

Richard Van Buren: Bennington

For the 2017 edition of Expo Chicago, Garth Greenan Gallery will present *Bennington*, a solo exhibition of works by Richard Van Buren. Six of the artist's densely layered abstract sculptures will be on view, including *Strata* (1977) and the monumental floor piece *Bennington* (1970). The latter consists of multiple brightly colored polyester elements cast from Mylar sheets buried in a snowbank. It is a seminal work in that it marks the beginning of the artist's career-long fascination with the relationship between natural/organic forms and man-made/inorganic materials, especially their ability to mimic each other.

Rather than modeled or constructed, works like *Bennington* seem to emerge as residue from two ends of time that seldom conjoin. Folded, twisted, sharp, and lumpy—the forms are shot through with colors that are simultaneously toxic and beautiful. In each element, the artist embedded milled glass, plaster, paper, glitter, and dry pigment. At times, the semi-transparent forms resemble crumpled pieces of space junk that have been frozen in order to encase other pieces of trash for forensic reference. Viewers both look at and into *Bennington*.

Van Buren's understanding of time is what sets him apart from his peers. His early sculptures are not about the timeless present (Donald Judd and Dan Flavin) or the body (Eva Hesse), nor do they reference art history—Jackson Pollock's poured paintings, for example. Rather, they acknowledge that time shapes matter into forms that people might not recognize, which, as critic John Yau writes, "is a rather disquieting perception of infinity." With his embrace of disparate, seemingly incommensurable materials, and his invention of new creative processes, Van Buren's achievement is more timely than ever. Add this to embrace of disparate, seemingly incommensurable materials, as well as the processes that he pioneered, and the enormity of his achievement becomes instantly apparent.

Born in Syracuse, New York in 1937, Richard Van Buren studied painting and sculpture at San Francisco State University and the National University of Mexico. While still a student, Van Buren began exhibiting his work at San Francisco's famed Dilexi Gallery, alongside artists as diverse as Franz Kline, H.C. Westermann, Ron Nagle, Ed Moses, and Robert Morris. In 1964, Van Buren relocated to New York. From 1967 to 1988, he taught in the Sculpture Department at the School of Visual Arts. In 1988, he began teaching at the Parsons School of Design. He remained at Parsons until September 2001. Van Buren lives and works in Perry, Maine.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Van Buren had solo exhibitions at many of the most influential and prestigious galleries, including: Bykert Gallery (1967, 1968, 1969, New York), 112 Greene Street (1972, New York), Paula Cooper Gallery (1972, 1975, 1977, New York), and Texas Gallery (1974, 1976, Houston). During this period, his work also figured prominently in many landmark museum exhibitions, such as *Primary Structures* (1966, The Jewish Museum, New York), *A Romantic Minimalism* (1967, Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia), *A Plastic Presence* (1970, Milwaukee Art Center), and *Works for New Spaces* (1971, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis), among others. In 1977, the City University of New York, Graduate Center mounted a retrospective exhibition of Van Buren's work.

Van Buren's work is featured in the collections of major museums around the world, including: the Art Institute of Chicago; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the National Gallery, Washington, D.C.; the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

Garth Greenan Gallery is pleased to represent Richard Van Buren.



Untitled, 1976