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Reflection 01: Sol LeWitt

Sol LeWitt, born in 1928, is known as an early contributor to the minimalist and conceptual art movements in the 20th and early 21st century. Based in America, LeWitt used a variety of materials and is considered a multimedia artist, his works often taking the form of wall paintings and what he referred to as “structures.” LeWitt’s time as a graphic designer in the Vietnam War, as well as his time in an architectural studio influenced his work greatly. His profession led him to believe that the idea itself, even without material form, could be considered art. Though LeWitt enjoyed drawing at an early age and attended many different art schools, including the School of Visual Arts in New York, he found that he had a difficult time adapting to the rigid expectations and programs. It was after his time in New York that he was hired by I.M Pei and he was introduced to the architectural process. Though he was hired as a graphic designer, seeing the way that architects made plans before delegating the task of building the structure itself became the basis of his ideology and later artistic process. He explains that "An architect doesn't go off with a shovel and dig his foundation and lay every brick. He's still an artist."¹ In the 60s, LeWitt would experiment with different processes, beginning the building of his cube-based structures returning to what he referred to as “fundamentals.” It was here that he began to consider himself a conceptual artist rather than a minimalist, as he focused on the design process as, as aforementioned, he delegated the construction itself to different teams. Oftentimes, his instructions would be vague, or include an interpretable sketch, which would

¹ *The Art Story*, Bio

leave the team to apply their own interpretation to his works. His inclusion in Seth Siegelaub's *Xerox Book* project is when LeWitt began to experiment with wall drawings and paintings.

LeWitt passed away in 2007, at the height of his career.

Out of all of the works of LeWitt's career, one which stands out as particularly unique is "Buried Cube Containing an Object of Importance but Little Value." Released in 1968, it is neither a wall painting nor is it one of his structures. It is difficult whether to classify it as photography or performance, but what it is definitely is LeWitt's most conceptual work, and allegedly, a goodbye to minimalism. The event had no audience and only took the form as a series of six photos in a square format. For their display, they were mounted on paper. The cube was buried in a local garden, though its exact location is unknown. As well, it is not known what was in the buried vessel. The photos themselves are black and white, and show four different figures across the six images, showing two men and a woman who seem to be the artist's age, as well as LeWitt himself. The cube sits at their feet in the first three pictures, before the fourth image shows a man, whose face cannot be seen, digging the hole in which the cube is then placed, then buried in the proceeding images. Although we do not see the man's face who is doing the digging, it can safely be assumed that he is not LeWitt, as the artist's pants seem to be a lighter color, aligning with LeWitt's delegatory ideology. It is also interesting to note that the production of this piece came after the publication of his manifesto for the Concept Art movement which came out the same year. In this manifesto he writes "The execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art."² The fact that the work lives only in concept, that there is no definite proof or physical evidence that the cube was buried

² *The Art Story*, Bio

other than the photos, perfectly falls within the ideals of conceptual art, and is a marker of LeWitt's definite journey from minimalism to conceptualism.

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