





DOWN AT THE FARM

AN ART ADVISOR
AND CURATOR,
THE FORMER
DIRECTOR OF
SILVERMINE
GUILD ARTS
CENTER GIVES
CTC&G AN
EXCLUSIVE TOUR
OF ONE OF THE
WORLD'S MOST
ASTOUNDING
SCULPTURE
PARKS

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS
BY HELEN KLISSER DURING



THE LARGEST RICHARD SERRA SCULPTURE in the world—a 20-foot-tall, 843-foot-long ribbon of Cor-Ten steel, roughly the length of two-and-a-half football fields—is located not in America, Europe or any of the dozens of cities worldwide that are now hosting biennial art fairs. Instead, it snakes through the emerald green pastureland of The Farm, a private, 1,000-acre sculpture park and environmental preserve at the edge of Kaipara Harbor, on the North Island of New Zealand. The dream of a fellow countryman of mine, The Farm has never been open to the public except for occasional special events, and has been visited mainly by the handful of international artists who have been invited to create works there.

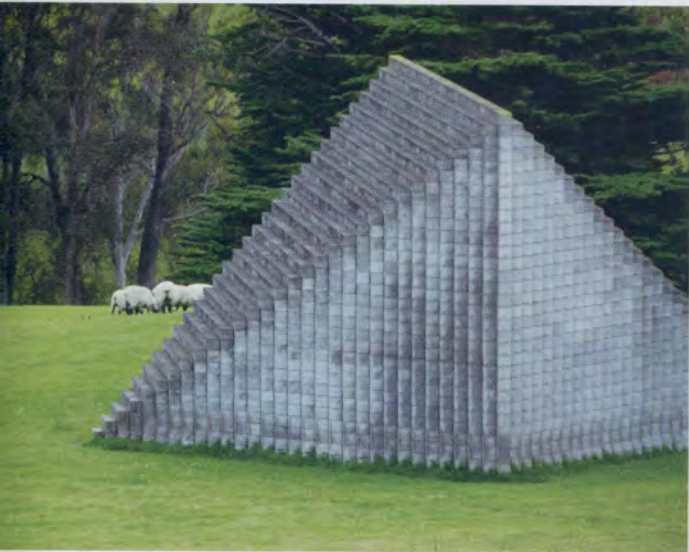
Like the other 30 sculptures on The Farm, Serra's *Tē Tubirangi Contour*

is site specific. It is made up of 56 enormous plates that follow the rolling contour of the landscape. Sheep continuously rub up against the rusty, red steel, so much so that they've left an off-white band along the base of the sculpture. They do so because the panels list 11 degrees from vertical, providing a serendipitous shelter from the elements.

The sheep are one of the 30 species of animals, including alpaca, yak, emu, giraffes and rare varieties of cattle, that have been introduced to the land since the first 400 acres of The Farm were purchased in 1991. (A second parcel was bought several years later.) Over the years, the owner has also planted indigenous flora (to replace the failing, non-native deciduous trees brought in by a former caretaker) and nurtured the seasonal



Jurassic Park | Begun in 1991, *The Farm*, a 1,000-acre sculpture park and environmental preserve in New Zealand, is now home to some 30 monumental sculptures by an international roster of artists. Neil Dawson's *Horizons* (PREVIOUS SPREAD), 188 feet long and almost 50 feet high, was inspired by the vision of a piece of corrugated iron that has blown from a dismantled water tank—a familiar sight in New Zealand. **Nice Pile** | Chris Booth's 13-foot-tall sandstone tower *Kaipara Strata* (OPPOSITE) was the first sculpture installed on *The Farm*. **Monster Mash** | Andy Goldsworthy's *Fleeting Moments* (LEFT AND ABOVE), 11 arches of Scottish stone, resembles a subterranean monster.



