality does not exist once the work enters the public domain. How the work alters a given site is the issue, not the persona of the author. Once the works are erected in a public space, they become other people's concerns.¹²

When Serra first moved out of the institutions of art, he moved very far indeed. It was 1970. Robert Smithson had built the *Spiral Jetty* (1970) in the Great Salt Lake in Utah; Michael Heizer had carved *Double Negative* (1969) into the Virgin River Mesa of Nevada; Serra himself was planning *Shift* (pl. 60), the large outdoor work in King County, Canada. For all the excitement generated by the development of earthworks, however, Serra found such isolated sites unsatisfactory. An urban artist working with industrial materials, he discovered that the vast and inevitably mythologized American landscape was not his concern, nor were the pathos and mock heroism of working in isolation from an audience. "No," he said, "I would rather be more vulnerable and deal with the reality of my living situation."¹³ Serra negotiated with New York City officials for a site in the city, and eventually they granted him a permit to construct a work in an abandoned dead-end street in the Bronx. There, in 1970, Serra built *To Encircle Base Plate Hexagram, Right Angles Inverted* (fig. 9), a circle of steel angle, twenty-six feet in diameter, embedded in the surface of the street. Half the circle's circumference was a thin line, one inch wide; the other half, the angle's flange, eight inches wide. From a distance, at street level, the work was invisible; only when the viewer came directly upon it did the work materialize. Standing within its circumference, the viewer could reconstruct its sculptural bulk, half buried under grade. There was, however, a second approach, also from a distance, from which the work was visible in a different way. The dead-end street gave on to stairways leading up to an adjoining street at a higher level; from there the street below appeared as a "canvas" upon which the steel circle was "drawn." This reading of figure against ground, rather than reconstructing material bulk in the ground, worried Serra, seeming to him once again the pictorialism into which sculpture always tended to lapse, a pictorialism he wished to defeat with the sheer materiality and duration of experience of his work. Moreover, this deceptive pictorialism coincided with another way of reading the sculpture that Serra did not



Fig. 6. Rigging of *Elevator* (pl. 88), by Ray LaChapelle and Sons, steelriggers, The Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, N.Y., 1980

Fig. 7. Forming of *Clara-Clara* (pl. 104), steel mill, West Germany, 1983



Fig. 8. *Slice*. 1980
Cor-Ten steel, 10' x 124'6" x 1½"
Leo Castelli Gallery and Blum Helman Gallery,
New York, and collection the artist

foresee and that came to represent for him a fundamental deception against which he would position his work. That deception was the *image* of the work as against the actual experience of it.

To *Encircle's* site was, as Serra described it, "sinister, used by the local criminals to torch cars they'd stolen."¹⁴ Clearly those "local criminals" were not interested in looking at sculpture—pictorial or not—and it was Serra's misconception that anyone from the art world was interested enough in sculpture to venture into that "sinister" outpost in the Bronx. The work existed, then, in precisely the form in which earthworks exist for most people—as documents, photographs. They are transferred back into the institutional discourses of art through reproduction, one of the most powerful means through which art has been abstracted from its contexts throughout the modern era. For Serra, the whole point of sculpture is to defeat this surrogate consumption of art, indeed to defeat consumption altogether and to replace it with the experience of art in its material reality:

If you reduce sculpture to the flat plane of the photograph, you're passing on only a residue of your concerns. You're denying the temporal experience of the work. You're not only reducing the sculpture to a different scale for the purposes of consumption, but you're denying the real content of the work. At least with most sculpture, the experience of the work is inseparable from the place in which the work resides. Apart from that condition, any experience of the work is a deception.

But it could be that people want to consume sculpture the way they consume paintings—through photographs. Most photographs take their cues from advertising, where the priority is high image content for an easy Gestalt reading. I'm interested in the experience of sculpture in the place where it resides.¹⁵

Serra's attempts to enforce the difference between an art for consumption and a sculpture to be experienced in the place where it resides would, however, embroil him in constant controversy. The first work Serra proposed for a truly public location was never allowed to occupy the site for which it was intended. After winning a competition in 1971 for a sculpture for the Wesleyan University campus in Middletown, Connecticut, Serra's *Sight Point* was ultimately rejected by the university's architect as "too large and too close to the campus's historical building."¹⁶ It was, of course, just this size and proximity that Serra had wanted. *Sight Point* is one of a number of large-scale works that employ the principles developed in the early Prop Pieces, principles of construction that rely exclusively on the force of gravity. But at their greatly increased scale and in their particular public settings, these works no longer use those principles merely to oppose the formal relationships obtaining in Modernist sculpture; now they come into conflict with another form of construction, that of the architecture of their surroundings. Rather than playing the subsidiary role of adornment, focus, or enhancement of their nearby buildings, they attempt to engage the passerby in a new and critical

reading of the sculptures' environment. By revealing the processes of their construction only in the active experience of sequential viewing, Serra's sculptures implicitly condemn architecture's tendency to reduce to an easily legible image, to collapse into, precisely, a facade. It is that reduction to facade, the pictorial product of the architect's drawing board, site of the architect's expressive mastery, that, presumably, the Wesleyan University architect wanted to protect for the campus's "historical building."¹⁷

