

Sol LeWitt Drawing Series . . .

Dia:Beacon

Riggio Galleries

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Drawing Series . . .

Drawing Series—Composite, Part 1–IV, #1–24 A + B, Wall Drawing #1085 is a landmark in Sol LeWitt's oeuvre: conceived in 1968 but first realized as a wall drawing only in 2003, at Dia:Beacon, it heralds a remarkable body of wall works generated over the last thirty-five years. As such, the expansive work, filling two large symmetrical galleries, provides a point of departure for this in-depth presentation of some fourteen wall drawings devised during the period 1968–75. Given its axiomatic status, its extraordinary beauty and quiet authority, there was every incentive for Dia to realize its pair, *Wall Drawing #1211*, which substitutes four colors—black, red, blue, and yellow—for #1085's graphite. Galleries identical in scale to those housing the first version were therefore prepared in spring 2006 to accommodate its partner.¹

To complement this monumental presentation of both versions of *Drawing Series*, Dia invited the artist to select for the adjacent galleries from among the numerous drawings he conceived shortly after—that is, in the early 1970s. LeWitt has thus chosen, sequenced, and sited twelve works, which have been executed according to his preset instructions by two teams of assistants working on location from May through late August 2006. The result is an extraordinary confluence of works, variously bold and subtle, improvised and predetermined, clear and cryptic, reductive and expansive. For all their diversity and complexity, they are nonetheless informed by a singular aesthetic that LeWitt formulated in the late sixties in two manifestoes: *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art* (1967) and *Sentences on Conceptual Art* (1969). Key among the precepts through which he parsed his pioneering notion of Conceptualism are the maxims: "In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work" and "All decisions are made beforehand, so execution becomes a perfunctory affair." Among other guiding tenets and self-imposed constraints is the rejection of illusion both in the drawing and in the surface plane of the wall, which remain resolutely flat. The arbitrary, the expressive, and the subjective are also eschewed along with all traces of the maker's hand and personal taste: light-toned and evenly applied, the lines create grids, patterns, and diagrams of varying tonality that nonetheless preserves the integrity of the picture plane. The colors used are only those that are basic to printing—red, blue, yellow, and black. Moreover, since the realized drawings are always unique, a work may exist in more than one place at any one time. And, since the work is the idea—that is, the set of instructions (which take the form of a certificate and an accompanying diagram held by the owner, who purchases the "use of the idea")—then the life of a drawing when executed may, and almost always will be, contingent and temporary.

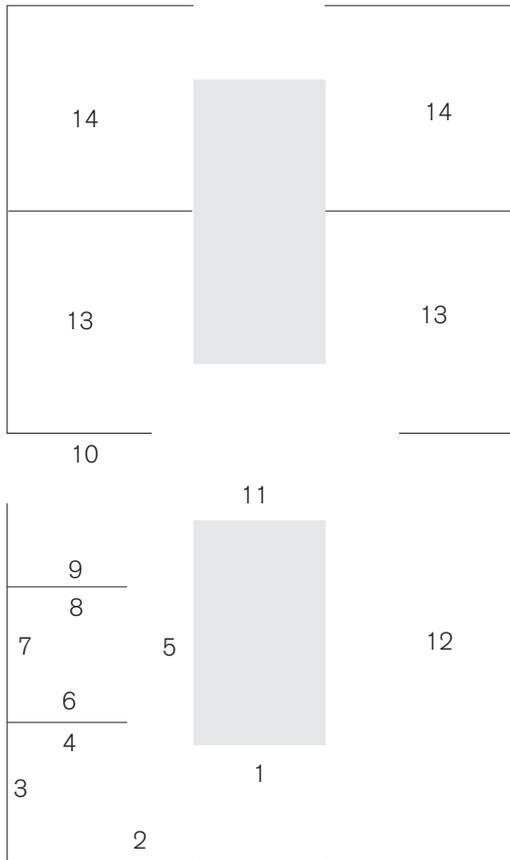
Stringent and rigorous rather than rigid and dogmatic, LeWitt's work is no more in thrall to mathematical calibration than to systems per se: on those occasions when he does exhaustively pursue seriality and permutation, as in the two variants of *Drawing Series*, the result is imbued with a degree of excess such that the limpid cogency and coherence is almost undermined by a gossamer-like luminosity. Given that, for him, "artists are mystics," and given too his conviction that "irrational thoughts should be followed absolutely and logically," many works fall outside the parameters of what is usually expected of Conceptualism, that is, a rational, logical exegesis. For example, he often capitalizes on circumstance—on the quirks of a particular architectural situation, on the skills and inventiveness of the assistants executing the drawing, or on the different effects produced by substituting one medium or material for another: crayon in place of pencil, color instead of graphite, or a grey or black surface in lieu of the more usual white wall. Moreover, most of his drawings can never be exactly replicated; for each instantiation, each iteration, is a new interpretation, as is a new performance of a musical score. In #123, for example, differences in lengths of the individual lines reflect different heights and hence different reaches among the ten or so draftspersons involved in its execution, each of whom contributed at least one line; aptitude, physical stamina, and mental concentration also impact upon the final effect. Sometimes the instructions that determine a wall drawing are quite strict, sometimes they are provisional, offering a certain leeway in interpretation. If those that seem elaborate often yield disarmingly simple solutions, others based on abbreviated or succinct verbal or graphic instructions may produce unexpectedly complex forms or a modular progression whose hallmark is a prolix, proliferating redundancy.

