WORDS MATTER

The Work Of Lawrence Weiner

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Abstract

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This dissertation explores the practice of contemporary artist Lawrence Weiner. From 1968 onwards, Weiner has presented his work using language and, as such, the artist is historically regarded as one of the pioneering practitioners of Conceptual art. The artist himself categorically refuses that designation, preferring to focus on the *material* aspects of his work. Nevertheless, his oeuvre has been largely received in terms of a predominantly linguistic intervention. Craig Dworkin encapsulates this position, when in discussing the Conceptual wager of Weiner's statements he writes: "Having tested the propositions that the art object might be nominal, linguistic, invisible, and on a par with its abstract initial description, the next step was to venture that it could be dispensed with altogether." By focusing equally on the linguistic and material aspects of Weiner's practice, this dissertation argues, conversely, that Weiner's work is primarily an *object strategy*, and not a dematerialized linguistic presentation.

The first part of this discussion deals with Weiner's ground-breaking work from the mid 1960s to the early 1970s, analyzing the full implications of Weiner's extraordinary decision to present materials through language. Close comparisons are drawn with the profoundly materialist practices of contemporary artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Carl Andre, Richard Serra and Robert Smithson. Weiner's use of language is also distinguished from the text-based works of Conceptual artists Joseph Kosuth and Douglas Huebler, problematizing the degree to which Weiner's statements can stand as an exemplar of postmodern textuality, inasmuch as their referential content remains of primary consequence.

Several chapters of the dissertation focus on drawings, and in particular the artist's notebooks, an aspect of Weiner's practice that has remained largely unstudied. Crucially, the notebooks present a model of thinking which is wholly corporeal as opposed to purely analytical. Furthermore, they raise the problem of the visual in relation to a body of work that has been credited with the suppression of a traditional (optical) aesthetic. In being conceived by the artist as "maps," Weiner's drawings also invite an analysis of spatial considerations, and are thus linked

to the artist's own designation of his work, not as art in general, but specifically as sculpture. Finally, the notebooks, like Weiner's films, practically dissolve the categories of reality and fiction. Indeed, Weiner himself would insist that every presentation of his essentially "realist" work is nonetheless inherently "theatrical."

One of the long-standing criticisms of Conceptual art was that while it made aspects of circulation and distribution part of the work - thereby testing the limits of institutional constraint and expanding art's potential to engage in collective reception - it failed to achieve truly democratic access, in large part by neglecting issues of desire. Thus, Conceptual art's promise of collective accessibility was purportedly foreclosed by an art whose theoretical propositions lacked a democratic content. In closely considering the generic content of Weiner's work, this dissertation develops a picture not only of the concrete relationship between word and thing, but of the ways in which Weiner uses signs (drawings, text, films) to "objectify" desire, demonstrating that his "sculptures" must be seen as both conceptual *and* sensual, fully immersed in politicized questions of imaginary and bodily experience.

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To Josefa Domingo

INTRODUCTION

Statements

Lawrence Weiner has said that he "never was" a Conceptual artist.[1] Nonetheless, upon first reading, the artist's work appears to validate standard assumptions regarding Conceptual art. Take the book *Statements* from 1968, which consists of twenty-four works presented solely in language, printed one to a page (e.g. *AN AMOUNT OF PAINT POURED DIRECTLY UPON THE FLOOR AND ALLOWED TO DRY*) (figs. 1 & 24). If Conceptual art was said to effect the dematerialization of the art object, as claimed by critic Lucy Lippard, then *Statements*' sentence fragments would seem to have achieved this withdrawal, precluding an experience of art based on the immediacy of optical plenitude or phenomenological encounter.[2] If Conceptual artists were credited with the attempted democratization of art's making, distribution and reception, then the modest booklet, printed in an edition of 1000, lacking in any graphic extravagance and priced at $1.95, shares in these utopian aspirations by turning Pop art's veneer of cheapness (e.g. the mimicry of hamburgers, soup cans and Brillo boxes) into an even more extreme vulgarization.[3] Finally, if Conceptual art witnessed the eclipse of authorial presence, then *Statements*' objectively articulated bits of information exemplify this impersonality, placing the artist in the role not of expressive creator but of "cataloguing clerk," as Sol LeWitt would say.[4] No wonder, then, that despite his own protests, Weiner is invariably identified as a seminal Conceptual artist. This

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[1] Lawrence Weiner in Adrian Shaughnessy, "The Work Need Not Be Built, A Discussion with Lawrence Weiner," *Turning Some Pages* (London: Howard Smith Paper, 2007), n.p.

[2] Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972*, (1973; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997). In "The Fate Of Echo," his introduction to *Against Expression: An Anthology of Conceptual Writing*, Craig Dworkin cites Weiner's work as a prime example of the Conceptual elimination of the art object, "hunted all the way to the brink of extinction." See Dworkin, "The Fate Of Echo" in *Against Expression* (Evanston, Illinois: 2010), xxxiv – xxxv.

[3] Weiner's aspiration for an art that could be essentially "given away" should not only be seen in the context of Fluxus' artists deployment of published "scores" and modest editions (e.g. *Fluxkits)*, but also in relation to Claes Oldenburg's initial commitment to the devaluation of art objects, as exhibited in the seminal installations of *The Street* (1960) at Judson Memorial Gallery and *The Store* at 107 East 2nd Street (1961-1962), wherein certain art objects were accorded the same status as collected refuse, or priced in line with everyday commodities. In his notes from *Store Days*, Oldenburg repeatedly calls for an art of "intense satanic vulgarity." See *Claes Oldenburg's Store Days: Documents from the Store (1961) and The Ray Gun Theater (1962)* (New York: Something Else Press, 1967), and *Claes Oldenburg: The Sixties*, exh. cat., ed. Achim Hochdörfer with Barbara Schröder (Vienna: Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, 2012).

dissertation examines the limitations of that seemingly straight-forward categorization, at a moment when Weiner's work has achieved a level of visibility, unprecedented in the history of Conceptual art.

At *Documenta* 13 (2012), Weiner's work was shown in a space which curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev called "the Brain" of the Museum Fridericianum.[5] For this installation, the work appeared in transparent letters applied to a glass partition, positioned low to the ground and in close proximity to Giuseppe Penone's *Essere fiume 6* (1998) which consisted of a river stone and its ersatz twin, carved out of Carrara marble. No less 'sculptural' than Penone's work, Weiner's text marked an act of spatial dislocation, both minutely precise and vaguely indeterminate:

THE MIDDLE OF THE MIDDLE OF THE MIDDLE OF
(figs. 2a & 2b)

Taken as a reflection on the artist's work as a whole, the words seem particularly apt, inasmuch as Weiner's practice is poised at the center of contemporary concerns. For in exploring "Conceptual" strategies put in place by Weiner forty years ago – mechanisms of decentering and displacement, operations of translation and dissemination, the dismantling of hierarchical configurations, borders and boundaries – one is confronted with a wide inventory of contemporary approaches, used now to confront accelerating transformations of globalization in the post-Fordian, post-colonial landscape of late capitalist development.[6] Deploying language as a *commonly* available means of putting objects into question, Weiner's work finds itself in the middle of crucial efforts to contest and re-define our increasingly privatized material relations, rendered ever more precarious in the face of both the ruinous effects of overproduction and the

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[4] Sol Le Witt, "*Serial Project #1*" [1966], *Aspen 5+6* (1967), n.p.

[5] Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, "Rotunda In The Fridericianum: The Brain" in *Documenta 13: Catalog 3/III, The Guidebook* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012), 24-136.

[6] See, for instance, Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon-Quetigny: Les Presses du Réel, 2002) as well as the introductory texts to *Altermodern, Tate Triennial*, exh. cat. (London: Tate, 2009) for exemplary theorizations of the contemporary artwork as a decentering, discursive practice, indebted to Conceptual art's legacy.

abstractions attendant to the “informatization” or “digitalization” of all realms of experience. As a result, Weiner has become enormously prevalent in the last two decades, influential to the extent that during a 2009 symposium accompanying *the anyspacewhatever* – a survey exhibition of post ‘90s art - curator Nancy Spector introduced Weiner as “the patron saint” of the artists on view.[7]

In a related phenomenon, the term “Conceptual” has witnessed an overwhelming resurgence, leading critic Roberta Smith to announce “the hegemony of late late Conceptualism” newly characterized as “extravagantly materialized and labor intensive.”[8] Smith’s paradoxical description reveals that Joseph Kosuth’s totalizing claims for Conceptual art have indeed been spectacularly realized, in the form of travesty. In his manifesto on Conceptualism, Kosuth declared in 1969: “All art (after Duchamp) is conceptual (in nature) because art only exists conceptually.”[9] By now one accepts the fact that nothing escapes this designation, inasmuch as the term no longer operates as a category but as a catch-all, increasingly evacuated of specificity. Whereas Conceptual art had once stood for the criticism of hierarchical divisions (of medium) and of constraining boundaries (of market and museum), it now inhabits a sphere, not only of democratic contestation, but of what Benjamin Buchloh has deemed “a condition of universal aesthetic entropy.”[10] Faced with the meaninglessness of a situation in which “conceptual” practices have joined the morass of “gratuitously exchangeable” avant-garde strategies, devolving towards what Jacques Rancière calls “the Great Parataxis,” it seems more urgent than ever to understand Weiner’s work not only in its specificity, but in its *heterogeneity*.

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[7] Nancy Spector’s comments were delivered during an introduction to “Lawrence Weiner in conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist” for the symposium *24 hour Program on the Concept of Time*, Guggenheim Museum, New York (January 6, 2009), held in conjunction with the exhibition *theanyspacewhatever* (October 24 – January 7, 2009). The show featured works by Angela Bulloch, Maurizio Cattelan, Liam Gillick, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Douglas Gordon, Carsten Höller, Pierre Huyghe, Jorge Pardo, Philippe Parreno, and Rirkrit Tiravanija. Liam Gillick, in particular, has worked closely with Weiner, appearing as a player in Weiner’s 1999 film *EYES ON THE PRIZE*, and more recently collaborating with Weiner for the exhibition *A SYNTAX OF DEPENDENCY* at M HKA, Antwerp, February 3 – May 22, 2011. See also *Liam Gillick, Lawrence Weiner, Between Artists* (Canada: A.R.T. Press, 2006) and Gillick’s essay “The Objectification Of Desire In The Work Of Lawrence Weiner” in *Lawrence Weiner As Far As The Eye Can See*, exh. cat., eds. Donna De Salvo and Ann Goldstein (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art; and New York: The Whitney Museum of American Art, 2007), 242 – 256.

[8] Roberta Smith, “Art Show as Unruly Organism: *Documenta* 13 in Kassel, Germany,” *The New York Times* (June 14, 2012); http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/15/arts/design/documenta-13-in-kassel-germany.html?pagewanted=all/.

[9] Joseph Kosuth, “After Philosophy” reprinted in *Art After Philosophy and After* (1969; Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1993), 18.

[10] Benjamin Buchloh, “Farewell to an Identity,” *Artforum* vol. 51, no. 4 (December 2012), 258.

Arguing for the necessity to view forms of resistance, not as co-extensive with the immaterial intelligence/labor of capitalism but as radically heterogeneous to its logic, Rancière posits a notion of communism as “intempestive” and “atopian”: “To be *intempestive* means at once that you do and do not belong to a time, to be *a-topian* means that you do and do not belong to a place.”[11] This dissertation attempts to grasp what is intempestive and atopian about Weiner’s contemporary practice, not only in relation to a hegemonic socio-political order, but with regard to Conceptual art itself. For to posit Weiner’s work as a ‘true’ model for Conceptualism would require that a number of governing assumptions be overturned. How, for instance, can we understand Conceptual art’s “linguistic turn” as a rejection of physical object encounters, when one of its leading practitioners calls himself a “materialist” and a “sensualist”? How, furthermore, can we define Conceptual art as a final departure from the Modernist constraints of medium specificity, following Minimalism in a move towards the making of “art in general,” when Weiner will characterize his sentence fragments paradoxically as *sculpture*? If, as Kosuth would proclaim, Conceptual art exists as an analytic proposition, a tautological formulation with no access to any matter of fact outside the autonomous sphere of art, then on what basis can Weiner’s work be justified as political praxis, and how are we practically to “use” the sculptures / statements as Weiner suggests? Moreover, if the sterility of Conceptual art’s administrative communiqués did result in what Buchloh crucially identified as the perceived elimination not only of sensory plenitude but of bodily experience, then should we view the emergence of an unabashed corporeality in Weiner’s notebooks, drawings, recordings, videos and films as compensation for the conceptual suppression of libidinal subjectivity, or as a deconstructive exposure of the desiring subject, present all along in Weiner’s texts?

One of the severest critiques of Conceptual art would be articulated by the artist Marcel Broodthaers. Rachel Haidu has analyzed the precision of Broodthaers’ attack on Conceptual art’s mythologized language of false neutrality, its fantasy of transparent communication, and its pretensions to circumvent institutionalized frameworks of artistic creation and reception. In the

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[11] Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus, On Politics and Aesthetics* (London and New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2010), 82.

context of Haidu's discussion, Weiner's work is judged guilty of "ephemeralizing" language, of unwittingly speaking / writing in the dictatorial voice he so wished to avoid, thus perpetuating the illusion of unmediated dialogue. In being frequently presented on the "hypertrophied authoritarianism" of the gallery or museum wall, Weiner's work purportedly frustrates access to collective experience, by fostering private, imaginary reflection. Haidu writes: "An authoritatively communicated score gives us instructions that reinforce the primacy of the realm of the imagination – precisely that which art, fortified by museums and the gallery system, is supposed to address."[12]

In his assessment of Conceptual art's failure to transcend the conditions of capitalist exchange, Rancière states (making implicit reference to Weiner's work):

> Thirty years ago, conceptual artists claimed to have broken with the forms of commodified art by no longer creating solid objects available for private ownership, but instead specific forms for presentation or spatialization of ideas: a hole in a wall, a crack running through a building, a line in the desert, etc. And yet intellectual and artistic property did not disappear; it simply underwent a displacement. Artists increasingly began to be viewed – and paid – as owners and sellers of ideas as such. This meant that intelligence itself came to take the place of its products, implying a radicalization in the idea of private property. The immateriality of concepts and images, instead of doing away with private appropriation, turned out to be its best refuge, the place where its reality is tantamount.[13]

Seth Price would argue furthermore that Conceptualism's interventions in the distribution / dissemination of art were undercut by the work's "mandarin air". Price writes: "However, whether assuming the form of ad or article, much of this work was primarily concerned with finding exhibition alternatives to the gallery wall, and in any case often used these sites to demonstrate dryly theoretical propositions rather than address issues of, say, desire."[14] Reflecting back on the works' ostensible lack of democratic *content*, Lippard retrospectively remarks: "We had this dream… that artist's books would be in drugstores and airports…and then we realized that the content wasn't there… I mean the form was there because we had these little cheap books and that would be nice but nobody would have cared in a drugstore coming in and picking one of

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[12] Rachel Haidu, *The Absence Of Work, Marcel Broodthaers, 1964 – 1976* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2010), 88-89.

[13] Rancière, *Dissensus, On Politics and Aesthetics,* 79.

[14] Seth Price, *Dispersion*, 2002; http://www.distributedhistory.com/Dispersion08.pdf.

these things up… the content *was* the form, and where it went in the art world, and how it was handled, and how it was distributed…"[15]

This dissertation refutes the above claims: that Weiner's work is an authoritative "score" which indulges in the *privacy* of imaginary reflection, that his work attempts to defeat commodification by means of its *immateriality*, that it's content can be reduced to a "dryly theoretical" linguistic form, or that its failure can be measured by the fact that artists are paid to do their work. Indeed, to criticize Conceptual art on the basis that ideas are now bought and sold (as even Lippard would do), is to strip these practices of the complexity of their interventions. After all, Pop art's prior exposure of the commodification - not of soup cans or steel wool but of *signs* - would have already disqualified any strategy which did not acknowledge language's fundamental role in the capitalist traffic of ideas. As evidenced by his early *Propeller* paintings, which display a graphic Pop sensibility, Weiner began his artistic career fully cognizant of the sign's status as emblem or logo. His writings, furthermore, explicitly acknowledge the artist's role within an ever-expanding service industry.[16] Weiner's use of language, therefore, can never have relied on dematerialization to escape the confines of an increasingly "immaterial" cycle of appropriation and exchange. Rejecting the Conceptual trope of de-objectification, this discussion aims to recover the perplexing difficulty of Weiner's work, through a reading of the artist's texts that focuses not only on their linguistic presentation, but equally on their *material* content (a hole in a wall, a crack in a driveway, a line of stakes set in the ground).

Whereas for Broodthaers, the materiality of language would lead inexorably to its unintelligibility (as in *Pense-Bête* [1964] when books of poetry are rendered illegible by being encased in plaster), for Weiner art must remain legible. Like Broodthaers, however, Weiner would recognize that communication is both *facilitated* and *interrupted* by: the concreteness of bodies (sexualized), objects (language + the materials referred to) and their relationships (of equivalence as well as dominance) (figs. 3 & 4). As such, the work offers a model of artistic

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[15] "Interview With Lucy Lippard," *Artforum* (September 11, 2012), http://www.artforum.com/words/id=33579.

[16] For an excellent discussion on Weiner's work and its relationship to the "valorization of the general human language capability" in a post-Fordian economy see Eric de Bruyn's "Being Then Within a Context of Revolution: Six Notes on Two Films by Lawrence Weiner" in *Film Avantgarde Biopolitik*, eds. Sabeth Buchmann, Helmut Draxler, and Stephan Greene (Vienna: Schlebrügge, 2009), 364 – 391.

practice that sustains its utopian aspirations without succumbing to naïve fictions. In an article on the contemporary Conceptual artist Mel Bochner, Eric de Bruyn describes Bochner's practice as "utopic" to the degree that it acknowledges, without affirming, the conditions through which its own discourse becomes ideological.[17] Weiner's texts share with Bochner's a resistance to transparency, similarly rejecting the "zero degree" neutrality associated with Conceptual art. As such, the work is marked by its own limitations and historical contingency, reflecting the fact that no practice can ever maintain what Roland Barthes had once described as "the splendor of a permanent revolution of language."[18]

While the first two chapters of this dissertation focus on works that fall largely within the historical periodization of Conceptual art (Lippard's anthology of Conceptual practices dates from 1966 – 1972), the remaining chapters deal with drawings and works beyond that period, in order to analyze dramatic shifts in the artist's approach, including his return to the category of sculpture in the early '80s and his concurrent embrace of an unabashedly visual presentation style. The notebooks date from 1973-present, and part of the aim of this dissertation is to provide a survey of Weiner's drawing practice, which until recently has not been analyzed in any comprehensive fashion.[19] Although the discussion focuses largely on works and drawings, the full extent of Weiner's modes of presentation will be considered, including: installations, books, films, videos, recordings and posters. This non-restriction remains critical not only to the theorization of the work's materialism and Weiner's use of mediums, but also to an understanding of the dynamics of translation crucial to Weiner's oeuvre, wherein a work such as *BROKEN OFF* (1971) appears in multiple formats over the course of several decades. Finally, if Weiner's work expands versus delimits the purview of Conceptual art, then this dissertation must take into account more than the usual suspects (Joseph Kosuth, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Sol LeWitt, Ed Ruscha) to

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[17] Eric de Bruyn, "*Alfaville*, or Utopics of Mel Bochner," *Grey Room* 10 (Fall 2003), 76-111.

[18] Roland Barthes, "Lecture in Inauguration of the Chair of Literary Semiology, Collège de France, January 7, 1977," *October* 8 (Spring 1979), 6.

[19] The first major museum retrospective of Weiner's drawings opened at the Museu d'art Contemporani de Barcelona in March of 2013, scheduled to travel to Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam in September 2013 – January 2104. The exhibition catalog *Written On The Wind: Lawrence Weiner Drawings* (ed. Alice Zimmerman [Cologne: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) and Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2013]) includes texts by Gregor Stemmrich, Bartomeu Marí and Soledad Gutiérrez.

include points of comparison not properly Conceptual (Frank Stella, Robert Rauschenberg, Carl Andre, Robert Smithson). Weiner himself was not enrolled as an art student, but as a philosophy major, and has expressed wide interests, citing the influence of Alfred North Whitehead, Noam Chomsky and Jean Piaget among others. His drawings/writings make reference to existentialism, Aristotle, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Karl Marx, Giles Deleuze and Girogio Agamben, whose writings therefore figure in this discussion. In particular, the philosophical work of Jean-François Lyotard has proven extremely influential to this research, inasmuch as Lyotard was himself closely engaged with the concerns of Conceptual art, and the problem of how to "stage" ideas within the techno-scientific, post-industrial, post-cinematic condition of "information."[20] In terms of art historical framework, this dissertation is heavily indebted to Rosalind Krauss' theorization of developments in post '60s art, as well as Alexander Alberro, Benjamin Buchloh, Eric de Bruyn and Gregor Stemmrich's fundamental analyses of Weiner's work and of Conceptual art as a whole. In large part this text is a response to Buchloh's call for a discussion of libidinal subjectivity as it emerges in Weiner's practice.

Chapter I examines Weiner's self-avowed materialism, and the necessity of linguistic presentation, stressing that the artist's investigations expand well beyond an exploration of language's materiality. Chapter II discusses the ways in which Wiener's art of "ideas" defeats any form of idealization, remaining grounded in complex referential operations. Chapter III uses Weiner's notebooks and drawings to analyze the conceptual strategies (dialectic, paradigmatic, diagrammatic) that emerge in the artist's practice, articulating their connection to questions of subjective embodiment and libidinal release. Chapter IV considers the work's relation to optical experience, focusing on the distinctly visual problems associated with color and design that are central to Weiner's work. Chapter V explores Weiner's later drawings, charting Weiner's shift

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[20] In addition to writing on artists such as Marcel Duchamp and Joseph Kosuth, with his landmark exhibition *Les Immatériaux* (Centres Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1985) Jean-François Lyotard experimented directly with the "dramaturgy of information" offering a means of presenting ideas that rejected the assumptions of dematerialization. Regarding this exhibition John Rajchman writes: "In Lyotard's labyrinthine theatre of the new (post-cinematic) 'condition' of information, 'immateriality' was no longer conceived in terms of freeing concepts or ideas from all materials, but, on the contrary, of shifting the idea of 'materiality' away from that of 'formed matter' (including the 'modernist' distinction between form and content) and towards the 'techno-sciences' and the city." See John Rajchman, "*Les Immatériaux* or How To Construct the History of

away from dialectical analysis towards other models of thinking. Chapter VI deals with issues of spatiality and site-specificity, examining the artist's renewed dedication to the category of sculpture. The concluding chapter highlights the provocative intersection of Weiner's empirical works with the "imaginary" fields of poetry and literature, re-positioning issues of theatricality, autobiography and desire as central versus peripheral to the history of Conceptual art.

Chapter I: THE RUPTURE OF A SURFACE (language + materials)

Mel Bochner argues that art's "linguistic turn" of the 1960s was both a logical outcome of Minimalism's investigation of serial procedures (whose structure implied a grammar and syntax) and a rejection of the type of objecthood that had come to define Minimalist sculpture.[21] Regarding the hotly debated status of the art object during this period Bochner writes:

> From Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns to Frank Stella and Donald Judd, the major questions circled around the issue of objecthood. Was a work of art primarily an object even if it was, in Judd's terms a "specific object"? Or was "what you see is what you see," in Stella's reductivist dictum, all there was to a work of art? To some of us, too much was missing from these formulations. They represented a kind of solipsism, a withdrawal from the world that left art with no possible means of affecting philosophical, social, or political conditions. How could a work of art destabilize the status quo from within such a limited aesthetic framework?[22]

As Bochner's assessment suggests, language served not only as a strategy of negation – of optical plenitude, plastic embodiment, phenomenological presence – but a means of *expansion*, moving the work beyond the solipsistic boundaries that still enclosed artistic practice within "the phenomenology of rooms" or tied its meaning to the sheer visibility of surfaces.[23] When in 1968

Exhibitions," *Tate Papers* Issue 12 (2009); http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/les-immateriaux-or-how-construct-history-exhibitions.

[21] Mel Bochner: "Once you turn to seriality, you turn to language. Once you work out this program which is essentially a grammar and a syntax you have basically all the workings of a language. And I think it is that turn towards language which is really against Minimalism, it's against the gestalt, against the specific object." Bochner in conversation with Anna Lovatt (New York: October, 2, 2002) in "Seriality and Systematic Thought in Drawing c. 1966-1976: Ruth Vollmer, Sol LeWitt, Eva Hesse, Mel Bochner and Dorothea Rockburne" (PhD Dissertation, Courtauld University of Art, 2005).

[22] Bochner, "Why Would Anyone Want to Draw on the Wall?" *October* 130 (Fall 2009), 135.

[23] On the solipsistic nature of serial practices see Bochner, "Serial Art, Systems, Solipsism," *Arts Magazine* (Summer 1967), reprinted in *Minimal Art, A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (Berkeley and Los

Weiner decided to move away from making *specific* objects, using language to present materials in *general,* his goal was undoubtedly to invest the work with those dimensions that were “missing” from both Modernist formalism and Minimalist positivity. In complete contrast, however, to artists who would claim to have transcended objecthood in favor of pure discourse (Art & Language), logical investigations (Joseph Kosuth) or unmediated “events’ (George Brecht), Weiner would insist on the *materialist* nature of his practice, repeatedly affirming that the works present “relationships of human beings to objects and objects to objects,” relations that the artist would deem “perverse.”[24]

Chapter I explores the motivations, implications and contradictions that attended Weiner’s unorthodox decision to use language as the primary medium for a material investigation. On the one hand, Weiner’s display of text within the sphere of visual arts would register as an aesthetic withdrawal, signaling the work’s incapacity to compensate for the impoverishment of contemporary object experience. On the other hand, Weiner’s recourse to language was never conceived as an outright negation of the work’s sensory dimension, but conversely as a practically infinite extension of material connections. Challenging the received notion that an examination of the materiality of the signifier invariably results in the draining away of referential solidity (as in Pablo Picasso’s *papiers collés*, wherein tactile surfaces reveal the diacritical nature of signs rather than the palpability of things signified), Weiner would exploit linguistic form in order to emphasize *objective* content above all, highlighting the fact that all surfaces are both perceptually and conceptually significant, invested with signs and meanings that are institutionally and ideologically enforced, and effaced only at the cost of idealization. Weiner’s formulation of the work as “language + the material referred to” crucially indicates that words function in *combinatory* relation with objects rather than as substitutions for an absent referent, underscoring as well the discursive constraints that are an inherent part of our material interactions.

Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), 92 – 102. Victor Burgin would similarly argue that Conceptual art aimed to “explode” the object, opening art’s doors to the social and political dimensions suppressed by the self-reflexive autonomy of Modernist practice. See, Burgin, “The Absence of Presence” in *The End of Art Theory* (Atlantic Highlands, 1986).

[24] Weiner in “Early Work, Interview by Lynn Gumpert” in *Lynda Benglis, Joan Brown, Luis Jimenez, Gary Stephan, Lawrence Weiner: Early Work*, exh. cat. (New York: The New Museum, 1982), reprinted in *Having Been Said, Writings & Interviews of Lawrence Weiner, 1968 – 2003,* eds. Gerti Fietzek & Gregor Stemmrich (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2004), 125.

Taking a cue from the artist's own description of the work as "superficial" this chapter is anchored by an analysis of surface, the very quality that would seem to have been eliminated by a purportedly "dematerialized" Conceptual art. Several models of superficiality emerge as relevant to this discussion, including: 1) Minimalism's emphasis on meaning as *externally*, which is to say publically produced, 2) the conflation of matter and information enacted on the "receptor" surfaces of Rauschenberg's *Combines* and displayed on the "one-dimensional" screen of Warhol's Pop icons, and 3) Alain Robbe-Grillet's literary descriptions, which render things as depthless, released from inherent metaphor and from an anthropocentric grasp. The logical extreme of this superficial language is found in Fredric Jameson's theorization of postmodern textuality as a play of "broken" signifiers, divorced not only from the referent but from the signified. This specter of the insubstantial postmodern text, drained of all contact with the "real" stands as the critical limit of Weiner's practice, wherein signs also read as allegorical fragments marked by absence and loss, testifying to the necessity of articulating a different way of relating to the surfaces of things.

Chapter II: THE TRACE OF AN IDEA (concept + object)

After many years of refusing the term "Conceptual art," in a notebook dated October 1983 – January 1985, Weiner proposed an idiosyncratic definition: "Conceptual art as it is utilized is simply the choice of an artist that the idea of the material is the most important content of the work of art"[25] (fig. 110). This notion was already operative in Weiner's early *Removal Paintings* (1966-68), a series of geometric abstractions that might easily have been viewed as Modernist painting, were it not for Weiner's insistence that the works dealt with "the *idea* of painting" rather than painting as such. In *Towards a Newer Laocoön* Clement Greenberg had argued against such an idealist approach, stating that from the late 19th century onwards: "the avant-garde saw the necessity of an escape from ideas, which were infecting the arts with the ideological struggles

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[25] Lawrence Weiner Notebook October 83 – January 85, Moved Pictures Archive, New York.

of society."[26] Art's "physicalist" emphasis on material form and on the specific qualities of each medium would purportedly restore the artwork to its proper role as a sublimation of existing conditions, guarding against the degradations of mass cultural experience. Modernism would thus be founded upon: "the assertion of the arts as independent vocations, disciplines and crafts, absolutely autonomous, and entitled to respect for their own sakes, and not merely as vessels of communication." When Greenberg critiqued Minimalist art, he did so on the grounds that Minimalism was "too much a feat of ideation, and not enough anything else."[27]

Weiner far exceeded Minimalism's purportedly idealist challenge to medium specificity by stipulating in his 1968 *Statement of Intent*: "The piece need not be built." In thus constituting the work as a general idea of materials *with no specific form,* Weiner confounded the categorization of art objects into "independent vocations" and suppressed the physical qualities conventionally associated with aesthetic experience. Rather than securing his practice within the confines of self-reflexivity (as numerous Conceptual artists would claim to do), Weiner maximized the work's capacity to intervene in ideological struggles, using all manner of distribution methods in order to underscore the work's role as a "vessel of communication" immersed in the complexities of real, social space. When Sol LeWitt described Conceptual art as "a massive reassertion of content" in opposition to the dominance of "Twentieth Century Formalism" he identified precisely what was at stake in Weiner's polemical decision to present the work, not as autonomous form but as materialist idea.[28]

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[26] Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon" in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 1: *Perceptions and Judgments 1939–1944*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 28.

[27] Hal Foster argues against Greenberg's description of Minimalism as an idealist practice: "This was no less a misreading, made by some conceptual artists too, when it was meant positively: that minimalism captures pure forms, maps logical structures or depicts abstract thought. For it is precisely such metaphysical dualisms of subject and object that minimalism seeks to overcome in phenomenological experience. Thus, far from idealist, minimalist work complicates the purity of conception with the contingency of perception, of the body in a particular space and time." *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1996), 40. As this dissertation will argue, such a complexification of both conception and perception motivates Weiner's practice as well.

[28] Sol LeWitt, unpublished transcript of a talk given to the 'Art Now' class, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 20 March 1970. Lippard Papers, Archives of American Art. Quoted in Anna Lovatt, "Ideas in Transmission: LeWitt's Wall Drawings and the Question of Medium," *Tate Papers* Issue 14 (October 1, 2010); http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/ideas-transmission-lewitts-wall-drawings-and-question-medium#footnote33_jrzj1rh.

Significantly, this anti-formal emphasis on content was not universally shared by Conceptual artists, many of whom would in fact maintain a highly formalist approach (though not necessarily a Greenbergian one). In the case, for instance, of Henry Flynt's score-based Concept art, defined in 1961 as a derivation of his earlier investigation of "Structure art," the focus was not at all on content but on form, as Branden Joseph describes: "For Flynt, such works were on the order of metaworks, works about their own structure and analysis, which had little relation, in fact, to their material realization and as such were akin to formalist mathematics."[29] As Flynt himself would explain:

> Structure (or concept) music, for example, needs straightening out, first, by ceasing to call it 'music,' and starting to say that the sound (or activity) is used only to carry the structure or conceptual cleverness, and that the real point is the structure or conceptual cleverness – the categorization – and then it will be seen how limited, impoverished the structure of these productions trying to be music are.[30]

Flynt's insistence on the primacy and abstractness of structure was aimed against the "cognitive pretensions" of art that posed as objective truth, or scientific revelation.[31] Such pretensions would, in fact, constitute the basis of Weiner's practice, conceived as a type "research" akin to a branch of "earth science" (fig. 265).[32] Offering neither logical conundrums nor philosophical propositions, Weiner's structures would present material relationships already *actualized* in the social field, irrespective of the receiver's decision to "build" the work again or not.

This chapter focuses on the distinct nature of Weiner's empirical ideas in comparison with the "concept" as variously mobilized within Conceptual art and Fluxus practices. Far from the hollow "academicism" that Bochner would associate with Kosuth's formulation of "Art as Idea as Idea," Weiner's works are not *a priori* abstract formulations or tautological definitions, but materio-linguistic *traces* that complicate object encounters as opposed to categorizing them. Articulated primarily in the past tense, Weiner's ideas frustrate any possibility of temporal or perceptual reconciliation, refusing both the sublimated "presentness" which Michael Fried associated with

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[29] Branden Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts after Cage* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 164.

[30] Henry Flynt quoted in *Ibid*., 165.

[31] For a discussion of Flynt's notion of "acognitive culture" see Joseph's chapter on "Concept Art" in *Ibid*., 153-212.

[32] Numerous references to art as an "earth science" appear in Weiner's notebooks (cf. Weiner Notebook 2002).

Modernism, and the literal presence he ascribed to Minimalism. Furthermore, in complete contrast to what Hal Foster would call “the purity of conception,” Weiner’s works remain disintegrative and “self-differing,” precluding immateriality or idealization by being subject at all times to the contingencies of material translation.[33] Thus, while Weiner’s works can always be visualized, they crucially reject any anchorage in a singular image. They thereby counteract the spectacularized conditions of contemporary experience, described by Guy Debord in terms of the circulation of consumable, identificatory “image-objects” designed to perfect the subject’s separation from objective reality.[34] Weiner’s works defeat this spectacular alienation, not by bringing things closer in an illusory reconciliation, but by amplifying the receiver’s sense of critical distance, articulating a relationship to matter based on the *commonality* of general ideas versus the privacy of subjective identifications (i.e. “A PLACE WHERE IN FACT I WAS NO LONGER NECESSARY IT IS SUFFICIENT”).[35]

Chapter III: PARADIGMS SUITABLE FOR DAILY USE (notebooks + drawings)

If within the contested sphere of Conceptual art there was profound disagreement on both the status of works (material or immaterial) and the nature of ideas (tautological or referential), there was nonetheless a consistent, collective desire to break away from forms of subjective expression. The paradoxes of producing an art of ideas that would in no way depend upon the consciousness of the artist are encapsulated in Robert Barry’s work:

> *All the things I know but of which I am not at the moment thinking –*
>
> *1:36 PM; June 15, 1969.*

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[33] Rosalind Krauss constructs a model of ‘medium’ as no longer an essentialist form but a “self-differing” structure. This concept will be explored in both Chapter II and Chapter VI. See Krauss, *A Voyage On the North Sea, Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1992). See also *Under Blue Cup* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2011).

[34] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (1967; New York: Zone Books, 1994), 16.

[35] Weiner, “The Robbe-Grillet Express: A Ticket To Ride,” *Artforum* vol. 46, no. 10 (Summer 2008), 389.

Barry began his career as a painter, and his statement recalls the sorts of claims that had been associated with Abstract Expressionism, and especially the work of Jackson Pollock, who would famously affirm: "The source of my painting is the unconscious."[36] While Barry's work gestures towards an analogous territory of unconscious thoughts or what Lucy Lippard called "repressed knowledge," Barry's use of the pronominal "shifter" renders ambiguous whether the work refers to the contents of Barry's mind or those of the viewer, inasmuch as "I" could legitimately be claimed either by the artist at the moment of the work's inscription, or by the reader at the time of reception.[37] In either case the artist's thoughts are presented as utterly inaccessible, for in complete contrast to an art of autographic gesture, wherein lines and forms are perceived as directly expressing the mind of the artist, Barry's generic text gives the viewer nothing to see.

The problem of how to generate and present ideas that maintained their separation from the artist's subjectivity would become acute within the field of drawing, the ineluctably visual medium that, more than any other, was tied to a notion of intimate expression, as Robert Morris' satiric statement "On Drawing" describes:

> Scratches made while on the train, in a plane, a hangover from the High Renaissance where every telephone number and coffee stain (by the right person) revealed the inner or under or deeper or less disguised and more naked creative nerve – so many little exposed nerves; see them trembling beneath the neuritis and neuralgia of the cross-hatching.[38]

In 1963, Morris presented a drawing made of trembling scratches produced not by his hand but by the neuronal activity of his brain, via the technological mediation of the electroencephalogram. *Self-Portrait (EEG)* registered the artist's brain-waves while he was thinking of himself, for a period long enough to generate lines equal to his height[39] (fig. 5). In parodic fashion, Morris' work offered an important example of how to use drawing to register thinking, while at the same time frustrating any attempt to read the work in terms of self-expression. Within the practice of artists

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[36] Jackson Pollock in a 1947 statement quoted in *Jackson Pollock: Key Interviews, Articles, and Reviews*, ed. Jasmine Moorhead (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1998), 202.

[37] Lucy Lippard commentary in Robert Barry, *All the Things I know but of Which I Am Not at the Moment Thinking – 1:36 pm; June 15, 1969*, exh. cat. (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1974). For a scholarly debate regarding the correct reading of Barry's use of the pronoun "I" see "Conceptual Art and the Reception of Duchamp," *October* 70 (Fall 1994), 133-134.

[38] Robert Morris, "On Drawing" in *Pop Art Redefined,* eds. Suzi Gablik and John Russell (London: Thames & Hudson 1969), 94–5.

such as Sol LeWitt and Mel Bochner, the possibilities of drawing as a radically impersonal operation would be fully developed, offering drawing as a means of documenting processes and ideas, uncoupled from the artist's private sensibility.

While drawing remained an essential component of Weiner's practice from the start of his career, initially graphic elements would not figure prominently in his presentation of work. Indeed, Weiner appeared to follow the lead of Minimalist artists such as Frank Stella, Donald Judd and Carl Andre who looked upon drawing as an unnecessary supplement, too closely linked to expressive form. While drawing had been crucially implicated as *content* in Weiner's work, for instance through operations of removal, Weiner consistently maintained that the drawings he personally executed should not be considered works of art. Drawing would nonetheless continue to shape the artist's practice and in 1973, he began keeping notebooks, extensive accumulations of drawing and writing that until now have neither been studied nor comprehensively shown. This chapter explores the modes of thinking reflected in these objects, which continue to problematize the concept of "private" reflection, despite the fact that they were made for the artist's personal use.

Correspondent with the heterogeneous materiality of the works themselves, the notebooks reveal a thought process that is wholly visceral rather than purely conceptual. Produced in large part through collage operations, the notebooks' dense embodiment stands as a dialectic counterpart to the corporeal withdrawal effected by the works' linguistic presentations, thus raising the critical issue of how Weiner mediates the relation of signs to the desiring subject. This tactility stands as an important context against which to view the artist's earliest published graphics, whose persistent rectilinearity and techno-scientific rigor might have seemed to eliminate bodily experience altogether. The latter half of the chapter examines these drawings from the late '70s to the early '80s, whose calculated restraint was designed to critique resurgent expressionist tendencies, through the development of an image repertoire capable of registering body and matter without reflecting back on the artist's subjectivity - a graphic depersonalization,

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[39] For a discussion of *Self-Portrait (EEG)* see *Robert Morris, The Mind/Body Problem,* exh. cat. (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1994), 142.

that once again, does not necessarily equate to dematerialization, or the elimination of a sensuous response.

Chapter IV: RED SAILS ON THE SUNSET (drawings + design)

Describing Weiner's contribution to the 1976 exhibition *Drawing Now*, curator Barbara Rose writes: "Text is all, the visual part is unnecessary."[40] As Buchloh would argue, however, to read Conceptual art in terms of pure text (i.e. poetry) would deflate its criticality, for in order to function as a negation of conventional aesthetics, the work must be seen within the tradition of *visual* art. The necessity of viewing the work in that context is confirmed by Weiner himself, when in 2007 he titles his retrospective *AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE* (1988). While undoubtedly Weiner's use of language invalidates an aesthetics of optical plenitude, *AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE* proclaims the centrality of vision (and the creation of "spectacle value") as a material condition of any exhibition (fig. 6). Whereas numerous Conceptual artists did insist on the fundamental invisibility of their works (e.g. Robert Barry's focus on imperceptible materials / experiences, Ian Wilson's work based on conversations), just as many remained deeply invested in problems of perception (e.g. Sol LeWitt and Mel Bochner's works dealing with the relationship of concept to materialization). In Weiner's case, the content of works would always remain accessible to vision, indicating an intention to interrogate rather than negate perceptual experience. In order to analyze the role that vision plays in Weiner's practice, this chapter examines how the work deals with color, the most quintessentially optical of all phenomena.

Regarding the relationship of Conceptual art to color, Briony Fer writes: "The renunciation of color reached its highest point at the moment of Conceptualism, and the fallout from that renunciation is still with us, which has meant that the color innovations that emerged even within Conceptual art have been largely ignored."[41] In Weiner's practice, color in fact plays a crucial role, although the artist imposes a strict divide between the colors of the work and its forms of

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[40] Barbara Rose, *Drawing Now* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1976), 81.

[41] Briony Fer, "Color Manual" in *Color Chart: Reinventing Color, 1950 to Today*, exh. cat. ed. Ann Temkin (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), 29 – 30.

presentation. As we have seen, Conceptual art's development was largely based on the separation of form and content, as announced in Sol LeWitt's assertion that "what the work of art looks like is not too important."[42] While Weiner would agree with that statement, the fact remains that what Conceptual art looked like was enormously important, as evidenced by Weiner's own commitment to the practice of design. A tension thus emerges between the work's immediately perceptible presentation, and the absent / deferred / distant object of reference. If in the '60s and '70s, Weiner's designs would place the work within the austere framework of administration, that context would change dramatically by the '80s, when Weiner's presentations would take a flagrantly decorative turn.

Weiner's visually indulgent presentations would be criticized as an abnegation of the historical relevance of his work. Jan Dibbets, for instance, recounts that for the 1972 catalog *Konzept-Kunst*, Weiner and Kosuth had taken the hard-line, insisting that no photographs be included, leaving the presentation as anonymous and ascetic as possible. Dibbets claims to have disagreed with that approach, arguing that "the artist has the responsibility to visualize what he wants to say." Later on, Dibbets would be shocked at Weiner's turnabout:

> Weiner made an exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum in 1997 or 1999 and he'd already moved so far from that position that the whole museum, to my total amazement, was yellow walls with red letters, and circles on the floor with green letters. I couldn't believe my eyes! I said: 'Lawrence, you're the man who's against presentation. You're showing off your concepts from 1967 to 1970. You're changing history. You're making fashionable art.' He got so fed up. The same happened to Daniel Buren: the switch of idea that's said to be extremely consequential. But in fact, there is no consequence. That's the strange thing.[43]

A similar charge of betrayal would be leveled against Sol LeWitt, whose later wall drawings feature graphic patterns and colors that unabashedly serve a decorative purpose.[44] Undeniably these transformations were part of a collective response to an increasingly commercialized and

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[42] Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs On Conceptual Art," *Artforum* vol. 5, no. 10 (Summer 1967), 79-84, reprinted in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2000), 13.

[43] Jan Dibbets, "Conversation with Jan Dibbets (April 28, 2005, Amsterdam)" in Sophie Richard, *Unconcealed: The International Network of Conceptual Artists 1966-1977, Dealers, Exhibitions and Public Collections* (London: Ridinghouse, 2009), 419.

[44] Lovatt critiques the decorative aspects of Sol LeWitt's later work in "Seriality and Systematic Thought in Drawing c. 1966-1976: Ruth Vollmer, Sol LeWitt, Eva Hesse, Mel Bochner and Dorothea Rockburne."

conservative art establishment, characterized by the return of a "specular regime."[45] Of key concern in this discussion is how/whether the self-described "theatricality" of Weiner's designs escapes a formal reification, resisting the condition of mere decoration or reconciliation with the demands of spectacular display.

Chapter VI: HERE THERE & EVERYWHERE (sculpture + site)

In 1982, Weiner participated in *Documenta* 7, an exhibition conceived by its director, Rudi Fuchs, as a re-affirmation of art's autonomous existence, liberating the artist in his/her vocation as "the last practitioner of distinct individuality."[46] Both Buchloh and Douglas Crimp launched severe critiques against this exhibition which retreated from the radical interventions of the '60s and '70s in a renewed institutional claim for art's separateness from what Fuchs called the "hard and brutal" environment.[47] Crimp notes that Fuchs' attempted de-politicization of art was in part achieved through the installation's willful de-differentiation of works, as objects appeared in "unlikely juxtaposition" so as to "deny difference, dissemble meaning, and reduce everything to a potpourri of random style." This homogenizing tendency was reflected by Weiner's contribution to the exhibition: *MANY COLORED OBJECTS PLACED SIDE BY SIDE TO FORM A ROW OF MANY COLORED OBJECTS* (1979), a work that was both installed in capital letters on the frieze of the Museum Fridericianum, and printed on a band covering the two-volume catalog (fig. 7). The statement pointed not only to the exhibition's overriding logic of display, but to the work's own constitution as a row of bronze letters (many colored objects), fusing operations of self-reflexivity and site-specificity in order to unveil the art object's spectacular condition, and its compromised status as decoration.[48]

Importantly, Buchloh notes that while *Documenta* 7 glorified painting, sculpture was marginalized: "Either by excluding certain sculptors or by presenting their work in an incoherent

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[45] Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962 – 1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990), 143.

[46] R.H. Fuchs, catalogue preface in *Documenta 7*, Kassel 1982, vol. 1, XV; quoted in Buchloh, "Documenta 7: A Dictionary of Received Ideas," *October* vol. 22 (Autumn, 1982), 104.

[47] Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, M.A. and London: The MIT Press, 1993), 239.

manner (Richard Serra, for example, represented only by drawing), the curators made it appear that sculptural activity had withered to utter marginality."[49] Three examples of outdoor sculpture provided an exception, namely: Claes Oldenburg's *Pick-Axe* (1982), Carl Andre's *Steel Peneplain* (1982), and Dan Graham's *Two Adjacent Pavilions* (1978-82). Despite its public installation and integration with the architectural site, Weiner's work was clearly not conceived at the time as being in the same category as these others. By then, however, Weiner had in fact reverted to calling his work sculpture, a perplexing designation inasmuch as the artist's linguistic interventions had raised such difficult questions regarding sculpture's historical and material validity. In a conversation with William Furlong from 1980, Weiner addressed his re-use of the term: "I see 'sculpture' as a word that most people… perhaps it's a placatory gesture on my own part, but it's a word that most people can relate to as a material way of human beings relating to objects. I see most painting, especially most successful painting, as functioning within a sculptural level as well."[50] At the same time, Robert Barry would also return to traditional categories, in a seeming reversal of his own critique of visual art: "I had been working with color for several years. The best way of using color is to paint it. There's also a perverse streak in me. The idea of making painting, which was such a taboo in the '70s within the so-called conceptual art community, really intrigued me. I wouldn't have done it if I didn't think I could bring to painting something personal, something different."[51]

This chapter analyzes the relationship of Weiner's work to sculpture, beginning with his early rejection of medium specificity, and the implications of his return to 'sculptural' concerns. Weiner and Barry's own statements regarding the recuperation of such practices point to the problematic nature of these re-categorizations, inasmuch as they risk a "placatory" and "perverse" reconciliation with dominant cultural forces. Indeed, one could legitimately argue that in calling the work sculpture, Weiner highlights Conceptual art's failure to transcend a limiting historical condition through the making of "art in general." One of the goals of this discussion is to

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[48] Buchloh, "Documenta 7: A Dictionary of Received Ideas," 120 – 121.

[49] Buchloh, "Documenta 7: A Dictionary of Received Ideas," 117.

[50] Weiner in "A Conversation with William Furlong Concerning 20 Works by Lawrence Weiner Presented in London in 1980" reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 110.

understand the impacts of Weiner's calculated decision to insert the work within a sculptural discourse. Undoubtedly, one result would be to underscore the work's relationship to spatial concerns, an aspect often occluded by the artist's use of text.

In 1974 Henri Lefebvre published *The Production of Space*, his pioneering effort to make our subjective constitution in space the center of ideological struggles. Lefebvre argued for the revolutionary transformation, not just of superstructures, institutions and political apparatuses but of the space of everyday experience itself, currently in thrall to the repressive, homogenizing constraints of capitalist abstraction and bourgeois consensus. Space would thus be viewed not as a "thing in itself" but as a set of relations in which dominant structures are constantly reproduced. Significantly, Lefebvre denounced any optimism in the transformative power of rational communication/information as a suspect force, one that only conceals the actuality of social practices and contributes to illusions of transparency. In what could easily be read as an indictment of Conceptualism, Lefebvre writes: "Man does not live by words alone – all subjects are situated in a space in which they must either recognize or lose themselves – a space which they may both enjoy and modify."[52] According to Lefebvre, in our contemporary milieu of phallocentric authoritative display and fetishistic substitution, language leaves subjects perpetually wanting as the author bemoans: "Searching in vain for plenitude desire must make do with words."[53]

Contrary to Lefebvre, Weiner has always believed, perhaps optimistically, in the ability of words/signs to disrupt and modify spatial practices, dislodging things from pre-ordained places, disorienting habits of assumed direction and signaling new ways of inhabiting space (a belief technically demonstrated by the cartographic drawings analyzed in Chapter V). Regarding the "purpose" of sculpture, Weiner observes: "Sculpture is a marking of materials, that help human beings find their own place in the sun."[54] Weiner's designs would increasingly emphasize this sense of the work not as a virtual substitute for experience, but as a concrete obstacle in space

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[51] Robert Barry quoted in Marjorie Welish, "Nancy Spero, Martha Rosler and Robert Barry," *BOMB* 47 (Spring 1994); http://bombsite.com/issues/47/articles/1753.

[52] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson- Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 35.

[53] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 97.

and a destabilizing form of energy within it. In concentrating on the works' relationship to contemporary sculptural practices, this discussion foregrounds these aspects, showing that Weiner's sculptures occupy a liminal, *atopian* territory, in-between the spatial extremes of modernist placelessness and postmodern site-specificity.

Conclusion: THE TRAVEL OF MARGARET-MARY (reality + fiction)

In an article entitled "Art Within the Arctic Circle" Lippard recounts her 1969 journey with Weiner to Inuvik Northwest Territory, a trip to make work for an exhibition at Edmonton Art Gallery called *Place and Process*.[55] In her day-by-day chronicle, Lippard describes the "infinite sameness of the terrain," the depredations of the "slum" town of West Inuvik, the inventory at "Slim" Semmler's general store (long johns, rabbit pelts, canned foods, fur animals, bead pins and "Eskimo" belts made in Japan), along with a brief recounting of Weiner's construction of two works of art. Over the course of the four-day trip, Weiner built three versions of *A NATURAL WATER COURSE DIVERTED REDUCED OR DISPLACED*, in one case making a dam out of small stones, and in another, diverting a broad river into a curved channel and then into a straight one. For another work, *THE ARCTIC CIRCLE SHATTERED,* Weiner used a .22 rifle to "crease" a rock in a muddy gravel pit on the tundra (figs. 8 & 9). Remarkably, Lippard's account gives very little information regarding the actual making of these works, but along the way, we learn about the sorry state of the Eskimo Inn, the truck driver who wanted to buy Weiner's pointed toe boots, and "the eerie red glow" of the diffused Northern sunset against "dense blue skies." It is precisely because of these details, however, that one relishes Lippard's tale, filled with anecdote and incident, for it is the type of history that a receiver of Weiner's work rarely encounters. The artist himself would likely insist that these minutiae, charming though they might be, are ultimately of no consequence to a reading of the work. The irony, of course, is that without seeing the photographs, viewing the

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[54] Lawrence Weiner video monologue, 2009, ARKENmuseum; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=puEMu8JBu00.

[55] Lucy Lippard, "Art within the Arctic Circle," *The Hudson Review* vol. 22, no. 4 (Winter, 1969 - 1970), 665-674. The exhibition *Place and Process* was curated by Willoughby Sharp.

itinerary, or perusing the documents that tell us exactly what happened and where, a reading of Weiner's statements begins to lend itself evermore to the realm of storytelling.

In thinking about Weiner's excursion to the Arctic Circle, another journey comes to mind. Broodthaers' short film *A Voyage On The North Sea* (1974) presents a stream of silent, still images featuring two photographs of sailboats and a painting of a schooner (perhaps on the North Sea, perhaps not), interspersed with close-up details, presumably from the painting, and ending with a photograph of a sailboat in a city harbor (figs. 10a, 10b & 10c). Importantly, the film's first shot is not a picture at all, but an inter-title which reads "Page 1", after which, an establishing shot of a sailboat on the sea. In total, the film contains 15 "Pages" which zoom the viewer in and out of the images, shuttling between representation and abstraction as the camera occasionally lingers upon details of a canvas surface, allowing its textural grid to take precedence over the seascape's legibility (i.e. favoring the materiality of the signifier over that of the signified). Broodthaers' film is in part a meditation on how various effects of movement can be generated, either through the illusory depiction of the froth on a wave, the rhythm of dark and light created by the weave of canvas threads, or the action of the camera lens itself, registered in alternating views of near and far, producing a sense of both spatial and temporal distance (traced between historical painting and contemporary photograph). Thus, Broodthaers' work, while it combines elements of "the real" (actual photographs, actual paintings) clearly presents a voyage that is wholly virtual. Indeed, Rosalind Krauss reads the work as an attempt, not only to tell a fictional story, but to tell a story about the medium of fiction, as *A Voyage On The North Sea* traverses the various supports of film, photograph, painting and novel, joined by Broodthaers into a single, discontinuous strip of light and image.

One might argue that *Voyage On The North Sea* is antipodal to *THE ARCTIC CIRCLE SHATTERED*, inasmuch as the sea, the ships and the sky are not the content of Broodthaers film, but the support for a structural investigation. These material elements are nonetheless made to appear over the course of the work, whose spatial and temporal flux is situated within the context of images that summon *ideas* about: the color of water, the choppiness of waves, the dramatic listing of ships against a horizon line. There is, therefore, some correspondence between Broodthaers' voyage and Weiner's statement, which remains perpetually suspended between the presence of language and the spatial and temporal remoteness of “the materials referred to.” Thus, hovering at the border between actual and virtual, *THE ARCTIC CIRCLE SHATTERED* verges at all times on what the artist would call a “fictive” condition. Indeed, the increasing theatricality of Weiner’s presentations eventually pushes the work ever closer to an “imaginary” realm, producing immersive fields of text that undeniably invoke the “spatialized” poetry of Stéphane Mallarmé. This chapter surveys the ways in which Weiner’s “realist” works will be projected onto an imaginary field, dissolving any clear distinction between these two registers. Such an approach lies as well at the heart of Broodthaers’ exploration of fiction.[56] When Broodthaers explained the necessity of constructing his own museums as theatrical presentations, he stated: “a fiction allows us to grasp reality and at the same time what it hides.”[57] Weiner would similarly exploit this dialectical capacity, arguing for the objective truth-value of every “theatrical engagement”:

> THEATRE MAY IN FACT BE FALSE
> MOVIES MAY IN FACT BE FALSE
> BUT IN EFFECT
> THEY ARE THE ONLY MEANS OF PRESENTING A TRUE REPRESENTATION
> OF LIFE[58]

Weiner’s work maintains its commitment to the exploration of empirical existing fact, mobilzing the associative powers of the imagination in order to bring us closer to objective reality, made visible through the inherent fallacy of a theatrical *mise-en-scène*.

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[56] For a discussion of Marcel Broodthaers’ investigation of the ‘medium’ of fiction see Krauss, *A Voyage On the North Sea, Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*.

[57] Broodthaers as quoted in *A Voyage On the North Sea, Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, 47. One could chart a trajectory from Weiner’s and Broodthaers’ works to Pierre Huyghe’s *A Journey that wasn’t* (2005), a multi-part work based on the artist’s expedition to find a “non-topographical” island and its legendary inhabitant (an albino penguin) in the Antarctic. Huyghe’s intermedia reflection on the trope of the “expedition” relates closely to Weiner’s own conception of artists as those who “take voyages into thinking things that were unthinkable” and return to show what they have seen (Weiner in conversation with David Batchelor in conjunction with the exhibition *Lawrence Weiner: Inherent In The Rhumb Line*, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England [March 22, 2007]; http://www.rmg.co.uk/upload/mp3/lawrence-weiner-in-conversation.mp3). For a brief discussion of Huyghe’s work in relation to Broodthaers’ in terms of the problem of fiction see Sjoukje van der Meulen, “Pierre Huyghe: A Journey that wasn’t,” *Witnessing You*; http://www.being-here.net/page/5551/en.

[58] Weiner, *Ducks On A Pond / Towards A Theatrical Engagement* (Ghent: Imschoot, uitgevers, 1988), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 174.

NONSENSE COMMON SENSE DISSENSUS – a note on motivation

Weiner's notebooks are primarily traveling surfaces, made as a result of the artist's itinerant practice. As such, they raise fundamental issues regarding the status of the contemporary artist as "nomad."[59] T.J. Demos has written extensively on the relationship of modernism, not to an abstract notion of travel or nomadism, but to the specific condition of *exile*. Citing Walter Benjamin's description of modernity as an "epoch of transcendental homelessness" and Edward Said's diagnosis of our contemporary age as "the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass immigration," Demos calls for an aesthetics of exile "adequate to express the ravaging spatial and experiential effects of displacement."[60] He describes how Dada responded to brutal circumstances of geopolitical violence and deracination by liberating language from national tongues. This expatriation of language provided an antidote to everyday speech, irretrievably corrupted not only by international warfare but by the all-pervasive and withering effects of commodification. Dada's mobilization of a wandering, placeless language did indeed resist the constraints of national linguistic identity, but only at the expense of becoming senseless, thus succumbing to a solipsistic travesty of publicness and communicative action.[61] Following Theodor Adorno, Demos suggests that Dada fulfills its duty to a world in crisis precisely by registering the severe limits of its own poetic interventions, through forms of self-defeating dissonance. Indeed, Demos warns of a contemporary failure to acknowledge these limitations, leading to works that indulge a romanticized notion of borderless travel and a false utopian vision of universal solidarity.

While Weiner's practice depends upon a logic of itinerancy that might superficially resemble what Daniel Buren would describe as the "pseudo-freedom" of a work that "can be

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[59] Miwon Kwon critiques the condition of 'artist as nomad' in her study on site-specific practices, *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2002).

[60] T.J. Demos, "The Ends of Exile: Towards A Coming Universality?" *Altermodern, Tate Triennial*, exh. cat. ed. Nicholas Bourriaud (London: Tate, 2009), 75-76.

[61] Demos, "Zurich Dada: The Aesthetics of Exile" in *The Dada Seminars*, ed. Leah Dickerman (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2005), 7-29.

transported from here to there, anywhere," Weiner's works do, in fact, underscore the objective conditions that delimit and prevent free mobilization.[62] And while the term "exile" implies a level of forced migration non-applicable to Weiner's travels, his movements are no less motivated by a sense of crisis and urgency. In conversation with David Batchelor regarding the impact of The Vietnam War and the events of the '60s, Weiner remarks: "Let's say it was easier from 1966 onwards to make good work. There was a *frisson*, a sense that if you didn't pull together and try to make the best culture you could, we were going to be living as abject animals."[63] Immersed in the context of anti-war protest, civil rights and socialist activism, Weiner's work followed the historical avant-garde in turning to language as a site of critical resistance. Crucially, however, the nature of that resistance would not be based upon nihilism but on an *effective* agency.

The year 1966 marked both the largest US deployment of troops in Vietnam to date, as well as the gradual intensification and increased visibility of opposition to armed conflict. From Noam Chomsky's perspective, the peace movement was of such widespread impact that by 1967 it was a determining factor in the US government's inability to declare national mobilization, leading to the critical decision after the 1968 Tet Offensive to begin limiting American troop involvement.[64] Hardt and Negri identify this point as marking "the irreversible military defeat of the U.S. imperialist adventures,"[65] a crisis in US hegemony that was not only military but economic.[66] Hardt and Negri argue that in tandem with this hegemonic collapse, the emergence of New Left, civil rights, Black Power and feminist movements generated "an enormous and powerful affirmation of the principle of constituent power and the declaration of the reopening of social spaces." Ultimately, however, the defeated imperialist authority of nation states would be

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[62] Daniel Buren, *THE CUBE THE WHITE THE IDEALISM (1967 – 1975) followed by 'GOING THROUGH' a guide for the two exhibitions 'TO TRANSGRESS" and "TO PLACE' retrospectively and simultaneously visible at THE LEO CASTELLI GALLERY and THE JOHN WEBER GALLERY 420 West Broadway, New York, September 1976* (New York: Leo Castelli Gallery and John Weber Gallery, 1976); quoted in Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 193.

[63] Weiner, "I Am Not Content, Interview by David Batchelor," *Artscribe* (March/April 1989), reprinted in *Having Been Said,* 188.

[64] Noam Chomsky in Paul Shannon, "The Legacy of the Vietnam War," *Indochina Newsletter* Issue 18 (November – December 1982), 1-5.

[65] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 2000), 179.

[66] In what came to be known as "the Nixon Shock," on August 17, 1971 President Nixon unilaterally ended the direct convertibility of US currency into gold, thus ending the Bretton Woods system (1944) that had been critical to US economic hegemony over nonsocialist countries (see Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 266).

replaced by an even more totalizing form of imperial sovereignty, while productive forces of protest and insurrection would be "reterritorialized" into ever widening circles of consensus.[67] Nonetheless, despite the bleakness of these historical developments, the affirmative experience of "constituent power" in the 1960s would continue to inform Weiner's understanding of political responsibility.[68] As such, Weiner dismissed Dada's irrational, trans-national "liberation" of language as mere bourgeois mystification: "Schwitters wanted a cigarette, stuck his hand in his pocket, didn't find one, and went pyap pyap pyap, pyap, pyap, pya. What for? That is just a game for rich people. Schwitters was a good artist, but he sat in a salon in Hannover and went pyap pyap pyap, pyap, pyap, pya; he traveled to Berlin and went pyap pyap pyap, pyap, pyap, pya."[69] Throughout thousands of notebook pages featuring every imaginable linguistic permutation, there is no single instance of Weiner indulging in the absurdist allure of pure nonsense. Moving beyond Dada's breakdown of speech, Weiner would find ways to contest the legitimacy of ideologically enforced identities, and seemingly indomitable power structures, whilst remaining invested in communicative action. Refusing the universal idealism of both Esperanto and Ursonate, Weiner's strategy of re-directing and even derailing signs never abandons the prospect of meaning.

By the same token, Weiner's commitment to meaning must be distinguished from Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action, first articulated in Germany in the late 1960s and early '70s, with its faith in the agency of *intersubjective* speech acts, and in language as an instrument of consensus and progress.[70] In the Habermassian formulation, communication is oriented towards reciprocity and agreement, grounded in the assumption that reason is the social

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[67] Fredric Jameson puts the "end" of the '60s at 1972 – 74, with the withdrawal of the US from Vietnam (1973) and the subsequent end of mass politics, along with the onset of world economic crisis in 1973 - 1974, and the complete colonization of both agriculture and culture by what Mandel would call "generalized universal industrialization." See Jameson, "Periodizing the '60s" [1984], reprinted in *The Ideologies of Theory, Essays 1971-1986*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 207.

[68] In a paper presented at the "Art and Literature" symposium at Santiago de Compostella, April 1997 Weiner states: "Your history is that you're the first generation in the world that can ever say that the aesthetic, artistic so-called creative community was able to stop two wars. No other generation in the world has ever done that, and I refer to Algeria and Vietnam." See *Lawrence Weiner* (London: Phaidon, 1998), 134.

[69] Weiner in "A Conversation with Christine Breyhan (1999)," *Kunstforum International* (January – March 2000), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 387.

[70] See Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984) and *Legitimation Crisis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975).

/ biological condition that founds an ideal speech community. For Habermas, critical struggles are located in securing the material conditions that enable free intersubjective discourse, along with full participatory access to the formulation of common meanings and values. In his analysis of Habermassian publicity, Terry Eagelton questions whether the universal deep structures of communication can indeed harbor a political ideal as Habermas' theories imply: "Habermas believes, perhaps too sentimentally, that what it is to live well is somehow already secretly embedded in that which makes us most distinctively what we are: language."[71]

According to Jacques Rancière, Habermas' model of consensus, is not merely idealistic, but equated with a "police order," based on an idea of "the proper," that destines individuals and things to a pre-determined distribution of places. Instead of consensus, Rancière offers dissensus, a model of egalitarian disruption in the dominant forms of perception, organization and communication; a de-classificatory operation that, like the upheavals of May '68, disturbs the hierarchies that order what can be seen and said and by whom. Rancière argues that the site of politics is not grounded in rational debate between conflicting interests, but in the struggle to break the police order, thus inventing new ways of being a subject and of "making sense of the sensible."[72]

In diametric opposition to Habermas' model, Weiner's work is never teleologically driven towards consensus, and instead remains perpetually divergent, always multiplying rather than delimiting possible meanings and uses. Rather than fostering agreement through intersubjective speech acts, the work's traces of empirical fact engender conflicting designations, placing common meanings and values always into question. If Weiner does share Habermas' belief that the structures of language already show us how to live happily and well, it will be because language, like collage, is something both heterogeneous, and porous, filled with gaps and spaces that enable every kind of conjunction and disjunction to occur. The commonality fostered by such a language can only be characterized by idiosyncrasy, singularity and contention, establishing a publicity that relies not on univocity but on constant efforts of translation and disputation.

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[71] Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 408.

[72] Rancière, *Dissensus, On Politics and Aesthetics*, 139.

Weiner’s work is thus much closer to Rancière’s declassifying operation of dissensus, whose aesthetic component Rancière defines as follows:

> Within any given framework, artists are those whose strategies aim to change the frames, speeds and scales according to which we perceive the visible, and combine it with a specific invisible element and a specific meaning. Such strategies are intended to make the invisible visible or to question the self-evidence of the visible; to rupture given relations between things and meanings and, inversely, to invent novel relationships between things and meanings that were previously unrelated.[73]

Rancière’s description resonates with Weiner’s emblematic figures of removal. In *A 36” X 36” REMOVAL TO THE LATHING OR SUPPORT WALL OF PLASTER OR WALLBOARD FROM A WALL* (1968), drawing produces a cut that dislodges matter from its place, confounding the self-evident integrity of surfaces (front/back, interior/exterior, art object / institutional support), just as it confuses the specificity of mediums (drawing / painting / sculpture / architecture) (fig. 11). Harkening back to Lucio Fontana’s *Concetto Spaziale* and forward to Gordon Matta-Clark’s architectural interventions, Weiner’s incisive work destabilizes the foundations of aesthetic perception by virtue of an economic extraction that results not in vacancy, but in a welter of unfamiliar connections, like the newly equivalent relation of built object to linguistic sign. Thus, Weiner’s removal simultaneously interrogates the grounds of visibility, ruptures the contours of specific objecthood and relates the work to a discursive framework that extends far beyond the intentions of either artist or receiver. As such the work produces not the absence of sense, but the installation of a *dissensus*.

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[73] Rancière, *Dissensus, On Politics and Aesthetics,* 141.

CHAPTER I: THE RUPTURE OF A SURFACE (language + materials)

Reality does not lie beneath the surface of appearance.[1] *– Douglas Huebler*

As I sit in Lawrence Weiner's studio looking through his notebooks, the artist occasionally walks by and tells a story about something on a page, pointing to a drawing, a clipped-out encyclopedia entry, a postage stamp. Eager to help, he seems to find it curious nonetheless that anyone should be poring over these decades old boxes of paper, and later, as if to underscore his suspicions, he issues an emphatic reminder: "Art is not profound," he says, "Mondrian is not profound."[2] No doubt, Weiner is warning against the trap of thinking that buried somewhere in these files lies the key to the work. After all, Weiner has always insisted that the work harbors no secrets, that it is "self-obvious."[3] Today, however, Weiner goes further, proclaiming in all seriousness that the work is meant to be "superficial." If by 1968, Weiner had rejected the creation of unique art objects, deciding instead to present ideas in language, what would it mean now to describe these ideas as superficial, and what could a body of work based in language have to show us about surfaces?

A RECTANGULAR CANVAS AND STRETCHER SUPPORT WITH A RECTANGULAR REMOVAL FROM ONE OF THE FOUR CORNERS SPRAYED WITH PAINT FOR A TIME ELAPSURE

In 1966 Weiner began making *Removal Paintings*, a series of abstract, largely monochromatic works that consistently altered the canvas's conventional shape in order, systematically, to "fuck

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[1] *Software*, exh. cat. (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1970), 35. *Software* was held at the Jewish Museum, New York (September 16 - November 8, 1970) and at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. (December 16 - February 14, 1971).

[2] In conversation with the author at the artist's studio, New York, May 2005.

[3] Lawrence Weiner: "There's no game, there's nothing obscure. They don't have to know art history, it's quite self-obvious." See "Apartment Number, A Conversation with Colin Lochhead (1981)," *Apartment Number*, exh. cat. (Toronto: A Space, 1982), reprinted *Having Been Said, Writings & Interviews of Lawrence Weiner, 1968 – 2003,* eds. Gerti Fietzek & Gregor Stemmrich (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2004), 115.

it over"[4] (fig. 12). Weiner sabotaged the integrity of painting's two-dimensional plane by cutting a notch out of a corner of each canvas, foregrounding painting's sculptural dimension at the expense of its medium specificity. The works recall Frank Stella's notched *Aluminum Paintings* exhibited in 1960 at the Leo Castelli Gallery, and in fact Weiner would refer to the lines of subtly contrasting color at the top and bottom of his *Removal Paintings* as "stripes"[5] (fig. 13). But while Stella's work was claimed for both Modernist opticality and Minimalist positivity, Weiner's *Removal Paintings* offered a different reading of the shaped canvas, irreconcilable with these extremes.

In his "fight for Stella's soul," Michael Fried argued that the brilliance of Stella's painting lay in its ability to hold as depicted shape, thus overcoming the literal character of the picture support and suppressing the work's tactile materiality.[6] Deftly revealing painting's constitutive flatness while simultaneously resisting its collapse into mere objecthood, Stella's work would thereby compel the viewer's conviction in the medium of painting, theorized by Fried as an experience of optical plenitude and presentness. Disavowing such acts of sublimation Weiner, by contrast, exposed the *Removal Paintings'* objecthood as a sheer matter of fact. This self-evidence stemmed in large part from the removal's frequent placement at the bottom of the canvas, giving the appearance of an object strangely off-kilter, an imbalance subtly exacerbated by the painting's slightly angled stripes. While these works did not register gravity indexically in the manner of Jackson Pollock's dripped paintings, they nevertheless gave a sense of being subject to gravitation. This effect is demonstrated in a 1967 snapshot of Weiner's former Bleecker

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[4] Weiner in "Early Work, Interview by Lynn Gumpert," in *Lynda Benglis, Joan Brown, Luis Jimenez, Gary Stephan, Lawrence Weiner: Early Work*, exh. cat. (New York: The New Museum, 1982), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 120.

[5] Weiner: "Then there was another thing you could to a painting, which was from the propeller paintings, was to stripe a line on the top and the bottom, and that line would have varying angles and the angles were based on how you felt at a particular moment." See "Early Work, Interview by Lynn Gumpert" reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 120. In an interview with Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Weiner acknowledges having seen Stella's 'black paintings' at Stella's first retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in 1970, and being "extremely impressed" with Stella's 1964 interview with Henry Geldzahler. See "Benjamin H. D. Buchloh in conversation with Lawrence Weiner," *Lawrence Weiner* (London: Phaidon, 1998), 9. Alexander Alberro connects the *Removal* paintings to Stella's 1960s 'aluminum' series in Alberro and Alice Zimmerman, "Not How It Should Were It To Be Built But How It Could Were It To Be Built," *Ibid*., 42.

[6] Michael Fried: "In a sense, Carl Andre and I were fighting for his soul." *Discussions In Contemporary Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press 1987), 79. For Fried's discussion of Stella's work see *Three*

Street studio, where a hanging *Removal Painting* is tilted precariously to one side, as though the canvas were about to succumb to the force of its own weight (fig. 14). What the photo makes clear is that Weiner's attack is aimed squarely at the vertical field, at our vision's ability to project upon the perceived object a reflection of the body's vertically oriented, bilateral symmetry.[7] It is that sense of disorientation which Weiner experienced when confronting Pollock's work for the first time, an encounter that left him "ill."[8] While the *Removal Paintings* do not yet directly engage the horizontal field in the way that subsequent works often will (e.g. *5 GALLONS WATER BASE TEMPERA PAINT POURED DIRECTLY UPON THE FLOOR AND ALLOWED TO REMAIN FOR THE DURATION OF THE EXHIBITION* [1969]), their asymmetrical geometry strikes nonetheless at a gestalt sense of good form (fig. 15).[9]

Inasmuch as Weiner's removals replicate the rectangular shape of the canvas, they seem correspondent with the deductive structure "exalted" in Stella's early black and aluminum paintings.[10] In these works the rigorous miming of shape and support would be further reflected in the paint's striped formations, the "paths of brush on canvas" that according to Carl Andre would "lead only into painting."[11] If, however, Stella's work could appear to be born completely from internal necessities as Andre described, the *Removal Paintings* would make no such claims for self-referentiality, opening instead onto utter contingency. According to Weiner, the overall

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American painters: Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, Frank Stella, exh. cat. (Cambridge, Mass.: Fogg art Museum, 1965).

[7] Rosalind Krauss discusses the historical legacy of Jackson Pollock's 'drip' paintings in terms of their deployment of a horizontal field that opposes the "fronto-parallel" virtual field theorized in Gestalt psychology, wherein verticality invites a projection of the bodies' triumph over gravitation. See Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1993), 243 – 329.

[8] Zimmerman: "Weiner remembers being deeply affected as a teenager by a Jackson Pollock painting in the Museum of Modern Art, New York. In trying to comprehend his location within what he read as a star map, he actually became ill." Zimmerman, "Not How It Should Were It To Be Built But How It Could Were It To Be Built," 38.

[9] These aspects of Weiner's painting are discussed by Buchloh in "The Posters Of Lawrence Weiner" in *Lawrence Weiner: The Posters* (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1985), reprinted in Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry, Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 197*5 (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2000), 558 - 566.

[10] Krauss references Fried's analysis of Stella's work: "It is common enough to say of Stella's painting that it is structured deductively – that all internal differentiations of its surfaces derive from the literal aspects of the canvas edge." See Krauss, "Sense and Sensibility, Reflection on Post '60s Sculpture," *Artforum* vol. 12, no. 3 (November 1973), 46.

size of the paintings was determined not by any compulsion arising from within the canvas, but by the practical necessities of his studio. If he made them any higher they'd graze the ceiling, any wider and they couldn't get through the door. Occasionally, Weiner would make the paintings the same height and width of his body, but this scale was not consistently maintained.[12] The size of the removals themselves ranged from discrete notches to hefty chunks, variations determined by "the person who was receiving it."[13] Similarly, colors and their intensity were ostensibly chosen by the receiver, further limiting Weiner's control over the artistic process.

In his analysis of the *Removal Paintings*, Benjamin Buchloh stresses precisely these aspects of randomness, linking them to a re-affirmed Dada tradition exemplified by Robert Rauschenberg's decision to choose the colors of his paintings based on hardware store availability. Buchloh argues that Weiner's paintings would exceed the work of Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns in destabilizing the artist's authorial presumptions, by allocating real decision-making powers to the receiver: "Thus, the autonomous control of the artist over the 'means and ends' of artistic production is now broken up into the manifest conditions of a collaboration, an interaction of partiality negating mythical *totality*, immanent and exterior determinant conditions in mutual fragmentation."[14] Although certainly these gestures would align Weiner's practice with an ideal of chance determinations and audience participation explored in Happenings and Fluxus event-scores, Weiner himself would describe the *Removal Paintings*' collaborative potential in rather circumscribed terms: "I would ask the person who was receiving it what color he wanted,

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[11] Carl Andre, "Preface To Stripe Painting" in *Sixteen Americans*, ed. Dorothy C. Miller (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1959), reprinted in *Cuts: texts 1959 – 2004 / Carl Andre*, ed. James Meyer (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2005), 267.

[12] Weiner references the pragmatic motivation for the *Removal Paintings'* scale in "Symposium at Bradford Junior College" (February 8, 1968) with Carl Andre, Robert Barry and moderated by Seth Siegelaub on the occasion of the exhibition *Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Lawrence Weiner* at Laura Knott Gallery February 4 – March 2 1968; reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 15. See also, Alice Zimmerman, "WORKS AND DAYS – A CONVERSATION WITH MYSELF ABOUT Lawrence Weiner," *EN LA CORRIENTE / IN THE STREAM* (Valencia: Generalitat Valenciana, Conselleria de Cultura, 1995), 106.

[13] Weiner in "Lawrence Weiner at Amsterdam, Interview by Willoughby Sharp," *Avalanche* (Spring 1972), 67, reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 44.

[14] Buchloh, "Lawrence Weiner: The Posters," *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry, Essays on European and American* art *from 1955 to 1975*, 566.

what size he wanted, and how big a removal, as it didn't really matter."[15] More than merely courting indeterminacy, Weiner proclaimed an indifference to size, scale and color, in a quixotic assertion that what the paintings looked like didn't really matter. Retrospectively, he explained "I wasn't interested in paintings as paintings, but as a visualization of what I was thinking."[16] Weiner acknowledged the failure of this attempt to lure the viewer's attention away from the unique object of phenomenological experience, towards a conceptual engagement: "Really this work was dealing with the idea of painting rather than a painting. But of course it was still a painting. An artist can say a cup of coffee is art, but he's a damn fool if he says a cup of coffee isn't a cup of coffee just because it's art."[17]

The hazards of Weiner's approach at this moment would find articulation in Sol LeWitt's article *Paragraphs On Conceptual Art* published in the summer of 1967. Here LeWitt discusses the exigencies of working with physical materials, while attempting to focus the viewer on an underlying concept or idea:

> Three dimensional art of any kind is a physical fact. This physicality is its most obvious and expressive content. Conceptual art is made to engage the mind of the viewer rather than his eye or emotions. The physicality of a three-dimensional object then becomes a contradiction to its non-emotive intent. Color, surface, texture and shape only emphasize the physical aspects of the work. Anything that calls attention to and interests the viewer in this physicality is a deterrent to our understanding of the idea and is used as an expressive device. The conceptual artist would want to ameliorate this emphasis on materiality as much as possible or use it in a paradoxical way. (To convert it into idea.)[18]

Weiner's paradoxical solution to painting's problematic physicality would be to try to turn his paintings into signs. Stella's work had shown how this could be achieved without filling the canvas with words, numbers or logos in the manner of Johns, Twombly or Warhol. Writing about "the signs that haunt Stella's early stripe paintings" Rosalind Krauss recognized Stella's seemingly nonlinguistic canvases to be shaped as emblems such as stars and crosses, part of a

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[15] Weiner in "Lawrence Weiner at Amsterdam, Interview by Willoughby Sharp," *Avalanche* (Spring, 1972), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 44.

[16] Weiner in "Lawrence Weiner at Amsterdam, Interview by Willoughby Sharp," *Avalanche* (Spring, 1972), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 44.

[17] Weiner in "Lawrence Weiner at Amsterdam, Interview by Willoughby Sharp," *Avalanche* (Spring, 1972), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 45.

[18] Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs On Conceptual Art," *Artforum* vol. 5, no. 10 (Summer 1967), 79-84, reprinted in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2000), 15.

public inventory of signs merged by Stella to the flatness of a deductively structured support (fig. 16). According to Krauss, "the real achievement of these paintings is to have fully immersed themselves in meaning, but to have made meaning itself a function of surface – *of the external, the public, or a space that is no way a signifier of the a priori, or of the privacy of intention*."[19] In *Sense and Sensibility, Reflection on Post '60s Sculpture*, Krauss argues that Stella's "expurgation of illusionism" was designed to reject a notion of meaning as something projected or invented within the interiority of a "constituting consciousness" and subsequently externalized as form. Stella's work would make meaning the result of a superficial object encounter, grounded within a public space determined by semiological convention, generated concurrently *with* experience as opposed to established *a priori* in the artist's or viewer's mind. Krauss thus distinguishes Stella's work from the "traditionalism" of "private language" and models of intentionality which she finds in certain Conceptual practices. Robert Barry's self-interview contribution to the exhibition *Prospect 69* provides an example:

> Q: What is your piece for Prospect '69?
>
> RB: The piece consists of the ideas that people will have from reading this interview.
>
> Q: How can these ideas be known?
>
> RB: The piece in its entirety is unknowable because it exists in the minds of so many people. Each person can really know that part which is in his own mind.[20]

Krauss links the subjectivism implied in Barry's statements to what is known in Logical Positivism as "protocol language," wherein meaning depends upon the singularity and unverifiability of private sense impressions, such as one's experience of color or of pain ("that part which is in his own mind"). Joseph Kosuth's definition of art as "a presentation of the artist's intention"[21] also

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[19] Krauss, "Sense and Sensibility, Reflection on Post '60s Sculpture," 47.

[20] Robert Barry's self-interview submitted to the exhibition catalog for *Prospect 69* at Kunsthalle Dusseldorf (September 30 – October 12, 1969), reprinted in Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972* (1973: Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 113.

[21] Kosuth: "A work of art is a tautology in that it is a presentation of the artist's intention, that is, he is saying a particular work of art *is* art which means, is a *definition* of art." Kosuth, " Art After Philosophy," first published in *Studio International* 178, no. 915 (October 1969), 134-137; no. 916 (November 1969), 160 – 161; no. 917 (December 1969), 213-213; reprinted in *Art after Philosophy and After* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1993), 20.

conforms to this model of meaning, anchored within the constituting consciousness of "a private Self."[22]

In his early *Propeller* paintings, first exhibited at Seth Siegelaub Contemporary Art (September 14 – October 10, 1964), Weiner clearly rejected any formulation of meaning based on the privacy of intentions (figs. 17a & 17b). Featuring enlargements and reformulations of TV test patterns, the *Propeller* paintings revealed meaning to be a function, not only of a conventional sign system, but of the information network of broadcast television. Alexander Alberro analyzes these aspects of the *Propeller* series, whose readymade imagery "frustrated critical attempts to interpret artworks as stemming from the personal subjectivity of an exceptional, unique sensibility."[23] Similarly, the *Removal Paintings* were not expressions of subjective thought or intention, offering instead collectively constructed "emblems" for painting, made familiar through repetition across multiple surfaces.[24] As a sign, the removal was particularly "rich" in the manner described by Charles Sanders Peirce, inasmuch as it appeared simultaneously as an index (bearing an evidentiary trace of the act of removal), an icon (having a diagrammatic relation to the painting it signified) and as a symbol (of "the idea of removal" or "the idea of painting" as such).[25] Weiner's strategy to transform painting into sign would be complicated, however, by the *specific* materiality of canvas and paint, their obdurate resistance to being seen as a *general* emblem. Having learnt his lesson, by 1968 Weiner would increasingly refrain from the presentation of physical constructions, instead using language as his preferred medium. As such, one could even read the removal retrospectively as a symbol for Weiner's practice as whole, consistently theorized in terms of the loss of the object of direct perceptual

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[22] Krauss, "Sense and Sensibility, Reflection on Post '60s Sculpture," 46.

[23] Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2003), 84-86.

[24] Weiner: "The removal of an edge from a presentation (object) within the context of art simply reduces what could be misunderstood as a wall painting or so into what in effect it is: an emblem with information on it (a logo)…" Weiner, "From a Dialogue with Edward Leffingwell," *Dialogue* (January /February, 1984), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 153.

[25] C.S. Peirce articulates a "triad" of sign types, each with a distinct relation to the designated conceptual object. This triad consists of *icon*, a sign such as a photograph or a diagram built upon a relation of resemblance; *index*, a sign based on an existential connection between sign and object producing a deictic relation, as exemplified by a weathervane or symptom; and *symbol*, a sign such as language whose relation to the object is arbitrary. For a useful summary of Peirce's "triad" see Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 19 – 25.

experience (i.e. painting / sculpture / performance) and its replacement by linguistic sign. Alberro describes this transformation in terms of a radical erasure:

> Yet, rather than prioritizing the moment when the work physically materialized, as Pollock had ostensibly done, Weiner's new work emphasized the generative role of the title. The work was thus split into two distinct parts – one centered on the descriptive title, the other on the performance and its residue. This was the last step before the object was erased from the operation altogether by the growing importance of the linguistic utterance.[26]

Anne Rorimer articulates a similar position, focusing on what she perceives as the autotelic nature of Weiner's texts:

> Lawrence Weiner came to the radical conclusion in the late 1960s that language could function in lieu of other materials typically associated with making works of art. Since 1968, Weiner has exhibited works that rely on language to be the very substance of the message it delivers, existing as the means to its own end: the production of meaning.[27]

The blank space left by the removal thus comes to represent both the constitutive absence inscribed within the structure of the sign as trace, and the purported emptiness left behind by Weiner's "linguistic turn."[28] According to this picture, the materiality of language comes at the expense of the materiality of the referent, and indeed any physical constructions of Weiner's statements are typically relegated to a secondary status as Gregor Stemmrich observes: "In his case the building of a work is a retrospective illustration, representation, or information and has absolutely no value as art."[29] Such a dismissal would seem to invoke a hierarchy, however, one that obscures the fact that Weiner's work is formulated not purely as language, but crucially as "language + the material referred to."[30] This mixture is already embodied in the paradoxical

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[26] Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* , 93.

[27] Anne Rorimer, "Lawrence Weiner: Displacement," *Robert Lehman Lectures on Contemporary Art* (New York: Dia Center for the Arts, 1996), 19.

[28] In *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* Alexander Alberro titles his chapter on Weiner's work "The Linguistic Turn." The phrase, often associated with Conceptual art, was made prominent in Richard Rorty's 1967 collection of essays on linguistic philosophy, *The Linguistic Turn* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992). Rorty attributes the initial coinage to Bergmann: "All linguistic philosophers talk about the world by means of talking about a suitable language. This is the linguistic turn, the fundamental gambit as to method on which ordinary and ideal language philosophers [OLP, ILP] agree" (see *The Linguistic Turn*, 8).

[29] Gregor Stemmrich, "Lawrence Weiner – Material and Methodology," *Having Been Said*, 434.

[30] According to Zimmerman, subsequent to the 1969 publication of Weiner's *Statement of Intent*, the work would be formulated as "language + the materials referred to." See Alberro and Zimmerman, "Not How It Should Were It To Be Built But How It Could Were It To Be Built," *Lawrence Weiner* (London: Phaidon, 1988), 46. Liz Kotz writes that the formulation of "language + the materials referred to" dates from 1972 (see Liz Kotz, *Words To Be Looked At, Language in 1960s Art* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2007), 209.

operations of removal, which simultaneously convert painting into idea (sign) while at the same moment drawing us closer to the work's tangible materiality.

Standing in front of a series of *Removal Paintings* exhibited on the occasion of Weiner's 2007-2008 retrospective at The Whitney Museum of American Art, a story told by Alice Zimmerman comes to mind. In an effort to avoid virtuosity, Weiner had opted to spray the paint with an air compressor, an industrial method of paint application designed to efface any trace of expressivity. Zimmerman recalled that although Weiner used a mask, in the studio of less than 1000 square feet, "the air was thick for hours afterwards."[31] Remarkably, these paintings bear the traces of that labor, in surfaces whose flatness appears veiled by columns of air, thick with paint. Far from the standardized sheen of industrial exteriors, these colors unexpectedly give a sense of varying weights and densities, shifting between transparency and opacity. But all this, we are told, is of anecdotal interest, a kind of material dross left behind by the linguistic statement, whose "abstract formulation" alone takes precedence over any material realization.[32] Nevertheless, confronted by the *Removal Paintings*, one hesitates to say that they are immaterial. And now, with the paintings far from view, when reading *A RECTANGULAR CANVAS AND STRETCHER SUPPORT WITH A RECTANGULAR REMOVAL FROM ONE OF THE FOUR CORNERS SPRAYED WITH PAINT FOR A TIME ELAPSURE* (1968) one wonders what type of contact remains with those oddly shaped, densely colored surfaces.

A SERIES OF STAKES SET IN THE GROUND AT REGULAR INTERVALS TO FORM A RECTANGLE TWINE STRUNG FROM STAKE TO STAKE TO DEMARK A GRID A RECTANGLE REMOVED FROM THIS RECTANGLE

It is November 26, 2007 and Weiner is sitting on a panel at MoMA with his friends Robert Barry and their former dealer, Seth Siegelaub. Under discussion is Siegelaub's ground-breaking work in

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[31] Zimmerman, "Works And Days – A Conversation With Myself About Lawrence Weiner," 106.

[32] Comparing Weiner's work to the process-oriented aspects of Richard Serra's sculpture, Kotz writes: "And both artists would construct pieces that involved these material, sculptural processes – except that for Weiner, the abstract formulation, in its continual openness to re-articulation, takes precedence over the realization, however transitory or compelling" (Kotz, *Words To Be Looked At, Language in 1960s Art,* 209).

art publications, catalogs such as *The Xerox Book* (1968) and *One Month* (1969) which served not as supplementary information but as the primary site of exhibition, providing the most expedient way for artist and dealer to "show ideas."[33] Taking the floor, Siegelaub begins to talk about a series of "dematerializations," seeming to validate Lucy Lippard and John Chandler's theorization of 1960s artistic practice as a loss of emphasis on art's physical manifestation, motivated in large part by a desire to escape commodification. "Such a trend," they would write, "appears to be provoking a profound dematerialization of art, especially of art as object, and if it continues to prevail, it may result in the object's becoming wholly obsolete."[34] Although the term "dematerialization" would become nearly synonymous with Conceptual art, its relevance was almost instantly discredited by many of the artists whose practice it was meant to describe.[35] Weiner himself debunked the term in a 1972 interview: "When artists are dealing with so-called 'dematerialization of the object,' and they present large sheaves of papers, photos, objects, all signed, sealed, delivered, insured, they haven't dematerialized anything, they've just substituted six reams of papers and six reams of photos for a large stone sculpture. There's no material difference."[36] Nonetheless, forty years later Siegelaub persists in using the word, listing the dematerialization of critical exhibition sites: his 52nd street New York gallery, Bradford Junior College (site of *Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Lawrence Weiner,* 1968) and Windham College (site of *Hay, Mesh, String,* 1968). He mentions too the dematerialization of key players absent from the panel, namely Joseph Kosuth, Douglas Huebler (deceased) and Carl Andre. In the case of Andre, however, Siegelaub makes a critical distinction, stating that the sculptor's nonattendance

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[33] The panel discussion at MoMA, New York*, From the Specific to the General: The Publications of Seth Siegelaub* was moderated by Alexander Alberro and took place on November 26, 2007. Notably, more than merely offering an expedient way to "show ideas," Siegelaub's seminal publications were designed to provide a venue for presentation and distribution outside the conventional gallery / museums structure. The very existence of the MoMA symposium attested to the inevitable institutionalization of those early interventions.

[34] Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art" [1967], *Art International* vol. 12, no. 2 (February 1968), reprinted in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* 46-50.

[35] See for instance Terry Atkinson's letter written in direct response to Lippard and Chandler's article, "Concerning The Article 'The Dematerialization of Art'" [March, 23, 1968] in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, 52-58. See also Francis Colpitt, "The Formalist Connection and Originary Myths of Conceptual Art" in *Conceptual Art, Theory, Myth, and Practice,* ed. Michael Corris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 36-40; Charles Harrison, "Einleitung" in Art *& Language: Terry Bainbridge, Michael Baldwin, Harold Hurrell, Joseph Kosuth*, eds. Paul Maenz and Gerd de Vries (Cologne: DuMont, 1972), 11-17.

[36] Weiner in "Lawrence Weiner at Amsterdam, Interview with Willoughby Sharp" reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 48.

is only fitting, given that his works are “antithetical” to those of the artists present. Upon hearing that last account, Weiner shrugs his shoulders in silent protest. Clearly that is not how he would tell the story.

Both Weiner and Andre described themselves as “materialists,” and looking at their respective contributions to the outdoor show *Hay, Mesh, String* (1968), the correspondences in their attitudes towards sculpture and materials seem obvious. Weiner, having “preconceived the idea of displacing 70 feet by 100 feet” decided to build on the campus lawn a 70 x 100 foot grid made of 510 yards of hemp twine, stapled to 34 stakes hammered into the ground, with a 10 x 20 foot notch removed from the grid (fig. 18).[37] In its expansive horizontality, Weiner’s work fulfilled Andre’s idea of sculpture as a road, a space with no single point of view “except a moving one.”[38] And as with Andre’s floor pieces, Weiner’s grid offered no privileged perspectives, having been made to be surveyed as well as entered by an embodied, roaming viewer. During a symposium accompanying the exhibition, Andre and Weiner voiced their agreement on the importance of “place” in sculpture, not in the sense of creating a new environment, but in altering the existing one so as to make aspects of it “more conspicuous.”[39] When Weiner described his sculpture’s effect of bringing out whatever was around and underneath the landscape (like two poles of a building that suddenly gained prominence, although they were barely noticeable prior to the work’s construction), Andre called this a perfect example of “place in an environment.”[40]

Partly due to budgetary constraints, one of the stipulations of the show was that the artists could work only with materials indigenous to the site (Windham College, VT). This in no way hampered Weiner or Andre who, as a general rule, insisted on using familiar, commonly

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[37] “Symposium at Windham College” [April 30, 1968], with Carl Andre and Robert Barry, moderated by Dan Graham on the occasion of the exhibition *Carl Andre, Robert, Barry, Lawrence Weiner* (April 30 – May 31, 1968), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 19.

[38] “My idea of a piece of sculpture is a road. That is, a road doesn’t reveal itself at any particular point. Roads appear and disappear. We either have to travel on them or beside them. But we don’t have a single point of view for a road at all, except for a moving one, moving along it. Most of my works – certainly the successful ones – have been ones that are in a way causeways – they cause you to make your way along them or around them or to move the spectator over them. They’re like roads, but certainly not fixed point vistas. I think sculpture should have an infinite point of view. There should be no one place nor even a group of places where you should be.” Andre, “Sculpture as a Road” [1970], from an interview with Phyllis Tuchman; excerpt reprinted in *Cuts: texts 1959 – 2004 / Carl Andre*, 259.

[39] “Symposium at Windham College” reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 16 – 17.

[40] “Symposium at Windham College” reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 17.

available materials, precisely in order to be able to undermine conventional / commercial definitions of use. Andre described this approach: “The materials I use have been processed by manufacture… but have not been given the final shape of their destiny by the manufacturing culture… I wouldn’t ever be interested in laying a brick wall with mortar.”[41] For the show, Andre laid 183 units of uncovered, common baled hay end to end, in an array that lead from the woods into an adjacent field. Entitled *Joint*, the temporary, wall-like structure offered a perfect example of Andre’s resolve to use standardized objects in non-standard ways (fig. 19). In its deployment of identical repeated elements, *Joint* also reflected Andre’s “atomism,” his desire to see matter in terms of particles, whose integrity he would vigilantly guard. Andre admitted that his deep interest in elemental form was motivated by a sensual response, “a very primitive infantile love of solids and of mass, of the thing that was the same all the way through.”[42] Prior to *Joint*, Andre had experimented with compound materials, using a coat of blue acrylic paint to cover a sculpture made of chipboard sheets (*Blue Lock,* 1967). Perhaps the overlay of paint resembled too much the duplicity of commercial veneers and Andre rejected this work as a “miserable failure,” reaffirming his allegiance to the work’s material core.[43]

Andre’s sculptural imperative called for an immediate, non-transferable experience of matter, purged not only of additives layers, but most importantly, freed from symbolic meaning. For Andre the conversion of matter into sign enabled its entry into economic systems of circulation, resulting in an inevitable bastardization. “Matter as matter rather than matter as symbol is a conscious political position I think, essentially Marxist,” he would declare.[44] Andre’s position resonates with Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s call for a phenomenological mode of questioning that would resist the degradations and depletions of language:

> It asks of our experience of the world what the world is before it is a thing one speaks of and which is taken for granted, before it has been reduced to a set of manageable, disposable significations; it directs this question to our mute life, it addresses itself to that

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[41] Andre in Sandy Ballatore, “Carl Andre on Work and Politics,” *Artweek* 7, no. 24 (July 3, 1976), 1.

[42] Andre in an interview with Phyllis Tuchman [1970], excerpt reprinted *Cuts: texts 1959 – 2004 / Carl Andre*, 248.

[43] Andre in Jeffrey Inaba, “Cal Andre’s Same Old Stuff,” *Assemblage* 39 (1999), 41.

[44] Andre in “Carl Andre: Artworker” [1970], interview by Jean Siegel, excerpt reprinted in *Cuts: texts 1959 – 2004 / Carl Andre*, 61.

> compound of the world and of ourselves that precedes reflection, because the examination of the significations in themselves would give us the world reduced to our idealizations and syntax.[45]

The possibility of a material encounter based on "our mute contact with the things, when they are not yet things said" is reflected in Andre's sculptural commitment to "aluminum as aluminum, a bale of hay as a bale of hay."[46] Weiner, on the other hand, would recognize that any attempt to assert the phenomenological priority of a "mute" materiality would result, not only in an idealization, but in precisely those fetishistic operations of commodification that Andre abhorred. According to Henri Lefebvre's Marxist analysis of space, when faced with the trap of exchange, the greatest error would be to consider "things as themselves," for to do so would be to ignore the fact that things are always "the substrate of mendacious signs and meanings," dissimulating the social relations which they embody.[47] Problematizing the essentialism of "the thing that was the same all the way through," Weiner accepted the heterogeneous mixture of objects, signs and meanings as an unavoidable necessity, later proclaiming: "THE NATURAL OBJECT [ITSELF] IS ALWAYS AN ADEQUATE SYMBOL."[48]

Weiner's Windham sculpture surely revealed a host of material qualities, ranging from the tension of strung twine to the mutual resistance of stake and turf. Of equal physical importance, however, were the jobs these materials performed in the signifying practices of their environment. As such, the embodied perceptual experience of Weiner's work could never be characterized as purely abstract, inasmuch as the grid continued to serve as an instrument of observation and control. At the Windham symposium Weiner made clear the link between his grid and land ordinance:

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[45] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Invisible and the Invisible* (1964; Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 102. The phenomenological possibility of a mode of interrogation based on "our mute contact with the things, when they are not yet things said" (38), while relevant to Andre's work, is totally rejected in Weiner's practice, wherein there is no access to a "presuppositionless" field, nor any possibility of "mute contact" with objects. Furthermore, Weiner's work rejects Merleau-Ponty's assumption that language imposes a *reduction* of sensory plenitude.

[46] Andre in an interview with Phyllis Tuchman (1970), excerpt reprinted *Cuts: texts 1959 – 2004 / Carl Andre*, 144.

[47] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (1974; Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 80 – 81.

[48] Weiner, *Turning Some Pages* (London: Howard Smith Paper, 2007), n.p.; published in conjunction with the lecture "Turning Some Pages" held at BAFTA, London (May 15, 2007).

> One of the things that came up, when I had been speaking of using a grid, was Sergeant Preston, I believe, where you bought one square inch in the Yukon and they had split it up with strings, and each one of these squares was the square you owned, you sent in a box top and a quarter or a dollar or a dime, whatever it was.[49]

The stakes, too, would maintain their function as symbols and guarantors of property ownership and entitlement:

> In your whole school the entire environment is staked. You look around and every place you go there is a stake, and any stake means one cesspool, one urinal, one this one that. So the idea of taking these stakes that were already around and then just stringing them into a form which would displace a certain amount of space on the ground just became very intriguing.

Although Weiner acknowledged each material's part in buttressing existing power structures, his strategy of displacement was designed to subvert those operations. Thus, removing a chunk of the grid undercut its totalizing capacities to render space, objects and individuals available for observation, organization and 'information.'[50] Making the stakes in the environment publicly visible highlighted the disciplinary and proprietary structures typically hidden underneath the space. Stringing the grid with hemp twine raised issues of contraband and the legal enforcement of proper use. Like Andre, Weiner tried to derail the destiny of objects. For Weiner, however, there would be no liberation into "matter as matter," inasmuch as all objects were like stakes in the ground, marked by the uses and abuses to which they had been put. Thus, in one sense Siegelaub was justified in claiming that Andre's practice was antithetical to Weiner's, inasmuch as Andre still believed in the artist's ability to present matter scrubbed clean of unwanted signs, precisely delimiting the relation of words and things.

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[49] "Symposium at Windham College" reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 20.

[50] Regarding resistance to the disciplinary structure of the grid, Michel de Certeau writes: "If it is true that the grid of 'discipline' is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it, what popular procedures (also 'miniscule' and quotidian) manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them, and finally, what 'ways of operating' form the counterpart, on the consumer's (or 'dominee's'?) side, of the mute processes that organize the establishment of socioeconomic order." See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), xiv. De Certeau invokes Foucault's concept of the grid as a "microphysics of power" which operates without possessor or privileged space, seeming to function autonomously through a technological ability to distribute, classify and analyze objects. "It is the miniscule and ubiquitously reproduced move of 'gridding' (*quadriller*) a visible space in such a way as to make its occupants available for observations and 'information.' The procedures that repeat, amplify, and perfect this move organize that discourse that has taken the form of the 'human sciences.'" *Ibid*., 46-47.

If Weiner and Andre shared a certain perception of space and place, they differed completely in their handling of surface. Krauss emphasizes the distinct superficiality of Minimalism in her discussion on the discourse of '60s aesthetics:

> It had been focused on justifying or legitimating the internal structure of a given work – a structure made visible by the articulations of a surface by drawing or of a three-dimensional object by the separation of its parts – by means other than those of mimesis or illusion. In this way the minimalist aesthetic came to be deeply engaged with the condition of the literal, with the purging of illusion from the work of art by making everything about it external. Illusionism depends on the convention of the "inside" of a work of art, on a space it does not share with that of the rest of the world. Literalism was an attempt to make the work, whether sculpture or painting stop at its surface.[51]

Krauss would reference Andre's floor sculptures, works like *144 Lead Square* (1969) as exemplary (fig. 20). Utterly relieved of depth and its attendant illusions, the extreme flatness of these sculptures offered one solution to the elimination of sculptural interiority and its pretenses to hidden meaning. The seemingly unobstructed visibility of Andre's metal plates would be underscored by the legibility of their gridded articulation, producing drawing as "a real function of the separateness of each square or tile of metal."[52] Ironically, however, Andre's desire for self-evidence would convert every material, no matter how physically opaque, into another form of transparency.[53] Again we are reminded of Andre's insistence on materials that were the same all the way through, objects whose identity was so patent, that even the density of a lead square could take on the clarity of a pane of glass. "More than anything else," Krauss writes, "minimalism was focused on surface, and where the surface stops, which is edge." Weiner's surfaces, by contrast, would never appear so clear-cut. Refusing the transparency of both structure and substance, Weiner's work would present not the hidden core of objects, but rather,

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[51] Krauss, "Eva Hesse: Contingent," *Bachelors* (1979; Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), 99.

[52] Krauss, *Bachelors*, 100.

[53] In *Passages In Modern Sculpture*, Krauss discusses the work of Constructivist sculptor Naum Gabo from the 1910s and '20s in relation to the creation of a "conceptually transparent" ideated space, wherein an object's form would be made fully accessible to the intellect by providing visual access to the object's *core*: "For the literal transparency of the intersecting vertical planes of artworks such as the 1923 *Column* is merely the material analogue for the underlying idea of the construction: namely, that one must have access to the core of the object where the principle of its structure – its rigidity and its coherence as a volume – is lodged in the intersection maintained along its axial center." See Krauss, *Passages In Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1977), 60-61. Krauss posits the *superficial*, contingent experience of Minimalist sculpture as antithetical to this model of constructivism based on the viewer's conceptual / analytic perception of the "generative core" as the *a priori* source-point for (and explanation of) an object's extended views. Chapter II explores the ways in which Weiner also rejects this model of transparent intellection.

their basic impurity, revealing even the most elementary surface to be "laden with meaning" in ways that could never be fully perceived or circumscribed.[54]

Weiner explicitly acknowledged the aggression of his Windham sculpture when he admitted that initially, he had wanted to use barbed wire.[55] Built in April 1968, the work would sustain a connection to the violent history of campus insurrections that culminated in the events of May, the crisis of the university, the riots aimed at seizing space and language in order "to combat the logic that assigns people to their places," as Kristin Ross has described.[56] As such, it seems fitting that Weiner's dysfunctional grid would result in a rather consequential turf war of its own, as Weiner recalls:

> I built my piece, which consisted of stakes and twine in the form of a rectangle with another rectangle removed, where the jocks practiced their touch football. It's very hard to play touch football with those stakes and twine, so they cut it. At this time, the last vestiges of heavy metal macho sculpturehood still existed and that led to some sort of vigilante posse getting ready to undo the philistine's damage. When I got there and looked at it, it didn't seem as if the philistines had done the work any particular harm… There was this emotional transition right then and there when I realized it didn't matter. And it certainly didn't constitute a reason to go out and beat somebody up.[57]

Faced with the unstrung remains of his sculpture, Weiner realized that the work need not be tethered to any particular built object, and that its presentation in language would enable it to exceed those temporal and physical confines. Rorimer explains this pivotal transition, framing it as a defensive move: "Weiner decided that, despite any physical damage, the sculpture would remain intact by virtue of the fact that it had been formulated entirely in language by way of the descriptive phraseology which at that point had become a part of his work."[58] Thus, Weiner's turn to language is seen as an effort to keep the work "intact," protected from acts of vandalism and physical deterioration, able to "retain its identity across multiple manifestations" as Liz Kotz

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[54] Weiner: "ALL ASPECTS OF THE CULTURE OF THE MATERIAL ENGAGED ARE ALLOWED INTO PLAY WITHOUT METAPHOR WITHOUT (A) SENSE BUT LADEN WITH MEANING (THE WORK THEN IS ALLOWED TO FURNISH MEANS FOR METAPHOR) <FOR EACH VIEWER OF THE EXHIBITION>" Fax response to Andreas Hapkemeyer in "Lawrence Weiner. The Klagenfurt Installation," *Lawrence Weiner: Slipping And Sliding,* ed. Arnulf Roshmann (Klagenfurt: Kärntner Landesgalerie, 1996), 40.

[55] "Symposium at Windham College" reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 20.

[56] Kristin Ross, *May '68 and its Afterlives* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 24.

[57] "Early Work, Interview by Lynn Gumpert (1982)" reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 122.

[58] Anne Rorimer, "Lawrence Weiner: Displacement," 22-23.

describes.[59] Although such readings sound reasonable, in following this logic we would have to believe that Weiner uses language as a preservative and a prophylactic, whereas nothing could seem further from the works' dispersed materiality.

A few months before *Hay Mesh String*, Andre, Barry and Weiner exhibited together in a show organized by Siegelaub at Bradford Junior College at the invitation of Douglas Huebler.[60] Weiner showed a *Removal Painting*. Barry showed three monochromatic paintings, one of which Barry had hung low to the ground, "so that you have to look down on it."[61] Andre exhibited a work that one could both look down on and walk upon. *Untitled (144 Pieces of Zinc)*, like all of Andre's metal sheet works, had virtually no volume, resulting in a sculptural experience of pure exteriority (fig. 21). The zinc's maximally extended surface exposed the work completely to its environment, a vulnerability registered in scratches and traces left by unpredictable forms of contact. Andre would exaggerate this sense of contingency by refusing to anchor the units in place, preferring always to use a "clastic" structure which he defined as "broken or preexisting parts which can be put together or taken apart without joining or cementing."[62] Over and above any pretense to tautological identity or intact elemental purity (wood as wood), it is precisely these qualities of clastic (un)binding and superficial connection that would make Andre's work so relevant to Weiner's sculptural concerns. And if there is a trait which Weiner's work and Andre's materials share most deeply, it is a tendency to disintegrate, to scatter and spill like a bagful of eight hundred plastic blocks, strewn randomly across a floor (*Spill*, 1966) (fig. 22).

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[59] Liz Kotz, *Words To Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2007), 205.

[60] *Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Lawrence Weiner*, Laura Knott Gallery, Bradford Junior College, Bradford, Mass. (4 February – 2 March 1968).

[61] Robert Barry quoted in Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* , 107.

[62] Andre in an interview with Phyllis Tuchman (1970); excerpt reprinted in *Cuts: texts 1959 – 2004 / Carl Andre*, 142.

According to Weiner, it is around this moment in 1968 that he would formulate his programmatic *Statement of Intent*, published in the exhibition catalog for *January 5 – 31, 1969* held at Siegelaub's gallery.[63] That original, legalistic text reads:

> 1. The artist may construct the piece
> 2. The piece may be fabricated
> 3. The piece need not be built
>
> Each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership

Through the *Statement of Intent*, Weiner invalidated a number of dominant aesthetic hierarchies. Firstly, he eliminated any priority of objects constructed by the artist's hand, a distinction already problematized within the context of Minimalism. More radically, he proposed an *equivalence* between the work's construction/fabrication and its 'un-built' linguistic formulation, thus negating the existence of a privileged object that might anchor the work's meaning in any single optical /tactile experience. Abandoning the necessity of conventional construction ("The piece need not be built"), Weiner far exceeded what Donald Judd had described as Minimalism's attempt to "get clear" of painting and sculpture via the insertion of an undefined "specific object" into "real" three-dimensional space.[64] Pushing this logic further, Weiner would produce un-specified, un-built linguistic interventions, expanding the work's dimensions not only beyond the picture frame, or off the pedestal, but into the full range of concrete socio-political contexts, inasmuch as language offered Weiner a quintessentially unframeable material:

> ….the picture-frame convention was a very real thing. The painting stopped at that edge. When you are dealing with language, there is no edge that the picture drops over or drops off. You are dealing with something completely infinite. Language, because it is the most non-objective thing we have ever developed in this world, never stops.[65]

Weiner's excitement over the boundless potentiality of language recalls Tony Smith's revelatory encounter with the New Jersey Turnpike construction site:

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[63] Lawrence Weiner in *January 5 – 31, 1969*, exh. cat. (New York: Seth Siegelaub, 1969), n.p. Although the *Statement of Intent* was first published in 1969, Weiner dates it from 1968. See Adrian Shaughnessy, "The Work Need Not Be Built, A Discussion With Lawrence Weiner," *Turning Some Pages* (London: Howard Smith Paper, 2007), n.p.

[64] Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," *Arts Yearbook* 8, 1965; reprinted in Thomas Kellein, *Donald Judd: Early Work, 1955-1968* (New York: D.A. , 2002).

[65] Lawrence Weiner, "Art Without Space" symposium with Weiner, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, moderated by Seth Siegelaub, broadcast on WBAI-FM, New York (November 2, 1969); excerpts printed in *Having Been Said*, 33.

> The experience on the road was something mapped out but not socially recognized. I thought to myself, it ought to be clear that's the end of art. Most painting looks pretty pictorial after that. There is no way you can frame it you just have to experience it.[66]

Using practically every format of publication (books / posters / postcards/LPs/movies etc..), Weiner maximized the works' potential to intervene in "real" space, aggressively contesting the framing confines of institutional display and distribution. Rather than merely incorporating processes of repetition within a single specific object, Weiner's recourse to the *iterability* of language resulted in an inherent multiplicity.[67] In proclaiming indifference to the work's condition(s) at any given moment ("I realized it didn't matter"), the *Statement of Intent* aligned once again with LeWitt's contention that the work's significance lay in its *idea* rather than in its provisional *form*, which would remain subject to theoretically infinite realizations.

At the same time, Weiner's declaration of intent distinguished his own anti-formalist position from that of Joseph Kosuth, exemplified in the self-reflexive regress of the propositional title "Art As Idea As Idea". For this series, dated 1966 - 1968, Kosuth presented disposable, photographically enlarged dictionary definitions of words such as "art," "meaning," and "definition," pointing to a fully abstract experience of exclusively linguistic meaning, wholly *pre-determined*, first of all by the artist, and only secondarily by the dictionary (fig. 23).[68] Kosuth himself attested to these restrictions when he proclaimed: "A work of art is a tautology in that it is a presentation of the artist's intention, that is, he is saying that a particular work of art is art, which means, is a

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[66] Tony Smith quoted in Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* (June 1967); reprinted in *Minimal Art, A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1968); 131.

[67] Reading Weiner's work in relation to that of Fluxus artist George Brecht, Kotz identifies a shared emphasis on what Jacques Derrida has termed "the iterability of the mark," referring to a linguistic materiality based on repetition, temporality and delay (see Kotz, *Words To Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art*, 98). On the iterability / instability of the sign Derrida writes: "The identity of the mark is also its difference and its differential relation, varying each time according to context, to the network of other marks. The ideal iterability that forms the structure of all marks is that which undoubtedly allows them to be released from any context, to be freed from all determined bonds to its origin, its meaning, or its referent, to emigrate in order to play elsewhere in whole or in part another role. I say 'in whole or in part' because by means of this essential insignificance the ideality or ideal identity of each mark (which is only a differential function without an ontological basis) can continue to divide itself and to give rise to the proliferation of other ideal identities." Derrida as quoted in Asja Szafraniec, *Beckett, Derrida and the Event of Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007) 81. The question of "ideality" will be taken up in chapter II. According to Weiner the capacity to separate from any given context does in fact constitute an ontological basis ("There is nothing that's not out of context"). See note 75 following.

[68] In an interview featured in the documentary film *This Not That: The Artist John Baldessari* (2010), Joseph Kosuth states: "If you see your work as 'meaning' and you're putting it into the world, you're not casual about what the meaning means, and so you have to have some kind of control over that."

definition of art."[69] In complete contrast to this hyper-Modernist fortification of autonomous art and authorial privilege, Weiner's *Statement of Intent* underscored the *limits* of intentionality, explicitly dissolving any artistic authority over the work's materialization, and by extension its meaning and use. Weiner's catalog entry for the exhibition *18 Paris IV. 70* makes explicit the work's openness to all possible readings and material instantiations:

> *RUPTURED*, 1969
> There is no correct or incorrect way to construct the piece. As the work is concerned with the idea of ruptured in all of its ramifications, whatever implications the exhibition sees fit to construe is fine.[70]

In the 1969 symposium " Art Without Space," an exchange regarding the use of language points to the incompatibility of Kosuth's and Weiner's approaches:

> LW: …I'm working within the realm of complete generalities. There can be no misreadings. If somebody chooses, when they receive a piece, to build it themselves, they can't do it wrong. They can do it in a way that might displease me personally but not aesthetically. They can't do it wrong.
>
> JK: Conceptually.
>
> LW: Not Conceptually. They just can't do it wrong. You like the word 'conceptual.' For you, it's fine. It fits you. I don't really see it fitting me. I don't think there is a pre-conceived concept because the material is so erratic.[71]

As Weiner's rebuttal suggests, his move towards the increased abstraction of generic statements was designed not to place the work in a rarefied sphere of ideation, but to encompass every possibility of material specification. Moving abstraction away from the essentialist, anti-materialist trajectory initiated by artists such as Vasily Kandinsky ("Must we not then renounce the object altogether, throw it to the winds and instead lay bare the purely abstract"), Weiner turned to linguistic abstraction precisely in order to expand the work's contact with *concrete*, physical materiality.[72] By contrast, Kosuth would press Kandinsky's purist vision of abstraction towards the most complete renunciation of objecthood. Writing in "Art After Philosophy" (1969) Kosuth

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[69] Joseph Kosuth, " Art After Philosophy" reprinted in *Art after Philosophy and After*, 20

[70] Weiner in *18 Paris IV. 70*, exh. cat. (Paris: Seth Siegelaub, 1970), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 35.

[71] " Art Without Space," symposium with Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth and moderated by Seth Siegeluab, broadcast on WBAI-FM (November 2, 1979), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 33.

[72] Vasily Kandinsky quoted in Leah Dickerman, "Inventing Abstraction" in *Inventing Abstraction 1910 – 1925: How a Radical Idea Changed Modern Art*, ex. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2012), 13. For an

cited Duchamp's first unassisted readymade (the *Bottle Rack* of 1914) as the historical origin of an art whose physical properties (form / morphology) would be essentially irrelevant, and whose meaning would derive solely from the artist's conceptual ability to define the nature of art.[73] Kosuth's misprision of the readymade as an act of intentional definition, offered the artist a model for bracketing objects, enabling him to deal with "abstractions of abstractions" in order to stress "the immateriality of the work."[74] Weiner's rejection of what he called "the Duchampian ethic" stemmed from this limited reading of the readymade as a gesture of re-contextualization (placing a non-art object in an art context) that remained fundamentally indifferent to the object's materiality.[75] In place of Kosuth's pseudo-Duchampian 'concept,' construed as an immaterial, *a priori* mental construct, born from the intentional / definitional capacities of the artist, Weiner would instead posit the 'idea' as an impersonal and "erratic" relationship of language to materials. Kosuth's linguistic investigation of "art in general," on the other hand, would follow a reductivist logic, strictly delimiting the work's scope, not only invalidating the categories of painting and sculpture, but eliminating extraneous material/factual considerations.[76] In "Art After Philosophy" Kosuth precisely demarcated art's conceptual purview: "In other words, the propositions of art are

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analysis of a materialist trajectory that counters Kandinsky's spiritualist, immaterialist ideal see Peter Galison's "Concrete Abstraction" in the same volume (350 – 357).

[73] Kosuth's reading of the readymade as a model of intentionality ignores the fact that the readymade undermines traditional notions of authorship and intention through the logic of the chance encounter. In response to the question "How do you choose a readymade?" Duchamp would reply "It chooses you, so to speak" (as quoted in Thierry de Duve, "Echoes of the Readymade: Critique of Pure Modernism" in *The Duchamp Effect* [Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1996], 105). Krauss had early on dismissed the notion that Duchamp's readymades could stand as a model for intention. Regarding Duchamp's *Fountain* (readymade from 1917), Krauss writes: "the arthood of the Fountain is not legitimized by its having issued stroke-by-stroke from the private psyche of the artist; indeed it could not. So it is like a man absentmindedly humming and being dumbfounded if asked if had meant that tune or rather another. That is a case in which it is not clear how the grammar of intention might apply" ("Sense and Sensibility," 43-52, n.4).

[74] "Four Interviews with Barry, Huebler, Kosuth, Weiner," *Arts Magazine* (February 1969), 22-23. These "self-interviews" ostensibly conducted by Arthur R. Rose (Kosuth's pseudonym, which references Duchamp's alias Rrose Sélavy), were published following the seminal exhibition *January 5 – 31, 1969* at Seth Siegelaub Contemporary Art, New York.

[75] Weiner: "I realized sculpture was about 'Put in Place,' volume or mass put in place. It's a matter of transportation. You move it from one place to the other, which was a rejection of the Duchampian ethic. I still find myself engaged in rejecting the idea that changing the context of a material constitutes an aesthetic gesture. I think that all materials normally change their context and it's not necessarily an aesthetic gesture. There is nothing that's not out of context." Quoted in "Early Work, Interview by Lynn Gumpert" in *Lynda Benglis, Joan Brown, Luis Jimenez, Gary Stephan, Lawrence Weiner: Early Work*, exh. cat. (New York: The New Museum, 1982); reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 123.

not factual, but linguistic in *character* – that is they do not describe the behavior of physical, or even mental objects; they express definitions of art, or the formal consequences of definitions of art. Accordingly we can say that art operates on a logic."[77] Weiner, by contrast, refuses such dogmatic essentialism, offering a model of generic language which is not aimed at the transcendence of particularity (as in a classification or categorical definition that subsumes specific cases), but instead *affirms* a multiplicitous array of meanings and uses, as works constantly shift between the generality of an abstract formulation and the specificity of a concrete "ramification."[78] Weiner chose to work with language precisely because of this labile condition: "BEING ITSELF (LANGUAGE) A MATERIAL ONE IS THEN ABLE TO WORK GENERALLY WITH RATHER SPECIFIC MATERIALS."[79]

Due in large part to a historical coincidence, Weiner's decision to leave the work in language is invariably viewed in the context of linguistic philosophy. In "The Linguistic Turn," published in 1967, Richard Rorty defines this "philosophical revolution" as "the view that philosophical problems are problems which may be solved (or dissolved) either by reforming language, or by understanding more about the language we presently use."[80] Certainly, A.J. Ayer's "anti-metaphysical revolt" would prove exemplary for Kosuth's theorization of art as a quasi-philosophical method. Ayer writes: "The propositions of philosophy are not factual, but

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[76] Kosuth: "… the word art is general and the word painting is specific. Painting is a *kind* of art. If you make paintings you are already accepting (not questioning) the nature of art." See "Four Interviews with Barry Huebler Kosuth, Weiner," 23.

[77] Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy," 20 - 21.

[78] Weiner's *catalogue raisonné, Specific & General Works* (Villeurbanne: Le Nouveau Musée / Institut d'Art Contemporain, 1993) makes no clear distinctions between specific and general, indicating that the works constantly shuttle between these two registers.

[79] Weiner, "[Regarding the (a) Use of Language within the Context of Art]," *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* vol. 1, no. 1 (February 1978); reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 84. For a discussion on Alfred North Whitehead's theorization of "generic" ideas which affirm multiplicity rather than being founded upon a logical notion of classification or categorization (and the transcendence of particularity) see Isabelle Stengers, *Thinking With Whitehead: A Free And Wild Creation Of Concepts*, trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2011), 19 -41.

[80] Richard Rorty, *The Linguistic Turn* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 3. Rorty credits the phrase "the linguistic turn" as having been coined by Bergmann: "All linguistic philosophers talk about the world by means of talking about a suitable language. This is the linguistic turn, the fundamental gambit as to method, on which ordinary and ideal language philosophers (OLP, ILP) agree." See Rorty, *The Linguistic Turn*, 8.

linguistic in character – that is they do not describe the behavior of physical, or even mental objects; they express definitions, or the formal consequences of definitions. Accordingly, we may say that philosophy is a department of logic."[81] While Ayer's formula is perfectly echoed in Kosuth's propositional theory of art, it conflicts entirely with the material facticity of Weiner's non-definitional statements. Furthermore, if within linguistic philosophy, one goal was to eliminate or "dissolve" certain philosophical problems, by attending to the ordinary use of language (as opposed to a philosophical / metaphysical misuse), Weiner would instead use ordinary language to raise questions regarding "commonsensical" meanings, problematizing habitual uses rather than accepting them as given.[82] If, as Ayer would phrase it, linguistic philosophy's aim was to bring out the implications of what we already know, Weiner's work would be designed conversely to make us re-evaluate and question those initial assumptions. Thus, Weiner's project participates in Alfred North Whitehead's critique of "The Fallacy of the Perfect Dictionary," the illusion that human language already holds within it all the fundamental ideas applicable to existence, with the result that critical analysis is confined to "the limits of the dictionary."[83] Whitehead contrasts the "safety" of this mode of thinking, with the "adventure" of a speculative approach, one that attempts to enlarge rather than restrict the scope of what can be said, introducing new verbal characterizations. Indeed, Weiner's work bears a close relationship to Duchamp's own notion of the readymade as an expansion of meaningful possibility. Regarding the infamous case of *Fountain* (1917), a readymade consisting of an upturned urinal rejected for exhibition by the Society of Independent Artists because of its vulgar materiality, Duchamp writes: "Whether Mr. Mutt [one of Duchamp's pseudonyms] with his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view – created a new thought for that

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[81] A.J. Ayer quoted in Rorty, *The Linguistic Turn*, 5.

[82] Rorty: "For the only sense in which it is true that philosophers are better agreed about words than about things is that philosophers who disagree about everything else can agree on how they use words in non-philosophical discourse. If we do not draw upon this agreement, then there is no point in taking the linguistic turn at all." See *The Linguistic Turn*, 19.

[83] Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (1938: New York: The Free Press, 1968), 173.

object."[84] While Weiner debunks the myth that an artist's powers of re-contextualization could make "useful significance disappear" ("An artist can say a cup of coffee is art, but he's a damn fool if he says a cup of coffee isn't a cup of coffee just because it's art"), he nonetheless aims to generate new thoughts for objects, relying not only on the artist's powers of designation (choosing / placing), but equally on the ungovernable effects of linguistic designation / dissemination.

A REMOVAL OF AN AMOUNT OF EARTH FROM THE GROUND
THE INTRUSION INTO THIS HOLE OF A STANDARD PROCESSED MATERIAL

In late 1968 Weiner published his first book, *Statements* (divided into "Specific" and "General" sections). Here the *Removal Paintings* and the Windham sculpture would be re-presented along with twenty-two other works, using concise linguistic formulations, without recourse to editorial or illustration. Moving away from the self-evidence of conventionally constructed objects, Weiner's *Statements* share Robert Barry's aspiration to deflate modernist / formalist assumptions regarding the adequacy of visual experience as a sole mode of material investigation. As Peter Osborne notes, this would be the rationale behind Barry's use of materials such as radio carrier waves and inert gases, whose invisibility would indicate that an aesthetic investigation of matter should include its "physico-chemical constituents," and not only its immediately perceptible properties.[85] In a 1969 interview with Patricia Norvell, Barry explained his intention to exceed the parameters of strictly visual arts: "And at the time I was interested in making objects, if you could call them objects – I guess maybe they were not, in the traditional sense of objects – which were totally outside of our perceptual limitations. One of the things which I tried was to deal with all of those other parts of the electromagnetic spectrum outside of the visual arts, that very narrow band in there which we perceive as light. And part of that spectrum involved radio waves."[86] In *90mc Carrier Wave (FM),* first exhibited at Siegelaub's gallery in 1969, Barry used a concealed hand-

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[84] Marcel Duchamp quoted in T.J. Demos, "The Language of Expatriation" in *Dada Culture: Critical Texts On The Avant-Garde*, Dafydd Jones ed. (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2006), 112, n.8.

[85] Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art* (London, New York: Phaidon, 2002), 29 – 30.

[86] Robert Barry in an interview with Patricia Norvell (1969) in *Recording Conceptual Art,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Patricia Norvell (Berkeley: UCLA Press, 2001), 89. During this interview Barry also states: "I

engineered FM radio transmitter to emit radio waves at a frequency of 90 megacycles. In the absence of textual indicators, or a transistor radio tuned to precisely the right frequency, the work would remain, not only unframeable but imperceptible. Osborne writes that such works "enact a natural-scientific deconstruction of Greenberg's supposedly 'physicalist' ideology of medium-specific modern art, by drawing attention to the conceptual dimension of all reference to materiality."[87] Moreover, Barry's work signaled the fact that our relationship to materials exceeds both perceptual *and* conceptual understanding, inasmuch as carrier wave and human receiver sustain a mutual impact, regardless of whether or not the work becomes known. On the other hand, Barry's insistence on fabrication, along with his acceptance of the materials' imperceptibility fundamentally distinguished his practice from Weiner's, whose works would be constituted in the process of *reception* rather than production ("The work gains its sculptural qualities by being read, not by being written").[88] Instead of using invisible objects to point to a material existence beyond our perceptual capacities, *Statements* withdrew objects from immediate vision in order to reveal the meaning of materials to be grounded in discourse, a fact rendered opaque by an exclusionary focus on "physico-chemical constituents," abstract formal qualities, or mute materiality.

Regarding Weiner's distinctive handling of words in *Statements* Birgit Pelzer writes: "He would fashion them into sculptural blocks by trying to determine a statement's impenetrable core, its unalterable textual formulation"[89] (fig. 24). Colin Gardner proclaims that the resulting texts

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suppose I could be called a materialist, in that I don't impose some process, some alien process, onto the material I've chosen. I just simply use it the way it is or think it's meant to be used."

[87] Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art*, 30.

[88] Weiner in "Interview with Benjamin H.D. Buchloh," 28.

[89] Birgit Pelzer, "Dissociated Objects: The Statements / Sculptures of Lawrence Weiner," *October* 90 (Autumn 1999), 87. In fact, Weiner does occasionally alter the textual formulation of work, sometimes changing word choice and punctuation, and even eliminating whole sections of text. See, for instance, the difference between the presentation of the 1989 work *HERE THERE & EVERYWHERE* as it appears in *Specific & General Works* (Villeurbanne: Le Nouveau Musée / Institut d'Art Contemporain, 1993), #631; and in *Situation*, ed. Claire Doherty (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Whitechapel Gallery and the MIT Press, 2009), 150 (the section "*ALL OVER IT ALL HERE THERE & EVERYWHERE*" is taken out and rules are inserted between phrases). Another notable example is the work permanently installed at the Walker Art Cente: *BITS & PIECES PUT TOGETHER TO PRESENT A SEMBLANCE OF A WHOLE* (1991) - which appears as *BITS & PIECES PUT TOGETHER TO PRESENT A SEMBLABLE OF A WHOLE* in *Specific & General Works.*

would produce a "timeless linguistic gestalt."[90] By contrast, Weiner's own assessment of *Statements* sounds far more commonplace:

> The word "statements" in my first book was not even about utterances but referred to what you get at the end of the month, after used services. When you get your American Express bill, it says "statement enclosed." It tells you that you drank fourteen tequilas, you did this, you did that. That's all *Statements* ever was. It told you how many pieces of stone were moved and where.[91]

Weiner's aim to give an account of "how many pieces of stone were moved and where" recalls Ed Ruscha's aspiration for book works such as *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1963), conceived as a "straightforward way of getting the news and bringing it back"[92] (fig. 25). In Weiner's approach, however, objectivity is linked not to the ethics of reportage, but placed squarely within the framework of administration, confirming Buchloh's analysis of Conceptual art's aesthetics.[93] Indeed, *Statements* are not "utterances" tied to a communicative act between sender and receiver. Neither do they constitute definitions or valid general principles.[94] They are rather a kind of paper trail, akin to a statement of bills, the bureaucratic "index" of an information age. Viewed as textual residue, *Statements* seems to lack the authority that some authors' descriptions would give it. This limitation, however, remained critical to Weiner's design. Weiner would frequently voice his opposition to "impositional" art, to works that gave instructions, or that required certain parameters of viewing or engagement in order to be experienced.[95] Having just

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[90] Colin Gardner, "Lawrence Weiner: The Space Between Words," *Artforum* vol. 29, no. 3 (November 1990), 156 – 60.

[91] Weiner in "Interview by Phyllis Rosenzweig," *Lawrence Weiner: With the Passage of Time* (Washington, D.C.: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, 1990), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 237.

[92] Ed Ruscha in David Bourdon, "Ruscha As Publisher [Or All Booked Up]," *Art News* vol. 71 (April 1972), reprinted in *Leave Any Information At The Signal, Writings Interviews, Bits, Pages*, ed. Alexandra Schwarz (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2002), 41.

[93] Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962 – 1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990), 105-143.

[94] Dieter Schwarz writes that Weiner's work avoids "linguistic idealizations" through a dialectic treatment of the works' content and context. See "Learn To Read Art" in *Lawrence Weiner Books 1968 – 1989, Catalogue Raisonné*, ed. Dieter Schwarz (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther Konig / Le Nouveau Musée, 1989), 139.

[95] Weiner: "I'm very against impositional art. I think all directional art, I'd almost say choreographic art, art that gives directions to people to do, art that imposes things on people in a non-conventional aspect, like utilizing the newspaper but not putting it in the advertisement section is an imposition that art never has the right to do. That becomes aesthetic fascism… I do not approve of art that you cannot supposedly experience unless you do prescribed things, because that's choreography, and to me really and truly is aesthetic fascism." Quoted in an interview with Patricia Norvell (1969), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 27.

suffered the repercussions of building a giant grid on a campus lawn, it seems logical that Weiner would thereafter prefer the relative understatement and convenience of books, which could easily be put aside. In a text published on artist's books, Weiner would explain: "They (books) are perhaps the least impositional means of transferring information from one to another (source)."[96]

In July / August 1970, *Studio International* published a special "magazine exhibition" organized by Siegelaub, in which six curators were each given an eight-page section, and invited to make the space available to any artists of their choosing. Critic Lucy Lippard selected Weiner, along with Robert Barry, Sol LeWitt, Douglas Huebler, On Kawara, Stephen Kaltenbach, N.E. Thing Co., and Fredrick Barthelme, each of whom was asked to pass on a situation in which the next artist was to work.[97] For Weiner, even this round-robin game proved too coercive, and his published "instructions" for On Kawara simply read:

> Dear On Kawara,
>
> I must apologize but the only situation I can bring myself to impose upon you would be my hopes for your having a good day.
>
> Fond Regards, Lawrence Weiner[98]
>
> (fig. 26)

This extreme sense of tact falls neatly in-line with Weiner's aspirations for a non-impositional presentation. It seems at odds, however, with the work's material content, which aims invariably to create a disturbance, to be "the tough guy in the bar," as Weiner would say.[99]

AN AMOUNT OF BLEACH POURED UPON A RUG AND ALLOWED TO BLEACH

Also see "A Conversation With William Furlong Concerning 20 Works by Lawrence Weiner Presented in London 1980," audio cassette produced and published by Audio Arts, London, 1980, reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 109; and "Lawrence Weiner at Amsterdam" reprinted in *Having Been Said* 47.

[96] Weiner, "Idea Poll: Statements on Artists' Books by Fifty Artists and Art Professionals Connected with the Medium," *Art-Rite* (Winter 1976/77), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 82.

[97] This magazine exhibition appeared in *Studio International* vol. 180, no 924 (July / August 1970). For Lippard's discussion of this project see Lippard, *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972*, 179.

[98] "48-Page Exhibition," *Studio International* (July / August, 1970), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 37.

[99] Weiner in "Benjamin H. D. Buchloh In Conversation With Lawrence Weiner," *Lawrence Weiner*, 13.

It is November 14, 2007, the night before the opening of Weiner's first American retrospective, and The Whitney Museum is hosting a celebration dinner. During the cocktail hour, guests in festive attire board the main elevator, headed for the third floor where the exhibition is on view. But on the ride up, something is amiss, something smells.

"Did someone throw up in here?" a lady asks.

"No," the elevator attendant replies. "It's the art."

On the floor there is a stain left by *AN AMOUNT OF BLEACH POURED UPON A RUG AND ALLOWED TO BLEACH* (1968), introducing the show with an abrasive odor (fig. 27). That sense of impropriety will mark many of the works, and especially those few selected to be built (all dated 1968):

> *ONE PINT GLOSS WHITE LACQUER POURED DIRECTLY UPON THE FLOOR AND ALLOWED TO DRY*
>
> *TWO MINUTES OF SPRAY PAINT DIRECTLY UPON THE FLOOR FROM A STANDARD AEROSOL SPRAY CAN*
>
> *A 36" X 36" REMOVAL TO THE LATHING OR SUPPORT WALL OF PLASTER OR WALLBOARD FROM A WALL*
>
> *A WALL CRATERED BY A SINGLE SHOTGUN BLAST*[100]
> (figs. 28, 29 & 30)

Weiner's desire to "fuck" painting over is taken to extremes in these works, all of which offer allegories of both painting and sculpture, reconstituted in terms of debasement and defacement.[101] If Weiner's earlier canvases had blurred the division between painting and sculpture (through rectangular removals), these works collapse that distinction altogether,

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[100] *Lawrence Weiner: As Far As The Eye Can See*, Whitney Museum of Art, New York (November 15, 2007 – February 10, 2008). Curators Donna De Salvo and Ann Goldstein chose the works to be built for the exhibition. The exhibition would subsequently travel to The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (April 13 2008 – July 14 – 2008) and to K21 Kunstammlung Nordhein Westfalen (September 27, 2008 – January 11, 2009).

[101] For a discussion of the allegorical aspect of work Weiner's work, see Buchloh, "The Posters Of Lawrence Weiner"; as well as Dieter Schwarz, "Utiliser le langage, utiliser l' art: le travail de Lawrence Weiner" in *Langage et modernité*, ed. Buchloh (Villeurbanne: Le Nouveau musée, 1991). Also see Buchloh's commentary on Schwarz's essay from the same volume (131-154).

relegating paint (white lacquer, spray paint) to the horizontal plane of sculpture and using sculptural operations (carving / cratering) within the vertical realm of painting. Signifying any floor or wall as their support, the works flout not only the conditions of medium specificity, but also the parameters of institutional constraint.[102] Simultaneously, they reject any pretense to autonomous existence by emphasizing the contingencies of linguistic distribution and contextual materialization. Recoding the artistic gesture as not only de-skilled but destructive (spilling, shooting, vandalizing, corroding), Weiner's works violently attack "the idea" of traditional aesthetic experience, institutional validation and authorial privilege.

On the other hand, while Weiner deflates the pretensions of painting and sculpture, like Andre he attempts to dignify the materials themselves, giving a sense of "matter mattering" beyond any allegorical significance.[103] Thus, materials are shown asserting their own "imperative" (bleach bleaches, paint pours, aerosol sprays, gun shoots) generating a sense of material agency that pervades the exhibition, confronting the viewer with a host of surface disruptions (*A TURBULENCE INDUCED WITHIN A BODY OF WATER* [1969]) and unpredictable mixtures (*AN AMOUNT OF SEAWATER POURED UPON THE GRASS)* [1968]), as well as chemical reactions (*FERMENTED* [1969]) in which the role of human protagonists remains an open question. [104] In developing this approach to materials, Weiner moved away from Aristotelian thinking, and in this respect the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead serves once more as a guide. In *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead develops a conception of reality as *process* in diametric opposition to Aristotle's doctrine of primary substance, wherein identity remains preserved in the assertion that "one primary substance cannot be a component in the nature of another" (e.g. "wood as wood"). Rejecting this essentialist ideal, Whitehead would focus instead

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[102] Buchloh discusses these aspects of Weiner's work in "The Posters of Lawrence Weiner.'

[103] Carl Andre: "Sculpture, you might say is matter mattering. We compliment a painter when we call her a colorist. My vocation is to be a materialist" (*Cuts: texts 1959 – 2004 / Carl Andre,* 140).

[104] Weiner: "This may sound really egotistical, but when presented with a material, I begin to address its imperative. For instance, a cigarette. One of the imperatives, the one that Richard Serra presents, is that a cigarette seems to produce cancer. Another of its imperatives is that it seems to have a taste structure. The third is the fact that it burns." Quoted in "Portraits from a Conversation" in "Conversation with Kathy Acker, Joseph Kosuth, Sandro Chia, Philip Glass, Barbara Kruger, David Salle, Richard Serra," *Artforum* (May 1982); reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 133 – 134.

on “the connectedness of things” [105] conceiving of reality in terms of relations, as “the mutual immanence of occasions, each in the other,” a unity he will refer to as “nexus.” [106] In place of primary substance and the “static self” Whitehead posits a “life in motion in which all actualities partake.”[107]

Whitehead’s philosophy directly relates to the logic of Weiner’s structures, which would also treat objects as processes, focusing not on identities and essences but on a dynamic interrelatedness (between word and thing, content and context). As such, while many works consist of an isolated verb (*IGNITED* [1969]), nouns will always appear in combination (*A FLARE IGNITED UPON A BOUNDARY* [1968]). If Whitehead would lament that, “The taint of Aristotelian Logic has thrown the whole emphasis of metaphysical thought upon substantives and adjectives, to the neglect of prepositions and conjunctions,” then works such as *TO AND FRO. FRO AND TO. AND TO AND FRO. AND FRO AND TO.* (1971) would reverse this imbalance. [108] Favoring transformation, connection and motion, Weiner displaces the concept of substantives altogether, destabilizing any illusions of a “static self” (*AN INDIVISIBLE ENTITY DIVIDED REDUCED OR PARTITIONED* [1969]).

In his narrative analysis, Kosuth argues for the historical priority of Weiner’s process-based work within the context of post-Minimal sculpture.[109] Weiner himself would make no claim to “anti-form,” acknowledging that these inchoate, non-expressive configurations of common materials were not new territory when he began to investigate them, pointing to Allan Kaprow’s pile of used car tires in Martha Jackson’s sculpture gallery (*Yard,* 1961), or Robert Rauschenberg’s painted wooden chair and canvas (*Pilgrim*, 1960)[110] (figs. 31 & 32). Although it

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[105] Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1961), 233.

[106] *Ibid.,* 197.

[107] *Ibid.*, 275.

[108] *Ibid.,* 276.

[109] Referencing Weiner’s poured paint works, and especially those directly executed on the floor, Kosuth suggests that Weiner’s work not only preceded but inspired works such as Serra’s splashing pieces, also begun in 1968. See “Influences: The Difference between ‘How’ and ‘Why’” in *Art After Philosophy and After*, 80-81. Weiner’s relationship to sculptural practice will be further investigated in Chapter VI in this volume.

[110] In conversation with the author, November 2007. Regarding *Pilgrim* (1960) Rauschenberg would comment “I’m particularly attracted to elements in life that for the most part are taken for granted so successfully that no one sees them or understands them anymore… the chairs that I do incorporate in my

might seem counter-intuitive to compare Weiner's statements to Rauschenberg's *Combines*, laden as they are with all manner of things (animals, bedding, furniture, clothes, clocks, tires etc.…) the artists nonetheless shared a distinct material sensibility (fig. 33).[111] For Weiner, the fact that Rauschenberg presented built objects would not necessarily indicate a fundamental divergence in their practices. On the contrary, Weiner would repeatedly insist that physical objects convey information in the same manner as linguistic statements, with no hierarchy separating these forms of transmission, no added benefit to seeing / smelling the work over reading about it in a catalogue. Again, Weiner explained this equivalence in terms of his non-impositional ethic:

> "It would be a fascist gesture on my part if I were to say, you can accept things only on a verbal information level, which would be the type on the page, or you can accept them only on an oral information level. For myself, if the information is conveyed, then the piece exists. And it doesn't matter if it's physically conveyed or whether it's conveyed verbally or orally.[112]

While Weiner's assertion sounds straightforward enough, it will nevertheless take some perceptual adjustment to understand how reading *ONE PINT GLOSS WHITE LACQUER POURED DIRECTLY UPON THE FLOOR AND ALLOWED TO DRY* transfers information in quite the same way as a pool of sticky white paint spread upon the ground.

ONE STANDARD AIR FORCE DYE MARKER THROWN INTO THE SEA

In his report on *The Postmodern Condition* (1979), Jean-François Lyotard defines contemporary experience, not in terms of a visual, spectacular or even textual mediation, but in terms of the conversion of all knowledge into quanta (bits) of information, a translation required in order to circulate, commoditize and control knowledge with the capabilities afforded by cybernetic

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work are classically ordinary. Maybe that's their revenge." Rauschenberg in Mark Rosenthal, *Artists at Gemini G.E.L.: Celebrating the 25th Year* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993).

[111] In "Lawrence Weiner – Material and Methodology" Stemmrich discusses the connection between Weiner's work and Rauschenberg's *Combines* (*Having Been Said*, 430).

