Lawrence Weiner: AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE

A key figure associated with the emergence and foundations of conceptual art during the 1960s, Lawrence Weiner remains one of the most dynamic artists working today. *Lawrence Weiner: AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE* offers a comprehensive examination of Weiner's remarkable and cohesive oeuvre, assembling key selections and bodies of work from throughout his 40-year career. It presents the full range of Weiner's art, from early Propeller and Removal paintings to "specific and general" works using language, which has characterized his production since 1968. Also included are works on paper, films, videos, books, posters, multiples, and audio works, which are all integral to his distinctive oeuvre. The exhibition examines the range of Weiner's work with language, from the first studio-based manifestations included in his landmark 1968 book *STATEMENTS*, to later works that address the physical and cultural landscape and introduce as forms adaptations of graphic devices and everyday figures of speech. MOCA's presentation was designed closely with the artist, who approached the expansive space of The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA as a "fairground."

Weiner began in the 1960s to create works that were central to the ongoing debate regarding the nature and meaning of art. Weiner has defined art as "the relationship of human beings to objects and objects to objects in relation to human beings," and that premise remains at the core of his work. These conditions have been the basis of Weiner's production since 1967. Using language as material, he was at the forefront of a radical shift in which language or text emerged as a primary medium for the making of art. Weiner and others challenged the "object status" of painting and sculpture, proposing that the idea and intention of the artist were of equal importance, if not greater, than the representation of an object itself.

Weiner was born in the Bronx in 1942 and attended New York City public schools. He spent the late 1950s and early '60s traveling throughout the United States, Mexico, and Canada. The first presentation of his work was in Mill Valley, California, in 1960. He divides his time between a studio in New York and a boat in Amsterdam.

Lawrence Weiner: AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE is co-curated by Ann Goldstein, senior curator, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and Donna De Salvo, chief curator and associate director for programs, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.



AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE, 1988, language + the materials referred to, dimensions variable, installation at the Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, Germany, 2000; © 2008 Lawrence Weiner/Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York

The following was adapted from a text written by Jarrett Gregory for the Whitney Museum of American Art. New York

This exhibition marks Lawrence Weiner's first United States retrospective and, like much of the artist's work, it is about choice, personal experience, and the act of looking. In his studio, Weiner explores the properties of materials and their relationships to humans and to other objects in the world. In 1968, in order to avoid the constraints and specificity of displaying objects, Weiner turned to language as a means of presenting his sculpture. The properties of language compliment Weiner's aspirations for his art: that it is accessible, subjective, and, above all, useful to a diverse audience.

Though his texts are often disarmingly eloquent, it is not language itself but rather the idea (or content) that Weiner presents as the artwork: the material, movement, or transition referenced by his words. So long as this content is conveyed, a piece may be recreated in a multitude of ways: spoken, written, or as a built manifestation of the object or circumstances the language describes. At each venue, the works featured in Lawrence Weiner: AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE have been the same; their presentations, however, have differed: what may have appeared as text on a wall in New York may be physically built in Los Angeles. This installation was conceived in collaboration with the artist; his ideas are evident not only in the artworks on view but in their presentation, which aims to facilitate the viewer's experience, allow for multiple points of view, and increase accessibility without directives. The exhibition is not organized chronologically, nor is any piece or medium given precedence. The viewer is encouraged to enter the space and relate to the work in whatever way he or she chooses, without the aid of wall texts or other explanations.

Weiner's "Statement of Intent" (1968) outlines three ways his works may exist: built by the artist, built by someone other than the artist, or in language (not built). According to Weiner, "If the information is conveyed, then the piece exists."

Therefore, a piece that is not constructed might be written, spoken, or thought about, and in the same vein, a built piece does not indicate how the work *should* look, but how it *could* look. All options are viable and none alter the work; there is no set way to build a piece, as long as it conveys the information.

Because language holds no value unless it is received, Weiner's art depends on an audience. In keeping with the communal nature of language, Weiner's works have a social function: to prompt the viewer to consider his or her relationship to other people, objects, ideas, places, and materials. "Use factor," a concept posited by the artist, refers to the potential for meaning that a piece of art has once it enters a culture.² Weiner makes art that is functional and accessible, and that provokes the viewer to turn it into something that he or she can use. He has put his work in songs, films, and on the radio, and his pieces have been translated between languages or presented simultaneously in multiple tongues.

