

For Immediate Release
March 28, 2008

**LANDMARK INSTALLATION OF SOL LEWITT WALL DRAWINGS, A COLLABORATION
AMONG THREE MUSEUMS, OPENS AT MASS MOCA NOVEMBER 16, 2008**

*One hundred works by one of the most important artists of the last half century
to be installed in 27,000-square-foot historic building; on view for twenty-five years*



Sol LeWitt, *Wall Drawing #1081: Planes of color*. Acrylic paint. Installation View: *Sol LeWitt: Wall Drawing*, Kunstammlungen Chemnitz, Chemnitz, Germany, 2003. Photographer: Paul Kramer

In a major collaboration among three institutions, *Sol LeWitt: A Wall Drawing Retrospective* opens at MASS MoCA (the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art), in North Adams, Massachusetts, on **November 16, 2008**. The landmark installation comprises forty years of work by Sol LeWitt, one of the most influential contemporary artists of the last half century.

Conceived by the **Yale University Art Gallery**, New Haven, Connecticut, in collaboration with the artist before

his death in April 2007, the project has been undertaken by the Gallery, **MASS MoCA**, and the **Williams College Museum of Art**, Williamstown, Massachusetts. The installation will remain on view for twenty-five years, occupying a 27,000-square-foot historic mill building in the heart of MASS MoCA's campus. The three-story building, which is being fully restored for this exhibition by Bruner/Cott and Associates architects, will be outfitted with a complex sequence of new interior walls constructed to LeWitt's own specifications.

Sol LeWitt: A Wall Drawing Retrospective will consist of one hundred works – covering nearly an acre of wall surface – that LeWitt created from 1968 to 2007. The works in the retrospective will be on loan from numerous private and public collections worldwide, including the Yale University Art Gallery, to which LeWitt donated a number of wall drawings.

LeWitt – who stressed the idea behind his work over its execution – is widely regarded as one of the leading exponents of Minimalism and Conceptual art, known primarily for his deceptively simple geometric structures and dynamic wall drawings. His experiments with the latter commenced in 1968 and were considered radical, in part because this new form of drawing was purposely temporal and often executed not just by LeWitt but also by other artists and students whom he invited to assist him in the installation of his artworks.

Jock Reynolds, the Henry J. Heinz II Director of the Yale University Art Gallery, who in 1993 worked closely with LeWitt to produce an earlier retrospective of his wall drawings for Phillips Academy Andover's Addison Gallery of American Art, explains, "Until now, large displays of Sol's wall drawings have of necessity been on view for relatively brief periods of time in major museum survey exhibitions. To otherwise view multiple LeWitt wall drawings, one has had to travel far and wide and spend years pursuing them individually in situ. At MASS MoCA, a visual feast of LeWitt's wall drawings will be on view for the next twenty-five years, attended by annual 'teaching exhibitions' that will help further elucidate Sol's remarkable artistic legacy. Visitors will be able to return again and again to see and enjoy one hundred of his wall drawings in one location."

Project History

The impetus for *Sol LeWitt: A Wall Drawing Retrospective* was a 2004 conversation between Reynolds and LeWitt. Their conversation evolved and resulted in a commitment by the artist to give a substantial number of his wall drawings and his entire wall-drawing archive to the Yale University Art Gallery, which already owned an extensive array of LeWitt's art in multiple mediums. Realizing that the Gallery did not have enough space to install and maintain a large number of the artist's wall drawings at any one time, Reynolds suggested to LeWitt that MASS MoCA, with its historic mill complex, might be able to accommodate an extended retrospective of the works.

Reynolds and LeWitt then met with MASS MoCA Director Joseph Thompson and toured the museum's campus of industrial buildings, where the artist was immediately intrigued by Building #7. The structure, situated at the center of MASS MoCA's multibuilding complex, and featuring large banks of windows that open onto two flanking courtyards, appealed to LeWitt as an ideal site for a multifloor installation of his work. His specifications for the space included new circulation paths, including a series of "flying bridges" and newly created courtyard spaces, that will connect the LeWitt building to MASS MoCA's changing exhibition galleries and entry lobby.