[112] "Lawrence Weiner at Amsterdam, Interview with Willoughby Sharp" [1972], reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 44.

technology.[113] Unlike the spectacle, theorized by Debord as an image relation, information transmission does not limit itself to any specific sense or medium, extending its reach over all sensible domains whether tactile, visual, aural or textual. All matter and experience thus become perceptible and manipulable in their status as various inflections of information, which in turn becomes a kind of transcendent univocal entity and primary index of value.[114]

That physical objects were invariably layered with information was a fact presciently acknowledged in Rauschenberg's first monochrome, *White Painting with Numbers* (1949), a painterly surface inscribed with fragments of numerical data that in no way resembled the life model that was their purported subject (fig. 34).[115] Rauschenberg would subsequently favor supports covered in newsprint, which enabled him to "activate a ground so that even the first strokes in the painting had their own unique position in a gray map of words."[116] In a 1976 interview, Rauschenberg described perception in terms of a dialectic process of seeing and reading: "When you see an image it almost doesn't exist until you can turn it into language. When you read something, if you can't see it, you almost can't remember it too, so the words become the images and the images become words."[117] By the time Rauschenberg expressed this view, it had already been confirmed in the explosion of text-based practices that flourished in the context of visual art in the late '60s. Of utmost importance to Weiner's work was Rauschenberg's early intuition that text and matter would be mutually translatable precisely because of their shared status as information, enabling Weiner to read Rauschenberg's

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[113] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report On Knowledge* (1979: Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984), 4-5.

[114] Physicist John Archibald Wheeler offers an extreme version of the pervasiveness of information: "Otherwise put every it – every particle, every field of force, even the space-time continuum itself – derives its function, its meaning, its very existence… from bits." Quoted in James Gleick, *The Information* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2011), 356. According to Lyotard, it is precisely this ability to be quantized that renders information available to totalizing mechanisms of production, circulation and control.

[115] Leo Steinberg recounts that Rauschenberg painted *White Painting With Numbers* in 1949 while at the Art Students' League life drawing class, during which he turned his back on the model in order to work on this painting. See Steinberg, *Other Criteria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 85.

[116] Rauschenberg quoted in Simon Morley, *Writing On The Wall: Word And Image In Modern Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 118.

[117] Rauschenberg quoted in Branden Joseph, *Random Order: Robert Rauschenberg And The Neo-Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2003), 162.

materials, not as found objects but as a form of “notation.”[118] This condition of matter as signaling device or message transmission is made explicit in numerous of Weiner’s works:

ONE STANDARD AIR FORCE DYE MARKER THROWN INTO THE SEA (1968)

A FLARE IGNITED UPON A BOUNDARY (1969)

THE PEACE OF THE PYRENEES OVER AND OUT (1970)

According to Steinberg a sense of matter as information is already at stake in Rauschenberg’s *Combines*, conceived as a space of data processing, versus pure optical viewing:

> To hold all this together, Rauschenberg’s picture plane had to become a surface to which anything reachable – thinkable would adhere. It had to be whatever a billboard or dashboard is, and everything a projection screen is, with further affinities for anything that is flat and worked over – palimpsest, cancelled plate, printer’s proof, trial blank, chart, map, aerial view. Any flat documentary surface that tabulates information is a relevant analogue of his picture plane – radically different from the transparent projection plane with its optical correspondence to man’s visual field. And it seemed at times that Rauschenberg’s work surface stood for the mind itself – dump, reservoir, switching center, abundant with concrete references freely associated as in an internal monologue – the outward symbol of the mind as a running transformer of the external world, constantly ingesting incoming unprocessed data to be mapped in an overcharged field.[119]

Remarkably, Steinberg traces the shift from optical to conceptual in a body of work whose physicality could not have been more sumptuous. If Rauschenberg’s *Combines* articulate the plane of thought, of memory, or of information processing, that space is conceived in wholly embodied terms (fig. 35). This inextricable relation of mental to carnal is part of the legacy of Marcel Duchamp, whose desire “to grasp things with the mind the way the penis is grasped by the vagina” led him to reject a space of disincarnated cognition, or of thought transparent to itself.[120] As previously discussed, Weiner would dismiss the term “Conceptual” and its associated immateriality, preferring instead to talk about his ideas as objects with tangible

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[118] Speaking specifically about the non-Expressionistic materiality of Rauschenberg’s *Combines* Weiner notes: “Rauschenberg is exceptional in his dealing with material. […] What makes Rauschenberg so interesting - the *Combines* – is that he never attempted to transform the material. He attempted to use the material in a sense of notation, not in a sense of a found object. He used it to construct a parable. And that is what makes the work interesting, as opposed to an expressionist work – or, for me, the work of Beuys who will instill the work with something.” See “Red as well as Green as well as Yellow as well as Blue, Interview by Irmelin Lebeer,” *Chroniques de l’* art *Vivant* (December, 1973), previously unpublished excerpts printed in *Having Been Said*, 72.

[119] Steinberg, *Other Criteria*, 88.

[120] Marcel Duchamp in Lawrence Steefel, *“*The Position of La Mariée mis a nu par ses celibataires, même (1915 – 1923) in the Stylistic and Iconographic Development of the Art of Marcel Duchamp*”* (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1960), 312; quoted Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1993), 111.

physical qualities stating: “I believe the work itself produces a certain amount of energy, which in turn displaces a certain amount of space...”[121] The notion of an idea creating physical space through displacement is explicitly figured by Weiner’s operations of removal (of walls, paper, canvases, rugs) and the interstitial spaces they reveal (fig. 33). Undoubtedly, Weiner would be drawn to Rauschenberg’s work by the radical spatiality it disclosed.

Branden Joseph identifies “space” as the critical operative element in Rauschenberg’s *Combines*, enabling the extended re-configuration of object relations within the work by multiplying the possible relays between objects and their environment:

> “Space,” then, is the means by which process enters Rauschenberg’s neo-dada collage. External events interpenetrate with the fixed collaged elements already there and thus alter, break up, and recharge the interconnections between them. As the opening of the artwork to process and temporal change, space (rather than negation) is the neo-dada artwork’s mechanism of nonidentity. Reactivating the contingent relational arrays between materials, it works to postpone the moment of the artwork’s ultimate reification. “The moment a picture begins to look like you think it does,” Rauschenberg contended, “it’s nearly gone.”[122]

Rauschenberg’s spatial bulwark against reification, articulated through the intensely corporeal “data” of the *Combines* would be progressively diminished in his later silkscreens (figs. 36 & 37). Joseph links their increased flatness and relative immateriality not to the constitutive conventions of painting, but to the spectacular operations of television broadcasting, theorized by Guy Debord as the rendering of all human activity into “image objects,” available for circulation, consumption and control. Joseph describes Rauschenberg’s revised strategy for the silkscreen medium, as generating an “outside” of television through processes of iteration, stressing the image’s gaps and fissures which defeat any pretense to static unity or spectacular presence.[123]

This Deleuzian effort to release the forces of difference within repetition would also be crucial to Weiner’s work, as evidenced in his contribution to the *Xerox Book*. Contemporary with the publication of *Statements* in 1968, Siegelaub mounted a group exhibition which similarly consisted only of the information in the catalog. The artists: Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris and Weiner, were each given twenty-five

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[121] “Art Without Space,” symposium with Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth and moderated by Seth Siegelaub, broadcast on WBAI-FM (November 2, 1979), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 31.

[122] Joseph, *Random Order*, 156.

pages in which to present their work. Siegelaub had wanted to exploit what was then the most democratic form of publishing available and hence the catalogue was named the *Xerox Book.*[124] Weiner's contribution was the statement: *A RECTANGULAR REMOVAL FROM A XEROXED GRAPH SHEET IN PROPORTION TO THE OVERALL DIMENSIONS OF THE SHEET* (fig. 38). The text was hand-written on the lower right-hand side of a piece of graph paper and then Xeroxed twenty-five times. Rather than generating redundancy, however, Weiner saw this strategy of repetition as one of differentiation:

> And so the exciting thing about the "Xerox Book" project was that there were twenty-five sheets and it was the same exact piece. And that helped to show that the removal, as long as it was in proportion, could have been twenty-five different removals.[…] So for me it was a perfect piece.[125]

Here, repetition is coded not as an act of resemblance, but as a form of temporal and physical displacement that heightens the work's self-differing character.[126] In the absence of any model that could allow us to think of the Xeroxed removal in terms of original and copy, and in the insistence that each repeated sheet offered, in fact, a different removal, Weiner's "perfect piece"

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[123] See Joseph, "Split Screens" in *Random Order*, 173-207.

[124] For an extensive account of Seth Siegelaub's project see Alberro, "The Xerox Degree Of Art" in *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity ,* 130-151.

[125] Weiner in "Interview with Patricia Norvell (1969)" in *Recording Conceptual Art,* 105.

[126] These operations of repetition resonate with Gilles Deleuze's theories on difference and repetition published in France in 1968. The following passage, inspired by the "permutating series" of modern works of art, offers important ways to think about emerging strategies in Weiner's practice:

> The identity of the object read really dissolves into divergent series defined by esoteric words, just as the identity of the reading subject is dissolved into the decentred circles of possible multiple readings. Nothing, however, is lost; each series exists only by virtue of the return of the others. Everything has become simulacrum, for by simulacrum we should not understand a simple imitation but rather the act by which the very idea of a model or privileged position is challenged and overturned. The simulacrum is the instance which includes difference within itself, such as (at least) two divergent series on which it plays, all resemblance abolished so that one can no longer point to the existence of an original and a copy (Gilles Deleuze, *Difference & Repetition* [1968: New York: Columbia U. Press, 1994], 69).

Deleuze offers an understanding of the term "simulacrum" quite different from simulacra as contemporaneously theorized by Jean Baudrillard. For Baudrillard simulacra described the late capitalist phenomenon of the replacement of reality by its representation. This replacement would ultimately level differences, enabling everything, now constituted as equivalent sign, to enter into the economies of exchange. The transformation of reality into simulacra would therefore be seen as part of a historical shift from exchange-value to sign-exchange value, effecting the total absorption of lived experience within "the brothel of substitution and interchangeability" (Baudrillard, *Selected Writings* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988], 128). In contrast, Deleuze's concept of the simulacrum crucially "includes difference within itself." Deleuze's simulacrum thus undermines forces of exchange by producing, through repetition, a difference that precludes equivalent substitution. Such a condition is figured in Weiner's work, where one iteration cannot be equally exchanged for another, despite the apparent similarity of repeated terms.

relates closely to Rauschenberg's *Factum I* and *Factum II* of 1957, a pair of simultaneously worked paintings whose seeming identity is subverted by the fractional differences that proliferate from one canvas to another (fig. 39). In Rauschenberg's silkscreens, this technique of "splitting" would result in images whose vestigial depth could still be perceived in their veiled, scrim-like layers, and in the abrupt disjuncture between repeated elements. It would remain for artists such as Andy Warhol to acknowledge the irremediable superficiality of an "image-object" world in which experience is completely reduced to the "informational cloak" of advertising and media packaging, ultimately enabling an artificial difference to be consumed (fig. 40).[127]

Divested even of Pop art's veneer of materiality, Weiner's *Statements* might appear to have completely abandoned the cognitive space explored by Rauschenberg's *Combines* and their excessive tactility. The perceived disincarnation of Weiner's work thus comes to exemplify the extreme reduction of Postmodern experience, described by Fredric Jameson as: "the eclipse of all of the affect (depth, anxiety, terror, the emotions of the monumental) that marked high modernism, and its replacement by what Coleridge would have called fancy or Schiller aesthetic play, a commitment to surface and to the superficial in all the senses of the word."[128] The fact that Conceptual artists favored language was seen by Jameson as evidence of the "the widespread textualization of the outside world," the defining aspect of postmodern spatialization.[129] In his story of reification, Jameson charts the transformations by which our experience of space is successively flattened, stripped of any sense of history or concrete reality, by a reification that penetrates our signifying practices so completely, that not only are all connections to reference

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[127] David Joselit: "As pop art demonstrated in the 1960s, a commodity's informational cloak – as communicated in advertising and packaging – is not simply an appliqué but a constitutive feature: its personality as it were." See Joselit, *Feedback: Television Against Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2007), 15. Invoking the theorizations of Baudrillard on the political economy of the sign, Hal Foster writes: "In our system of commodities, fashions, styles art works…, it is difference that we consume." See Foster, *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1985), 171.

[128] Fredric Jameson introduction to *The Postmodern Condition: A Report On Knowledge* by Jean-François Lyotard (1979: Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984), xviii. In "The Posters of Lawrence Weiner' Buchloh refers to Weiner's 1968 *Statement of Intent* as "the basic formula of the post-modern aesthetic" insofar as it makes the networks of relationships and conventions that constitute the work's production and reception part of the work itself.

[129] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 158.

and reality unhinged, but signifier and signified no longer connect, leaving us with a superficial text, a random play of "pure" signifiers, "broken pieces of language."[130] In Jameson's theory, the dissociation between word and thing to which Carl Andre's Marxist materialism aspired, had already overtaken our experience of reality, to the detriment of our sense of time and place. In his discussion of Weiner's work, Alberro points to the disorientations of just this kind of textual play:

> These 1968 works thus signal a moment of "decentering," when the centered art object had been driven from its locus as the primary point of reference. The result was a type of art that was strictly about materials, about the material quality of the text, the brute facticity of the signifier, rather than any ideal meaning. It is clear that for Weiner by 1968 it did not matter if his work lacked "meaning." Its operation was nothing but graphic activity, a sort of marking in which – *à la nouveau roman* – there was no signification and only description involved.[131]

Alberro frames his Derridian analysis of Weiner's work within the operations of publicity and circulation characteristic of the late Capitalist phenomenon of "informatization."[132] As we have seen, this informational equivalence, registered early on in Rauschenberg's work, was crucial to the development of Weiner's textual strategy, allowing for the artist to claim indifference as to the mode of transmission used ("And it doesn't matter if it's physically conveyed or whether it's conveyed verbally or orally"). Weiner would favor text and especially books over built objects as both the "least impositional" and the most easily disseminated form of information transfer. According to Alberro, that linguistic preference in fact implicated the work in a predominant mode of subjection, privileging mental labor in a manner that reflected rather than subverted the hierarchies of an increasingly bureaucratized information economy. Weiner explicitly acknowledged these transformations, accepting his role as a producer of what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri would later call "immaterial labor," eventually proclaiming in 1982: "ART IS IN RELATION TO ITS SOCIETY A SERVICE INDUSTRY."[133]

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[130] Jameson, "Periodizing the 60s," *Social Text* No. 9/10 (Spring-Summer 1984); reprinted in The *Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971 – 1986, vol. 2* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 201.

[131] Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity ,* 96 – 97.

[132] For a discussion of the postmodern transformation from industrial to "immaterial" labor correspondent with the widespread "informatization of production" see Hardt and Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2000), 280 – 303.

[133] "Notes From Art," *Art Journal* (Summer, 1982), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 130. Weiner's first published reference to art as a "service industry" appears in "A Conversation With Robert C. Morgan (1979),"

By 1972 Baudrillard had debunked any faith in "radiating information" as a species of "cybernetic idealism": "This idealism of content (of production or of signification) never takes form into account. This idealism of messages forgets that it is the hegemony of the code that is installed behind their accelerated circulation."[134] In Baudrillard's totalizing formulation, the "code" of political economy is the differential sign structure that rationalizes and regulates our exchanges, imposing absolute control over meaning. The purpose of consumption, which underlies every object relation, would be none other than the re-production and perpetuation of this code. Thus, the profusion of messages generated by technologies of information would constitute just one more subset of the profusion of commodity goods, all of which are converted into "sign exchange value" in order to be circulated and consumed in what Baudrillard calls "the brothel of substitution and interchangeability." According to Baudrillard's theory, Weiner's translation of objects into information / language would only mime the operations of commodity circulation, which manipulate not objects, but signs:

> It is because the structure of the sign is at the very heart of the commodity form that the commodity can take on, immediately, the effect of signification – not ephiphenomenally, in excess of itself, as "message" or connotation – but because its very form establishes it as a total medium, as a *system of communication* administering all social exchange. Like the sign form, the commodity is a code managing the exchange of values. It makes little difference whether the contents of material production or the immaterial contents of signification are involved; it is the code that is determinant: the rules of the interplay of signifiers and exchange value.[135]

More apocalyptically even than Jameson, Baudrillard posits an existence in which reference / reality are not merely detached from free-floating signs, but completely subsumed by their logic, to the degree that "the real" is produced as a simulacral effect of signification.

Real Life Magazine (Winter, 1983), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 102. Also see Sabeth Buchmann, "Under the Sign of Labor" in *Art After Conceptual Art,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Sabeth Buchmann (Vienna: Generali Foundation, 2006), 179-195. Eric De Bruyn uses Paolo Virno's analysis *The Grammar of the Multitude* to frame Weiner's works and films as a utopian alternative to the Postfordian colonization of the "common places" of language. See "Being Then Within a Context of Revolution: Six Notes on Two Films by Lawrence Weiner" in *Film Avantgarde Biopolitik*, eds. Sabeth Buchmann, Helmut Draxler, and Stephan Greene (Vienna: Schlebrügge, 2009), 364 – 391.

[134] Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1972: Candor: Telos Press, 1981), 199.

[135] Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, 146.

Weiner's practice refutes Baudrillard's postulates, first of all by insisting upon the capacity of a work's generic content to undermine rather than perpetuate a dominant structure / code.[136] Instead of merely testifying to an evacuation of reality and reference, Weiner's linguistic presentations aim to put object encounters into question, signaling the imperiled and impoverished status of material existence without simply miming processes of reification (as the purveyors of Pop icons would be accused of doing). And rather than enabling the commensurability of objects, language offers Weiner the possibility for irrecuperable differentiation and unpredictable forms of circulation, as his contribution to the *Xerox Book* shows. Exploiting the capacities of information transmission, Weiner was motivated less by "cybernetic idealism," than by the recognition that object relations are dominated by new forms of distribution, valuation and control. As such, Weiner's works reflect not only the liberal potential of "radiating information" but the institutional dependencies and authoritarian impositions that impede the sending and receiving of messages.

TRIED AND TRUE

In his introductory essay to the 1970 MoMA exhibition *Information*, Kynaston McShine extols the virtues of a global community of artists who privilege communication over object production as a means of contesting the boundaries that define art and its reception. McShine affirms:

> The activity of these artists is to think of concepts that are broader and more cerebral than the expected 'product' of the studio. With the sense of mobility and change that pervades their time, they are interested in ways of rapidly exchanging ideas, rather than embalming the idea in an 'object.'[137]

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[136] Stemmrich discusses the methodological differences between Weiner and Baudrillard's approaches to subject-object relations using Baudrillard's *The System of Objects* as a point of reference. According to Stemmrich, Weiner allows for intervention within cultural configurations by dealing with objects on a "general" level, belonging to "the world" as opposed to a particular cultural configuration, whereas Baudrillard's analysis of a totalizing but "closed" system of objects characterized by "the self-similarity of the fractal" negates the opportunity for such points of resistance (see "Lawrence Weiner – Material and Methodology" in *Having Been Said*, 448).

[137] Kynaston McShine, *Information*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1970), n.p. *Information* was held at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (July 2 - Sept. 20, 1970).

For the exhibition's critics, such as Gregory Battcock, this transportation of ideas would not be sufficient to undermine the institution of the museum, and its associated politics and aesthetic conventions. Similarly, Les Levine would write that the show merely neutralized criticism, as the museum co-opted the work of its "enemies."[138] Thus, rather than triumphantly proclaiming a new criticality as McShine had envisioned, *Information* already exposed the compromised ability of these new streams of data to combat forces of reification and institutional administration. In a re-appraisal of the contradictions and aspirations surrounding *Information*, Ken Allan includes an epigraph from Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media*: "As automation takes hold, it becomes obvious that information is the crucial commodity, and that solid products are merely incidental to information movement."[139] This condition is reflected in Weiner's work (*AN ACCUMULATION OF INFORMATION TAKEN FROM HERE TO THERE* [1970]) which stages both the possibility and failure of a dialectical negation.

Weiner's contribution to the MoMA exhibition was the statement *TRIED AND TRUE* (1970). In a letter to Weiner, McShine politely expressed a slight dissatisfaction with the work. He writes:

> Dear Larry,
>
> Thank you for sending "Tried and True." I think it is OK for the catalogue, but I am a bit reluctant to settle for only that for the exhibition even at this late date.
>
> Despite all my deadlines, anxieties, etc., I think it is important that you be well represented – the show is shaping into something really marvelous, controversial, etc. This is an objective opinion, naturally. But please think about it and let me know right away. Installation plans have to [be] made, and I am looking forward to something really "right on" (corny!) from you.[140]

Ultimately, McShine would have to settle for *TRIED AND TRUE*, a strange work to include in a show conceived as a controversial reevaluation of the nature of art. Perhaps McShine sensed that the work might reflect badly on the others in the show by pointing to the irony and inevitability

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[138] This discussion of the critical response to *Information* comes from Kenneth R. Allan, "Understanding *Information*" in *Conceptual Art, Theory, Myth, and Practice*, ed. Michael Corris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 144-68.

[139] Allan, "Understanding Information," 144.

[140] Kynaston McShine, letter to Lawrence Weiner, May 25, 1970, *Information* exhibition file, MoMA Archives, Reg. 934.

of institutionalization. Probably he was expecting more from the artist than a time-worn cliché. Weiner, for his part, was very happy with the work. In keeping with his *Statement of Intent*, Weiner offered to build *TRIED AND TRUE* at the museum's discretion, although he admitted: "I can offer no suggestions as to how this is accomplished."[141] The work was ultimately presented as text in the catalogue, and although *TRIED AND TRUE* certainly did not provide a conventional object experience, it nonetheless might have given the appearance of something "embalmed" (fig. 41).

TRIED AND TRUE was part of a group of works from 1970 in which Weiner used clichés for the first time. These works included:

A STONE LEFT UNTURNED

EARTH TO EARTH ASHES TO ASHES DUST TO DUST

SOMETHING OLD SOMETHING NEW SOMETHING BORROWED SOMETHING BLUE

This Duchampian territory of readymade phrases had been explored in Bruce Nauman's work (e.g. the sculptural literalizations *Henry Moore Bound To Fail* and *From Hand To Mouth* ([1967]) and in Ed Ruscha's paintings and drawings, which featured words and phrases "pulled off the street"[142] (figs. 42, 43 & 44). For Yve Alain-Bois, Ruscha's clichés pointed to an entropic impulse, a subversion of transmission in favor of interference.[143] According to information theory, the extreme redundancy of clichés inhibits their capacity to carry information, as language retreats into a state of indifferentiation, sinking into an ocean of background noise. Bois argues that Ruscha's "liquid words" aim perversely to accelerate this erosion, pushing the cliché's disarticulation even further, in a formless operation whereby words come to be read as spittle and ejaculate. Considering Weiner's interest in objects and actions related to spilling, staining and defacement, it would not be hard to imagine that Weiner intended for *TRIED AND TRUE* to generate a degree of noise and interference in the context of the exhibition, enacting a debasement of language at the very moment of its institutional validation as art. Such an analysis,

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[141] MOMA *Information* Proposals Reg. 934.

[142] Ruscha in "'Ed Ruscha' interview with Thomas Beller," *Splash* (February 1989), reprinted in *Leave Any Information At The Signal, Writings Interviews, Bits, Pages* , 281.

however, does not take into full account the specific implications of reading the words *TRIED AND TRUE* in the context of an exhibition titled *Information*.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari argue that to call language "informational and communicational" merely serves as a pretense for order.[144] Contradicting the doctrines of information science, which measure information in terms of the amount of freedom one has in the construction and interpretation of a message (e.g. more information equals greater possibilities of selection), Deleuze and Guattari expose *redundancy* as the underlying goal of information, designed ultimately to ensure that no signification remains independent of the dominant one.[145] "Information," they write, "is only the strict minimum necessary for the emission, transmission, and observation of orders as commands."[146] The readymade is cited as an instance of this kind of redundant order-word. As John Rajchman describes, Deleuze conceives of the canvas and the page, not as blank surfaces, but as covered with readymade clichés that stultify thought and block our senses. The artist's job would be to clear away these linguistic impositions and "deliver us from our communicational stupidities, our informational 'automatisms.'"[147] These habits of thinking are exposed by *TRIED AND TRUE*, a work that points to both the proliferation of clichés that ground communication, and the reactionary goals served by information.

Lyotard, on the other hand, underscores the fact that communications and information must be assessed, not based on any intrinsic properties (of speed or accessibility, redundancy or variability), but according to the *uses* served by the transmission, reminding us that "a cybernetic machine does not run on information, but on the goals programmed into it." More optimistically

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[143] Yve Alain-Bois, "Thermometers Should Last Forever," *Ed Ruscha: Romance With Liquids*, *Paintings 1966 – 1969* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), 8 – 38.

[144] See ""Language Is Informational and Communicational" in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980; Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 75-85.

[145] Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 10.

[146] Deleuze and Guattari, ""Language Is Informational and Communicational" in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* 76.

[147] John Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2000), 11.

than Deleuze and Guattari, he points out that these uses are not wholly deterministic, and that with every transmission there arises the possibility of something new arising:

> The atoms are placed at the crossroads of pragmatic relationships, but they are also displaced by messages that traverse them, in perpetual motion. Each language partner, when a "move" pertaining to him is made, undergoes a "displacement," an alteration of some kind that not only affects him in his capacity as addressee and referent, but also as sender. These moves necessarily provoke "countermoves" – and everyone knows reactional countermoves are no more than programmed effects in the opponent's strategy; they play into his hands and thus have no effect on the balance of power. That is why it is important to increase displacement in the games, and even to disorient it, in such a way as to make an unexpected "move" (a new statement).[148]

On every level, Weiner's *Statement of Intent* operates as a formula for displacement. Exploiting the ambiguities of language ("the work need not be built") and the uncertainties of reception ("the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership"), Weiner maximizes potential disorientation, ensuring that use is left undetermined and messages remain in perpetual motion.[149] Producing a message so *general* that even a single word results in an overload of material implications (*RUPTURED*), Weiner's work corresponds closely with Sol LeWitt's efforts to increase interference in the transmission of ideas.[150] At the same time, Weiner avoids the myth of democratic circulation, pointing to the redundancies that control every act of reception, and that obstruct our attempts to break away from a language of orders and commands (*OVER AND OVER. OVER AND OVER. AND OVER AND OVER. AND OVER AND OVER*. [1971]).

In 1991, Weiner designed an installation at Dia Center For The Arts based on the work *DISPLACEMENT*.[151] On the floor of the exhibition, he placed a large game-board/runway printed with the text:

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[148] Lyotard, T*he Postmodern Condition: A Report On Knowledge*, 16.

[149] Anna Lovatt, "Ideas in Transmission: LeWitt's Wall Drawings and the Question of Medium," *Tate Papers* Issue 14 (October 1, 2010); http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/ideas-transmission-lewitts-wall-drawings-and-question-medium.

[150] For a discussion on LeWitt's tactic of overloading transmission channels with data see Anne Lovatt, "Seriality and Systematic Thought in Drawing c. 1966-1976: Ruth Vollmer, Sol LeWitt, Eva Hesse, Mel Bochner and Dorothea Rockburne" (PhD Dissertation, Courtauld University of Art, 2005), 83-85.

[151] *Displacement* was held at Dia Center For the Arts, New York (April 4 1991 – February 2, 1992).

1 FOR THE MONEY
2 FOR THE SHOW
3 TO GET READY &
4 TO GO
(figs. 45a & 45b)

Once more utilizing a well-worn cliché (Carl Perkins' "Blue Suede Shoes" 1955), Weiner undermined the disruptive possibilities of his own *Statement of Intent* by mixing its terms with the rock-song's controlled trajectory (1 FOR THE MONEY 2 FOR THE SHOW). The installation thus registered the limits of any effort to articulate new statements, calling into question what sort of displacement and interference would be sufficient to upset the balance of power secured by "informational automatisms" and "reactional countermoves." Aiming nonetheless towards productive disorientation, Weiner's show included a bewildering re-design of Dia's bathroom doors. Replacing "Male" and "Female" with "US" and "THEM," a canny shift in signage forced receivers to resist a readymade categorization, putting into question even those designations presumed to be most natural, signaling the necessity of forging new pragmatic relationships (figs. 45 & 47).

A RUBBER BALL THROWN AT THE SEA

Further problematizing the critical potential of Conceptual art's distribution / exhibition of information, Alberro emphasizes the ways in which Siegelaub's approaches posited an equivalence between the work and its publicity. Alberro cites Siegelaub's plan for an exhibition at Simon Fraser University, which took place in May and June, 1969. Weiner's contribution was a memo composed on university letterhead, upon which was printed the work *A RUBBER BALL THROWN AT THE SEA* (1969). According to the catalog, on May 23 this memo was distributed to mailboxes of all students and faculty, and mailed "to all interested parties" in a manner befitting an urgent notice (fig. 48). Undeniably the work existed by virtue of its public and, in this case, administrative transmission. But beyond the circulation of information, and the text's decentering of signification, we discover that a rubber ball has been and will likely be thrown at the sea, a fact that simultaneously registers as both leisurely play and ecological disaster. The work relates to others from that year, all dealing with the disequilibration of aqueous systems:

> *ONE QUART HEAVY GRADE MOTOR OIL POURED INTO THE GULF STREAM* (1969)
>
> *FLOATABLE OBJECTS THROWN INTO INLAND WATERWAYS ONE EACH MONTH FOR 7 YEARS* (1969)
>
> *ONE QUART ANTI-FREEZE POURED UPON THE ICE LITTLE AMERICA ROSS DEPENDENCY ANTARCTICA AND ALLOWED TO REMAIN*
> *ONE QUART ANTI FREEZE POURED UPON THE ICE NORWAY STATION PRINCESS MARTHA COAST QUEEN MAUD LAND ANTARCTICA AND ALLOWED TO REMAIN* (1969)

Although these statements offer no "ideal meaning" they are not altogether detached from concrete reference in a state of free-floating signification. Weiner's belief in the work's pragmatic capacity to relate the receiver to objects of actual lived experience separates his practice fundamentally from a quintessentially postmodern one such as Douglas Huebler's, whose contribution to the *Xerox Book* provides an instructive counter–example. For his work, Huebler submitted twenty-five pages, each featuring two dots labeled "A" and "B" placed side-by-side towards the middle of the page. Although the dots and their placement appeared identical, twenty-five different texts offered incongruous "readings" of the information presented. Thus while one page declared: "A AND B REPRESENT POINTS LOCATED ONE INCH BEHIND THE PICTURE PLANE," another page countered: "A AND B REPRESENT POINTS LOCATED 100,000,000 MILES BEHIND THE PICTURE PLANE" (figs. 49 & 50). The contradictory texts expose what Huebler referred to as "the irresponsibility of language," highlighting its arbitrary nature and its capacity to over-determine perception.[152] Releasing his work from any empirical relationship to reality, he would state of the maps, photographs and texts collected through his *Variable Pieces*: "The documents prove nothing… They make the piece exist." Inventing a synthesizing context indifferent to the "real" contents framed, Huebler aimed "to empty the work of what appears to be content" in a manner that was directly indebted to the artist's reading of Alain Robbe-Grillet.[153] Alberro notes that Huebler would often cite the influence of Robbe-Grillet

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[152] Douglas Huebler quoted in Michael Auping, "Talking With Douglas Huebler," *Journal* 15, The Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art (July – August 1977), 38.

[153] Huebler in Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* , 72.

on his practice, and indeed it is Huebler's work and not Weiner's which shares the structural intent of the *nouveau roman*, theorized by Robbe-Grillet as a form of writing invested not in the thing described, but in "the movement of description."[154] Robbe-Grillet recounts a telling episode in which, possessed by "the realistic illusion," he traveled to Brittany thinking he might look at some seagulls in order to help him with a beach scene he had been writing for *The Voyeur*. Later, he realized his error in seeking to observe from life. "The only gulls that mattered to me," he says, "were those that were inside my head."[155]

Roland Barthes argues that Robbe-Grillet's courage lay in his determination to postulate "a novel without content," one whose literalness was of such rigor that neither objects (a slice of tomato, a plate of ham), nor even events (murders or molestations) seemed any longer to swarm with symbols, their significance having been reduced to a form of "optical resistance." That obduracy is the result of a distinctly superficial language as Barthes describes:

> …language here is not the rape of an abyss, but the rapture of a surface; it is meant to paint the object in other words to caress it, to deposit little by little in the circuit of its space an entire chain of gradual names none of which will exhaust it.[156]

Like the plates of Andre's *144 Pieces of Zinc*, Robbe-Grillet's object shuns all depth, having no existence beyond its phenomenon.[157] According to Barthes, it is in precisely this way that Robbe-Grillet will have destroyed meaning, offering to the reader's vision nothing but objects cleansed of metaphor and anthropomorphism, objects that partake of the ontological *Dasein,* being "there" before being "something." Nevertheless, Barthes reminds us that meaning can only ever be suspended, and in Robbe-Grillet's novels it returns in the form of obsessions: the erasers of *Les Gommes*, a piece of string in *Le Voyeur*, the caterpillar in *La Jalousie*. Barthes goes on to argue that it was Robbe-Grillet's mistake to suppose that there is indeed a *Dasein* of objects, waiting to

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[154] Alain Robbe-Grillet: "The entire interest of the descriptive pages – that is, man's place in these pages – is therefore no longer in the thing described, but in the very movement of description." See Robbe-Grillet, *For A New Novel*, *Essays On Fiction* (1963; New York: Grove Press, 1965), 148.

[155] Robbe-Grillet, *For A New Novel, Essays On Fiction*, 161-162.

[156] Roland Barthes, "Objective Literature" in *Critical Essays* (1954; Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), 14.

[157] In "Not How It Should Were It To Be Built But How It Could Were It To Be Built" Alberro quotes Roland Barthes regarding the transparent surface of the aesthetic object: "constructions of skins (of layers, of levels, of systems), whose volume contains, finally, no heart, no core, no secret, no irreducible principle, nothing but

be revealed by literature, whereas, it is only by means of literary artifice that a designifying object world becomes possible:

> As a matter of fact, anthropologically things signify immediately and always with good reason and it is because signification is their natural condition that by simply stripping them of their meaning literature can affirm itself as an admirable artifice: if nature signifies it can be a certain acme of culture to make it designify.[158]

Like Huebler, Weiner would claim Robbe-Grillet as a source, and his language will take on the painstaking evidentiary quality of Robbe-Grillet's descriptions, their topographical obsessions and perplexing exactitude (e.g. *A SHEET OF BROWN PAPER OF ARBITRARY WIDTH AND LENGTH OF TWICE THAT WIDTH WITH A REMOVAL OF THE SAME PROPORTIONS GLUED TO THE FLOOR* [1968]). In Robbe-Grillet's novels Weiner finds a way to present objects released, not only from metaphor and metaphysics, but from an anthropocentric grasp. The author proclaims the stakes of the *nouveau roman's* revolutionary objectivity:

> Thus the word functioned as a trap in which the writer captured the universe in order to hand it over to society.
>
> The revolution that has occurred is in kind: not only do we no longer consider the world as our own, our private property, designed according to our needs and readily domesticated, but we no longer even believe in its "depth." While essentialist conceptions of man met their destruction, the notion of "condition" henceforth replacing that of "nature," the *surface* of things has ceased to be for us the mask of their heart, a sentiment that has led to every kind of metaphysical transcendence."[159]

This is, no doubt, the superficial relation to which Weiner's own language aspires, one in which the subject no longer masters the world, and objects are cleansed of transcendental significance. On the other hand, Weiner will still argue that language does lie at the "heart" of things, eliminating the possibility of an object without meaning, or a work without content. And while Weiner would try to present materials stripped of *inherent* metaphor, he nonetheless accepted the fact that metaphor constitutes one legitimate form of use: "That's why I am basically saying that art is not a metaphor. Because it is about an objective reality. It can be used, objective realities

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the very infinity of its envelopes – which envelope nothing other than the totality of its surfaces." See *Lawrence Weiner* (London: Phaidon, 1998), 50.

[158] Barthes, "The Last Word on Robbe-Grillet" [1962], *Critical Essays*, 203.

[159] Robbe-Grillet, *For A New Novel*, 24.

can be used as metaphors. Its use value in society is that of a metaphor. But its essence has nothing to do with metaphor. And the less metaphorical anything is, the more useful it is."[160]

According to Jacques Rancière, metaphors operate upon a rhetorical-poetical principle in which images and words (the seeable and sayable) are joined in such a way as to *hide* the separation between these two registers, in a kind of "representative magma" that dissolves distinctions, a joining power that produces "the sensory evidence of a world in order." One task of politics and of art would be to create a dialectical split in this flow of substitutions, "to get words to be heard in their strangeness and images to be seen in their silliness" in order to enable new combinations of the seeable and sayable to emerge. Relying upon the erratic materiality of "objective realities" and the ambiguities of linguistic expression to dispel what Rancière would call "the great metaphor" (which naturalizes dominant combinations of language + materials) Weiner's work disrupts "the sensory evidence of a world in order" by refusing any *fixed* metaphoric trajectories.[161]

In a series of film strips shot by Hollis Frampton in 1969, we see Weiner by the sea (Niagara Falls) and in his hand there is a rubber ball (fig. 51). He is throwing it out onto the water as part of a working method he describes as "research."[162] As this movie is not frequently screened in public, the viewer's encounter with these works remains predominantly textual, and therefore increasingly unpredictable:

A RUBBER BALL THROWN INTO THE AMERICAN FALLS NIAGARA FALLS

A RUBBER BALL THROWN INTO THE CANADIAN FALLS NIAGARA FALLS

It is easy enough to say that the works exists as an idea in the minds of artist and receiver, but it would be wrong to relegate the work to the sphere of mental construct alone. According to

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[160] Weiner in "Interview by Dieter Schwarz" [1989] reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 196 – 197.

[161] See Jacques Rancière, "Godard's Politics" in *Film Fables*, trans. Emiliano Battista (Oxford and New York, NY: Berg Publishers, 2006), 145 - 153. In *The Practice of Everyday Life* Michel de Certeau writes about metaphor as a spatial trajectory, making an analogy to the Greek *metaphorai* (mass transportation): "To go to work or come home, one takes a 'metaphor'" (see Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. Steven Rendall [Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1984], 115). Weiner's aim would be to generate texts available for any metaphoric trajectory whatsoever.

[162] Film shot by Hollis Frampton of Weiner constructing works for "July, August, September 1969" Seth Siegelaub Contemporary Art (New York, 1969).

Weiner the text does not describe, illustrate, instruct or explain, but simply presents "AN EMPIRICAL EXISTING FACT."[163] Once again, the work contests the hermetic tautological formula advocated in Joseph Kosuth's theorization of art as a philosophical investigation. Taking his cues from A.J. Ayer, Kosuth writes: "Works of art are analytic propositions. That is, if viewed within their context – as art – they provide no information what-so-ever about any matter of fact."[164] Following this categorization, Weiner's statements would be labeled "synthetic" propositions because their truth / falsehood relies not on the statement's logical consistency alone, but on its verification against a material criterion.[165] Kosuth flatly asserts that Weiner's work does not conform to orthodox Conceptualism, precisely because of the work's empiricism and its reliance on "outside information." In a footnote to his essay, Kosuth expresses consternation at Weiner's decision to present these matters of fact in language: "I did not (and still do not) understand this last decision. Since I first met Weiner, he defended his position (quite alien to mine) of being a 'Materialist'. I always found this last direction (e.g. *Statements*) sensical in my terms, but I never understood how it was in his."[166] Kosuth uses language to preserve art as a purely logical inquiry, disconnected from the physical properties of things. Weiner, by contrast, wants to connect "language + the material referred to," in order to produce, not only an optical resistance, but an "immediate tactile response."[167] *A RUBBER BALL THROWN AT THE SEA* gives a sense of this tactility, as the work projects us away from the self-sufficiency of logical analysis, towards the chaotic world of factual realities of which it is a part. Moreover, in echoing the voice of literary description, Weiner points to a model of empiricism grounded not in the evidentiary certainty of sensory knowledge, but in the associative mechanisms of the imaginative faculty, wherein "material imperatives" are mingled with the flux of our perceptions, given

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[163] "Art Is Not a Metaphor…" *zweitschrift* (Summer 1980), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 107.

[164] Joseph Kosuth, " Art After Philosophy" reprinted in Art *After Philosophy and After*, 20.

[165] Susan Heinemann, "Lawrence Weiner: Given the Context," *Artforum* (March 1975), 33 -37.

[166] Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy," *Art after Philosophy and After*, 32.

[167] Weiner: "There is no analogy I can make. Because it's not foreplay it's the whole thing: the immediate tactile response. There's nothing, nothing being held back. That's all there is." Quoted in "Interview by Marjorie Welish," *Bomb* (Winter 1996), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 353.

constancy via linkages of contiguity, resemblance and causality.[168] Empirical existing facts are therefore *imaginatively* framed, not as "things in themselves" or as streams of indifferent data, but as objects of belief, and matters of grave concern.[169]

ONE 106" x 16" SLAB OF "DOW HD 300" STYROFOAM SUNK FLUSH WITH THE GROUND

In 1967, Barthes' influential essay "The Death of the Author" would appear in the Fall/Winter issue of *Aspen* magazine. Here, Barthes describes the radical transformation of modern literature, exemplified by the work of Stéphane Mallarmé in which the author writes "with prerequisite impersonality" suppressing himself in the interests of producing a text in which "only *language* acts." Instead of an author who expresses himself, the modern text depends on a "scriptor" who "no longer bears within him passions, humors, feelings, impressions, but rather this immense dictionary from which he draws a writing that can know no halt." If the author's presence tyrannically limits the text, his elimination opens it to "the multiplicity of writing," a place wherein meanings ceaselessly emerge and evaporate with no transcendental signified to arrest the play of significations. Ultimately, the beneficiary of the author's self-sacrifice would be the birth of a new reader:

> The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is without history, biography,

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[168] In his text on David Hume, Gilles Deleuze proposes a style of empirical thinking which is not grounded in sensory experience or knowledge but in the associative mechanisms of the imagination, namely: causality, contiguity and resemblance. Being located in the imagination, empiricism is therefore not limited to what can be sensed, but enables a subjective transcendence of the sensory given. See Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay On Hume's Theory Of Human Nature*, trans. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

[169] Bruno Latour argues for the necessity of a "renewed" empiricism and a more profoundly realist attitude in which "matters of fact" are recognized to be a poor proxy for experience. Relying upon Heidegger's hierarchical distinction between the instrumentalized "object" versus the associative complexities of "the thing," Latour states that reality must be viewed from a more "constructive" standpoint, in terms of "matters of concern." As such, objects would be perceived as "things" which require an enormous amount of participants (human and nonhuman) to exist. See Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry* 30 (Winter 2004), 225-248.

> psychology; he simply is that someone who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted.[170]

The parallels between Weiner's works and Barthes' theories are seductive. Certainly Weiner formulates his texts in order to generate the broadest range of significations, avoiding any overt personal reference that might authorize one reading over another. In leaving texts open, Weiner's practice not only empowers the reader, but demands from the works' receivers unprecedented levels of responsibility. On the other hand, although Weiner exploits the effects of ambiguity and decentering that language mobilizes, as we have seen, the statements do not merely generate a random play of signs. For Weiner, language will remain subordinated to his primary artistic concern: namely, the reconfiguration of existing relationships of human beings to objects, and objects to objects. And it is in this sense that Weiner defines himself as a "materialist," believing along with many artists of this period that the reformulation of subject-object relations offered a means through which a radically new concept of collective subjectivity could emerge. If we understand Weiner's work in light of that aim, then the implications of the reader's birth and the artist's self-effacement are not so obvious. What happens, for instance, when returning to *ONE 106" x 16" SLAB OF "DOW HD 300" STYROFOAM SUNK FLUSH WITH THE GROUND* (1968) we discover that the artist himself measures roughly 106" x 16", that HD 300 Styrofoam was a material commonly used by the US military in Vietnam, and that "flush with the ground" might signal a shallow grave?[171] Weiner's superficial work draws us back to Carl Andre's concept of sculpture, as a pure demonstration of "matter mattering." But in place of the self-evidence implied by that formula, Weiner's abstract statement offers a question, compelling the receiver to ask not only what the work is made of, but rather, "What does the work make matter?"[172]

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[170] Roland Barthes, "The Death Of The Author" in *Image-Music-Text*, ed. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill & Wang, 1977) 142-148.

[171] Alice Zimmerman, "Not How It Should Were It To Be Built But How It Could Were It To Be Built" in *Lawrence Weiner*, 47.

[172] Regarding Whitehead's "constructive" approach to philosophy and to philosophical generalities Stenger writes: "Importance is a Whiteheadian generic notion. It enables no classification, yet nevertheless does not condemn it: to classify may be what matters, for instance, for a botanist. This is not a matter of psychology, for if one questions botanists, they will speak of vegetal proliferation, of the thorny questions raised by each type of classification, in short, of an adventure that confronts one with plants. Every adventure thus calls forth the generic question 'what does it make matter?' which can also mean 'how is the contrast between

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success and defeat defined for it?' and this question will call for others in turn, which will imply the trials, risks, and type of environment required for success and so on." See Stenger, *Thinking With Whitehead*, 19.

CHAPTER II: THE TRACE OF AN IDEA (concept + object)

Among the host of artist's in the 1960s who would claim to work with 'concepts' and 'ideas,' Weiner's practice is distinguished by its emphasis on "the idea of the *material*."[1] A pair of videotaped "advertisements" for the works *BEACHED* (1970) and *BROKEN OFF* (1971) gives a sense of what such ideas might look like, as the artist constructs the works through a series of task-like performances. Despite the no-frills, documentary quality of these videos, Weiner would later note the importance, not of their realism or facticity, but of their *staging*:

> ALL INTELLECTUALLY DETERMINED ACTIVITY IS THEATRICAL
> ANY ATTEMPT TO REDUCE THIS ASPECT OF THEATRICALITY IS IN
> REALITY A MYSTIFICATION[2]

Weiner's adamantly empirical ideas are thus theatrically presented, not only in books and on walls, but on posters, postcards, buttons and matchbooks, in addition to chefs hats, flags, bags and beer mats. They appear "collaged" into songs, videos and films, and installed on escalators, manhole covers, cars and trains. Importantly, Weiner will conceive even the most matter-of-fact of these formats as an attempt to create a "*mise-en-scène,"* acknowledging not only the artifice, but the *sensible* nature of every presentation.[3] In using video to present *BEACHED* and *BROKEN OFF* Weiner demonstrates that his work is not indifferent to vision, but critically aimed against a specific type of "pictorial" visuality, one that would anchor the idea in a singular, self-reflexive image.[4]

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[1] Lawrence Weiner: "Conceptual art as it is utilized is simply the choice of an artist that the - idea of the material is the most important part of the content of the work of art" (Lawrence Weiner Notebook October 1983 – January 85).

[2] Lawrence Weiner, "[The Need of a Place (a Table)…]" reprinted in *Having Been Said, Writings & Interviews of Lawrence Weiner, 1968 – 2003,* eds. Gerti Fietzek & Gregor Stemmrich (1989; Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2004), 191. In his essay in this volume, Stemmrich discusses the relationship of Weiner's theatricality to Michael Fried's concept of theatricality as developed in Fried's essay "Art and Objecthood." See "Lawrence Weiner – Material and Methodology," 429 - 457.

[3] Benjamin H.D. Buchloh and Weiner discuss the artist's use of the term "*mise-en-scène*" in "Benjamin Buchloh in conversation with Lawrence Weiner," *Lawrence Weiner* (London: Phaidon, 1998), 31.

[4] Michael Fried described the optical qualities of Modernist sculpture and painting in terms of a "pictorial" sensibility, one in which materiality is sublimated in order to generate the illusion of purely visual experience. In "Art and Objecthood" Fried characterizes Minimalism as an attack on the pictorial and a refusal of transcendence, in favor of a "theatrical" experience of extended duration and of *literal*, as opposed to virtual, materiality. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* (June 1967), reprinted in *Minimal Art, A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1968).

In “The Transformations of the Image in Postmodernity” Fredric Jameson writes a history of vision, beginning with the intersubjective conflict mobilized in Sartre’s theorization of the *Loo*k (*Being and Nothingness*, [1944]) whereby a subject becomes an object for an Other via an alienating and reifying gaze. For Sartre, there still exists the possibility of dialectical shift, moving towards a collective vision that would surpass the asymmetries of submission and domination in which the Look remains trapped. That collective potential is foreclosed in the second stage, as vision becomes the operative technique within a disciplinary and bureaucratic apparatus, installing “a state of universal subjection.”[5] Jameson’s spokesperson for this second phase is Michel Foucault, who writes: “In [this new disciplinary world] it is power’s subjects that are required to be seen. Their illumination secures the hold of the power exercised upon them. It is the fact of being seen uninterruptedly, of always being able to be seen, which maintains the disciplinary individual in his subjection.”[6] According to Jameson, within this second regime, the transfiguration of visible space is no longer a meaningful possibility. In such a sphere of radically diminished agency, Robbe-Grillet’s *roman du regard* offers the most appropriate form of expression, as language appears “locked into the visible and measurable universe without alternative.”[7] Here, the paranoiac meticulousness of description reveals not the power of omnipotent vision, but the exorbitant condition of sight as an “impotent delirium,” a sensuality utterly dissociated from the conceptual, and therefore essentially meaningless. Jameson will find that same dissociation in the practices of Conceptual art, “where a tangible object seemed to offer no toehold for a thinking that continued to turn around it, in endless circles of paradox and categorical self-cancellation.” Depicting Conceptual art as the pendant to an alienated, omnipresent visibility Jameson writes:

> There is no metaphysical or political kinship between conceptual art and the visual theories and practices I have been discussing here: yet its mention usefully dramatizes a moment in the becoming universal of visibility in which the abstract mind seems unable to find its niche or function in this unexpected primacy of a sense once subordinate to it. Conceptual art also foregrounds the significance of the enigmatic and no-longer-mediatory-object itself, as a place of transit (like Descartes’ pineal gland) between an

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[5] Fredric Jameson, “The Transformations of the Image” in *The Cultural Turn* (New York and London: Verso, 1998), 106.

[6] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, quoted in Jameson, “The Transformations of the Image,” 106.

[7] Jameson, “The Transformations of the Image,” 108.

> impersonal visibility and the equally impersonal and disembodied forces of a universal rationalization and bureaucratization.[8]

In the third and final stage, enigmatic objects are replaced by the "image," theorized by Guy Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle* as "the final form of commodity reification." The image is the result of the fusion of technological mediation and consumer culture, greeted no longer with paranoia but with a collective euphoria. Through the pervasiveness of images, culture and therefore aesthetic experience expand, becoming coterminous with "market society" and thus permeating all aspects of daily life. But instead of achieving the liberatory transformation of "art into life," this condition of "aesthetics in general" offers only a random, rambling, mesmerizing stream of images, through which perception passively consumes itself in an infinite series of sensations, affects and irritations. Weiner's ideas are structured precisely to counteract this model of the "image" on every level: temporal, spatial and sensible. Simultaneously, however, the work refutes Jameson's characterization of Conceptual art as a wholly administrative, rationalized and disembodied practice, one that would remain alienated from vision and prone to the vanity of signification.

BEACHED

In a two and a half minute black and white video from 1970, illustrating "five material possibilities" for his work *BEACHED*, we see Weiner constructing the work by fishing pieces of driftwood out of the sea (fig. 52).[9] Sometimes the task goes smoothly, at others Weiner struggles, losing his footing in one case, and a battle with a giant log in another. In every instance, the actions appear to be totally uncontrived, as though the camera had just happened upon a man, cleaning up some ocean debris. This effect, of course, is highly designed. Weiner's actions represent the

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[8] Jameson, "The Transformations of the Image," 109.

[9] *Beached* was produced by Fernsehgalerie Gerry Schum, Hannover, and first presented at Galerie Konrad Fischer, Kunstmarkt, Koln (October 13 – 18, 1970). See Bartomeu Mari, ed. *SHOW & TELL: The Films & Videos of Lawrence Weiner*, catalogue raisonné (Gent: Imschoot, uitgevers, 1992), 69. According to a publisher's statement, the video features the artist building the work in Holland on August 16, 1970.

antithesis of a heroic or exemplary demonstration, having no more validity than any other possibilities that a receiver of his work might devise. The artist's unassuming, quotidian gestures stand in stark contrast, therefore, to a kind of work that Weiner will later refer to as "heavy-metal macho sculpturehood."[10]

Considered against the background of 1970s art, the year of Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* in the Great Salt Lake, or of Michael Heizer's *Double Negative* in the Virginia River Mesa, the extreme understatement of *BEACHED* is especially striking. Thinking of a more local comparison, Richard Serra's *To Encircle Base Plate Hexagram*, *Right Angles Inverted* was also built that year, on a dead-end street in the Bronx, Weiner's hometown (fig. 53). Serra's sculpture was made of a circle of steel angle, twenty-six feet in diameter, set in the surface of the street. The embeddedness of *To Encircle* literally within the public domain, underscored what Rosalind Krauss would a few years later describe as Serra's (and Minimalism's) engagement with the public versus private construction of meaning.[11] Moreover, Serra's decision to site the work in the Bronx, an area besieged by the most extreme forms of urban decay, ensured that the viewer's physical experience of the sculpture could not be abstracted from concrete socio-political factors. Although Weiner shared Serra's aspiration for a public work capable of transgressing institutional limits and critiquing existing hierarchies, his means would remain diametrically opposed.

As Douglas Crimp has argued, for Serra, sculpture would have the capacity to defeat commodity relations only through experiencing it "in the place where it resides."[12] Thus, the publicness of Serra's work would depend on a phenomenological encounter, one physically constrained by the mutual presence of sculptural object and embodied viewer, and marked by the contingencies of real time and space. For this reason, Serra denounced photographic representations of the work, which he linked to the "easy Gestalt" of advertising. In pictorializing the sculpture, the photograph reduced its experience to an illusory one, allowing the sculpture to

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[10] Weiner in "Early Work, Interview by Lynn Gumpert" in *Lynda Benglis, Joan Brown, Luis Jimenez, Gary Stephan, Lawrence Weiner: Early Work*, exh. cat. (New York: The New Museum, 1982), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 122.

[11] Krauss, "Sense and Sensibility, Reflection on Post '60s Sculpture," *Artforum* vol. 12, no. 3 (November 1973), 43-53.

be *consumed* versus phenomenologically encountered. This was, perhaps, the main frustration of *To Encircle*, the fact that few people actually bothered to go and see it in its "sinister" site, relegating the reception of the work to a kind of pornographic encounter with its photographic substitute.[13] By contrast, Weiner avoided photographs, not because they detracted from the 'real' experience of the work, but precisely because they tended to confer upon the depicted object an unwonted degree of authenticity. For Weiner, any attempt to fix aesthetic experience in the identity of a specific object, or to insist upon sculptural reality as available only to an embodied visual encounter, would constitute nothing less than a form of "aesthetic fascism."[14] Weiner had earlier realized through his own sculptural work that a built object nominated as a work of art would inevitably assume a kind of absolute authority (e.g. the turf war for Weiner's sculptural contribution to *Hay, Mesh, String* 1968). Even in the face of daily permutations and the anonymity of industrial fabrication, the still privileged object would ground experience in the 'reality' of a physical presence that inevitably imposed strict terms on the public construction of meaning. Weiner's shift to language was designed to reject precisely these phenomenological impositions.

During the course of *Beached*, a voice-over by Weiner articulates the stakes of his work announcing: "*BEACHED* is a public freehold example of what could be art within my responsibility. As the artist may construct the work, and / or the work may be fabricated, and / or the work need not to be built, all being equal and consistent with my intentions, I elected to construct five material possibilities for videotape."[15] The text echoes Weiner's *Statement of Intent*, but strikingly, its reiteration in *Beached* becomes even more conditional, noting that the

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[12] Richard Serra quoted in Douglas Crimp, *On The Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1993), 167. This discussion of Serra's work is drawn from Crimp's account.

[13] Richard Serra as quoted in Crimp, *On The Museum's Ruins*, 167.

[14] Weiner, "Conversation With the Editor, Oct 12, 1969" in *Conceptual Art*, ed. Ursula Meyer (Toronto and Vancouver: Clarke, Irwin & Co., Ltd., 1972), 217 – 218.

[15] Weiner's use of the term "public freehold example" refers to the artist's practice of designating a certain percentage of work as unavailable for sale and therefore secured for the public domain. The choice of language as a medium, however, ensures that even those works privately owned will remain publicly accessible, as Weiner states: "I go through a lot of trouble to get things published all the time. So the pieces are published, the information is public, anybody that really is excited can make a reproduction. So, in fact, the art is all public freehold" (quoted in an interview with Patricia Norvell [1969], reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 27).

tape represents only what "*could* be art" and referring to the documented constructions not as art but as "material *possibilities*." The relegation of the physical object to the status of supplementary illustration completely dissolves the aesthetic hierarchy exemplified by Serra's position, wherein the object of perceptual experience is privileged over and above any representation.[16] For Weiner, by contrast, the physical materialization would constitute a *representation* of the work, just as much as the linguistic formulation itself. As such, *BEACHED* bears a much closer resemblance to *Spiral Jetty* (1970) than the modesty of its presentation would imply.

Craig Owens describes Smithson's transformation of the visual field into a textual one as "one of the most significant aesthetic events of our decade." Discussing *Spiral Jetty* in 1979 Owens writes:

> Like the non-site, the *Jetty* is not a discrete work, but one link in a chain of signifiers which summon and refer to one another in a dizzying spiral. For where else does the *Jetty* exist except in the film which Smithson made, the narrative he published, the photographs which accompany that narrative and the various maps, diagrams, drawings etc., he made about it? Unintelligible at close range, the spiral form of the *Jetty* is completely intuitable only from a distance, and that distance is most often achieved by imposing a text between viewer and work. Smithson thus accomplishes a radical dislocation of the notion of point-of-view, which is no longer a function of physical position, but of the mode (photographic, cinematic, textual) of confrontation with the work of art.[17] (fig. 54)

Remarkably, Weiner's model of displacement would exceed even the Jetty's "dizzying spiral" inasmuch as for Weiner there is no presentation, no matter how extensively archival, in which the work could be seen wholly to exist. Again, this is not to relegate the work to a status of dematerialization, but rather to recognize the perpetual suspension of the work, not only through its textual formulation but *even in its material construction*. Presented in language or illustrated through physical objects, the work never escapes the status of a representation for which no model can be identified, and therefore cannot be experienced "in the place where it resides." Thus, the video tape that would seem to bring us closer to artist and work will only point to an

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[16] For a discussion on the relationship of Weiner's work to its "supplements" see Buchloh, "The Posters Of Lawrence Weiner" reprinted in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry, Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 197*5 (1985; Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2000), 555 - 576.

[17] Craig Owens, "Earthwords," *October* 10 (Autumn 1979), reprinted in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture*, ed. Scott Bryson et al. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 47.

unbridgeable distance that separates the receiver and *BEACHED*, a gap that prevents the idea from ever being “completely intuitable.”

BROKEN OFF

Another brief, black and white video from 1971, this time for the work *BROKEN OFF*, begins with a shot of Weiner speaking into a microphone (fig. 55). “*BROKEN OFF*,” he announces, “is a public freehold example of what could be art within my responsibility.” As with *Beached*, the video goes on to show five examples: Weiner cracking a branch in a field, kicking and dislodging a rock, splitting a piece of wood, scraping some bark off a tree and finally pulling the plug of the recording device itself, thus ending the video / audio transmission. Referring to *BROKEN OFF* as one of his most important works, Weiner has continued to present / build it over a period of more than twenty years.[18] Thus, *BROKEN OFF* would appear as: a post-card mailed from East Germany to West Germany (1971), a yellow matchbook cover (1980), a corner of the Kunsthalle Bern wall with a chunk knocked out (1983), a plaque covering the bricked up window of a building in Sindelfingen (1989), and an ancient Roman tile with one corner cracked off (given to Weiner by his daughter Kirsten) (figs. 56, 57 & 58). Shifting from tree branch, to video transmission, to geo-political boundary, *BROKEN OFF* connects a series of divergent actions, objects and events, generating an extreme version of the “contingent relational arrays” that animated the meandering space of Rauschenberg’s *Combines*. Recalling once more Whitehead’s theory of reality as process, *BROKEN OFF* shatters the integrity of static material substance, pointing instead to a “nexus” of interrelations, articulated through a paradoxical force of conjunction. In its inherently clastic structure, combining objects by means of disintegration, *BROKEN OFF* gives a perfect

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[18] Weiner in “Das Loch In Der Wand / I Want Your Hole,” ***öffentlich, public freehold***, ed. Ingrid Burgbacher-Krupka (Ostfildern: Edition Cantz, 1992), 11-17. This book was published in connection with Weiner’s installation of *BROKEN OFF* in Sindelfingen, Germany.

example of what could be meant when Weiner uses the word “idea,” and how that use precludes any sense of idealization.[19]

Ideas were a primary target of philosopher Georges Bataille’s “base materialism,” an adamantly non-conceptual approach to matter first articulated in the context of Surrealism in the late 1920s. Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois have argued for the relevance of Bataille’s work to an analysis of practices (e.g. Smithson, Ruscha, Serra) wherein the binary division between form and content (the hallmark of Conceptual art) no longer serves as a useful distinction.[20] Weiner’s desire to present *ideas* would seem to disqualify his practice from the anti-project of base materialism altogether, for as Bois explains, Bataille considered ideas to be nothing less than prisons, forcing matter to conform to a “*devoir-être*” or a role model of what *should* be. Base materialism would offer an escape from these “ontological prisons,” a heterological opposition to the idealism of classical materialism and its enforcement of normative standards and models of resemblance.[21] Resisting assimilation to any abstraction or concept, matter would remain indefinable and formless, characterized by self-splitting and singular deviation. Such operations are, in fact, mobilized in many of Weiner’s works, where one encounters numerous instances of self-differing objectivity (*AN INDIVISIBLE ENTITY DIVIDED REDUCED OR PARTITIONED*), and entropic disintegration (*AN AMOUNT OF BLEACH POURED UPON A RUG AND ALLOWED TO BLEACH*) exacerbated by the tendency of matter and language to find themselves always “in the wrong place” (*DISPLACED* [1969]).[22] More importantly, as *BROKEN OFF* shows, Weiner’s language serves to de-classify rather than to categorize, resulting not in conceptual formalizations, but in heterogeneous admixtures of words and things. Ultimately, Weiner’s practice stops short of a truly base materialism, inasmuch as the works are meant to test

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[19] Dieter Schwarz writes that Weiner’s work unleashes a signifying chain that prevents any return to ideality. See “Utiliser le langage, utiliser l’ art: le travail de Lawrence Weiner” in *Langage et modernité*, ed. Benjamin Buchloh (Villeurbanne: Le Nouveau musée, 1991), 142-144.

[20] See Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois, *Formless A User’s Guide* (New York: Zone Books, 1997), published in conjunction with the exhibition *L’Informe: Mode d’emploi* at the Centre Pompidou, Paris (May 21 – August 26, 1996).

[21] See Yve-Alain Bois, “Base Materialism” in *Formless A User’s Guide*, 51-62.

meaning rather than to effect its outright collapse. Nonetheless, there is enough of a correspondence to indicate that a different understanding of ideality is required to describe Weiner's practice, one that does not picture ideas as academic, imprisoning constraints, but that opens the idea itself to formless operations of heterological self-splitting. One such model is found in Jean-Luc Nancy's theorization of the idea, precisely not as form, but as "vestige."

In *The Vestige of Art*, Jean-Luc Nancy invokes Hegel's concept of art as "the sensible presentation of the Idea," stating: "No other definition escapes from this one sufficiently to oppose it in any fundamental way. It encloses up until today, the being or essence of art." [23] Nancy warns that Hegel's Idea should not be confused with an intellectual one, being rather, "the presentation to itself of being or the thing." Art's job would be to give this invisible internal conformation a form, to make a visibility of invisibility by giving the Idea an image. Mimesis thus exists not only between the image and its corresponding Idea, but also at the very core of the Idea itself inasmuch as it is "the self-imitation of being, its transcendent or transcendental miming." Nancy emphasizes that this mode of thinking is always inherently theological, invariably linked to the historical motif of "the visible image of the invisible God." And we can easily find echoes of what Nancy calls this "ontotheological function." It resounds, for instance in Barnett Newman's aspiration to make an "ideographic picture," one that could present "pure" ideas directly to the viewer, "and not through the medium of their names."[24] It can be heard too in Frank Stella's positivism, when he says: "If the painting were lean enough, accurate enough or right enough you would just be able to look at it. All I want anyone to get out of my paintings, and all I ever get out of them, is the fact that you can see the whole idea without any confusion…

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[22] Reference to an adage quoted by Freud in "Character and Anal Eroticism": "Dirt is matter in the wrong place." Quoted by Bois in "Base Materialism," *Formless A User's Guide,* 59.

[23] Jean-Luc Nancy, "The Vestige of Art" in *The Muses* (1994; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 88.

[24] Quoted in Yve-Alain Bois, "Perceiving Newman" in *Painting As Model* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1990), 192. Bois argues that while Newman speaks about painting as an expression of the "pure idea," ("For it is only the pure idea that has meaning. Everything else has everything else") this idea would be based not a translation or execution of an *a priori* concept, but on an experience of meaning created in the phenomenological process of making and beholding the work. The idea's embodiment is therefore *coincident* with its inscription in painting and its perception by the viewer. Newman's idea remains tied, therefore, to an experience of presence (both spatial and temporal).

What you see is What you see."[25] Certainly it is at work in Joseph Kosuth's pretensions to logical clarity, pronounced in the tautological regress of "Art as Idea as Idea" (fig. 161e). Indeed, the ontotheological function operates anywhere there is an effort to crystallize an idea, to present it in a self-reflexive, pellucid image.

Nancy goes on to suggest another definition and a different task for art. This new direction is already announced in two moments of Hegel's thought. The first is the dialectical necessity, the imperative for the Idea to go outside itself in order to be itself. The second is the fact that in being presented, the Idea loses its ideality and ceases to be what it is. Thus, the presentation of the Idea is simultaneously its withdrawal. And it is in the wake of the withdrawal of the Idea and of the image that Nancy will formulate another theory of art as vestige. To explain the vestige, Nancy uses Thomas Aquinas' example of smoke caused by fire. In the smoke there is no *eidos* of fire, no image of it. It represents only "the causality of the cause, but not its form."[26] The word vestige derives from *vestigium*, which designates the sole of the shoe, or the trace of a foot. This trace, however, does not identify its origin or model: "A vestige shows that someone has passed by but not who it is." The vestige is thus the antithesis of the statue, a statue of Mercury for example, which gives the *eidos* of the god in a resplendent image. By contrast the vestige shows only the passage or withdrawal of the Idea, and not the imprint of its form. "It is," Nancy proposes, "(of) the sensible (the) traced or tracing as its very sense."

Structurally, Nancy's vestige bears a strong relationship to what Krauss would call "the logic of the index," a category of sign developed by C.S. Peirce in opposition to the symbol. Whereas the symbol maintains an arbitrary relation to its referent (as in most linguistic signs), the index sustains an existential connection, as Krauss explains: "As distinct from symbols, indexes establish their meaning along the axis of a physical relationship to their referents. They are the marks or traces of a particular cause, and that cause is the thing to which they refer, the object they signify. Into the category of the index, we would place physical traces (like footprints),

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[25] Frank Stella in conversation with Bruce Glaser and Donald Judd, "New Nihilism or New Art," broadcast on WBAI FM (February 1964), reprinted as "Questions To Stella and Judd" in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. George Battcock (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), 158.

[26] Nancy, "The Vestige of Art," *The Muses*, 95.

medical symptoms, or the actual referents of shifters."[27] According to Krauss, much of the heterogeneity of post '60s work could in fact be understood in terms of an indexical operation, in which the emptiness of signs becomes meaningful only in relation to an external, physical referent. But herein lies the crucial difference between the index and the vestige, inasmuch as there is no existential presence which would fill the vestige with meaning, in the way, for instance, that the "empty" shifter is "filled with signification" when in the course of conversation a speaker lays claim to the personal pronoun "I". The vestige, by contrast, frustrates this type of embodiment, by refusing to be anchored, even momentarily, by any single image or form.

Returning now to the traces of *BROKEN OFF*, something like this model of the vestige comes to mind. The long list of objects and actions through which *BROKEN OFF* has been presented fail to identify the work; as with *BEACHED* the multiple possibilities prove only that we cannot know for certain what the work looks like. Or to put it otherwise, the work could look like anything whatsoever. It would be meaningless, for instance, to state that there is a certain category or class of things or events that form the extension of *BROKEN OFF*, for there is literally nothing which cannot in some way be described as broken off (including the words themselves). As a concept, *BROKEN OFF* is thus paradoxical, constituting what Bertrand Russell would call an "illegitimate totality."[28] As an idea *BROKEN OFF* subverts the ontotheological function at the

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[27] Rosalind Krauss, "Notes On The Index: Part I" in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (1976; Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1985), 198.

[28] In "Homonyms," Giorgio Agamben reviews the problem of "illegitimate totalities" articulated by Bertrand Russell. If one assumes that there are such things as concepts determining a class of objects which form that concept's extension (e.g. "red" determines a class of red objects) then there also arise such things as "non-predicative" concepts which cannot determine a class without producing antinomies. Examples of such concepts would be the words "all," "any" and "every" which constitute illegitimate totalities because they "pretend to be part of the totality they define." As such one is faced with a concept that is simultaneously part of its own extension (e.g. *BROKEN OFF*). Logicians would try to issue a prohibition against such illegitimacy, stating that "Anything that implies all the members of a class must not itself be one of them" or "all that in any way concerns every or each member of a class must not be a member of that class." Agamben points out, however, that all words are in fact susceptible to the condition of non-predicative expression, being presented as classes of which they are simultaneously members and not members. He goes on to identify "being-in-language" as the "non-predicative property par excellence." This "being-in-language" will come to signify for Agamben not the totality of a concept and its extension, but what shatters the pretensions of coherent relations based on synonymous definition (participation in a common concept). Thus, Agamben distinguishes the concept (based on synonymy) from the idea (based on homonymy) which shows "the being-in-language" of all the members of every class. This notion of the idea, based not on the exclusions of categorization but on an embrace of singularity (homonyms have the same name but different definitions) corresponds in some way with Nancy's self-differing theorization of the idea.

For Agamben a return to the sensible experience of "dwelling" in language remains fundamental to engendering a new sense of community no longer based on categorical exclusion. See Agamben, "Homonyms," *The Coming Community* (1990; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 70 – 76.

heart of Hegel's idealism, in failing to resolve into a clear image of itself. The split tiles, cracked branches and battered wall are not reflections of *BROKEN OFF* in the mimetic manner of a Hegelian presentation. In the book *Screenplay & Movie*, Weiner specifically questions such a model of reflection, through drawings filled with the words "mirror mirror" and "image image." One of the drawings pointedly asks: "Mirror Mirror on the wall why reflect at all?" later voicing the futility of this mimetic operation: "Mirror Mirror on the wall after reflection why do I exist at all?"[29] (figs. 59a & 59b) Refusing the tautological regress of such a self-perpetuating, self-reflexive structure (e.g. the dominant structures of capitalist exchange), Weiner worked to articulate the idea as not only self-differing, but even self-cancelling.[30]

Such a presentation of the idea as the very failure of mimetic or indexical reconciliation lies at the heart of Sol LeWitt's practice, and in particular the *Wall Drawings*, begun in 1968 (fig. 60). Due to the materials used (hard pencils, sometimes in color), these works generally take on a spectral appearance, causing a difficulty of seeing often matched by an arduousness of reading. Writing about the *Wall Drawings*, Anna Lovatt proposes that these visible and conceptual impediments generate unpredictable levels of interference in the transmission of ideas, increasing the amount of noise and therefore uncertainty in the system (effects that would be codified by Weiner's *Statement of Intent*).[31] LeWitt's work amplifies static, first of all by being drawn on the wall itself, incorporating what LeWitt called the "holes, cracks, bumps and grease marks" of their surface, rendering their appearance dependent upon the site of inscription.

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[29] Weiner, *Screenplay & Movie* (Los Angeles: Regen Projects, 2005), n.p.; published in conjunction with an exhibition at Regen Projects, Los Angeles (April 2005).

[30] Weiner remarks: "The dominant structure's reason for existence is to continue to exist. It can only see itself in the reflection of a mirror. It could change itself from left to right. It can't do anything else. The position of the artist is to scratch that mirror." Weiner, *Between Artists: Liam Gillick and Lawrence Weiner* (New York: A.R.T. Press, 2006), 11.

[31] Anna Lovatt, "Ideas in Transmission: LeWitt's Wall Drawings and the Question of Medium, *Tate Papers* Issue 14 (October 1, 2010). As Lovatt notes, in *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* Claude Shannon offers a fundamental picture of information transmission as a form of encryption in which a sender's message is transmitted via code over a channel. That message is then decoded by the receiver, with the goal of "reproducing at one point either exactly or approximately a message selected at another point" (the formula for controlled signification highlighted by Deleuze and Guattari). Within information science noise functions both as a corruption of transmission *and* as an increase in the quanta of information transferred. More than overriding the clarity of a message, as seen in Ruscha's "liquid words," noise contributes to the amount of uncertainty in the transmission, giving the receiver greater interpretive choice (e.g. Stephen Crocker's observation that the static sound of Neil Armstrong's voice from the moon becomes a sign, not only of interference, but of his distance from us).

Conceived as verbal instructions, which are then executed by multiple hands, the works make use of the fact that "Each person draws a line differently and each person understands words differently." Finally, LeWitt insists that there are no parameters for "correct" interpretation: "It doesn't really matter if the viewer understands the concepts of the artist by seeing the art. Once it is out of his hand the artist has no control over the way a viewer will perceive the work. Different people will understand the same thing in a different way."[32] Thus, the systematic and often painstaking execution of LeWitt's *Wall Drawings* shows that ideas can only be infinitely *traced* without ever being adequately formalized. One thinks, as well of LeWitt's *Serial Project No. 1 (ABCD)* (1967), wherein the vastness of a permutational scheme precludes the work's resolution into the clarity of a distinct picture.[33]

Thinking once more about Weiner's early *Removal Paintings*, it becomes evident that their liability was not their visibility per se, but their tendency to be seen as "image," as clearly mirroring their associated idea in a manner that Newman and Stella might have admired. Following LeWitt, Weiner's move towards language would be an attempt to free the idea, not from sensibility as such, but from precisely this kind of crystallization. A resistance to the image accounts for Weiner's ambivalent relationship to built versions of the work. For there is always the risk that the photographs of Weiner: pouring paint onto the floor of Robert Barry's kitchen (*ONE PINT GLOSS WHITE LACQUER POURED DIRECTLY UPON THE FLOOR AND ALLOWED TO DRY* [1968]), lighting a flare on the boundary of Amsterdam and Amstelveen (*THE RESIDUE OF A FLAIR IGNITED UPON A BOUNDARY* [1968]), or carving up the Kunsthalle Bern museum wall (*A 36" X 36" REMOVAL TO THE LATHING OR SUPPORT WALL OF PLASTER OR WALLBOARD FROM A WALL* [1968]) might serve to identify the work, supplying it with an authoritative illustration (figs. 61, 62a & b, 63).[34] This is why the photograph, while

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[32] Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs On Conceptual Art" reprinted in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, 14.

[33] Anna Lovatt, "Seriality and Systematic Thought in Drawing c. 1966-1976: Ruth Vollmer, Sol LeWitt, Eva Hesse, Mel Bochner and Dorothea Rockburne" (PhD Dissertation, Courtauld University of Art, 2005), 81.

[34] *THE RESIDUE OF A FLAIR IGNITED UPON A BOUNDARY* and *A 36" X 36" REMOVAL TO THE LATHING OR SUPPORT WALL OF PLASTER OR WALLBOARD FROM A WALL* were constructed for the contemporaneous exhibitions *Op losse Schroeven (Situations and Cryptostructures)* at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (March 15- April 27, 1969) and *When Attitudes Become Form (Works – Concepts – Processes – Situations – Information)* at the Kunsthalle Bern (March 22 – April 23, 1969). For an extensive

offering a perfect model of an indexical procedure is problematic as an example of the vestige, for the snapshot's evidentiary status shores up identity rather than deferring it as the vestige does. Presenting the work in language, Weiner hoped to mitigate such effects of patency. Articulated as a statement, the idea attaches and detaches from objects and events without forming them. Far from securing the work's ideality, language maximizes the work's contact with multiple surfaces, objectifying the idea without fixing it in a single configuration. As a result, the receiver perceives the idea not in the fullness of an image, but in the excessive residue of a material/linguistic encounter, a type of presentation that is simultaneously experienced as withdrawal.

TRACCE TRACES

In 2001 Weiner published a book devoted to the work *A NATURAL WATER COURSE DIVERTED REDUCED OR DISPLACED* (1969). The cover and back of the book feature the same photograph taken by Alice Zimmerman of Weiner standing in a stream, building the work in 1969 (fig. 64). One might have expected the entire book to be filled with similar documents. Instead the book simply names a series of geographic locations: Putney VT, USA; Inuvik Northwest Territory, Canada; Bodo, Norway; Dusseldorf, Germany. Some places, such as Inuvik, are listed multiple times (each on separate pages). No other details are provided, giving the reader only a general sense of something specific having taken place. In signaling the work's concrete passage, while refusing to deliver a complete image of it, the book once more recalls Nancy's vestige, the trace that shows "the causality of the cause and not its form," like smoke without fire. That Weiner was keenly interested in such a structure is evidenced in his second book *Tracce Traces* (1970), which consists of fifty works from 1969 in Italian and English

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analysis of these two landmark exhibitions see Christian Rattemeyer et al. *Exhibiting the New Art, 'Op Losse Schroeven' and 'When Attitudes Become Form' 1969* (London: Afterall Books, 2010).

translation, all of them past participles of transitive verbs such as: *FERMENTED, DISPLACED, TRANSFERRED, BREACHED, PAINTED, SMUDGED, IGNITED, STAINED* (fig. 68).[35]

In the same year that *Tracce Traces* was published, Ed Ruscha would create his first set of screenprinted words using organic store-bought materials such as: chocolate syrup, tomato paste, Bolognese sauce, cherry pie filling, coffee, caviar, axle grease, tulips and raw eggs (figs. 65 & 66). *News, Mews, Pews, Brews, Stews & Dues* was born out of Ruscha's dissatisfaction with a certain kind of superficiality: "The first work I did involving vegetable matter and organic materials came out of a frustration with materials. I wanted to expand my ideas about materials and the value they have. I was concerned with the concept of staining something, rather than applying a film or coat or skin of paint on a canvas. I started looking at ideas as though they were stains."[36] According to Cornelia Butler, Ruscha's conflation of "ideas" and "stains" stands as the hallmark of the artist's Conceptualism. As evidenced by a book such as *Tracce Traces*, it is a sensibility shared by Weiner no less. In both *Mews, Pews, Brews, Stews & Dues* and *Tracce Traces* ideas are presented not as *a priori* constructs, but as the linguistic remains of a material process. Moreover, Ruscha's work partakes of *Tracce Traces* indeterminacy, for while the stained screenprints certainly give the impression of a support having been suffused with colored matter, the actual ingredients used are not clearly discernible, reminding us once again of the vestige's status as a trace that shows only that something (anything) has passed.

Highlighting Weiner's connection to post-minimalism, Liz Kotz productively compares *Tracce Traces* to Richard Serra's *Verb List* (1967-1968) first published in *Avalanche* 1971, in which Serra inventories over one hundred possible sculptural procedures such as "to roll, to crease, to fold, to store"[37] (figs. 67 & 68). For Kotz, the primary distinction between the *Verb List* and *Tracce Traces* lay in Weiner's emphasis on an "abstract formulation" as opposed to a physical realization. In addition, one would want to note that unlike the *Verb List*, Weiner's work

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[35] Weiner, *Tracce Traces* (Torino: Sperone editore, 1970).

[36] Ed Ruscha quoted in Cornelia Butler, "Information Man," *Cotton Puffs, Q-Tips, Smoke And Mirrors: The Drawings of Ed Ruscha*, exh. cat. (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2004), 31.

presents not actions or processes as such, but precisely their traces, as the artist himself would acknowledge: “So the new series of my works are traces of what an artist does.”[38] This crucial difference is articulated in Serra’s preference for infinitives (to split) and Weiner’s insistence on past participles (*SPLIT*). While for Serra, language served as the formula for the production of what John Rajchman would call “indeterminate virtualities,” for Weiner and Ruscha, language was itself the material residue of a previously actualized action, as tangible as molten lead splashed upon the floor.[39] Although less bureaucratic than *Statements*, *Tracce Traces* are similarly neither utterances nor formulas, but a kind of verbal/informational excess produced by a material reaction (like the odor of freshly poured bleach). As with *BROKEN OFF*, *Tracce Traces* touches upon specific materials, without being identified with them, remaining traces of anything whatsoever. By virtue of this generality/abstraction, the works place the burden of responsibility on the receiver, tasked with determining the work’s concrete implications. Focusing on connections between artists such as Weiner, Smithson, Serra and Nauman, Kotz emphasizes their shared interest in Cagean models of participatory and aleatory production, their “openness to the unanticipated, to the uncontrollable, effects of time, change, erosion and decay.”[40] On the other hand, while such chance procedures undoubtedly play a critical role for Weiner in deciding the objects fermented, displaced or transferred, books such as *Tracce Traces* make it nearly impossible to sustain an attitude of Cagean indifference, inasmuch as they focus not on the perceptual immediacy of events, but equally on their material *consequences*, as Weiner’s

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[37] Liz Kotz, *Words To Be Looked At, Language in 1960s Art* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2007), 212.

[38] As quoted in Jack Burnham, “Alice’s Head: Reflections on Conceptual Art,” *Artforum* (February, 1970), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 34.

[39] In a 1977 interview, Richard Serra describes the verb list (worked on from 1967 – 68) as “a way of applying various activities to unspecified materials…The language structured my activities in relation to materials which had the same function as transitive verbs” (quoted in Kotz *Words To Be Looked At, Language in 1960s Art*, 209).

Regarding the “indeterminate virtuality” of Serra’s infinitive form, John Rajchman writes: “The ‘activities for unspecified materials’ thus become a matter of attaining this infinitive potential spatially, prior to subjects or objects, and the question arises of this larger philosophical nature of space, to which all of Serra’s activities seem to lead us.” See Rajchman, “Serra’s Abstract Thinking,” *Richard Serra, Sculpture: Forty Years*, exh. cat. ed. David Frankel (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2007), 66.

[40] Kotz, *Words To Be Looked At, Language in 1960s Art*, 212.

recourse to the past tense implies (e.g. *ONE QUART HEAVY GRADE MOTOR OIL POURED INTO THE GULF STREAM* [1969]).

Due to a number of commonalities, Weiner's works have been linked to the Cagean Event score as developed in the early 1960s by *Fluxus* composer George Brecht. Looking at the scores collected in Brecht's 1963 Fluxbox *Water Yam*, a correspondence with Weiner's work on the level of both presentation style and content is unmistakable (figs. 69 & 70). Printed on variously sized note cards that merge a ludic sensibility with an administrative aesthetic, Brecht's scores deal with materials and processes that one finds throughout Weiner's work, for example:

WATER
- coming from
- staying
- going to

Both Brecht and Weiner would investigate a host of concerns closely associated with Minimal and Post-Minimal art, while using textual presentation in order to avoid tying the works to sculptural form. Julia Robinson argues that Brecht pioneered the linguistic turn historically accredited to Conceptualism, by being the first to substitute the aesthetic object with a textual formulation.[41] Robinson notes that the radical propositions of Weiner's *Statement of Intent* were already prepared for by the participatory, open-endedness of Brecht's scores, which similarly advanced a non-hierarchical relation between author and receiver, positing the audience's construction / execution / use of the work to be as valid as anything produced by the artist. Brecht had, in fact, been the first to eliminate the necessity of conventional object production or spectacular display by proposing that the score could be performed in the simple act of reading and noticing, thus allowing for the possibility of the work to remain an "idea."[42] Robinson cites Weiner's 1972 series

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[41] For Julia Robinson's discussion of the relationship of George Brecht's work to Conceptual art see "The Event Score & The Conceptual Turn in the Art of the 1960s" in "From Abstraction To Model: In The Event Of George Brecht & The Conceptual Turn In The Art Of The 1960s" (PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2008), 234 – 307.

[42] In close correspondence with Weiner's "Statement of Intent," in 1968 Robert Filliou articulated "The Principle of Equivalence" as a "conceptual tool" that posited a non-hierarchical relation of three states: "Well Made," "Badly Made" and "Not Made." Filliou describes how he arrived at this formula: "The first work was putting a sock into a box. I put a red sock into a yellow box and the first time the proportions were right, the colors were right, I called this work Well Made. I did it once more and the proportions were not right and the color was out – Badly Made. I did it a third time – it was just the concept: red sock in a yellow box. And then

of sound-based works as explicitly indebted to the logic of the score, and to Brecht's formulation of an "art of maximal implications with minimal means"[43]:

LOUDLY MADE NOISE (forte)

AND / OR

MODERATELY LOUDLY (mezzoforte)

(fig. 72)

Like Brecht, Weiner uses text, not merely to avoid the production of unique objects, but to acknowledge the concrete mechanisms that organize perception. Robinson discusses Brecht's interest in Ernst Cassirer's theory of perception as essentially symbolic, structured by language, and inherently mediated. While such concepts certainly accord with Weiner's work, Cassirer's formulation of mythic experience remains significantly at odds with Weiner's practice:

> For in this mode, thought does not dispose freely over the data of intuition, in order to relate and compare them to each other, but is captivated and enthralled by the intuition which suddenly confronts it. It comes to rest in the immediate experience; the sensible present is so great that everything else dwindles before it.[44]

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having these three works together I considered them as Well Made, seeing as I went to the trouble of making them. And I remade the three of them once more Badly Made and then once more Not Made. And then those three sets of three I considered Well Made as I had reasoned before and I re-did it once more Badly Made and a third time Not Made […] Principle of Equivalence… applies to every growth every thought, every idea." See Maud Capelle, "Filliou Now: the Unfinished Project," *art press* no. 297, (Jan 2004) (figs. 71a & 71b). While Filliou's principle, like Weiner's "Statement of Intent," eliminates any hierarchy between objects and ideas, Filliou's complex strategy of "co-creation" was less concerned with the objective content of work (which – like the socks in a box - was often of a completely arbitrary nature) than on the work's often game or gag-like structuring of *activity* (e.g. the creation of "useless" portraits). Filliou's development of "Poetical Economy," linked closely to the thinking of Charles Fourier, would center primarily on an effort to defeat the capitalist theory of value by dismantling the hierarchical division of labor and leisure - hence the connection between the Principle of Equivalence and "Permanent Creation." That emphasis on the relative value of activity is brought out in Filliou's distinction between "Well Made" vs. "Badly Made," qualifications that no longer exist in Weiner's formula – which remains focused on *object* relations (as opposed to subjective actions).

For a discussion of Filliou's and Brecht's project as a form of "counter-network" and "counter-economy" see Natilee Harren, "*La cédille qui ne finit pas*: Robert Filliou, George Brecht, and Fluxus in Villefranche (deregulation version)," *The Getty Research Journal* no. 4 (2012), 127 – 143.

[43] George Brecht, Allan Kaprow, Robert Watts, "A Project in Multiple Dimensions" (grant proposal, Rutgers University, 1957-58), quoted Julia Robinson, "From Abstraction To Model: In The Event Of George Brecht & The Conceptual Turn In The Art Of The 1960s" (PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2008), 128. Robinson notes that Weiner was familiar with Fluxus at least by the 1970s, if not by the time of his work in Putney Vermont in 1968. According to Robinson, Brecht shared Weiner's interest in the philosophy of Whitehead.

[44] Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth* (New York: Dover Publications, 1953); as quoted in Robinson, "From Abstraction To Model: In The Event Of George Brecht & The Conceptual Turn In The Art Of The 1960s," 131-132.

According to Robinson, this model of immediacy relates to one of Brecht's fundamental challenges, namely: "how to make art that would not be subject to translation, but that would make use of the matrix of symbolic form."[45] Herein lies one critical difference between Weiner's works and Brecht's scores, which remain tied to an ideal of the *untranslatability* of a perceptual instant. For Weiner, by contrast, a structure's capacity to be meaningful relies precisely on its ability to be translated, implying a temporal mediation that precludes the captivations of "the sensible present" to which Brecht's work aspires: "Rather than an image of a concrete life, it is a signal preparing one for the moment itself. Event scores prepare one for an event to happen in one's own now."[46]

Brecht's desire to frame a punctual act of heightened perception ("very private… little enlightenments…"), at the expense of the object ("I am always happy to de-emphasize objects") conflicts entirely with Weiner's focus on objective content above all else.[47] Rather than being designed to reflect back on the subject's creative powers of perception, or to compose a momentary intervention in *inter-subjective* relations, Weiner's structures point instead towards an objective materiality, which is never the indifferent ground of a moment of sensible experience, but the elusive focus of our signifying practices.[48] This materialist emphasis is evidenced in a host

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[45] Robinson, "From Abstraction To Model: In The Event Of George Brecht & The Conceptual Turn In The Art Of The 1960s," 133.

[46] Brecht, "Events (Assembled Notes)," unpublished manuscript, 1961; quoted in Robinson, "In The Event Of George Brecht," *George Brecht: A Heterospective*, exh. cat. (Köln: Museum Ludwig, 2005), 16.

[47] Brecht, as quoted in David T. Doris, "Zen Vaudeville: A Medi(t)ation in the Margins of Fluxus" in *The Fluxus Reader*, ed. Ken Friedman (London: Academy Editions, 1998), 97. Regarding the suppression of the object Robinson writes: "The crux of the event score is its shift of focus away from the object to the very enactment of the artist's decision-making processes – the very criteria out of which a work is composed" (Julia Robinson, "The Brechtian Event Score: A Structure in Fluxus," *Performance Research* vol. 7, no. 3 [September 2002], 113). Brecht: "My work consists of events, or rather the arrangement of events, and I am always happy to de-emphasize objects toward a focusing on events which I think EXIT does very well." Quoted in Robinson, "From Abstraction To Model: In The Event Of George Brecht & The Conceptual Turn In The Art Of The 1960s," *277.* See also Robinson, "Maciunas as Producer: Performative Design in the Art of the 1960s," *Grey Room* 33 (Fall 2008), 67-83. Discussing George Maciunas' conception of the Fluxus score as "the very inscription of collectivism" Robinson writes: "Rejecting works of 'art' as finalized, static *objects*, the primary function of the Fluxus score was to compose relations between subjects" (*Ibid*., 67).

[48] Although Weiner acknowledges a serious interest in Brecht's work, he repeatedly distances his practice from instructional / performance based art. In conversation with Patricia Norvell (1969) Weiner unequivocally declared: "No. The event can never be the art. There is no thing about an event that's art." See *Recording Conceptual Art*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Patricia Norvell (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 102.

of works, whose performance could have dubious, if not catastrophic results (all works from 1969):

> *TWO FIELDS IN ADJOINING COUNTRIES CRATERED BY SIMULTANEOUS EXPLOSIONS*
>
> *A DIRECT AFFRONT TO A NATURAL WATERWAY*
>
> *A GLACIER VANDALIZED*
>
> *THE ARCTIC CIRCLE SHATTERED*

Weiner would later use the term “sculpture” to emphasize that while the works can always be “built” they are not logical conundrums, scores to be completed or possibilities to be realized, but traces of “EMPIRICAL EXISTING FACT.”[49] Articulated in the past tense, the works refuse the plenitude implied by even the most ephemeral Event, a temporal structure that invariably offers the promise of perceptual resolution (as expressed in Robert Morris’ conclusion that in performance, “What you do is what you do”).[50] Negating the possessive sense of presence (“one’s own now”) that Brecht’s Event-scores were designed to frame, Weiner’s statements fracture sensibility, connecting the receiver to materials that remain temporally and spatially *distanced*, confounding all certainty of what the present entails. As Victor Burgin would argue, such an “absence of presence” would prove fundamental to Conceptual art, producing a threat to self-integrity that requires recognition of, and intervention within, the “networks of differences” that define art and its representations, pointing as well to the possibility for change.[51] That sense of ambiguity remains crucial to Weiner’s work, which leaves the receiver to produce the meaning of a trail of surface effects generated by the idea’s passage, in forms as trivial and significant as a postcard bearing the words *BROKEN OFF,* mailed across the Berlin Wall.

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[49] Weiner: “ART IS NOT A METAPHOR UPON THE RELATIONSHIP OF HUMAN BEINGS TO OBJECTS & OBJECTS TO OBJECTS IN RELATION TO HUMAN BEINGS… BUT A REPRESENTATION OF AN EMPIRICAL EXISTING FACT IT DOES NOT TELL THE POTENTIAL & CAPABILITIES OF AN OBJECT (MATERIAL) BUT PRESENTS A REALITY CONCERNING THAT RELATIONSHIP” See “Art is not a metaphor,” *zweitschrift* (Summer 1980), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 107.

[50] Robert Morris, unpublished interview with Jack Burnham, November 21, 1975, Robert Morris Archive. Quoted in Maurice Berger, *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 25.

[51] Victor Burgin, “The Absence of Presence” in *The End of Art Theory* (Atlantic Highlands, 1986).

A TRANSLATION FROM ONE LANGUAGE TO ANOTHER

Weiner defines translation as "the moving of one object to another place."[52] In *Flowed*, a book from 1971, this effect of displacement through translation is made not only visual but palpable (fig. 73).[53] The book presents ten variations of *FLOWED*, beginning with *FLOWED GENTLY* and ending with *FLOWED DESPITE*. The works appear in seven Western languages (Italian, French, Danish, Spanish, German, Dutch and English) and are printed three languages to a page. A reading of the book gives the sense not of self-contained blocks of text (as in *Statements*), but of words coursing through the turned pages, being transported (*FLOWED*) by virtue of their simultaneous translation. As with Weiner's photocopied removals for the *Xerox Book*, *Flowed* proliferates the works through repetition, but in this case translation guarantees a significant difference, and a constant mobilization.

In his essay on translation Roman Jakobson ends with a reference to an old saying: *Traduttore, traditore*, or "the translator is a betrayer."[54] The English version exemplifies perfectly the danger the rhyme warns against, inasmuch as the English loses all the paronomastic value of the Italian original, thus depleting it. According to Jakobson, such deficits are the reason that poetry remains untranslatable, allowing only for creative transposition. Weiner will use this distinction to separate his work from poetry:

> And poetry…. Essentially the definition could almost be something that is not translatable. It's possible to get an approximate translation. It's made not to be translated, it's made to have the beauty and the form and the sense of the language itself. And my work is designed initially to be translated, either into physical form or other languages.[55]

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[52] Weiner, "A Translation From One Language To Another," *De Witte Raaf* (January – February, 1996), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 345.

[53] Weiner, *Flowed* (Halifax, Nova Scotia: The Lithography Workshop, 1971).

[54] Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects Of Translation," *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (1959; London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 118. At the end of his essay Jakobson asks "translator of what messages, betrayer of what values?"

[55] Weiner in "Interview by Dieter Schwarz" [1989], reprinted in *Having Been Said,* 196.

In books such as *Tracce Traces* and *Flowed*, Weiner turns away from the ethics of the origin implied in Jakobson's description of poetry, through a form of translation that invalidates any possibility of unfaithfulness. Here, works are printed in multiple languages, with no clear indication of priority between one version and another. This insistence on translations that are not hierarchically separated but rather braided together can be found as well in Weiner's early "melodic noise" recordings, which feature multiple translations voiced in call response formats, as well as super-imposed in near cacophony.[56] One could argue that because Weiner is American, the English always takes precedence. This would be untrue, however, because the words are not properly the source of the work, being themselves translations of a material encounter.[57] Weiner describes a working method in which the process of translation is not limited to language, but occurs between words and materials in an incessant relay:

> I become enamored, or intrigued, or interested in a particular material. Often I bring the material upstairs to the studio, because while you may have a certain insight about the material, there are many other things you don't know about it. You deal with the material in relation to other materials, and from that you begin to test the premise or insight you began with. I translate what I learn from this into language.[58]

This language in turn begets other translations, both physical and linguistic. Identifying the initial objects or events that sparked Weiner's engagement is often neither feasible, nor necessary for the receiver, since the work may be transported through any materials and languages whatsoever. Translation is thus extricated from a long history of fidelity and betrayal.

In its installation in a public square in the Medieval town of Sindelfingen Germany, *BROKEN OFF* was translated two ways (fig. 74). Printed on a large tile covering a window of an old salt house, the work read: "*BROKEN OFF ABGEBROCHEN* (ODER) *AUFGEBROCHEN*," further extending the work's already multiple uses. For example, as *AUFGEBROCHEN* (broken open) the work gained a specific relevance to its placement in a bricked up window. As *ABGEBROCHEN* (torn down) the work recalled the destruction of historic buildings and streets

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[56] Relevant recordings include the LPs, *Having Been Done At, Having Been Done To - Essendo Stato Fatto A* (1973); *Nothing To Lose - Niets Aan Verloren* (1976); *Having Been Built On Sand With Another Base (Basis) In fact / Auf Sand gebaut Mit einer andern Basis tatsächlich* (1978).

[57] This concept of translation departs from Jakobson's definition of translation as a purely linguistic operation. According to Jakobson, the meaning of any linguistic sign is its translation into an alternate sign.

that was part of Sindelfingen's modernization.[59] Presented in a town square, the work signaled yet another transformation, namely the aborted "bourgeois public sphere" which has, according to Jürgen Habermas, devolved from a center of rational critical debate into a platform for advertisement and manipulative publicity.[60] The list of tangential readings could continue indefinitely, and according to Samuel Weber's analysis of Walter Benjamin's theory of translation, this dereliction from the original is translation's goal, rather than its error. Weber writes:

> In moving away from the original, translation unfolds *the ways* of meaning by moving words *away* from the meanings habitually attached to them, and which are generally construed as points of arrival rather than departure. Meaning is generally conceived as a self-contained, self understanding universally valid entity, one that precedes the words that express it. Translation's way to go, by contrast, leads in the direction of other words and other meanings, exposing a complex and multidimensional network of signification in which word occurrences are inevitably inscribed.[61]

AUFGEBROCHEN opens the work onto a set meanings not present in the English version, having to do with pulling up stakes, decamping and setting off. Thus, more than merely returning to the idea, *AUFGEBROCHEN* inflects it, sending *BROKEN OFF* on another course. It does this, not by transforming *BROKEN OFF*, but by glancing it, touching it at the smallest point as Benjamin describes:

> As the tangent fleetingly touches the circle only in one point and as it is this touching, not the point, that governs its trajectory into the infinite, so the translation touches the original fleetingly and only in the infinitely minute point of its meaning, in order to pursue its own course following the law of fidelity, in the freedom of the movement of language.[62]

Weber goes on to elaborate this inflection, stating that "the glancing movement of translation moves whatever it touches, but above all, it moves the language in which it takes place and those

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[58] Weiner in "I Am Not Content, Interview by David Batchelor," *Artscribe* (March / April 1989), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 190.

[59] See the discussion of the Sindelfingen installation of *BROKEN OFF* in Ingrid Burgbacher-Krupka, *öffentlich, public freehold* (Ostfildern: Edition Cantz, 1992).

[60] Habermas links what he calls the "refeudalization" of public space directly to a devaluation of the printed word, and a corresponding abandonment of a certain standard of public communication / debate that was built around a culture of private reading, now displaced by media consumption. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (1962; Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1989).

[61] Samuel Weber, "A Touch Of Translation: On Walter Benjamin's 'Task of the Translator'" in *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*, eds. Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 75.

[62] Walter Benjamin, "Task of the Translator, An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's Tableaux Parisiens" [1923], quoted in "A Touch Of Translation: On Walter Benjamin's 'Task of the Translator'" in *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*, 76.

who depend on it." This historical contingency is perfectly demonstrated by *BROKEN OFF*, whose significance to a divided Germany at the moment of its initial presentation in 1971 would be drastically altered after its May 1989 installation. *ABGEBROCHEN* (ODER) *AUFGEBROCHEN* appeared just months before pieces of the Berlin Wall would themselves be broken off by the *Mauerspechte* (wall woodpeckers), acts of demolition that marked the beginning of freer border crossings, of a people having set off on a different course. Thus, after seventeen years, the return to *BROKEN OFF* can only be conceived as a significant displacement, the result not only of a tangential encounter between two languages, but of a superficial contact between ideas and events, at a specific time and place.

According to Giyatri Spivak, one of the main ethical issues facing translation in the context of globalization is the threat of monolingualism.[63] Indeed, translation remains ever critical to forces of cultural imperialism, as evidenced by the US Defense Department's funding of the "phrase-a-lator" translation device, its celebration of "Translation Day" and endorsement of Turbo Arabic language boot-camp.[64] Nevertheless, Spivak argues that translation offers a key strategy in the pursuit of "good globalization," as long as it works to de-originate texts, and resist cultural hegemony, simultaneously contesting both the naturalized production of nation-state identities and the mythical ideal of a universal subject.[65] Weiner uses translation in just this way, as a mode not only of circulation but of deviation and differentiation. Boundaries thus become a critical material for Weiner, with particular emphasis on the way that objects change identities by crossing certain borderlines, a phenomenon vividly demonstrated by a set of works from 1970 made with the peculiarities of German grammar in mind. In English the works read *TO THE SEA* and *TO THE LAKE*. In German the works read *AN DIE SEE* and *AN DEM SEE*, with the

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[63] These remarks concerning translation studies are drawn from the symposium, "Translating" at Columbia University, September 29 – 30, 2005. Speeches referenced were given by Mary Louise Pratt, Gayatri Spivak and Martin Puchner.

[64] Daniel Buren's work for *Documenta* 7 in 1982 featured a loud-speaker outside the Museum Fridericianum reciting colors in various languages. In this case, translation signified the increasingly pervasive retrenchment of nationalist consciousness. See Buchloh, "Documenta 7: A Dictionary of Received Ideas," *October* vol. 22 (Autumn, 1982).

[65] As a somewhat problematic example of de-origination Martin Puchner offers a document such as the *Communist Manifesto*, a text written for maximum circulation through global translation.

difference between “sea” and “lake” stemming not from a change in noun but from a shift in gender.[66] The work’s seemingly straight-forward transposition thus opens onto considerations of nationality and gender as determinants of objective and subjective identity. Proving Jakobson’s insight that “languages differ essentially in what they *must* convey and not in what they *may* convey,” *AN DIE SEE* and *AN DEM SEE* also show that language obliges us always to express more than we intend.[67] When Barthes writes about the “fascism” of language, he points to this inherently legislative role, as language forces us to categorize, assert and repeat.[68] In light of the fact that there is no exit from language, Barthes will call for a way to disempower it from within, “to cheat with speech.” Weiner’s work offers one strategy, as it puts into play a movement of translation that dislocates language, while simultaneously exposing the identificatory powers inscribed within it. At the same time, the multiplicities of translation also reveal that what Giorgio Agamben calls our linguistic “dwelling” has the capacity to constitute a community based on a radically *differential* specificity, repressed by the categorical forces of nationalism, but present nonetheless in the fact that that our “being-in-language” is *not* a category that ties us to the same concept (i.e. of citizen), but an *idea* that enables us to give the same word (“human’”) whatsoever specification.[69]

HOW TO TOUCH WHAT

For Weber, the history of translation is inseparable from a history of *touching*. To illustrate this Weber returns to *Genesis*, to the story of the *Tree of Knowledge* wherein touching is forbidden because it implies taking possession. In eating and touching the tree, Adam and Eve would

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[66] This work is discussed by Alberro and Zimmerman, “Not How It Should Were It To Be Built But How It Could Were It To Be Built,” *Lawrence Weiner* (London: Phaidon, 1988), 52.

[67] Roman Jakobson, “On Linguistic Aspects Of Translation,” *The Translation Studies Reader*, 116.

[68] Roland Barthes, “Lecture in Inauguration of the Chair of Literary Semiology, Collège de France, January 7, 1977,” *October* 8 (Spring 1979), 5-6.

[69] See Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*. On the difference between the categorical nature of concepts based on a relation of synonymy, versus the “idea” constituted by the heterogeneous logic of homonymy, see note 28 above.

acquire the same powers of God, the hierarchical knowledge that separates good from evil. In the story of Babel, man again tries to master the space between himself and God, by building a tower to reach the heavens. God bewilders this effort to possess divinity, hampering the supreme gift of language and creating a confusion of tongues, thus withdrawing from man the Adamic power to make a name that is proper. After Babel, all names and languages will be confounded. Naming and touching, now radically curtailed, no longer automatically engender an act of possession. Instead there emerges a new mode, of “touching without taking,” a non-proprietary relation that, according to Weber, characterizes perfectly the task of translation, born out of language’s dispersal.

In 2000 Weiner collaborated with Eve Sonneman on a book entitled *How To Touch What.* It is a picture book, with photographs and words showing a wide variety of materials being touched and thereby combined. For instance, a set of photographs features a shot of anonymous hands holding ice cubes over a bowl, with the word “ICE” stamped across the picture. On the facing page, hands hold a string of accumulated dust, with the words “& DUST” superimposed. These sorts of manual demonstrations appear throughout the book, with pictures of hands stretching a piece of string in front of a brick wall (“CONCRETE & TWINE”), or holding a jar of yellow powder and a plastic sheet (“BRIMSTONE & PLASTIC”) (fig. 75a). As evidenced by its title, the book serves as a kind of primer on how to interact with materials. And if one had to articulate a formula for the type of contact proposed, one could simply call it “touching without taking.”

Importantly, the book reveals touching to be far more than a manual operation. There is, for instance, a set of images wherein no hands are visible at all. In two photographs of Yankees fans we see groups of young men from the shoulders up. Yankees logos and slogans adorn their clothes, with “NY ’98 CHAMPS” shaved onto one man’s scalp. The pictures are similar, with a few notable exceptions, such as the appearance and disappearance of a cigarette dangling from someone’s mouth. On top of the pictures we read “WORDS + SMOKE,” a phrase that highlights the fact that words are simultaneously objects to be manipulated (e.g. sewn on a jacket, painted on a face, carved into a hairline) as well as a means of manipulating (touching) objects (fig. 75b).

This palpable connection is underscored on every page of *How To Touch What* as language marks (stamps) the surfaces it touches, leaving an indelible trace. The work thus recalls *Tracce Traces*, and relates as well to Ruscha's formulation of ideas and words as stains. Indeed one of the great research topics of Weiner's career has been an investigation of all the ways (tattoos, stencils, incisions, engraving, painting, pasting, cutting) that language can be inscribed on things (fig. 77).

Weiner's interest in language as not only a trace but a tactile operation links his practice closely to graffiti, and in particular to the way that words deface the surface of Cy Twombly's canvases. Building on Barthes' analysis of Twombly's "graphisms," Krauss clarifies the stakes in Barthes' description:

> For graffiti is a medium of marking that has precise, and unmistakable, characteristics. First, it is performative, suspending representation in favor of action: I mark you, I cancel you, I dirty you. Second, it is violent: always an invasion of a space that is not the marker's own, it takes illegitimate advantage of the surface of inscription, violating it, mauling it, scarring it. Third, it converts the present tense of the performative into the past tense of the index: it is the trace of an event, torn away from the presence of the marker. "Kilroy was here," it reads.[70]

Weiner's early work seems particularly allied with graffiti's enactment of signification as vandalization (fig. 76). Witness the photographs of Weiner putting a crack in a driveway (*A 2" WIDE 1" DEEP TRENCH CUT ACROSS A STANDARD ONE CAR DRIVEWAY* [1968]) or leaving gaping removals in a wall, rug or canvas. The impropriety of these operations is exacerbated by their presentation in language, inasmuch as words transgress upon a territory formerly secured as visual. Krauss underscores the importance of graffiti as a strategy to undermine the premises of self-presence and plenitude that dominated the theorization of painting as a visual art. This subversion of form is tied to the belated temporality of the graffiti as index: "Even as graffiti's graphic lash strikes in the present, it registers itself as past, a mark whose violence dismembers the very idea of the image in the mirror, the whole body, Narcissus." As has been argued, such an attack on the "image" appears in Weiner's work, which similarly fractures the present through its consistent articulation in the past tense. And yet, despite the abundant parallels between Weiner's texts and Twombly's mark, there remains a sharp divide

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[70] Rosalind Krauss, "Cy was Here; Cy's Up," *Artforum International* vol. 33, no. 1 (September 1994), 70-76.

separating Weiner’s writing from a certain type of graffiti operation, one that links the index ultimately to a single existential identity (“Kilroy was here”).

One of the first milestones in the historicization of graffiti was the publication of *The Faith Of Graffiti* in 1974, with text by Norman Mailer and photographs by John Naar and Mervyn Kurlansky. Naar had originally wanted the title for the book to be *Watching My Name Go Buy*, a title Mailer disliked. Naar’s concept was used nonetheless for the UK printing, which featured a picture of a subway train, heavily tagged. Looking back at the history of graffiti, as it emerged in Philadelphia and New York in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s, Naar’s intuition was certainly correct, for the story of graffiti is in this context, first and foremost a story of proper names: Cornbread, Cool Earl, Taki 183, Julio 204, Frank 207, Joe 136, Friendly Freddie. Undeniably, for the early writers of graffiti, the tag was not simply a violation or desecration of public or private space, but a mark of transitory possession, as the writer EZO described: “You bomb and then it's like these are my walls, my throw-ups, my paintings and you can't fuck with it . . . but deep inside myself, I know that nothing fuckin' lasts. It just can't. It's not meant to.” [71] While the tag itself may be painted over, what does last for the graffiti writer, if he is any good, is the fame that attaches to his name, like the legends of Cornbread tagging the Jackson 5’s silver jet, or the back of an elephant’s ass. Trains became the preferred medium for writers, whose goal was always the recognition of a signature. This need for the name to return to its proper owner was underscored by the frequent use of tags with numbers, which typically signaled the street where the writer lived. The competitive stylistic innovations: bubbles, blocks, arrows, twists, were similarly born from the desire to *brand* the signature, ensuring that amidst the profusion of tags, masterpieces and throw-ups, all could be differentiated, and that credit would be given where it was due. In that sense, one could argue that there is no greater testament to the bonds of authorship and ownership, than the sight of a heavily “bombed” train.

Both the tag and the brand-name, infinitely repeatable but quintessentially untranslatable, belong to the pre-lapsarian concept of proper names that still guarantee an act of possession.

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[71] EZO quoted in Jeff Chang, “American Graffiti,” *The Village Voice* (September 10, 2002), 2; http://www.villagevoice.com/books/0237,chang,38197,10.html.

Weiner, by contrast, uses names that are common, exploiting the inherent difficulty of claiming language as one's private property (as Jakobson had observed: "There is no such thing as private property in language: everything is socialized."[72]) While the graffiti writer aims to cancel the public status of the surfaces inscribed ("my walls, my throw-ups, my paintings"), provocatively revealing the inherent fallacy of a public space that has not already been subjected to forces of privatization, Weiner infiltrates the spaces of advertising (i.e. the gallery) in order to affirm the works' public accessibility: "The person who buys the work knows damn well that they're not buying something that someone else has not been privy to. Once they buy it, there's no possibility that that work can be hidden away in a vault… The gallerist becomes a complicit conspirator with me in the presentation of the work to a public. If the public cannot afford it, they can still have it."[73] Weiner goes even further in his commitment to a non-proprietary relation, by designating a portion of his output as "public freehold" or not for sale. When names (Weiner's or a collector's) appear attached to the works, the implication is less one of authority or ownership, than responsibility: "The act of buying one of my works, comparable to signing your name at the bottom of a petition, means accepting the responsibility that the conclusions raised so far are correct."[74] A concept of active commitment thus replaces the logic of appropriation that still grounds the graffiti writer's mark.

A WALL CRATERED BY A SINGLE SHOTGUN BLAST

Pasted in one of the artist's notebooks from 1980, we find a matchbook printed with a graffiti slogan from May 1968: "JE PRENDS MES DESIRS POUR LA REALITE CAR JE CROIS EN LA

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[72] "Results of The Conference of Anthropologists and Linguists," Indiana University, 1953 quoted in Jakobson, "Two Aspects of Language," *Language In Literature*, ed. Krystyna Pomorska (1956; Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, 1987), 104.

[73] Weiner in "I Am Not Content, Interview By David Batchelor," *Artscribe* (March / April 1989), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 190.

[74] Weiner in "Interview by Michel Claura," *VH 101* (Spring, 1971), reprinted in *Having Been Said,* 42.

REALITE DE MES DESIRES," below which, the attribution: "LARRY W. OR LAUREN BACALL"[75] (fig. 78). Looking back on the events of '68, Maurice Blanchot rhapsodized about an equality and fraternity born of "a being-together," united not in a collective project, but in unfettered freedom of speech: "Everybody had something to say, and, at times, to write (on the walls); what exactly, mattered little. Saying it was more important than what was said. Poetry was an everyday affair."[76] In writing about his own decision to begin drawing / writing on walls Mel Bochner recalled being similarly impressed by the images of '68: "Here the wall played an important role as the inescapable site for a dramatically open-ended public conversation, available to anyone with something to say and a can of spray paint."[77] Exploiting the publicness of walls from early on in his career, Weiner would nonetheless dispel any illusions of "freedom of speech." That fact is made stridently evident in a Berlin street scene from Weiner's film *A Second Quarter* (1975) which features a man (Tony Long) standing in the foreground, facing the camera, absent-mindedly smoking a cigarette. He fails to see that behind him, a woman (Bernice Conrad-Eybesfeld) is writing a text in chalk on a building wall. In place of the ambiguities of Weiner's work, the anarchic rallying cries of '68, or the tags of urban graffiti, we read the fascist slogan: "Arbeit Macht Frei"[78] (fig. 79). The scene confirms Buchloh's assessment that Weiner's territorial shift towards more public means of presentation/distribution (i.e. posters, public walls, books etc…) is not simply a bid for larger audiences unconstrained by the confines of gallery or museum, but a measured attempt to contest discursive conventions, while recognizing the impossibility of fully transcending cultural and institutional limits.[79] Weiner's work thus puts

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[75] Published in John Lichfield, "Signs of the times: The sayings and slogans of 1968," *The Independent* (February 22, 2008); http://www.independent.co.uk/extras/saturday-magazine/features/signs-of-the-times-the-sayings-and-slogans-of-1968-786017.html.

[76] Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community* (Barrytown, N.Y. : Station Hill Press, 1988), 30.

[77] Mel Bochner, "Why Would Anyone Want to Draw on the Wall," *October* 130 (Fall 2009), 138.

[78] "Arbeit Macht Frei" was a phrase attributed to German-Nationalist author Lorenz Diefenbach and adopted by the Weimar government as a slogan to popularize public works programs. The slogan was infamously adopted by the Nazi party and placed at the entrance to numerous concentration camps.

[79] For Buchloh's account of Weiner's expansion and dislocation of sculptural sites engineered as "a programmatic contestation of the validity of the traditional institutional and discursive confines of art production and reception" which nevertheless did not succumb to the fallacy of escaping those boundaries see "The Posters Of Lawrence Weiner" in *Lawrence Weiner: The Posters*, ed. Buchloh (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of art and Design, 1985), reprinted in Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture*

Blanchot's ideal of "spontaneous communication" to the test, making clear that an idea's public inscription alone is never enough to ensure an unfettered, egalitarian reading.

Before the wall had been re-claimed as a space of "open-ended public conversation" it had already been thoroughly colonized by what Walter Benjamin in 1928 described as "the brutal heteronomies of economic chaos." Writing about an everyday life beset by "locust swarms of print," Benjamin declared that film and advertisement forced the printed word into "the dictatorial perpendicular," forever transforming what had once been an engagement with the autonomous refuge of the book into a public encounter with walls covered in hortatory text.[80] Weiner's early work programmatically violates this space of authorial imposition:

> *A REMOVAL TO THE LATHING OR SUPPORT WALL OF PLASTER OR WALLBOARD FROM A WALL* (1968)
>
> *ONE QUART EXTERIOR GREEN INDUSTRIAL ENAMEL THROWN ON A BRICK WALL* (1968)
>
> *A WALL STAINED BY WATER* (1969)
>
> *A WALL CRATERED BY A SINGLE SHOTGUN BLAST* (1968)
>
> *A WALL PITTED BY A SINGLE AIR RIFLE SHOT* (1969)
>
> *A WALL SHATTERED BY A SINGLE PISTOL SHOT* (1969)

In the catalog introduction for the 1970 exhibition *Using Walls*, Susan Tumarkin Goodman painted an inviting picture of these surfaces: "Walls are inherently neutral, of course, which allows them to be used by artists in numerous ways, not dictating a single or uniform approach."[81] For this exhibition, Weiner built *A REMOVAL TO THE LATHING OR SUPPORT WALL OF PLASTER OR WALLBOARD FROM A WALL* (1968), dispelling any illusion of abstract neutrality by revealing the significant materiality of an institutional container (fig. 80). Brian O'Doherty would later write about the lessons learned from works such as these:

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*Industry, Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 197*5 (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2000), 558 - 566.

[80] Walter Benjamin, "One Way Street" in *Reflections*, trans. Peter Demetz (1928; New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 77 – 78.

[81] Susan Tumarkin Goodman, *Using Walls*, exh. cat. (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1970), n.p.

> With postmodernism, the gallery space is no longer ‘neutral’. The wall becomes a membrane through which aesthetic and commercial values osmotically exchange. As this molecular shudder in the white walls becomes perceptible, there is a further inversion of context. The walls assimilate; the art discharges. How much can the art do without? This calibrates the degree of the gallery’s mythification. How much of the object’s eliminated content can the white wall replace? Context provides a large part of late modern and postmodern’s art’s content. This is the seventies art’s main issue, as well as its strength and weakness.[82]

In 1973 Michael Asher pursued his own strategy of removal (“doing without”), sand-blasting the walls of Galleria Toselli in Milan down to the unvarnished brown plaster. Thus, Asher temporarily liberated the space from the false neutrality of white paint, exposing the mechanisms of suppression through which the gallery stages its displays (fig. 81). Ironically enough, Galleria Toselli was also the site where in 1972 Weiner first presented his ideas as signage, integrated with the architectural/institutional support, the literal target of so many of the artist’s own works.[83] Acknowledging that his statements would invariably be seen within the context of advertisement and authoritarian inscription, Weiner endeavored nonetheless to find a presentation that would avoid “endangering” the work itself. His strategy proved similar to that of Daniel Buren’s, who co-opted the techniques of advertising display in order to undermine their logic. Buren’s graphic striped banners, mechanically printed and minimally over-painted, insinuated themselves within the spaces of commercial and institutional address, in order to “unveil” the formal and cultural limits that governed their perception. Weiner’s presentations likewise exposed the social relations of production obscured by both advertising’s image-object and the auratic work of art, conditions made glaringly evident by the installation of a work such as *TO SEE AND BE SEEN* (1972) (figs. 82. 83 & 84). Boldly announcing the work’s “spectacle value,” the very thing that “ideas” were designed to defeat, Weiner’s public installations avoid mythification to the degree that they reveal the fragility of their own powers of intervention in the disciplinary space of the “dictatorial perpendicular.”[84]

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[82] Brian O’Doherty, *Inside The White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (1976) excerpted in *Situation*, ed. Claire Doherty (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2009), 29.

[83] According to Weiner, the innovation in presentation came from seeing the collection of Giuseppe Panza di Biumo, who had painted the artist’s work on the walls of his home. While at first Weiner was perturbed, he soon concluded, “this doesn’t do anything wrong.” See Weiner, “I Am Not Content” reprinted in *Having Been Said,* 189.

[84] Hal Foster develops the concept of “spectacle value” in *Design and Crime* (New York: Verso, 2002).

In the *System of Objects* (written the same year as Weiner's turn to text), Jean Baudrillard describes advertising as a *mise-en-scène,* a festival of collective buying power in which advertisements themselves are the primary products. Within the heteronomies of exchange, advertising serves as a system of connotation, a language of universally decipherable signs that dictates the terms of consumption. According to Baudrillard, consumption is in fact not an object relation, but a controlled manipulation of signs, facilitated by the conversion of all objects into "sign-objects," whose meanings and trajectories are determined by "the hegemony of the code." This code is what is secured by advertising, whose goal is always to circumscribe meaning:

> Every advertising image is a key, a legend, and as such reduces the anxiety-provoking polysemy of the world. But in the name of intelligibility the image becomes impoverished, cursory; inasmuch as it is still susceptible of too many interpretations, its meaning is further narrowed by the addition of discourse – of a subtitle, as it were which constitutes a second legend. And by virtue of the way it is read, the image always refers only to other images. In the end advertising soothes people's consciousness by means of a controlled social semantics – controlled, ultimately to the point of focusing on a single referent, namely the whole society itself. Society thus monopolizes all the roles. It conjures up a host of images whose meanings it immediately strives to limit.[85]

In reading Baudrillard's description, the political necessity of Weiner's attack on the image becomes clear. For in circulating ideas, unanchored by any single form, the work breaks the tautological circuit that advertising imposes. Rather than delivering the real, converted into manipulable sign (the simulacral token of the image-object), Weiner uses the indeterminacy of language to destabilize our grasp on material reality, installing a disorienting gap between the work's linguistic formulation and the boundless materiality to which the language refers. Writing the works in the past tense, Weiner summons not the future gratification of object acquisition (or instructions for a "score" to be creatively performed) but a problematic reckoning with traces of empirical fact, whose significance must be re-determined within the parameters of each encounter. Through translation, the works unleash the "anxiety-provoking polysemy" that the advertising's "legend" seeks to control, generating a seemingly endless profusion of tangential

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[85] Jean Baudrillard, *The System Of Objects*, trans. James Benedict (1968; London and New York: Verso, 1996), 177 – 178.

object encounters that are monopolized by no single referent. Pointing instead to the multiple and conflicting "codes" within which meaning is articulated, Weiner's work thus disrupts, momentarily, the performance of hegemonic control. And while the works' theatrical presentation may sometimes evoke the structure of the tickertape, the stream of headlines designed to be consumed as "news" (a format to be exploited later by Jenny Holzer), the ambiguity of textual formulation subverts the passivity of reception, announcing that every material relation remains subject to contestation (fig. 85).

For the Sixth Guggenheim International of 1971, Weiner contributed two works from 1970: *DONE WITHOUT* and *FLANKED BESIDE*. In view of the scandalous censorship of Buren's work from this show, Weiner's texts would come to reflect the repressive conditions and ideological investments of that particular *mise-en-scène* (figs. 86a, 86b & 87).[86] In *Critical Limits* (1970) Buren had explicitly denounced the overwhelming constraints within which all cultural activity is produced, and which the censorship of his work amply revealed: "To pretend to escape from [the precise and definite limits to which art is contained in bourgeois society] is to reinforce the prevailing ideology which expects diversion from the artist. Art is not free, the artist does not express himself freely (he cannot). Art is not the prophesy of a free society. Freedom in art is the luxury / privilege of a repressive society."[87] According to Baudrillard, within the current state of spectacular consumption, it is in the space of advertising alone that the concept of "freedom" truly applies: "advertising is the most democratic of products, the only one that is 'free' – and 'free' to all."[88] Without resorting to a romanticized notion of 'freedom of expression' Weiner would nonetheless exploit these possibilities of "democratic" access. Writing the work on walls, on

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[86] For an extensive analysis of the socio-political conservatism and institutional politics that contributed to this controversial act of censorship see Alexander Alberro, "The Turn of the Screw: Daniel Buren, Dan Flavin and the Sixth Guggenheim International Exhibition," *October* 80 (Spring 1997), 57-84. Buren's contribution was a monumental striped banner designed to hang in the middle of the museum's rotunda, polemically interrupting the ordered space of the exhibition and making explicit what Henri Lefebvre would describe as the "phallic verticality" of institutional supports.

[87] Daniel Buren as quoted in Alberro, "The Turn of the Screw: Daniel Buren, Dan Flavin and the Sixth Guggenheim International Exhibition," 80.

[88] Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, 171.

posters, in books, and on sidewalks, Weiner suggests that all of it is essentially "given away."[89] Gabriele Wix will describe Weiner's work as "unclaimed things," matters of circulation and transportation, with no sense of belonging.[90] A contradiction thus emerges between the specific ideological and material constraints underscored in Weiner's various *mise-en-scène* (*TO SEE AND BE SEEN*), and Weiner's utopian claims that the work's linguistic presentation and ideational content exceed the critical limit of 'art as luxury.'[91] Weiner's optimism regarding the inherently *communal* potential of language was based early on in his reading of Noam Chomsky: "The moral stance of Chomsky within the aspiration of a universal past / present within the species – one of my major reasons for using language plus the materials referred to."[92] Chomsky's emphasis on the "species character" of cognitive structures, and his attempts to formulate a universal grammar gave Weiner a positive framework for understanding language, one that counteracted Baudrillard's dystopian concept of the sign as a pure distortion of social and material relations. Rather than viewing language solely as violent imposition ("structure is always violent, and distressingly so"[93]), over-determined by a hegemonic order of signification, Weiner relied upon Chomsky and Jean Piaget's theorizations of language as a biological imperative, the source of our commonality and the basis of our contact with things. Moving

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[89] Weiner in conversation with Patricia Norvell, 1969 in *Recording Conceptual Art*, 104.

[90] Gabriele Wix, "Unclaimed Things," in *Nach Bildende Kunst Art After Fine Art* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012), 48-50. Weiner's desire to make his work available for use has left both his texts and designs open to unauthorized appropriation - by commercial entities in particular. For Weiner's response to such appropriations, see Adrian Shaughnessy, "The Work Need Not Be Built, A Discussion with Lawrence Weiner" in *Turning Some Pages* (London: Howard Smith Paper, 2007), n.p. Weiner begins by saying, "I would like to go on record and say that the reason I'm making these things is for people to use," although he does also state, "I never copyrighted anything, and I don't copyright a piece of sculpture, I don't copyright my work, if it's worth stealing it's worth buying."

[91] Numerous commentators have bemoaned the fact that Conceptual art's recourse to the idea did not result in the elimination of objects for sale, but the commodification of ideas and of "intelligence" itself. As Jacques Rancière writes: "The immateriality of concepts and images, instead of doing away with private appropriation turned out to be its best refuge, the place where its reality is tantamount to its self-legitimation." See Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus, On Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. Steven Corcoran (London and New York: Continuum Publishing, 2010), 79.

[92] Weiner in Alicia Chilida / Lawrence Weiner, "A Fax Conversation / Una conversación por fax" in *Lawrence Weiner: Por Si Mismo / Per Se* (Madrid: Museu Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2001), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 405. For a discussion of Weiner's relationship to Chomsky's Cartesian theories of universal grammar see Stemmrich, "Lawrence Weiner – Material and Methodology" in *Having Been Said*, 444- 446.

[93] Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects,* 170.

beyond a paranoid distrust of signs, Weiner attempted to articulate a different nominal relation, dialectically opposed to models of Adamic possession or simulacral subordination.

AN APPLE IS CALLED AN APPLE

In the LP recording *Nothing to Lose / Niets Aan Verloren* from 1976, a female voice (Coosje van Bruggen) softly pronounces "an apple is called an apple because the name apple is written down inside the apple." At first this may sound like Baudrillard's formula ("the structure of the sign is at the very heart of the commodity"). Weiner later explains the attribution of the phrase, which serves as a touchstone throughout his career:

> Jean Piaget was a psychologist working with children after the second world war, shell-shocked children, children who were homeless. He had a question he asked them: "Why is that called an apple?" The child looked at him and said, very simply, "An apple is called an apple because the name apple is written down inside the apple." It's very simplistic, but that's in fact what I'm talking about. Nomering.[94]

At a 2008 talk at the Tate Modern, Weiner invoked the aphorism once more, adding that it is "what all children believe." In *The Child's Conception of the World*, however, Piaget offers a more nuanced picture of the average child's understanding, which he divides into three developmental stages of Nominal Realism.[95] In the first stage (ages 5-6) children believe that names belong to things and emanate from them. In the 2nd stage (ages 7-8) they accord the powers of naming to the makers of things, to God or to the first men. In the 3rd stage (9 – 10), naming is an anonymous activity no longer tied to creation; the arbitrariness of names becomes apparent to the child. Weiner's citation does not appear in this chapter of Piaget's book, although one might associate it with a description of the first stage, when Nominal Realism is at its peak. There again, Piaget makes a distinction which conflicts with Weiner's example:

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[94] Weiner, "Intervention," *Lawrence Weiner*, 137. An excerpt from a text by Jean Piaget pasted in the artist's notebook reads: " the mountain is called a mountain because the name mountain is written down inside the mountain" (Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1975, Moved Pictures Archive, New York). Also see "The Only Thing That Knows Its Own Essence Is the Thing Itself, Interview by Carles Guerra" [1995], *Cave Canis* (Spring, 1996), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 336; and de Bruyn's "Being Then Within a Context of Revolution: Six Notes on Two Films by Lawrence Weiner" in *Film Avantgarde Biopolitik*, 364 – 391.

[95] Jean Piaget, *The Child's Conception of the World* (London: Routledge, 1929).

> For indeed, although children may suppose they need only to look at a thing to know its name, it does not in the least follow that they regard the name as in some way written on the thing. It means rather that for these children the name is an essential part of the thing. The name Salève implies a sloping mountain, the name sun implies a yellow ball that shines and has rays, etc. But it must also be added that for these children the essence of the thing is not a concept but the thing itself. Complete confusion exists between thought and the things thought of. The name is therefore in the object, not as a label, attached to it but as an invisible quality of the object.[96]

Clearly, Weiner is not interested in the kind of essentialist nomination described here. The name "apple" does not emanate from the fruit, but is written down inside it. If the name can be considered a quality of the object, it is not invisible and inherent, but rather tangible and extrinsic. Like a label, the name attaches and detaches from things, but not without leaving behind some evidence of having been inscribed there (figs. 88 & 89). Once again we find language figured, not as autonomous graphism, but as something enmeshed in the surfaces of the world, tracing not only the contours of things, but crucially our efforts to manipulate them (*How To Touch What*). Signification in Weiner's work is therefore never in vain, but pragmatic, aimed at engendering a material encounter. Crucially, this referential function rejects the notion of language as betrayal, while still resisting the Classical utopia of transparent signs and the plenitude of totalizing representations.[97] Indeed, language's usefulness to Weiner resides not in its capacity for exactitude or categorization, but precisely in a kind of pragmatic inadequacy:

> When you walk into a room, when you see a sculpture on the floor, when you see a painting on the wall, what do you see? You see red. I prefer to describe it that way because no two people in the entire world can see the same red. Physical fact, but we know what we're talking about when we say 'red.'[98]

The word "red" fails utterly to capture the phenomenological subtleties of a particular shade. Nonetheless, that vagueness is what enables "red" to put us in mutual contact with a color whose appearance remains singular in each of us, but whose significance extends far beyond subjective perceptual experience. For Weiner language is most accurate, most appropriate, when it recognizes fully the erratic and fugitive qualities of the materials it refers to, when it makes no pretense to marshal or limit the work's contents. Increasingly in Weiner's texts, words aspire to

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[96] Piaget, *The Child's Conception of the World*, 69 – 70.

[97] For a discussion on the epistemic breaks between the pre-classical, classical and modern regimes of representation see Michel Foucault, *The Order Of Things, An Archaeology of The Human Sciences* (1966; New York: Random House, 1970).

nothing more than an easeful relation to whatever is referenced, in order to maximize possible ramifications (*RUPTURED*). As such, the legitimacy of language relies not on the correctness of names, but simply on the fact that they are common, that language offers "a universal common possibility of availability."[99] In writing on the Pseudonym, Giorgio Agamben gives an analysis that elucidates Weiner's concept of "nomering":

> The petty bourgeois distrust of language is transformed here into a modesty of language with respect to its referent. This referent is no longer nature betrayed by meaning, nor its transfiguration in the name, but what is held – unuttered – in the pseudonym or in the ease between the name and the nickname. In a letter to Max Rychner, Walser speaks of this "fascination of not uttering something absolutely."[100]

Buchloh writes about the strategic importance of ellipsis to Weiner's work: "The ellipsis functions like the strategy of removal itself: it functions simultaneously as a fragmentation prohibiting closure and perfection, and invites as well the participatory and collaborative processes of the perceiving subject."[101] Ellipsis, however, is not exactly a blank to be filled, but rather a sign of what trails off, what can never be fully captured or contained. Ellipses are a mark of language itself becoming incomplete, circumstantial, or "SIMPLY A NAME FOR USE AT THE MOMENT," as the artist himself would note.[102] Stemmrich links the "incompleteness" of Weiner's works to Gottlob Frege's notion of the "unsaturatedness" of concepts. Importantly, however, Stemmrich

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[98] Weiner, "Intervention," *Lawrence Weiner*, 137.

[99] Weiner in "Benjamin Buchloh in conversation with Lawrence Weiner," *Lawrence Weiner,* 19. Referencing Paolo Virno's *Grammar of Multitude*, Eric de Bruyn analyzes Weiner's work in relation to a contemporary form of commonality, no longer based on the unity of the state but upon "language, intellect, possibilities common to all humanity." Using an Aristotelian model, Virno theorizes language in terms of "common places" which constitute the basic scaffolding of language, and "specific standpoints" which include metaphors, remarks and speeches that make-up language in daily use. According to Virno, the "specific standpoints" of disciplinary society (e.g. family, company, nation-state) have largely been displaced, creating an experience of "homelessness" that requires ever more reliance on the "common places" of language as a standard of orientation. De Bruyn argues that Weiner's works and films reflect this loss of anchorage in "specific standpoints," pointing to the corresponding necessity of recognizing language as a "common place" in order to find some ground for orientation within the transformations of our contemporary, Postfordian society of control, in which forms of biopower have replaced disciplinary structures. See Eric de Bruyn's "Being Then Within a Context of Revolution: Six Notes on Two Films by Lawrence Weiner" in *Film Avantgarde Biopolitik*, eds. Sabeth Buchmann, Helmut Draxler, and Stephan Greene (Vienna: Schlebrügge, 2009), 364 – 391. On the increasing expropriation or privatization of this inherently common linguistic, creative faculty within current forms of capitalist accumulation see Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009).

[100] Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (1990; Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 59.

[101] Buchloh, "The Posters Of Lawrence Weiner," 564.

[102] Lawrence Weiner Notebook January 1997 - September 1998, Moved Pictures Archive, New York.

points out that Frege's theory was articulated so as to emphasize the interrelatedness of concepts, in specific opposition to "conceiving words as names."[103] Weiner's understanding of language, on the other hand, remains invested not only in the connections from concept to concept, or in the structuralist relay from sign to sign (or image to image), but in a certain "modesty of language with respect to its referent." Replacing the exactness of Names with a provisional, fragmentary incompletion, language for Weiner becomes practical, presenting a surface to which "anything reachable-thinkable" can momentarily adhere.

A HEAP OF LANGUAGE

In a 1967 Dwan Gallery press release entitled "Language to be looked at and / or things to be read," Robert Smithson mapped a terrain in which the purely optical surfaces of Modernism were ruptured by a repressed textuality.[104] In his statement, Smithson described a field wherein language and object were not merely connected by arbitrary linguistic convention, but fundamentally interchangeable: "Words for mental processes are all derived from physical things. References are often reversed so that the 'object' takes the place of the 'word.'"[105] For Owens, Smithson's work signaled the "reciprocal translatability of verbal and visual phenomena," as well as "the interchangeability, of writing and sculpture," conditions fundamental to Weiner's own practice of material translation as we have seen.[106] On the other hand, for Smithson this radical equivalence of word and thing offered no pragmatic possibilities of meaningful material connection. According to Owens, Smithson's work must be perceived in terms of a total collapse

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[103] Stemmrich: "Frege considered 'incompleteness' or 'unsaturatedness' (Ungesattigheit) an essential characteristic of concepts (for example, the word 'brother' alone refers to no person and no thing), and it is precisely this that makes it possible to study their logical connections to one another" ("Lawrence Weiner – Material and Methodology" in *Having Been Said*, 454). Stemmrich contrasts Weiner's use of "unsaturatedness" with the "saturatedness" of linguistic expressions as developed in Piaget's studies of Nominal Realism.

[104] Owens, "Earthwords," *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture*, 45.

[105] Robert Smithson, "Language To Be Looked At And / Or Things To Be Read" [1967], reprinted in *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1996), 61

of significant difference, an entropic dissolution exacerbated by our postmodern condition. Thus, if Smithson could claim to read a text embedded in the earth, it would only be because reality itself has been depleted, constituted as representation in the simulacral manner theorized by Baudrillard.[107] Smithson offers a picture of this fateful crumbling of objective solidity, as he writes about "The Dying Language" in a 1968 essay for *Artforum*:

> The names of minerals and the minerals themselves do not differ from each other, because at the bottom of both the material and the print is the beginning of an abysmal number of fissures. Words and rocks contain a language that follows a syntax of splits and ruptures. Look at any word long enough and you will see it open up into a series of faults into a terrain of particles each containing its own void. This discomforting language of fragmentation offers no easy gestalt solution; the certainties of didactic discourse are hurled into the erosion of the poetic principle.[108]

In *A Heap Of Language* from 1967, Smithson gave shape to this disastrous geologic conception, in a pyramid of words that combined the highest ideals of literary competence ("belles letters") with the most debased forces of linguistic deterioration ("Babel"), ensuring that over the course of a drawing, monumental form would be reduced to the rubble of a self-described "Heap" (fig. 90). Word and object thus fuse, producing not a plenitude of signification, but a disorienting confrontation with fragments, voids and ruptures, an experience Smithson later referred to as "a catastrophe of mind and matter."[109] Such catastrophic pulverization would be the motivating force behind Smithson's dialectical structure of Site and Non-Site, wherein a remote location designated as Site would be presented through the Non-Site "text" of maps, photographs and raw materials, elegantly displayed in metal containers whose geometric configuration underscored matter's status as sign. For Smithson, these "earth maps" of the Non-Site, despite their obdurate materiality, nonetheless signaled a "nonworld." For while they pointed to actual Sites, such as

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[106] Owens, "Earthwords," *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture*, 42 – 43.

[107] Owens writes: "If reality itself appears to be already constituted as image, then the hierarchy of object and representation – the first being the source of the authority and prestige of the second – is collapsed. The representation can no longer be grounded, as Husserl wanted, in presence. For Smithson the real assumes the contingency traditionally ascribed to the copy; the landscape appeared to him, not as Nature but as a 'particular kind of heliotropy.' The result is an overwhelming experience of absence: the abyss." See "Photography En Abyme" in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture*, 27.

[108] Smithson, "A Sedimentation Of The Mind: Earth Projects," *Artforum* (September 1968), reprinted in *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings*, 107.

[109] Smithson in an interview with Patricia Norvell (1969); excerpt reprinted in *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings*, 194. In this conversation, Smithson criticizes conceptual art for ignoring the material aspect, stating that his own work is "clogged with matter."

the Pine Barrens Plains in NJ, the Non-Sites paradoxically showed these spaces to be utterly inaccessible, because textually displaced and literally lost in time. Indeed, any travel between Site and Non-Site would produce only a fictional encounter, a failure of resemblance and adequation. Thus, instead of forging conformal connection between interior and exterior, an unbridgeable chasm would open between the Non-Site and Site, whose irretrievable spatial and temporal remoteness, would leave the doubtful viewer with only "a very ponderous weighty absence."[110]

For all its varied traces of empirical fact, Weiner's language produces a similarly palpable sense of absence, as the works remain, like the Non-Site of *Spiral Jetty*, perpetually dispossessed. Thus, if Weiner's texts function as maps or indicators, they too are designed to disorient, being neither conformal nor coincident with the spaces to which they point. Seizing upon that sense of displacement and loss, Buchloh's reading of Weiner's work will have much in common with Owens' analysis of Smithson's "allegorical impulse." Arguing against Dieter Schwarz's claim that Weiner's texts join visuality and legibility, Buchloh will insist, on the contrary, that Weiner's allegorical practice unequivocally attests to the irremediable inaccessibility of prior forms of visual experience.[111] Thus, Modernist opticality, phenomenological immediacy, not to mention classical representation are modes permanently lost to Weiner, whose works relentlessly pursue the logics of decentering and supplementarity theorized by Derrida as the "*mise en abyme*" of textuality. But while Smithson launches headlong into this terrain, creating structures that revel in their status as void and ruin (*Asphalt Rundown, Partially Buried Woodshed, Spiral Jetty*), Weiner's gestures and interventions take a less apocalyptic turn. Although Weiner's work deals with forces of entropic degradation, his practice is not solely weighted towards absence, or the paradoxical monumentalization of entropic decay. For Weiner, the use of text will not signify

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[110] Smithson in an interview with Patricia Norvell (1969); excerpt reprinted in *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings*, 193.

[111] See Dieter Schwarz, "Utiliser le langage, utiliser l' art: le travail de Lawrence Weiner" in *Langage et modernité*, ed. Buchloh (Villeurbanne: Le Nouveau musée, 1991); see also Buchloh's commentary on Schwarz's essay from the same volume (131-154).

a capitulation to systematic de-differentiation, offering instead a mode of complexification, a counter-entropic force that Jean-François Lyotard refers to as "negentropy."[112]

In a conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist for *24 hour Program on the Concept of Time*, Weiner talks about a recent work in Milan and the negentropic possibilities of graphite:

> Graphite is exciting – one of the reasons I like pencil. I need to draw in order to think… But graphite is one of the most exciting mediums… When you put a piece of graphite on a piece of paper it slows down the neutrons going across the paper and in fact it's a very minor way of stasis. It's a way of beating entropy. Rembrandt's drawings in pencil never have any problems because the paper ages slower than ones done in pen or ink. Graphite is used in nuclear power plants to slow down the flow of neutrons. That's an attempt to break entropy and for me that's a sculptural relationship. The idea of trying in some way, manner, or form to have a real stasis just for a split split split split split split split second…[113]
> (figs. 91 & 92)

According to Lyotard, all technological development is geared towards complexification and therefore negentropy. Our bodies and our concepts serve the same function, acting as transformers on the environment (e.g. Steinberg's analysis of Rauschenberg's *Combines*), thus ensuring "a supplement of complexity in the universe."[114] The products of this complexification are not always strictly beneficial to humanity, and Lyotard will contrast their effects with a pragmatic goal of "optimum adjustment" between subject and environment. Complexification, by contrast, destabilizes that relation, inasmuch as it always involves a proliferation of possibilities, and an increase in "material liberty."[115] Such negentropic differentiation is not the destiny of matter - entropy is. Complexification remains possible, however, especially when delays are introduced, multiplying responses and material paths. That split second delay is what Weiner (echoing Duchamp) speaks so rapturously about. It is a delay generated in Weiner's own work, through a permanent suspension of meaning, which never settles into a static form / image. Looking again at the traces of *BROKEN OFF*, we can see Weiner's idea functioning as a transformer in the way that Lyotard proposes. Through a seemingly infinite trail of material

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[112] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (1988; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 22.

[113] Lawrence Weiner in conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist for *24 hour Program on the Concept of Time*, Guggenheim Museum, New York (January 6, 2009). Weiner references the exhibition *With A Line Of Graphite* held at Galleria Massimo de Carlo, Milan (May 8 – June 28, 2008).