Almost all the elements of LeWitt's playfully inventive repertoire from these years are evident in this ensemble of works: lines in all four directions (vertical, horizontal, left and right diagonal), straight and not straight, touching and not touching, solid and broken, gridded and arced, as well as those most basic of geometric figures, the circle, square, and triangle. Whether dry or droll, the spirit—the wit—of this work is undeniable, for as the artist once sagely cautioned: "One should be intelligent enough to know when not to be too intellectual."²

Lynne Cooke, Curator

1. In contrast to works made after 1969, whose measurements are intimately and directly linked to the specifics—the coordinates, contours, and dimensions—of the walls they are drawn on, this work floats freely: its dimensions are fixed and predetermined, and it is not tethered to the venue; rather it simply requires a wall of a certain minimal size.
2. Sol LeWitt, interview by Andrew Wilson, *Artmonthly* 3, no. 164 (March 1993), p. 6.

site map



checklist of works

Wall Drawing #1085: Drawing Series—Composite, Part I–IV, #1–24, A was drawn by Scott Ellison, John Hogan, Jason M. Rulnick, and Anthony Sansotta, October–December 2003.

Wall Drawing #1085: Drawing Series—Composite, Part I–IV, #1–24, B was drawn by Takeshi Arita, Sachiko Cho, Stephen Gunn, John Hogan, Eric Hongisto, Emily Ripley, Anthony Sansotta, and Hans Viets, April–May 2003.

All other wall drawings in this exhibition were drawn by Takeshi Arita, Sachiko Cho, Elizabeth Christ, Megan Dyer, Scott Ellison, Lacey Fekishazy, Amy Feldman, Mary Gagne, John Hogan, Peter Iannarelli, Nick Kozak, Roland Lusk, Tanya Merrill, Tomas Ramberg, Darin Roberts, Anthony Sansotta, and Jo Watanabe, May–August 2006.

- 1. Wall Drawing #46: Vertical lines, not straight, not touching, covering the wall evenly.** 1970
Graphite on wall
The LeWitt Collection, Chester, Conn.
- 2. Wall Drawing #97: Ten thousand straight and ten thousand not straight lines.** 1971
Graphite on wall
The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Gift of Kourosh Larizadeh
- 3. Wall Drawing #123: Copied lines.** The first drafter draws a not straight vertical line as long as possible. The second drafter draws a line next to the first one, trying to copy it. The third drafter does the same, as do as many drafters as possible. Then the first drafter, followed by the others, copies the last line drawn until both ends of the wall are reached. 1972
Graphite on wall
Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Mass. 1991.20 gift of the artist, Addison Art Drive
- 4. Wall Drawing #69: Lines not long, not straight, not touching, drawn at random using four colors, uniformly dispersed with maximum density, covering the entire surface of the wall.** 1971
Colored pencil on wall
Private Collection
- 5. Wall Drawing #118: Fifty randomly placed points connected by straight lines.** 1971
Graphite on wall
Private Collection
- 6. Wall Drawing #141: Progressive lines (straight and not straight).** A ten-inch grid covering the wall. An increasing number of vertical straight lines from left to right, and horizontal not straight lines from bottom to top. 1972
Graphite on wall
Private Collection