When asked what *Sight Point* (1971–75, pl. 71) lost by being built in the back court of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam instead of its intended location, Serra replied simply: "What happened with *Sight Point* was that it lost all relationship to a pattern of circulation, which was a major determinate for its original location at Wesleyan."¹⁸ Serra recognized that even public art was generally granted only the function of aesthetic enhancement in the seclusion of museumlike sites, removed from normal circulation patterns and placed, as it were, on ideological pedestals:

Usually you're offered places which have specific ideological connotations, from parks to corporate and public buildings and their extensions such as lawns and plazas. It's difficult to subvert those contexts. That's why you have so many corporate baubles on Sixth Avenue [New York], so much bad plaza art that smacks of IBM, signifying its cultural awareness.... But there is no neutral site. Every context has its frame and its ideological overtones. It's a matter of degree. There is one condition that I want, which is a density of traffic flow.¹⁹

It was just such a density of traffic flow that Serra found for *Terminal* (1977, figs. 1, 10), erected in the very center of the German city of Bochum in the central hub of commuter traffic. "The streetcars miss it by a foot and a half."²⁰

Terminal is a prop construction of four identical trapezoidal plates of Cor-Ten steel, forty-one feet high. The plates were manufactured at the Thyssen steelworks in the nearby company town of Hattingen, one of a number of such towns in the Revier industrial region of which Bochum is the capital city. Although *Terminal* was initially built in Kassel for Documenta 6, Serra meant the work for its present site, in part because he wanted it located in the center of the steel-producing district where its plates were manufactured.²¹ It is this social specificity of its site, however, that would cause a furor over *Terminal*.

At first the work aroused a response not unusual for Serra's public sculpture: graffiti identifying it as a toilet or warning of rats, letters to the editors of local newspapers deploring the huge expenditure of city funds, declaring the work ugly and inappropriate. As the controversy widened, and as city council elections neared, the Christian Democratic party (CDU) seized upon it as the focus for its political campaign against the firmly entrenched Social Democrats, who had voted to purchase the work for the city. Vying for the votes of the steelworkers, who constitute a majority of the region's electorate, the CDU printed campaign posters



Fig. 9. Installation of *To Encircle Base Plate Hexagram, Right Angles Inverted* (pl. 48), 183 Street and Webster Avenue, the Bronx, New York, 1970



Fig. 10. *Terminal*. 1977

showing a photograph of *Terminal* montaged against one of a steel mill (fig. 11). The slogan announced: "This will never happen again—CDU for Bochum." The Christian Democrats' objections to *Terminal* are extremely revealing of the issues raised in Serra's public sculptures, especially insofar as his abstract vocabulary intersects with explicit social and material conditions. It is therefore worth quoting at length from the press release issued by the CDU stating its position on *Terminal*:

The supporters of the sculpture refer to its great symbolic value for the Revier region generally and for Bochum in particular as the home of coal and steel. We believe the sculpture lacks important qualities that would enable it to function as such a symbol. Steel is a special material whose production demands great craftsmanship, professional and technical know-how. The material has virtually unlimited possibilities for the differentiated, even subtle treatment of both the smallest and the largest objects, both the simplest and the most artistically expressive forms.

We do not believe this sculpture expresses any of these things since it looks like a clumsy, undifferentiated, half-finished "ingot." No steel-worker can point to it positively, with pride.

Steel signifies boldness and elegance in the most varied constructions; it does not signify monstrous monumentality. This sculpture is frightening because of its awkward massiveness, untempered by any other attributes. Steel is also a material that, to a great degree, suggests resilience, durability, and resistance to rust. This is especially true of the high-quality steel produced in Bochum. This sculpture, made only of simple steel, is already rusted and disgusting in appearance. Steel is a high-quality material developed from iron and so is not a true raw material. Yet this sculpture gives the impression of raw material... extracted from the earth and given no special treatment.

If, as its supporters claim, the sculpture is to symbolize coal and steel, it must provide the possibility of positive identification for those concerned, that is, for the citizens of this area, especially the steelworkers. We believe that all of the characteristics mentioned provide no positive challenge and identification. We fear the opposite will occur, that rejection and scorn will not only result initially but will intensify over time. That would be a burden not only for this sculpture but for all self-contained modern artworks. Such cannot be the goal of a responsible cultural policy.²²

