

*Observer*  
10 March 2019

**OBSERVER**

## Why Lawrence Weiner Won't Dispense Career Advice to Today's Emerging Artists

By [Scott Indrisek](#) • 03/10/19 9:00am



Lawrence Weiner photographed in 2016. Johannes Simon/Getty Images

If one had a time machine and a perverse sense of humor, it might be interesting to spirit a 26-year-old Lawrence Weiner onto the campus of a 21st-century art school like the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD). What sort of student would he be? In 1968, the artist debuted his pivotal book work, *Statements*, which laid out parameters that would go on to inform his entire career. It was a casual manifesto, ripe for quotation, that began with a revolutionary shrug (“I do not mind objects, but I do not care to make them”) and stressed that artworks can still exist in the world, even if they’re not materially realized. In the late ‘60s and early ‘70s, Weiner was indeed making the occasional physical thing—or at least doing things in physical space, like cutting out a precisely measured chunk of a wall, or tossing objects into the ocean. He ultimately sought a way to turn language itself into sculpture. (Like many of the statements I’m about to make, Weiner would likely take issue with that one, in his own charmingly cantankerous way.)

But how would this lion of Conceptual art—a term that he basically disavows, though it has served him well—have fared in the climate of an intensely career-driven art and design school? The occasion for this idle thought experiment was SCAD's recent edition of deFINE ART, a program of exhibitions and talks, during which Weiner was recognized as the event's 2019 honoree. (Past recipients include Carlos Cruz-Diez and Carrie Mae Weems.) SCAD prides itself on its professionalism, on how it prepares its charges for the real world; the college's SCADpro initiative, for instance, pairs students on projects with corporate partners like Uber, Delta and Amazon. Introducing Weiner in Savannah, President Paula Wallace attempted to connect the artist's own legacy to her college's can-do spirit. "He had what we call the 'SCAD hustle' too, before we even had a name for it," she said. "He created a space for himself and his work and radically transformed public art in America forever."



Lawrence Weiner, *A Bit Beyond What Is Designated As the Pale*, 2017. Lisson Gallery

Weiner must be an interesting, and maybe slightly uncomfortable, role model for young SCAD students. His path to eventual canonization began with an abortive attempt at higher education—a single year at Hunter, before he called it quits and went on a prolonged road trip. Now, at 77, he seems to have a complicated relationship to the idea of arts education in general.

Observer met up with Weiner last week in Savannah for a brief conversation that might best be described as circuituous (I'm still puzzling over bits of my transcript, hoping they yield up their sweet, secretive nectar) though we did skirt around the issue of the art world's professionalization. "I really believe in art," he said, "which means the more people that try to make it—not try to make a marketable product, not try to fit in to please their teacher—that's important to me. That's the whole point." While Weiner gives talks, he's never been a professor. "I take students and the idea of students very seriously," he told me. "But if you have authority, you can't be an artist. And if you don't have authority, you can't be a teacher. I know people who reconciled it, and they did fine. I can't do it." And later: "I really hope that all these people that gave up making art to make some product that fit in, or gave them tenure or something—I hope they have the most unhappy lives in the world."



Lawrence Weiner, *Whole Cloth Stretched to the Limit*, 2007, Lisson Gallery

Here's the rub: By 2019, a professionalized art education is essentially a prerequisite for success; art education isn't cheap; and it's a whole lot easier to remain pure when you don't have \$100,000 of student debt looming over your head. Weiner did seem to realize a certain generational disconnect. "I try not to counsel," he said, recalling a dinner the night before where SCAD students seemed eager for career advice. "My only answer was, 'Don't ask me that, because it doesn't make any sense to you. I'm too old. I had it so easy, compared to what you have.'"

And so what would a 26-year-old Weiner be doing at SCAD in 2019? Would he be part of the relatively straightforward sculpture or graphic design departments, or would he be pursuing a B.F.A. in Branded Entertainment or Production Design? Would he be part of a SCADpro cohort helping translate Samsung's "Do What You Can't" slogan into impactful, text-based wall murals?

I may sound like I'm disdainful of SCAD's programming here, but I'm really not; art schools that instead pretend to float above the lame, pedestrian concerns of 'making a living' owe their graduates an apology, and perhaps a refund. A single year of tuition at SCAD will set you back a bit over \$37,000, before room or board, but at least students seem to have a clearer-eyed vision of what the future holds.

In that sense, watching Lawrence Weiner regale a SCAD auditorium is a confusing experience. Earlier in the day, I'd asked the artist how he has dealt with work that is, ultimately, unsuccessful. "I just turn around and say 'Oops!'," he explained. "I'm not flying an airplane. I'm not writing prescriptions for people, and I'm not teaching—intentionally. If I make an ass of myself it doesn't much matter."

In some ways, having a pilot or a doctor address the SCAD student body might make more sense in our brave new creative world. Weiner's brand of confidence—his hardscrabble determination to make it from the South Bronx to the red-hot center of the serious art world—seems simultaneously inspiring and sadly out-of-date.

LISSON GALLERY

*Cultured Magazine*  
9 October, 2019

# CULTURED

## PERPLEXED IN PUBLIC: LAWRENCE WEINER ON THE LANGUAGES THAT HAVE DEFINED HIM

RAHEL AIMA

10.09.2019

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PHILIP-DANIEL DUCASSE



LAWRENCE WEINER IN HIS STUDIO, 2019.



"You might be surprising." Lawrence Weiner reassures me, as we sit down to speak in the garden-level studio of his glass-and-steel Greenwich Village townhouse. I'm wildly intimidated and pretty sure I bore him but he's too warm, too charming to let it show. Throughout the interview, he alternates between frankness and playful provocation, opining on donkeys who rape women, harvesting ambergris for the war effort, Japan's comfort women, and how the "cosmetics industry is probably the most useless thing in the entire world."

As a kid, Weiner would make chalk drawings on the sidewalk outside his parents' candy store. He describes it as his own little platform. "You grow up in the South Bronx, you learn, you use what you have, and if it's the wall and it's a floor, you use it. You can't go to your private school's benefit and show them what you've just drawn." But he doesn't consider those drawings art. Central to his practice is a belief that a work of art doesn't exist until somebody sees it: "it's a good intention, but that doesn't make it art." The same ethos would inform early works made as a teenager following the lure of the Beats on a roadtrip west. He left little sculpture-offerings along the way and famously detonated a number of explosives in a California state park in what would come to be known as his *Cratering Pieces* (1960).

Weiner is not opposed to romanticizing those early decades of experimentation and generosity, even as he cautions against fetishizing adventure. His background ("a good public education and no glitch") meant that not working wasn't an option, but how he chose to make money was. He explains, "You can take the security of your neighborhood, and your life, and just work in 7-Eleven. Or you can go and find some people, politically, that you're interested in, and that are anti-racist, and you can get a ticket to work on ships. Make about the same money. But, it's a romantic choice."

Today, he's a giant of Conceptualism, known for making sculptures out of language. But don't call him a living legend—he finds the term embarrassing and a little inane. (When asked which artists he'd call living legends, he retorts, "none of your business!") Weiner no longer believes in the linguistic theory of functionalism, but seems to work towards a kind of universal grammar all the same, even as each sculpture responds directly to its context. In contrast to his voluminous speech, his deployment of language is considered, indexical and precise. He sticks with capital letters to avoid confusion in languages like German or Turkish. Of unnecessary punctuation, he notes that it "has a meaning—if there's no need, why use it? If you don't have a king or a queen, why do you wear a tie?"

In the 1960s, he learned—and later forgot—an Inuit language after falling in love. Today, he also speaks French, German and Dutch, yet doesn't consider himself good at languages. "I learn them to be polite. There's no other reason for me. You work with someone until 2 in the morning and if you can't let them talk about their own soul in their own language, there's something with you, not with them." Both wonderful reasons I think, but Weiner refuses any hierarchy, stating that "everything you do correct is fine." This anti-authoritarian sentiment is one that recurs when discussing arts pedagogy. He chose not to be an educator because of the assumed authority and would probably be fine abolishing the MFA industrial complex altogether. "I think you can teach art fabulously by just having a regular school," he says. "Learn physics, learn mathematics, learn philosophy, learn history, and turn around and the art you make has a reason to exist."

Art, for Weiner, is about sincere communication, not creating spectacle or paying attention. It's not about skill, but at the same time "there's a theatrical aspect to art, and you owe it to the people to do it well." It's a social contract he compares to brushing your teeth before a date. He's also troubled by cheating, the narrowing of opportunity and access and the current political situation. "I have no basic moral codes," he demurs. "I think people should do what they want to do with each other, but there's a point where it crosses the line."



He's disgusted by the camps on the border and believes this is "the end of the age of fat white men being authorities," but sees his own political involvement as limited to the Civil Rights movement. Speaking of the time, Weiner emphasizes that nothing worthwhile comes easy, whether it's the hard-won racial progress that now seems to be backsliding, or building an art career.

"Most people don't realize what a life people had in order to bring about any change. And how frightening it is. But life is frightening. Making art is frightening unless you've come through the middle-class system, and you have an art advisor and a counselor."

But there are so many rewarding moments too: one of many anecdotes involves seeing a woman, hunched and sad, straighten up upon viewing his work. "That's what I make art for, okay? Sounds corny, but it's the truth... Here I am. I'm 77 years old and I made it to 77. Whether I'll make it to 78, I don't know. I may disgrace myself tomorrow."

LISSON GALLERY

*Canvas*

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canvas



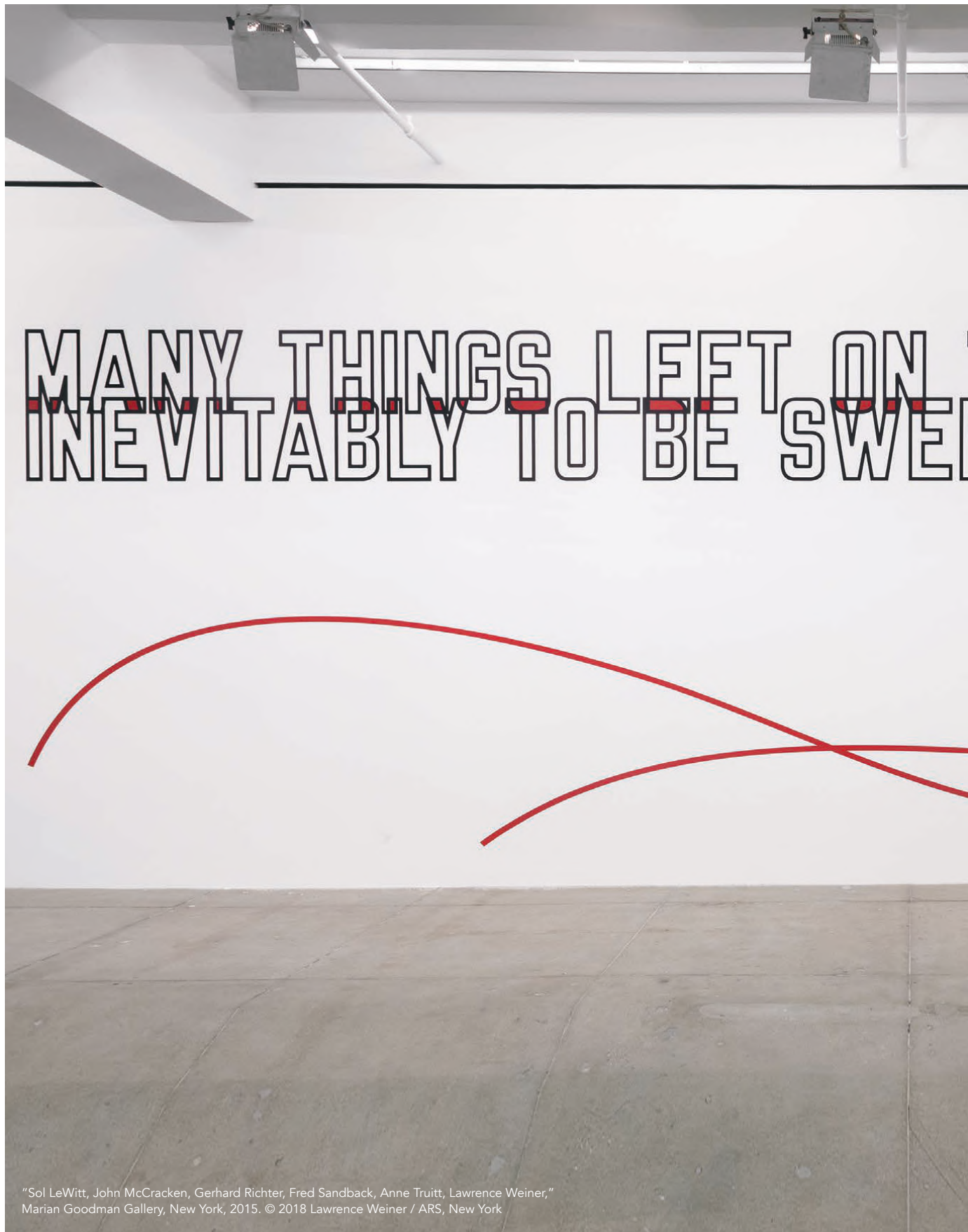
# YOUR WORDS, OR MINE?

In this issue on Word-as-Art, all our featured artists, whether from New York, Paris, Hong Kong, Beirut, Baghdad, Mumbai or Cairo, are working in the English language, reflecting its cultural hegemony as a universal means of communication. Some of them, like Lawrence Weiner and Jenny Holzer, take things further by translating their work into multiple languages in different contexts. Here, we explore the cultural positioning of text in contemporary visual culture and look at how artists have decentralized the primacy of the image by radicalizing text, turning the textual into sculptural, visual material.

