

PAULA COOPER GALLERY

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SOL LEWITT

Cubic Forms

243A Worth Ave, Palm Beach

January 16 – February 7, 2021

PALM BEACH—Opening January 16 in Palm Beach, "Sol LeWitt: Cubic Forms" explores the artist's use of the cube as the base unit for a prolific body of work including structures, drawings, prints, and photographs. In the early 1960s, opposed to the subjectivity of Expressionism, LeWitt turned to systematic geometry by devising basic sets of rules that governed the execution and design of a work of art. "The cube," LeWitt boldly asserted in 1966, "is the best form to use as a basic unit for any more elaborate function, the grammatical device from which the work may proceed."

In LeWitt's iconic series of "open structures," framed white cubes act as the common denominator, which are then programmatically altered or combined to form the final composition. On view in the exhibition, *Modular Wall Structure* (c. 1965) is among the earliest and finest examples of this body of work: "simple and austere with a clarity and assuredness not seen before,"¹ wrote curator Gary Garrels. Later works illustrate LeWitt's interest in increasingly complex and provocative serial systems. The configuration of *Corner Piece 1 2 3 4 5 6* (1979), for example, shows amplified density, architecturality, and optical play. *Incomplete Open Cube 9/5* is derived from his major project, *Variations of Incomplete Open Cubes* (1974), which proposes all of the 122 variations in which a cube can be incomplete. The title of the large steel version reveals where in the schematic progression the frame lays—here 9/5 indicates the fifth variation of a cube with nine limbs.

The primacy of the cube appears throughout LeWitt's oeuvre in other media, finding myriad possibilities within narrow instructional parameters. A selection of his colorful gouache drawings investigates variations of geometric projection—a two-dimensional representation of the three-dimensional form. Using a limited range of pigments, LeWitt experiments with the medium through mixing and layering of hues. In some works, the cube appears in its entirety, projected isometrically such as *Cube* 1997. In others, the cube is cropped and rendered with watered-down paint and loose, expressive brushwork. A set of vibrantly colored etchings push the cube further still, depicting twelve *Forms Derived from a Cubic Rectangle*.

LeWitt's use of modular units and serial systems helped to inspire a generation of artists including Jennifer Bartlett. Exhibited alongside "Sol LeWitt: Cubic Forms" is a focused presentation of Bartlett's pioneering steel and enamel square plates. Plotting dots within a gridded matrix according to simple mathematical schemes, Bartlett lauded LeWitt's seminal text, "Sentences on Conceptual Art" (1969), as "one of the great mid-century poems. On a good day I could follow 15 of his [35] rules."² However, Bartlett's exuberant and idiosyncratic works take "the lessons learned from LeWitt on a very wild ride."³

¹ Gary Garrels, "Sol LeWitt: An Introduction," in *Sol LeWitt: A Retrospective*, ed. Gary Garrels (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

² "Jennifer Bartlett by Elizabeth Murray," Interview in *BOMB Magazine* (October 1, 2005).

³ Andrea Miller-Keller, "Varieties of Influence: Sol LeWitt and the Arts Community," in *Sol LeWitt: A Retrospective*, ed. Gary Garrels (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

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Landmark American artist Sol LeWitt (1928 – 2007) was born in Hartford, Connecticut. In 1953 he moved to New York where he had his first one-person show at the John Daniels Gallery in 1965. In October 1968 he presented his first ever Wall Drawing at the inaugural exhibition of Paula Cooper Gallery. The Gemeentemuseum in The Hague presented his first retrospective exhibition in 1970, and his work was later shown in a major mid-career retrospective curated by Alicia Legg at the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 1978. In 2000 the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art organized an acclaimed retrospective, which traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. LeWitt's works are in numerous public collections including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Art Institute of Chicago; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Centre National d'Art Moderne Georges Pompidou, Paris; the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam; Turin's Castello di Rivoli; the Moderna Museet Stockholm; and the Tate Gallery, London. "Sol LeWitt: A Wall Drawing Retrospective" opened at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams in November 2008 where it will remain on view for thirty-five years.

Born in 1941 in Long Beach, California, Jennifer Bartlett studied at Mills College and received her MFA from Yale University in 1965. By the mid-1970s, she emerged as a leading artist of her time. Bartlett has had major exhibitions at such institutions as the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Brooklyn Museum, New York; the Carnegie Museum of Art, Philadelphia; and the Cleveland Museum of Art in Ohio. Her works are represented extensively in collections in the US and abroad including the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; the Israel Museum, Jerusalem; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Naoshima Museum in Japan; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Tate Modern, London; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

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