

Carl Andre

Born in Quincy, Massachusetts, Carl Andre became a leading sculptor of Minimalism, known for his geometric floor-piece installations conceived with a strong sense of uniformity of shapes and the subsequent interaction with their environments and with each other. It was a vast departure from the emotive work of the Abstract Expressionists who were all dominant in New York when he began his career.

He attended Philips Andover Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, where he studied art with Patrick Morgan, a student of Hans Hofmann, one of Abstract Expressionism's chief exponents.

Andre also attended Kenyon College in Ohio, traveled in Europe, enlisted in the Army, and then moved to New York City where Patrick Morgan introduced him to the contemporary art scene and where he shared a studio with Minimalist Frank Stella who encouraged his geometric creative instincts.

Andre did his first works on paper in 1958, which led to a series of large-scale drawings and wooden, plexiglass sculptures. These sculptures had repetitive geometric patterns and were in part influenced by the continuities expressed in the work Constantin Brancusi as well as the building-block style of the Russian Constructivists.

From 1960 to 1964, he worked for a railroad company and inspired to make sculpture that looked like roads, he decided that rather than cutting into material, he would let his sculpture be the cutting device into the environment.

In 1965, he made his first ground pieces, and from that time used industrial products such as brick, styrofoam slabs, and metal strips, and cut them into squares that were uniform in size and material and related to each other through these factors as well as that they were sharing the same installation venue. On site, they took their definition and could be arranged in a variety of ways from single file to circular.

The viewer can observe Andre's works from a variety of perspectives and have their own optical experiences divorced from the artist's intent. The pieces can easily be dismantled and stored, at which time they cease to be anything but objects, without relationships to each other or to an environment.

These concepts of relating sculpture to its site was a marked departure from sculpture being considered as a precious and unique object, divorced from its surroundings. Andre did not paint his sculpture, preferring that time work away on the natural materials.

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