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Robert Montgomery. *Slow Disappearance*. 2014. Plywood, copper, aluminium, 12 volts LED, light bulbs. 220 x 120 cm.  
Image courtesy of the artist





"Sol LeWitt, John McCracken, Gerhard Richter, Fred Sandback, Anne Truitt, Lawrence Weiner,"  
Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, 2015. © 2018 Lawrence Weiner / ARS, New York



THE BANKS OF A RIVER  
EPT INTO THE FLOW

**The First and  
Last Word**

LAWRENCE WEINER

## PROFILE



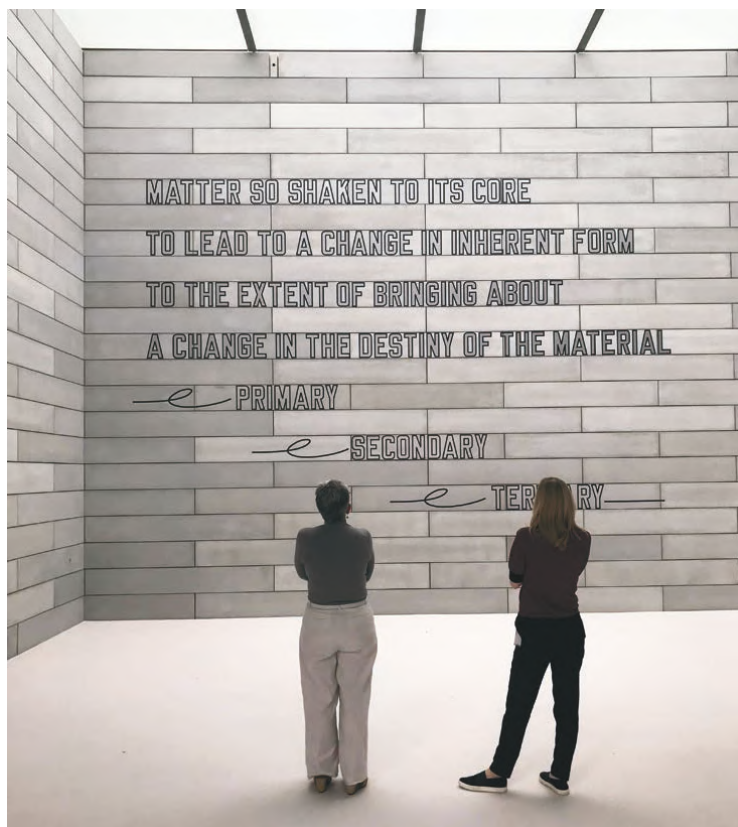
"INHERENT INNATE TENSION," Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, 2017. Photography by Cathy Carver. © 2018 Lawrence Weiner / ARS, New York

Lawrence Weiner thinks about the way in which he places work in the world. One of the father figures of 1960s Conceptualist art – a category which he rejects but explored in his landmark 1968 book, *Statements* – he sees words as his raw materials, his work as text-derived sculpture and art as object. His work has been widely translated and exhibited on walls, manholes, galleries and institutions worldwide. **William Corwin** spends some time with the legend in his NYC studio.

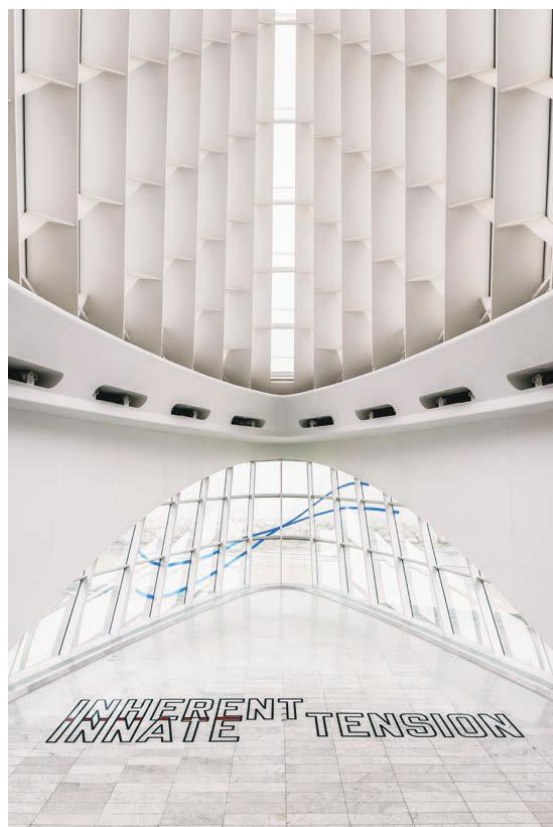
We think of conceptual art as some of the most contemporary work being made, but after talking to Lawrence Weiner in his Manhattan studio for an hour, I am convinced, at least with respect to his art, that he is representing the most ancient human form of communication, in terms that are universal and which imply an absolute equality between the speaker and the reader, one that predates any social, racial or gender hierarchy. He is clearly weary of explaining these things to people, "My work is the easiest to translate because it's all about objects; objects are objects. *Pierre* = stone. It's all the same. [If there's a problem] It's usually a class nuance."

The work is literally what it says it is, and when it comes to non-objective ideas, he has an equally pithy rationale: "The nice thing about taking a specific object that has no specific form is that language explains it, its title is what it is. So there's nothing to explain." I suppose this could have been the shortest interview I've ever conducted, but having been granted some time to speak with an artist whose work is found in every major museum on the planet and has had solo exhibitions at the Tate, Dia Art Foundation, SF MoMA, Museum Ludwig and Museo Tamayo among many others, as well as retrospectives at the Whitney Museum in New York





Left: Glenstone, Potomac, Maryland, 2018. Photo: Anne Reeve. © 2018 Lawrence Weiner / ARS, New York; Right: "Lawrence Weiner: INHERENT INNATE TENSION." Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, 2017. Photo: John Magnoski. © 2018 Lawrence Weiner / ARS, New York



**"If that which you are trying to tell someone gets across, it's sufficient. Whether it's a slash of paint, an opera, a delicate little painting, or a poem, I don't really care – if you can get across what you're trying to say, you have succeeded."**

(2007–08) and LA's MoCA in 2008, I thought I would bend his ear a bit longer. Weiner, who spends half his time on a houseboat in Amsterdam, seemed willing to indulge me.

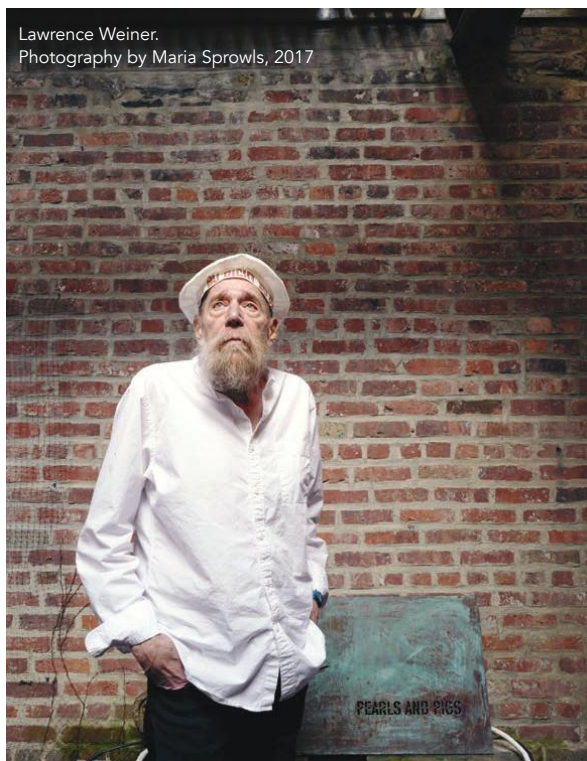
Weiner's studio is a renovated townhouse in Greenwich Village, modern and sleek in light creamy-grey, unlike the largely traditional 19th-century red brick construction of the neighbourhood. Despite all the precision of his prose, its delivery in no-nonsense declarative fonts and stylish architecture, Weiner himself is a contradiction to his environment. He exudes the sensibility of a human being comfortable in their own skin. His light shirt is open wide at the collar and around his wrists are various bracelets and tattoos that have gone a touch blurry with time. Throughout the interview he clasps a cane of unprocessed wood, polished by use over the years. He coughs – but no longer chain smokes – he tells me, with a slightly bemused air, that he is struggling with the side effects of surviving cancer. Most prominent is the Old-Testament-style beard, which billows out from his cheeks and chin, giving his head a stable and sagacious trapezoidal impression.

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"PLOT09: This World & Nearer Ones," Governors Island, New York / Creative Time, 2009. © 2018 Lawrence Weiner / ARS, New York



Lawrence Weiner.  
Photography by Maria Sprowls, 2017

Staten Island Ferry in and out of its Manhattan terminal. They possess the same immediacy and readability of a 'Danger' sign, but it only takes a second to recognise that, while masquerading as conventional signage, this is an existential declaration emblazoned on the creaking wooden pylons smelling of tar and splashed by the wake of the ferry. Weiner grew up poor in the South Bronx neighbourhood of New York City and this goes a long way towards explaining his intensely democratic approach to art. When he expressed that he wanted to be an artist, "She [my mother] looked at me with real concern and said, 'Lawrence, you'll break your heart.' I asked why, and she said, 'This art thing, it's for rich people.'" Weiner went to school (Stuyvesant) until noon and worked on the docks in the afternoons and evenings, unloading bags of cement and bananas, as well as other odd jobs. I attended Stuyvesant 46 years later and, despite the lapse of several decades, it still is an institution that attempts to offer working class immigrant communities an avenue to higher education. "I grew up having to tell myself there was something..." Weiner recalls. "I was going to be a labour organizer, and I was not bad at it; I was going to do my socialist thing. Then



"PLACED ON THE TIP OF A WAVE," Regen Projects II, Los Angeles, 2009. © 2018 Lawrence Weiner / ARS, New York

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Weiner's work can be encapsulated in two, seemingly modest words – sufficient and unmediated. But this is deceptively simple; he also projects a blueprint for a utopia that functions. "If that which you are trying to tell someone gets across, it's sufficient. Whether it's a slash of paint, an opera, a delicate little painting, or a poem, I don't really care – if you can get across what you're trying to say, you have succeeded." Accessibility and language are of primary significance to him, as is art that can be read in different contexts and cultures – and text without metaphor. But embedded within this open approach to art is a personal rejection of most mediated forms of representation and an embracing of material. "I think that this idea that there's no hierarchy, for me it was very important, to make sure that stone and steel and gold and lead were on the same level." Though this seems dryly intellectual, the whole picture encompasses a series of dichotomies oscillating between imagination and reality. Academics are pitted against artists; experience, or "being there", competes with alienated

historical narratives; and the visceral butts heads with the sensual. "The purpose of the academy is to present facts, and at the very worst, solutions by accommodating to the system: the purpose of an artist is to ask questions – they're not at all compatible," he asserts gravely.

WITHIN A REALM OF DISTANCE was Weiner's subversive intrusion into the stately neoclassicism of England's Blenheim Palace. Through the injection of a few well-placed phrases in his blunt modern font that jarred playfully, or perhaps sardonically, with the cartouches, swags and architraves of Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor's opulent design, Weiner eviscerates the idea of aristocratic entitlement. He is quick to mention one artist as a profound inspiration. "Mondrian is still a hero for me – he was a very brave man." A large part of that had to do with Mondrian's fervent belief that art can change the world, tear up and reweave the fabric of society; he sought universal harmony through Theosophy and mysticism, with his canvasses as a conduit, but Weiner seeks to abrogate social injustice through his texts. "That was my thing, to build an aesthetic that would not allow for racism, it takes away the hierarchy. Whether I succeeded or not I have no idea, but that was my intention," he says.





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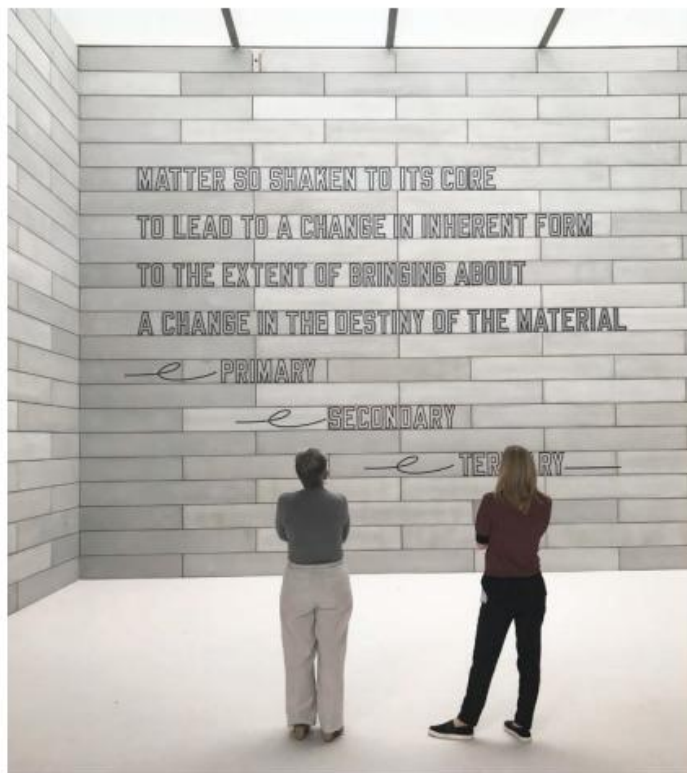


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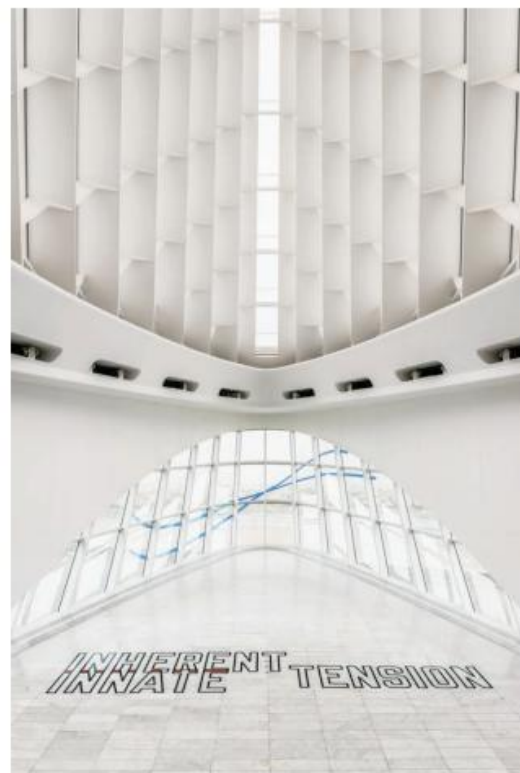
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## Lawrence Weiner

### IN DER STRÖMUNG EINES MOMENTS

Lawrence Weiner wurde 1940 in New York, wo er nach vielen Aufenthalten u.a. in Amsterdam auch lebt. Er ist einer der wichtigsten Konzeptkünstler, dessen „Declaration of Intent“ zu den reichsten Statements zur Kunst gehören. früh arbeitete Weiner im Außenraum, schon frühen 1970er Jahren sind Wandzeichnung bevorzugtes Medium.

Er stellte mehrmals auf der documenta (au 1977, 1982, 2012), 2007 im Whitney Museum, New York, 2008 K21, Düsseldorf; 55. Biennale '2013; 2014 Stedelijk Museum; Galerien u.a. Gallery, London, Regen Projects, Los Angeles, Hubert Winter, New York, Hubert Winter, V

Sabine B. Vogel: Wann hast du deine erste Auftragsarbeit ausgeführt?

Lawrence Weiner: Das war irgendwann in den Sixties, als jedes individuelle Kunstwerk ein individuelles Gespräch mit der Person erforderte, die das Werk erhielt, über die Farbe, Größe und die intellektuelle Motivation zur Entstehung des Werkes.

Worin liegt die besondere Herausforderung von Auftragskunst?

Es gibt keine speziellen Herausforderungen. Auftragswerke sind ein Versuch, das Werk in die Strömung eines Moments im Kontext einer größeren Strömung zu platzieren.

