



**ANTHONY  
CARO**







# ANTHONY CARO

Sculptures

## Storm King Art Center

May 20-October 31, 1981

From the York Series, 1974

Front cover, left to right: *Yonge Street Flat*, *Bloor Flats*

Inside front cover: *Bloor Flats*

Back cover, left to right: *Yonge Street Flat*, *Streaker Flat*, *Fossil Flat*, *Surprise Flats*

Inside back cover: *Surprise Flats*

Storm King Art Center  
Old Pleasant Hill Road  
Mountainville, New York 10953

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#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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David R. Collens

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During the spring and summer of 1974, Anthony Caro made 37 large steel sculptures at York Steel, Canada and York University,<sup>1</sup> just outside of Toronto. It wasn't his first excursion out of the studio into the factory; in 1972, he had spent two weeks making pieces at the Rigamontè works in Veduggio (Brianza) Italy. But it was the first time Caro had had means and assistance which freed him completely from the limitations of studio scale equipment.

Until he began to work on the York Pieces, it had seemed that Caro's spontaneous, improvisatory approach automatically eliminated the possibility of making very large sculptures, or at least, of using elements over a certain size. He had to be able to shift the components of his constructions easily, in order to be able to adjust them intuitively. Because of the difficulties of moving enormous pieces of metal, it appeared that the only way to preserve this kind of freedom and end up with a public scale sculpture would be to work out the piece at a smaller, more manageable size and then enlarge it (or have it enlarged). Many sculptors use this method — even some good ones — despite its inherent dangers. Enlargement is perilous because it critically alters the relationship of surface to volume: doubling the dimensions of an element, for example, increases its volume eight times. But Caro's acute sensitivity to the actual size of things, his passionate concern for scale, makes such a method impossible for him, so until 1974, his sculpture had remained comfortably human in scale, made of elements which a single man (or one with a little help) could easily manoeuvre.

At York Steel and later, in the field at York University, where the half-finished pieces were moved for completion, Caro suddenly had men and equipment at his disposal which allowed him to work with a new lexicon of elements, without changing his attitude or his approach, but instead of simply making larger equivalents of his earlier sculptures, as a lesser artist might have, Caro explored new ideas. Because of the skill of the steel yard workers and because of the equipment they were trained to use, new possibilities were open to him. He described the elements he selected:

*"the extraordinary weight of those things, those pieces which were unlike anything I'd ever handled up to then. They were...*

*enormous and those guys at that steel yard were handling them like butter because they were accustomed."*<sup>2</sup>

Caro says some of the York Pieces had to do with "seeing steel in that position"<sup>3</sup> — slung up, lifted, moved as easily as he himself could move a thin plate.

*"They'd swing it up and it would look wonderful and I'd say 'Let's get some legs on it'."*<sup>4</sup>

Many of the works in the series, such as *Medium Flat*, *Yonge Street Flat*, or *Bay Flat*, are about this kind of unexpected presentation of beautiful sheets of material.<sup>5</sup> Others, such as *Fossil Flat*, *Bloor Flat*, or *Hog Flat*, are about slabs leaning on one another, about configurations which appear temporary and spontaneous. Still others, such as *Streaker Flat*, are horizontal spills of metal. Although there is a family resemblance between the pieces, they do not constitute a series in the sense of development of a single theme with variations. Seen as a group, it's clear that each of the York Pieces both suggested new alternatives and proposed solutions to other works, but each is distinctly individual: witness the engaging oddity of *Square Feet Flat*, which combines forthright presentation with an image very like a Welsh dresser.

Although the works were built out-of-doors, and because of their size, are frequently displayed out-of-doors, Caro prefers them in an orderly or urban setting. He likes the play of clear vertical and horizontal environment against the irregularity of the sculptures.

The welded and bolted steel sculptures which had established Caro's reputation, after 1960, were predominantly linear. They developed horizontally, resting on the floor of the spectator's own space, although the word "resting" is misleading, since Caro seemed to have abolished the law of gravity in these works. He disposed his components with the hand of a master juggler, creating deliberate ambiguities between purely pictorial elements and supporting members, often establishing a sort of elevated surrogate horizon, above and below which structural



and pictorial elements seemed to float. The bright, uniform colors with which he usually painted these works helped cancel out the industrial associations of his material, and at the same time, unified his multiplicity of elements. The skin of paint made the work appear singular, insubstantial and weightless.