Weiner explored his early conceptual program through his Propeller paintings (1964-65). He adapted their shapes from television test patterns, producing them in different sizes and colors. Weiner was not interested in making pictures, but rather was engaged in a discourse about the idea of painting. Each piece was sold for the same price regardless of size and was never insured beyond the cost of the canvas, paint, and frame. By treating the propellers as equivalent manifestations of one overarching concept, Weiner tried to underscore that the paintings were conceptually based, rather than unique objects. However, the distinction was too nuanced: Weiner was still making objects that were inevitably accepted as paintings rather than as ideas.3 In an effort to alter the way his works were understood, he changed his approach.

When he began constructing Removal paintings (1966–68), Weiner took a step away from painterly concerns such as imagery and technique. He worked against the rectangular shape of the canvas by cutting a piece from it,

usually at a corner. He then spray-painted the canvas and also painted one stripe along the top and another along the bottom. This formulaic. even mechanical, approach eliminated any trace of the artist's hand, and was reinforced by the fact that he let each receiver choose the size of the canvas, dimensions of the removal, and color of the paint.4 If the receiver did not like the outcome, Weiner stripped the canvas and started again. He came to find working on canvas to be limiting because "the painting stopped at that edge. When you are dealing with language, there is no edge that the picture drops over or drops off. You are dealing with something completely infinite. Language, because it is the most non-objective thing we have ever developed in this world, never stops."5

In February 1968, the Siegelaub Gallery organized the outdoor exhibition Staples, Stakes, Twine, Turf at Windham College in Vermont. Weiner's contribution was a 75-by-100-foot grid constructed with twine and 34 wood stakes that he installed on a field between two dormitories. When students reclaimed access to the field by cutting the twine, Weiner was unfazed: "When I got there and looked at it, it didn't seem as if the philistines had done the work any particular harm. And that was it There was this emotional transition. right then and there when I realized it didn't matter."6 What was built as a site-specific outdoor installation became A SERIES OF STAKES SET INTO THE GROUND AT REGULAR INTERVALS TO FORM A RECTANGLE—TWINE STRUNG FROM STAKE TO STAKE TO DEMARK A GRID-A RECTANGLE REMOVED FROM THIS RECTANGLE (1968). Weiner's next exhibition, in December of the same year, consisted of the book STATEMENTS, in which works were presented only as text.7



Bethany Izard with SINK OR SWIM YOUR ASS GETS WET, transfer tattoo, New York, 2004; © 2008 Lawrence Weiner/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Placed adjacent to one another, SOME STONE TO STAND ON... (1988) and A 36" X 36" REMOVAL TO THE LATHING OR SUPPORT WALL OF PLASTER OR WALLBOARD FROM A WALL (1968) evoke materiality, but their presentations are qualitatively different, allowing the viewer to experience the varied ways in which Weiner communicates his work. In SOME STONE TO STAND ON..., the materials (stone, wood, glass, steel, gold, earth, coal, salt, lead, ashes, rubber, and hemp) exist in the viewer's mind as images conjured up by reading. Each viewer will imagine "earth" differently: it may be dry, mossy, or warm, and in different shades of brown or red. In contrast, the removal piece is a tangible reconstruction with specific physical qualities. The viewer is not asked to imagine his or her own version of a 36" X 36" REMOVAL, but instead is offered one possible manifestation.

Notes

- "Lawrence Weiner at Amsterdam: Interview by Willoughby Sharp," reprinted in *Having Been Said:* Writings & Interviews of Lawrence Weiner 1968–2003, ed. Gerti Fietzek and Gregor Stemmrich (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2004), 44.
- 2. "I Am Not Content: Interview by David Batchelor," reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 186.
- 3. "Lawrence Weiner at Amsterdam," 44.
- 4. "Early Work: Interview by Lynn Gumpert," reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 120.
- 5. "Art without Space," reprinted in *Lawrence Weiner* (London: Phaidon, 1998), 98.
- 6. "Early Work: Interview by Lynn Gumpert," 122.
- 7. Weiner, STATEMENTS (New York: Seth Siegelaub and the Louis Kellner Foundation, 1968)