Auftragskunst ist ein integraler Bestandteil jeder Biennale. Was interessiert dich daran, Werke für einen speziellen Kontext, zu einem speziellen Thema beizutragen?

Auftragskunst ist ein integraler Teil. Es ist keine Frage der Wahl, es ist eine Frage des Entgegenkommens, wie man mit den Notwendigkeiten der Gesellschaft in diesem Moment umgeht.

Gibt es einen klaren Unterschied zwischen Aufträgen für Ausstellungen und für den öffentlichen Raum?

Das Ausstellen eines Werkes an einem beliebigen Ort ist eine öffentliche Präsentation, die Frage ist, ob es innerhalb seiner Kultur permanent ist oder nicht.

Gibt es einen Unterschied zwischen Auftragskunst und Atelierwerken, vielleicht im Hinblick auf Kunstmarkt-Orientierung?

Es sollte keine Berücksichtigung von Marktorientierung geben & eine Adaption der vorgegebenen Struktur ist nicht notwendigerweise ein Kompromiss. Jedes Werk ist in irgendeiner Weise von irgendjemandem in einem Atelier gemacht.

Wie wichtig sind Auftragswerke für dein Oeuvre?

Es gibt keinen Unterschied zwischen einem Auftrag und einer Einladung. Es ist nett zu wissen, dass jemand etwas haben möchte. Die Präsentation

eines Künstlers zu jeder gegebenen Zeit ist die Präsentation von etwas, dass vorher nicht existierte und niemand wusste, dass sie es benötigen.

„Jedes Werk ist in irgendeiner Weise von irgendjemandem in einem Atelier gemacht.“

Hat sich die Situation für Auftragskunst in den letzten Jahren geändert, neue Kunden oder ähnliches?

Abgesehen von dem Fakt, dass du das Unwort „Kunde“ in deiner Frage benutzt, hat sich in Bezug auf die Nachfragen in der letzten Dekade nichts geändert.

Wie wichtig ist der ursprüngliche Kontext für Auftragskunst?

Ich mache keine ortsspezifischen Arbeiten. Meine Werke können mit ihrem Inhalt in jedem Kontext bestehen.

Ist der Begriff „Auftragskunst“ in irgendeiner Weise problembehaftet? Bevorzugst du andere Begriffe wie „Projekt“?

Ich glaube, das hängt von der Benutzung des Wortes ab. Ich wüsste nicht, wie man zwischen einem Projekt, einem Auftrag oder einer inneren Notwendigkeit zum Schaffen von Kunst unterscheiden kann.

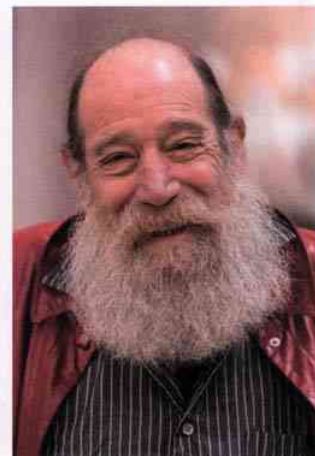
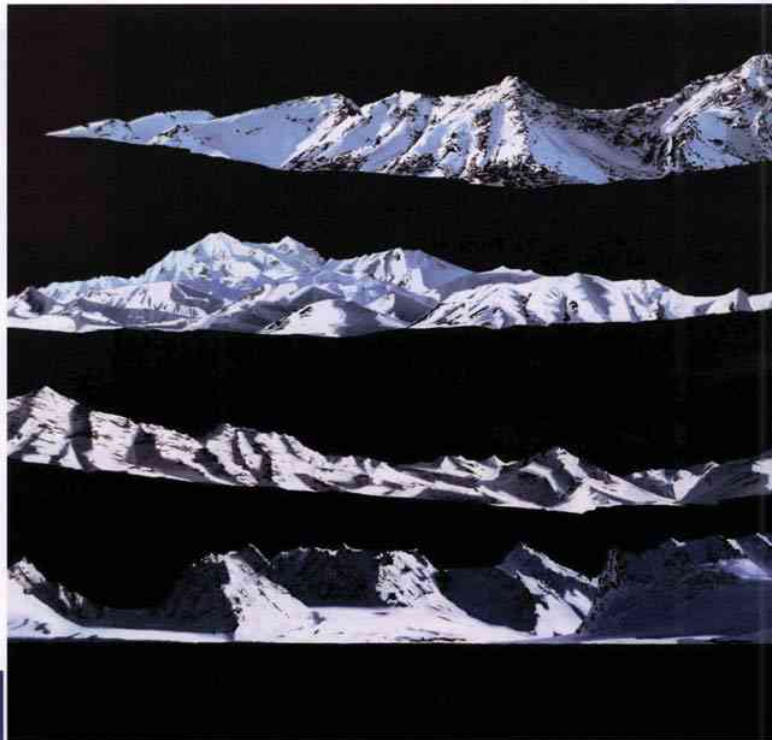
CRUSHING ON SUMMER IN ASPEN

# REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

Aspen, Colorado, may be the Shangri-La of the western US, a mountain valley that is not so much undiscovered as endlessly rediscovered. The surrounding Rocky Mountains have long been the jet set's winter playground of choice, but serious collectors now flock to art-filled summer homes as well. The cultural anchor of the community is the **Aspen Art Museum (AAM)**, housed in a glass cube wrapped in a basketweave of wood veneer designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect **Shigeru Ban**. The big draw is **ArtCrush** (2-4 August), a series of benefit events for the museum, including a wine tasting and silent and live auctions of contemporary art that culminate in the **ArtCrush Summer Benefit Gala**. During the party, the Aspen Award for Art will be presented to **Lawrence Weiner**, creator of Conceptual, word-based artworks. As it has for the past five years, Sotheby's will proudly sponsor ArtCrush, and auctioneer Oliver Barker will be on hand to conduct the live sale.

Also in town at this time is **Art Aspen** (3-6 August), the contemporary fair that is entering its seventh year on a high after attracting nearly 6,000 enthusiasts to its 2016 edition. Talks by leading artists, curators, gallerists and collectors will take place alongside offerings from 30 international dealers.

Aspen in summer offers much more than just one glamorous weekend of art. Before, during and after ArtCrush, the AAM presents an exhibition pairing **Wade Guyton** with the collaborative duo **Peter Fischli and David Weiss**, which will occupy its six galleries, rooftop sculpture garden and outdoor commons (23 June-26 November). The US-born Guyton's





COURTESY RICHARD LEVY GALLERY, ALBUQUERQUE © BILLY FARRELL/BFA.COM © PETER FISCHLI AND DAVID WEISS, COURTESY MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY, NEW YORK PHOTOGRAPH © MICHAEL MORAN

(Clockwise from left) Richard Levy Gallery will bring Beau Berry's painting *Composite*, 2015, to the Art Aspen fair; Sotheby's auctioneer Oliver Barker at last year's ArtCrush gala; Peter Fischli and David Weiss's *Flowers and Mushrooms*, 1997–98/2006, on view at the Aspen Art Museum (AAM); Lawrence Weiner will receive the Aspen Award for Art this year, and the facade of the AAM, designed by architect Shigeru Ban.

artworks, made using old Epson inkjet printers, are being juxtaposed with the postmodern found objects, sculptures and playful films from throughout Fischli and Weiss's 30-plus-year collaboration.

Not far from the AAM is the stalwart **Baldwin Gallery**, which hosts **PreviewCrush** the night before the gala, when the works in the live and silent auctions are on view to the public. The gallery is located on one of the town's charming streets, lined with red-brick buildings. Back in the 1880s, Aspen grew up around a makeshift mining camp until the discovery of silver ore deposits transformed it into a prospectors' boomtown, and elegant structures rose high above the miners' shacks. Among these stately landmarks is the **Hotel Jerome**, its three-storey elevation a feature of East Main Street since 1889. Built to rival Claridge's in London and the Georges V in Paris, it initially had 90 rooms (though only fifteen baths) and the first fully electric lighting system. Later, it became a favoured destination for actors John Wayne and Gary Cooper, as well as a hangout for gonzo journalist Hunter S Thompson. Now renovated and operated by Auberge Resorts, it has stunning mountain views, 93 guest rooms (all with baths), bars, restaurants, a pool and a spa.

As a reminder that Aspen was – and still is – a place where silk hats and cowboy boots sit side-by-side, across the street from the hotel is **Thomas Hynes House**, a one-storey miners' shack. Externally unaltered, it is home to the town's premier sushi restaurant, **Matsuhisa Aspen**, where reservations must be made a month in advance. —EMMA JONES



# LISSON GALLERY

Art Daily

5 November 2016

<http://artdaily.com/news/91363/Lawrence-Weiner-artwork-lights-up-the-perimeter-fence-of-the-new-Nation-Museum-and-the-Nesodd-ferry#.WC8N9KLhAlg>

**artdaily.org**

## Lawrence Weiner artwork lights up the perimeter fence of the new Nation Museum and the Nesodd ferry



Using language as his material, Weiner has defined his work as sculpture and when asked, he refers to its medium as "language + the material referred to". Photo: National Museum / Børre Høstland.

**OSLO.-** The National Museum, OSLO PILOT and Statsbygg in collaboration with the ferry services Norled and Ruter are pleased to present a commissioned work by the internationally renowned New York-based artist Lawrence Weiner. On 4 November the work, **HELD JUST ABOVE THE CURRENT** (2016), will be unveiled on the perimeter fence around the construction site of the new National Museum, on the Nesodd ferry, and in the form of 50,000 small tattoos handed out in several locations in Oslo.

Lawrence Weiner (b. 1942 in New York) is one of the foremost artists in America and Europe today. A central figure in the Conceptual art movement of the 1960s, he is renowned for his language-based sculptures and other works exploring language. His artworks can be found in numerous museums, private collections and public spaces around the world. As a leading figure in the conceptual art movement of the 1960s, Weiner's exceptional, pioneering creations defy traditional notions of what constitutes a work of art.

Using language as his material, Weiner has defined his work as sculpture and when asked, he refers to its medium as "language + the material referred to". Weiner maintains that language itself is 3-dimensional, declaring that the work is what it says it is. His work seeks to transcend the restraints of any particular culture and context, leaving it open to the individual's intellectual reading as a "receiver". As such, his work is ever present, ever in flux and never finished. It offers a radical redefinition of the relationship between artist and receiver, thereby promoting a universal accessibility for art.



#### **Lawrence Weiner in Norway**

Today, Weiner's only permanent work to be seen in Norway is WATER MADE IT WET, installed on a large commercial building in Svolvær harbour for the Lofoten International Art Festival in 1999. He has participated in two shows at Kunstneres Hus in Oslo. His 1996 work THINGS MADE TO BE SEEN FORCEFULLY OBSCURED was included in the group show "Draft Deceit" in 2006, and his 1994 piece USE ENOUGH TO MAKE IT SMOOTH ENOUGH ASSUMING A FUNCTION was exhibited in the lobby of Kunstneres Hus in 2014. In September 2016 he had an exhibition at OSL contemporary in Oslo. This is not to say that Weiner's contact with Norway has been slight. Just as he was formulating his seminal Statement of Intent in 1969, he fabricated A GLACIER VANDALISED somewhere on the Svartisen glacier.

Lawrence Weiner (b. 1942 New York, NY) lives and works in New York. Significant solo exhibitions of the artist's work have been held at numerous museums and institutions. In 2007, the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, organised the first major retrospective of his work in the United States, which travelled to K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf, Germany. Other recent and notable exhibitions include Blenheim Palace (the birthplace of W. Churchill), Woodstock, England (2015); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2013); Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Barcelona (2013); Tate Modern, London (2012, 2006); ARKEN Museum, Køge; Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga, Málaga, Spain (2008); Haus der Kunst, Munich (2007); Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City (2004); Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg, Germany (2000); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (1994); and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C. (1990). He has contributed to dOCUMENTA 5, 6, 7, and 13 (1972, 1977, 1982, 2012); the 36th, 41st, 50th and 55th iterations of La Biennale di Venezia (1972, 1984, 2003, 2013); the 27th Biennale de São Paulo (2006); and the Istanbul Biennale (2015). He is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Roswitha Haftmann Prize (2014); Doctor of Humane Letters from the City University of New York (2013); the Skowhegan Medal for Painting/Conceptual Art (1999); the Wolfgang Hahn Prize, Cologne; a Guggenheim Fellowship (1994); and two National Endowment of the Arts Fellowships (1976, 1983).

# LISSON GALLERY

Art Daily

13 November 2016

<http://artdaily.com/news/91568/Lawrence-Weiner-s-mental-image-for-the-state-of-society-on-view-at-Kunsth#WDQSPqLJwlg>

**artdaily.org**

## Lawrence Weiner's mental image for the state of society on view at Kunsthhaus Bregenz



Lawrence Weiner, WHEREWITHAL | WAS ES BRAUCHT, 2016. Detail view third floor, Kunsthhaus Bregenz. Photo: Markus Tretter. Courtesy of Lawrence Weiner © Lawrence Weiner | ARS, New York | Bildrecht, Wien, 2016 and Kunsthhaus Bregenz.

**BREGENZ.-** The exhibition title WHEREWITHAL in white uppercase letters is outlined in black. It is a work about language and, according to Weiner, a mental image for the state of society, people, and the world today.

Art has to ask questions, stated Lawrence Weiner during his first visit to [Kunsthhaus Bregenz](#). If it contented itself with predetermined answers, it would fall into the traps of complacency and simple illustration. Born in 1942 in New York, Lawrence Weiner is one of the world's most renowned artists and a cofounder of American conceptual art. In realizing art as an intellectual act, Weiner has from the very beginning worked with language. On the wall it attains a virtually tangible existence. »First there was the word, and with the word one realized that there was something before the word.« (Lawrence Weiner, 1996) Weiner always employs two languages, English and the respective native language, the objects acquiring both optical »dignity« and an interplay between understanding and space.

On the walls of Kunsthhaus Bregenz Weiner's texts become a commentary on the architecture, the space, and sensory experience. His works are only apparently site-specific. They relate to themselves, pursue elliptical odysseys through meaning and create deft plays on society, politics, and the place of art.

Lawrence Weiner is particularly important to Kunsthau Bregenz because of his spatial thinking. The model for his text works across the building's four floors is, according to Weiner, a kind of geyser. Geysers provide valves for excessive pressure, and art is a spontaneous escape from apparently hermetic tectonic crusts. He admits to that as being »idealistic«, but this nevertheless remains one of art's tasks.

KUB Director Thomas D. Trummer on the Exhibition at Kunsthau Bregenz: Texts have been applied to the polished concrete walls, some occupying the whole surface. They expand to become wall-filling messages that simultaneously convey poetic thoughts, for which the Kunsthau could not be more appropriate. The interior's concrete surfaces and skylighting create the impression of a deserted city, providing a worthy complement to the work of Lawrence Weiner, for whom text is a sculpture that merges with its support. The subject matter – what else could it be in Bregenz – is stone, but equally fragility, porosity, and the endangered. These are issues that condense in the title of the exhibition WHEREWITHAL | WAS ES BRAUCHT. Wherewithal here alludes both to what is absolutely necessary and to a world flirting dangerously with its own unraveling

Lawrence Weiner was born February 10, 1942 in the Bronx, New York City.