In many works, Caro seemed to have chosen his collaged-together materials because they were literally thin, or to have sliced and altered them to stress their linear qualities. In some, he incorporated the animate twists of ploughshares and tank ends, presenting the viewer simultaneously with edge and plane. In others, he depended upon ephemeral effects of grids, creating planes at once there and not there, through accidental overlappings subject to change as the spectator moved around the piece.

These works almost always developed horizontally — “ground flung,” as they have been eloquently described. In a sense, horizontality, like openness, can be a kind of guarantee of abstractness, since verticality almost always carries with it some lingering association with the upright posture of human beings. By spreading his sculpture along the ground, Caro gained a new freedom of construction. The perpetual bugbear of support became less of an issue; the sculpture could extend and expand at the sculptor’s will, its structure no longer dictated by the need to transfer the weight of elevated masses to a single point, nor by the logic of the human body. The viewer, in turn, was free to observe the pieces without the domination of a preferred view or a sense of front and back.

The York Pieces, by virtue of their size and density, seem at first acquaintance a retreat from some of the concerns of Caro’s earlier sculpture, even a side-stepping of the traditions of constructed sculpture itself. Picasso and Gonzalez, after all, had physically opened up the time-honored figurative monolith. They had made it possible for sculpture to deal with open, thin-walled volumes, linear drawing and industrial materials, instead of masses and marble. (It might be more accurate to say that Picasso and Gonzalez made it possible for structures which combined open, thin-walled volumes, linear drawing and iron or steel, to be called sculpture. Modern movement architecture had already rejected the sculptural, masonry massing of the

Beaux-arts, in favor of light, linear members and thin-skinned, elevated volumes.)

Unlike most of their ancestors in the lineage of constructed sculpture, and unlike most of Caro’s earlier works, the York Pieces are made of large, substantial sheets of metal. Caro seems to have fallen in love with steel, particularly with soft-edged, romantic sheets with exquisitely inflected surfaces. It’s as though he finally succumbed to the physical properties of his chosen material, after years of disassembling, of exploiting steel’s tensile strength and practical virtues, but not its substance or weight. Of course, in the York Pieces, he still uses *relatively* thin elements — plates and sheets, rather than blocks or ingots — but their sheer size makes a great difference in how we perceive the works.

Caro’s earlier, linear sculptures defied gravity. Their potent illusion of weightlessness made what they looked like more important than what they were made of. The uniform color, intimate scale and relatively small size of the component parts of these works made it possible for us to ignore the fact that steel bars — say — no matter how thin, are still heavy. Visual evidence made us happily accept their apparent ability to float, without thinking about the literal properties of their material. But the slabs and plates from which the York Pieces are constructed are so large that we cannot disregard their weight. Caro makes sure we take their aggressive physicality into account by leaving their surfaces unpainted, emphasizing the particularities of metal.

Yet despite the apparent precariousness of some of his configurations, we accept their seemingly transitory positions without question, with the “willing suspension of disbelief” usually called into the service of the theater. It’s quite different from the sense of danger, the awareness of a threat of collapse which characterizes many of Richard Serra’s works. Caro tacitly acknowledges gravity, in the York Pieces, making no attempt to hide his props and supports. (In the most successful pieces, though, they are such integral parts of the sculptures that, recalling his earlier work, it is difficult to see them only as supporting members. Conversely, when the prop remains too singularly a prop, the sculpture often suffers.)





*Medium Flats*



Although some aspects of the York Pieces make them seem unique within the body of Caro's work, there are precedents for some of their concerns. Caro had begun to use relatively large pieces of unpainted, soft-edged steel as early as 1972, in the Veduggio series, made in Italy. Like the York Pieces, these works incorporated magnificent sheets of metal, often presented vertically, as though displayed on an easel. The vertical stance of these sculptures altered the viewer's relationship to the works from one of observation to one of confrontation, but the device of presentation defeated any figurative associations inherent in verticality. In the York Pieces, Caro continues to examine the possibilities of this assumption. In unequivocally frontal works, such as *Bay Flat* or *Medium Flat*, he takes a cue from David Smith and suppresses end views in favor of head-on encounters. Like Smith, too, he makes it impossible to predict a given view of a sculpture from any other view. In works such as *Fossil Flat*, with its deep "sandwich" format, or *Surprise Flats*, with its "boarded-up entrance," there isn't even a sense of frontality. The deep notch in the cross-wall of *Fossil Flat*, for example serves to emphasize the volume of the piece, the distance between the two exterior "walls." The energy of the sculpture is turned inward, contained. The skewed teepee of *Surprise Flats* is skewed further by the not-quite-congruent slatted structure which, in turn, suggests something walled-off and hidden. Yet as we move around the sculpture, we see through it and into it. There are several different "faces" of the work—as there are in all the York Pieces. In the most successful sculptures, like *Surprise Flats*, there is no sense that any is the preferred view.

