Lawrence Weiner was born in the Bronx, New York, February 10, 1942. He currently lives in New York City and Amsterdam. His first solo exhibition was in 1960, and he has exhibited widely in numerous shows since.

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A book entitled Lawrence Weiner: Displacement was integral to the exhibition, charting the conception of the work through to its realization. A poster designed for the exhibition by Weiner is also available.

Checklist of Works

1. CAT. #690 (1991) BITS & PIECES PUT TOGETHER TO PRESENT A SEMBLANCE OF A WHOLE
2. CAT. #697 (1991) SAND A + FERROUS OXIDE SILVER HAVING SPACE BY VIRTUE OF INHERENT MOVEMENT
3. CAT. #698 (1991) CADMIUM + MUD DISPLACING BY VIRTUE OF INHERENT INSTABILITY
4. CAT. #699 (1991) WATER + (FERROUS CONCRETE ENCOMPASSING BY VIRTUE OF INHERENT DENSITY
5. CAT. #688 (1991) TITANIUM LEAD MOVING INTO BY VIRTUE OF INHERENT VOLITION
6. CAT. #691 (1991) CADMIUM, MUD, TITANIUM, LEAD, FERROUS OXIDE, AND SO ON...

All works are composed of the language and the materials referred to.

The mise-en-scène for the entry into the works is found on the floor.
Displacement

Lawrence Weiner chose to present his work at Dia in two formats, the room and the book. At the entrance to the exhibition space, Gary Garrels writes, "Weiner has laid out a gameboard runway, distinct from the work itself which cannot be seen at the entrance. The choice to enter has been extended by the artist: the decision to participate or not to participate is ours:

(1) FOR THE MONEY

(2) FOR THE SHOW

(3) TO GET READY &

(4) TO GO!"

Once inside the room the spectator next encounters on the lambent spread of sandy-colored floor, a key premise in Weiner’s work:

1. THE ARTIST MAY CONSTRUCT THE WORK

2. THE WORK MAY BE FABRICATED

3. THE WORK NEED NOT BE BUILT

and, adjacent to that, tellingly, in parentheses:

(EACH BEING EQUAL & CONSISTENT...)

This succinct statement encapsulates Weiner’s belief that art is a proposition about relationships between human beings and objects, and between objects and other objects, which need not be reduced to convey its content, since, to continue his tenet, “each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist, the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of reception.” To clarify and best present this position Weiner has worked exclusively since the late sixties with language, and with the generalities of material rather than with its specifics. A former philosophy student, Weiner articulates his aesthetic in clear precise terms: “If I’m dealing with generalities of materials, language is sufficient. (Using language) leaves it more open for the user. It lets consumers immediately transform it into something they can use in their lives.”

"Size, color, format, means of presentation, all have to do with the times and that’s the only artistic practice that is not just aesthetic practice. You do not present something within a context that in your terms will be used in a way that you don’t particularly approve of. I reject things like certain typespaces that stand for what was an old-fashioned idea of modernism."

“(Parentheses and brackets) stand for something physically. In materials the parentheses and brackets mean ‘athletics.’ Using them is a way of presenting the work without having to have a large discourse, without having to have abundant information hanging all over the place explaining that we’re not talking really about this material but about any other material that happens. It is an editorial introduction meaning that I do know my choice is an emotional one and viewers can replace it with anything else they want.”

“...I don’t know why I become interested in some material. It could be because I move the material around, and when it comes to a configuration that makes some sense and I begin to understand why I was interested in it, I translate that...[into] language from what I see. That translation I then clean up and present. My prose is disquieted because I see in terms of nouns. And I see any activity in a noun because I see it as a material process that I understand in art. So, that makes me not a very good prose writer. Poetry is about those untranslatable, unnameable emotions and emotions between human beings to human beings in the kind of work I do. It is designed for translation. It’s the exact opposite of what poetry is.”

"[I]f you try to find a means of presenting which would be, if not immediately comprehensible, then at least understandable to the majority of people I’m interested in. Then you have to hustle around and try to find a means to show it. When you’re closed out of the gallery system, you make a book. If you have something to say you can always do it, you can put it out on a poster, that’s very cheap to do. In each case—gallery or book or poster—you have to design the presentation as best you can out of courtesy for your public.”

"...my major concern has been the use factor of art within a society. It is not just used in the context of what we know as art history; it is an attempt to place material which could be used to place your self within that society as a productive member.”

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"(2) FOR THE SHOW"

"(3) TO GET READY &"

"(4) TO GO!"

Art that imposes conditions, human or otherwise, upon the receiver for its appreciation in my eyes constitutes aesthetic fascism. My art never gives direction.”

"When I use language, I presume I am not speaking to my meanings, but imposes my perception and my research on an object in a pure art context.”

"...any expression of what you have to say. But your personal enlightenment of your personal angst is not a fit subject for art. It might be a fit subject for literature, or poetry perhaps, but art is about material objects.”

"The artist should...figure out how to cover his art. That’s his responsibility... What happens to the product is absolutely explicit in its production. When you produce the product you know how it can be used. You have to then decide how you will deal with that. I don’t think there is anything wrong with people speculating in art. Why not? You just have to make art that, even if locked in the basement of a bank, can still function in its time. That’s one of the things about using language. I’ve responded to this problem about explicit and implicit ideological content in the kind of work I make. The Museum of Modern Art can acquire a piece of mine, show it for a year, and then put it in the basement. But, at the same time, the work can be shown in five or six other places. I always remain the right to be allowed to put any work of mine in my collection of work. I’ll give credit to the people who bought it, but it is public art, it must remain in my possession. And there has been no problem with that. Now, if you make a unique object the buyer, the new owner, can put it in a basement and so basically put it out of circulation. There has been art bought off in this way because its ideological content was either paradigmatically or legitimately contrary to some industrialist’s beliefs... It’s the responsibility of the artist to deal with the society he’s going to be placing his art in. If he doesn’t, then he’s reprehensible.”

"My contention is that perhaps we have to accept that art has become a service industry, rather than a production industry... Its content is its reason for existing, rather than its product. The content of the product is its reason for existence.”

"...my major concern has been the use factor of art within a society. It’s quite content, as a studio artist, to be working away. But then you come to present something which within its own time will have some use factor, not only within the art world, but within the general idea of the relationships of human beings to objects. For me that is the only reason for the existence of art per se... Art, when it’s placed into the context of the world, is not just used in the context of what we know as art history; it is an attempt to place material which could be used to enrich the daily lives of other human beings. This is not to say that as an artist you have some special insights into materials denied to everyone else. But you do have more time to think about what that relationship is. If you can present as concise a work dealing with that relationship, you have done, perhaps, a tiny but important bit to place your self within that society as a productive member.”

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4. op. cit.


6. op. cit.


8. (1969, requested here) op. cit. p. 53.


12. op. cit. pp. 37-38


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