



Art: *Union of the Torus and the Sphere*

Site: Interior, factory-building space

Place: DIA: Beacon

Location: Beacon, NY

Artist: Richard Serra



diacenter.org, Richard Barnes

Aside from the title being about geometric forms, there is a spiritual pairing of this object in this tight space – a strange narrow interior hallway of a gallery with clerestory windows on two walls. The light plays such a significant role, as it does in cathedrals, creating theatrical celestial illumination on this hard, earthen lump.

Its form, much like the prow of a ship being beaten by waves (another possible reason for the symbolic union), sits helplessly inside a space that resembles the hold of a ship, that lowest, innermost bottom. The dynamic makes for a strange inside/outside relationship. And the scale of the object held within this compression chamber makes references to ships in bottles. The leaning, curving form is accentuated by the claustrophobia-inducing walls, and would be less meaningful in a wide-open space – its power being the containment and tension created. The work is impenetrable, so your interaction with it is based on its surface form, which varies as it slumps closer to or farther from the encasing walls. The energy it exudes in its sloping swagger and its oxidized, textured skin is palpable, like some sad creature in a cage. It is hard to decipher whether it is being held up or, rather, bent down by its pressurized cabin, adding to the totality of its mystery. How

a big lump of steel in a tight space could possess a sacred sense of place is a puzzlement, but it is exactly the kind of unknowable that affects us this way, if we allow it. The intention may be one of geometry but the result is so much more.

Impact:

- Containment
 - Scale
- Primal/spiritual fortress
 - Exemplar use of form
- Alchemy of materiality (changing hard to soft)
 - Experiential
 - Emotional

Art-to-Site Rating: High

View Date: July 2007