It's this sense of being confronted by an extensive, articulated, substantial object, rather than a complex, elusive visual phenomenon, which separates the York Pieces from any of their predecessors. Even the Veduggio sculptures, (and those which immediately followed them) which apparently prefigured ideas developed in the York Pieces, were closer to those of the earlier, linear works. Their increased emphasis on surface was simply the result of using larger elements; plates and sheets have more surface than bars and rods. The sculptures were still essentially drawing-like, albeit it was drawing with broad strokes and areas of tone, rather than fine lines. The undulating contours of the

rolled sheets focussed our attention on the linear rhythms of shape and edge.

In the York Pieces, the component plates are so large that the sheer expanse of steel dominates the particularities of shape. The slabs' curving edges still demonstrate their origin in the rolling mill, but they are relatively simple in contour. And no matter how gorgeous the original slab of steel, Caro never allows it to dominate the sculpture. Like any found object he has used, it is made subordinate to the structure of the entire work. It may be an essential element, but its meaning derives only from its relationship to other components and to the whole.

Yet the large expanses of steel are presented to us so that we may admire the nuances of their surfaces, so much so that we are irresistibly provoked to find analogies with painting for the York Pieces. This is not to say that similar parallels can't be found for Caro's earlier work. The openness and opticality of his sculptures of the '60s and early '70s, for example, are characteristics peculiar not only to the tradition of constructed sculpture, but to the abstract painting of Caro's contemporaries at the time—his friends Kenneth Noland, Helen Frankenthaler and Jules Olitski, to name just a few. The pools and bars of radiant thin color in their paintings of the period were expressions of ideas closely related to those Caro tackled in three dimensions: ideas about extension and expansiveness, about seeing itself, Caro and his colleagues were (and are) all deeply concerned with art which is for the eye only, art which transmits its logic and emotion through visual perceptions alone.

But the York Pieces invite comparison not with the clean-edged, transparent color painting of the '60s, but with sensuous "painterly" painting, in general. If the Veduggio pieces recalled Jules Olitski because of their edge drawing and emptied out centers, the York Pieces suggest him because of their substance and the all-over inflection of their surfaces. The dense floods of soft-edge color of Helen Frankenthaler's recent works come to mind, as do the looming "molars" of Morris Louis's Veils.

For all their physicality, for all their clarity of structure, the York Pieces are as fundamentally optical as their predecessors. It's this that keeps them from encroaching on the concerns of architecture, despite their size and despite their wall-like slabs.





Left: *Yonge Street Flat*; right: *Bloor Flats*





It's also what keeps their mass from being overwhelming. Caro has managed to appropriate the substance and seductive surfaces of traditional modelled sculpture, and translate them not only into the idiom of constructed sculpture, but into purely visual terms. The York Pieces were remarkable, at the time Caro made them, for their mass and size. They remain perhaps more remarkable for their expansion of the vocabulary of modernist sculpture.

Karen Wilkin, March 1981

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>York University issued the invitation to make works to Anthony Caro during the academic year 1973-74. The David Mirvish Gallery, Toronto, sponsored and supported the project. In the spring of 1974, Caro began the sculptures, at York Steel, with the assistance of James Wolfe and Willard Boepple. During the summer, the pieces were moved to the York University campus, where Caro continued to work on them, at intervals, for nearly a year. André Fauteux was his assistant during this phase. Wolfe was Caro's assistant earlier at Veduggio and was the principal assistant throughout the York project.