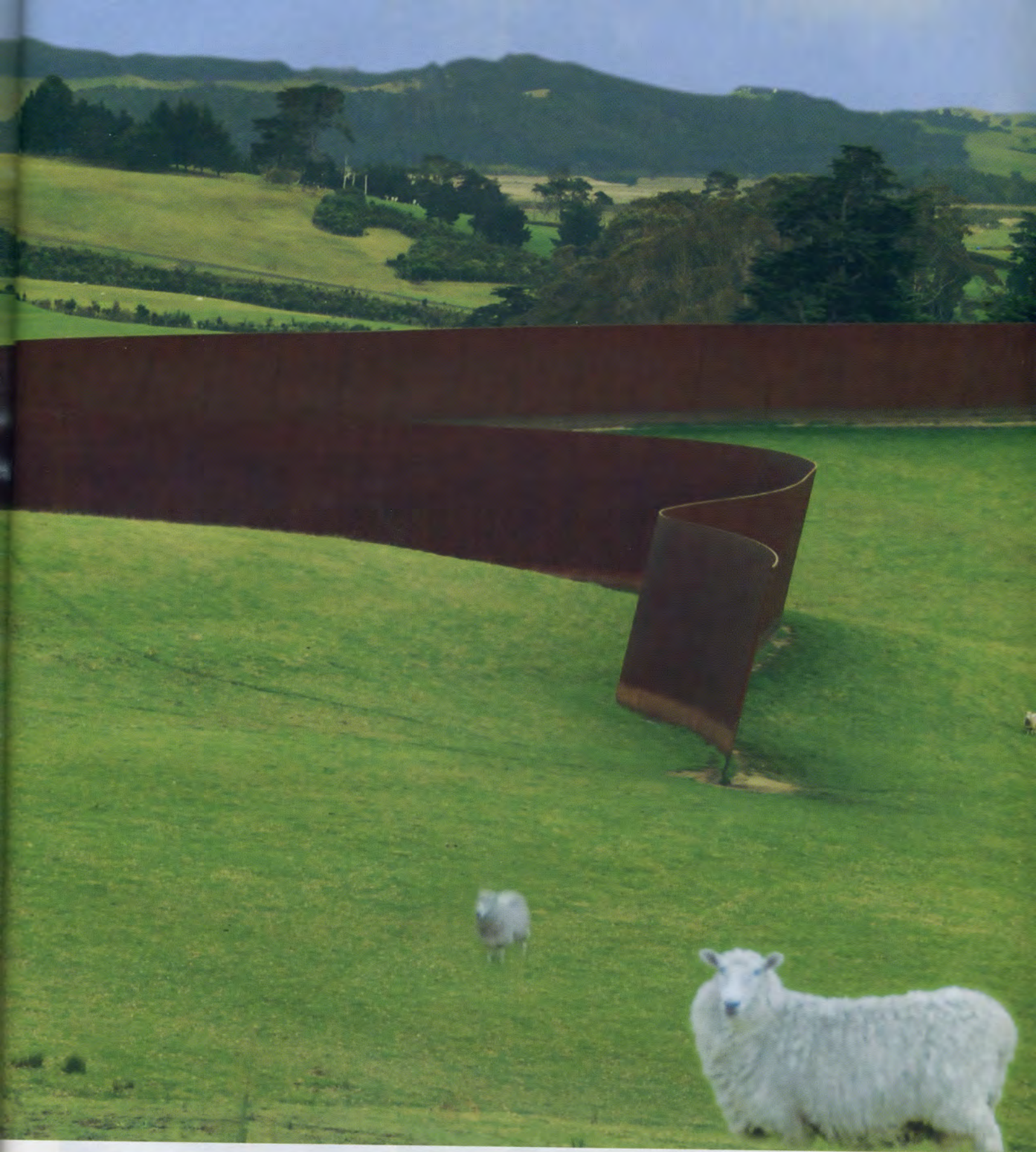
flocking of godwits and other native birds whose migratory path includes the mudflats at the water's edge.

Visiting The Farm earlier this year, it was hard to believe that the monumental sculptures I was looking at were in New Zealand. Here were important works by major international artists—Sol LeWitt, Kenneth Snelson, Andy Goldsworthy, Daniel Buren, George Ricky, Marijke de Goey, Richard Long, Eric Orr and, of course, Serra. When I was studying art history at Auckland University in the 1980s, there were no works by international artists on view anywhere, including museums. Yes, there were impressive collections (and a rich history) of New Zealand art, but my homeland was known more for its stunning landscapes and seascapes, budding film and wine industry, rugby games and sailing than its artistic production. But while New Zealand was isolated from the rest of the contemporary art world then, that is certainly not the case now.

In one of my first meetings with Serra, in New York around 1996, I was trying to persuade him that it would be worthwhile to meet this unknown New Zealand collector I was advising—The Farm's owner, who I'd met through his daughter, my closest friend. Sheep and godwits were not part of my pitch. In a few brief minutes at a gallery opening, I had to describe to him this fantastic venture, the creation of one of the world's largest sculpture parks in an obscure location halfway around the globe. Serra looked only vaguely interested. Finally, I just gave up and said, "You two would be like two boys in a sandbox." And it worked: I organized a studio visit and a match was made.