For the Christian Democrats, now presiding over record unemployment in Germany,²³ to claim that they represent the steelworkers' interests is hypocritical, and the steelworkers demonstrated at the polls that they were undeceived in this regard: the Social Democrats retained power in the region. What is important here, however, is the nature of the demand made on public art to provide the working class with symbols to which they can point with pride, with which they can positively identify. Now, hidden in this demand, it could be argued, is the

requirement that the artist symbolically reconcile the steelworkers to the brutal working conditions to which they are subjected. Steel, the material which the citizens of the Revier region work with daily, is to be used by the artist only to symbolize boldness and elegance, resilience and durability, the unlimited possibilities for subtle treatment and expressive form. It is, in other words, to be disguised, made unrecognizable to those who have produced it. Serra's work flatly refuses this implicitly authoritarian symbolism, which would convert steel from raw material—although processed, steel is a raw material in the capitalist economic structure²⁴—to a signifier of invincibility. Instead Serra presents the steelworker with the very product of his alienated labor, untransformed into any symbol at all. If the worker is then repelled, heaps scorn on *Terminal*, it is because he is already alienated from the material; for although he produced those steel plates, or materials like them, he never owned them; the steelworker has no reason whatsoever to take pride in or identify with any steel product. In asking the artist to give the workers a positive symbol, I would suggest that the CDU is really asking the artist to provide a symbolic form of consumption; for the CDU does not, in any case, wish to think of the worker as a worker, but rather as a consumer.²⁵

The Bochum CDU's goal of a "responsible cultural policy" that would not be a burden for "self-contained modern artworks" parallels official public art policies in the United States that have emerged and expanded over the past twenty years. Taking for granted that art is private self-expression, these policies are concerned with the various possibilities of transferring such an art into the public realm without offending public expectations. In an essay tellingly entitled "Personal Sensibilities in Public Places," John Beardsley, who worked for the Art in Public Places Program of the National Endowment for the Arts and was commissioned to write a book about it, explains how the artists' private concerns can be made palatable for the public:

An artwork can become significant to its public through the incorporation of content relevant to the local audience, or by the assumption of an identifiable function. Assimilation can also be encouraged through a work's role in a larger civic improvement program. In the first case, recognizable content or function provides a means by which the public can become engaged with the work, though its style or form might be unfamiliar to them. In the latter, the work's identity as art is subsumed by a more general public purpose, helping to assure its validity. In both cases, the personal sensibilities of the artist are presented in ways that encourage widespread public empathy.²⁶

One of Beardsley's prime examples of the empathy solicited through recognizable content involves a public much like that for *Terminal*:

[George] Segal was awarded his commission by the Youngstown Area Arts Council. He visited the city and toured its steel mills, finding the

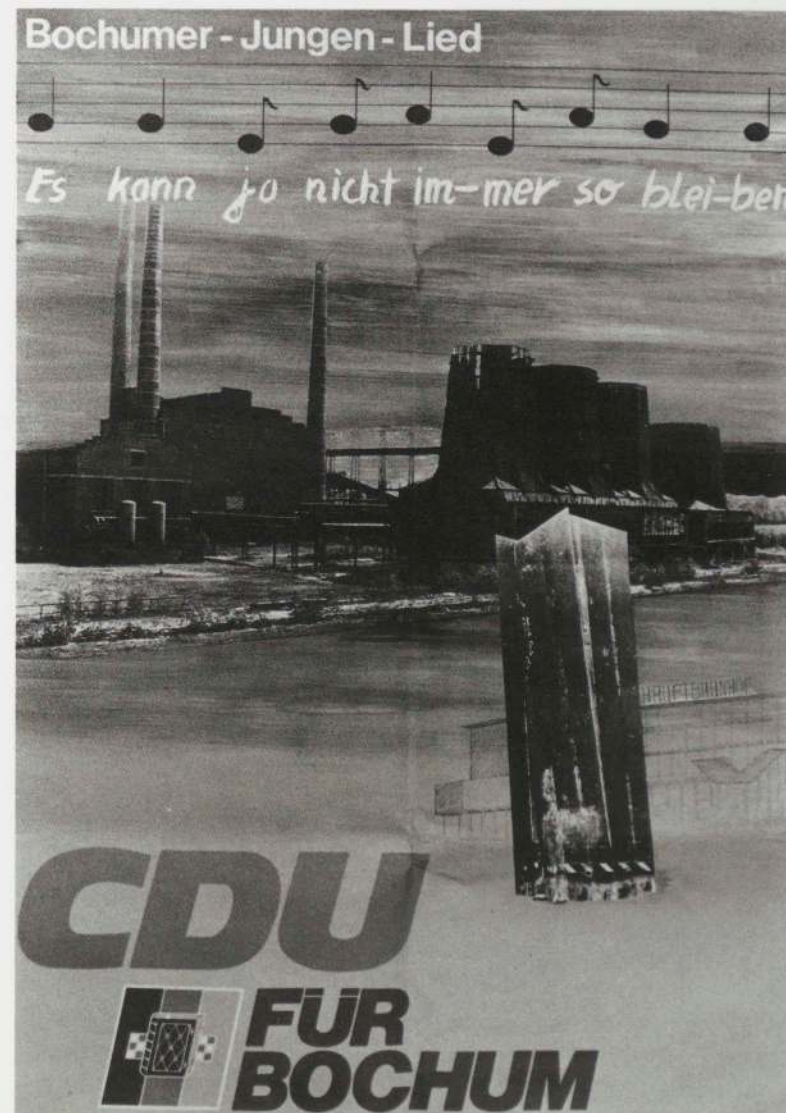


Fig. 11. Christian Democratic party (CDU) campaign poster, Bochum, West Germany, 1979



Fig. 12. *Tilted Arc*. 1981
Cor-Ten steel, 12 x 120' x 2½"
Installed Federal Plaza, New York
General Services Administration, Washington, D.C.

