

SOL LEWITT PRIVILEGED CONCEPT OVER EXECUTION. A founder of both minimal art and conceptual art, he established parameters through which serial work could emerge. In the 1950s LeWitt worked briefly in New York City as a graphic designer, first for *Seventeen* magazine and later for I. M. Pei's architectural firm. He did not relish this experience but did develop a fascination for typography. In 1968 LeWitt made the first of his well-known wall drawings. In this body of work, he developed specific guidelines or diagrams that provided instructions for another person to draw a two-dimensional work directly on walls. To put this in more technological terms, LeWitt encoded the process of a work of art, thereby divorcing the concept from the manifestation of form. Just as a programmer creates a series of steps for a computer to follow, LeWitt provided steps for a human to follow. LeWitt, however, played with the ambiguity of text, purposefully carving out space in his instructions for the human executor to make individual decisions. As a result, each rendition of a wall drawing is unique. And each rendition speaks to us about the push-pull of logic and intuition.

DOING WALL DRAWINGS

SOL LEWITT | 1971

The artist conceives and plans the wall drawing. It is realized by draftsmen (the artist can act as his own draftsman); the plan (written, spoken, or drawn) is interpreted by the draftsman.

There are decisions that the draftsman makes, within the plan, as part of the plan. Each individual, being unique, if given the same instructions would understand them differently and would carry them out differently.

The artist must allow various interpretations of his plan. The draftsman perceives the artist's plan, then reorders it to his experience and understanding.

The draftsman's contributions are unforeseen by the artist, even if he, the artist, is the draftsman. Even if the same draftsman followed the same plan twice, there would be two different works of art. No one can do the same thing twice.

The artist and the draftsman become collaborators in making the art.

Each person draws a line differently and each person understands words differently.

Neither lines nor words are ideas, they are the means by which ideas are conveyed.

WHEN AN ARTIST USES A CONCEPTUAL FORM OF ART, IT MEANS THAT ALL OF THE PLANNING AND DECISIONS ARE MADE BEFOREHAND AND THE EXECUTION IS A PERFUNCTORY AFFAIR. THE IDEA BECOMES A MACHINE THAT MAKES THE ART.

SOL LEWITT
"Paragraphs on
Conceptual Art"
1967

The wall drawing is the artist's art, as long as the plan is not violated. If it is, then the draftsman becomes the artist and the drawing would be his work of art, but art that is a parody of the original concept.

The draftsman may make errors in following the plan. All wall drawings contain errors, they are part of the work.

The plan exists as an idea but needs to be put into its optimum form. Ideas of wall drawings alone are contradictions of the idea of wall drawings.

The explicit plan should accompany the finished wall drawing. They are of equal importance.

SOL LEWITT Installation view of the exhibition *Sol LeWitt* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, February 3-April 4, 1978. Photo: Katherine Keller.