[114] Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, 45.

[115] Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, 44.

actualizations, that never results in an “optimum adjustment,” *BROKEN OFF* complexifies the relation between word and thing, demonstrating as well that some combinations / translations are more beneficial than others (e.g. *BROKEN OFF* + the Berlin Wall). In view of the works’ liberal, random mobilization, it sounds strange, at first, to hear Weiner gush over the *static* properties of graphite, and its capacity for structural conservation (all those well preserved Rembrandt drawings), qualities which seem totally at odds with the operations of dispersal, differentiation and displacement that we have been following all along. But then, during the same conversation with Obrist, Weiner will admit, “Entropy is not particularly a bad thing, until you look in the mirror in the morning.” Such collapsed contradictions are, in fact, the motor for Weiner’s practice, which struggles to articulate a work based not on logical exclusions, but on material and libidinal release. Ultimately, for Weiner, “language + the material referred to” would remain the best hope for such a structure, as evidenced by *BROKEN OFF*, which fuses entropic disintegration with negentropic transformation. Faced with the spectacular flattening of experience, and our environment’s catastrophic ruination, Weiner would continue to labor in the belief that language, in all its superficiality, might still complicate our experience of material reality, restoring to our relations with objects some measure of their depth and distance.

CHAPTER III: *PARADIGMS SUITABLE FOR DAILY USE (notebooks + drawings)*

the six senses

Lawrence Weiner has said that he cannot think without drawing.[1] As a result of that practical necessity, over the course of four decades (1973-present), the artist has filled thousands of notebook pages with drawings, breathtaking and bewildering in their multiplicity. Although the artist's works are vehiculated through these pages, Weiner has insisted that these objects (along with his movies, books, posters and postcards) are not to be regarded as art. Until recently, the notebooks remained largely un-exhibited, indicating that while these pages may be inextricably connected to the works' production, their relevance to the works' reception remains an open question.[2] Despite the fact that Weiner made drawings throughout his career, in a 1969 interview with Patricia Norvell he dismissed their relevance to public presentation altogether ("I don't believe in drawings and things like that").[3] His skepticism echoed that of Minimalist artists such as Donald Judd, Carl Andre and Frank Stella, who viewed drawing as a supplementary distraction, susceptible to being seen as a form of intimate expression.[4] Although by the mid '60s artists had devised numerous strategies to extract drawing from an autographic practice (as

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[1] Lawrence Weiner in conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist for *24 hour Program on the Concept of Time*, Guggenheim Museum, New York (January 6, 2009).

[2] While individual pages of Weiner's notebooks have occasionally been reproduced in various catalogs, the first extensive exhibition of notebooks would take place during Weiner's 2013 drawings retrospective *Written On The Wind* at the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (March 8 – June 24, 2013). See *Written On The Wind*: *Lawrence Weiner Drawings,* exh. cat., ed. Alice Zimmerman (Cologne: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) and Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2013).

[3] Weiner in conversation with Patricia Norvell (June 3, 1969) in *Recording Conceptual Art*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Patricia Norvell, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 104. In the list of "Selected Solo Exhibitions Related To Drawing" included in the exhibition catalog *Written On The Wind*: *Lawrence Weiner Drawings,* there is a marked hiatus between the first exhibition in 1964 (*Lawrence Weiner*, Seth Siegelaub, New York) and subsequent drawing-related exhibitions beginning in 1983 (Albert Mertz / Lawrence Weiner, Nordjylands Kunstmuseum, Aalborg; Iron + Steel, Galerie Micheline Szwajcer, Antwerp; Works + Reconstructions, Kunsthalle Bern, Bern). See *Written On The Wind*: *Lawrence Weiner Drawings,* 130.

[4] Anna Lovatt discusses both the Conceptual embrace of drawing practices, as well as the Minimalist resistance to them in "Ideas in Transmission: LeWitt's Wall Drawings and the Question of Medium," *Tate Papers* Issue 14 (October 1, 2010); http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/ideas-transmission-lewitts-wall-drawings-and-question-medium#footnote33_jrzj1rh. See also her "Seriality and Systematic Thought in Drawing c. 1966-1976: Ruth Vollmer, Sol LeWitt, Eva Hesse, Mel Bochner and Dorothea Rockburne" (PhD Dissertation, Courtauld University of Art, 2005).

exemplified in the works of Sol LeWitt and Mel Bochner) some still worried that to show drawings would risk reverting to the presentation of unique objects, tied to their makers' consciousness as opposed to the works' material content. Weiner's notebooks, therefore, begin as a 'monologic' form of information processing, designed not as a dialog with the receiver, but as a conversation the artist has with himself.[5] Nonetheless, in reading the notebooks now as a record of the artist's thoughts and ideas, one would still want to avoid regressing towards a conventional perception of 'drawing as thinking,' articulated by Vassari, centuries ago:

> Father of our three arts (architecture, sculpture and painting), "*disegno*" proceeds from the intellect, drawing from many things a universal judgment similar to a form or "idea" of all things of nature, which is most singular in its measures… And from this cognition is born a certain concept… such that something is formed in the mind then expressed with the hands which is called "*disegno*"…[6]

In her catalog essay for the 1976 exhibition *Drawing Now,* Bernice Rose does in fact, link contemporary practices arising from "the conceptualization of art" to the Renaissance theories of Vassari and Frederico Zuccari. Specifically, she relies upon Zuccari's distinction between *disegno interno*: the idea contained exclusively in the mind as a spark of divine inspiration, and *disegno externo*: the externalization of the idea in actual representation. Rose writes: "If conceptualization with reference to representation and to abstraction itself has been an ongoing concern of artists through the century, then concentration on the mark itself in drawing, and the use of drawing for itself alone – in relation to 'ratiocination' (*disegno interno*) – are not illogical."[7] Following Lawrence Alloway, Rose characterizes Sol LeWitt's *Wall Drawings* as an extreme example of *disegno interno*.[8] Insofar as LeWitt provides only the conceptual schema and leaves the *Wall Drawings*' execution to anonymous draftsmen, the work purportedly demonstrates

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[5] The definition of drawing as a form of information processing that is categorized according to *use* comes from Luis Camnitzer's typology. Camnitzer identifies four categories of drawing "transmission": monologues (e.g. doodles), orders (e.g. technical drawings), dialogs (e.g. drawings for exhibition) and collectibles (e.g. calligraphic drawings). Camnitzer, "Between The Lines," talk delivered for "Crossing the Line" symposium at Museum of Modern Art (July, 21, 11); held in conjunction with the exhibition *On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (November 21, 2010–February 7, 2011).

[6] Vassari quoted in Pamela Lee, "Drawing In Between" in *Reorganizing Structure By Drawing Through It / drawing by Gordon Matta Clark*, exh. cat. ed. Sabine Breitwieser (Vienna: Generali Foundation, 1997), 28. Lee argues that Matta-Clark's drawing departs from the rationalized abstraction inherent in Vassari's principle of *disegno*. This essay makes an analogous argument for Weiner's drawing practice.

[7] Bernice Rose, *Drawing Now*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1976), 12.

[8] Lawrence Alloway quoted in Rose, *Drawing Now*, 76.

drawing as "pure ratiocination."[9] Weiner's contribution to the *Drawing Now* catalog (a text work rather than a drawing) would be placed in the same category of mental construct, one that "takes place much more in the head than in the eye."[10]

Without having opened a single notebook, one suspects that Rose's disincarnated formulation of drawing as *interior* conceptualization, more or less indifferent to exteriorization, cannot possibly apply to Weiner's practice. After all, Weiner's works mobilize drawing precisely as a series of *removals*, cuts in the fabric of every kind of surface (rugs, walls, paper, driveway) that irrevocably shatter any illusion of secure boundary between inside and outside. If the lines in Weiner's notebooks were to lead us back to the space of private intellection and inner impulses, then they would be antithetical to the work itself, which points always towards objects (rather than towards a singular subject). In a 1982 statement for *Artforum* Weiner adamantly declared, "I am not *con*tent,"[11] echoing comments he made a decade earlier to Achille Bonito Oliva: "And my work has no relationship to 'I,' the work is presented out of context with me."[12] Weiner's impersonal ethic rejects the self-reflexivity of both subjective expression and "pure ratiocination," and in trying to find a public use for the notebooks, it would seem imperative to avoid any reading that would enclose them in the privacy of a constituting consciousness, positing something formed in the mind and projected onto the page, via the artist's hand.[13]

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[9] In "Le Witt in Progress" Rosalind Krauss argues against this model of ratiocination, showing that Le Witt's serial progressions perform the very unraveling of rational thought, and not its "pure" demonstration. See Krauss, "Le Witt In Progress" in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1985), 244-258.

[10] Rose, *Drawing Now*, 81. The catalog lists Weiner's contribution as the following work, presented in black letters against a white wall:

IN RELATION TO AN INCREASE IN QUANTITY REGARDLESS OF QUALITY:

HAVING BEEN PLACED UPON A PLANE

( ) UPON A PLANE

HAVING BEEN PLACED ( )

[11] Weiner, "…I AM NOT CONTENT," *Artforum* vol. 20, no. 9 (May 1982), reprinted in *Having Been Said, Writings & Interviews of Lawrence Weiner, 1968 – 2003,* eds. Gerti Fietzek & Gregor Stemmrich (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2004), 135.

[12] Weiner in "Interview by Achille Bonito Oliva," *Dialoghi d'artista: Incontri con l'arte contemporanea 1970 – 1984* (1971; Milan: Electa, 1984), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 53.

[13] In "Art After Philosophy" Joseph Kosuth writes about Weiner's notebooks in terms of a move from private to public: "Thus, by the summer of 1968, he [Weiner] decided to have his work exist only as a proposal in his notebook – that is, until a 'reason' (museum, gallery or collector) or as he called them, a 'receiver' necessitated his work to be made. It was in the late fall of that same year that Weiner went one step further

Charles Sanders Peirce offers a useful model of thinking, no longer based on the presumption of an *internal* perception of ideas. If within Cartesian discourse ideas are conceived as being immediately transparent to the self, requiring no representation, Peirce would instead define thinking as wholly representational, existing only in the inferential interpretation of signs.[14] In its most elementary form, the sign is defined as "an object which stands for another to some mind" and according to Peirce, there is no way for reality to affect consciousness without being first perceived as a sign (language being only one example of a possible sign system).[15] For thinking to occur at all, each sign must be *translated* or interpreted in a subsequent one, with the result that thoughts are always mediated and temporal, never having the quality of instantaneous illumination. Crucially, Peirce argues that this triadic signifying process (object-sign-interpretant) does not proceed from or remain contained within an individuated self, but is rather something in which we are contained. He writes: "Just as we say that a body is in motion and not that motion is in a body we ought to say that we are in thought and not that thoughts are in us."[16] This picture of thinking as an objective reality that surpasses the limits of subjectivity and requires insertion into a given semiotic field, helps us enter the excessive space of Weiner's notebooks. Here,

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in deciding that it didn't matter whether it was made or not. In that sense his private notebooks became public." See Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy" reprinted in *Art After Philosophy and After* (1969; Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1993), 27. The notebooks that Kosuth refers to were simple loose-leaf binders with works printed on them, unlike the more complicated structures that Weiner begins to make in 1973.

[14] On Peirce's rejection of both the Cartesian dualism of mind and matter and the Lockean conception of thought as the internal perception of ideas see James Hoopes' introduction to *Peirce on Signs* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 6-7.

[15] Charles Sanders Peirce, "Writings of Charles S. Peirce, 3:66-68" [1873] reprinted in *On Signs*, 141. Hoopes notes that Peirce's semiotic theory does not stress the arbitrariness of signs, but rather their "physical" connection to both objects and events. Peirce's "semiotic realism" proposes that thoughts / signs in fact share a substantial identity with the world. On Peirce's concept of reference Kaja Silverman writes: "Reality bumps up against us, impinges upon us yet until we have found a way of representing that reality, it remains impervious to thought." See Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 16. While Peirce's semiology exhibits on the one hand, the same sort of "semiotic closure" seen in Saussure's differential concept of the sign (Peirce writes: "The object of representation can be nothing but a representation of which the first representation is the interpretant,") there is nevertheless, according to Silverman, an "insistence on the existential relation of sign and object, or signifier and referent – on the connection, that is, between signification and reality" (Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics*, 15). This referential connection makes Peirce's model of signification more relevant than Saussure's to Weiner's notion of language as a form of materio-linguistic combination ("language + the material referred to").

[16] Peirce, "Writings of Charles S. Peirce, 2: 211-42" [1868] reprinted in *On Signs*, 71. See Hoope's introduction regarding Peirce's categorization of thought as a representational relation ("thirdness") in contrast to the sheer "thisness" of things ("firstness") or mechanical relations between things ("secondness"). Peirce considered thirdness to be a real force, operative in nature, along with the first two categories of relations (Hoope, Introduction to *On Signs*, (10-11).

ideas are traced not within the clarity and privacy of the intellect but on surfaces already filled, not only with writing, but with every manner of sign.

Weiner starts keeping notebooks in 1973, but it will not be until 1983 that we see an artist's sketchbook. Instead Weiner turns to ruled papers of all sorts: accounting ledgers, composition books, quadrille graph papers, index cards, agendas and legal pads, reflecting what Benjamin Buchloh would call "Conceptual art's fascination with life in the fully administered world"[17] (fig. 93). Buchloh argues that while this internalization of techno-scientific and economic orders performed a consequential assault on Modernist opticality and the consumerist and industrial aesthetics of Pop and Minimalism, it did so at the cost of negating any access to bodily plenitude or psychic autonomy, inasmuch as all activity would be consigned to an impersonal, pre-determined matrix.[18] Indeed, while the notebooks from the '70s are filled with writing, cutting, and pasting, there is very little in the way of gestural, improvisatory sketching. Insisting upon pre-programmed surfaces, Weiner cancels any possibility that drawing or thinking might emanate from a space of originary emptiness, free from bureaucratic or techno-scientific constraints. On the other hand, Weiner consistently subverts the disciplinary logic of these reified forms, through a host of operations including: fragmentation, linguistic inscription, corporeal registration, and of course removal (e.g. *A RECTANGULAR REMOVAL FROM A XEROXED GRAPH SHEET IN PROPORTION TO THE OVERALL DIMENSIONS OF THE SHEET* [1968]). Such strategies would similarly abound in the practice of Sol LeWitt, whose 1967 Dwan Gallery announcement

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[17] Benjamin Buchloh, "Hesse's Endgame: Facing the Diagram" in *Eva Hesse Drawing*, exh. cat. ed. Catherine de Zegher (New York: The Drawing Center; and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 149. Regarding Marcel Broodthaers' critical deflation of Conceptual art's administrative aesthetic Buchloh writes: "If these artists incorporated the conditions of what Theodor W. Adorno had notoriously called the 'totally administered world' into the very structure and material principles of their work (creating a period style of the index card and the loose-leaf binder, of the Xerox machine and the filing cabinet, of the typewriter and the Telex machine) in order to develop one of the most significant and authentic aesthetic challenges of the postwar era, Broodthaers, the dialectician, replied to this aestheticization of bureaucracy with the bureaucratization of the aesthetic." Buchloh, "Marcel Broodthaers: Open Letters, Industrial Poems," *October* 42 (Fall 1987), reprinted in Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 – 1975* (Cambridge Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2000), 97.

[18] Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962 – 1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990), 105-143. Buchloh later argues that conceptualism would be misread as "masochistically accepting the prohibition of matter and process under the pressures and controls of a universally administered world." See Buchloh, "Art Belge et Conceptuel Daledien: An Abecedarium (incomplete)" in *A Bit of Matter and a Little Bit More, The Collection and Archives of Herman and Nicole Daled 1966 – 1978*, exh. cat. ed. Patrizia Dander and Ulrich Wilmes (Munich: Haus der Kunst, 2010), 273.

was described by Robert Smithson as a "self-destroying logic," wherein the submergence of the mechanically printed grid within a deluge of hand-written data, produced an experience of seeing and reading that was "like getting words caught in your eyes"[19] (fig. 94). Thus, for many Conceptual artists, ruled papers served as both a form of opposition (to the optical / commercial / industrial), as a well as an object to be resisted. Until the early '80s, Weiner's notebooks and drawings would insist on maintaining this conflictual relation to rigidly configured supports. Early on, in an extreme effort to avoid the illusions that come from tracing a graphic line against a white reserve, Weiner would go so far as to draw his own graph paper, a paradoxical insistence on the necessity of starting from a marked ground.[20]

Such an acknowledgement of thinking as something that invariably occurs within a field of what has already been thought and inscribed is also found in Jean-François Lyotard's *The Inhuman* (1988). Lyotard writes that in order to be rendered useful, thought must be traced in a common space. This objectification and spatialization transforms thoughts into "culture" which can then be transmitted, memorized and conserved - a process which describes one function of Weiner's notebooks, an archival project commenced at what some critics view as the end of the "the moment of Conceptual Art."[21] Crucially, however, thinking for Lyotard is not defined in terms of memorization, categorization or conservation. For Lyotard, the "pain" of thinking would be to encounter in the plenitude and excess of what is given, the irresolution of what has not yet been thought.[22] The task of thinking and writing would be to carve out a clearing in this field of inscriptions, to make ourselves receivers of what we are not yet prepared to think.

In Weiner's films *A First Quarter* (1973) and *A Second Quarter* (1975), wherein players exist in a domain of pure citation, consigned to read / recite the artist's works, we get a sense of

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[19] Robert Smithson, "A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art," *Art International* (March 1968), reprinted in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1996), 80.

[20] Weiner would occasionally draw his own graph paper in order to execute the *Grid Time* drawings which date from the mid to late '60s (coincident with the *Removal Paintings*). A discussion of these drawings follows. Notably, Weiner does not start using blank pages for notebooks until the early '80s, at which point his approach to drawing changes markedly. These transformations are discussed in the following chapters.

[21] See Charles Harrison's periodization of Conceptual Art (1967-1972) in *Essays On Art & Language*, 29. Lucy Lippard's chronicle *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object* dates from 1966 – 1972.

[22] Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, 19-20.

what it means to live in the *already-thought*. In Weiner's first notebook (1973) we find the artist working primarily with *readymade* ideas. On these pages, pre-fabricated texts such as newspaper articles, personal correspondence, and encyclopedia entries serve as a ground for devising new combinations of "language + materials" (fig. 95). Sometimes these texts are overlain with grids in order to facilitate a formulaic process of phrase selection and deletion. In other cases, words are simply circled or crossed-out. For instance, in a hostile letter concerning the Sixth Guggenheim International exhibition, Weiner will strikethrough numerous passages in order to extract the words "strictly calculated," "in behalf of" and "appropriate compromise."[23] While these experimental strategies would eventually be abandoned, they nonetheless demonstrate a conceptual approach that has little to do with creative projection or ratiocination. Working amidst the obstructions of given thoughts, texts and objects, these pages reveal a method in which the artist must sift through the overabundance and redundancy of existing signs, in order to make room for what has not yet been said or seen.

Such a confrontation with the surfeit of *a priori* inscriptions is nowhere more evident than in the drawings of Cy Twombly, whose scrawls similarly follow a logic of citation, revealing both the plenitude and decrepitude of the signs that precede us.[24] Regarding a work such as *Adonais* (1975), Anna Lovatt writes that Twombly "mimes the act of writing – of producing meaning - in the grooves of the already written"[25] (fig. 96). And as Roland Barthes observes, Twombly's paper never starts as an uncorrupted whiteness ("Mallarmé's problem of the white page: often this whiteness, this blank provokes a panic: how to corrupt it?")[26] The artist's surface is instead dirtied and tainted, thus inimical to a classical model of cognition:

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[23] See Alberro, "The Turn of the Screw: Daniel Buren, Dan Flavin, and the Sixth Guggenheim International Exhibition," *October* 80 (Spring 1997), 57-84.

[24] Weiner discusses his admiration for Twombly's work in "Benjamin Buchloh in Conversation with Lawrence Weiner," *Lawrence Weiner* (London: Phaidon, 1998), 10.

[25] Anna Lovatt, "Cy Twombly: Fifty Years of Works on Paper, Serpentine Gallery, London, 17 April – 13 June 2004," review in *Papers of Surrealism* Issue 2 (Summer 2004).

[26] Barthes, "Cy Twombly: Works On Paper" in *The Responsibility of Forms*, trans. Richard Howard (1979; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 167.

> …it is insofar as the background is *not clean* that it is unsuitable to thought (contrary to the philosopher's blank sheet of paper) and therefore very suitable to everything that remains (art, indolence, pulsion, sensuality, irony, taste: everything the intellect can experience as so many aesthetic catastrophes).[27]

Robert Pincus-Witten similarly underscores this division between the physicality of Twombly's drawing and the space of intellection:

> Drawing is the means par excellence by which ideas are made manifest. Yet Twombly, always aware that his art is not one of idea but of visual effect, came to resent the very means by which his art exposes him. His art is not about ideas, but mindlessness. Therefore what Twombly engenders is not drawing but the drawing away of drawing. It is a kind of hand-hating drawing, one which denies rather than affirms.[28]

Whereas these descriptions maintain a sharp divide between corporeality and ideality, it is precisely this boundary that Twombly's drawing effaces, offering a picture not of "mindlessness" but of mind as a form of matter. We find this same image in *The Inhuman*, wherein Lyotard contrasts the Cartesian perception of matter as "the failure of thought," with a Bergsonian view that between mind and matter there are only differences of degree.[29] Following Jean Perrin's claim that "all matter is in the end a particular and very condensed form of energy," Lyotard suggests that mind is a "contained vibration" of this same energetic force.[30] Twombly's vibratory palimpsests attest to this consubstantiality. Fusing words, equations and diagrams with "indolence, pulsion, sensuality," Twombly's work (on paper and on canvas) reveals that there is no intellection released from the body, and no thought outside of spaces already corrupted by matter and signs. Thus, if Twombly's graffito mark had attacked the integrity of Modernist painting's intact optical surface, a work such as *Academy* (1955) shows Twombly simultaneously transgressing upon the conceptual field, littering "the philosopher's blank sheet of paper" with signs of profanity (the word "FUCK" being the work's most legible inscription) (figs. 97a & 97b). This vulgar corporealization, not only of vision, but of *thinking* was no less at stake in the work of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg."[31] Weiner's notebooks are born of a similar intuition,

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[27] Barthes, "Cy Twombly: Works On Paper," 167.

[28] Robert Pincus-Witten quoted in Rose, *Drawing Now*, 19.

[29] Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, 38-40.

[30] Jean Perrin quoted in Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, 43.

[31] Robert Rauschenberg quoted in *Simon Morley, Writing On The Wall: Word And Image In Modern Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 118.

demonstrating not only the coincidence of mind and matter, but the incarnation of thought as a *sense*.

In Alighiero Boetti's monumental "Biro drawing" *I sei sensi (The Six Senses)* (1974-75), we find that message viscerally conveyed (figs. 98a & 98b). Like the artist's tapestries, the work looks as though it had been stitched together, woven from a multitude of green, ballpoint hatch-marks. Covering six large sheets of paper in undulating rows, these miniscule dashes are punctuated by large white commas that at first appear randomly dispersed across the sea of marks. Through minute variations in the pressure of ink, the length and angle of lines, or the density of inscription, the sheets reveal the presence of numerous hands, and indeed these traces were made by anonymous teams of male and female, working away for months on a single drawing. The laboriousness of this impersonal writing combines with the corporeal strain of reading, as these pages produce not only a variegated texture, but an encoded text. On the left-side margin of the first sheet we find an alphabet which the viewer may connect to the floating commas, in order finally to decipher six words: *vedere* (to see), *udire* (to hear), *odorare* (to smell), *gustare* (to taste), *toccare* (to touch) and *pensare* (to think). Struggling to read the last sheet, linking commas to letters across the vast space of drawing, one becomes fully aware that "*pensare"* (to think) requires the use of a body.

to draw is to say

Seeming to downplay the importance of drawing, Weiner would remark in a 1990 interview "There are a few sketches around, shards of things. They're literally just drawings with words."[32] Weiner's off-hand comment reveals the important fact that drawing consists of fragments of writing and representation, or as the artist himself notes: "TO DRAW IS TO SAY"[33] (fig. 99).

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[32] Weiner in "If The Shoe Fits, Wear It, A Conversation with Edward Leffingwell," *Shift* (no. 1, 1990), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 220.

[33] This phrase appears in Lawrence Weiner Notebook January 1985 – August 1986 and is published in Weiner, "[statement on Drawing]," *White Walls* no 13 (Spring 1986), 52.

Rather than define drawing in terms of image creation or delineation (as Rose would do), Weiner links drawing to a much broader operation, one that ranges from delicate graphic gestures, to utilitarian lists. This radical heterogeneity had been foregrounded in Mel Bochner's seminal exhibition, *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant To Be Viewed as Art* (1966) which featured four spiral notebooks, each filled with one hundred photocopied submissions, including: a sketch by Le Witt littered with equations, an invoice from Donald Judd's supplier (because he didn't "do" drawing), a score by John Cage, and a diagram of the Xerox machine that was used to reproduce the "drawings and other visible things" for the show. In both the choice of materials, and the recourse to mechanical reproduction, Bochner's show purged the work of any "autographic value," crucially shifting the viewer/ reader's focus towards conceptual content and away from the perception of an auratic, autonomous object.[34] In addition to these transformations, Bochner's exhibition also implied an expansion of the scope of drawing beyond the act of mark-making. For if one could view the show in its entirety as a form of drawing, then the process of accumulating and collating one hundred pages into a notebook, would itself constitute a form of draftsmanship. This is also the lesson of Weiner's notebooks, which show that if to draw is to *articulate* (to say), then it is also a way to unite, by means of a joint.[35] An instillation of Luis Camnitzer's *Two Parallel Lines* (1976) demonstrates this articulating function using both language and materials (fig. 100). Camnitzer's work pairs a line of randomly accumulated detritus with a handwritten line of text beneath. This text references a wide range of things ("…A shadow of the horizon. Fragment of the curvature of the Earth. Axis of a corner. Narrative. Consummated balance...") but never directly mentions the specific materials displayed above (straws, wire, plastic utensils, twigs). That gap between language and matter proves crucial to the work's functioning as Camnitzer describes: "It's two languages that run

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[34] Bochner quoted in Anna Lovatt, "Ideas in Transmission: LeWitt's Wall Drawings and the Question of Medium, *Tate Papers* Issue 14 (October 1, 2010). *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant To Be Viewed as Art* was first exhibited December 2 – 23, 1966 at the Visual Arts Gallery, The School Of Visual Arts, New York.

[35] Weiner: "One approaches drawing with another sense than one approaches the making of a piece of sculpture. ...Drawing is articulating an idea." See Dieter Schwarz, unpublished interview with Lawrence Weiner, Ghent, November 12.1990; quoted in Birgit Pelzer, "Dissociated Objects: The Statements / Sculptures of Lawrence Weiner," *October* 90 (Autumn 1999), 91.

parallel and are disconnected until you want to make them connect, so you become a translator of sorts. The only relation there is between the garbage line and the written line is really the relation the reader makes when looking at it. There's no pre-determined relation by me, it's up to you."[36] Crucially, Camnitzer states that the base matter of garbage *already* exists as language, in a manner parallel to the words beneath. This echoes Peirce's theory that for an object to be thought at all, it must first be interpreted as sign (or as Weiner would put it, "I see in terms of nouns.")[37] For Weiner and Camnitzer both, the goal of work would be to generate a space wherein the articulation of signs (words and matter) could never be permanently fixed by either the artist's thought patterns or the reader's. To that end, the artists persistently refrain from authoritative assertion in their works, in order to make room for unexpected ways of joining terms.

Articulation in all its senses emerges as the primary operation in Weiner's notebooks, producing an immense inventory of every imaginable means of connection, beginning with the careful determination of how "the idea of material" hooks onto a particular set of words. In addition to the multitude of combinatory procedures linguistically referenced (e.g. editing, causal relations, groupings, additions, pilings, etc…), nearly every page also bears some physical trace of adhesion, in stains of inks, pencils or paints, yellowing bars of cellulose, thick accumulations of blue painter's tape, bulky arrays of staples, or swaths of glue that shrink and pucker the surfaces they bind (figs. 101 & 102). Collaged fragments, including pages from Moby Dick, encyclopedia entries, cigar labels, and matchbook covers are concatenated without being transformed or harmonized, their material heterogeneity never fully recuperated, as in the diacritical sign system of a Cubist collage. Instead, through frequent cut-out removals and a preference for perforated pages, Weiner underscores the risk that these agglomerations will disjoin rather than cohere. The notebooks' connections thus reflect a Deleuzian logic that John Rajchman calls an art of "disjunctive synthesis," an articulation of *relations* as opposed to *essences*, using the logic of

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[36] Luis Camnitzer, *Behind the Scenes: On Line: Luis Camnitzer* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010), video podcast, http://www.moma.org/explore/multimedia/videos/131/819. *Two Parallel Lines* was installed for the exhibition *On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century* held at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (November 21, 2010–February 7, 2011).

[37] Weiner in "Interview by Phyllis Rosenzweig" in *Lawrence Weiner With The Passage of Time* (Washington, D.C.: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, 1990), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 236.

"and" in favor of the predicative verb "to be"[38] (figs. 103 & 104). Weiner will accentuate precisely this aspect of conjunction, making seams as pronounced as possible, developing surfaces reminiscent of John Chamberlain's extravagantly stapled small collages or Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbild* drenched in glue. Explaining the significance of the term "*Merz*" Schwitters wrote: "*Merz* meant establishing connections, preferably between all things in this world."[39] Weiner's notebooks take Schwitters' parataxis to its logical conclusion, inasmuch as there is literally no material under the sun that is not in some way implicated and thereby joined to some other, without coordination or subordination.[40] This aggregative process results in a texture of thinking/drawing/writing that is thoroughly carnal, in notebooks filled from the start with libidinal and material intensities that are not the "failure" of thought, but the very ground of its "vibratory suspension."[41] This fusion of

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[38] John Rajchman, *Deleuze Connections* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 3-15.

[39] Kurt Schwitters, "Merz" [1924], reprinted in *Das Literarische Werk, vol. 5* (1981); quoted in Simon Morley, *Writing on the Wall* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 68.

[40] In "Kurt Schwitters' Merzbau: The Desiring House," Jaleh Mansoor expands upon the link between Schwitters' Merzbau and Deleuze and Guattari's theory of Desiring-Machines which it helped to inspire. In this reading, Schwitters work is seen as operational, rather than representational, involved in a force of libidinal production whose goal is "procedural excess." "Merzbau," she writes " hardly presents a formal object identifiable and able to be categorized as sculpture or architecture. Instead we find a ceaseless flow of material aggregation and the habitual *production* of its own production." The work constitutes a machine, not because it is mechanical, or instrumental, but because it is a *combinatoire,* staging an encounter with another "techno-social machine," (bourgeois Modernist painting) in order to perversely introject and manipulate that other machine's forces of production. Material flow (hyle) is organized, conducted, directed and interrupted by the machine and in turn this material cuts into the machine itself, undoing the boundaries between matter and form now rendered continuous through assemblage. Deleuze and Guattari refer to Schwitters' machine as "the desiring house" which constructs itself at the same time that it destroys itself, through "the compositional, anti-structural set of relations, cuts and connections." The objects produced by the machine are not end-products but themselves become machines in the circuit of production, whose processes are always grafted onto their surfaces. Importantly, this model of cutting, connection, break-down and "disjunctive synthesis," is a way for Deleuze and Guattari to challenge the "territorialization" of the flows of desire by an Oedipal narrative. This "theater" of desire replaces the factory of production, codifying the flows and subjecting them to the law of paternal hierarchy, and lack. See Mansoor, "Kurt Schwitters' Merzbau: The Desiring House," *InVisible Culture* no. 4 (Spring, 2002); http://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/index.html.

In films such as *A Bit Of Matter* from 1976, Weiner would also explore models of desire based not on patriarchal subordination, or a search for lost objects but on continuous connection and flux. Works such as *BROKEN OFF*, whose accumulations are marked by disintegration, demonstrate perfectly the operations of "disjunctive synthesis" which Deleuze and Guattari describe. Weiner's notebooks themselves could certainly be viewed as a surface of desiring production, as they too operate through ceaseless, habitual cutting and combining, introjecting the "techno-social" machines of administration, cartography, mathematics, and communication, not to mention Modernist painting, sculpture and drawing. There remains, however, an important distinction, inasmuch as the "procedural excess" of Weiner's notebooks never abandons the rationalization of a representative function ("TO DRAW IS TO SAY"). As such, the notebooks do not constitute what Mansoor will call the "self-driven economy of work indifferent to its product." For there is always more meaning in Weiner's work, than the sheer materiality of its production.

[41] D. H. Kahnweiler uses this term to characterize the virtuality and nonsubstantiality of both the *papiers collé*s and Mallarmé's poetry. Quoted in Yve-Alain Bois, "Kahnweiler's Lesson" in *Painting As Model*

articulation and embodiment, is also Lyotard's intuition, for as David Joselit explains, Lyotard conceives of the sign, not in opposition to the flesh, but as a structure that "emerges from carnality."[42]

In *Libidinal Economy*, Lyotard imagines the body as primarily *inarticulate*, a disorganized, single surface with no interior / exterior, a "great ephemeral skin" or "libidinal band" that takes the form of a whirring Moebius strip.[43] Upon this strip, aleatory, acephalic psychic pulsions circulate, marked by "intensities" - unbound "excitations of force" which are displaceable, instantaneous and unwilled. Signs are conceived as a "disintensification" of this band, a kind of cooling and volumetric spatialization, that develops into a theater of representation, structuring and channeling these libidinal energies. According to Lyotard, Peirce's semiotic voyage of signs from one to the other results in an annihilation of material, a "dematerialization" which is the result of making things signify. For Lyotard this "dematerialization" can be seen in one of two ways. Either it functions like the abstractions of capital, which dissect libidinal pulsions, rendering them comparable and countable and hence exchangeable; or, it allows for a "refinement and intensification of the passages of affects":

> And if this is the case, then is this 'dematerialization' not, in the same space and time, the cartography of a *material* voyage, of new regions of sonorous but also chromatic, sculptural, political, erotic, linguistic space, being, as a result of the *mise en signes* conquered and crossed by the trails of influxes offering the libido new opportunities for intensification, the fabrication of signs through 'dematerialization' providing material for the extension of tensors?[44]

Lyotard refers to semiosis as a *mise en signes*, emphasizing the process by which signification carves out a theatrical volume within the pulsatile "skin" of libidinal intensities, in order to impose a stable structure of inside / outside, this / not-this within the band of libidinal singularity and difference. In this theatrical "*dispositif*" or apparatus, intensities will be

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(Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1990), 95. The close connection between Weiner's work and Mallarmé's will be taken up in chapter VII.

[42] David Joselit, *Infinite Regress: Marcel Duchamp 1910 – 1941* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1998), 18.

[43] Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (1974; Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993). This discussion of Lyotard's work relies on Grant's introduction and glossary.

[44] Lyotard *Libidinal Economy*, 44.

subordinated to perpetual deferral and lack (either the signified or the other signifier to which the sign refers). What Lyotard calls the "tensor" wrests the sign from this "intellectual," referential state, in order to affirm that signs "can also be, indissociably, singular and vain intensities in exodus."[45] Thus, for Lyotard, all signs are characterized by a certain duplicity. They function on the one hand to channel libidinal intensities into a stable apparatus of signification, and on the other hand, they dissimulate, producing/veiling: "difference within identity, the chance event within the foresight of composition, passion within reason."[46] Throughout Weiner's notebooks, this double valence of signs becomes apparent, as "intellectual signs" and "tensor signs" occupy the same fabric, and the "dematerialization" of signification is mingled with a "material voyage" of an unpredictable, divergent, exorbitant nature. Indeed, Weiner's notebooks, are nothing if not vast fields investigating the ways in which signs structure desire, and how desire in turn inflects the action of signs. Crucially, however, neither Weiner nor Lyotard will ever propose a space of libidinal release that lies beyond representation. Indeed, everything that occurs in the notebooks, is acknowledged to be part of a grander *mise en signes,* as Weiner would repeatedly insist, "ALL INTELLECTUALLY DETERMINED ACTIVITY IS THEATRICAL."[47]

From the beginning, Weiner's notebooks highlight the tension between aleatory flows of desire and the various representations into which they are carved. Indeed, the notebooks' increasingly dense embodiment is itself "disintensified" through the work's linguistic presentation, so that a trade-off occurs between the deferrals and absences produced by language and the influx of materials that the notebooks circulate.[48] In a particularly voluptuous example, we find one notebook so replete with pasted elements that it cannot even be closed (figs. 105a & 105b). The notebook (June 2005- November 2009) offers a fabricated version of the work embossed on

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[45] Lyotard *Libidinal Economy*, 50.

[46] Lyotard *Libidinal Economy*, 52.

[47] Weiner, "[The Need of a Place (a Table)…]" reprinted in *Having Been Said,* 191.

[48] Buchloh argues that to the degree that Cubist collage intensified the material density of the sign structure itself, it suppressed the corporeality of graphic gesture, along with the substantiality of reference. According to Fredric Jameson, this transformation in the status of the sign would characterize postmodern spectacularization at large: "The peculiar new status of the image, the 'material' or what might better be called the 'literal,' signifier: a materiality or literality from which the older sensory richness of the medium has been abstracted." See "Periodizing the 60s," *Social Text* No. 9/10 (Spring-Summer 1984), reprinted in *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971 – 1986*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 195.

its cover - *BITS & PIECES PUT TOGETHER TO PRESENT A SEMBLANCE OF A WHOLE* (1991) – a phrase which could stand as a definition, not only of collage, but of representation in general. Permanently splayed open, like an accordion bellows made of papers warped by glue, the notebook nearly prohibits reading. As such, it suggests a belated riposte to Marcel Broodthaers' *Pense-Bête* (1964), the books of poetry that remain forever shut because embedded in a plaster cast. As materiality overtakes legibility, the notebook connects to the collage effects in Weiner's "melodic noise" projects or the sonic / visual palimpsests of films such as *Done To* (1974), wherein a multiplicity of overlapping voices renders language unintelligible, as though words were sinking back into the disorganized field of the "libidinal band." Along with the sound recordings, movies and books, Weiner's notebook collages explicitly reintroduce bodily figuration, via photographs that range from Polaroids of family members and pin-ups of transvestites, to publicity shots of George Bush and Lucy Lawless. Corporeality is registered foremost, however, by the notebooks' tactility, which avoids the pitfalls of fraudulent compensation by remaining perpetually fragmentary and contingent, producing both the singular, differential intensities that Lyotard associates with the "tensor sign," as well as the structured, disintensified theater of *mise en signes*. As we shall see, the geometric rigidity of Weiner's early published graphics remains thoroughly invested in operations of "cooling" and geometric spatialization, associated with the semiotic subordination of libidinal impulses. But in using the notebooks' purposefully disorganized surface as a context for exploring Weiner's rigorous diagrammatic structures, the latter's connection to the instability of material and corporeal flows comes to light.

from nowhere to nowhere

Most notebooks start with an itinerary. The longest lists ninety places, the shortest names two (figs. 106 & 107). Weiner has said that these travel logs provide a key, and when asked why he began keeping notebooks, Weiner points to the exigencies of a nomadic existence:

> THE SIMPLE FACT THAT MY LIFE CONSISTS OF AN INTERACTION WITH THE WORLD AROUND ME & AS IT BECAME MORE & MORE NECESSARY TO BE OUT ON THE ROAD & IN DIFFERENT PLACES THE TABLE FILLED WITH THE NOTES & THINGS OF OTHER PEOPLE & ALL WAS NO LONGER ACCESSIBLE TO ME SO I BEGAN TO CARRY THEM AROUND IN NOTEBOOKS[49]

The phenomenon of artists working "on the road" was celebrated in the 2009 exhibition *In & Out of Amsterdam, Travels in Conceptual Art 1960-1976*, a title that references Weiner's 1971 work *IN AND OUT. OUT AND IN. AND IN AND OUT. AND OUT AND IN*. In his catalog essay, Christophe Chérix writes about the importance of mobility to the international group of artists associated with the Amsterdam gallery *Art & Project*. In this context, Sol LeWitt's pocket planner from 1975 proves exemplary, as it documents the artist opening five European solo shows, visiting five countries and thirteen cities all in a single month. Weiner, for his part, recalls: "It *was* a tour. It was like playing football – it went from stadium to stadium. And the interesting thing was that there was a whole system built into it."[50] Chérix underscores the fact that this seemingly mandatory itinerancy was not merely a result of the demands of exhibition, but constitutive of the work's content. Referencing Weiner's 1969 *Art & Project Bulletin 10* which presented *A TRANSLATION FROM ONE LANGUAGE TO ANOTHER* and Jan Dibbets' *Robin Redbreast's Territory / Sculpture* from the same year, Chérix writes:

> Both works show a tendency in the generation of artists active in the 1960s and early '70s to focus on the idea of travel both physically and conceptually and to recognize that art exists in the simple act of *Coming And Going*. Such a state brings to mind philosopher Michel de Certeau's description of stories, which applies just as well to these artists: "Every day, they traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories."[51]

Although some of Weiner's notebooks are more portable than others, all of them register spatial trajectories via the ephemera grafted onto them: scraps of hotel stationary, ID badges, canceled postage stamps, postcards, tickets and telegrams. There are pictures of ships, trains, and planes, along with abundant references to voyages, departures and destinations. For instance, on a notebook page from 1975 Weiner writes (across from photographs of an erect penis and a beer can):

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[49] Lawrence Weiner, e-mail correspondence with author, October 12, 2012.

[50] Weiner quoted in Chirstophe Chérix, "Greetings from Amsterdam," *In & Out of Amsterdam, Travels in Conceptual Art, 1960 – 1976*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2009), 17.

THE JOURNEY IS FROM NOWHERE TO NOWHERE – IT SUITS ONE

Weiner's errant life as a "sailor" is well documented here, in glimpses of the artist in his studio on the boat Joma (berthed in Amsterdam), in countless renderings of ships, and in obsessive reflections on the duplicity of the horizon (figs. 108 & 109). In his essay on Dada, Roman Jakobson extolled the virtues of the sailor when he asked: "Is this not the reason for the fact that sailors are revolutionary, they lack that very 'stove,' that hearth, that little house of their own, and are everywhere equally *chez soi*?"[52] While Jakobson's portrait of the revolutionary at home in his dispossession undoubtedly suits Weiner, the artist will take pains to point out that transience is not a choice freely made by intrepid travelers. Frequently throughout the notebooks, we find versions of Weiner's oft published aphorism, first executed for the *Biennale des Friedens* (1985): "WE ARE SHIPS AT SEA, NOT DUCKS ON A POND," a reminder that journeying is not exotic, but a matter of survival (figs. 110 & 111).[53] The aphorism rejects outright Heidegger's lament over Modern man's "homelessness," and the philosopher's Nativist calls for a renewed sense of "dwelling."[54] Heidegger's place-bound ideal is epitomized in the "self-sufficiency" of the Black Forest farmhouse, wherein a spiritual unity between man and things presides. In the tamed wilderness, man would ostensibly discover once more his "autochthonous nature," an antidote to the disidentification and displacements of market capitalism. Heidegger writes: "We are plants which – whether we like to admit it to ourselves or not – must with our roots rise out of the earth in order to bloom in the ether and bear fruit."[55] Weiner's aphoristic embrace of an uprooted condition offers no promise of redemption through localization. Indeed, Weiner's statement reveals that both the metaphysic of dwelling and the ideals of site-specificity fall prey to the

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[51] Chérix, "Greetings from Amsterdam," *In & Out of Amsterdam, Travels in Conceptual Art, 1960 – 1976*, 21.

[52] Roman Jakobson, "Dada" reprinted in *Language in Literature* (1921; Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1987), 34. For Jakobson the sailor stands for a new transrational consciousness capable of "erasing the boundaries between yesterday's warring powers."

[53] According to Alice Zimmerman, "DUCKS ON A POND" was conceived in relation to a notion of "sitting ducks" at a target range (in conversation with the author, October 2, 2012, New York). This aphorism, initially executed for Friedens Biennale Hamburg, has appeared in numerous formats over the years including buttons, plaques and posters, as well as a floating permanent sculpture for *Hamburg Projekt* in Germany (1989).

[54] This discussion relies on David Harvey's analysis of Heidegger's relation to "Place" in *Cosmopolitanism And The Geographies Of Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 182-188.

[55] Heidegger quoted in Harvey*, Cosmopolitanism And The Geographies Of Freedom*, 183.

fraudulent assumption that stasis can overcome circulation. At the same time, Weiner's nomadism harbors no illusions regarding the costs and implications of movements, invariably curtailed by the boundaries in which we dwell and from which we take flight.

Storyboards for books and movies appear regularly throughout the notebooks. Among these we find mock-ups relating to Weiner's 1977 book *Coming And Going*, a work in English and French that focuses on the implications of transportation.[56] *Coming And Going* is among the first of Weiner's published books to feature a graphic, in this case a square with corners labeled "A,B,C,D" and the words "AREA (SPACE)" or "AIRE (ESPACE)" printed in the center (figs. 112a & 112b). In its spare geometric rigidity, the drawing ironically defeats any sense of mobility. Creating an impression of strictly channeled movement, if not outright obstruction, the image exemplifies the way in which signs "disintensify" corporeal/libidinal flows. The diagram can be read as an abstracted version of Douglas Huebler's drawing for *Variable Piece #1* (1968) which features a New York City map overlain with three nested squares whose corners are labeled "A,B,C,D" (fig. 113). Huebler's mapped points designate markers placed alternatively on automobiles, on static locations, and on elevators. In a note at the bottom of the map, Huebler contrasts the movement of the vehicular marks ("carried into random and horizontal directions") to that of the elevator marks ("carried into random and vertical directions"). Weiner's book describes an analogous series of transportations ("IS / WAS CARRIED FROM A TO B"), but goes on to explore how and when an area / space comes to form a proprietary limit ("IS / WAS CARRIED OVER INTO AREA (SPACE) AT BOUNDARY A-B"). Short texts in the book raise issues of trespass, of changes in status for the carrier and carried, and of expulsion ("THOSE / THAT OF AREA (SPACE) ATTEMPT TO OR EJECTS EITHER THE CARRIED OR THE CARRIER FROM AREA (SPACE)"). Along with the diagram, *Coming And Going* is illustrated with three photographs of Weiner's early work, *What Is Set Upon The Table Sits Upon The Table*

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[56] Weiner's book "Coming And Going Venant Et Partant" relates to the 1977 work:
COMING AND GOING
REMAINING WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF PUT AND PLACE
(i.e. as a means of transport)

(Stone On Table) c. 1962 – 1963, featuring a chunk of Brooklyn Bridge limestone, placed on a wooden plank table, built by Weiner in the backyard of his Bleecker Street studio.[57] Weiner recounts the significance of this work to his understanding of sculpture:

> Every day I would go outdoors and move this piece of limestone from one corner of the table to the other, occasionally hitting it with a hammer, occasionally getting sort of angry at it, and literally bouncing it until it looked in the right position to be cut into this unnamed sculpture. After a couple of weeks I realized that that's what it's all about and literally just placed it on the table, paying absolutely no attention to how I placed it.… I realized sculpture was about "Put in Place," volume or mass put in place. It's a matter of transportation...[58]
> (fig. 114)

Significantly, Weiner re-inscribes the sculptural activity of "Put in Place" within the broader discourse of immigration and emigration implicitly referenced by *Coming And Going*, whose unspecified diagram of "AREA (SPACE)" could refer to anything from a table, to a building, to a nation-state. In this context, transportation results not in a fantasy of unfettered movement, or in a random play of directions, but in a consequential negotiation of authoritatively imposed limits and attempted expulsions.

Two years earlier, Weiner had dealt specifically with the territorializing structures that constrain movements and enforce subjective identifications. The graphics featured in the book *Relative To Hanging* (1975) undermine the self-evidence of a set of nationalist symbols, through a de-classificatory operation that relies once again on an operation of removal. Printed in Denmark, *Relative To Hanging* features the following works translated into Danish, Norwegian Icelandic, Swedish and Finnish:

HAVING STOOD FOR [AS]

(HAVING WAVED)

HAVING STOOD IN [AS]

(HAVING WAVED)

HAVING STOOD UP [AS]

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[57] The original of *What Is Set Upon The Table Sits Upon The Table (Stone On Table)* has been lost, although the work is occasionally re-constructed for exhibition.

[58] Weiner in "Early Work, Interview by Lynn Gumpert" in *Lynda Benglis, Joan Brown, Luis Jimenez, Gary Stephan, Lawrence Weiner: Early Work*, exh. cat. (New York: The New Museum, 1982), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 123.

(HAVING WAVED)
HAVING STOOD OVER [AS]
(HAVING WAVED)
HAVING STOOD DOWN [AS]
(HAVING WAVED)

On the cover and beside each text, schematic renderings of Scandinavian flags appear, presumably in correspondence with the five languages printed (figs. 116 & 117). When conventionally represented, the flags' compositions are nearly identical, featuring either one of two variations on the Nordic Cross (single or double-line). In *Relative To Hanging* , on the other hand, the flags become virtually unidentifiable. Rendered in outline alone, drained of their distinctive color schemes, there is no sure way to properly distinguish these flags. Looking to the storyboard for *Relative To Hanging* which appears in a notebook from 1975, we see that Weiner does theoretically match each text to the correct national flag (here the flags are not pictured but only named) (figs. 115). Nevertheless, Weiner's design has done its duty, creating a gap in signification that causes the flags to waver in their symbolic authority, an eventuality announced by the work itself (*HAVING STOOD DOWN [AS]*).

Remarkably, Weiner introduces graphic images into his books for the first time using emblems that Buchloh would classify as "icons of control and containment."[59] The authoritarian function of flags had been compulsively explored in Boetti's prolific production of *Mappa* (over one hundred fifty produced since they were begun in 1971), tapestries of world maps featuring each country covered in the colors and designs of its national flag. To signify a struggle over a country's self determination (e.g. Afghanistan and Namibia), Boetti would occasionally instruct that those countries be depicted in white, a reminder of the violence with which flags come to mark our geography, a fact strategically veiled by cartographic pretensions to neutrality (fig. 118).

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[59] Buchloh, "Hesse's Endgame: Facing the Diagram" in *Eva Hesse Drawing*, 144. For a discussion of the relationship of sculptural practice to questions of post-national identity see Buchloh, "Sculpture Between Nation-State and Global Commodity Production" in *Gabriel Orozco*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2009), 34-43.

In an article that describes the mechanisms by which flags manipulate, not only territories and movements but our basic perceptions, Umberto Eco writes at length about the nuances of Scandinavian standards:

> Now a socio-semiotic study of national flags remarks that national flags make use of only seven colors: red, blue, green, yellow, orange, black, and white…. Orange hardly distinguishable from red, is rarely used. What counts in the perception of a flag is categorization, not discrimination. If we were to look up the flags of the Scandinavian countries we would realize that the blue of the Swedish and Finnish flags (which is light) is different from the blue of the Icelandic and Norwegian ones (which is dark). Now look at Sweden's yellow cross on a light blue field – there is not a flag in the world with a yellow cross on a dark blue background, and for good reason. Everyone would recognize such a flag as the symbol for Sweden.[60]

The significant differences in color described by Eco are completely erased in Weiner's handling of these symbols and in fact, the flags appear in the notebooks as washed out Xerox copies. Weiner's anemic flags recall Jasper Johns' *White Flag* from 1955, which similarly frustrated categorization and discrimination, destabilizing the "dispositif" through which national identity is recognized (fig. 119).[61] Eco emphasizes the fact that flag colors are not mere physical pigments but semiotic devices strongly correlated to ideas such as courage and bravery (red) or peace and purity (white). He goes on to remark that "the nature of these values (hope peace and so on) is irrelevant: what counts is the structural architecture of their basic oppositions which must be clear."[62] With characteristic economy, Weiner depletes these emblems, neatly effacing standard significations and metaphorical associations, through an operation of chromatic removal that temporarily releases these signs from the strictures of identification (note that the overloaded figure/metaphor of the cross remains). Nevertheless, while Weiner dismantles the structural architecture by which the flags typically operate, he does not collapse them into sheer equivalence or utter nonsense. The flags remain differentiable, not by their intrinsic qualities (color), but only when tied, however tenuously, to the words translated beside them.

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[60] Umberto Eco, "How Culture Conditions The Colors We See" in *On Signs*, ed. Marshall Blonsky (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), 173.

[61] Another relevant comparison would be Claes Oldenburg's series of American flags fashioned from scrap wood and cardboard, which were similarly stripped of their symbolic colors (red, white and blue), as well as any pretense to monumental authority (by virtue of their debased, weather-beaten condition). See *Claes Oldenburg: The Sixties*, exh. cat., ed. Achim Hochdörfer with Barbara Schröder (Vienna: Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, 2012).

[62] Eco, "How Culture Conditions The Colors We See" in *On Signs,* 174.

in the stream of life

Over and again, Weiner confirms Peirce's hypothesis that signification is fundamentally an act of translation. Throughout the notebooks texts turn up in Arabic, Catalan, Chinese, Dutch, English, French, German, Hebrew, Greek, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese and Spanish, registering not only the artist's mobility but the excursions of the works themselves. Here, translation occurs not only from one language to another, but between various surfaces and contexts. For example, hand-written texts will often show their printed or typed versions pasted on top, marking a specific mechanism of objectification via typo-translation, as autographic traces are literally suppressed by mechanical inscription (fig. 120). In one extreme case, Weiner's *Statement of Intent* will be compulsively re-translated no less than twenty-seven times in exhaustive variation and in multiple languages, having been typed, printed, hand-written and Xeroxed; on blue onion skin, pink onion skin, plain paper and cardstock; marked with strikethroughs, addenda, abbreviations and fragmentation. On one page from a notebook dated 1978, we find a printed version in English and Dutch, with the word "piece" crossed-out and changed to "work." A note in the margins asks: "IS REUSE A FORM OF (A) DIALECTIC OR NOT?" (fig. 121) Such questions had explicitly surfaced in Weiner's book *Towards A Reasonable End* (1975): "Within a forward motion does dialog become dialectic? Within a forward motion does dialectic become material? When in motion is material dialectical?"[63]

On the green cover of a notebook from 1975 Weiner tapes a printed excerpt: "Processes change, old processes and old contradictions disappear, new processes and new contradictions emerge, and the methods of resolving contradictions differ accordingly" (fig. 122). It is a passage from "On Contradiction" by Mao Zedong in which the author proclaims contradiction to be the basic law, not only of materialist dialectics, but of existence itself. Denouncing vulgar

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[63] The subject of dialectic forms part of the dialog between Lawrence Weiner and Kathryn Bigelow in the video *Green As Well As Blue As Well As Red* (1976).

evolutionism and bourgeois metaphysics which posit static, isolated, immutable things, Mao argues for a concept of identity that is fundamentally riven by opposition and change. "Life," he writes, "consists precisely and primarily in this - - that a being is at each moment itself and yet something else."[64] Weiner had often announced his commitment to this style of thinking, referring not only to himself as a "dialectician," but to his work as "the methodology of dialectic accessible to all."[65]

A dialectic analysis of integral contradiction informs the images Weiner calls "paradigmatic drawings," the first series of which appears in a notebook from 1978.[66] These images mark the appearance of sketching in the notebooks, and while not strictly "found" (as in the graphic of *Coming And Going* or the flags of *Having Been Waved*) the drawings are nonetheless externally derived, resembling technical illustrations, like maritime markers seen on the sides of ships.[67] Titled "ABOVE BELOW THE LEVEL OF ( )" the sketches feature pairs of schematic 'landscapes' set one atop the other (fig. 123). A bold line between top half and bottom (dis)joins the images, functioning like the bar that unites and divides a fraction. The pairs mirror each other, save for a single differentiating element. In one pair, for instance, the top picture marks an 'x' floating above a horizon line, whereas the bottom picture shows the 'x' beneath. In their extreme abridgement, the drawings demonstrate with utter limpidity the theory of oppositions

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[64] Mao Zedong, "On Contradiction" reprinted in *Collected Writings of Chairman Mao*, vol. 3 (1937; El Paso: El Paso Norte Press, 2009), 53. In writing about the impact of Maoism in the '60s Fredric Jameson cites this essay's profound influence, especially on Louis Althusser who was interested in Mao's mapping of the overdetermined relations inherent to antagonistic and nonantagonistic contradictions. Jameson recognizes Mao's formulation of contradiction to be one of the most significant theoretical structures of the 1960s. See Jameson, "Periodizing the '60s." For a discussion of Maoism during this period see A. Belden Fields, *Trotskyism and Maoism* (New York: Autonomedia, 1988) and also Kristin Ross' discussion of French Maoism in Ross, *May '68 And Its Afterlives* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002). See also Eric de Bruyn's "Being Then Within a Context of Revolution: Six Notes on Two Films by Lawrence Weiner" in which de Bruyn uses Jacques Rancière's analysis of Maoism in Jean-luc Godard's *La Chinoise* to discuss the connection to Maoism in Weiner's films *A First Quarter* and *A Second Quarter*.

[65] Weiner: "For with art we have then a methodology to deal with the relationship of human beings to material as well as the methodology of a dialectic accessible to all." Quoted in notes for a talk introducing the screening of "A First Quarter" at Gentofte Kunstbibliotek in Hellerup, Denmark, (Jun 12, 1974), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 73. See also, "Lawrence Weiner at Amsterdam, Interview by Willoughby Sharp," *Avalanche* (Spring, 1972), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 47 – 48.

[66] Weiner publishes a reference to "paradigmatic drawings" in a spread for *Adix* (June / July, 1979) reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 97. The text reads: "A STRUCTURE OF Lawrence Weiner AS A MEANS OF PRESENTING WORK UTILIZING PARADIGMATIC DRAWINGS UTILIZED AS WELL AS A MEANS OF PRESENTING WORK."

Mao describes (a whole constituted by the contradictory relation of above and below). In publication, that self-evidence is further accentuated by a graphic re-inscription that effaces any trace of gesturality. The drawings are presented as five "figures" in the book *The Level Of Water – De Waterstand* (1978) (fig. 124a).[68] Published in the Netherlands, the book specifically addresses the existential concerns of a country with 40% of its land mass lying below sea level. Textual references to dikes, flooding, resistance, blocking and containment clarify the issues at stake. That sense of intelligibility dissolves, however, as soon as the reader tries to combine text and image. As with the flags of *Relative To Hanging*, categorization and discrimination become a matter of contestation.

In the book, each "figure" bears the caption: "ABOVE BELOW THE LEVEL OF WATER" a phrase that disorients through an unaccustomed combination of dialectically opposed prepositions.[69] The reader's effort to secure the location of something that is neither above, nor below, nor above and below, but specifically "ABOVE BELOW" is in no way simplified by the diagrams. Figure 4, for example, features a juxtaposition of just two horizontal lines, one dashed and one solid, but as the lines switch places above and below, it is not even obvious which one signifies "THE LEVEL OF WATER" (fig. 124b). This indeterminacy crucially highlights the incapacity of a techno-scientific configuration to rationalize a fluctuating and often turbulent materiality.[70] That representational inadequacy takes on dire significance when the drawings are re-published for an American context in the summer of 1979, some months after Three Mile

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[67] Weiner makes reference to his drawing sources including cut-out cigarette papers and nautical symbols in "Interview by Dieter Schwarz" [1989] reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 195.

[68] In around 1971 Weiner executed a plywood relief entitled *The Level Of Water* which featured a "paradigmatic" form executed in red balsa wood against a grey plywood ground. The form, composed of a rectangle with the lower left corner removed and a horizon line bisecting the shape, would find frequent re-use, for instance in stickers featuring the work *PLACED OVER A SPACE WITH A PROBABILITY OF SHIFT (i.e. a lintel,* shown in association with the bar and restaurant Chinese Chance at 1 University Place in Greenwich Village. This paradigm also appears in a sticker featuring the radio program *Böse ist Besser* in association with Radio bis Kunstfunk Berlin. Examples of these appear in a notebook dated 1981.

[69] The complete work from 1977 reads:

ABOVE BELOW THE LEVEL OF WATER

WITH A PROBABILITY OF FLOODING

(i.e. a dike)

Island Accident (March 28, 1979), the worst in US nuclear power plant history.[71] The immediate cause of that cataclysm was, in essence, a failure to properly gauge and maintain correct levels of water (coolant), with the devastating result that 40,000 gallons of nuclear waste were dumped into the Susquehanna River. In discussing the 1979 publication of *The Level Of Water* with Robert C. Morgan later that year, Weiner acknowledged its link to "certain clear and present dangers," although the drawings pointedly refrain from making those threats explicit.[72]

In a text accompanying the magazine version of *The Level Of Water*, Weiner justifies his recent use of drawing as public presentation: "PARADIGM AS REFERENCE TO THE ASSERTION OF SOME EXPRESSIONISTS THAT NEITHER THE CHOICE OF SUBJECT NOR THE IMAGE IS OF ANY IDEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE" (figs. 125a & 125b). The statement announces the paradigms' function as a dialectic reversal, one in which the autographic indulgences of resurgent expressionist tendencies would be displaced by a structural logic and the urgency of factual content. Designed for legibility (if not easy comprehension) these drawings give the illusion of being part of an existing vocabulary of emblems, emphasizing their role as public sign as opposed to private gesture. On the other hand, while it might seem logical to read the geometric exactitude of these images as a suppression of corporeality, the paradigms in fact mark the becoming-figural of Weiner's text. Recalling Walter Benjamin's characterization of the diagram as a form of "picture writing," Weiner's paradigms reflect an "eccentric figurativeness," one that comes to invade language through the medium of technical illustration.[73]

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[70] In spite of their geometric exactitude, the figures in *The Level Of Water* structurally have much in common with the jagged cut that articulates Gordon Matta-Clark's stacked paper drawings, described by Pamela Lee as "a line which fails to rationalize form" (see Pamela Lee, "Drawing In Between," 29).

[71] Three "figures" from *The Level Of Water* were printed along with text in *Journal: Southern California Art Magazine* (June-July 1979), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 93.

[72] Weiner in "A Conversation with Robert C. Morgan (1979)," *Real Life Magazine* (Winter, 1983), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 101.

[73] Walter Benjamin points to the diagram as an avenue of resistance to the "locust swarms of print" that had come to pervade everyday experience. Benjamin writes: "But it is quite beyond doubt that the development of writing will not indefinitely be bound by the claims to power of a chaotic academic and commercial activity; rather, quantity is approaching a qualitative leap when writing, advancing ever more into the graphic regions of its new eccentric figurativeness, will take sudden possession of an adequate factual content. In this picture writing, poets who will now as in earliest times be first and foremost experts in writing will be able to participate only by mastering the fields in which (quite unobtrusively) it is being constructed: the statistical and technical diagram. With the foundation of an international moving script they will renew their authority in the life of peoples, and find a role awaiting them in comparison to which all the innovative aspirations of

More importantly, in *The Level Of Water*, it is not the intellectual sign that exerts dominance, but *matter* which emerges as indomitable referential content, activating the tension between a ruled configuration and that which violently resists those constraints.

Weiner's idiosyncratic characterization of his drawings as "paradigms" would seem to suggest they be viewed as archetypes or models. Within Ordinary Language philosophy, paradigm signifies in precisely this way. In the 'paradigm case' argument, for instance, the paradigm serves as a way of distinguishing between two ways of learning an expression.[74] For one class of expressions, usage is learnt through description (e.g. we learn the use of the term 'ghost' after someone describes to us that a ghost is a being of certain characteristics). For another class of expressions, use is learned ostensively, by pointing to a 'paradigm case' in which the term is correctly applied (e.g. we learn to use the expression 'It is certain that,' by being shown valid cases). Weiner's practice, however, invalidates this argument, for in terms of both the work and the drawings, no parameters of 'correct' application exist.[75] Sketched in a notebook under the vague title "ABOVE BELOW THE LEVEL OF ( )" Weiner's paradigms announce their unrestricted applicability to any material necessity.

Roland Barthes develops a concept of what he calls the "paradigmatic consciousness," that is perhaps more in line with what we see in these early drawings.[76] Barthes defines the paradigm as an opposition of two virtual terms, *one* of which will be actualized in the production of meaning. In contrast to the "symbolic consciousness" which posits an interior relation between

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rhetoric will reveal themselves as antiquated daydreams." See Benjamin, "One Way Street" in *Reflections*, ed. Peter Demetz (1928; New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 78.

[74] This discussion of the paradigm case comes from John Passmore, "Arguments To Meaninglessness: Excluded Opposites and Paradigm Cases" in *The Linguistic Turn, Essays In Philosophical Method*, ed. Richard Rorty (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 190.

[75] According to Thomas Kuhn's influential theory from *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), paradigms constitute the set of conventions and rules that ground a particular scientific discourse, acting as the filters through which a limited number of problems, data sets and experiments are made visible, while others remain marginalized or unseen. Kuhn argues that scientific revolutions only occur through paradigm shifts which bring entirely new problems and methods into view. While Weiner's drawings do indicate a general field of possible inquiry, they remain opposed to the paradigmatic function that Kuhn describes as they avoid delimitations of use and the circumscription of data points.

[76] Roland Barthes, "The Imagination of the Sign" in *Critical Essays*, trans. Richard Howard (1962; Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), 207 – 208.

signifier and signified (the Christian cross), a paradigmatic consciousness recognizes that a sign's meaning is determined externally in relation to other signs (red for stop versus green for go). The paradigm thus depends on conflict in order to generate meaning, always requiring the choice of one term over another, but implying the unexpressed term with every selection. This structuralist emphasis on binaries only superficially relates to the *organic* force of contradiction Mao described, for in complete contrast to the dialectical method, the paradigmatic structure does not contain within it the possibility of historical development (revolution) nor is there any question of "resolving" or sublating a paradigmatic opposition. Instead, Barthes will speak of "baffling" or "neutralizing" its terms, an operation already at work in the unrecognizable flags of *Relative To Hanging* or the prepositional confusion of *The Level Of Water*. In her translator's introduction to Barthes' *Le Neutre*, Krauss discusses Barthes' desire to "neutralize the exercise of power," the rule of winners and losers. Recalling his childhood love of the game "prisoner's base," Barthes reveals, "what I liked best was to free the prisoners – the effect of which was to put both teams back into circulation: the game started over again at zero."[77] For Barthes, who will liken speech to the dynamics of prisoner's base, the key is not who wins, but circulation, keeping the pieces in play. In a later set of notebook drawings from 1994, Weiner will invoke precisely this ludic sensibility by including Tic Tac Toe game boards, a structure that becomes a favorite in the artist's practice. Tic Tac Toe is a game that when played rationally by both players, always ends in a stalemate, so that if winning were the desired outcome, the logical choice would be not to play at all. The only reason, therefore, to play Tic Tac Toe would be to keep Xs and Os in circulation. In a 1993 drawing Weiner proposes Tic Tac Toe as a non-dialectical remedy to "neutralize the exercise of power,"[78] precisely by keeping the pieces in play:

> QUESTION: WHAT TO DO WHEN A SOCIETY ATTEMPTS TO DESTROY ITS CIRCLES
> ANSWER: PLAY TIC TAC TOE & HOPE FOR THE BEST
> (figs. 126 & 127)

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[77] Roland Barthes, "From The Neutral," *October,* no. 112 (Spring 2005), 3.

[78] Rosalind Krauss translator's introduction to Barthes, "From The Neutral."

Undoubtedly, Weiner's early works and drawings explore a kind of paradigmatic imagination. According to Barthes, this mode of thinking requires "an acute attention to the *variation* of several recurrent elements," exemplified, for example, in Robbe-Grillet's novels with their obsessive permutations.[79] Everywhere in Weiner's drawings and work, we find a similarly relentless investigation of structured variation, as images and texts explore "the smallest difference necessary and sufficient to effect a change of meaning."[80] The correspondences between Weiner's work and LeWitt's maddeningly unabridged variations become apparent. The crucial distinction lies in the fact that Le Witt's serial progressions remain avowedly solipsistic, as the artist himself declares: "to put three boxes together is a really silly kind of thing when you think of it. I mean, the world is really going to hell in a toboggan, and I'm putting these boxes together… it has no validity as anything except a process in itself. It has nothing to do with the world at all."[81] LeWitt's claims for autonomous production are, of course, totally invalidated by works such as the *Wall Drawings*, whose materialization remains wholly contingent on the surfaces of their inscription, every mark being physically conditioned by the space of execution. This embededness of serial procedures and systematic permutations within concrete contexts had already been revealed by Dan Graham's *Homes for America* (1966-67) which grounds abstract serial operations within the socio-political materiality of suburban tract housing. Such an immersion within the 'real' would remain critical to Weiner's practice, as encapsulated by a hand-written quote pasted in a notebook from 1975 that will become the artist's rallying cry: "AN EXPRESSION HAS MEANING ONLY IN THE STREAM OF LIFE (Ludwig Wittgenstein)"[82] (figs. 128a & 128b). Indeed, beyond a formal interest in structural intricacies, the paradigmatic figures

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[79] Roland Barthes, "The Imagination of the Sign" in *Critical Essays*, 210.

[80] Roland Barthes, "The Imagination of the Sign" in *Critical Essays*, 205.

[81] Sol LeWitt, interview with Patricia Norvell (1969) in *Recording Conceptual Art,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Patricia Norvell (Berkeley: UCLA Press, 2001), 121.

[82] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Last Writings, vol. 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 913. Wittgenstein's phrase: "Words only have meaning in the stream of life" will figure prominently in Weiner's practice.

in *The Level Of Water* matter because, "in the stream of life," an opposition between above and below can signal the difference between catastrophe and survival.[83]

For Barthes and Weiner no less, paradigms become an "erotic object." Barthes writes rapturously about the seductions of binary thinking: "This idea seemed to him inexhaustible, he could never exploit it enough. That one might say everything *with only one difference* produced a kind of joy in him, a continuous astonishment."[84] Weiner's erotic invocation of binary opposition (*IN AND OUT. OUT AND IN. AND IN AND OUT. AND OUT AND IN.*) is never quite as wanton in the paradigmatic drawings. Nonetheless, these images remain astonishing and perplexing in precisely the way Barthes describes, seeming to encompass multitudes, through a single spatial differentiation ("ABOVE BELOW"). Most importantly, Weiner's drawings also reveal that the strictures of a representational configuration (whether conceived as paradigmatic opposition or dialectic contradiction) can never totally master the volatility of corporeal intensities. This is what distinguishes Weiner's work from other examples of a diagrammatic impulse, the fact that Weiner's drawings, mechanical as they appear, are designed neither to degrade nor to simplify experience, but to signal its material complexity, by means of an elliptical insufficiency.

a question of balance

Within art historical discourse several conflicting concepts of the diagrammatic emerge. Yve-Alain Bois associates the diagram with a Euclidian geometric order that posits an *a priori*, axiomatic ground, as illustrated by the mathematical progressions that prefigure Donald Judd's sculpture.[85] Krauss will emphasize that the logic of such axiomatic relationships is one of

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[83] Weiner: "Water finds its own level. And with global warming we've discovered that *The Level Of Water* is probably the most profound thing in the world, because there is no level of water any longer ("Personal Structures Symposium on 'Time,'" *Arti et Amicitiae*, Amsterdam, The Netherlands - June 15, 2007).

[84] Barthes, *Roland Barthes / By Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 50.

[85] On Bois' conception of the diagram see "A Drawing That Is Habitable," *Fred Sandback,* eds. Friedmann Malsch, Herausgeber and Christiane Meyer-Stoll, (Ostifildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2005), 27-63.

abbreviation, the ability to summarize an expansion rather than obsessively proliferate its various terms as LeWitt would do.[86] Dan Flavin's abbreviated diagrams follow perfectly this axiomatic model of "rapid recognition," aspiring to show only what is strictly necessary[87] (fig. 129). While Weiner's paradigmatic drawings might evoke such an order, implying the calculable coordinates of ideal space through their spare geometry, they do so only to throw that organization into doubt as we have seen. Such a non-axiomatic propagation of terms informs Weiner's paradigmatic series *A Question Of Balance* which appears Xeroxed into a notebook dated January - March 1981[88] (figs. 130 - 133). On these pages, thirteen square frames outline configurations of elliptical shapes, unbroken and broken lines, that divide the planes into horizontal, diagonal and vertical segments, with no clear progression from one figure to the next. These variant distributions are united only by the fact that all remain unbalanced, thus elaborating an opposition between visible imbalance (inequality physically presented) and imagined balance (equality virtually implied). As is often the case with Weiner's work, the artist refrains from specifying where or how these particular relations might apply, producing an ambiguity based not on an excess of terms, as in LeWitt's drawing, but on a pronounced lack of complete information.

Whereas the figures in *The Level Of Water* were more or less anchored in landscape, in *A Question Of Balance* reference remains totally unqualified. Unlike axioms whose assumptions are self-evident and require no proof, these diagrams articulate idiosyncratic spatial relationships that in no way constitute a self-evident given. Once again, Weiner's work recalls the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, who argued that "The abstract does not explain, but must itself be explained."[89] Expanding upon this idea, John Rajchman writes:

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[86] "Le Witt In Progress" in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge Mass. and London, The MIT Press, 1985), 245 – 258. Krauss discusses Robert Morris' sculpture as a project to "defeat the diagrammatic." In this case, the diagrammatic is defined as "the notion of a fixed, internal armature that could mirror the viewer's own self, fully formed prior to experience." See Krauss, "Sense and Sensibility, Reflection on Post '60s Sculpture," *Artforum* vol. 12, no. 3 (November 1973), 50.

[87] Briony Fer, "diagram" in *The Infinite Line* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 65.

[88] *A Question Of Balance* is published in *Werke & Rekonstruktionen : Kunsthalle Bern 19. August-16. Oktober 1983 = Works & reconstructions / Lawrence Weiner*, exh. cat. (Bern: die Kunsthalle, 1983). A mock-up for a book featuring the drawings appears in a notebook dated January 1981 – March 1981, although this book was not published.

[89] Alfred North Whitehead quoted in John Rajchman, *Constructions* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1998), 64.

> To explain *by* abstractions is to start with abstract Forms and ask how they are realized in the world or extracted from it. But to explain those abstractions themselves is to reinsert them in a larger (and smaller) "pluralistic" world that includes multiplicities that subsist in Forms and induce variations in them, altering their connections with other things.

Indeed, it is never easy to explain *by* Weiner's abstractions because they themselves are characterized by indeterminate variation, never simply realized in the world nor extracted from it. Thus, the drawings of *The Level Of Water* do not illustrate dikes, just as the schematics of *A Question Of Balance* do not identify a particular distribution of objects. Despite their status as "figure," the drawings are not pictorial but operational, showing a set of relations that maintain an indeterminate connection to specific material actualizations in the social field.

By contrast, the *concretization* of abstract forms within regnant apparatuses of domination and control is the focus of Buchloh's definition of the "order of the diagrammatic."[90] In this reading, geometric *a priori* are inseparable from a bureaucratic matrix of subjective constraint, a depersonalized mode of systematic, mechanical inscription wherein options for subjective agency are contained within a restrictive social construction. Buchloh points to Warhol's 1962 *Dance Diagrams* which transform libidinal ecstasy into commoditized clichés of corporeal manipulation. Similarly, Picabia's mechanomorphs, begun in 1915, reveal the tragicomic absurdity of subjective representation within a sphere of industrial and techno-scientific domination. To the list one could add Hans Haacke's *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System as of May 1st, 1971*, in which pages of web-like tracery connect names and addresses, mapping serially reproduced structures of economic exploitation as enacted within real time and space. While Weiner's diagrams may foreground such oppressive configurations (e.g. "AREA (SPACE)"), not to mention catastrophic techno-scientific failures (e.g. *The Level Of Water*), as *A Question Of Balance* shows, the drawings remain under-determined by any single reference, unleashing a perpetual undecidability, despite an extreme graphic clarity.

David Joselit offers a more liberatory formulation of the diagrammatic, based on the same body of work that informs Buchloh's analysis. According to Joselit, Picabia's mechanomorphs

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[90] Buchloh, "Hesse's Endgame: Facing the Diagram," in *Eva Hesse Drawing*, exh. cat. ed. Catherine de Zegher (New York: The Drawing Center; and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006) 117-150.

are not parodies of portraiture, but instead act as machines that run on polymorphous connectivity, thus formulating an alternative method of negotiating subjectivity within the sphere of production and consumption. Joselit frames his discussion of Dada diagrams, works such as Duchamp's *Unhappy Readymade* (1919) and *The Large Glass* (1915-1923), using a Deleuzian conception of the diagrammatic which Joselit defines as a force of pure relationality between things, a vector field in which "lines of flight" signal a utopian escape from objectivity (fig. 134). This radical departure is enabled by the diagram's utter lack of reference, as it "encompasses objects without itself signifying any particular object in the world."[91] Joselit argues that this release into pure semiosis is what allows these diagrams to circumvent existing object relations, a utopian function that depends simultaneously upon corporeality and virtuality as Joselit explains: "…in its combination of phenomenological corporeality (a "piloting role") and pure semiosis (a "real that is yet to come") the diagram constitutes an *embodied utopianism*." [92]

Neither Weiner's works nor his drawings ever attain a realm of "pure semiosis," being fully embedded in existing object relations, however perverse those may be. Before turning towards "a real that is yet to come," the drawings are designed to illuminate actual conditions in the present, as the poster title *Paradigms Suitable For Daily Use* (1986) makes clear (figs. 135 & 136).[93] Furthermore, it might seem preposterous to characterize Weiner's diagrammatic images in terms of "lines of flight," inscribed as they often are within rigorous geometric frameworks that summon ideas of control and containment. As such, the drawings are more comparable to Deleuze's theorization of the Foucauldian diagram: "The diagram or abstract machine is the map of relations between forces, a map of destiny, or intensity, which proceeds by primary non-localizable relations and at every moment passes through every point, 'or rather in every relation

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[91] David Joselit, "Dada's Diagrams" in *The Dada Seminars*, ed. Leah Dickerman (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2005), 235.

[92] Joselit, "Dada's Diagrams" in *The Dada Seminars*, 237.

[93] The poster *Paradigms Suitable For Daily Use* published by Air Gallery in 1986 was printed in conjunction with the show "Works from the Lawrence Weiner Poster Archive of the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design 1965 – 1986" at Air Gallery London (April 23 – May 18, 1986).

from one point to another.'"[94] Such diagrams or "abstract machines" are the immanent causes of the assemblages that make them visible (e.g. prisons) and articulable (e.g. statements). Defined by "informal functions," Foucault's diagrams are unanchored by any specific use and remain unstable and fluid, enabling them to constitute spatio-temporal multiplicities. Weiner's drawings similarly map relations of force without being permanently localizable, thus maintaining their fluidity and instability (e.g. "ABOVE BELOW THE LEVEL OF ( )"). Most importantly, the status of the Foucauldian diagram as a cartography of both power *and* resistance corresponds closely with the aspirations of Weiner's practice, as the subtle disorder of *Relative To Hanging* already shows. Colliding with dominant ideological structures (e.g. flags and borderlines), Weiner's diagrams nonetheless remain unanchored by any single referential precondition, no matter how imposing. As emphasized by the "informal function" of *A Question Of Balance*, significant reference is never inherent or predetermined, but continuously unfixed and contentiously re-produced. Thus, shaped by the vicissitudes of context, Weiner's diagrammatic *mise en signes* can make no absolute claims for an "embodied utopianism." On the other hand, they do demand constructions of meaning and use guided by the agency, however limited, of an embodied reading.

time hangs heavily upon

Reacting to an installation of Le Witt's *Serial Project No. 1 (ABCD)*, 1966 consisting of an array of constructed variations of incomplete open cubes, Mel Bochner describes a visceral experience in which conceptual order breaks down into visual chaos (fig. 137).[95] Lovatt argues that such breakdown characterizes LeWitt's exploration of the diagrammatic as "a site of (mis)translation and (mis)interpretation," one in which a bodily encounter with the diagram's

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[94] Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Séan Hand (1986; Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 36.

[95] Bochner discusses the work in "Serial Art, Systems, Solipsism," *Arts Magazine*(Summer 1967); referenced in Lovatt, "Seriality and Systematic Thought in Drawing c. 1966-1976: Ruth Vollmer, Sol LeWitt, Eva Hesse, Mel Bochner and Dorothea Rockburne," 78.

materiality confounds understanding, producing a wedge between concept and percept.[96] This corporeal connection is where Joselit locates the specific agency of the diagrammatic. In order to understand that link, Joselit turns to Brian Rotman's mathematical analysis. In contrast to an art historical discourse that views the diagram in terms of corporeal suppression (dramatically reducing visual experience to an encounter with schematic forms), for Rotman the diagram is foremost "a question of the body," significant only in relation to our visual / kinetic perception.[97] As such diagrams call attention to the materiality of signs and our corporeality in manipulating them, in ways that ideograms, such as Arabic numerals, generally do not. They therefore pose a threat to conceptual rigor as Rotman explains: "And neither Platonism's belief in timeless transcendental truth nor phenomenology's search for ideal objectivity, both irremediably mentalistic, can survive such an incursion of physicality."[98] According to Rotman, this intolerance is even revealed in the writing of Husserl, who omits diagrams entirely from his discussion on the origins of geometry.

Because diagrams are physically experienced shapes, dependent upon an embodied, situated gesture for both articulation and interpretation, their integration within mathematical discourse frustrates any ambition to ground mathematics in timeless, universal entities. Through diagrams, the body resurfaces, revealing that numbers are not simply given before us, but are "materio-symbolic or technosemiotic entities that have to be *made* by materio-symbolic creatures."[99] No longer *a priori* forms having emerged from a divine Platonic mind, diagrams reveal that "numbers have to be grasped bottom up from the living body of the counting subject."[100]

In *Everyday Life In the Modern World*, Henri Lefebvre bemoans the impacts of such enumeration on our corporeal existence: "Everything here is calculated because everything is

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[96] Lovatt, "Seriality and Systematic Thought in Drawing c. 1966-1976: Ruth Vollmer, Sol LeWitt, Eva Hesse, Mel Bochner and Dorothea Rockburne," 83-85.

[97] Brian Rotman, *Mathematics As Sign: Writing, Imagining, Counting* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 70.

[98] Rotman, *Mathematics As Sign: Writing, Imagining, Counting*, 57.

[99] Rotman, *Mathematics As Sign: Writing, Imagining, Counting*, 123.

[100] Rotman, *Mathematics As Sign: Writing, Imagining, Counting*, 124.

numbered: money, minutes, meters, kilograms, calories…; and not only objects but also living thinking creatures, for there exists a demography of animals and of people as well as things. Yet people are born, live and die."[101] The fact that counting comes at an existential cost to the body is one of Conceptual art's obsessions, as demonstrated in the serial repetitions of On Kawara's *Date Paintings*, Hanna Darboven's calendrically formulated inscriptions and Mel Bochner's painstaking wall measurements (fig. 138). In these works, mathematics and accounting are used to cancel subjective expression, but without simply catalyzing a process of dematerialization or decorporealization. Instead, those things presumed to be the most impersonal and immaterial (numbers, dates, measurements) are manipulated in laborious, intimate, affecting ways, so as to make them fundamentally a question of the body (and not of an individual subject). As such, the works point, not only to the arbitrariness of numerical systems, but vitally to their cost, as well as their finality. Replacing the human body with a machine does nothing to reverse that inevitable finitude as Rotman explains (through the figure of Kronos the "sage"):

> As I've said before, though, the crucial thing about a limit to counting is not where the limit lies but that it exists. If you tried to count that far from inside the universe, using a real computer with real energy requirements, you would use up more and more of the fabric of the universe trying to get there.[102]

In the mid to late 1960s, Weiner performs his own entropic counting experiments in a series of diagrammatic drawings that perfectly demonstrate what Buchloh calls the "dialectic of matrix and grapheme."[103] On sheets of graph paper, some store bought and some hand-made, Weiner dashes off patterns made of de-skilled, manifestly unexpressive graphic marks, one per square. Referred to as "tics," or as miniscule "m's" designating "mass" the marks are consistently arranged in rectangular blocks of varying sizes, such as two integers across and six down, or four across and ten down (fig. 139). [104] In direct relation to Weiner's paintings from roughly the same

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[101] Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life In The Modern World*, trans. Sacha Rabinovitch (1968; New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1984), 21.

[102] Rotman, *Mathematics As Sign: Writing, Imagining, Counting*, 135.

[103] Buchloh, "Raymond Pettibon: Return to Disorder and Disfiguration," *October* 92 (Spring 2000), 46. Buchloh locates this "dialectic of matrix and grapheme" in the contradiction between Jasper Johns' matricial modes and Cy Twombly's corporeal gestures.

[104] Birgit Pelzer, "Dissociated Objects: The Statements / Sculptures of Lawrence Weiner," *October* 90 (Autumn 1999), 91. See also *Drawing Is Another Kind Of Language: Recent American Drawings from a New*

period (1966-1968), each rectangular block is structured by a removal, with one or two squares from a corner of the rectangle left blank. In one series of drawings from 1968, initially intended for publication in Seth Siegelaub's *Xerox Book*, the pattern of blocks progresses from left to right across twenty-five pages, so that while the first drawing starts in the upper left-hand corner, the last page features the pattern starting twenty-five integers to the right[105] (figs. 140a & 140b). This progression implies not only an extension of the pattern beyond the space of the page, but a movement that would paradoxically result in a blank sheet of graph paper if the artist were to continue drawing (a mathematical extension of Rauschenberg's 1953 *Erased de Kooning*). Through a self-canceling labor, mark-making dialectically converts to erasure, as already indicated by the first removal of one graphic integer from a rectangular block of "tics." Channeling bodily flows into the disciplined logic of counting, Weiner's disintensified registration of tactility points neither to corporeal fullness nor to libidinal discharge, but towards the body's ineluctable disappearance.[106]

Alberro describes a self-reflexive narrative at work in this series, as it focuses on the spatio-temporal process of literally moving the drawing / pattern in a single, linear direction over the course of twenty-five sheets.[107] The drawings thus register the time it takes to make them, and Weiner has in the past referred to them as "Grid Time" drawings, signaling the fact that they were typically executed within a predetermined timeframe.[108] Donna de Salvo describes them in

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York Private Collection, eds. Pamela Lee and Christine Mehring (Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museum, 1997), 218.

[105] Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2003), 142.

[106] Weiner's *Grid Time* drawings relate closely to Eva Hesse's contemporaneous drawings on graph paper in which repetitive marks are accumulated in patterned formations, mobilizing a dialectic between corporeal registration and geometric containment. See Buchloh, "Hesse's Endgame: Facing the Diagram," *Eva Hesse* 148-149. Buchloh argues that Hesse's use of graph paper exceeded Conceptual art's utilization, and "transformed its innate qualities to reach a more fundamental understanding of Conceptual art's fascination with life in the fully administered world." I would argue, however, that Weiner's work corresponds closely with Hesse's perversion of the logic of the graph. Another example in this vein would be Alighiero Boetti's *Cimento dell'armonia e dell invenzione (Contest of Harmony and Invention)*, 1969 in which the artist took twenty-five sheets of graph paper and retraced every grid line, thus subverting the mechanical regularity of the grid with the unevenness of corporeal inscription (figs. 142 & 143).

[107] Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2003), 142.

[108] Pelzer, "Dissociated Objects: The Statements / Sculptures of Lawrence Weiner," 91.

ludic terms, as "a game of "tic" against the clock in which the acts of filling in or leaving empty were determined by acuity and / or chance."[109] As such, each drawing attests to Rotman's theory of counting as a corporeal practice contained within absolute physical *and* temporal limits. In one example, that sense of finite duration is drastically prolonged. Pasted into a notebook from 1982 we find a Xeroxed *Tic* drawing with every graphic mark overdrawn in black ink (fig. 144). A note typed along the bottom reads:

> Drawn upon a Xerox of a drawing of Lawrence Weiner of 1968
> New York City 1977
> In effect – DRAWN OVER ^ON WITHIN A RELATIONSHIP OF SOME SORT OF CONTINUITY

After more than a decade, these marks resurface in order to be re-counted. This act of doubling articulates a certain continuity of time, but one that remains fractured by a long gap (11 years).

On a page from a notebook dated 1975-78, Weiner sketches an equation. Its variables are translated into the following factors: "TIME (x) HANGS (→) HEAVY (Y) (HEAVILY) (o) UPON." Along with this equation we find the words, "FOR A SHORT TIME," and the 1976 work:

> *RELEASED*
>
> *AT A POINT OF PASSAGE*
>
> *FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY*

The work appears typed, written, enumerated and appropriately dedicated, with Michael Asher's name and the work's *catalog raisonné* number circled next to it (fig. 145). In this work and throughout the notebooks, time emerges as something concrete but fleeting: "IF ONLY FOR A TIME" (August 2001 – January 2002), "BORROWED TIME" (January – October 1983), "AFTER ANY GIVEN TIME" (January 2001 - January 2002), "AS LONG AS IT LASTS" (January 1992 – December 1992) (fig. 146).[110] The notebooks themselves record a transient temporal passage, that unlike the unidirectional sequence of twenty-five *Grid Time* drawings, can be disorienting in its unregenerate non-linearity. As such the notebooks resemble the "knots" that Denis Hollier will

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[109] Donna De Salvo, "As Far As the Eye Can See" in *Lawrence Weiner: As Far As The Eye Can See*, exh. cat., ed. De Salvo and Ann Goldstein (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art; and New York: The Whitney Museum of American Art, 2007), 71.

[110] Of these various 'notes' on time found in Weiner's notebooks, the following have been categorized by the artist as works: *AFTER ANY GIVEN TIME* (2010), *AS LONG AS IT LASTS* (1992).

find in the anti-narratives of Robbe-Grillet, wherein the present tense is robbed of consistency by being forced to signal past, present and future alike.[111] Through the compulsive re-use of words, images and ideas, time similarly loops backwards and forwards in the notebook pages, producing a labyrinthine thread that links objects to be presented to objects formerly seen, reminding us too of the temporal mixing of Weiner's films. This enfolding of space-time is diagrammed in the Xeroxed *Tic* drawing by means of an impersonal gesture that articulates a "disjunctive synthesis" of time (1968 / 1977/ 1982 / NOW), and a visceral connection to some *body* who counts. Thus, in addition to *mass* and *matter*, the "m's" must also signify *mind*, as Weiner's drawing inscribes once more, the passages of thinking in the field of the already-written. Here, diagrammatic traces and removals gesture towards the urgency of what remains to be said, and the burden of a limited time and space in which to say it.

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[111] Denis Hollier, "Knots," *Artforum* 46, no. 10 (Summer 2008), 390.

CHAPTER IV: RED SAILS IN THE SUNSET (drawings + design)

i have just had an insight
red is redder than green, meaner than yellow, and
bloodier than black
-Claes Oldenburg[1]

black and white and red (all over)

Being a low-resolution, grayscale photocopy, Weiner's 1977 Xeroxed *Tic* drawing seems to correspond perfectly with Conceptual art's presumed prohibition against color and its associated sensuality (fig. 144).[2] The designation of color as an unwanted and even perilous supplement was made explicit by Le Witt in *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art* (1967): "Color, surface, texture and shape only emphasize the physical aspects of the work. Anything that calls attention to and interests the viewer in this physicality is a deterrent to our understanding of the idea and is used as an expressive device."[3] Le Witt notably excludes line from his warning, thus echoing the centuries old Aristotelian prejudice that favors line as the true repository of thought. David Batchelor expands upon this historical degradation of color, denounced as an irrational, carnal pleasure, or worse yet a mere cosmetic ("all defied Nature absolutely paints like a harlot" as Herman Melville would declare).[4] In light of this history, it seems only logical that in aiming for conceptual rigor, artists in the late '60s would purge color from their works, ascetically restricting themselves to the less obviously expressive palette of black and white. According to Theodor Adorno, this turn away from color was a mark not only of seriousness, but of critical relevance: "Radical art today is the same as dark art: its background color is black. Much of contemporary

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[1] Claes Oldenburg, *Claes Oldenburg's Store Days: Documents from the Store (1961) and The Ray Gun Theater (1962)* (New York: Something Else Press, 1967), 54.

[2] See Briony Fer, "Color Manual" in *Color Chart: Reinventing Color, 1950 to Today*, exh. cat. ed. Ann Temkin (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), 29 – 30.

[3] Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs On Conceptual Art," *Artforum* vol. 5, no. 10 (Summer 1967), 79-84, reprinted in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2000), 15.

[4] Herman Melville quoted in David Batchelor, *Chromophobia* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), 16.

art is irrelevant because it does not take note of this fact continuing instead to take delight in bright colors."[5]

Examples of Conceptual art's purportedly achromatic aesthetic abound in Weiner's practice. One could point to the trade manual style of *The Level Of Water* (1978) with its diagrammatic "figures", or to the iconic publication design for *Statements* (1968) a small, grey, paper-bound book, with works printed one to a page in lower-case, Royal Typewriter face. When Batchelor refers to Conceptual art's fetishization of black and white, one easily imagines Weiner's work installed in Franklin Gothic Condensed, in large black capital letters painted or pasted on a white wall[6] (fig. 148). In truth, however, Weiner had never renounced color. On the contrary, color was from the start one of the artist's most studied areas of "research," as even a cursory glance through his notebooks proves. The Xeroxed *Tic* drawing thus misleads, inasmuch as the original drawings are often vibrant, filled not only with graphic lines, but with delightfully bright color. For instance, a drawing from 1965 features reddish orange tics made with colored pencil over a yellow watercolor field, a palette that matches the colors in Weiner's early *Propeller Paintings* (1964-1965) (fig. 139). Of course, Weiner himself would likely dismiss these chromatic details as irrelevant to the idea of temporally bound mark-making which the drawings are meant to convey. In much the same way, Weiner relegated color and size to supplementary status in the *Removal Paintings*, whose import for Weiner was "the idea of painting" rather than painting as such ("I would ask the person who was receiving it what color he wanted, what size he wanted, and how big a removal, as it didn't really matter").[7] This marginalization of coloristic incident belies the critical role that color plays in Weiner's practice, as already revealed in an oft-reused work included in the "Specific" versus "General" section of *Statements* that reads:

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[5] Theodore Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 58.

[6] The first time Weiner presented his work as wall inscriptions was in January 1972 at Galleria Toselli in Milan. According to Weiner, this form of presentation was actually initiated by Giuseppe Panza di Biumo who had decided to present Weiner's work from his collection as painted wall text (see "I Am Not Content" in *Having Been Said, Writings & Interviews of Lawrence Weiner, 1968 – 2003,* eds. Gerti Fietzek & Gregor Stemmrich ([Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2004],189).

[7] Weiner, "Lawrence Weiner at Amsterdam, Interview by Willoughby Sharp," *Avalanche* (Spring 1972), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 44.

One quart exterior green enamel thro
wn on a brick wall [sic]

Weiner's notebooks are suffused with color, becoming ever more dazzling as time wears on. While the notebooks from the '70s are cooler in tone, befitting an administrative aesthetic, they are nonetheless filled with the variously colored papers and inks one would expect to find in a well-stocked stationery store. It will not take long for a more exuberant sense of color to overtake the notebooks, in vibrantly painted collage elements and texts (the first of these appears in 1978), in increasingly varied materials ranging from wrappers, matchbook covers, and pantone color samples featuring brilliant patches of tyrian pink, metallic silver or gauloise blue (fig. 147). Crucially, however, all of this vivid, chromatic extravagance does not convey how color actually emerges within the work itself. In this case, one would have to look at texts such as the following, plainly written and typed in a notebook dated 1975-1978:

WITH A TOUCH OF PINK
WITH A BIT OF VIOLET
WITH A HINT OF GREEN
(1977)

This work, dedicated to Weiner's dealer Dorothee Fischer, is published in a book from 1978, printed in black and white with a grey cover (figs. 149 -151).[8] Through an obvious visual disjunction, *WITH A TOUCH OF PINK* demonstrates that Weiner uses color in two discrete ways: either as content referenced by language or as form enmeshed in surfaces. This marked distinction between the colors in the work (PINK, VIOLET, GREEN), versus the colors of the book (grey, black, white), underlines the separation between material content and presentational form that characterizes Conceptual art in general.[9] Le Witt had formulated this division early on in

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[8] For a discussion of the importance of Dorothee and Konrad Fischer's gallery to the development of practices within Minimalist and Conceptual art see *With a Probability of Being Seen. Dorothee and Konrad Fischer. Archives of an Attitude*, exh. cat., ed. Friedrich Meschede (Barcelona: Musee d' Art Contemporani de Barcelona; Dusseldorf: Richter Verlag, 2010).

[9] In *Essays on Art & Language* Charles Harrison argues that this strategic separation of 'art' from its presentational form was actually a "mystification," inasmuch as the artist's processes / conditions of production would not be made transparent in a work whose form was not merged with its content. Harrison

Paragraphs on Conceptual Art: "What the work of art looks like isn't too important. It has to look like something if it has physical form. No matter what form it may finally have it must begin with an idea. It is the process of conception and realization with which the artist is concerned. Once given physical reality by the artist the work is open to the perception of all, including the artist."[10] Crucially this segregation negates a Modernist equivalence (content = form), and later on, Weiner would elucidate his anti-formalist position: "The work is about informal objects. Neither the work nor the presentation have a form until the need presents itself."[11]

One can begin to grasp what an informal relation to color might mean, by imaging an opposite example, a painting by Yves Klein for instance. In Klein's spiritualist ideal, color demands immediate apprehension in order to produce an effect of immanence that Yve-Alain Bois describes as "the material imprint of a vital force too powerful to be seized, but also too diffuse to be represented or intellectually grasped."[12] Klein would summon this "inarticulate moment of sensation" by producing paintings whose saturation of pigment was of such intensity that color transformed into material sublimity, offering a presence beyond any intellectual mediation (fig. 122). Bois goes on to argue that Klein's historic relevance lies entirely in his ability to mobilize these desires for mute presence and sensory fullness, only to expose them as fraudulent. That travesty is announced first of all by Klein's efforts not merely to name color but to brand it (International Klein Blue), thus linking the resplendence of coloristic sensation to "the 'fixative medium' that is money."[13]

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argues that by contrast, Art & Language's presentation style disclosed the discursive nature of their project. See Charles Harrison, *Essays On Art & Language* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1991), 51. This charge of "mystification" only holds, however, if the work's significance is tied primarily to the artist's act of production. For Weiner, on the other hand, meaning derives exclusively from the *receiver's* activity of production and use, and not at all from the artist's performative inscription.

[10] LeWitt, "Paragraphs On Conceptual Art" in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* 13.

[11] "Notes Around & About Art," *Et tous ils changent le monde. Lyon 93: deuxième biennale d'art contemporain*, exh. cat. (Paris: Réunion des musées Nationaux / Biennale d'art Contemporain, 1993), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 299. See also, "The Work Is About Informal Objects" [1988], *Öffentlich / Public Freehold: Lawrence Weiner. Ulrich Ruckriem,* ed. Ingrid Burgbacher-Krupka (Ostfildern, Germany: Edition Cantz, 1992), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 177.

[12] Yve-Alain Bois, "Klein's Relevance for Today," *October* 119 (Winter 2007), 88.

[13] Bois, "Klein's Relevance for Today," *October*, 84.

Klein's branding highlights the commercial conflation of color and sign exchange value, a phenomenon widely investigated by artists such as Alighiero Boetti and John Baldessari (figs. 152 & 153). By uniting the brand name with a purportedly transcendental chromatic experience, Klein further underscores one of the most orthodox assumptions we have about color, namely its essential resistance to language. Indeed, the acronym IKB says practically nothing about the luminosity of Klein's particular shade. This deficiency of language before the richness of coloristic phenomena was theorized long ago by Goethe, who warned against the substitution of words in favor of a lived experience of things.[14] Batchelor elaborates extensively upon this notion of color as something irreducible to language, as that which reveals not only language's outer limits, but its impotence. He cites author Aldous Huxley's observation that perceptions are clouded by the words we use to think them, with the result that "language greys the world around us."[15] He mentions too Klein's 1954 storyboard depicting an animated film based on the "war between line and *color*." In hyperbolic fashion, Klein bemoaned the fact that "color is enslaved by line that becomes writing."[16] In Sol LeWitt's *Untitled (Red Square, White Letters)* from 1962, Buchloh traces precisely this conflictual relation between linguistic and perceptual experience, as LeWitt's painting shuttles between these registers, creating an irresolvable duality between reading and seeing (fig. 154).[17] Weiner undoubtedly takes this antagonism to the furthest extreme, as demonstrated by his contribution to the 1987 exhibition *Perverted By Language* which reads:

BLACK AND WHITE AND RED (ALL OVER) FROM COLOR TO COLOR (1979)

Using a familiar pun in an act of linguistic perversion, Weiner's work implies, if not enslavement, then at least a temporary submission of color to the realm of legibility (i.e. black and white

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[14] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Theory of Colours* (1810; Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1970).

[15] Batchelor, *Chromophobia*, 75.

[16] Yves Klein quoted in Batchelor, *Chromophobia*, 77.

[17] Benjamin Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962 – 1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990), 113 – 114.

newsprint) (fig. 147). Siegelaub had announced this eventuality in 1969: “the same way that color was information before, language is beginning to function as information now.”[18]

For *Color Chart*, a 2008 exhibition focused on coloristic innovations post-1950, Weiner contributed the following work from 1972 in large wall text:

GREEN AS WELL AS BLUE AS WELL AS RED
RED AND GREEN AND BLUE MORE OR LESS
RED OVER AND ABOVE GREEN OVER AND ABOVE BLUE
RED IN RELATION TO GREEN IN RELATION TO BLUE
RED IN LIEU OF GREEN IN LIEU OF BLUE

In the context of the museum wall, the work summoned an idea of painting only to withdraw it. Bruce Nauman, whose work *P.P.G. Sunproof Drawing No. 1* (1965) was also on view, spoke about his own negation of painting saying: “I still don’t trust any kind of lush solution, which painting was, and so I decided – it was a conscious decision at some point – that I was not going to be a painter.”[19] By the late 1960s, with the consolidation of his *Statement of Intent*, Weiner had arrived at a similar decision. But compared to Bruce Nauman’s drawing (a monochromatic photocopied color chart for Pittsburgh Paints) Weiner’s use of language appears even more extreme in its refusal of a lush solution. In line with an Adornian assessment, one could read this willful “graying” of color as the only relevant means of reflecting contemporary experience, wherein bright color signals capitulation to a culture of spectacular illusions.[20] Conceived thus as an allegorical depletion, Weiner’s work would imply a negation, not only of color as visually expressive form, but also of color as autonomous readymade. Batchelor had, indeed, argued that the post-war recourse to chance procedures and industrial manufacture granted color a new independence: “The color chart divorces color from conventional theory and turns every color into a ready-made. It promises autonomy for color; in fact, it offers three distinct but related types of

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[18] Seth Siegelaub interview with Patricia Norvell in *Recording Conceptual Art,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Patricia Norvell (Berkeley: UCLA Press, 2001), 42.

[19] Bruce Nauman in an interview with Coosje van Bruggen, quoted in van Bruggen, *Bruce Nauman* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), 7.

[20] Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962 – 1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions,” 143.

autonomy: that of each color from every other color, that of color from the dictates of color theory, and that of color from the register of representation."[21]

Invalidating every type of autonomy, Weiner's colors boldly announce their relativity in operations of conjunction, domination and replacement, as articulated by the words: "AND," "AS WELL AS," "MORE OR LESS," "OVER AND ABOVE," IN RELATION TO," "IN LIEU OF." Furthermore, color in Weiner's work is not only registered by means of representation, but implies its own representative function. In a dialog from Weiner's video *Green As Well As Blue As Well As Red* (1976) Weiner and Kathryn Bigelow argue over color and its references:

> KB: Are you not using colors that have specific implications, i.e. red: communism, green: fascism, blue: workers?
>
> LW: I am. In effect, we are.
>
> KB: In utilizing specific political implications is it not true that in the formalization of them into the system or manner in which you have used language you have therefore undercut their political value by dealing with the implications of reference rather than with the thing itself?
>
> LW: Not at all. It's not possible at all in a logical proposition to deal with the reality.
>
> KB: Then in this conflict could the colors have just been apples, oranges and pears?
>
> LW: No. A fruit is not a color. A fruit has a color.

Later on in the dialog Weiner affirms: "Political references are possible when one utilizes language in reference to materials. The use of a double entendre or the use of a converse meaning within language is not only feasible but a necessity." Weiner's embrace of what Bigelow would call "atrophied symbolic value" conflicts with previous efforts, often foiled, to liberate color from hackneyed associations. Rauschenberg famously articulated his frustration with the public's incapacity to see colors without habitually viewing them in terms of cliché:

> And there had been a lot of critics who shared the idea with a lot of the public that they couldn't see black as color or as pigment, but they immediately moved into associations and the associations were always of destroyed newspapers, of burned newspapers. And that began to bother me. Because I think that I'm never sure of what the impulse is psychologically. I don't mess around with my subconscious. I mean I try to keep wide awake. And if I see in the superficial subconscious relationships that I'm familiar with, clichés of association, I change the picture…. So if you do work with known quantities making, puns or dealing symbolically with your materials, I think you're shortening the life

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[21] Batchelor, *Chromophobia*, 105.

> of the work even before it's had a chance to be exposed. I mean, it hasn't had a life of its own. It's already leading someone else's life."[22]

For Weiner, such clichés of association were an inevitable part of any work, and as we have seen, Weiner never shies away from employing an overused phrase (e.g. *SOMETHING OLD SOMETHING NEW SOMETHING BORROWED SOMETHING BLUE* [1970]). Registering the entropic degradation of language through cliché and atrophied symbolism, Weiner's work avoids the mythical status of transparent communication with which Conceptual art is so often equated.[23] Nonetheless, Weiner also shared Rauschenberg's devotion to giving the work a life of its own, uncoupling readymade phrases from readymade meanings, hoping to prevent the work from settling into something familiar. Weiner found that language itself could produce this continual disassociation from known qualities, through a deliberately crafted imprecision of terms, so that even specific works (*ONE QUART EXTERIOR GREEN ENAMEL THROWN ON A BRICK WALL*) generate a trail of unresolved questions. That perpetual irresolution is what authorizes Weiner and Bigelow to argue about the explicitly political implications of *GREEN AS WELL AS BLUE AS WELL AS RED*, while curator Anne Temkin reads the same work as a reference to the RGB panel of analog color television.[24] Here we find a straightforward example of what an informal object could be, in this case a grouping of colors that responds to the needs of both televisual analysis and socialist struggle equally and without prejudice. Unfortunately, this still leaves us with a notion of color as something loaded with potential symbolism, but effectively deprived of sensuous qualities. Turning away from this somber picture, what if we were to imagine, perhaps counter-intuitively, that Weiner designed his work to produce as lush an experience as possible, one even more intense than the most vivid passage of International Klein Blue? And what if,

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[22] Oral history interview with Robert Rauschenberg, 1965 Dec. 21, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-robert-rauschenberg-12870/.

[23] Haidu views Broodthaers' turn to Mallarmé as a rejection of any optimism regarding the communicative possibilities of language / information: "*Mallarmé*'s poetics – involved as they are with the synesthetic tradition and its ambitions for a 'total' work of art – propose a materiality to language that trumps the totalizing dreams of a completely accessible, utterly intelligible, reiterable and reproducible artwork." Rachel Haidu, *The Absence of Work, Marcel Broodthaers, 1964-1976* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2010), 78.

[24] See Ann Temkin's discussion of Weiner's contribution to the exhibition in *Color Chart*, 152.

paradoxically, the artist had come to the conclusion that to do this, it would be better to *say* color in order to *show* it?

When Weiner describes the relation of signs to objects, he invokes their propinquity, portraying language as something “WRITTEN INTO THE HEART OF THINGS”[25] (fig 155). According to this logic, the connection of words and things is neither natural, nor inherent, but a result of our use of language, for to have named an object is to affect it, leaving a linguistic trace that penetrates the object inasmuch as its destiny is changed. If Weiner’s picture gives a sense of language’s residual *impact* on things, Jean- François Lyotard, on the other hand, offers a model of the way that language affects our *perception* of things. Whereas in *Libidinal Economy*, Lyotard had focused on the mechanisms through which signs articulate and organize libidinal flows, in *Discourse / Figure* he offers another theory of language from the perspective of object relations, describing the way in which a specific act of linguistic designation can come to reveal “the thickness of the world and its very possibility as always incomplete synthesis, as horizon hollowed out behind its sensory presence.”[26] To illustrate this, Lyotard imagines the word neither as a label, nor as a free-floating sign, but conversely as a perforation, an object whose own thickness dissolves in order to bring into highest relief another object exterior to it. In being thus designated by language, the object does not simply appear to vision, but itself becomes a sign (a form of “dematerialization” that can result either in formulaic abstraction or a new “material voyage”). Lyotard illustrates this conversion by means of an everyday gesture: “When the finger points to the tree to designate it, it says the tree, making it tip forward over an abyss of meaning. Or, put differently, designation implies this profound eschewal, this drainage of the back of things.”[27] Suddenly, what was once immanent, suffers from a new emptiness, an absence which indicates something mysterious that remains to be seen. This opacity is what Lyotard calls the

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[25] Lawrence Weiner Notebook June 1998 – February 1999, Moved Pictures Archive, New York.

[26] Jean-François Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, trans. Antony Hudeck and Mary Lydon (1971; Minneapolis and London: The University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 82 – 83. In *Libidinal Economy* Lyotard writes that signification is a process of “dematerialization” that can either result in an abstraction of material or in the intensification of a material voyage (see chapter 3).

[27] Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, 82.

sign's thickness. It is the difference between the surface layer of blue that we apprehend instantly, and the meaning of blue which is its corporeal repercussion. That meaning is temporally actualized through blue's withdrawal, which exposes us to the sense of a side that remains obscured but complementary to the one that we readily see.

Emphasizing those effects of "eschewal" that come with an act of linguistic designation, Lyotard characterizes language as an object "shot through with holes," a description that resonates with Weiner's intuition of signs as ruptured surfaces, punctuated by removal.[28] And we can easily imagine Weiner's work designating color (or any other object) in the manner Lyotard describes, pointing to it and carving out a horizon beyond the immediacy of sensory presence. Thus, Weiner's use of the simplest color word would serve not to purge experience of sensation, but to plunge color into "an abyss of meaning," to prevent color from being merely recognized in terms of its surface effects or associated clichés (e.g. *[TURNED] RED AS WELL AS BLACK* [1972]). Rather than signaling language's impotence, the elliptical insufficiency of Weiner's designation gestures instead towards a significant opacity dialectically opposed to the transparent visibility of spectacle culture, and its "passive acceptance" of everything as it appears.[29] In Sol LeWitt's *Location* drawings, we find a similar irresolution, as a clearly defined shape is paired with a surfeit of verbal description that bewilders our grasp of both image and language, making the *Location of a Trapezoid* (1974) seem an unfathomable task:

> A trapezoid whose top side is half as long as its bottom side and whose left side is one and a half times as long as the top side and is located where a line drawn from a point halfway between a point halfway between the center of the square and the upper left corner and a point halfway between the midpoint of the top side and the upper left corner to a point halfway between the midpoint of the right side and the upper right corner is crossed by two lines…
> (fig. 156)

As Lyotard argues, and as both Weiner and LeWitt show, language is not built for the false utopian reconciliation of visible and legible, or as Hegel would have it, the sublimation of seeing by saying. Rather, language functions by virtue of an "insurmountable exteriority from sensory to

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[28] Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, 30.

[29] Guy Debord writes in *The Society of the Spectacle*: "The spectacle manifests itself as an enormous positivity, out of reach and beyond dispute. All it says is: 'Everything that appears is good; whatever is good will appear.'" See Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (1967; New York: Zone Books, 1994), 15.

sayable."[30] This is not to say that language and matter make no contact, but to acknowledge that whenever language indicates something outside itself - an operation that Lyotard will call "diadeictics" (as opposed to Hegelian dialectics) - an empty interval emerges that is, "the depth that separates the showing from the showed."[31] This exteriority is already inscribed within language, through the arbitrariness of the terms used to designate objects of sense ("SIMPLY A NAME FOR USE AT THE MOMENT"). And according to Lyotard, this externality of objects to language is what makes language useful, enabling a critical distantiation. In this theory, language does not negate visuality as such, but rather holds things at a distance from our gaze, in order to make them the object of a search, like a horizon onto which we cast our glances. Only through this necessary withdrawal can designation produce what Rancière will describe in *The Future of the Image* as a visibility that is both imageless and blinding,[32] one that restores some measure of our "plundered sensuality" without any illusion of false reconciliation.[33] A work from 2008 brilliantly articulates this possibility (fig. 157):

PLACED ON DISPLAY   BRILLER PAR SON ABSENCE   WHERESOEVER

red sails in the sunset

When attempting to designate rather than display color, the problem arises of how to show a thickness that lies beyond the sumptuous immediacy of local chromatic experience. Picasso had

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[30] Lyotard *Discourse, Figure*, 34.

[31] Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, 40.

[32] In *The Future of the Image*, Jacques Rancière writes: "There is a visibility that does not amount to an image; there are images which consist wholly in words. But the commonest regime of the image is one that presents a relationship between the sayable and the visible, a relationship which plays on both the analogy and the dissemblance between them. This relationship by no means requires the two terms to be materially present. The visible can be arranged in meaningful tropes; words deploy a visibility that can be blinding." Rancière, *The Future Of The Image*, trans. Gregory Elliot (London and New York: Verso, 2007), 7.

[33] Terry Eagleton writes on "the Marxist sublime": "The goal of Marxism is to restore to the body its plundered powers; but only with the suppression of private property will the senses be able to come into their own." Quoted in Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1990), 201.

already grappled with this issue of color and signification in the *papiers collés*. As Krauss recounts, the challenge for Picasso would be to find a way of incorporating color into the carefully orchestrated sign system of Cubist collage, wherein every element was meant to be experienced not in itself but in terms of a substitute (e.g the grain of wood signified by floral paper).[34] The conundrum of color was that it would tend to defeat substitution by remaining local, a matter of sensation rather than signification. Picasso's answer would come in a piece of mauve wallpaper: "In the resplendence of its surface vibrating with a kind of ersatz chroma , it produced the experience of color itself, but color now bracketed as sign, color mediated through the mechanical processes of printing, color produced in terms of the secondhand condition of the copy."[35] Such mass cultural surfaces were not only mechanically re-produced but fundamentally arbitrary and ornamental, smuggling in "the 'decorative *un*intentionality' of Modernism."[36]

For Weiner, language solved the problem of designating color, mediating it without the need for mechanical reproduction. The challenge would be in opening up his particular sign system to an experience of local color beyond the "achromatic" scale of black and white, but to do so without detracting from the work's content ("language + the material referred to"). Recalling a Cubist strategy, Weiner's immediate solution was to bracket the appearance of local color as arbitrary, seemingly unconnected to the matter of the work. One gets a sense of this seemingly capricious approach in the installation of the work ***BLACK AND WHITE AND RED (ALL OVER) FROM COLOR TO COLOR*** for the exhibition *Perverted By Language*. A notebook entry with installation instructions reads "color (?) choice of installation crew," indicating a certain indifference to chromatic effects.[37] In an interview with Suzanne Pagé included in the catalog for the solo exhibition *Sculpture* 1985, Weiner makes this exteriority of presentation explicit: "The work plus the material plus the content constitute the sculpture. The color and means of

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[34] Rosalind Krauss, *The Picasso Papers* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), 171.

[35] Krauss, *The Picasso Papers*, 180.

[36] Krauss, *The Picasso Papers*, 185.

[37] Lawrence Weiner Notebook August 1986 – June 1987, Moved Pictures Archive, New York.

presentation are arbitrary, as are most decisions before they become a reality."[38] A survey of Weiner's early book covers (green, orange, yellow, blue) demonstrates that fact, as does the *Sculpture* catalog itself, printed with a dusty pink cover, and a triangular notch removal from one side (figs. 158a, 158b & 159). Whereas such cuts have been linked to Constructivist design, as they render both the objecthood of the book and the spatiality of the page concrete, Weiner's book color points in the opposite direction, towards the synthetic sheen of Pop or West Coast Minimalism, the lustrous pink plank of John McCracken's *The Absolutely Naked Fragrance* (1967), for instance (fig. 160).[39] In McCracken's work, made of polished resin, the Constructivist tension between space / architecture / sculpture is re-designed and recoded to invoke, not only a revolutionary "truth to materials," but also the consumerist idylls of surfing and American Pop culture. Such vulgarization of an avant-garde ideal seems also to take place in Weiner's book, for as was the case with Picasso's mauve wallpaper, *Sculpture's* idiosyncratic pink pushes the catalog into a flagrantly ornamental context. For Weiner, this decorative condition was not something unintentional, but an almost inescapable consequence of any presentation, as Weiner's comments on poster design reveal: "It's interesting, it's a superhuman question for an artist, this matter of the decorative. A poster is always decorative."[40] In the '60s, Kosuth had claimed victory over decoration by means of a tautological, analytic formulation that would segregate Conceptual art from aesthetics, and especially from formalism, whose products he dismissed as "the vanguard of decoration" (figs. 161a – 161d).[41] If Weiner had ever shared that confidence, it was clear that by the end of the 1970s, his attitudes had changed.

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[38] Weiner in "Interview by Suzanne Pagé," *Lawrence Weiner: Sculpture*, exh. cat. (Paris: ARC-Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1985), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 163.

[39] In an interview with Weiner, Welish links the artist's drawing to "the rhetoric of the Russian avant-garde in its self-conscious visualization of the space of the page," and specifically to Vasili Kamensky, who sliced the corners of his pages. Weiner responds to the comparison: "His interest is for it to become five-sided. I used to take this paper and say, 'I'm not going to sit here and say this isn't an object.'" Quoted in "Interview by Marjorie Welish," *Bomb* (Winter, 1996), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 355.

[40] Weiner, "A Poster Is the Writing on the Wall, Discussion at the École Supérieure d'art Visuel in Geneva (1989)," *Lawrence Weiner: Posters Hanging in European Collections*, ed. Catherine Quéloz (Geneva: Sous-sol, École Supérieure d'art Visuel, Département de l'Instruction Publique, 1990), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 217.

[41] Joseph Kosuth, "Art after Philosophy" reprinted in *Art After Philosophy And After* (1969; Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1991), 17.

Marcel Broodthaers, whose *Décors* precisely analyzed the historical imperatives of a certain type of decorative object arrangement (e.g. *Un Jardin d'Hiver* 's [1974] exploration of the 19th century Winter Gardens' domestication of exoticism), spoke in Baudelairian terms about the importance of following contemporary fashion: "I think that in order to circulate art, to function as an artist, there is a law: one has to be dressed in the fashion of one's times."[42] In her analysis of Broodthaers' work, Rachel Haidu remarks that when Broodthaers embarked upon his *Décors*, the fashion of the time was, in fact, dominated by the anti-decorative impulse of Minimalism and Conceptualism, a contemporary look informed by industrial and bureaucratic orders. Weiner's own notebooks mark the drastic change in tastes that would take place in just a few years, for beginning in the 1980s, decorative flourishes will start to abound. Not coincidentally, this period will also witness the resurgence of what Buchloh would call "the specular regime" ushering in the return of painterly expressionism along with its unabashed decorative excesses, everything against which Conceptual art had militated.[43] In a withering critique of *Documenta 7* (1982), which programmatically re-installed painting as the acme of liberal artistic expression, Buchloh declares that "artists can in fact be excellent designers, especially at a historical moment when ornament and decoration are among the only practices they are allowed to reactivate."[44] Responding to this *zeitgeist*, Weiner would put aside the sobriety of accounting ledgers and composition tablets, starting off the decade with a comparatively extravagant set of embossed, leather-bound agendas issued by *The Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits*, illustrated with recipes, film stills and posters from the grand days of railroad travel (figs. 162a & 162b). By 1983 he would move onto artist's sketchbooks, as well as hand-made notebooks, embellished with names and dates, using stenciled texts, some lavishly painted in metallic silver and bright blue, or rendered in Margaret Seaworthy Gothic, a typeface of his own design. Words themselves would appear in ever more complex elaboration: stamped, circled, boxed, stenciled and painted, in seemingly every color, size and orientation. Weiner's drawing style, formerly

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[42] Marcel Broodthaers quoted in Haidu, *The Absence Of Work, Marcel Broodthaers, 1964 – 1976*, 242.

[43] Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962 – 1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990), 143.

[44] Benjamin Buchloh, "Documenta 7: A Dictionary of Received Ideas," *October* 22 (Autumn 1982), 108.

rigorous and diagrammatic, would become more fluid and gestural, no longer strictly avoiding traces of expressivity. This new exuberance is tellingly revealed in Weiner's predilection for pinking shears, implements that automatically turn any cut into an ornamental object (figs. 163a, 163b, 164a, 164b & 165).

Looking back at Weiner's first book *Statements* (1968), the change in style appears especially dramatic (fig. 1). The implications of Weiner's designs were undeniably most acute during the "ascetic" phase of the late '60s to early '70s, when it was critical to vividly distinguish linguistic interventions from aesthetic precedents.[45] Regarding this period Weiner remarks: "Those early manifestations – they are not early, but from the late 1960s, when I had the opportunity to make posters and books and things – are so highly designed you cannot believe it. I mean, take *Statements,* there is a design factor to make it look like a $1.95 book that you would buy. The type-face and the decision to use a typewriter and everything else was a design choice."[46] Indeed, each detail of *Statements'* presentation polemically targets practically every aspect of a traditional aesthetic, eliminating all traces of autonomy, subjective expression, "artfull" production and visual delectation. Devaluing presentation in the most extreme way possible, *Statements* critiques the pretensions of Modernist design, along with Pop art's illusion of cheapness, while simultaneously perverting the logic of administrative orders which the book mimes. Flagrantly modest and truly devalued, *Statements* frustrates the demands of spectacular exhibition, and prevents the work from devolving into mere decoration.

Precisely two decades later, Weiner produces another highly designed object, *The Sky & The Sea / La Mer & Le ciel*, a "book in a box" consisting of unbound "pages" of cloth, which also serve as flags (fig. 166 & 167). The book presents the aphorism "WE ARE SHIPS AT SEA NOT DUCKS ON A POND," dispersed as fragments of text across fields of bright color. The words

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[45] For a discussion of the significance of Conceptual art's interventions as an anti-aesthetic see Buchloh's "Conceptual Art 1962 – 1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions."

[46] Weiner in "Benjamin Buchloh In Conversation With Lawrence Weiner," *Lawrence Weiner* (London: Phaidon (1998), 20. Weiner's use of design as a means of intervening in the conditions of art production should be seen within the context of Fluxus design work, and in particular what Julia Robinson has analyzed as the "performative design" practice of George Maciunas in the 1960s. See Robinson, "Maciunas as Producer: Performative Design in the Art of the 1960s," *Grey Room* 33 (Fall 2008), 58 – 83.

are accompanied by stars and schematic renderings of floating ships, cartoon versions of "paradigmatic drawing," with no trace of diagrammatic severity. Vividly printed in pink, blue, yellow, orange and green, the cloth pages are trimmed by pinking shears, indulgences that counter-act the perceived "withdrawal of jouissance" associated with Conceptualism's administrative aesthetic.[47] At the same time, these embellishments confront head-on the illusions of what Barthes, following Sartre, would call "colorless writing," the dream of an innocent language freed from the bondage of history and the dominance of cliché. In the context of visual art, such writing would not necessarily be characterized by the achromatic or monochromatic, but by a belief in language as transparent, as in Kosuth's logical investigations, and their frequent reference to the limpidity of water or glass. By contrast, Weiner's work increasingly acknowledges writing to be what Barthes would call "a decorative and compromising instrument," one mired not only in history, but in political economy, one in which a writer's or artist's freedom remains perversely objectified in terms of luxury.[48] Dieter Schwarz identifies Weiner's later designs as diametrically opposed to the utopian claims of the historic Avant-Garde, replacing revolutionary form with "the allegorical remains" of the artist's work.[49] Indeed, Weiner's artist's edition registers its own compromised condition, calling attention to its decorative status, frustrating "democratic" distribution through the sheer elaborateness of its construction, and announcing in no uncertain terms the historical inaccessibility of *Statements'* utopian aspirations. *The Sky & The Sea* thus confirms Marcel Broodthaers' early intuition, when in 1969, at the high point of Conceptual art's turn to 'mass' publication (the "Xerox" degree of art), he issues a limited artist's edition on transparent mecanographic paper, translating the "spatialization" of language in

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[47] Buchloh discusses the *misreading* of Conceptual art in terms of a miming / masochistic acceptance of "the prohibition of matter and process under the pressures and controls of a universally administered world." See Buchloh, "Art Belge et Conceptuel Daledien: An Abecedarium (incomplete)" in *A Bit of Matter and a Little Bit More, The Collection and Archives of Herman and Nicole Daled 1966 – 1978*, exh. cat. ed. Patrizia Dander and Ulrich Wilmes (Munich: Haus der Kunst, 2010), 273.

[48] Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (1953; New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 86.

[49] Dieter Schwarz, "Learn To Read Art" in *Lawrence Weiner Books 1968 – 1989*, catalogue raisonné (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther Konig / Le Nouveau Musée, 1989), 131 – 132.

Stéphane Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* into illegible patterns of ornamental black bars (fig. 168).[50]

Interestingly, it is around this same time, that Weiner will paste in a notebook this fragment of excerpted text: "gratuitous ornament 'wasted manpower and therefore wasted wealth'"[51] (fig. 99) The text quotes Loos' *Ornament and Crime* (1908) in which the architect targets the florid extravagances of Art Nouveau, denouncing the adornment of bodies and utilitarian objects as a form of cultural degeneracy, a displacement of the erotic impulse from which all art is born. The Modern aristocrat, Loos argues, has no need for such forms of primitive release, because the refinements of art have taken their place. Loos' attack on decoration was thus a bid for the specificity of art, the proper place for Modern man to focus his joy and his "inventiveness." Ornament threatened to blur the distinctions, not only between art and not art, but more fundamentally between subject and object, so that all would be subsumed in what Hal Foster calls the "wanton subjectivism" of total design.[52]

In his own indictment on contemporary design culture, *Design and Crime* (2002), Foster argues that the distinctions which Loos zealously guarded have indeed collapsed, and that all objects and even subjects are now submitted to the imperatives of design, subordinated to the requisites of a spectacularized culture industry. The fusion of art and life as called for within the contexts of Art Nouveau, the Bauhaus or Fluxus, thus comes to pass not as liberation, but as "perverse reconciliation."[53] Jean Baudrillard claims that this eventuality had unwittingly been prepared for by the Bauhaus itself, insofar as it invented the "object" as a functional, meaningful form:

> For the object is not a thing, or even a category; it is a status of meaning and form. Before the logical advent of this object form, nothing is an object, not even the everyday utensils – thereafter, everything is, the building as well as the coffee spoon or the entire city. It is the Bauhaus that institutes this universal semantization of the environment in

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[50] See Haidu's discussion of Broodthaers' *Un coup de dés n'abolira jamais le hasard* (1969) in *The Absence of Work*, 67-68.

[51] Lawrence Weiner Notebook January 1985 - August 1986, Moved Pictures Archive, New York.

[52] Hal Foster, *Design and Crime* (New York: Verso, 2002), 17.

[53] Foster, *Design and Crime,* 19.

> which everything becomes the object of a calculus of function and of signification. Total functionality, total semiurgy.[54]

The Bauhaus thereby falls in line with the production requirements of the "second Industrial Revolution," which demand that commodity and sign circulate together as "sign-object." In endeavoring to elevate our experience of everyday objects, the Bauhaus inadvertently leads to the debasement of sensuous experience, drawing all things within a signifying practice whose alibi is functionality, but whose effect would be to impose "sign-exchange value" on the totality of our environment. Invoking Loos, Foster questions whether and how it would be possible to restore "objective limits," to create a space of resistance to this sovereignty of designed/commodified sign.

Weiner's decorative turn could be seen to reflect the dystopian conditions that Foster describes, in which "everything from jeans to genes – seems to be regarded as so much *design*."[55] Weiner's work as an artist is, in fact, thoroughly enmeshed with his work as a designer, as evidenced in scores of notebook sketches that reflect the vast scope of his projects including: books, posters, installations and announcement cards; tattoos, set stages, denim jackets and nylons; bags, hats, composters and matchbooks; pens, pins, cars, and cups. Titling his first major American retrospective *AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE*, Weiner undoubtedly acknowledges the inevitable requirement to produce what Foster calls "spectacle value,"[56] advertising the artist's role in guaranteeing the museum's status as a place where images are not only seen but consumed. At the same time, however, Weiner's approach to design is far from cynical or indifferent. While Weiner will repeatedly speak about the "arbitrariness" of his presentations, at the same time he declares: "All adornment of a formal object must have meaning or bring about a basic change of state or fall into the decorative or sentimental which is in fact acceptance of the demand for accommodation."[57]

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[54] Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1972: Candor; Telos Press, 1981), 185.

[55] Foster, *Design and Crime* 17.

[56] Foster, *Design and Crime* 81.

[57] "ON AND ABOUT CONSTRUCTING A STRUCTURE" in *Lawrence Weiner: Altered To Suit / Passend Gemacht*, exh. cat. (Krefeld, Germany: Krefelder Kunstmuseen, 1988), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 176.

That commitment to design as a form of meaningful expression is nowhere more evident than in Weiner's 1972 publication *Green As Well As Blue As Well As Red* (fig. 169). Printed in pocket-size, with yellow titles on a red background, the book cover reflects not at all on the artist's 'creativity' owing its appearance entirely to *Quotations From Chairman Mao*, published by the Chinese Communist Party starting in 1964, one of the most iconic and widely printed books in existence. Without equivocation, Weiner's little red book underscores the enormous import carried by even the slightest stylistic choice, revealing design to be stridently rhetorical, a force which guides the reader in one direction or another. That declamatory aspect is contradicted by the work itself which remains oblique, nothing like the authoritative pronouncements of Chairman Mao. Even though we may see the "*RED*" of the work in terms of the red of the cover, the irresolution of linguistic designation reveals the non-necessity of that relation. Through permutation and removal, indeterminacy prevails, as illustrated by one page which reads:

( ) ___ IN LIEU OF ___

Weiner will explain his frequent use of blanks and parenthesis saying: "It is an editorial introduction meaning that I do know my choice is only an emotional one and viewers can replace it with anything else they want."[58] While parentheses may bracket an arbitrary aspect of content, the design of *Green As Well As Blue As Well As Red* appears completely motivated and not at all capricious, pointing explicitly to the problematic of cultural revolution, brutally enforced in the East, and increasingly suppressed in the West.[59] But if the design of *Green As Well As Blue As*

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[58] "Interview by Phyllis Rosenzweig," *Lawrence Weiner with the Passage of Time* (Washington, D.C.: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, 1990), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 236.

[59] *Green As Well As Blue As Well As Red* was published in the same year that a historic shift in Sino-American relations took place. February 1972 marked Richard Nixon's historic 8-day visit to China, and his meetings with Mao Zedong which "normalized" Sino-American relations, strategically impacting the Cold War balance of power. For a discussion of this event see Margaret MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao, The Week That Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2007).

By this time, the cultural revolution had long been a matter of brutally violent conflict. 1972-1976 has been called the "Succession Phase" of the Cultural Revolution – ending with Mao's death in 1976 and the arrest of Gang of Four a month later, followed by official discreditation. For a discussion of the significance of the idea of "Cultural Revolution" in the West see Herbert Marcuse, *Counter-Revolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972). For a discussion of Maoism, specifically in relation to Weiner's films *A First Quarter* and *A Second Quarter* see Eric de Bruyn's "Being Then Within a Context of Revolution: Six Notes on Two Films by Lawrence Weiner." De Bruyn uses Jacques Rancière's analysis of Maoism in Jean-luc Godard's *La Chinoise* to compare the ways in which both artists use film as a stage for the embodiment and thereby the political

Well As Red polemically takes a stand, embroiling the work within a violently contested socio-political context, how is that commitment expressed throughout the rest of Weiner's practice, where we find scores of designs that refuse to give directions, ones that do seem willfully arbitrary in their profuse variation?

In 2010 Alain Badiou publishes his own little red book entitled *The Communist Hypothesis*. Badiou begins by arguing that although the mid 1970s was the start of "the ebb of the 'red decade,'" we are still contemporaries of May '68, despite the unrestricted rise of neo-liberal capitalism, and the association of Communism with criminal utopia.[60] According to Badiou, such eventualities were unimaginable during the heyday of '68, a time when "everyone spoke the same language and the red flag was everyone's emblem."[61] Now, in the wake of crumbled solidarity and discredited symbolism, Badiou calls for a revitalization of practices devoted to organizing displacements and refusing the stasis which keeps people in their places. Communism, he argues, must be grasped as an idea in the generic sense, one that exposes the fictional structures that dominate our reality, one without which life would be "intolerable." This renewed dedication would require a different more affirmative manner of speaking, a way of defeating "linguistic terrorism" on all sides. "At this point," Badiou writes, "we need to use more colorful language."[62]

Perhaps this more colorful language is what we find in Weiner's most ornamental flourishes. Returning now to the flags of *The Sky & The Sea*, one understands that Weiner's choices are diametrically opposed to the design of a book such as *Green As Well As Blue As Well As Red*, with its implications not only of widespread distribution but of mass recognition. Recalling Marcel Broodthaers' *Le Drapeau Noir, tirage illimité* (1968), wherein the black flag of anarchist revolt is reduced to a species of art object/advert (fig. 170), Weiner's flags renounce

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destabilization of statements (Mao's "teachings" in the case of Godard's films, and the artist's text works in the case of Weiner's movies).

[60] Alain Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*, trans. David Macey and Steve Corcoran (London and New York: Verso, 2010), 1.

[61] Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*, 53.

any pretension to universal authority, not only by means of their self-limiting structure (book in a box), but by virtue of their embellishments. That disprivileging of revolutionary form becomes explicit through Weiner's invocation of a Constructivist aesthetic. In a catalog from 1988, sample pages from *The Sky & The Sea* are published next to a photograph of a 1965 reconstruction of El Lissitzky's *Proun Room* (1923), highlighting the link between Weiner's floating ships and Lissitzky's abstract forms (figs. 171 & 172). In both cases one sees slim rectangles drifting diagonally in a horizonless field, intersected by vertical lines. With *The Sky & The Sea*, however, the radical possibility of Lissitzky's operational techniques appears diminished, as Weiner turns the ambiguities of a *non-symbolic* spatial investigation into a Neo-Pop icon. A similar transformation had, of course, occurred within Lissitzky's own design work, in posters such as "Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge" (1919) which fuse the *Proun's* spatial destabilizations with the clarity of a political message. According to Bois, Lissitzky's design avoids instrumentalization to the degree that the complexities of abstraction refuse the easy answers and identifications characteristic of propaganda. In *The Sky & The Sea,* on the other hand, these difficulties of reading are replaced by the graphic legibility of ships and stars, an unabashedly decorative re-inscription that submits the formal aspirations of Lissitzky's work to a dialectical inversion. At the same time, Weiner's symbolic translation is neither a sign of "perverse reconciliation" nor of melancholic disenchantment. As Rancière would argue, such conversions are the primary means by which the aims of art and those of design become reconciled, without necessarily resulting in the subordination of one practice to the other, or the degradation of work into sheer decoration.

Writing about "the surface of design" Rancière articulates a common space that unifies the most rarified ambitions of autonomous art and the practical necessities of industrial design. Rancière notes that both disciplines share a fundamental desire to produce an "abbreviating symbol," a "type" that might exist on the one hand as a simplified graphic standard, and on the other a "formative principle[s] of a new communal life."[63] Thus, in the poetry of Mallarmé, one

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[62] Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*, 58.

[63] Jacques Rancière, *The Future Of The Image*, trans. Gregory Elliot (London and New York: Verso, 2007), 95.

finds an arrangement of words, spaces and ideas, fused into a world of "essential forms" of "schemes of appearance and disappearance" elaborated in typical images, such as the accordion folds of a fan, the evanescence of smoke, or the froth upon waves. In a different but related way, the industrial engineer Peter Behrens produces streamlined objects that eliminate the "ersatz soul" of ornamental design in favor of a spiritual unity, in which labor and use are rationalized, rendered transparent in the coincidence of "primal form" and function. While ultimately, these lofty aims would be subordinated to the logic of consumption, Rancière wants to focus on the poetical / political ambitions of the creation of types, in which "the symbolic writing of forms" creates an equivalence between the products of art and of industry, the appearance of words and of things. Whereas Foster sees design in terms of a completely arbitrary collapse of "objective limits," Rancière will find, instead, a space of conversion liberated from hierarchies:

> 'Abbreviated forms' are, in their very principle, an aesthetic and political division of a shared world: they outline the shape of a world without hierarchy where functions slide into one another. The finest illustration of this might be the posters designed by Rodchenko for the aircraft company Dobrolet. The stylized forms of the plane and the letters of the brand are combined in homogeneous geometrical forms. But this graphic homogeneity is also a homogeneity between the forms that serve to construct Suprematist paintings and those that serve to symbolize both the élan of the Dobrolet planes and the dynamism of a new society. The same artists does abstract paintings and makes instrumental posters; in both cases, he is working in identical fashion to construct new forms of life.[64]

Weiner's practice reflects this homogeneity, as both his works and designs aim to alter the ways that we relate to a universe of shared objects, emphasizing, through the use of language and signs, that over and above every quality (of dynamism, visibility, functionality…) these materials are our form of commonality. In the paradigmatic drawings Weiner eventually leaves behind the exposition of binary opposition, increasingly concerned with the formulation of "types" - the ship from *The Sky & The Sea* being a prime example. While Weiner's re-use of Lissitzky's *Proun*, registers the critical loss of a specific formal strategy, he nonetheless re-inscribes the aspirations of that historical moment in the form of a contemporary emblem. Creating a new "type" that would no longer presume to be primordial or essential, Weiner defines the shapes of communal existence in terms of a fundamental *idiosyncrasy*. Thus, the superficiality of a Pop aesthetic not

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[64] Rancière, *The Future Of The Image*, 107.

only vulgarizes Weiner's form, but inserts a measure of arbitrariness that depletes the image of any universal authority, while still maintaining an ideal of common accessibility. In the animated drawing *Blue Moon Over* (2001) Weiner stakes his claims on the future of "IDEOSYNCRATIC SOCIALISM," [sic] based not on a uniform standardization, or an enforced equalization, but on the Marxist creed: "EACH TO THEIR ABILITIES & EACH TO THEIR NECESSITIES."[65] Weiner's *Statement of Intent* is essentially a formula for idiosyncrasy, as its coda declares: "EACH BEING EQUAL AND CONSISTENT WITH THE INTENT OF THE ARTIST THE DECISION AS TO CONDITION RESTS WITH THE RECEIVER UPON THE OCCASION OF RECEIVERSHIP." Leaving the receiver to determine condition and meaning, emphasizing the *compromised* contingency of any presentation, Weiner's design remains committed to a cause that Terry Eagleton calls essentially communist, namely: "the all-round liberation of the multiplicity of particular use values, where the only absolute would seem development itself."[66]

The relation of form to need, desire and use is the subject of Weiner's distinctive book *Apples & Eggs Salt & Pepper* (1999) printed in English and Japanese, using vivid primary colors and Japanese stab binding (figs. 173a & 173b). The text questions the logic of Modernism's universalist design aesthetic / ethic, declaring: "FORM CAN ONLY FOLLOW FUNCTION WHEN FUNCTION ITSELF IS PRE-ORDAINED."[67] Paradoxically, the pre-ordained function of Weiner's work is to be an object which in no way pre-determines its own use ("THE ONLY JUSTIFICATION FOR THE EXISTENCE OF ART IS TOWARDS A NOT DETERMINED END

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[65] Lawrence Weiner Notebook January 1996 - 1997, Moved Pictures Archive, New York.

[66] Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1990), 215.

[67] Weiner's critique of a Modernist Bauhaus aesthetic extends to his typographic choices. Rejecting what he perceives as the academicism of serif fonts ("It says that it is intellectual and intelligent") and the universalist authority of Helvetica, Weiner will prefer Franklin Gothic Condensed which he describes as a "working class" typeface. His insistence on capital letters both eliminates hierarchical relations between letters, and stands as well as a rejection of the historical Bauhaus preference for lower case, regarded as the most rational and efficient mode of type-setting. In an effort to avoid a "signature" style, Weiner began using the fonts Stencil and FF Offline, a typeface which suggests the fractured appearance of dot-matrix printing. In the early 1990s the notebooks begin to show Weiner's work on the typeface Margaret Seaworthy Gothic. For an extended discussion of typography in Weiner's practice see Gabriele Wix, "Unclaimed Things" in *Nach Bildende Kunst Art After Fine Art* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012). See also "Design Matters Live with Lawrence Weiner," filmed interview with Debbie Millman at Weiner's New York studio, directed and co-produced by Hillman Curtis (2008).

(AN END)").[68] In this respect, Weiner's practice remains close to George Brecht's, whose Event-scores were premised upon uncoded models of use and functionality.[69] Such issues were fundamental to the discourse of art beginning in the '60s as the everyday materiality of works (bricks, rolled steel, fluorescent bulbs) defeated any presumption of inherent use/value/function as Dan Graham observes: "No permanently worthwhile experience is implied, the 'value' of an Andre (or Flavin or Warhol or Christo) being temporally contingent on its present context."[70] Kosuth would make a similar assessment regarding Flavin's work: "Issues of function having to do with meaning being contingent on use are particularly relevant to someone like Flavin. The value of his work is the power of his art as an idea – I don't think one can seriously argue that it is due to craft, composition, or the aura of the traces of his hand."[71] Kosuth's notion of "meaning being contingent on use" comes in part from his reading of Wittgenstein who writes in *Philosophical Investigations*:

> For a *large* class of cases – though not for all – in which we employ the word "meaning" it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language.[72]

Wittgenstein's definition applies specifically to language, and even then, only to "a large class of cases," a distinction elided in Kosuth's formulation. Kosuth will make a different qualification, however, grounding meaning / use in the *intention* of the artist: "The difference between all the various uses of the box or cube form is directly related to the differences in the intentions of the artists."[73] Kosuth's authoritarian definition contradicts Weiner's concept of use, which must be compared not only to a linguistic theory, but to Marx's economic one:

> So far as it (a commodity) is a use-value, there is nothing mysterious about it, whether we consider it from the point of view that by its properties it satisfies human needs, or that it first takes on these properties as the product of human labor. It is absolutely clear that,

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[68] Weiner, "IS GILLICK BEGGING THE QUESTION?" in *Liam Gillick: The Wood Way* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 2002), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 412.

[69] Julia Robinson, "From Abstraction To Model: In The Event Of George Brecht & The Conceptual Turn In The Art Of The 1960s" (PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2008).

[70] Dan Flavin (1968) quoted in Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2003), 22.

[71] Joseph Kosuth in Jeanne Siegel, "Joseph Kosuth: Art as Idea as Idea," WBAI-FM New York radio interview (April 7, 1970), published in *Artwords: Discourse on the 60s and 70s* (New York: Da Capo Pres, 1985), 227.

[72] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (1945; Oxford and Malden: Blackwell, 1997), 20e.

[73] Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy," 23.