As is the case with everyone who is invited to create work at The Farm, Serra was flown to New Zealand to live with the land and then begin concept drawings. There is always much discussion and dialogue, often with great zeal and passion, as the owner wants to push the limits and boundaries of each artist—and himself. The video artist Tony Oursler has been to The Farm twice, and is working on a four-hour projection. Sculptor Anish Kapoor

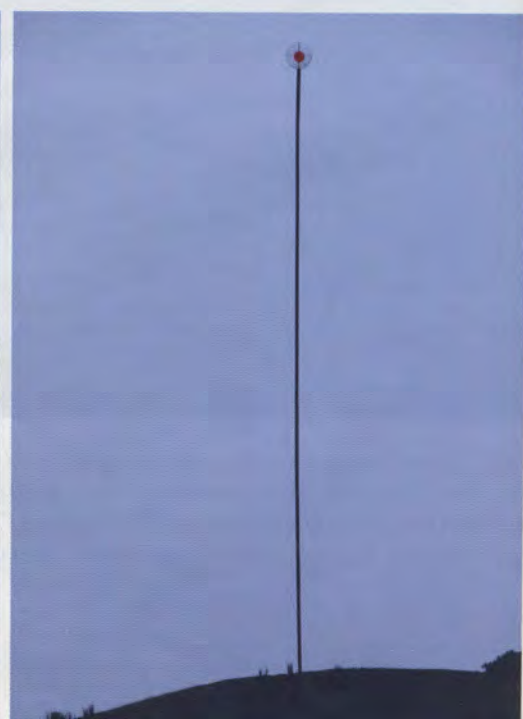




Rock Solid | As all the sculptures are site-specific, every artist invited to create work for The Farm is flown to New Zealand to walk the land before producing concept drawings. One exception was Sol LeWitt, whose 25-foot-high Pyramid (OPPOSITE LEFT), made from concrete blocks, was purchased at the ACE Gallery in NYC. Still, LeWitt visited The Farm to site it. **Larger Than Large** | Richard Serra's 20-foot-tall Te Tuhirangi Contour (ABOVE) winds for 843 feet through the pastureland. It's made from 56 steel plates, each shaped to follow the contour of the land. Sheep often rub against it because the steel retains the heat of the sun and provides shelter from the elements. Over the years, they've left an off-white band along the base.



Here's Looking at You | Llamas, one of 30 varieties of animals that have been introduced to the land, gaze over Daniel Buren's Green White Fence (ABOVE). The piece, which runs for almost half a mile through the landscape, has both aesthetic and practical appeal, as it divides off various animal paddocks. The striped posts, all deliberately tilted from vertical, create a visual separation from the environment. **High Art** | George Rickey's stainless steel Two Rectangles (BELOW LEFT) stands 40 feet tall. Each rectangle measures 20 feet by five feet. **Pole Position** | Len Lye's Wind Wand (BELOW RIGHT) towers over The Farm. When the wind blows, the massive fiberglass pole bends and quivers like a long, red blade of grass.





...s creating a large-scale work that should be completed in two years. As for
 ...ol LeWitt, though the concept model of his almost 50-foot-tall concrete
 ...block sculpture, *Pyramid*, was acquired through ACE gallery in NYC, he flew
 ...to New Zealand to site the sculpture himself.

The Farm also includes work by many New Zealand sculptors includ-
 ...ng Graham Bennett, Christopher Booth, Bill Culbert, Neil Dawson, Ralph
 ...Horere, Len Lye, Peter Nicholls, John Reynolds and Richard Thompson, all
 ...grand and majestic in their placement. Seeing them leads you across pad-
 ...ocks, down into valleys and around lakes until you reach the beach, the site
 ...f one of the most breathtaking works, Andy Goldsworthy's *Fleeting Moments*.

Consisting of 11 massive stone arches leading into the sea, the piece resemb-
 ...a slumbering subterranean monster, its humps emerging from the tide or
 ...sand, depending on the time of day. But there's also a soothing tranquility to
 ...the piece, particularly as the waves quietly lap against the stone.

I have no doubt that one day The Farm will be open to the public and
 ...become the Bilbao of the South Pacific. I envision people walking among
 ...this magnificent sculpture, discovering new artists and looking with wonder
 ...at the indigenous and exotic wildlife. Though you'll have to endure a 20-
 ...hour flight to get there from Connecticut, the art—like the imaginations of
 ...its creators—will have no borders. ☀

Fixed Out | Born in The Netherlands but now living and working in New Zealand, Leon van den Eijkel referenced a palette often used by his countryman, Piet Mondrian, in his mammoth
 ...and Cloud Confrontation in Landscape (ABOVE). Each of the 25 blocks of varying height, which appear to emerge en masse from the earth, have a length and width of seven-and-a-half feet.