

PRESS RELEASE

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The Williams College Museum of Art presents

Sol LeWitt: The Well-Tempered Grid

September 15–December 9, 2012

Photos available upon request.

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Williamstown, Mass. – The Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) is pleased to present the exhibition *Sol LeWitt: The Well-Tempered Grid*. On view from September 15 to December 9, 2012, *Sol LeWitt: The Well-Tempered Grid* is the first exhibition to focus on the centrality of the grid in LeWitt's art. The exhibition focuses on LeWitt's use of the grid as a generative matrix for his artistic production over the span of nearly five decades, from 1960 until his death in 2007.

Inspired by his first encounter with the work of photographer Eadweard Muybridge (1830–1904) in the late 1950s, LeWitt began experimenting with a loosely structured grid in several large oil paintings of 1960, based on the Muybridge motif of a running man. By 1962 he had simplified his use of this format to exclude figurative elements, and by 1964 he was making his first wall-mounted grid structures. When LeWitt made his first wall drawings in 1968 he used the grid as the underlying structural principle. Thereafter grids became a pervasive matrix in all of the media in which LeWitt worked—in his three-dimensional “structures,” drawings and gouaches on paper, photographic cycles, artist's books, furniture, and wall drawings. All of these media will be represented in the exhibition.

LeWitt felt a great passion for classical music; it was a constant companion during his time in the studio as well as in his leisure hours. His collection of 4,000 audio cassettes that he copied from LPs for easy portability between house and studio filled the shelves of the small den in his home in Chester, Conn. The music of Bach occupied a special place in this collection and it is noteworthy that LeWitt's Bach holdings included four complete recordings of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* (1722/42), a monument of the classical keyboard literature, which has inspired the title of the exhibition. The theme and variation form, so pervasive in Bach's oeuvre is equally characteristic of LeWitt. Like Bach, LeWitt found extraordinary richness in systematic formal logic, developing complex structures out of the simplest elements such as a two-by-two grid with lines in four directions. The artist Adrian Piper, who executed some of LeWitt's early wall drawings, noted this relationship when she remarked, "With all the recognition that he has received, people still don't know how important he is. Sol is to art what Bach was to music."

Charles W. 'Mark' Haxthausen, Robert Sterling Clark Professor of Art History, is curating this major exhibition, of more than sixty works on loan from the LeWitt Collection in Chester, Conn. supplemented with a selection of artist's books from The Clark Art Institute Library. The exhibition will coincide with an undergraduate seminar on Sol LeWitt's wall drawings that he will offer during the 2012 fall semester at Williams. In addition a wall drawing exemplifying the theme of the exhibition will be executed with the students in the seminar as observers. Haxthausen's pedagogical motive for the exhibition's theme is to provide students with an insight into LeWitt's creative mind, the mind that conceived a body of work offering an extraordinary range of visual experience developed with relentless logic out of the simplest visual structures. As such, "Sol LeWitt: The Well-Tempered Grid" is intended to complement the ongoing retrospective of LeWitt's wall drawings at MASS MoCA that will be the focus of the seminar. Haxthausen explains that he is "interested not only in having students study and analyze the wall drawings at MASS MoCA. I want them to understand the principles of LeWitt's art so well that they are able to replicate the process of conceiving a plan for a drawing that could have been thought out by LeWitt himself and then executing that drawing in order to experience the process of interpreting a given concept, as did LeWitt's draughtspersons. This will give the students a much more intimate sense of LeWitt's art than they would gain simply by looking at and reading about it."

Williams College and Yale University contributed generously to MASS MoCA to make the wall drawing retrospective a reality, and several Williams students worked as draftspersons on the realization of that ambitious project. Yet, despite Williams's sponsorship of the

MASS MoCA exhibition, this will be the first time that this unique resource will be the focus of a course at Williams.

Its impact will extend beyond the art department: A multi-disciplinary gallery talk with music by Bach will be held on October 11 in the WCMA exhibition. Erica Dankmeyer, Visiting Lecturer in Dance, will direct the Contemporary dance group CoDa in *LeWitticisms* on November 1 at MASS MoCA with choreography inspired by LeWitt's directives for his wall drawings as well as dances structured around the theme of the grid. These events are open to the public and all are invited to attend. A full listing of related programming follows.

A fully illustrated catalogue with three essays accompanies the exhibition. Charles W. 'Mark' Haxthausen writes on LeWitt and the grid. Christianna Bonin assesses LeWitt's relationship to Richard Serra and the wall drawing. Erica DiBenedetto, who organized a LeWitt exhibition for WCMA in 2008, will publish an essay on Sol LeWitt's 1980 artist's book, *Autobiography*.

Related Programming

Season Celebration

Friday, September 28 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Williams College Museum of Art

Join us for a reception to celebrate the season's exhibitions.

Gallery Talk and Performance

Thursday, October 11 at 4:30 p.m.

Williams College Museum of Art

Robert Sterling Clark Professor of Art History and exhibition curator Charles W. 'Mark' Haxthausen, and Associate Professor of Music Ed Gollin explore the affinity between LeWitt's systematic artistry and Bach's musical structure through discussion and live musical performances.

LeWitticisms

Thursday, November 1 at 6:30 and 8:00 p.m.

MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA

Join us for an evening of exciting new music and contemporary dance in the MASS MoCA galleries inspired by the wall drawings of Sol LeWitt. The Williams College Contemporary Dance Ensemble (CoDa) will perform *LeWitticisms*, featuring original choreography by

faculty and students, and composer Tristan Perich will combine the harpsichord with electronic music in his original work *Dual Synthesis*. Free shuttle buses available for Williams students leaving Chapin Hall at 6:00 and 7:30 pm sharp. Tickets are \$5 for students; \$8 for non-students. Limited Space available. Tickets will be available through the MASS MoCA box office (413) 666-2111 and at the door.

The Williams College Museum of Art

The Williams College Museum of Art is located on Main Street in Williamstown, Massachusetts. It is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. The museum is wheelchair accessible and open to the public. Admission is FREE. For more information, contact the museum at (413) 597-2429 or visit wcma.williams.edu.

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