He has had solo exhibitions at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (2013), Museu d'Art Contemporani in Barcelona (2013), Haus der Kunst in Munich (2007), Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo in Mexico City (2004), Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg (2000), Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (1994), and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. (1990). He was a participant in documenta 5, 6, 7, and 13 (1972, 1977, 1982, 2012) in Kassel and the 36th, 41st, 50th, and 55th Venice Biennale (1972, 1984, 2003, 2013).

He is the recipient of numerous awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship (1994), the Wolfgang-Hahn-Preis from the Gesellschaft für Moderne Kunst at Museum Ludwig in Cologne (1995), the Roswitha Haftmann-Preis from the eponymous Zürich-based foundation (2015), and a honorary doctorate from the City University of New York (2013).

Weiner divides his time between his studio in New York City and his boat in Amsterdam.



## Art News



### Lawrence Weiner: Founding Conceptual Artist Unveils New Blenheim Palace Exhibition

09-10-2015

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A major new exhibition by American artist and founding figure of Conceptual Art, Lawrence Weiner, titled **WITHIN AREALM OF DISTANCE** opens at Blenheim Palace on 10 October. The exhibition showcases works conceived by the artist over the past several decades, in addition to significant works created especially for the Palace. Integrated throughout the ornate interior as well as the monumental exterior of the 18th century building, the exhibition demonstrates the artist's practice of using language as a medium to create a multitude of sculptural forms; viewed in contrast to the traditional backdrop of the UNESCO World Heritage site.

Lawrence Weiner is regarded as one of the most influential artists working today with a career spanning over fifty years. The exhibition, conceived by the artist in close collaboration with Blenheim Art Foundation and co-curator Christian Gether, Director, ARKEN Museum of Modern Art, will feature a new and ambitious body of work presented in a building that dates back to 1704 and which famously became the birth place of British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill in 1874. Existing as an idea rather than a physical object, Weiner invites visitors to experience his work in tandem with the rich heritage of the Palace.

Using the Palace as a support structure for his artistic vision, Weiner has created several site-specific installations, allowing visitors to experience his work and the building's historic

collections simultaneously. The work, which gives the exhibition its name: WITHIN A REALM OF DISTANCE, is made up of brightly coloured and three-dimensional urethane and vinyl lettering, strikingly situated on the frieze of the Palace's main entrance. The ceiling of the Long Library, which runs the entire length of the Palace's West Front making it one of the longest rooms in a private house in Britain, now features the work MORE THAN ENOUGH after being almost untouched for the last 200 years. Site-specific pieces have also been made for the west side of the Great Hall where the words NEAR & FAR & EQUAL MEASURE AT SOME POINT, are located above the arch, and the text SO FAR FLUNG adorns the Green Drawing Room.

Additional works include FAR ENOUGH AWAY AS TO COME READILY TO HAND, an almost four metre pvc banner with vinyl overlay, has replaced the tapestry depicting the Battle of Blenheim hanging in the First State Room. In the Chapel, is A PENNY HERE, A PENNY THERE, above the marble monument to the first Duke and Duchess and their two sons. FOUND ALONE AFTER ANY GIVEN TIME, consisting of seven embroideries displaying differing texts, are also hung in place of existing drawings and prints throughout the Palace and presented as a homily. The works are both subtly and strikingly juxtaposed against the art and architecture of the Palace, creating something completely unique.

WITHIN A REALM OF DISTANCE is the second exhibition by Blenheim Art Foundation, a programme of contemporary art which sees exhibitions presented at the Palace by internationally acclaimed contemporary artists, and follows the inaugural exhibition Ai Weiwei at Blenheim Palace (2014). The Foundation was established by Lord Edward Spencer-Churchill, whose family have resided at Blenheim Palace since the early 18th century, and whose brother is the 12th Duke of Marlborough. A dedicated collector of contemporary art, Lord Edward has long held the ambition to launch a contemporary art programme at Blenheim Palace, and realised Blenheim Art Foundation in 2014 with its Director, Michael Frahm.

**Review to follow**

**Photo: Hugo Glendinning, 2015**

# Someone Splashed Word Art All Over a Historic British Manor House

A conceptual artist gets free rein at Blenheim Palace.

by James Tarmy

October 13, 2015 – 2:00 PM BST



Lawrence Weiner is a 73-year-old post-minimalist conceptual artist who turns language into art. [Blenheim Palace](#) is a 300 year-old, monumental, baroque country house widely considered the most lavish private home in England. Not the most obvious match.

And yet! [Weiner](#) was invited by Lord Edward Spencer-Churchill, (brother to the 12th Duke of Marlborough, distant relative to Winston, and an active lover of contemporary art), to create an installation at the palace, which is open year-round to the public.

The invitation came via [the Blenheim Art Foundation](#), which Spencer-Churchill founded last year. Its first commission was for dissident Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, who filled one room with ceramic crabs, painted a Coca-Cola sign on a vase from the Han Dynasty, and filled the formal gardens with blue porcelain orbs.

Weiner's approach is more austere. The artist, who lives and works in Manhattan's West Village, opted to pepper the palace's public rooms with his pleasant, mostly inscrutable phrases. Ostensibly they're meant to allow visitors to "experience [the] work in tandem with the rich heritage of the Palace, using the building's historic collections as a support structure for his artistic vision," though the reality is slightly more jarring. Check out images of the installation below.



## Installing a Weiner Work on the Facade



■ Weiner: *Within a Realm of Distance*, 2015. Photographer: Hugo Glendinning/Courtesy of of Blenheim Art foundation

## The Finished Piece



■ Weiner: *Within a Realm of Distance*, 2015. Photographer: Hugo Glendinning



## Blending In, Sort Of.



■ Weiner: *Far Enough Away*, 2015. Photographer: Hugo Glendinning/Courtesy of of Blenheim Art foundation

## Weiner's Art, Enlivening the Family Crest



■ Weiner: *A Penny Here, A Penny There*, 2015. Photographer: Hugo Glendinning/Courtesy of of Blenheim Art foundation



## Weiner in the Long Library



■ Artist Weiner in the long library. Photographer: Hugo Glendinning/Courtesy of of Blenheim Art foundation

## A Ceiling Installation in the Long Library



■ Weiner: *More Than Enough*, 2015. Photographer: Hugo Glendinning/Courtesy of of Blenheim Art foundation



## *Near & Far & Equal Measure At Some Point*



■ Weiner: *Near & Far & Equal Measure At Some Point*, 2015. Photographer: Hugo Glendinning/Courtesy of of Blenheim Art foundation

## **The Formal Garden at Blenheim Palace, Pre-Weiner**



■ Photographer: Kord.com/Getty Images

## PEOPLE

### Lawrence Weiner Updates an 18th-Century Palace with 21st-Century Text

Lauren Palmer, Wednesday, October 28, 2015



WITHIN A REALM OF DISTANCE LAWRENCE WEINER AT BLENHEIM PALACE (2015).  
Image: Hugo Glendinning/Courtesy of Blenheim Art Foundation.

Although many who travel to Blenheim Palace go for its connection to Winston Churchill, there's another reason to book a trip to the former British prime minister's ancestral home: [The Blenheim Art Foundation](#), which brings contemporary art to the opulent UNESCO World Heritage site.



For his commission at Blenheim Palace, Lawrence Weiner has created one of his signature textural installations meant not to compete with the museum's holdings or grounds, but to exist in "a simultaneous reality," the artist told artnet News in a phone interview. "There is no hierarchy, there's no my-stuff-is-more-interesting-than-this-stuff. If you begin to follow the logic of what I'm presenting in the space, you begin to get an entirely different thing. [The exhibition] begins to turn Blenheim Palace into a normal museum where there's other people's art. A normal public space. And I was rather shocked that it worked."

Grouped with 1960s conceptual artists such as Joseph Kosuth, Robert Barry, and Sol Lewitt, Weiner's art is adept at raising awareness and challenging the status quo through text-based artworks. For the past five decades, the "language-based sculptor," to borrow art critic Roberta Smith's term, has reliably given his audience something to ponder.

"Within A Realm of Distance," which runs until December 20, spans the exterior and interior of the palace; new works are on display along with several of the artist's favorites that "talk about things," as the artist softly explains.



WITHIN A REALM OF DISTANCE LAWRENCE WEINER AT BLENHEIM PALACE (2015).  
Image: Hugo Glendinning/Courtesy of Blenheim Art Foundation.



"I tried to build an entire show that had a logic structure to it, about the value of objects and the relationship of human beings to objects, and objects to objects in relation to human beings," he continued.

These juxtapositions serve as the structure for the exhibition; just as Weiner's artwork is situated among the Blenheim's treasures, visitors situate themselves within both concurrently.



WITHIN A REALM OF DISTANCE LAWRENCE WEINER AT BLENHEIM PALACE (2015).  
Image: Hugo Glendinning/Courtesy of Blenheim Art Foundation.

Visitors to the palace are encouraged to explore, as the exhibition uses space and surfaces that span the site in creative ways. Look up on the ceiling in the palace's library, or investigate inside and out to find posited tokens, reminding viewers of our tendency toward accumulation and the "objects that we spend our life around," as Weiner says. The coins are inscribed with "Dry Earth + Scattered Ashes" on one face, and "Dry Earth + Buried Gold" on the other, in the artist's characteristic capitals.

"[The font is] called Margaret Seaworthy Gothic," the artist shares with artnet News. "I wanted something that had some elegance, but no authority."



WITHIN A REALM OF DISTANCE LAWRENCE WEINER AT BLENHEIM PALACE (2015).  
Image: Hugo Glendinning/Courtesy of Blenheim Art Foundation.

With careful pre-planning, the work was installed in just a week. "Even the façade was [installed] three days before it opened," Weiner said. He attributes much of the success of the exhibition to the team behind it: "I was impressed. I didn't think I could do it and they could do it, but we did."

See more images of the works on view below.

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#artists #exhibitions #foundations #installation #sculpture



[Lauren Palmer](#)





WITHIN A REALM OF DISTANCE LAWRENCE WEINER AT BLENHEIM PALACE (2015).  
Image: Hugo Glendinning/Courtesy of Blenheim Art Foundation.



WITHIN A REALM OF DISTANCE LAWRENCE WEINER AT BLENHEIM PALACE (2015).  
Image: Hugo Glendinning/Courtesy of Blenheim Art Foundation.





WITHIN A REALM OF DISTANCE LAWRENCE WEINER AT BLENHEIM PALACE (2015).  
Image: Hugo Glendinning/Courtesy of Blenheim Art Foundation.



WITHIN A REALM OF DISTANCE LAWRENCE WEINER AT BLENHEIM PALACE (2015).  
Image: Hugo Glendinning/Courtesy of Blenheim Art Foundation.

# Baffling modern art at Blenheim

## Exhibition

### Lawrence Weiner

Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire



By Mark Hudson

As you approach Blenheim Palace, a cryptic proclamation currently stands out over the main entrance: “Within a Realm of Distance.” You won’t be surprised to hear that this is contemporary art.

Off-the-wall installations and uncompromising outdoor sculpture are becoming as much a part of the country-house experience as cream teas. Chatsworth, Houghton Hall, Waddesdon – they’re all at it. This show, however, feels an odd fit even by current standards. Having got into this field last year with Ai Weiwei, the Blenheim Art Foundation (founded by Edward Spencer-Churchill, brother of the current Duke of Marlborough, Jamie) is hosting the veteran American conceptualist Lawrence Weiner. On the one hand, we have the birthplace of Winston Churchill, the bombastic high baroque building describing itself as “Britain’s greatest palace”; on the other, the 73-year-old Bronx-born artist’s gnomic text-interventions.

The lettering over the entrance doesn’t just announce the exhibition: it is part of the art. While the “realm” and “distance” of the title may refer to the house and landscape in a way that feels just about comprehensible, the work in the austere entrance hall is

befuddling: the preposterously titled “Matter so shaken to its core to lead to a change in inherent form to the extent of bringing about a change in the destiny of the material”. The matter referred to in the piece – which is simply its title emblazoned on a bare stone wall with the words “primary”, “secondary” and “tertiary” written beneath – may be this very stone. However, as the piece was “made” in 2002, that feels unlikely.

On the day I went, most visitors, giving it a glance as they made their way into this awe-inspiring space, didn’t seem too bothered either way.

The sense of wilful obtuseness yielding diminishing returns increases in the opulent state rooms, where one

of the tapestries celebrating the martial victories of the house’s founder, John Churchill (1650-1722), has been replaced by a length of what looks like silver plastic sheeting bearing the words “Far Enough Away As To Come Readily To Hand.”

If this piece of abstruseness makes you want to run, you’ll miss the splendours of John Vanburgh and Nicholas Hawksmoor’s interior. You can’t have the stridently monumental without the bafflingly post-modern.

As you enter the library, however, the two begin to integrate in a way that starts to make sense. The words on the ceiling, “More saltpetre than black powder, more aluminium than lead” refer to gunpowder, the substance that, effectively, built Blenheim.

The house, like all stately homes, is a temple to its founding dynasty. Everywhere statuary and tapestries trumpet the military achievements of John Churchill. A hagiographic, permanent display, meanwhile, celebrates his descendant, Winston.

The suspicion that Weiner may be providing a subversive counter-commentary to this grandiose dynastic message builds as you look up at the library cupola where the words “More Than Enough” feel like a comment on the surrounding magnificence.

Could it be that Weiner, whose work is all about defying easy interpretation, is providing a not so subtly coded message that might actually enhance a walk round Blenheim? It would be nice to think so, but I’m not sure.



Puzzle: one of Weiner’s cryptic messages

Until Dec 20. [blenheimpalace.com](http://blenheimpalace.com)



# Aesthetica

Review of Lawrence Weiner: Within a Realm of Distance at Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire



"You can have any kind of a like-for-like with people, but if you have to say 'I love you', you better mean it."

Lawrence Weiner isn't keen to put his work in context. Although he's considered a founding figure of American conceptualism, a pioneer of post-minimalism and a trailblazer for text-based art, he doesn't associate himself with any particular movement. Nor does he believe that the works currently on show at Blenheim Palace are site-specific – something he might not have mentioned to the curators at the Blenheim Art Foundation. Consisting of new and reformulated text works appearing unannounced throughout the palace, *Within a Realm of Distance* equips visitors with a linguistic toolkit for "finding their own existential relationship to the world of objects at the moment." The fact that those objects might be victorious tapestries, priceless porcelain or Churchill memorabilia is neither here nor there. The texts are made to adapt to the needs of the viewer: the words will serve their purpose "within a realm of distance" at "any given time."

