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### Richard Serra at Matthew Marks

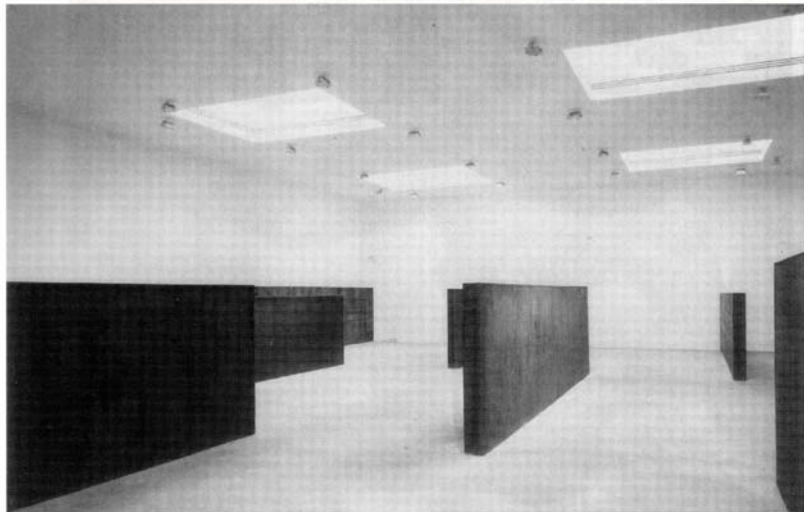
Richard Serra's new sculpture, *To Whom It May Concern*, is his largest indoor piece in almost 15 years. It consists of nine upright plates of Cor-Ten steel, all 22 feet long and 8 inches thick but varied in height from 65 to 75 inches. Arranged in rows of three and staggered in relationship to each other, these rectangular plates took up most of the 5,000 square feet of the main gallery.

As installed at Marks, the work suggested room dividers or the abstracted hedges of a maze in an English garden. The steel plates function as a system of walls and openings which thread the viewer through the passages along a more or less angular path. The dense metal seems to absorb sound and muffle sensation, so that eventually what remains is silence and an utter stillness against which the viewer measures each intake of breath, each heartbeat, each footfall. Yet this subtly cadenced, elegant structure fails to establish the intensity of relationship which usually exists—for better or worse—between a Serra sculpture, its environment and the viewer. Here, a distance and deceptive nonchalance prevail, exemplified by the offhandedness of the title, *To Whom It May Concern*.

This seeming easing of control makes for a less confrontational, less intimidating, less authoritarian and ultimately more viewer-friendly experience, as if Serra were attempting a reconciliation of sorts.

I was told that, wending your way through the work, in certain places you could almost see the entire assemblage from above—if you happen to be over 6 feet tall (which says something of the artist's assumptions about whom he is addressing). Otherwise the sculpture is experienced as a number of partial and split views which replicate themselves as you move around it. Rather than making you feel diminished or crushed, though, this Serra seems to steady the sense of self, both physically and psychologically. The surface of the steel is also less raw and more painterly than usual, its velvety texture beautifully streaked with blue grays, whitened grays, a smear of orange rust, a splatter of oxblood, and rose—another conciliatory gesture, perhaps. If this work lacks the dark, brooding disaffection that characterizes his best work, it still proves that Serra, after all these years, remains a master.

—Lilly Wei



Richard Serra: *To Whom It May Concern*, 1995, Cor-Ten steel (nine parts), each part 22 feet long and 8 inches thick, variable heights up to 75 inches; at Matthew Marks.