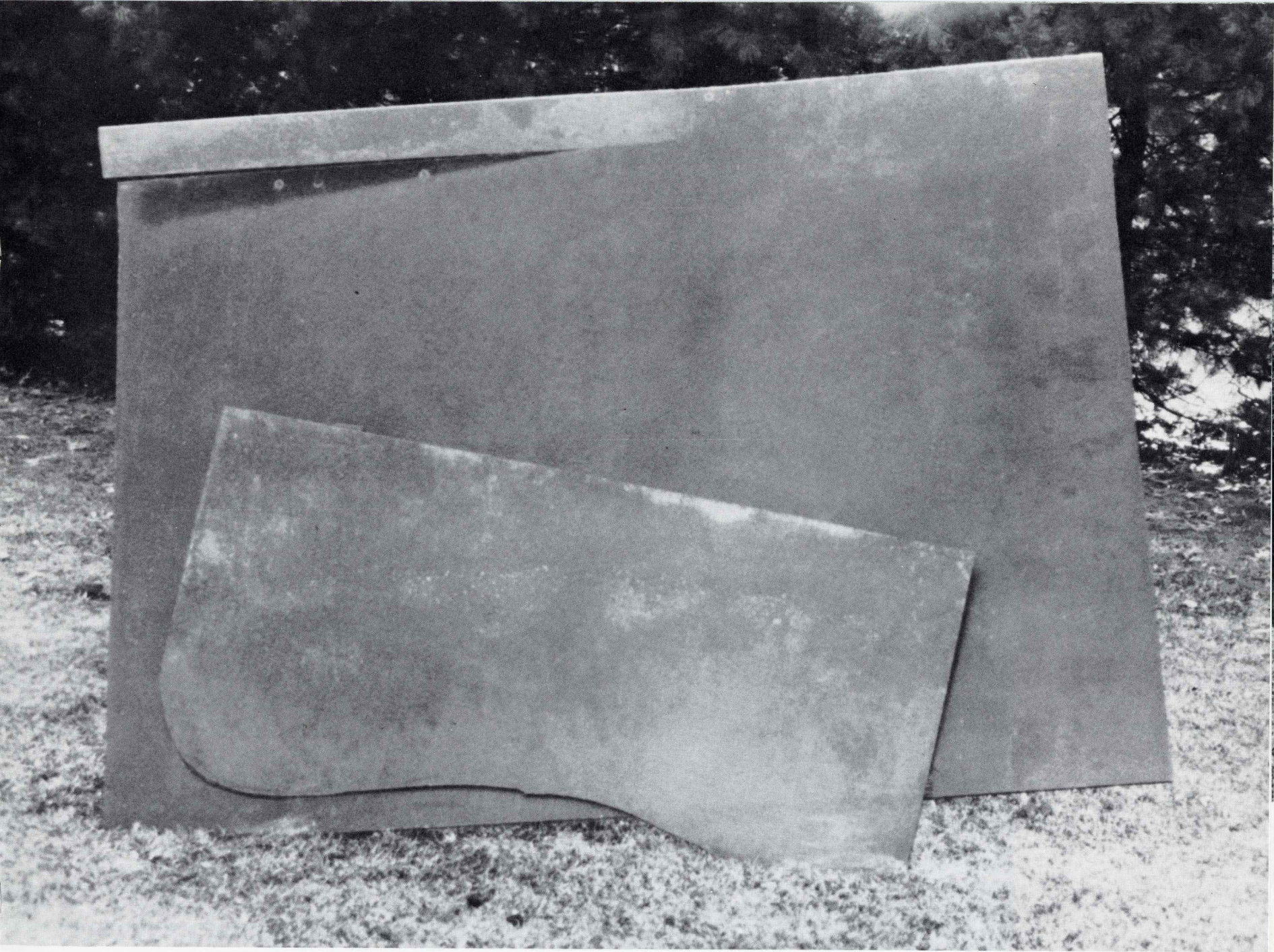
<sup>2</sup>Anthony Caro, quoted by Joseph G. Green, in *The York Pieces by Anthony Caro*, The Faculty of Fine Arts, York University, Downsview, Ontario, n.d., p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Anthony Caro, in conversation with the author.

<sup>4</sup>Anthony Caro, in conversation with the author.

<sup>5</sup>*Yonge Street Flat* and *Bay Flat*, in fact, were the first of the series.