7. **Wall Drawing #273: Lines to points on a grid.** A six-inch (15 cm) grid covering the wall. Lines from the corners, sides, and center of the walls to random points on the grid. Composite (seventh wall): red lines from the midpoints of four sides, blue lines from four corners, yellow lines from the center. 1975
Water-soluble crayon and graphite on wall
Private Collection

8. **Wall Drawing #171: A line through the center of the wall toward the upper left corner and a line from the center of the wall to the upper right corner.** 1973
Graphite and water-soluble crayon on wall
Courtesy of the artist

9. **Wall Drawing #235: The location of three points,** 1974
Graphite and water-soluble crayon on wall
Courtesy of the artist

10. **Wall Drawing #248: The location of a straight, not straight and a broken line, a square, a triangle and a circle.** (The specific locations are determined by the draftsman.) 1975
Graphite and water-soluble crayon on wall
Courtesy of the artist

11. **Wall Drawing #271: Black circles, red grid, yellow arcs from four corners, blue arcs from the midpoints of four sides. (ACG 195)** 1975
Colored pencil on wall
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

12. **Wall Drawing #136: Arcs and lines.** Two lines crossing. A 36-inch (90 cm) grid covering the wall. All possibilities of two lines crossing using arcs from corners and sides, straight lines, not straight lines, and broken lines. Two lines in each 36-inch (90 cm) square. 1972
Graphite and water-soluble crayon on wall
Courtesy of the artist

13. **Wall Drawing #1211: Drawing Series—Composite, Part I–IV, #1–24, A+B,** 1968/2006
Colored pencil on wall
192 drawings, 40¼ x 40¼ inches (103 x 103 cm) each
Courtesy of the artist

14. **Wall Drawing #1085: Drawing Series—Composite, Part I–IV, #1–24, A+B,** 1968/2003
Graphite on wall
192 drawings, 40¼ x 40¼ inches (103 x 103 cm) each
Dia Art Foundation; Gift of Melva Bucksbaum and Raymond Learsy and the Martin Bucksbaum Family Foundation

Sol LeWitt was born in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1928, and attended Syracuse University. After serving in the Korean War as a graphic artist, he moved, in 1953, to New York, where he worked as a draftsman for the architect I. M. Pei. LeWitt had his first solo exhibition at the Daniels Gallery, New York, in 1965, and the following year Dwan Gallery, New York, mounted the first in a series of solo exhibitions. He participated, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, in several significant group exhibitions of Minimalist and Conceptual art, including "Primary Structures," at the Jewish Museum, New York, in 1966, and "When Attitude Becomes Form," at the Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland, in 1969. His renowned text "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" was published in 1967. LeWitt's work was included in Documentas 6 (1977) and 7 (1982) in Kassel, as well as the 1987 Skulptur Projekte in Münster and the 1989 Istanbul Biennial. Major retrospectives of his works were organized by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1978, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, in 2000. A retrospective of LeWitt's wall drawings was held in 1984 at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. Sol LeWitt died on April 8, 2007, in New York City.

Selected Bibliography

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Cover:

Detail from Sol LeWitt, *Wall Drawing #1085: Drawing Series—Composite, Part I–IV, #1–24, A+B*, 1968/2003. Graphite on wall. 192 drawings, 40¼ x 40¼ inches (103 x 103 cm) each. Dia Art Foundation; Gift of Melva Bucksbaum and Raymond Learsy and the Martin Bucksbaum Family Foundation.

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