

# hirshhorn

## **Artist at Work with Youth with DC-based artist Mary Coble**

*Conceptual Artists from the 1960s*

Richard Long  
Lawrence Weiner  
Sol Lewitt

Lesson Packet

Fall 2008

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Smithsonian  
*Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden*

**Richard Long**  
**Born Bristol, England, 1945**

**Overview**

Looking at the work of Richard Long, this project will focus on his use of the natural world and his unique style of mark making. Utilizing non-traditional materials and methods, students will explore the potential of natural materials and own bodies as mark-makers while delving into the concept of "place" through considering a space that has made an impact on their lives.

**Artist Information**

While Richard Long sculpts, paints, and photographs, his work is unified by its focus on landscape, which has made him one of the most well known contemporary Earthworks artists.

Wandering through diverse landscapes in locations around the world is a crucial part of Long's process of questioning the conventional concepts about what art is. He documents these walks and later, using site-specific natural materials such as mud, rocks, or sticks, creates an artwork based on his experience of that specific time and place.



Richard Long's *Carrara Line*, 1985, from the Hirshhorn's collection, The Panza Collection.

"I enjoy meeting people but I find it difficult to work with people around. A lot of my best creative thinking time is when I'm on my walks, which are usually alone."  
—Richard Long

**Terms**

1. **Body Art**: Art made on, with, or consisting of, the human body.
2. **Earthworks**: A form of art (also referred to as Environmental Art or Land Art).created in nature that uses natural materials such as stones, leaves, or soil, in which landscape and the work of art are inextricably linked. Sculptures are not placed in the landscape; rather the landscape is the very means of their creation.
3. **Site-specific art**: Artwork created expressly to exist in a certain place. Typically, the artist takes the location into account while planning and creating the artwork.

(www.wikipedia.org)

**Pre-Creation Discussion**

1. Ask students to share some traditional methods and mediums of art making.
  - 1.1. Define "traditional art" as commonly used processes and materials that have been prevalent for decades.

- 1.2. Answers might include: Painting, drawing, sculpture, ceramics, film photography, as well as paint, pencil, charcoal, clay , and stone.
2. Inquire about examples of non-traditional method or mediums.
  - 2.1. Define “non-traditional art” as practices or material that might be considered out the ordinary, are not often utilized, or seem to blur the boundaries of what constitutes art.
  - 2.2. Prompt students to consider the use of natural objects such as mud, berries, leaves, sticks, and rocks, as well as how these objects might be employed to create artworks.
3. Present the materials that will be used for this project and where and/or how they were acquired.
4. Introduce the idea of “place.”
  - 4.1. Prompt students to discuss a place that has had a lasting impact on them.
  - 4.2. Can they remember the smells, sounds, colors, feel of this location?
5. Offer a brief description of Richard Long’s process and ideas. Dialogue with students about the terms above in connection with Long’s concepts, process, and work.
6. Introduce the first Creation of the day and show examples. The second Creation should be introduced after the first one is completed.

This discussion will not only educate the students about the work of this particular artist, but will also help relate his process and art to new terms and ideas, which they will, in turn, use to create their own work.

### **Materials**

- White (or colored) roll paper (Note: The stiffer the better)
- Clay Slip (pictured; various colors if possible; this can be bought or made by essentially mixing clay with water)
- Natural materials of various colors (examples: blueberries, cherries, grass, flowers, etc.; if possible. students should gather the materials themselves, as it would further elucidate the artist’s process.)
- Paint pans or other containers to hold raw materials
- Buckets or wash containers
- Paper towels or rags for clean up
- Plastic floor covering
- CD player and age-appropriate music
- Example of Richard Long’s work and/or the work of other “Earthworks” artists





### **Creation #1**

1. Dip fingers into the berries or other colorful good ideas. (These may need to be squished and possibly slightly cooked beforehand, as this helps make the colors more saturated.)

2. Using music that has a steady rhythm that students can follow, tap the beat of the song onto a sheet of paper. Re-dip the fingers whenever the prints grow

faint or a different color is desired. This will leave a visual impression of the sound.

A variation of this could be achieved by devising a code that corresponds to how many finger would touch the surface of the paper such as one tap=A, two taps=B, and so on.

### **Creation #2**

1. Discuss the idea of “place” and its relationship to the mark-making in which students are about to engage.

Issues to discuss:

- a. Students should each pick a place that has significance to them and be able to articulate why this place is important.
- b. What movements do they use in this place? Do they walk, run, skip, etc.? Are there areas they need to tip-toe around, or do they stomp through these location, or simply walk firmly, placing their whole foot solidly on the ground? (The idea is to visually relay an important place through the marks made by footsteps.)