Fig. 13. Opposite: *Tilted Arc*. 1981

open hearth furnaces "staggeringly impressive." He decided to make steelworkers at an open hearth the subject of his sculpture, and used as models Wayman Paramore and Peter Kolby, two men selected by the steelworkers union from its membership. His commission coincided with a severe economic crisis in Youngstown during which a series of mill shutdowns eventually idled some 10,000 workers. Yet completion of the sculpture became a matter of civic pride. Numerous local businesses and foundations gave money; one of the steel companies donated an unused furnace. Labor unions assisted in fabricating and installing the work. One cannot escape the conclusion that the subject matter was largely responsible for this outpouring of public support. The people of Youngstown sought a monument to their principal industry, even as it collapsed around them. Segal's *Steelmakers* is a tribute to their tenacity.²⁷

It is a cynical arts policy indeed that would condone, much less laud, a monument mythologizing work in steel mills when the real historical condition of the steelworkers is that of being forced into the industrial reserve army. Just whose tenacity does this work really pay tribute to? To the steelworkers hopelessly trying to maintain their dignity in the face of joblessness? Or to the society—including the business community, steel companies, and labor unions whose largesse contributed to the work—that will go to any length to ensure that those steelworkers will never recognize the nature of the economic forces arrayed against them? Perhaps the CDU in Bochum would find Segal's *Steelmakers* insufficient as a symbol of the boldness and elegance of steel—the work is, after all, cast bronze—but it can certainly be said to fulfill what I have suggested is the CDU's essential demand: that the sculpture reconcile the workers with their brutal conditions by giving them something with which they can positively identify. That this identification can only be false, that the workers' pride is only intended to make their subjugation more tolerable, is, in the terms of the political analysis I am invoking, precisely what motivates such a cultural policy.²⁸

Needless to say, such a cultural policy, whether that of the Right in Germany or of the liberal establishment in the United States, finds the public sculpture of Richard Serra considerably more problematic. Conservatives in this country who argue against all federal funding for culture oppose Serra's work categorically, confident that when all public commissions are once again exclusively paid for by the private sector, there will be no more room for such a "malignant object" (Serra's *Tilted Arc* is illustrated in an article of that title).²⁹ The cultural bureaucrats want, however, to appear more tolerant, hoping that "Serra's sculpture may eventually win a greater measure of acceptance within its community."³⁰

That a difficult work of art requires time to ingratiate itself with its public was a standard line of defense of Serra's *Tilted Arc* (figs. 12, 13) during the public hearing of March 1985. Historical precedents of public outrage meeting now-canonical

works of modern art became something of a leitmotif. But this deferral to the judgment of history was, in fact, a repudiation of history, a denial of the current historical moment in which *Tilted Arc* actually confronts its public in all its specificity, as well as a denial of Richard Serra's intransigent rejection of the universal nature of the work of art. For to say that *Tilted Arc* will withstand the test of time is to reclaim for it an idealist position. The genuine importance of *Tilted Arc* can best be understood through an analysis of the crisis that it has precipitated within established cultural policy.

Tilted Arc is built on a site that is public in a very particular sense. It inhabits a plaza flanked by a government office building housing federal bureaucracies and by the United States Court of International Trade. The plaza adjoins Foley Square, the location of New York City's federal and state courthouses. It is thus situated in the very center of the mechanisms of state power. The Jacob K. Javits Federal Building and its plaza are nightmares of urban development, official, anonymous, overscaled, inhuman. The plaza is a bleak, empty area, whose sole function is to shuttle human traffic in and out of the buildings. Located at one corner of the plaza is a fountain that cannot be used, since the wind-tunnel effect of the huge office bloc would drench the entire plaza with water. Serra's *Tilted Arc*, a twelve-foot-high, steel-plate wall, one hundred and twenty feet long, and tilted slightly toward the office building and the trade courthouse, sweeps across the center of the plaza, dividing it into two distinct areas. Employing material and form that contrast radically with both the vulgarized International Style architecture of the federal structures and the Beaux-Arts design of the old Foley Square courthouses, the sculpture imposes a construction of absolute difference within the conglomerate of civic architecture. It engages the passerby in an entirely new kind of spatial experience that is counterposed against the bland efficiency established by the plaza's architects. Although *Tilted Arc* does not disrupt normal traffic patterns—the shortest routes to the streets from the buildings are left clear—it does implant itself within the public's field of vision. Soliciting, even commanding attention, the sculpture asks the office workers and other pedestrians to leave their usual hurried course and follow a different route, gauging the curving planes, volumes, and sight lines that mark this place now as the place of sculpture.

