

Richard Nonas



Fergus McCaffrey, New York, is pleased to present a large-scale exhibition of works by **Richard Nonas**. On view **September 10–October 25, 2014**, the exhibition will be broad in scope, with works ranging from 1970 through 2014.

Richard Nonas is one of the leading artists of the Post-Minimalist generation living and working in New York. In the 1970s, Nonas and a group of intrepid artists began creating and showing works in alternative spaces, including the Clocktower and 112 Greene Street.

Nonas was at the heart of this pivotal rethinking of how art could be shown and experienced.

Sculpture and space are interdependent carriers of deep philosophical and emotional meanings for Nonas. Many of his works—made of such materials as linear wood beams, granite curbstones, and steel slabs—rest directly on the ground and function more as spatial and emotional markers than as formal aesthetic objects. The forms interrupt the space, calling attention to the nonspecificity of the forms on the one hand, while creating a charged sense of place on the other.

Born in 1936 in New York, Nonas studied social anthropology and literature at Lafayette College and Columbia University. After ten years of fieldwork in northern Ontario, Canada's Yukon Territory, the Sonoran Desert, northern Mexico and southern Arizona, Nonas returned to New York. He has described an epiphany in 1967, not long after his return: "One day I held up two pieces of wood, pushed them together and, incredibly, they conveyed strong and specific emotion. It was identifiable emotion but with no story explaining it, a disembodied emotion I could not fathom or explain. I felt like I had been hit on the head with a hammer. I realized all at once that it might be possible to communicate abstract emotion and ideas directly with objects, instead of indirectly with language."^{*}

Nonas's anthropological work left a deep imprint that still affects his sculptural practice, in particular his engagement with the perception of place. "What I realized in Mexico was that there are physical places, spaces deeply imbued with human meaning, that can have a great deal of power over us, places that affect us in an extremely worldly way. Those places are still models for the kind of art that I want to make. But I cannot do that directly. What I can do, though, is to make objects that function as tools to force those powerful places into existence."^{*}

Using materials that operate in the interstices between nature and culture, Nonas often reiterates his sculptural arrangements using different materials, such as wood, steel, and stone. The immense difference between how those materials feel—what they convey, and the way the viewer reacts to them and interacts with them—is key to his work. For Nonas, a line arranged in a space using wood elements is slower, more absorbent, more porous, whereas the same line in steel is hard, fast, and cold.

Nonas has exhibited extensively and his works are in public collections around the world, including the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, Connecticut; Guggenheim Museum and Museum of Modern Art, both in New York; Museum of Contemporary Art,

Los Angeles; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Panza Collection, Milan; and Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Saint-Étienne Métropole, Saint-Priest-en-Jarez, France.

Fergus McCaffrey is located at 514 West 26th Street, New York, NY 10001, 212-988-2200

More information at www.fergusmccaffrey.com and on [Facebook](#).

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*"Richard Nonas with Alex Bacon," *Brooklyn Rail*, March 4, 2013.

Image: Richard Nonas, *Pivot*, 2014, 90 granite curbstones and three wood wall-markers: 10 x 7 meters / 32.8 x 23 feet.