2. Consider materials and color strategies.

Having picked the place that is going to be used as a source, have students focus on which materials and colors would best represent this space.

Issues to discuss:

- a. Are certain colors necessary in order to evoke the place?
  - b. Are there certain materials actually found in that place that can be incorporated in order to literally represent the space, or do students want to interpret the space differently, or more metaphorically or abstractly?
3. Containers with slip should be provided thought out the project space so students can easily step from the container onto the paper surface. A towel and water bucket should be easily accessible as well.

Explore experimentation, play, and risk-taking. There is no right or wrong way to interpret this project, which relies upon a very personal response to place.

Students can also further express place and the interpretation of that space through movement.



**Lawrence Weiner**  
**Born New York, New York, 1942**  
**Overview**

Lawrence Weiner's innovative use of symbols and text will serve as the inspiration of this project, in which we will explore the idea of "self" by utilizing non-traditional techniques, symbols, and text to create self portraits.



**Artist Information**

Lawrence Weiner is a central figure of conceptual art, challenging the traditional roles of the art object and methods of presentation. Weiner chooses to work in a variety of mediums such as sculpture, video, performance art, installation, and sound art. Many of his pieces utilize text, whether in the form of written instructions which may be followed—or not—or a passage written by the artist and painted on a wall by someone else.

"I really believe the subject matter of my art is—art." —Lawrence Weiner

**Terms**

1. Self: The individual, from his or her own perspective. To you, self is you.
2. Symbols: Something—an object, picture, text, sound, composition, or particular sign—that represents (or stands for) something else by association, resemblance, or convention, especially a material object used to represent something invisible.
3. Typography: The aesthetics and techniques of arranging type, type design, and modifying type glyphs. ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org))

**Pre-Creation Discussion**

1. Begin by asking questions about visual representation in art.  
*When you think of art do you think of words or pictures? How can both be useful?*
2. Discuss symbols and show examples of personal and public symbols. Brainstorm other symbols with students.
3. Talk about the idea of "self" and which texts or symbols could be related to an individual's sense of "self."
4. Develop this discussion within the context of a brief description of Lawrence Weiner's process and ideas. Explore the terms above in connection with his work.

This discussion will not only educate the students about the work of this particular artist, but will also help relate his process and art to new terms and ideas, which they will, in turn, use to create their own work.

5. Introduce the Creation of the day and show examples.

## **Materials**

- White (or colored) roll paper (Note: the stiffer the better)
- Scissors
- Conte crayons (Note: oil pastel sticks or crayons could substitute)
- Magazines (Note: Age appropriate content, large text, colors)
- Glue sticks
- Examples of Lawrence Weiner's work
- Examples of personal and public symbols

## **Creation #1**

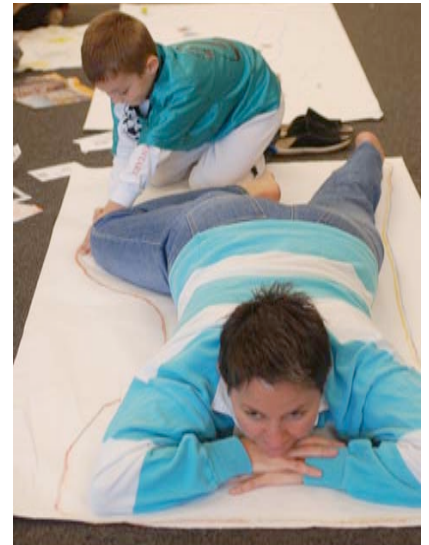
1. Working with a partner, each person will lie down on the roll paper and trace the outline of each other's body.

2. Cut out the traced form, paying special attention to the outside shape rather than the interior form. Once completed, students will have their first example of a large-scale stencil.

3. Using a conte crayon on its side, students will partially shade the portion of the stencil with the void where the body was cut out and.

4. Considering the discussion about self, text, and symbols, students will look through magazines to find words that they feel represent their view of themselves.

5. Each person will then glue the magazine cut-outs onto the shaded stencil, with attention to the grouping of words, placement, and the color schemes created.



**Sol LeWitt**  
**Born Harford, Connecticut, 1928–2007**



Sol Lewitt's *Wall Drawing #1113* On a wall, a triangle within a rectangle, each with broken bands of color, 2003, from the Hirshhorn's collection.

**Overview**

Looking at the work of Sol LeWitt, students will learn about and explore his distinctive use of repetition, shape, and color. Inspired by his art processes and ideas, students will use non-traditional materials to first create colorful, geometric "wall drawings" and then to make a three-dimensional tape sculpture.

**Artist Information**



Installation of Sol Lewitt's *Wall Drawing #3*, 1969, from the Hirshhorn's collection, The Panza Collection.