In reorienting the use of Federal Plaza from a place of traffic control to one of sculptural place, Serra once again uses sculpture to hold its site hostage, to insist upon the necessity for art to fulfill its own functions rather than those relegated to it by its governing institutions and discourses. For this reason, *Tilted Arc* is considered an aggressive and egotistical work, with which Serra places his own aesthetic assumptions above the needs and desires of the people who must live with his work. But insofar as our society is fundamentally constructed upon the principle of egotism, the needs of each individual coming into conflict with those of all other individuals, Serra's work does nothing other than present us with the truth of our social condition. The politics of consensus that ensures the smooth functioning of our society is dependent upon the shared belief that all individuals are unique but can exist in harmony with one another by assenting to the benign regulation of the



Photo: Jack Manning/NYT Pictures

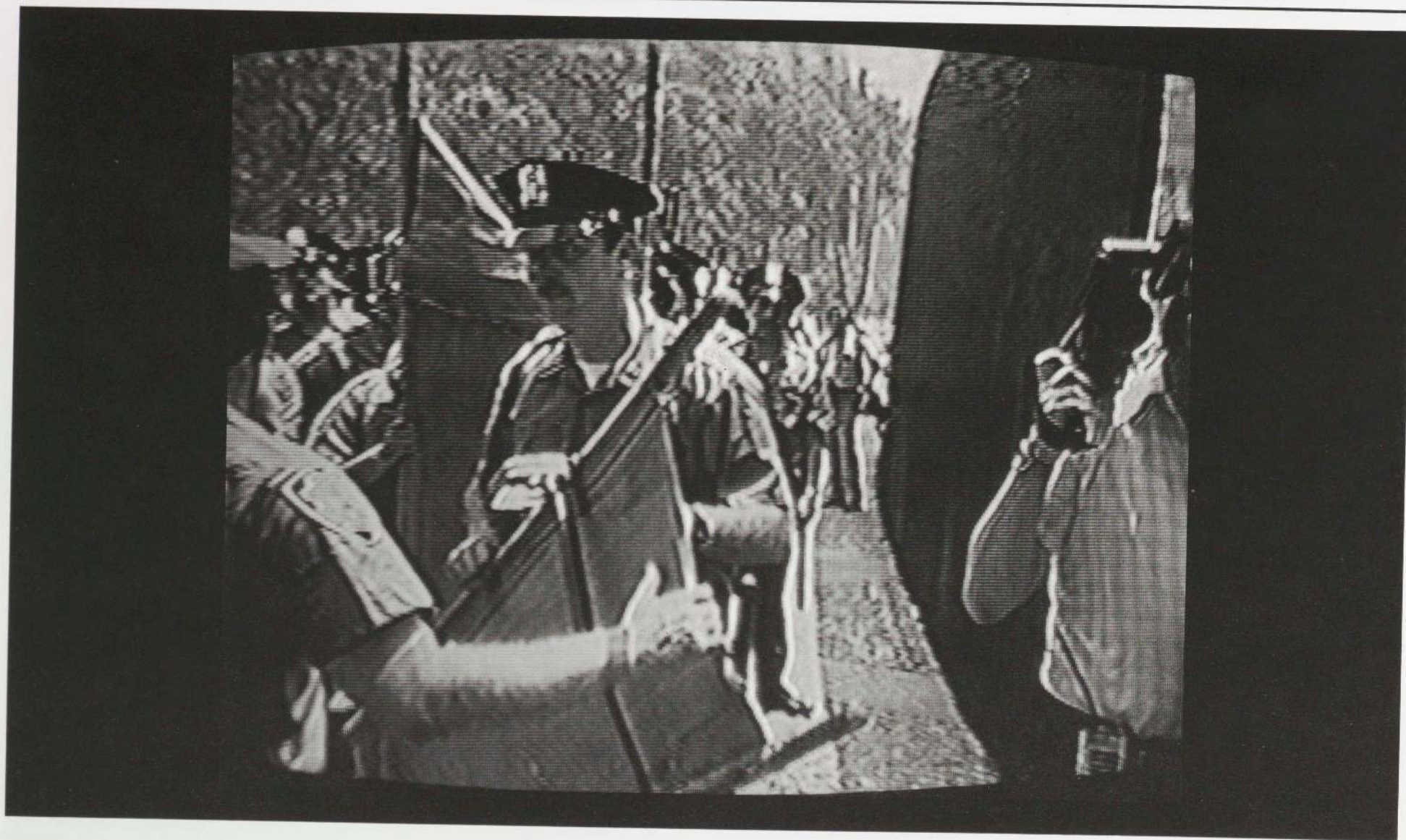


Fig. 14. Demonstration at Federal Plaza, New York, June 6, 1984, against U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service policies regarding Central American refugees. Videotape: Dee Dee Halleck.

state. The real function of the state, however, is not the defense of the citizen in his or her true individuality, but the defense of private property—the defense, that is, precisely of the conflict between individuals.³¹ Within the politics of consensus, the artist is expected to play a leading role, offering a unique “private sensibility” in a manner properly universalized so as to ensure feelings of harmony. The reason Serra is accused of egotism, when other artists who put their “private sensibilities in public places” are not, is that his work cannot be seen to reflect his private sensibility in the first place. And, once again, when the work of art refuses to play the prescribed role of falsely reconciling contradictions, it becomes the object of scorn. A public that has been socialized to accept the atomization of individuals and the false dichotomy of private and public spheres of existence cannot bear to be confronted with the reality of its situation. And when the work of public art rejects the terms of consensus politics within the very purview of the state apparatus, the reaction is bound to be censorial. Not surprisingly, the coercive power of the state, disguised as democratic procedure, was soon brought to bear on *Tilted Arc*. At the hearing staged to justify the work’s removal,³² the most vociferous opposition to the work came not from the public at large but from representatives of the state, judges of the courts and heads of federal bureaucracies whose offices are in the Federal Building.

