

SOL LEWITT

PLANES WITH BROKEN BANDS OF COLOR (SAN GIMIGNANO)

Opening: Saturday 14 February 2009, Via del Castello 11, 6pm–12 midnight

Long term project, Tuesday–Saturday, 2–7pm

Galleria Continua is pleased, and honoured, to exhibit a previously unshown wall drawing by Sol LeWitt in its San Gimignano gallery.

Sol LeWitt (Hartford 1928–New York 2007) was one of the leading exponents of Minimalism, which emerged in the United States at the beginning of the 60s. Based on mental structures and concrete visual structures, his work was characterized by a constant spirit of inquiry, resulting in unquestionably and invariably original work.

In his long artistic career, LeWitt managed to achieve a perfect balance between perceptual and conceptual quality, between the simplicity of geometric order and the search for beauty and intuitive creativity.

LeWitt overturned the conventional rules of artistic practice and of the material production of artworks, dismissing, with his conceptual approach, notions of non-repeatability and of the importance of manual ability, attributing absolute priority to the idea: *"The work is the manifestation of an idea. It is an idea and not an object."* In LeWitt's view, his work was not essentially a manual practice but was first and foremost a question of producing a pure, Platonic idea, which could then be handed over to someone else for material execution, provided his instructions and the intentions of his idea were respected. This "making an idea the work" has meant that the output of this magnificent American artist can now be found around the world – in leading museums, public buildings, private homes, foundations and even in remote universities.

After a solo show at the Galleria Continua in 1998, the artist's work is once again going on display in San Gimignano. *Planes with Broken Bands of Color (San Gimignano)*, an extraordinary wall drawing conceived by the artist in June 2004, is being realized for the first time on the wall for which it was planned.

The structural principle of LeWitt's artistic production is the *ars combinatoria*: cubes, circles, triangles, pyramids and lines, or, as in this case, rectangles and parallelograms are dismantled, reiterated and modulated according to standardized spatial proportions and combined in new ways. The artist reinvented the artistic process, playing on the variability and intermittency of the geometric structures that underpin Western notions of space.

Colour is of the greatest value in all of LeWitt's work. In *Planes with Broken Bands of Color (San Gimignano)* – as in *Circle of Bands of Colors* and *Whirls and Twirls* – the artist explores the optical effects created by the combination of colour and the geometric module. In this type of wall drawing, the form of the work obeys precise rules: the bands, for example, are of a standard width, and two bands of the same colour may not touch.

At the end of the 90s and the beginning of the new century, LeWitt began using acrylics, and many works from these years, including the wall drawing on show in San Gimignano, include all the primary and secondary colours: red, yellow, green, orange, blue and purple.

Geometry and poetry come together, then, in this work, offering viewers a new and exciting visual experience.

Sol LeWitt (1928-2007) has been the subject of hundreds of solo exhibitions in museums and galleries worldwide since 1965. His prolific two and three-dimensional work ranges from Wall Drawings, over 1200 of which have been executed, to photographs and hundreds of works on paper and extends to structures in the form of towers, pyramids, geometric forms, and progressions.

After receiving a B.F.A. from Syracuse University in 1949, Sol LeWitt traveled to Europe where he was exposed to Old Master painting. Shortly thereafter, he served in the Korean War, first in California, then Japan, and finally Korea.

Sol LeWitt moved to New York City in the 1950s and pursued his interest in design at Seventeen magazine, where he did paste-ups, mechanicals, and photostats. Later, for a year, he was a graphic designer in the office of architect I.M. Pei. Around that time, LeWitt also discovered the photography of Eadweard Muybridge, whose late 1800s studies in sequence and locomotion were an early influence. These experiences, combined with an entry-level job he took in 1960 at The Museum of Modern Art, would influence LeWitt an artist.

At the MoMA, LeWitt's co-workers included fellow artists Robert Ryman, Dan Flavin, and Robert Mangold. Curator Dorothy C. Miller's now famous 1960 "Sixteen Americans" exhibition with work by Johns, Kelly, Rauschenberg, and Stella created a swell of excitement and discussion among the community of artists with whom LeWitt associated. Interviewed in 1993 about those years LeWitt remarked, *"I decided I would make color or form recede and proceed in a three-dimensional way."*

The Museum of Modern Art, New York gave Sol LeWitt his first retrospective in 1978-79. The exhibition traveled to various American venues. Other major exhibitions since include *Sol LeWitt Drawings 1958-1992*, which was organized Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Netherlands in 1992 which traveled over the next three years to museums in the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, France, Spain, and The United States; and in 1996, The Museum of Modern Art, New York mounted a traveling survey exhibition: *Sol LeWitt Prints: 1970-1995*.

In recent years the artist has been the subject of exhibitions at P.S.1 Contemporary Center, Long Island City (Concrete Blocks); The Addison Gallery of American Art Phillips Academy, Andover (*Twenty-Five Years of Wall Drawings*); and Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford (*Incomplete Cubes*), which traveled to three art museums in The United States.

Sol LeWitt's most recent retrospective was organized by the San Francisco Museum of Art in 2000. The exhibition traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

At the moment, the MoMA of New York is hosting a solo show of the artist and the MASS MoCA (North Adams in Massachusetts) is dedicating him a large retrospective.

**For further information about the show and for photographic material:
Silvia Pichini, Communication Manager: press@galleriacontinua.com, cell 347 45 36 136**