



Anish Kapoor at the Guggenheim

The Dimensions of Memory

BY JAN GARDEN CASTRO

Anish Kapoor's *Memory* is a new kind of monument—a 24-ton, Cor-ten steel, site-specific work that poses phenomenological questions about inner space, mind, and being. Designed for both the New York and Berlin Guggenheims, it debuted in Berlin in November 2008 as the first Deutsche Bank commission. In New York through March 28, *Memory* forms part of the museum's 50th-anniversary celebration.

Kapoor's seemingly elemental forms embody multiplicities, playing with voids that appear solid, sculpture that reads as two-dimensional, volume that marks time, color that changes scale, and transformations of self and gender. His work relates to that of other experimenters, including Joseph Beuys, Barnett Newman, and Paul Neagu. Kapoor also explores historical contexts and self-generated forms, as seen in his wax and oil paint sculpture *Svayambh*, whose blood-like wax form was variously shaped during its slow passage through the portals of historic museums in Nantes, Munich, and London.

MATHIAS SCHORMANN, © THE SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM FOUNDATION, NY



Memory, 2008. Cor-ten steel, 14.5 x 8.97 x 4.48 meters.

In fact, Kapoor's body of work challenges notions of sculpture's materiality. Sandhini Poddar's excellent catalogue essay quotes Kapoor recounting Paul Neagu's realization that "the purpose of being an artist was somehow not to make more-or-less interesting objects, but that the language of the eye has psychological, physiological, philosophical, even metaphysical implications. That felt to me what I was looking for." Poddar suggests that Kapoor's recent work is "mental sculpture" and that *Memory's* monumental void is more central than its mass.

The 154 thin pieces of steel that make up *Memory* were bolted together with steel bands on site. The resulting shape is curved and linear, with one flattened round end where multiple plates join and one rectangular portal that reveals the dark, smooth-seamed interior. Because the form is crammed into a small gallery, viewers can never see the complete sculpture. Rope, tape, and guards restrict us to three views: the end close up, the tank-like right flank, and the rectangular opening into a cavern that, at first, resembles a two-dimensional black painting. I'm personally struck by *Memory's* voice — resonant echoes from its vast belly — and by the exterior's curvilinear relation to Wright's spiral building, with its central, steel-girded glass rotunda. In addition, the exterior grid suggests an elongated globe with longitudinal and latitudinal lines. In an old-fashioned way, *Memory* joins un-seeable immensity and ingenious craft/engineering. This deeply philosophical piece is largely unapproachable, so it's a memorial that is, in some ways, about one's capacity to look inward.

Memory's Cor-ten skin will slowly age and rust. The correspondences, geometries, and engineering give the piece many dimensions and associations. Engineer Christopher Hornzee-Jones, Dutch fabricator Allard Bokma, and shipbuilder Lamert Osinga are among the many talented artisans with whom Kapoor worked. The exhibition catalogue elaborates on their roles, Kapoor's career, and approaches to memory: Henri Lustiger-Thaler explores remembrance in Holocaust memorials, while Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak grapples with the dilemmas of globalization. This leaves us to ponder the big picture — the gift of memory, the range of memory, the roles of memory, or the absence of memory in shaping histories and lives.

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Above: View through the window of *Memory*. Below: Computer-generated image of the installation at the Guggenheim Museum, NY.