> by its activity humanity changes the form of the materials of nature in such a way as to make them useful to it. The form of wood, for instance, is altered if a table is made out of it. Nevertheless the table continues to be wood, an ordinary sensible thing. But as soon as it emerges as a commodity it changes into a thing that transcends sensuousness.[74]

That transcendence is the effect of exchange value, tied neither to an object's use nor to its sensible form, but to the quantity of abstract labor the object embodies. This social relation remains nonetheless "veiled," as exchange-value comes to be seen as an intrinsic property of the object itself. Human labor is thus reflected back as an objective quality of the commodity, transforming it into a social hieroglyph and a fetish. These mysterious illusions of exchange are contrasted with the self-evident relation of humans to objects of use. Importantly, within this non-fetishistic realm of practical relations, Marx includes sensuous pleasure, inasmuch as the active contemplation of an object's material qualities is considered to be as functional as any mechanical interaction: "We experience the sensuous wealth of things by drawing them within our signifying practices – a stance which differs on the one hand from the crude instrumentalism of exchange-value, and on the other hand from disinterested aesthetic speculation."[75] The sensuality of Weiner's works hinges precisely on this conception of use as a functional experience of meaning, and in order to avoid the "crude instrumentalism" that privileges one meaning / use over another, design plays a critical role, ensuring an affirmative, often boisterous, but non-coercive way of speaking.

According to Baudrillard, on the other hand, such aspirations towards use value are idealizations, failing to recognize that use and need are not natural, and objective, as fantasized in the terrestrial paradise of Robinson Crusoe, but only mythic naturalizations of the dominant relation of exchange. "Use value," Baudrillard writes, "is an abstraction. It is an abstraction of the system of needs cloaked in the false evidence of a concrete destination and purpose, an intrinsic finality of goods and products."[76] Baudrillard argues that use values and exchange values are, in

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[74] Karl Marx, "The Fetish Character of the Commodity and its Secret," *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, volume 1, 2nd edition, 1873; quoted in Peter Osborne, *How to Read Marx* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 2005), 9.

[75] Eagleton, *The Ideology of The Aesthetic*, 204-205.

[76] Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, 131.

fact, regulated by the same code, subjected to the same structures of equivalence, despite Marx's claim for the "incomparability" of use. The watchword "to each according to his needs," offers only the promise of an "idealist" political economy, inscribing use as a "moral law at the heart of the object," whereas in fact, the system of needs is only a more profound expression of the system of commodified signs. To posit the "liberation of needs" as a revolutionary idea ignores the fact that the very concept of "need" is itself artificial. In order to escape "the terrorism of value" Baudrillard argues for renewed forms of symbolic exchange, exemplified by the gift and counter-gift, wherein the object's value is reduced to nothing, and "the ambivalence of an open relationship" is maintained.[77]

In *Apples & Eggs Salt & Pepper* Weiner never explicitly mentions the terms "value" or "exchange." Instead he offers one equation marked by "GAIN" ("TO GIVE + TO GET"), versus another marked by "LOSS" ("TO HAVE + TO TAKE"). The first resembles Baudrillard's formula for symbolic exchange, the second is the motor for capitalist accumulation, a logic of surplus specifically addressed by many of Weiner's works (e.g. *MORE THAN ENOUGH* [1998]).[78] Weiner's book goes on to question what is inherent in objects ("NEED," "FORM," "DIGNITY"), and what is assumed ("FUNCTION," "FORM"), what is intrinsic ("APPLES AS THEY ARE") and what is produced ("SALT AS MADE"). These relations are presented, not as natural but as inherently theatrical, part of "THE KYOGEN OF OUR NEEDS & DESIRES"[79] (fig. 139b). Whereas Baudrillard would condemn functionality as the rationalization for exchange, Weiner will uphold function as the essence of dignified object relations ("THE DIGNITY OF AN OBJECT IS DEPENDENT UPON FUNCTION"). If there is any remaining utopianism in Weiner's project it

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[77] Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign,* 212.

[78] Gregor Stemmrich discusses the manner in which several of Weiner's drawings question the self-evident assumptions of "fair exchange" (i.e. "give & take" or "quid pro quo") in his essay "Showing & Telling – Drawing & Writing" in *Written On The Wind: Lawrence Weiner Drawings*, ed. Alice Zimmerman (Cologne: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) and Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2013), 105 – 112. Weiner's "Statement Of Intent" from 1968 already attempts to escape "the terrorism of value" by eliminating any possible hierarchy between the various conditions in which the art object might exist (i.e. constructed by the artist / fabricated / unbuilt). In this regard, Weiner's "Statement Of Intent" should be compared with Robert Filliou's aim to create a new "theory of value" through his 1968 "Principle of Equivalence" (positing an equivalence between "well made" "badly made" and "not made"). See also note 42, chapter 2 in this volume.

[79] The Japanese word "Kyogen" or "wild speech" refers to a brief comedic performance, often satirical, staged as an intermission between acts of a Noh play.

lies in his belief that in presenting a work whose content possesses no inherent form (informal), use will remain multiple and idiosyncratic. Rather than imposing universal value, design would serve to increase this ambivalence, by means of a theatrical artifice that defeats any transparency of meaning or use. This ambivalence, however, is already fundamental to our signifying practices, as Wittgenstein's Beckettian text shows:

> When someone says the word "cube" to me, for example, I know what it means. But can the whole *use* of the word come before my mind, when I *understand* it in this way?
>
> Well, but on the other hand isn't the meaning of the word also determined by this use? And can't these ways of determining meaning conflict? Can what we grasp in a flash accord with a use, fit or fail to fit it? And how can what is present to us in an instant, what comes before our mind in an instant fit a *use*?...
>
> What really comes before our mind when we *understand* a word? – Isn't it something like a picture? Can't it *be* a picture?...
>
> The picture of the cube did indeed suggest a certain use to us, but it was possible for me to use it differently.[80]

What remains productive about the concept of use is not at all its "intrinsic finality" or its promise of "a concrete destination and purpose," but rather, the fact that it cannot be fully comprehended. As Wittgenstein's discursion indicates, the "whole use" of a word can never come to mind, making it theoretically possible at any point to picture use differently. *Apples & Eggs Salt & Pepper* allows us to grasp this ambiguity, inasmuch as "USE IN RELATION TO FORM" (design), is revealed to be provisional and unnatural, a wholly artificial product of a *mise en signes*.

While Weiner avoids outright didacticism, he nonetheless compels the receiver to accept or reject the broader assumptions upon which his designs are based, in order that embellishment might remain a form of articulation. Jean-luc Godard, whose own *mise-en-scène* were of great importance for Weiner, describes the necessity of revealing one's ideological investments: "Basically what I am doing is making the spectator share the arbitrary nature of my choices and the quest for general rules which might justify a particular choice."[81] That sense of responsibility is explicitly stated in Weiner's book *Turning Some Pages* (2007), a collaboration with Howard Smith Paper that is simultaneously a journal and an advertisement of the manufacturer's

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[80] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 54e.

[81] Jean-luc Godard, *Godard on Godard*, eds. Jean Narboni and Tom Milne (1968; New York and London: Da Capo Press, 1972), 239.

products, a perfect forum to address both the aims and compromises of design. Using the term "paradigm" now to designate, not drawings exclusively but any mode of presentation, a page from the book reads:

> THERE ARE PARAMETERS ALBEIT ARBITRARILY
> THERE ARE IMPERATIVES ALBEIT SPECULATIVE
> THERE ARE ASPIRATIONS ALBEIT VAGUE
> WITHIN THE NATURE OF THE PARADIGM[82]

On the facing page are the letters, "J K L…" set in Margaret Seaworthy Gothic, printed in metallic silver with black outline, and periods shaped like rivets (fig. 174a). These letters run throughout the book, testifying to a "surface of design" wherein the shapes of letters occupy the same space as informal ideas, neither one being more significant than the other. Such manifestly visual indulgences open Weiner's practice to the charge of "formal reification," of undercutting the critical aspects of his work in order to accommodate the demands of spectacle.[83] Weiner's rebuttal would be to continue to insist upon a non-hierarchical distinction, in which art remains a question of material content, and design a problem of arbitrary form. Ironically, *Green As Well As Blue As Well As Red* had already demonstrated this lack of formal authority, proving that even the most strident design fails to overcome the work's fundamental contingency.

On a page from a notebook dated January - September 2007 Weiner explains the difference between art and design: "ART ASPIRES TO THE SENSUAL EXPERIENCE, DESIGN ASPIRES TO A VISCERAL EXPERIENCE"[84] (figs. 174b & 175). To understand this opposition, it helps to think again of Lyotard's distinction between a surface view of color, and an encounter with its meaning through linguistic designation. The first involves an instantaneous physical

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[82] Lawrence Weiner, *Turning Some Pages* (London: Howard Smith Paper, 2007), n.p. Published in conjunction with the lecture "Turning Some Pages," held at BAFTA, London (May 15, 2007).

[83] Julia Robinson argues that Brecht's work was not only prior in adapting Conceptual art's linguistic orientation, but that Brecht's consistently understated presentation style avoided the work's "formal reification." As an example of the latter she references Weiner's texts "which currently appear in diverse and colorful fonts on the walls (interior and exterior) of museums and commercial galleries. In a recent exhibition at Marian Goodman gallery the lettering appeared in glittered metallic blue." See Robinson, "From Abstraction To Model: In The Event Of George Brecht & The Conceptual Turn In The Art Of The 1960s," 290.

[84] The statement "ART IS SENSUAL DESIGN IS VISCERAL" appears in *Turning Some Pages*.

impact, the second is temporally extended, marked by a sensual withdrawal of the object from one's immediate grasp. Looking through the notebooks it is easy enough to feel this gap between mediated content and immediate form. We see it in a set of drawings, from a notebook dated July 2008 – December 2009 (fig. 176). Here, Weiner sketches a group of landscapes filled with graceful gesture and exquisite color. The geometric rigor that characterized Weiner's early paradigms unravels in these light and fluid images, which seem to float above the graph paper upon which they are inscribed. Within each picture lies a space without horizon lines, punctuated by a hovering red form, like a flag in the wind. Stenciled on top in blue are the words: "RED SAILS IN THE SUNSET." Far from the discretion of black and white, color emerges now as both resplendent and significant. But the drawings leave us wondering whether "RED" still means what it did before "the ebb of the 'red decade.'" After all, Weiner's choice of phrase does not come from any creed or manifesto, but from an old love song:

> Red sails in the sunset, way out on the sea
> Oh, carry my loved one home safely to me
> She sailed at the dawning, all day I've been blue
> Red sails in the sunset, I'm trusting in you[85]

Mixing revolutionary desire with sentimental cliché, Weiner's drawing deflates the pretensions of an iconic symbol, exposing both the romanticism and the remoteness of a former ideal (*HAVING STOOD DOWN [AS]*). If these sails can still function as "everyone's emblem" it will be because "RED" now loams in the abyss of meaning, turning our desires away from categorical certitudes, towards speculative imperatives, and vague aspirations.

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[85] The song "Red Sails in the Sunset" was published in 1935, written by Hugh Williams with lyrics by Jimmy Kennedy.

CHAPTER V: MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE (drawing + mapping)

to find one's place in the sun

A short film from 2009 for the series *Design Matters* shows Weiner working in his New York studio. It starts intimately, with the artist at his drafting table, carefully cutting out the word "EXISTS" in large blue letters[1] (fig. 177a). Lingering close-ups reveal Weiner's tools: a pot of glue, a pair of scissors, an eraser, straight edges, brushes, paint colors, a set of drafting instruments, along with a small notebook, bursting with warped pages (figs. 177b & 177c). These commonplace drawing materials might be unremarkable, were it not for the fact that they belong to an artist who adamantly calls his work *sculpture*. In another shot we see Weiner using a divider to take measurements off an image, almost as though he were plotting a course on a chart (177d). In a voice-over Weiner explains, "I see all the drawings I do as sort of star maps." Perhaps this logical connection of drawing to mapping can shed light on Weiner's more puzzling decision to re-insert his work in the category of sculpture. The complementarity of sculpture and mapping was a territory widely investigated by artists during the late '60s and '70s, and although it may be pure coincidence, this link is articulated in a notebook dated October 1983 – January 1985, which contains early examples of Weiner publicly billing his work as sculpture (e.g. gallery announcements for *5 Sculptures* at Gallery Daniel Templon) along with the first explicit textual reference to maps ("PARADIGMATIC DRAWINGS OF MAPS + SEGMENTS OF MAPS AS PARADIGM") (figs. 178a & 178b). Thus, in order to understand Weiner's investment in the idea of "sculpture," it helps to take a closer look at how maps figure in the artist's practice.

Practically every one of Weiner's notebooks contains a conventional map of some kind, from architectural installation layouts to cut-outs from standard geographical charts (figs. 178c & 178d). This preponderance of maps reflects a collective cartographic obsession that emerged

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[1] "Design Matters Live with Lawrence Weiner," filmed interview with Debbie Millman at Weiner's New York studio, directed and co-produced by Hillman Curtis (2008).

during the post-war period, exemplified by the map-centric works of Douglas Huebler and Alighiero Boetti, artists interested not only in a phenomenal experience of space, but in its ideological projection.[2] While Weiner's paradigms and diagrams evoke abstracted maps and charts, his early drawings are not as invested in the kind of subversive assault on the legibility / credibility of actual maps that we find, for instance, in LeWitt's work, wherein drawings feature maps with central portions excised, or crumpled to replace an inscribed topography with that of the now three-dimensional sheet (figs. 179a & 179b). A notable exception is Weiner's "built" version of the work *AN INDIVISIBLE ENTITY DIVIDED REDUCED OR PARTITIONED* (1969) in which Weiner takes a map of North America and separates it into three vertical sections, thus partitioning the US and Canada, entities presumed to be "indivisible" (in a typed note accompanying the now divided map, Weiner writes: "The maps imply an acceptance that the idea of the US and Canada represent an indivisible entity" (fig. 181). More typically, however, when Weiner pastes a map onto a page, it will be in order simply to reference a particular geopolitical context, almost as straight-forward as writing down its name (fig. 182). On the other hand, there is an enormous gulf between these map fragments and the drawings into which they are incorporated. In Weiner's "star maps" the logic of cartographic science is nakedly exposed as fiction, for as Weiner himself would attest, drawings are "maps that don't get you anywhere."[3] In this respect, Weiner's mapping practice is closest to Robert Smithson's, wherein cartographic relations between Site (actual sites of sculptural interventions such as the *Spiral Jetty* of Mono Lake) and Non-Site (accumulations of "earth maps," charts, drawings that point to the Site remotely) produce only dizzying, imaginary encounters. Smithson described this "elusive" quality of maps using language similar to Weiner's: "This map of Mono Lake is a map that tells you how to get nowhere… One might even say that the place has absconded or been lost. This is a map that will take you somewhere, but when you get there you won't really know where you are…

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[2] On the ubiquity of maps in artistic practice during this time, Roberta Smith remarks: "At a certain point around 1973, it was probably difficult to find an artist working in the Conceptualist or Earthwork mode who had not used a map at least once in some way." Smith quoted in Denis Wood, *Rethinking The Power Of Maps* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2010), 207.

[3] Lawrence Weiner in conversation with David Batchelor on the occasion of the exhibition *Lawrence Weiner: Inherent In The Rhumb Line* at the National Maritime Museum (Greenwich, England), March 22, 2007.

You're always caught between two worlds, one that is and one that isn't"[4] (fig. 180). Smithson's fusion of mapping, writing and sculpture into a single practice that catches us somewhere "between two worlds" is an important reference for Weiner's work as we have seen.

Weiner's cartographic project should also be compared to a psychogeographic one, defined by Guy Debord in 1955: "The production of psychogeographical maps, or even the introduction of alterations such as more or less arbitrarily transposing maps of two different regions, can contribute to clarifying certain wanderings that express not subordination to randomness but complete *insubordination* to habitual influences (influences generally categorized as tourism, that popular drug as repugnant as sports or buying on credit)"[5] (fig. 183). Weiner's works and drawings are in themselves insubordinate structures, designed to dislodge even the most habitual forces (e.g. the emblematic character of flags, or the prepositional certitude of above and below). But markedly unlike psychogeographic maps, which are always tied to the specific practice of urban *dérive* either as a record of observation or as an instrument of rapid passage, Weiner's maps, like the works, never give directions. Being always partial and provisional, they do not pretend to capture the psychogeographic relief of cities, with their barriers and vortices, nor do they offer instructions on how to successfully initiate an act of "playful-constructive" drifting.[6] In fact, encoded within Weiner's maps is the always greater possibility that we will fail to cast off our habitual movements, and that release into psychogeographical terrain will remain an artistic exoticism, another kind of "popular drug."

A sense not of liberated motion but of curtailment characterizes Weiner's films *Passage To The North* (1981) and *Plowmans Lunch* (1982), where instead of the playful wandering of *dérive*, we witness a set of frustrated journeys, wherein "players" end more or less where they began (fig. 184). In a scene of seduction from *Plowmans Lunch* a man (Weiner) and a woman named Zachte Bern (Alice Zimmerman) are together on a bed in the cabin of a boat. Zachte says: "Emigration is like making art. It's super to find yourself in another place with another logic."

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[4] Robert Smithson quoted in Wood, *Rethinking The Power Of Maps,* 208.

[5] Guy Debord, "Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography," *Les Lèvres Nues* No. 6 (September 1955); http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/presitu/geography.html.

Taking off her jewelry, the man soberly responds: “So many of these people schlep around the same baggage from place hither and yon” (fig. 185a). The sailor’s melancholic cynicism recalls Rimbaud’s traveler’s lament: “The same bourgeois magic wherever your baggage sets you down.”[7] Kristin Ross writes that in *Le Bateau Ivre* Rimbaud would explore the sea in order to find a non-terrestrial mode of travel, unbound by the stasis of Bourgeois tourism, or the “locational movement” of commodity circulation.[8] In Rimbaud’s poetry, a commodified passage through fixed departure and arrival points is replaced by the “non-itinerary” of the drunken boat, and the gravitational displacements of the sea.[9] As Deleuze and Guattari have shown, however, such deterritorializing mobility is precisely how capitalism now functions.[10] That fact is reflected by *Plowmans Lunch*, wherein the liberatory promise of an unmapped itinerary is exposed as just one more cliché. As such, when we watch the sailor of *Plowmans Lunch* (Weiner) standing on the ship’s deck, wearily proclaiming, “I am drunk. And I have no desire not to be drunk, and I have no desire not to be afraid,” Rimbaud’s dream of the drunken boat’s unharnessed movement turns to disillusionment (fig. 185b). Despite their “playful-constructive” appearance, the ‘maps’ that follow are marked by a similar disenchantment.

The link between drawing and cartography is specifically articulated in Weiner’s 1984 book, *Factors In The Scope Of A Distance* (figs. 186a & 186b). Consisting entirely of graphic images without text, the book’s design is one of Weiner’s most colorful, replacing the seriousness and rigor of techno-scientific illustration with the Pop sensibility of a comic book adventure. Instead of story lines, letters of the alphabet link these images, creating a wordless abecedarium

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[6] Debord, Theory of the Dérive, *Les Lèvres Nues* No. 9 (December 1958); http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/theory.html.

[7] Arthur Rimbaud quoted in Kristin Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune* (London and New York: Verso, 2008), 96.

[8] Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune,* 119.

[9] Ross *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune,* 35. Ross writes: “’Cherche!’ the only sound in the poem, becomes a true *invitation au voyage* – the invitation to conceive of space *not* as a static reality but as active, generative, to experience space as created by an interaction, as something that our bodies reactivate, and through this reactivation, in turn modifies and transforms us.”

[10] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism And Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, Helen R. Lane (1972; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

in which pictures are concatenated, with no clear progression between them. Dieter Schwarz describes the content of these drawings as “a personal statement of the artist rendered in the context of watching a ship in the distance.” He goes on to explain that, “The vertical lines indicate the cartographic method of determining distance, and the horizontal elements render ships at sea as they appear on the horizon.”[11] As we have seen, Weiner uses this emblem of the ship repeatedly, and especially in conjunction with the aphorism, “WE ARE SHIPS AT SEA NOT DUCKS ON A POND.” On the other hand, without knowledge of those images or Schwarz’s iconographic analysis as guide, neither the identity of ships, nor the logic of cartographic measurements appears self-evident in this book. Following the title, one assumes that the drawings present an inventory of navigational tools, things like horizon lines, landmarks, coastlines, or intervals of time. The ship emblems themselves resemble cross-staffs, while gridded fields are perhaps meant to evoke sea charts (figs. 186c & 186d). Nonetheless, despite a comic book simplicity, *Factors In The Scope Of A Distance* remains perplexingly abstract, presenting a kind of dysfunctional atlas, compiled from an idiosyncratic set of “maps that get you nowhere.”[12]

Apart from an infusion of bright color, these images differ markedly from previous paradigmatic drawings, primarily in their handling of space. Although a predominant rectilinearity still implies the armature of the grid (certain drawings will have been sketched using graph paper), many give the distinct impression of forms drifting upon the unmarked reserve of the page. While some drawings still resemble schematic landscapes, others are far more ambiguous, as in one drawing which features a series of solid color fields invaded by slim triangular wedges (figs. 186e & 186f). Unlike the abstractions of *The Level of Water* or *A Question of Balance*, anchored by the opposition between above / below, equality/inequality,

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[11] Dieter Schwarz, “Learn To Read Art” in *Lawrence Weiner Books 1968 – 1989, Catalogue Raisonné*, ed. Dieter Schwarz (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther Konig / Le Nouveau Musée, 1989), 176.

[12] For a discussion on the role of the atlas within the practice of “collective empiricism” see Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2007), 19 – 27. Daston and Galison write that atlases play an essential part in establishing the “working objects” for any field of scientific inquiry, by guiding practitioners as to “what is worth looking at, how it looks, and, perhaps most important of all, how it should be looked at.” Atlases must therefore be definitive, showing the difference between what is essential and what can be overlooked, moving always towards a standardization that represses idiosyncratic particularities.

these figures devolve into sheer difference, with no apparent binary organizing the variations as a whole (though at times, the push and pull of colors or slight changes in scale signal a gap between near and far). As such, *Factors In The Scope Of A Distance* marks a movement away from dialectical contradiction towards a different way of relating terms. Not coincidentally, it is during this period of the early ‘80s that Weiner will start using artist’s sketchbooks as notebooks, so that drawing / thinking now take place upon blank pages. If it had once seemed critical to orient the work within the space of bureaucratic organization and calculation, writing upon a fabric of already written inscriptions, now Weiner’s drawings begin to play with a different sort of geometry, one that takes shape in a seemingly uncharted field (fig. 187).

In their discussion of “The Smooth and the Striated,” Deleuze and Guattari offer a model for understanding this spatial shift in Weiner’s practice. Following their analysis, one could read the earlier paradigmatic drawings as problematizations of “striated” space, a field / force that reins in deterritorializing flows (e.g. the immigration / emigration of subjects, or the flux of exchange produced by the decoding operations of modern capitalism).[13] Built upon a gridded architecture and evoking a Euclidian set of coordinates, Weiner’s early diagrammatic images do deploy territorializing forms of organization, producing sedentary spaces wherein movements and trajectories are subordinated to points, as in the rigid boundaries of *Coming And Going*. Often contained within rectangular frames, these drawings leave themselves available to statistical quantification and optical examination, organizing material flux into schematic binary oppositions, as seen in the “figures” for *The Level Of Water*. Persistently rectilinear and executed with mechanical exactitude, the paradigmatic drawings signal the anxiety that “calls forth striation” with its requirements to delineate and designate. Of course, if Weiner articulates a striated space, it will only be to undermine its categorical stability, as demonstrated by a host of drawings and works wherein grids are subjected to operations of removal (e.g. *A RECTANGULAR REMOVAL FROM A XEROXED GRAPH SHEET IN PROPORTION TO THE OVERALL DIMENSIONS OF THE SHEET).*

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[13] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 474 – 500.

While the geometric forms in *Factors In The Scope Of A Distance* still display characteristics of striation, these drawings nevertheless signal a turn towards what Deleuze and Guattari will call "smooth" space, a type of *dis*organization found in many of the works as well. In smooth space, the warp and weft of coordinates are replaced by an amorphous entanglement *(ABOVE BEYOND BELOW* [1986]). Instead of statistical distributions, metric regularities, or dialectic oppositions, one finds accumulations, intervals, and constant variation (*A PILE IN THE MIDST OF* [1988]). Distances in such spaces undergo a division that involves not only a shift in magnitude, but an essential change in nature – a spatial differentiation which seems already to be at stake in Weiner's repeated renderings of emblematic ships (*TAKEN FROM HERE TO WHERE IT CAME FROM AND TAKEN TO A PLACE AND USED IN SUCH A MANNER THAT IT CAN ONLY REMAIN AS A REPRESENTATION OF WHAT IT WAS WHERE IT CAME FROM* [1981]). Smooth spaces thus produce what Bergson characterizes as a qualitative, fusional, continuous multiplicity, as opposed to one that is homogenous and discrete. As these nonmetric multiplicities displace binary oppositions, and directionality overtakes dimensionality, smooth space unleashes nomadic forces of deterritorialization (*ENOUGH PUSH AND PULL TO MAKE A STRUCTURE GO TO PIECES* [1985]). No longer marking static sites of departure and arrival, points now become unfixed, subordinated to trajectories of abstract lines which proliferate orientations (*BROKEN FROM ITS MOORING* [1988]). Along with this inconstancy of orientation and migration of reference points, one encounters the indistinctness of an "Eskimo" space "wherein no line separates earth from sky," or space from that which it contains (*COVERED BY CLOUDS* [1989]). While smooth space may sound inherently more liberatory than striated, Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that what counts is how these spaces alternately produce and subordinate one another: "What interests us in operations of striation and smoothing are precisely the passages or combinations: how the forces at work within space continually striate it, and how in the course of its striation it develops other forces and emits new smooth spaces. Even the most striated city gives rise to smooth spaces: to live in the city as a nomad, or as a cave dweller."[14]

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[14] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 500.

Although Weiner's drawings and works move increasingly towards a looser, more fugitive space, they crucially do not point to an experience *prior* to structure or system. Such would be the territory of phenomenology's pre-objective ground, an abstract "spatiality without things" which Krauss finds in Richard Serra's sculpture, for instance.[15] Using language, Weiner emphasizes the work's situation within a given code, precluding any access to a pre-objective field. In a 1984 drawing, Weiner underscores the necessity of continually clashing with forces of containment, articulating the conflictual passage between striated and smooth, so as to avoid any illusion of unfettered movement or return to phenomenological origin. Co-opting a United States Government Memorandum sent from "HERE" to "THERE" on the subject of "LIFE LIBERTY & THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS," Weiner draws a fleet of emblematic ships dispersed across the page. Above a government advertisement to "Buy US Savings Bonds," Weiner writes a different slogan, an aphoristic reminder that our happiness is tied not to our dwelling (like sitting ducks), but to a restless and fortuitous state of being transient (like ships at sea). In this drawing / memo Weiner playfully but explicitly affirms that any attempts at displacement must first encounter head-on the omnipresence of an authoritative, disciplinary order.

In a page from a notebook dated June 1987- May 1988, Weiner pastes a drawing of a compass rose, north end up (fig. 188). The structure consists of a pair of open-ended perpendicular double lines, marked by a segmented black oval at the point of intersection. Variations on this configuration will serve as the principal structural element in a group of drawings entitled *Spheres Of Influence* from 1990 (figs. 189a & 189b). In this series, cardinal directions are abandoned while the intersections, now variously colored, are themselves warped and mobilized, hurled into space across a field of eight blank sheets. Whiplash arrows connect forms to fragments of hand-written and typed text. Merging traced elements with gestural lines drawn by a free hand, these unbound, vectored images resonate with the nomadic intensities that Deleuze and Guattari describe. Weiner's flight into indeterminate "smooth" space remains

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[15] Rosalind Krauss, "Richard Serra: Sculpture " [1986] in *Richard Serra*, ed. Hal Foster with Gordon Hughes (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2000), 99 -145.

measured, however, by a series of equations accompanying the figures, questioning the implications of these crossing paths, and their alternately expanding and contracting ovals (spheres):

> THE LARGER THE SPHERE OF INFLUENCE OF THE PROCESS = LESS SOPHISTICATION
>
> SOPHISTICATION = REDUCTION (EXPANSION) OF THE SPHERE OF INFLUENCE
>
> CRUDE (MORE BRUTAL) WELDING = SPILLAGE (IN FACT MORE AREA COVERED)
>
> VULGAR = SPREAD
>
> LACK OF FINESSE = EXPANSION OF THE SPHERE OF INFLUENCE
>
> LOSS OF COVERAGE = EXCESS OF SOPHISTICATION
>
> SOPHISTICATION / LACK OF SKILL = SPHERE OF INFLUENCE
>
> SLOPPY WELDING FIRST ORDER WELDING LACKING FINESSE SOPHISTICATED = EXPANSION OR REDUCTION OF SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

As in *Coming And Going*, Weiner mixes a sculptural process, one particularly associated with monumental public sculpture (welding), with a geopolitical structure of subordination / expansion (sphere of influence). As it happens, these drawings were made in the year just prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union (by the end of 1991), a turning point for one of the most powerful spheres of influence in modern history. In the wake of this collapse, Hardt and Negri would describe the installation of a radically new dynamics of power, positing the post-war, postmodern emergence of Empire as a totalizing sphere of influence, no longer dominated by modern configurations of imperialist nation-states but by the sovereignty of transnational corporate interests.[16] Coincidentally, Weiner's drawing gives an abstract sense of these new mechanisms of imperial (vs. imperialist) power, which rely no longer on boundaries or barriers but precisely on open space: "In this smooth space of Empire, there is no place of power – it is both everywhere and nowhere. Empire is an ou-topia, or really a non-place."[17] Exploiting the deterritorializing and decentering movements of currency, commodities, labor and rhizomatic networks of information, Hardt and Negri state that Empire's power is not vested in modern "striated" forms of disciplinary organization, but in enabling capitalism to operate in the "friction-free" *ou-topia* of smooth space,

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[16] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 2000), 306.

[17] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 190.

parasitically feeding off the creative, productive forces of the global multitude. These dynamics are registered in Weiner's drawing, wherein the power structure *itself* ("sphere of influence") is lightened and loosened, operating in an ungrounded field without horizon, pointing to the fact that as Hardt and Negri have argued, "difference, hybridity, and mobility are not liberatory in themselves."[18] While there may be more revolutionary potential in the pervasive displacements, new forms of subjectivity, as well as uncontrolled, undisciplined "nomadic desires"[19] that inhabit this smooth space, there is no guarantee that ever more brutal hierarchies and inequalities will not be perpetuated. Deleuze and Guattari had addressed this risk, although their faith in the revolutionary potential of smooth space remains:

> Movements, speed and slowness, are sometimes enough to reconstruct a smooth space. Of course, smooth spaces are not in themselves liberatory. But the struggle is changed or displaced in them, and life reconstitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new paces, switches adversaries. Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us.[20]

When Weiner discusses the context of these works, he speaks in ecological terms. In conjunction with the exhibition *Spheres Of Influence* at the ICA London in 1991 Weiner explained his idea of process and expansion:[21]

> This particular body of work comes from a series of work I was doing in Norway ... I was up in the rocks between Kristiansand and Stavangar and you could see the sea, sort of, smell the sea more than you could see it. And I realized that there's a thing called ground water. And whatever I was doing was going through the ground as well. So there were two parts to the work that I was making. There was the final thing, the 'HIT HARD (&)' which means those were the things, clearing it up and bringing it to. And at the same time there was something going on that I would not be able to see, which is the eventual flow into the sea or flow into the water system. And that's what this body of work is about. It's just on the other side. It really is this: shoot an arrow up in the air, know not where it lands.[22]

Weiner is referencing the work:

> *HIT HARD (&)*
> *--*
> *JUST ON THE OTHER SIDE*

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[18] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 156.

[19] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 253.

[20] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 500.

[21] *Lawrence Weiner: Spheres of Influence* was held at The Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, from January 25 – March 3, 1991.

[22] Weiner, interviewed by Matthew Collings on *The Late Show*, BBC2, first broadcast 27 February 1991.

among five other works shown with these drawings including:

CROSSED OVER (&)

JUST ON THE OTHER SIDE

GROUND DOWN (&)

JUST ON THE OTHER SIDE

ATTACHED TO (&)

JUST ON THE OTHER SIDE

CROSSED OUT (&)

JUST ON THE OTHER SIDE

(1990) (fig. 190)

The works each incorporate a graphic horizon line separating action (*HIT HARD (&)*) from location (*JUST ON THE OTHER SIDE*), with the implication of a barrier having been crossed. *Spheres of Influence* formed part of the works' *mise-en-scène*, creating a context for the sometimes vulgar and excessive spread of impacts/influences that are often incalculable and invisible, but not always desirable: shoot an arrow up, know not where it lands.

The distinctive intersections of Weiner's *Spheres Of Influence* recall El Lissitzky's *Proun G7* from 1923, although Weiner states that he did not have Lissitzky's work in mind when he generated these forms (figs. 191 & 192).[23] Significantly, both artists' structures feature the pattern of crossed paths and segmented oval, placed in a context of motion. More pronounced in Lissitzky's *Proun* is the impression of a structure not only drifting across space but of turning within it, as if the oval were a corkscrew twisting into or out of the plane of the painting. Lissitzky himself describes this transition within the work:

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[23] Weiner in conversation with the author, October 2, 2012, New York.

> We saw that the surface of the *Proun* ceases to be a picture and turns into a structure round which we must circle, looking at it from all sides, peering down from above, investigating from below. The result is that the one axis of the picture which stood at right angles to the horizontal was destroyed. Circling around it, we screw ourselves into space… We have set the *Proun* in motion so we obtain a number of axes of projection.[24]

Bois identifies this reversible, rotating dynamic in Lissitzky's *Prouns* as the core of their radicality. According to Bois, Lissitzky's use of axonometric projection would lead eventually to "the foundering of perception," eliminating both the stasis of a perspectival viewpoint and the anthropomorphism of a phenomenal orientation. Following Malevich's call to "liberate us from the horizon of forms," Lissitzky strives towards the abolishment of fixed orientation, requiring an effort of reading based upon constant reconsideration of coordinates, producing images that function operationally as opposed to pictorially.

In many respects, Bois' analysis could easily apply to Weiner's practice, which is no less invested in effects of perceptual destabilization, multiplying not only points of view but points of reference, figuring forth the horizon-less multiplicities of smooth space. Both artists undoubtedly share a commitment to the articulation not of pictures, but of visual/linguistic structures that are built to displace perspectival and phenomenological privileges through a loss of unitary point of view. As with the *Proun*, reversibility is a major feature of Weiner's book designs in particular, wherein necessities of translation often result in books that literally flip upside down, or reverse course altogether, moving simultaneously from left to right and right to left (as happens in *Apples & Eggs Salt & Pepper*).[25] In *Spheres Of Influence*, however, a structure whose revolutionary significance had once been guaranteed by its form (*Proun*), is evoked in the presentation of a potentially reactionary formulation (sphere of influence). In view of the utter collapse of Lissitzky's dream of Soviet Socialist utopia, the *Proun* now suffers a dialectical inversion. No longer inherently signaling liberation, its spectral re-appearance as a "sphere of influence" only confirms Barthes' fateful assessment that "there is no language which can be lastingly revolutionary."[26]

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[24] El Lissitzky quoted in Yve-Alain Bois, "El Lissitzky: Radical Reversibility," *Art in America* (April 1988), 174.

[25] Several of Weiner's publications exploit this mode of reversible reading including: *In Relation To A Probable Use* (1978), *Apples & Eggs Salt & Pepper* (1999) and *Out From Under* (2000).

By means of “the dialectical image,” Walter Benjamin holds out the almost magical possibility of harnessing the utopian desires of the past for the purposes of the present. Eagleton vividly describes this particular historical mechanism as: “the shocking confrontation in which time is arrested to a compact monad, spatialized to a shimmering field of force, so that the political present may redeem an endangered moment of the past by wrenching it into illuminating correspondence with itself.”[27] Weiner’s dialectical confrontation with Lissitzky’s work is both more illuminating and more sobering than this, as Weiner’s drawing simultaneously redeems a revolutionary aspiration, while registering the enervation of a particular formal intervention. As seen in *The Sea & The Sky*, when a *Proun*-like structure emerges in *Spheres Of Influence*, it does so with equal delicacy, but without the same intricacy. It is enough for Weiner to gesture loosely towards the idea of Constructivist vision, in order to figure both its urgent relevance and its historical limitation.

A more explicit reference to Lissitzky’s work appears in a set of drawings from 1999, featuring Weiner’s own tale of revolutionary struggle. “Oval Over The Triangle” pits one geometric form against another as the shapes float together in space, a clear link to Lissitzky’s *About Two Squares* (1922)[28] (figs. 193a, 193b & 194). Regarding the content of Lissitzky’s book, Bois argues that its epic signification remains purposefully “weak,” forcing the reader into an active effort of construction, as the artist himself exhorts:

> DON’T READ
> TAKE PAPER COLUMNS BLOCKS
> FOLD COLOR BUILD

The necessity to actively produce meaning is even more extreme in Weiner’s images, wherein the significance of oval (eccentricity?) and triangle (hierarchy?) remains as indefinite as Lissitzky’s red square appears over-determined. Weiner’s drawings thus present a kind of

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[26] Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (1953; New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), 75.

[27] Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1990), 327.

[28] Gregor Stemmrich mentions the connection between Weiner’s drawings and Lissitzky’s *About Two Squares* in “Showing & Telling – Drawing & Writing” in *Written On The Wind: Lawrence Weiner Drawings*, ed.

dysfunctional epic inasmuch as a known trajectory ("VICTORY OF THE OVAL") does not yet tell us towards what end it progresses. Similarly, Lissitzky's *About Two Squares* leaves the reader hanging, as the last page reads:

> HERE
>
> IT ENDED
>
> FURTHER

Beyond the fait accompli of "RED" victory, ("ON THE BLACK SETTLED RED CLEARLY") the future remains in question. For Lissitzky, one of the most important characteristics of a book, along with its filmic capacity for "simultaneous collective reception," was just this inherent open-endedness. Lissitzky writes about this quality in relation to children's books, which remain an important part of Weiner's practice (figs. 195a – 195c):

> By reading our children are already acquiring a new plastic language; they are growing up with a different relationship to the world and to space, to shape and to *color*; they will surely create another book.[29]

This struggle to "create another book" was, of course, one of the revolutionary moments of 1960s art. Ed Ruscha speaks about the disruption his own book work caused:

> My books were very hot items – it was hot art to me, almost too hot to handle. I liked the idea that my books would disorient, and it seemed to happen that people would look at them and the books would look very familiar, yet they were like a wolf in sheep's clothing. I felt that they were very powerful statements, maybe the most powerful things I've done. My work is not revolutionary, but the books that I did were, at that point, a can opener that got into something else.[30]

In 1978 Ruscha and Weiner collaborated on the filmic book *Hard Light*, a disarmingly prosaic photonovel that follows the story of "a new girl in town," but is once more, "a wolf in sheep's clothing" (figs. 196a & 196b). Clearly, Ruscha and Weiner share a desire to disorient, first and

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Alice Zimmerman (Cologne: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) and Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2013), 110.

[29] El Lissitzky, "Our Book (1926/27)" reprinted in *El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts*, ed. Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers (London: Thames & Hudson, 1968), 359.

[30] Ed Ruscha in Bernard Blistène, "Conversation with Ed Ruscha" [1990] reprinted in Ed Ruscha, *Leave Any Information At The Signal*, ed. Alexandra Schwarz (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2002), 303. In this interview Ruscha makes the connection between his painting and book work: "I consider my books to be strictly visual materials I even perceived them as bits of sculpture, in a way. I even painted on the sides of my canvases for a few years to accentuate the idea that this was a three-dimensional thing. I would make a painting that said "Radio," for example, then paint the title on the side. In an odd way, it was like a book, and so my paintings were book covers in a way. That's it, I do book covers."

foremost by using language out of place, or as Weiner himself would put it "when you use language the shit hit the fan."[31] There remains, however, a significant distinction between their textual practices, perhaps best expressed in Ruscha's fascination with a kind of aimless object: "The attraction would be that they (books) would be worthless to people. It's like doing something for no reason – or doing something as a great exercise, as I look at it."[32] The gratuitousness of exorbitant expenditure, or "doing something for no reason" is ultimately not what motivates Weiner's work.[33] As already announced in the book title *Towards A Reasonable End*, Weiner will utilize effects such as the undecidability of diagrams or the bewilderment of excessive variations, always as a *means.* Indeed, Weiner refers to his own work as "presentation of an apt methodology,"[34] in effect a structure to be used towards some purpose, not yet inscribed within it. Once more, the example of Lissitzky becomes relevant, inasmuch as Lissitzky considered *Prouns* not as ends in themselves, but as "the station on the road towards constructing a new form."[35] "*Proun's* power," he wrote, "is to create aims."[36] Weiner's work aspires to nothing less, as the artist proclaims: "It's the way that all art is about understanding your place in the sun, understanding where you're standing and what your relation to the world is."[37] A notebook dated 2002- January 2003 articulates the necessity of drawing as part of the artist's effort of orientation:

> BELOW THE LEVEL OF WATER WHERE THE SEA CANNOT MOVE
> ANY PLATEAU IS UP ABOVE THE BELOW
> ONE MUST DRAW TO FIND ONES PLACE IN THE SUN
> (fig. 197)

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[31] Weiner in conversation with Liz Kotz on the occasion of the exhibition *Lawrence Weiner: As Far As The Eye Can See*, at the Whitney Museum, New York (January 17, 2007).

[32] Ruscha, in Diane Spodarek "Feature Interview: Edward Ruscha" [1977] reprinted in *Leave Any Information At The Signal*, 75.

[33] For a discussion of Georges Bataille's concept of matter as pure loss and sumptuary expenditure see Yve-Alain Bois, "Base Materialism" in Bois and Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide* (New York: Zone Books, 1997), 51-62.

[34] Weiner in dialog with Kathryn Bigelow in the video *Green As Well As Blue As Well As Red* (1976).

[35] Lissitzky quoted in Margolin, Victor *The Struggle For Utopia: Rodchenko, Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy*, 1917-1946 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 33.

[36] Lissitzky quoted in *The Struggle For Utopia: Rodchenko, Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy*, 1917-1946, 33.

lost at sea

In a notebook dated Summer 1993- July 1994 Weiner makes a collage bearing the words "LOST AT SEA" featuring a map, an encyclopedia entry and a stamped set of coordinates all pointing to the Sargasso Sea (fig. 198). The Sargasso Sea is itself the kind of inaccessible, fictional place that Smithson described, simultaneously a legendary sea without shores, (a "Non-Site" filled with secrets and mystery) and a North Atlantic gyre (a "Site" threatened by warming waters and floating plastics). Along with this reference to a vanishing location we find a litany of withdrawals:

> WITHOUT A POT TO PISS IN – WITHOUT A MEANS OF EXPLANATION – WITHOUT A WILL TO WALK ON WATER – WITHOUT A PORT OF CALL – WITHOUT A FLAG TO WAVE – WITHOUT THE RIGHT OF WAY - WITHOUT THE WHEREWITHAL – WITHOUT A MEANS TO AN END – WITHOUT A SONG IN YOUR HEART – WITHOUT A GYROSCOPIC FIX – WITHOUT THE STARS IN YOUR EYES – WITHOUT A MANIFEST OR DESTINY

Having moved beyond the crisis of representation, Weiner's maps grapple with a perhaps more extreme crisis of spatial orientation, whose vital import was already registered in the deceptive banality of Huebler's *Location Pieces*, and summarized in Huebler's concise observation: "Where a thing is involves everything else..."[38]

In his 1967 lecture *Of Other Spaces*, Foucault had shown that our idea of "location" is in fact a historical one. Defining our current epoch as one of space and simultaneity, "the epoch of

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[37] Weiner in "If the Shoe Fits, Wear It A Conversation with Edward Leffingwell," *Shift, no. 1* (1990), reprinted in *Having Been Said, Writings & Interviews of Lawrence Weiner, 1968 – 2003* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2004), 218.

[38] Douglas Huebler in "Four Interviews with Barry, Huebler, Kosuth, Weiner," *Arts Magazine* (February 1969), 22-23.

juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed,"[39] Foucault underscores the historicity of space, which was not always so concerned with relations of propinquity, storage and circulation. In particular, Foucault recounts the way in which a Medieval spatiality based on hierarchic "emplacement" was transcended by the work of Galileo, in order to arrive at our current concept of localization:

> For the real scandal of Galileo's work lay not so much in his discovery, or rediscovery, that the earth revolved around the sun, but in his constitution of an infinite, and infinitely open space. In such a space the place of the Middle Ages turned out to be dissolved, as it were; a thing's place was no longer anything but a point in its movement, just as the stability of a thing was only its movement indefinitely slowed down. In other words, starting with Galileo and the seventeenth century, extension was substituted for localization.[40]

Foucault goes on to question whether this "theoretical desanctification of space" has actually been achieved in practice, for so many inviolable spatial hierarchies remain in our midst, including the divisions between public and private, leisure and work, culture and use. The seeming immovability of these structures, is no doubt part of the reason that Galileo becomes a subject of great interest to Weiner. Several notebook drawings from 2007, in fact, question whether or not we still believe in Galileo's discovery. One image displays the following text arranged around a drawing of a vortex: "IS GALILEO RIGHT IS GALILEO WRONG AT THE LEAST SOMETHING TURNS"[41] (fig. 199).

In a 2007 exhibition entitled *Inherent In The Rhumb Line*, Weiner showed works and drawings devoted to seafaring and mapping, confronting the problem of how to achieve a "desanctification" of space, and shedding a light retrospectively on the artist's cartographic imagination (fig. 200).[42] Like *Factors In The Scope Of A Distance*, the exhibition focused on location and navigation, but now filtered through the specific device of rhumbs. In diametric

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[39] Michel Foucault, "Of Others Spaces" published in French in 1984 in the journal *Architecture-Mouvement-Continuité*, based on a lecture delivered in March, 1967; reprinted in *diacritics* (Spring 1986), 22.

[40] Foucault, "Of Others Spaces," 23.

[41] Lawrence Weiner Notebook January - September 2007, Moved Pictures Archive, New York.

[42] The exhibition *Lawrence Weiner: Inherent In The Rhumb Line* was held at The National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London (March 22 – December 9, 2007). I am deeply grateful to Lisa Le Feuvre for her insights on this body of work and her extremely helpful suggestions for avenues of research.

opposition to the map that gets you nowhere, rhumbs remain the easiest way to chart a course in the air or on the sea, because they are lines of constant compass bearing. On a specific type of map, namely a Mercator projection, rhumb lines appear straight, making it simpler to draw and follow them on a chart. That directness is only an illusion, however, because traced upon the surface of the globe, rhumb lines or loxodromes are actually spiral courses that take the traveler "slantwise running." While they are not the shortest distance between points, they are the surest, as a 1569 Flemish map-maker proclaimed: "If you wish to sail from one port to another, here is a chart, and a straight line on it, and if you follow this line carefully you will certainly arrive at your destination. But the length of the line may not be correct. You may get there sooner or may not get there as soon as you expected but you will certainly get there."[43] That purported certainty is what made rhumb lines so critical to a maritime history, not only of exploration and trade, but of exploitation and colonialist expansion, a fact acknowledged in Weiner's animated drawing for the show, which flashes the on-screen text: "LOOTING THE WORLD WITH THE HELP OF THE RHUMB LINE." Offering a prime example of mapping's function as a force of "striation," rhumbs territorialize that very "archetype of smooth space," the sea.[44] According to Deleuze and Guattari, the sea is, in fact, the first smooth space to be subjugated by striation, through the innovations of astronomical bearings and geographical maps which enabled open water navigation, and the subsequent establishment of hierarchical modes of territorial subjugation.[45]

In glancing at Weiner's maps for the exhibition, each one emblazoned with the exhortation "SAIL ON", one might be deceived into thinking that rhumb lines are inherently soaring and graceful things (figs. 201a – 201e). In fact, the drawings offer a graphic antithesis to the logic of rhumbs, defeating any sense of navigational certitude by replacing straight lines of constant bearing with ethereal, web-like configurations that drift lightly across the page. All stasis having been abolished, every element of the map is dynamized. Currents of arrows and

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[43] David Greenhood, *Mapping* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago, 1964), 28.

[44] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 479.

[45] For an overview of cartography's role in imperialist and colonialist expansion see David Harvey, *Cosmpolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). Benedict Anderson discusses the role of maps in the concretization of nation-state identities in *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006), 170 – 178.

emblematic waves follow compass roses spinning like atoms in fission, while curving arcs suggest an unraveling global grid of longitudes and latitudes. As in *Spheres Of Influence*, Weiner's drawing generates a smooth space out of a rigidly conformal entity, and once again, texts effect a necessary re-direction, compelling the viewer to consider further what these trajectories mean (e.g. "THOSE WITH A WAY HAVE THE GROUNDS FOR LOXODROMIC IMPUNITY" or "DISTORTION AS A MEANS DELUSION AS AN END"). Weiner's graphic lyricism maintains a critical function, exposing the map's role in enforcing dominant spatial relations ("KEEPING WITHIN THE LINES"), while at the same time suggesting other vectors. Thus, the drawings recall Foucault's diagrams, wherein virtual power relations are mapped in their as yet unrealized, diffuse multiplicity, and then superimposed with other maps that show unbound points of creativity, change and resistance.[46]

Overtly referencing mechanisms of "DISTORTION" and "DELUSION" Weiner dispels any notion of maps as an innate or universal form of spatial intelligence, thus exemplifying what David Wood calls a practice of "counter-mapping."[47] According to Wood's cartographic history, common conceptions of maps as primal, instinctive wayfaring devices obscure cartography's specific origins in consolidating formations of power, most especially the integrity of nation states and the indisputability of private property relations. The 19th century Vidalian model of geography offers an influential example of this naturalizing tendency, promoting geography as "the science of landscape" and designating the geographer as one who interprets natural conditions.[48] Such pretensions to scientific exactitude are famously skewered by Jorge Luis Borges who writes of a certain "Map of the Empire," perfectly congruent with its territory and therefore perfectly useless.[49] The Imperial map's epic failure lay in the mistaken assumption that its instrumentality consisted of accurately depicting the land, rather than in establishing a desired configuration of it.

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[46] See Gilles Deleuze, "A New Cartographer" in *Foucault,* trans. Seán Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 23-44.

[47] Denis Wood, "Mapmaking Counter-Mapping and Map Art in the Mapping of Palestine" in *Rethinking the Power of Maps*, 231 – 255.

[48] Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune,* 86.

[49] Borges, Jorge Luis, "On Exactitude in Science" in *The Aleph and Other Stories*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin Group, 1998), 181.

Wood argues that maps are a relatively recent historical phenomenon emerging as a graphic artifact in the 16th century, in order to link a territory to its various interests, enabling the concretization of the abstract identity of nation states (i.e. "AN INDIVISIBLE ENTITY"). The inherently fictional nature of all maps is attested to by the existence of virtually unlimited varieties of possible map projections, which prove that the mathematical translation of data points from a three-dimensional sphere to a two-dimensional surface is a question not of universal truth, but of provisional use. This is the lesson of Agnes Denes' 1979 book of drawings *Isometric Systems In Isotropic Space: Map Projections From The Study Of Distortion Series, 1973 – 1979*, which redefines cartography as "a tantalizing game" and points to several distortions which can be compared to Weiner's own projections (figs. 202a & 202b):

> Point of departure: rejection of existing information, zero dimension. Followed by the amassing of new data, assessment and choice. The anatomy of form is studied, vectors are built, earth measurements and scale factors rearranged, grid systems created and dimensions added. And when the perfect form slowly emerges, it is carefully obliterated, dissected and pulled apart, not only to find further beauty but to gain other perspectives. The live skin of the globe is peeled, the dynamic mantle stripped bare to expose the membrane of grids and coordinates down to the core of gravitational mass, the nucleus. At this point the elusive processes and invisible structures begin to emerge. Longitude and Latitude lines are unraveled to form networks of consciousness on new levels of awareness. The remaining points of intersections are cut, and the continents allowed to drift. Gravity has been tampered with, earth mass altered, polar tension released. The north pole is forced to meet the south or they are pulled apart.[50]

Denes' hallucinatory text, laced with references to entropy, polar implosion, and fragmentation resonates with Smithson's apocalyptic language, although her projections transform catastrophic global distortions into breathtakingly elegant configurations such as *The Pyramid, The Egg* (*sinusoidal ovoid), The Snail (helical toroid), The Cube, The Hot Dog, The Lemon (prolate ovoid) The Doughnut (tangent torus)*. Denes' flagrantly imaginary contortions are, however, only extreme versions of the inherent falsifications and delusions by which all maps must operate. This fictive condition is routinely suppressed beneath the locational accuracy by which maps gain their authority. Wood argues that by means of such pretensions to veracity, and an illusory iconicity, maps hypostasize the formations they depict (e.g. the boundaries of a country or the

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[50] Agnes Denes, *Isometric Systems In Isotropic Space: Map Projections From The Study Of Distortion Series, 1973 – 1979* (Rochester, NY: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1979), 3.

delineations of a coast-line), thus perpetrating what Barthes calls the “ideological abuse” of myth, which functions invariably as “the decorative display of *what-goes-without-saying*.”[51]

Leaving behind the quasi-scientific precision of Weiner’s earlier paradigmatic drawings, the maps for *Inherent In The Rhumb Line* avoid ideological abuse, using a textual “legend” that remains overtly rhetorical, and a gestural inscription that reveals its own contingency. The instability implicit in *The Level Of Water* is here made explicit, as sweeping curves overtake rectilinear forms. and cardinal directions hurtle off on their own courses, abandoning what geographer David Harvey refers to as the cartographic illusion of secure reference points.[52] In her analysis of the “geography fever” that swept France after the suppression of the Commune, Ross points out that the Haussmanization of Paris was built upon just such a “cartographic illusion” of referential stability, epitomized in “the fantasy of the straight line.”[53] Ross contrasts this tool of confinement with the *curve*: “what changes directions without forming angles, what is not straight, what is distinct from the fixed, metric and sedentary essences of the town square grid.”[54] Indeed, Weiner’s increasing preference for curvilinear forms counteracts the stultification of grids, and the constrained mobility of fantastical straight lines such as the rhumb. And yet, one wonders what it would mean to “SAIL ON” armed with maps such as these, in which the most basic methods by which we make our way in the world are no longer naturally assumed, but ruthlessly questioned. Weiner readily admits the outsized ambition of his practice, often declaring: “I don’t want to fuck up somebody’s day on their way to work. I want to fuck up their whole life.”[55] With as much decorative seduction as he can muster, Weiner will try to upend our everyday trajectories by displacing habitual patterns of orientation, challenging the validity not just of rhumbs, but of borders, boundaries, horizons, centers, peripheries, and even standard prepositions. In fact,

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[51] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 11.

[52] David Harvey argues for cartography’s role in buttressing the illusion of “clear-cut” reference points - e.g. state-formations - during a period in which fixed territorialities and disciplinary configurations, such as those of the nation-state, have suffered increasing destabilization / deterritorialization. See Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom,* 274 – 276.

[53] Ross, *The Emergence Of Social Space*, 95.

[54] Ross, *The Emergence Of Social Space,* 82 – 83.

[55] Weiner in “Design Matters Live with Lawrence Weiner,” filmed interview with Debbie Millman at Weiner’s New York studio, directed and co-produced by Hillman Curtis (2008).

every convenient distortion that falls under the category of “what-goes-without-saying,” will be subjected to scrutiny, including the wisdom of being guided by the North Star (figs. 203 & 204).[56]

In a notebook dated May 2006 - January 2007 Weiner includes photographs from two *Rhumb Line* drawings, overlain with a revolving compass rose and the stenciled text: “WHEN REQUIRE PRECEDES DESIRE”, below which he writes:

> KEPT WITHIN THE LINES   ASSUMING A DIRECTION
> VOYAGING TO ACQUIRE THAT WHICH IS NECESSARY TO FULFILL EXISTENCE AT THE START OF THE VOYAGE.
> (fig. 201f)

Here Weiner’s map seems to warn against the *known* versus the unknown, implying that the voyager’s true perils lie in following a set course.”[57] Weiner would state that the artist’s duty is to avoid assumptions of direction, thereby taking “voyages into thinking things that were unthinkable.”[58] In *Heterologies*, Michel de Certeau explores the problem of how to expel thought from habitual, pre-ordained movement by, for instance, following the illegitimate drift of fictional writing or the wandering paths of mystic speech. In his chapters on Foucault, who Deleuze called “the New Cartographer,” de Certeau focuses on the displacements wrought by epistemological discontinuity. He writes, “The ground of our certainty is shaken when it is revealed that we can no longer think a thought from the past.”[59] The problem, as Foucault poses it, is how to move beyond the present, “how and to what extent it would be possible to think otherwise.”[60] Foucault

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[56] The North Star or Polaris frequently appears in Weiner’s recent work, and is the material focus of the exhibition and book *Out From Under*, published in Arabic, English and Hebrew by Dvir Gallery in 2000.

[57] Regarding the transformational aims of Rimbaud’s poetry, Ross writes: “The space of the voyage, whose unmapped itinerary lies in the dashes and ellipses that crowd the end of the poem, merges with a temporal passage (‘And we’ll take a long time…’) that guarantees that the voyagers will not be the same individuals at the end of the trip that they were at the beginning.” See Ross, *The Emergence Of Social Space*, 35.

[58] Weiner in conversation with David Batchelor in conjunction with the exhibition, *Lawrence Weiner: Inherent In The Rhumb Line*, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England [March 22, 2007]; http://www.rmg.co.uk/upload/mp3/lawrence-weiner-in-conversation.mp3). Weiner’s description of the artist’s role echoes Lefebvre’s notion of thinking as the articulation of what has not yet been thought, and Deleuze and Guattari who would write that “To think is to voyage.” See Deleuze and Guattari, *One Thousand Plateaus*, 482.

[59] Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: The University Of Minnesota Press, 1986), 177.

[60] Michel Foucault, *l’usage des plaisirs, vol. 2 in Histoire de la sexualité* (1984) as quoted in de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, 194.

gives a glimpse of the spatial upheaval such thinking requires in his preface to *The Order of Things*, wherein he delights in the monstrosity of Borges' Chinese encyclopedia:

> This book first arose out of a passage in Borges, or of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought – our thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography – breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things, and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinctions between the Same and the Other.[61]

Reading Foucault's description, it almost seems as though Borges' text could be mapped onto Weiner's drawings, wherein we find landmarks shattered, geographic certainties unraveled, ordered surfaces dispersed, and paradigmatic oppositions collapsed. There is, however, a cost to all this dislocation, and discontinuity, a violence at being thrown headlong into "the abyss of meaning." At the frontier of Classical thought, marked by the presence of Sade, Foucault will find not the jubilation of a new style of thinking, but despair at our profound conceptual inadequacy:

> After him, violence, life and death, desire and sexuality will extend, below the level of representation an immense expanse of shade which we are now attempting to recover, as far as we can in our discourse in our freedom in our thought. But our thought is so brief, our freedom so enslaved, our discourse so repetitive, that we must face the fact that that expanse of shade below is really a bottomless sea.[62]

always at a distance

Arguing for the necessity of assigning a meaning to the apparent meaninglessness of everyday life, Henri Lefebvre writes: "In this world you just do not know where you stand; you are led astray by mirages when you try to connect a signifier to a signified – declamation, declaration or propaganda by which what you should believe or be is signified."[63] In *Everyday Life In the Modern World* (1968) Lefebvre denounced the proliferation of written language as the very means

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[61] Foucault, Michel, *The Order Of Things: An Archaeology Of The Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970), xv.

[62] Foucault, *The Order Of Things*, 211.

[63] Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life In The Modern World*, trans. Sacha Rabinovitch (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1984), 25.

of implementing an existence stripped of “the ‘real’ referential,” wherein meaning and substance have vanished in the face of bureaucratically controlled consumption.[64] In line with Baudrillard, Lefebvre defined Capitalist consumption as a relation not with objects but with signs and symbols, a nightmare enacted by Bouvard and Pécuchet: “They are at work, and their endurance (our own) is tremendous; they dive head first into signifiers, they swim, swallow mouthfalls of the inebriating tide that carries them and though they are breathless they stick to it. In the end, all they gain is ‘Words, words and wind.’”[65] This tide of words is exactly where Weiner’s work places us (*WRITTEN ON THE WIND* [1998]) (fig. 205). Rather than eroding the substantiality of reference, however, Weiner attempts to complicate our experience of the real, hollowed out by linguistic designation but never supplanted by it. Instead of prescribing the course of our actions, Weiner’s adamantly non-instructional works and drawings throw all activities into doubt, enabling not the breathless consumption of signs but a constant search for meaning.

On the other hand, the referential capacities upon which Weiner’s work depends for meaningful spatial intervention would be thoroughly discredited by Lefebvre, who argues that the spatial distortions wrought by language stem in large part from a modernist uncoupling of Signifier and Signified, resulting in a detrimental condition of fascination in which signs float in swarms, causing perceptible reality to lose its stable reference points, ushering in a space characterized by complete relativity.[66] In *The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1984), Jameson expands upon the spatial dystopia of a postmodern condition, which he views not in terms of the potentially liberating forces of “deterritorialization,” but negatively, as a depthless, schizophrenically fragmented and derealizing space, flattened by “the widespread textualization of the outside world.” Here, subjects are incapacitated by a spatial confusion which renders them incapable of perceiving their place within the unrepresentable totality of society’s structures. Instead of Deleuze and Guattari’s call for nomadism and experimentation, Jameson seeks an antidote to temporal and spatial dislocation in “an aesthetic of cognitive mapping,” aimed at giving the

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[64] According to Lefebvre’s thesis, a language of precision and calculation, of “scriptures” and programming codes, has overtaken our existence, exacerbating a societal tendency towards “terrorism” and repression. See Lefebvre, *Everyday Life In The Modern World*.

[65] Lefebvre, *Everyday Life In The Modern World*, 137.

subject "some new heightened sense of its place in the global system."[67] Four years later, Jameson elaborates on this concept of cognitive mapping, citing Conceptual art, along with the utopian visions of science fiction, as exemplary practices: "Thus, 'conceptual art,' too, surely stands under the sign of spatialization, in the sense in which one is tempted to say, every problematization or dissolution of inherited form leaves us high and dry in space itself."[68] That description may remind us of a confrontation with Weiner's maps, wherein the stability of everything from horizon lines to celestial markers is thrown into doubt, leaving us for a moment at least, "LOST AT SEA". Jameson goes on to argue, however, that the effect of this dislocation is to return the subject to an act of self-reflection:

> Conceptual art may be described as a Kantian procedure whereby, on the occasion of what first seems to be an encounter with a work of art of some kind, the categories of the mind itself – normally not conscious, and inaccessible to any direct representation or to any thematizable self-consciousness or reflexibility – are flexed, their structuring presence now felt laterally by the viewer like musculature or nerves which normally remain insensible in the form of those peculiar mental experiences Lyotard terms paralogisms – in other words, perceptual paradoxes that we cannot think or unravel by way of conscious abstractions and which bring us up short against the visual occasions.[69]

Following Jameson's formulation we are led right back where we started, with a body of work whose purported aim is to restore our contact with "the mind itself" through an interior flexion of its perceptual categories. If, however, Weiner's drawings and works enable us to confront the spatial confusion into which we have been plunged, it cannot only be for the sake of a paradoxical conceptual exercise that provides us with a sense of our own minds at work.

There is a different way in which Weiner's structures perform operations of cognitive mapping, based not on a self-reflexive Kantian procedure, but on a radical eccentricity. Jameson himself suggests the need for such a movement when he describes postmodern spatiality as one in which distance in general and critical distance in particular no longer exist. He goes on to diagnose our postmodern bodies as "bereft of spatial coordinates and practically (let alone

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[66] Lefebvre, *Everyday Life In The Modern World*, 112 – 120.

[67] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism Or The Cultural Logic Of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 54.

[68] Jameson, *Postmodernism Or The Cultural Logic Of Late Capitalism,* 157.

[69] Jameson, *Postmodernism Or The Cultural Logic Of Late Capitalism,* 157.

theoretically) incapable of distantiation."[70] In his melancholic condemnation of urban life, Heidegger had already bemoaned a "shrinking" of distances born from "technological dominion" and the equivalences of market capitalism: "Everything gets lumped together into uniform distancelessness… What is it that unsettles and thus terrifies? It shows itself and hides itself in the *way* in which everything presences, namely in the fact that despite all conquest of distance the nearness of things remains absent."[71] By contrast, this collapse of distance had once been interpreted positively by Walter Benjamin, who theorized that as mechanical reproduction brought things "closer" to the masses, resulting in the decay of aura ("the unique phenomenon of distance, however close it may be"[72]), objects would be released from cult and ritual value to take on new political functions. This technologically mediated presence of art would no longer foster individual contemplation, but specific historical critique and "simultaneous collective experience."[73] More recently, Paul Virilio confirmed the bankruptcy of such ideals, denouncing technologically administered "telepresence" as a degraded form of experience, one that defeats criticality altogether by creating a narcissistic collapse of distanced vision. According to Virilio, the most important philosophical question is no longer "Who am I really?" but, "Where am I actually?"[74] This urgency of finding our place in the world is made doubly imperative by the derealizing impact of telepresence, our contemporary milieu of monitors and information flows which impedes an ability to determine location, to perceive temporal and spatial distance, to journey through space, and to feel the weight and bulk of the things around us. In telepresence, there is no longer duration, or any real possibility of displacement. Instead, the viewer experiences ubiquity, instantaneity, omniscience and omnipresence. Insidiously, these powers are not democratically distributed, but belong to a privileged perspective, motivated by an

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[70] Jameson, *Postmodernism Or The Cultural Logic Of Late Capitalism,* 48.

[71] Heidegger quoted in Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom,* 182.

[72] Walter Benjamin, "The Work Of Art In the Age Of Mechanical Reproduction" [1936] in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), 222.

[73] Benjamin, "The Work Of Art In the Age Of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations*, 234.

[74] Paul Virilio, "Polar Inertia" [1990], in *The Virilio Reader*, ed. James Der Derian (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 131. For Virilio's discussion of telepresence, which he links to the catastrophic threat of total war, see also *Art As Far As The Eye Can See* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2007) and *Open Sky* (London; New York: Verso, 1997).

imperialistic, egocentric desire to make every space accessible to a dominant gaze (another example of "striation"). For Virilio, this abandonment of vast horizons for the "generalized immediacy" of the boxed screen creates an illusory trap, blocking nomadic movement with the inaction of "polar inertia." Virilio's warning brings to mind the spectacularly languorous quality of many contemporary art installations in which viewers have been induced to lie down, losing themselves in the womb-like surround of psychedelic film, gazing at a mirror spinning slowly on the ceiling, or staring at the effulgence of an ersatz sun.

Weiner's work is designed to propel us out of such torpor, through a transient intervention of language and materials that heightens our perception of distance in order to avoid collapsing into egocentric fascination. Notably, Weiner refers to his drawings as *star* maps, invoking a method of navigation and orientation, based not on familiarity with those things nearest to us, but on our sensual connection with the remotest part of our existence, thus marking our place within an unrepresentable totality (what Jameson will call "class consciousness"). In a page from a notebook dated July 2010 – May 2012, Weiner once again shows through a simple proliferation of terms, how precarious and disorienting the scope of this expanse can be: "AT A DISTANCE IN THE DISTANCE IN A DISTANCE FROM A DISTANCE" (figs. 206a & 206b). Insisting always on this interval, Weiner defeats the "generalized arrival" of telepresence, opening onto a horizon beyond the framing devices of page, screen, book, wall, and our very bodies themselves. Thick with objects, obstacles and absences, these spaces are not delivered to us instantaneously and in full, but rather designated to us through an act of linguistic deixis that accentuates "the depth that separates the showing from the showed."[75] This distance is specifically not what Buchloh described as the "heroic dislocation" of Minimal or Post-minimal art, because in Weiner's work all objects, from the stones under our feet to the faraway Arctic Circle, are presented with a specific remoteness, initiating what Deleuze and Guattari would call "a voyage in place" that is a mode of not only being *in* space but *for* it.[76]

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[75] Jean-François Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, trans. Antony Hudeck and Mary Lydon (1971; Minneapolis and London: The University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 40.

[76] Deleuze and Guattari, *One Thousand Plateaus*, 482.

In some way, all of Weiner's works bear a resemblance to those maps that Joseph Conrad's Marlow tells of in *Heart of Darkness*, the "many blank spaces on the earth" that sparked a desire for exploration. On the other hand, neither the drawings nor the works offer any opportunities for plundering or possession, invested as they are in dismantling the distorting authority of such tools as boundaries, spheres of influence, and rhumbs. Crucially, Weiner interjects these abstractions into "the stream of life" in order to render their impacts concrete, for as Homi K. Bhabha reminds us, the meaning of terms such as "distance" and "displacement" changes profoundly based on where you stand in the world: "The globe shrinks for those who own it; for the displaced or the dispossessed, the migrant or the refugee, no distance is more awesome than the few feet across borders or frontiers."[77] In *The Location of Culture* Bhabha argues that the significance of "the imaginary of spatial distance" lies in conceiving of a way "to live somehow beyond the border of our times," to find a liminal space wherein current designations of identity, and configurations of hierarchical difference are subject to new forms of contestation.[78] In Bhabha's theory, this locality of culture must escape the logic of Hegelian dialectics, which does violence to multiplicity and difference by subsuming opposing identities into a coherent totality. As Weiner's practice moves further away from a dialectical method, his maps and works exceed a paradigmatic investigation of integral contradiction. Diagramming different combinatory relations, Weiner appears to aim for the territory Bhabha describes, as signaled by a scrap of text pasted in a notebook dated September 2007 – June 2008 which reads: *A BIT*

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[77] Homi K. Bhabha, "Double Visions," *Artforum* 30, no. 5 (January 1992), 88.

[78] Bhabha, *The Location Of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 1994), 6. – In their critique of Bhabha's theories, Hardt and Negri argue that focusing on power as a dialectical structure insufficiently addresses the new Imperial mechanisms of power, which are no longer dialectical but decentered and deterritorializing, built not on binary opposition but on multiplicity and difference, strategies which can therefore no longer be assumed as a form of automatic resistance, as Bhabha's arguments for cultural hybridity might imply. See *Empire*, 143 – 146.

BEYOND WHAT IS DESIGNATED AS THE PALE (2007) (figs. 207 – 208). What this liminal space has to do with the word “sculpture” remains to be seen.

CHAPTER VI: HERE THERE & EVERYWHERE (sculpture + site)

When Weiner spoke in 1970 about making the book *Tracce - Traces*, he specifically extracted his work from the problematic of sculpture: “Somehow the shit residue of art history made me make paintings and sculptures. But now I feel no contact with or relevance or need of a place in art history.”[1] By that time, artists had broadened the applicability of the term sculpture to encompass a seemingly limitless range of practices including, for instance, Ian Wilson’s work consisting only of “oral communication,” or Douglas Huebler’s *Site Sculptures*, based on locational operations of mapping and marking (fig. 209).[2] Weiner, on the other hand, envisioned his work as a break from that category, attacking the validity not only of sculpture but of “specific object” on multiple fronts. As Benjamin Buchloh has argued, Weiner’s use of language dismantled sculptural pretensions to exceptional materiality, underscoring the fact that material specificity results not only from inherent physical properties, but from an ideologically invested construction of meaning.[3] Situating the work within a discursive framework, Weiner invalidated sculptural claims for the primacy of phenomenological experience, revealing object encounters to be dominated by concrete institutional forces rather than by abstract determinants of spatial / bodily perception. Shifting away from fabrication, Weiner showed that sculptural conventions based on plastic

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[1] Lawrence Weiner quoted in *Conceptual Art And Conceptual Aspects*, exh. cat. ed. Donald Karshan (New York: New York Cultural Center, 1970), 35.

[2] In the catalog for his exhibition with Seth Siegelaub *Douglas Huebler: November 1968*, Huebler defined sculpture as an entirely mediated object: “The existence of each sculpture is documented by its documentation. The documentation takes the form of photographs, maps, drawings and descriptive language” (quoted in Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* [Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2003]), 75.

Regarding his approach to sculpture as “visualized” versus “visual” Ian Wilson states: “I’m not a poet and I’m considering oral communication as sculpture. Because, as I said, if you take a cube, someone has said you imagine the other side because it’s so simple. And you can take the idea further by saying you can imagine the whole thing without its physical presence. So now immediately you’ve transcended the idea of an object that was a cube into a word, without a physical presence. And you still have the essential features of the object at your disposal” (quoted in *Conceptual Art And Conceptual Aspects*, 39).

[3] See Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962 – 1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions,” *October* 55 (Winter 1990), 136 and “The Posters Of Lawrence Weiner” in *Lawrence Weiner: The Posters* (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of art and Design, 1985), reprinted in

embodiment insufficiently reflected upon actual transformations in material relations, affected not only by the depredations of industrial production and sign-exchange value, but by increasingly predominant operations of "informatization" or "digitalization." In light of these numerous challenges, it might seem counter-intuitive for Weiner to re-name his work sculpture. Nonetheless, a little over a decade later, Weiner decided to do just that.

A FIELD CRATERED BY STRUCTURED SIMULTANEOUS TNT EXPLOSIONS

The first work printed in *Statements* (1968) references Weiner's much earlier *Cratering Piece* from 1960, in which the artist produced a series of contained explosions in a national park in Mill Valley, California. Considered within the context of sculpture, *Cratering Piece* was an extraordinary proposition at the moment of its initial execution, pre-figuring not only "anti-form" but the first "earthworks" by several years (e.g. Richard Long's first outdoor sculpture of 1964, or Robert Smithson's first site works in 1965). When Weiner recalls the work, he sometimes invokes the legend of Johnny Appleseed: "The Johnny Appleseed idea of art was perfect for me. Johnny Appleseed spread apple seeds across the United States by just going out on the road and spreading the seeds. I do not know if this is true, but I would love it to be."[4] *Cratering Piece* was similarly conceived as a public intervention without art-institutional buttress, an idealistic attempt to "leave things by the side of the road." The gesture itself was anything but romantic, causing the unauthorized disruption of a controlled environment, re-coding a Cubist 'shaping' of space as a formless act of violent removal, and replacing aesthetic skill with a different sort of technical competency (i.e. the "structured" use of dynamite). In diametric opposition to what Carl Andre would later call a "priapic" monumentality, *Cratering Piece* precociously seized upon the horizontal vector articulated in Jackson Pollock's drip paintings, one that had not yet been

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Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 197*5, (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2000), 566-574.

[4] Weiner, "Benjamin H.D. Buchloh in Conversation with Lawrence Weiner," *Lawrence Weiner* (London: Phaidon, 1998), 8. In a notebook dated 2001- January 2002 Weiner includes two encyclopedia entries on the life of Johnny Chapman (1774-1845), a.k.a. "Johnny Appleseed".

critically explored in the dominant paradigm of welded sculpture. Coupling literal debasement with an experience of de-differentiation, Weiner's craters would have been inseparable from the site of their production, offering one conclusion to the classic dilemma of how to perceptually distinguish sculpture from other objects in the world. When in 1968 Weiner made the even more radical decision to present the work in language, one of the artist's goals would be to render extreme this condition of immersion in 'real' space, paradoxically by dissolving the work's intrinsic connection to any particular site.

In late 1968, the same year of *Statements*' publication, two seminal sculpture shows took place in which the possibilities inherent in *Cratering Piece* would be programmatically explored: *Earthworks*, organized by Robert Smithson and held at Dwan Gallery in October, and *9 at Castelli* organized by Robert Morris and held at Castelli's warehouse in December. The connections between a host of *Earthworks* projects and Weiner's work are extensive. From Michael Heizer's trenches dug in forests and mud flats, to Oldenburg's hole in central park (dug by grave-diggers), to Dennis Oppenheim's earlier use of stakes in *Site Markers* (1967), or his various "cut" interventions in bodies of water/ice (fig. 210) – all find parallel operations in Weiner's practice, which similarly exposes the interrelatedness of objects within an ecosystem, but in terms stripped of heroic monumentality:

> *A REMOVAL OF AN AMOUNT OF EARTH FROM THE GROUND THE INTRUSION INTO THIS HOLE OF A STANDARD PROCESSED MATERIAL* (1968)
>
> *3 MINUTES OF 40lb. PRESSURE SPRAY OF WHITE HIGHWAY PAINT UPON A WELL TENDED LAWN*
> *THE LAWN IS ALLOWED TO GROW AND NOT TENDED TILL THE GRASS IS FREE OF ALL VESTIGES OF WHITE PAINT* (1968)
>
> *A 2" WIDE 1" DEEP TRENCH CUT ACROSS A STANDARD ONE CAR DRIVEWAY* (1968)
>
> *A SHALLOW TRENCH DUG FROM HIGH WATER MARK TO LOW TIDE MARK UPON A NORTH ATLANTIC BEACH* (1969)
>
> *A NATURAL WATER COURSE DIVERTED REDUCED OR DISPLACED* (1969)
>
> *A STAKE SET IN THE GROUND IN DIRECT LINE WITH A STAKE SET IN THE GROUND OF AN ADJACENT COUNTRY* (1969)
>
> *A DIRECT AFFRONT TO A NATURAL WATERWAY* (1969)
>
> *THE ARCTIC CIRCLE SHATTERED* (1969)

When Michael Heizer described his own impetus for embarking on the terrain of "Land Art" he cited a context of mounting violence first of all: "I started making this stuff in the middle of the Vietnam war. It looked like the world was coming to an end, at least for me. That's why I went out in the desert and started making things in dirt."[5] Coupled with this escalation of armed conflict, was "an awareness that we live in a nuclear era. We're probably living at the end of civilization"[6] (fig. 211). Those apocalyptic conditions were made manifest in Weiner's earliest works, in the explosions of *Cratering Piece*, and the pop icons of the *Propeller Paintings* (derived from TV test patterns, but bearing a resemblance to nuclear hazard symbols as Weiner has noted).[7] For artists such as Heizer, Oppenheim and Smithson the imperiled status of material reality would be expressed in part through the physical remoteness of works, as Oppenheim claimed: "you can't see the art, you can't buy the art, you can't have the art."[8] Brian Wallis observes that this withdrawal was one of the most remarkable aspects of the *Earthworks* exhibition, with its reliance on photographic documentation of distant or destroyed objects: "This not only frustrated conventional market expectations in the gallery, but established a strange sense of absence, even loss, and posed a peculiarly disorienting problem about what constituted the 'real' work of art."[9] That inability not only to proximately experience sculpture but even to *locate* it was exacerbated in Weiner's statements, wherein Smithson's dialectic of Site and Non-Site would be displaced by an even more disorienting series of traces without origin. Due to this negation, not only of embodied presence, but also of a discrete sense of "place" (an experience which built works such as Weiner's contribution to the exhibition *Hay Mesh String* [1968] did sustain), Weiner's connection to the practices of Land / Environmental art would be occluded, in the presumption that his works functioned purely conceptually, as a textual rather than a spatial

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[5] Michael Heizer quoted in Jeffrey Kastner and Brian Wallis, *Land And Environmental Art* (London: Phaidon, 1998), 30.

[6] Heizer quoted in *Land And Environmental Art,* 42.

[7] Whitney

[8] Douglas Oppenheim quoted in Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 91.

[9] Brian Wallis, *Land And Environmental Art*, 24.

investigation.[10] During a symposium entitled *Art Without Space* (1969) Weiner was compelled to refute his own dealer Seth Siegelaub's premise that his art existed outside of spatial concerns by virtue of its linguistic definition:

> Space for me would be almost an energy, since it doesn't matter to me whether my works are built or not built, or whether I build them or somebody else builds them. It is all exactly the same work, once it is presented or communicated. I believe the work itself produces a certain amount of energy, which in turn displaces a certain amount of space… The only thing is, they don't have any way yet of determining this objective space, walking over it and chalking it out and saying this is the space that Weiner's idea in 1968 took up.[11]

The difficulty of perceiving the "objective space" and concrete materiality of Weiner's ideas would similarly obscure Weiner's relation to "anti form," despite the fact that Robert Morris' theorization resonated closely with Weiner's practice:

> The focus on matter and gravity as means results in forms that were not projected in advance. Considerations of ordering are necessarily casual and imprecise and unemphasized. Random piling, loose stacking, hanging, give passing form to the material. Chance is accepted and indeterminacy is implied, as replacing will result in another configuration. Disengagement with preconceived enduring forms and orders for things is a positive assertion. It is part of the work's refusal to continue estheticizing the form by dealing with it as a prescribed end.[12]

Morris' description might apply to any number of informal processes critical to Weiner's works:

> *AN AMOUNT OF BLEACH POURED UPON A RUG AND ALLOWED TO BLEACH*
>
> *AN AMOUNT OF PAINT POURED DIRECTLY UPON THE FLOOR AND ALLOWED TO DRY*
>
> *TWO MINUTES OF SPRAY PAINT DIRECTLY UPON THE FLOOR FROM A STANDARD AEROSOL SPRAY CAN*
>
> *ONE QUART EXTERIOR GREEN ENAMEL THROWN ON A BRICK WALL*
>
> (figs. 25, 26a)

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[10] While the historical survey *Land And Environmental Art* includes a number of Conceptual artists (Art & Language, John Baldessari, Alighiero Boetti, and Douglas Huebler) no mention is made of Weiner's work.

[11] "Art Without Space (November 2, 1969)" symposium with Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth and moderated by Seth Siegelaub, broadcast on WBAI-FM, reprinted in *Having Been Said, Writings & Interviews of Lawrence Weiner, 1968 – 2003,* eds. Gerti Fietzek & Gregor Stemmrich (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2004), 31.

[12] Robert Morris, "Anti Form," *Artforum* vol. 6, no. 8 (April, 1968), reprinted in *Continuous Project Altered Daily, The Writings of Robert Morris* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1993), 46.

Joseph Kosuth notes that in November of 1968 he had taken Morris to see Weiner's studio.[13] The numerous poured / sprayed / splashed paint works that Weiner was building around that time recall Yoko Ono's instruction piece from 1960, published in *Grapefruit* in 1964:

> *PAINTING TO BE STEPPED ON*
>
> *Leave a piece of canvas or finished painting on the floor or in the street.*

Weiner departed from Ono's instruction by eliminating the support altogether, integrating built works with the "non-art" surfaces of floor and wall in ways that relate to William Anastasi's "wall removals," "pours" and "throws" from the mid '60s (figs. 212, 213, 214, 215 & 216).[14] Kosuth suggests a correspondence between Weiner's gravitational, horizontally oriented pieces and Richard Serra's *Splashing*, a sculpture that Douglas Crimp later recalled as the most "defiant" of those on view at *9 at Castelli*: "Along the juncture where wall met floor, Serra had tossed molten lead and allowed it to harden in place. The result was not really an object at all; it had no definable shape or mass; it created no legible image"[15] (fig. 217). That illegibility was coupled with a disintegration of the marker between floor and wall, disordering the perception not only of object, but of spatial container. As such the experience of *Splashing* was utterly dependent upon

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[13] Joseph Kosuth, "Influences: the Difference Between 'How' and 'Why,'" unpublished notes from 1970 in *Art after Philosophy and After: Collected Writings*, 1966 – 1990 (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1991), 81.

[14] In 1966, William Anastasi made a number of seminal "site specific" works, exploiting everyday materials (e.g. *Twelve ounces of tap water on a floor*), de-skilled operations (pouring, throwing, scratching) and chance procedures in ways that correspond with Weiner's material investigations (e.g. *A CUP OF SEA WATER POURED UPON THE FLOOR* [1969]). For *Issue*, part of a series of what Anastasi would call "wall removals," the artist carved the plaster off a wall in a vertical line approximately 4 inches wide, stretching from ceiling to floor – with the chipped plaster accumulated at the base in a small heap. For *Trespass* he constructed a removal in the shape of a square, in a manner that relates closely to *A 36" X 36" REMOVAL TO THE LATHING OR SUPPORT WALL OF PLASTER OR WALLBOARD FROM A WALL*. In two untitled works Anastasi, used gallons of industrial high-gloss enamel, throwing the paint on the wall in one case, and in another, carefully pouring it in a rivulet stretching from the seam between ceiling and wall down to a puddle on the floor. The crucial difference between Anastasi's work and Weiner's practice would lie in Anastasi's emphasis on material fabrication as opposed to linguistic constitution / transmission. Importantly, Anastasi viewed these mark-making strategies in terms of the practice of *drawing*, as revealed in a 2007 exhibition at *The Drawing Center* in New York for which these site-specific works from the 60s were reconstructed. The *Untitled* pieces in particular were personally remade by the artist, underscoring the importance of gestural execution to the works' reception (for a permanent installation at the Mattress Factory in Pittsburgh, *Trespass* would be executed by the artist using a stone to unevenly scratch off parts of the wall's plaster covering). See, *William Anastasi: a retrospective*, exh. cat. (Copenhagen : Nikolaj, Copenhagen Contemporary Art Center, 2001) and *William Anastasi: Raw* (New York: The Drawing Center, 2007).

[15] Douglas Crimp, "Redefining Site-Specificity" in *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1993), 151. Regarding *Splashing*, Crimp states "to remove the work meant certainly to destroy it," echoing Richard Serra's defense for his sculpture *Tilted Arc* (1981), delivered during the public

its situation within the architecture of the warehouse, announcing a new condition for sculpture, inasmuch as any displacement of the work would result not only in its physical destruction, but in a significant depletion of meaning.

One could have said the same thing about Weiner's spills of paint, or any number of works fused with architectural surfaces, were it not for the fact that Weiner perceived these objects in terms of *language*, as information transmission rather than built form or performative process. An irresolvable contradiction would thus emerge between the work's idea of extreme contextual integration, and the capacity for unlimited distribution / re-contextualization afforded by linguistic presentation. That opposition is highlighted in Weiner's and Serra's mutual contributions to the seminal show curated by Harold Szeeeman *When Attitudes Become Form* (1969), for which Serra executed *Splashing* and Weiner built *A 36" X 36" REMOVAL TO THE LATHING OR SUPPORT WALL OF PLASTER OR WALLBOARD FROM A WALL* (1968) (fig. 218). Both Serra's gesture of architectural desecration and Weiner's act of controlled demolition revealed the art object's meaning to be dependent upon a concrete situation, whose structural integrity the work would simultaneously ruin and reveal. But whereas Serra grounded the viewer's experience in increasing levels of specification, focusing on the intervention of a particular sculptural construct/process within a circumscribed context, Weiner pointed in the opposite direction, towards ever greater generalization, as the built object constituted the provisional trace of an infinitely iterable idea. This logic of repetition was, in fact, essential to *Splashing*, which would be executed not only in various sites over many years, but in multiple castings within a single context (e.g. *Casting,* 1969), mobilizing a tension between the rhythm of serial repetition and the differences that accrue with each unique instantiation (fig. 219). As Rosalind Krauss notes, Serra himself would take a critical view of the way in which works like *Splashing* and *Casting* tended to halt the "wave-like flux" of sculptural process, 'fixing' the work as figure (lead) against a ground (architecture), thereby re-invoking a virtual pictorial space and

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hearing conducted by the General Services Administration in 1985 to determine whether the sculpture would remain at its site (the plaza of Jacob K. Javits Federal Building in lower Manhattan).

succumbing once more to “the grip of the ‘image.’”[16] Presenting his own work as text, Weiner explored the logic of differentiation inherent in processes such as *Splashing*, but without the risks of producing a sculptural object or performative act that might give the work an authoritative picture.[17] In light of these aims, Kosuth’s claim that Weiner was excluded from the early exhibitions of anti-form due to his work appearing “too pretentious and gestural” seems ironic, if not patently absurd.[18] Those were in fact the very qualities which Weiner sought to eliminate, not only through his choice of manifestly quotidian materials (nails, brown paper, plywood, typing paper, walls, rugs) and ordinary processes (cutting, pasting, throwing, pouring, spraying) but through an adamantly impersonal linguistic presentation that would theoretically purge the work of the type of heroic gesture/image that the execution of *Splashing* spectacularly maintained (fig. 220).

AN OBJECT TOSSED FROM ONE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER

In 1969 Seth Siegelaub published a catalog exhibition entitled *One Month*, for which a different artist would execute a work on each calendar day, with the artist’s initial proposals being the only information included in the catalog. These performances / fabrications were due to take place in March, the same month of *When Attitudes Become Form*, thus offering a dialectical counterpart to the material bacchanal of Szeeman’s show. Weiner’s assigned day was March 30, upon which he was supposed to have built *AN OBJECT TOSSED FROM ONE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER* (1968).[19] The catalog contained no information other than the work’s title, effectively rendering

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[16] Rosalind Krauss, “Richard Serra: Sculpture” in *Richard Serra*, ed. Hal Foster with Gordon Hughes (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2000), 107.

[17] For a discussion on Weiner’s mobilization of the “idea” as an attack on the pictorialism of the “image” see Chapter II in this volume.

[18] Joseph Kosuth writes: “Robert Morris has since told me that Weiner wasn’t included in those shows because he felt Weiner’s work was ‘too pretentious and gestural.’” Kosuth in *Art after Philosophy and After: Collected Writings*, *1966 – 1990*, 81.

[19] In conversation with the author (May 22, 2013, New York), Weiner stated that he never personally built *AN OBJECT TOSSED FROM ONE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER*.

the details of any *specific* construction immaterial to the work's reception. While its textual presentation alone might seem to have abandoned sculptural concerns, the work nonetheless reflected upon Weiner's engagement with Minimalist sculpture and in particular, the reception of a Constructivist legacy.

Both Buchloh and Alexander Alberro have discussed the ways in which Weiner's practice expanded upon Constructivist principles recently revived within the context of Minimalism. For instance, if artists such as Donald Judd, Carl Andre and Dan Flavin were inspired by Vladimir Tatlin's *Corner-Counter Reliefs* to locate sculpture as one term in a larger set of spatial relationships (the triad of object-viewer-site), these Minimalist works remained abstracted within the illusory "neutrality" of the gallery, or in Andre's case within "generic classes of places."[20] Weiner's work, on the other hand, extended material interdependencies beyond the grounds of embodied perception, to include discursive mediation and concrete forces of institutional constraint as part of any sculptural situation (e.g. replacing the boundary between wall and floor with the border between one country and another). If Andre interpreted Tatlin's ethic of "truth to materials" in terms of a separation of matter from symbol in order to see "wood as wood," the positivism of that approach belied the fact that even for Tatlin, objects functioned as elements in a meaningful syntax, potentially divorced from inherent metaphor, but never cleansed of signs. Weiner's materialism, by contrast, focused not only on self-evident physical properties but on the often obscured ideological investments that mark every material relationship (e.g. the changes in meaning / use / value that accompany the transportation of objects across borderlines).[21] And

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[20] Carl Andre quoted in Phyllis Tuchman, "An Interview with Carl Andre," *Artforum* 7 no. 10 (June 1970), 55.

[21] Vladimir Tatlin's work was deeply connected to the linguistic experiments of "transrational" poets, such as Velimir Khlebnikov, who were involved in breaking language down into basic units that could be reformulated into new meaningful constructions (in contrast to the absurdist experiments of Dadaist poetry). Tatlin conceived of his work in close relation to these experiments: "Parallel to his word-constructions, I decided to make material constructions." (Tatlin quoted in Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, *Art Since 1900* [New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004], 127. On the relationship of Kazimir Malevich, Vladimir Tatlin and the poetics of Velimir Khlebnikov see also Masha Chlenova, "O.10" in *Inventing Abstraction*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2012), 206 – 208. Such a syntactical approach to materials is also present in Andre's structures, and mirrored in the artist's poetic work. Andre nonetheless argued for the complete absence of symbolism from material construction. When in 1920 Tatlin went on to build the towering spiral model for *The Monument to the Third International*, conceived simultaneously as a monument, a meeting house and the triumph of telegraphic communication (broadcasting information into the clouds), his perception of materials in terms of symbolic qualities would be revealed in full force (as in his desire to use glass as a metaphor for the transparency of a revolutionary political structure).

while Andre's assemblages of firebricks and Flavin's deployment of fluorescent bulbs followed the example of Aleksander Rodchenko's pedagogical *Spatial Constructions* - wherein materials were used for demonstration/ presentation and then stored or discarded – their sculptures remained tied to a specific "auratic" experience, if not a singular object. Taking the lessons of laboratory Constructivism to heart, Weiner eliminated any auratic possibility, by presenting a general material relationship (e.g. "AN OBJECT TOSSED") for which the production of even pedagogical models would no longer be necessary ("the work need not be built"). Most importantly, perhaps, in shifting towards information transmission, Weiner exposed the limitations of Minimalism's industrial paradigm in the face of new mechanisms of control and commoditization, thus mirroring the Russian avant-garde's abandonment of formal Constructivist experiments in favor of "Productivist" parameters of making and reception.[22]

Alberro has argued that Weiner's transformation of production and distribution formats, through publication (print, LP, film, video, radio etc..) and exhibition in alternative spaces (notably the use of occasionally anonymous street posters) constitutes one of the artist's most significant contributions, answering Walter Benjamin's call for a work that would not only reflect upon, but intervene in conditions of production.[23] Writing about the measure of a literary work's political efficacy, Benjamin writes:

> *An author who teaches writers nothing, teaches no one*. What matters, therefore, is the exemplary character of production, which is able first to induce other producers to produce, and second to put an improved apparatus at their disposal. And this apparatus is better the more consumers it is able to turn into producers – that is readers or spectators into collaborators. We already possess such an example, to which, however, I can only allude here. It is Brecht's epic theater.[24]

Weiner's 1968 *Statement of Intent* created just such an "improved apparatus," placing the receiver in the position of "producer" of meaning as opposed to consumer of images ("the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership"). In Weiner's

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[22] On the Russian Avant-Garde shift from Constructivist to Productivist principles see Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography," *October* vol. 20 (Autumn 1984), 82-119.

[23] Alexander Alberro and Alice Zimmerman, "Not How It Should Were It To Be Built But How It Could Were It To Be Built," *Lawrence Weiner*, 51.

[24] Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer" in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 233. The essay was presented at the Institute for the Study of Fascism in Paris on April 27, 1934.

case, however, the receiver's collaboration would not be solicited by means of a mythically "open" score (as in the context of Fluxus), but by a statement designed to highlight the structures within which both the character of production and the content of objective experience remains curtailed (e.g. the restrictions and consequences implied by *AN OBJECT TOSSED FROM ONE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER*).

Having developed a "non-culinary" means of presenting his material investigations, Weiner's work indeed relates to Benjamin's reading of Bertolt Brecht's theatre as an exemplary productive apparatus.[25] As Benjamin describes, Brecht's epic theater replaced the immersive transcendence of *gesamtkunstwerk* with a "dramatic laboratory," designed not only "to expose what is present" but to show where and how events remain alterable.[26] Installing an artificial distance between audience and performance, Brecht purportedly counteracted any illusions that might reify the elements represented and naturalize the "happenings" as opposed to revealing them as "experimental rearrangements." These effects of distancing were achieved primarily through interruptions designed to "paralyze" any empathetic responses, so as to enable the audience's critical reaction. Benjamin identifies Brecht's use of "the quotable gesture" as fundamental to this disruption of illusory identification: "To quote a text involves the interruption of its context. It is therefore understandable that the epic theater, being based on interruption, is, in a specific sense, a quotable one."[27]

That Weiner was intensely interested in quotation is evidenced in films such as *A First Quarter* (1973) and *A Second Quarter* (1975), wherein characters communicate to each other almost exclusively through the citation of Weiner's works. Indeed, from the *Cratering Piece* onwards, Weiner appears motivated by a desire to transform the specific object into "the quotable

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[25] Weiner, in fact, resists the characterization of his own work as Brechtian, believing that Bertolt Brecht's theater served a didactic, instrumentalized purpose, which Weiner's own use of generic, abstracted language refuses. In a conversation with Sharon Hayes, Weiner states: "Brecht does not bend and slide with the audience. As a matter of fact, I don't think you're Brechtian at all. You don't tell everybody everything, you show it to them. Brecht doesn't show, he tells. Wonderfully, but he tells." Weiner in "Bomb Live: Sharon Hayes & Lawrence Weiner," video interview May 2010; http://bombsite.com/issues/999/articles/3597.

[26] Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," 235.

[27] Benjamin, "What is Epic Theater?" in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (1939; New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 151.

gesture" that Benjamin describes, carving out a measure of critical distance that would interrupt any empathetic identification with either the artist's creative psyche or the art object's phenomenal authority. If the use of everyday materials and de-skilled techniques was one way of achieving this, Weiner's linguistic presentation emphasized the work's "quotable" aspect all the more, revealing that any given material relationship remains subject at all times to meaningful alteration and differentiation. As Jacques Derrida has argued, language is in fact governed by the logic of quotation or "citational graft," functioning purely by virtue of its ability to be separated from every context, and to be legible in the absence of either sender or addressee (a relationship that Weiner would later describe as "contextural" versus contextual).[28] Writing thus serves as a productive apparatus, constantly yielding to other readings and re-writings, offering the perfect vehicle for Sol LeWitt's formulation of the "idea" as "the machine that makes the art."[29] On the other hand, if the sign possesses the force to break from every context, that possibility of iteration also implies the potential for the sign to split from both the referent and signified.[30] The iterability of the mark thus comes at the cost of a "crisis of meaning," an irresolution inscribed in Weiner's works, whose capacity to rupture from every given context invariably carries with it the risk of meaninglessness.

OVERDONE DONEOVER AND OVERDONE AND DONEOVER

In the summer of 1971, Weiner participated in another seminal exhibition, for which artists were invited to make work specifically for Sonsbeek Park, Arnhem. The catalog's

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[28] Lawrence Weiner, *If In Fact There Is A Context* (Ostfildern: documenta and Museum Fridericianum Veranstaltungs-GmbH, 2011), n.p. Liz Kotz discusses the relationship of Conceptual practices to Derrida's concept of "citational graft" in *Words To Be Looked At, Language in 1960s Art* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2007).

[29] Sol LeWitt writes: "The idea becomes the machine that makes the art." LeWitt in "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," *Artforum* vol. 5, no. 10 (Summer 1967), reprinted in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (London and Cambridge Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2000), 12.

[30] Jacques Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context" in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (1971; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 317.

introductory text by Wim Beeren announced the show's broader theme of "spatial relations," making clear that this would not be a conventional sculpture park exhibition. Going "beyond the pale" of Sonsbeek, all of Holland was made available as a "field of operation."[31] As had been the case with *Earthworks*, the show's extensive geographic scope precluded many works from being seen *in situ*, necessitating transmission via catalog, telex, film and video. Sonsbeek Park thus became one node in a network of contexts, revealing spatial relations to be fundamentally dispersed and mediated. This concept of site contrasted with the earlier anchorage in "place" demonstrated by Weiner, Barry and Andre's contributions to the outdoor show *Hay Mesh String* at Windham College, VT (1968).[32] Whereas at that time, Weiner and Andre's sense of spatial relations was very much in accord, the artists' works for Sonsbeek revealed how their practices had diverged in the course of three years.

For the Sonsbeek exhibition catalog, Andre published a photograph of his sculpture *Light wine circuit*, along with a "dialectical chronology" of its production starting with "two rules for the piece":

> no materials or fabrication cost
> no harm done to any living thing
> (fig. 221a)

The chronology goes on to document Andre's arrival in Arnhem, the discovery of discarded plastic tubing, the discovery of the work's site, and the subsequent layout of tubing in an unconnected zigzag formation. The remainder of the chronology deals with the sculpture's subjection to numerous instances of theft, distortion, and finally destruction, necessitating not only the purchase of more tubing (violating rule number 1), but also the use of rope to connect the tubes –the first time in six years that Andre used a "binding factor" (violating the artist's commitment to clastic form). In reflecting upon the compromised status of the work, Andre

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[31] W.A.L. Beeren, "From exhibition to activity" in *Sonsbeek 71: Sonsbeek buiten de perken. 19.6 – 15.8.1971*, exh. cat. (Deventer, Neth.: Drukkerij 'De IJssel', 1971), 11.

[32] For a discussion of Carl Andre's and Lawrence Weiner's contributions to the exhibition *Hay Mesh String* at Windham College, VT (1968) see chapter I in this volume.

quotes from Marx's *The Gundrisse*: "Labor is the living fire that shapes the pattern; it is the transitoriness of things, their temporality, the transformation by living time."[33]

The fate of Andre's *Light wine circuit* recalls the earlier destruction of Weiner's contribution to the exhibition *Hay Mesh String*, which consisted of a giant lawn grid made of hemp twine and stakes, cut down by "jocks" at Windham College. In Weiner's case the work's undoing was not only a sign of "the transitoriness of things" but a signal for the necessity of working in a different way. Consequently, if *Light wine circuit* still relied on the artist's hand as "the living fire that shapes the pattern" Weiner's language would leave that shaping in the hands of the receiver. While Andre would insist on rebuilding the sculpture, ultimately using rope to try to keep the units in place, Weiner opened his own work to a theoretically infinite dispersal. And although Andre's sculpture could be destroyed, Weiner's statement could, in a sense, no longer be undone, being conceived as the trace of an extant material relationship ("an empirical existing fact"). In direct opposition to the *singularity* of *Light wine circuit* (re-named *SIGHT LINE WORKOUT* after re-construction to signify that it was a different piece altogether), Weiner underscored his own work's inherently quotable nature, through the repetitions of the text itself, which appeared in the catalog in English and Dutch translation:

> *OVERDONE DONEOVER AND OVERDONE AND DONEOVER*
>
> (fig. 221b)

The work was in fact part of a larger series that shared the same structure of redundancy and reversal:

> *OVERTURNED. TURNED OVER. AND OVERTURNED. AND TURNED OVER.*
>
> *DOWNTRODDEN. TRODDENDOWN. AND DOWNTRODDEN. AND TRODDENDOWN.*
>
> *PASSED OVER. OVERPASSED. AND PASSED OVER. AND OVERPASSED.*

Weiner's work explored the significant shifts that result from a minimal displacement of terms, dealing concretely with a type of "spatial relation" distinctly counterposed to the "spatial seriality"

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[33] Karl Marx quoted in Carl Andre, "Dialectical Chronology," *Sonsbeek 71: Sonsbeek buiten de perken. 19.6 – 15.8.1971,* 5.

characteristic of Minimalist sculpture.[34] For if artists such as Judd and Andre had used the logic of "one thing after another" as a means of overcoming the arbitrariness of compositional hierarchies (so that no single brick or square of metal could be seen as more or less critical than another), Weiner's repetitions would instead underscore the profound changes in meaning and therefore use that attend even the slightest displacement (e.g. the error of something "DONEOVER" versus the excess of something "OVERDONE"). In addition to questioning the ability of sculptural form to eliminate structural hierarchies, *OVERDONE DONEOVER AND OVERDONE AND DONEOVER* tested the validity of the notion of site specificity altogether, first of all by offering a work whose presentation solely within the exhibition catalog revealed the site to be a product of mediating supplements, rather than the locus of an "authentic" experience.[35] This had also been the lesson of Huebler's *Site Sculptures* and Smithson's pairing of Site and Non-Site which effectively prevented the work from being experienced proximately in its entirety. *OVERDONE DONEOVER AND OVERDONE AND DONEOVER* exaggerated that sense of dislocation, through a textual formulation that enabled the work to be grafted onto any number of contexts, by-passing the connection to a singular place altogether. Thus, the work's site-specific qualities were less a function of physical situation (randomly scattered via publication), than a product of *use* – inasmuch as a receiver could choose or not choose to utilize the work as a means of locating themselves within the context of Sonsbeek.

In articulating the difference between Andre's sculpture and Weiner's work, it proves helpful to consider Nick Kaye's distinction between a "substantive" approach to site versus a "transitive" one. Andre's *Light wine circuit* stands as a perfect model for the former, predicated upon the real-time bodily experience of an object actualized in its *proper* place. In refusing

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[34] Rosalind Krauss, "Richard Serra: Sculpture," 105-107.

[35] James Meyer characterizes the site-specificity the '60s in terms of a "literal" approach, wedded to an ideology of Presence: "Thus the premise of site specificity to locate the work in a single place, *and only there*, bespoke the 1960s call for Presence, the demand for the experience of 'being there.' An underlying topos of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, of the happening and performance, Presence became an aesthetic and ethical *cri de Coeur* among the generation of artists and critics who emerged in the 1960s, suggesting an experience of actualness and authenticity that would contravene the depredations of an increasingly mediated, 'one-dimensional' society." Meyer, "The Functional Site, or The Transformation of Site Specificity"

circulation and re-construction, such a substantive site-specific practice would aim to eradicate any trace of abstracted spatiality, as Crimp argues:

> The idealism of modern art, in which the art object *in and of itself* was seen to have a fixed and transhistorical meaning, determined the object's placelessness, its belonging to no particular place, a no-place that was in reality the museum – the actual museum and the museum as a representation of the institutional system of circulation that also comprises the artist's studio, the commercial gallery, the collector's home… Site specificity opposed that idealism – and unveiled the material system it obscured – by its refusal of circulatory mobility, its belongingness to a *specific* site.[36]

That sense of "belongingness" is registered by the transitoriness of *Light wine circuit,* and its material, temporal and spatial dependence upon a singular context for existence / significance.

A "transitive" concept of site, on the other hand, posits location as an unstable entity, one constantly re-produced as opposed to given in advance by the object's situation within a unique place (i.e. *OVERDONE DONEOVER AND OVERDONE AND DONEOVER*). In conceiving of the "site" as performative versus substantive, Kaye turns to the operations of language, and in particular the practice of reading: "To 'read' the sign is to *have located* the signifier, to have recognized its place within the semiotic system."[37] According to Kaye, this act of location was first problematized within the visual arts through what Michael Fried described as the intrusion of "theatricality" in Minimalist sculpture. As the Minimalist object grounded the "beholder" in real time and space, replacing the sublimated "presentness" of the Modernist work with the literal presence of bodies and things in the world, the art experience was opened to theoretically infinite extension, duration, and therefore potentially arbitrary significance. Rather than securing a sense of place, the specific object in fact confronted the viewer with his / her own performative attempt to locate the work within the context of a given situation, whose spatial and temporal limits were no longer well-defined. Within the framework of "institutional critique" this effort to situate the work becomes increasingly complicated, as the ordering systems that govern particular places were de-naturalized, subjected to ever more extreme levels of interrogation, and

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in *Space, Site, Intervention, Situating Installation Art*, ed. Erika Suderburg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 26.

[36] Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins*, 17.

[37] Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation*, 1.

disruption (as epitomized by Daniel Buren's striped canvas interventions, or Michael Asher's and Weiner's wall displacements).

In developing this performative model of site, Kaye makes an analogy to Michel de Certeau's theorization of "space" not as something given in advance, but as constantly re-formulated through practices. These practices are never autonomous but are situated within "places" which orient them and give them sense, thus actualizing or spatializing a particular "ordering system":

> … *space is a practiced place*. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same way, an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e.: a place constituted by a system of signs.[38]

While "place" presents itself as internally stable, governed by a set of rules and a fixed distribution of elements, "space" is inherently multiple, as exemplified by the walker whose transitive act of locating never settles upon a place that is proper. De Certeau compares the difference between space and place to Ferdinand de Saussure's distinction between *langue* – the system of rules and conventions that make up a language, and *parole* – the practice of speech in which rules are given expression. De Certeau writes:

> …in relation to place, space is like the word when it is spoken, that is, when it is caught in the ambiguity of an actualization, transformed into a term dependent upon many different conventions, situated as the act of a present (or of a time), and modified by the transformations caused by successive contexts. In contradistinction to the place, it has none of the univocity or stability of a "proper."[39]

De Certeau's description summons the ambiguity of Weiner's itinerant work, actualized within "successive contexts" which inflect the work's meaning while failing to enclose it. Thus, spatiality never inheres as a substantive quality of the work but is constantly re-produced in the *practice* of reading as the artist would later affirm: "The work gains its sculptural qualities by being read, not by being written."[40] This intrusion of discursive mediation within places constructed for the practice of viewing, would in and of itself generate a force of spatial disruption, amplified by the content of the works themselves which invariably defy the "stability of the 'proper'" by means of

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[38] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1984), 117.

[39] de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 117.

additive mixtures, disintegrative removals, and transgressive border crossings. In practice, the works expose the latent disorder that haunts the ordering systems of place, which remain always susceptible to rupture as De Certeau describes: "The surface of this order is everywhere punched and torn open by ellipsis, drifts and leaks of meaning: it is a sieve-order."[41]

In *May '68 and its Afterlives*, Kristin Ross characterizes the mass uprisings in France (culminating in a strike of 9 million people) in terms of a collective rebellion against the "naturalized distribution" of places:

> What has come to be called "the events of May" consisted mainly in students ceasing to function as students, workers as workers, and farmers as farmers: May was a crisis in functionalism. The movement took the form of political experiments in *de*classification, in disrupting the natural 'givenness' of places; it consisted of displacements that took students outside of the university, meetings that brought farmers and workers together, or students to the countryside – trajectories outside of the Latin Quarter, to workers' housing and popular neighborhoods, a new kind of mass organizing (against the Algerian War in the early 1960s, and later against the Vietnam War) that involved physical dislocation.[42]

Such a "crisis in functionalism" had its compliment in the postwar art world, at the moment when tires, bedcovers, bricks and light fixtures were brought into the sphere of art production. As we have seen, the "givenness" of places would in turn be dismantled by a host of performance activities and sculptural practices that disrupted the authoritative logic, not only of galleries and museums, but of any ordering system whatsoever. Weiner would heighten these declassificatory tendencies, creating work that in being perpetually subject to displacement, invalidated any definition of proper use/function, thus contesting the impositions of place. In the wake of such disruptive interventions, occurring at every level of culture, it is unsurprising that a massive retrenchment would follow. As Ross recounts, in France the years after May '68 were characterized by crackdowns and repressions attendant with "the hypertrophy of the state."[43] The new will to stabilize order was succinctly articulated in sociologist Raymond Marcellin's diagnosis: "the following principle of social justice must be applied with energy and perseverance:

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[40] Weiner in "Benjamin H.D. Buchloh in Conversation with Lawrence Weiner," *Lawrence Weiner*, 28.

[41] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* 107.

[42] Kristin Ross, *May '68 And Its Afterlives* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 25.

[43] Ross, *May '68 And Its Afterlives,* 60.

'To each his place, his share, his dignity.'"[44] Such a reconstitution of and reinforcement of proper places remained the target of Weiner's transitive practice, and the work's persistent refusal to "belong" to any proper site. According to Jacques Rancière, such resistance is what gives art its political efficacy:

> Aesthetic experience has a political effect to the extent that the loss of destination that it presupposes disturbs the way in which bodies fit their functions and destinations. What it produces is no rhetoric persuasion about what has to be done. Nor is it the framing of a collective body. It is a multiplication of connections and disconnections that reframe the relation between bodies, the world where they live and the way in which they are 'equipped' for fitting it. It is a multiplicity of folds and gaps in the fabric of common experience that change the cartography of the perceptible, the thinkable and the feasible.[45]

What Rancière calls the "aesthetic 'political'" as opposed to the politicized aesthetic, originates in a state of disjunction, as cause and effect relationships are suspended, resulting in operations of "des-identification" that enable new forms of subjectivization to emerge. In presenting an art without image or destination, the multiple connections and disconnections of Weiner's work elaborate a new cartography of subject-object relations, one in which receivers become aware that every act of location must be produced in relation to the hegemony of an existing, hierarchical configuration.

TOPPLED FROM ABOVE

In 1972, Herbert Marcuse published *Counterrevolution and Revolt* in which he analyzed the potential for radical change in the face of an increasingly prevalent and powerful anti-revolutionary consciousness.[46] Describing the US as "the soil of the counterrevolution," Marcuse details a massive effort to reintegrate the Capitalist "sieve-order," restoring people and things to a

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[44] Raymond Marcellin, *L'importune vérité* (Paris: Plon, 1978), 297; quoted in Ross, *May '68 And Its Afterlives,* 61.

[45] Jacques Rancière, "Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art," *Art & Research* vol. 2, no. 1 (Summer 2008); http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n1/Rancière.html.

[46] Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972). Marcuse's book is based on a series of lectures delivered in 1970 at Princeton and the New School for Social Research.

pre-determined, hierarchical distribution of places.[47] On the peremptory nature of repression and the simultaneous potential for widespread structural change Marcuse writes:

> Here [in the Western world] there is no recent revolution to be undone, and there is none in the offing. And yet, fear of revolution which creates the common interest links the various stages and forms of the counterrevolution. It runs the whole gamut from parliamentary democracy via the police state to open dictatorship. Capitalism reorganizes itself to meet the threat of a revolution which would be the most radical of all historical revolutions. It would be the first truly *world-historical revolution*.[48]

The volatile circumstances of this moment: deteriorating economic conditions, massive protests against the escalation of conflict in Indochina, coupled with the increasingly brutal suppression of opposition (e.g. the shooting of students by government authority at Kent State and Jackson State) generated an atmosphere overwhelmed not only by routine violence, but by what Marcuse would call a "proto-fascist syndrome."[49] This embattled political situation constitutes one context within which Weiner's work from this period becomes legible, articulating a crisis in radical politics in terms of a crisis in spatial orientation (all works from 1970):

TOPPLED FROM ABOVE

COVERED FROM THE REAR

WEAKENED FROM WITHIN

MOVED FROM UP FRONT

TILTED FROM BELOW

SHIFTED FROM THE SIDE

FLANKED BESIDE

DONE WITHOUT

MIDDLE OF THE ROAD

LEFT OF CENTER

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[47] Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 29.

[48] Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 2.

[49] Marcuse warned that although the objective conditions for Socialist transformation already exist (i.e. adequate wealth to abolish poverty, technical advancement in utilization of resources, unbridled exploitation of productive forces by the ruling class, growth of anti-capitalist movements in the Third World, working class alienated from means of production), there remained a stronger threat that these conditions would bend further towards fascism. The volatility of this period was encapsulated by William L. Shirer's remark to the Los Angeles Times: "we may well be the first people to go Fascist by the democratic vote" (quoted in *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 25).

RIGHT OF CENTER

Weiner's rejection of the term 'sculpture' at this time undoubtedly takes part in what Marcuse would call a "linguistic rebellion," aimed at subverting all forms of oppressive rule over the use of words and images, and dismantling traditional definitions and categories (i.e. "the shit residue of art history").[50] Apart from this declassificatory impulse, Marcuse argues that linguistic strategies must aim above all to defeat the bewildering illusions perpetuated by an "Orwellian" discourse, which disguises contradictions and hides "the obscene symbiosis of opposites."[51] Within this official parlance, striving for peace is equated with waging war, ending war means intensified bombing, freedom is secured by Administration, and tear gas and poison are seen as "legitimate and humane" when compared with the alternative of napalm.[52] Such mystifications shed a light on the political urgency of Weiner's commitment to a language that underscores the *merest* opposition between terms, as epitomized in the prepositional distinction between two works from 1969 and 1970 respectively:

A RUBBER BALL THROWN AT THE SEA
A RUBBER BALL THROWN ON THE SEA

In fostering a practice of reading that critically attends to the slightest differences *(TOPPLED FROM ABOVE* versus *TILTED FROM BELOW*), Weiner's work counteracts the numbing effects produced by an official language of counter-information, wherein the most glaring contradictions are routinely and easily dissembled.

Writing about the role of art in the service of social transformation, Marcuse notes that Cultural Revolution in the West reveals a fundamental contradiction, testifying to lagging developments at the base of society ("cultural revolution but not (yet) political and economic revolution"). Regarding the subversive potential of art, however, Marcuse argues for the necessity of its separation from politics and economics, proclaiming that art can never effectively "represent" structural change:

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[50] Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 80.

[51] Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 130.

> Art can express its radical potential only as art, in its own language and image, which invalidate the ordinary language, the "prose du monde." The liberating "message" of art also transcends the actually attainable goals of liberation, just as it transcends the actual critique of society. Art remains committed to the Idea (Schopenhauer), to the universal in the particular; and since the tension between idea and reality, between the universal and the particular, is likely to persist until the millennium which will never be, art must remain alienation.

Marcuse's argument is essentially a bid for art's specificity, as he maintains that aesthetics as a form of *general* negation cannot properly participate in revolutionary praxis. Weiner's practice contests those presumptions using ordinary language to intervene in "the prose du monde," and affirming that ideas *occupy* the real rather than standing in alienated "tension" with it. Weiner recognized that to posit a transcendent sphere of art with "its own language and image" only confirms the hierarchical separation of places which the insurrections of the '60s had so provocatively challenged (while ignoring the fact that in an image-saturated society, culture and therefore "aesthetic" experience would overtake every aspect of social space, evacuating the possibility of aesthetic autonomy).[53] Weiner therefore denounced any concept of "counter-culture" as a reactionary stance, insisting instead that whatever occurs within the sphere of art takes place simultaneously within the culture as a whole, ensuring that art remains a *practical* negation, as opposed to an autonomous aesthetic one. In a statement for a panel at MoMA regarding Conceptual art's publication activity during the '60s and '70s, Weiner declares:

> THE HEIGHT OF SELF-REFLEXIVITY IS THE IDEA OF A COUNTER CULTURE
>
> ALL ACTIVITY MUST BY DEFINITION OCCUR SIMULTANEOUSLY ON THE SAME POINT

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[52] Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, 109-110.

[53] Writing some two decades later about the resurgence of the "aesthetic" within postmodern culture, Fredric Jameson argues that the dominance of the "image" as commodity (rendered ubiquitous through technological mediation) has resulted in the aestheticization of culture at large, virtually obliterating the possibility of transcendence upon which Marcuse's theory of autonomous art relies: "Indeed we shall see shortly that in a culture so overwhelmingly dominated by the visual and the image as ours has become, the very notion of aesthetic experience is either too little or too much: for in that sense, aesthetic experience is now everywhere and saturates social and daily life in general; but it is this very expansion of culture (in the larger or perhaps the nobler sense) which rendered the very notion of an individual art work problematic and the premise of aesthetic judgment something of a misnomer" (Jameson, "The Transformations of the Image" in *The Cultural Turn* [New York and London: Verso, 1998], 100). The experience of generalized aesthetics is no longer defined by a specific object or framework, but is transferred to "the life of perception," affording a random sampling of sensations that can only be passively registered, resulting in "the permanent inconsistency of a mesmerizing sensorium" (Jameson, *Ibid*., 112). For a profoundly different theorization of the significance of the "aesthetic regime" and the notion of specificity, see Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, trans. Gregory Elliott (New York and London: Verso, 2007). Arguing that "the end of the images" was a project historically completed within Modernism, Rancière posits a dialectic relationship of contemporary "images" (naked, ostensive and metaphorical) as a form through which to understand contemporary artistic practice.

ALL ACTIVITIES MUST BE ASSUMED TO BE WITHIN THE SAME SPHERE.[54]

Given Weiner's rejection of "parallel realities" (e.g. the ideality of art versus the reality of society) and their attendant hierarchies ("THE EXISTENCE OF SIMULTANEOUS REALITIES PRECLUDES THE NECESSITY OF THE HIERARCHY OF PRE SUPPORTED PARALLEL REALITIES") it seems extraordinary that by the 1980s Weiner would re-name his work sculpture, a word that immediately connotes the "self-reflexivity" of an aesthetically circumscribed context. On the other hand, Weiner's tactical move makes perfect sense, considering that it is within the domain of sculpture that one of the most significant battles would be fought concerning the relationship of art to an increasingly reactionary public sphere.

TILTED FROM BELOW

In 1981, Weiner executed a large-scale public installation of work, for a presentation of *TILTED FROM BELOW* and *COVERED FROM THE REAR* in Bremerhaven, Germany (figs. 222a & 222b). One part of the show consisted of street posters issued by Kabinett für Aktuelle Kunst, featuring the works translated into German as *VON UNTEN GEKIPPT* and *VON HINTEN BEDECKT* along with the artist's name and the date of exhibition (Sept. 1981). Another part involved an installation on a stretch of pavement, whereupon the works were painted in red letters on a yellow square measuring 11 x 11 meters, giving the appearance of a giant hazard sign. As Alberro has noted, Weiner's presentation rendered the works' content both more urgent and more vulnerable, as the artist's design resulted not only in erasure but defilement.[55] While that sense of debasement was already at stake in *Cratering Piece*, the downtrodden condition of *VON UNTEN GEKIPPT* and *VON HINTEN BEDECKT* directly implicated receivers in an act of

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[54] Lawrence Weiner in a prepared statement for the panel discussion*, From the Specific to the General: The Publications of Seth Siegelaub* held at MoMA, New York on November 26, 2007. A hand-written draft of this text appears in Lawrence Weiner Notebook September 2007 - June 2008, Moved Pictures Archive, New York.

[55] Alexander Alberro and Alice Zimmerman, "Not How It Should Were It To Be Built But How It Could Were It To Be Built," *Lawrence Weiner*, 66-67.

communal, physical destruction, bringing the problem of public responsibility graphically to the fore.

In July of that same year, Richard Serra installed *Tilted Arc* at Federal Plaza in New York, offering a completely different model for work that also attempted to "get sculpture off the pedestal and into the street."[56] Consisting of a 12-foot-high, 120 foot-long wall of self-oxidizing Corten steel, tilted on its axis by 1 foot, the massive sculpture transformed the experience of the plaza, denounced by the artist as a showcase for bureaucratic power (fig. 223). Although *Tilted Arc* still enabled normal traffic patterns, it nonetheless compelled pedestrians to consider a different route, marked by the sight lines, volumes and surfaces generated by sculptural form. Crimp assesses the dynamics of *Tilted Arc* in relation to its site:

> In reorienting the use of Federal Plaza from a place of traffic control to one of sculptural place, Serra once again used sculpture to hold its site hostage, to insist on the necessity for art to fulfill its own functions rather than those relegated to it by its governing institutions and discourses. For this reason, *Tilted Arc* was considered an aggressive and egotistical work, with which Serra placed his own aesthetic assumptions above the needs and desires of the people who had to live with his work. But insofar as our society is fundamentally constructed on the principle of egotism, the needs of each individual coming into conflict with those off all other individuals, Serra's work did nothing other than present us with the truth of our social condition.[57]

Serra's own comments on placement confirm Crimp's assessment of the autonomous nature of his site-specificity: "I think that sculpture, if it has any potential at all, has the potential to create its own place and space, and to work in contradiction to the spaces and places where it is created in this sense. I am interested in work where the artist is a maker of 'anti-environment' which takes its own place or makes its own situation, or divides or declares its own area."[58] As numerous commentators have argued, however, Serra's "anti-environments" would in fact be designed to defeat any sense of egoic self-possession, invalidating the symbolic display of authority by means of a radically abstract spatialization.

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[56] Richard Serra, quoted in Casey Nelson Blake, "An Atmosphere of Effrontery: Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc*, and the Crisis of Public Art" in *The Power of Culture: Critical Essays in American History*, eds. Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 255.

[57] Crimp, "Redefining Site Specificity," 179.

[58] Richard Serra and Clara Weyergraf, *Richard Serra: Interviews, Etc., 1970 – 1980* (New York: The Hudson River Museum, 1980), 128.

According to Yve-Alain Bois, Serra's anti-monumental and anti-pictorial outdoor sculptures destroy any sense of identity by developing a spatio—temporal experience based on the absence of any given *plan*. As such, Serra's work assumes a conflictual relationship, not only to specific buildings (e.g. the bureaucratic oppressiveness of courthouses and office towers) but to architectural structure itself, prototypically generated from the coherence of pre-existing plans and built according to an ordered articulation of space. Serra would defeat this organization by rendering the terrain formless, generating a sculptural experience that no longer starts with a definable *a priori*, but that unfolds within the discontinuous and labyrinthine passage of "stroller time."[59] John Rajchman emphasizes that the transitive, peripatetic vision installed by Serra's sculptures is not intended to be conceptually grasped nor registered as image, but to produce an *affective* encounter, through a mobilization that bypasses the mediations of representation. Serra's sculptures would thus construct an abstract spatiality that is neither self-referential nor reductive, but "intensive," suggesting a space prior to the measurable extension which grounds figuration and illustration. No longer deployed in phenomenological relation to the body's vertically oriented, bilateral symmetry, the sculptures theoretically enable the viewer to invent new modes of circulation: "Into our movements in space Serra's works induce trajectories that cannot be centered in the usual relations of subjectivity and objectivity, inside and outside – that try to defeat space's habitual coordinates (up, down right, left, high, low), unmooring us from our usual sense of orientation, of 'being there.'"[60]

As Krauss has written, *Tilted Arc* plunged our relations of horizontal and vertical, interior and exterior into a state of utter indeterminacy, by means of a form that rendered the experience of obdurate enclosure and infinite openness fluid and labile. Through "a constant exchange of horizons" mobilized by the stroller's movement between the concavity and convexity of the arc's surface, Serra's "anti-environment" stood as an outright negation of imprisoning spatial hierarchies, wherein concrete, inviolable boundaries delineate places for work and spaces for

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[59] Yve-Alain Bois, "A Picturesque Stroll around Clara-Clara" in *Richard Serra,* 59-96.

[60] John Rajchman, "Serra's Abstract Thinking" in *Richard Serra, Sculpture: Forty Years* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2007), 63.

leisure.[61] Serra's abstract spatial interventions would, however, be totally misread (or willfully misinterpreted) by members of the public who insisted on viewing the sculpture in *representational* terms as part of a rhetoric of power, rather than a release into new zones of sensibility. As such, the sculpture came to be identified alternatively as a "symbolic war with the federal bureaucracy," a terrorist "blast wall" or more frequently as "the Berlin Wall of Foley Square."[62] In conflicting with the police order that authorizes the appropriate uses of public space, Serra's sculpture served as the flash point for an intense and prolonged political controversy, revealing public art to be in a state of absolute crisis. Virtually from the time of its installation, the sculpture faced intense hostility, spearheaded by official complaints against the work, along with anonymous petitions from some 1300 out of 10,000 employees in the plaza, asking the commissioning body (General Services Administration) to remove the work. These actions culminated in a public hearing in 1985, in which the work would be put on trial by the GSA, resulting in *Tilted Arc*'s destruction in 1989 by the Federal Government. Casey Nelson Blake gives an analysis of the competing discourses that emerged during the long battle: "one articulated by artists and art administrators that upheld the exclusive competence of cultural professionals; another put forth by conservative judges, officials, and commentators who sought to reassert their power against the "New Class"; and a third discourse that, however hostile to *Tilted Arc*, broke out of the confines of the conservative polemic against the adversary culture in its insistence that the public be given more control over public affairs."[63]

In the name of guarding the artist's freedom to contest dominant ideological structures, Serra had earlier disavowed any responsibility to accommodate either the site or its inhabitants: "Placing pieces in an urban context is not synonymous with an interest in a large audience even through the work will be seen by many people who wouldn't otherwise look at art. The work I make does not allow for experience outside the conventions of sculpture as sculpture. My

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[61] Krauss, *Richard Serra: Sculpture*, 140.

[62] See Blake, "An Atmosphere of Effrontery: Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc*, and the Crisis of Public Art" for a thorough discussion of the various grievances against Serra's sculpture, most of which centered around the purportedly "symbolic" nature of the work (interpreted alternatively as anti-patriotic or inhumane), or to the hazards it posed to public security.

[63] Blake, "An Atmosphere of Effrontery: Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc*, and the Crisis of Public Art," 250.

audience is necessarily very limited."[64] The opinions of any larger audience would be of no consequence to Serra's decision-making, as the artist affirmed: "If you are conceiving a piece for a public place, a place and space that people walk through, one has to consider the traffic flow, but not necessarily worry about the indigenous community. I'm not going to concern myself with what 'they' consider to be adequate, appropriate solutions."[65] For many anonymous petitioners, that attitude would be equated with outright elitism, making Serra's sculpture the perfect "irrational target" for the projection of legitimate grievances, centering largely around the utter lack of democratic participation in decisions relating to everyday life. Lucy Lippard, who argued *against* the sculpture's relocation, nonetheless acknowledged in a letter to the GSA: "at no time in these lengthy proceedings did anyone think about consulting with the people who live with the art on a daily basis. Public art is a commitment not only to the artist and the funding source and the owners of the site, but to the people themselves – the idea of a democratic culture."[66] Conservative critics, on the other hand, would manipulate popular resentment that stemmed from routine disenfranchisement, in order to attack the very possibility of democratic culture, ensuring that the plaza maintained an atmosphere of tranquilized consensus:

> Conservative critics of *Tilted Arc* did not so much advocate a system of total control as they did a vision of the public sphere as a place without significant spontaneity or political argument – in short a public sphere without public opinion. Individuals could make use of Federal Plaza for private, leisure-time activities that had no visible public consequence; otherwise, the function of the area was purely ceremonial. Conservatives invoked, alternately, a pastoral image of a properly policed and depoliticized oasis in lower Manhattan and a more authoritarian vision of government property presided over by state officials. The "refeudalization" of the public sphere that Habermas describes as the outcome of a bureaucratized politics and a consumer culture has as its corollary a shift from public deliberation to the public presentation of power. Public spaces, in the eyes of most conservatives, are places for unanimity, not debate or disagreement. They exist for the display of authority, not the give-and-take of public discussion.[67]

In causing a collapse of consensus, the *Tilted Arc* controversy had in fact instituted a democratic disruption in the predominant organization of perception and communication. Ultimately,

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[64] Serra in "Interview: Richard Serra & Bernard Lamarche-Vadel (1980)" in *Richard Serra: Interviews, Etc., 1970 – 1980*, 149,

[65] Serra in "Interview: Richard Serra & Liza Bear [1976]" in *Richard Serra: Interviews, Etc., 1970 – 1980*, 73.

[66] Lucy Lippard to William J. Diamond, n.d. *Tilted Arc* file, Arts and Historic Preservation Program, GSA, Washington, D.C. Quoted in Blake, "An Atmosphere of Effrontery: Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc*, and the Crisis of Public Art," 286.

[67] Blake, "An Atmosphere of Effrontery: Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc*, and the Crisis of Public Art," 280.

however, by means of a travesty of populist participation (putting a work of art on trial), the neutralized space of controlled activities and defused opinion would be restored, marking the triumph of a conservative police order over the subversive intervention of public sculpture.

In Weiner's street sign installation of *TILTED FROM BELOW COVERED FROM THE REAR*, the vulnerability of art without access to a legitimate public sphere was registered by the self-destroying logic of the work's design.[68] Weiner, however, would fortify his work against the sorts of challenges that Serra's sculpture faced, by avoiding the compromises of benign affirmation while still rejecting the extremes of authoritative imposition that *Tilted Arc*'s massive form aggressively embodied (as openly acknowledged by both the artist and his principal defendants). Indeed, Weiner's self-effacing road sign exposed the fallacies of an art that "declares its own area" or that aspires to "hold its site hostage." Rejecting the univocity of the 'proper' that ultimately grounded Serra's site-specificity, Weiner would attempt to harness the destabilizations of an abstract spatialization, but for the experience of *any thing whatsoever.* Weiner's sculpture would thus incorporate not only the peripatetic movements of the receiver, but also the erratic displacement of materials, simultaneously unmooring both subject and object. Using the logic of citational graft to eliminate the prospect of misreading ("they can't do it wrong") Weiner created a public work that would accept the *full* implications of conflicting views and shifting horizons, revealing all consensus to be a state of enforced repression, rather than a harmony of rational agreement.[69] As such, the work relates in many ways to James Meyer's theorization of a "functional" as opposed to "literal" site-specific practice:

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[68] In an article entitled "Sculpture, Publicity and the Poverty of Experience," Buchloh describes the inevitability of sculpture's historical "dematerialization" in view of two overwhelming factors: first, the abrogation of any access to a legitimate public sphere, now transformed into what Negt and Kluge call the "production public sphere," and second, the domination of object experience by the logic of sign exchange value, to the exclusion of concepts of use. Buchloh argues that without registering these catastrophic developments in both our experience of collectivity and our relationship to objects, any sculptural intervention succumbs to a form of compensatory mythification. See Buchloh, "Sculpture: Publicity and the Poverty of Experience" in ***White Cube/Black Box: Skulputrensammlung: Video Installation Film: Werkschau Valie Export und Gordon Matta-Clark***, exh. cat. (Vienna: EA-Generali Foundation, 1996).

[69] As Chantal Mouffe has argued, public *space* (in contrast to the Habermassian public sphere) is always characterized by an "agonistic" form of democratic politics, inasmuch as there is no rational solution to the conflicts in a pluralist social world. Democratic struggle therefore centers around the power relations that structure society, and which are invariably imposed in terms of a hegemonic exclusion that enforces one

> In contrast [to the literal site] the functional site may or may not incorporate a physical place. It certainly does not privilege this place. Instead, it is a process, an operation occurring between sites, a mapping of institutional and textual filiations and the bodies that move between them (the artist's above all). It is an informational site, a palimpsest of text, photographs and video recordings, physical places, and things: an allegorical site, to recall Craig Owens's term, aptly coined to describe Robert Smithson's polymathic enterprise, whose vectored and discursive notion of "place" opposes Serra's phenomenological model. It is no longer an obdurate steel wall, attached to the plaza for eternity. It is a temporary thing, a movement, a chain of meanings and imbricated histories: a place marked and swiftly abandoned. The mobile site thus courts its destruction; it is willfully temporary; it's nature is not to endure but to come down.[70]

Remarkably, Meyer categorizes Weiner's work as literal in its approach, arguing that the artist's wall removals indulge in "the modernist impulse of reflexivity" by pointing, if not to the work itself, then to its framing conditions. That analysis ignores the fact that from the start, Weiner's practice aimed at overcoming self-reflexivity and contesting the limitations of specific contexts through both the generality of content (e.g. referencing any wall versus a gallery wall) and the dispersals of language. If functional practices now explore an "expanded" site as Meyer claims, then that wider terrain had already been staked out by artists such as Weiner decades ago. There is, for instance, a distinct continuity between Meyer's "functional" example of Christian Philipp Müller's *Illegal Border Crossing between Austria and Principality of Liechtenstein* (1993) and *AN OBJECT TOSSED FROM ONE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER* (figs. 224 & 225). Müller's travels constituted one part of a series of elements comprising *Green Border*, made for the Austrian Pavilion at the 1993 Venice Biennale.[71] Dressed as a hiker, the Swiss artist journeyed without proper visas across Austria's borders to each of its eight neighboring countries (Müller and his assistant were

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configuration over another within a context of contingency. Counter-hegemonic practices may install a different order, but this in its turn will constitute another form of hegemony. Within this theorization, Mouffe declares that "the public space is the battleground where different hegemonic projects are confronted, without any possibility of final reconciliation." Mouffe's model of agonistic public space opposes both Jürgen Habermas' ideal of the public sphere as the site of rational consensus, and Hannah Arendt's concept of agonism, which still relies on the goal of intersubjective agreement. See Mouffe, "Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces," *Art & Research, A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*, vol. 1, no. 2 (Summer 2007); http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v1n2/mouffe.html. Maria Hlavajova writes about the rejection of consensus in Weiner's work in "Dicht Bij: Thinking About the Work of Lawrence Weiner for the Exhibition As It Came To Be" in *Dicht Bij*, exh. cat. (Utrecht: BAK and Center for the Humanities, 2009), 28-33.

[70] Meyer, "The Functional Site; or The Transformation of Site Specificity," 25.

[71] Christian Philipp Müller's *Green Border* had four distinct components: Austria's current national boundaries as traversed by the artist, its historical border shift as cartographically registered, the architectural border enclosing the Austrian pavilion at the exhibition, and the installation of features of the Green Border within the pavilion itself (surveillance camera, eight trees from Austria, eight signs with botanical and geo-political information, eight plaques with directions, eight veduta from the Austrian National Library, air conditioner with sluice and monitor).

arrested at the Czech Republic border and prohibited from re-entering that country for three years). Müller marked these crossings by mailing postcards to friends in the art world, invoking On Kawara's motto to confirm: "I crossed the border between X and Y and I AM STILL ALIVE."[72] Regarding the critical import of this work Meyer writes: "Simulating the illegal immigrant's trials, Müller's gesture thematized the blurring of national identity at this historical moment of internationalism and late capitalist organization, when nationalist ideologies have returned with a vengeance."[73] Although Weiner's work similarly defeats the categorical logic of national identity, and contests the borderlines that constrain the immigration and emigration of both persons and things, his sculptures never presume to "simulate" the immigrant's trials through the exemplary figure of the artist or even the art object. Meyer's problematic description of Müller's complex intervention reveals that Müller's project (no less than Serra's monolithic structure) risks re-invoking a heroic, self-reflexive gesture, inasmuch as it is "the artist's body above all" that gives coherence to the movement between sites. Weiner's practice avoids that possibility, ensuring that the "functional" qualities of any site are determined by the receiver's productive efforts, as opposed to the artist's or the artwork's privileged agency.

A BLACK MARK UPON THE EARTH

In the catalog for *Sculpture*, a 1985 solo show at ARC – Musée d'art moderne de la ville de paris, Weiner explained the re-categorization of his work:

> The work refers to and deals with sculptural materials and concepts, the culture has accepted installation, light, sound, etc. as sculpture. Language has now entered the culture as a sculptural material, therefore the terms "works", pieces", etc. are no longer necessary: sculpture is sufficient. What was once a concept for artists and the culture is

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[72] On Kawara began a series of works in 1970 in which he sent telegrams to friends and colleagues bearing the message "I AM STILL ALIVE." This phrase was used by Kawara as a response to Weiner's "instruction" for Kawara as part of the magazine exhibition "48-Page Exhibition," *Studio International* (July / August, 1970), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 37. For a discussion of this exhibition see chapter I in this volume.

[73] Meyer, "The Functional Site; or The Transformation of Site Specificity," 28.

> now a reality. What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet. The subject was roses, not names.[74]

Far from being merely sufficient, Weiner's designation provocatively linked the work to a discipline profoundly undermined by the artist's own linguistic interventions as we have seen. In fact, several of the works included in the 1985 catalog could easily be read as allegories of sculpture, pointing to its degraded status as a form of aesthetic production. For example this work from 1974:

> *IN RELATION TO AN INCREASE IN QUANTITY REGARDLESS OF QUALITY:*
>
> *HAVING BEEN PLACED UPON A PLANE*
>
> *( ) UPON A PLANE*
>
> *HAVING BEEN PLACED ( )*

Here, parentheses constitute what Jeff Wall would call "marks of indifference" signaling a condition of both arbitrariness and loss.[75] In this case, Weiner's sculpture aligns with a critical approach that Buchloh finds in Michael Asher's "situational aesthetics," pointing to the compromised material and historical legitimacy of sculpture, from within the analysis of sculptural production itself.[76] Weiner's work from 1976, dedicated to Asher, highlights the artists' shared

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[74] Weiner in an interview with Suzanne Pagé, *Sculpture*, exh. cat. (Paris: ARC - Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1985), n.p.

[75] Jeff Wall, "Marks of Indifference": Aspects of Photography in or as, Conceptual Art (1995)" in Ann Goldstein and Anne Rorimer, *Reconsidering the Object of Art, 1965-1975*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1995), 247-267.

[76] Buchloh, "Michael Asher and the Conclusion of Modernist Sculpture (1980)" in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry, Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 197*5, 1-39. Buchloh's discussion of "Situational Aesthetics" is based on Victor Burgin's formulation of the term. In 1969, Burgin published the article "Situational Aesthetics" (*Studio International* vol. 178, no. 915 [October, 1969]), defining Conceptual work in terms of an "aesthetic system" capable of *generating* objects rather than constituting an object in itself. He lists two consequences of this approach: the first being an emphasis on spatial / material / temporal contingency and the second, a shift from an objective to a behavioral focus: "the specific nature of any object formed is largely contingent upon the details of the situation for which it is designed; through attention to time, objects formed are intentionally located partly in real, exterior space and partly in psychological, interior space." Burgin goes on to define the work as a set of "situational cues" that signal an aesthetic attitude in "the behavior of the perceiver" who not only attends to the object, but now plays a role in its formation. The work thus focuses not on object production per se, but on the complex of "artistic" behaviors that are materially, temporally and spatially specific to a chosen situation. Burgin argues that the temporal dilations such work creates erode clear distinctions between subject and object, inside and outside. He writes: "There is something of Norman O. Brown's 'polymorphous perverse' in the attitudes now infiltrating the hierarchical structures that have previously determined the relevance and usage of materials and media in art. It is through an indiscriminate empiricism that the new work is currently evolving." While "indiscriminate empiricism" certainly applies to Weiner's practice, Burgin's emphasis both on behavioral aspects and situational specificity conflicts with Weiner's objective focus (Weiner's work focuses on *extant* material

interest in temporally discrete interventions that defeat any sculptural claim for autonomy or trans-historical validity:

RELEASED AT A POINT OF PASSAGE FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY

By the same token, Weiner's persistent invocation of "sculpture" (utilized by the artist for over three decades now), must serve other purposes than to remind us of the term's historical bankruptcy. A key to its relevance is disclosed in an unexpected detail from the *Sculpture* catalog itself. Included in the book is a series of small black and white photographs, street views of a seemingly random collection of buildings that appear dissociated from the works on view. As curator Suzanne Pagé's interview reveals, the pictures are of New York apartment buildings where Weiner had at some point resided. When asked if these autobiographical references reflected or critiqued contemporary trends, Weiner replied: "Of course, *l'air du temps* is a factor. My utilization of developments in means of presentation is just that: an utilization of developments in presentation. Sculpture requires a space, in effect a place in the sun. My landscape, my place in the sun, my nature are urban."[77]

Beyond placing the works in the context of urban decay, or parodying expressionist tendencies through the inclusion of personal details, the photographs in fact link Weiner's work to a specific function, well ingrained in sculpture's history. After all, these buildings are presented in the catalog as landmarks, marking / commemorating spaces where the artist supposedly lived. As such they belong in some way to what Krauss has described as "the logic of the monument:"

> The logic of sculpture, it would seem, is inseparable from the logic of the monument. By virtue of this logic a sculpture is a commemorative representation. It sits in a particular place and speaks in a symbolical tongue about the meaning or use of that place.[78]

Krauss recounts the Modernist negation of this monumental logic in the late 19th century, as it ushered in forms of sculpture characterized by "sitelessness, or homelessness, an absolute loss of place."[79] That nomadic, placeless condition was made literal in Brancusi's absorption of bases

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relationships that do not depend on the "generating" capacities of the receiver for existence) and his insistence on the work's capacity to divorce from any given context.

[77] Weiner in an interview with Suzanne Pagé, *Sculpture*, n.p.

[78] Krauss, "Sculpture in The Expanded Field (1978)" reprinted in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1985), 279.

[79] Krauss, "Sculpture in The Expanded Field (1978)," 280.

within the sculptural construct, signifying the object's liberation into the realm of autonomous, idealist space. Krauss goes on to argue that by the early '60s this domain of Modernist placelessness had been thoroughly evacuated. Transformed into "a categorical no-man's land" sculpture was no longer a rich field of autonomous possibility, but "a kind of ontological absence" whose logic was based on a set of exclusions ("not-landscape and not-architecture," eventually becoming "what was in the room that is not really the room").[80] From this set of exclusions, Krauss goes on to define the positivity of an expanded field of practice, including marked sites, site construction, and axiomatic structures, whose link to sculpture was no longer based on a modernist notion of medium specificity but on a post-modern focus on the logical operations performed on a set of cultural terms (in this case architecture versus landscape).

