



Sylvester

2001

Weatherproof steel

Outer Spiral: 13 feet, 7 inches by 41 feet by 31 feet, 8 inches
(4 meters by 13 meters by 10 meters)

Inner Spiral: 13 feet, 7 inches by 30 feet, 8 inches, by 24 feet, 11 inches
(4 meters by 9 meters by 8 meters)

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Richard Serra (b. 1938, San Francisco, CA, USA)

In his early life, Richard Serra spent time in shipyards where his father worked as a pipefitter during World War II. Serra also worked in a steel mill to earn money for college. After completing a BA in English Literature at the University of California at Berkeley and a BFA and MFA in painting at Yale, Serra spent a year in Paris and a year in Florence on a Fulbright Scholarship. Serra abandoned painting in 1966 to begin making sculpture, working with steel. In 1968 and 1969, Serra began working with structural engineers outside of the gallery setting. Serra began working in landscapes in the 1970s and has developed steel art structures both in the US and abroad. Serra also works in film, releasing his first studio film, *Hand Catching Lead*, in 1968.

Sylvester (2001)

Sylvester is named for David Sylvester, a British art critic and friend of Serra's, who passed away shortly before the 2001 Gagosian exhibition *Torqued Spirals, Toruses, and Spheres*. Sylvester is part of the *Torqued Spiral* series, and the full piece consists of 5 self-supporting steel panels, weighing a total of 225,000 pounds, or 112.5 tons. The installation of Sylvester was part of the planning process during the first phase of Glenstone; the curves of the Gallery building and the sculpture echo one another. Charles Gwathmey, Glenstone's first architect, worked with the founders in selecting the placement of the work and the building; Serra weighed in on its placement as well. There are a number of echo spots that create different sound effects within the work, and the piece radiates heat absorbed from sunshine. In 2001, Serra remarked, "I like how [Sylvester] cuts the sky."

From the Artist

"Steel was such a traditional material I wasn't going near it... Picasso, González, Calder had all done great things with steel. But then I thought, Well, I can use steel in the way industry uses it—for weight, load bearing, stasis, friction, counterbalance.

I knew something about steel, so why not?" (Richard Serra interview, *The New Yorker*, August 5, 2002)

Reflections

As you experience *Sylvester* (2001), take notice of your sense of gravity. You may also notice how sound changes as you move in and out of the sculpture. How do these two elements - gravity and sound - affect your experience of *Sylvester*?

Richard Serra has a keen interest in the choreography of the viewers' bodies through space. To some, he "sculpts with air" and "negative space." How do these intangible elements (air, space, movement) affect your experience of the work?