Untitled, 1987 (left) oil paint on steel, 12" x 12" x 2"; *Untitled*, 1986 (right) oil paint on steel, 9¼" x 8¾" x 6¾".

RICHARD NONAS

FERGUS MCCAFFREY
SEPTEMBER 10 - OCTOBER 25

This new Chelsea gallery's recent survey of Richard Nonas's works was spectacularly beautiful. Less about the many eccentrically minimal objects than about the way they activated the space, the exhibition encompassed 51 pieces as elements of a strategically scattered whole that was far more than the sum of its parts. This was not only a retrospective of sorts, ranging from 1970 to 2014, but also a new site-specific installation that gave earlier works a new life. It was totally installed by the artist

Before Nonas began making objects, he worked for ten years as a cultural anthropologist, studying the way native cultures conceptualize space. Nonas never studied art. His off-kilter reductive works—made of rough wood beams, hard granite curbstones, cold steel slabs—bear some affinities with the work of Richard Serra, Carl Andre, and Dorothea Rockburne, but though he showed at 112 Greene Street, the Clocktower, and in the 1976 inaugural show at P.S. 1, Nonas always handled objects as tools for perceiving the emotional resonance of space and place.

Skid (New-Word Chaser Series), 2014, a 41-foot procession of steel T-forms, led diagonally through the main space into the rear gallery. Like deliberately randomized signposts, dense steel and wood pieces were strewn across the room—the smallest measuring 4½ by 3 by 2 inches. Among them was *Deadfall* (1975), a large scalene triangle flat on the floor. Leaning against a wall was a steep wooden stair-like slice. The two earliest works, both dated 1970, were simple sheets of butcher's paper slathered with carpenter's glue. On the staircase landing, an intriguing, long, narrow, frame-like object lured viewers to the upstairs gallery, where small double objects in solid steel from the "Fist Series" occupied the walls. The nine-part steel *Hunk* (2008) dominated the floor. The only touch of color here: the anomalous *Steel Drawing, 5 Plates: One Red, One Yellow* (1988). KIM LEVIN

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