By invoking the category of sculpture, Weiner would seem to have turned away from this expanded field. Indeed, the applicability of the term to Weiner's practice has less to do with the logical possibilities accruing from an opposition of landscape to architecture, than with a dialectical tension between the site-specificity of landmarks and the placelessness of the modernist art object. In the conclusion to her study on "site specific art and locational identity" Miwon Kwon calls for a form of "relational specificity" in which such models of sedentariness and nomadism are held together as "sustaining relations" in order to combat both the serialization of sites ("one thing after another") and the unevenness of spatial adjacencies (such as the extremes of ownership and dispossession).[81] *Sculpture* mobilizes these contradictions, as it presents several works that evoke a decrepit monumentality:[82]

A BLACK MARK UPON THE EARTH (1984)

A BARRICADE FORMED OF THE RESULTANT DEBRIS AS A WALL CAME TUMBLING DOWN (1984)

along with others that signify a rootless condition:

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[80] Krauss, "Sculpture in The Expanded Field (1978)," 282.

[81] Miwon Kwon, *Once Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: 2002), 166.

[82] Alice Zimmerman associates these works with the "urban decay" evidenced by the photographs included in the *Sculpture* catalog. See Alexander Alberro and Alice Zimmerman, "Not How It Should Were It To Be Built But How It Could Were It To Be Built," *Lawrence Weiner*, 59.

> *TAKEN FROM HERE TO WHERE IT CAME FROM AND TAKEN TO A PLACE AND USED IN SUCH A MANNER THAT IT CAN ONLY REMAIN AS A REPRESENTATION OF WHAT IT WAS WHERE IT CAME FROM* (1981)
> (figs. 226a & 226b)

In-between these poles lies the usefulness of "sculpture" to Weiner's practice, as the term comes to designate a "differential" condition of "placelessness" that is not autonomous, and monumentality that is not specific.[83] For while Weiner's sculptures may function as a kind of landmark the works are never anchored by sites, thus remaining in a state of exile. On this point Weiner remains unequivocal: "Almost every work of mine doesn't have a place. It doesn't belong anywhere."[84] At the same time Weiner repeatedly affirms: "… all art is about understanding your place in the sun, understanding where you're standing and what your relation to the world is."[85] The work thus occupies a non-place which is neither the borderless, friction-free "ou-topia" of global capitalism, [86] nor the free-floating idealist space of Modernist art, because in fact, so many of Weiner's works do function as monuments, not in the heroic sense but in a cartographic and historical one. For instance, when presented in the context of a Parisian museum, the makeshift contents of *A BARRICADE FORMED OF THE RESULTANT DEBRIS AS A WALL CAME TUMBLING DOWN* mark the site of the Paris Commune, described by Kristin Ross not only as "the first realization of urban space as revolutionary space," but as a demonstration of the "volatility" of signs during periods of conflict. [87] According to this theory, as signs are disputed and appropriated during times of revolutionary crisis, what V.N. Volosinov calls "the inner

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[83] Krauss articulates a concept of "differential" specificity in relation to Marcel Broodthaers' work, in order to wrest the notion of "medium" from an essentialist, formalist model, thereby salvaging its potential for an understanding of contemporary practices that ostensibly belong to a postmodern, post-medium condition. See Krauss, *A Voyage On the North Sea, Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1992). See also *Under Blue Cup*, in which the possibility of *inventing* a medium is connected to the operations of memory (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2011).

[84] Weiner in "Interview by Marjorie Welish," *Bomb* (Winter, 1996), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, p, 354.

[85] Weiner in "If the Shoe Fits, Wear It A Conversation with Edward Leffingwell," *Shift, no. 1* (1990), reprinted in *Having Been Said,* 218.

[86] For a discussion of the concept of "ou-topia" as mobilized by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their theorization of the Imperial forces post-Fordian capitalism, see chapter V in this volume. See also Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 2000).

[87] Kristin Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune* (1998; London and New York: Verso, 2008), 4. According to Ross, the Commune was in fact a linguistic practice, as evidenced by the proliferation of journals and the "staggering quantity of posters which were designed not merely to decorate the revolution but to articulate it." Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune,* 138.

dialectical quality" of language emerges, as when curse words suddenly function as words of praise.[88] This "inner dialectical quality," finds monumental expression in the permanent installation of *SMASHED TO PIECES (IN THE STILL OF THE NIGHT) / ZERSCHMETTERT IN STÜCKE (IM FRIEDEN DER NACHT)* painted in 1991 on the roof of a former anti-aircraft tower in Vienna (fig. 227). If Weiner's sculpture - heralded as "a memorial against war and fascism" - still avoids a naïve and compensatory monumentality, it is because the language the artist uses openly registers and even exacerbates its failure to be adequate to an unmasterable history.[89] Weiner himself has said on various occasions that *SMASHED TO PIECES* refers not to wartime atrocities but to coconuts dropping on the ground or bottles breaking in the street.[90] Oscillating between the romance of an old love song and an explicit allusion to violent destruction (disturbing not only the stillness but the *peace* [FRIEDEN] of the night) Weiner's monumental sculpture neither memorializes nor transcends the past, revealing instead our incapacity to redeem the present.

Dealing once more with the problem of sculptural commemoration, in 2007 the work *REIHEN VON KOHL MARKIERT MIT ROTER TINTE UND MORGEN VERGRABEN* [*ROWS OF CABBAGES MARKED WITH RED INK AND BURIED TOMORROW*] was installed as a frieze on the entablature of the Haus der Kunst, formerly known as the Haus der Deutschen Kunst when the institution was inaugurated under Adolf Hitler's direction thirty years ago (figs. 228a & 228b). Within this context, "cabbages marked with red" generate a complex tangle of references that are historical (e.g. the cabbage soup served in concentration camps, the use of red triangles to mark

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[88] V.N. Volosinov as quoted in Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune,* 150.

[89] Gabriele Wix quotes Vienna's commissioner of culture Andreas Mailath-Pokorny describing *SMASHED TO PIECES (IN THE STILL OF THE NIGHT) / ZERSCHMETTERT IN STÜCKE (IM FRIEDEN DER NACHT)* as a "memorial against war and fascism." Gabriele Wix, "Unclaimed Things" in *Nach Bildende Kunst Art After Fine Art* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012), 30.

[90] Weiner: "And things that really function like the Vienna Flakturm – the tower – everybody was reading it as if it had something to do with *Kristallnacht*… no I was trying to show that there was a difference when you hear beer bottles breaking in the night and when you hear beer bottles breaking in the day - it's a different sound… but of course they can build their own metaphor off of it – that's why we used 'peace' of the night in the German instead of 'still' of the night." Weiner in "Bomb Live: Sharon Hayes & Lawrence Weiner," video interview May 2010; http://bombsite.com/issues/999/articles/3597.

political prisoners) as well as literary (e.g. Lewis Carroll's *The Walrus and The Carpenter* [1872], Zola's *Le Ventre de Paris* [1873], O. Henry's *Cabbages and Kings* [1913] and even perhaps the cauliflowers in Brecht's play, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* [1941]).[91] By means of a common vegetable, Weiner's sculpture signals the museum's history as a primary outpost of Nazi propaganda, or more broadly the complacency of cultural institutions in the face of barbarism. At the same time, the work could also be read as a piece of information on how to preserve cabbages over the winter. Writing about Zola's and Brecht's work, Jacques Rancière points out that while cabbages and cauliflowers are elevated to "the dignity of artistic and political symbols," there remains a certain play in these objects between politicity and a-politicity, reflecting a contemporary fusion of politics with spectacular commodity display.[92] Weiner similarly unveils art's compromised legibility in what passes for a contemporary public sphere by presenting a work that shuttles between the triviality and profundity of cabbages displayed on a monumental frieze. Invoking the ungovernable volatility of linguistic designation, Weiner's sculpture thus resists the mythology of transparent communication and the presumptions of instrumentalized didacticism so often associated with Conceptual art.[93] Moreover, Weiner's sculpture never

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[91] Weiner's script for the October 2010 broadcast of a "radio essay" entitled "& THAT WAS THE TROUBLE WITH ARISTOTLE" includes the line "And now let us talk of cabbages and kings. And what to wear where," a direct reference to Lewis Carroll's poem *The Walrus and The Carpenter*:

"The time has come," the Walrus said,

"To talk of many things:

Of shoes--and ships--and sealing-wax-

Of cabbages--and kings-

And why the sea is boiling hot-

And whether pigs have wings."

Lewis Carroll, *Through The Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* in *The Annotated Alice*, ed. Martin Gardner and John Tenniel (New York: Norton & Company, 2000), 185. O. Henry's first book of short stories was entitled *Cabbages and Kings* (1913).

[92] Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, trans. Steven Corcoran (Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2009), 47-49.

[93] Rachel Haidu writes that while Conceptual art productively turned attention towards the work's intersection with its site, in doing so it annulled its own materiality, becoming didactic: "… these early instances of what comes to be known as institutional critique performed by minimalism and conceptual art seem to run aground when language is disemboweled of precisely those characteristics that lend it its own 'site-specificity' – a site-specificity upon which it depends. When language is used to diminish the visual information of an artwork in order to expand the spectator's orientation toward the site as a condition for art, the abstractions involved reduce language – and the art itself – to little more than a didactic instrument." Haidu, *The Absence Of Work, Marcel Broodthaers, 1964 – 1976* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2010), 102.

speaks with monumental authority about the symbolic function of any specific place, and in fact, *ROWS OF CABBAGES MARKED WITH RED INK AND BURIED TOMORROW* was not even made with the Haus der Kunst in mind (the work dates from 1994 and was previously shown in association with Projektraum Berlin in 1996). Once again, the self-proclaimed placelessness of Weiner's linguistic structure comes into play, enabling an elliptical movement that allows meaning and use to remain provisional and non-impositional, even in the face of inscription on a dictatorial surface.

As the exhibition at Sonsbeek '71 already demonstrated, a lack of place does not necessarily equate to a lack of site, insofar as "sites" are now constituted as "a discursive vector," defined less by geographic specificity than by intertextual practices, information flows and the bodies and structures through which these pass. Kwon writes, "this transformation of the site textualizes spaces and spatializes discourses," a phenomenon boldly confirmed by Weiner's public installations of language.[94] On the other hand, in keeping with Meyer's theorization of functional practice, Kwon argues that these fragmentary and transitory sites still rely for coherence on "a nomadic narrative whose path is articulated by the passage of the artist."[95] In Weiner's case, by contrast, work is never a narrative function of the artist's personal trajectory. Instead, the errancy of Weiner's sculpture is produced by what Derrida calls the "*destinerrance*" of language, the possibility-of never-arriving that constitutes language's materiality.[96] It is just this quality of unpredictable dissemination that Weiner's sculptures will exploit, being fly-posted on public walls, inscribed on inconspicuous manhole covers, even written on planks and sent out

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[94] Kwon, *Once Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity,* 29.

[95] Kwon, *Once Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity,* 29. In order to reflect a shift towards more spatially, temporally and discursively dispersed practices, Claire Doherty will propose the term "situation-specific" as opposed to site-specific. She writes: "Such works and processes share the situational characteristics of contemporaneity, defined recently by Terry Smith as 'prioritizing the moment over time, direct experience of multiplicitous complexity over the singular simplicity of distanced reflection'…Often temporary and interventionist, invariably now performed by individuals other than the artist, mobilizing and demanding different kinds of public engagement, such works often result from a commission, as part of broader, place-based, scattered-site exhibitions. Yet such situation-producing works contest a literal reading of the specifics of place as fixed and stable, causing a destabilizing effect theorized by art historian Miwon Kwon as being in 'the wrong place'." Claire Doherty in the Introduction to *Situation* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2009), 13.

to sea. *Destinerrance* informs the materiality of Weiner's drawings no less, as this note from a notebook dated July 2008 – December 2009 reveals: "DRAWINGS ARE MESSAGES. THE CULTURE FUNCTIONS AS THE BOTTLE IN THE SEA" (fig. 229). According to Rancière, such indirection is the dread of the Marxist intellectual.[97] For Weiner, on the other hand, it is the crux of his practice, as the artist himself states: "there then is the problem of not *what* is the art but *where* is the art."[98] Again, we find ourselves in that interstitial space that Smithson had gestured towards, faced with a body of sculpture that both situates and dislocates, reveling in its own "loss of destination":

> (AWAY FROM IT ALL)
> HERE THERE & EVERYWHERE
> ---
> (BENEATH IT ALL)
> HERE THERE & EVERYWHERE
> ---
> (ABOVE IT ALL)
> HERE THERE & EVERYWHERE
> ---
> (1989)[99] (fig. 230)

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[96] Jacques Derrida, "Le Facteur de la Vérité (1975)" in *The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 411-496.

[97] Jacques Rancière writes: "Althusser's enterprise, however, is marked throughout by the dread of the Marxist intellectual, the dread of the intellectual fallen prey to politics: not to make 'literature,' not to address letters without addressee; not to be Don Quixote, the fine soul who fights against windmills, not to be alone, not to be the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, an activity by which one loses one's head, literally as well as figuratively." Rancière, *The Flesh of Words*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 137.

[98] Weiner, "Notes for a Talk Introducing a Screening of *A First Quarter"* at Gentofte Kunstbibliotek in Hellerup Denmark (June, 27, 1974), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 73.

[99] This work is reprinted as it appears in *Situation*, ed. Claire Doherty (Cambridge, MA and London: Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2009), 150. The phrase *(ALL OVER IT ALL) HERE THERE & EVERYWHERE* is omitted in this publication of the work.

Describing the precarious “moment of transit” in which contemporary culture finds itself (postmodern, postcolonial, postfeminist…), Homi K. Bhabha offers a description that resonates with the space of Weiner’s sculpture:

> For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the ‘beyond’: an exploratory, restless movement caught so well in the French rendition of the words *au-delà* – here and there, on all sides, *fort / da*, hither and thither, back and forth.[100]

Mingled with the list of prepositions (the basis of Weiner’s practice) Bhabha includes Freud’s game of *fort / da*, the child’s manipulation of an object of desire in order to control the object’s absences and presences, through a rhythm that would master the displeasure of loss. Denis Hollier uses the term *fort / da* to describe something (the future) that is: “as close and as far as can be.”[101] That paradoxical sense of proximity and remoteness is precisely where Weiner’s work has lead us (*HERE THERE & EVERYWHERE*). On the other hand, while desire lies at the heart of Weiner’s practice, as do the operations of absence, presence, (dis)pleasure and loss, the possessive *mastery* over objects and subjects - implied by the game of *fort / da* and enforced by the hegemonic ordering of places (of cabbages and kings) - is exactly the sort of perverse relation that Weiner’s sculptures indiscreetly cause us to question.

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[100] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 2.

[101] Denis Hollier, *The Politics of Prose, Essay on Sartre*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 46.

CHAPTER VII: THE TRAVEL OF MARGARET MARY (reality + fiction)

it rained like hell tomorrow

In 1972, with the help of Richard Landry, Weiner made two "advertisements for work" one of which illustrated *TO AND FRO. FRO AND TO. AND TO AND FRO. AND FRO AND TO.* (fig. 231). Shot in the backroom of Leo Castelli's New York Gallery, the video relates to *Beached* (1970) and *Broken Off* (1971) in its presentation of five possibilities for the work "were it to be built." If, however, Weiner's earlier videos tied the work's construction too closely to the artist's person, *To And Fro. Fro And To. And To And Fro. And Fro And To.* corrects this intimacy by focusing only on an anonymous, disembodied hand, sliding an ashtray up and down across a blank surface. Each deliberate execution of the work is punctuated by the hand withdrawing from the object and forming a fist, like a period between statements. Thus, in their precise positioning all five examples of *TO AND FRO. FRO AND TO. AND TO AND FRO. AND FRO AND TO.* appear identical. Designated nonetheless as five *different* possibilities, Weiner's video points once again to a repetition that precludes equivalent substitution, frustrating the logic of resemblance, originals and copies.

Observing *TO AND FRO. FRO AND TO. AND TO AND FRO. AND FRO AND TO.* in action one is struck by the way the object is touched. As with Weiner's performance in *Beached*, wherein the artist fishes driftwood out of the sea, an everydayness marks the encounter with the ashtray. When we discover, however, that this object happens to be one of Weiner's favorite things, another set of questions emerges.[1] The problem of how to touch objects properly (*How To Touch What*) was crucial to Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism, a philosophy referenced throughout Weiner's practice.[2] Denis Hollier identifies the crisis of the Sartrean intellectual as a

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[1] See Alice Zimmerman, "Works and Days – A Conversation with Myself About Lawrence Weiner" in *Lawrence Weiner, obras: en el corriente = in the stream* (Valencia: Generalitat Valenciana, Conselleria de Cultura, 1995).

[2] References to existentialism appear frequently throughout Weiner's practice, in notebook drawings, song lyrics, interviews and texts. See, for instance, Lawrence Weiner, *A Tale Of A Maiden Or Two* (Cologne: Salon Verlag, 1996). In an interview with Marjorie Welish Weiner states: "But we live in a world where each individual is unique and alone - and this is the definition from a $1.98 dictionary of existentialism – in an

failure to gain mastery over things, and in a passage from Sartre's *La Nausée,* the protagonist Roquentin bemoans: "Objects should not touch, because they are not alive. One uses them, one puts them back in place, one lives in their midst: they are useful, nothing more. But in my case, they touch me. It's unbearable."[3] As Hollier recounts in *The Politics of Prose,* for Sartre there should be neat distinctions, between tools that serve and the dominators of tools who touch. To be touched by an object implies a loss of maintenance, an insubordination akin to that of one's own body in a moment of desire. The proper relationship of man to object would thus be transitive rather than possessive or affective. Watching *To and Fro's* anonymous hand shifting its equally generic ashtray, the object relation appears to be appropriately de-sexualized and certainly non-acquisitive. And yet, there is one small detail that violates Sartre's terms of self-mastery. The ashtray is overturned, and therefore out of (pre-determined) use. Its manipulation, while not overtly sexual, can still not be characterized as purely instrumental, thus skirting the border between activism (masculine) and a surrender to the flesh (feminine). In Weiner's film *A First Quarter* (1973), *TO AND FRO. FRO AND TO. AND TO AND FRO. AND FRO AND TO.* would indeed be seductively re-enacted by a female player using a pack of cigarettes, openly flouting Sartre's prohibition against an affective material relationship.

For Sartre's Roquentin, the anxiety over objects would be two-fold. Feeling things unbearably touching him, he remains unable to grasp them, as when he fails to throw a pebble into the sea: "I held it by the edges, with my fingers very far apart, so as not to dirty myself."[4] Hollier describes the implications of Roqeuntin's fastidiousness: "For Sartre the real is not what mind appropriates unto itself, for the real is inassimilable and indigestible; it is rather, that which

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indifferent and often hostile world. If one finds oneself by virtue of one's existence in an adversarial position to the world, if I find myself that way, then there must be at least another million people who do as well. That's a lot of people. That's a gold record." Weiner in "Interview by Marjorie Welish," *Bomb* (Winter 1996), reprinted in *Having Been Said, Writings & Interviews of Lawrence Weiner, 1968 – 2003,* eds. Gerti Fietzek & Gregor Stemmrich (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2004), 351. Eric de Bruyn discusses the relationship of Weiner's work to Sartre's model of committed literature in "Being Then Within a Context of Revolution: Six Notes on Two Films by Lawrence Weiner" in *Film Avantgarde Biopolitik*, eds. Sabeth Buchmann, Helmut Draxler, and Stephan Greene (Vienna: Schlebrügge, 2009), 364 – 391.

[3] Jean-Paul Sartre, *La Nausée* quoted in Denis Hollier, "A Study of Hands" in *The Politics of Prose, Essay on Sartre* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 112.

[4] Sartre, quoted in Hollier, *The Politics of Prose, Essay on Sartre,* 111.

gets hands dirty."[5] Roquentin's inability to make valid contact with the real is analogous to the failure of a writing that remains uncommitted. As a counter-example to Sartre's model of committed literature, Holllier offers André Gide's *The Counterfeiters* (1925), a regressive structure (a novel about writing a novel) that formalizes a bourgeois lack of consciousness. Hollier describes Roquentin's desire to suppress such consciousness (which must always be of something other than itself) through the self-reflexive medium of novelistic fiction: "If Roquentin takes his papers off to Paris, it is in order to turn the journal into a novel, to cleanse it – and himself along with it – of the sin of existing."[6] As it happens, *The Counterfeiters* had early on made an impression on Weiner.[7] And when confronted with the works' expanses of language, wherein material content emerges as that which cannot be proximately grasped, it is easy for a moment to think that Weiner's sculptures have also been cleansed of "the sin of existing." This illusion accounts in part for the work's close association with Robbe-Grillet's novels and their autotelic movement of description, to which Weiner's texts bear a significantly superficial similarity.[8]

Robbe-Grillet critiques the tragic mode of *La Nausée* in which the distance between man and things is sublimated in Roquentin's tactile struggle to maintain corporeal integrity. He writes: "Drowned in the depth of things, man ultimately no longer perceives them: his role is soon limited to experiencing, in their name, totally humanized impressions and desires."[9] For Robbe-Grillet, the best and only tool against the illusory ingestion of the real is "the cleansing power of the sense of sight" whose efficacy Sartre already acknowledges. [10] "Optical description," Robbe-Grillet declares, "is, in effect, the kind which most readily establishes distances: the sense of

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[5] Hollier, *The Politics of Prose, Essay on Sartre,* 111.

[6] Hollier, *The Politics of Prose, Essay on Sartre,* 69.

[7] Weiner has mentioned that Andre Gide's *The Counterfeiters* was one of the first important encounters he had with art. A reference to Gide's existentialism, as articulated in *The Counterfeiters* and in *Lafaciado,* appears in Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1975-1978, Moved Pictures Archive, New York.

[8] For a further discussion of Weiner's work in relation to Alain Robbe-Grillet's novels see Chapter I in this volume.

[9] Alain Robbe-Grillet, *For A New Novel*, *Essays On Fiction* (1963; New York: Grove Press, 1965), 68.

[10] Robbe-Grillet, *For A New Novel*, *Essays On Fiction*, 73.

sight, if it seeks to remain simply that, leaves things in their respective place."[11] From this perspective, distance would simply be measured without regret, hatred or despair, marking a non-anthropocentric relation between man and things who may now "coexist peacefully in mutual indifference" as Hollier describes.[12] In a published statement on Robbe-Grillet, Weiner reads this separation as the mark not only of distance, but of dignity:

> WHAT IS SET UPON THE TABLE SITS UPON THE TABLE BECAME SUFFICIENT TO MAINTAIN A SEMBLANCE OF DIGNITY A PLACE WHERE IN FACT I WAS NO LONGER NECESSARY IT IS SUFFICIENT[13]

Rejecting Sartre's call for manual mastery, effacing the identity of all human protagonists, Weiner's sculpture will embody the tactful separation of Robbe-Grillet's language. At the same time, Weiner vehemently opposes Robbe-Grillet's belief in an art that creates "only *for nothing,*" and that concerns itself wholly with a manner of speaking, irrespective of what is actually said.[14] The work is, after all, structured for the sake of content and use, the drawings filled not only with maps, but with messages.

There are, in fact, many ways in which Weiner's linguistic practice adheres to a Sartrean ethic of commitment, firstly, in conceiving of the work as a tool, a heterotelic object that does not have its ends in itself. As such, both Sartre and Weiner insist on *reading* as the only way in which writing is objectified, ultimately the only end proper to it.[15] Undoubtedly, Weiner shares Sartre's belief that one writes for the present, a punctuality Hollier describes in terms that suit Weiner's work: "It is inadvisable to touch wet paint, because one will get dirty. In order to have dirty hands [*les main sales*], there is but one solution, and it is political: read wet print."[16] One thinks of Weiner's attachment to the timeliness of street posters, and also of his early videos, all those images of the artist getting his hands dirty, building examples of *BEACHED* with pieces of

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[11] Robbe-Grillet, *For A New Novel*, *Essays On Fiction*, 73.

[12] Hollier, "Knots," *Artforum* vol. 46, no. 10 (Summer 2008), 390.

[13] Weiner, "The Robbe-Grillet Express: A Ticket To Ride," *Artforum* vol. 46, no. 10, 389.

[14] Robbe-Grillet, *For A New Novel*, *Essays On Fiction*, 37.

[15] Hollier, *The Politics of Prose, Essay on Sartre,* 33.

[16] Hollier, *The Politics of Prose, Essay on Sartre,* 94.

driftwood, or breaking a branch to show *BROKEN OFF*, not to mention his role (as the anti-Roquentin) in *A RUBBER BALL THROWN AT THE SEA*. There is too that long scene from the film *A First Quarter* in which the urgency of "wet print" is literalized, as we watch an androgynous figure (Tina Girouard) paint the following text on an outdoor wall:

ONEQUARTEX
TERRIORGREEN
INDUSTRIALEN
AMELTHROWNON
ABRICKWALL
(fig. 232)

Regarding art, Weiner has said, "…it's not for the millenniums, it's not forever, it's for right now. Cause I'm only from right now."[17] And in a notebook dated June 2005 – November 2009, we find a photograph of the artist, smiling ear to ear, holding up a sign that says "It's NOW!" (fig. 233) Indeed, Weiner's sense of contemporaneity may even be more pressing than Sartre's. In his chapter on "the infelicities of the present tense," Hollier reveals that for Sartre, temporality involved an irresolvable disjunction, being torn between an "impassioned sense of the present" and a consciousness of the need to transcend it, in other words to have a future.[18] But if the last lines of *La Nausée* prophetically state, "Tomorrow it will rain in Bouville,"[19] that prediction will be re-written in Weiner's notebook to read, "IT RAINED LIKE HELL TOMORROW"[20] (fig. 234). Using the infelicities of the *past* tense, Weiner's language makes us wonder if we have ever really moved beyond, causing us to shudder if indeed tomorrow's rain will be the same as yesterday's hell.

Perhaps the most critical difference between Sartre's ethic and Weiner's practice has to do with the question of direction. For Sartre, literature must be an object with a project. Refusing

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[17] Lawrence Weiner video monologue, ARKENmuseum, 2009; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=puEMu8JBu00

[18] Hollier, *The Politics of Prose, Essay on Sartre,* 89.

[19] Hollier, *The Politics of Prose, Essay on Sartre,* 23.

[20] Lawrence Weiner Notebook July 2008 – December 2009, Moved Pictures Archive, New York.

the aimlessness of capitalism, or the detachment of touristic spectacle, the committed writer should be a pilot, marshaling his readers towards an end. As such, the writer cannot be "*déraciné*," one who speaks as a stranger, because the imperative of writing, when faced with the necessities of class consciousness, would be always to know for whom one writes, to be certain not only of one's direction but of one's addressee.[21] Writing thus operates in a space that is securely oriented, as Hollier describes:

> The future, the binding principle of the present, gives it consistency and makes it available to perception. The gerundial infinitive is the privileged mode of objectivity: an object is a project, the road is to-be-traveled, the mountain to-be-avoided. "The arrow," as he says, "indicates the road." To assert that the world is "hodological" is to argue that its space is arrowed, its every line a vector, every point a vehicle.[22]

Once Weiner moves away from the rectilinearity of his early paradigms, his drawings will start to be filled with arrows. The hodolgical world of "every line a vector" would seem to be the one we find in Weiner's later drawings such as *Spheres Of Influence* (1990) wherein figures appear to be hurled into empty space, warped by a velocity that also propels the whiplash curves that connect forms to fragments of text (figs. 189a & 189b). Such "maps," on the other hand, never point solely in one direction, either to the road we must travel or the mountain to avoid. If anything they produce a sense of vertiginous indirection, multiplying possible paths rather than binding movement in a single vector. That destabilization is exacerbated in a series of drawings from a notebook dated 2001 – January 2002, related to the film/drawing *Blue Moon Over* (2001). In these schematic landscapes reminiscent of *The Level Of Water*, horizon lines appear fully ungrounded, invaded by arrows and moving ellipses. Weiner provides a rationale for these dynamics, in a text pasted onto the cover of a cigar box which reads: "AS THE HORIZON METAPHORIZES FROM NOUN TO VERB NEW APHORISMS COME INTO PLAY"[23] (figs. 235a, 235b & 235c). How to find one's way, when the horizon itself is in motion is the question asked but not answered by Weiner's drawings, which never assume the authority of a native speaker, or the pretenses of a piloting function ("THE ONLY JUSTIFICATION FOR THE EXISTENCE OF

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[21] Hollier, *The Politics of Prose, Essay on Sartre,* 14.

[22] Hollier, *The Politics of Prose, Essay on Sartre,* 20.

[23] Lawrence Weiner Notebook 2001 – January 2002, Moved Pictures Archive, New York.

ART IS TOWARDS A NOT DETERMINED END (AN END)).”[24] While Weiner remains committed to work that is read, ensuring its translation, and its referential potential to engage with the contexts in which it is found, he also embraces the uncertainties of *destinerrance*, which are the measure of an unmasterable transience for subject and object alike. It is this movement that Weiner describes in his 2008 text written *in memoriam*: “ROBBE-GRILLET EXPRESS: A TICKET TO RIDE”:

A NON METAPHORICAL REALITY
WITH THE OBVIATION OF EMPATHY
WITH ALL POSSIBILITIES
WITH ALL ASPIRATIONS
WITH ALL DESTINATIONS[25]

There is, of course, a great risk entailed in exploring this “errant migration” and the utopian declaration that all roads and all destinies are simultaneously possible. Weiner’s practice pushes ever closer to what Maurice Blanchot will describe as the exilic condition of writing in the field of the imaginary, a form of literature that is again the very opposite of Sartre’s model of engagement. In *The Space of Literature*, Blanchot speaks of writing as that which suspends the imperative of the present, annuls the truth of the world and effaces the identity of the author, in order that language may affirm its rarefied presence in the absence of the real from which it has been released. Describing the demands that such writing imposes, Blanchot invokes the experience of Franz Kafka:

> For, as far as Kafka is concerned to be excluded from the world means to be excluded form Canaan, to wander in the desert, and it is this situation which makes his struggle pathetic, his hope hopeless. It is as if, cast out of the world, into the error of infinite migration, he had to struggle ceaselessly to make of this outside another world and of this error the principle, the origin of a new freedom.[26]

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[24] Weiner, “IS GILLICK BEGGING THE QUESTION?” in *Liam Gillick: The Wood Way* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 2002), reprinted in *Having Been Said*, 412.

[25] Weiner, “The Robbe-Grillet Express: A Ticket To Ride,” *Artforum* vol. 46, no. 10, 389.

[26] Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (1955; Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 70.

For Blanchot, as for Robbe-Grillet, that freedom would be inseparable from the work's uselessness, its utter lack of justification. In no longer being a tool, however, the work finds its necessity for existing:

> … the more the world is affirmed as the future and the broad daylight of truth, where everything will have value, bear meaning, where the whole will be achieved under the mastery of man and for his use, the more it seems that art must descend toward that point where nothing has meaning yet, the more it matters that art maintain the movement, the insecurity and the grief of that which escapes every grasp and all ends.[27]

Blanchot's analysis traces the infra-thin line that separates the freedoms of nomadic sensibility from the hopelessness of spinning in the desert, the profundity of ambiguous meaning from its grievous and perilous annihilation. Blanchot's literature: useless, endless, utterly detached from the temporality and objectivity of things in the world, could easily stand as the bad dream of Weiner's linguistic practice. At the same time, there is some way in which Weiner's work converges with this imaginary field, through its itinerancy and effacement touching upon what Blanchot would call the "rebel space" of the book, a space which leaves the reader in a position of eccentricity.[28] Blanchot describes how Alberto Giacometti's sculptures install this kind of space, substituting the fluctuations and contingencies of the real with "the unmalleable lifeless profundity of the imaginary." When at once we perceive this spatial translation, we find ourselves decentered, "at a point which coincides with nowhere."[29] Back again to the placelessness of modern sculpture, half-way to the insubordinate space of Weiner's work.

a feeling of home

In a statement on one of his favorite artworks, Giacometti's *The Palace at 4 AM (1932)*, Weiner writes:

> IT IS NOT THEATER_ IT IS NOT ARCHITECTURE & ONLY BY VIRTUE OF ITS PHYSICAL PRESENCE IS IT *SCULPTURE_* IT DOES NOT PRECLUDE A LINE OF

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[27] Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 247.

[28] Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 192.

> SIGHT WITHIN THE SPACE. IT IS AS CLOSE TO A FEELING OF HOME AS POSSIBLE.[30]

The connection between Weiner's practice and Giacometti's palace is at first difficult to fathom, for what could be more antithetical to a non-metaphorical, impersonal structure than Giacometti's fetishistic object. Referencing Giacometti's own description of the work in an article for *Minotaure* (1933), Roxanna Marcoci names the palace's protagonists: "his mother, on the left, as she appeared to him when he was a child; opposite her his lover, known only by her first name, Denise, portrayed at once as a spinal column and a skeletal bird; and in the middle, between the two, a phallic form identified with the artist"[31] (fig. 236). If we follow the Freudian story suggested by this description, then we will be lost with regard to Weiner's work. Instead, it helps to concentrate on Weiner's sense of the *Palace* as "a feeling of home," and then to recall what Godard's Juliette from *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'ellle* says when her son asks "What is language?" "Language," she replies, "is the house that man lives in."

Let us imagine that Giacometti's palace is a structure like language. In viewing this scaffold of a house that dis-shelters, that encloses nothing, we recall Lyotard's description of language as an object "shot through with holes." This perforation moves us beyond the divide that separates committed writing from the space of the imaginary, for indeed, the first lesson of Giacometti's fairy-tale like sculpture is its complete exposure to everything "real" that is purportedly exterior to it ("IT DOES NOT PRECLUDE A LINE OF SIGHT WITHIN THE SPACE"). One is reminded of Duchamp's *Small Glass* (1918), whose ocular contraptions pull the space of the room into the plane of the work, distorting, diminishing, upending the real within the small frame of a convex oculus. Using Claude Monet's *Water Lilies* as an example, Lyotard writes about the force with which a work of art can absorb the reality that surrounds it: "In front of the image's powerful consistency, reality is so fragile that in the contest between the two expanses, of the artwork and of the world in which it is placed, it is the first that seduces and attracts the

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[29] Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 48.

[30] Lawrence Weiner Notebook July 2008 – December 2009, Moved Pictures Archive, New York.

[31] Roxana Marcoci, "Perceptions at Play: Giacometti through Contemporary Eyes," *Art Journal* vol. 64, no. 4 (Winter, 2005), 18.

second to it: the basement of the *Orangerie* allows itself to be sucked through its walls into the light-filled mist floating over the painted pools…"[32] According to Lyotard, this happens because the world presents itself to us not as fullness, but as somehow lacking: "The world throws itself into artworks because there is emptiness within it and because the artist's critical expression provides a shape to our object-seeking desires."[33]

In Giacometti's uncanny sculpture, the shape of those desires is stripped of any boundary between the artist's delicate imaginary construction and the even greater fragility of the real which it internalizes (an inherent vice corrected by the conservator's addition of a Plexiglas case). In a work such as this, wherein contradictions are lost in the simultaneity of things formerly opposed, Lyotard might trace a shift from structural relations to what he calls "the figural." But while the figural has everything to do with vision, as the word itself implies, it is something that is distinctly sensed from within language: "The figure-form is the presence of nonlanguage in language. It is something that belongs to another order lodged in discourse, granting the latter its expressivity."[34] The figural is what shows that language is inseparable from its other, in the same way that Giacometti's palace is fully enmeshed in the space of the world. When in the early 1990s Weiner starts incorporating increasingly idiosyncratic graphic gestures as part of the work (rather than as an ancillary drawing), he pushes his practice further into this domain of the figural. One later example is *TAKEN TO AS DEEP AS THE SEA CAN BE* (2005) which incorporates a curve that dips down beneath a horizon line in order to loop back up again (fig. 237). Finding increasingly frequent expression in Weiner's works and drawings, such curves are neither unidirectional arrows, nor shapes that can be precisely identified. According to Lyotard, the figural is none other than what escapes recognition: "The line is therefore figural when, by her or his artifice, the painter or drawer places it in a configuration in which its value cannot yield to an activity of recognition – for to recognize is to know well."[35] The figural is thus not only a form of expressivity,

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[32] Jean-François Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, trans. Antony Hudeck and Mary Lydon (1971; Minneapolis and London: The University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 281.

[33] Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, 281 – 282.

[34] Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, 49.

[35] Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, 213.

but a violation of the discursive order, inasmuch as it does not submit to being precisely named. Speaking about the intrusion of graphic elements in his work, Weiner tells the anecdote of a child who sees the curving line and remarks "it doesn't have a name yet, but we all know how to use it."[36] One could re-phrase this to say that Weiner's figural lines are of use, precisely because we cannot name / recognize them. Thus, they remain a mark of fascination, a graphic transcription of language's intimate relation, not only with a material externality, but with something of use that is not yet well known.

Significantly, these looping graphic gestures produce not only a doubling, but a change in direction that effects a change in perception. Following Leibniz, Deleuze was fascinated by such perplications and their ability to unleash new trajectories and other points of view. Rajchman calls Deleuze's concept of folding, "an art of seeing something not seen, something not already 'there.'"[37] For Deleuze the fold offers a way out of our habits of seeing, opening onto a space in which a process of invagination enables the internalization of an outside (like *The Palace at 4 am*), generating complications that allow us to problematize or question our spaces rather than accept them as givens. Rajchman explicates the way in which Deleuze's folds "introduce a creative distantiation into the midst of things." He writes:

> Such distance is the holding apart – what Deleuze calls the "disparation" - of a space that opens in it the chance of a "complex" repetition (not restricted to the imitation of a given model, origin, or end) or a "free" difference or divergence (not subordinated to fixed analogies or categorical identities). Perplications are thus what allows one to trace the diagonal lines in a fabric that cut across it so as to fold it again.[38]

The path taken by Weiner's newly figural line is rarely the shortest one. By virtue of its curvature, these wave-like forms in fact increases the distance between two points. It is precisely this roundabout mode of travel that Weiner illustrates in his book *From Point To Point* (1995), wherein drawings designate meandering routes in lieu of direct ones (fig. 238). For Deleuze that element of "creative distantiation" is what opens space to a difference free from fixed analogies and categorical identities. For Weiner these looping lines are closely associated not only with distance

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[36] Weiner, "Gallery Talk: Lawrence Weiner and Donna De Salvo on *Lawrence Weiner: As Far As The Eye Can See*," November 29, 2007; http://whitney.org/WatchAndListen/Artists?play_id=156.

[37] John Rajchman, *Constructions* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1998), 26. See also Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz And The Baroque* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

but with an idea of *cusps*. In a drawing from 2005 - 2009, Weiner writes beside a curving graphic: “ALL WITHIN THE POWER TO TWIST THE LINE TO CUSP”[39] (figs. 239 & 240). Importantly, a cusp signifies not only an altered course, but a more consequential turning point, a change in vector that equals a phase transition from one state to another. Thus, the challenge of each graphic gesture would be to generate a sufficient amount of movement, enough of a twist in the work’s passage to ensure that something new is given to be seen.

a graceful gesture

In a notebook dated July 2008 – December 2009 a sketch for an installation in Lisbon features the work: *THE GRACE OF* $\boxed{A}$ *GESTURE* (2010) (fig. 241). As Weiner’s drawing shifts from dialectical paradigm to “informal diagram,” becoming more “figural” in the manner just described, grace emerges as an important idea (figs. 242, 243a & 243b). For example, regarding an installation for children in Castillon, Weiner remarks:

> It’s the whole concept of “a graceful gesture” will kill a bull in a bullfight that kills the bull, and doesn’t make it suffer – is looked down upon by the European community. But the same graceful gesture, when you turn it this way (up) will fly a kite, and if you happen to be in the wrong place, the Taliban will cut your arm off. And it’s for children, and it’s the idea that the whole point of the matter is the “grace,” not what the society who owns you at that moment says it has a value for it.[40]

This violent change in value is also recorded in the Lisbon sketch, in a note that reads: “GRACE IN PORTUGUESE HAS DOUBLE MEANING SILLY & GRACEFUL WHATSOEVER THAT MAY MEAN.” Again, translation effects a significant difference, for what Portuguese shows is that grace points at once to what is most exalted *and* to what is most vulgar. “Grace” is thus another instance of a baffled paradigm, releasing what Barthes will describe as the shimmering nuance of a binary rendered neutral, offering a way to escape both the tyranny of “value” and the fascism of

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[38] Rajchman, *Constructions*, 18.

[39] Lawrence Weiner Notebook June 2005 – November 09, Moved Pictures Archive, New York.

[40] Weiner in “Interview with Lawrence Weiner by Ann Goldstein” Utrecht, January 23, 2010; http://www.formerwest.org/ResearchInterviews/InterviewwithLawrenceWeiner.

language (“what the society who owns you at that moment says”).[41] This collapsed contradiction opens onto another meaning of grace, one invoked in Jameson’s discussion of Schiller: “Freedom is at this point nothing more than the mutual neutralization of these two powerful drives (toward matter and form): like pleasure for Freud, it is the release from tension, access to and glimpse of a world in which quantity is replaced by quality, where force, weight, and mass are replaced by or transformed into, grace. Indeed, as for Bergson, grace is for Schiller the very manifestation of freedom in the realm of the senses...”[42] Without making any totalizing claims for sensual freedom, perhaps we can hold onto the concepts of “mutual neutralization,” the replacement of quantity by quality, and the movement away from dialectical opposition towards another kind of relation, “where force, weight, and mass are replaced by or transformed into, grace.”

This shift from dialectical contradiction to a differing mode of correspondence is examined by Rancière in his discussion of montage.[43] Rancière proposes that in “dialectical montage,” there is always a clash of heterogeneous elements that reveals something behind something else. Weiner’s removals literalize this operation, as do any of the paradigmatic drawings. In *A Question Of Balance*, for instance, images of imbalance stage an idea of balance which remains virtually implied behind the represented order. By contrast, Rancière proposes what he calls “symbolic montage,” which takes heterogeneous elements and places them in a relation of “co-belonging” wherein contradictions are revealed to be part of the same fabric (a concept of “mutual neutralization”). Rancière writes: “If the dialectical way aims, through the clash of different elements, at the secret of a heterogeneous order, the symbolist way assembles elements in the form of mystery.”[44] While these orders do not exclude one another, and a kind of “dialectical automaticity” forms part of any heterogeneous relation, there is nonetheless an

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[41] Roland Barthes, *The Neutral, Lecture Course at the Collège de France (1977-1978)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

[42] Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971), 89.

[43] Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, trans. Gregory Elliott (New York and London: Verso, 2007), 56 -67.

[44] Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, 57.

emphasis in symbolic montage on the fraternity of metaphors, and even an illusory co-presence of seeable and sayable.[45]

The 2007 – 2009 installations of Weiner's most recent retrospective, *As Far As The Eye Can See*, could be considered a graceful *tour de force* of symbolist montage (figs. 244a, 244b & 244c). In these spaces, the most heterogeneous contents were linked upon meandering, divergent surfaces "without common measurement," much less chronological order.[46] No cause or explanation was given for the various styles of presentation and information displayed. Works circulated, unencumbered by a narrative frame that would impose coherence on the vastly disparate objects seen, which apart from language included: paintings, a stone on a table, a window shutter, a cracked tile, bleach on a rug and birdshot on a wall. Nonetheless, the overall impression of those scrupulously designed spaces was less of cacophony than of connection, a kind of utopian suspension wherein everything appeared to be simultaneously and harmoniously out of place.

According to Rancière such fraternity is brought about through the operations of "continuous phrasing" one of the primary characteristics of symbolist montage. We hear it in Godard's films, when a voice whispers through a collection of scenes, evoking "the power of what is given as the continuation of a sentence that is always-already begun."[47] Rancière cites a passage by Foucault that conjures this murmurous symbolist space:

> I would have preferred to be enveloped in words, borne away beyond all possible beginnings. At the moment of speaking, I would like to have perceived a nameless voice, long preceding me, leaving me merely to enmesh myself in it, taking up its cadence, and to lodge myself when no one was looking, in its interstices as if it had paused an instant, in suspense to beckon me.[48]

This is the seduction of wandering through Weiner's recent *mise-en-scène/signes*, wherein one is literally enveloped by texts and graphic marks that draw the mundane architecture of the room, into the space of an impersonal, drifting language. Here, we understand the vital importance of Weiner's insistence on the past tense, as it forces us to reckon not only with a language that has

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[45] Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, 62.

[46] Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, 59.

[47] Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, 59.

[48] Michel Foucault, "The Discourse on Language" quoted in Rancière *The Future of the Image*, 59.

long preceded us, but with a relation to objects that are given in the world prior to our subjective efforts to see or to master them. More than anything else, it is the past tense that renders the objectivity of materials always slightly beyond our reach, and thus outside of our capacity to dominate or possess. But at the same moment that the works beckon us towards this ungraspable materiality, we find ourselves enmeshed in a continuous rhythm of words - shimmering, mysterious, obdurate - that make it tempting to forget that they refer to anything beyond their linguistic presence. And it is by means of this staging that Weiner's work will come closest to poetry, specifically the symbolist montage of Stéphane Mallarmé. Alberro notes the critical connection between Mallarmé's textual displacements and the decentering or differential play that he finds in Weiner's texts, both of which he describes as "pressing the signifying potential of language to a point where it exceeds a logocentric order of meaning or truth."[49]

Unquestionably, Weiner's recent presentations share with Mallarmé's texts a distinct spatialization, one that enfolds the ground within it, so that words produce a curve or a thickness in space, operating much like the graceful twist of *TAKEN TO AS DEEP AS THE SEA CAN BE* (figs. 255a & 255b). This effect of atmospheric convolution is sometimes buttressed by architectural interventions such as a sinuous free-standing wall, or a propeller-shaped series of open partitions.[50] Even when words are displayed in rectilinear arrangements, space surges forth, bringing the wall or the floor not only in contact with the text but into a fuller kind of coincidence, or "co-belonging." Mallarmé's handling of the page models this spatiality, by treating it not as inert background but as the text's warp and weft. On his relationship to this surface, Mallarmé writes:

> There is at Versailles a kind of wainscoting in scrollwork tracery, pretty enough to bring tears to the eyes; shells, coilings, curves, reprises of motifs. That is how the sentence I toss out on the paper first appears to me, in summary design, which I then review, purify, reduce, and synthesize. If one obeys the invitation proffered by the wide white space expressly left at the top of the page as if to mark a separation from everything, the

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[49] Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 2003), 195.

[50] Weiner's interest in convoluted spaces can be seen, for instance, in his exhibition design for *Gyroscopically Speaking* (2010) at Marian Goodman Gallery, New York. For this show, works were presented on a free-standing s-shaped wall that floated in the middle of the space. In *Lawrence Weiner: As Far As The Eye Can See* (2007 - 2008) at The Whitney Museum, New York, Weiner inserted partitions which divided the space into a shape reminiscent of his *Propeller Paintings*, breaking up the possibility of a linear trajectory.

> already read elsewhere, if one approaches with a new, virginal soul, one then comes to realize that I am profoundly and scrupulously a syntaxer, that my writing is entirely lacking in obscurity, that my sentence is what it has to be, and to be forever...[51]

In *The Double Session*, Derrida explains that to be "a syntaxer" means to be invested in a relation between things that is not primarily semantic. Instead of searching for singular meaning, or the adequations of truth, the syntaxer explores the functions of spacing, the logic of the hymen which is not the thing-in-itself, but what figures in-between (present and non-present, desire and pleasure). The hymen is thus permanent suspension, a threshold which is never crossed as Derrida describes: "A folding back, once more: the hymen, 'a medium, a pure medium, of fiction,' is located between present acts that don't take place. What takes place is only the *entre*, the place, the spacing, which is nothing, the ideality (as nothingness) of the idea."[52]

Mallarmé's virginal whiteness is the very antithesis of the "already-read" surface of Weiner's early notebooks and drawings. When blank pages do appear in Weiner's practice, however, they bring with them a different style of drawing, one with coilings and curves, "pretty enough to bring tears to the eyes." Like Mallarmé, Weiner will treat language as something to be visually designed, a synthetic ornament that can be made to scintillate and soar (Weiner's fondness for metallic paints and textual arabesques), or press upon surfaces with a palpable weight (the insistence on capital letters). Derrida's "logic of the hymen" has as well some relation to Weiner's notion of art as a sensuality that is not yet visceral, and to the suspension of Weiner's sculpture as a figure in-between (language and materials, placelessness and monumentality). In the book *Turning Some Pages* (2007), Weiner explicitly invokes Mallarmé, in drawings featuring cascades of falling dice accompanied by the words "AFTER THE DICE HAVE BEEN THROWN," a sure reference to Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés jamais n'Abolira le hasard* (fig. 256a). In several spreads of pages we also find graphic elements such as a line or curve that extend across the fold, accentuating the "*entre*" or invagination between pages as a real space through which drawing travels (fig. 256b). Nonetheless, if Mallarmé's syntax evokes a "separation from everything," a "nothingness" that is a pure medium of fiction, then we seem

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[51] Stéphane Mallarmé quoted in Jacques Derrida, "The Double Session (1970)" in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 180.

[52] Derrida, "The Double Session (1970)," 214.

again to be at odds with Weiner's practice, which has no authority outside of its immersion in the real. Regarding his work, Weiner has said: "If you want to call it anything else, it's very realist art, since it deals with real materials and real relationships of human beings to those materials."[53]

According to Blanchot, Mallarmé's poetry enacts the very disappearance of the real, displaced by the absence of pure fiction. "Igitur," he writes, "oscillates marvelously between its presence as language and the absence of the things of the world."[54] The poem is in effect the tracing of this disappearance. Blanchot explains what it means to "imagine," or to live an event as an image: "It is to be taken: to pass from the region of the real where we hold ourselves at a distance from things the better to order and use them into that other region where the distance holds us – the distance which then is the lifeless deep, an unmanageable, inappreciable remoteness which has become something like the sovereign power behind all things."[55] Rancière, on the other hand, will see this unfathomable expanse differently, not as a withdrawal from the world into a supposedly "pure" space of the imaginary, but as a movement that outlines another common space:

> Or let us take Mallarmé, a poet often viewed as the incarnation of artistic purism. Those who cherish his phrase "this mad gesture of writing" as a formula for the 'intransitivity' of the text often forget the end of his sentence, which assigns the poet the task of "recreating everything, out of reminiscences, to show that we actually are at the place we have to be". The allegedly 'pure' practice of writing is linked to the need to create forms that participate in a general re-framing of the human abode, so that the productions of the poet are, in the same breath, compared both to ceremonies of collective life, like the fireworks of Bastille Day, and to private ornaments of the household.[56]

Unlike Blanchot, who installs Mallarmé's poetry within the "inappreciable remoteness" of the imaginary, Rancière makes poetry "a matter of dwelling in a common world."[57] For Rancière, poetic fiction is not that which opposes real and imaginary. Instead, fiction is what demonstrates a gap in the sensible, what re-frames the real in such a way as to change what is seeable and

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[53] Weiner in "Early Work, Interview by Lynn Gumpert," *Lynda Benglis, Joan Brown, Luis Jimenez, Gary Stephan, Lawrence Weiner: Early Work*, exh. cat. (New York: The New Museum, 1982), reprinted in *Having Been Said, Writings & Interviews of Lawrence Weiner, 1968 – 2003* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2004), 127.

[54] Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 45.

[55] Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 261.

[56] Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus*, trans. Steven Corcoran (New York and London: Continuum Publishing Group, 2010), 120 – 121.

[57] Rancière, *Dissensus*, 121.

sayable, forging new relations between things and meanings, resulting in "the framing of a dissensus." Fiction therefore places "one world in another," an intervention that breaks with a "natural order" of making sense. Thus, dissensus is not the same as Blanchot's "rebel space" because it establishes a heterogeneity *within* the dominant order, since there is no place outside of it. What must be ruptured by the work of art is the totality with which any configuration relegates objects and subjects to specified places. The role of fiction, like the role of Weiner's sculptures and drawings, would be to reveal that every structure is a construction that can be broken, that the real is never naturally given, but always already fictional.[58]

In opposition to the long-standing claim that Conceptual art failed to take into account the role of desire or the imaginary, Weiner's realist practice will increasingly utilize the structures of fiction, as already announced in a 1973 book title, *Once Upon A Time*.[59] Beginning with *A First Quarter* (1973), Weiner's films insert the works within an unabashedly theatrical form, which the artist nonetheless calls "home movies." In fact, *Plowmans Lunch* will be referred to as a "documentary,"[60] following the advice of Godard who declared: "All great fiction films tend towards documentary just as all great documentaries tend towards fiction."[61] That slippage is everywhere present in Weiner's work. The notebooks from the early '70s, for instance, reveal a host of literary references - clippings from Stephen Melville's *Moby Dick*, Gertrude's Stein's *The Making of Americans,* Henry James' *The Art of Fiction* - inserted at precisely the moment when the works themselves appear to be the most 'matter-of-fact.'[62] Weiner's recent move towards an

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[58] Rancière, *Dissensus*, 148. On contemporary art's fascination with the inseparability of reality and fiction, actual and virtual see, for example, Carrie Lambert-Beatty, "Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility," *October* 129 (Summer 2009), 51-84.

[59] Discussing contemporary artistic practices in terms of their movement away from the dialectical critique of spectacle culture, towards an engagement with politics as invariably "undergirded by imaginary forms of identification," Vered Maimon writes: "How, then, to consider the legacy of Conceptual art in the face of contemporary practices that are informed by its models of criticality, yet, at the same time, mobilize precisely what was often left out of these models, namely the imaginary and fictional?" See Vered Maimon, "The Third Citizen: On Models of Criticality in Contemporary Artistic Practices," *October* 129 (Summer 2009), 85.

[60] On the reference to *Plowmans Lunch* as a documentary film see *Show (&) Tell: The Films & Videos of Lawrence Weiner*, ed. Bartomeu Mari (Gent: Imschoot, uitgevers, 1992), 30.

[61] Jean-luc Godard, *Godard on Godard*, eds. Jean Narboni and Tom Milne (1968; New York and London: Da Capo Press, 1972), 169.

[62] On the relevance of Moby Dick as a model of work in which "the methods of telling fact and fiction are interlocked from the start" see Betsy Hilbert, "The Truth of the Thing: Nonfiction in Moby-Dick" *College English*, vol. 48, no. 8 (Dec., 1986), 824 – 831. Hilbert writes: "This work assaults our concept of genre; it

overtly poetic spatialization of texts (which should not be confused with the spatiality of sculpture), marks an important shift in intentions. As Buchloh has argued, Weiner's "administrative" mode of display was geared towards a dialectic confrontation with a contemporary aesthetic, seeking to differentiate the work from other art objects by adopting the frameworks of ordinary language (e.g. statements, memos), revealing the dominance of a bureaucratic order from within the space of art. In a significant reversal, Weiner's "literary" designs seem now to distinguish themselves from the *prose du monde*, articulating a "dissensus" or disruption in the fabric of the "natural order" by dressing themselves in the guise of poetry. While the work's content remains as empirical as before, our relation to that facticity undoubtedly changes, as we now read the words in the context of a poetic oscillation between appearance and disappearance, shifting from the thickness of linguistic designation to the nothingness of a Mallarméan idea.

Rancière speaks about Mallarmé's work in terms of a "re-framing of the human abode." We are reminded once more of *The Palace at 4 am*, and the fragility with which that un-homely structure enfolds the even more vulnerable reality of which it is a part. The language that Weiner presents as our common dwelling underscores this precariousness, bursting upon the scene with the fleeting grandeur of a fireworks display (*AS LONG AS IT LASTS* [1992]), proffering traces of material encounters in which objects are held at an immeasurable distance, that also holds us (fig. 257). In seeking to effect a momentary rupture in our configurations of the real, Weiner's theatrical presentations push the border between real and imaginary to what Deleuze would call a "point of indiscernibility."[63] Indeed, as Godard explains, the purpose of a *mise-en-scène* is not

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confuses our easy categories. Melville's whale book is a massive conglomerate of fable and textbook, epic allegory, zoologic treatise, philosophic exploration, essay, romance and guidebook" (*Ibid*., 827).

[63] Gilles Deleuze, *The Time Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 46. The concept of indiscernibility emerges in Deleuze's discussion of Bergson's distinction between an "automatic" and an "attentive" recognition. The first is sensory-motor, extending perception into habitual movements, the second reverts perception to the object, and is associated with "a pure optical (and sound) image" which is to say a description. Here Deleuze references Robbe-Grillet, and the manner in which description effaces the object, in a process of simultaneous making and unmaking. Rather than linking a perception-image to an action-image as happens in the sensory-motor model, the descriptions of the pure optical image generate different kinds of linkages, between themselves and "recollection-images," between real and imaginary, physical and mental, objective and subjective, description and narration, actual and virtual. Crucially, the related terms are made to slip "into the same point of indiscernibility." D.N. Rodowick summarizes the material implications of this confusion:

empirical demonstration, but a form of mysterious, imaginary revelation. “Mise-en-scène,” he writes, “forces us to imagine an object in its signification.”[64] Lest we forget the real implications of our imaginings, Mallarmé reminds us that recollection and re-creation have no purpose but “to show that we actually are at the place we have to be.” Finally and without obscurity, understanding our place in the sun, as Weiner might say.

to Alice with a love

In a hand-made notebook dated January 1998, Weiner reflects on the contents of an increasingly vast accumulation, and the ever present difficulty of finding one’s bearings:

> I CANNOT SEEM TO KEEP A DIARY I FILL NOTEBOOK AFTER NOTEBOOK IN AN ATTEMPT TO MAP OUT MY PROGRESS FROM A TO B. & EACH TIME I RETURN TO PLOT THE COURSE IT JUST SEEMS TO HAVE GOTTEN THERE.
>
> (fig. 258)

If Weiner does not keep diaries, then how do we reconcile the fact that the notebooks are filled with so many intimacies: an affectionate dedication (“to Alice with a love”), a valentine from his daughter, a birthday greeting from an artist friend, a photo of his baby grandson, a telegram announcing his father’s death (figs. 159 & 260). Flipping through the pages, one gets a strong sense of Weiner’s tastes: Gauloise tobacco (hence the fondness for a certain shade of blue), cigars, fortune cookies, red nail polish, paper dolls, erector sets, Brenda Starr and Doris Day (fig. 261). Typed in a notebook dated August 2000 - August 2001 an aphorism reads:

> This point of indiscernibility is not fantasy; it concretely relates to objects and their potential intelligibility. But unlike either attentive or habitual recollection, it is impossible to decide where and when this process begins or concludes. Physical object or mental description? The two become confused in a process that both deepens our understanding of objects or events and widens our access to circuits of remembered experience in a mutual interpenetration of memory and matter. (David Norman Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze’s Time Machine* [Durham: Duke University Press, 1997], 92).

As Weiner has argued all along, his works are empirical realities and not descriptions. Yet his combinations of language + materials exploit this indiscernibility, over time expanding circuits of potential intelligibility in which objectivity cannot be separated from the imaginary, from memory, the virtual or the intimately subjective.

> IF AN ACCUMULATION REFLECTS A LIFE THE QUALITY OF THAT ACCUMULATION REFLECTS THE QUALITY OF THAT LIFE.[65]

Just so, the notebooks remind us that what counts in the work is nothing less than the quality of (a) life. And yet, despite the fact that the notebooks seem to map Weiner's day to day existence, it would be a mistake to view them purely as journals, at least in the sense that Blanchot uses the word.

According to Blanchot, the writer's "recourse to the 'journal'" is an antidote to the effacement that literature entails, and the solitude that results from withdrawing not only language, but oneself, from the world: "The writer belongs to a language which no one speaks, which is addressed to no one, which has no center, and which reveals nothing."[66] Caught in the "tyrannical prehension" of writing that affirms nothing but its own being, the writer turns to the journal in order to remember himself, to anchor his existence once more in the time and space of everyday life. The journal is therefore also a defense mechanism: "The journal represents the series of reference points which a writer establishes in order to keep track of himself when he begins to suspect the dangerous metamorphosis to which he is exposed. It is a route that remains viable; it is something like a watchman's walkway upon the ramparts…"[67] But Weiner's writings - his sculptures, books, posters, and drawings - are already journalistic, addressed to *any one* rather than no one, decentered but never detached. While Weiner's texts may take the guise of literature and poetry, the artist insists that they are nothing but pieces of empirical fact, affirming not only the substantiality of language, but the material density of the world. Thus, there is no need for the notebooks' reference points to remind Weiner of his contact with the real, because that is the very purpose of the work itself.

Nevertheless, in order to function, Weiner's work does require the artist's rigorous self-effacement. As such, one could easily view the notebooks as a place where the artist may leave

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[64] Godard, *Godard on Godard*, 24.

[65] This aphorism appears in *Artists' Collections*, exh. cat. (Avignon: Collection Lambert / Arles: Actes Sud, 2001) and in the artist's edition *Le Bilan* (2005) for the Collection Lambert.

[66] Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 26.

[67] Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 29.

himself behind. The proliferation of personal details would then be a form of release, a way to balance the rigorous disidentification the work entails. It is no coincidence that Weiner would begin making unabashedly autobiographic films at the same time that he starts keeping notebooks. Regarding his turn to cinema Weiner remarks: “I try not to let the personal aspects of my existence interfere with the making of art, but one of the loopholes I have is making movies.”[68] The notebooks are similarly “loopholes,” serving as the dialectical counterpart to the impersonal, “informal” materiality of the artist’s language. If, on the other hand, we want to think of the notebooks differently, as having a productive rather than a compensatory relation to the work, then we cannot read them solely as diaristic accumulation. Weiner gives a clue when on the cover of a notebook dated June 1987 - May 1988, he writes the title: “THE TRAVEL OF MARGARET MARY” (fig. 262). The identity of Margaret Mary is never disclosed, although *Plowmans Lunch* was filmed on a ship named “Margaretha” and Weiner’s name will appear on a matchbook as Margaret Lawrence Weiner, while the font he designs will be named Margaret Seaworthy Gothic. Perhaps the name is an alias, or an alter ego like Duchamp’s *Rrose Sélavy*.[69] On the other hand, since *THE TRAVEL OF MARGARET MARY* looks like the title of a story, why not treat it as such, and assume that Weiner is once more framing his work within a fictional *mise en scene*.

The Counterfeiters offers one example of the slippery border that separates journalistic truth from novelistic fiction. Gide’s novel is based on the author’s journal, and recounts the story of Edouard who is writing a book called *The Counterfeiters*, which is based on the author’s (Edouard’s) journal. On several occasions, Edouard and Gide announce the aim of their work: “I am beginning to catch sight of what I might call the ‘deep-lying subject’ of my book. It is – it will be – no doubt, the rivalry between the real world and the representation of it which we make to ourselves.”[70] The risk in this struggle for Edouard and Gide both, would be that the work ”may be too factitious,” that it might end by moving too far from life, and no longer ring true, like the false

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[68] Weiner, *Having Been Said*, 126.

[69] “Rrose Sélavy” Duchamp’s feminine alter-ego, first emerged in portraits by photographer Man Ray in the early 1920s. Duchamp would attribute numerous works, Readymades, puns and writings to Rrose Sélavy. Joseph Kosuth uses the pseudonym Arthur R. Rose for a self-interview in homage to Duchamp.

coin that Edouard's secretary Bernard passes into his hand. After Bernard gives Edouard the fake *sous* Bernard exclaims, "But now that you have examined it, give it back to me! I'm sorry that the reality doesn't interest you."[71] On the contrary, reality does interest Gide, so much so that he allows his journals to be published with the novel, along with an appendix that includes the newspaper clippings regarding counterfeit rings and children's suicides that find their way into the book. What is fascinating in Gide's strategy is that he must insert these bits of reality, in order that the author be absolved from "letting go the real subject for the shadow of the subject,"[72] in short, for being "an idea-monger" as Bernard would say. Gide's own journal stresses the dual foci of his work: "On one side, the event, the fact, the external datum; on the other side, the very effort of the novelist to make a book out of it all."[73]

In "A Penny For Picasso," Krauss discusses the risk of fraudulence that accompanies the severing of referent from representation that Gide's formula implies.[74] Like the circulation of fiat currency, unbacked by any commodity, the purity of aesthetic modernism detached from concrete reference brings with it the danger of inflation: "For at the level of literature, fraudulence not only carries the threat that one might aim for purity yet end up making a fake novel but also heralds the danger that abstraction, trafficking in the token as an utterly empty sign, might lead to language that means nothing at all."[75] Marking a complete historical reversal, if Gide worried about the referential detachment of modernist abstraction, then the risk for an artist like Weiner would be an excess of realism, leading to a conflation of the work with "the event, the fact, the external datum." The accusation of counterfeit in Weiner's work would thus be linked not to an art so rarefied as to be meaningless, but to an object so matter-of-fact that that it ceased to be meaningful as art. In the case of Weiner, a self-proclaimed realist and materialist, the critical establishment's emphasis on the "idea-mongering" aspect of Conceptual Art reflects, in part, an

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[70] Andre Gide, *The Counterfeiters*, trans. Dorothy Bussy (1927; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), 189.

[71] Gide, *The Counterfeiters*, 178.

[72] Gide, *The Counterfeiters*, 83.

[73] Gide, *The Counterfeiters*, 392.

[74] Rosalind Krauss, *The Picasso Papers* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), 3 – 25.

[75] Krauss, *The Picasso Papers,* 9.

inability / refusal to be content with the sheer facticity of the work, its poured paint, cut-out walls, shallow trenches and rubber balls. Seeking to maintain the category of art, as opposed to effecting its collapse into life, Weiner's "idea" will prevent the work's materiality from dissolving completely into non-art actuality. Thus, whereas Gide's published journals appended to *The Counterfeiters* serve to give the novel a dose of reality that would save it from being too idealist, in Weiner's practice the notebooks provide a surface for the translation of fact into idea, what Edouard will refer to as the "stylization" of reality into art.[76] Seeming to approach their work from opposite poles, the struggle faced by Gide and Weiner nonetheless remains the same:

> Groped in the clouds for hours on end. This effort to externalize an interior creation, to objectify the subject (before having to subjectify the object) is peculiarly exhausting. For days and days you can make nothing out, and it seems as though the effort has been useless; the important thing is not to give up. To navigate for days on end without any land in sight – this image must be used in the book itself; most artists, scholars, etc. are coastwise sailors who imagine they are lost as soon as they get out of sight of land. – The dizziness of empty space.[77]

Once more we find the image of the artist as a sailor on the open sea. And while Weiner may not view his work as an "interior creation" to be externalized, objectification is the "deep-lying subject" of the notebooks. According to Lyotard, to objectify means to *spatialize*, tracing thoughts within a common space. The notebooks render this spatialization palpable, generating reams of drawings in which the artist labors to turn needs and desires into ideas available for common use.[78] The incorporation of achingly personal details is thus neither gratuitous nor confessional, but an essential part of the artist's "research," as a page from a notebook dated March 2004 – June 2005 reveals:

> THE ESSENTIAL OBJECTIFICATION OF HUMAN DESIRE / NEED. A BEING THE OPERATIVE 'FICTIVE' IN TAKING AN ABSTRACTION & PLACING IT AS A MATERIAL REALITY WITHIN THE REACH OF ALL… ASAP
>
> I WISH I MAY I WISH I MIGHT OBJECTIFY DESIRE & FEEL ITS HEAT IN THE PALM OF MY HAND. ____

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[76] Gide, *The Counterfeiters*, 173.

[77] Gide, *The Counterfeiters*, 381.

[78] For Weiner's discussion of "the objectification of desire" see *Liam Gillick, Lawrence Weiner, Between Artists* (Canada: A.R.T. Press, 2006) 12.

RESPITE AT SOME POINT ASAP

Weiner's text relates to a work executed for the Reykjavik Arts Festival (2005), for which Weiner set several beams of wood adrift from the Westman Islands. These beams, whose whereabouts remain unknown, were each printed with the work *A PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS* ASAP (figs. 264 & 264). Weiner has spoken about his political investment in this work, remarking that the United States happens to be the only country wherein "the pursuit of happiness" is a declared right. According to Giorgio Agamben, this quest for happiness should be understood, not as a privilege guaranteed by any state, but rather as a defining aspect of what it means to be human:

> Each behavior and each form of human living is never prescribed by a specific biological vocation, nor is it assigned by whatever necessity; instead, no matter how customary, repeated, and socially compulsory, it always retains the character of a possibility; that is, it always puts at stake living itself. That is why human beings – as beings of power who can do or not do, succeed or fail, lose themselves or find themselves – are the only beings for whom happiness is always at stake in their living, the only beings whose life is irremediably and painfully assigned to happiness.[79]

With the substitution of an indefinite article ("JUST CHANGE THE THE TO A A"[80]), Weiner's work deals no longer with the privileges accorded to a particular citizenry, becoming instead the claim of all human beings as Agamben contends. Not "*the* pursuit" but "*a* pursuit" the work puts happiness at stake by leaving it open to whatsoever specification.[81] According to Weiner's note, it does this by means of a "fictive" operation, one that Gide had already described: "He says to himself that novelists, by a too exact description of their characters, hinder the reader's imagination rather than help it, and that they ought to allow each individual to picture their personages to himself according to his own fancy."[82] Along with the idiosyncrasies of design and the openness of elliptical statements, the translation of an object into something so abstract as to be "fictive" is another way for Weiner's sculptures / language to remain non-impositional, to

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[79] Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without End: Notes On Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 4.

[80] Lawrence Weiner, *Screenplay & Movie* (L.A.: Regen Projects, 2005), n.p.

[81] Anecdotally, a similar operation (switching from definite to indefinite article) was performed on the title of Godard's 1964 film, which in order to pass censorship, had to be changed from *La Femme Mariée* to *Un Femme Mariée*. The censors required the change in order to indicate that the movie was about a specific woman, and not the French woman in general. See *Godard on Godard*, 282.

[82] Gide, *The Counterfeiters*, 66.

stress once more "'the multiplicity of particular use values" which are the precondition for any pursuit of happiness.

a little bit more

Finally, what the notebooks show is that there is no work without "DESIRE / NEED."[83] In a 1969 artist's talk at NSCAD, Carl Andre described both his sculpture and Weiner's "poems" as affective rather than dispassionately intentional - an observation that leads him to a strange contradiction:

> Andre: And in a sense, one thing for instance about Larry Weiner's very beautiful poems is that to me, they amount to ungratified desire, that's what it's close to. But of course I think Larry, consciously or unconsciously, is being very subtle because he is enmeshing other people in his desires by leaving them open. You know he says this is my desire you can either gratify or not gratify it, in a sense.
>
> From the Floor: Does he consider it? Are the poems of his desires or ideas or what?
>
> Andre: I don't think he considers them his desires.[84]

While Andre willfully mistakes the empiricism of Weiner's statements for the virtuality of poetry, he does recognize that the work, as ascetic as it might have appeared in 1969, was fundamentally a matter of desire. On the other hand, Andre's reading underscores the risk that Weiner's texts might be seen as subjective indulgence (i.e. "*his* desires"), thus begging the question: how can a work based in sensuous experience, passion or affect ever constitute a truly objective fact?

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[83] Lawrence Weiner Notebook March 2004 – June 2005, Moved Pictures Archive, New York.

[84] Carl Andre, "NSCAD Artist's Talk (1969)," *Artist's Talk: 1969-1977*, ed. Peggy Gale (Halifax, Nova Scotia: The Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2004), 14. Discussing literature with Hollis Frampton in 1962, Andre argues for a sharp divide between empirical reality and the psychological domain of literature. He states: "If language is only a set of symbols and operations, then I think it cannot become art. The correspondence between a symbol and its referent is too fragile a relationship upon which to build literature. Sculpture is an art because it partakes of our plastic sense of ourselves, that is the materials of the sculptor and his final product occupy physical space in the same way we do. Literature is an art because its products occupy at least in part the same kind of psychological space which our own thoughts occupy. Literature is not about the phenomenal world, but about our relationship to the phenomenal world." See "On Literature and Consecutive Matters," excerpt reprinted in *Cuts: texts 1959 – 2004 / Carl Andre*, 132. Regarding the distinction between poetry and literature, Andre accepts that poetry is indeed more oriented towards "the external phenomenal world" than to the individual consciousness; Andre states; "I insist that the great natural poem about anything is its name" (*Ibid*., 133). Andre would refuse to see Weiner's linguistically presented work as "sculpture," implying that Weiner's "poetry" was addressed not to the material realities themselves – inaccessible to language - but to Weiner's own imaginary desires. For Weiner, as we have seen, thoughts or "ideas" are conceived as immanent to materiality, and therefore as objects inhabiting the same space as the material world and not a separate psychological space (thus invalidating Andre's distinction).

In analyzing the development of objectivity as an "epistemic virtue" within scientific practice, Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison describe the late 19th century development of "structural objectivity" as an extreme moment in the historic suppression of subjective experience:

> Structural Objectivity addressed a claustral, private self menaced by solipsism. The recommended countermeasures emphasized renunciation rather than restraint: giving up one's own sensations and ideas in favor of formal structures accessible to all thinking beings.[85]

Frege's conceptualism epitomizes the strictness of this approach, as he rejected the irretrievable subjectivity of both *representations* ("picturable" mental impressions of any sort) as well as *intuition*. Far from the scientific objectivity of "concepts," such mentalist "ideas" were dismissed as the variable contents of a single consciousness, unable to be shared because they were privately owned rather than lodged within a common reality. In order to avoid these traps of thought, Frege proposed a kind of "concept writing" (*Begriffsschrift*) free from any taint of "mental representation" (e.g. images and words) in favor of a purely "judgeable proposition."[86] Thus, within the framework of structural objectivity, only invariant, logical relations were considered appropriate "working objects," because only these were truly communal, stripped of the particularities of phenomenological or psychological experience.

Weiner's penchant for diagrams and logical equations, as well as his early proscription of images and illustrations, seem to fit perfectly within the parameters of structural objectivity, and its suppression of anything that might hinder the communicability of thoughts, and the focus on universal material *relations* (i.e. favoring the inter-subjective exchange of "red" as a word, over the physiological/psychological experience of "red" as a color). At the same time, however, Weiner's commitment to a form of "radical empiricism" flouts the tenets of structural objectivity, in recognizing that our sensuous responses to the surfaces of things are not only a means of understanding nature, but are themselves part of our objective world.[87] For inasmuch as

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[85] Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*, 257.

[86] Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*, 271.

[87] The term "radical empiricism" derives from Isabelle Stengers' discussion of Whitehead and William James in Stengers, *Thinking With Whitehead: A Free And Wild Creation Of Concepts*, trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2011).

Weiner's practice shows that the language we use to communicate and register our impressions leaves a trace on our objects of sense (i.e. "WRITTEN IN THE HEART OF THINGS"), our ideas must be viewed as *immanent* to material reality and not separate from it. In this respect, Weiner follows William James and Alfred North Whitehead, who argue against the bifurcation of nature into two systems of reality, one subjectively defined as "the nature apprehended in awareness" and another objectively viewed as "the cause of awareness."[88] For Whitehead, the adventure of empiricist thinking would be to recognize that "All we know of nature is in the same boat, to sink or swim together."[89] This sentiment is echoed in *Sink Or Swim*, Weiner's 2003 "motion picture," in which a scrolling series of looping lines leads to the flashing aphorism: "SINK OR SWIM EITHER WAY YOUR ASS GETS WET".

In his review of Daston and Galiston's text, D. Graham Burnett offers another picture of objectivity which does not end in the stripping away of affect, desire, or imagination. Quoting Barthes, Burnett writes:

> "Can it be that pleasure makes us objective?" Here is a thoroughly polymorphous perverse way of thinking about objectivity: what if all of that careful work of distancing and austerity is merely the precondition, the means to the end, of a fantastic and promiscuous commingling of the self with a whole universe of newly-defined others?[90]

Weiner's notebooks form the traces of this "polymorphous perverse" objectivity, revealing a deliberate effort of "distancing and austerity" that leads not to the suppression of desire, but to its release from the solipsism of a private self. Page after page shows the artist training himself to translate the most intimate passion or sense impression into a structure (linguistic or figural) which can be communally shared. In so doing, Weiner produces a body of statements which aim to reconcile the sensuous and the rational, revealing reason to be a form of sensory, imaginative experience, rather than a dispassionate conceptual faculty (fig. 265).[91] No longer conceived as

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[88] Alfred North Whitehead, *The Concept Of Nature*, as quoted in Stengers, *Thinking With Whitehead: A Free And Wild Creation Of Concepts*, 38.

[89] Whitehead, *The Concept Of Nature*, quoted in Stengers, *Thinking With Whitehead*, 40.

[90] D. Graham Burnett, "The Objective Case," *October* 133 (Summer 2010), 144.

[91] Weiner's sense of the "aesthetic" as a relation to reality that is equally sensuous *and* rational, corresponds with the Marxist demand for an aesthetic "reconciliation" that would counteract capitalism's "bifurcated" relationship to nature, characterized by an opposition between "brutal asceticism" and "baroque

the transcendence of monstrous variation, or the assumption of a bodiless "view from nowhere,"[92] structural objectivity in Weiner's hands thus becomes a matter of pleasure, a promiscuous, commingling that dissolves the boundaries separating self from other, an idea embodied in a work from 1976, which also serves as the title of Weiner's first porn video: *A BIT OF MATTER AND A LITTLE BIT MORE* (figs. 266a, 266b & 267).[93] The ramifications of this combinationatory relation are carefully considered in Robert Barry's "Art Work" from 1970, which charts the passages of "the idea" in a space marked by indiscernibility (of subject and object, object and object, real and imagined):

> It is always changing.
> It has order.
> It doesn't have a specific place.
> Its boundaries are not fixed.
> It affects other things.
> It may be accessible but go unnoticed.
> Part of it may also be part of something else.
> Some of it is familiar.
> Some of it is strange.
> Knowing of it changes it.

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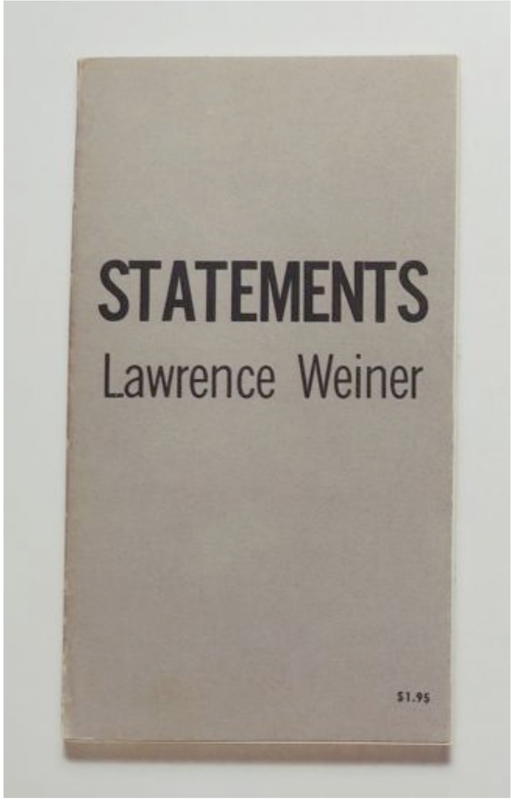
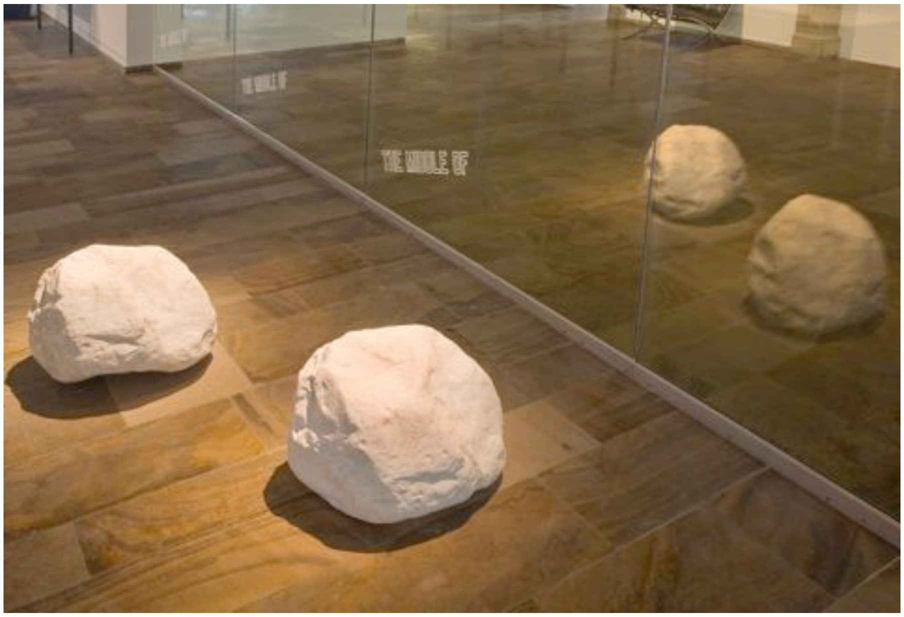
aestheticism." On this alienated condition Terry Eagleton writes: "Capitalist society is at once an orgy of such anarchic desire and the reign of a supremely bodiless reason. As with some strikingly ill-achieved artifact, its sensuous contents degenerate to sheer raw immediacy, while its governing forms grow rigidly abstract and autonomous." See Terry Eagleton, "The Marxist Sublime" in *The Ideology Of The Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 207. See also Stuart Liebman's analysis of film-maker Alexander Kluge's assessment of the potential for a renewed public sphere: "His [Kluge's] (provisional) conclusion: enlightenment today depends on two crucial efforts. First, substantive reason must be reconstructed as a modality of sensory, imaginative experience; and second, a "public sphere" which could serve as a forum for individual imagination and unconstrained public debate must be created to respond to the contemporary threats of media concentration and the 'industrialization of consciousness.'" Stuart Liebman, "Why Kluge?" *October* 46 (Autumn 1988), 7.

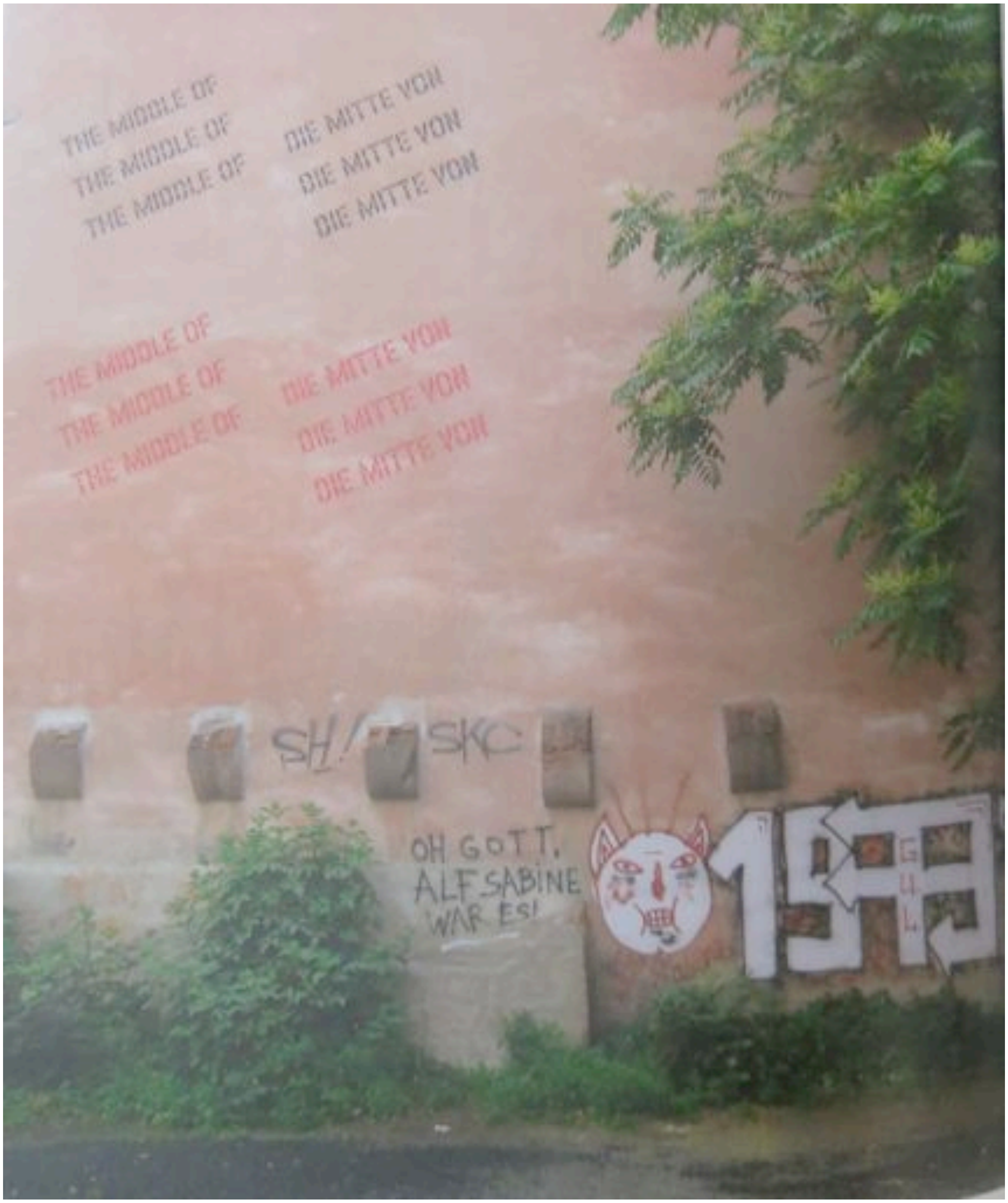
[92] Thomas Nagel quoted in Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*, 306.

[93] I discuss the video *A Bit Of Matter And A Little Bit More* in "Sympathy For Lawrence Weiner (One Plus One)" in *Lawrence Weiner: As Far As The Eye Can See*, exh. cat., 338-342.

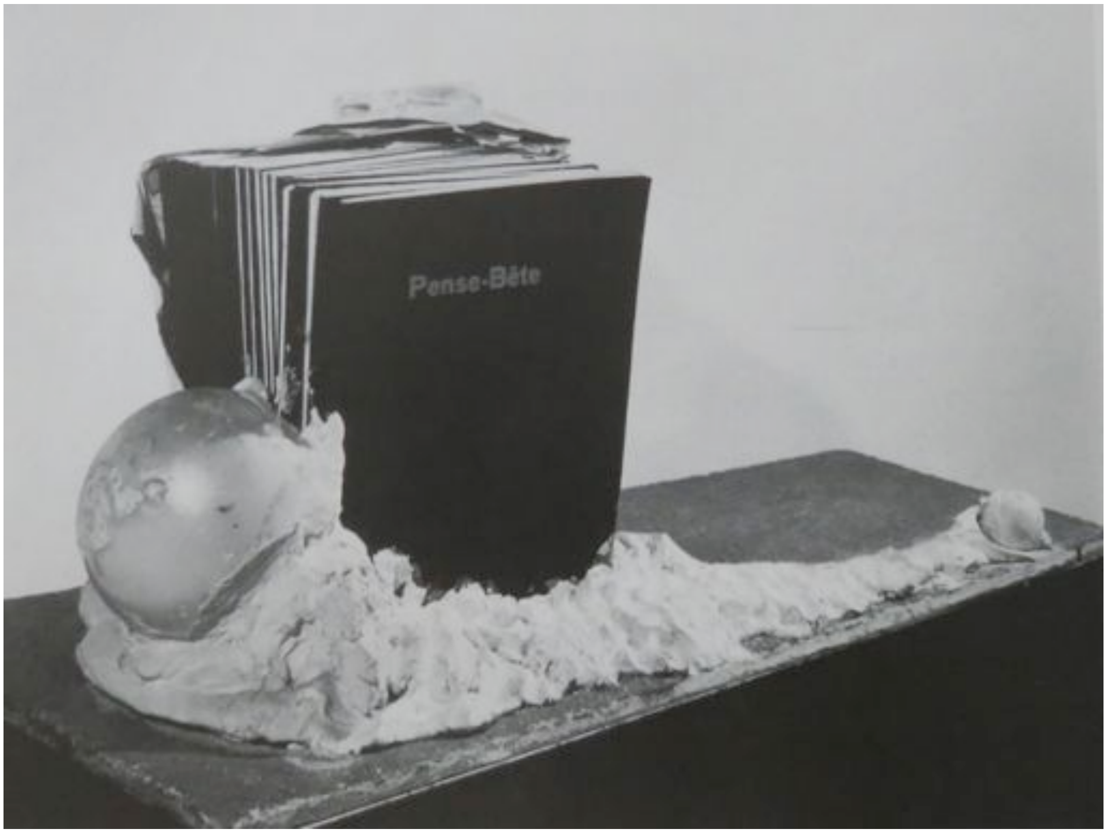


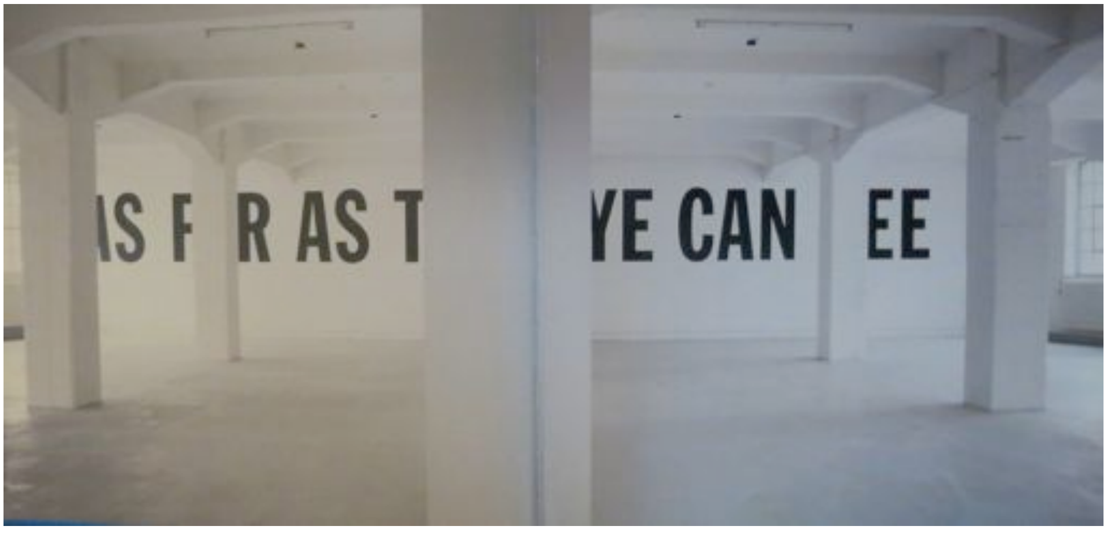


1. Lawrence Weiner, *Statements,* 1968
2a. Lawrence Weiner, *THE MIDDLE OF THE MIDDLE OF THE MIDDLE OF*, installation at Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, 2012

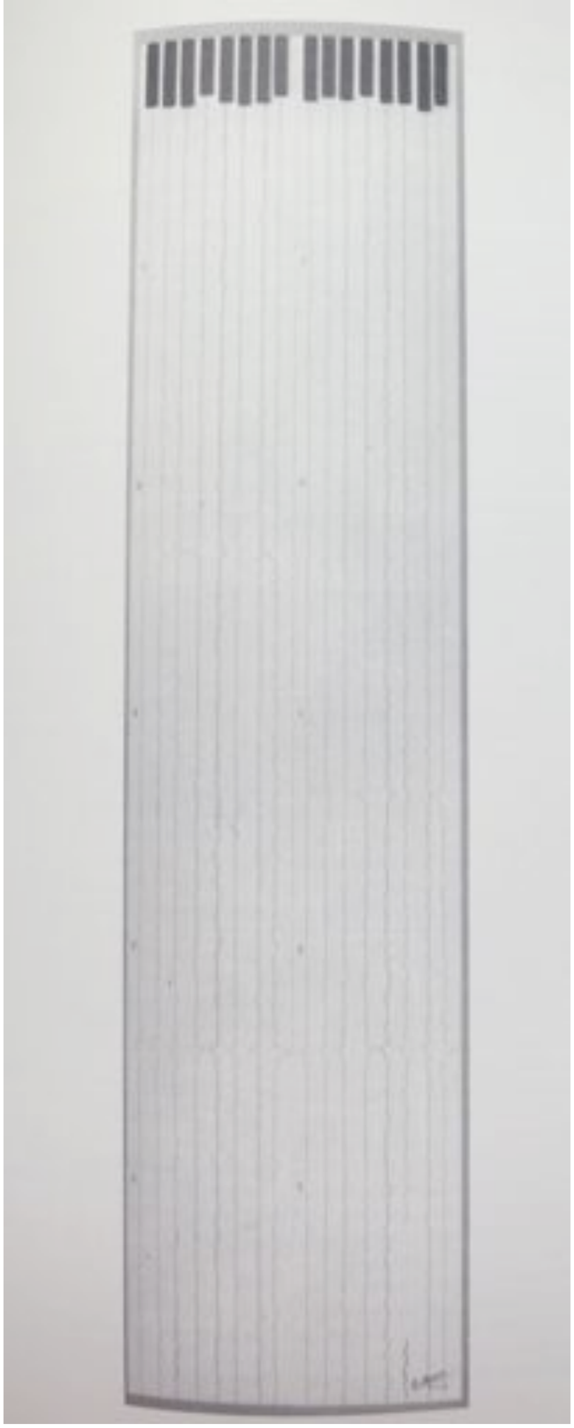


2b. Lawrence Weiner, *THE MIDDLE OF THE MIDDLE OF THE MIDDLE OF*, installation at Hugenot House, Kassel, 2012

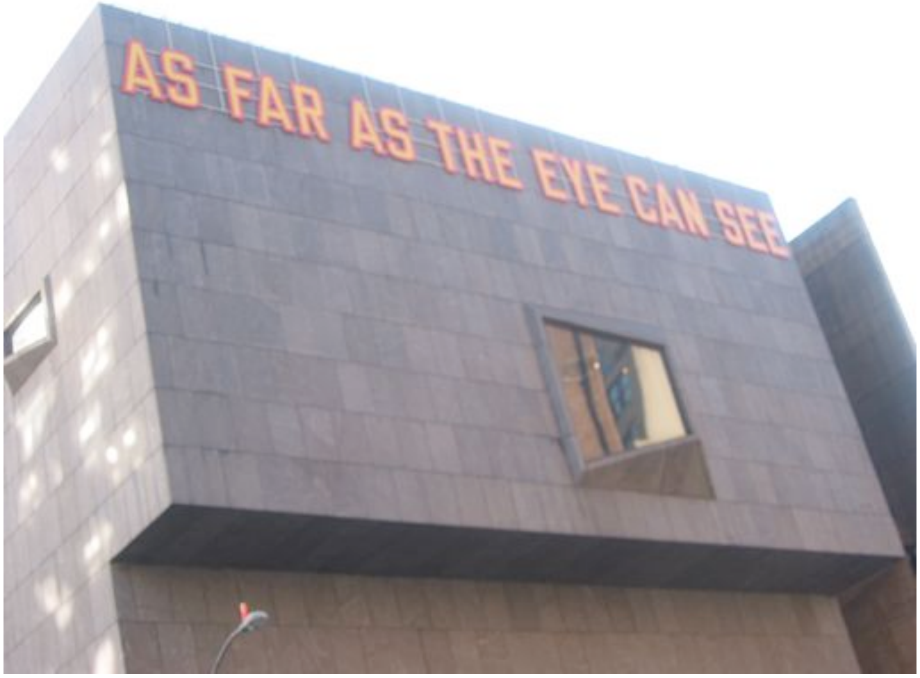


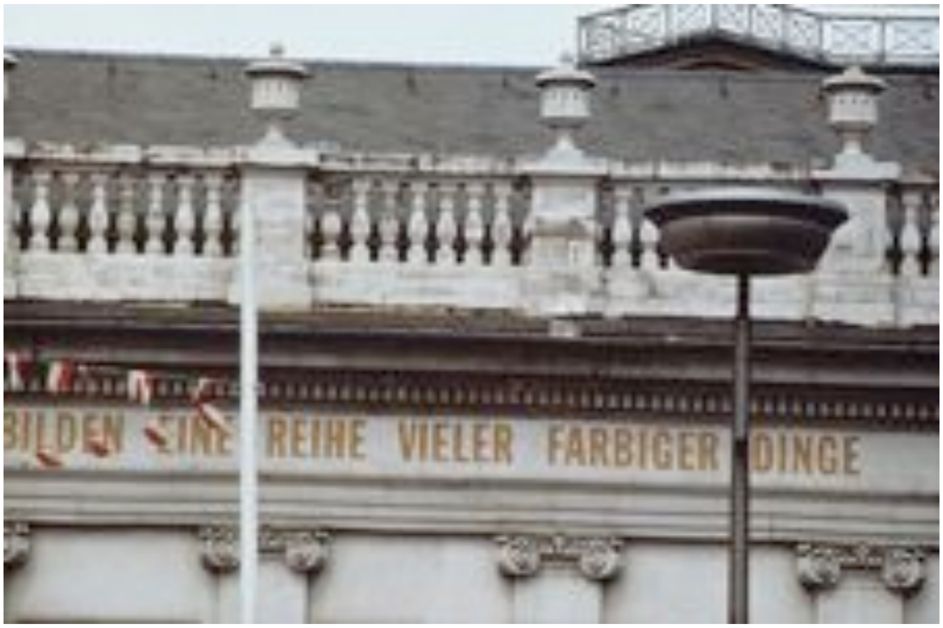


3. Marcel Broodthaers, *Pense-Bête*, 1964
4. Lawrence Weiner, *AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE* (1988), installation at Kunstverein Heilbronn, 2000

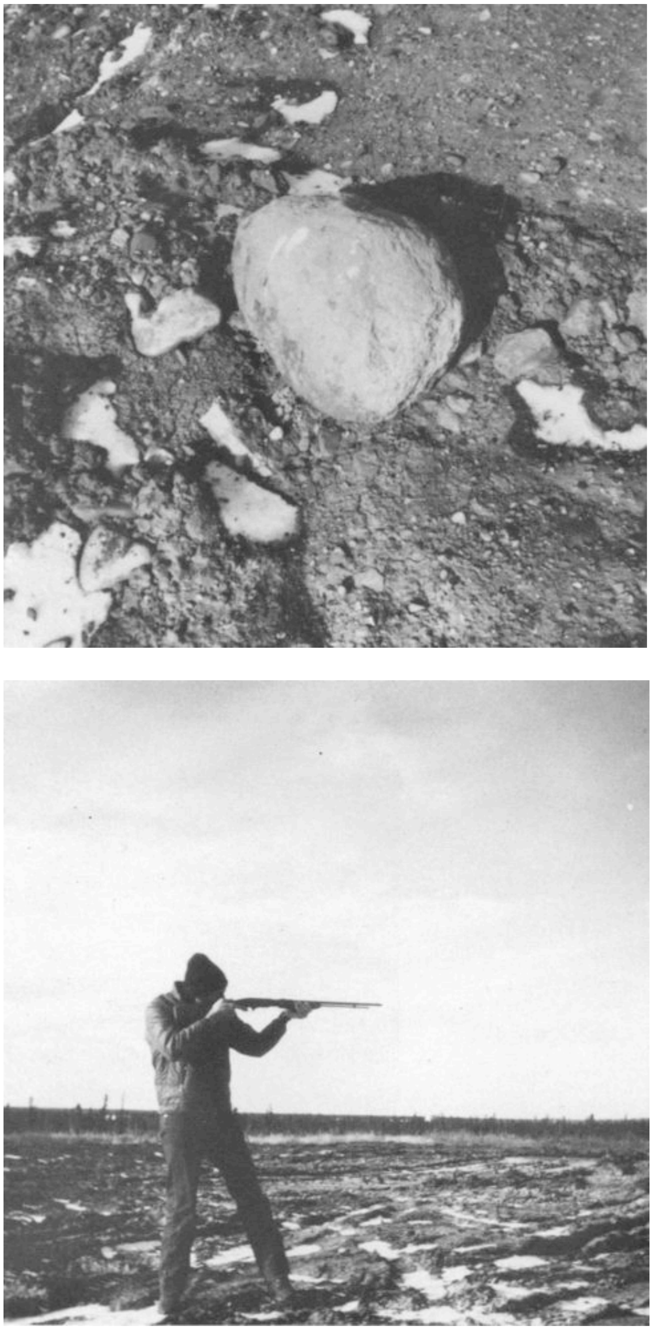


5. Robert Morris, *Self-Portrait EEG*, 1963

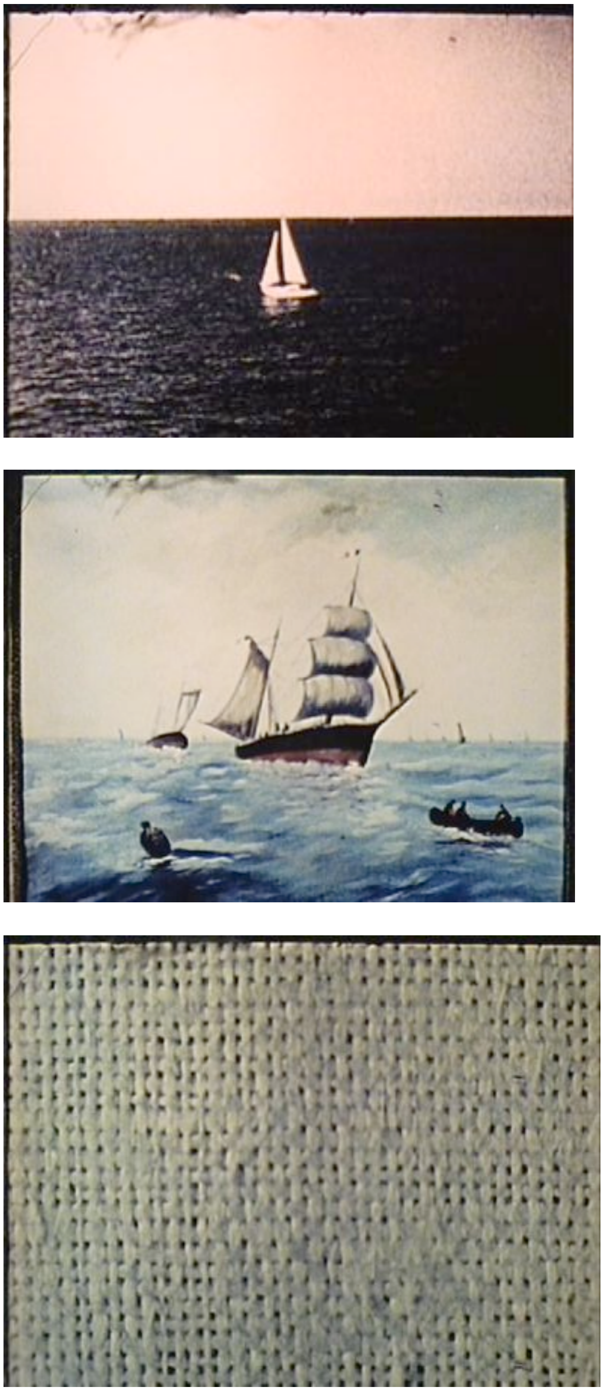




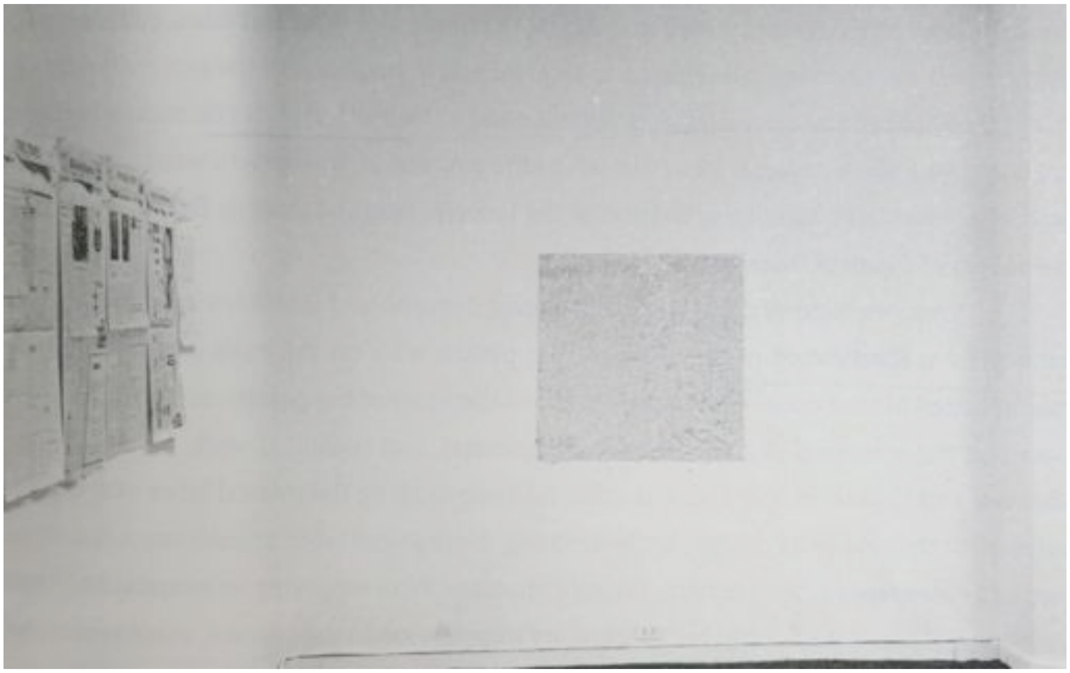
6. Lawrence Weiner*, AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE* (1988), installation at Whitney Museum of Art, New York, 2007
7. Lawrence Weiner, *MANY COLORED OBJECTS PLACED SIDE BY SIDE TO FORM A ROW OF MANY COLORED OBJECTS* (1979), installation at Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, 1982



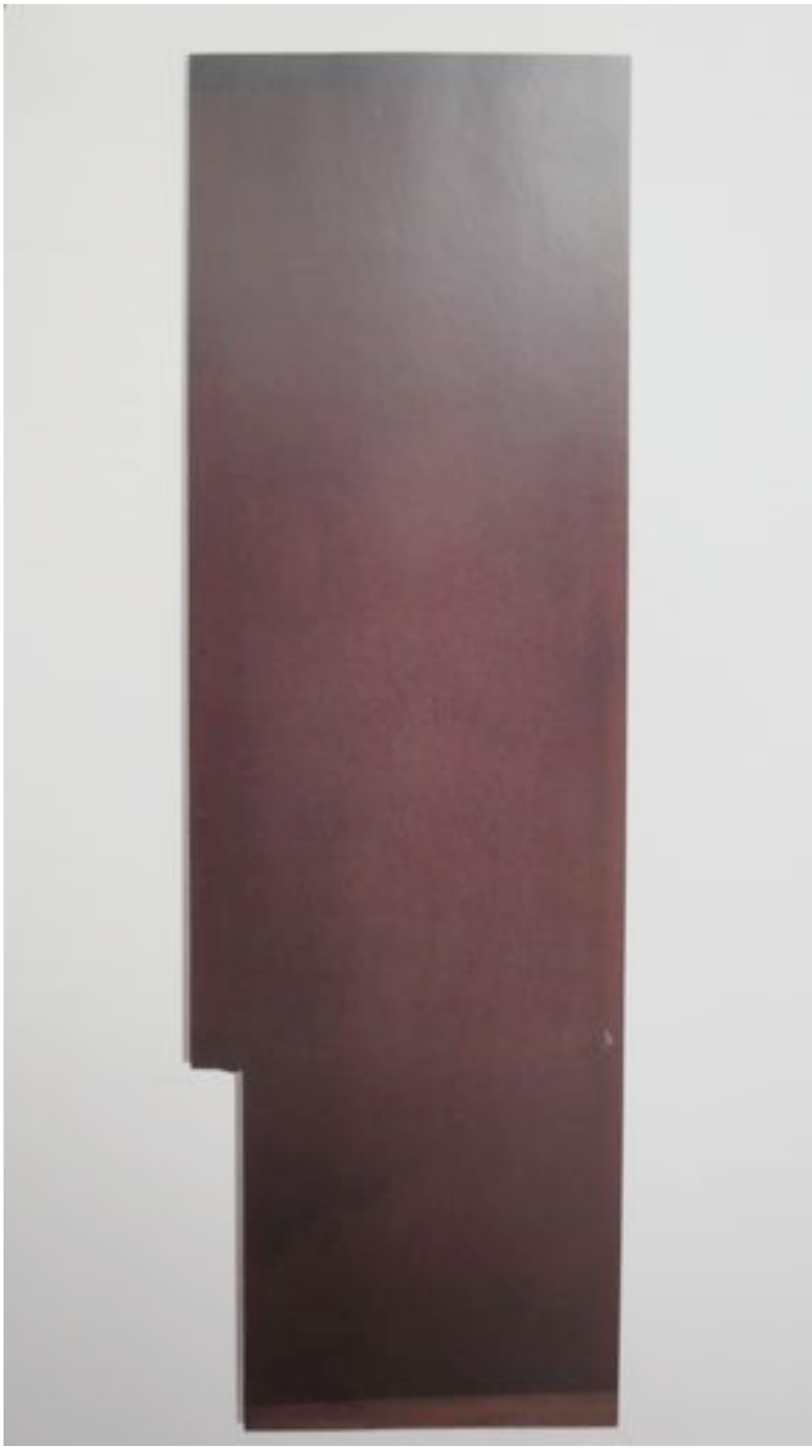
8 & 9. Lawrence Weiner, *THE ARCTIC CIRCLE SHATTERED*, Inuvik Northwest Territory, 1969



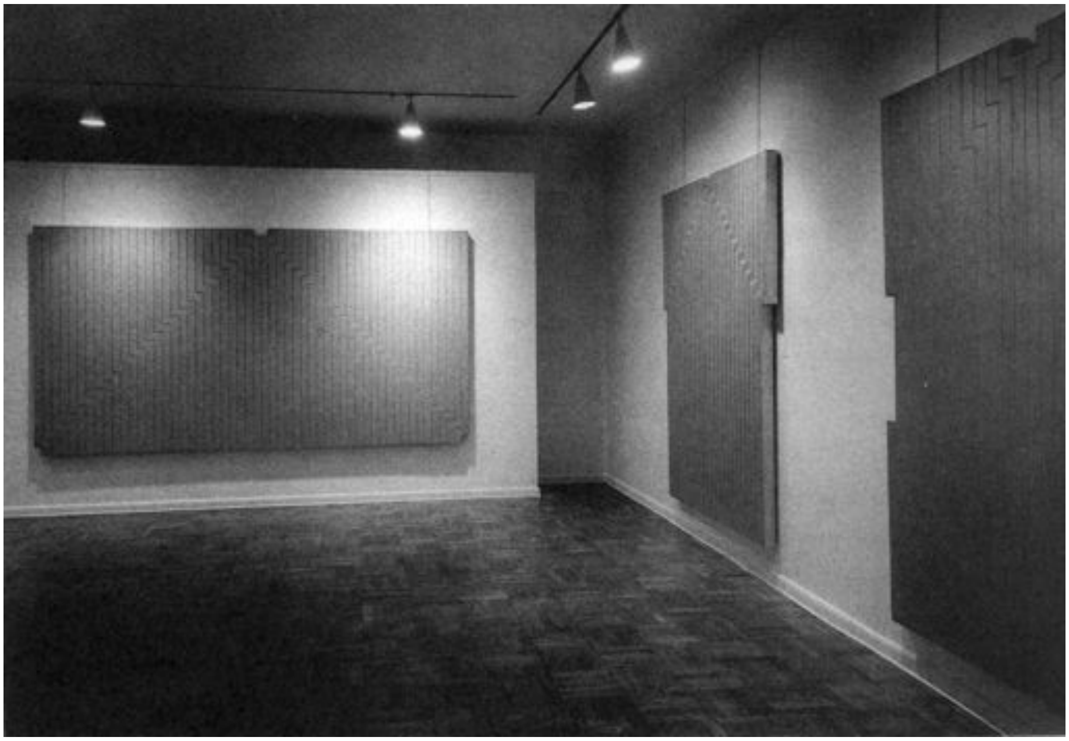
10a – 10c. Marcel Broodthaers, *A Voyage On The North Sea*, film stills, 1973-1974

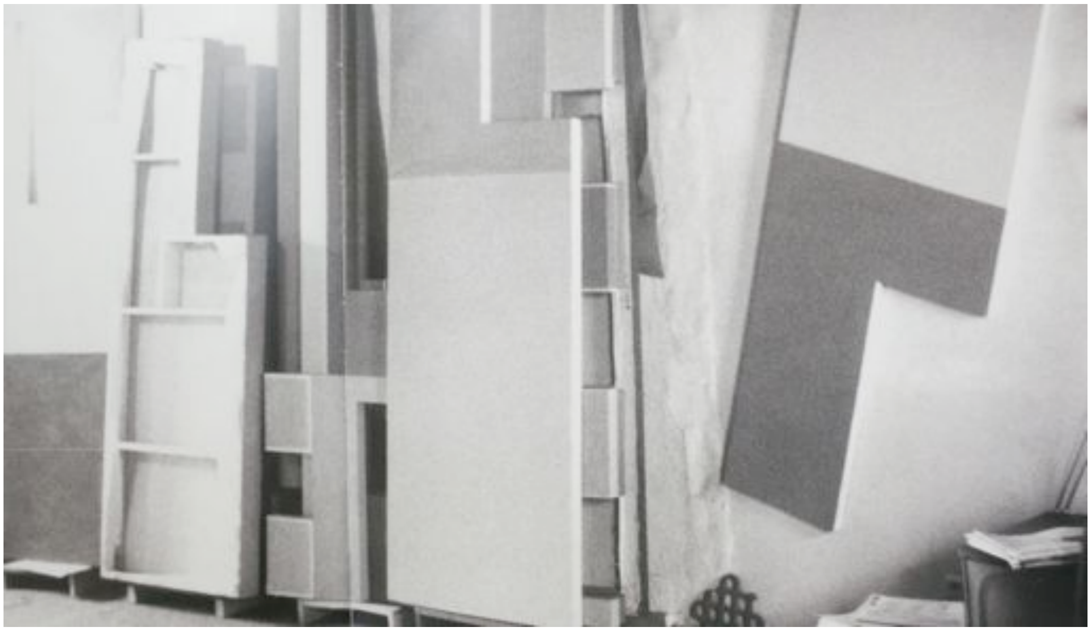


11. Lawrence Weiner, *A 36” X 36” REMOVAL TO THE LATHING OR SUPPORT WALL OF PLASTER OR WALL-BOARD FROM A WALL,* (1968), installation at Seth Siegelaub Gallery, New York, 1969

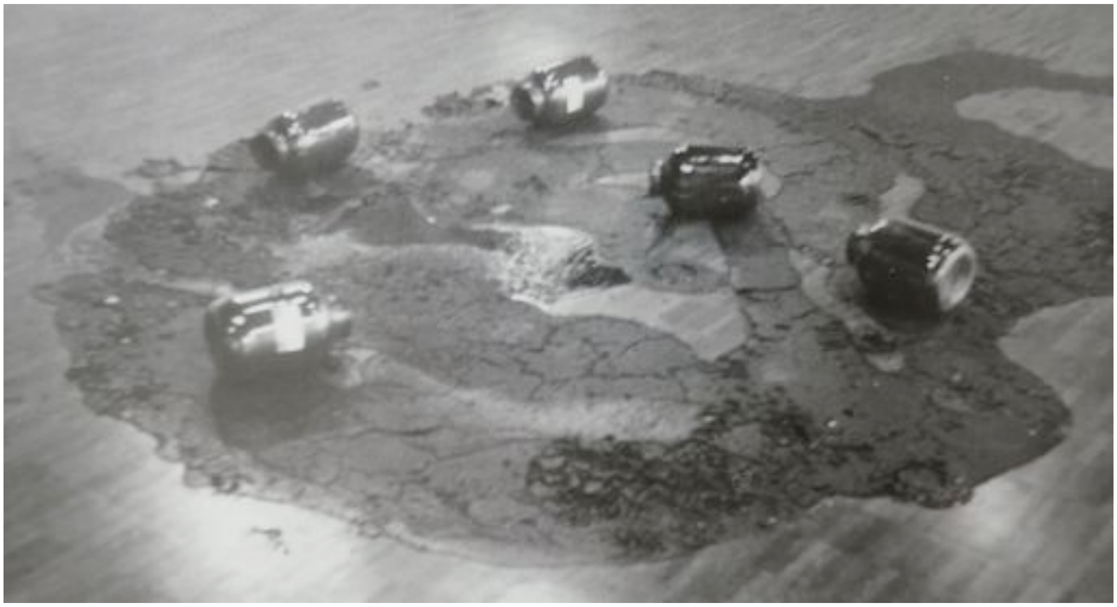


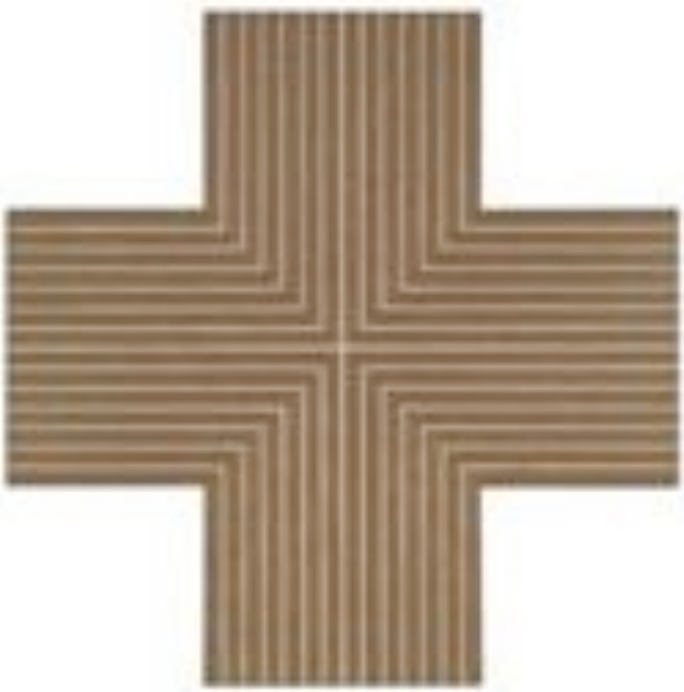
12. Lawrence Weiner, *Untitled,* 1968



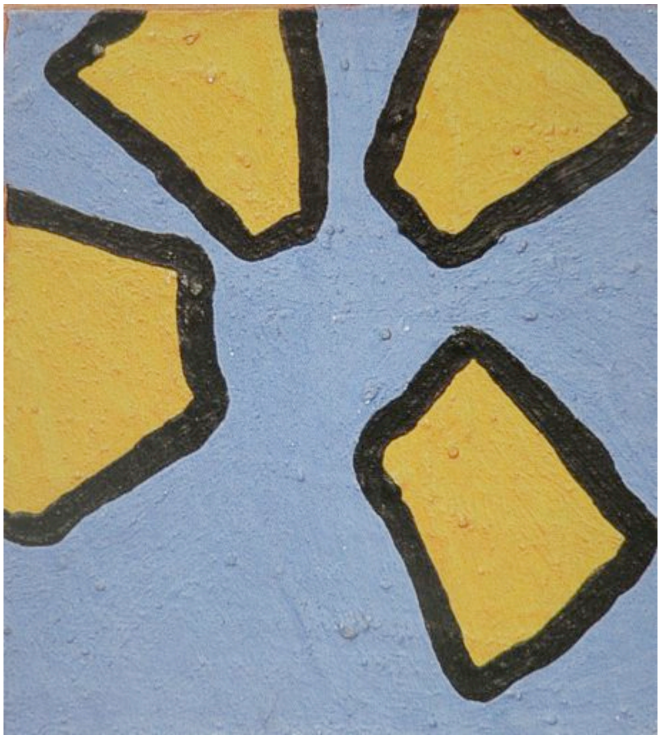


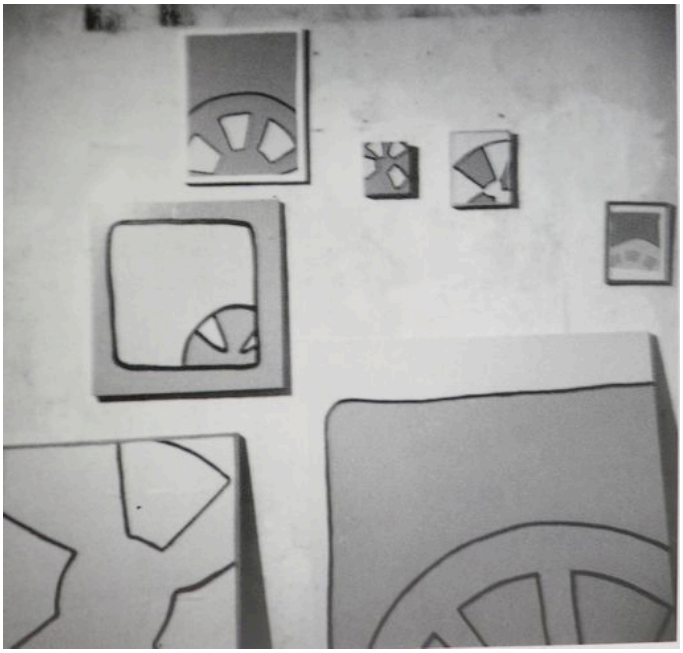
13. Frank Stella, installation at Leo Castelli Gallery, 1960
14.. Removal Paintings stacked in Weiner’s Bleecker Street studio, c. 1967



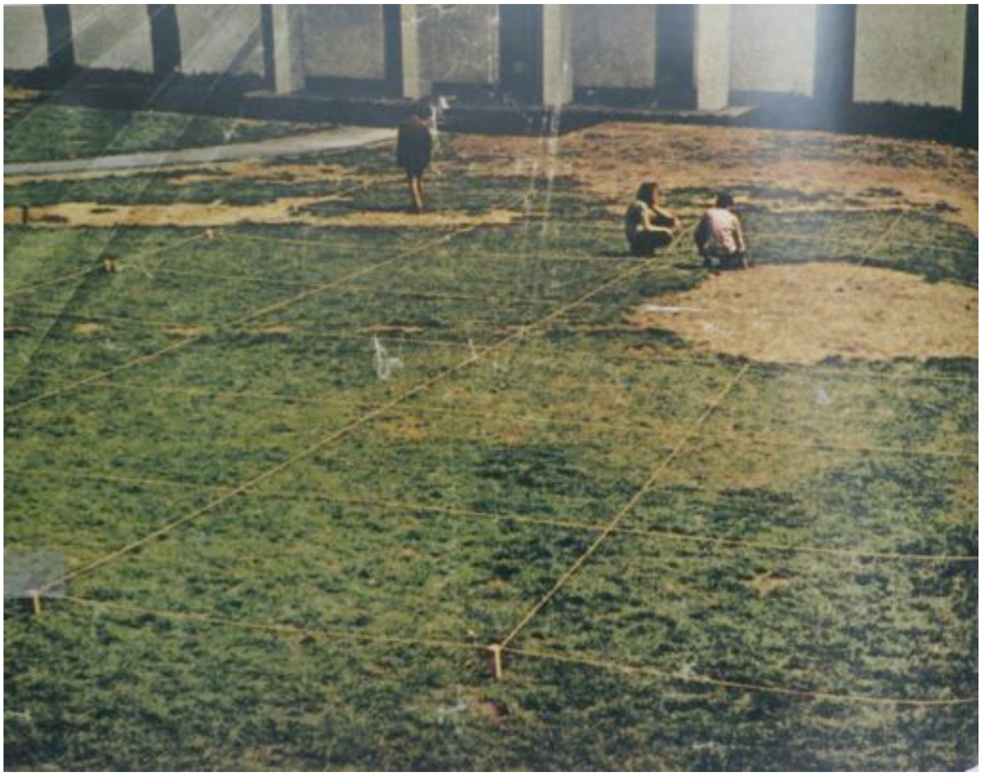


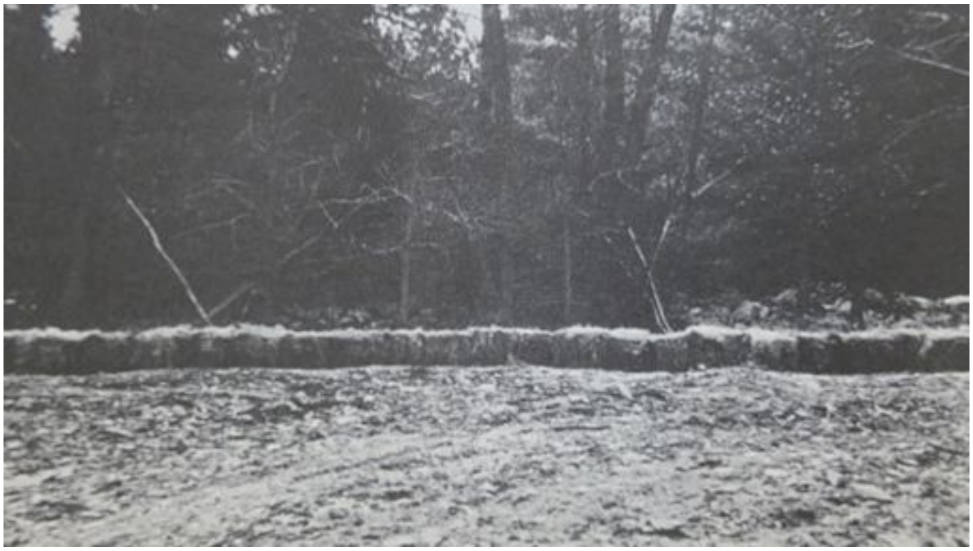
15. Lawrence Weiner, *5 GALLONS WATER BASE TEMPERA PAINT POURED DIRECTLY UPON THE FLOOR AND ALLOWED TO REMAIN FOR THE DURATION OF THE EXHIBITION*, installation at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, 1969
16. Frank Stella, *Ouray*, 1962



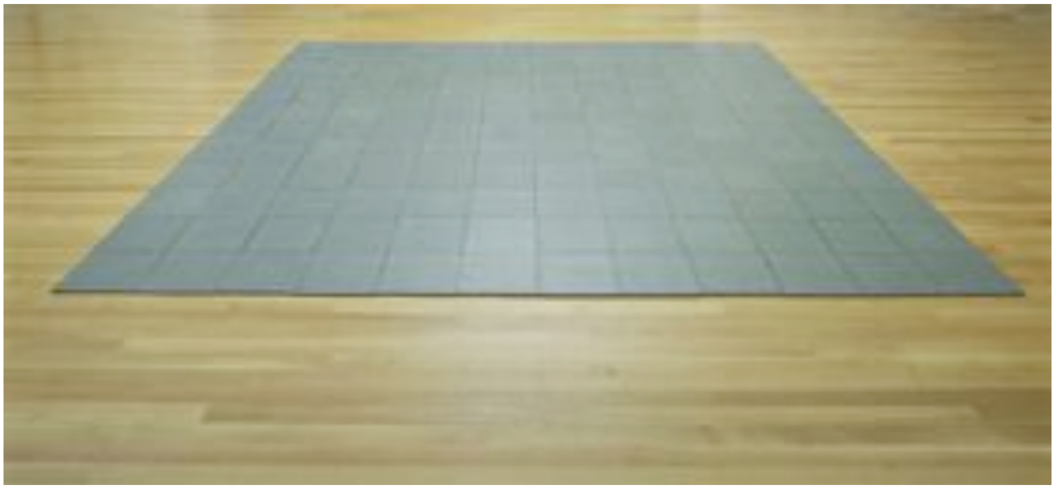


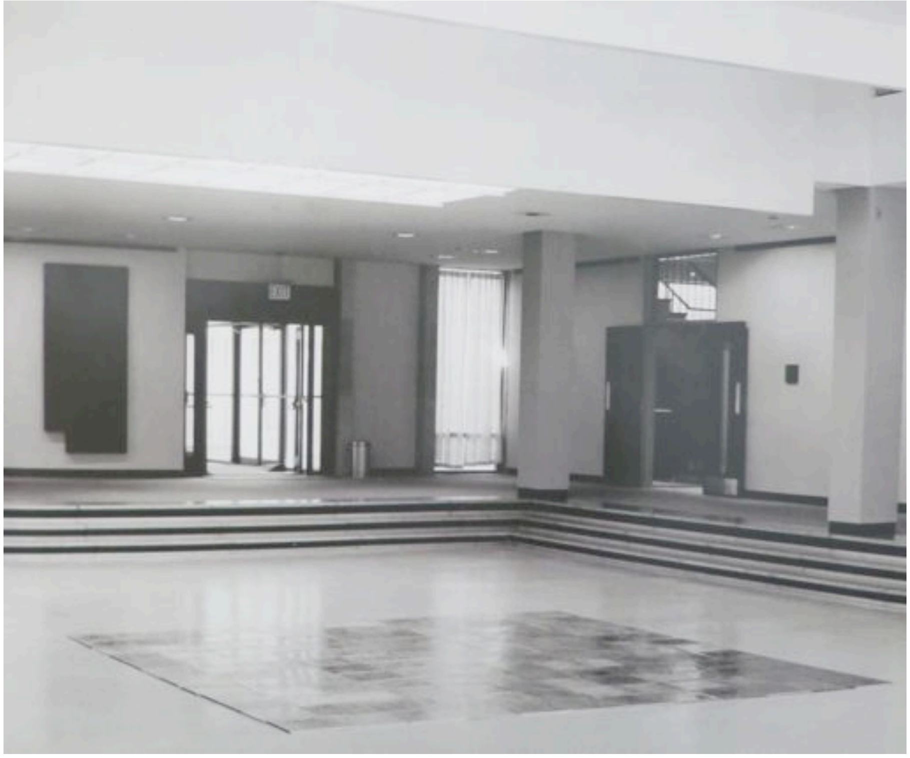
17a. Lawrence Weiner, *Propeller Painting*, 1963
17b. Lawrence Weiner, *Propeller Paintings*, c. 1965



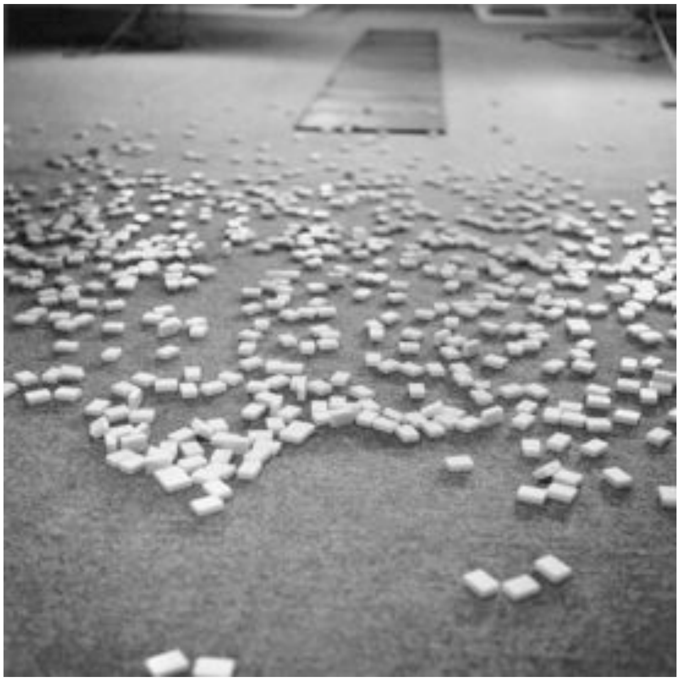


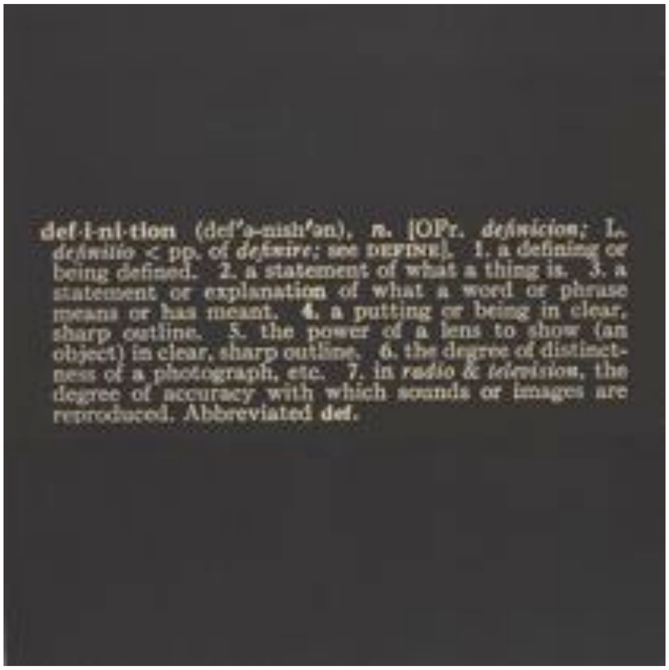
18. Lawrence Weiner, *A SERIES OF STAKES SET IN THE GROUND AT REGULAR INTERVALS TO FORM A RECTANGLE TWINE STRUNG FROM STAKE TO STAKE TO DEMARK A GRID A RECTANGLE REMOVED FROM THIS RECTANGLE*, installation at Windham College, Putney, Vermont, 1968
19. Carl Andre*, Joint,* 1968





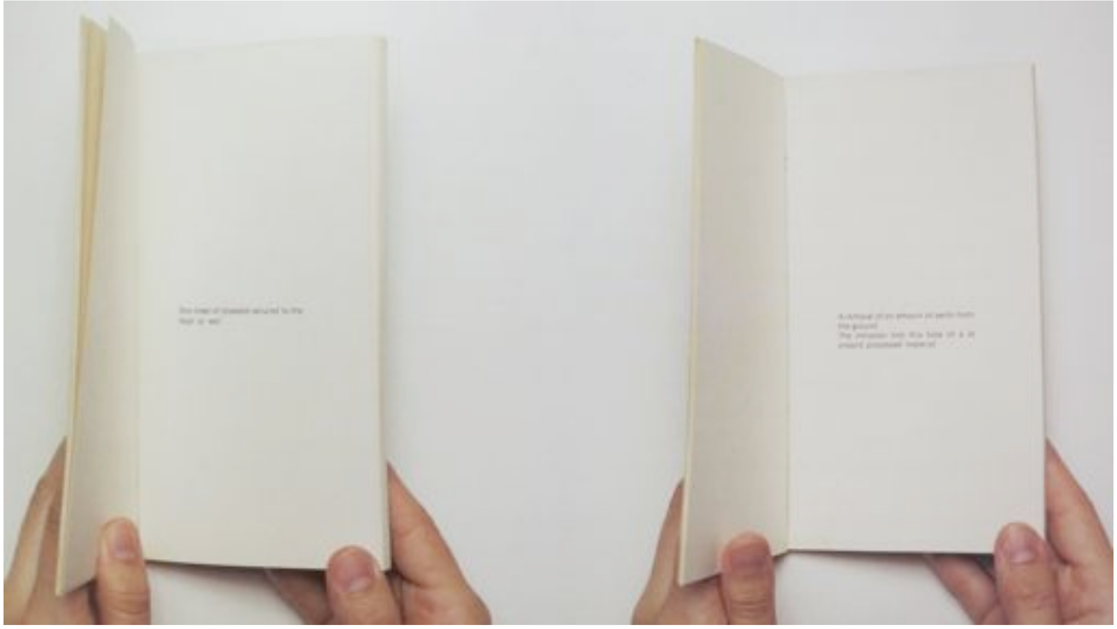
20. Carl Andre, *144 Lead Square*, 1969
21. Carl Andre, *Untitled (144 Pieces of Zinc),* 1968; Lawrence Weiner, *Untitled,* 1967; Robert Barry, *Untitled,* 1967; installation at Laura Knott Gallery, Bradford Junior College, 1968

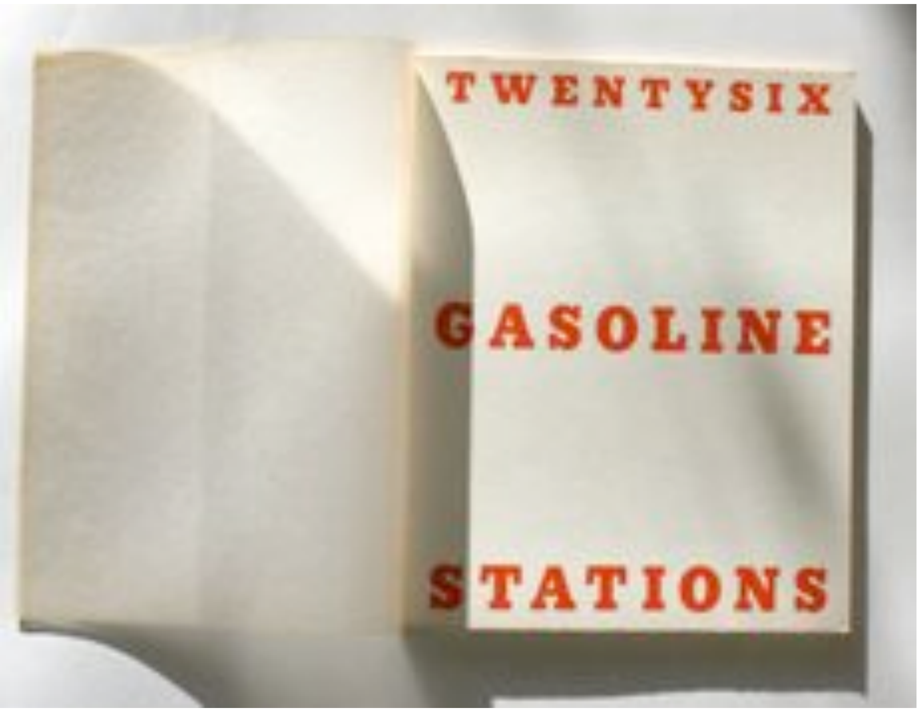




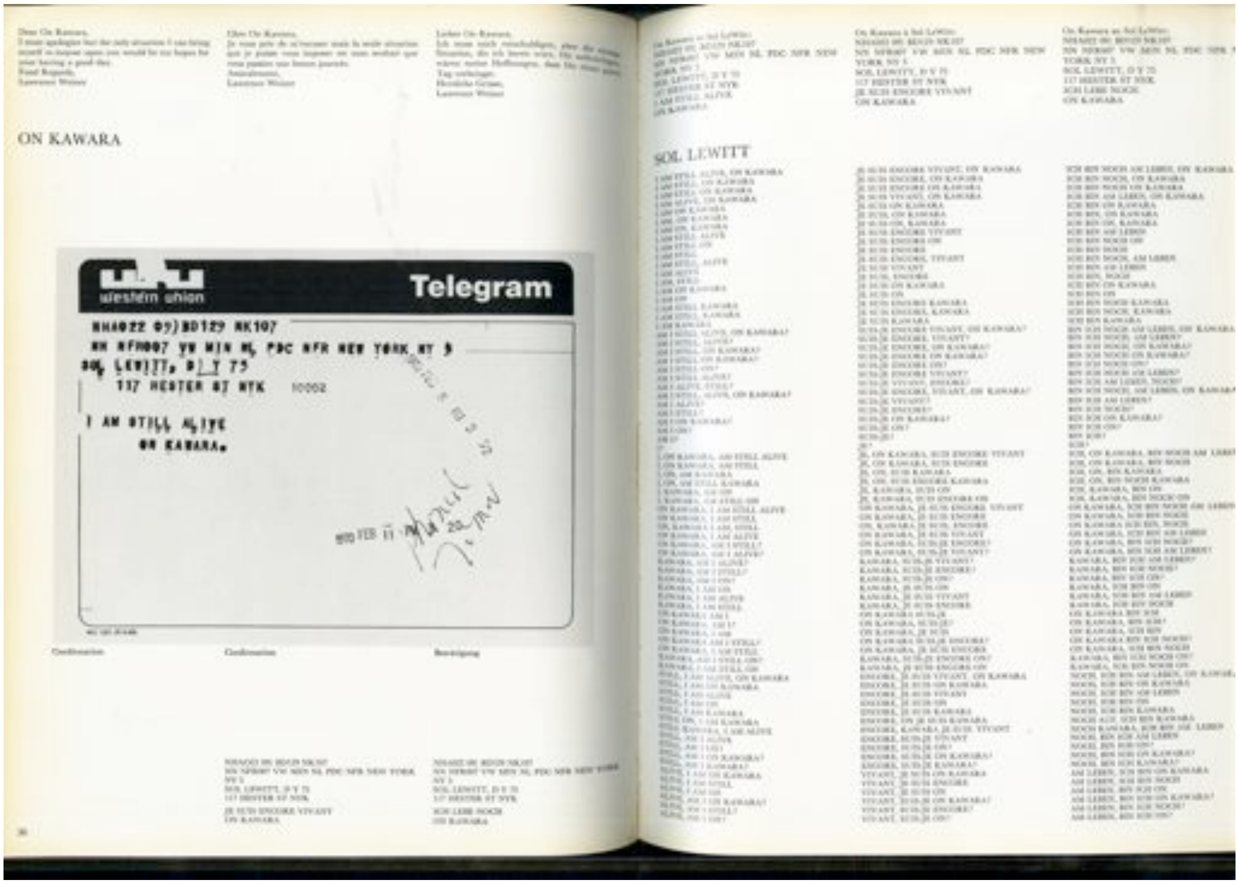
def·i·ni·tion (def'ə-nish'ən), *n.* [OFr. *definicion;* L. *definitio* < pp. of *definire;* see DEFINE]. 1. a defining or being defined. 2. a statement of what a thing is. 3. a statement or explanation of what a word or phrase means or has meant. 4. a putting or being in clear, sharp outline. 5. the power of a lens to show (an object) in clear, sharp outline. 6. the degree of distinctness of a photograph, etc. 7. in *radio & television,* the degree of accuracy with which sounds or images are reproduced. Abbreviated **def.**

22. Carl Andre, *Spill*, 1966
23. Joseph Kosuth, *Titled (Art as Idea as Idea) The Word "Definition,"* 1966-68





24. Lawrence Weiner, *Statements*, 1968
25. Ed Ruscha, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, 1963



ON KAWARA

Telegram

NHA022 0?)BD129 NK107

NN NFA007 VW MIN NL PDC NFR NEW YORK NY 3

SOL LEWITT, D Y 73

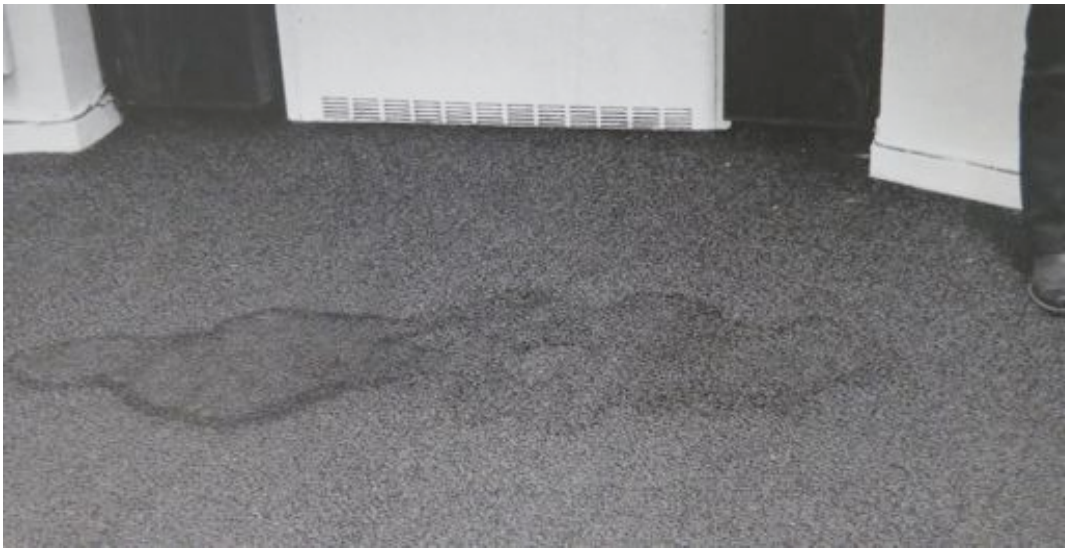
117 HESTER ST NYK 10002

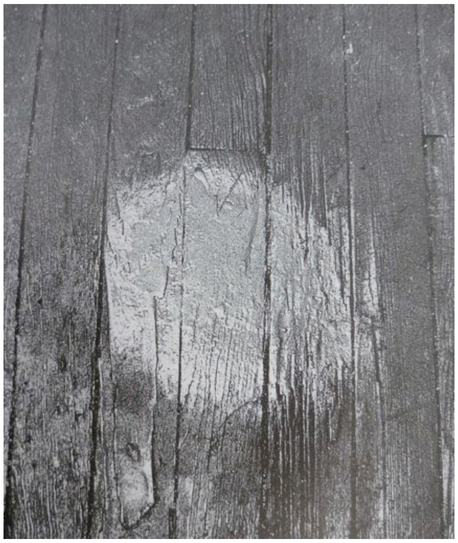
I AM STILL ALIVE

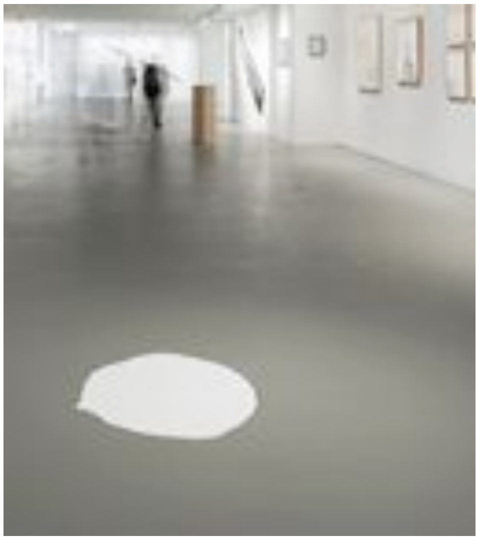
ON KAWARA.