Weiner constructing A 36" X 36" REMOVAL TO THE LATHING OR SUPPORT WALL OF PLASTER OR WALLBOARD FROM A WALL, 1968, for When Attitudes Become Form: Works—Concepts—Processes—Situations—Information, Kunsthalle Bern, 1969; photo by Shunk Kender, courtesy Harald Szeemann Archive, Switzerland

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PLAYLIST

10 WHAT'S A GIRL TO DO WHEN SHE CAN'T from MONSTERS FROM THE DEEP

Performers: Kim Weston, The Persuasions, Junior Mance, Jimmy Hayes, Lenny Pickett, Tony Garnier, and Mike Clark; lyrics: Lawrence Weiner; music: Ned Sublette; [CD] NYC: Moved Pictures and Excellent Records, 1997.

11 AS IT STANDS from MONSTERS FROM THE DEEP

Performers: Kim Weston, Junior Mance, Tony Garnier, and Mike Clark; lyrics: Lawrence Weiner; music: Ned Sublette; [CD] NYC: Moved Pictures and Excellent Records, 1997.

12 STARS DON'T STAND STILL IN THE SKY from SHIPS AT SEA SAILORS & SHOES

Performers: Ned Sublette and The Persuasions; lyrics: Lawrence Weiner; music: Ned Sublette; [CD] NYC: Moved Pictures and Excellent Records, 1993.

13 HAVING BEEN DONE AT/HAVING BEEN DONE TO ESSENDO STATO FATTO A

Performers: Lawrence Weiner and Marina Girotto; piano: Marina Girotto; translation: Cesare Scaglia; [33 1/3 LP] Rome: Gian Enzo Sperone and Konrad Fischer, 1973.

14 ROME WAS BUILT FOR A DAY from MONSTERS FROM THE DEEP

Performers: Ned Sublette, The Persuasions, Red Fox, and Sir Raphael; lyrics: Lawrence Weiner; music: Ned Sublette; [CD] NYC: Moved Pictures and Excellent Records, 1997.

15 i.e. A DIJK

from the exhibition *A Work of Lawrence Weiner Presented Within the Context of an Installation*, Wide White Space Gallery, Antwerp, 1977

Performers: Kirsten Vibeke Thueson, Coosje Van Bruggen, and Lawrence Weiner; mix: Lawrence Weiner; [Cassette] NYC: Moved Pictures. 1977.

16 JUST OVER THERE from SHIPS AT SEA SAILORS & SHOES

Performers: Ned Sublette and The Persuasions; lyrics: Lawrence Weiner; music: Ned Sublette; [CD] NYC: Moved Pictures and Excellent Records. 1993.

17 A BIT OF MATTER AND A LITTLE BIT MORE

Performers: AZW Bentley and Lawrence Weiner; music: Marzette Watts; mix: Marzette Watts and Lawrence Weiner; [Video Soundtrack] NYC: Moved Pictures, 1976.

18 HAVING BEEN DONE AT/HAVING BEEN DONE TO FSSENDO STATO FATTO A

Performers: Lawrence Weiner and Marina Girotto; piano: Marina Girotto; translation: Cesare Scaglia; [33 1/3 LP] Rome: Gian Enzo Sperone and Konrad Fischer, 1973.

19 HAVING BEEN BUILT ON SAND WITH ANOTHER BASE (BASIS) IN FACT

Performers: Britta Le Va, Tina Girouard, Lawrence Weiner, and Richard Landry, music: Richard Landry, mix: Lawrence Weiner and Richard Landry, remix: Kurt Munkacsi; [33 1/3 LP] NYC: Moved Pictures, 1978.

20 SHOW AND TELL from MONSTERS FROM THE DEEP

Performers: Ned Sublette, The Persuasions, Joe Russell, Robbie Ameen, and Anne Pope; lyrics: Lawrence Weiner; music: Ned Sublette; [CD] NYC: Moved Pictures and Excellent Records, 1997.

21 NOTHING TO LOSE/NIETS AAN VERLOREN

Performers: Coosje van Bruggen and Lawrence Weiner, translation: Ger Van Caspel and Coosje van Bruggen; [33 1/3 LP & CD reissue] Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 1976.

22 DEUTSCHE ANGST

Performers: Peter Gordon and Lawrence Weiner; lyrics: Lawrence Weiner; music: Peter Gordon; engineers: Roma Baran and Gail Turner Lopez at ZBS Foundation; [Cassette] NYC: Moved Pictures, 1981.