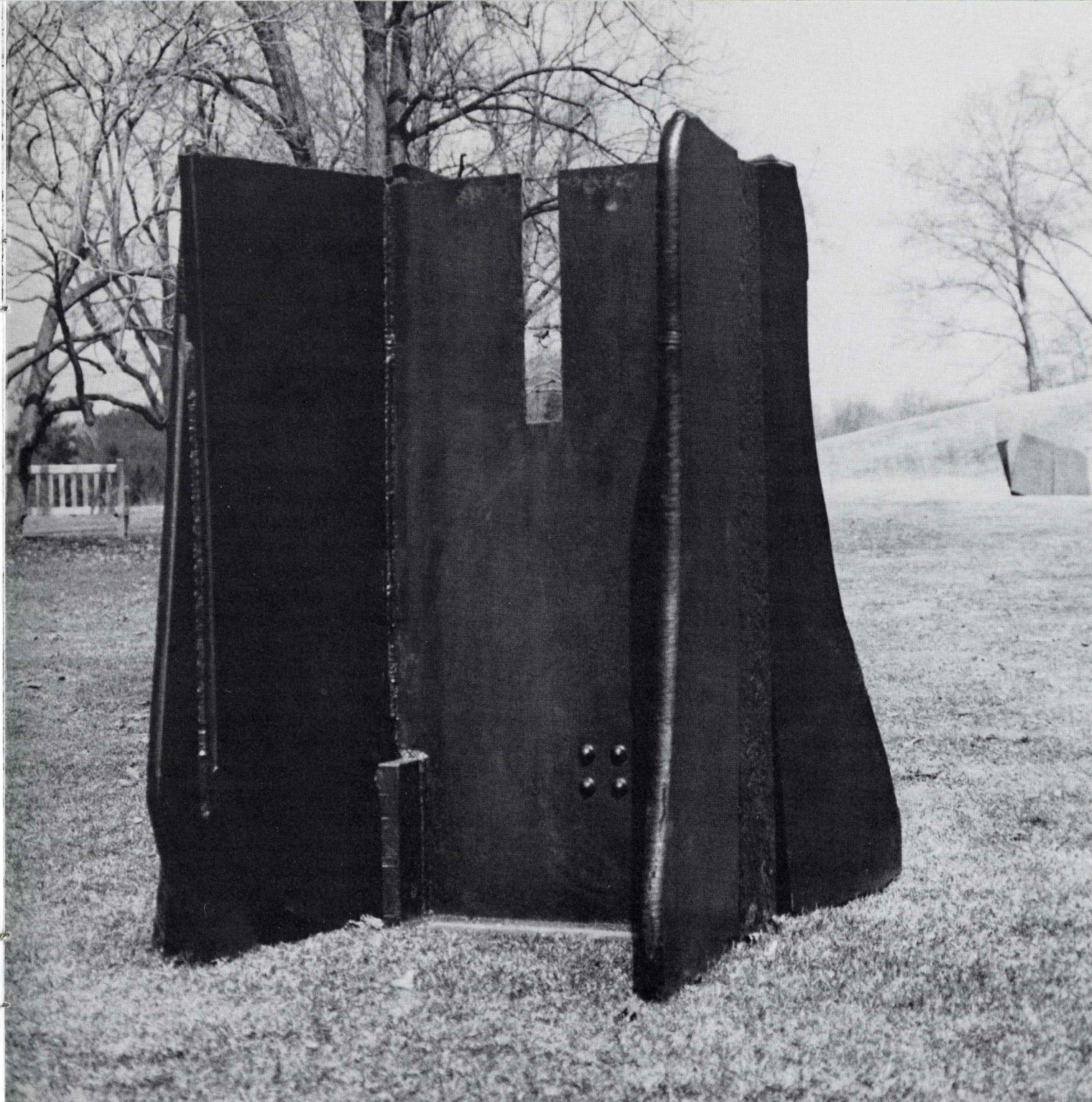
*Pin Up Flat*





*Hog Flat*

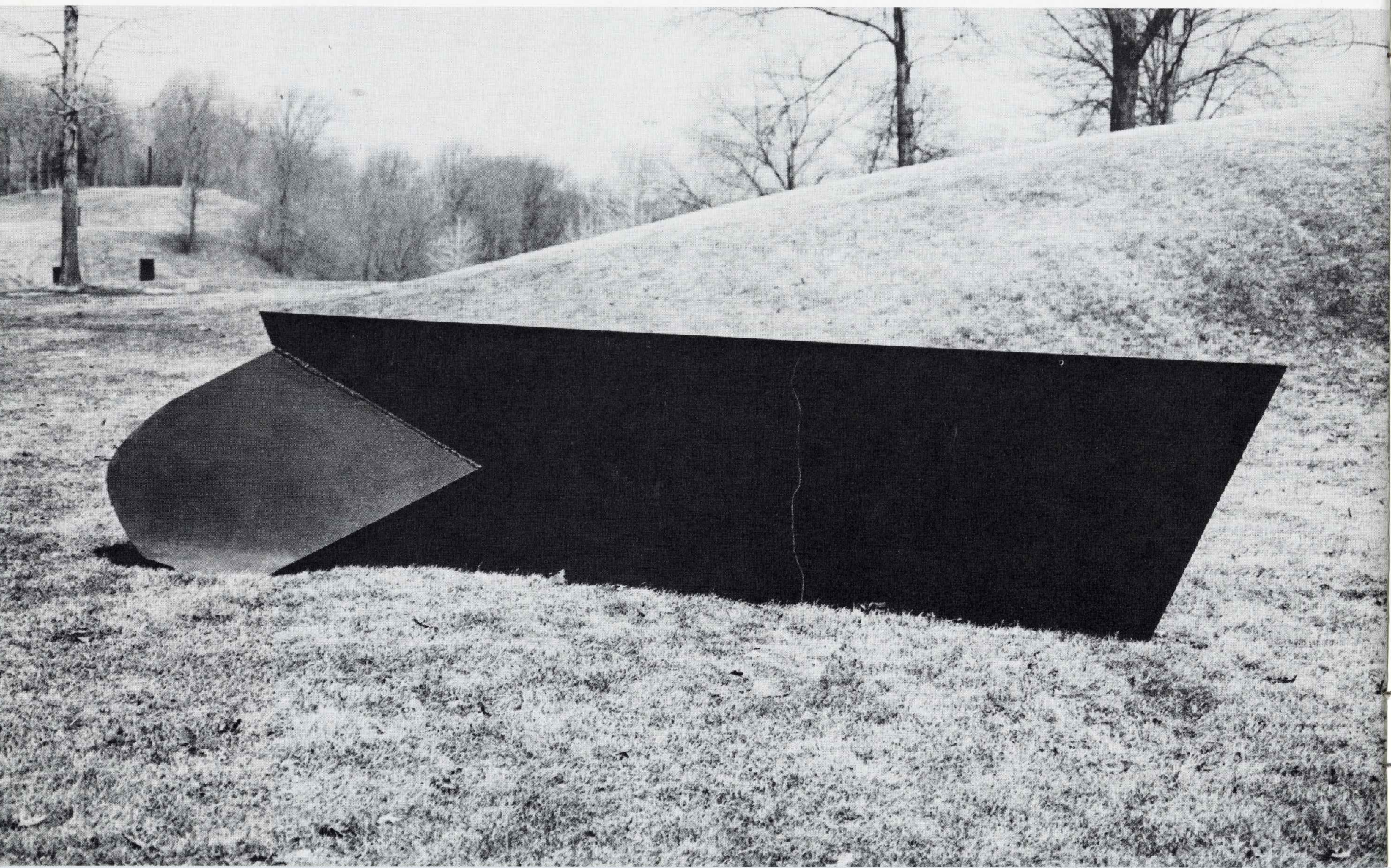




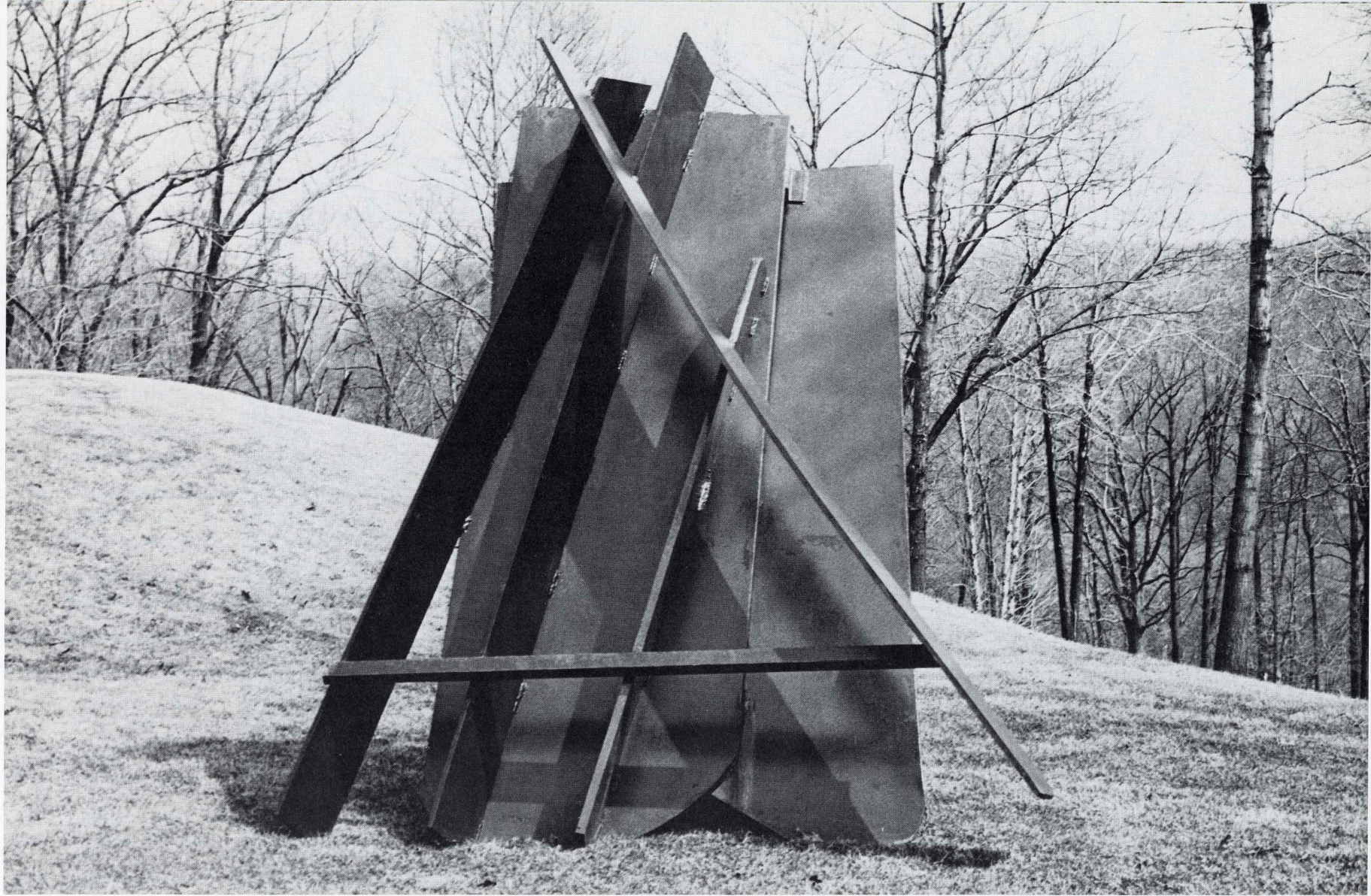
*Fossil Flat*



*Streaker Flat*







*Surprise Flats*





*Square Feet Flat*



## ANTHONY CARO

Born 1924 in London

Awarded Commander of the British Empire, 1971

### ONE MAN EXHIBITIONS

- |      |  |      |   |
|------|--|------|---|
| 1956 | Galleria del Naviglio, Milan   | 1975 | Museum of Modern Art, New York — Retrospective<br>Walker Art Center, Minneapolis<br>Museum of Fine Arts, Houston  |
| 1957 | Gimpel Fils, London  |      |   |
| 1963 | Whitechapel Art Gallery, London  | 1976 | Museum of Fine Arts, Boston — Retrospective<br>Watson de Nagy Gallery, Houston<br>Galerie Wentzel, Hamburg<br>Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago<br>Lefevre Gallery, London  |
| 1964 | André Emmerich Gallery, New York   |      |   |