Weiner prefers to think of his texts as sculpture rather than conceptual art, verbal constructions built from notions of space, time and physical material. Vaulting over a stone archway, the statement "NEAR & FAR & EQUAL MEASURE // AT SOME POINT", contracts the expanse of the palace into a few brief measurements. Embroidered homilies are "FOUND [...] AFTER ANY GIVEN TIME" resting on mantelpieces or hung in dark corridors. A text applied to a mirror simply states "SO FAR FLUNG".

Other works draw upon theories of chemical change, where scientific language slips into the figurative or poetic. In the Great Hall the statement "MATTER SO SHAKEN TO ITS CORE TO LEAD TO A CHANGE IN INHERENT FORM TO THE EXTENT OF BRINGING ABOUT A CHANGE IN THE DESTINY OF THE MATERIAL", suggests not only chemical change but alchemy; the word "lead" appears again in the Long Gallery, where text graphics installed in the ceiling cornices compare the physical properties of lead, gold, silver and aluminium. The slippery use of "lead" as both a verb and a noun suggests the mutability not



only of matter, but also of language. The texts are there for the taking – if visitors manage to find the bowl of wooden coins (“BURIED GOLD”) they are welcome to take one home.

Could alchemy be the key? Weiner shrugs his wide sloping shoulders. “I don’t do metaphor.” Just like he doesn’t “do” context. However, his lack of specificity is highly precise. What interested Weiner about Blenheim was its role as a “regal palace” rather than a “royal palace”, “a realm” rather than “the realm”. Built by Vanbrugh in the early 18th century to mark the victory of the 1st Duke of Marlborough over the French, Blenheim is a baroque fantasy of the palatial rather than the thing itself. The exhibition title appears emblazoned in vast vinyl lettering above the mighty north portico, the “A” of “WITHIN A REALM OF DISTANCE” helpfully encircled to inform visitors they are now entering an ideal existing outside time and space.

Blenheim, on the other hand, seem pretty sure of their positioning as a brand. Their strapline “Britain’s Greatest Palace” was clearly dreamt up by a copywriter with slightly more commercial wit than Weiner. Nothing can fault Blenheim’s ambition. The palace was born victorious and today it is a successful business; as witnessed at Chatsworth, commercial success goes hand in hand with contemporary art. When the Blenheim Art Foundation launched last year they chose Ai Wei Wei as their poster boy, another artist photogenically out of place amid the swirling curlicues and mighty colonnades. However, it remains to be seen whether Weiner’s sibylline statements will sell as well as scones and strawberry jam. For most of Blenheim’s visitors the exhibition will be less about “a realm of distance” than simply distancing, and it will be interesting to see who the Foundation selects next. Most likely a female artist, British, with a conceptual practice based on tangible narratives. My money’s on Cornelia Parker.

Lawrence Weiner: Within a Realm of Distance, until 20 December at Blenheim Palace, Woodstock, Oxfordshire OX20 1PP.

For more information, visit [www.blenheimpalace.com](http://www.blenheimpalace.com).

Matilda Bathurst

Follow us on Twitter @AestheticaMag for the latest news in contemporary art and culture.

#### Credits

1. Lawrence Weiner, Within a Realm of Distance at Blenheim Palace, 2015. Photo credit: Hugo Glendinning. Courtesy of Blenheim Art Foundation.

Posted on 4 November 2015

LISSON GALLERY

Town & Country  
December 2015

## TOWN&COUNTRY

### EXHIBITIONS

#### THE WRITING'S ON THE WALL

Contemporary artworks light up an 18th-century palace

Following last year's Ai Weiwei exhibition, the Blenheim Art Foundation has invited the American artist Lawrence Weiner to put his imprint on the palace's interiors. Known for his bold slogans (*A Bit Beyond What Is Designated as the Pale* in green on a white wall, for example), Weiner has emblazoned Blenheim with site-specific pieces, showing the historic rooms in a new way. CG

*'Lawrence Weiner: Within a Realm of Distance' is at Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire ([www.blenheimpalace.com](http://www.blenheimpalace.com)), until 20 December.*



# Boston

Dewey Square, MIT, Public Art

## The Greenway Announces Lawrence Weiner as Artist for Next Dewey Square Mural

The Greenway is commissioning the new mural, to be installed in September, in partnership with the MIT List Visual Arts Center.

By Olga Khvan | Arts & Entertainment | August 3, 2015, 5:21 p.m.



IN SEPTEMBER, SHINIQUE SMITH'S MURAL WILL BE REPLACED WITH A NEW WORK BY LAWRENCE WEINER | PHOTO BY GEOFF HARGADON, PROVIDED BY THE ROSE KENNEDY GREENWAY CONSERVANCY

In what has become an annual fall tradition, yet another acclaimed artist will soon paint a new mural on the Greenway Wall at Dewey Square.

The Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy announced today that it has commissioned internationally renowned conceptual artist Lawrence Weiner to paint its fourth temporary mural, this time in partnership with the MIT List Visual Arts Center.



Weiner, whose career spans more than 50 years, has been awarded fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim. He's known for his typographic works, such as his 2008 *Dead Center* installation at MIT, consisting of three phrases of text incised into three geometric shapes of colored granite and imbedded into a concrete path in the courtyard of the Ashdown House.

Weiner's mural at Dewey Square will be titled "A Translation from One Language to Another." Its specific design is being kept under wraps for now, but, like Weiner's installation at MIT, it will feature text.

"We hope that the viewers in Boston take away their own individual reading of the mural after seeing it," says Paul C. Ha, director of the List Center, in a press release. "We also hope that viewers find the work poetic, a challenge, and that it inspires conversations between those who happen to meet on the green to view the artwork."

The List Center is the third institution to partner with the Greenway on its mural commissions. The first two—*The Giant of Boston* by Os Gemeos and *Remanence: Salt and Light (Part II)* by Matthew Ritchie—were created in partnership with the Institute of Contemporary Art. The mural currently on display, *Seven Moon Junction* by Shinique Smith, was created in collaboration with the Museum of Fine Arts.

Weiner's mural is scheduled to be installed September 14-20. An opening celebration will follow on September 24, and the artist will participate as a panelist in the List Center's Max Wasserman Forum on Contemporary Art, which will focus on public art, in November.

## art talk

### Taste Test

On a brisk evening in New York, a stooped and bushy-bearded **Lawrence Weiner** drank from a tumbler filled with Scapa scotch. It was the fifth anniversary of the FLAG Art Foundation, and founder **Glenn Fuhrman** had decided to hold a scotch tasting and discussion in honor of Weiner's love of the stuff. Of the Scapa, Weiner noted, "It's not the best, but it's my favorite." He took another sip and added, "I hate the idea of hierarchy."

Fuhrman and Weiner have developed an occasional habit of sitting and talking for hours in Weiner's studio. Invariably, there is a bottle of scotch, which they often finish. After years of this ritual, Fuhrman's wife, **Amanda Steck**, suggested the idea for



Lawrence Weiner (left) sipping scotch with Glenn Fuhrman at the FLAG Art Foundation.

the tasting event.

But do art and scotch really go together? "I can't work when I'm drunk or stoned. It's like an athlete," Weiner said—but "I can look at art."

Minutes before the discussion began, Weiner admitted that he didn't have any idea what he would say: "I'm going to use whiskey to talk about

something that I hate—linear thinking!" More than 50 people showed up to watch what might happen. "Within 15 minutes of sending out the first e-mail, we were already over capacity," Fuhrman said. "It's a tribute to Lawrence, and maybe the power of scotch."

It's easy to see how one would want to indulge in

drunken conversation with Weiner. A master of text-based Conceptual art, Weiner has a speaking voice that is deep and hypnotic, and his choice of words is quixotically *en pointe*. The conversation smoothly shifted from Weiner's days working on the San Francisco shipping docks to his arguing with painters in New York bars in the 1960s to his artwork today.

At one point, Fuhrman asked whether the wild wealth of some contemporary artists is a bad thing. Weiner protested, comparing an artist who claims getting rich is bad to a patient rejecting penicillin to cure syphilis. "The point of art is penicillin!" he declared, and the audience erupted in laughter, perhaps fueled by the alcohol. For at least one night in the art world, scotch was the best medicine. —**Ali Pechman**

## Exhibition with works by the artists Ian Hamilton Finlay, Robert Montgomery and Lawrence Weiner opens in Berlin

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Lawrence Weiner, *CONFINED WITHIN THE LINES*, 2012. Language, Latex Tape on Wall. Dimensions variable.

**BERLIN.- AJLART** presents an exhibition with works by the artists Ian Hamilton Finlay, Robert Montgomery and Lawrence Weiner at Potsdamerstr. 98a, 2nd courtyard, 10785 Berlin.

With Ian Hamilton Finlay (1925-2006), Lawrence Weiner (\*1942) and Robert Montgomery (\*1971), the current exhibition brings together three positions of conceptual art for which language is central as a material and artistic means. Artistic work using language is linked to fundamental questions regarding the recording thereof from the outset, and consequently also to questions of intelligibility, whichever form that may take – for like music, language is inherently ephemeral. An artistic approach to language is therefore also always an approach to signs and their positioning, meaning the shape of signs in the locations and the areas where language occurs. This concerns the handling of legibility and representation, the question of comprehensibility as well as the rendition of contents within the framework of cultural contexts.

Across three generations, Finlay, Weiner and Montgomery share a preoccupation with the potential of language, as the elementary core of a work, to appear completely conventional, but also to radically break with convention. In its blatant brevity, the "Declaration of Intent", published by Lawrence Weiner in 1968, left the question of the materialisation of the work open, or rather, handed it over to the viewer. Nevertheless, Weiner also focuses on the creation of a distinct typography. This constitutes a universally applicable semiotic system, which he developed in keeping with his sculptural understanding of working with language, and was prominently installed in public space repeatedly.

In contrast to Weiner, the Scottish artist Ian Hamilton Finlay's work is marked by his background in concrete poetry, which gave him cause to found "Wild Hawthorn Press" in 1961, where he published his poetic texts and prints. A few years later, in 1966, he began working on "Little Sparta", a garden in the tradition of English landscape design in the late 18th century, with philosophical and political ideas embedded in the artfully cultivated and idealised nature of its grounds, ideas which often run counter to the current ideologies or social order. As such, the English landscape-garden function not only as actually tangible painting, is at the same time a medium of subversive opposition. Finlay transfers this linking of formally aesthetic considerations and political discourse almost seamlessly into his genre-bending, multi-faceted work, attaining a contemporaneity with a range spanning from antiquity to the present.

Robert Montgomery's works reference our present day, which – in the interest of a capitalist economic order – has produced a 'consciousness industry' where the fulfilment of individual dreams and desires is depicted as completely guaranteed. It is precisely this propaganda and simulation of the promise of happiness that Montgomery addresses with poetically associative texts, which are for the most part temporarily installed in public space, their assertions not related to promises, but rather the existential wavering between dream and reality, between longing and failure, between hope and life.



# Review



♥ ArtFunded £40,000

Lawrence Weiner (b. 1942)

Commission with archive  
material

2014

1) Steel embedded in  
stone; 2) ink on paper,  
stickers

1) Six paving stones, each  
90 x 50 cm; 2) various sizes

This public artwork consists  
of texts embedded into  
paving stones near to  
Glasgow's Gallery of  
Modern Art. The acquisition  
includes documentary  
archive material from  
Weiner's studio.

Acquired by Gallery of  
Modern Art, Glasgow.  
Total cost £100,000

## The Grand Tour

The latest exhibitions for Artist Rooms, the jointly owned collection of modern and contemporary art from the National Galleries of Scotland and Tate, supported by the Art Fund. For full listings see [www.artfund.org/artistrooms](http://www.artfund.org/artistrooms)

### Georg Baselitz

This show will coincide with the reopening of the New Walk Museum's German Expressionist collection, which has undergone an extensive rehang. The pairing will offer a chance to explore Baselitz's complex relationship with the legacy of Expressionism, celebrating not only his paint, print and sculpture work, but also the performative aspects of his practice. *Holly Black*  
 ● New Walk Museum and Art Gallery, Leicester, 20 September - 15 January 2015. [www.leicester.gov.uk](http://www.leicester.gov.uk)  
 Free to all



### Lawrence Weiner

Since the 1960s Weiner has attested that his wall texts are sculptures based on language and not conceptual pieces. In this display his work will take on new interpretations when placed amid the social and political history of coalmining. Text is integral to the stories of the mines, from iconic protest banners to industry specific signage. *HB*  
 ● Woodhorn Museum, Ashington, 25 October - 12 April 2015.  
[www.experiencewoodhorn.com](http://www.experiencewoodhorn.com)  
 Free to all

### Francesca Woodman

Despite taking her own life at 22, this American photographer produced an incredible body of work. Her surreal images comment on gender and the inner self, often subverting traditional views of the female nude and psyche by using slow exposures and deserted domestic settings to create ethereal portraits. *HB*  
 ● Oriel Davies, Powys, 15 November - 25 February 2015.  
[www.orieldavies.org](http://www.orieldavies.org)  
 Free to all

CHAMPAGNE PHOTOGRAPHY: SHUTTERSTOCK/ALAN BUCHHEITZ; GEORG BASELITZ: GALLERIES; LAWRENCE WEINER: ARTS; FRANCESCA WOODMAN: ARTS

## Bury text festival

Launching Bury's new Sculpture Centre with a text-based festival might seem unfitting, but the poetic use of words here constitutes an aural and tactile spectacle. In a series of contemporary language art exhibitions, readings and performances, the written word is taken off



the page. The French-Norwegian poet Caroline Bergvall's performance today promises to be an amazement of cross-

associational imagery. Other highlights include a neo-dada "anti-choir" and New York artist Lawrence Weiner presenting a choice selection of his beguilingly cryptic sculptural text installations (pictured). **RC** *The Met, Bury Art Museum & Bury Sculpture Centre, to 9 Jul*



# It's Nice That

CHAMPIONING CREATIVITY ACROSS THE ART AND DESIGN WORLD



Courtesy of LAWRENCE WEINER, ARS, NY and DACS, London 2014. Photos by Andy Keate. Installation views of ALL IN DUE COURSE at the South London Gallery, 2014 (detail)

## EXHIBITION

### The South London Gallery open a new show of work by Lawrence Weiner

Posted by Maisie Skidmore, Tuesday 30 September 2014



The South London Gallery describes Lawrence Weiner, whose new exhibition *All in Due Course* opened there last Friday, as a “reluctant pioneer of conceptual art,” which must be one of the coolest epithets going. The American artist has been creating his typographic wall sculptures since the 1970s when he first pioneered his unique medium which he maintains is not conceptualism but a kind of sculpture made using “language + the materials referred to.”

Made predominantly using paint or vinyl, Lawrence covers walls with provocative and ambiguous texts to challenge the assumptions of the viewer. These pieces rely heavily on his careful and deliberate choice of typefaces which naturally highlight “the visual and spatial qualities of any given language,” as the SLG explains. “His work explores structure and translation, using punctuation, colour and a uniquely coded sense of design, to change inflection or tone within the work.”

