

# Lawrence Weiner

Lawrence Weiner formulates his work through language. For him, language provides a medium for representing material relationships in the external world as objectively as possible. His statements are produced with minimal traces of authorial subjectivity; his works offer little evidence of the artist's hand, skill, or taste. "Art is not a metaphor upon the relationship of human beings to objects and objects to objects in relation to human beings but a representation of an empirical existing fact," Weiner argues. "It does not tell the potential and capabilities of an object (material) but presents a reality concerning that relationship."

Weiner contends that an individual artwork need never be realized, since "each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist, the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership." The artist's *Statement of Intent* from 1969 begins:

1. THE ARTIST MAY CONSTRUCT THE WORK
2. THE WORK MAY BE FABRICATED
3. THE WORK NEED NOT BE BUILT

Because Weiner's works are conceived as nonspecific representations of states or processes rather than material realities, they are capable of countless manifestations. Although their content is general and abstract, it is inextricable from their presentation and context. Seldom site-specific, these works can be site-related—that is, conceived in relation to the venue and circumstance. The typeface, size, placement, and color all vary with the site, as does the choice to stencil, paint, or mount, in relief, the letters. The context—whether a poster, artist's book, gallery, or public arena—also inflects the work's meaning.

Weiner has said, "I really believe that the subject matter of my art is—art." While sculpture has become his primary focus, earlier pieces addressed painting, the artist's medium of choice early in his career. Presenting a single formula that

equals the work, *ONE QUART EXTERIOR GREEN INDUSTRIAL ENAMEL THROWN ON A BRICK WALL* (1968) alludes to the Abstract Expressionism of Jackson Pollock. Weiner actually fabricated this work, as he did with a few others. In hurling paint against the facade of his home, he effectively extended Pollock's gesture into the real world. Various and versatile, Weiner's works at Dia:Beacon appear at physically dispersed sites—among the sculpture galleries, in a stairwell, and in the café/bookshop. Suspended high above the admissions desk, the *Statement of Intent* attests to his belief that "art always institutionalizes itself," irrespective of placement. It also reminds visitors that the work of art is completed in its reception, understanding, and potential enactment.

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Lawrence Weiner was born in the Bronx, New York, in 1942. After graduating from high school, he traveled across the country to California, where, in 1960, he used dynamite to create his *Cratering Piece* in Mill Valley. His first solo show was held at Seth Siegelaub Contemporary Art, New York, in 1964. In 1968 he presented *Statements*, a book of works composed solely of language, and since then he has continued to explore the capacities and presentation of language as a sculptural medium. Weiner has had solo exhibitions at venues including the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany (2000), the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (1991 and 1994), the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (1990), and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2007). In 1991 Dia presented his work *Displacement* and published an accompanying book of the same title. Weiner currently lives between New York City and Amsterdam.

Stairwell:

*ONE QUART EXTERIOR GREEN*  
*INDUSTRIAL ENAMEL THROWN*  
*ON A BRICK WALL*, 1968

Language + the materials

referred to

Collection Alice Zimmerman-Weiner;

Long-term loan

Café/bookshop:

*Statement of Intent*, 1969

Language + the materials

referred to

Public freehold; Courtesy the artist