

GAGOSIAN GALLERY



Serra sculptures both huge and dense go on view in London

Michael Roddy



Artist Richard Serra poses for photographers in Oviedo, northern Spain, in this file photo from October 21, 2010. Credit: Reuters/Eloy Alonso/Files

(Reuters) - It took “big guys”, cranes and a street closure to move four steel installations weighing more than 200 tons by American minimalist sculptor Richard Serra into a London gallery.

But once assembled the pieces were quite simple - one of the hallmarks of the San Francisco-born Serra’s works.

“One of the extraordinary things about his work in my view is that a small child of five-years-old can get it as easily as you or I,” said Mark Francis, co-director of art dealer Larry Gagosian’s London galleries.

“You don’t need to understand a lot about contemporary art to understand everything about it.”

The exhibition opens on Friday and includes pieces never before shown.

Three of the four pieces are made of steel plates or weatherproof steel. But one of them is of forged steel that is so dense and heavy that it required a mammoth effort to install it, Francis said.

“It took a lot of big guys figuring out how to get it in, and state of the art trucks and balancing weights and cranes,” he said.

The street outside the gallery was closed for two weeks to get the works in and trucks could only use certain bridges that could handle the enormous weight.

Another, “Backdoor Pipeline” (2010), is in some ways an offshoot of the walk-through snail-like structure that Serra, 74, made for the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao.

It consists of a towering, rust-coloured 15.2-m (50-ft) long A-shaped form, made of two pieces of curved steel that lean into each other at their apex. The shape is in some ways reminiscent of a church.

“London Cross” (2014), is made of two huge, 40-ft-long slabs of grey steel, mounted edgewise one atop the other in a gravity defying feat that is only made possible because the slabs are wedged into the corners of the room.

“You might not want it to end up in San Francisco,” Francis said, referring to the precarious balancing act for the plates and the notion of exhibiting them in an earthquake zone.

“Before it came we thought ‘Wow, this is going to be something unprecedented in his work’,” Francis said.

In the end, though, “It seems both massive and in a way quite intimate.”

The show runs through to the end of February. Prices for the works are not made public, Francis said.