*All in Due Course* will be the third time Lawrence has exhibited at the South London Gallery but his first solo show there will continue beyond the confines of the gallery to cover the outside walls as well. The conceptual artist has even created a temporary tattoo for the show, which makes it a winner in our book.

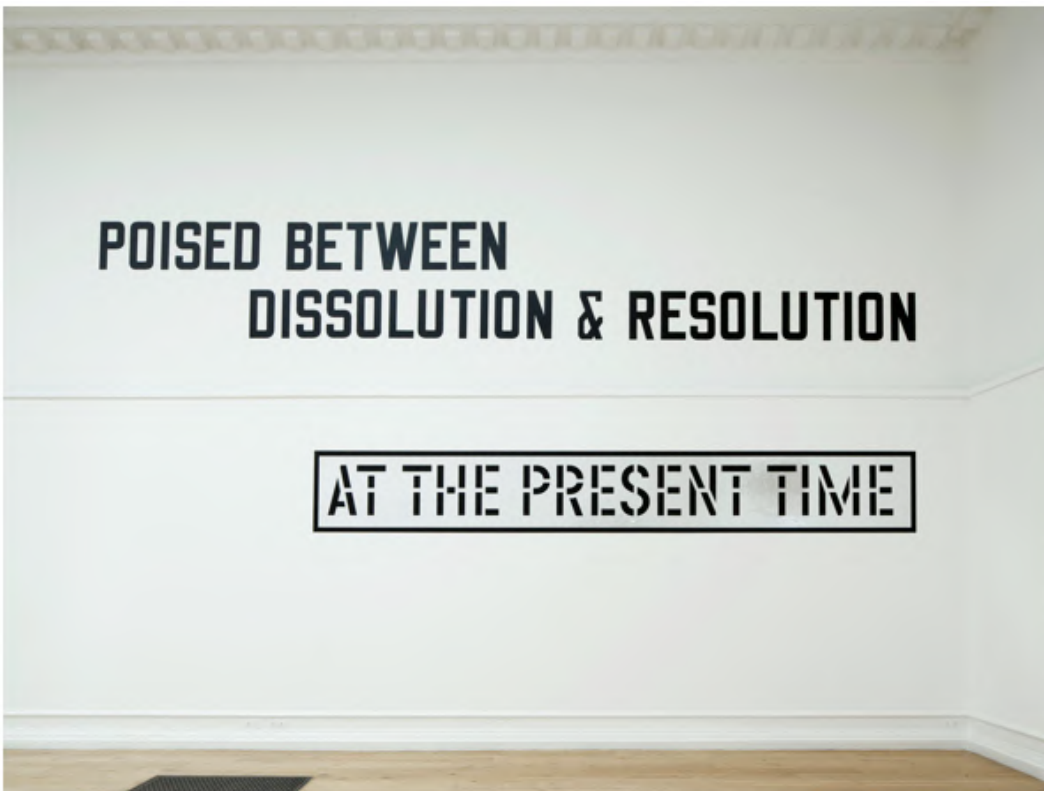
*All in Due Course* will run at London's South London Gallery until 23 November 2014. For more information visit our events listing site, [This At There](#).



Image courtesy of LAWRENCE WEINER, ARS, NY and DACS, London 2014. Photos by Andy Keate. Installation views of ALL IN DUE COURSE at the South London Gallery, 2014.



Image courtesy of LAWRENCE WEINER, ARS, NY and DACS, London 2014. Photos by Andy Keate. Installation views of ALL IN DUE COURSE at the South London Gallery, 2014



Lawrence Weiner: Cat #939, 2007. Installation view at the South London Gallery, Nothing is Forever, 2010. Image courtesy Lawrence Weiner, Tvon Lambert, Paris, ARS, NY and DACS. Photo: Andy Stagg





Lawrence Weiner : In the Midst, Birmingham 1999. Image courtesy Lawrence Weiner, ARS, NY and DACS



Lawrence Weiner: Intervention/Decoration, Foreground Projects, Frome, Somerset, 2008. Image courtesy Lawrence Weiner RAS, NY and DACS



Lawrence Weiner: Lisson Gallery: 2013. Image courtesy Lawrence Weiner, ARS, NY and DACS



Courtesy of Lawrence Weiner, ARS, NY and DACS, London 2014. Photos by Andy Keate. Installation views of ALL IN DUE COURSE at the South London Gallery, 2014



## In the studio: Lawrence Weiner, artist



'Art, if it really and truly succeeds, is going to change other people's lives'

Lawrence Weiner works in his studio in a mixed-usage building that he built with his wife, Alice, in the West Village in New York City. Imploding the small house they had lived in for 25 years, they built on the existing site with the advice of local architects LOTEK and "Alice as engineer". The resulting commodious five-storey structure will ultimately sport a green growing roof and solar panels, as well as living, archive and working spaces.

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I am invited on a bottom-to-top tour, during which we pass from the basement studio where we have been chatting up into the archive room. The studio itself is bright, opening into a small garden. There is an "ideas wall" on which are displayed projects from Lisbon to Paris in progress, near a desk with well used pencils, water-colours and stencils.

Weiner was born in the Bronx in 1942. His unhappy childhood has been widely chronicled and re-chronicled. He may be tired today but his distinctive look and his full and carefully groomed beard mean he is instinctively recognizable.

Weiner has often been called a conceptual artist but he dismisses this immediately. What he is clear on is that when he started to show work in the 1960s it was accepted by his peers. "I was supportive of certain people who like to call themselves Conceptual. I was



Weiner's core work ultimately relies on text – both through a flow of books and wall "sculptures", as he calls them, of slogans installed in a distinctive and legible fashion. He uses language as a way of opening up discourse. "But language allows it to go from culture to culture without becoming exotic."

Weiner is clear that it is not the materials that an artist uses but what they do with them that is important. "Every day that you make a work of art, which gives dignity to stone, which somebody can relate to that stone, then people can relate better to another person".

It is not about überpolitics but the inter-relational that Weiner talks about: "Watch people who have really found something in art, and you watch how that really tempers how they deal with their life. That's what art does: it lets you have this conversation."

Weiner's forthcoming projects include a mixture of public and private spaces. He has been given the task of trying to unite through art the original Eero Saarinen building with the more recent Calatrava wing of the Milwaukee Museum of Art. In the meantime, he is working on more publications, many of them done on a "pro bono basis" to raise the profile of locations – such as Palestine that he feels are important.

He is modest, admitting the possibility of failure. "Art, if it really and truly succeeds, is going to change other people's lives. If it doesn't succeed, then, well... well you did the best you could. And that's all you can say as an artist".



[Home](#) » [Art](#)

## LAWRENCE WEINER: ALL IN DUE COURSE AT THE SOUTH LONDON GALLERY



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### AT A GLANCE

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### TIME

**11:00**

### DATE

**26/09/14**

### PRICE

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**Produced by** [South London Gallery](#)

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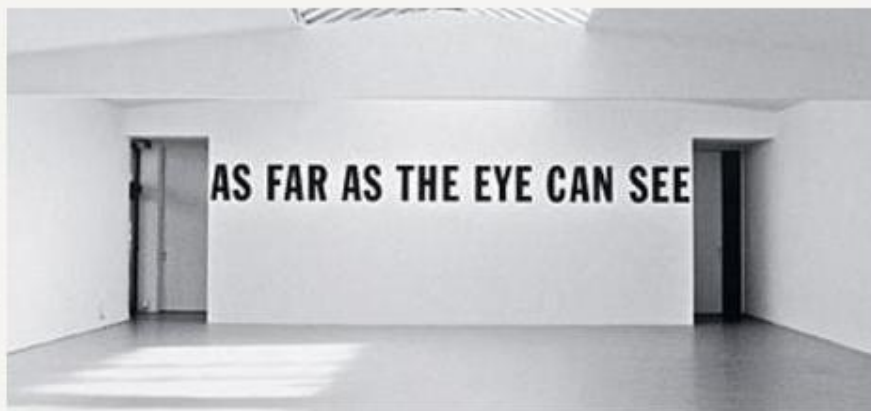
**See you at** [South London Gallery](#)

Acclaimed American artist and reluctant pioneer of conceptual art returns to the gallery with a solo exhibition, ALL IN DUE COURSE: a series of recent sculptures spanning interior and exterior spaces.

Though recognised as one of the central figures pioneering conceptual art in the 1960s, Lawrence Weiner identifies himself not as a conceptualist but as a sculptor whose medium is "language + the materials referred to". Since the 1970s Weiner has been best known for his striking wall 'sculptures'. Mainly using paint or vinyl, Weiner's works carve walls with thought, presenting provocative texts that are open to interpretation by the viewer.

For this exhibition Weiner has made a group of inter-related works that will be seen across the main and first floor galleries, and continue outdoors, running along the expansive Victorian brick wall of the SLG's Fox Garden. Visitors to the exhibition can venture further, beyond the gallery to an off-site work on the facade of the semi-derelict former Peckham Road Fire Station, located diagonally opposite the SLG.

**26 September - 23 November**



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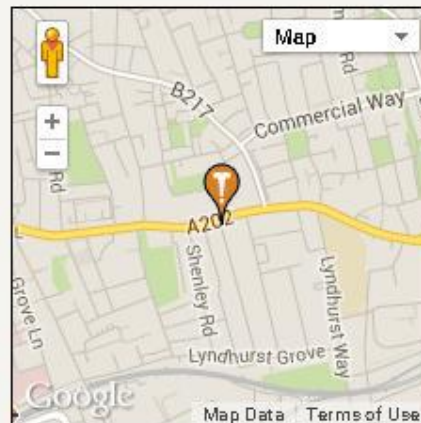
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# An Unlikely Powerhouse

Diminutive and demure, Marian Goodman has made a career of bucking trends, rising to the top of the art world on the strength of the artists she represents. Yet this fall, she becomes the latest in a string of dealers to open an outpost in London. What's behind her decision?

BY CAROL KINO PORTRAIT BY THOMAS STRUTH

**N**EW YORK GALLERIST Marian Goodman is one of the most powerful art dealers in the world, and also perhaps the most enigmatic. On a glorious summer day in London, her inscrutability is on full display as she stands amid a noisy Soho construction site, casting a careful eye over the Victorian warehouse that will soon contain her third gallery.

At 86, Goodman has been involved in the art business for nearly half a century. Yet she possesses few of the hallmarks that signify great dealers today—multiple outposts, such as Larry Gagosian, with 15 galleries in seven countries; palatial, starchitect-designed spaces like the ones David Zwirner and Hauser & Wirth operate in New York's Chelsea neighborhood; or entire departments dedicated to making money by peddling secondary market, or resale, work. Instead, Goodman is renowned for her artists, who span multiple continents and eras, among them conceptual icons John Baldessari, Dan Graham and Lawrence Weiner; photographers Jeff Wall, Rineke Dijkstra and Thomas Struth; installation artists such as Annette Messager and Danh Võ; and painters Julie Mehretu and Gerhard Richter, possibly her most illustrious talent.

In many ways, Goodman made her name by bucking trends—opting for anti-market conceptualism when market-friendly Neo-Expressionist paintings were the rage, and refusing to relocate from uptown to SoHo or Chelsea when everyone else was doing it. But with her London gallery, designed by the in-demand London-based architect David Adjaye and set just off Golden Square, Goodman seems to be falling in line with the other New York lodestars who also have branches there, including Zwirner, Hauser & Wirth, Pace and Gagosian. As with most of her decisions, her

reasons for doing so are not immediately apparent.

Weeks of cleaning have transformed the building's formerly grim facade into a glowing expanse of sandstone-colored brick. Sunlight streams through its newly refurbished windows and skylights, lighting up the cast-iron columns, the sinuously curving

staircase and the vaulted ceiling of the upper floor. But as Goodman, wearing a cream Chanel-style jacket, surveys her new 11,000-square-foot domain, she concedes few clues about her impressions.

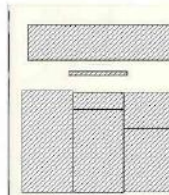
At first she mostly frets over details others have missed, such as the prominence of a ledge beneath the windows or a sign of moisture on a northern wall. Andrew Leslie Heyward, who directs Goodman's small Paris gallery and will run this one, too, walks alongside her, taking note. "So is it what you expected?" he asks. Poker-faced, Goodman responds, "I didn't know what I expected."

It's only when Leslie Heyward talks about art that Goodman softens. He points through a corner window to the park outside, where a sculpture by South Africa's William Kentridge, a longtime gallery artist, will be installed, and her face brightens. He explains that art movers will be able to drive a forklift straight through the front doors. "Enough room to lift a Jeff Wall in a crate 15 feet in the air!" Goodman says, relishing the possibilities for the Canadian photographer, whose work must be hoisted by crane into the windows of her fourth-floor gallery in New York.

Finally, passing by a generously windowed room on the upper floor, Goodman remarks that "Gerhard likes a lot of space," referring to the German painter Richter, whose show of new and recent work will inaugurate the gallery when it opens on October 14. (She consulted Richter, and many of her other artists, throughout the gallery's planning and design.)

By the time Leslie Heyward finally blurts out, "It looks so great," Goodman is smiling broadly. And even though the space is already drenched with light, the power of Goodman's approval is so strong that it's as though a second sun is shining.

Two days earlier, Goodman and I were talking over coffee in an empty dining room at her hotel in Basel, Switzerland. It was the day after Art Basel's VIP opening (Goodman has participated in the fair since 1970, its first year), and I asked her how she transformed herself into an art-world powerhouse. After all, she entered adulthood as a housewife—albeit a well-educated, progressive one—and now she stands at No. 14, and fourth among dealers, on *ArtReview's*





"Power 100" list. Goodman gazed at me awkwardly then ducked her head and said, "I don't know."

For the nearly 50 years she's been in the business, Goodman has been renowned for her counterintuitive shyness, seriousness and reserve. In an article for the *New Yorker*, Peter Schjeldahl once reported an acquaintance describing her as someone "who backs away while saying 'hello.'" She's about the last person you'd expect to become a dealer, a profession normally associated with glad-handing salesmanship.

Yet by now, Goodman's standing is such that even her competitors sing her praises. "What's so extraordinary about Marian is, number one, the sure head with which she picks great artists," says dealer David Zwirner, "and again and again in different decades. And number two, the loyalty she has brought to those careers" by making sure "the artist is noticed through institutions and letting the market follow." When he opened his first gallery in New York in 1993, Zwirner adds, Goodman's was "a model that I aspired to."

"If you'd only bought work from Marian Goodman over the last 40 years," says Tom Eccles, the executive director of the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, "you would have one of the best museums in

the world today. I don't know if there's any other gallerist you could say that of. Every one is a winner."

