

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 2024

## Exhibition dates:

29 May - 20 July 2024

## Opening reception:

Wednesday, 29 May 2024, 6 - 8 p.m.

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## Gallery hours 29 May - 20 July 2024:

Tuesday - Friday, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Saturday, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

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Richard Nonas  
*Untitled*, 2003  
acrylic on paper  
30 x 43 1/2 in. (76.2 x 110.5 cm)

# RICHARD NONAS

**It's the clarity that unnerves me.**

**The elegance,**

**The single mindedness of it.**

**The unmitigated simplicity.**

**I'm much happier with the idea of confusion.**

**Much more comfortable with ambiguity.**

**Much more content with unpredicted change.**

**They are what interest me.**

**Interest me because through them I touch the world.**

**Richard Nonas, excerpt from [THUMP THUMP],  
Artforum, April 1980**

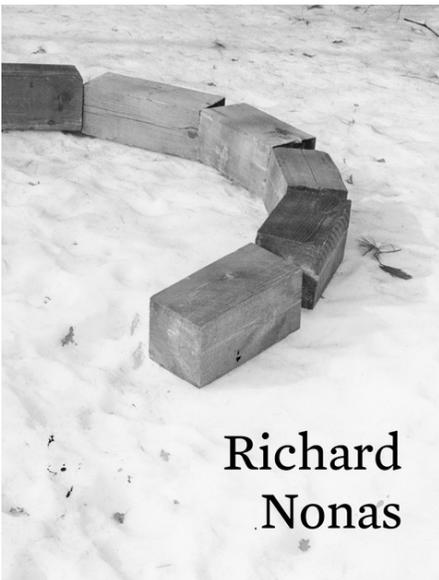
**Venice, CA** – L.A. Louver is pleased to present sculptures and paintings by Richard Nonas (1936-2021). A significant force in the canon of contemporary art, Nonas expanded the legacy of Minimalism into the realm of Post-Minimalism, engaging with material and site in a way that complicated and considered, rather than purported to resolve, a relationship to space and the surrounding environment. This exhibition illuminates the key preoccupations of an esoteric figure and materializes an important art historical transition.

Richard Nonas worked as an anthropologist for nearly 10 years before beginning a career as an artist in his early 30s, and this fieldwork deeply impacted his practice. Through time spent conducting research in Mexico, Nonas observed how the Tohono O'odham (formerly known as Papago) people derived meaning from their experiential relationship with objects, either natural or manmade, within the landscape. This notion that physical objects carry significance as meaningful spatial markers would become the absolute foundation of Nonas's oeuvre.

Nonas's sculptures consist of found materials – wood, stone or metal often flawed by rust or other abrasions – bearing the marks of their specific histories. These aesthetic imperfections visually distinguish his work from the intentional “simplicity” of artists like Donald Judd and align him more closely with figures such as Mark di Suvero and Richard Serra, both peers and friends of the artist. Similar to Serra's were Nonas's concerns with site specificity – the unrelenting, dynamic interaction between object, actor, and location. Nonas instigated this interaction through his constructions, which charge the space around them with potential energy. In many ways, Nonas utilized space as an active material, wielded and shaped through the imposition of physical objects. Notably, in various contexts, the artist sourced sculptural materials from the surrounding landscape of an exhibition space, reinterpreting the extant environment.



Richard Nonas photographed in Paris, c.1967-68.  
Harry Gruyeart/Magnum Photos.



Cover of *Richard Nonas* monograph.

Despite necessitating interaction, the interface between the viewer, sculpture, and surrounding area is never prescribed and left intentionally ambiguous by Nonas. The ambiguity, facilitated by the geometric nature of the works (a visual element likely informed by the cultural artifacts of anthropological study), allows room for philosophical and emotional contemplation of the profound reality that all of us exist within a matrix of context and history. These are not representations of the past or future, but provocations that heighten our awareness of present embodiment.

The mysterious and talismanic dimensions of Nonas's work also appear in the paintings on paper, which correspond almost as silhouettes to the sculptural arrangements. These paintings, exhibited for the first time in this presentation, operate as iconic descriptions of Nonas's sculpture. Graphically rendered in a highly pigmented palette of red, black, and white, the figure ground relationship is deliberately confused, expressing and emphasizing the equality between shape or line and the surrounding space in constructing an environment.

**Richard Nonas** was born in 1936 in New York, which was also the place of his passing in 2021 at the age of 85. He studied literature and social anthropology at the University of Michigan, Lafayette College, Columbia University and the University of North Carolina. Following his education Nonas worked as an anthropologist before turning to sculpture in the mid-1960s. In the 1970s, Nonas belonged to an intrepid group of artists and curators who found alternative places to exhibit their work and was notably included in the inaugural exhibition at P.S.1 (now MoMA PS1) in 1976.

Since then, the work of Richard Nonas has been exhibited extensively in the U.S. and abroad in indoor and outdoor installations. He has been the subject of several museum and institutional exhibitions, most recently including: FiveMyles, Brooklyn (2020–21); Musée Gassendi, Digne-les-Bains, France (2019); MAMCO Geneve, Switzerland (2019); 'T' Space, Rhinebeck, New York (2018); the Art Institute of Chicago (2017); MoMA PS1, New York (2016); MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts (2016); and the Walker Art Museum, Minneapolis (2012), among others.

On the occasion of this exhibition, the first comprehensive monograph on Richard Nonas, including text by Dieter Schwarz, Jan Meissner, Fabien Faure, and Richard Schiff, will be available for purchase at L.A. Louver.