

## **Sol LeWitt's Wall Drawing #118: A Collaborative Creative Process**

Sol LeWitt, a pioneer of conceptual and minimalist art, challenged traditional notions of art-making by emphasizing the primacy of the idea and the process over the art object itself. Wall Drawing #118, particularly emblematic of his approach, involves a rigorous conceptual framework where precision and repetition are central. This artwork's exact instructions were: "On a wall surface, any continuous stretch of wall, using hard pencil, place fifty points at random. The points should be evenly distributed over the area of the wall. All of the points should be connected by straight lines." These instructions enabled the artwork's execution by practitioners other than LeWitt himself, typically artisans carefully selected and trained by LeWitt to render his vision with fidelity. The art exists in the intersection of LeWitt's conceptual design and the skillful interpretation of those executing it.

On the facing page, you will observe a different rendition of Wall Drawing #118. This version, created using a pen plotter programmed by a human, adheres to the conceptual framework of connecting points with lines; however, it uses only 22 points instead of the original 50. This mechanized rendition reflects a different form of artistic collaboration, where the machine assumes the role traditionally occupied by human artisans. The human programmer who encoded the instructions into the plotter serves as a crucial intermediary in the artwork's realization, much like the artisans who translate LeWitt's instructions onto walls. This transformation raises questions about the role of technology in art creation and how mechanized processes influence or alter the artistic outcome and interpretation.

The copyright system, as it stands, often awards sole authorship to figures like Sol LeWitt, potentially neglecting the substantial creative contribution of artisans who physically create the artworks. The "mechanical reproduction" guideline by the Copyright Office presents a nebulous boundary, stipulating that outputs merely facilitated by machines may lack necessary human authorship for copyright protection. However, the artisans executing Wall Drawings contribute human skill, decision-making, and creativity, which are crucial in producing each unique piece. Under a proposed percentage allocation system, authorship could be divided more equitably, valuing all contributing voices. For instance, Wall Drawing #118 might allocate 70% of authorship to LeWitt for his conceptual vision, with the remaining 30% shared among the artisans who bring the artwork to life, reflecting a more comprehensive view of the artwork's collaborative nature.