From the moment *Tilted Arc* was installed on Federal Plaza in 1981, Chief Judge Edward D. Re of the United States Court of International Trade began the campaign to have it removed.³³ In a city where many people feel that they have little control over a degraded social environment and that such control is granted only to property owners, Judge Re held out the promise of pleasant social activities, which he claimed could not take place on the plaza unless the steel wall were removed.³⁴ With accusations that an elitist art world had foisted its experiments upon them, with visions of band concerts and picnic tables presented to them, many office workers signed petitions for *Tilted Arc*’s removal. But it would seem that the judge and his fellow civil servants had a very different view of the public from the beneficent one that saw people gathering to listen to music on their lunch breaks. As I read the existing documentation, the public seems to have consisted, on the one hand, of competitive individuals who could be manipulated to fight it out among themselves over the crumbs of social experience dishonestly offered to them, and on the other hand, of frightening individuals lurking on the other side of the wall, lying in wait for the judge as he left the protection of his chambers and ventured out into the public realm. In one of the many letters written to the GSA complaining of the sculpture, Judge Re made his fears explicit: “By no means of minor importance is the loss of efficient security surveillance. The placement of this wall across the plaza obscures the view of security personnel, who have no way of knowing what is taking place on the other side of the wall.”³⁵

Judge Re’s attitude, as reflected in his letter, was echoed during the GSA hearing by one of those security personnel. Her testimony is worth excerpting at some length, since it gives a clear and chilling sense of the state’s current regard for its citizens:

My main purpose here is to present you aspects from the security angle. The arc is what I consider to be a security hazard or a disadvantage. My main contention is that it presents a blast wall effect. . . . It’s 120 feet long, twelve feet high, and it’s angled in a direction toward both federal buildings, number one Federal Plaza and 26 Federal Plaza. The front curvature of the design is comparable to devices used by bomb experts to vent explosive forces. . . . The purpose of these . . . bomb devices is to vent explosions upward. This one vents an explosion, could vent an explosion both upward and in an angle toward both buildings. . . .

Most of the time the wall was [*sic*] closer to the building. It would, of course take a larger bomb than [those] which have been previously used . . . to destroy enough for their purposes, but it is possible, and lately we are expecting the worst in the federal sector. . . . Most people express their opinions against us in either violent ways or with graffiti and other types of ways. . . . *Tilted Arc* is used more for graffiti purposes than any of the other walls. . . . Most of the graffiti is done on the other side where we cannot view it.

Loitering for illegal purposes is another problem we experience and we do have a problem with drug dealing, which we cannot see from our side of the building. We, by the way, only concern ourselves with the federal side of the building.³⁶

If a public sculpture can have projected upon it such an explicit statement of the contempt in which the public is held by the state, it has served a historical function of great consequence. We now have written into the public record, for anyone who wishes to read it, the fact that the “federal sector” expects only the worst from us, that we are all considered potential loiterers, graffiti scribblers, drug dealers, terrorists. When *Tilted Arc* is converted, in the paranoid vision of a state security guard, into a “blast wall,” when the radical aesthetics of site-specific sculpture is reinterpreted as the site of political action, public sculpture can be credited with a new level of achievement. That achievement is the redefinition of the site of the work of art as the site of political struggle. Determined to “be vulnerable and deal with the reality of his living situation,” Richard Serra has found himself again and again confronted with the contradictions of that reality. Unwillingly to cover up those contradictions, Serra runs the risk of uncovering the true specificity of the site, which is always a political specificity.