At a time when the role of museums is changing drastically, from scholarly repository to social-gathering spot, Goodman still regards public institutions as the most important home for her artists' work. (During the fair, her artists aren't on view only in her booth, but in exhibitions all over town.) Goodman's annual Basel dinner, held this year in a 14th-century castle just outside the city, is thick with directors and curators, including Neal Benezra, director of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and Sir Nicholas Serota, who runs Britain's Tate museums. Because of Goodman's pint-size stature—she's barely five feet tall—all must stoop to talk, and throughout the evening she is often referred to, only half-jokingly, as "the queen." With her blend of grandmotherliness—she often arrives at meetings bearing cake and beams indulgently when a toddler crosses her path—and imposing authority, the comparison is not far off.

Yet because Goodman and her employees routinely refuse to discuss sales, the gallery is hardly mentioned in press about the fair. (The hot Art Basel news was the sale of a 1986 Andy Warhol self-portrait for more than \$30 million by Skarstedt, another New York gallery with a London branch.) Goodman herself is also notoriously chary of interviews, rarely agreeing to them and often regretting her cooperation. "Everyone at the gallery, including Marian, tries to tone it down," explains Roger Tatley, who was recently hired as a director for Goodman's London branch. "Artists should get the press."

**G**OODMAN DIDN'T open her first full-fledged gallery until 1977, less than a year before she turned 50, though her engagement with art began much earlier. Raised on Manhattan's Upper West Side, and educated at the Little Red School House, one of the city's first progressive schools, she grew up visiting galleries with her father, Maurice P. Geller, a first-generation Hungarian-American accountant who avidly collected the work of the mid-century American modernist Milton Avery. "When my father first started collecting, I thought he was mad," Goodman

says. "But I came to really appreciate his passion."

Married at 20 ("or 21," Goodman says, "I can't remember anymore") to civil engineer William Goodman, she organized her first show in about 1962, as part of a PTA fundraising drive for the Walden School, where her two young children were students. (Michael is now a heavy-construction photographer based in Los Angeles, and Amy is an herbalist in Vermont. "She's a very green girl," Goodman says proudly.) The show included work by Avery, as well as Stuart Davis and Franz Kline, and Goodman later published a portfolio of related prints. "I found that I just loved it, and that was that," says Goodman, who has lived since the early '70s in a Central Park West penthouse, not far from where she grew up. The minimalist, art-filled aerie can be accessed only by taking the elevator to the building's top floor, and then climbing a back staircase that doubles as a fire exit.

Goodman entered Columbia University as a graduate student to study art history, focusing primarily on African and pre-Columbian cultures—an education that later helped her "shape my attitude about taking a more long-term view," she says. She dreamed of working in a museum, but "it wasn't an easy time for women to become curators in New York." So in 1965, she joined forces with friends and founded Multiples (later incorporated as Multiples, Inc.), a publishing company that produced editioned prints and objects, otherwise known as "multiples." Pop Art was on the rise, and a handful of progressive publishers in America and Europe were similarly aflame with the idea of bringing art to the masses. After trying unsuccessfully to persuade the Museum of Modern Art to run a similar program, Goodman had decided to do it herself, starting a pattern that would define her career. "It was the '60s," she says. "There was a strong urge to do the right thing."

Although she had no business experience—or her own checkbook, either, until her divorce in 1968—Goodman soon became a preeminent editions publisher, working with Americans such as Claes Oldenburg, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Rauschenberg and Larry Rivers. In 1970, the year Multiples exhibited for the first time at Art Basel, Goodman published *Artists and Photographs*, a 19-piece portfolio that's now seen as seminal. Based on a show of the same



name, it explored the way artists such as Ed Ruscha, Christo and Bruce Nauman were incorporating photography into their work.

Yet Goodman had sensed even broader vistas in 1968, when she visited West Germany for the first time to see the art exposition Documenta. "I realized there was a fully formed art world in Europe with major artists we didn't know much about," Goodman says. "It changed everything for me."

On that trip, she discovered Joseph Beuys, the shamanistic godfather of conceptual art, with whom she published several multiples. On another, she became enchanted by Marcel Broodthaers, a Belgian surrealist poet-turned-artist whose installations often critiqued museum displays. Her efforts to find him a New York gallery led to "a strikeout," Goodman says. So she did "the most irrational thing in my professional life for sure." In 1977, a year after Broodthaers's death, she opened the Marian Goodman Gallery with a show of his work. She was bent on exhibiting Europeans who might otherwise not be seen in New York.

At first Goodman, who supported the business with sales of editions, found it hard going. But "Marian was remarkably farsighted," says Serota, "in choosing to work with artists who would have the potential for a long career, to evolve and develop. And then she stuck with them." By 1985, the year after she moved into the building on West 57th Street that still houses her gallery, her program was strongly focused around post-minimalist, conceptual work, with Italian Arte Povera sculptors such as Giuseppe Penone and Giulio Paolini, and a lot of young Germans, including the installation artist Lothar Baumgarten, a former student of Beuys, and the then little-known painters Anselm Kiefer and Gerhard Richter.

"If I had to say I have one gift," Goodman admits over tea in London, "it would be choosing well."

Goodman often talks about the struggles she encountered building a business as a woman in a man's world, and she didn't find much inspiration in the notable female dealers who had come before, like Martha Jackson and Betty Parsons, or even her relative contemporary Ileana Sonnabend. Instead, her model was Sonnabend's ex, Leo Castelli. "He was a very elegant man, and he conducted himself that way, too," Goodman says. "I learned about standards from him.

I liked his kindness." (Indeed, Goodman is also known for being straightforward in her business dealings.)

During the 1980s market boom, when New York went crazy for Neo-Expressionist painting, Goodman set her sights on cooler, more conceptual work—preferring the multifaceted abstraction of Richter, for instance, whom she describes as "a modern man." When other dealers moved downtown, she stood fast on 57th Street. "I was watching people in SoHo proceed with great confidence and then choose the wrong artists," Goodman says. They would fight "over who was the best new find, and the winner

would get the show. Then the next year, there was a new group and they'd start all over again. I didn't like it, I didn't respect it and I was always worried that it could be contagious."

In the late 1980s, she challenged herself by expanding her program. "There were new artists coming on the horizon, and I was terrified of making a choice. I finally said to myself, 'You have to do it.' Much to my amazement, I was lucky again"—this time with two new Germans, Struth and his Kunstakademie Düsseldorf classmate, the sculptor Thomas Schütte. Her winning streak continued even through the art market crash, with Gabriel Orozco, then a relative unknown from Mexico, and Kentridge, who focused on film made from drawings. Goodman soon realized that "for me, many of the best artists of the '90s generation were filmmakers"—a decision that led her to Pierre Huyghe and, more recently, Anri Sala and Yang Fudong.

Goodman also represents the British artist and filmmaker Steve McQueen, whose *12 Years a Slave* took the 2014 Oscar for best picture. "Without her, I wouldn't have a film life," McQueen says. He likens his early encounters with Goodman—when she visited his shows and watched his work develop for more than a year—to a courtship. "I think her work is done right at the beginning," he says. "It's to choose the artists she really wants to work with, and she takes it very, very seriously. Once she's made a commitment, that's it. She supports you 110 percent."

Her management style, at least where artists are concerned, is surprisingly laissez faire. She doesn't micromanage or pressure them to contribute work to fairs. She speaks to them regularly by phone

and spends much of her time on the road attending shows, making studio visits and just generally catching up. Weiner calls her "a family friend" and "part of one's existence." Wall, who has shown with her since 1989, says, "We're married. She's had about 20 other marriages, too."

**T**HE ARTISTS Goodman chooses are often viewed as subtly political, such as Mehretu, whose abstractions are inspired by current events. But Goodman doesn't see it quite that way. "The humanity in the work is what's important to me," she says. "It's art about life. And people need to be connected with something larger than themselves." Still, her beliefs are obvious: Given half a chance, she'll segue into a discussion of America's financial and educational inequalities, and the excellence of France's public health-care system. (Providing health care is "good business in the end," she says.) In 1956, Goodman was one of a group of civically engaged mothers who successfully battled Robert Moses when he tried to expand the parking lot at Tavern on the Green, forcing him to build a playground instead.



"I think she sees her gallery as a gesture about what American culture needs to be," Wall says. "How do you keep a serious notion of culture alive in an era where there are huge forces moving in the opposite direction? That has a lot to do with the choices she makes."

Goodman's choices are also motivated by concerns for her artists' historical legacy. When the collector Mitchell P. Rales approached Goodman in the early 2000s, hoping to acquire a Baldessari, she wouldn't consider it until he'd agreed to buy six of the artist's works for the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C., where the billionaire industrialist is a former board member, in addition to the six he purchased for Glenstone, his own private museum in Potomac, Maryland. "I had to convince Marian that we were worthy," Rales says, "so that she understood that this just wasn't somebody making a bet on whether John Baldessari's value would go up."

"That sounds like Marian," Baldessari says when he hears this story. "She's very careful about who gets work." But with Goodman, he adds, "artists come first.

If she's being assertive, she's doing it for the artist."

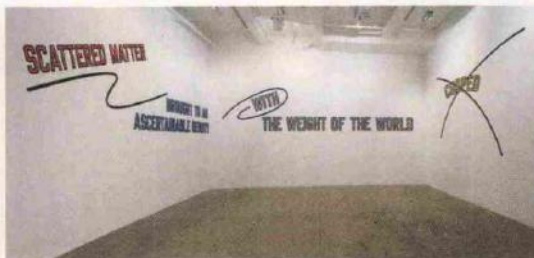
That's partly why Goodman's artists are so loyal, remaining with her for decades. With his skyrocketing resale market, Richter, 82, is perhaps her most hotly courted talent. (With a record of \$37.1 million, he's currently the second-most expensive living artist at auction, just behind Jeff Koons.) Richter says he'd never consider going elsewhere. "In German, we say *sympathisch*," he says of their first meeting, speaking in heavily accented English. "She was in her way of thinking close to me. I liked everything. For me she was wise, more than clever." Although he

is approached frequently, primarily by "this famous Gagosian, who showed me their interest many times," Richter says, chuckling, "there is no hope."

Preserving this low defection rate has also factored into Goodman's thinking about London. The idea began as a favor for Kentridge, who wanted a London office; Goodman set out to find him one, and before long, she and Leslie Heyward were looking for exhibition space. "If there has to be a center in Europe, it's clearly London," Goodman says. Earlier, she'd mentioned that some of her artists hadn't been happy with their representation there. "I felt I should provide a showplace."

Some say Goodman represents the tail end of the more intimate galleries of the past, whose founders were moved more by aesthetic considerations than market opportunities. But Goodman, with her long, forward-thinking view, doesn't really seem part of an older generation. She does seem jaundiced by the market-happy, mega-gallery trend that's ascendant, just as she was with the gallery competitions of the 1980s. "The whole system is bad for the art world," she says. "These guys should pay a lot more attention to the quality of the artists that they're running after, and a lot less attention to grabbing everything in sight."

With many New York behemoths now operating branches in Mayfair, her new gallery is clearly also a defensive move designed to protect territory she's staked out over decades. Many of her competitors "are all so famous for trying to poach everyone in sight," Goodman says. "So it kills two birds with one stone." And while the building she found was "more than we'd wanted," she adds, "there comes a time when you just have to act." ●

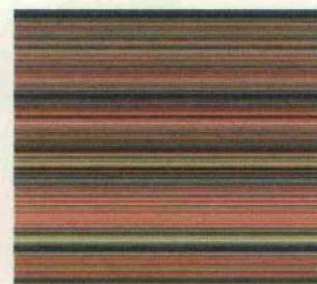


"ONCE SHE'S MADE A COMMITMENT, THAT'S IT.  
SHE SUPPORTS YOU 110 PERCENT.  
WITHOUT HER, I WOULDN'T HAVE A FILM LIFE."

—STEVE MCQUEEN

#### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Opposite page, from left: A rendering of the upper floor of Goodman's new London gallery; Lothar Baumgarten's *Los Aristócratas de la Selva y la Reina de Castilla*, 2011–2012; Lawrence Weiner's *Scattered Matter Brought to a Known Density, With the Weight of the World, Cusped*, 2007.



**GALLERY GIANTS** This page, from left: Steve McQueen's *Static*, 2009; Joseph Beuys's *Mirror Object*, 1975; Gerhard Richter's *919 Strip*, 2011; Rineke Dijkstra's *Parque de la Ciudadela Barcelona, June 4, 2005*.





**QUEENLY MANNER**  
Goodman photographed  
in Basel, Switzerland,  
by Thomas Struth, whom  
she has represented  
since 1989.



# LISSON GALLERY

Art Monthly  
February 2013

Lawrence Weiner  
STASIS AS TO  
VECTOR ALL IN DUE  
COURSE 2012

upon scenes, Sternfeld's wish to have them function as state-of-culture symbols contributes an air of rigged rhetoric which can make them resemble Gregory Crewdson's cinematic *mise en scène*. Sternfeld attempts to have it both ways, mining an equivocation between documentary and symbolic modes by having his symbolic statements appear to arrange themselves unbidden out of unmediated actuality. The method's perversity is that of the film director waiting for life to start behaving like a good movie so he can capture it.

The quotient common to Sternfeld's 2000s work is a sense of absence which is symptomatic, or at least descriptive, of its implied content lying elsewhere: in the story the image comprehends, which is often appended as wall text. The absence of the inferred drama is a metaphor for the photograph's dependence upon contextual narrative, as the ruins of the 'Sweet Earth' series, 1993-2005, intimate the failed utopian cultures of which they are both evidence and signifier. Sternfeld's achievement, however, is to interpret a conceptual trope in emotional terms. The absence of the referent implies the solipsism of self-reflexivity. A reliance on implication rather than denotation registers as loneliness. The remoteness of the events commemorated by Sternfeld's 'On this Site' series, 1993-96, suggests a dependence upon the text which explicates the pictures by describing murders which have taken place decades ago on the spot they record. In their vacancy, these photographs might be critiques of their own idiom – ghost towns that the teeming life in Sternfeld's early photographs has long since abandoned.

The 'Oxbow Archive' photographs, 2005-07, most seamlessly conflate Sternfeld's conceptualism and pictorialism. These deserted Massachusetts landscapes diagnose human effects on the natural environment not by documenting them but by retreating to the margins of inhabited landscape where those effects are rumours indicated only by how far the photographer has had to journey to find images which connote rather than designate them, leaving the images unviolated by a need to illustrate the idea they represent. February 28, 2007. *The East Meadows, Northampton, Massachusetts* shows a marsh of snow with reeds poking untidily through. If the picture's emptiness equals environmental untouchedness, it also represents its resistance to being commandeered as a vehicle for such metaphors; a function which, in the context of the series to which it belongs, it performs nonetheless. ■

MARK PRINCE is an artist and writer based in Berlin.