| 1965 | Washington Gallery of Modern Art, Washington, D.C.<br>Kasmin Limited, London   | 1977 | Galerie Piltzer-Rheims, Paris<br>Waddington and Tooth Galleries, London<br>André Emmerich Gallery, New York<br>Tel Aviv Museum, Tel Aviv  |
| 1966 | David Mirvish Gallery, Toronto<br>Galerie Bischofberger, Zurich<br>André Emmerich Gallery, New York  |      |   |
| 1967 | Rijksmuseum Kroller-Muller, Otterlo<br>Kasmin Limited, London  | 1978 | André Emmerich Gallery, New York<br>Harcus Krakow Gallery, Boston<br>Knoedler Gallery, London<br>Galerie André Emmerich, Zurich<br>Ace Gallery, Venice, California<br>Antwerp Gallery, Antwerp<br>Galerie Wentzel, Hamburg<br>Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago |
| 1968 | André Emmerich Gallery, New York   |      |   |
| 1969 | Hayward Gallery, London (organized by the Arts Council<br>of Great Britain)<br>British Section, X Bienal de São Paulo (organized by the<br>British Council)  | 1979 | Kunsthalle Mannehim<br>Kunstverein Frankfurt<br>Kunstverein Braunschweig<br>Stadt Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich<br>Gallery Kasahara, Osaka, Japan<br>Ace Gallery, Vancouver, Canada<br>André Emmerich Gallery, New York                                    |
| 1970 | André Emmerich Gallery, New York   |      |   |
| 1971 | David Mirvish Gallery, Toronto<br>Kasmin Limited, London   | 1980 | The York Pieces, Christian Science Center, Boston   |
| 1972 | André Emmerich Gallery, New York<br>Kasmin Limited, London   | 1981 | Harcus Krakow Gallery, Boston<br>Edmonton Art Gallery, Alberta, Canada<br>Storm King Art Center, Mountainville, New York  |
| 1973 | André Emmerich Gallery, New York<br>Norfolk and Norwich Triennial Festival, East Anglia  |      |   |
| 1974 | André Emmerich Gallery, New York<br>Galerie André Emmerich, Zurich<br>Kenwood House, London<br>David Mirvish Gallery, Toronto<br>Galleria dell'Ariete, Milan |      |   |