SOL LEWITT

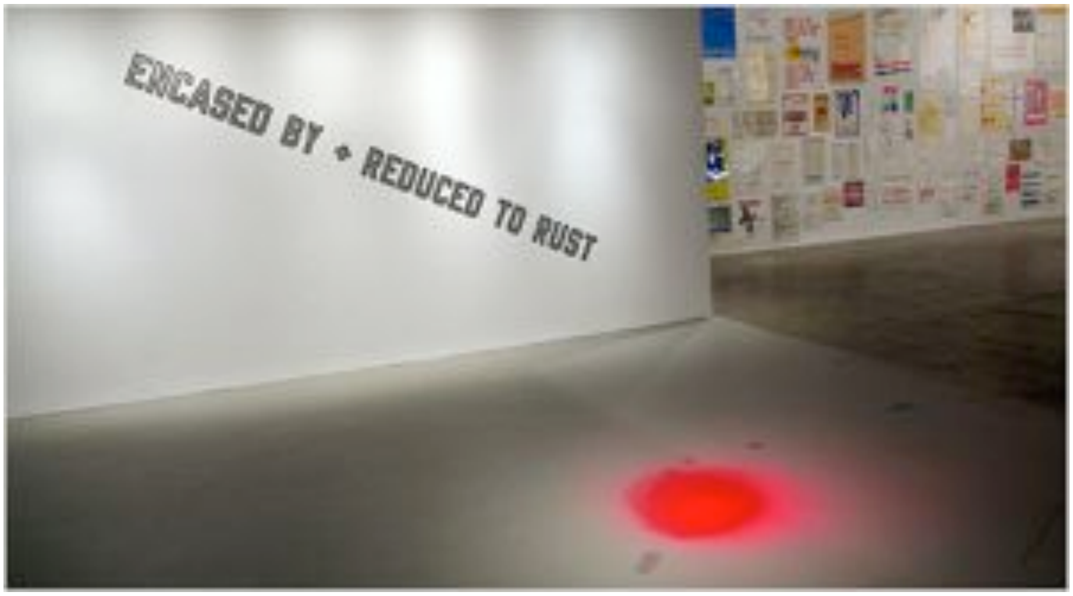
26. Lawrence Weiner, On Kawara and Sol LeWitt contributions for “48-Page Exhibition,” *Studio International*, July / August 1970

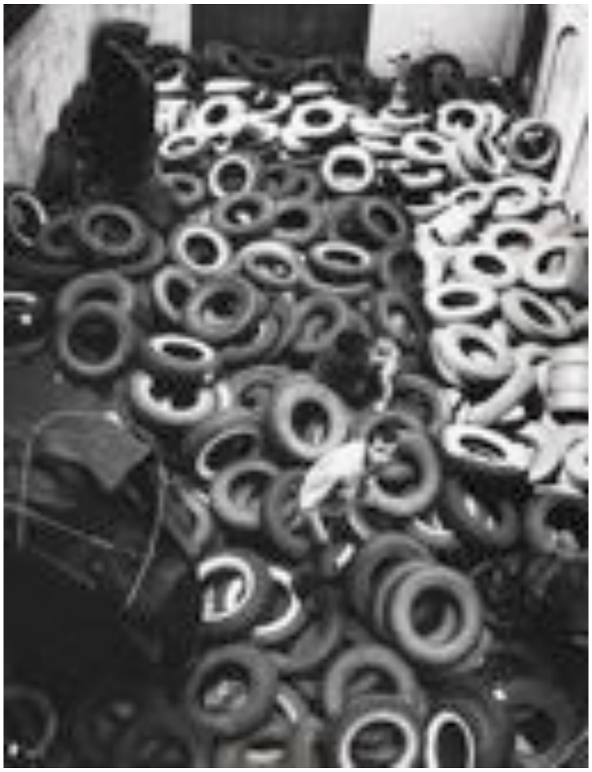




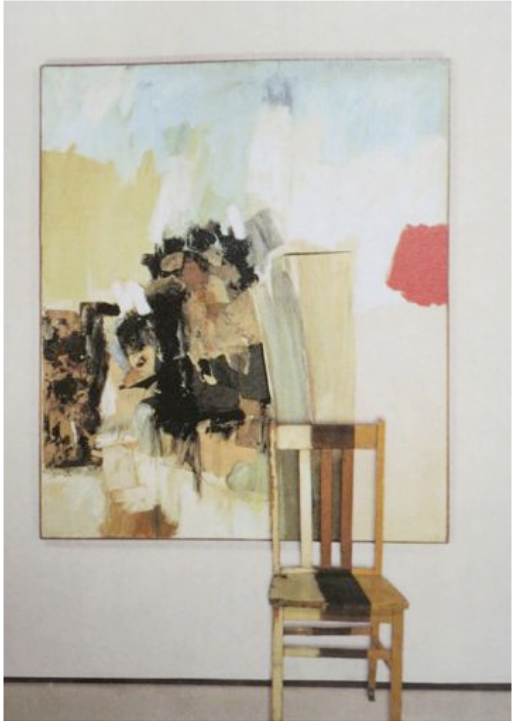


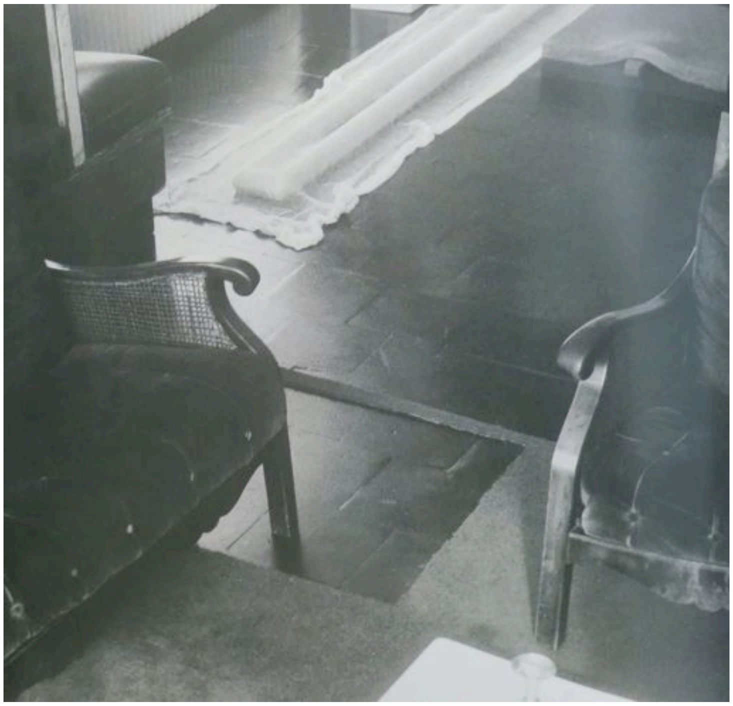
27. Lawrence Weiner, *AN AMOUNT OF BLEACH POURED UPON A RUG AND ALLOWED TO BLEACH*, installation at Seth Siegelaub at McLandon Building, New York, 1968
28. Lawrence Weiner, *TWO MINUTES OF SPRAY PAINT DIRECTLY UPON THE FLOOR FROM A STANDARD AEROSOL SPRAY CAN* (1968)*,* Sol LeWitt's Hester Street Studio Floor, late 1960s
29. Lawrence Weiner, *ONE PINT GLOSS WHITE LACQUER POURED DIRECTLY UPON THE FLOOR AND ALLOWED TO DRY* (1986), installation at Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2007



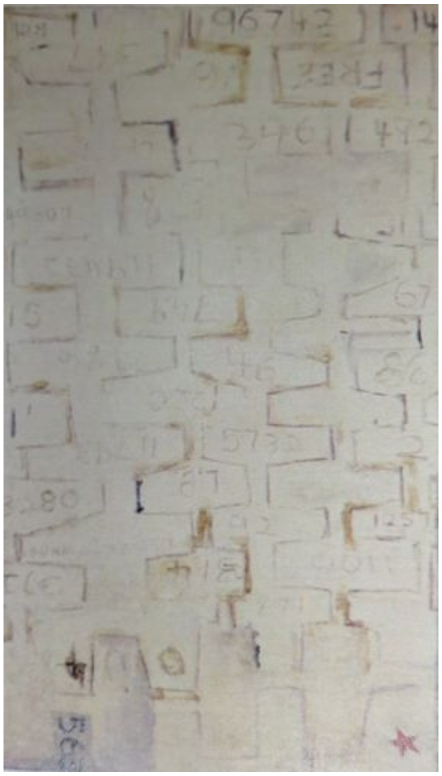


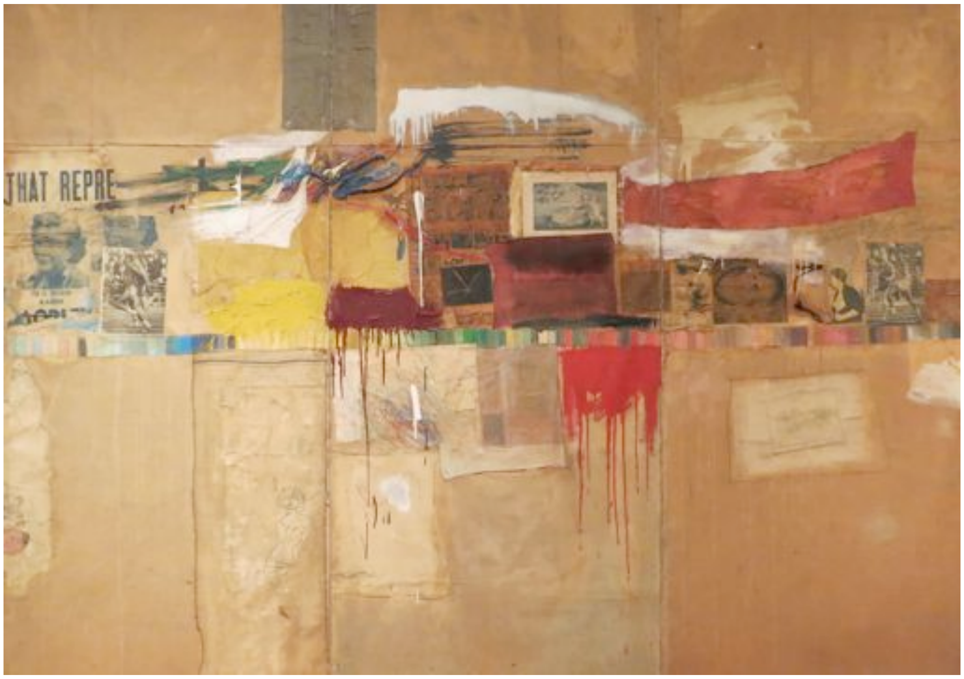
30. Lawrence Weiner, *TWO MINUTES OF SPRAY PAINT DIRECTLY UPON THE FLOOR FROM A STANDARD AEROSOL SPRAY CAN* (1968)*; ENCASED BY + REDUCED TO RUST* (1986), installation at Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2007
31. Allan Kaprow, *Yard*, 1961



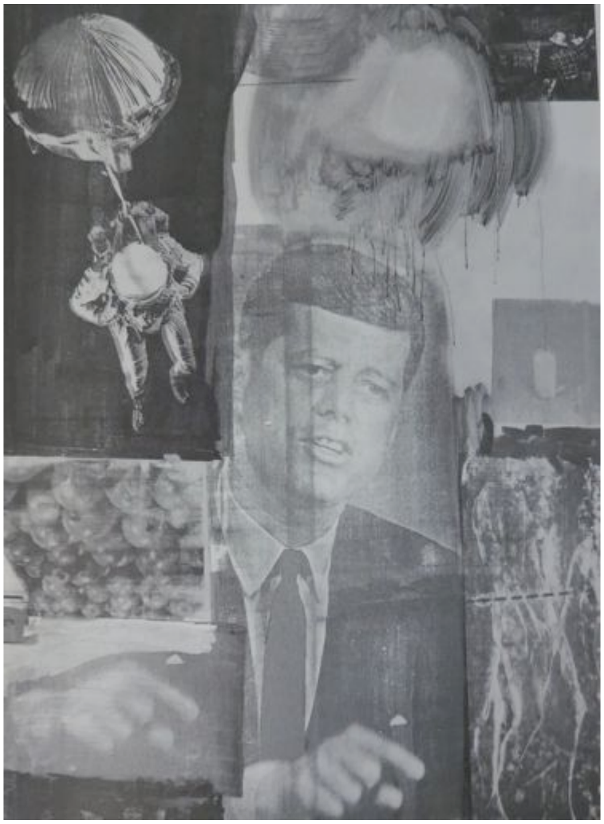


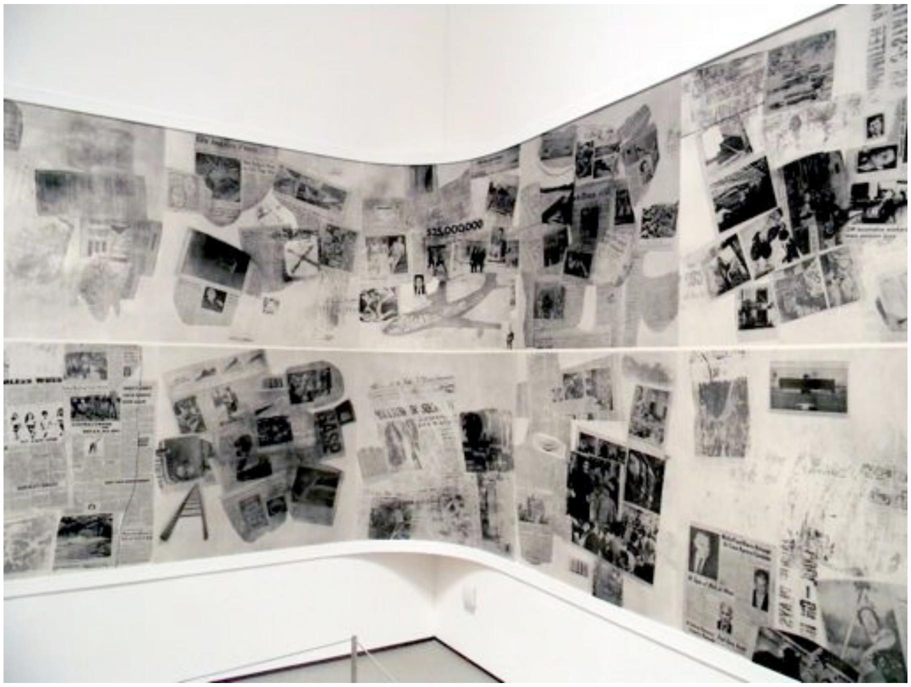
32. Robert Rauschenberg, *Pilgrim*, 1960
33. Lawrence Weiner, *A SQUARE REMOVAL FROM A RUG IN USE*, installation in private residence Cologne, 1969



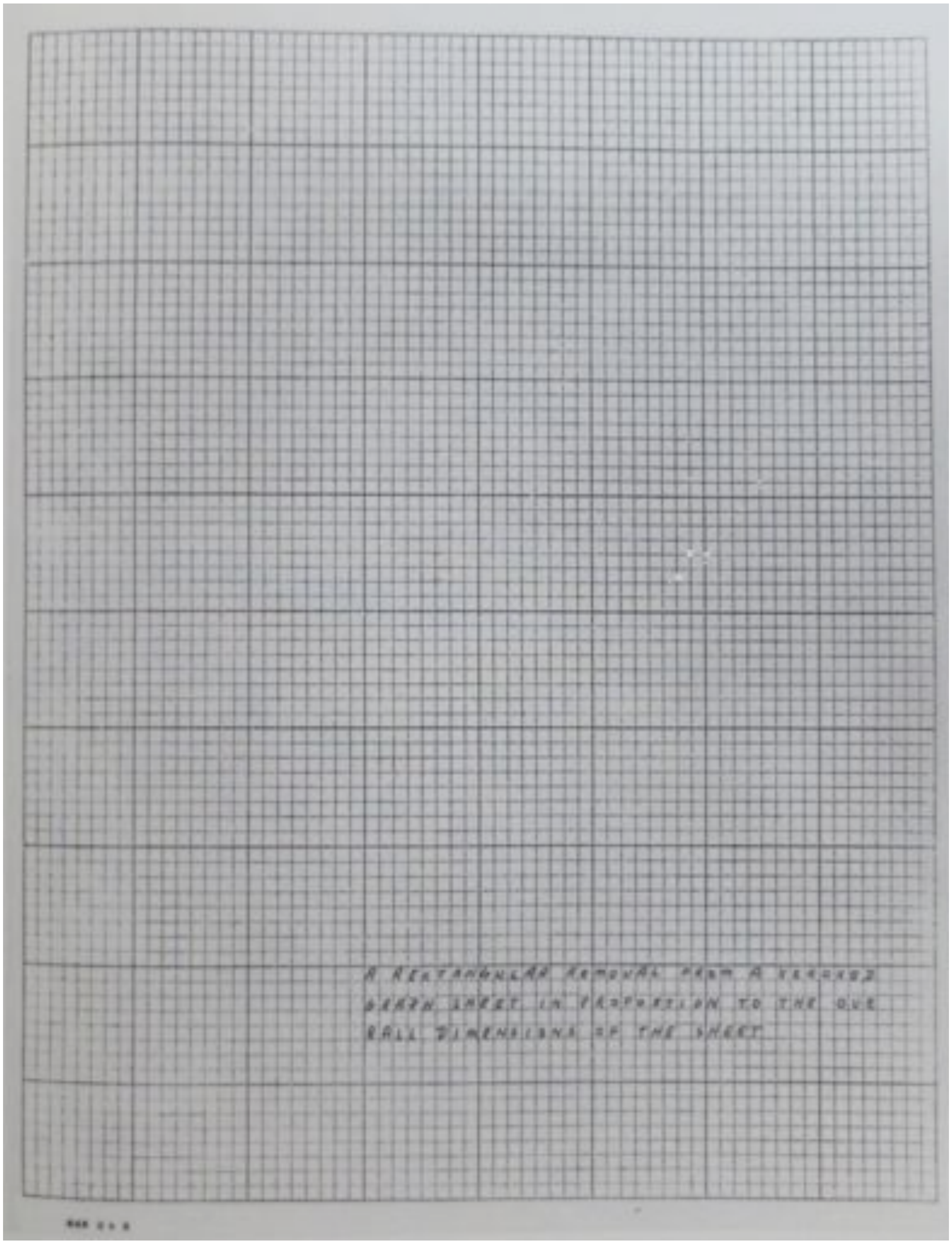


34. Robert Rauschenberg, *White Painting with Numbers*, 1949
35. Robert Rauschenberg, *Rebus,* 1955

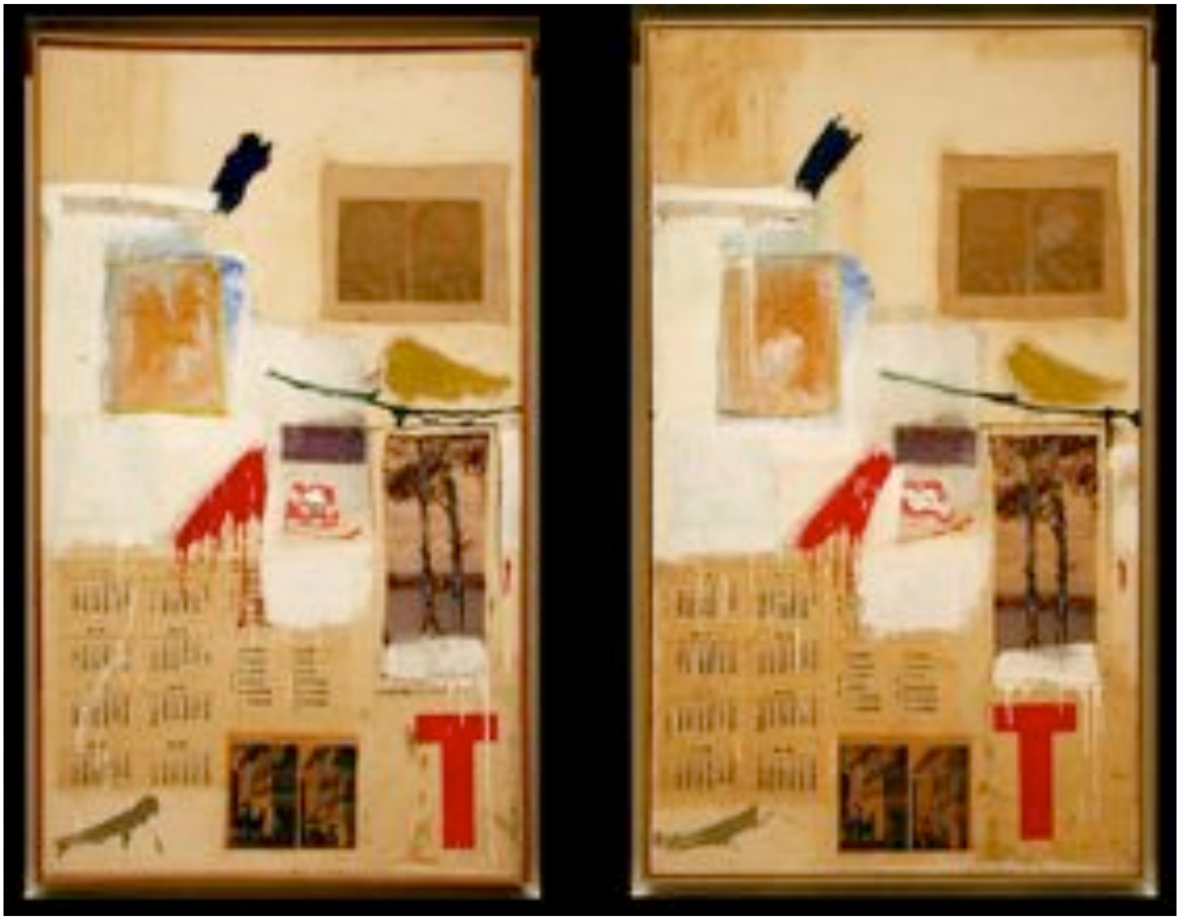




36. Robert Rauschenberg, *Retroactive I*, 1963
37. Robert Rauschenberg, *Currents*, 1970

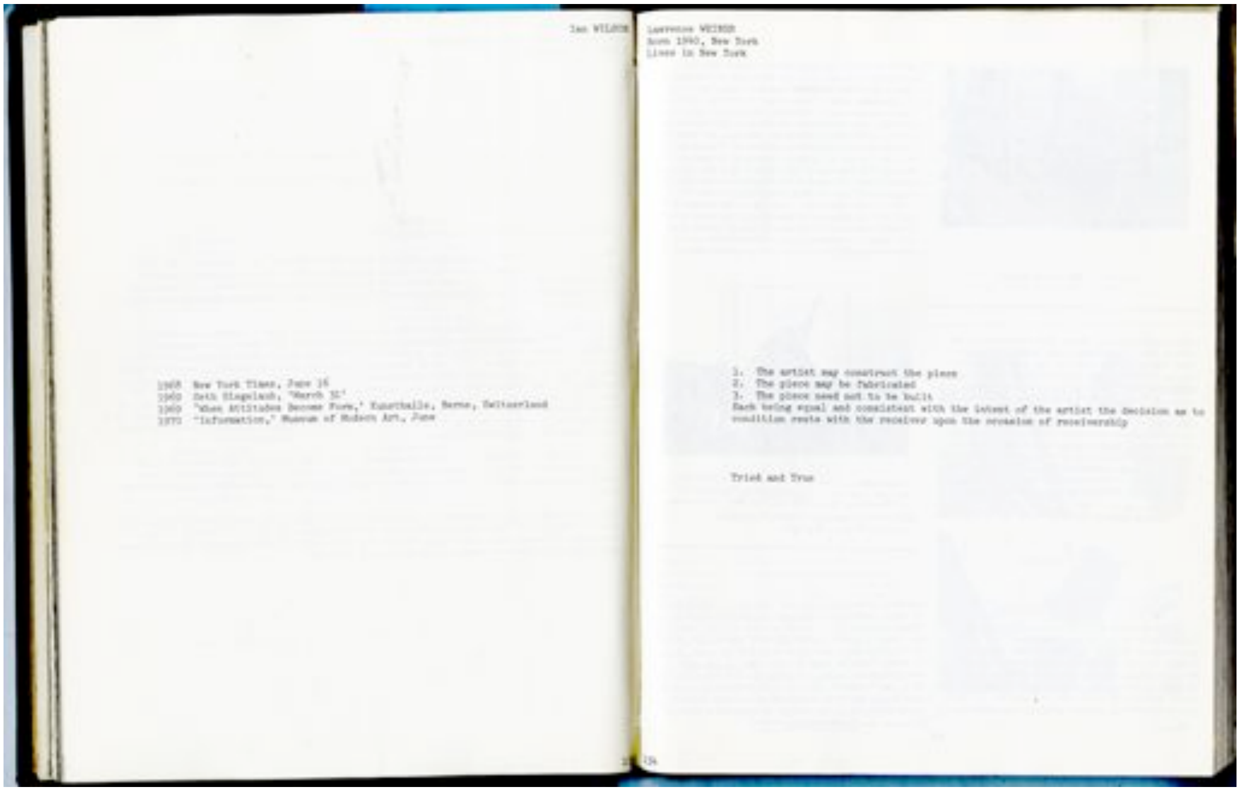

A RECTANGULAR REMOVAL FROM A XEROXED
GRAPH SHEET IN PROPORTION TO THE OVE
RALL DIMENSIONS OF THE SHEET

38. Lawrence Weiner, *A RECTANGULAR REMOVAL FROM A XEROXED GRAPH SHEET IN PROPORTION TO THE OVERALL DIMENSIONS OF THE SHEET* in *Xerox Book*, 1968



35. Rauschenberg, *Factum I and II*, 1957

40. Andy Warhol, *200 Campbell's Soup Cans*, 1962



Ian WILSON

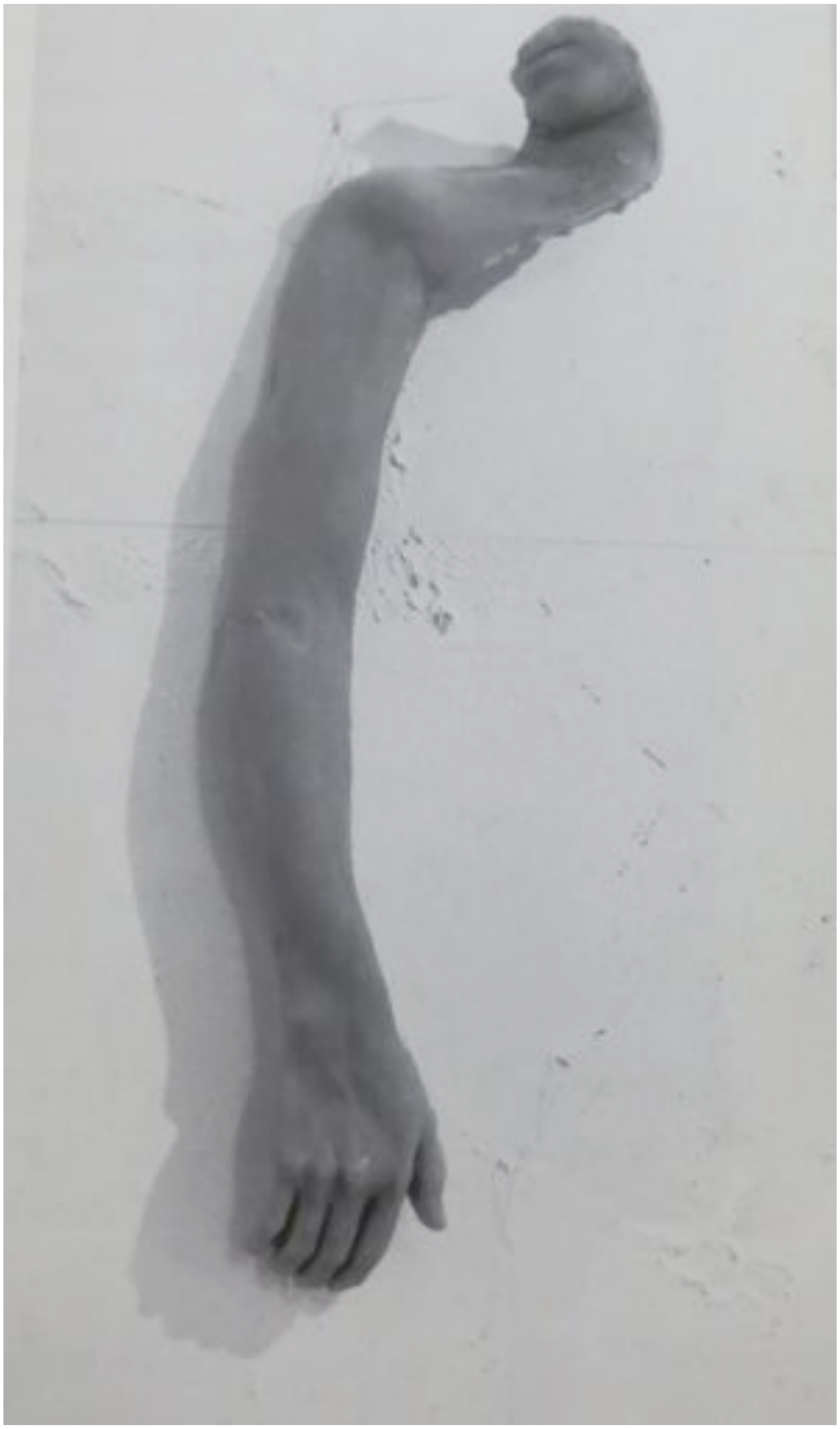
1968 New York Times, June 16
1969 Seth Siegelaub, "March 31"
1969 "When Attitudes Become Form," Kunsthalle, Berne, Switzerland
1970 "Information," Museum of Modern Art, June

Lawrence WEINER
Born 1940, New York
Lives in New York

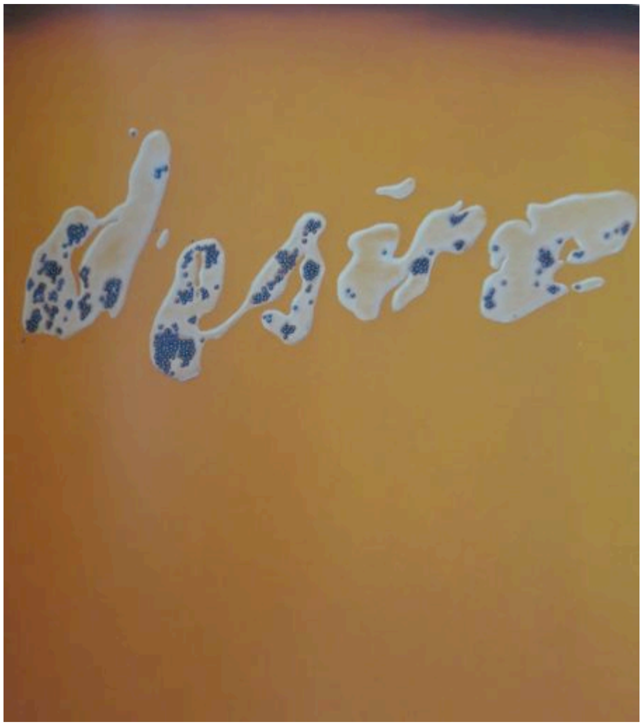
1. The artist may construct the piece
2. The piece may be fabricated
3. The piece need not to be built
Each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership

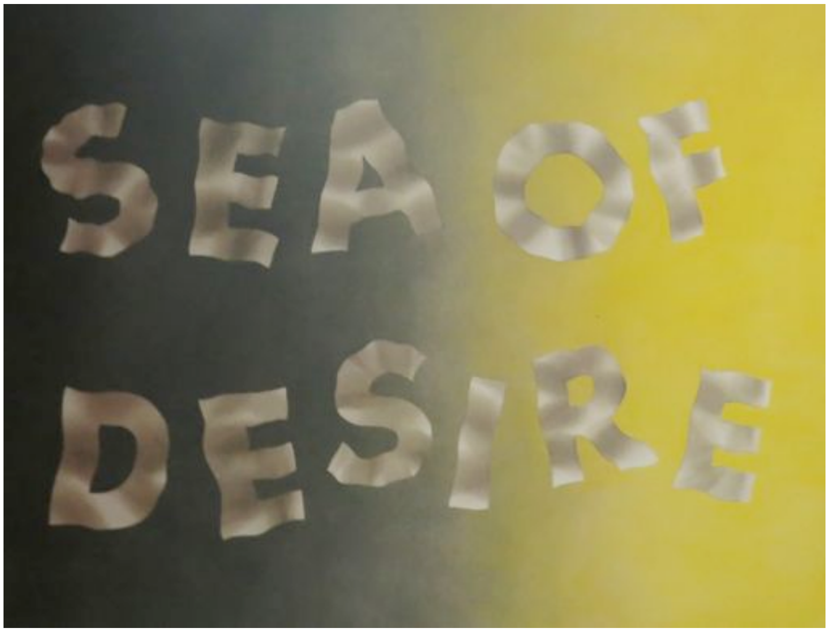
Tried and True

41. Lawrence Weiner, *TRIED AND TRUE*, exhibition catalog contribution to *Information* at Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1979

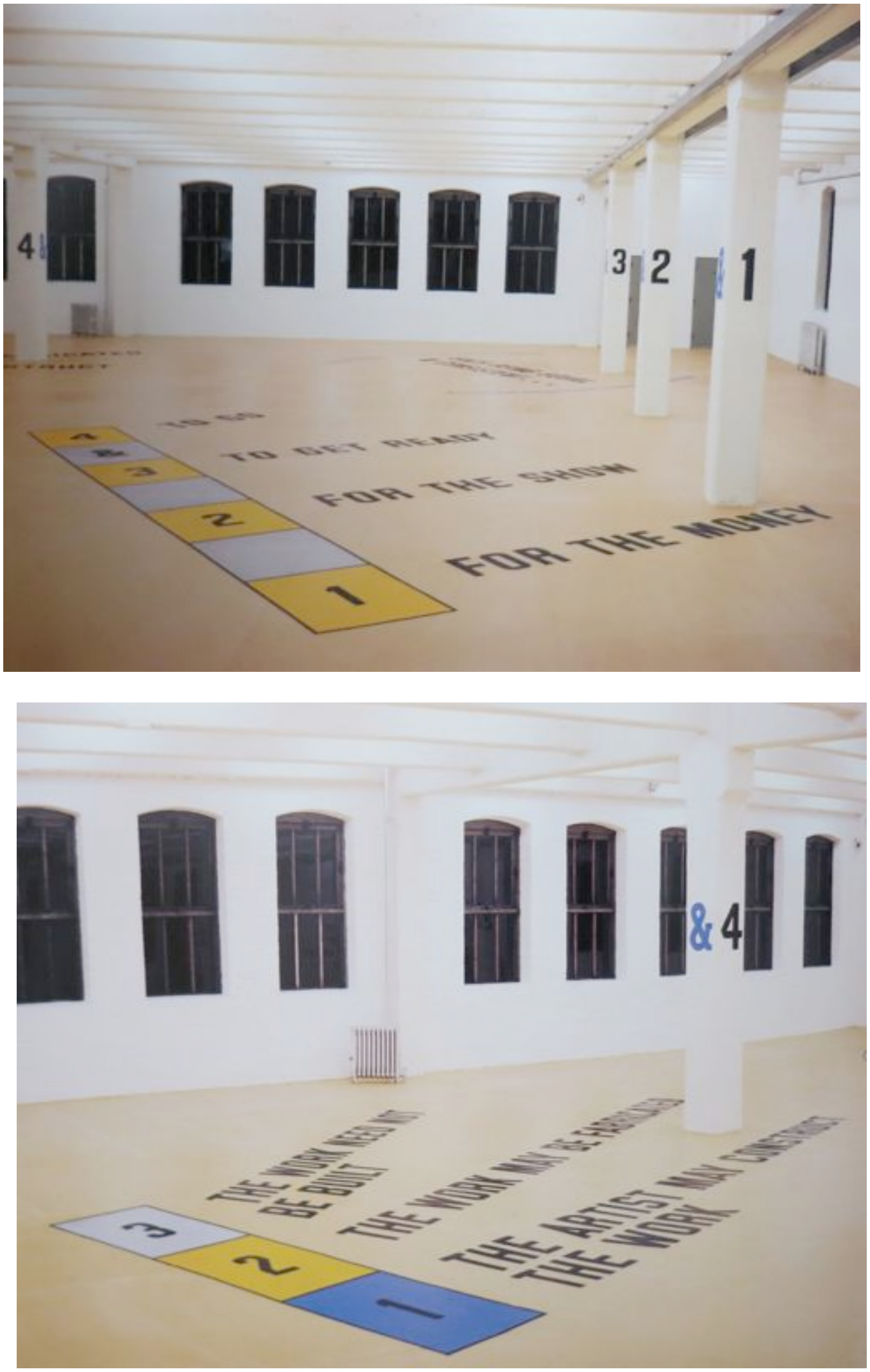


42. Bruce Nauman, *From Hand To Mouth*, 1967

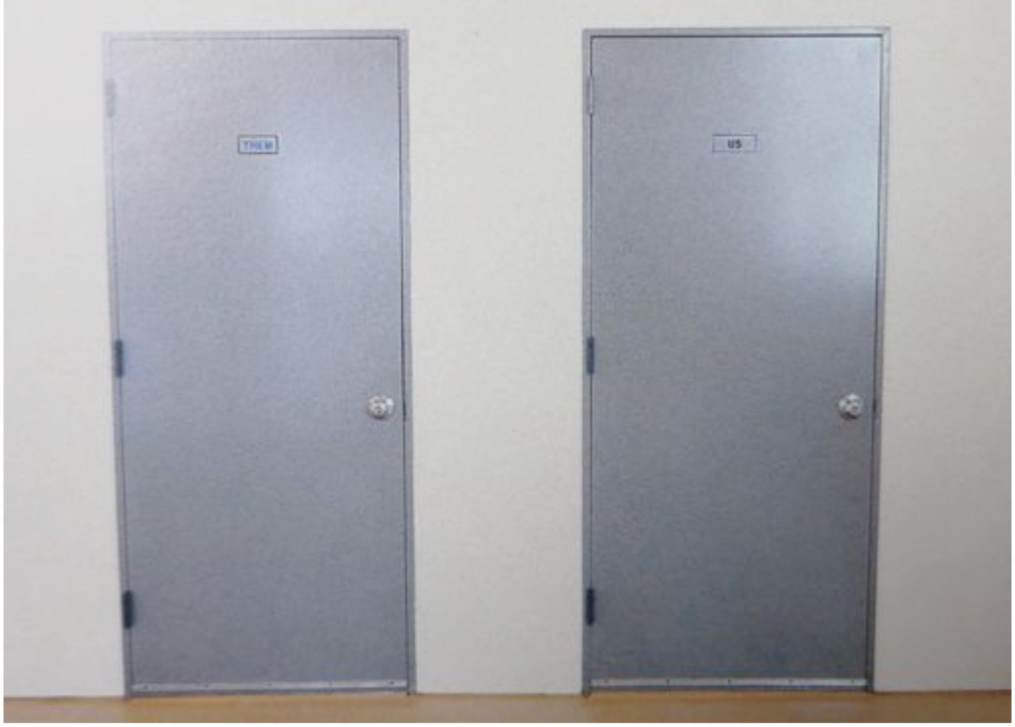


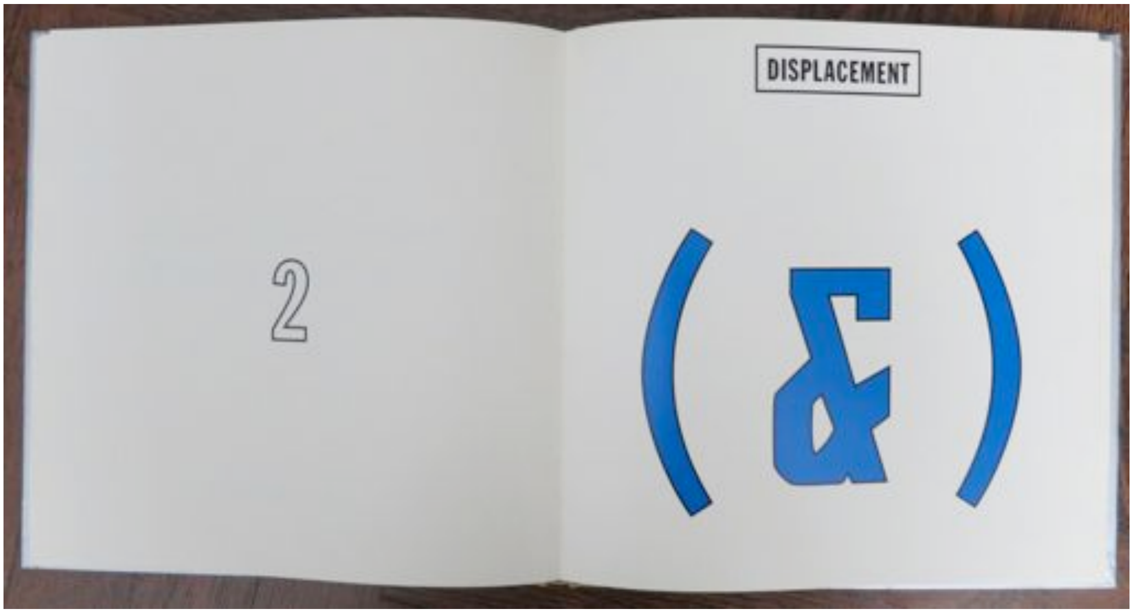


43. Ed Ruscha, *Desire*, 1969
44. Ed Ruscha, *Sea of Desire*, 1976

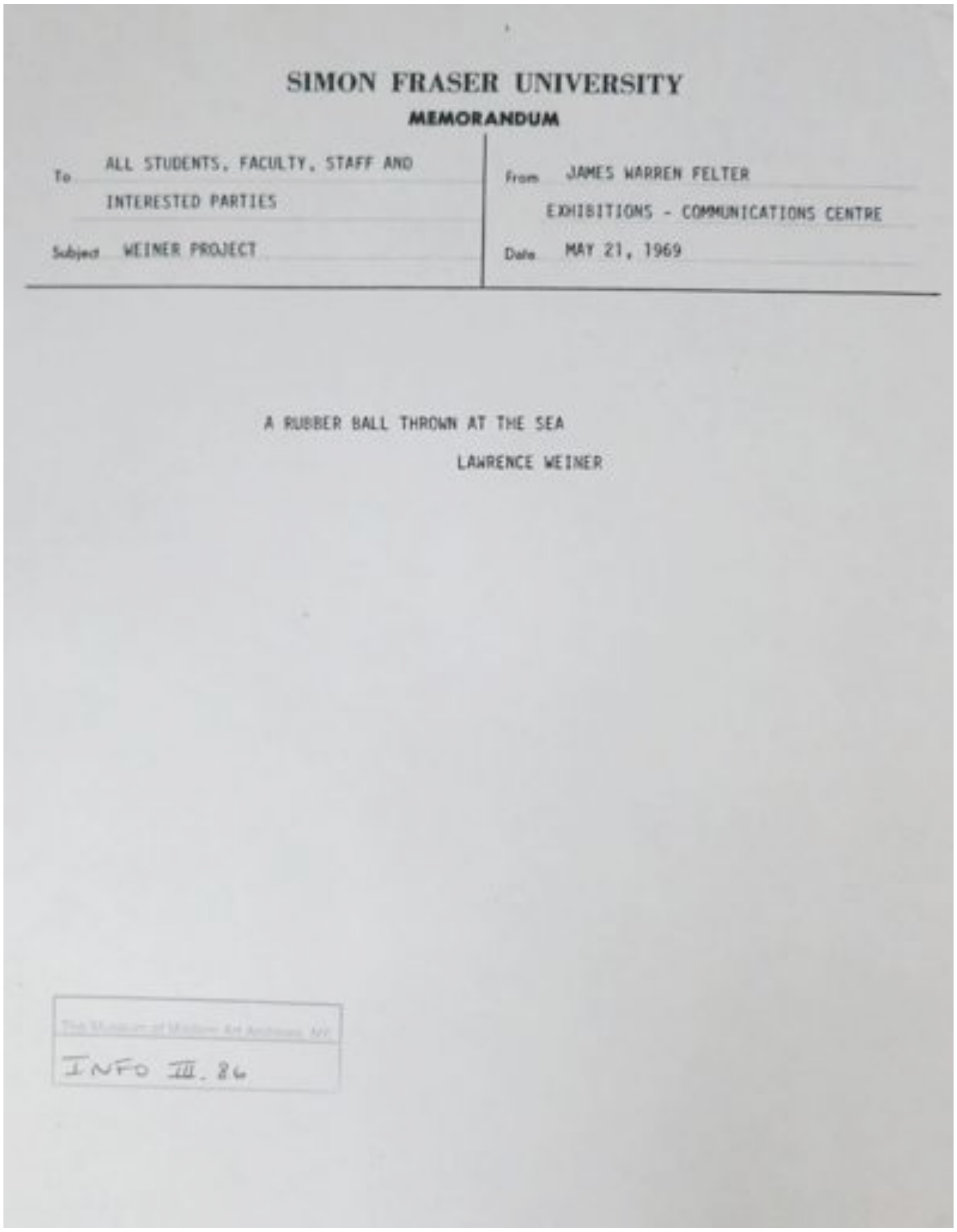


45a & 45b. Lawrence Weiner, installation for *Displacement* at Dia Center For The Arts, New York, 1991 - 1992





46. Lawrence Weiner, installation for *Displacement* at Dia Center For The Arts, New York, 1991 - 1992
47. Lawrence Weiner, *Displacement*, exhibition catalog, 1991



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

To ALL STUDENTS, FACULTY, STAFF AND INTERESTED PARTIES

Subject WEINER PROJECT

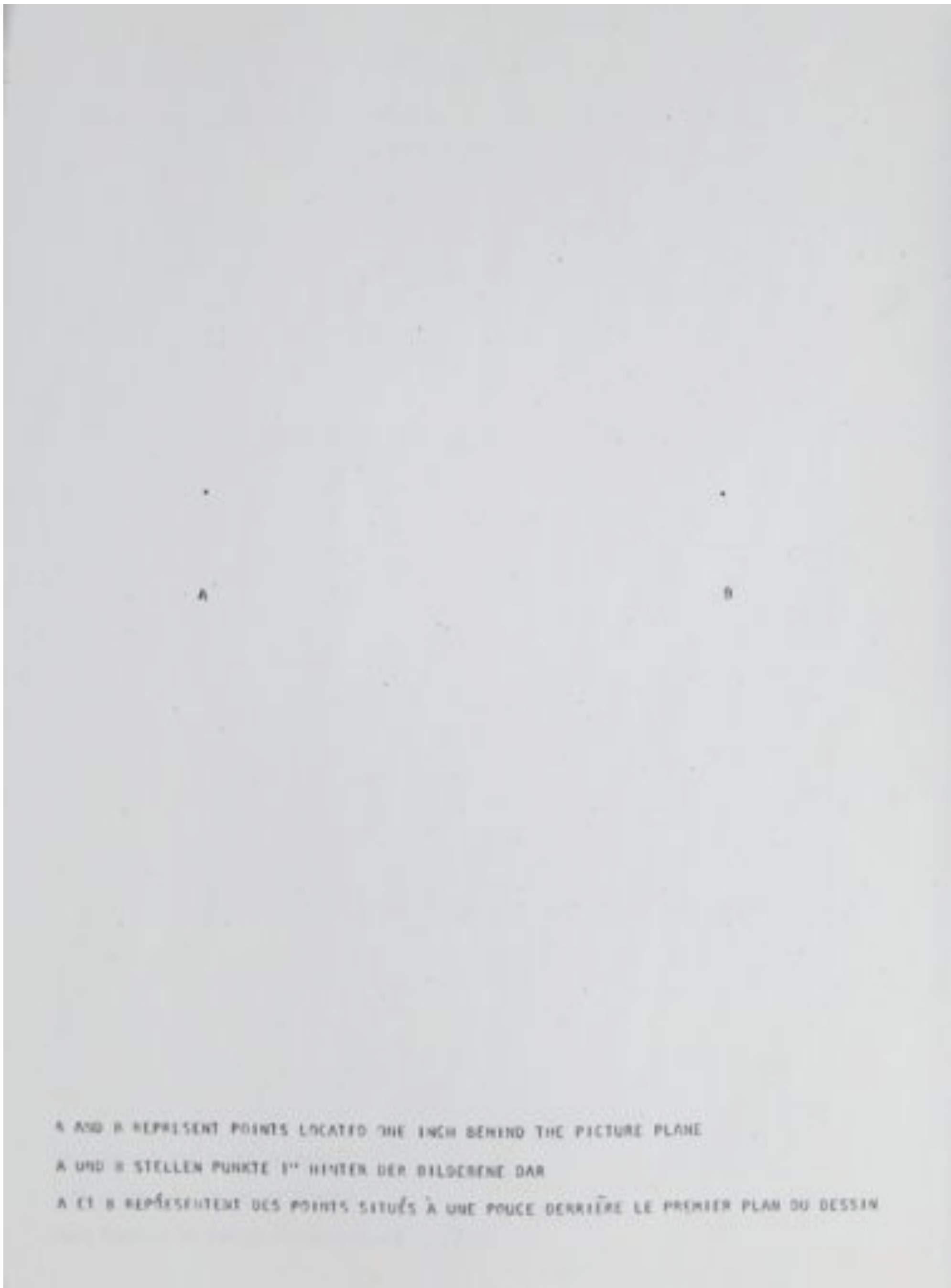
From JAMES WARREN FELTER
EXHIBITIONS - COMMUNICATIONS CENTRE

Date MAY 21, 1969

A RUBBER BALL THROWN AT THE SEA

LAWRENCE WEINER

48. Lawrence Weiner, *A RUBBER BALL THROWN AT THE SEA*, contribution for group exhibition at Simon Fraser University, 1969



A

B

A AND B REPRESENT POINTS LOCATED ONE INCH BEHIND THE PICTURE PLANE

A UND B STELLEN PUNKTE 1" HINTER DER BILDEBENE DAR

A ET B REPRÉSENTENT DES POINTS SITUÉS À UNE POUCE DERRIÈRE LE PREMIER PLAN DU DESSIN

49. Douglas Huebler, "A AND B REPRESENT POINTS LOCATED ONE INCH BEHIND THE PICTURE PLANE," *Xerox Book*, 1968

A

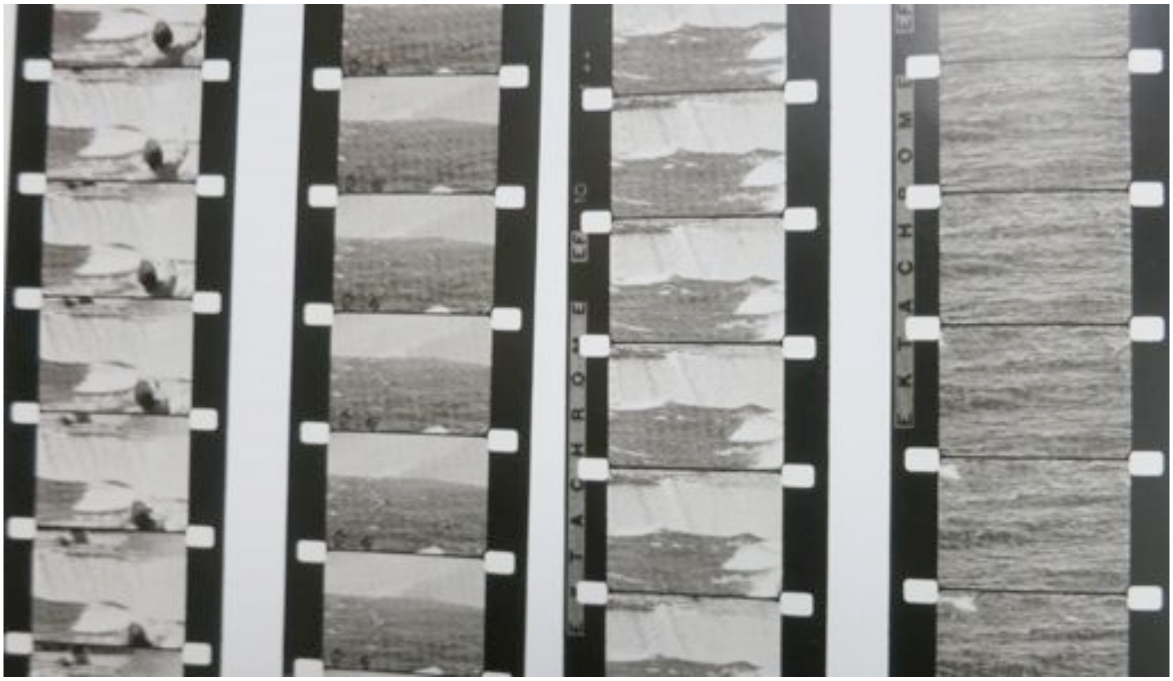
B

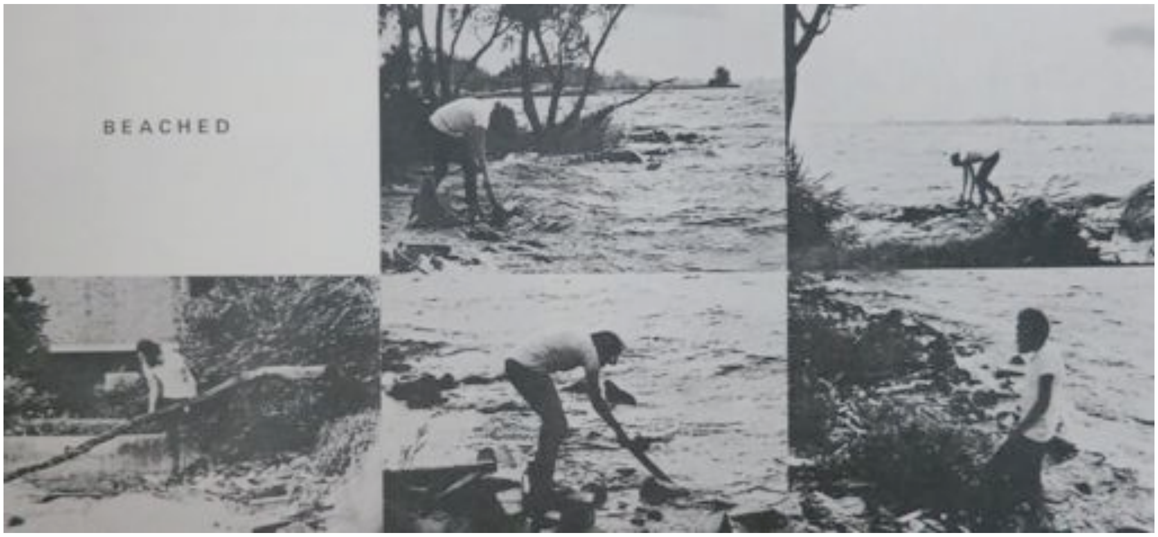
A AND B REPRESENT POINTS LOCATED 1,000,000,000 MILES BEHIND THE PICTURE PLANE

A UND B STELLEN PUNKTE 1,000,000,000 MEILEN HINTER DER BILDEBENE DAR

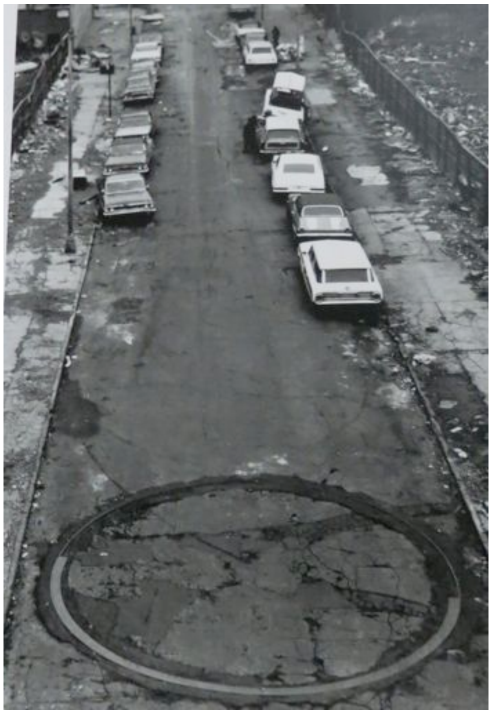
A ET B REPRÉSENTENT DES POINT SITUÉS À 1,000,000,000 MILES DERRIÈRE LE PREMIER PLAN DU DESSIN

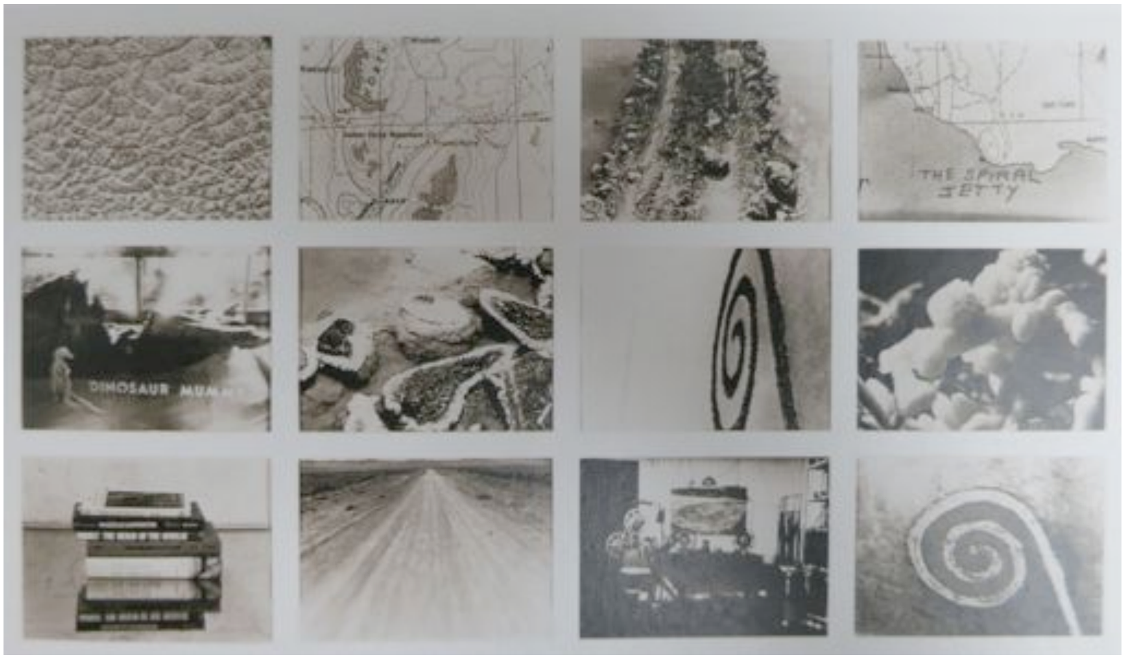
50. Douglas Huebler, "A AND B REPRESENT POINTS LOCATED 100,000,000 MILES BEHIND THE PICTURE PLANE," *Xerox Book*, 1968



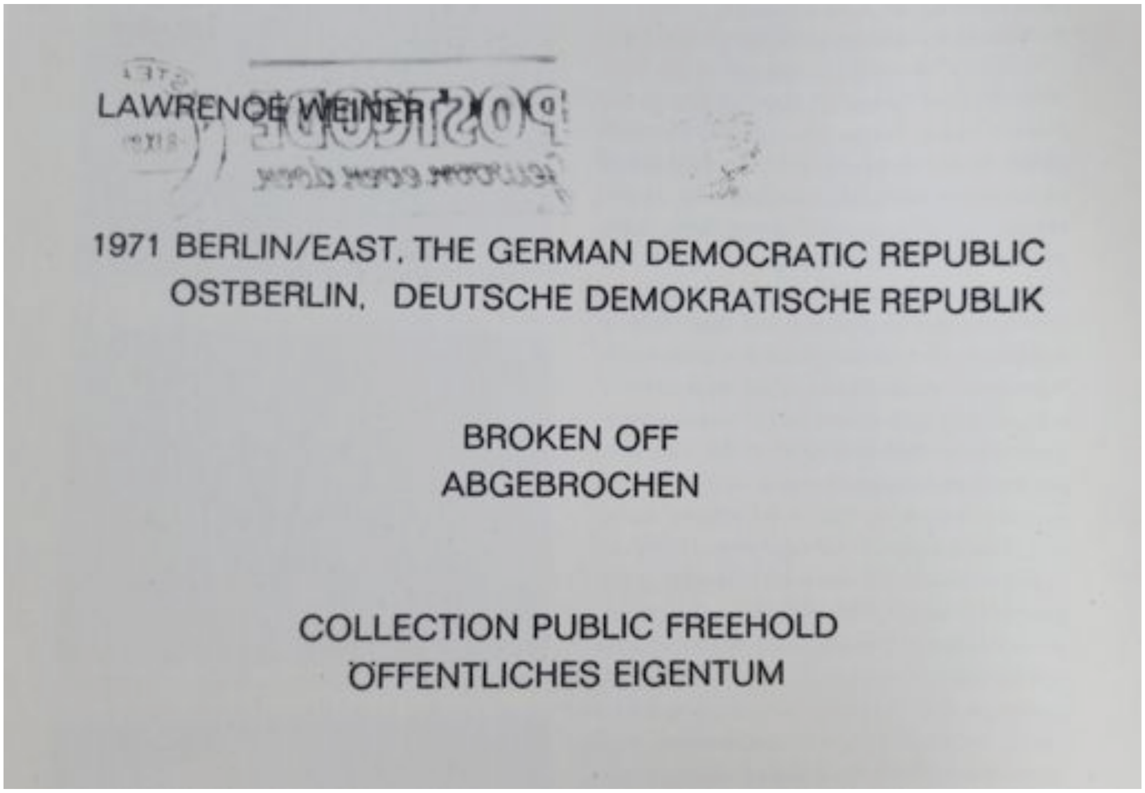


51. Lawrence Weiner, *A RUBBER BALL THROWN INTO THE AMERICAN FALLS NIAGARA FALLS* and *A RUBBER BALL THROWN INTO THE CANADIAN FALLS NIAGARA FALLS*; strips from film by Hollis Frampton of Weiner constructing the work, 1969
52. Lawrence Weiner, announcement card for *Beached*, 1970





53. Richard Serra, *To Encircle Base Plate Hexagram*, *Right Angles Inverted,* New York, 1970
54. Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, Great Salt Lake, Utah, film stills, 1970



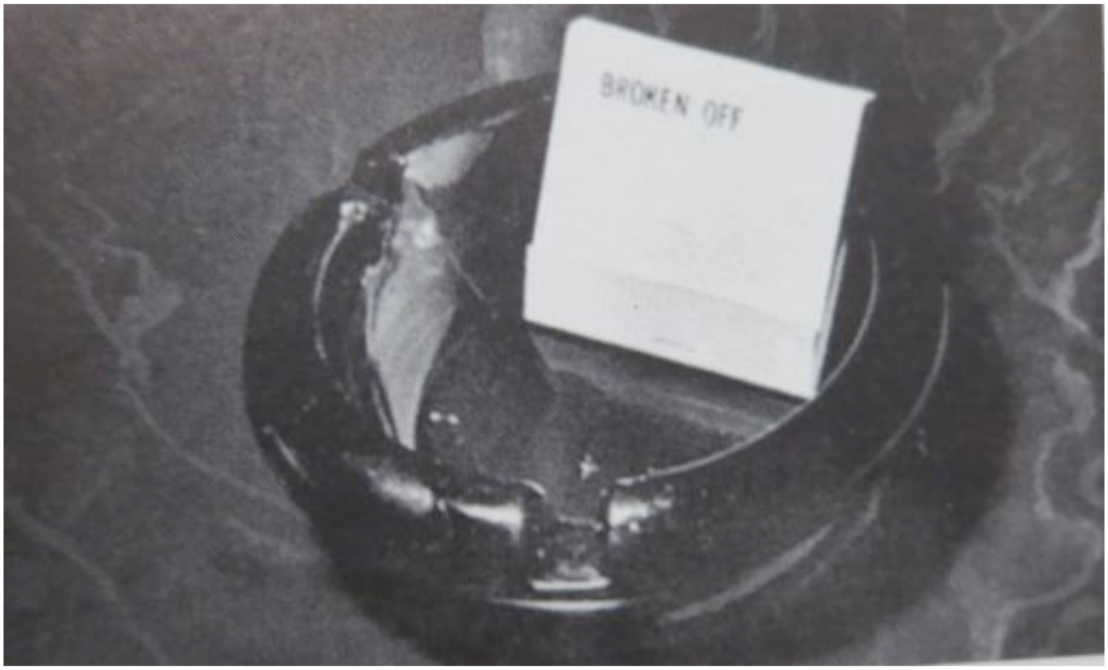
LAWRENCE WEINER

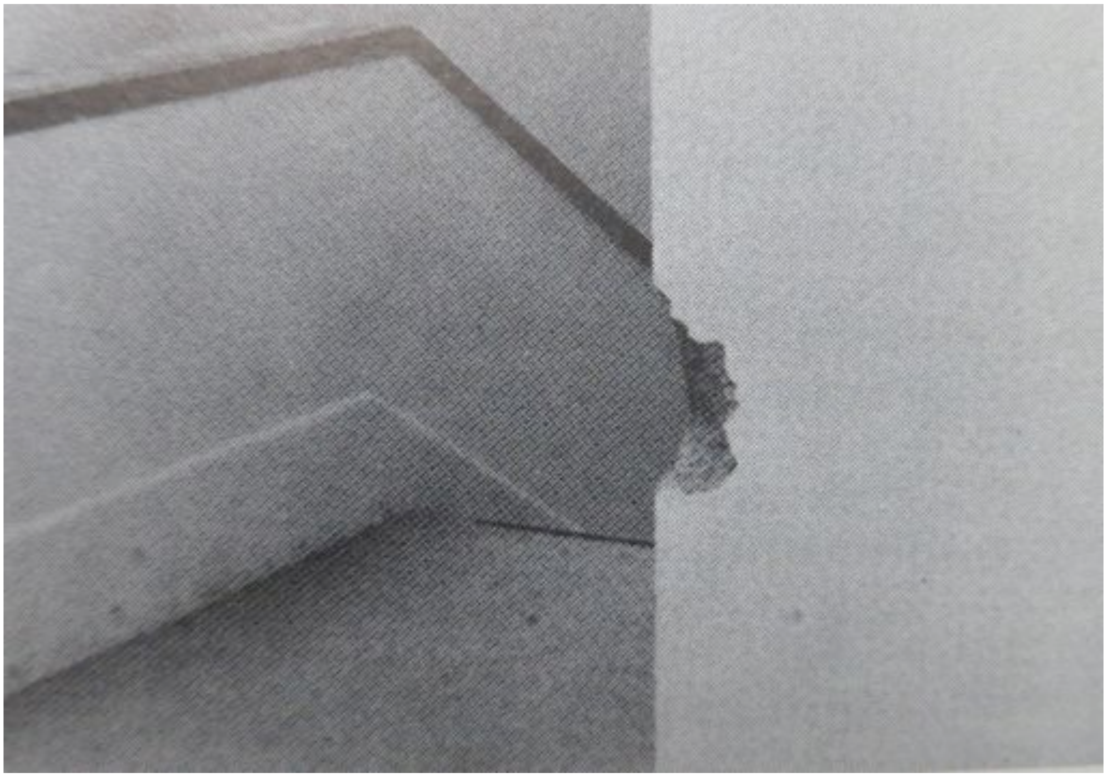
1971 BERLIN/EAST, THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
OSTBERLIN, DEUTSCHE DEMOKRATISCHE REPUBLIK

BROKEN OFF
ABGEBROCHEN

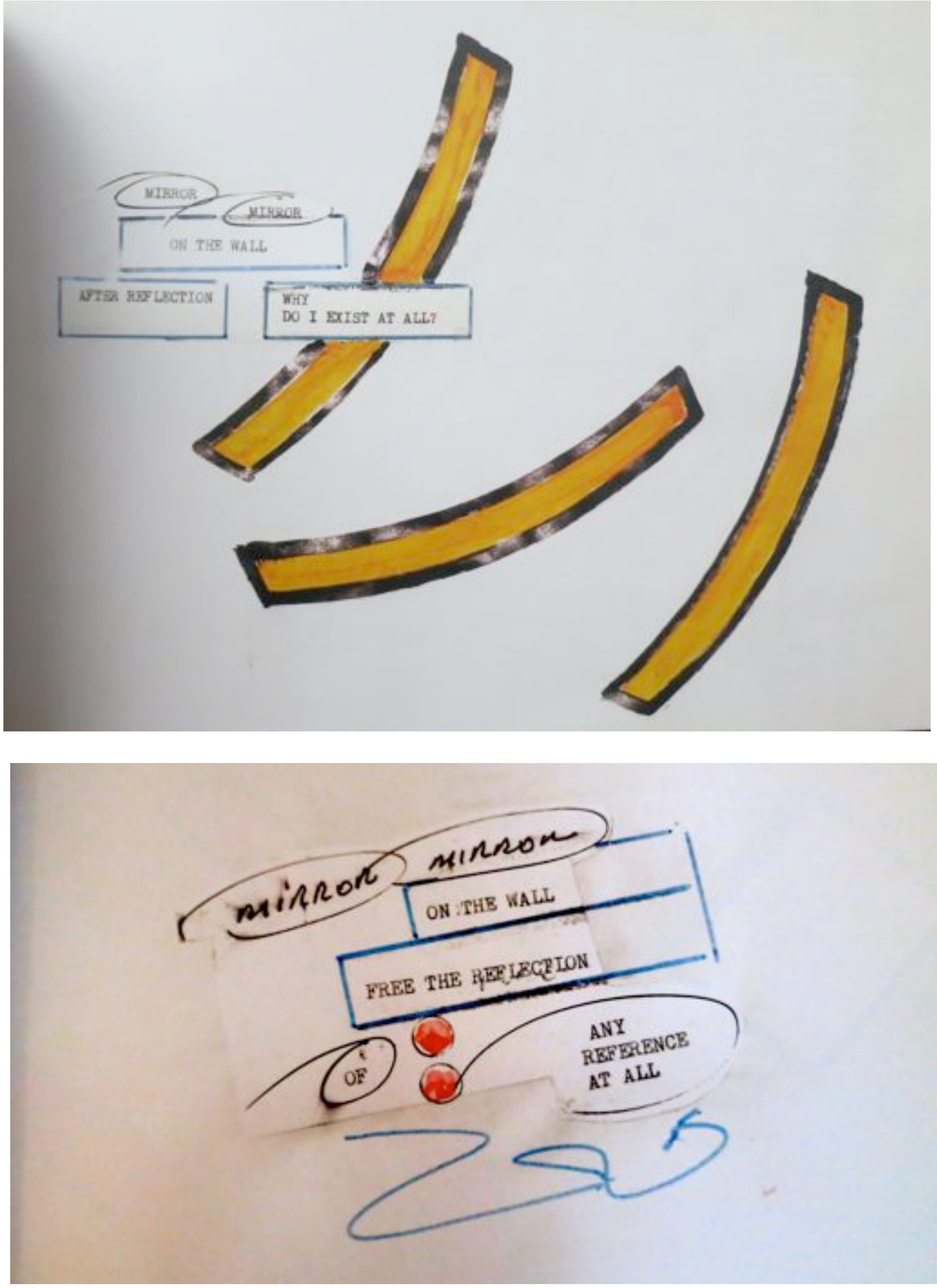
COLLECTION PUBLIC FREEHOLD
ÖFFENTLICHES EIGENTUM

55. Lawrence Weiner, *Broken Off,* video still, 1971
56. Lawrence Weiner, *BROKEN OFF,* 1971

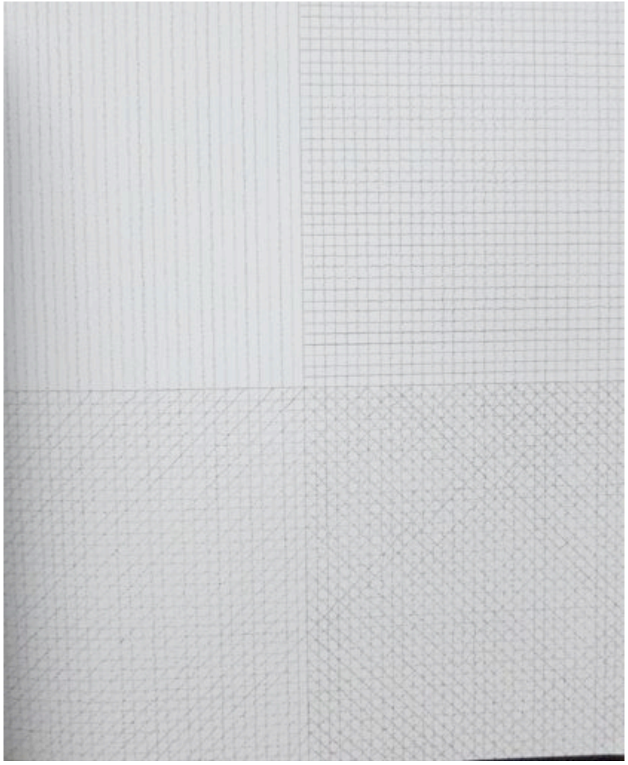




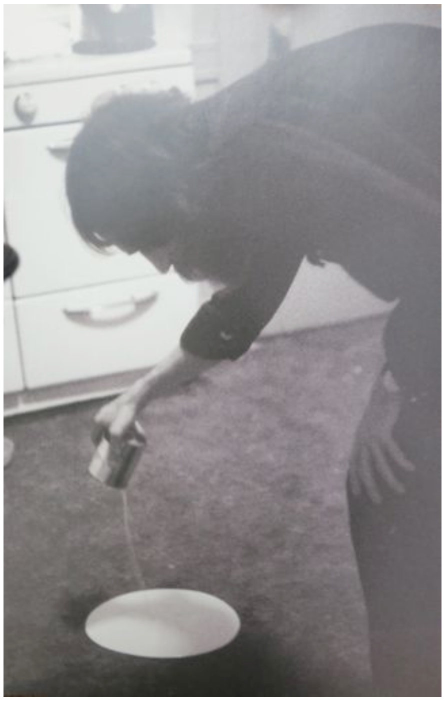
57. Lawrence Weiner, *BROKEN OFF* (1971), the Arts Club of Chicago,1987
58. Lawrence Weiner, *BROKEN OFF* (1971) installation at Kunsthalle Bern, 1983

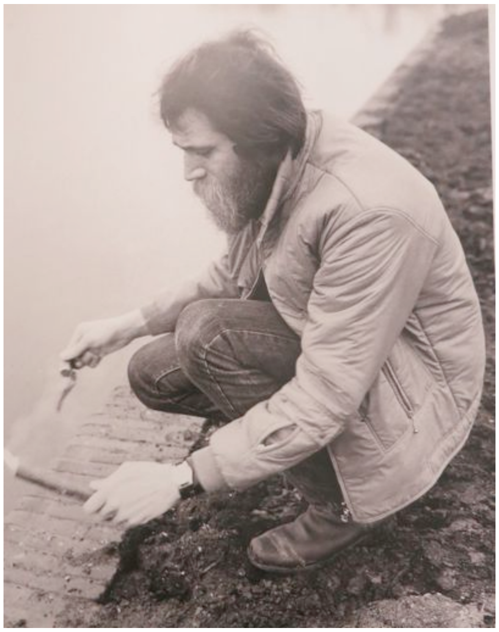


59a & 59b. Lawrence Weiner, *Screenplay & Movie,* 2005

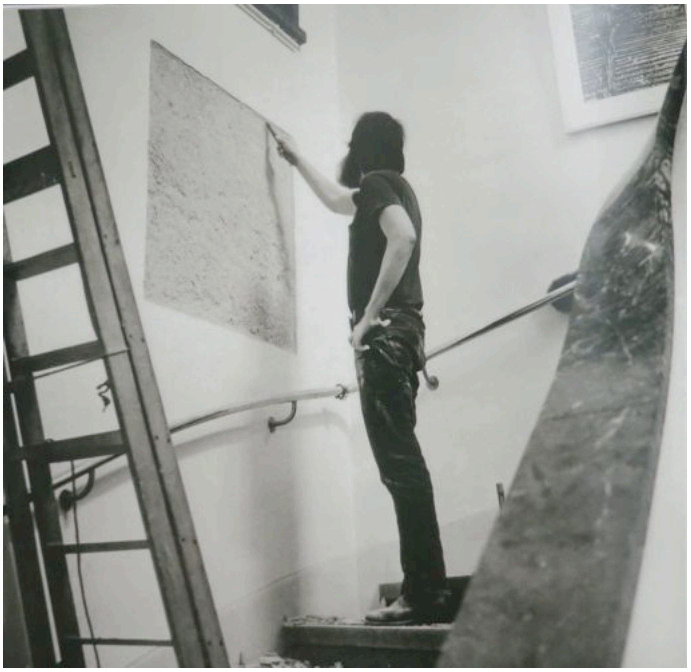


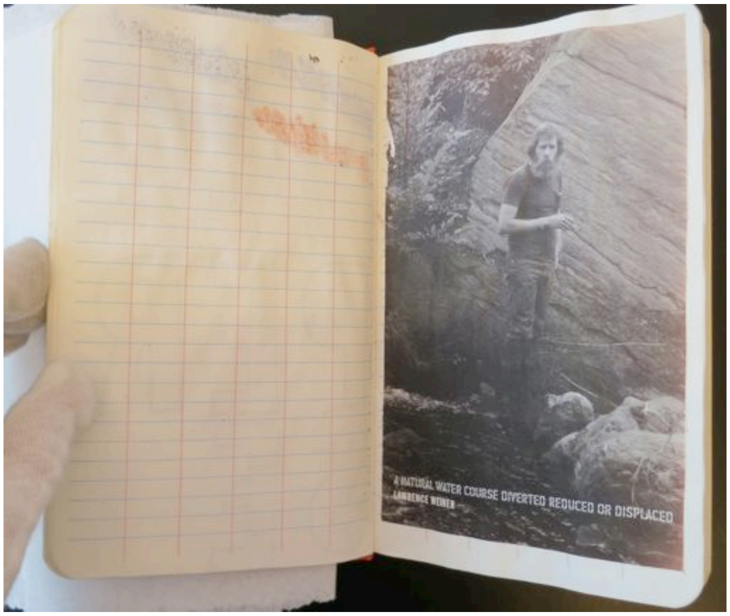
60. Sol LeWitt, *Wall Drawing 56: A square is divided horizontally and vertically into four equal parts, each with lines in four directions superimposed progressively*, 1970 (installation view and detail, Mass MOCA, North Adams, 2008)



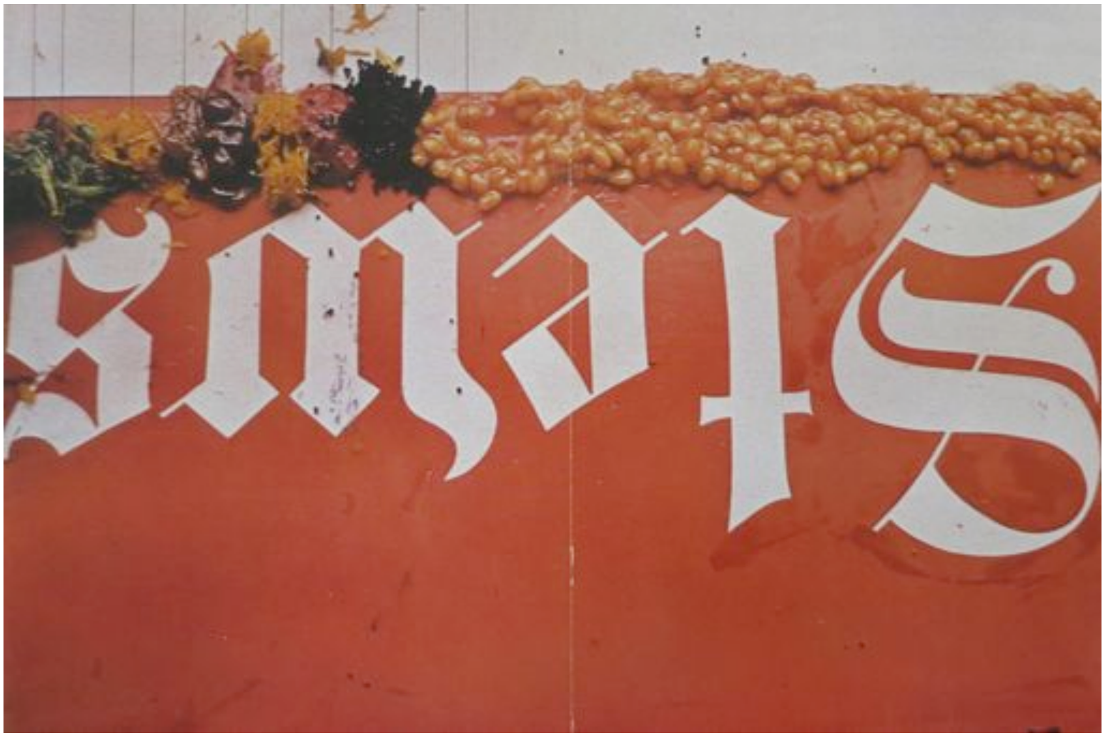


61. Lawrence Weiner, *ONE PINT GLOSS WHITE LACQUER POURED DIRECTLY UPON THE FLOOR AND ALLOWED TO DRY*, Weiner constructing the work on Robert and Julia Barry's kitchen floor, New York, 1968
62a & 62b. Lawrence Weiner, *THE RESIDUE OF A FLARE IGNITED UPON A BOUNDARY*, Weiner constructing the work at the city line of Amsterdam for the exhibition "Op Loose Schroeven," 1969



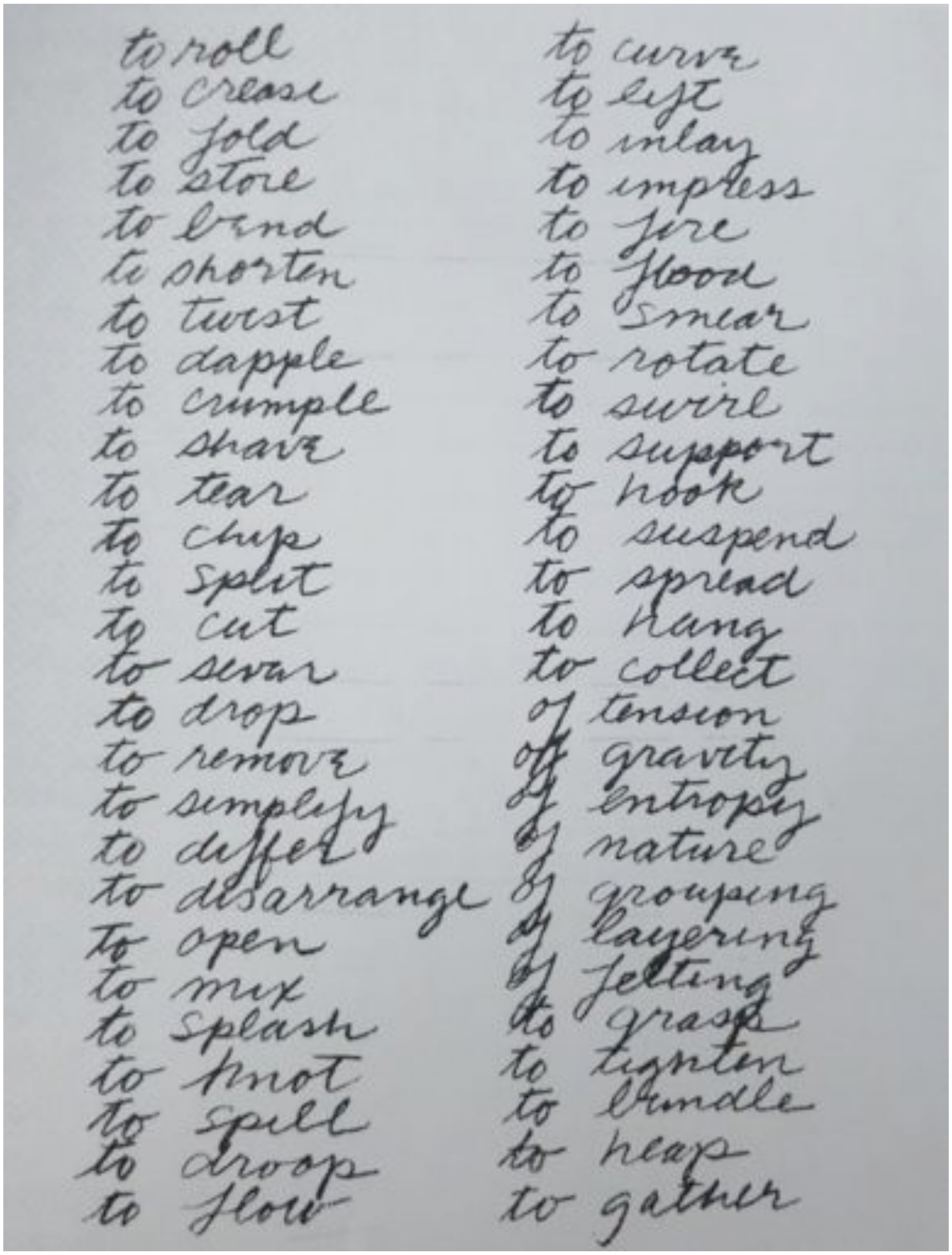


63. Lawrence Weiner, *A 36” X 36” REMOVAL TO THE LATHING OR SUPPORT WALL OF PLASTER OF WALLBOARD FROM A WALL* (1968), Weiner constructing the work at the Kunsthalle Bern for the exhibition “When Attitudes Become Form,” 1969
64. Lawrence Weiner Notebook August 2000 – August 2001 featuring cover of *A Natural Water Course Diverted Reduced Or Displaced* (2001), courtesy of Moved Pictures Archive, New York



News
Pews
Brews

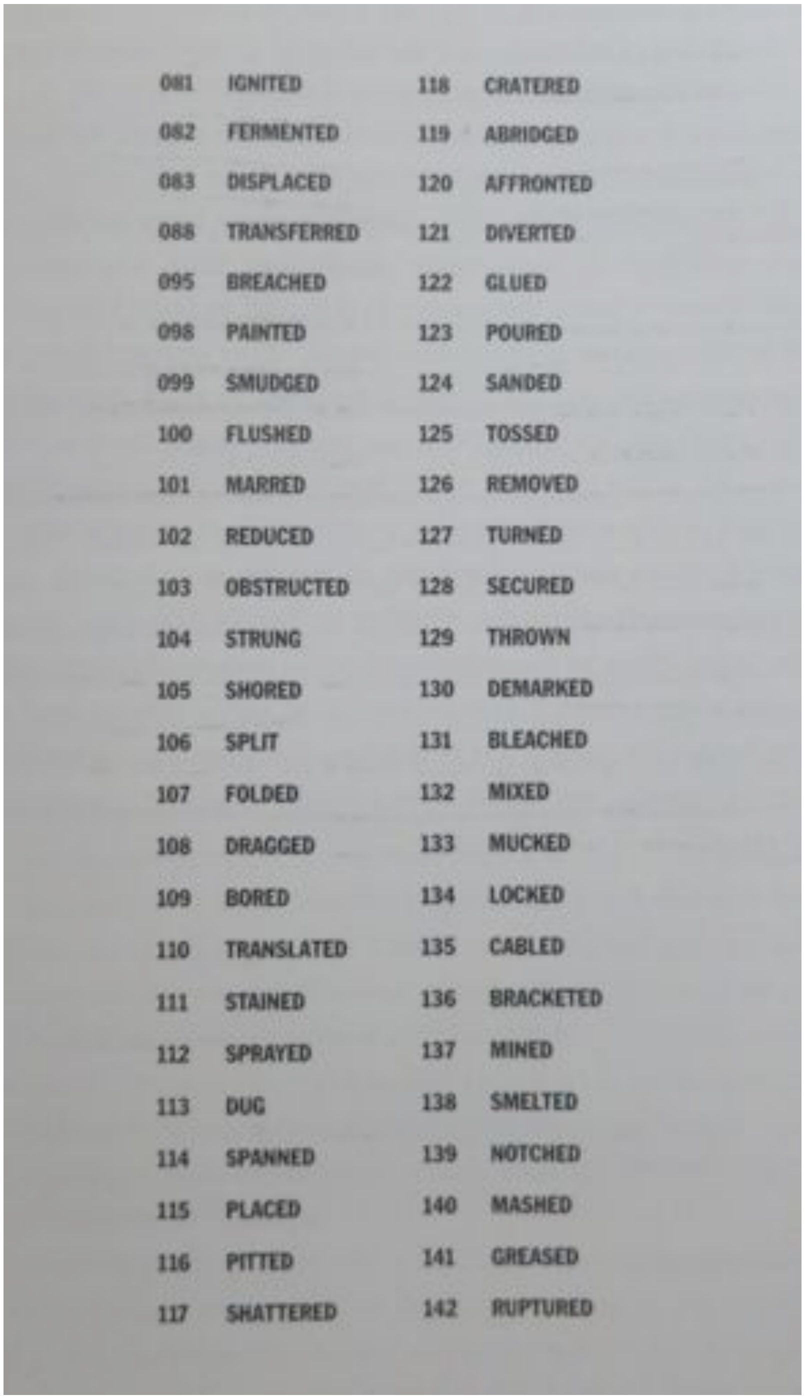
65. Ed Ruscha, Double-paged spread from the prospectus for *News, Mews, Pews, Brews, Stews and Dues*, 1970
66. Ed Ruscha, *News, Mews, Pews, Brews, Stews and Dues*, 1970



to roll
to crease
to fold
to store
to bend
to shorten
to twist
to dapple
to crumple
to shave
to tear
to chip
to split
to cut
to sever
to drop
to remove
to simplify
to differ
to disarrange
to open
to mix
to splash
to knot
to spill
to droop
to flow

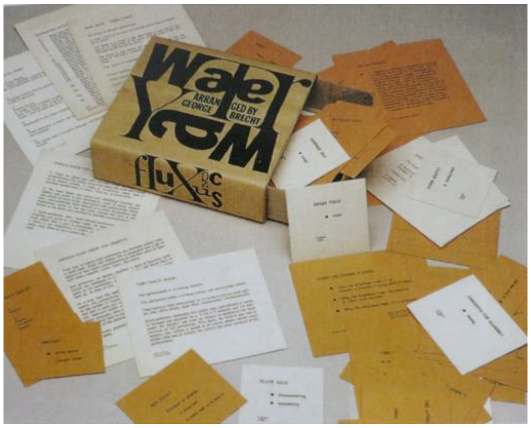
to curve
to lift
to inlay
to impress
to fire
to flood
to smear
to rotate
to swirl
to support
to hook
to suspend
to spread
to hang
to collect
of tension
of gravity
of entropy
of nature
of grouping
of layering
of felting
to grasp
to tighten
to bundle
to heap
to gather

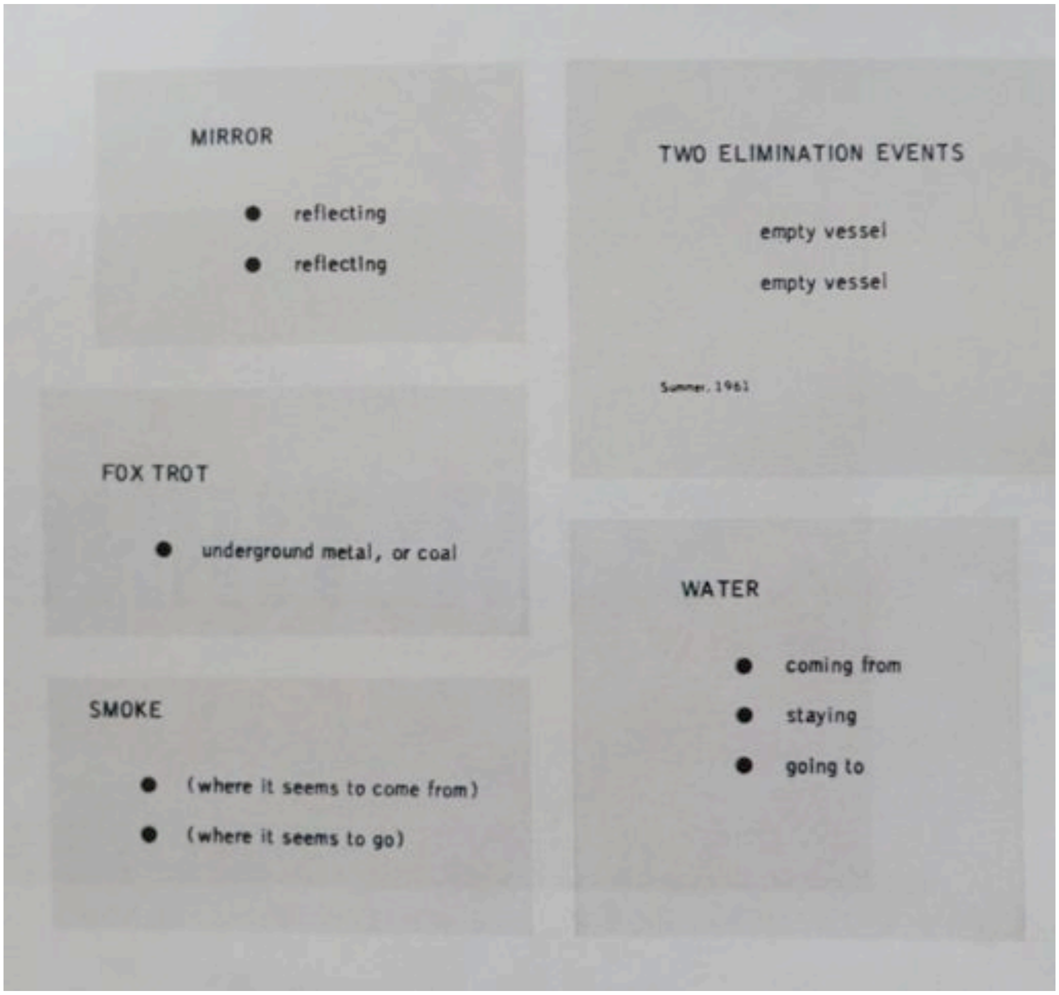
67. Richard Serra, *Verb List*, 1967-68



081 IGNITED
082 FERMENTED
083 DISPLACED
088 TRANSFERRED
095 BREACHED
098 PAINTED
099 SMUDGED
100 FLUSHED
101 MARRED
102 REDUCED
103 OBSTRUCTED
104 STRUNG
105 SHORED
106 SPLIT
107 FOLDED
108 DRAGGED
109 BORED
110 TRANSLATED
111 STAINED
112 SPRAYED
113 DUG
114 SPANNED
115 PLACED
116 PITTED
117 SHATTERED
118 CRATERED
119 ABRIDGED
120 AFFRONTED
121 DIVERTED
122 GLUED
123 POURED
124 SANDED
125 TOSSED
126 REMOVED
127 TURNED
128 SECURED
129 THROWN
130 DEMARKED
131 BLEACHED
132 MIXED
133 MUCKED
134 LOCKED
135 CABLED
136 BRACKETED
137 MINED
138 SMELTED
139 NOTCHED
140 MASHED
141 GREASED
142 RUPTURED

68. Lawrence Weiner, works included in *Tracce Traces*, 1970





MIRROR

- reflecting
- reflecting

FOX TROT

- underground metal, or coal

SMOKE

- (where it seems to come from)
- (where it seems to go)

TWO ELIMINATION EVENTS

empty vessel

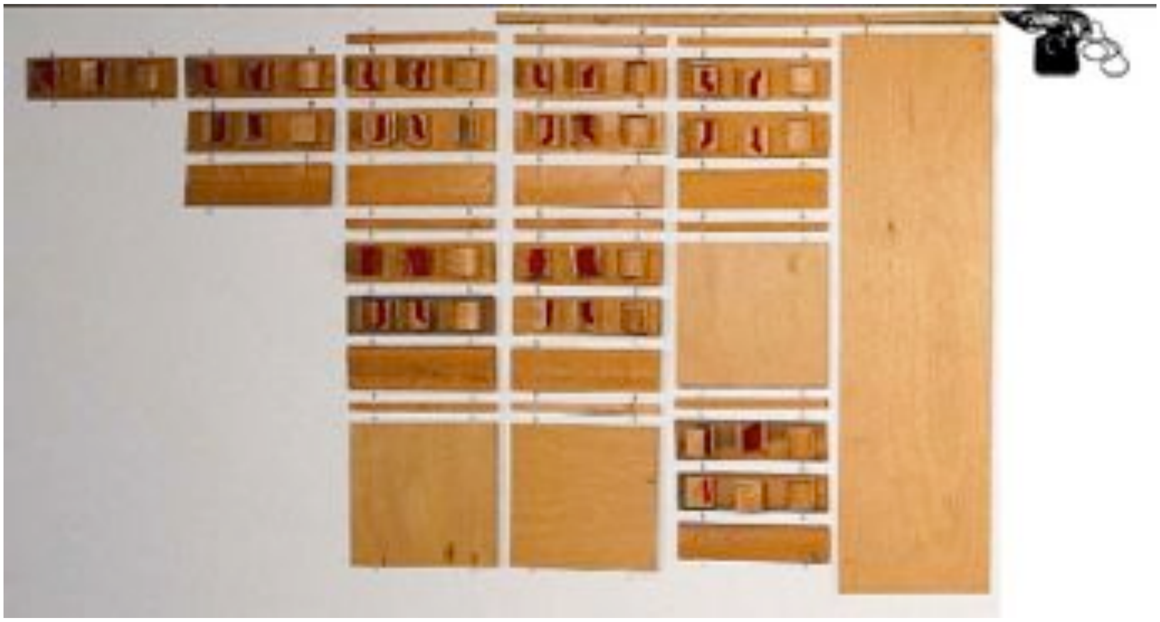
empty vessel

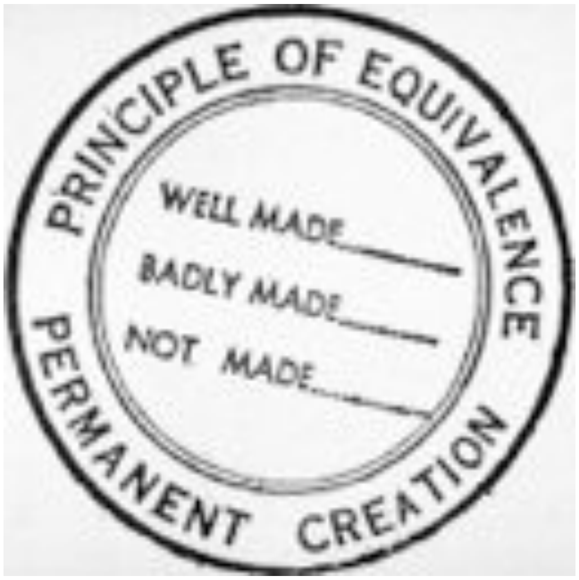
Summer, 1961

WATER

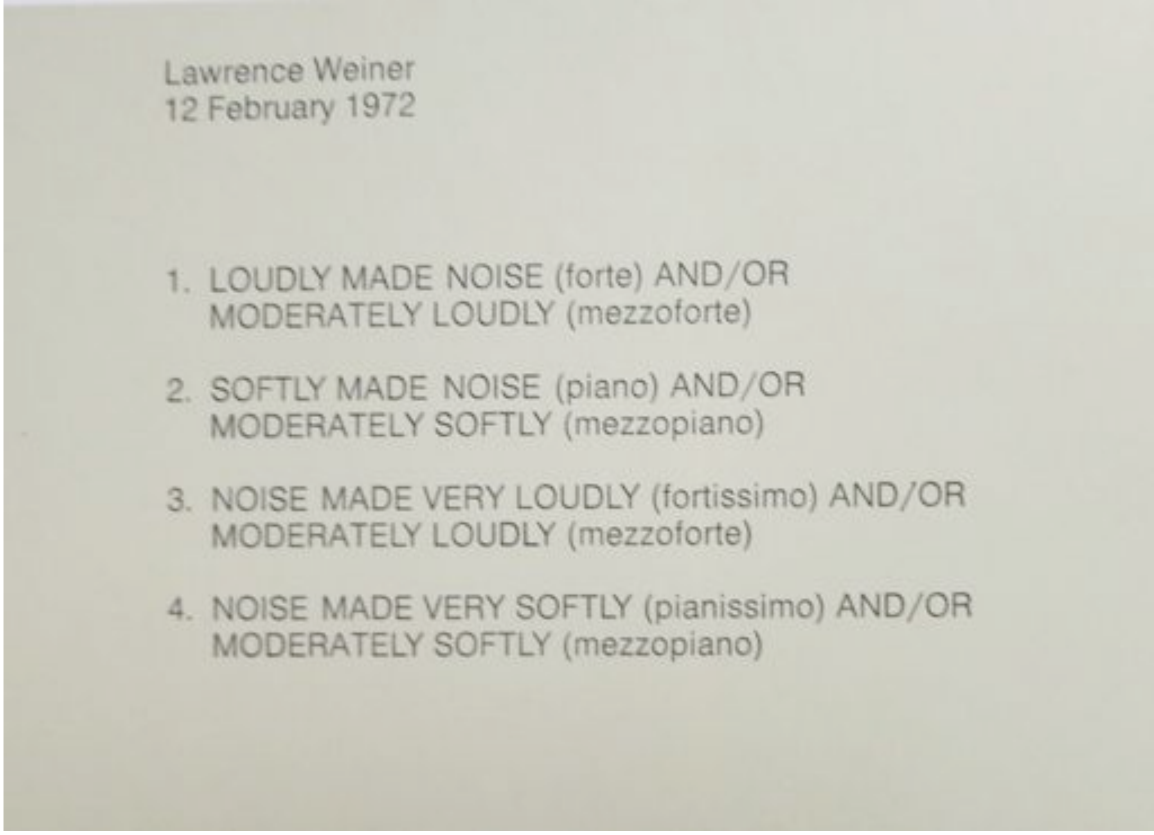
- coming from
- staying
- going to

69. George Brecht, *Water Yam* (George Maciunas design – Fluxus edition), 1963
70. George Brecht, Five Scores from *Water Yam*: *Mirror, Fox Trot, Smoke, Water* (all 1963), and *Two Elimination Events* (1961)





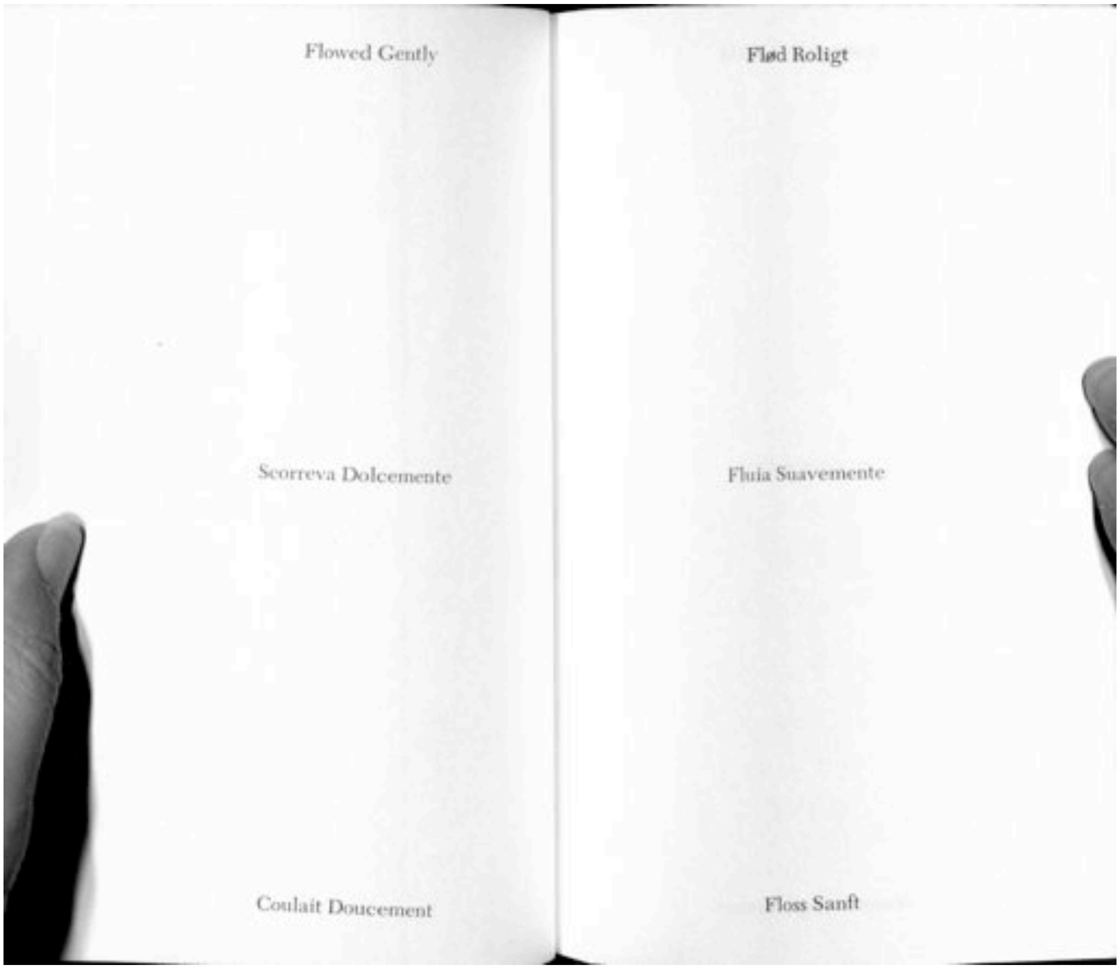
71a. Robert Filliou, *Principle Of Equivalence*, 1968
71b. Robert Filliou, *Principle Of Equivalence*, stamp, 1968



Lawrence Weiner
12 February 1972

1. LOUDLY MADE NOISE (forte) AND/OR
   MODERATELY LOUDLY (mezzoforte)
2. SOFTLY MADE NOISE (piano) AND/OR
   MODERATELY SOFTLY (mezzopiano)
3. NOISE MADE VERY LOUDLY (fortissimo) AND/OR
   MODERATELY LOUDLY (mezzoforte)
4. NOISE MADE VERY SOFTLY (pianissimo) AND/OR
   MODERATELY SOFTLY (mezzopiano)

72. Lawrence Weiner, Announcement for Leo Castelli Gallery, New York, 1972



Flowed Gently

Scorreva Dolcemente

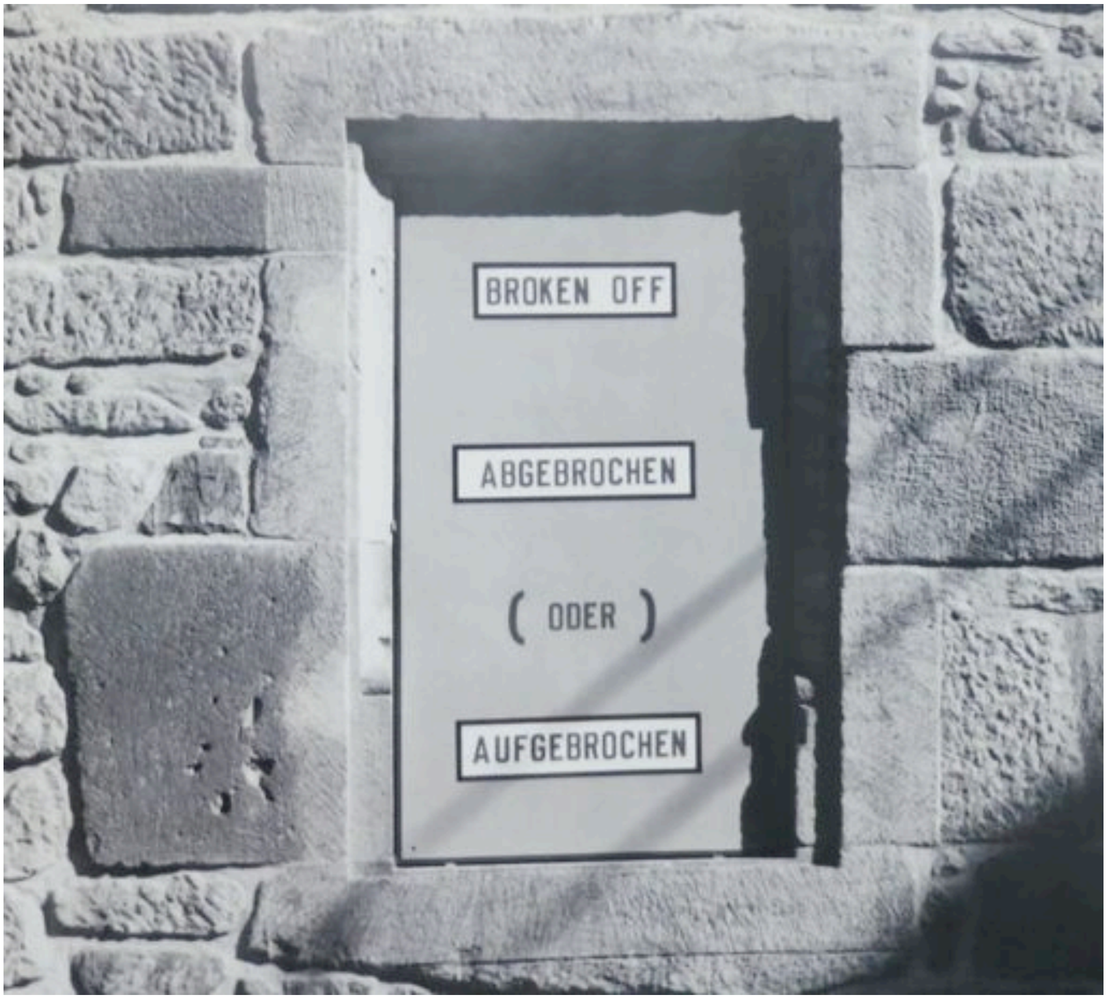
Coulait Doucement

Flød Roligt

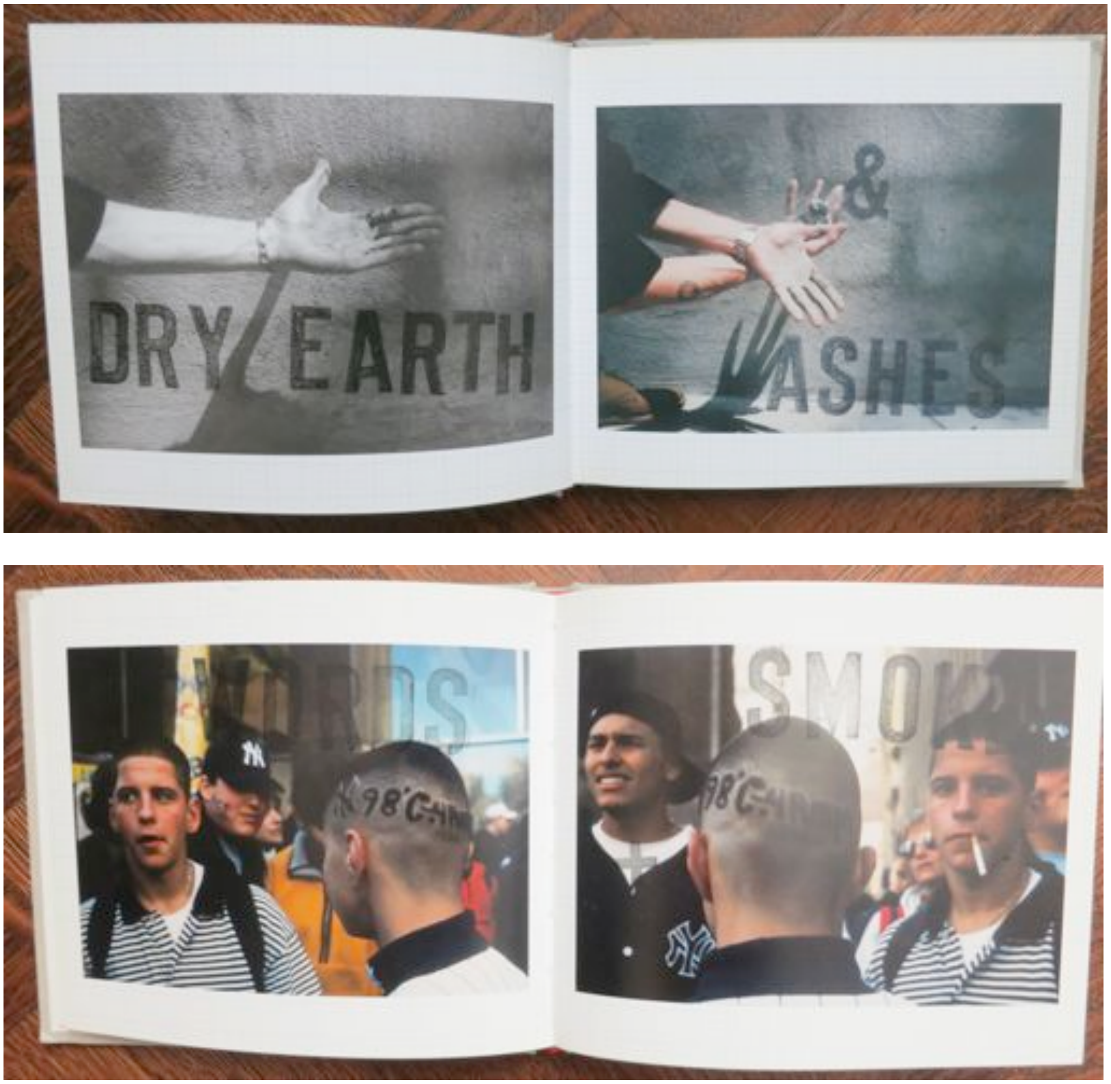
Fluia Suavemente

Floss Sanft

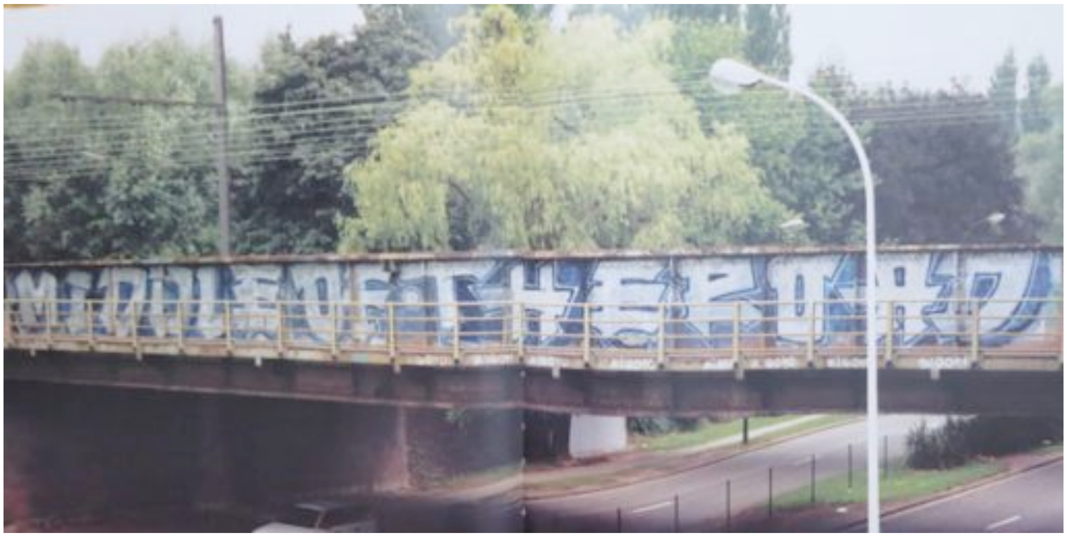
73. Lawrence Weiner, *Flowed*, 1971

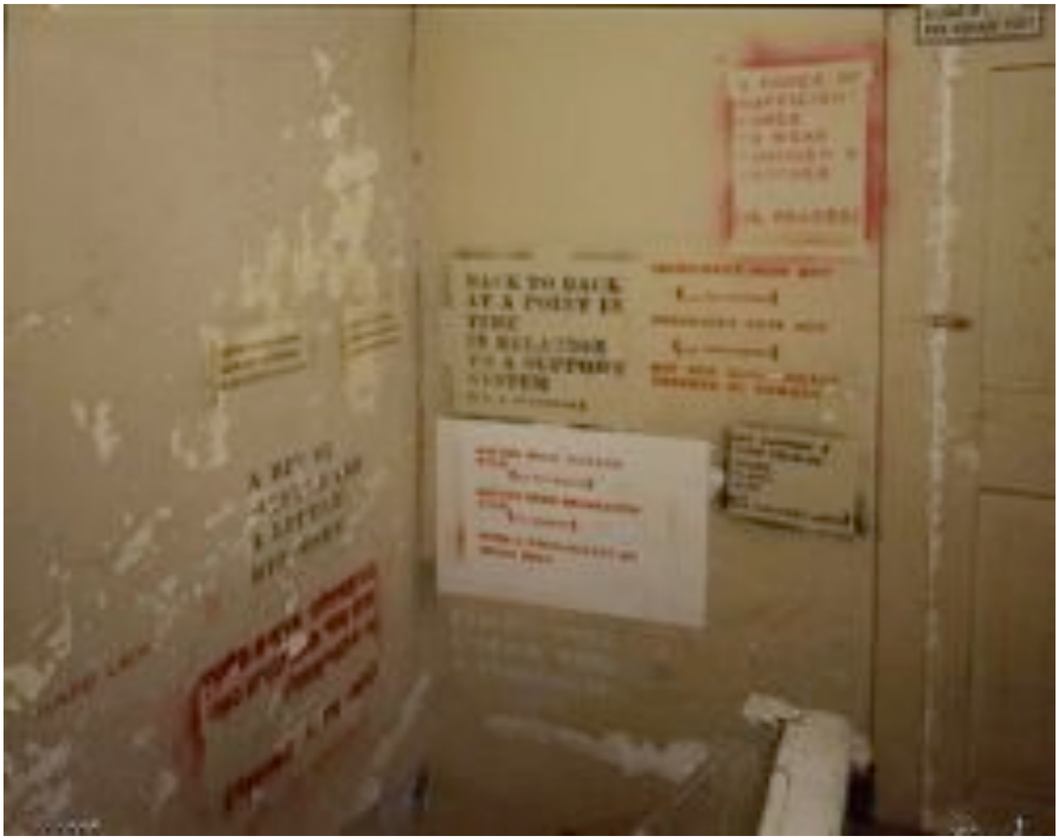


74. Lawrence Weiner, *BROKEN OFF* (1971) installation at Sindelfingen, Germany, 1989

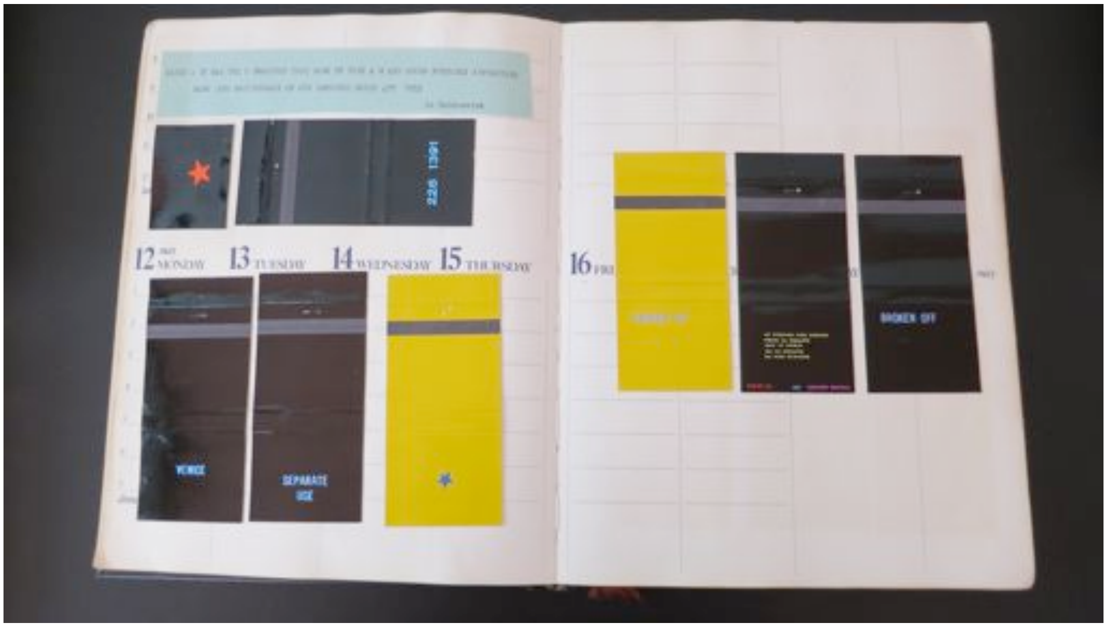


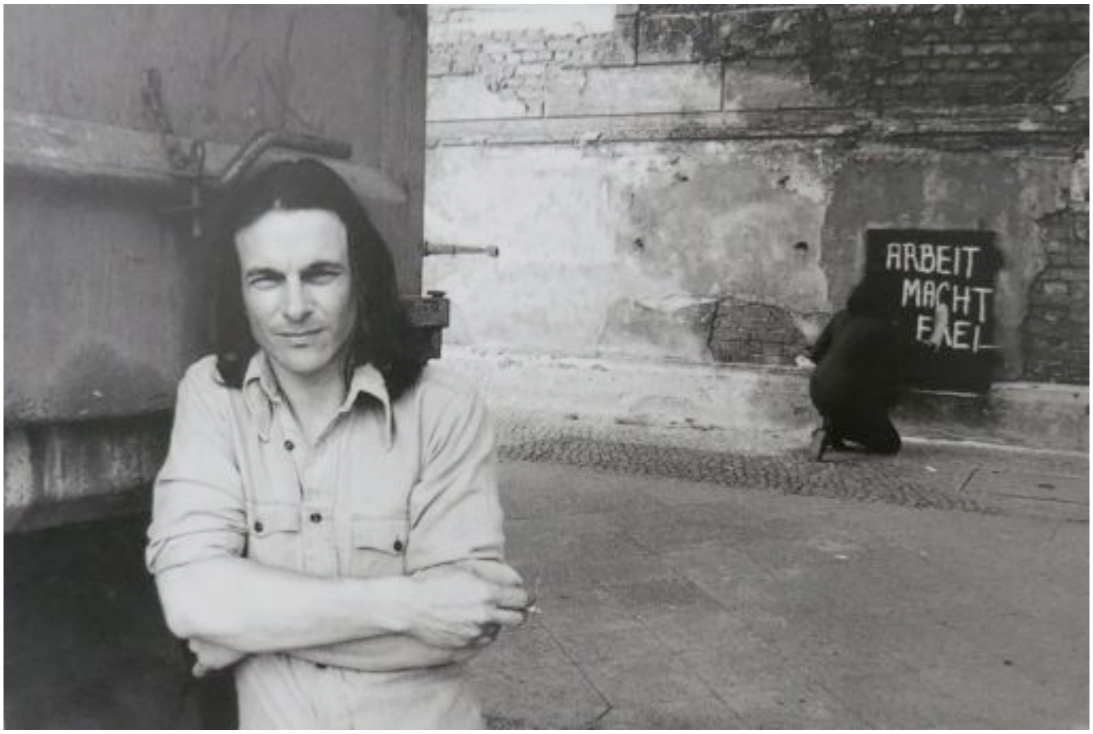
75a & 75b. Lawrence Weiner, *How To Touch What*, 2000



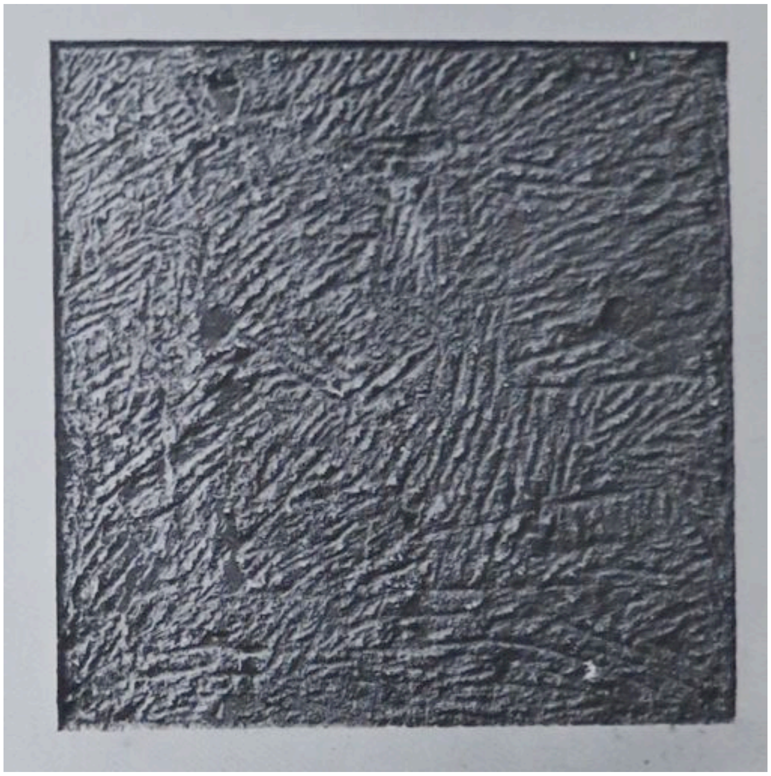


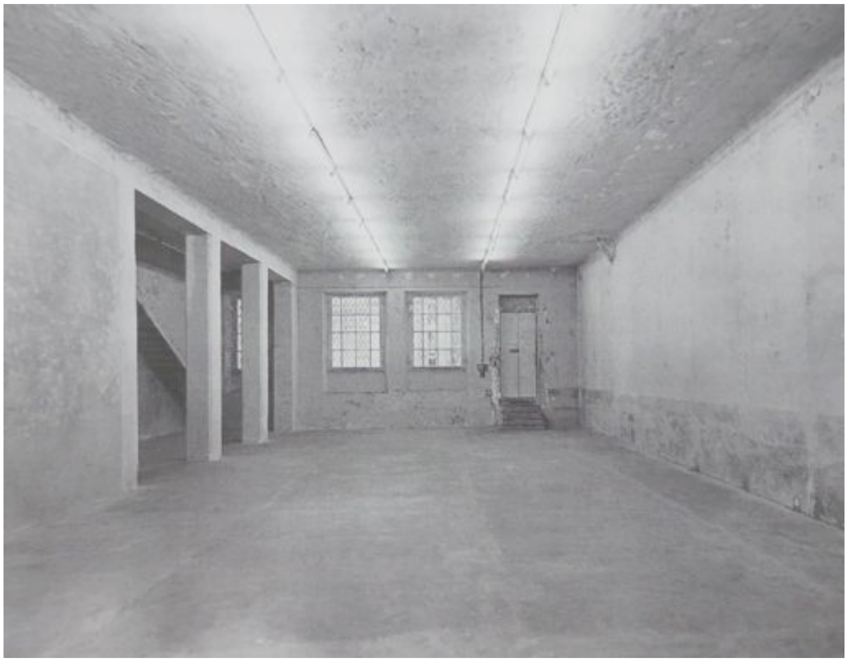
76. Lawrence Weiner, *MIDDLE OF THE ROAD* (1970), Brussels, Belgium, 1998
77. Lawrence Weiner's former studio at 13 Bleecker Street, circa 1979



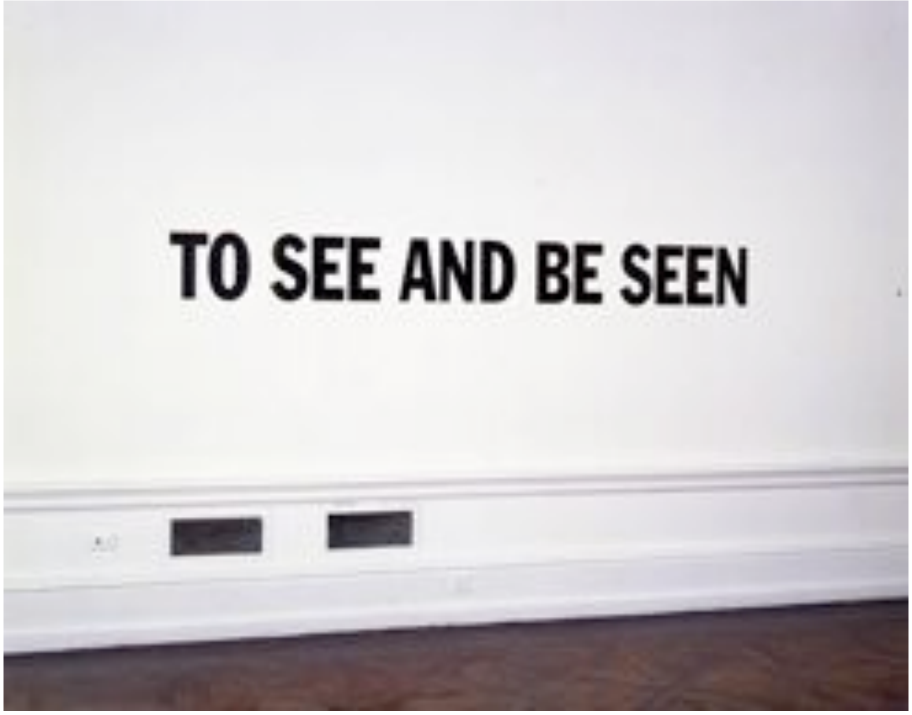


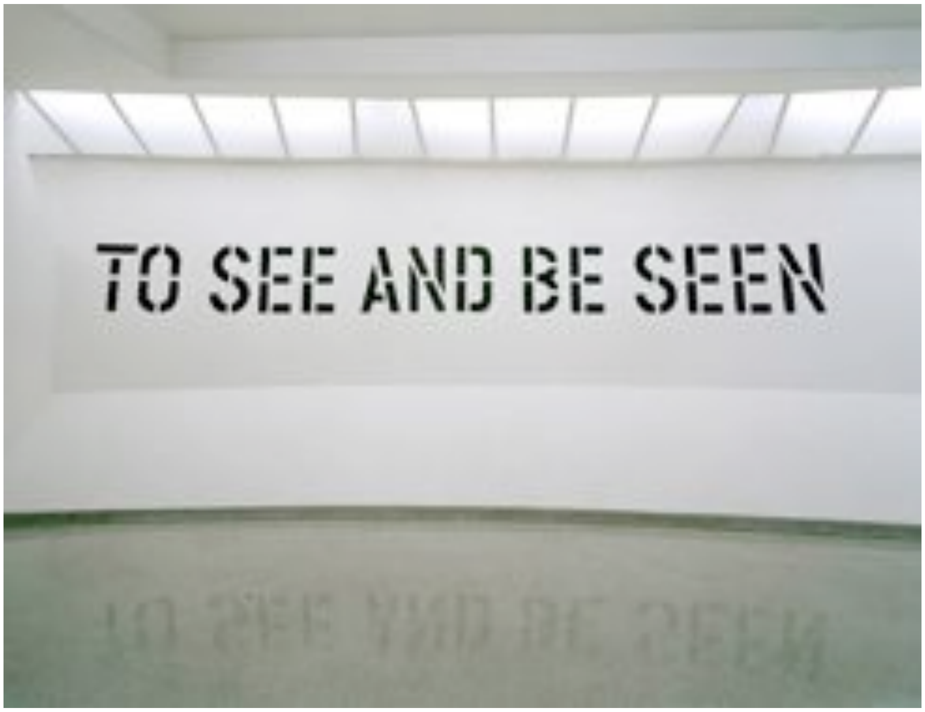
78. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1980, Moved Pictures Archive, New York
79. Lawrence Weiner, *A Second Quarter*, film still, 1975



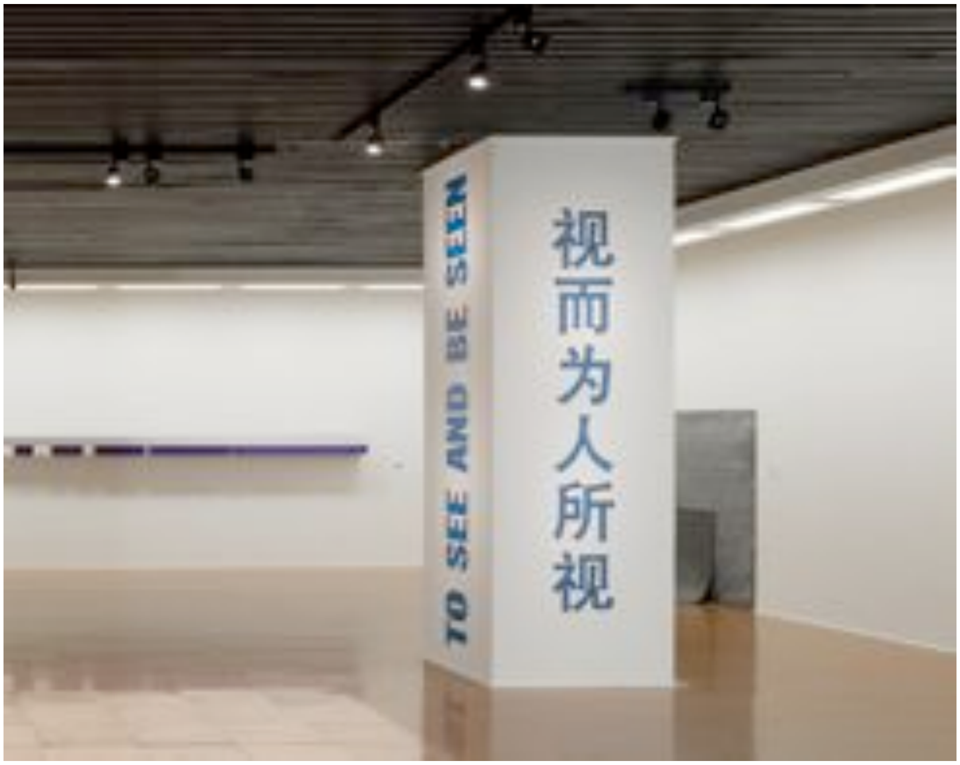


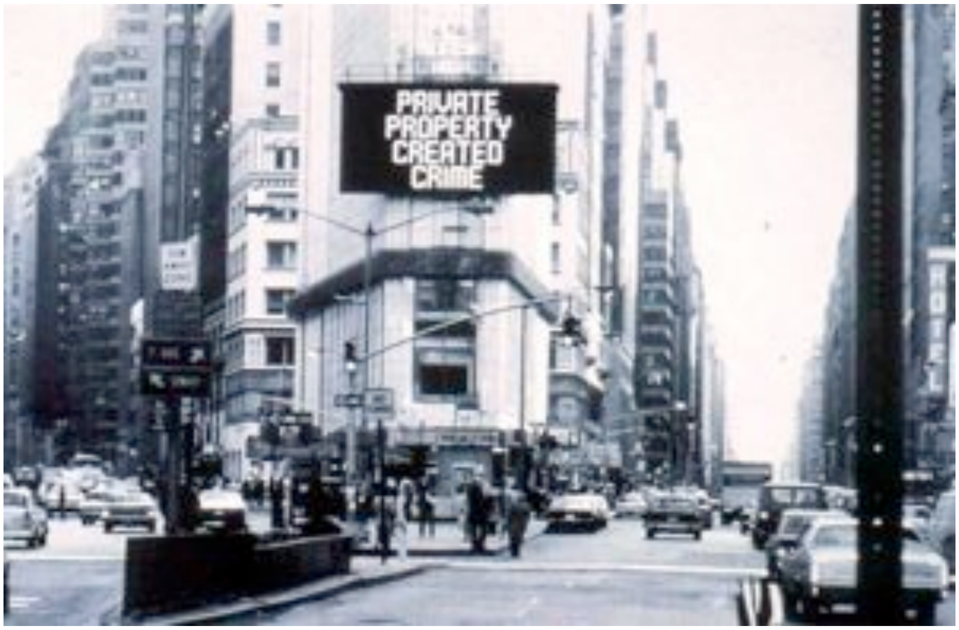
80. Lawrence Weiner, *A 36" X 36" REMOVAL TO THE LATHING OR SUPPORT WALL OF PLASTER OR WALL BOARD FROM A WALL (1968),* installation at The Jewish Museum, New York, 1970
81. Michael Asher, *Galleria Toselli*, Milan, sand-blasted gallery walls, 1972



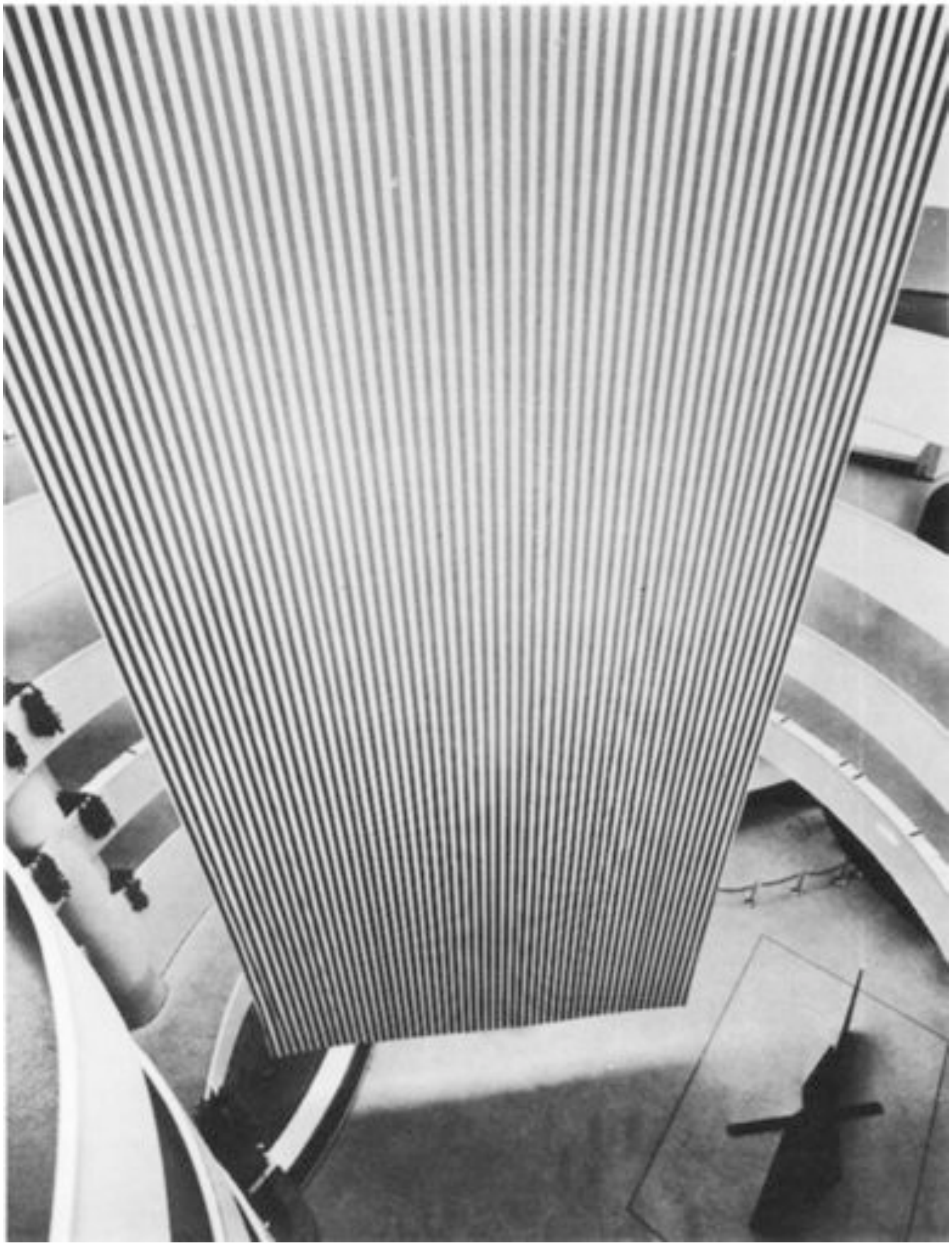


82. Lawrence Weiner*, TO SEE AND BE SEEN* (1972), installation at Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1993
83. Lawrence Weiner, *TO SEE AND BE SEEN* (1972), installation at Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2010

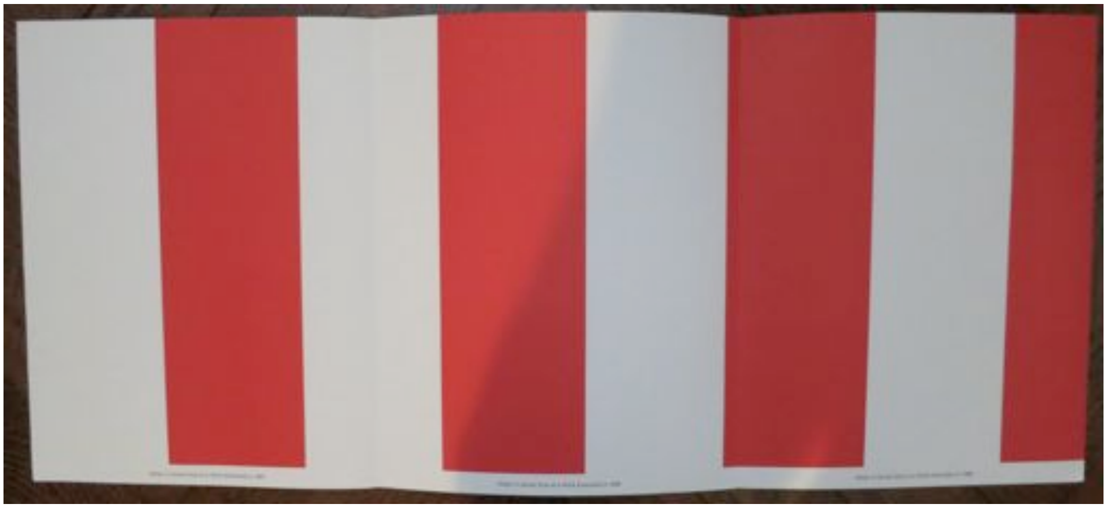


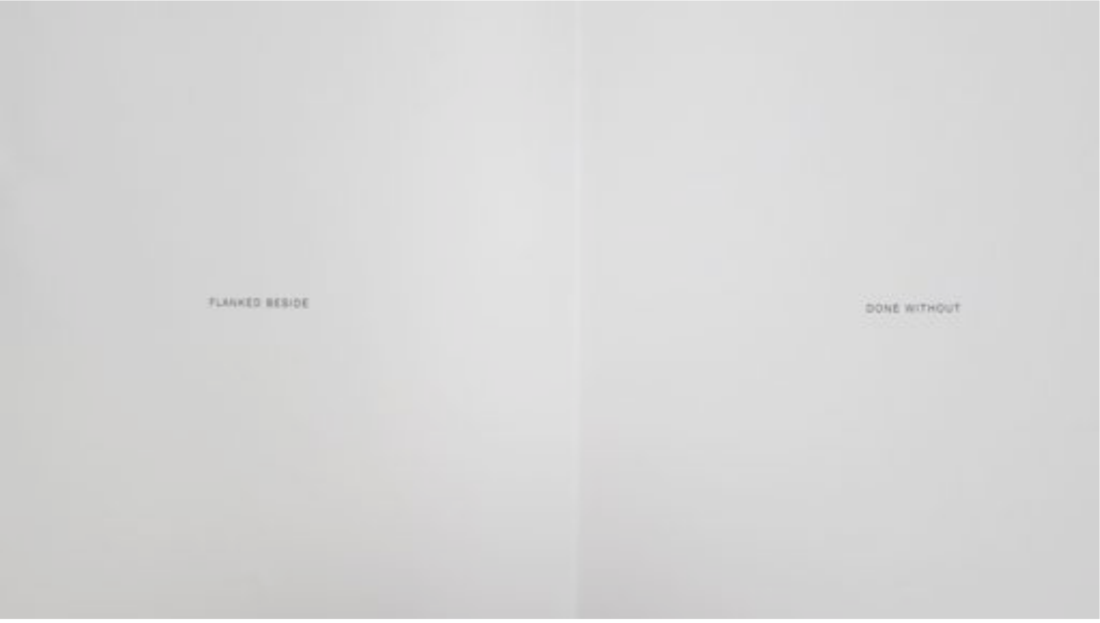


84. Lawrence Weiner, *TO SEE AND BE SEEN* (1972), installation at Shanghai Art Museum, 2007
85. Jenny Holzer, *Private Property Created Crime,* Times Square, New York, 1985

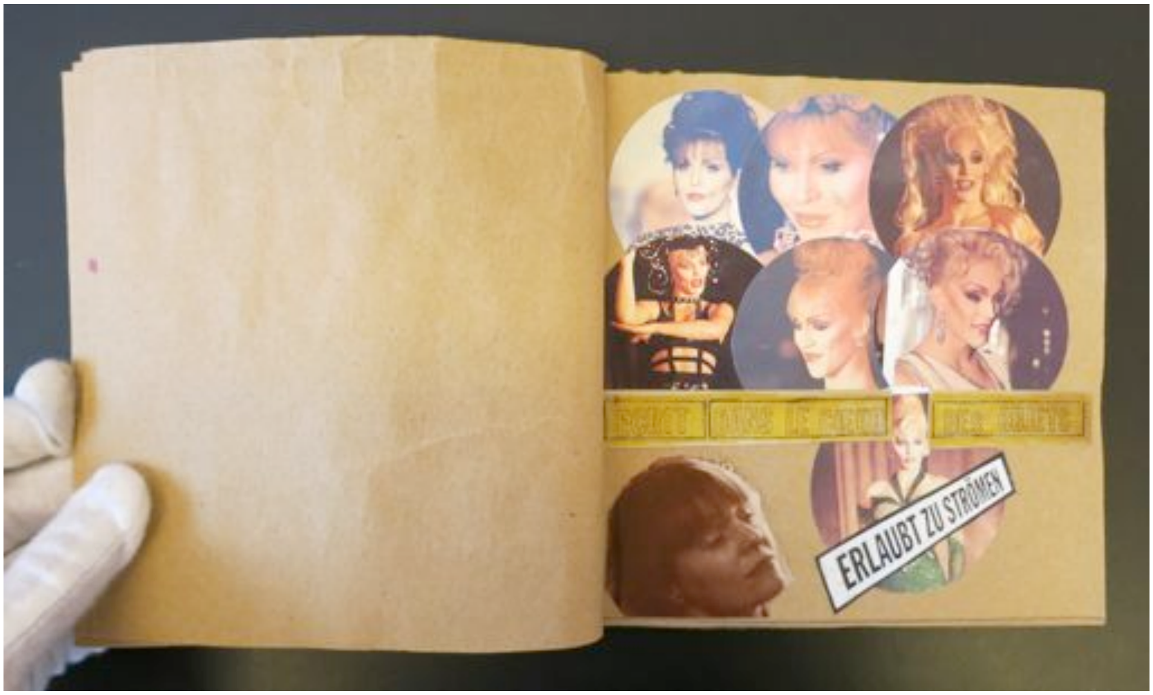


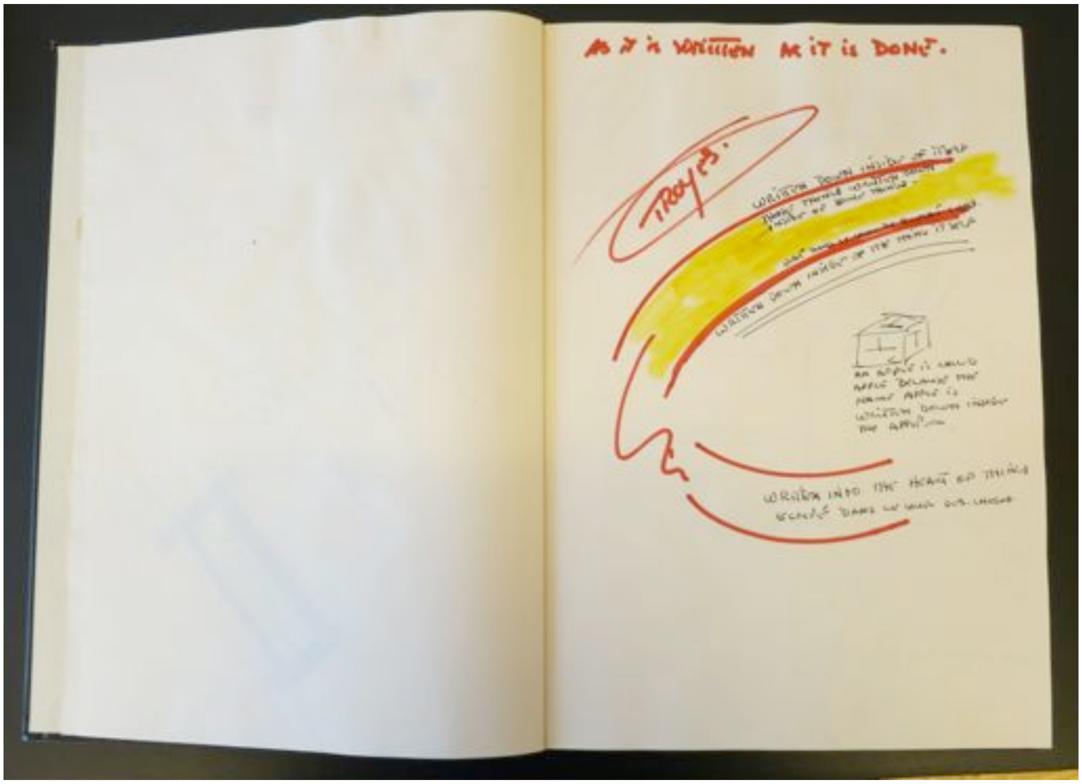
86a. Daniel Buren, *Untitled*, Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1971



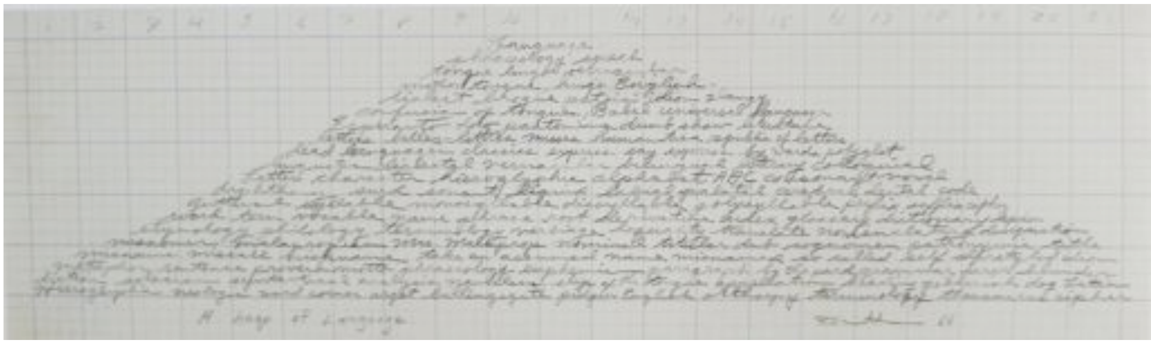

FLANKED BESIDE
DONE WITHOUT

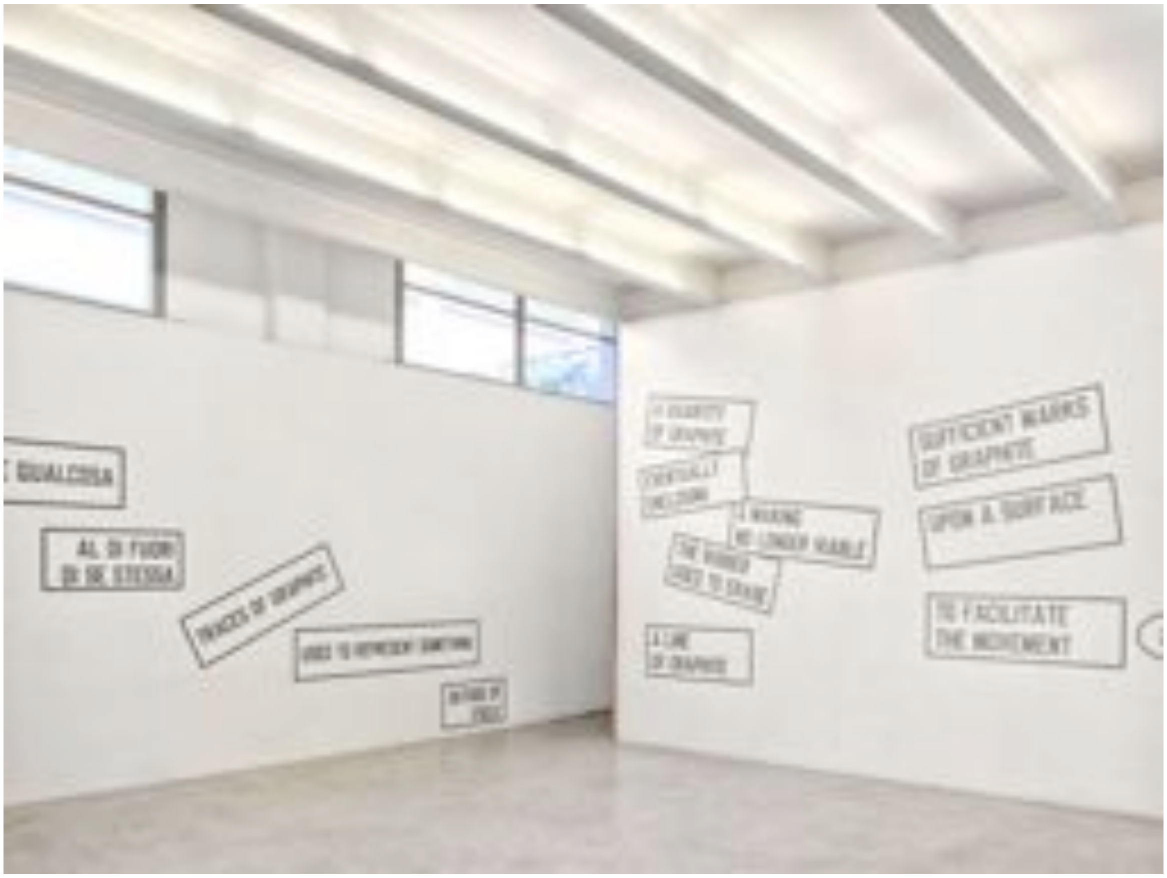
86b. Daniel Buren catalog contribution for the Sixth Guggenheim International Exhibition, 1971
87. Lawrence Weiner, *FLANKED BESIDE* and *DONE WITHOUT*, contribution to the Sixth Guggenheim International Exhibition, 1971



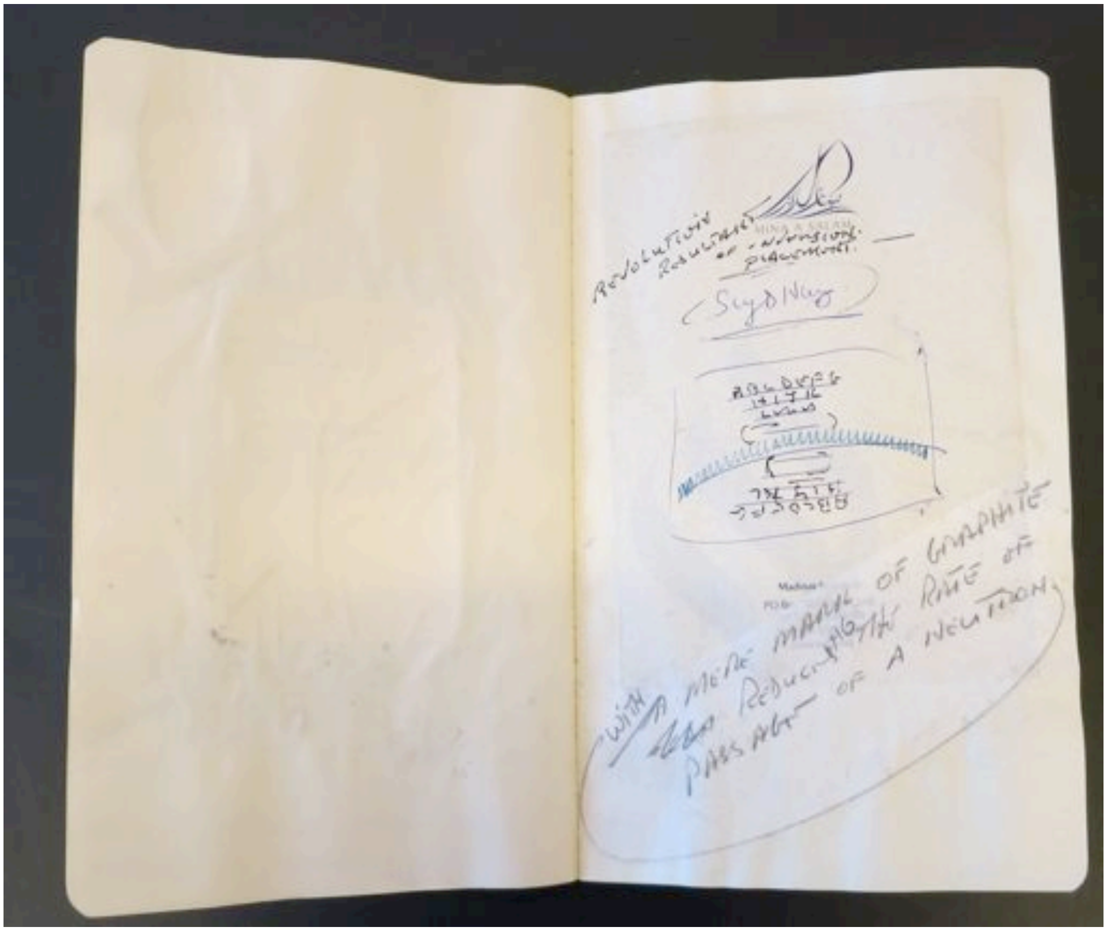

AS IT IS WRITTEN AS IT IS DONE.
TROYES.
WRITTEN INTO THE HEART OF THINGS

88. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1998, Moved Pictures Archive, New York
89. Lawrence Weiner Notebook June 1998- February 1999, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

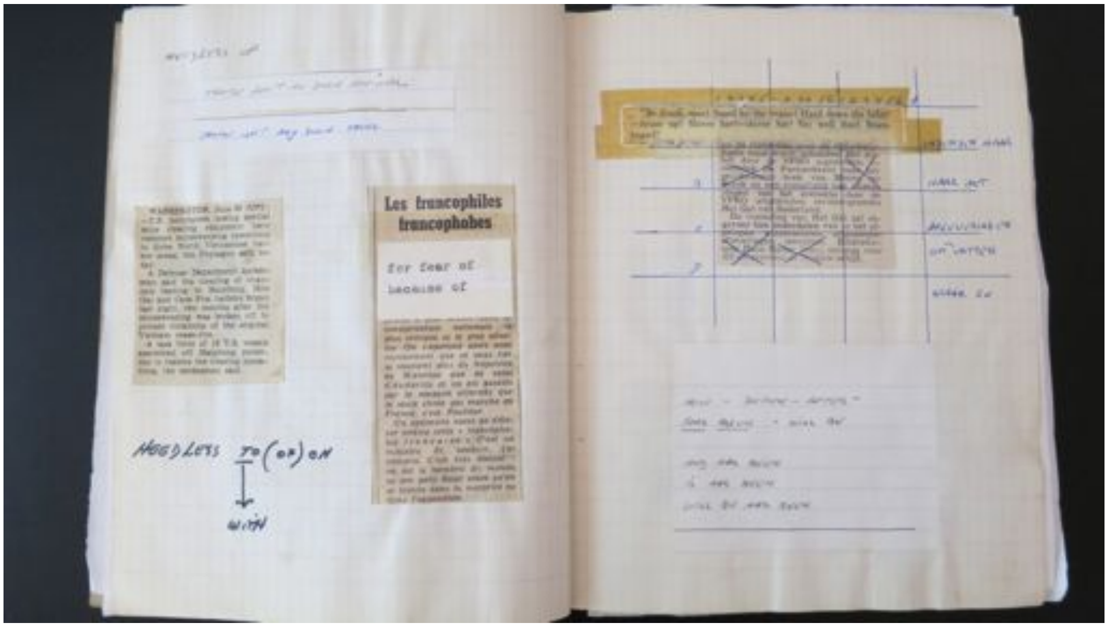




90. Robert Smithson*, A Heap Of Language*, 1966
91. Lawrence Weiner*, "*With A Line Of Graphite*,"* installation at Galleria Massimo de Carlo, Milan 2008.



