

www.lundahlumphries.com



Fig.7
Veduggio Plain, 1972-3
 Steel, rusted and varnished
 160 x 228.5 x 198 cm (63 x 90 x 78 in)
 Caro Family Collection
 (B1034)

The table sculptures of the 1970s also mark a significant turning point in Caro's approach to smaller works, generally. Until then, they depended upon a unique characteristic of the table. As Caro explained, 'I also realised that the table was not just another level. What made it different from the floor was not only its height but its edge.'¹³ Caro's interest in the edge precipitated what might legitimately be termed a revolution in modern sculpture. The first *Table Pieces* were, as we have seen, defined by their engagement with the table's edge; they extended beyond and below the edge, and by doing so multiplied the planes with which Caro's sculptures engaged. After about 1970, Caro is not as emphatic as he was earlier in exploiting the edge. Instead, his works include those extensions less by rule than by choice: in that sense, they are free to entertain other sculptural possibilities.

Such is very much the case in Caro's work in the mid-1970s. Generally speaking, his earlier expressions of denseness – almost earth-drawn weightiness – that appeared in the *Veduggio* series (fig.7) are complemented by a

new medium, and thus a new expression. In Caro's smaller works after the mid-1970s, the tabletop became mainly a determiner of scale. Up to this point, his table sculptures, whether made of steel rods or steel sheets, integrated the table's edge: they lapped, draped or intersected this right angle so that the edge asserted a new plane. Having exhausted the possibilities of this formal constraint, Caro then situated full pieces directly onto the tabletop.

Doing so, of course, entailed a risk. Because he stressed from the outset that these table sculptures were not meant to appear as models or maquettes, Caro's work had the difficult task of asserting its scale as *necessary*. While never jettisoning entirely his earlier accomplishments – later works might still incorporate, for example, the table edge or other elements that defined a previous collection – Caro's work demonstrates what one might term a sculptural 'memory'. At once new and innovative, the works recall and sometimes echo preceding images. For example, *Table Piece CCXVI* (1975; fig.8) strikes a resounding chord. Its confident openness is achieved, firstly, by a return to the

lightness of line that defined his early *Table Pieces*, yet, as in other works of the 1970s, the sculpture seems to operate less on juxtaposition than by expansion. These later *Table Pieces* seem to open outwards, often as if from an invisible centre. Secondly, in *Table Piece CCXVI* Caro has fully eliminated both the plinth, as with his earlier large-scale works, and the table edge, yet the work's scale is entirely its own. Caro himself noted the similarities between this work and his seminal *Prairie* (1967; see fig.5) – both depend on steel rods along the horizontal plane – but *Table Piece CCXVI* is neither a maquette for *Prairie* nor an homage. One of Caro's most important early free-standing sculptures, *Prairie* deployed cantilevered rods and plates in order to, in Fried's words, rethink the relationship of structure to surface: '*Prairie* defines the ground, not as that which ultimately supports everything else, but as that which does not

in itself require support. It makes this fact about the ground both phenomenologically surprising and sculpturally significant.'¹⁴

This play between structure and support also animates *Table Piece CCXVI*, which, along with many other pieces of the period, expands Caro's vistas – often in many directions simultaneously. These sculptures establish their presence and declare their expression, whilst never suggesting diminution or expansion. Indeed, they demonstrate a keen sense of confidence with material and statement that invites the viewer to consider figurative connections, but they do so with the steadfast resolve of abstraction. They anticipate Caro's concerns for the next several decades – a multidirectionality that is at once broad in scope and attentive in detail, a body of work that incorporates the problems of scale while simultaneously establishing a new sculptural lexicon.



Fig.8
Table Piece CCXVI, 1975
 Steel, rusted and varnished
 54.6 x 188 x 106.7 cm (21½ x 74 x 42 in)
 (B220)



Fig.9
Table Piece CCCXXVI, 1976-7
 Steel, rusted and varnished
 39.4 x 195.6 x 43.2 cm (15½ x 77 x 17 in)
 (B344)

3 Table Piece XXII

1967

Steel, sprayed 'jewelescent' green

25.4 x 80 x 68.6 cm (10 x 31½ x 27 in)

Caro Family Collection
(B22)

Table Piece XXII, like several other early *Table Pieces*, explores a theme of connection across scale, but unlike works that integrate handles and other familiar implements, this sculpture avoids anything suggestive of a non-abstract world. What animates this piece is the relationship between the pipe that sits athwart the table edge and the elbow-shaped tube atop the supporting surface. Although these elements are both circular at their ends, they differ in proportion. The bent pipe iterates its difference, too, by its arced surface, a gentle curve that stands in complementary contrariness to the straight line formed by the cylinder. A 'jewelescent' green finish unites the incongruous forms.

