

MIT List Center

Berner Venet

My name is Berner Venet.

Born in France, Venet moved to New York in the late '60s, where he began creating conceptual pieces based on mathematical systems.

I was part of those pioneers, let's say, using mathematical equation, things that nobody can understand but were interesting theoretically, let's say. I never studied mathematics. I'm not a mathematician.

Much of Venet's earlier work was determined by specific equations and geometric angles. By contrast, this 1993 work, Two Indeterminate Lines, explored his interest in how a line's mathematical position can be placed in dialogue with uncertainty through its physical realization. Venet made this work at a factory, letting the physical properties of the steel guide him to his final design.

I will take a bar of steel, which is about 24 feet long. I bend the steel. I try to adapt a shape to something that could fit with something else. It's pure improvisation. Until the last minute, I don't know how it's going to look like. It takes many, many, many hours and days to make those sculptures. It still doesn't do what you want to do. How do you bend this solid steel cold, with overhead crane, and you send them in the direction that you want? It's very hard.