92. Lawrence Weiner Notebook September 2007 – June 2008, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

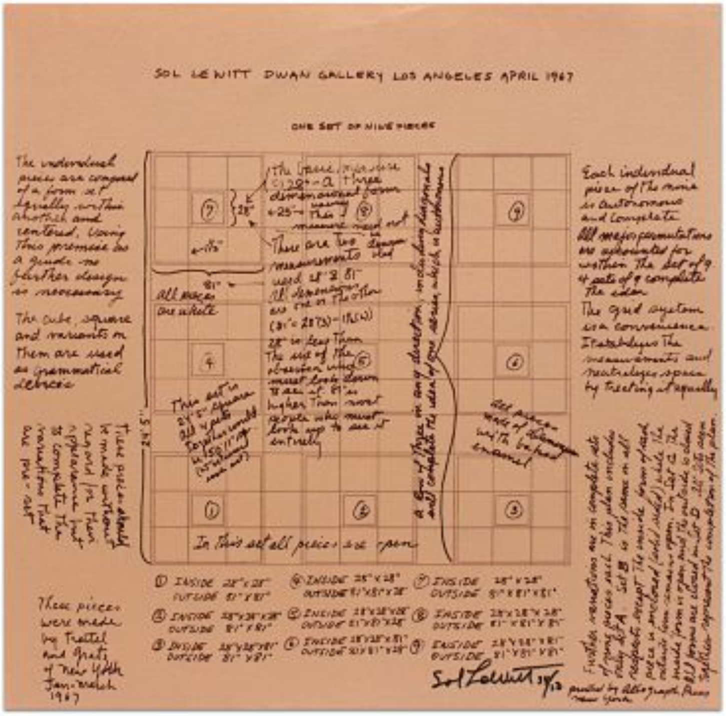


Les francophiles francophobes

for fear of
because of

NEEDLESS TO (OR) ON
WITH

93. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1973, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



SOL LEWITT DWAN GALLERY LOS ANGELES APRIL 1967

ONE SET OF NINE PIECES

The individual pieces are composed of a form set equally within another and centered. Using this premise as a guide no further design is necessary.

The cube, square and variants on them are used as grammatical devices.

Each individual piece of the nine is autonomous and complete. All major permutations are accounted for within the set of 9. 4 sets of 9 complete the idea. The grid system is a convenience. It stabilizes the measurements and neutralizes space by treating it equally.

All pieces made of aluminum with baked enamel

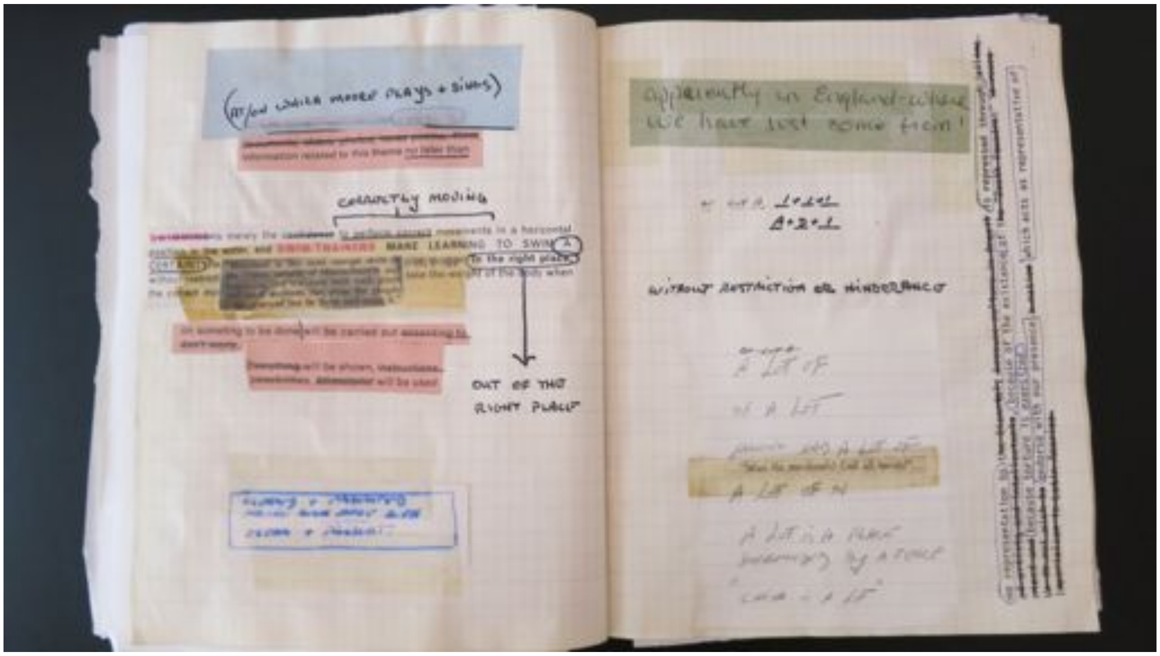
In this set all pieces are open

① INSIDE 28"×28" OUTSIDE 81"×81"
② INSIDE 28"×28"×28" OUTSIDE 81"×81"
③ INSIDE 28"×28"×81" OUTSIDE 81"×81"
④ INSIDE 28"×28" OUTSIDE 81"×81"×28"
⑤ INSIDE 28"×28"×28" OUTSIDE 81"×81"×28"
⑥ INSIDE 28"×28"×81" OUTSIDE 81"×81"×28"
⑦ INSIDE 28"×28" OUTSIDE 81"×81"×81"
⑧ INSIDE 28"×28"×28" OUTSIDE 81"×81"×81"
⑨ INSIDE 28"×28"×81" OUTSIDE 81"×81"×81"

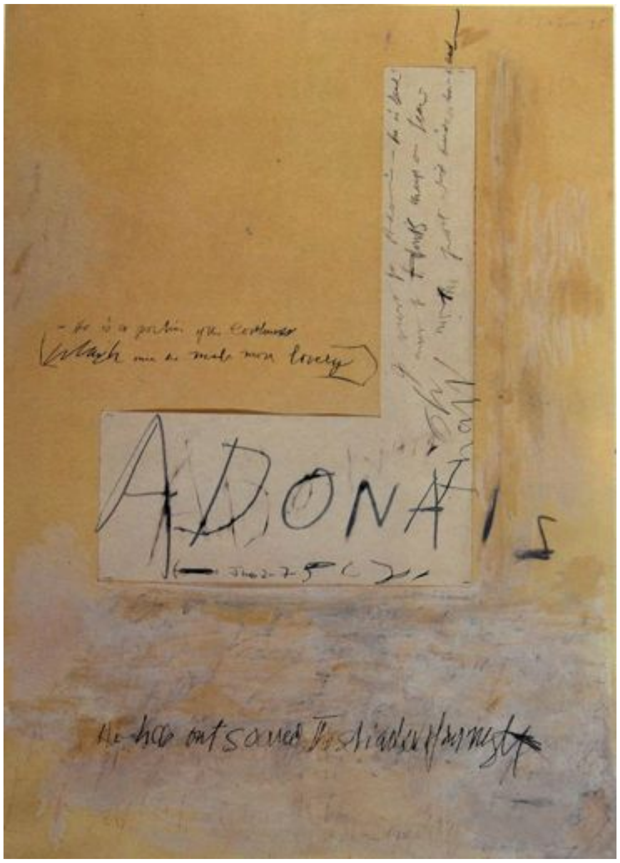
These pieces were made by Treitel and Gratz of New York Jan.-March 1967

Sol LeWitt

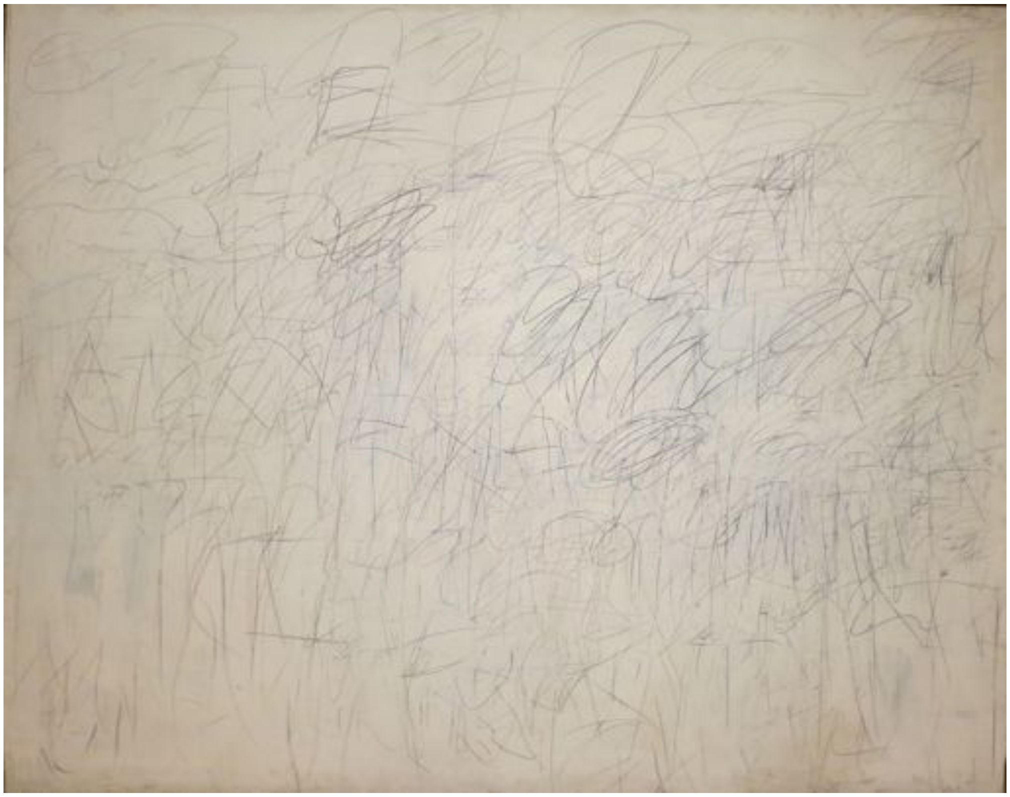
94. Sol LeWitt, *Serial Project No. 1 (ABCD)*, Announcement for Sol LeWitt Exhibit, Dwan Gallery, Los Angeles, 1967


(AT/ON WHICH MOTORS PLAYS + SIVES)
CORRECTLY MOVING
OUT OF THE RIGHT PLACE
Apparently in England—where we have just come from!
WITHOUT RESTRICTION OR HINDERANCE
A LOT OF
OF A LOT
A LOT OF IT

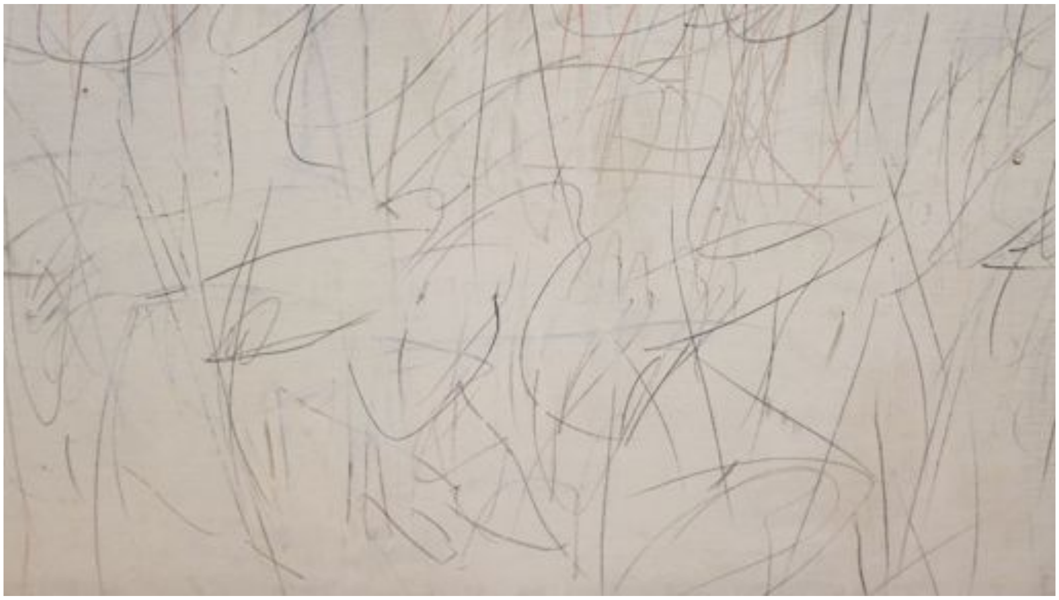
95. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1973, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



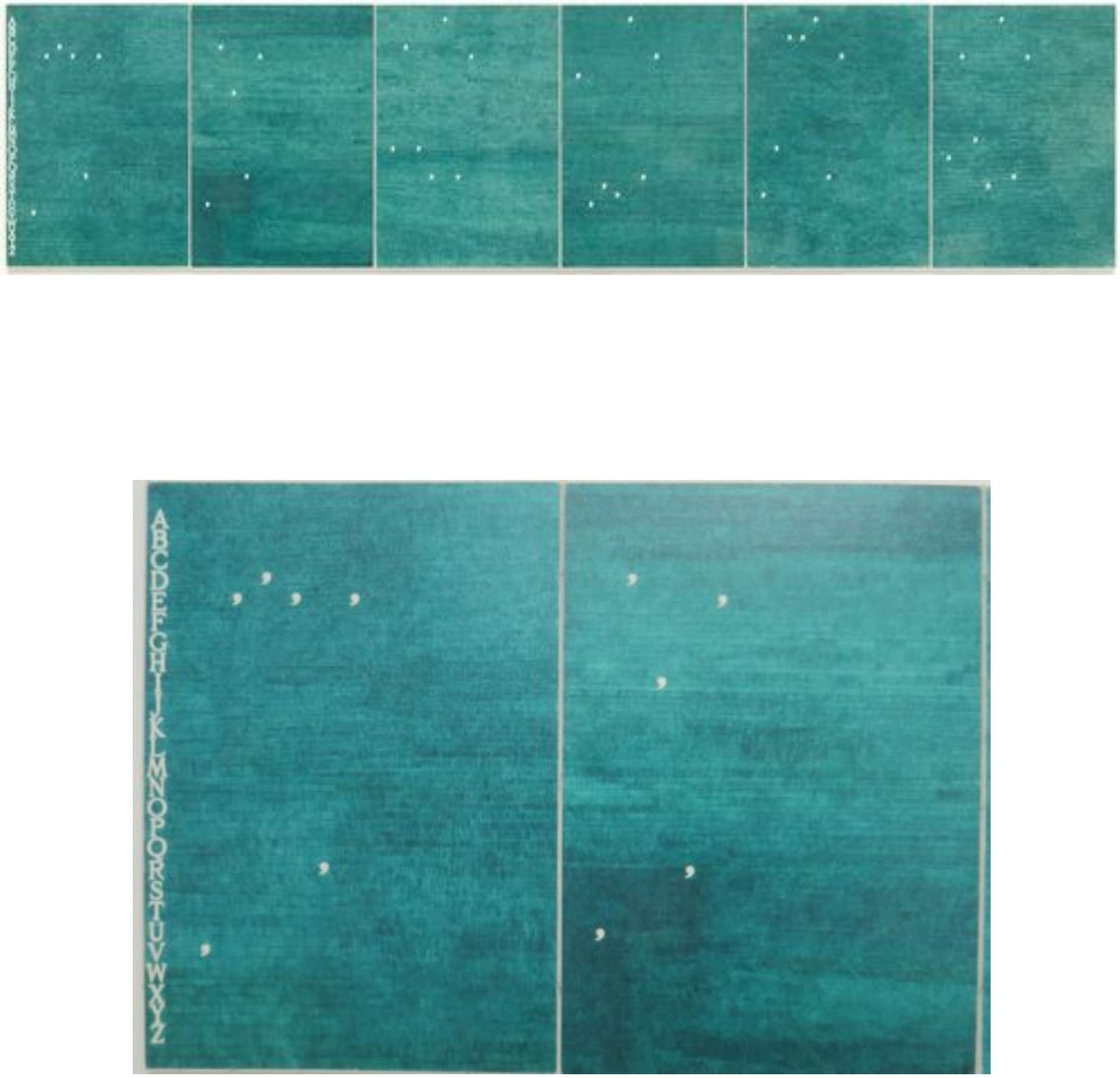
96. Cy Twombly, *Adonais*, 1975



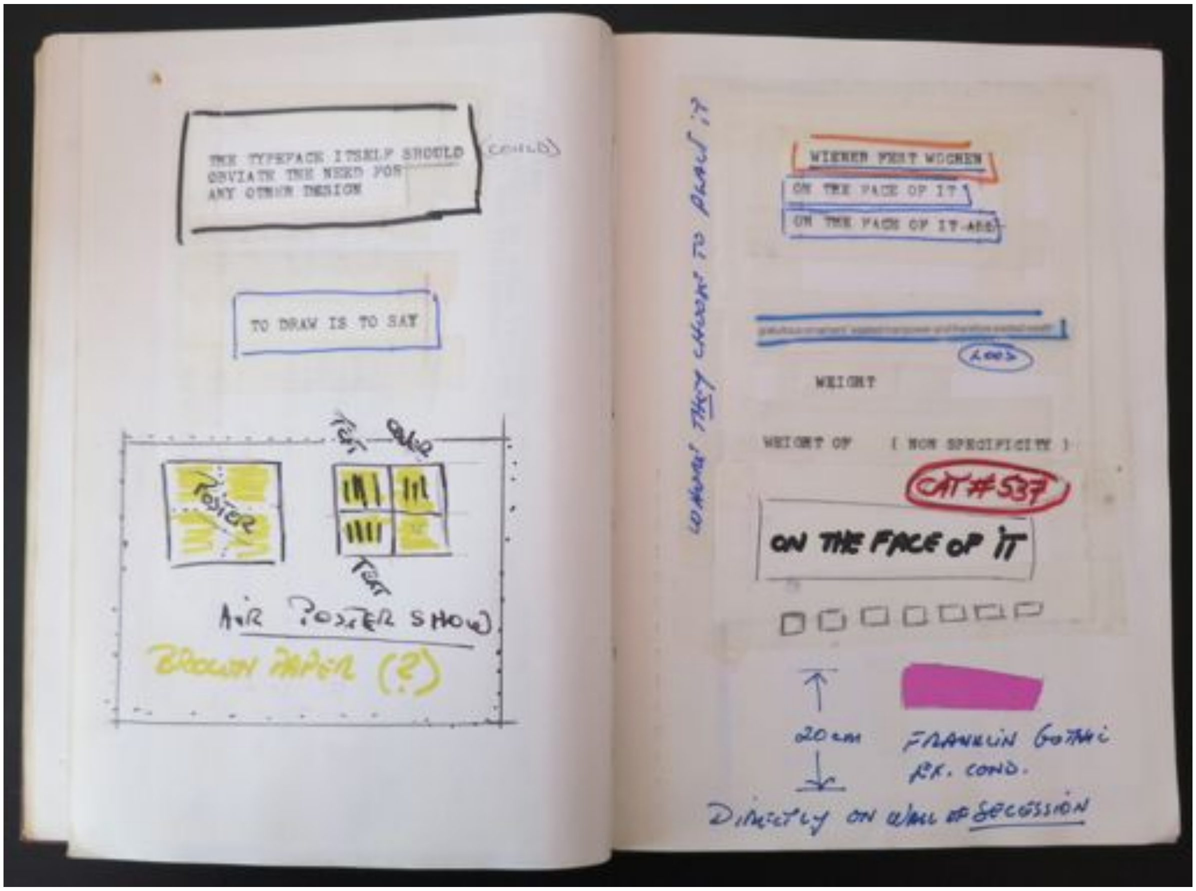
97a. Cy Twombly, *Academy,* 1955

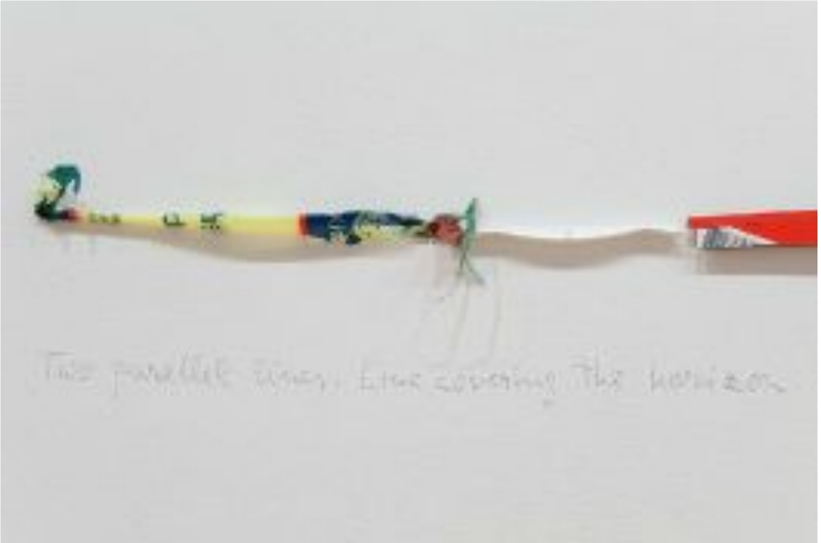


97b. Cy Twombly, *Academy*, detail, 1955



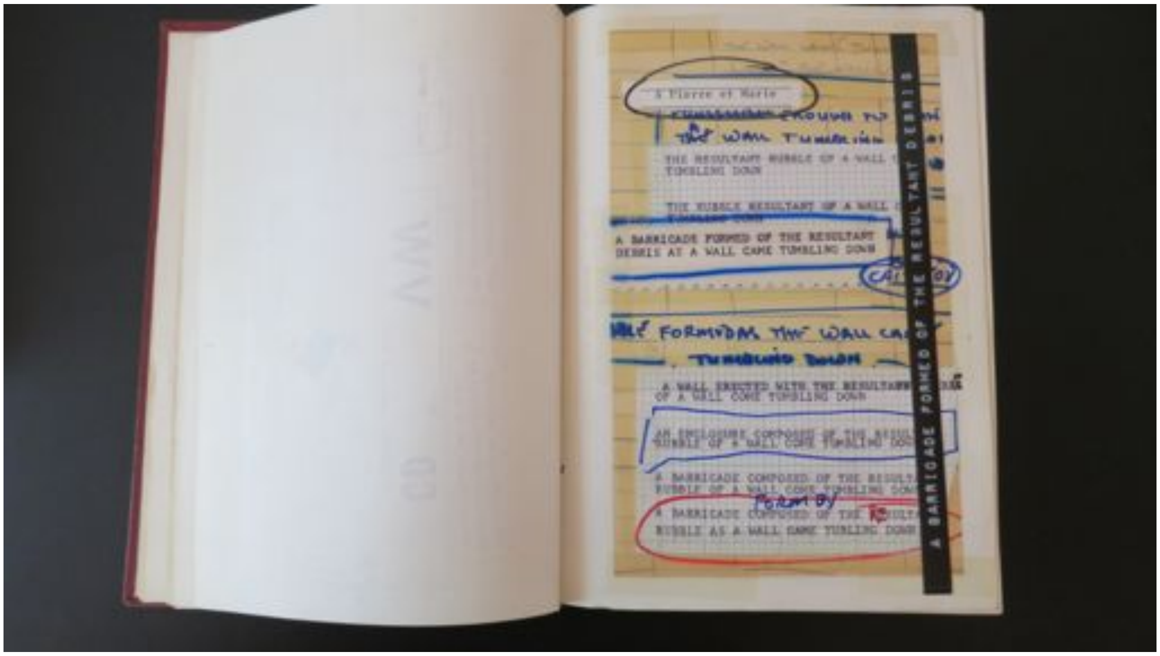
98a & 98b. Alighiero Boetti, *I sei sensi (The Six Senses),* 1974-75


THE TYPEFACE ITSELF SHOULD OBVIATE THE NEED FOR ANY OTHER DESIGN
(COULD)
TO DRAW IS TO SAY
TEXT
POSTER
AIR POSTER SHOW
BROWN PAPER (?)
WIENER FEST WOCHEN
ON THE FACE OF IT
ON THE FACE OF IT ABS
WEIGHT
WEIGHT OF (NON SPECIFICITY)
CAT #537
ON THE FACE OF IT
20 cm
FRANKLIN GOTHIC EX. COND.
DIRECTLY ON WALL OF SECESSION
WHERE THEY CHOOSE TO PLACE IT

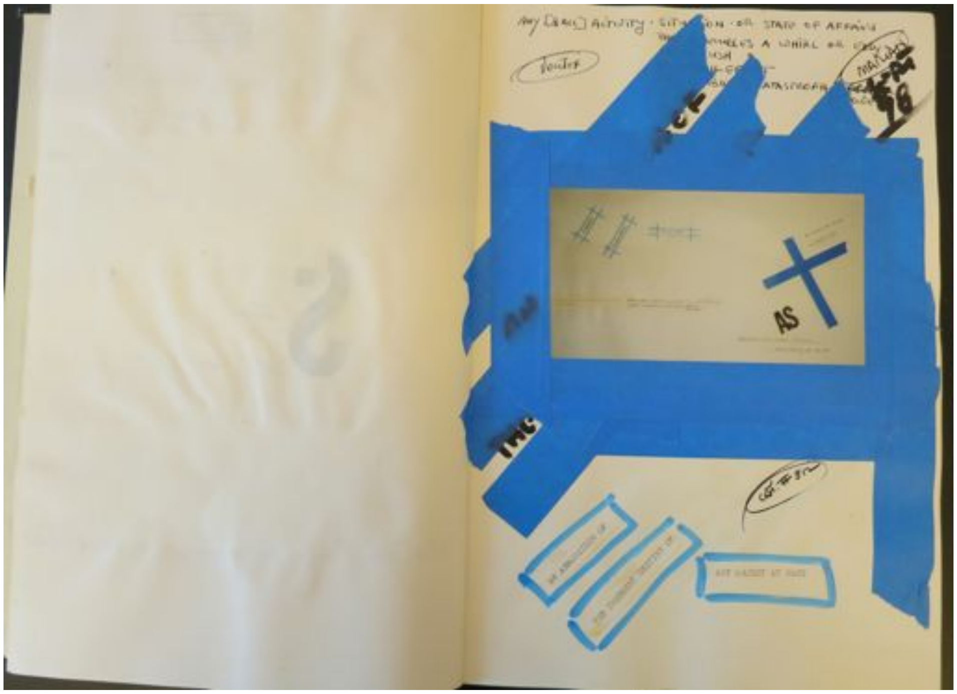


99. Lawrence Weiner Notebook, January 1985 – August 1986, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

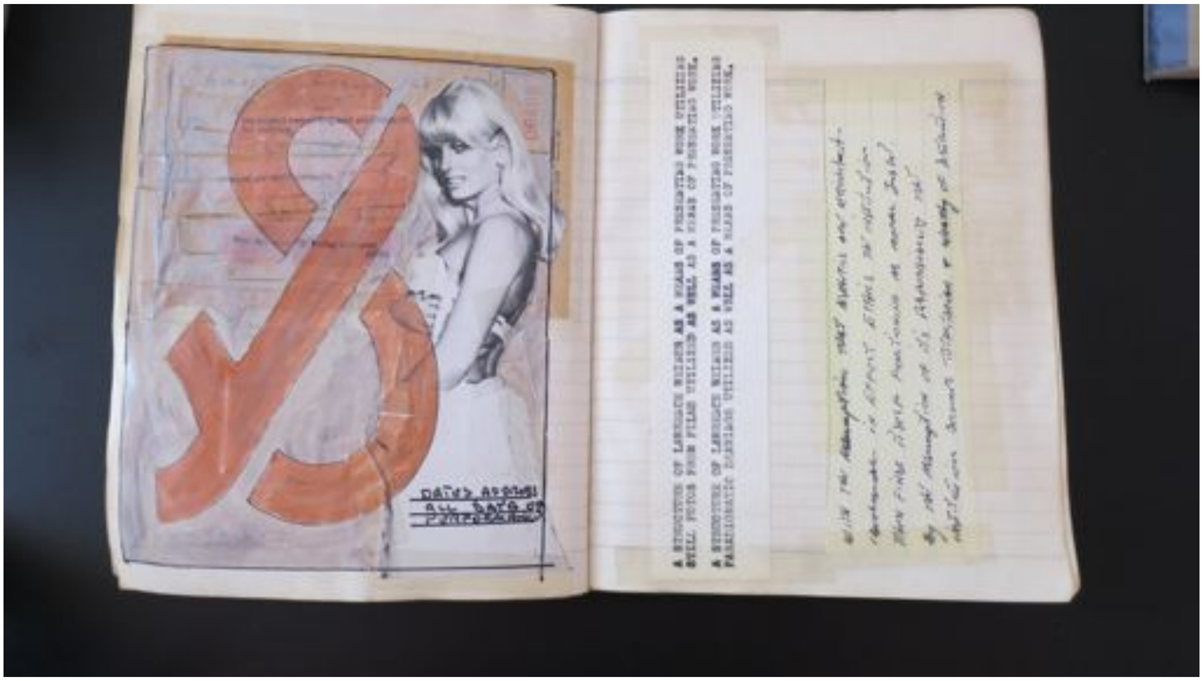
100. Luis Camnitzer*, Two Parallel Lines*, 1976 - 2010

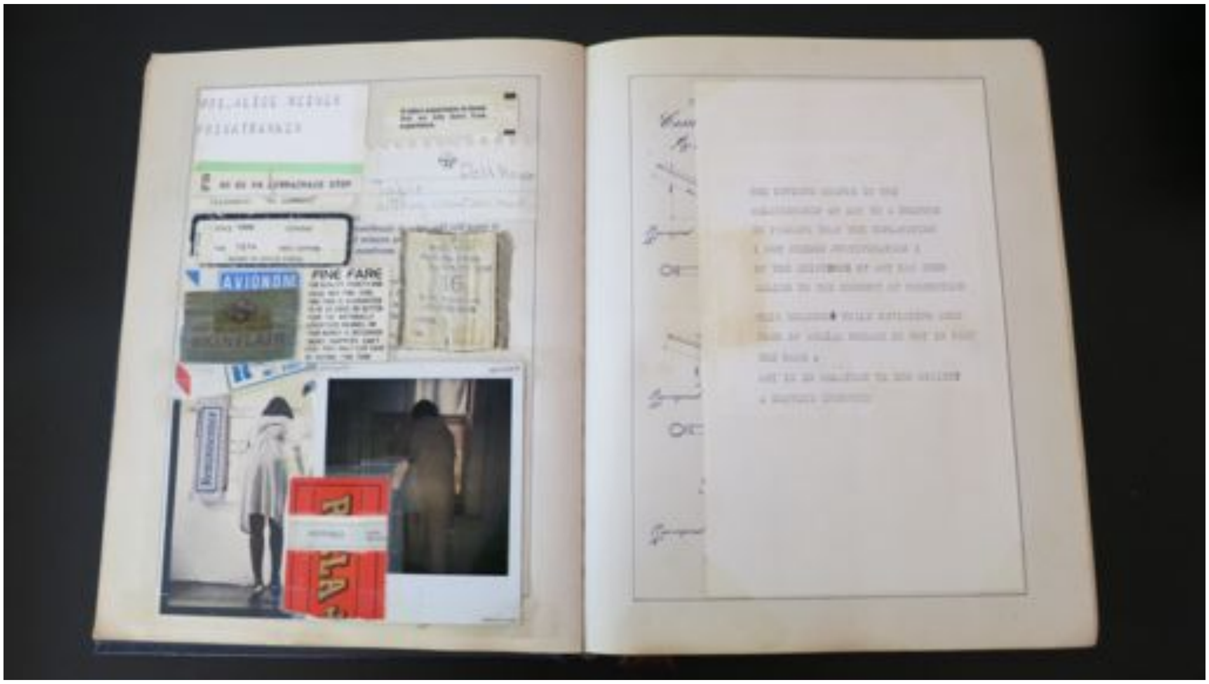

THE RESULTANT RUBBLE OF A WALL
TUMBLING DOWN
A BARRICADE FORMED OF THE RESULTANT
DEBRIS AT A WALL CAME TUMBLING DOWN
A WALL ERECTED WITH THE RESULTANT
OF A WALL COME TUMBLING DOWN
FORM BY
A BARRICADE FORMED OF THE RESULTANT DEBRIS

101. Lawrence Weiner Notebook October 1983 – January 1985, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



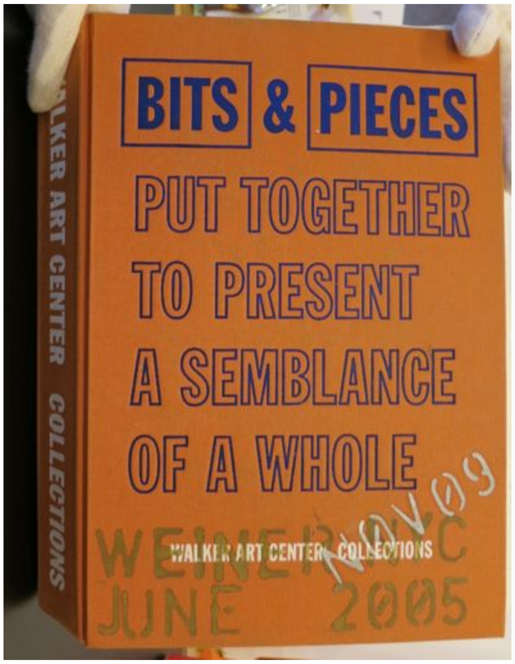
102. Lawrence Weiner Notebook June 1998 – February 1999, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

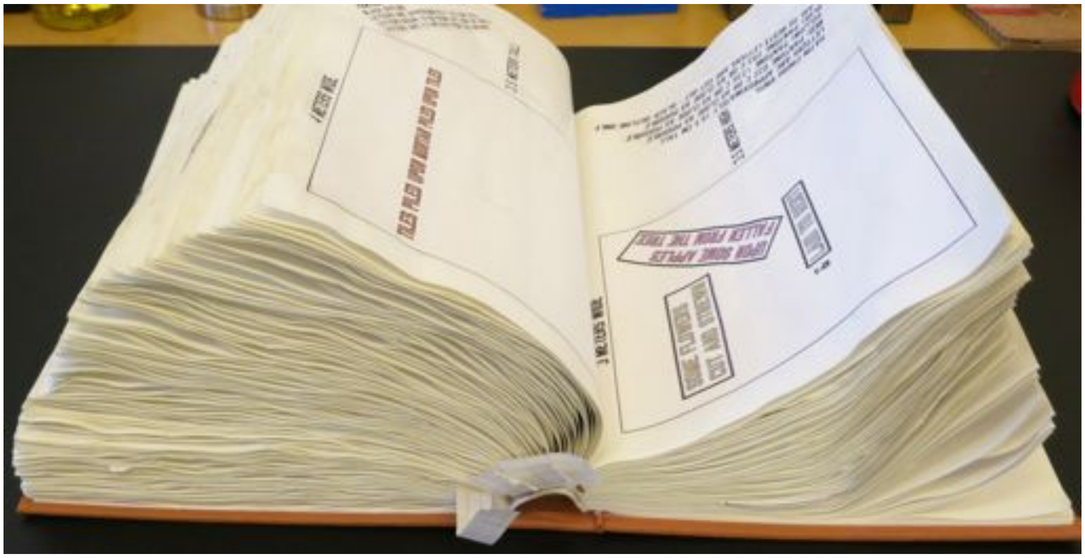




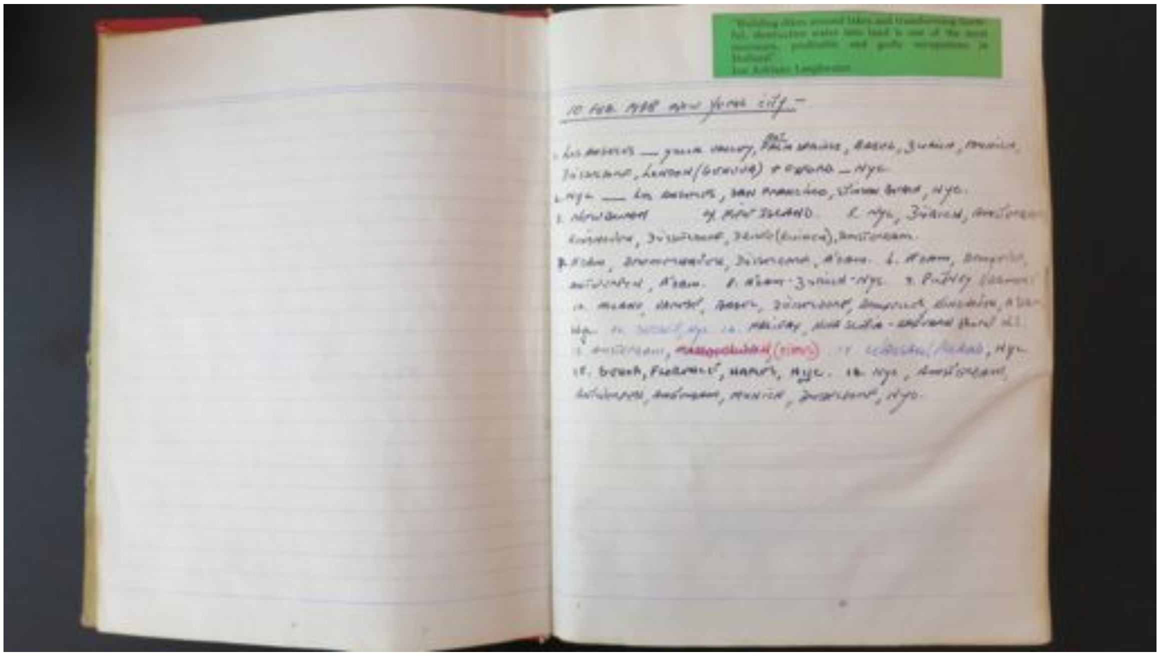
103. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1978, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

104. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1980, Moved Pictures Archive, New York





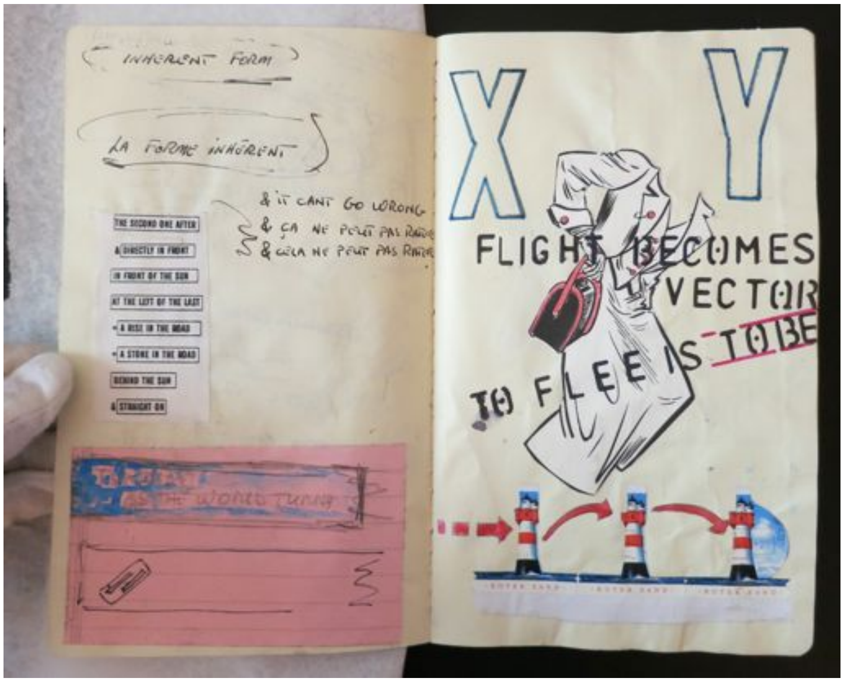
105a & 105b. Lawrence Weiner Notebook June 2005 – November 2009, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

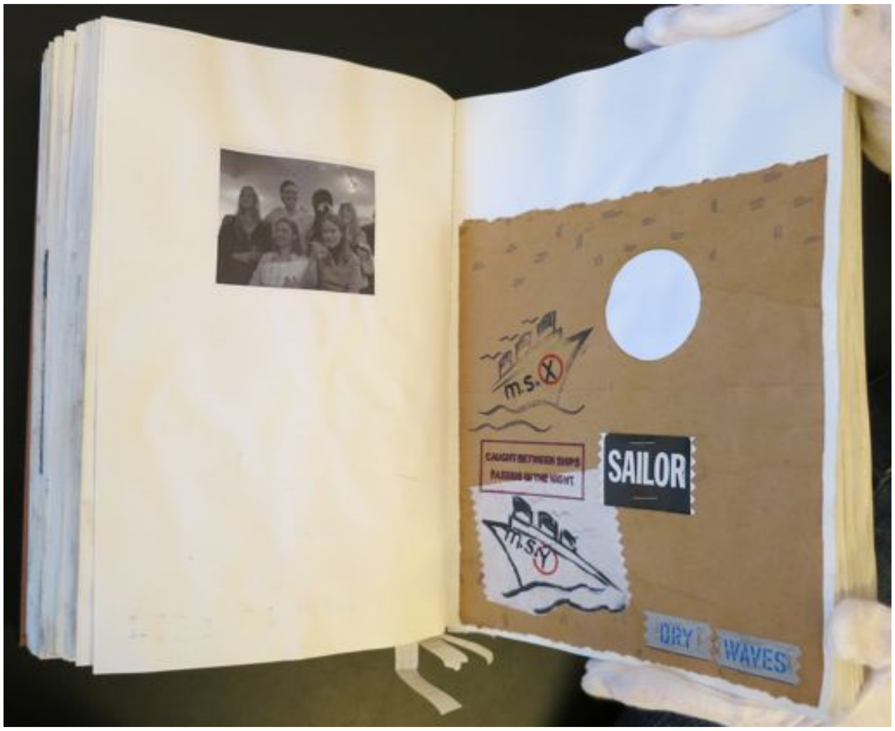


106. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1978, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

PUSHED OUT IN FRONT OF EACH OTHER
(AUF DIE BARRIKADEN)
COHIBA
TOKYO
PARIS
LOS ANGELES
CAUGHT BETWEEN SHIPS PASSING IN THE NIGHT
ZUOZ
NYC.
BLOCK ISLAND

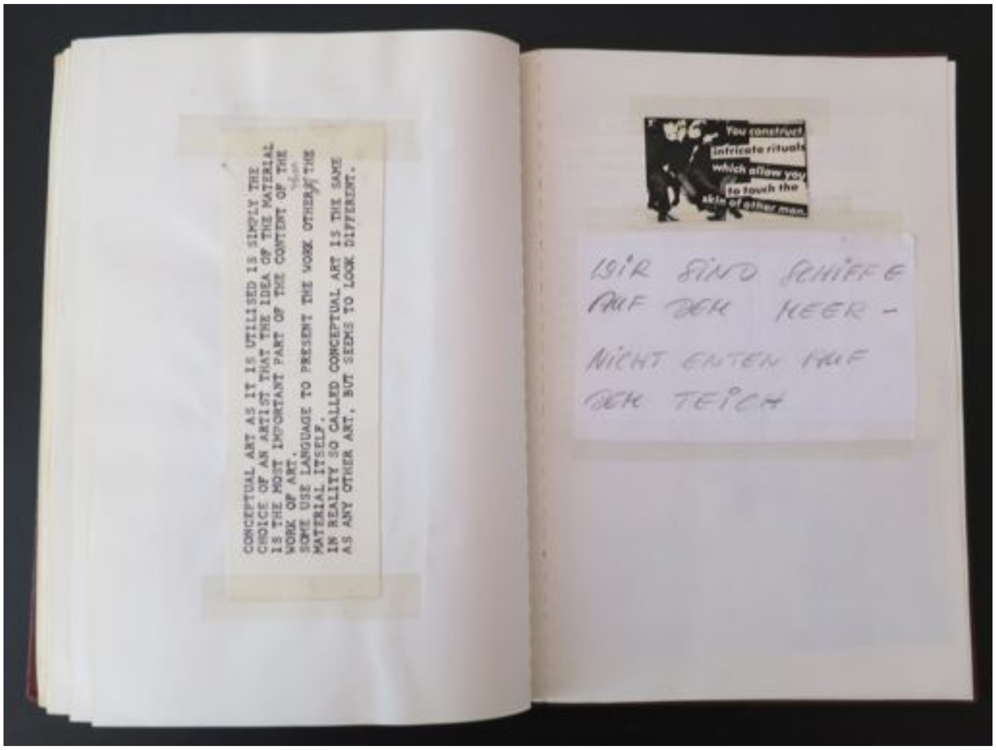
107. Lawrence Weiner Notebook February - August 1999, Moved Pictures Archive, New York





108. Lawrence Weiner Notebook April – June 2005, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

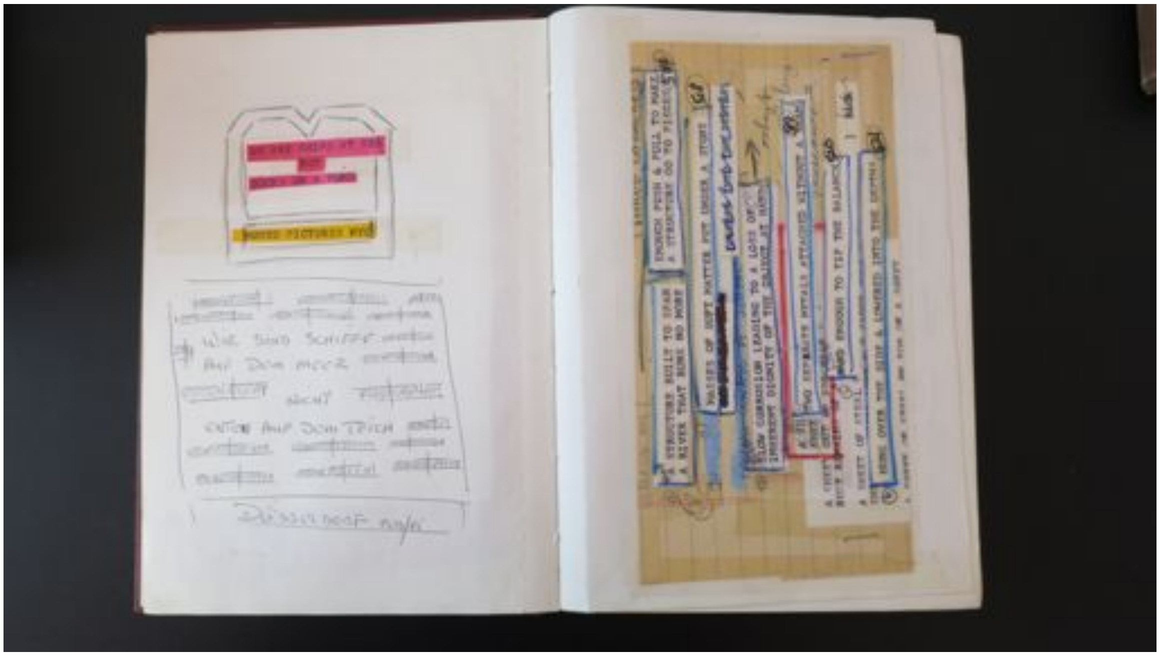
109. Lawrence Weiner Notebook June 2005 – November 2009, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



CONCEPTUAL ART AS IT IS UTILISED IS SIMPLY THE CHOICE OF AN ARTIST THAT THE IDEA OF THE MATERIAL IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE CONTENT OF THE WORK OF ART.
SOME USE LANGUAGE TO PRESENT THE WORK OTHERS THE MATERIAL ITSELF.
IN REALITY SO CALLED CONCEPTUAL ART IS THE SAME AS ANY OTHER ART, BUT SEEMS TO LOOK DIFFERENT.

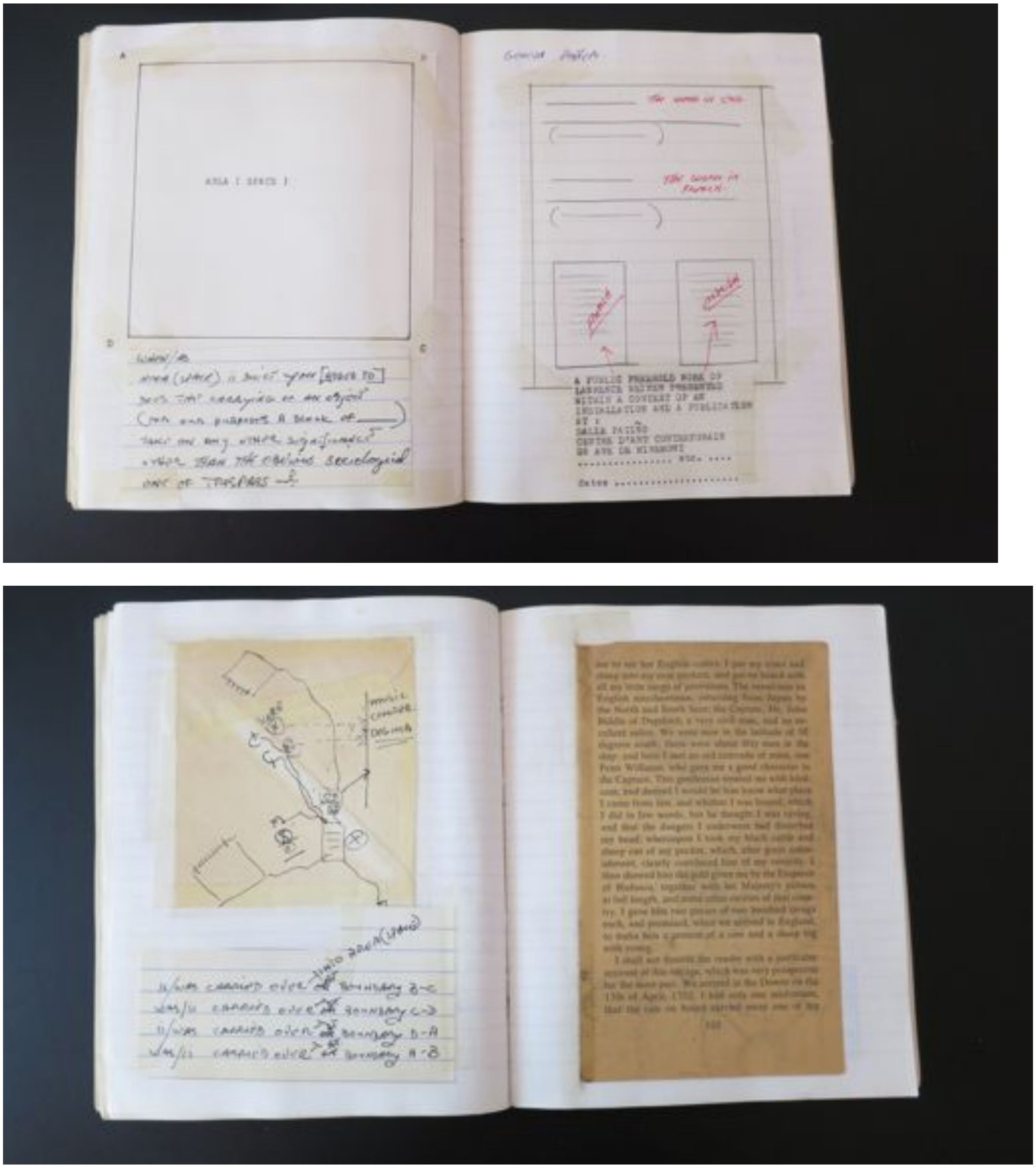
You construct intricate rituals which allow you to touch the skin of other men.

WIR SIND SCHIFFE AUF DEM MEER -
NICHT ENTEN AUF DEM TEICH

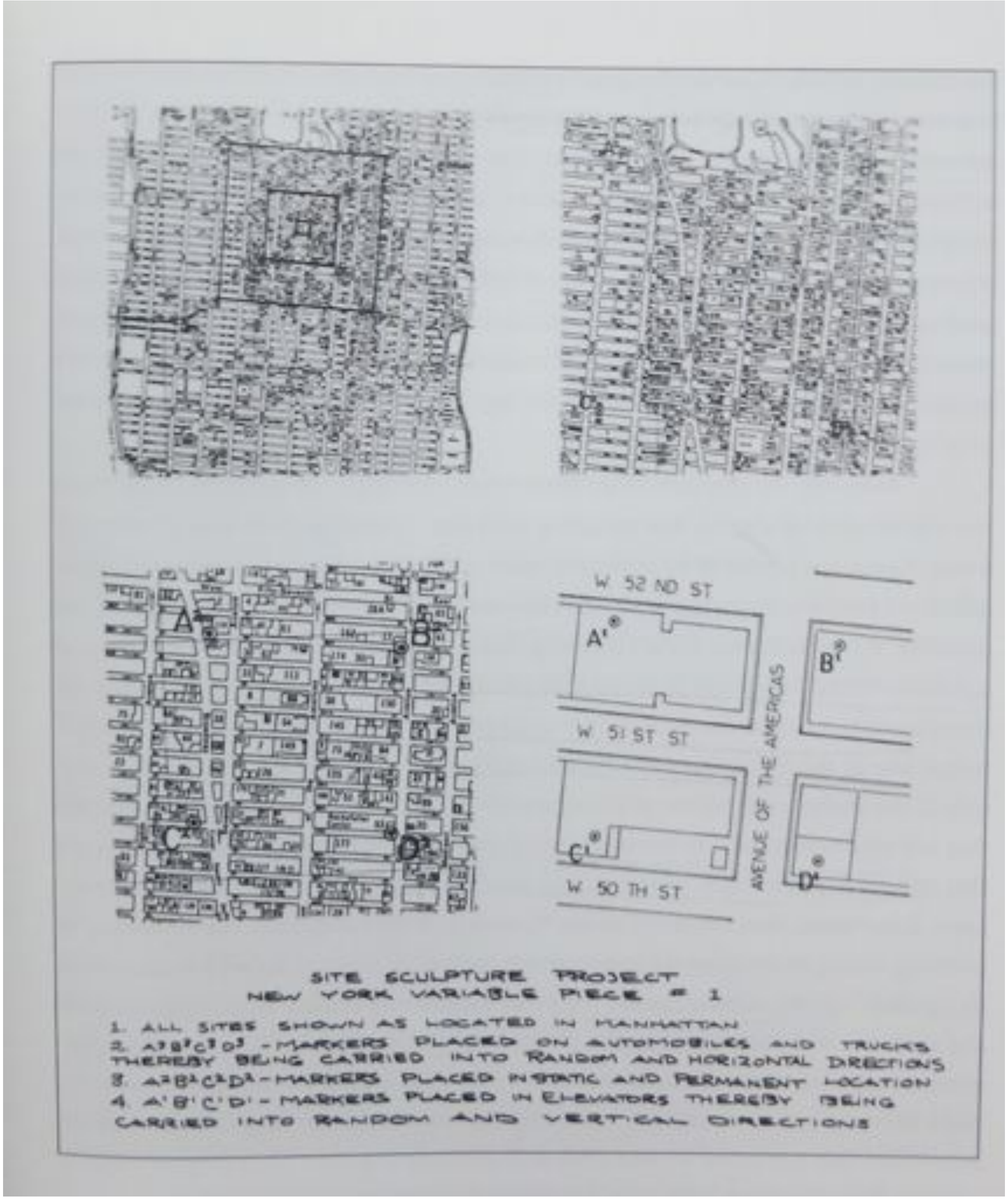


110. Lawrence Weiner Notebook October 1983 – January 1985, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

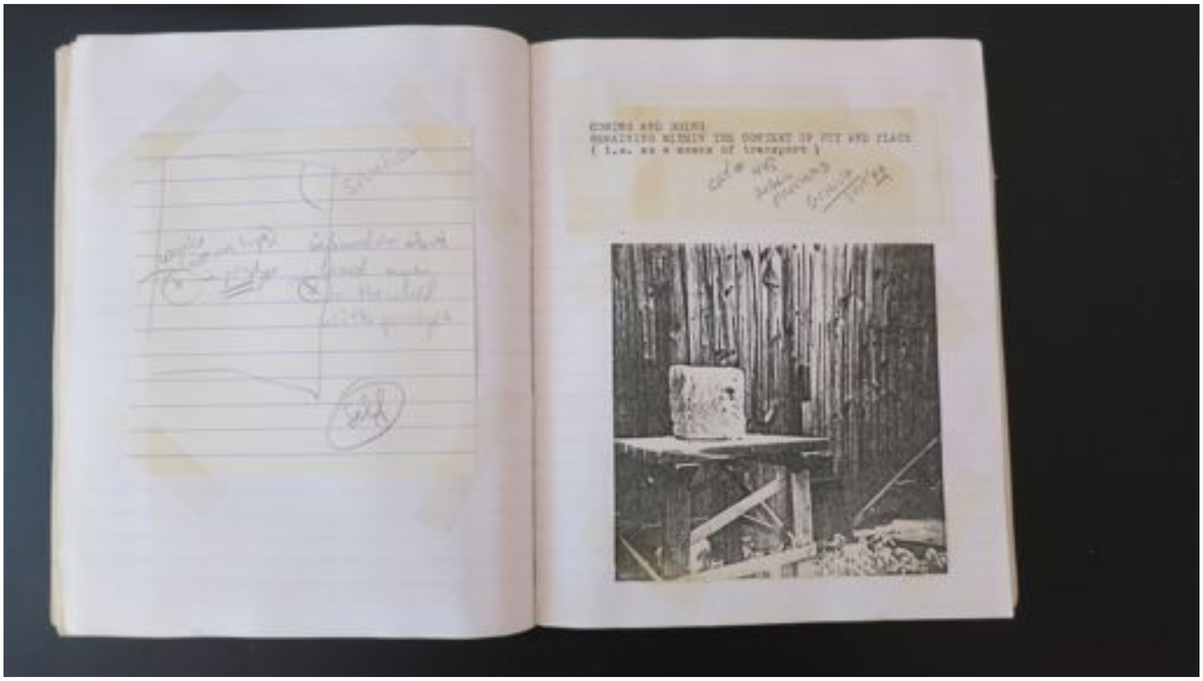
111. Lawrence Weiner Notebook January 1985 – August 1986, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

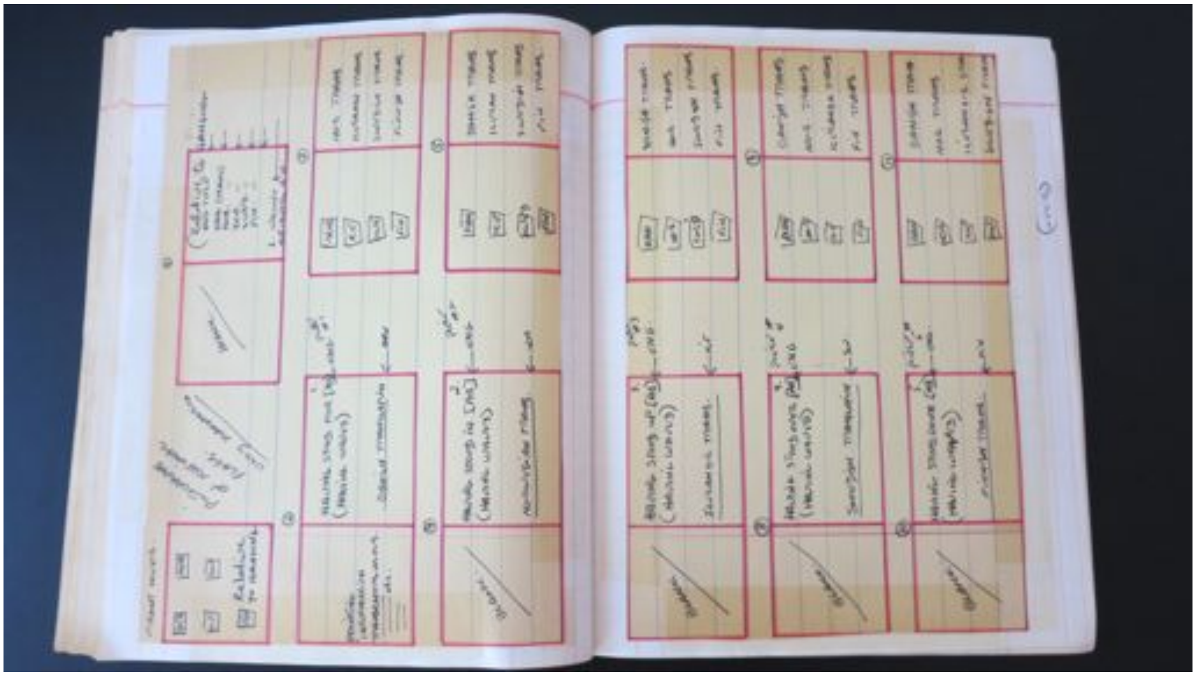


112a & 112b. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1975, Moved Pictures Archive, New York


A^2
B^2
C^2
D^2
W 52 ND ST
A^1
B^1
W 51 ST ST
AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS
C^1
D^1
W 50 TH ST
SITE SCULPTURE PROJECT
NEW YORK VARIABLE PIECE # 1
1. ALL SITES SHOWN AS LOCATED IN MANHATTAN
2. $A^3B^3C^3D^3$ - MARKERS PLACED ON AUTOMOBILES AND TRUCKS THEREBY BEING CARRIED INTO RANDOM AND HORIZONTAL DIRECTIONS
3. $A^2B^2C^2D^2$ - MARKERS PLACED IN STATIC AND PERMANENT LOCATION
4. $A^1B^1C^1D^1$ - MARKERS PLACED IN ELEVATORS THEREBY BEING CARRIED INTO RANDOM AND VERTICAL DIRECTIONS

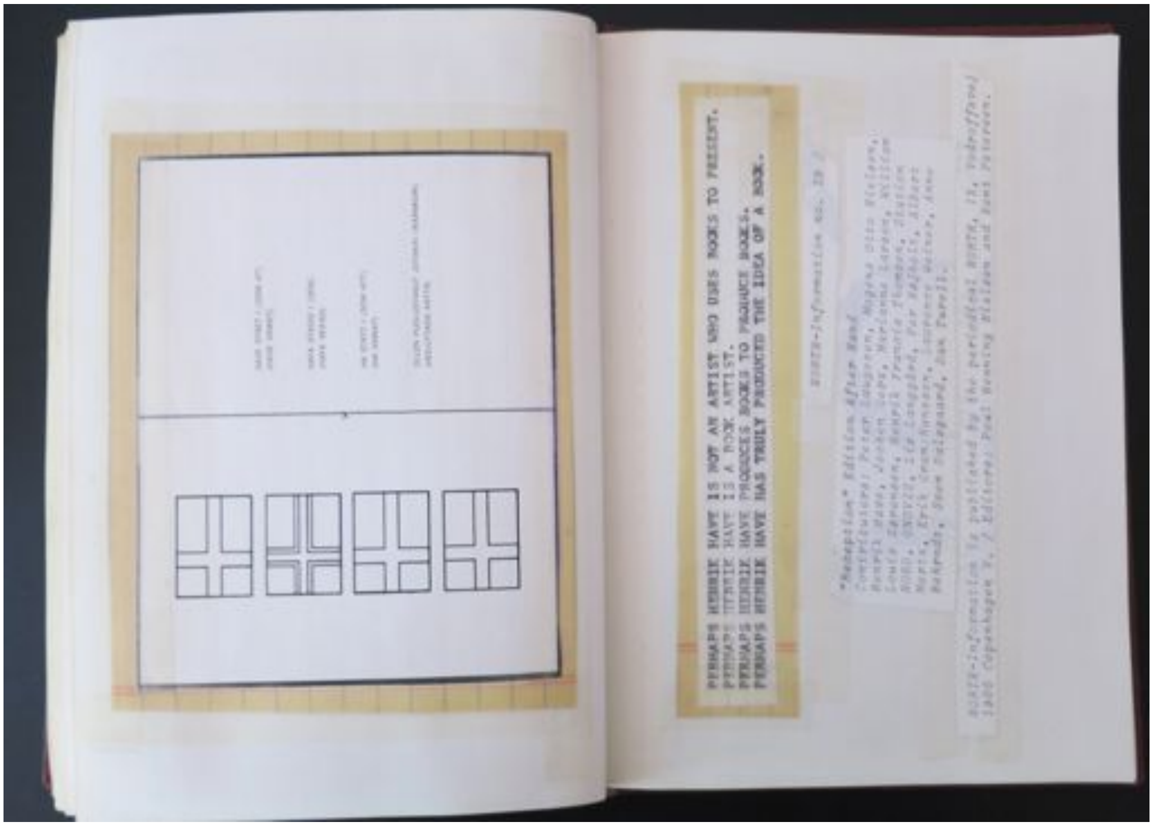
113. Douglas Huebler, *Site Sculpture Project, New York Variable Piece #1*, 1968



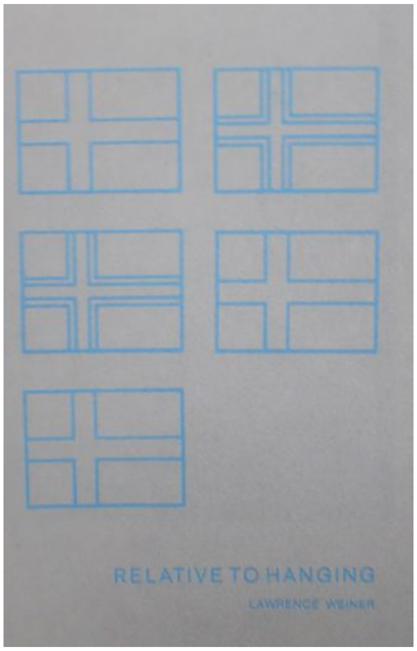


114. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1975, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

115. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1975, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

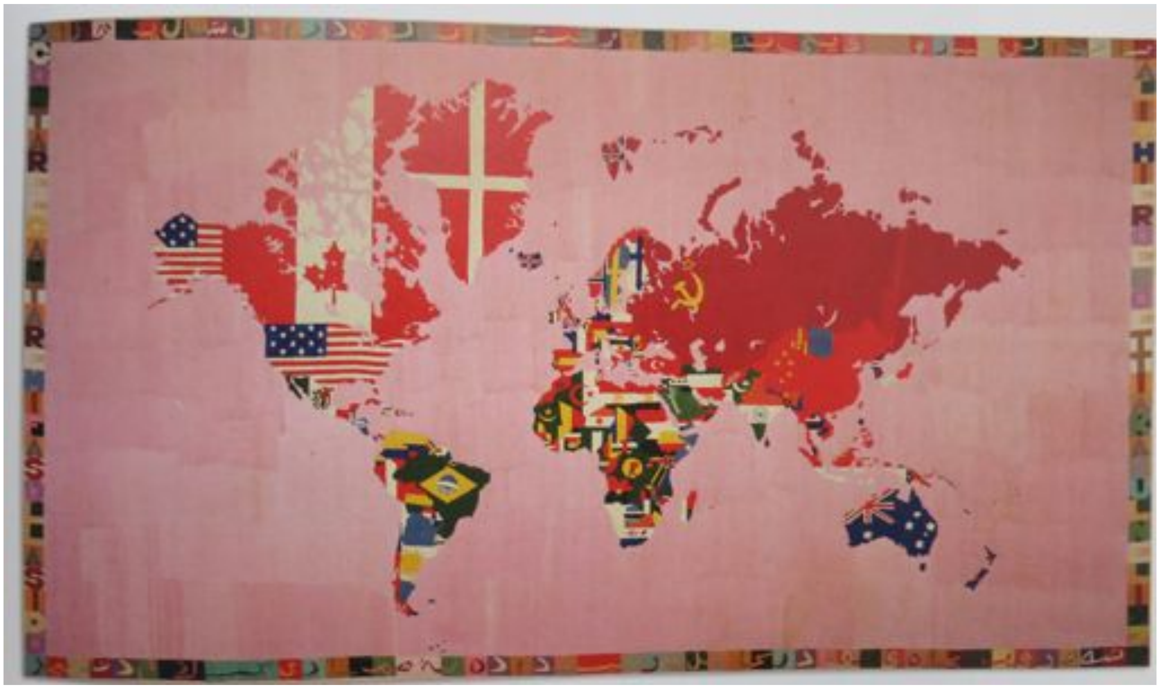


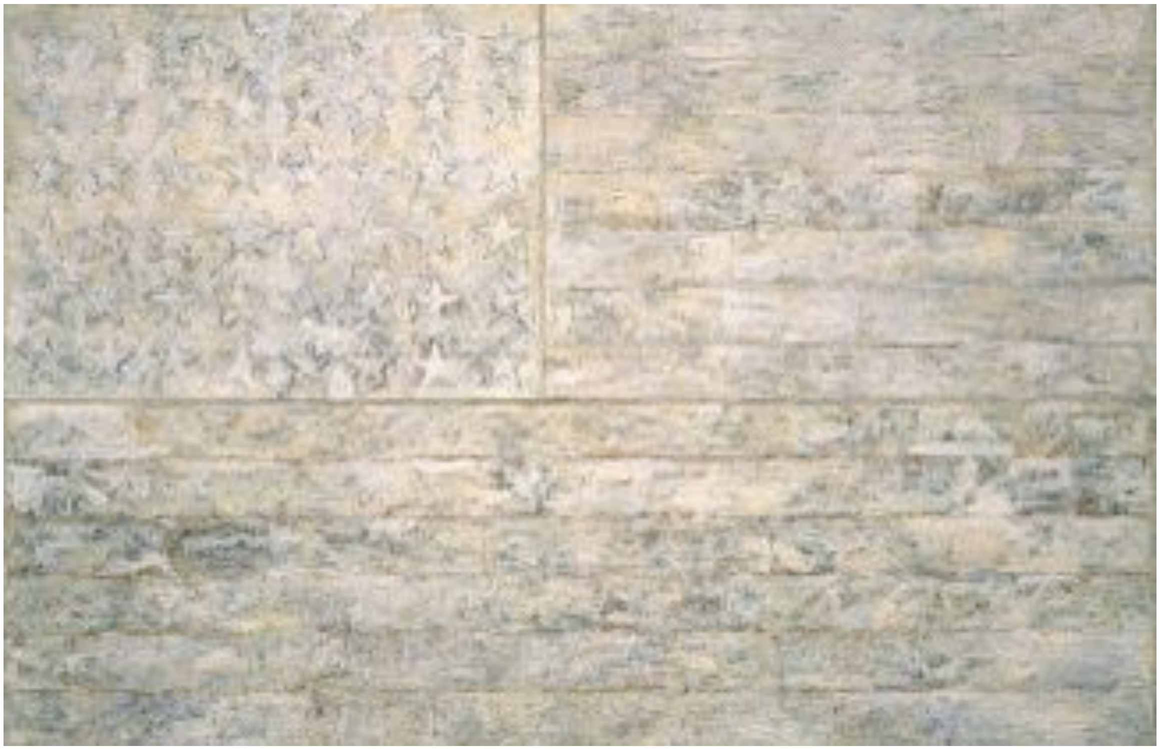
PERHAPS HENRIK HAVE IS NOT AN ARTIST WHO USES BOOKS TO PRESENT.
PERHAPS HENRIK HAVE IS A BOOK ARTIST.
PERHAPS HENRIK HAVE PRODUCES BOOKS TO PRODUCE BOOKS.
PERHAPS HENRIK HAVE HAS TRULY PRODUCED THE IDEA OF A BOOK.



116. Lawrence Weiner Notebook October 1983-January 85, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

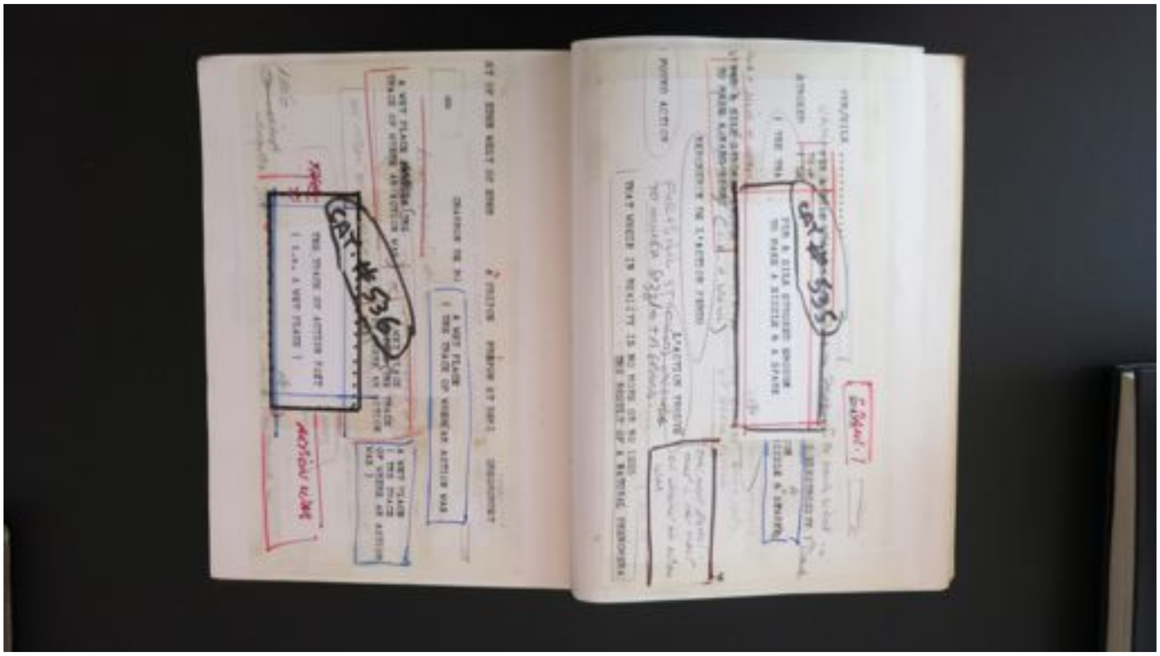
117. Lawrence Weiner, *Relative To Hanging*, 1975

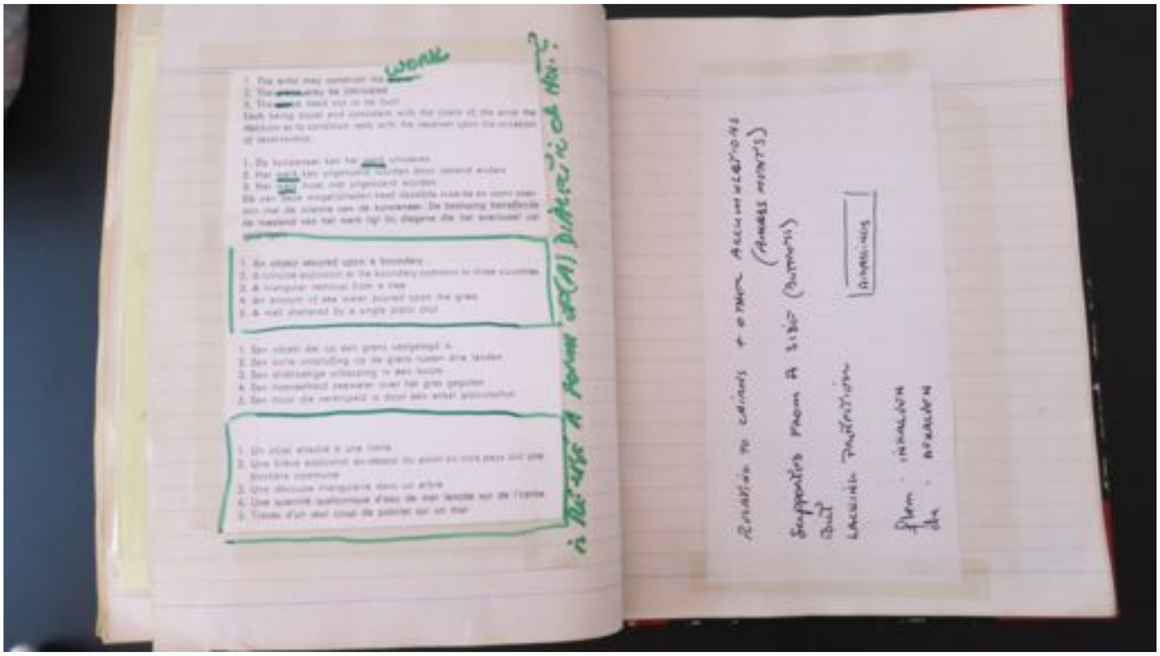




118. Alighiero Boetti, *Mappa*, 1979

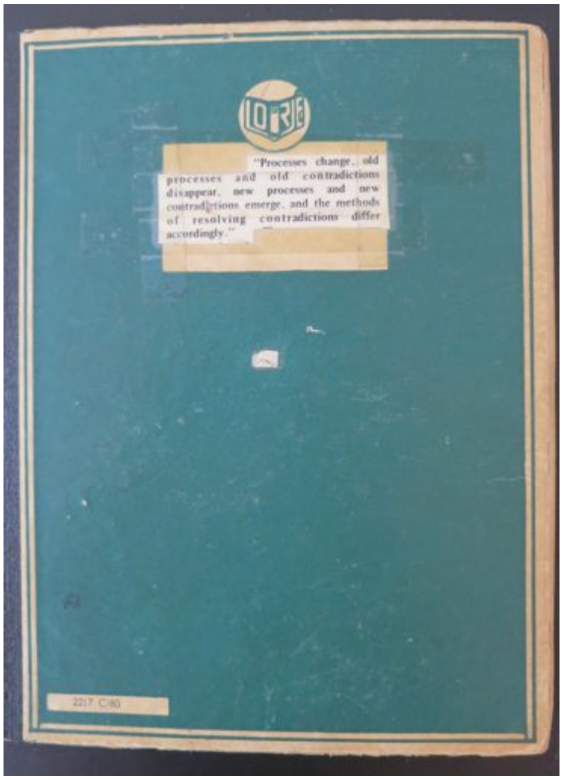
119. Jasper Johns*, White Flag*, 1955



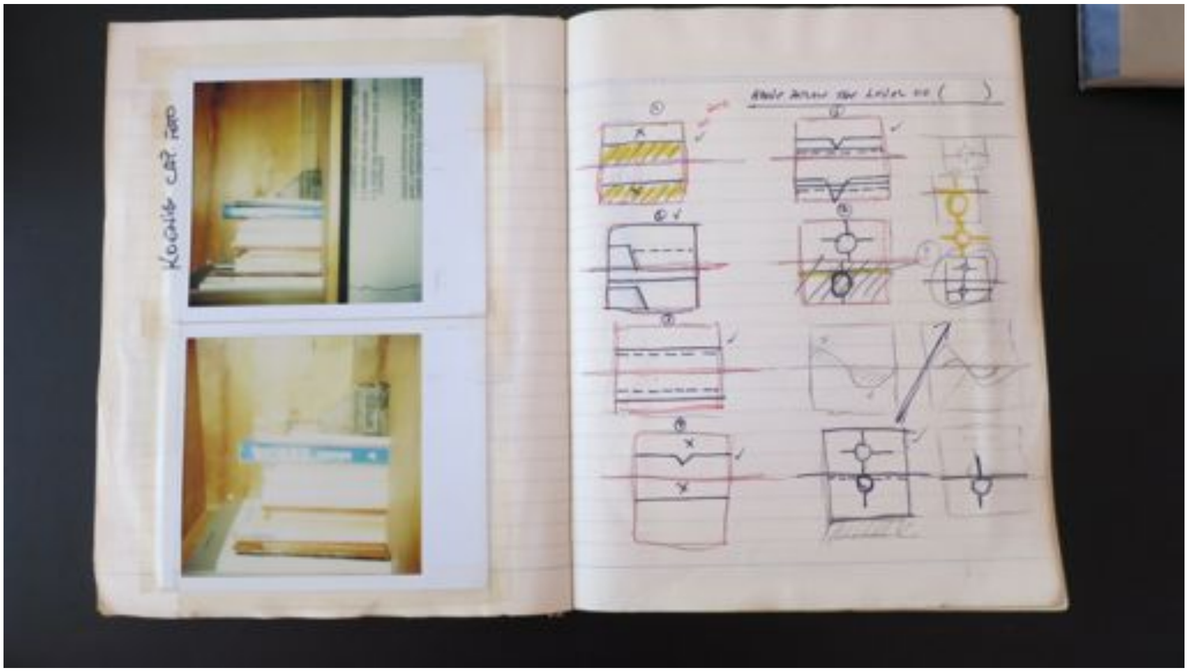


120. Lawrence Weiner Notebook January 1985 - August 86, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

121. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1978, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



"Processes change, old processes and old contradictions disappear, new processes and new contradictions emerge, and the methods of resolving contradictions differ accordingly."



122. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1975, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

123. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1978, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

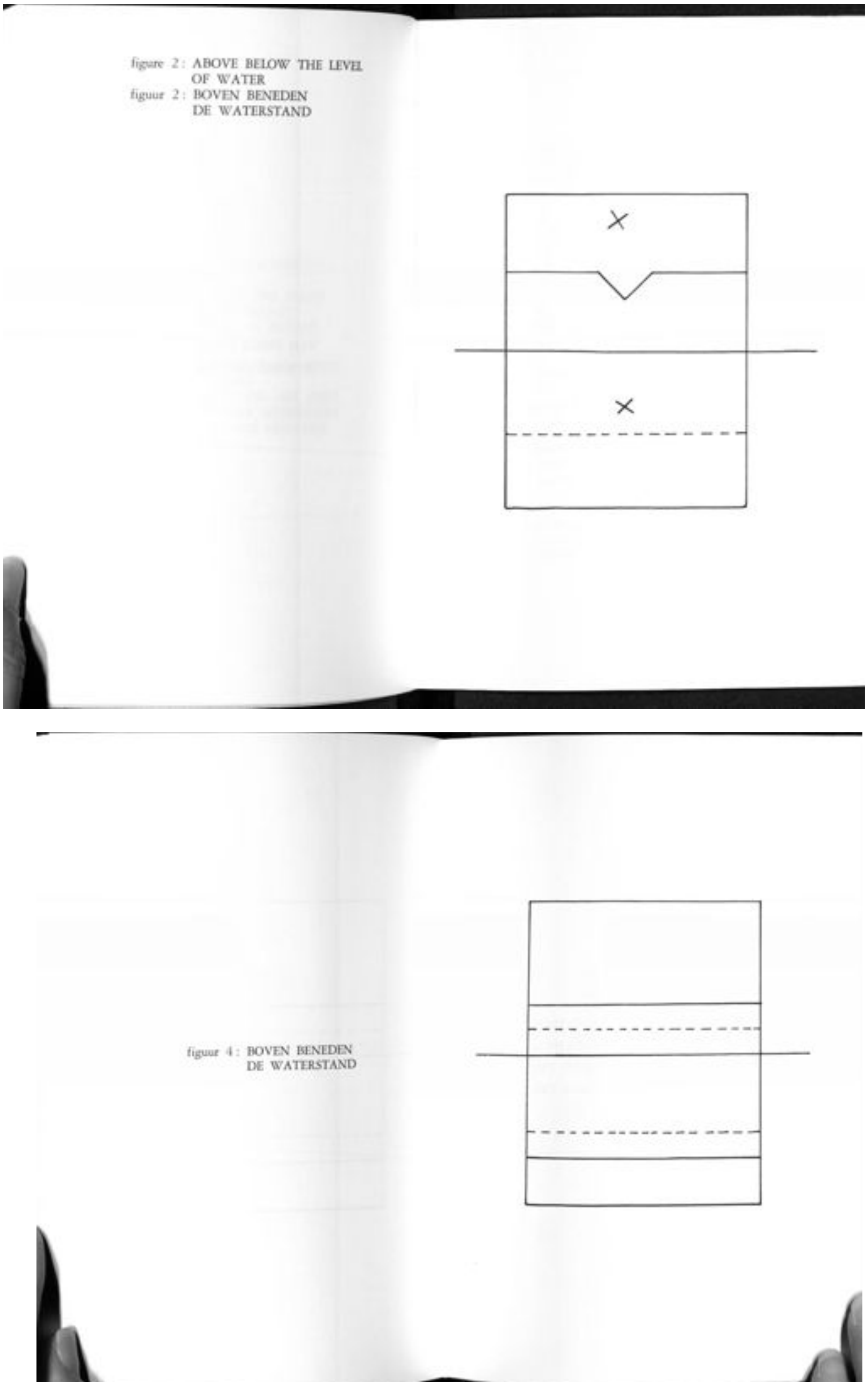
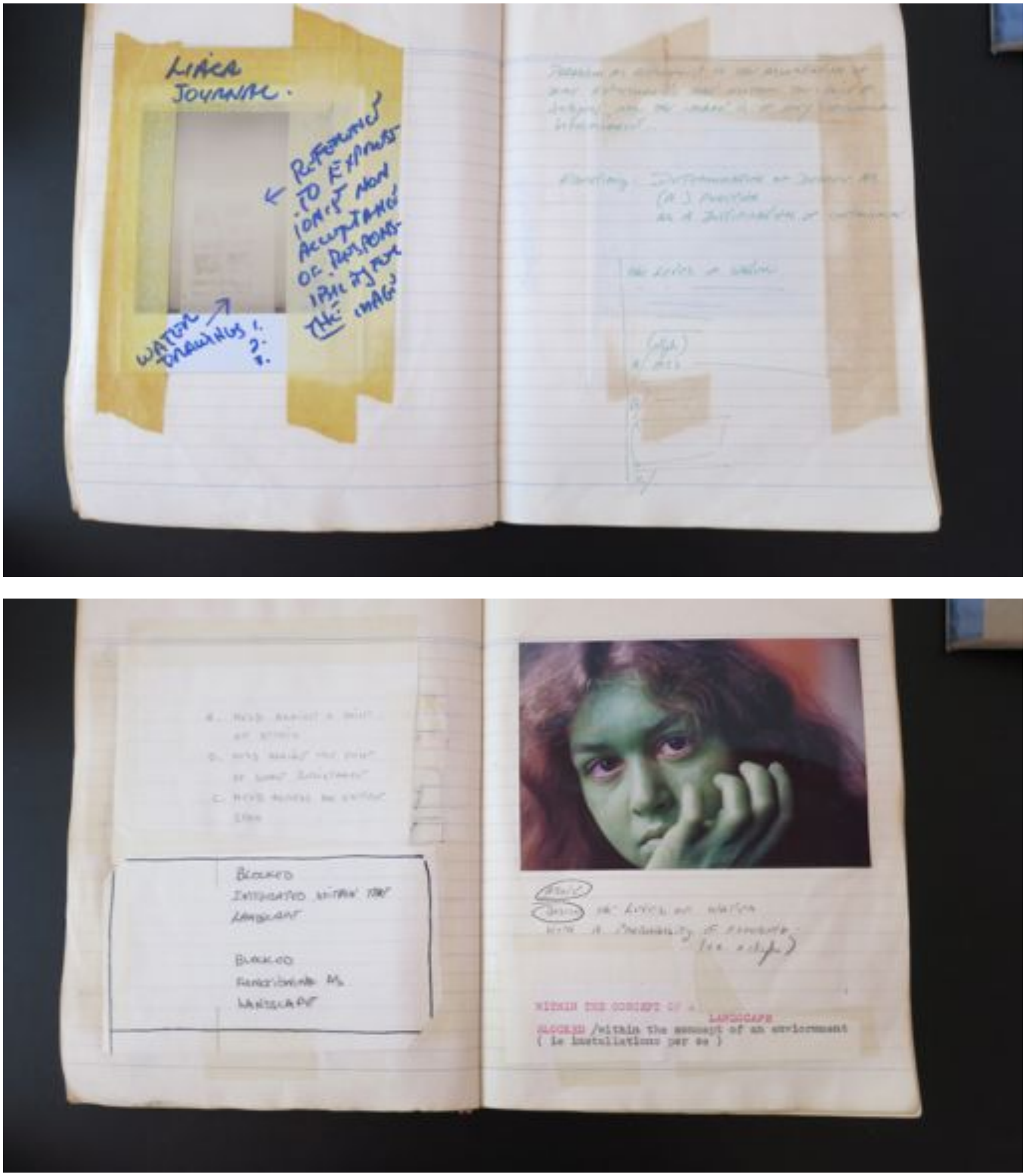


figure 2 : ABOVE BELOW THE LEVEL
OF WATER
figuur 2 : BOVEN BENEDEN
DE WATERSTAND

figuur 4 : BOVEN BENEDEN
DE WATERSTAND

124a & 124b. Lawrence Weiner, *The Level Of Water – De Waterstand*, 1978



LIACA
JOURNAL.

REFERRING
TO EXPANS-
ION OF NON
ACCEPTANCE
OF RESPONS-
IBILITY FOR
THE IMAGE

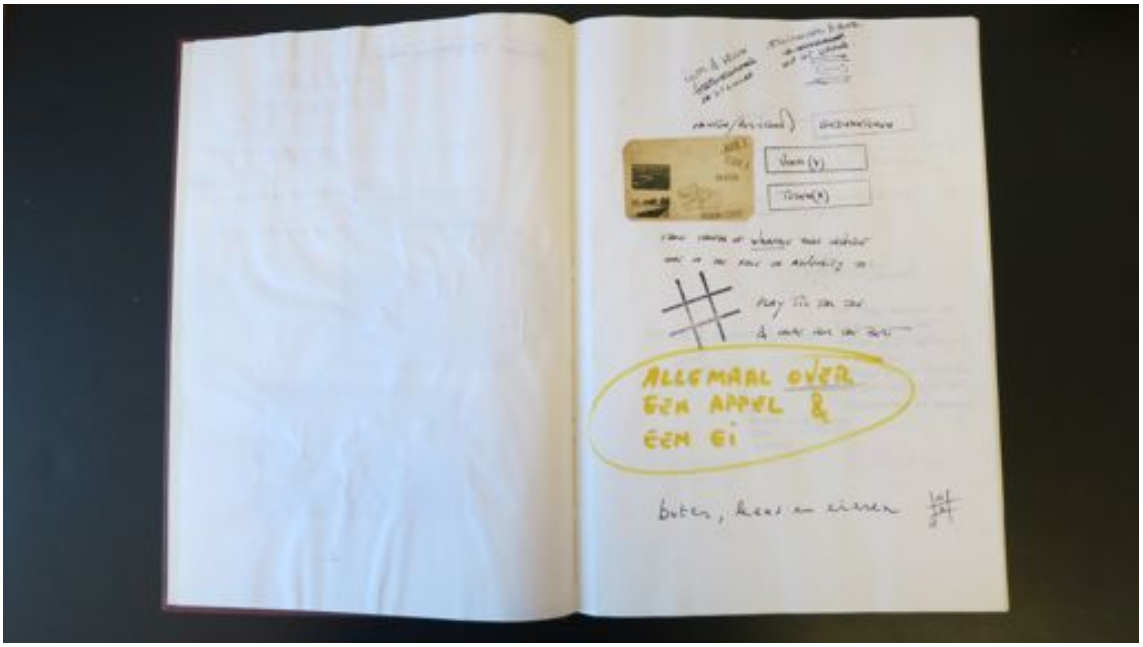
WATER
DRAWINGS 1.
2.
3.

BLOCKED
INTEGRATED WITHIN THE
LANDSCAPE

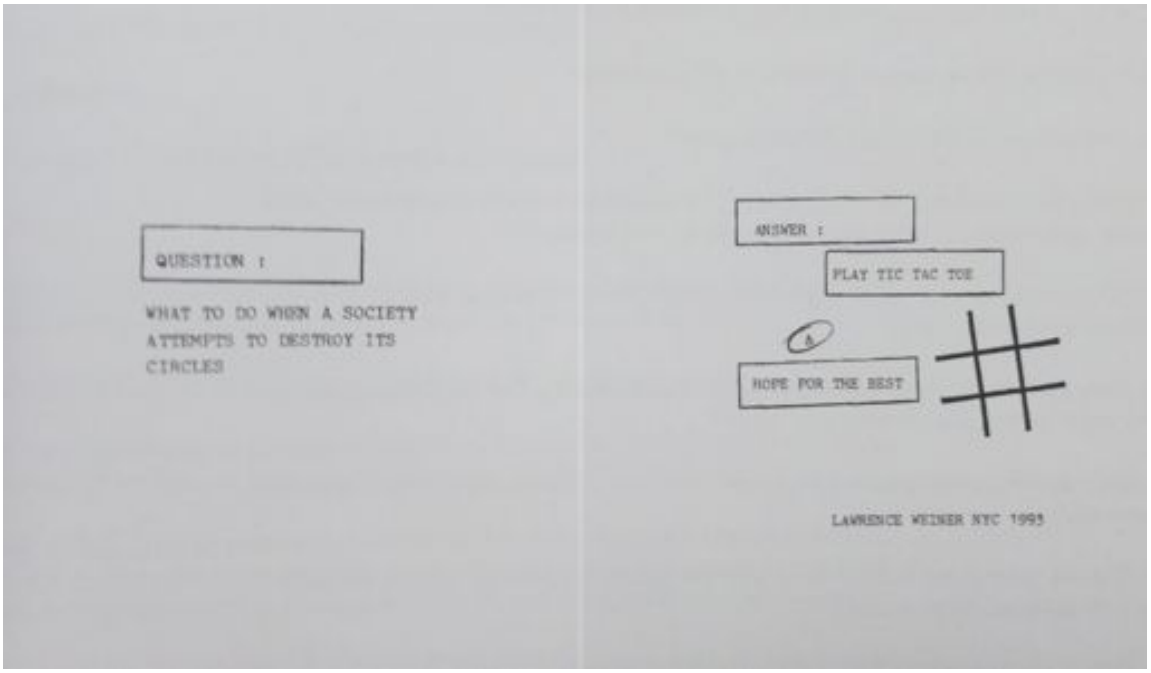
BLOCKED
FUNCTIONING AS
LANDSCAPE

WITHIN THE CONCEPT OF A
LANDSCAPE
BLOCKED /within the concept of an environment
(ie installations per se)

125a & 125b. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1978, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



ALLEMAAL OVER
EEN APPEL &
EEN EI



QUESTION :

WHAT TO DO WHEN A SOCIETY
ATTEMPTS TO DESTROY ITS
CIRCLES

ANSWER :

PLAY TIC TAC TOE

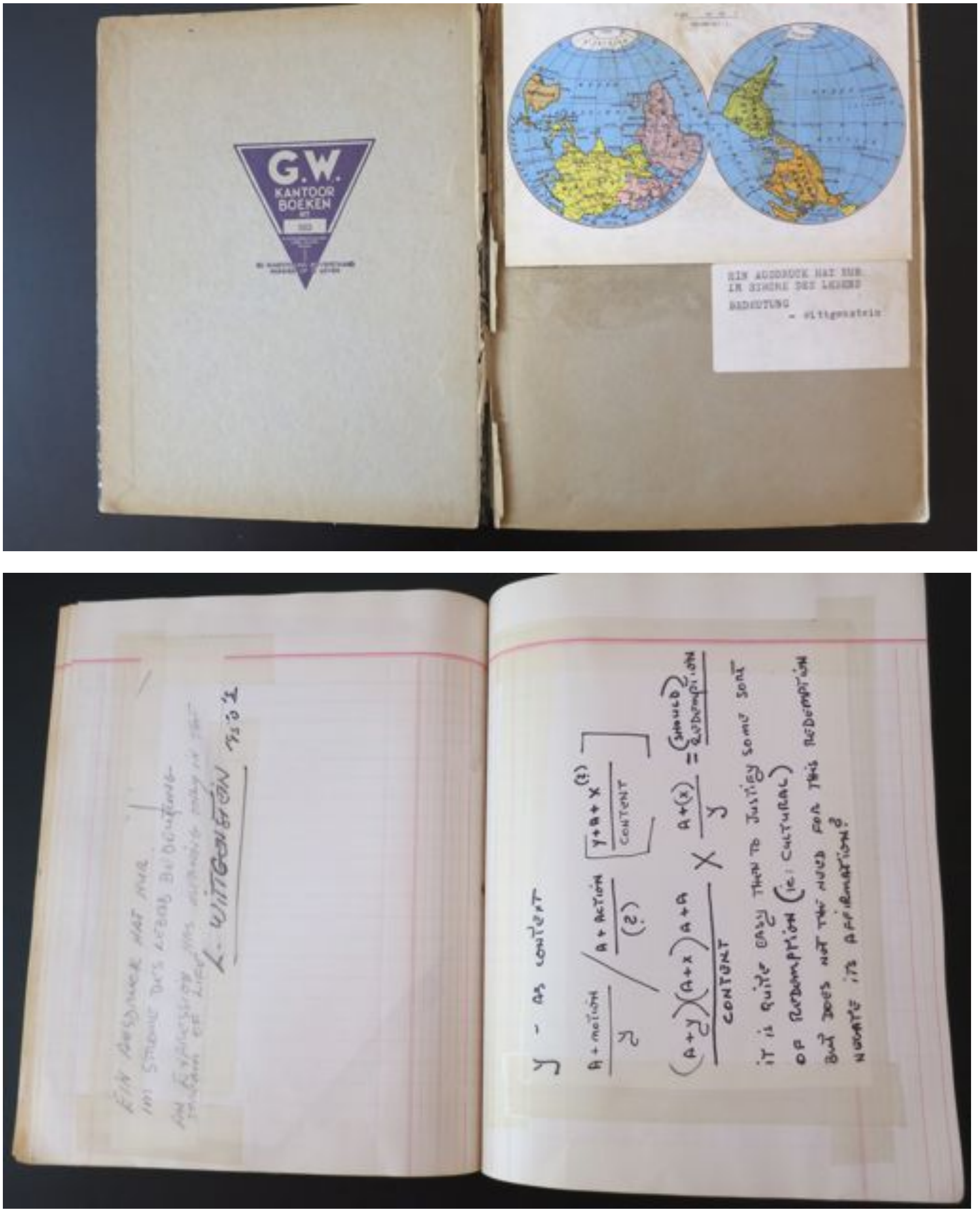
&

HOPE FOR THE BEST

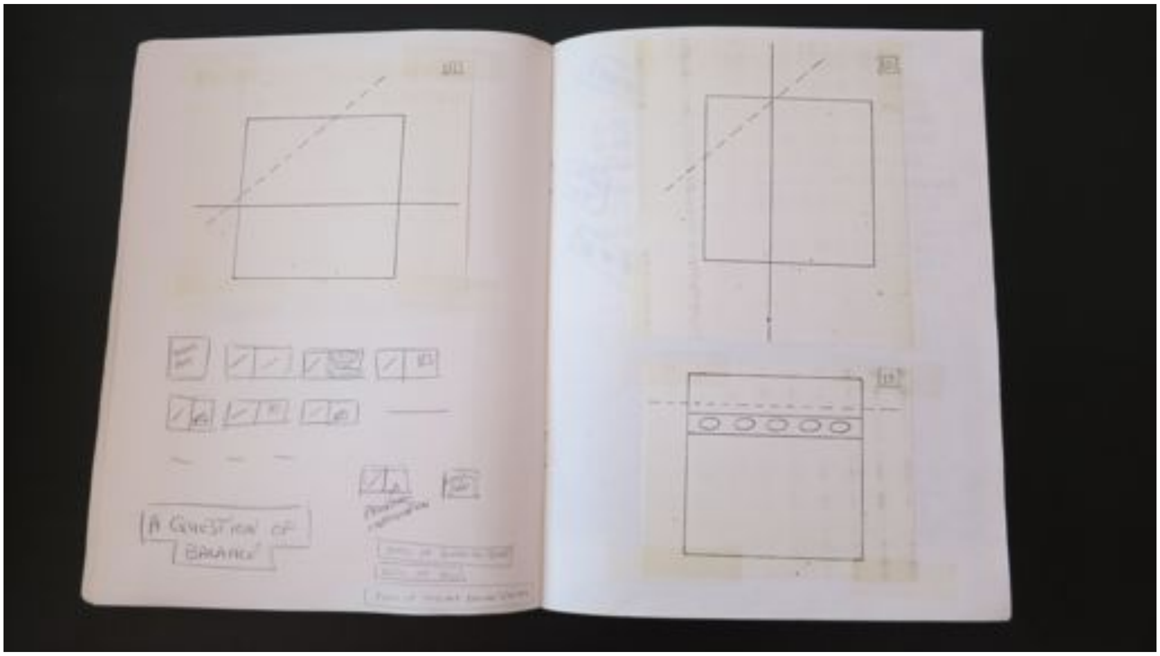
LAWRENCE WEINER NYC 1993

126. Lawrence Weiner Notebook July 1994 – April 1995, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

127. Lawrence Weiner, [Question/Answer], *White Walls*, nos. 22-23, 1994

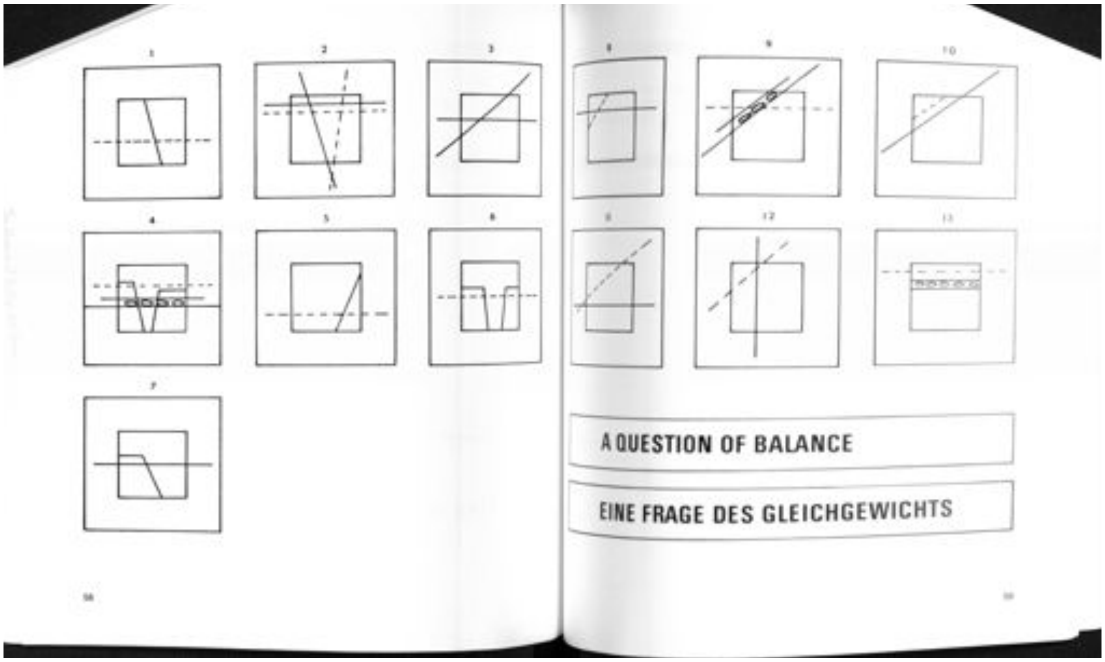


128a & 128b. Lawrence Weiner Notebook, 1975 Moved Pictures Archive, New York



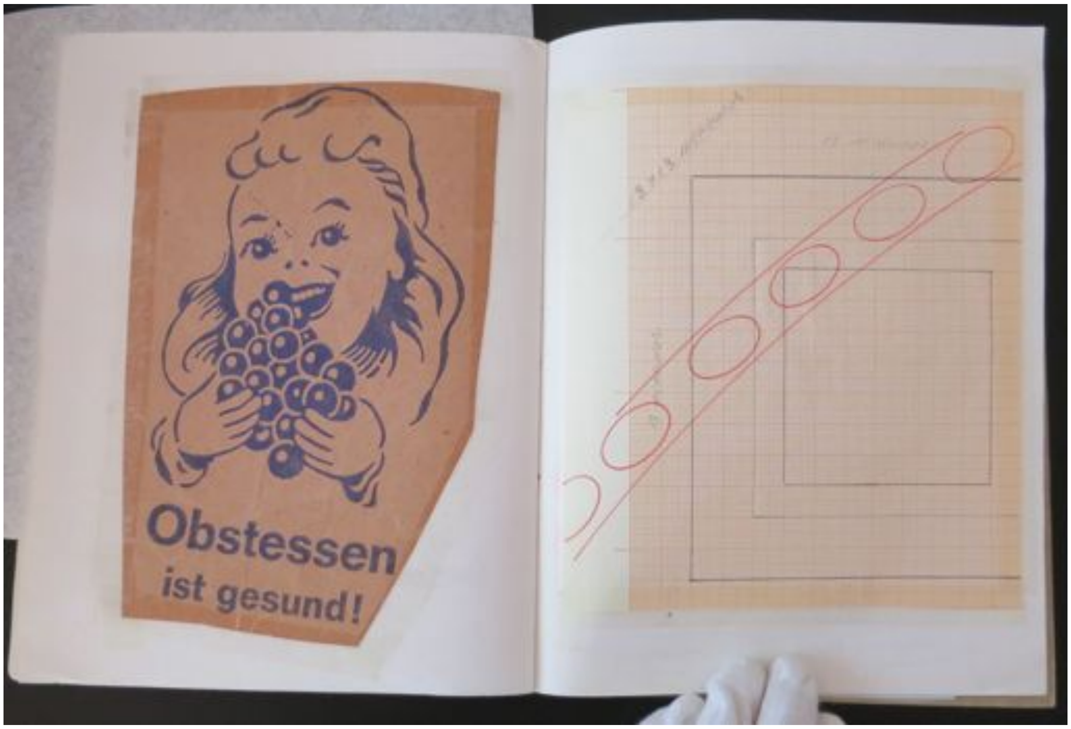
129. Dan Flavin, *Pink out of a Corner from No. 1 of December 19*, 1963

130. Lawrence Weiner Notebook January - March 1981, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



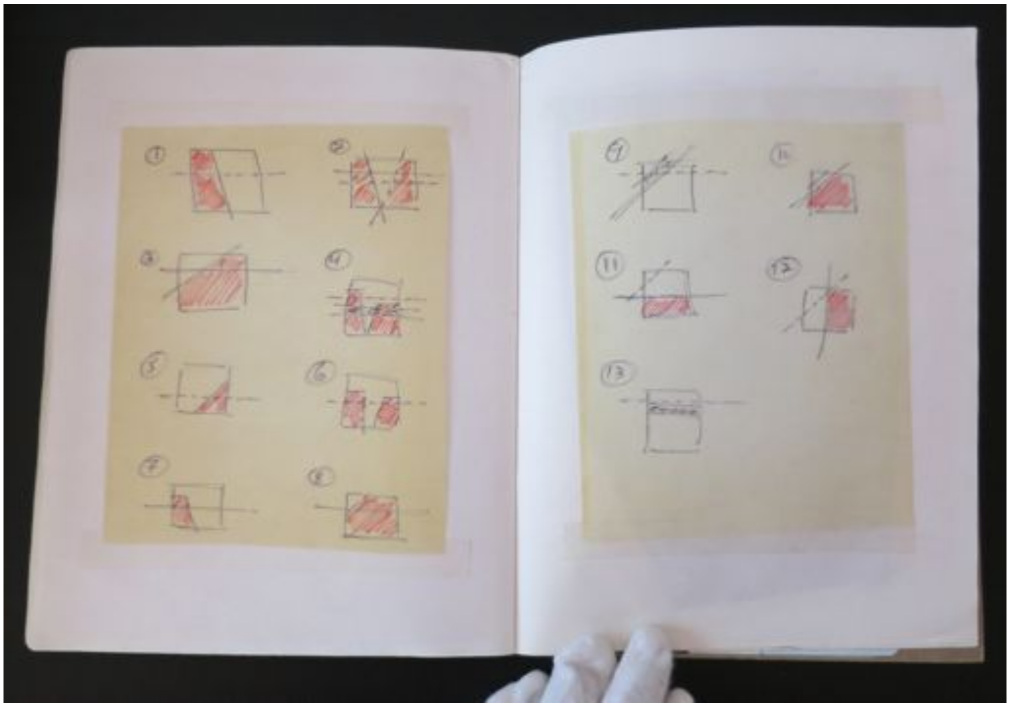
A QUESTION OF BALANCE

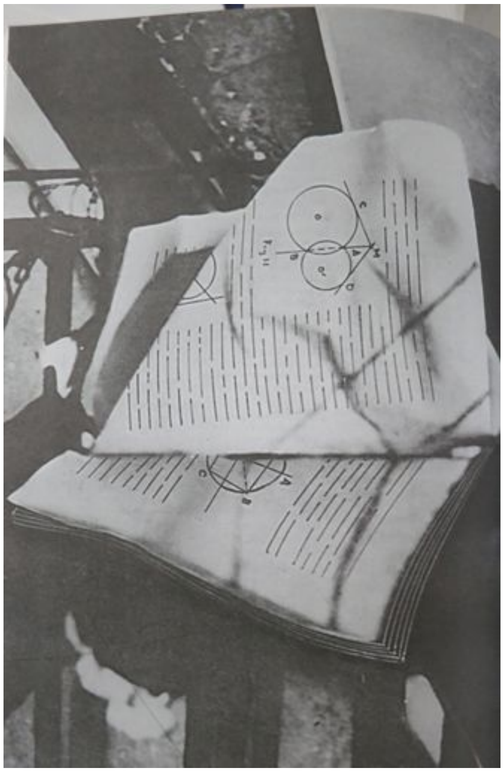
EINE FRAGE DES GLEICHGEWICHTS



131. Lawrence Weiner, *A Question Of Balance* drawings published in *Works & Reconstructions,* 1983

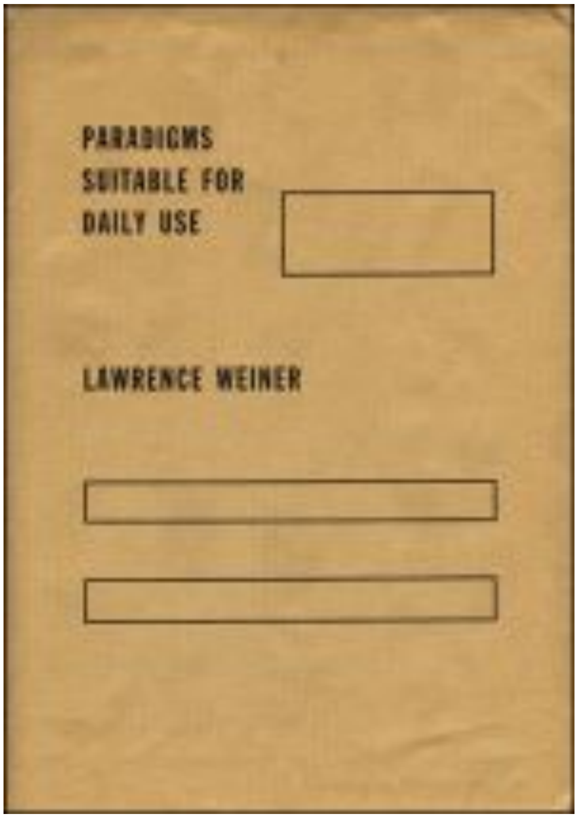
132. Lawrence Weiner Notebook January – March 1981, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

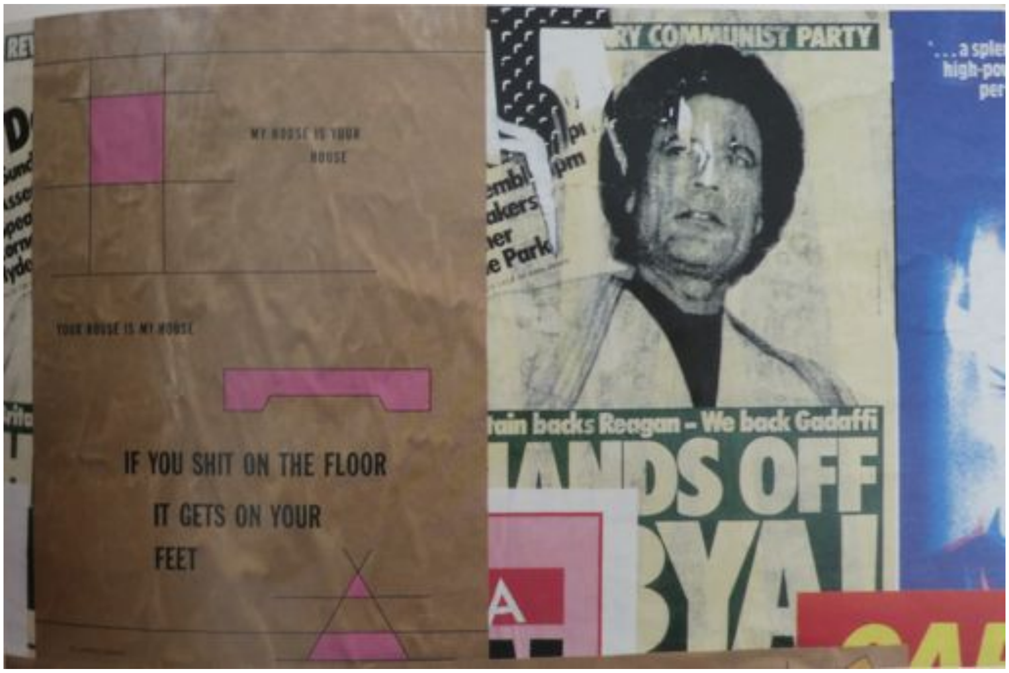




133. Lawrence Weiner Notebook January – March 1981, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

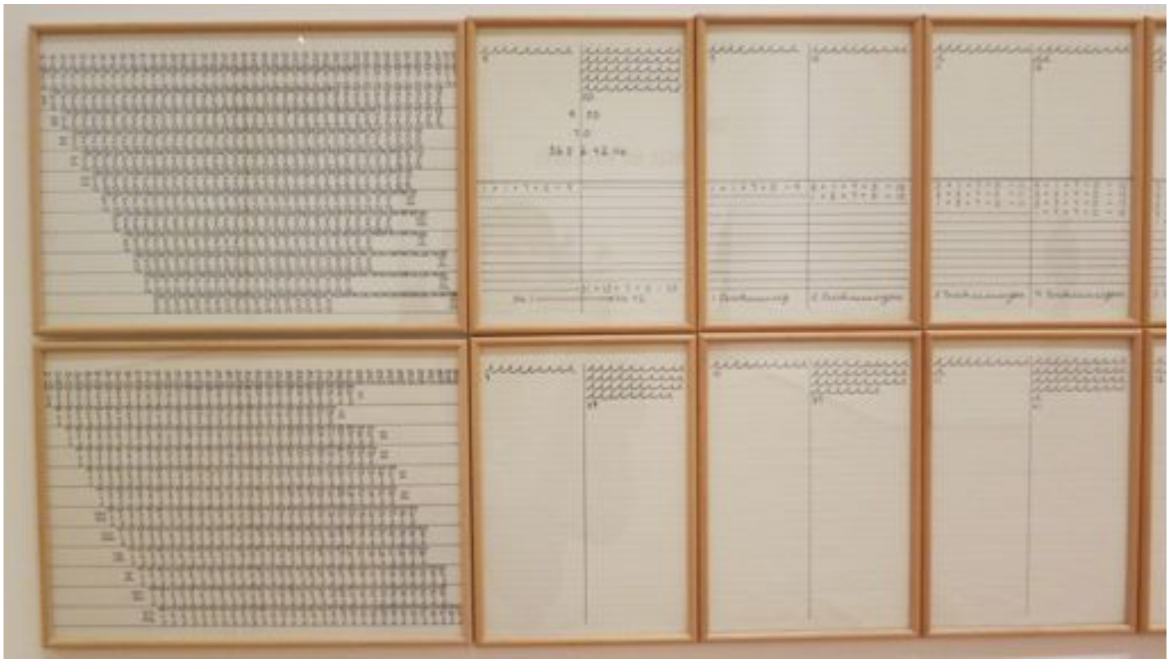
134. Marcel Duchamp, *Unhappy Readymade from Boîe-en-Valise*, 1993-1941, 1938





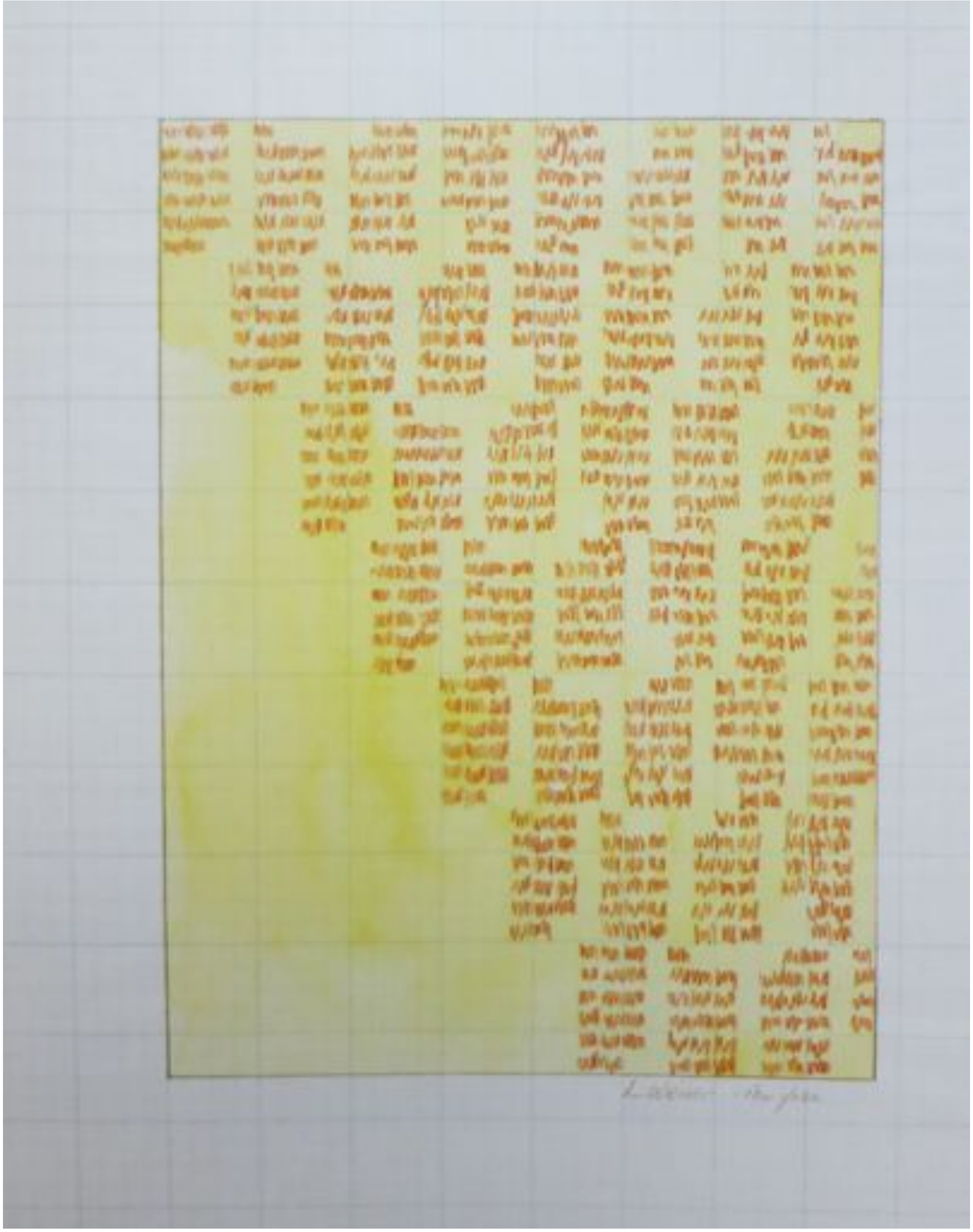
135. Lawrence Weiner, *Paradigms For Daily Use*, one of two posters in printed envelope published in conjunction with exhibition for AIR gallery, London 1986

136. Lawrence Weiner, *My House Is Your House Hour House Is My House If You Shit On The Floor It Gets On Your Feet*, poster for AIR gallery, London, 1985

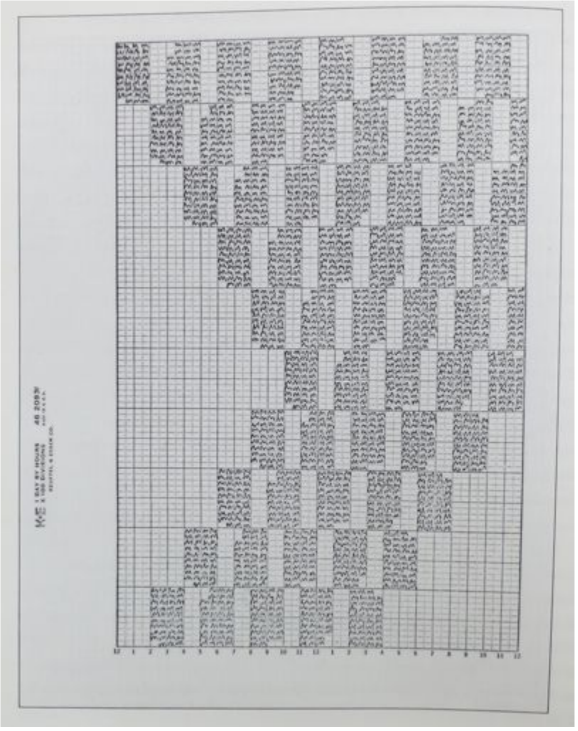


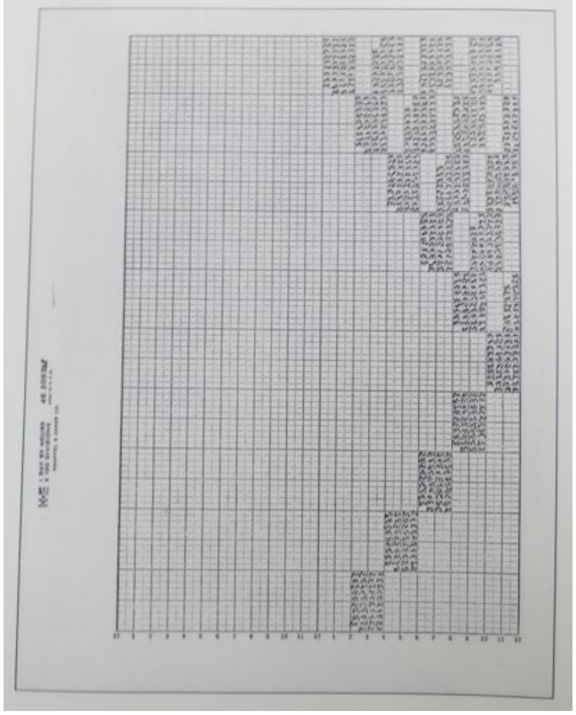
137. Sol LeWitt, *Serial Project, 1 (ABCD),* 1966