A NEW PAIR OF SHOES from SHIPS AT SEA SAILORS & SHOES

Performers: Ned Sublette and The Persuasions; lyrics: Lawrence Weiner; music: Ned Sublette; [CD] NYC: Moved Pictures and Excellent Records, 1993.

24 NEED TO KNOW/A STRUCTURE OF LAWRENCE WEINER

Performers: Peter Gordon, Britta Le Va, Michael H. Shamberg, Leslie Schiff, Ann-Sargent Wooster, James Umland, Juliet Weber, and Lawrence Weiner, radio play aired on WBAI, January 29, 1978; [Cassette & CD reissue NYC: EAI, 2005] NYC: Moved Pictures and James Umland, 1978.

25 THERE IS NO LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL (SILVER) from SHIPS AT SEA SAILORS & SHOES

Performers: Ned Sublette and The Persuasions; lyrics: Lawrence Weiner; music: Ned Sublette; [CD] NYC: Moved Pictures and Excellent Records, 1993.

RELATED EVENTS

LAWRENCE WEINER: THE COMPLETE FILMS AND VIDEOS

THURSDAYS: APRIL 24-JUNE 5, 6:30pm

MOCA GRAND AVENUE, AHMANSON AUDITORIUM

MOCA presents seven programs of Weiner's films and videos, including short conceptual pieces and longer narrative works. Weiner's oeuvre of film and video works broadens his ongoing interest in exploring the relationship between viewer and art object by adding the semantics of cinema to provide another facet to his investigation. This series has been curated by Whitney Museum of American Art's Anne and Joel Ehrenkranz Curator Chrissie lles, with thanks to Curatorial Assistant Gary Carrion-Murayari.

INFO 213/621-1745 or education@moca.org FREE

THURSDAY, APRIL 24, 6:30pm

PROGRAM ONE (Total running time: approx. 44 min.)
BEACHED (1970, 2.5 min., video, b&w, sound); BROKEN
OFF (1971, 1.5 min., video, b&w, sound); TO AND FRO/FRO
AND TO/AND TO AND FRO/AND FRO AND TO (1972, 1 min., video, b&w, sound); SHIFTED FROM THE SIDE (1972, 1 min., video, b&w, sound); GREEN AS WELL AS BLUE AS WELL AS RED (1975/76, 18 min., video, color, sound); and AFFECTED AND/OR EFFECTED (1974, 20 min., video, b&w, sound).

THURSDAY, MAY 1, 6:30pm

PROGRAM TWO (Total running time: approx. 105 min.)

DONE TO (1974, 20 min., 16mm film, color, sound); and A FIRST OVARTER (1973, 85 min., 16mm film, b&w, sound).

THURSDAY, MAY 8, 6:30pm PROGRAM THREE

A SECOND QUARTER (1975, 85 min., 16mm film, color, sound)

THURSDAY, MAY 15, 6:30pm

PROGRAM FOUR (Total running time: approx. 84 min.)

ALTERED TO SUIT (1979, 23 min., 16mm film, b&w, sound);

PASSAGE TO THE NORTH (1981, 16 min., 16mm film, color, sound);

PLOWMANS LUNCH (1982, 28 min., 16mm film, color, sound);

TRAILER FOR PLOWMANS LUNCH (1982, 6 min., video, color, sound); and READING LIPS (collaboration with Steen Møller Rasmussen) (1997, 11 min., 16mm film, color, sound).



Still from PASSAGE TO THE NORTH, 1981, 16 min., 16mm film, color, sound, courtesy of Moved Pictures Archive, New York; © 2008 Lawrence Weiner/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

THURSDAY, MAY 22, 6:30pm

PROGRAM FIVE (Total running time: approx. 110 min.) DO YOU BELIEVE IN WATER? (1976, 39 min., video, color, sound); A BIT OF MATTER AND A LITTLE BIT MORE (1976, 23 min., video, color, sound); FOR EXAMPLE DECORATED (1977, 23 min., video, color, sound); and THERE BUT FOR (1980, 20 min., video, color, sound).

THURSDAY, MAY 29, 6:30pm

PROGRAM SIX (Total running time: approx. 73 min.)

