

# Art issues.

November / December 2001  
number 70

## Sol LeWitt

at MARGO LEAVIN and REGEN PROJECTS,  
8 September–27 October

Sol LeWitt's work never stops changing. Lately, it has become more humorous. A pair of ambitious exhibitions presents sculptures, wall works, and nineteen opulently colored gouache drawings of irregular curves. At once aggressive and buoyant, LeWitt's intercessions into existing architectural structures form the core of his project.

The moment you enter Regen Projects, you are abruptly confronted with a cinderblock wall that spans the length of the gallery. *Wall (Regen)* (2001) is a 10' 8" high, 34' long, 6' deep wall that entombs the bulk of the gallery's volume. Only a narrow passageway remains, allowing visitors to move from the entrance to the office and on to the restroom. A similarly sized gap—approximately shoulder-width—exists between the top of the wall and the ceiling. Using each of the three dimensions of the rectangular cinderblocks, LeWitt has placed them at right angles to one another to solve a geometry problem: How to span the interior space without cutting a block or touching the end walls. The pattern he has created is intricate but regular, stepping back and then forward to form vertical clefts. By concealing a large part of the gallery, he intensifies a viewer's desire to enter it. Your curiosity aroused, you find yourself peering around the ends of the wall, where mortar oozes out of the side blocks but does not touch the gallery's pristine walls. The discrepancy in the transformation of a mathematical plan into its tangible form is evident when you notice the one-inch gap at the right end of LeWitt's barricade (where the masons began their work) and a two-inch gap on the left (where they finished).

*Wall (Regen)* is a human-scale math problem realized with playful precision and permanent materials in a highly impermanent situation. Looking at it, we experience the effects of mathematical exactitude. Usually, we use math for the results it delivers. Deterring us from our intended path into the gallery to see art, LeWitt's cinderblocks instead force us to put together an overall view in piecemeal fashion, part by part. It is surprisingly uncomfortable to be denied a vantage point that allows you to take in a view of the whole, a more distant perspective from which to grasp the system or the logic of the work's construction. There's no bird's-eye view here.

The way ideas and ideals are made manifest in the physical world is the subject of four new wall drawings at Margo Leavin Gallery, all of which emphasize the fact that human comprehension depends on very limited perspectives. *Wall Drawing #994*, *#993*, *#995*, and *#996* (all works, 2001) each cover one of the main space's four walls. These enormous orthogonal projections are drawn as if in perspective, but without a point of convergence. Painted edge-to-edge and top-to-bottom in solid blocks of acrylic color, they appear to be childishly simple building blocks or basic geometry lessons. Yet, as you walk back and forth in front of them, a disjunction interrupts the ordinarily smooth functioning of two perceptual systems. You feel like a caged tiger, trying to piece together an understanding of the larger world from a severely limited position.

It becomes apparent that the lines that form the sides of the isometric shapes are parallel. They appear to describe rectilin-

ear isometric forms which, from any single point, look as if they get larger as they recede into illusionistic space. Two systems for understanding visual reality collide in LeWitt's two-dimensional descriptions of three-dimensional forms: One-point perspective and two-point perspective pull your eyes in opposite directions. The primary and secondary colors that delineate each set of planes intensify the effect of diagrammatic space, upping the ante between irreconcilable systems of understanding visual information.

In both shows, LeWitt capitalizes on the artist's rare opportunity to function in the world as a free agent, looking through the prism of many disciplines. As an inventor, craftsman, director, and thinker, he uses philosophy, geometry, science, and art. In surveying what he has made, viewers weigh firsthand experience against abstract ideals. Within a deliberately focused field of interest (can we still call it Minimalism?), his project evolves like an eroding rock, gradually revealing the strata from which it was made.

Ingrid Calame is an artist who lives and works in Los Angeles.

Sol LeWitt  
*Wall (Regen)*, 2001  
Concrete block  
10'8" x 34' x 6'

Sol LeWitt  
*Wall Drawing #993*, 2001  
Acrylic  
16'10" x 36'