Sol LeWitt was a revolutionary artist who helped pioneer both the Minimal and Conceptual art movements. LeWitt is most well known for his brightly colored, mural-sized wall drawings, for which he devised instructions and installation possibilities, but then handed over to others to actually fabricate and/or install. From his detailed directions, which were sometimes precise, other times vague, geometric shapes, lines, repetition, and color, which may initially appear to be extremely simple, combine to create a stunning, powerful visual effect, typically encompassing large stretches of wall space.

For LeWitt, the idea itself constituted the work of art. The set of instructions that the owner possesses is, in a sense, the actual artwork; the instructions can be carried out as many times and by whomever the owners like.



"When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art."

—Sol LeWitt

Sol Lewitt's *Wall Drawing #356 BB Isometric figure within which are 3" (7.5 cm) wide black lines in three directions. (Cube without a cube)*, 2003, from the Hirshhorn's collection.

## **Terms**

1. **Conceptual Art:** Art that is intended to convey an idea or a concept to the perceiver, rejecting the creation or appreciation of a traditional art object such as a painting or a sculpture as a precious commodity
2. **Geometric:** Any shape or form having more mathematic than organic design. Geometric designs are typically made with straight lines or shapes from geometry, including circle, ovals, triangles, rectangles, squares.
3. **Minimalism:** A twentieth-century art movement or style stressing the idea of reducing a work of art to the minimum of colors, values, shapes, lines, and textures.
4. **Repetition:** Closely related to harmony, a principle of design, this term refers to a way of combining elements of art (click to view <http://www.artlex.com/ArtLex/E.html#anchor240577>) so that the same elements are used over and over again. Thus, a certain color or shape might be used several times in the same picture.

(www.artlex.com )

## **Pre-Creation Discussion**

1. Ask students to share some traditional methods and mediums of art making.
  - 1.1. Define "traditional art" as commonly used processes and materials that have been prevalent for decades.
  - 1.2. Answers might include: Painting, drawing, sculpture, ceramics, film photography, as well as paint, pencil, charcoal, clay , and stone.
2. Inquire about examples of non-traditional method or mediums.
  - 2.1. Define "non-traditional art" as practices or material that might be considered out the ordinary, are not often utilized, or seem to blur the boundaries of what constitutes art.



- 2.2. Prompt students to consider the use of everyday materials such as cups and toothpicks, materials from the earth such leaves or grass; using your body, and an idea actually being the art object.
3. Using Sol LeWitt's work as an example, introduce the term "Conceptual Art." Emphasize LeWitt's notion that an idea can be the artwork; there does not necessarily have to be a material object.
4. Continue the discussion with a brief description of Sol LeWitt's process and concepts. Discuss the terms above in connection with LeWitt's work.
5. Briefly introduce the first Creation of the day and show examples. Suggest possible geometric shapes and color strategies that could be used. The second Creation should be introduced after the first one is completed.

This discussion will not only educate the students about the work of this particular artist, but will also help relate his process and art to new terms and ideas, which they will, in turn, use to create their own work.

### **Materials**

- Colored masking tape (no more than 5 colors needed)
- Scissors
- White (or colored) roll paper or large sheets of paper (Note: The stiffer the better)
- Examples of geometric and organic shapes
- Examples of Sol LeWitt's Work

### **Creation #1**

1. Have students pick one geometric shape to use as the starting point. Draw the selected shape in the center of the paper. The size of the paper and the size of the initial shape is dependant upon the desired size of the final product. Note: The initial shape should be relatively small in order to build outwards from it.
2. Plan a color strategy that will be used to build the shape such as only using three specific colors or repeating two colors. Begin with the small geometric image that was just drawn and completely fill it in in with one color of tape.
3. Continuously repeat the shape by placing another line of tape directly beside the filled-in image, repeating until the desired size is achieved. Note: This creation, when possible, could be expanded by directly constructing it on a wall, mimicking the installation of LeWitt's work.
4. Then students should trim excess paper so only the tape shape remains. The final product can be displayed on a wall, floor, ceiling, or wherever students would like to place it.

### **Creation #2**

1. Students will pick a simple shape and draw that shape onto a desired size of paper. The shape does not need to be geometric and can be very organic. Students should choose a color strategy that will remain consistent throughout.

2. Fold the colored tape onto itself to create loops (sizes may vary). Following the outline of the shape that was drawn, students should fill it in with these tape loops, which they should stick to one another as they are laid down, rather than adhering them to the paper itself.

3. Once the shape is filled with tape, the "tape sculpture" may be removed from the paperback and displayed laying flat on a surface or upright hanging on a wall.