Notes

1. Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," *Arts Yearbook*, no. 8 (1965), p. 74.
2. Serra's actual assertion on this occasion was: "To remove 'Tilted Arc,' therefore, is to destroy it"; see hearing transcript, "The Matter of: A Public Hearing on the Relocation of 'Tilted Arc' at Jacob K. Javits Federal Building," March 6, 1985, p. 43. Held on March 6, 7, 8, 1985, at the Ceremonial Courtroom, International Court of Trade, One Federal Plaza, New York, the hearing took place before a panel consisting of William J. Diamond, Regional Administrator, General Services Administration; Gerald Turetsky, Acting Deputy Regional Administrator, GSA; Paul Chistolini, Public Building Services, GSA; and two outside panelists: Thomas Lewin of the law firm Simpson, Thacher, and Bartlett, and Michael Findlay of the auction house Christie, Manson, and Woods. On April 10, 1985, the panel in a four to one vote recommended relocation of *Tilted Arc*. This recommendation was adopted by Dwight A. Ink, Acting Director of the United States General Services Administration, Washington, D.C., and on May 31, 1985, he announced his decision to relocate the sculpture. Hearing transcript in The Museum of Modern Art Library.
3. Judd, p. 82.
4. In Phyllis Tuchman, "An Interview with Carl Andre," *Artforum*, vol. 7, no. 10 (June 1970), p. 55.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Walter Benjamin, "Edward Fuchs, Collector and Historian," trans. Kingsley Shorter, in *One-Way Street* (London: New Left Books, 1979), p. 360.
7. Daniel Buren, "Peut-il Enseigner l'Art?" *Galerie des Arts* (Paris), September 1968. Translated from the French by Richard Miller.
8. There have been several attempts to remove Serra's work from public sites. Soon after the decision to remove *Tilted Arc* was announced (see n. 2), St. Louis City Alderman Timothy Dee introduced a bill to the Board of Aldermen that would, if passed, allow city voters to decide whether *Tuain* (1974–82, pl. 94), a work in downtown St. Louis, should be removed. According to *The Riverfront Times* (St. Louis), September 6–10, 1985, p. 6A, Dee said: "The problem is the real gap between regular people—my constituents and the overwhelming majority—and the elitist art community, who decide to do something because they've all invested in certain artists" (italics added). The most thoroughly documented case is that of the Christian Democratic party of Bochum, West Germany, against *Terminal* (1977, pl. 77). For this case, see *Terminal von Richard Serra: Eine Dokumentation in 7 Kapiteln* (Bochum: Museum Bochum, 1980), and my discussion below. In addition, a number of major commissions awarded to Serra have never been built, due to opposition to the work from architects and city officials. These include works for the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation in Washington, D.C., the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, and works for outdoor sites in Madrid; Marl, West Germany; and Peoria, Ill. *Sight Point* (1971–75, pl. 71), commissioned for the Wesleyan University campus, was not built there. For a discussion of the difficulties Serra has faced in building his work in public, see Douglas Crimp, "Richard Serra's Urban Sculpture: An Interview," in *Richard Serra: Interviews, Etc. 1970–1980* (Yonkers, N.Y.: The Hudson River Museum, 1980), pp. 163–87.
9. Webster's *Eighth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1979), p. 989.
10. In volume II of *Capital*, Karl Marx divides the total mass of commodities into a two-department system for the purposes of explaining reproduction. Department I consists of the means of production: raw materials, machinery, buildings, etc.; Department II consists of consumer goods. Later Marxists have added to this scheme Department III to designate those goods that do not play a role in the reproduction of the working class since they are intended for consumption only by the capitalist classes themselves. Department III includes luxury goods, art, and weapons. For a discussion of this relation between art and arms, see Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism*, trans. Joris De Bres (London: Verso Editions, 1978), especially chapter 9, "The Permanent Arms Economy and Late Capitalism."
11. Amy Goldin, in "The Esthetic Ghetto: Some Thoughts about Public Art," *Art in America*, vol. 62, no. 3 (May–June 1974), p. 32.
12. Richard Serra, "Extended Notes from Sight Point Road," in *Richard Serra: Recent Sculpture in Europe 1977–1985* (Bochum, West Germany: Galerie m, 1985), p. 12.
13. In Crimp, p. 170.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 170.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 175.
17. On this subject, see Yve-Alain Bois, "A Picturesque Stroll around Clara-Clara," *October*, no. 29 (Summer 1984), pp. 32–62; see also Richard Serra and Peter Eisenman, "Interview," *Skyline*, April 1983, pp. 14–17.
18. Quoted in Crimp, p. 175.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 166, 168.
20. Richard Serra, in Annette Michelson, Richard Serra, and Clara Weyergraf, "The Films of Richard Serra: An Interview," *October*, no. 10 (Fall 1979), p. 91.
21. *Ibid.*; it is in this interview, in the context of a discussion of the film *Steelmill/Stahlwerk* (1979), by Serra and Weyergraf, that Serra discusses at length his experience working in steel mills. *Steelmill/Stahlwerk* was shot in the mill where the plates of *Terminal* were fabricated, although the shooting took place during the forging of *Berlin Block for Charlie Chaplin* (1977). See also in this regard the testimony by Annette Michelson at the public hearing about *Tilted Arc*; in hearing transcript (March 6, 1985), pp. 66–70. Michelson's testimony was important for the formulation of many of the ideas in the present essay.
22. Press release, CDU representatives to the Bochum City Council, reproduced in *Terminal von Richard Serra*, pp. 35–38.
23. Since 1982, when the CDU came to power in West Germany, the unemployment rate has risen to a postwar record: there are 2.2 million registered unemployed and an estimated 1.3 million unregistered job seekers. Hardest hit have been areas such as the Revier region, where heavy industries are located. In October 1985, the Federation of German Labor Unions staged a week-long protest against the CDU's economic policies to coincide with heated debates on the issue in the Bundestag. In these debates, the full range of the opposition attacked the CDU for contributing to the disintegration of social conditions in Germany.