Thompson comments, "As we've built the interior partitions to Sol's specifications, it has become clear that his understanding of architectural space was as masterful as his wall drawings themselves. He consciously sited his wall drawings to engage both the interior of Building #7 and its outside environment. It is stunning to see how well his monumental aesthetic intervention within the heart of the MASS MoCA campus of buildings is going to enliven the entire museum. Sol left almost every window in Building #7 generously open to invite in a play of continuous natural light—which is somehow typical of his creative spirit."

Retrospective Installation and Education Opportunities

"Detailed," "painstaking," and "strangely liberating" are terms that have been used to describe the experience of creating Sol LeWitt's monumental wall drawings. The drawings at MASS MoCA will be executed over a six-month period by twenty-four of the senior and seasoned assistants who worked with the artist over many years. They will be joined by thirty students from Yale University, Williams College, and North Adams's Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, as well as by undergraduate students from other colleges and universities around the country.

MASS MoCA's North Adams location, just five miles from Williams College, in Williamstown, offers a unique educational opportunity for Williams's undergraduates and those enrolled in its graduate

art-history program at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute to participate in this special exhibition. Like Yale, Williams is among the primary training grounds for professionals in the field of art history, and the LeWitt collaboration, to be accompanied by a variety of educational programs, will offer students a valuable opportunity to study the work of this important artist.

In conjunction with the project, the Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) will annually create a series of programs and shorter-term companion “teaching exhibitions” in a space at the entrance of Building #7 and at the Williams College Museum of Art. WCMA Director Lisa Corrin says, “There are so many ways to feature LeWitt’s artworks, as well as those of his artistic peers, in art-history and studio classes, and also in other disciplines. The WCMA staff will act as a bridge to help faculty members from all academic departments craft curricula based around the work— color theory, logic, rhythm, mathematics, and so much more are present in LeWitt’s work. Our goal is to have his vast installation of wall drawings become an extension of the Williams campus— a classroom of sorts for our students and those heralding from other colleges and universities. All three of the museums partnering in the LeWitt wall-drawing retrospective play a major role in the training and support of many of the art world’s future leaders, and this adventurous collaboration will offer a generation of students unprecedented firsthand exposure to the work of a major artist of our time.”

Sol LeWitt Wall Drawings: A Catalogue Raisonné

The Yale University Art Gallery has embarked on the research and production of *Sol LeWitt Wall Drawings: A Catalogue Raisonné*, which will be copublished in 2010 by the Gallery and Yale University Press. The basic design for this three-volume scholarly resource was created by the artist during his lifetime. The catalogue raisonné will contain descriptive texts, diagrams, installation photographs, and more for all 1,254 wall drawings that LeWitt realized from 1968 to 2007. A DVD illustrating the proper uses of materials and drawing techniques to be employed in realizing LeWitt’s basic “families” of wall drawings will also be included, providing a helpful guide to their proper future installation, as well as to their long-term care and conservation.

Conserving Sol LeWitt’s Wall Drawing Legacy

To additionally preserve the artistic legacy of Sol LeWitt’s wall drawings in perpetuity, the Yale University Art Gallery has endowed a position for a drawing conservator through the generosity of Yale alumnus Theodore P. Shen, B.A. 1966, and his wife, Mary Jo. In time, this conservator will oversee the LeWitt wall-drawing archives and other works on paper at Yale and will train new assistants to install the artist’s wall-drawing collection at Yale as well as those owned by individuals and public institutions worldwide.

Project Funding

To date, the Yale University Art Gallery and MASS MoCA have raised more than \$10 million from an array of devoted board members and other notable arts patrons who are highly supportive of Sol LeWitt’s work. In December 2007 Williams College announced a \$1.5 million contribution to the project that will fund teaching exhibitions and public programs during the twenty-five years that the LeWitt wall-drawing retrospective is extant.

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Press Information

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