

# The Museum of Modern Art

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## ANTHONY CARO RETROSPECTIVE AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The first retrospective to be held in the United States of work by the influential 50-year-old British sculptor, Anthony Caro, will take place at The Museum of Modern Art from April 30 through July 6. The exhibition, installed in the Garden Wing gallery and on the middle and upper terrace of the Museum's Sculpture Garden, includes approximately thirty large steel sculptures and a group of table pieces; some of the works have never previously been exhibited and a number have not before been seen in the United States.

Organized by William Rubin, Director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, who also wrote the accompanying monograph,\* the Caro retrospective is presented jointly with the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and has been made possible with the assistance of The British Council, London, and by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D.C. It is the first major exhibition of work by a British sculptor to be held at the Museum since its 1947 Henry Moore retrospective and includes works from private collectors and museums in the United States, Canada and Great Britain.

Surveying the work of the last decade and a half -- from the outset of Caro's mature style to the present -- the sculpture on view ranges from Midday of 1960, the first of Caro's innovative, horizontally oriented, painted steel pieces to the very large, unpainted works of the last several years such as Curtain Road of 1974 and Riviera, 1971-75.

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\*ANTHONY CARO by William Rubin. A comprehensive monograph that reviews Caro's early career and closely analyses his mature work, presenting the entire oeuvre against the historical background of 20th-century sculpture. 192 pages; 128 illustrations (16 color plates). Hardbound \$17.50 (members \$13.13); paperbound \$7.95 (members \$5.96). Published by The Museum of Modern Art; distributed by New York Graphic Society Ltd.

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In his catalog essay William Rubin defines Caro's work as the most important contemporary development of the tradition of Cubist-derived constructed sculpture that began with Picasso about 1912. The liberation from the monolith accomplished by Picasso's open-work, additively devised constructions established the modern tradition of constructed sculpture in which form is created through the joining by welding, soldering, glueing, bolting, etc. of separate elements. Although explored by the Russians, Tatlin, Rodchenko, Gabo and Pevsner, and later considerably broadened by Gonzalez and Calder, constructed sculpture remained secondary to the older tradition of working with modeled or carved solids until the post-World War II initiatives of David Smith. Even though considerable first-rate constructed sculpture has been made by some of Smith's contemporaries as well as younger artists, it is Caro who, since Smith's death, has most significantly advanced the on-going vitality of the tradition.

One of Caro's most important contributions to this tradition has been to effect a shift from a vertical to a horizontal orientation on a large scale. The conventional pedestal was eliminated, and the painted steel sculptures were spread out laterally making the space of the work coextensive with that of the viewer and incorporating the ground (or floor) in the sculptural experience. Since many, sometimes even all, of the units of a sculpture rest on the ground where they tend to touch rather than overlap or support each other -- they are not welded but are bolted or screwed together -- the usual sculptural sense of gravitational pressure is almost absent. Insofar as a vertical configuration, however abstract, tends to suggest anthropomorphic readings whereas a horizontal structure composed of identical elements does not, the lateral dispersion of Caro's work reinforces its abstractness. Only rarely does Caro seriously alter the forms of the found material that he

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uses to construct his sculptures; he prefers that their shapes be simple, relatively uninteresting in themselves. He thus forces the expressive content of the finished piece into the relationships between its discrete parts rather than focusing on their individual characters or profiles.

Caro has said, "I have been trying to eliminate references and make truly abstract sculpture, composing the parts of the pieces like notes in music. Just as a succession of these make up a melody or sonata, so I take anonymous units and try to make them cohere in an open way into a sculptural whole. Like music, I would like my sculpture to be the expression of feeling in terms of the material, and like music, I don't want the entirety of the experience to be given all at once."

Born near London in 1924, Caro was 36 years old when he created his first important sculptures. He had, however, been actively working in the art since the age of fifteen and this long apprenticeship is reflected in the rapidity and assurance with which he established his mature style in the early sixties. During the time he was earning his B.A. in engineering at Christ's College, Cambridge, Caro continued to study sculpture during his vacations and holidays at the Farnham School of Art near his parents' home. After serving with the Royal Navy from 1944 to 1946 he enrolled at the Royal Academy Schools in London where he received a strict academic training and won various awards and scholarships. Anxious to expand his experience beyond the traditional disciplines of the Academy Schools, Caro applied in 1951 for an assistantship with Henry Moore with whom he worked and studied for the next two years. He began exhibiting in 1955 and had his first solo exhibition in Milan the following year. Works from this period were often modeled in clay and are figurative and expressionistic with roughly rendered surfaces. A trip

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to the United States in 1959 -- where he saw sculpture by David Smith and other American metal sculptors and made numerous contacts in avant-garde circles -- acted as the catalyst for a major change in Caro's work. Shortly thereafter he began to work in an improvisational manner making the large, rigorously abstract, painted steel constructions that characterize his mature style.

Caro's work and teaching at the St. Martin's School of Art, London, have played an influential role in the rise of a new generation of English sculptors. Among his students have been Phillip King, William Tucker, Michael Bolus, David Annesley, Isaac Witkin and Tim Scott.

The Caro exhibition will travel after its showing in New York to the following institutions: The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, September 14 through November 2, 1975; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, December 12 through February 1, 1976; and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, March 25 through May 9, 1976.

The Museum of Modern Art gratefully acknowledges the support of its exhibition program by The New York State Council on the Arts.

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 Transparencies, black-and-white photographs and additional information  
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