24. In claiming that steel is not a raw material because it is produced from iron, the CDU attempts to mystify, through an appeal to a natural versus man-made distinction, the place of steel within capitalist production. Steel is, of course, a product of Department I, used for producing the means of production; see n. 10.
25. "To each capitalist, the total mass of all workers, with the exception of his own workers, appear not as workers, but as consumers, possessors of exchange values (wages), money, which they exchange for his commodity." Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York: Vintage Books, The Marx Library), p. 419. In the postwar period in Germany, attempts to reconcile the working class to its social conditions has operated precisely on the symbolic level, including language itself. Thus the words *Arbeiter* (worker) and *Arbeiterklasse* (working class) are no longer used in official discussion, as Germany is now said to be a classless society. In this society, there are only *Arbeitnehmer* (one who takes work, employee) and *Arbeitgeber* (one who gives work, employer). The irony of this linguistic reversal is not lost on the workers themselves, who, for their part, know perfectly well that it is the worker who is the giver of work (*Arbeitgeber*) and the employer who is the taker of work (*Arbeitnehmer*). In such a climate it comes as no surprise that the right-wing party would see art as another possible form of mystification of real social conditions.
26. John Beardsley, "Personal Sensibilities in Public Places," *Artforum*, vol. 19, no. 10 (June 1981), p. 44.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Louis Althusser has specified the role of what he calls Ideological State Apparatuses, among which he includes culture, as "the reproduction of the conditions of production." In order for this reproduction to take place, what must be assured is the workers' "subjection to the ruling ideology." Thus one of the functions of the cultural object confronting workers would be that of teaching them how to bear their subjugation. See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), pp. 127–86.
29. Douglas Stalker and Clark Glymour, "The Malignant Object: Thoughts on Public Sculpture," *The Public Interest*, no. 66 (Winter 1982), pp. 3–21. For other neoconservative attacks on public spending for art, see Edward C. Banfield, *The Democratic Muse: Visual Arts and the Public Interest* (New York: Basic Books, 1984); and Samuel Lipman, "Cultural Policy: Whither America, Whither Government?" *The New Criterion*, vol. 3, no. 3 (November 1984), pp. 7–15.
30. Beardsley, p. 45.
31. On this subject, the central texts are the early writings of Karl Marx on the state and civil society; see especially "On the Jewish Question," in *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (New York: Vintage Books, The Marx Library, 1975), pp. 211–41. See also the reinterpretation of the relation between state and civil society and the importance for it of consensus in the work of Antonio Gramsci.
32. I believe the public hearing on *Tilted Arc* was a mockery and that anyone who followed the case closely would agree with me. The hearing was presided over, and the four other panelists were selected by, William Diamond, Regional Administrator of the General Services Administration, who had publicly asked for the removal of *Tilted Arc*, circulated petitions and solicited testimonies for its removal (see "New York Day by Day," *The New York Times*, December 29, 1984, and Grace Glueck, "What Part Should the Public Play in Choosing Public Art," *The New York Times*, section 2, February 3, 1985, pp. 1, 27; see also letter of Gustave Harrow to Dwight A. Ink, Acting Administrator, United States General Services Administration, Washington, D.C., dated March 22, 1985, in The Museum of Modern Art Library). Many testimonies held that the hearing was obviously prejudiced; see especially those by Gustave Harrow (hearing transcript [March 6, 1985], pp. 51–56) and Abigail Solomon-Godeau (hearing transcript [March 8], pp. 564–67).
33. See Chronology of Events, in Dwight A. Ink, "Decision on the Tilted Arc," United States General Services Administration, Washington, D.C., May 31, 1985. It notes that *Tilted Arc* was installed at Federal Plaza on July 16, 1981; soon after, on July 27, "Honorable Edward D. Re, Chief Judge, Court of International Trade wrote Administrator Gerald P. Carmen contending that the sculpture was an architectural barrier which negatively impacts on the spaciousness and utility of the plaza." On August 18, he wrote: "...the views of responsible local citizens were not solicited before the sculpture was erected." An entry for November 18, 1984, reads: "Letter from Judge Re to GSA Administrator Ray Kline continuing to urge removal of the Tilted Arc." Document in The Museum of Modern Art Library.
34. See testimony of Judge Edward D. Re, hearing transcript (March 7, 1985), p. 362. Given the claims of the judge and other public officials that the plaza should be used for social activities, it is curious indeed that they made few attempts to experiment with the possibility of such activities with the sculpture in place. It is interesting to note that at the hearing itself numerous performing artists claimed that the sculpture, in fact, provided a perfect environment for their work. See hearing transcript, the testimonies of Philip Glass (March 6, 1985, p. 112), Joan Jonas (March 7, p. 420), and Alvin Lucier (March 7, p. 505).
35. Letter from Chief Judge Edward D. Re to Ray Kline, Acting Administrator, United States General Services Administration, Washington, D.C., November 5, 1984, p. 3.
36. Testimony by Vickie O'Dougherty, in hearing transcript (March 6, 1985), pp. 139–43.

Richard Serra / Sculpture

Rosalind E. Krauss

**Edited and with an introduction
by Laura Rosenstock**

Essay by Douglas Crimp

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