NIETS ANN VERLOREN/NOTHING TO LOSE (1984, 22 min., video, color, sound); and HEARTS AND HELICOPTERS—THE TRILOGY: EYES ON THE PRIZE (1999, 18 min., video, color, sound), HOW FAR IS THERE (1999, 17 min., video, color, sound), and WITH A GRAIN OF SALT (1999, 16 min., video, color, sound).

THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 6:30pm

PROGRAM SEVEN (Total running time: approx. 68 min.) BLUE MOON OVER (2001, 5.5 min., video, color, sound); DEEP BLUE SKY (2002, 6.5 min., video, color, silent); LIGHT BLUE SKY (2002, 5 min., video, color, silent); WILD BLUE YONDER (2002, 15.5 min., video, color, sound); SINK OR SWIM (2003, 18 min., video, color, sound); INHERENT IN THE RHUMB LINE (2005, 7.5 min., video, color, silent); LIBERTÉ ET CONTRAINTES LA FORME INHÉRENT (2006, 5 min., video, color and b&w, sound); and TURNING SOME PAGES (2007, 5 min., video, color, sound).

ART TALKS

These informal discussions of current exhibitions feature artists, curators, critics, writers, and other arts professionals. Unless otherwise noted, talks take place in the exhibition galleries, attendance is free with museum admission, and reservations are not required.

INFO 213/621-1745 or education@moca.org

SUNDAY, APRIL 13, 3pm

THE GEFFEN CONTEMPORARY AT MOCA

Artist Lawrence Weiner and exhibition co-curators MOCA Senior Curator Ann Goldstein and Whitney Museum of American Art Chief Curator and Associate Director for Programs Donna De Salvo lead a walkthrough of the exhibition.

SUNDAY, MAY 4, 3pm

THE GEFFEN CONTEMPORARY AT MOCA

Artist Christopher Williams leads a walkthrough of the exhibition and discusses the books of Lawrence Weiner.

SUNDAY, JUNE 15, 3pm

THE GEFFEN CONTEMPORARY AT MOCA

Anne Rorimer, independent scholar, leads a walkthrough of the exhibition.

Art Talks are made possible by The Times Mirror Foundation Endowment.

TEENS OF CONTEMPORARY ART (TOCA) EVENT

SUNDAY, APRIL 13, 3-5pm

THE GEFFEN CONTEMPORARY AT MOCA

Expand your definition of art through the exhibition *Lawrence Weiner: AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE.* View and discuss conceptual art and make your own text-based artwork in an experimental hands-on workshop with artist Hillary Bleecker. INFO 213/633-5310 or dgray@moca.org

FREE; no reservations required

Teens of Contemporary Art is made possible by the Joseph Drown Foundation and UBS.

FIRST SUNDAYS ARE FOR FAMILIES WORKSHOP

SUNDAY, JULY 6, 1-3:30pm

THE GEFFEN CONTEMPORARY AT MOCA

How is sculpture connected to reading? Join us for a drop-in workshop to discover connections between visual art and poetry.

INFO 213/621-1765 or fflores@moca.org

FREE; no reservations required

First Sundays are For Families is presented by Bank of America. Generous support is provided by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Arts Commission, and the Department of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles.

Bank of America



CINÉMOCA SELECTED FILMS BY LAWRENCE WEINER

SATURDAY, JUNE 14, 7-11pm (Screening begins at 9pm)

THE GEFFEN CONTEMPORARY AT MOCA

During this after-hours summer celebration, featuring six Saturdays of artist-curated outdoor screenings, music, gallery tours, and light fare, MOCA features Weiner's PASSAGE TO THE NORTH (1981), PLOWMANS LUNCH (1982), and HEARTS AND HELICOPTERS—THE TRILOGY (1999).

INFO 213/621-1745 or education@moca.org FREE with museum admission

CinéMOCA is presented by Infiniti.

Education programs at MOCA are supported by The James Irvine Foundation; the William Randolph Hearst Endowment for Education Programs; Jean and Lewis Wolff and Family, the Weingart Foundation; The Lura Gard Newhouse Charitable Lead Trust; the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Arts Commission; Wells Fargo; The Green Foundation; the Department of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles; and David Hockney.





Lawrence Weiner: AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE is jointly organized by The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

MOCA's presentation is made possible through the support of

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Ovation TV is the Official Network Partner of MOCA.

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