

PAULA COOPER GALLERY

SOL LEWITT

521 & 534 West 21st Street, New York
September 9 – October 22, 2022

Paula Cooper Gallery celebrates the return to its principal location at 534 West 21st Street with an expansive exhibition of works by Sol LeWitt across both New York galleries. Rebuilt by Richard Gluckman in 1996 and recently renovated, the award-winning space at 534 was one of the first galleries to open in Chelsea. The exhibition encompasses monumentally-scaled wall drawings and structures from the 1960s through the 1990s, and is a fitting homecoming for the gallery, which hosted LeWitt's first ever wall drawing in its inaugural exhibition in 1968. Opening on what would be LeWitt's ninety-fourth birthday, the rich variety of work on display underlines the artist's lifelong inventiveness and fearless experimentation.

At 534 West 21st Street a radiant wall drawing from LeWitt's *Pyramids* series rendered in colored ink wash wraps around four walls. Realized by a team of trained installers who followed the artist's original diagram and instructions, *Wall Drawing #485* questions ideas of permanence, uniqueness, and authorship through its potential to be recreated. Beginning with the earliest examples executed in pencil on white walls, the wall drawings are manifestations of an idea that shirk the condition of objecthood through their radical two-dimensionality. LeWitt began using ink wash to create vibrantly-colored wall drawings in the 1980s, adapting his primary palette of red, yellow, blue, and black by superimposing transparent colors and grey washes to achieve a range of hues and tones.

Accompanying the wall drawing are irregular structures from LeWitt's *Complex Form* series, developed in the 1980s from the flat polygonal shapes that populated his wall drawings at the time. Adapting similar shapes on paper, LeWitt used connecting lines to draw a plan or "footprint" for the three-dimensional work, before assigning heights to the points where the elevated lines would meet. Translated into structures, the *Complex Forms* confound the geometric order of LeWitt's earlier three-dimensional works, introducing an intriguing degree of unpredictability. Although LeWitt had stated in 1966 in reference to his geometric structures that "a more complex form would be too interesting in itself," he would contradict himself twenty years later by using this term to describe the new vertiginous and multifaceted works.¹

At 521 West 21st Street a presentation of LeWitt's modular structures examines the artist's first mature body of work and its evolution in subsequent decades. LeWitt identified seriality as the best system for the physical manifestation of his ideas in the early 1960s, establishing a creative process of profound rationality and originality. In the works on display, LeWitt has systematically combined cubic forms into simple and austere modular structures that yield complex perceptual experiences. LeWitt's proclivity to seriality was visually compelling, infinitely generative, and egalitarian: by refusing to privilege a single element of a work or its production, the artist allowed multiple points of entry.

Sol LeWitt (b. 1928, Hartford, CT – d. 2007, Chester, CT) had his first one-person show at the John Daniels Gallery (which was co-owned by artist Dan Graham) in 1965. Enno Develing at the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague presented LeWitt's first retrospective exhibition in 1970, and his work was later shown in a major 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 curated by Gary Garrels, which traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. LeWitt's works are in public collections including the Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Art Institute of Chicago; 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 MASS MoCA in North Adams in 2008, where it will remain on view through 2043.

¹ Sol LeWitt, "Serial Project No. 1" in *Aspen Magazine*, section 17, nos. 5-6, 1966, n.p.