

Richard Serra: Back to black



Richard Serra, *Patience*, 1985, Three color screenprint and Paintstik on coated paper, 62 x 52 1/2 inches
Edition of 20, Signed lower right

By Cate McQuaid

At: Barbara Krakow Gallery,
10 Newbury St.,
through February 1st.
617-262-4490,
barbarakrakowgallery.com

Richard Serra, best known for his giant, minimalist public art projects made from sheet metal, plunges into some of the issues his sculptures raise in prints at Barbara Krakow Gallery. The show revolves around a series from the 1980s, in which Serra applied three layers of oil stick through a silkscreen stencil, layering black over black. The result, in a piece such as "Patience," a vertical rectangle with a gently sloping top, is so textured, pebbly, and streaked — and so densely black, that it suggests a monolith, even though it's

only human-size, at 62 inches tall.

The 1996 etching "For Joni," a blotted black box splattering ink within and without, is made with a deeply etched plate, which creates a similarly imposing texture. Again, the black form carries all the weight; the inkblots merely suggest that the box has such mass it's dropping, and shedding fragments as it goes. With works such as this, the black's density and the apprehension of touch dominate. Which raises a delicious question: Can a print, flat as it is, ever be a sculpture?

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