

SOL LEWITT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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RETROSPECTIVE OF INFLUENTIAL CONTEMPORARY ARTIST

SOL LEWITT AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

SOL LEWITT, a retrospective of the work of one of the major artistic figures of the last ten years, will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art from February 3 through April 4, 1978. The exhibition presents the full range of the oeuvre of an artist who was a pioneer figure in the Minimalist movement of the 1960s and whose work has had a profound influence on the current generation of Conceptual and post-Conceptual artists. Although Sol LeWitt is internationally known and has been the subject of numerous one-person gallery and museum shows both in the United States and Europe, this exhibition is the first comprehensive retrospective of his work to be presented by an American museum.

Directed by Alicia Legg, Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture, SOL LEWITT is accompanied by a major monograph designed by the artist himself and edited by Miss Legg.* The definitive publication on the artist to date, it includes essays by critic Lucy Lippard, art historian Robert Rosenblum, and Curator Bernice Rose.

A series of lectures is being held in conjunction with the exhibition. Sol LeWitt will talk about his work on February 11 in a program especially for students and teachers; Robert Rosenblum, Professor of Fine Arts at New York University, and Donald Kuspit, Professor of Art History at the University of North Carolina, will present public lectures on March 14 and March 21

*Sol LeWitt. Edited by Alicia Legg. 184 pages, 274 illustrations (16 in color). \$22.50 clothbound; \$12.50 paperbound. Published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

PRESS PREVIEW: FEBRUARY 1, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

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respectively. In addition, gallery talks for the general public on various aspects of the exhibition will be given by graduate students at 1:00 p.m. every day except Wednesdays.

Included in the exhibition are LeWitt's modular and serial structures, ranging from his reliefs of the early 1960s to the more recent serial works that demonstrate the clarity of logical progression; his large wall drawings, which embody such central concerns of contemporary art as chance, impermanence, and the incorporation of architectural space; his drawings; and examples of his work in the burgeoning medium of artists' books.

LeWitt has used the cube and the square as his basic units and they have provided the primary elements for his work in both two and three dimensions. Beginning with his early wooden structures of 1962-64, which were among the first works in the idiom that was only a few years later to be widely called Minimal art, the exhibition traces the development of LeWitt's use after 1965 of the modular grid as the key element in his work. Miss Legg observes: "The wall pieces can be flat, with only the shallow depth of the members defined by shadows, or they can project to the depth of a cubic unit and, depending on the number of units, set kinetic passage in motion as the viewer approaches. Shadows also play a role, creating diagonal lines in the three-dimensional cross-hatching." Included among the 25 structures in the exhibition is LeWitt's first serial piece, Serial Project #1 (ABCD) of 1966 in which he arranged open and closed modular units on a four-part grid base to present every possible variation or permutation. In this work, as Miss Legg observes, "the progression moves from a delicate outline of shapes on a grid base to their gradual absorption by solid shapes, until the final set of block forms stands in solemn grandeur." Similarly, in another major serial piece, Cubes with Hidden Cubes of 1977, the concept of enclosure, or the placing of one form within another, is employed. Also included in the exhibition is Incomplete Open Cubes of

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1974, in which the linear elements of a cube are explored in 122 eight-inch pieces, beginning with the basic three bars and concluding with 11 bars (12 being needed to complete the cube).

LeWitt's first important drawings, like his structures, were derived from the grid format. They date from 1968 when LeWitt seriously began his serial drawing using the four basic kinds of straight lines (horizontal, vertical, and both diagonals), from which he has gone on to develop the various combinations and permutations. Like his structures, LeWitt's drawings are composed according to a simple rule and use simple components. In his color drawings he again holds to basics, using only the three primary colors plus black. By superimposing these he achieves a broad range of hues. Among some 80 framed drawings in the exhibition is All Three-Part Variations on Three Different Kinds of Cubes, presenting 71 variations of three stacked cubes in open and/or closed forms. A selection of LeWitt's drawings on postcards sent to friends will also be on view.

LeWitt's wall drawings are innovations in contemporary art which evolved from his early serial drawings. Bernice Rose has compared their catalytic significance for drawing to the importance for painting of Jackson Pollock's use of the drip technique. Drawn directly on the wall, the wall drawings assume their forms according to the space they occupy, following the architectural limitations of a given wall and incorporating its various physical elements. "I wanted to do a work of art that was as two-dimensional as possible," LeWitt has said of these works. LeWitt and his assistants have created wall drawings in black and white and color from such important drawing series as Arcs, Circles, and Grids and Locations of Lines. Believing that it is the "idea" that counts, LeWitt puts instructions for these works into writing for others to follow; hence, there are subtle variations in each execution though the artist works closely with his assistants. Many wall drawings are executed

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for temporary exhibitions, and the wall is then destroyed. LeWitt has created over 300 wall drawings and 16 of them are being shown in this exhibition.

Book design is one of LeWitt's greatest interests today. His "bookworks" incorporate all his ideas on form and seriality with the various progressions illustrated in line drawings in black and white as well as in color. Succinct captions serve as the text. "His concern in a book is that it convey information," Alicia Legg comments. "In order to show how ideas are brought to realization, he has devised a system of layout that reveals how ingeniously modular combinations and variations can be exploited." LeWitt's books, of which more than 20 are included in this retrospective, correspond chronologically with his structures and drawings and date from 1966 when his first publications devoted to his serial projects were issued. (A selection of these "bookworks" will be on sale in the Museum Bookstore during the exhibition.)

The art of Sol LeWitt has been an important force in the movement of contemporary artists toward an art of idea and self-examination rather than a more purely sensual art. "A pioneer in the Minimal and Conceptual movements that emerged in the mid-sixties, Sol LeWitt has influenced the community of artists and intellectuals in both this country and abroad with his work and his thinking," observes Alicia Legg. "Recognizing the integrity of elementary forms, LeWitt and other Minimal artists have exploited the simplest of geometric forms and shapes. Believing that ideas, although irrational, should be carried through logically, LeWitt wrote that 'the idea becomes the machine that makes the art,' and that 'Conceptual art is made to engage the mind of the viewer rather than his eye or emotions.'"

The exhibition, which has been made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, will later travel to the Musée d'Art Contemporain, Montreal (September 5 - October), the Krannert Art Museum of the University of Illinois, Champaign (March 4 - April 8, 1979), and the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, California (May 11 - June 24, 1979).