## Lawrence Weiner: Be That As It May

Lisson Gallery London 28 November to 12 January

A Lawrence Weiner exhibition is not easy to write about. Unlike the works of many contemporary artists, Weiner's are not overtly about something. They do not demonstrably address contemporary social, economic or political issues, nor do they seem to be particularly about the making process; the artist has followed the same practice over many years of sending vector files to the gallery which a sign-writer then realises on the walls of the space. Usually the same typeface is used: sans-serif, block letters, in a single colour or with a black outline and filled with another colour. The artist's usual choice of typeface (Franklin Gothic Condensed) is non-authoritative and yet elegant. It speaks to the open and democratic nature of his works, in that they do not assume any prior knowledge about a subject represented, nor do they speak to a viewer from a particular social bracket but simply require engagement



with what the artist has placed in the world. The words are combined with lines, circles and proofreaders' squiggles, some with a machine-made aesthetic while some appear as if hand-drawn.

Weiner thus retains his Conceptual Art roots, making works that seem to be no more than what they are. And yet, they are fresh and inspiring, not least because they are always new, made specifically for the space in which they are sited. At the Lisson show, the works are presented in a range of sizes and spaces. The huge *SWATHED IN SHINING METAL TO CONCEAL CORROSION & APPEAR TO ELUDE ENTROPY ON THE WHOLE* covers most of two walls in the main ground-floor gallery, while four smaller, framed works in ink, pencil and pastel on paper are hung in the side gallery, their sketch-like, handmade quality contrasting with the visual finish of the larger piece. The works in the first-floor gallery also address both material and spatial concerns in *PUSHED AS IF & LEFT AS IS* and *STASIS AS TO VECTOR ALL IN DUE COURSE*. The ground-floor front gallery is devoted to *THIS AS THAT BE THAT AS IT MAY*, which is realised on the window of the space. The words appear twice, readable from the street as well as inside the gallery. In recent years the artist has emphasised the social nature of his practice in collaborations with state schools in the US and in other public projects that aim to enrich daily life. The window piece in the current show also offers this possibility.

Together with their recognisable formal style, the works appear to have a very particular focus. The words Weiner chooses have clarity and precision, however they are not commonplace or simple. In contrast to the emphasis in Conceptual Art on the countable and the complete, his works remain remarkably open, setting out spatial possibilities rather than making definitions. Acting on both physical and metaphorical levels, they are not about something specific but are potentially about everything. This is their particular quality and in doing so they mine a rich seam, investigating the very nature of sculpture. Weiner uses 'sculpture' rather than another term for his works; although they may look flat they are resolutely spatial and explore the physical interaction between materials, thereby prompting the viewer to consider his/her place in relation to other people or objects in the world around them. The works thereby examine the fundamental and contingent relationship between the viewer and the object in a given space. In this case the objects take the form of words, their dematerialisation aiding in their timelessness, contributing to their enquiry into specificity/non-specificity. The materials of Weiner sculptures are the words he uses and those materials that are named by the words: the Lisson show lists 'language and the materials referred to' as the materials from which the wall-based works have been made (rather than the paint that has

been used).

Given the open condition of Weiner's works, the title of the Lisson show is particularly intriguing: BE THAT AS IT MAY seems to suggest a lack of openness, a polite dismissal of another viewpoint. In this context, however, the phrase may be broken down into its discrete units with THAT alliteratively referring to the THIS AS THAT of the window piece and AS IT MAY offering a range of possibilities. In their relationship with the other words, the phrases ON THE WHOLE and IN DUE COURSE operate on similar terms: freed from their usual limited meanings they become object-like and new again. Weiner's works continue to raise questions not only about the material and spatial qualities of sculpture but also about the nature of language and how it shapes human interaction. ■

DEBORAH SCHULTZ is an art historian.

## Prophetic Diagrams

George and Jørgen London 14 December to 16 February

It is unusual for a drawing show comprising 30-odd London and New York-based contemporary artists to be derived directly from an attempt to summon Lucifer, but Bermondsey is an old part of London and stranger things have happened. To be fair, it isn't just the Dark Lord himself; Beelzebub and Astaroth are also namechecked in curator William Corwin's essay, a beautifully written and engaging tract to which each artist was invited to respond with a work. The central tenet of the text, which was inspired by the discovery in an East Village skip of a book on the occult, is the revelation that it is good drawing technique, apparently, that is the key to successfully summoning a demon: the unique rune-like marks that each spirit responds to must be accurately inscribed. This exhibition, then, is a multi-voiced disquisition that extrapolates that point into a wider thesis defining the activity of drawing – drawing as a tool-making activity, drawing as diagramming, and drawing as incantation and summoning.

Some of the works are clearly summonings of sorts, calling up uncertain forms before our eyes, perhaps to the surprise of the artists. Noah Landfield's murky, moth-eaten scrap of untitled paper features an uninflected black slab levitating over an ill-defined brown ground, its sudden appearance as inexplicable as Stanley Kubrick's monoliths, while the hastily hacked brushwork of Joyce Pensato's *Mickey*, 2010, is just mouse-like enough to edge into the figurative and become a rune for a hideous, demonic version of Disney's mascot – this monstrous

spirit now possessing our visual memory in order to rear up, shadow-like, whenever we encounter The Mouse.

The amorphous depths of shadows are the subject of Chris Baker's untitled monoprint, the residue of scrubbed-away brushstrokes leaving only traces of the facture between gestures. This is the swirling fog of incantation, a pregnant miasma that is to certain painting practices what the primordial soup is to evolution. That pre-Cambrian slime is directly referenced – residing in the bilge deck – in Simon Patterson's working collage for his 1993 wall drawing *Monkey Business*, which transposed the archaeological epochs onto a deck diagram of the transatlantic cruise liner SS France, the diagram then being faxed to New York as installation instructions and hence making an analogue Atlantic crossing of its own via sea-bed telecommunication cables.

Shot in New York in 2001, Holly Zausner's photographic study *G Woman* shows the artist throwing what appears to be a deflated inner tube into the air, although it turns out to be an elongated female figure cast in rubber. Describing a looping calligraphic character high above the artist's head, not unlike some transcribed vision of the holy spirit in early Christian art, it is difficult in hindsight not to read the falling figure's shape in this inadvertently bleak image as prophesying the plumes of smoke which later that year would hang over the Twin Towers, visible as pale ghosts in the distance behind the artist's head.

A similar bleakness pervades the primeval scene in James Pimperton's pencil drawing *Feeler*, 2012, its rocks and primitive plants illuminated by a white sun emitting perfect graphite lines in just the way that the real sun doesn't; the radial lines pack tighter as they meet the circumference of the blank disk and so form a dark halo that suggests we are looking at the shadow-light of an absent black sun. The misery continues as Corwin himself contributes *Robespierre*, 2012, a grid-folded sheet of watercolour paper with a few rectangles washed in pale hues. There is the hint of a pixelated image but, presented alongside a Sarah Lucas cigarette drawing, the palette becomes nicotine, the obsessive folding a ritual of addiction; oddly enough, the curator's own work is more an exorcism than a summoning.

The light literally returns when Elise Co & Nik Pashenkov, more usually known as the industrial-design team Aeolab, animate their four experimental 'Oscillator' drawings via the application of an electric current. Ad-hoc circuit boards plug into the mains at one end and, at the other, trail wires that, with the careful application of small dots of solder to paperclips, carry the charge onto the drawings. Metallic ink allows the stream of charged electrons to traverse the surface of the paper and, as the power flicks on, to excite and illuminate pools of phosphor. The pencil marks around the glowing blocks of colour resemble organic growths or perhaps the organising powers of a magnetic field – either

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Artists Interview Features USA

### Lawrence Weiner: man of his word

The veteran Conceptualist, showing in London this month, uses text as just another material. And he doesn't like being called a Conceptualist, either

By Louisa Buck. Features, Issue 240, November 2012  
Published online: 19 November 2012



Lawrence Weiner at the Reykjavik Arts Festival to launch part of his work *A PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS ASAP*, 2005

For nearly half a century, the texts of Lawrence Weiner have been painted on the walls of cities and public buildings from Halifax to Hong Kong and galleries from Beijing to Mexico City. They have been spelled out in cobblestones, printed on beer mats, cast into iron manhole covers, floated inside souvenir Biers and sung as lyrics by a country and western band. Rendered in a utilitarian yet elegant typeface that is instantly recognisable, his cryptic but suggestive phrases operate simultaneously on several levels, whether spatial, poetic or political. They often conjure up processes and physical situations while at the same time leaving much to the imagination: "MANY COLOURED OBJECTS PLACED SIDE BY SIDE TO FORM A ROW OF MANY COLOURED OBJECTS" gives no indication of the actual colour, size, number or nature of these objects, just as "A TURBULENCE INDUCED WITHIN A BODY OF WATER" could be the swilling of water in a glass or the waves caused by an ocean liner.



# LISSON GALLERY

Theartnewspaper.com  
19 November 2012

These constructions of what Weiner calls “Language + materials referred to” have led to the 70-year-old New York artist being lauded as a pioneer of Conceptual art. His twice-reprinted Phaidon monograph hails him as “one of the canonical Conceptual artists of the 1960s”, and this view is echoed by London’s Lisson Gallery, where Weiner has a show of past and new work opening this month (21 November-12 January 2013). The gallery describes him as “a seminal American Conceptual artist”—but the man himself takes a different view. Speaking with characteristic forthrightness on the telephone from Vienna, Weiner dismisses such labels. “The Conceptual artist moniker makes absolutely no sense to me. I don’t like the term,” he says. “I think it was created by some people who wanted to make sure their work was differentiated from other artists. Why not just say sculptor?”

Or, more specifically, a sculptor who works with words. “I never quite understand why the shit hits the fan when sculpture is presented within the form of language,” he says. “The use of language is the same as the change to being able to use acrylic or light to make things—it’s not exotic.” Weiner may not make objects per se, but he is adamant that the stuff of the world is always at the centre of everything he does. He defines his art as “the relationship of human beings to objects and objects to objects in relation to human beings”, and insists that “art is essentially a sensual relationship between materials and objects”.

It is this relationship with the physical qualities of materials that continues to lie at the core of Weiner’s texts. He describes the genesis of his written words as “very mundane”, saying: “I become interested in a material and I bring the stuff into the studio. If the studio isn’t large enough for the material I’m interested in, then I go out into the landscape for it. I’ll go to a quarry or I’ll go to a steel mill, but most of the time I bring material in and I work with it—I don’t like the word ‘play’ because I’m not playing, I’m working. When I come to a configuration that I see, I translate it in terms of language. Then, after I’ve worked it through, I clean it up and I present it.”

Although Weiner’s texts are often poetic and open-ended, their creator is adamant that they carry no metaphorical meanings. “The work has no metaphor: it is what it is,” he insists. “Art that has no metaphor is what attracted me as a young person. I was attracted to Mondrian because you didn’t have to know anything; I was attracted to Caspar David Friedrich because again there was no metaphor. Each person coming to a Pollock or coming—hopefully—to a work of mine has a need and they have a desire and they have to place themselves in the material world and they make their own metaphor.” Weiner’s texts have been translated into many languages, and he believes their lack of specific metaphor enables them to have a wider application. “The work can go from culture to culture without having to take account of what your grandfather or your father says it is about. It is about what you get from what you are doing.”

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Despite the fact that in certain locations Weiner's texts can seem to chime almost uncannily with their direct surroundings, he is equally insistent that they are never tied in to a specific location. Even though he concedes that *Zerschmettert in Stücke (im Frieden der Nacht) / Smashed to pieces (in the still of the night)*, 1991, which was installed on a Nazi-era Flakturm Tower in Vienna, has an "unfortunate reference" to Kristallnacht, Weiner says this was unintentional and makes the point that, installed in the South Pacific, the piece could just as easily refer to coconuts falling off trees. "My work is never site-specific. Art work has to find its place in very much the same way that you and I do. People move from place to place until they find somewhere they can function. Brancusi became a French artist, Picasso became a French artist: how many artists do we think of as American but they come from somewhere else where they weren't appreciated as they were?"

Weiner was born in the South Bronx in 1942, the son of a candy-store owner, into what he has described as "a lower-working-class background". Although he was working on the docks at the age of 12, he graduated from Stuyvesant High School at 16, and then studied literature and philosophy at Hunter College for less than a year before hitchhiking across the country, doing odd jobs and "making the strangest kind of paintings". These included his multimedia "Propeller Paintings", made in the mid-1960s, which are represented in the Lisson show. In 1960, Weiner got into trouble when, with a group of friends, he made his now legendary *Cratering Piece*, for which he blew up parts of a state park north of San Francisco and dubbed the resulting voids sculptures. "There were artists performing all over the place, doing happenings, performances, other things," he remembers. "In the light of my history, it was a big deal; in the light of what the hell was going on, it was just another artist out there, doing another sculpture-park thing using performances, explosives, tons of steel. This was all normal."

Working and showing alongside fellow artists Sol LeWitt, Carl Andre and Robert Barry, Weiner's investigations into the forms and processes of art led him to view art as a simple physical interaction, which could be expressed as effectively in words. Why, he asked, was it necessary to make a piece when it could be described? "I didn't have the advantage of a middle-class perspective. Art was something else; art was the notations on the wall, or the messages left by other people. I grew up in a city where I had read the walls; I still read the walls. I love to put work of mine out on the walls and let people read it."

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## UNDER THE INFLUENCE

# LAWRENCE WEINER ON THE WATTS TOWERS

portrait FREDERIKE HELWIG



**THERE IS ONLY ONE PERSON** whose photograph I've ever had in my studio: Simon Rodia, the man who built the Watts Towers. I don't know how I found out about the Watts Towers, living in New York in a world of abstract expressionists, but sometime in the late 1950s I decided to hitchhike to California to see them. I thought: go to San Francisco, you can find work on the docks and then you can hitch to Los Angeles. I had seen a photograph of a small part of it and I had envisioned that it would be enormous, like everything in California. Of course they were not yet finished, but I was just knocked for a loop - here was this... thing! When I was hitching I had a vision that art was something that you placed within the world and it didn't matter if anyone knew who did it. The Towers fit in with my idea of Johnny Appleseed - where you went, you left things on the side of the road. Upon completion, Rodia did what artists can never do: he just walked away.

If anyone informed my relationship to putting work in the public sphere and doing things outside the gallery, it was this man. I don't just build things any more: I incorporate them into existing structures. But Rodia felt that the fabric of Los Angeles and the fabric of Watts was an existing structure. I have nothing but

enormous admiration for public artists; it seems that what they do is much closer to what made us all artists than anything else. And it is a means of placing art within the city, taking that funny unspoken right you have that says you can do graffiti anyplace as long as it says something that's not just about existential drama. Not 'Jose, 42nd Street', because that's an existential plea, and everybody has an existential plea. But you could say, 'Your children are hungry' or 'The sky is blue'. In fact Rodia was perhaps the first artist I'd ever come across who was saying 'The sky is blue', and that was something.

I do a lot of public sculptures that once they enter into the firmament become site-specific. Nothing is ever initially site-specific - it becomes so when it finds the right place to be. And people adopt it into their lifestyles and they bring it together. I think the question of public art is an interesting one, because I don't see a difference between artists and what is called 'public'. Artists - they pay their taxes and take their kids to the dentist; I don't see where the dividing line is. Art is made by people, for people, end of conversation. It's all comprehensible: none of us are geniuses.