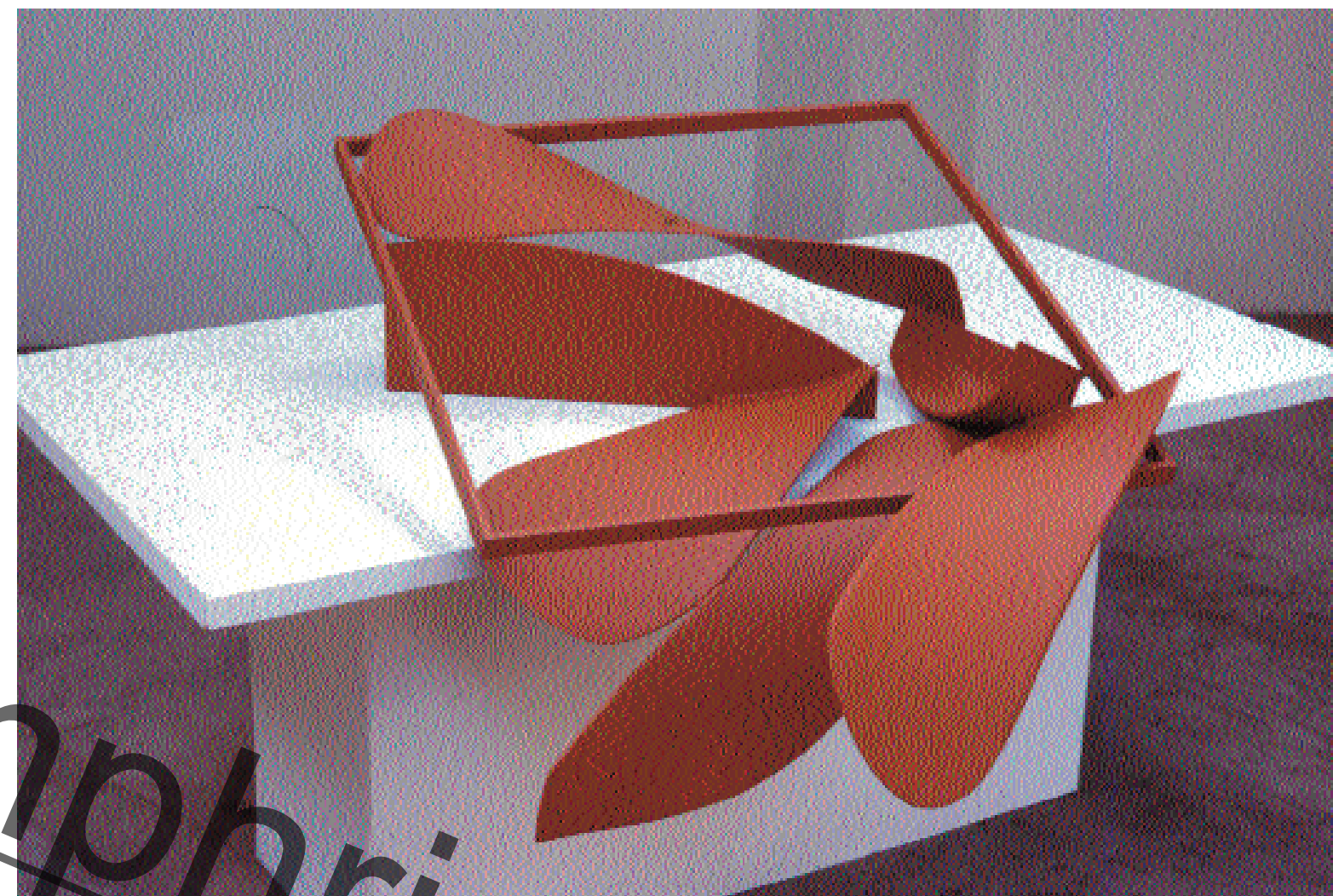




7 Table Piece LXXXII

1969
Steel, painted eggshell brown
48.3 x 121.9 x 147.3 cm (19 x 48 x 58 in)
Tate Gallery, London
(B81)

In both these works Caro incorporates actual ploughshares that also appear in many of his large free-standing works, such as *Sun Feast*, *Georgiana* and *Deep North* (all 1969–70).



8 Table Piece XCVII

1970
Steel, painted tan
63.5 x 134.6 x 111.8 cm (25 x 53 x 44 in)
Caro Family Collection
(B95)

33 Dancer's Little Book

1995-7

Porcelain and steel

16.5 x 21 x 8 cm (6½ x 8¼ x 3¼ in)

Private Collection, London
(B2424)

In *Dancer's Little Book*, Caro turns our assumptions about the materials used on their head: fragile porcelain becomes dense and compact, almost overpowering the light frolic of the steel rings. The industrial pincers that run up the side of the 'book' reinforce this inversion of expectations, since they seem to lose strength and significance in relation to the denser porcelain pages. Like many others in the *Book Sculptures* series, this work draws heavily from its title: a dance is, after all, a controlled but expressive movement, a point that Caro makes through the contrast of the porcelain and the rigid metals that bind it.





56 Paper Sculpture No.56 (Upright)

1981
Graphite, handmade paper in wooden box
81.3 x 57.5 x 24.1 cm (32 x 22¾ x 9½ in)
Centre for Contemporary Graphic Art, Fukushima, Japan
(B1425)



57 Paper Sculpture No.48 (Bandit)

1981
Pencil, chalk, acrylic, corrugated board, handmade paper on
Tycore in wooden box
83.2 x 68.6 x 12.7 cm (32¾ x 27 x 5 in)
(B1417)

62 Silver Piece 4 (González)

1975-7

Silver

49.5 x 48.3 x 12.7 cm (19 1/2 x 19 x 5 in)

Caro Family Collection

(B636)

www.lundhummer.com

