



Sol LeWitt Works

December 2, 1987 – February 28, 1988

Sol LeWitt has been well known since the 1960s for his sculpture, graphics, and wall drawings. The wall drawings, which depend for their point of departure on the specifics of the site, have evolved from linear demarcations to richly colored renderings of flat form in which sensual appeal combines with great conceptual clarity.

The following text is edited from an interview with the artist, which took place in the fall of 1987.

Phyllis Rosenzweig, Associate Curator

PR: What kinds of considerations go into the plan for your wall drawings? To what extent do the shape and dimensions of the site affect your design, or do you have a plan in mind that you then fit into the space? I am thinking of Renaissance frescoes in which a set story with specific scenes had to be adapted to various spaces. Does your work parallel this process, or does the wall or architectural space inspire the plan?

SL: The conception of the wall drawing usually follows generally what is on my mind at the time unless there are unusual aspects of the space to consider. The ideas, though, are general enough to be done on a wall-size area.

PR: What features of this particular space did you take into consideration in planning your work?

SL: The space chosen, being an entire room, made possible a work that would be self-contained and visible at any point within. I thought, when I first saw the space, to use a black band on top to counteract the decorative aspect of the coffers. It would probably be used on the bottom and sides as well for the sake of consistency and to isolate the elements of the work and draw them together at the same time.

PR: The wall drawings of the last several years, with your use of colors and the sensuality of the surfaces caused by the rubbed-in inks, are extremely beautiful. How important is this element of beauty to you?

SL: The observer can perceive the work as he or she is able. I have no objection to the perception of beauty in my work. I don't comment on my own perception.

PR: Does it concern you that your work might serve a decorative function—become, for example, a backdrop or serve as decor? Mark Rothko withdrew his murals for the Four Seasons restaurant in New York because he felt they would not be looked at seriously in such a setting.

SL: It's difficult to know when a work is more or less decorative. Again, it seems to be a personal perception. I don't try to make pieces in public any different than work in galleries, museums, or houses.

PR: What is the relationship between your current wall drawings and your sculpture? Are the sculptures three-dimensional projections of similar permutations of the rectangles, pyramids, and other geometric shapes that appear in the wall drawings?

SL: The three-dimensional forms generally are similar to those in the drawings and wall drawings. Now I work with a woodworker and architects in Italy to make complex structures of wood while the drawings and gouaches I do are of cube-like forms.

PR: How has the relationship evolved between you and your assistants considering the changing nature of these wall drawings? The earlier work involved sets of instructions, for example, "four lines from all directions, touching or not touching." You now seem to be concerned with more specific images and shapes. Has the interpretive, or collaborative, role of your assistants changed or are there still similarities in the working process?

SL: The recent work requires skill and experience to do well, while much of the older work required neither. The assistants usually don't make aesthetic criticisms but mainly make technical suggestions.

PR: Why do you refer to these projects as "wall drawings" rather than "murals"? What do you see to be the essential difference between the two terms?

SL: "Wall drawing" is what I started using for these installations and, although the work has changed, the term hasn't. However, the medium used—ink—is a drawing medium. Also, the term "wall drawing" has less weight of history to contend with than "mural" might.



Ink drawing by Jo Watanabe from plans by Sol LeWitt for *Various Forms*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, 1987.

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Hartford, Connecticut, September 9, 1928. Educated at Syracuse University, New York, 1945-1949. BFA, 1949. Lives in Chester, Connecticut, and Spoleto, Italy.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1965 Daniels Gallery, New York.
- 1969 Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld, West Germany, *Sol LeWitt: Sculptures and Wall Drawings*.
- 1970 Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, *Sol LeWitt*.
- 1978 Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Sol LeWitt*, and tour to Musée d'Art Contemporain, Montreal; Krannert Art Museum, Champaign, Illinois; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art.
- 1981 Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, *Sol LeWitt Wall Drawings 1968-1981*.
- 1983 Musée d'Art Contemporain, Bordeaux, *Lignes en Quatre Directions et Toutes Leurs Combinaisons: Sol LeWitt*.
- 1984 Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, *Sol LeWitt: Muur Techningen 1968-1984; Techningen 1958-1976*, and Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, the Netherlands, *Sol LeWitt: Structuren 1960-1983* (simultaneous exhibitions).
- 1985 Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts, *New Works: Sol LeWitt*.
- 1986 Tate Gallery, London, *Sol LeWitt Prints 1970-86*.
- 1987 Westfälischer Kunstverein, Münster, West Germany, *Sol LeWitt: Gekipte Formen*.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1963 St. Mark's Church, New York.
- 1966 Jewish Museum, New York, *Primary Structures*. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *Annual Exhibition 1966: Sculpture and Prints* (also included in 1979 and 1987 Biennials).
- 1968 Kassel, West Germany, *Documenta 4* (also included in *Documenta 5, Documenta 6, Documenta 7, and Documenta 8*). Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Art of the Real*.
- 1970 Art Institute of Chicago, *69th American Exhibition* (also included in 1976 American Exhibition).
- 1976 Venice Biennale (also included in 1980 Biennale).
- 1981 Museen der Stadt Köln, Cologne, *Westkunst*.
- 1984 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *American Art Since 1970*.
- 1985 Museum of Art, Institute of Contemporary Art, Pittsburgh, *Carnegie International*.
- 1987 Westfälischen Landesmuseums für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Münster, West Germany, *Skulptur Projekte in Münster 1987*.

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- Alloway, Lawrence. "Sol LeWitt: Modules, Walls, Books." *Artforum* 8 (April 1975): 38-43.
- Krauss, Rosalind E. "LeWitt in Progress," in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985, pp. 244-258.
- Kuspit, Donald B. "Sol LeWitt: The Look of Thought." *Art in America* 63 (September-October 1975): 42-49.

Legg, Alicia, ed., Lucy R. Lippard, Robert Rosenblum, and Bernice Rose, texts. *Sol LeWitt*. Exhibition catalog. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1978. Statements by Sol LeWitt.

LeWitt, Sol. "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art." *Artforum* 5 (June 1967): 79-83.

Lippard, Lucy. "Sol LeWitt: Non-Visual Structures." *Artforum* 5 (April 1967): 42-46. Reprinted in *Changing: Essays in Art Criticism*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1971, pp. 154-166.

Masheck, Joseph. "Kuspit's LeWitt: Has He Got Style?" *Art in America* 64 (November-December 1976): 107-111; "Kuspit/Masheck (Continued)." *Art in America* 65 (January-February 1977): 5-7.

Pincus-Witten, Robert. "Sol LeWitt: Word — Object." *Artforum* 11 (February 1973): 69-72.

Sol LeWitt. Exhibition catalog. The Hague: Haags Gemeentemuseum, 1970. Texts by John N. Chandler, Enno Develing, Dan Graham, and others. Statements by Sol LeWitt.

Sol LeWitt Prints 1970-86. Exhibition catalog. London: Tate Gallery, 1986. Text by Jeremy Lewison.

Sol LeWitt Wall Drawings 1968-1984. Exhibition catalog. Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum; Eindhoven: Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum; and Hartford, Conn.: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1984. Texts by Alexander Van Grevenstein, Jan Debbaut, and Sol LeWitt and Andrea Miller-Keller.



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