## OUTDOOR SCULPTURES

### *Bay Flat*, 1974

Steel, H. 101" x L. 59" x D. 60"

### *Bloor Flats*, 1974

Steel, H. 67" x L. 74" x D. 64"

### *Fossil Flat*, 1974

Steel, H. 73" x L. 53" x D. 86"

### *Hog Flat*, 1974

Steel, H. 115" x L. 73" x D. 46"

### *Medium Flats*, 1974

Steel, H. 79" x L. 165" x D. 44"

### *Pin Up Flat*, 1974

Steel, H. 79" x L. 103" x D. 67"

### *Square Feet Flat*, 1974

Steel, H. 76" x L. 110" x D. 47"

On loan from Clement and Janice Greenberg

### *Streaker Flat*, 1974

Steel, H. 45" x L. 201" x D. 45"

### *Surprise Flats*, 1974

Steel, H. 122" x L. 136" x D. 113"

### *Yonge Street Flat*, 1974

Steel, H. 90" x L. 109" x D. 39"

The above York Series sculptures are from the collection of the artist, courtesy of the André Emmerich Gallery, except as noted.

### *Moment*, 1973

Steel, H. 52½" x L. 92" x D. 78"

Guido Goldman Sprinkling Trust

### *Reel*, 1964

Painted steel, H. 34¼" x L. 107" x D. 37¾"

Storm King Art Center

### *Seachange*, 1970

Painted steel, H. 35" x L. 111" x D. 60"

Storm King Art Center

## INDOOR SCULPTURES

### *Bennington*, 1964

Painted steel, H. 3'4" x L. 13'10" x D. 11'1½"

On loan from Jules Olitski

### *Emma Dance*, 1977

Steel and painted steel,

H. 94¼" x L. 98" x D. 111"

### *Fender*, 1972

Steel and Cor-ten Steel,

H. 21¾" x L. 34" x D. 8'1"

Collection of Helen Frankenthaler

### *Haze*, 1970

Painted steel, H. 19" x L. 78" x D. 72"

### *Horizon*, 1966

Painted steel, H. 5'9½" x L. 13'9" x D. 34¼"

Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University,  
Waltham, Mass.

Gift of Mr. & Mrs. Max Wasserman

### *Piece LVI*, 1969

Polished steel & brass, H. 12¼" x L. 26" x D. 10"

Private collection,

courtesy of André Emmerich Gallery

### *Piece XLI*, 1967

Polished brass, H. 14½" x L. 18½" x D. 5"

Private collection,

courtesy of André Emmerich Gallery

### *Quarterings*, 1980

Brass plate, cast & welded bronze,

H. 27" x L. 32" x D. 28"

### *Shaftsbury*, 1965

Painted steel, H. 2'3" x L. 10'7" x D. 9'

Private collection, Boston

### *Stainless B*, 1974-75

Stainless steel, H. 18½" x L. 53" x D. 33"

Private collection,

courtesy of André Emmerich Gallery

### *Table Piece CCCCIX*, 1977-78

Rusted & varnished steel,

H. 31" x L. 64" x D. 34½"

### *Table Piece CCCXIII*, 1976-77

Rusted & varnished steel & sheet steel,

H. 30" x L. 40" x D. 14"

Collection of Eric D. Rosenfeld, New York

### *Table Piece CCCXV (Safety)*, 1975-76

Steel, H. 15" x L. 28" x D. 17½"

### *Table Piece CCLXXIII*, 1975-76

Rusted & varnished steel, H. 19" x L. 52" x D. 31"

### *Water Street Stop*, 1980

Cast & welded, copper plates & bar bronze,

H. 44½" x L. 54" x D. 33"

Private collection, New York

### *Water Street Warm-up*, 1980

Cast & welded brass plated bronze,

H. 20" x L. 35½" x D. 16"

### *Water Street Wonder*, 1980

Welded & cast bronze, copper plate,

H. 65" x L. 52" x D. 26"

Collection of Sheila Caro

All works courtesy André Emmerich Gallery, except as noted.