138. Hanne Darboven, *Ein Jahr* (detail), 1970

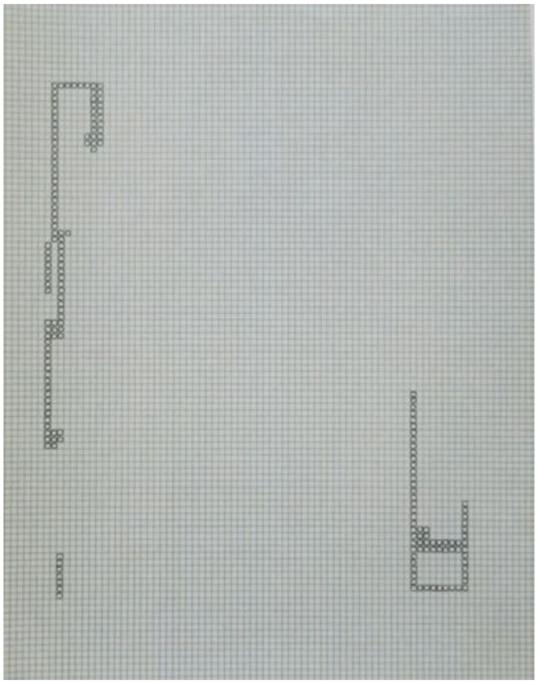


139. Lawrence Weiner, *Untitled,* 1965



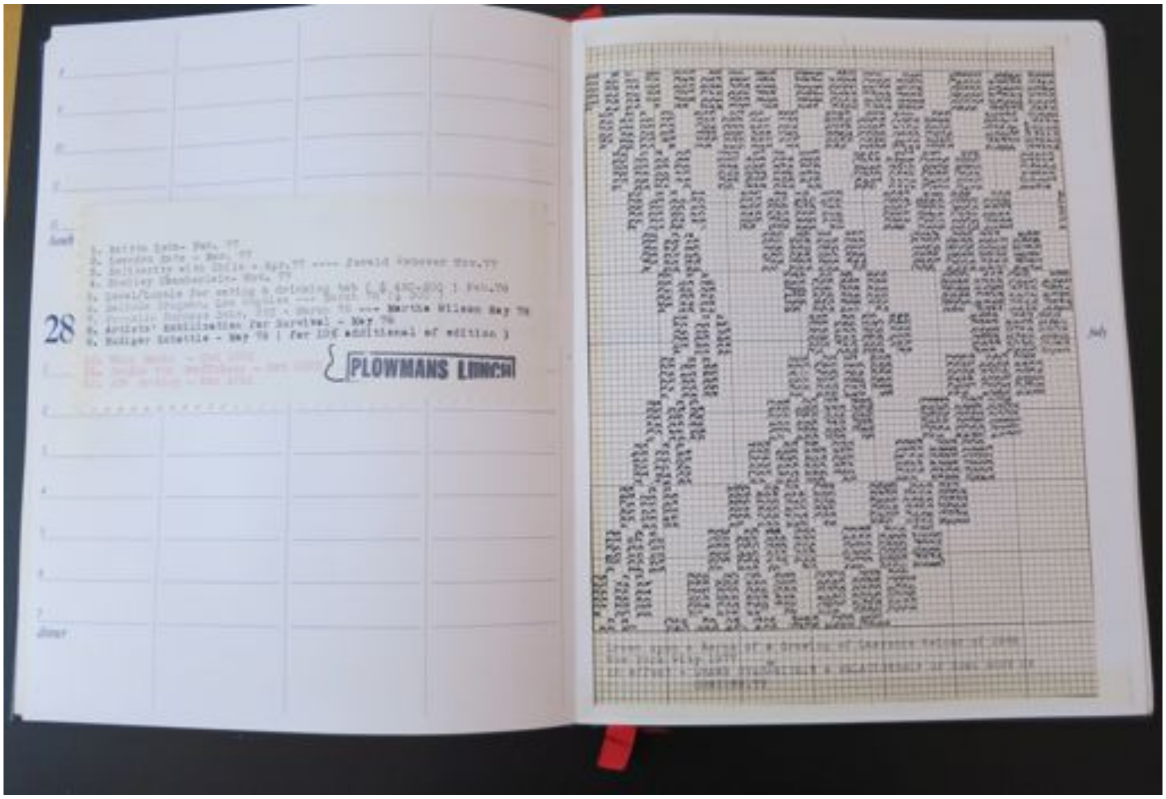


140a & 140b. Lawrence Weiner, *Untitled*, 1968

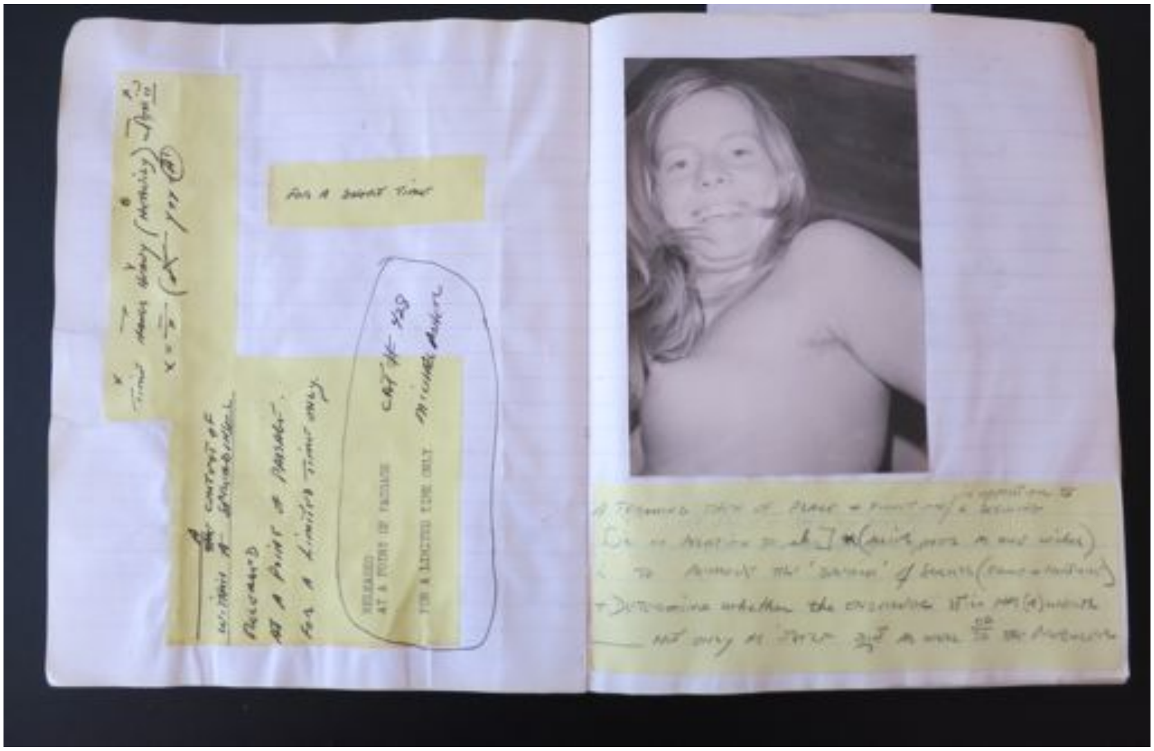


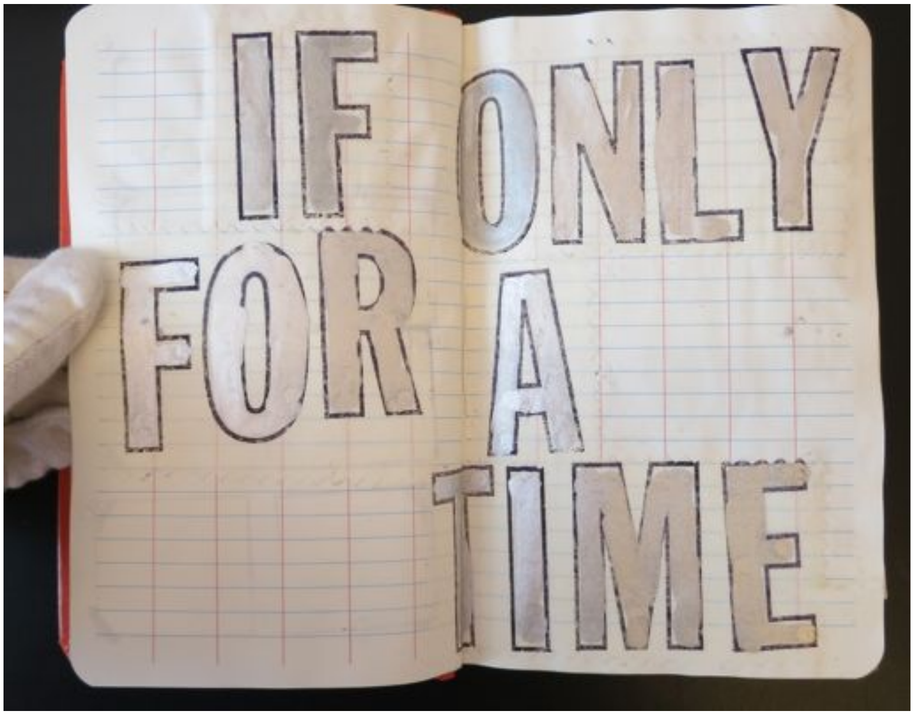
142. Eva Hesse, *no title*, 1967

143. Alighiero Boetti, *Cimento dell'armonia e dell'invenzione (Contest of Harmony and Invention)*, 1969



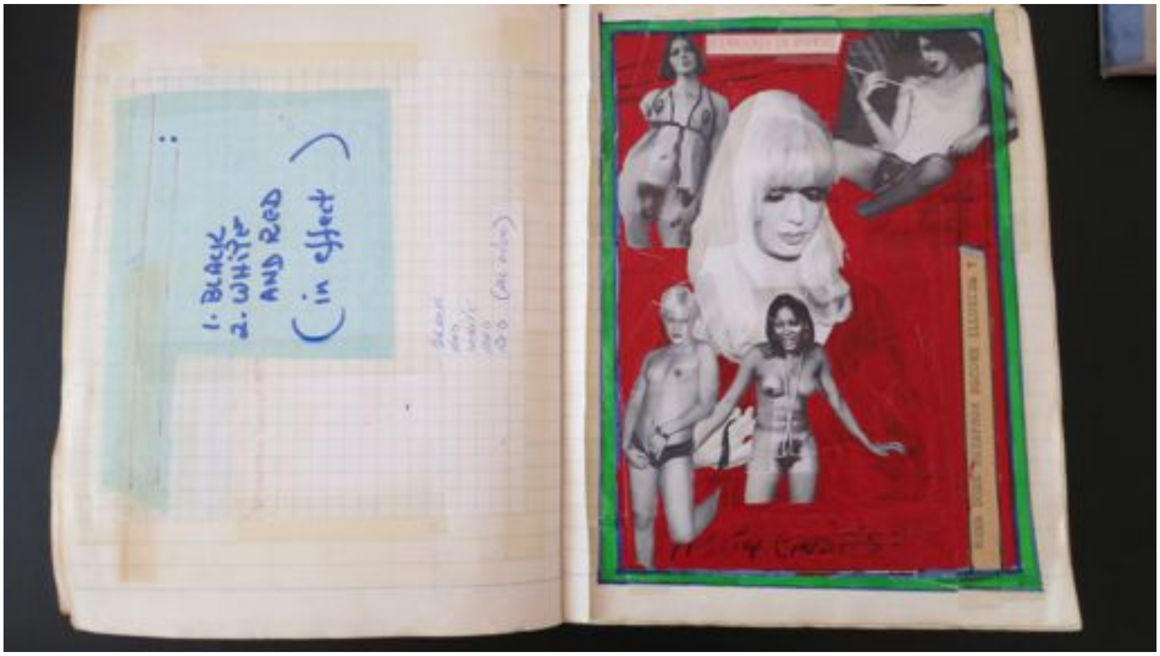
144. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1982, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

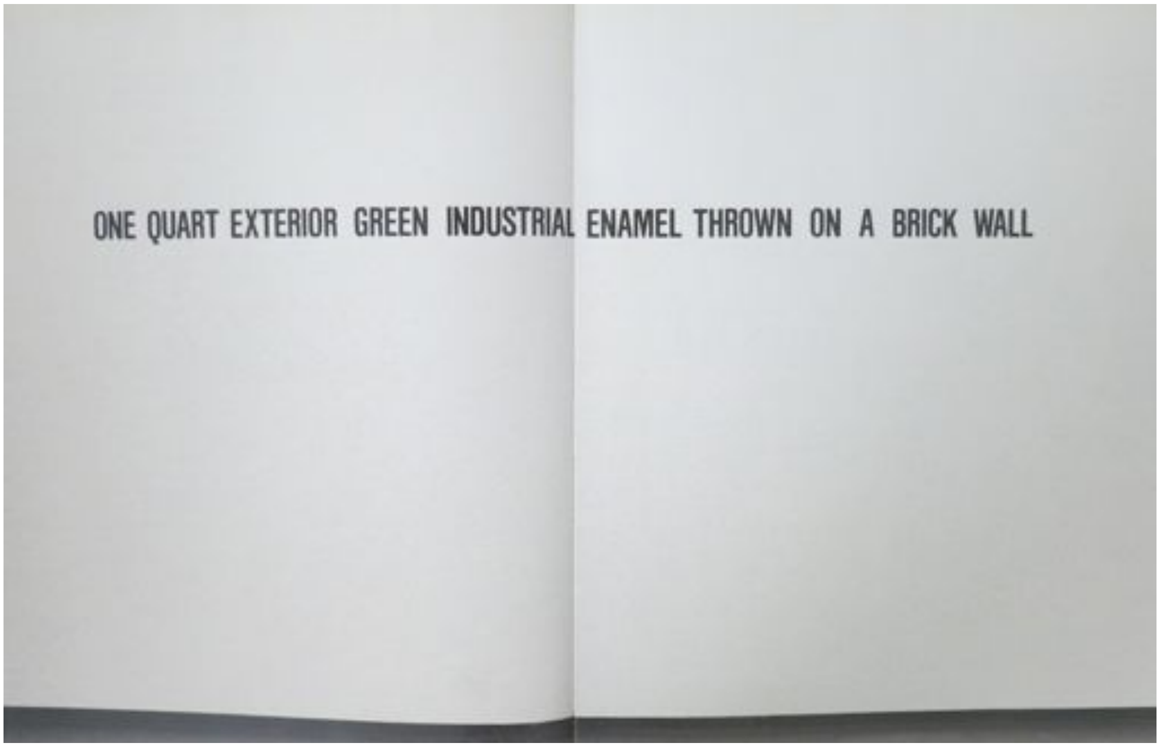




145. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1975-1978, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

146. Lawrence Weiner Notebook August 2001 – January 2002, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

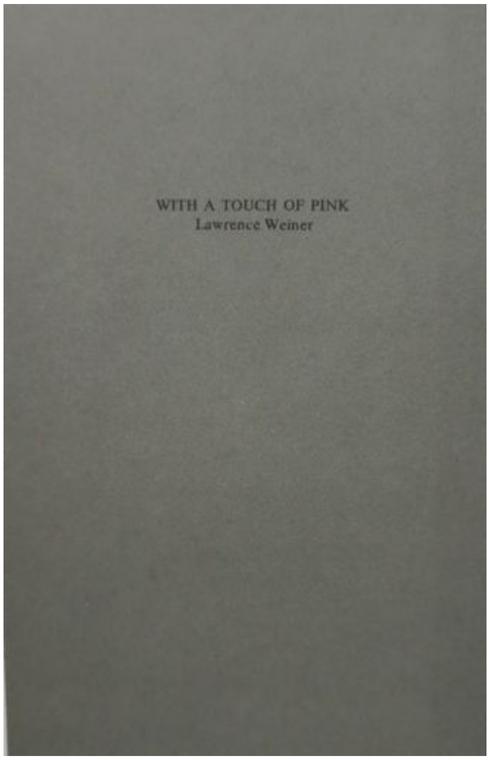




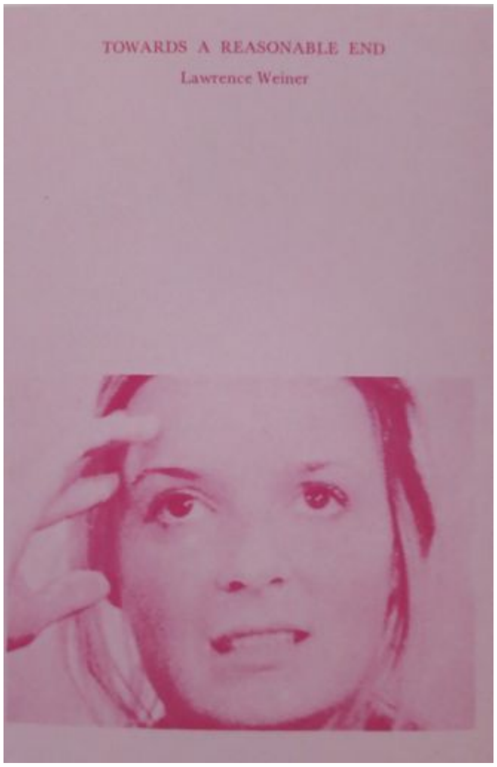
ONE QUART EXTERIOR GREEN INDUSTRIAL ENAMEL THROWN ON A BRICK WALL

147. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1978, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

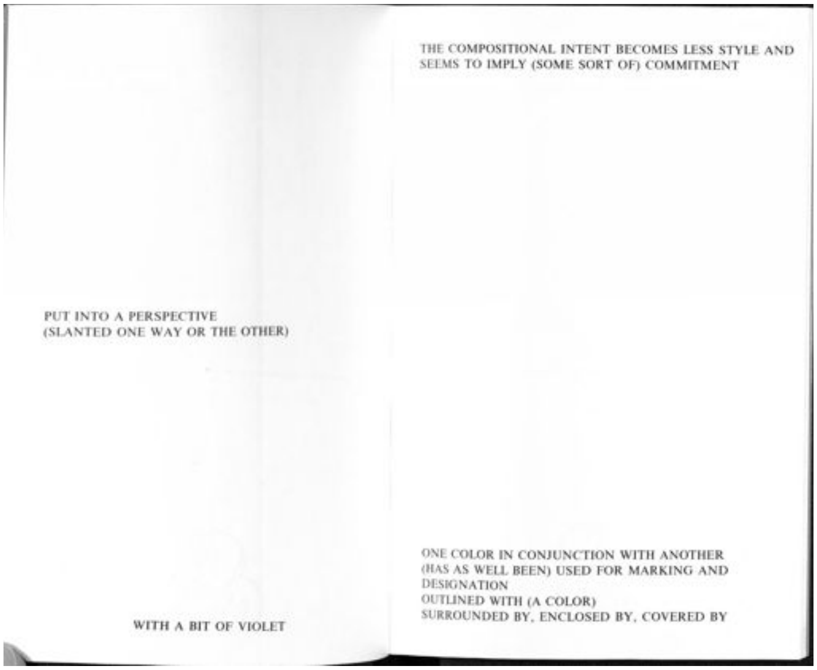
148. Lawrence Weiner, *ONE QUART EXTERIOR GREEN INDUSTRIAL ENAMEL THROWN ON A BRICK WALL,* installation at Paul Mantz, Cologne, 1983



WITH A TOUCH OF PINK
Lawrence Weiner



TOWARDS A REASONABLE END
Lawrence Weiner



PUT INTO A PERSPECTIVE
(SLANTED ONE WAY OR THE OTHER)

WITH A BIT OF VIOLET

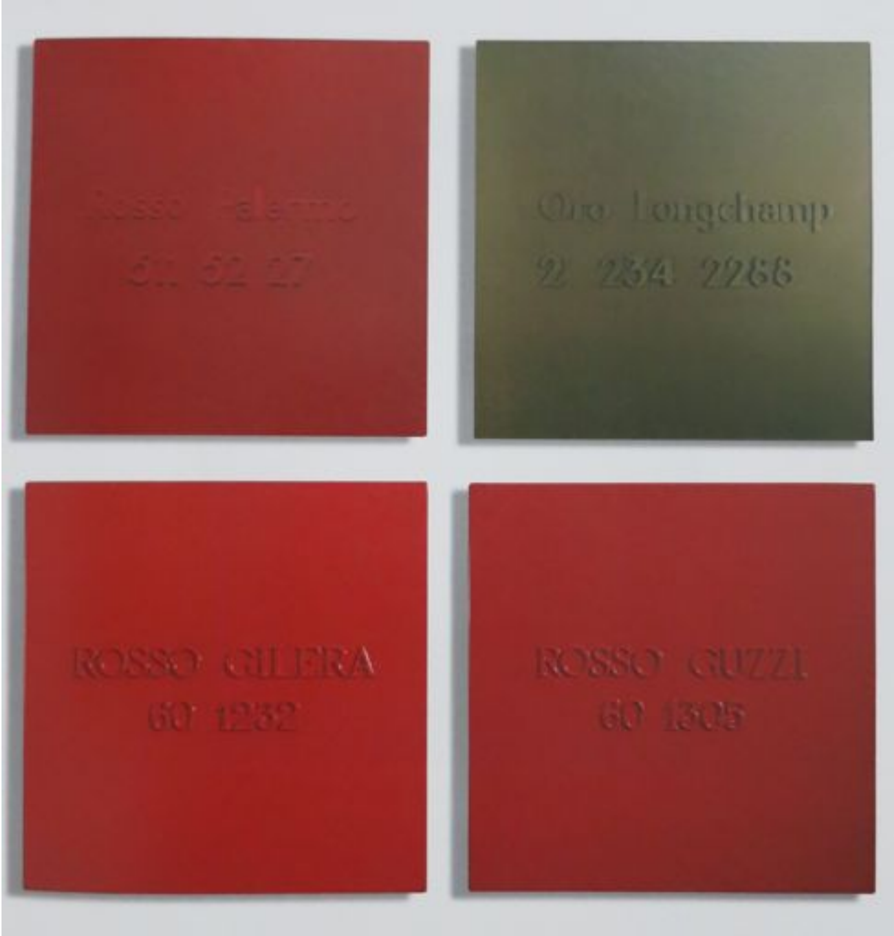
THE COMPOSITIONAL INTENT BECOMES LESS STYLE AND
SEEMS TO IMPLY (SOME SORT OF) COMMITMENT

ONE COLOR IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANOTHER
(HAS AS WELL BEEN) USED FOR MARKING AND
DESIGNATION
OUTLINED WITH (A COLOR)
SURROUNDED BY, ENCLOSED BY, COVERED BY

149. Lawrence Weiner, *With A Touch Of Pink*, 1978

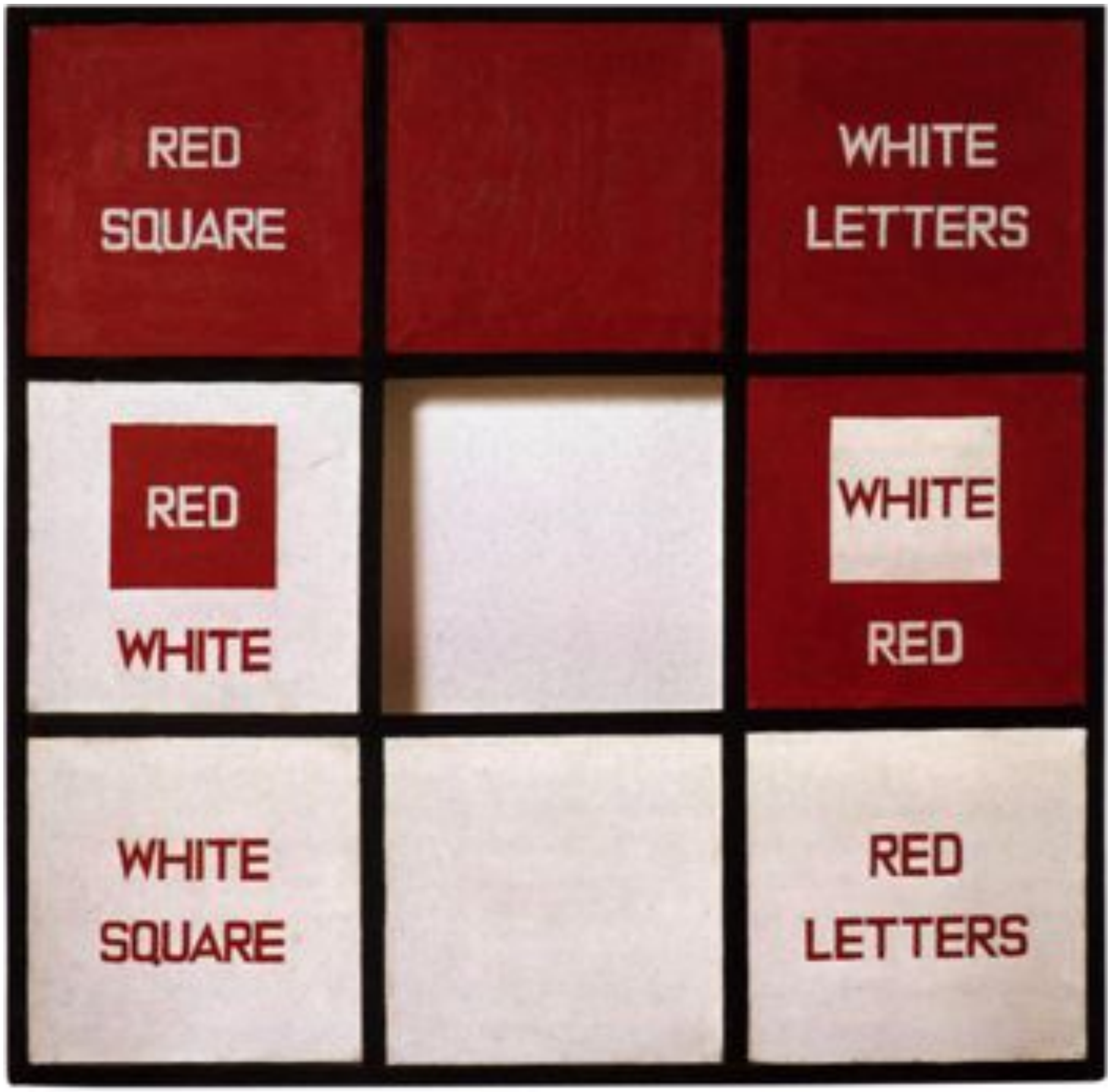
150. Lawrence Weiner, *Towards A Reasonable End,* 1975

151. Lawrence Weiner, *With A Touch Of Pink*, 1978

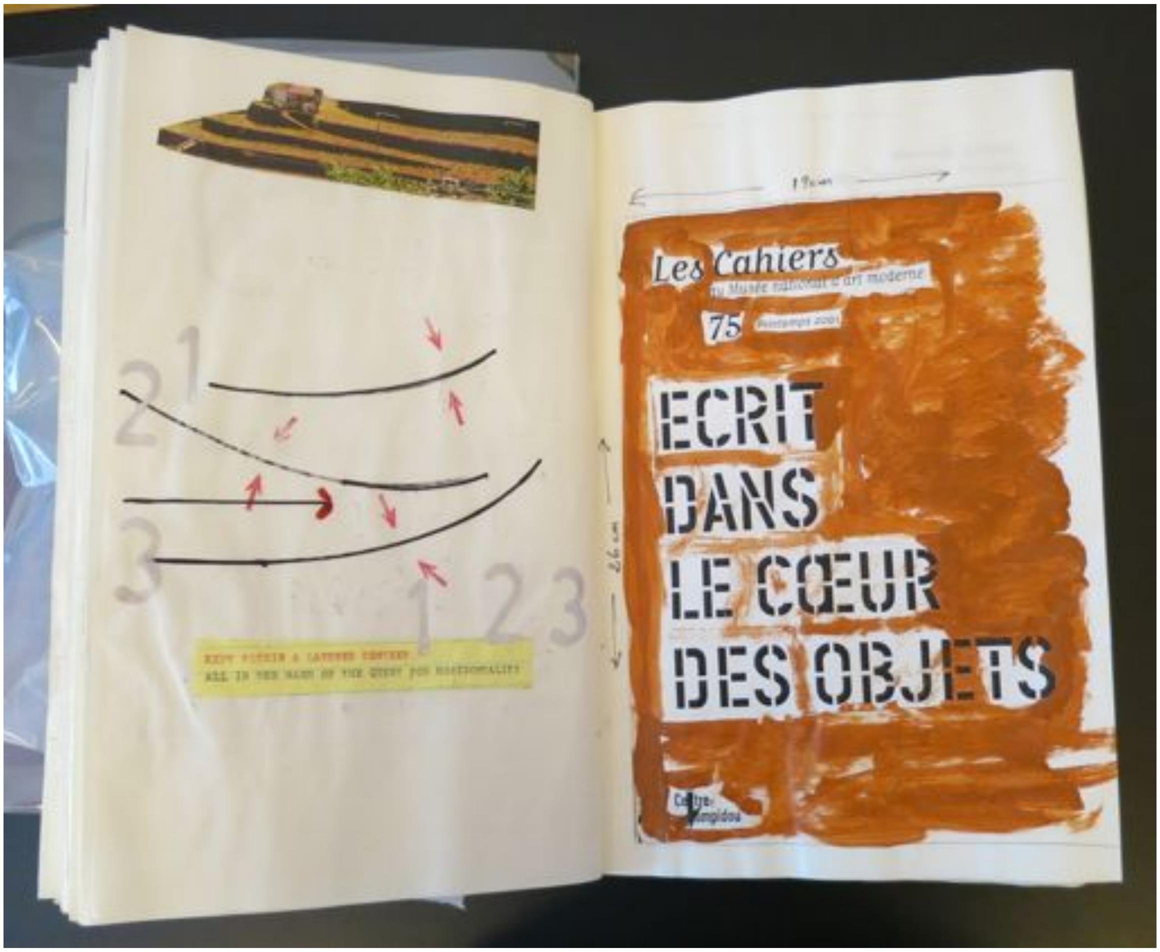


152. Yves Klein, *Blue Monochrome,* 1961

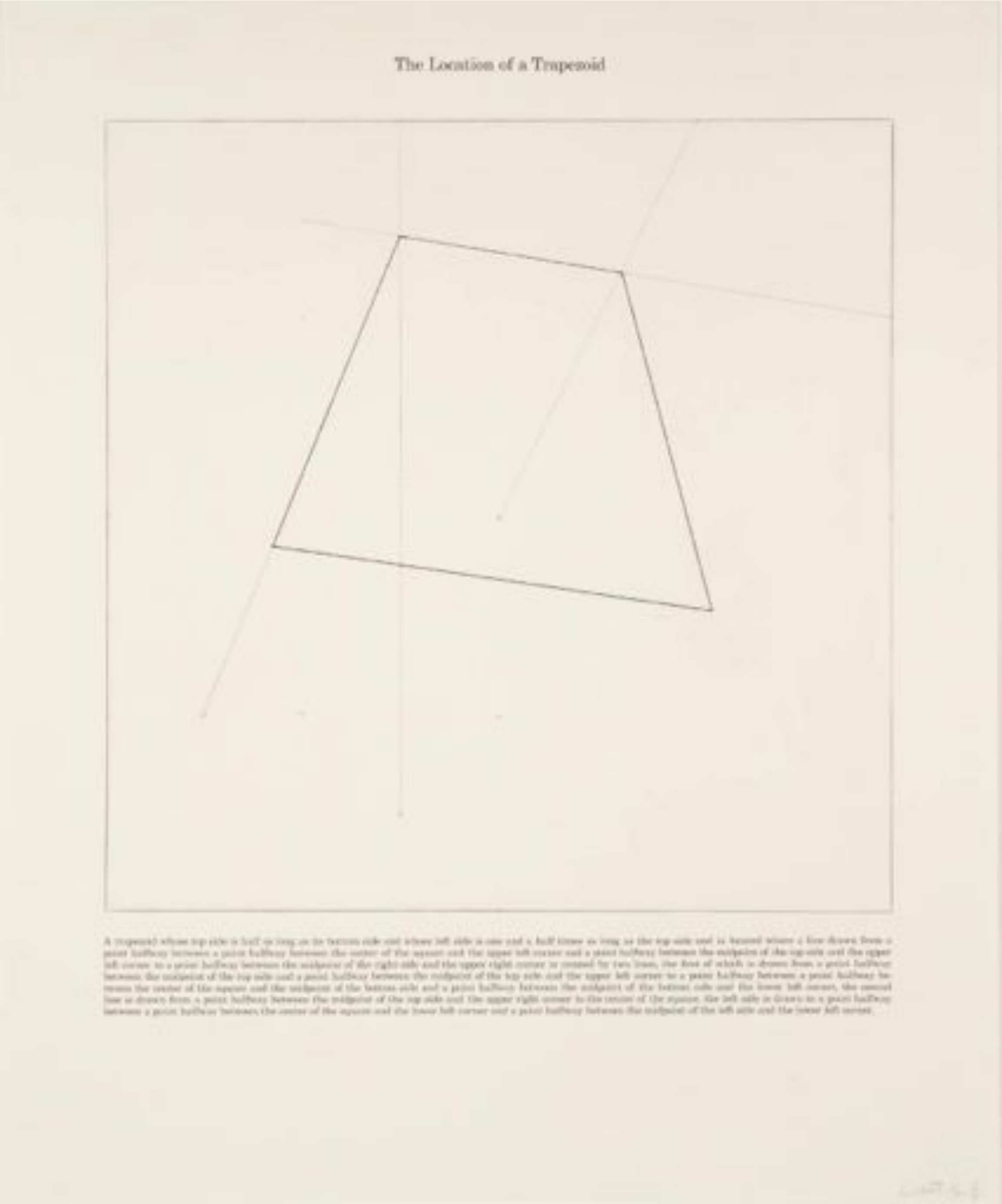
153. Alighiero Boetti, *Rosso Palermo, 511 52 27*, 1967; *Oro Longchamp, 2 234 2288* 1967; *ROSSO GILERA 60 1232   ROSSO GUZZI 60 1305*, 1967



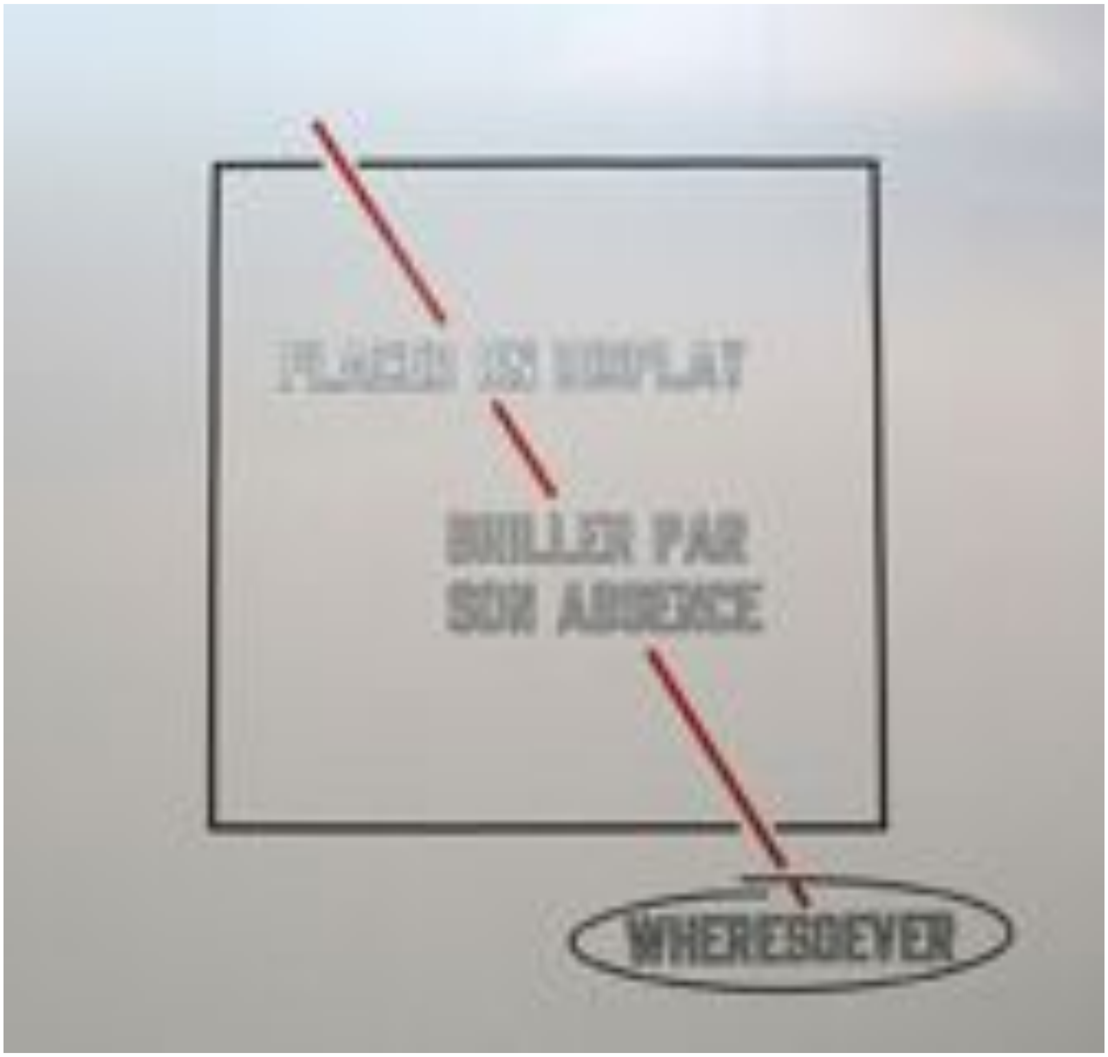
154. Sol LeWitt, *Untitled (Red Square, White Letters),* 1962



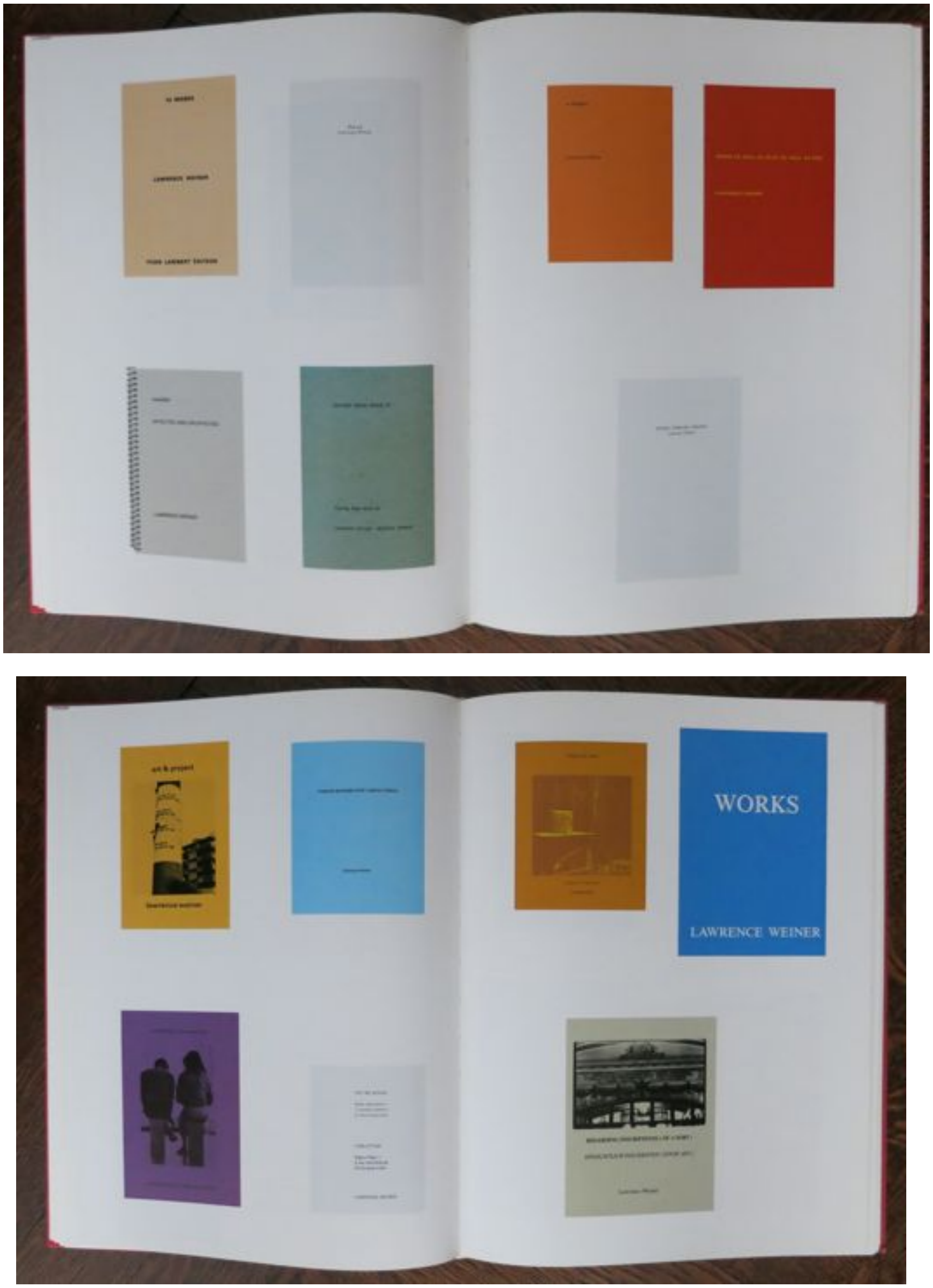
155. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 2001 – January 2002, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



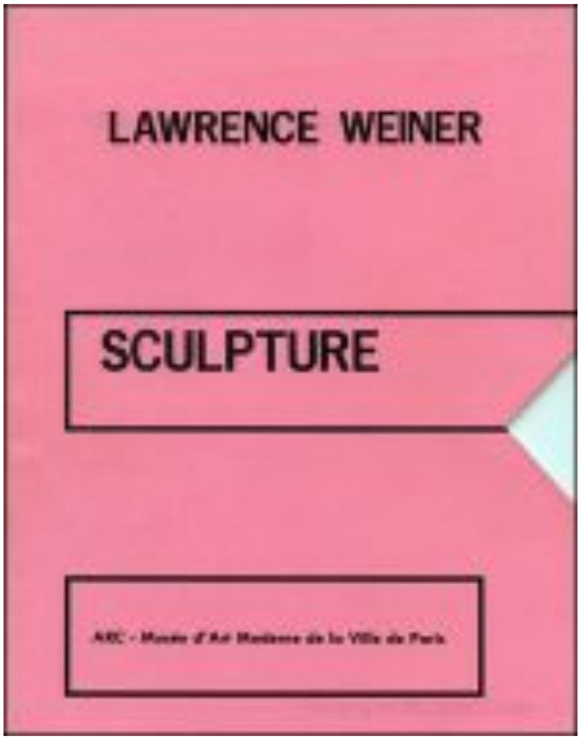
156. Sol LeWitt, *Untitled (The Location of a Trapezoid),* 1974



157. Lawrence Weiner, *PLACED ON DISPLAY BRILLER PAR SON ABSENCE WHERESOEVER* (2008), installation at Yvon Lambert, Paris, 2009

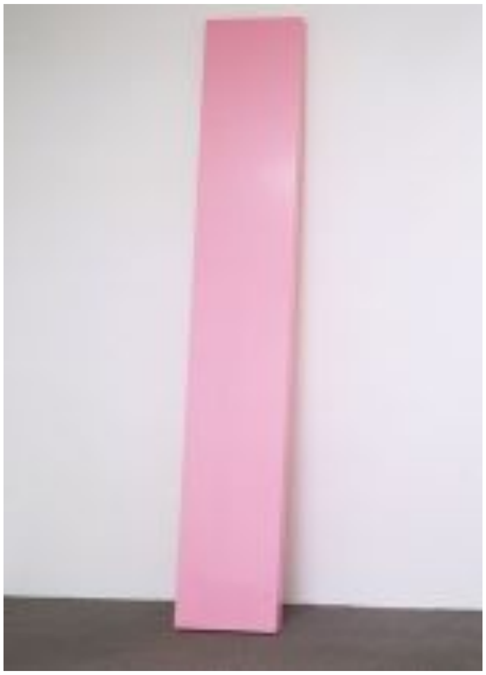


158a & 158b. Lawrence Weiner book cover designs, 1971 - 1978



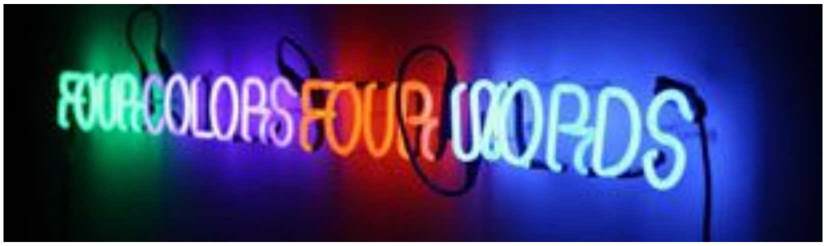
LAWRENCE WEINER

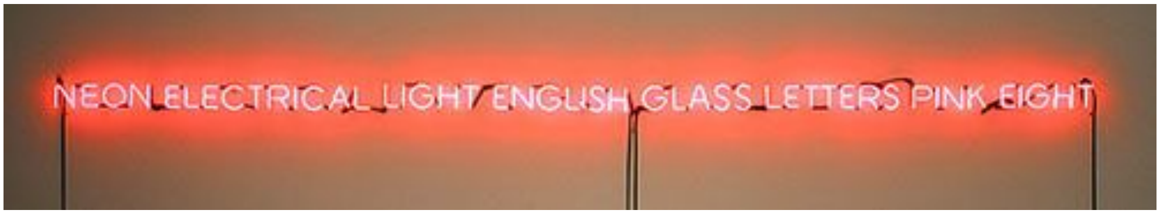
SCULPTURE

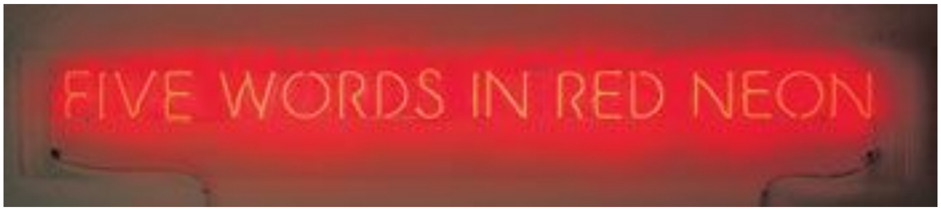


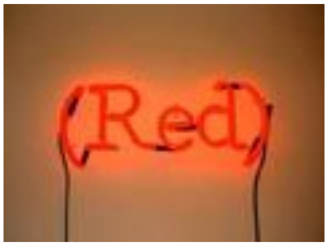
159. Lawrence Weiner, *Sculpture*, exh. cat., 1985

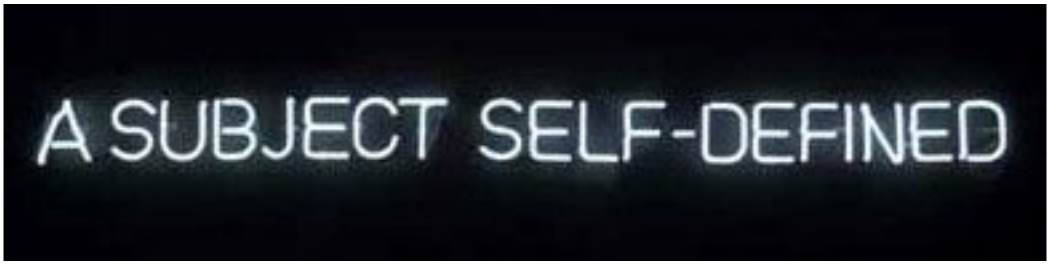
160. John McCracken, *The Absolutely Naked Fragrance*, 1967











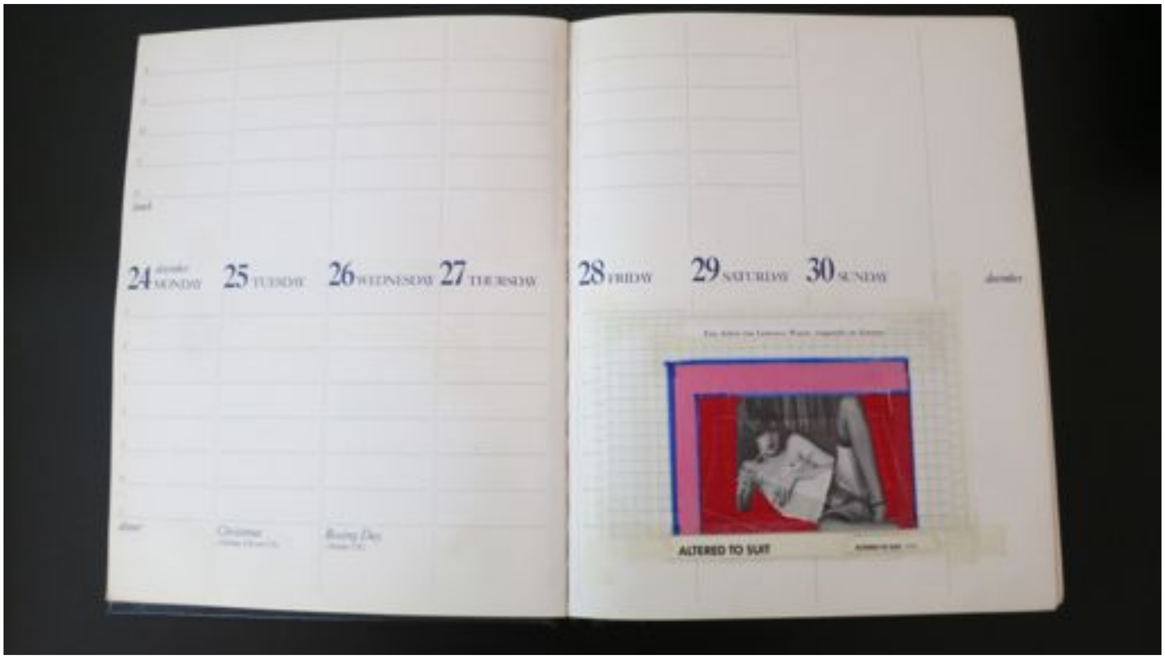
161a. Joseph Kosuth, *Four Colors Four Words*, 1966

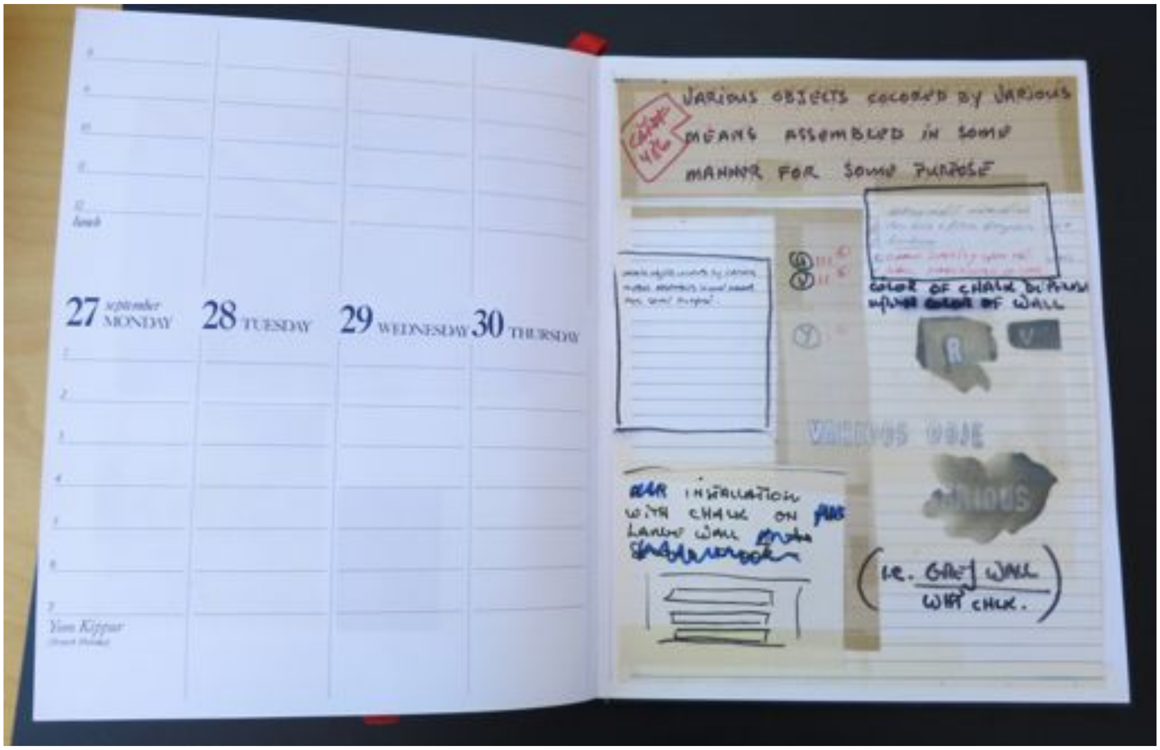
161b. Joseph Kosuth, *Neon Electrical Light English Glass Letters Pink Eight*, 1966

161c. Joseph Kosuth, *Five Words In Red Neon*, 1965

161d. Joseph Kosuth, *Wittgenstein's Color*, 1989

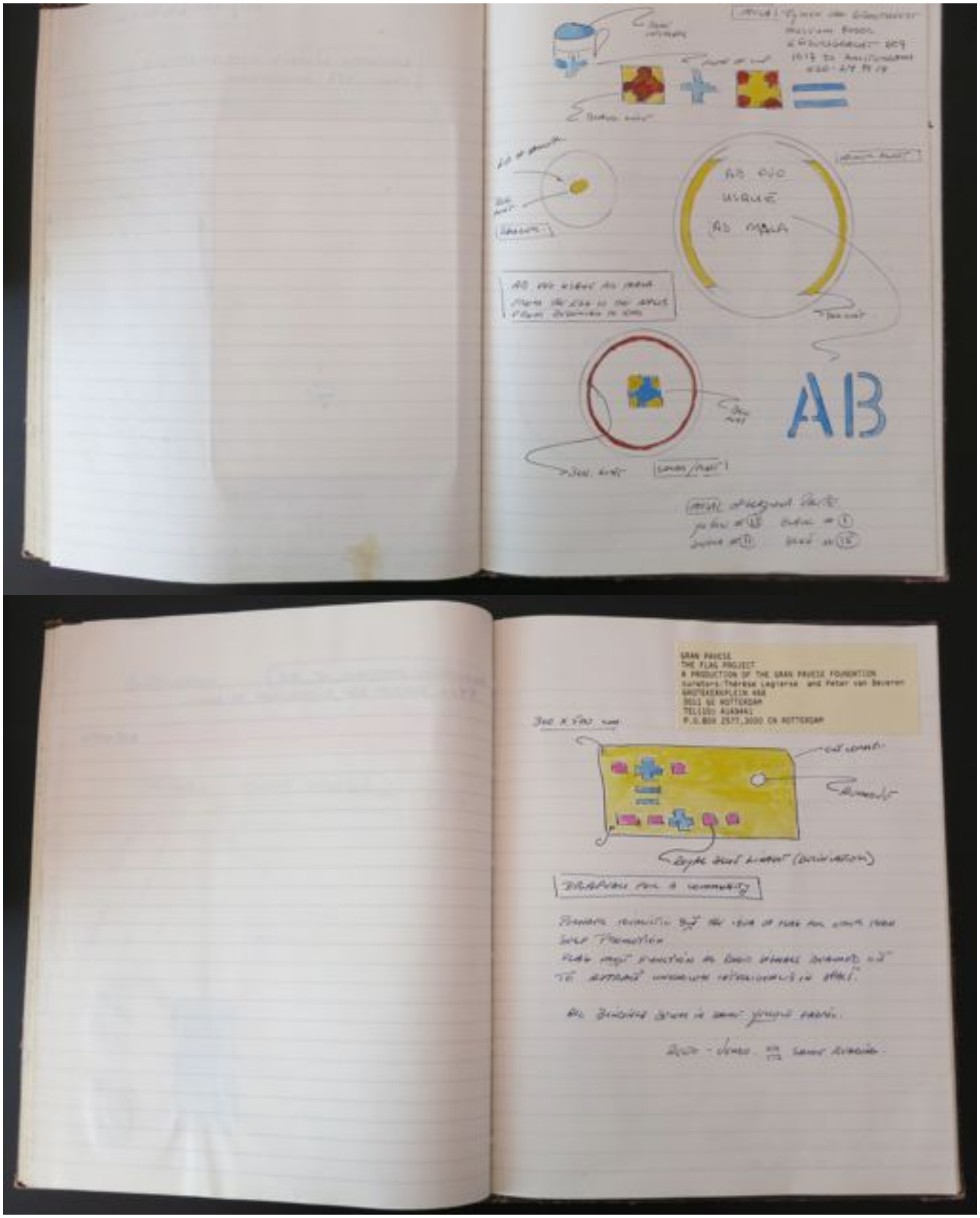
161e. Joseph Kosuth, *A Subject Self-Defined*, 1967



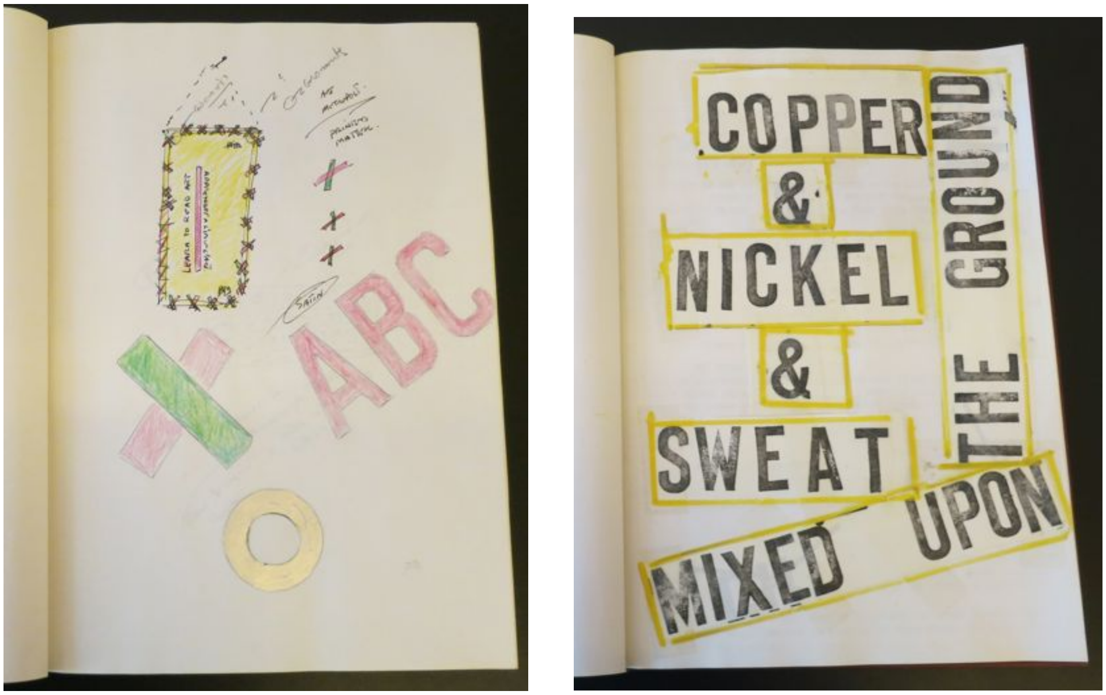

27 september MONDAY
28 TUESDAY
29 WEDNESDAY
30 THURSDAY
Yom Kippur
VARIOUS OBJECTS COLORED BY VARIOUS MEANS ASSEMBLED IN SOME MANNER FOR SOME PURPOSE
COLOR OF CHALK DEPENDS UPON COLOR OF WALL
INSTALLATION WITH CHALK ON LARGE WALL
(I.E. GREY WALL WITH CHALK.)
VARIOUS

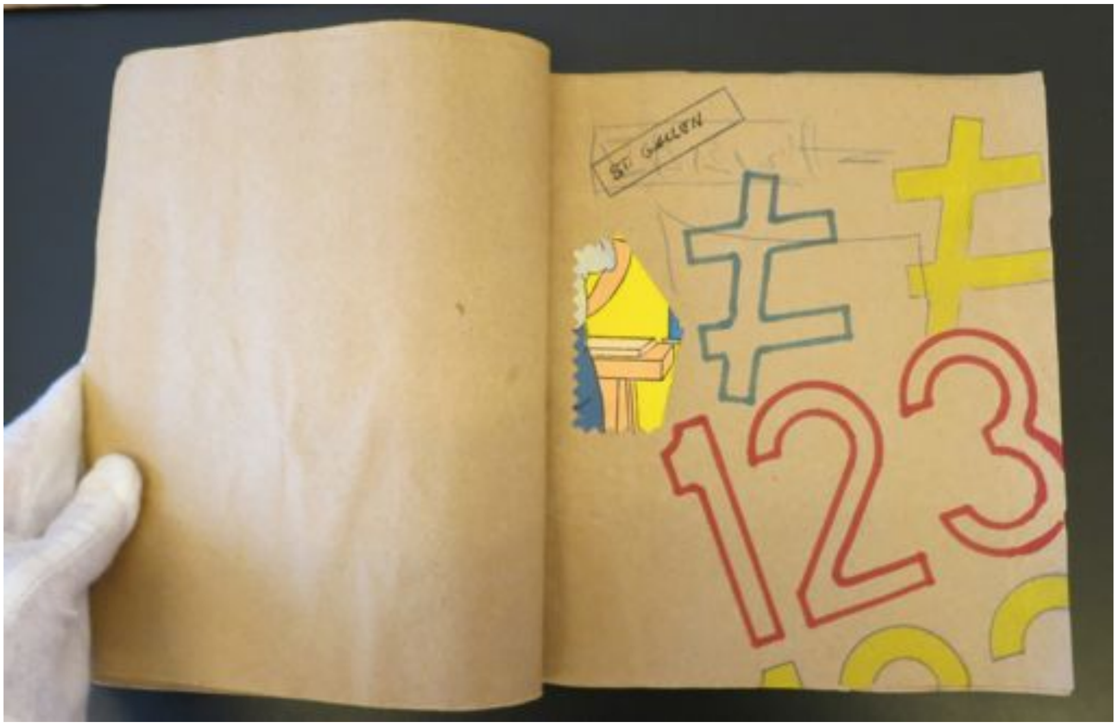
162a. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1980, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

162b. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1982, Moved Pictures Archive, New York


AB OVO
USQUE
AD MALA
AB
GRAN PAVESE
THE FLAG PROJECT
A PRODUCTION OF THE GRAN PAVESE FOUNDATION
Curators:Thérèse Legierse and Peter van Beveren
GROTEKERKPLEIN 46A
3011 GE ROTTERDAM
TEL(010) 4149441
P.O.BOX 2577,3000 CN ROTTERDAM

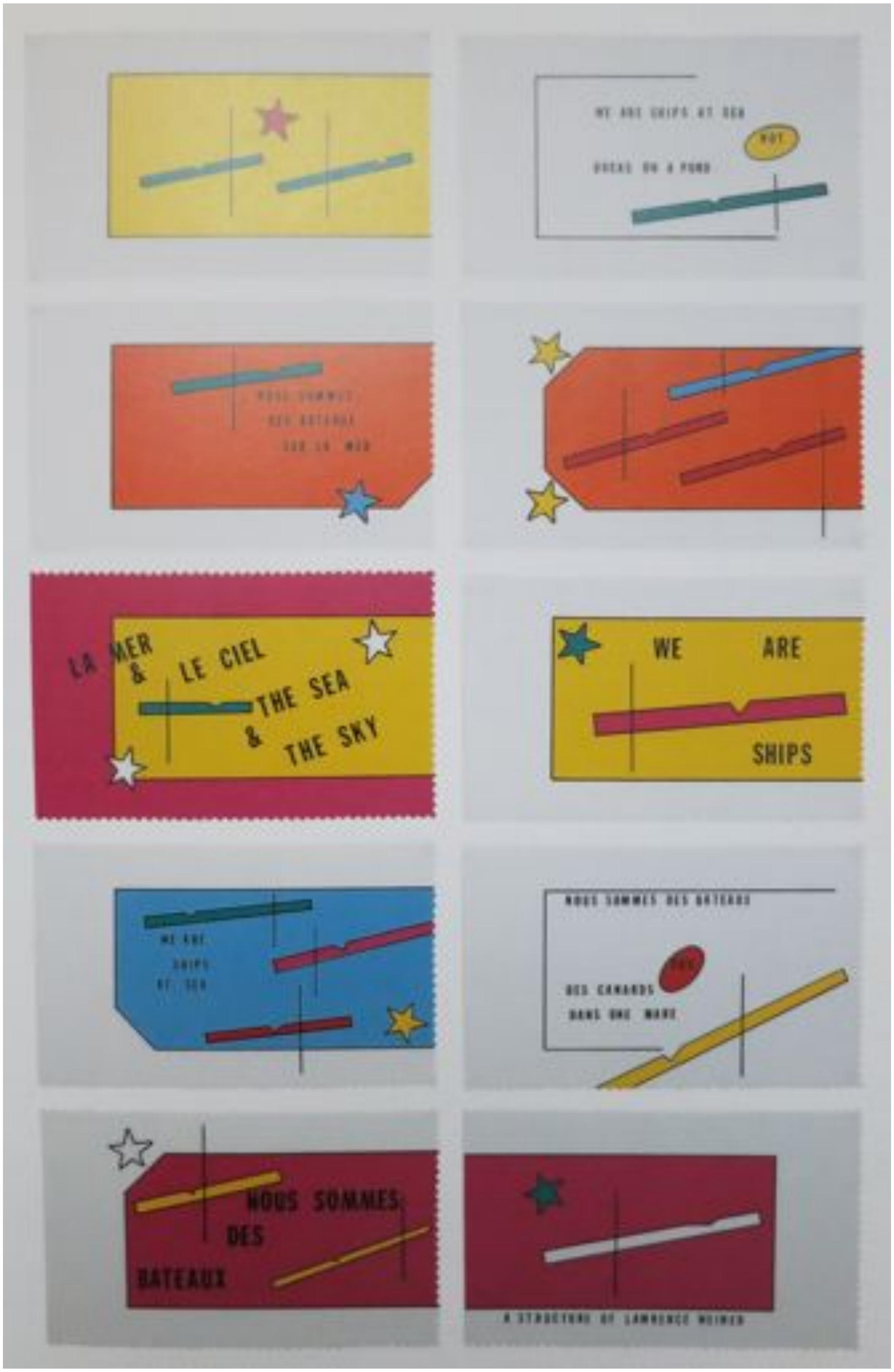
163a & 163b. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1987, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



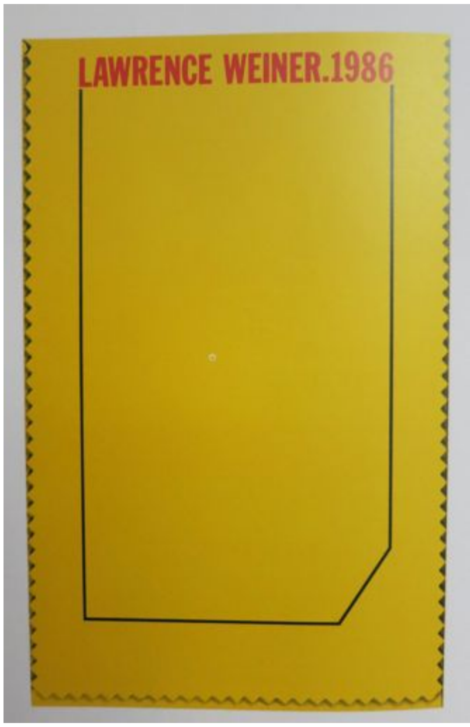


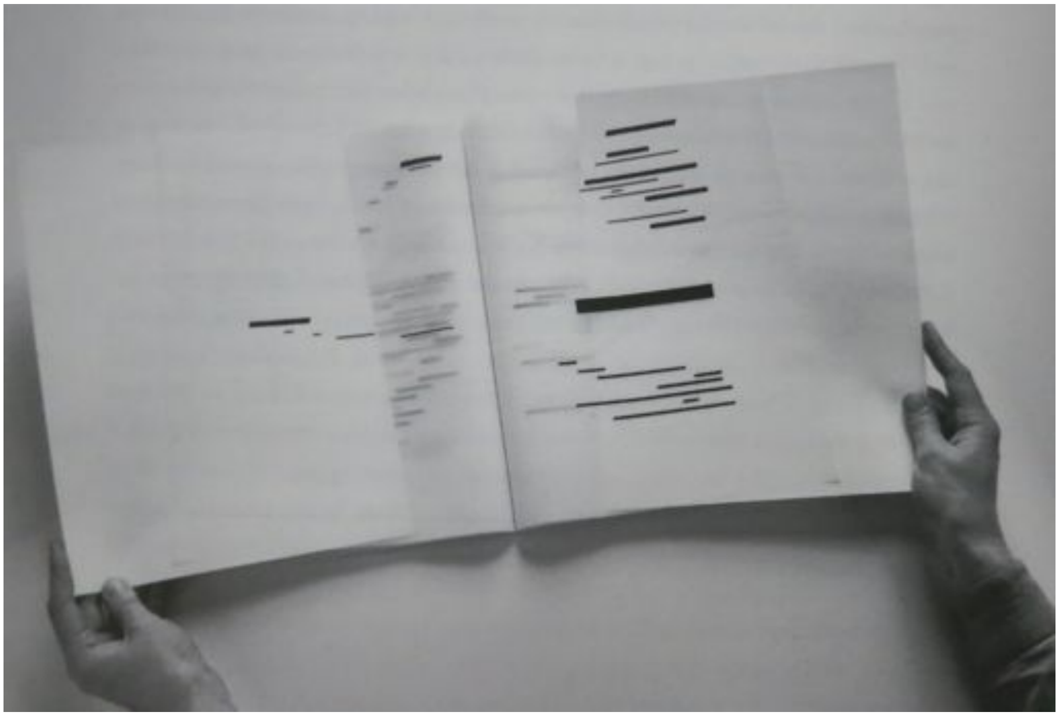
164a & 164b. Lawrence Weiner Notebook January – December 1992, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

165. Lawrence Weiner Notebook October - December 1997, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



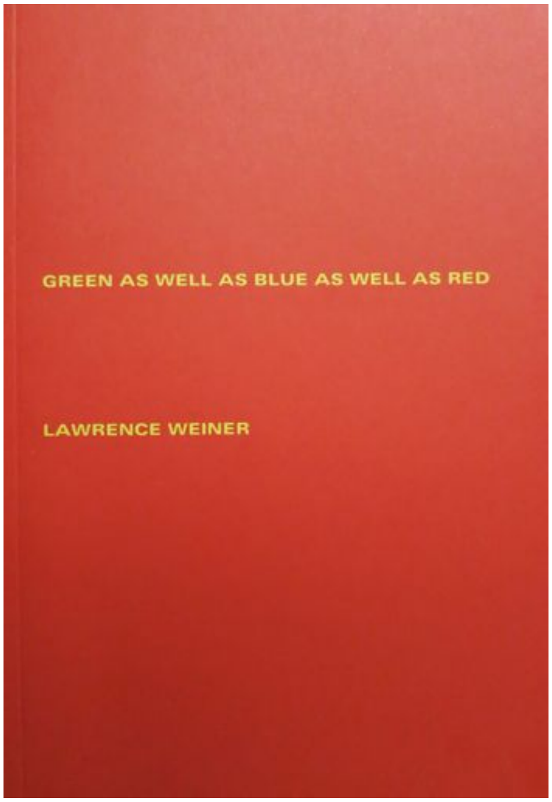
166. Lawrence Weiner, *The Sky & The Sea / La Mer & Le Ciel*, excerpt, 1986

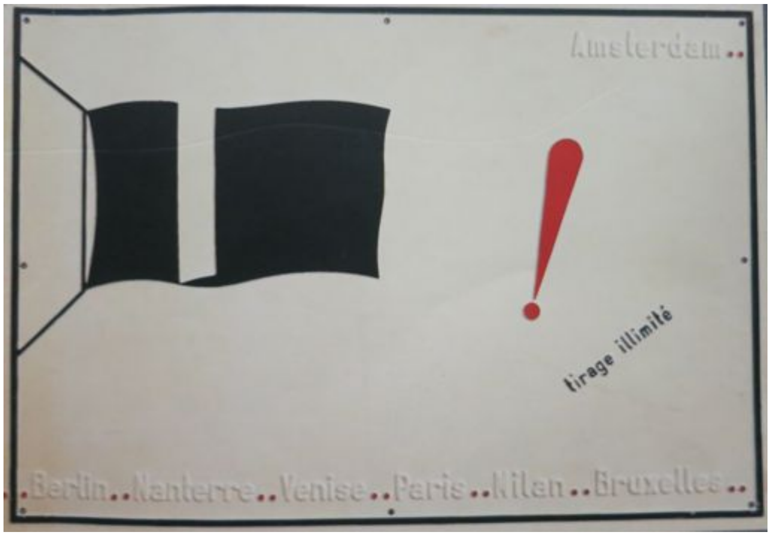




167. Lawrence Weiner Notebook, *The Sky & The Sea / La Mer & Le Ciel*, box, 1986, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

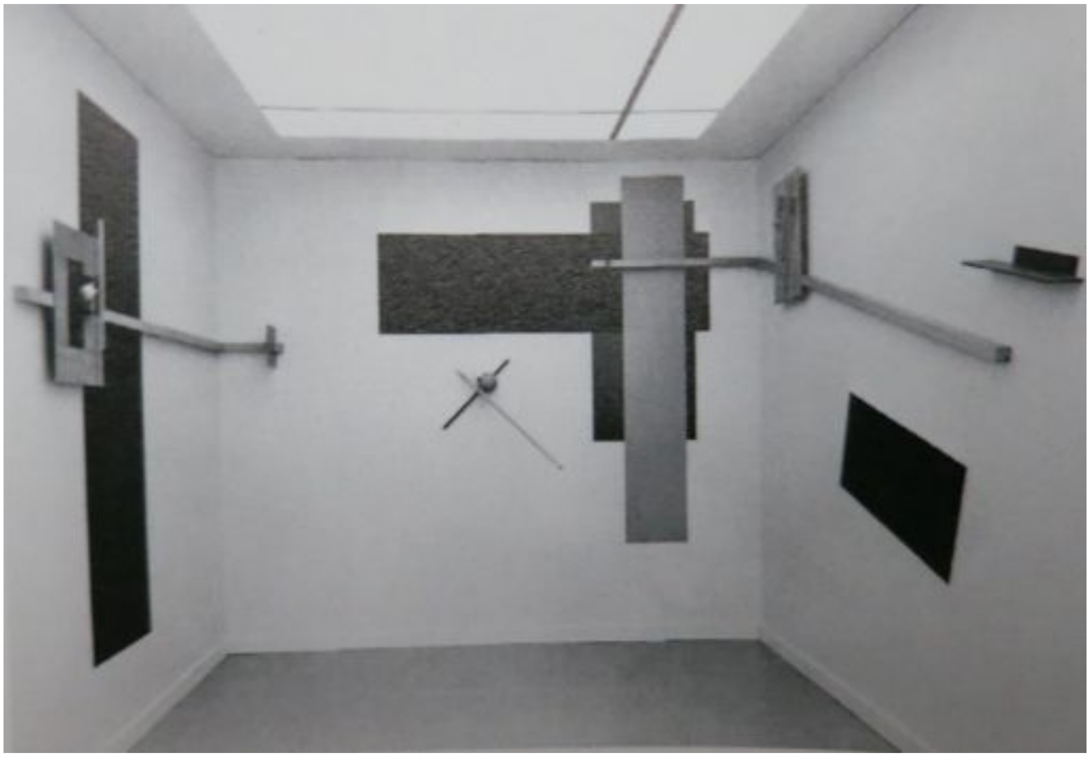
168. Marcel Broodthaers, *Un Coup de Dés Jamais N'Abolira Le Hasard,* 1969

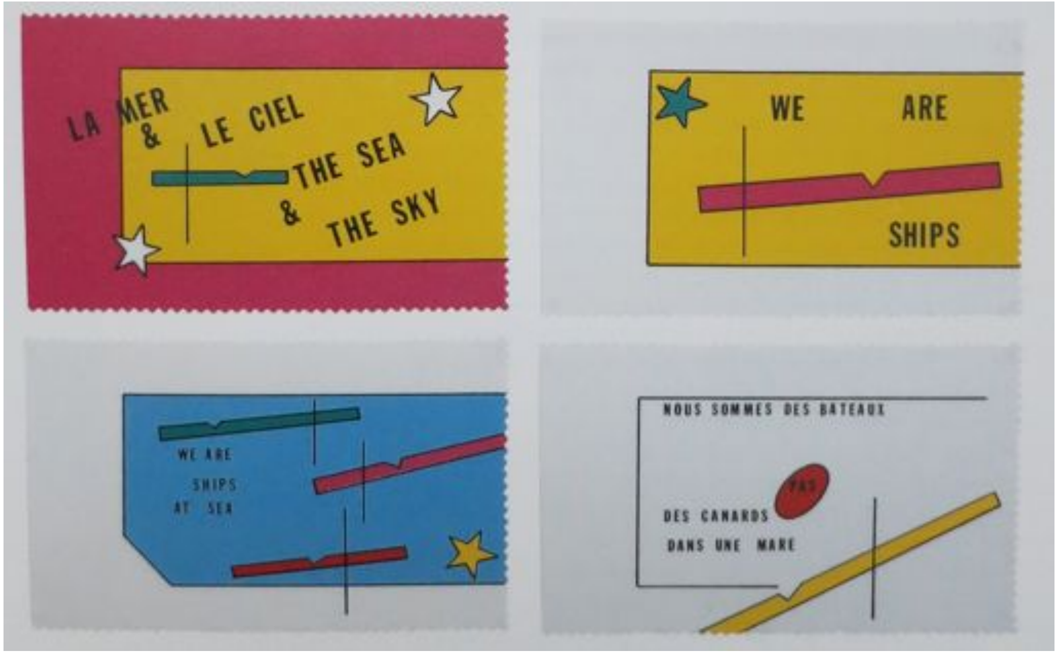




169. Lawrence Weiner, *Green As Well As Blue As Well As Red*, 1972

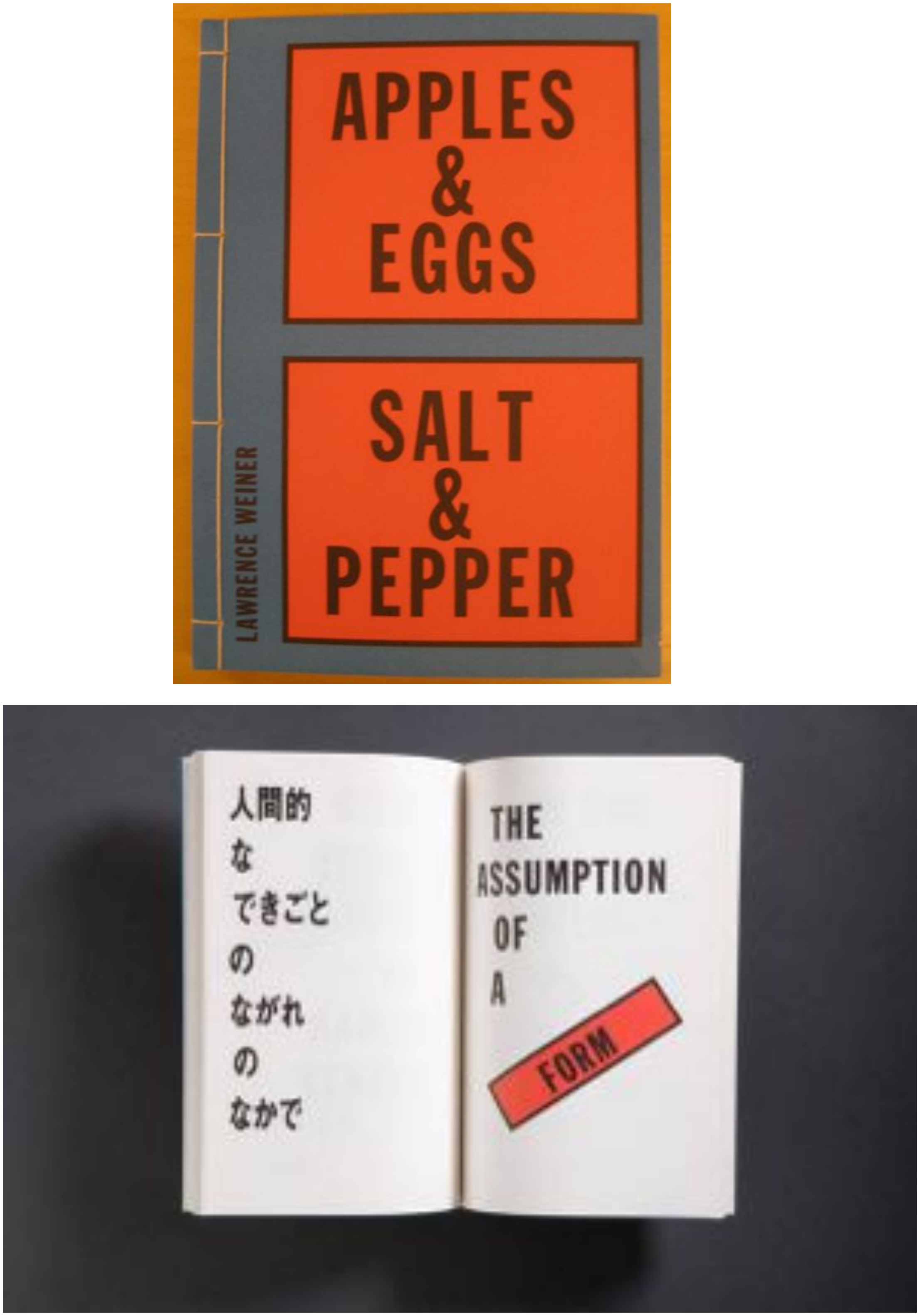
170. Marcel Broodthaers, *Le Drapeau Noir, tirage illimité,* 1968



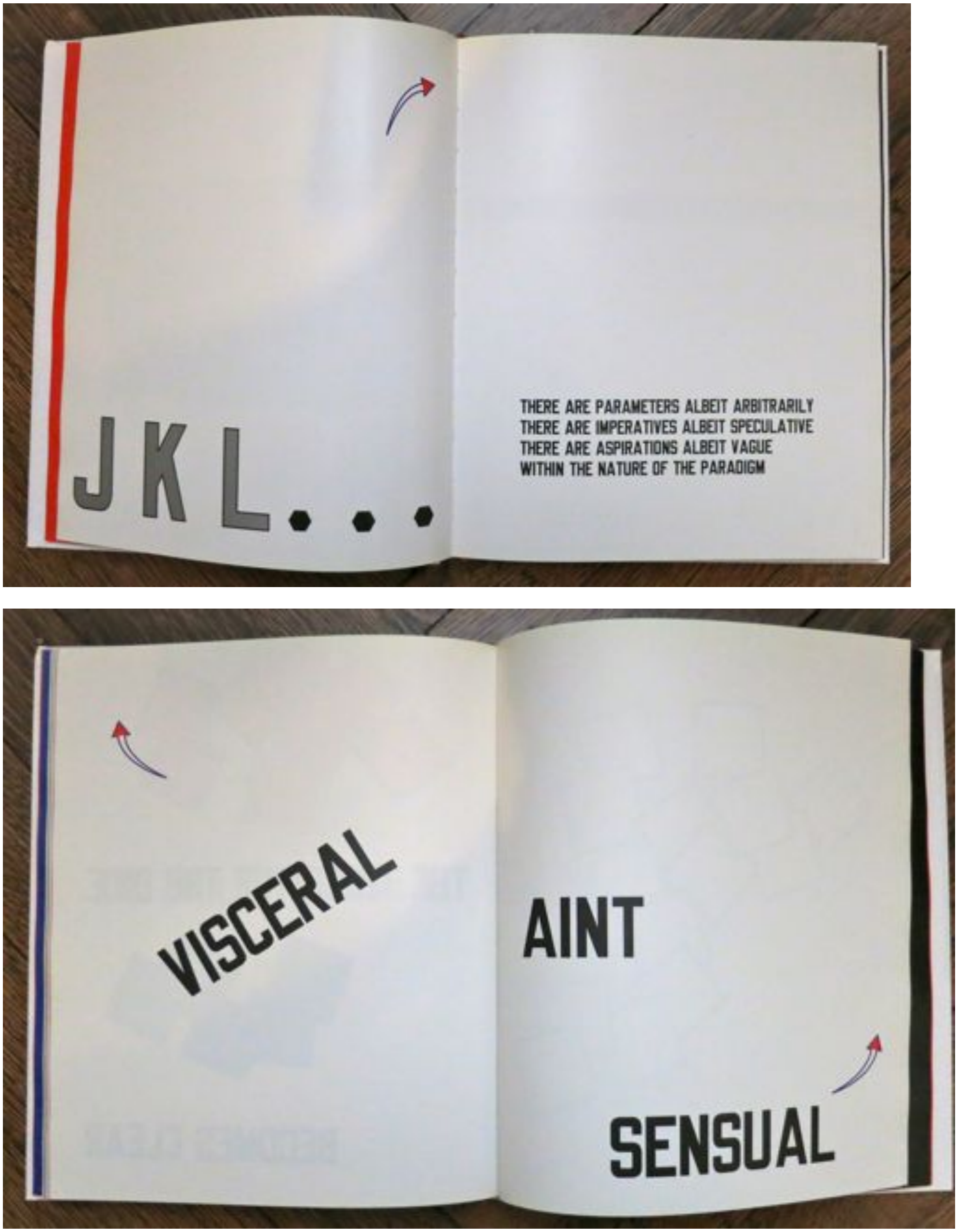


171. El Lissitzky , *Proun Room* (1923), installation at Van Abbemsuem, Eindhoven, 1965

172. Lawrence Weiner, *The Sky & The Sea / La Mer & Le Ciel*, excerpt, 1986



173a & 173b. Lawrence Weiner, *Apples & Eggs Salt & Pepper*, 1999



JKL...

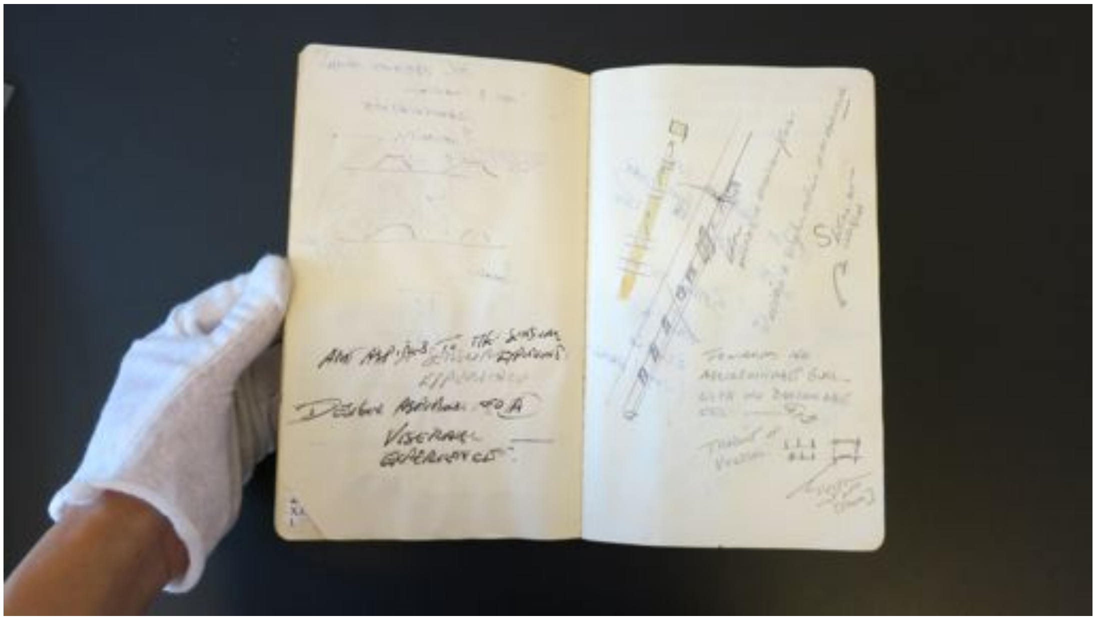
THERE ARE PARAMETERS ALBEIT ARBITRARILY
THERE ARE IMPERATIVES ALBEIT SPECULATIVE
THERE ARE ASPIRATIONS ALBEIT VAGUE
WITHIN THE NATURE OF THE PARADIGM

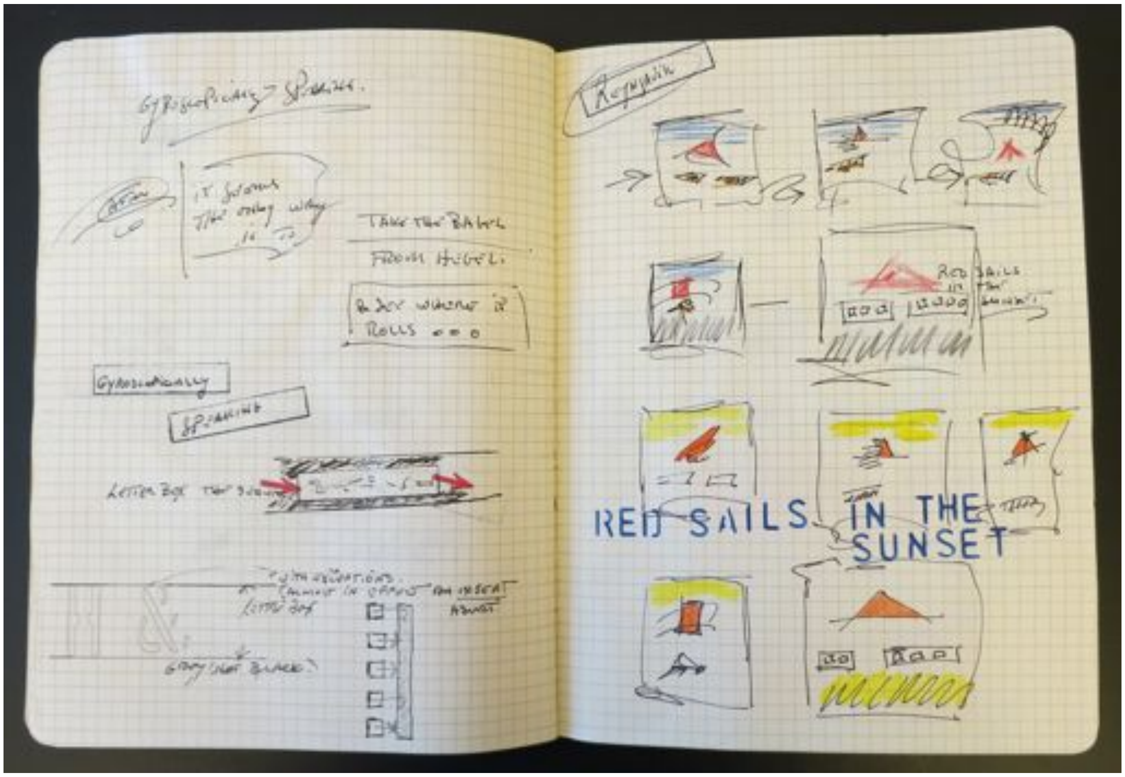
VISCERAL

AINT

SENSUAL

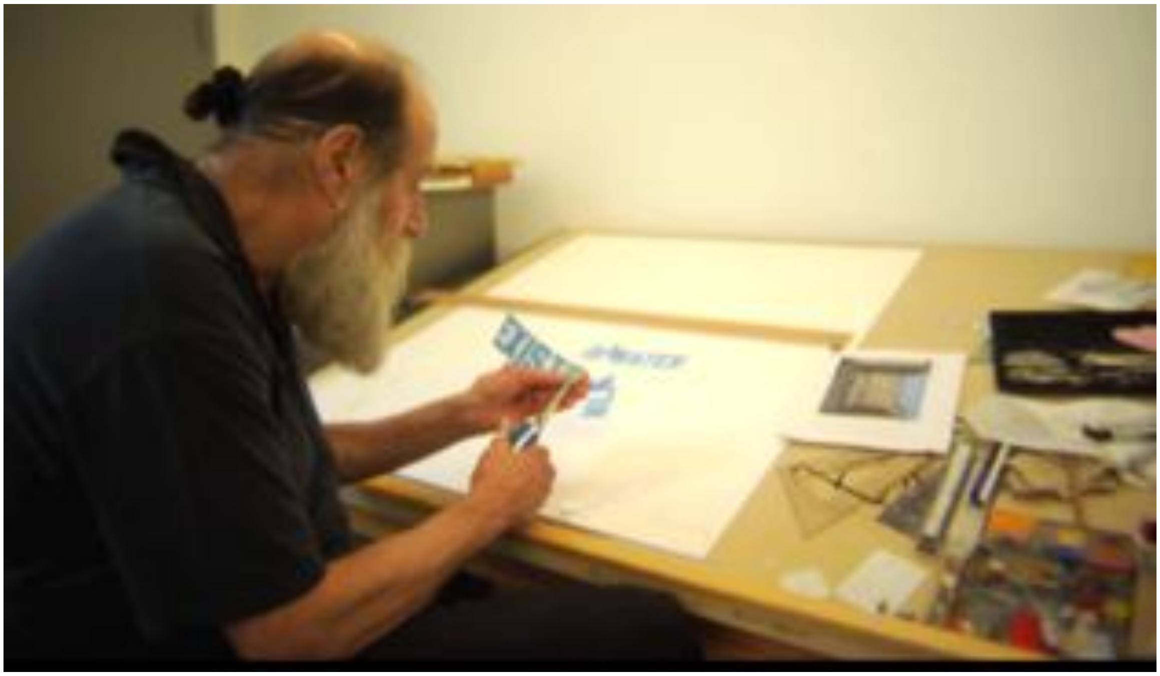
174a & 174b. Lawrence Weiner, *Turning Some Pages*, 2007





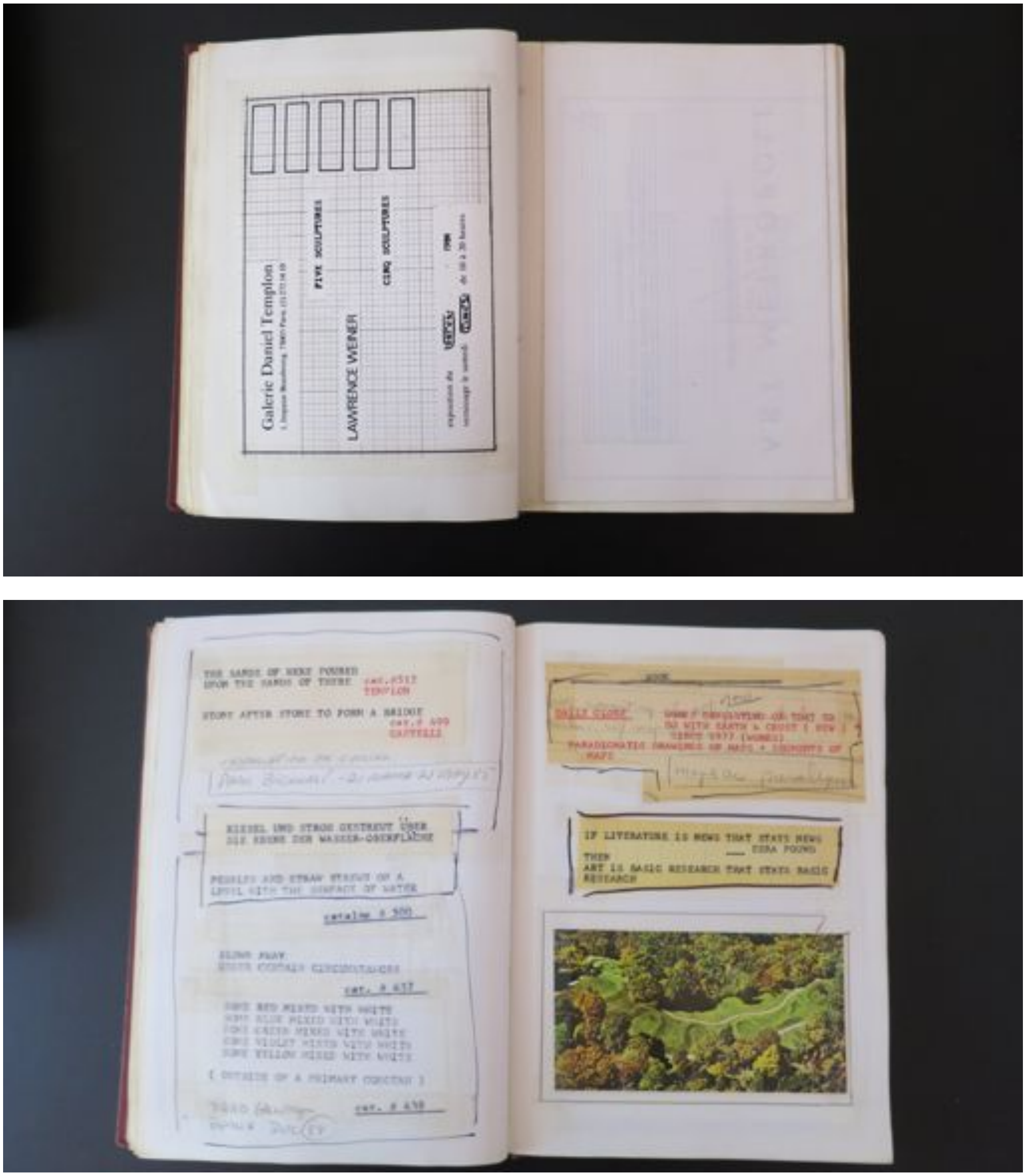
175. Lawrence Weiner Notebook January – September 2007, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

176. Lawrence Weiner Notebook July 2008 – December 2009, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



177a & 177b. Hillman Curtis, *Design Matters Live with Lawrence Weiner*, film still, 2008

177c & 177d. Hillman Curtis, *Design Matters Live with Lawrence Weiner*, film still, 2008



Galerie Daniel Templon

LAWRENCE WEINER

FIVE SCULPTURES

CINQ SCULPTURES

THE SANDS OF HERE POURED
UPON THE SANDS OF THERE

STONE AFTER STONE TO FORM A BRIDGE

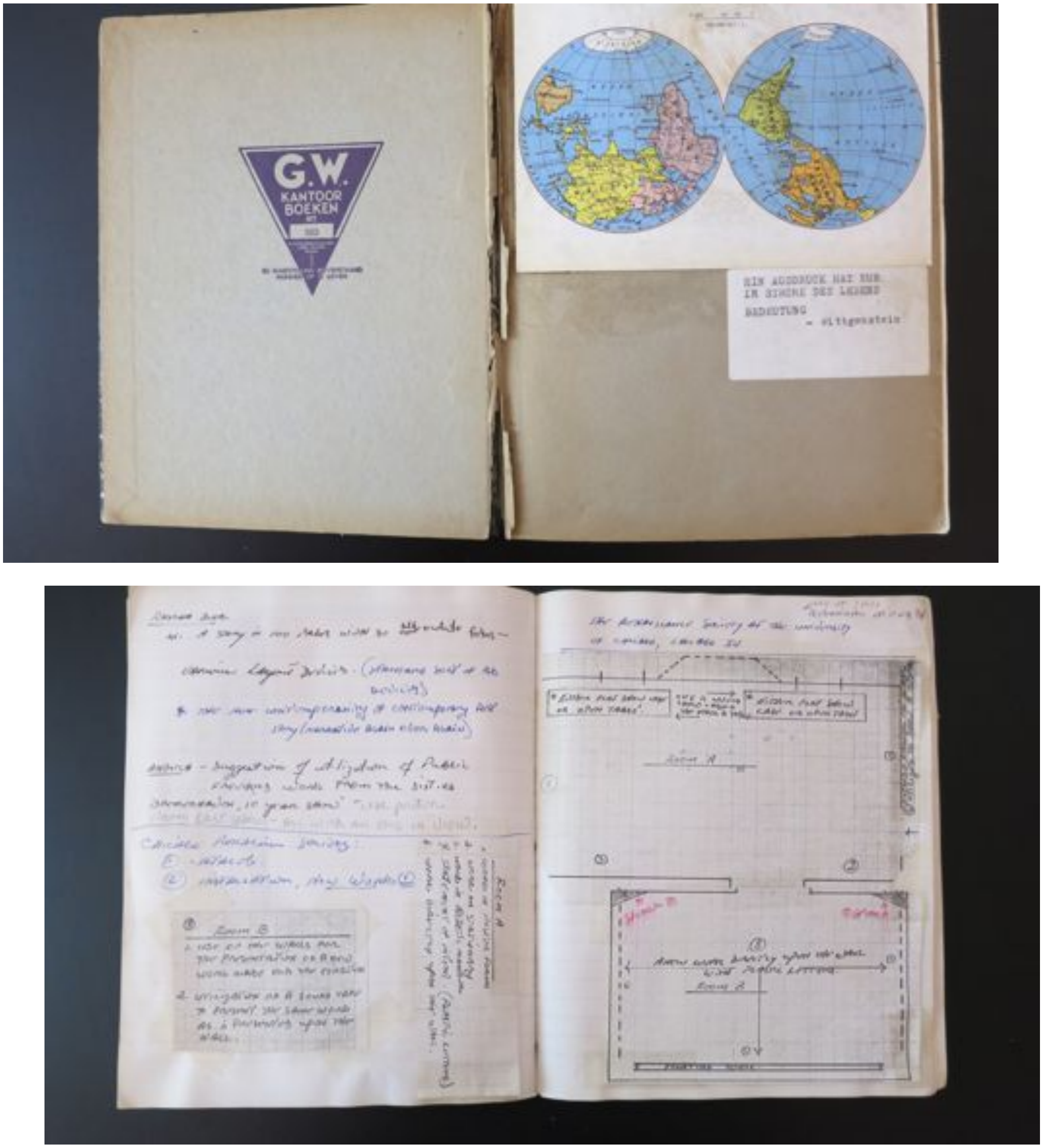
KIESEL UND STROH GESTREUT ÜBER
DIE EBENE DER WASSER-OBERFLÄCHE

SOME RED MIXED WITH WHITE
SOME BLUE MIXED WITH WHITE
SOME GREEN MIXED WITH WHITE
SOME VIOLET MIXED WITH WHITE
SOME YELLOW MIXED WITH WHITE

(OUTSIDE OF A PRIMARY CONCERN)

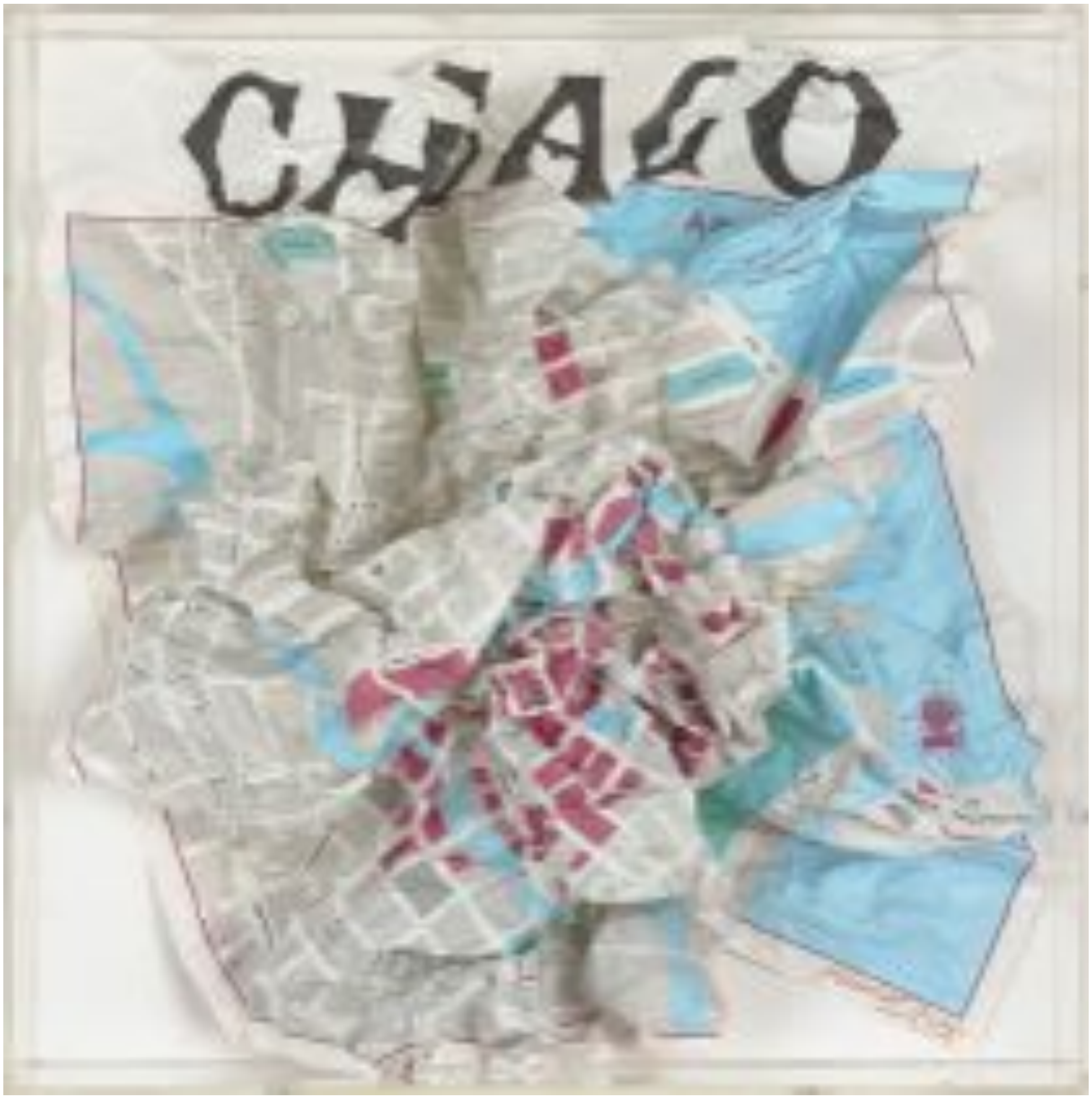
IF LITERATURE IS NEWS THAT STAYS NEWS
— EZRA POUND
THEN
ART IS BASIC RESEARCH THAT STAYS BASIC
RESEARCH

178a & 178b. Lawrence Weiner Notebook October 1983 – January 1985

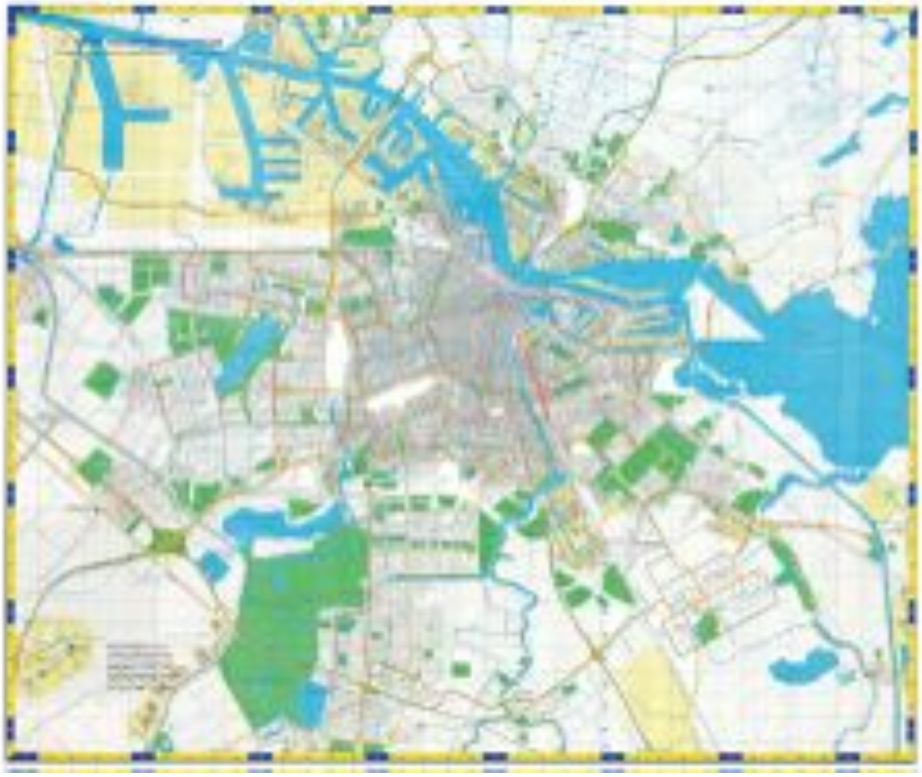


EIN AUSDRUCK HAT NUR
IM SINNE DES LEBENS
BEDEUTUNG
- Wittgenstein

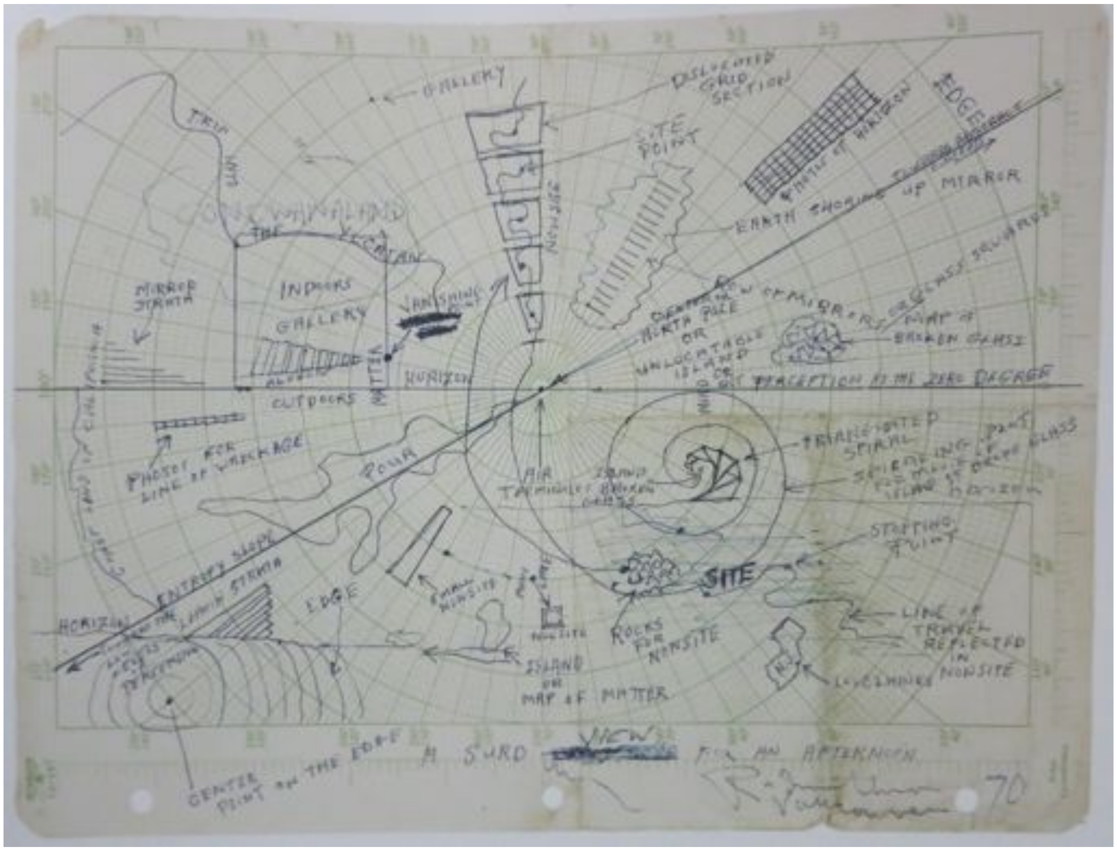
178c & 178d. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1975 - 1978

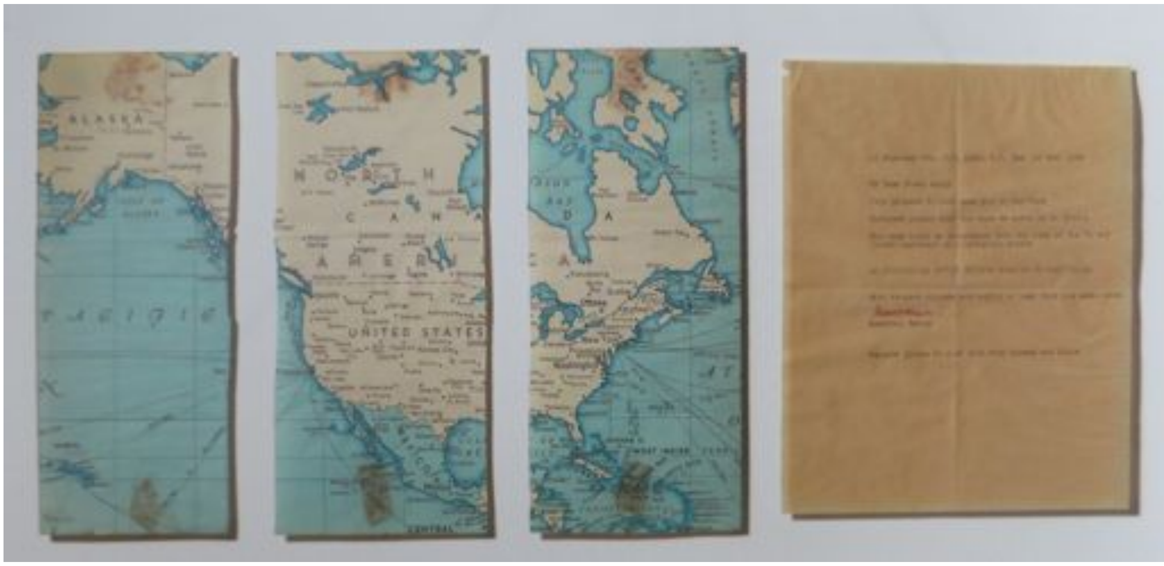


179a. Sol LeWitt, *Untitled*, 1979.



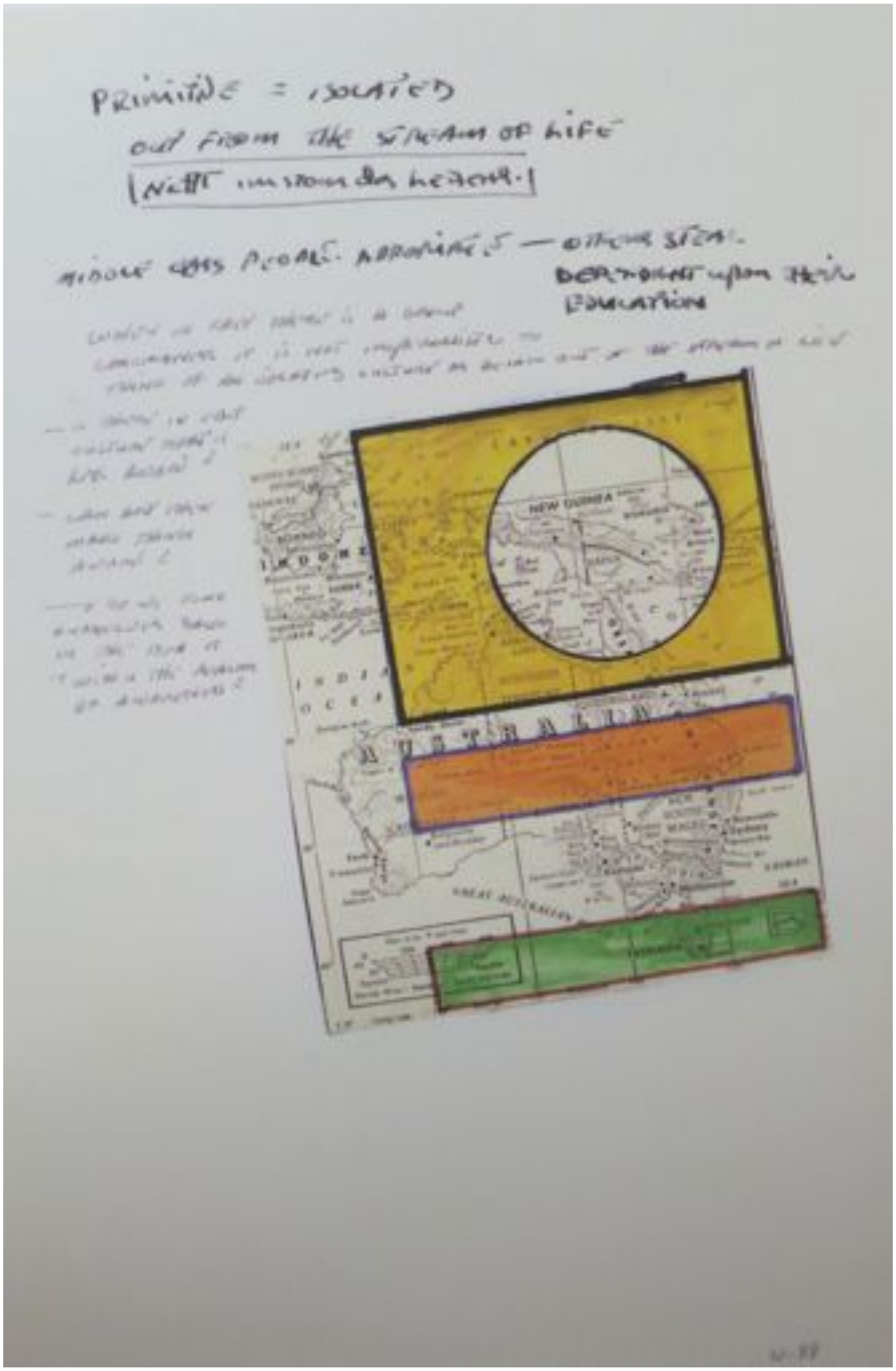
179b. Sol LeWitt, *Map of Amsterdam without Vondelpark, Rembrandtpark, Julianapark, Sarphatipark, Beatrixpark, Flevopark, Florpark, Sportpark Riekenhaven, Sportpark Melkweg and Westerpark*, cut-out city map, September 4, 1976



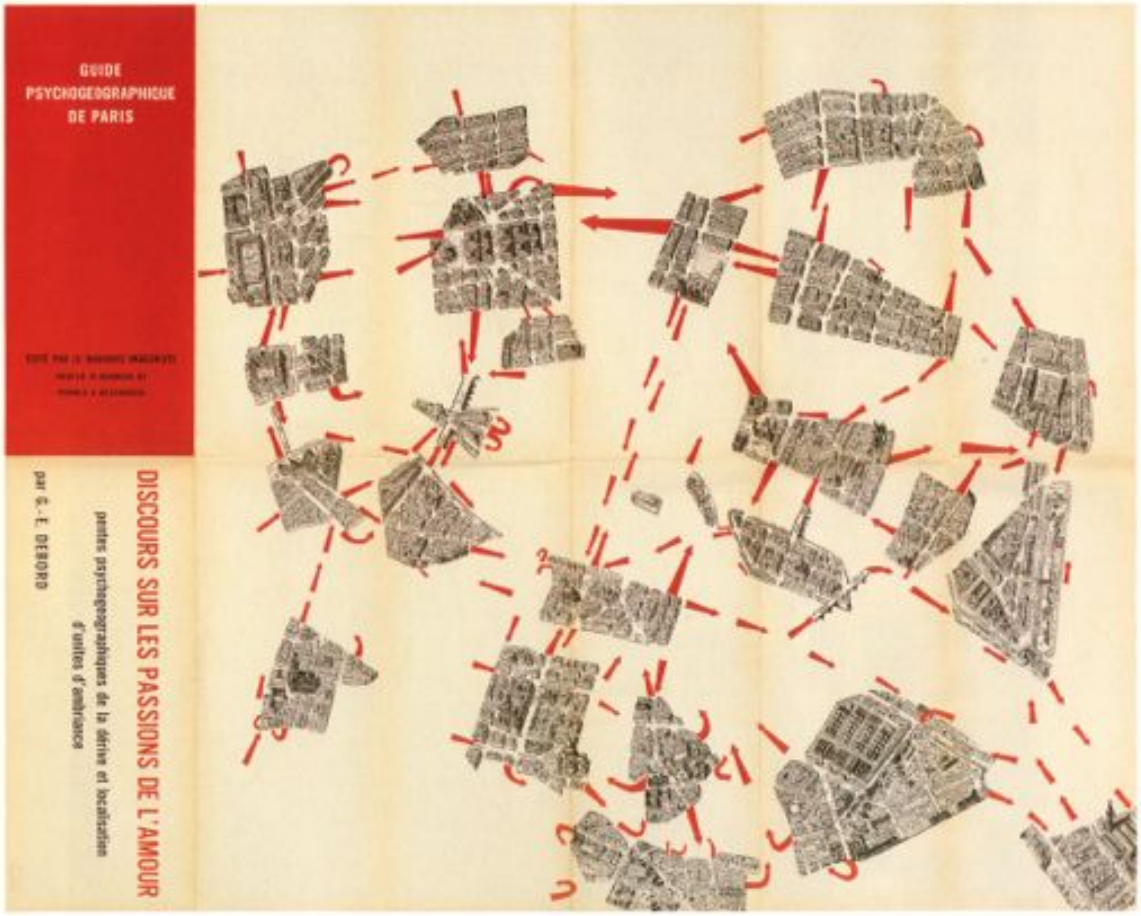


180. Robert Smithson*, A Surd View For An Afternoon*, 1970

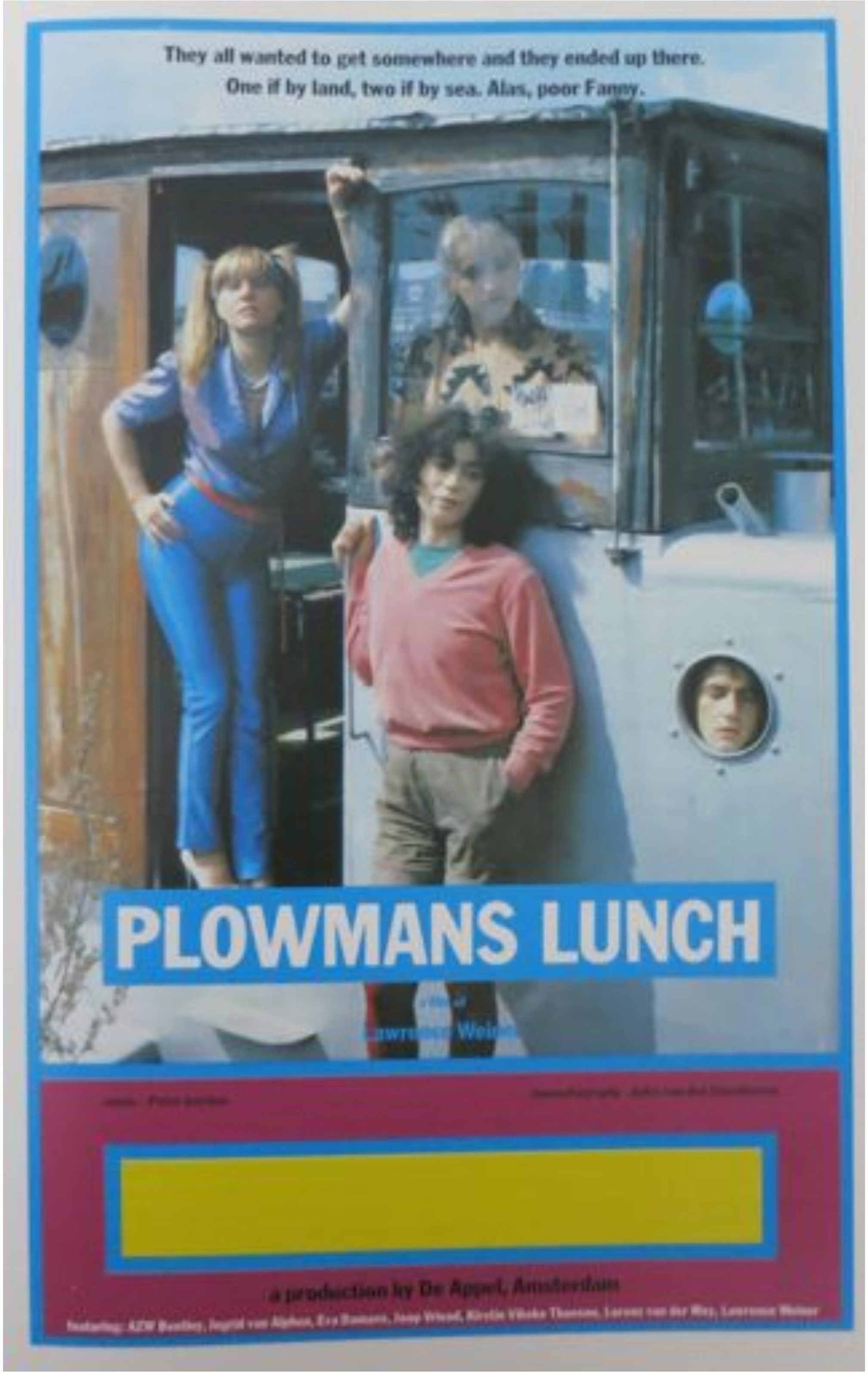
181. Lawrence Weiner, *Untitled (INDIVISIBLE ENTITY)*, 1969


PRIMITIVE = ISOLATED
OUT FROM THE STREAM OF LIFE
[NICHT IM STROM DES LEBENS.]
MIDDLE CLASS PEOPLE. ABORIGINES — OTHER STEA.
DEPENDENT UPON THEIR EDUCATION
NEW GUINEA
AUSTRALIA
INDIAN OCEAN

182. Lawrence Weiner, *Primitive = Isolated*, 1988

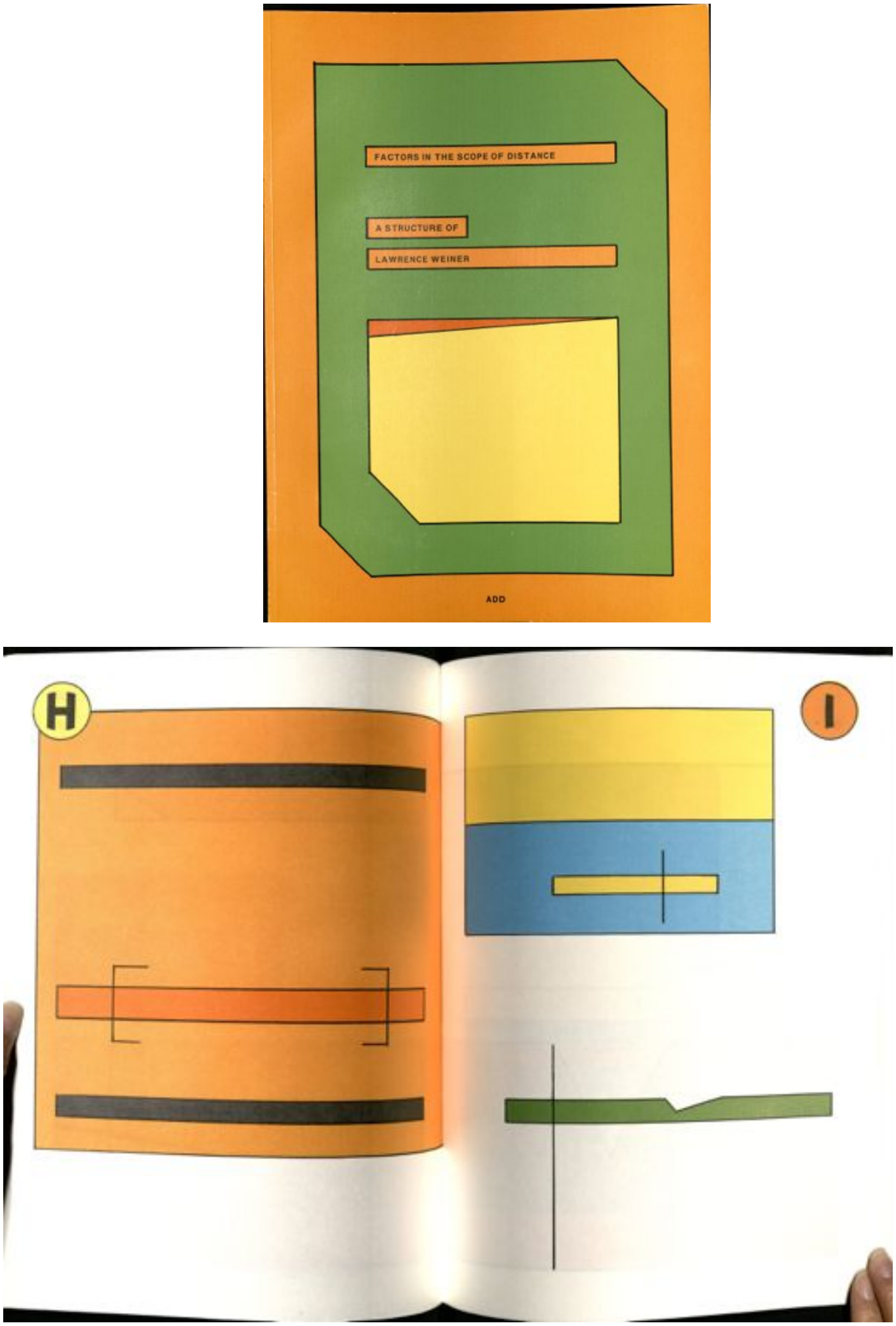

GUIDE
PSYCHOGEOGRAPHIQUE
DE PARIS
DISCOURS SUR LES PASSIONS DE L'AMOUR
pentes psychogéographiques de la dérive et localisation
d'unités d'ambiance
par G.-E. DEBORD

183. Guy Debord, *Guide Pychogéographique de Paris,* c. 1955

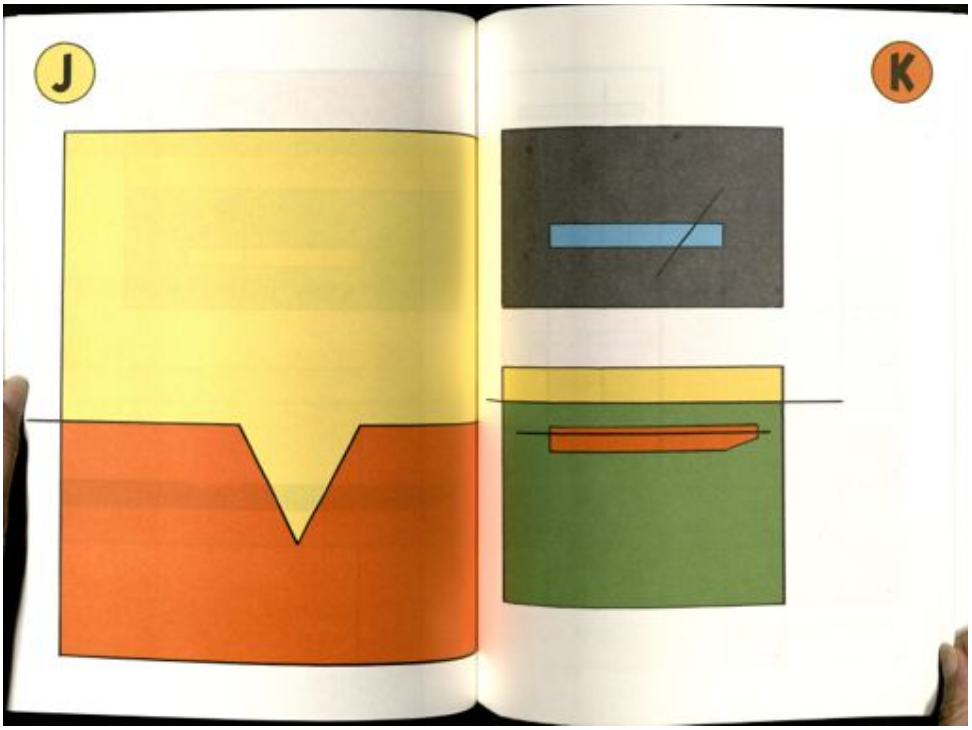

They all wanted to get somewhere and they ended up there.
One if by land, two if by sea. Alas, poor Fanny.
PLOWMANS LUNCH
a production by De Appel, Amsterdam

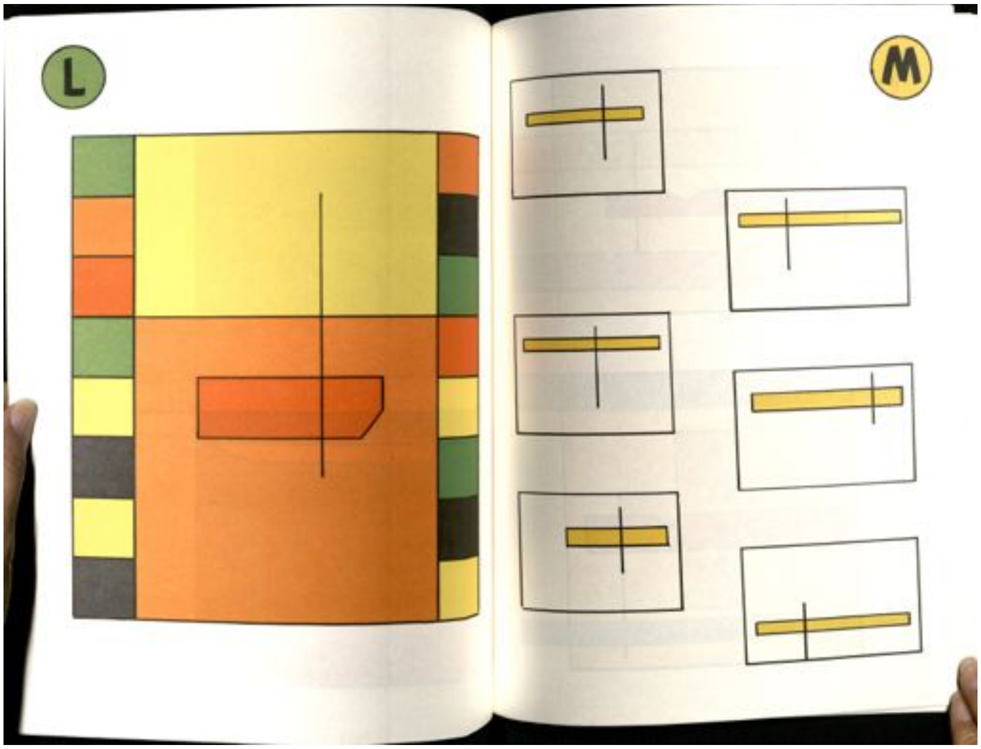
184. Announcement card for screening of *Plowmans Lunch*, Eurocinema, Eindhoven, 1982

185a & 185b. Lawrence Weiner, *Plowmans Lunch*, film stills, 1982

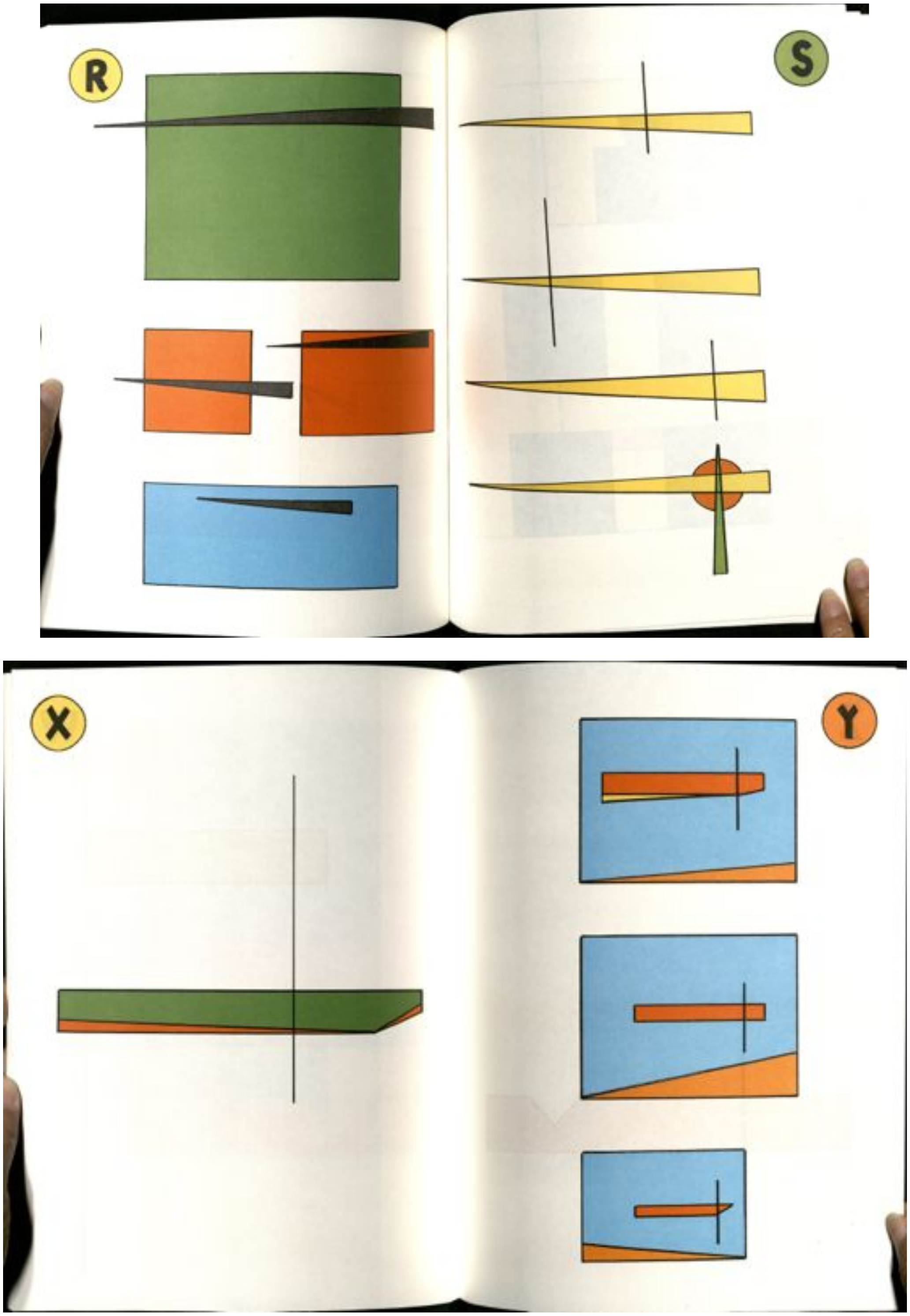


186a & 186b. Lawrence Weiner, *Factors In The Scope Of A Distance*, 1984

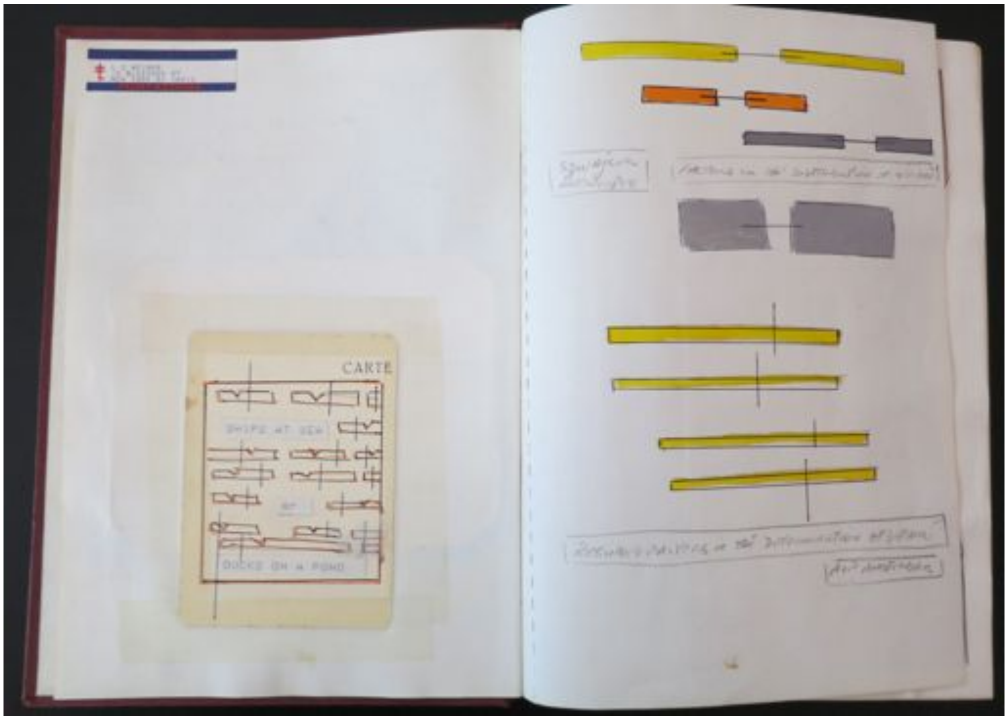


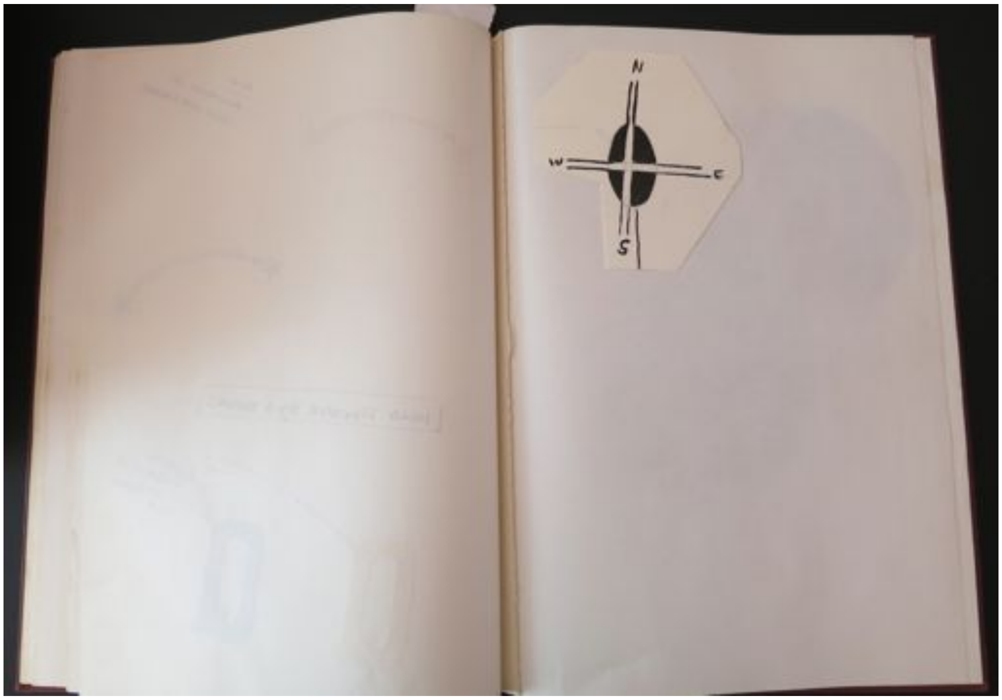


186c & 186d. Lawrence Weiner, *Factors In The Scope Of A Distance*, 1984



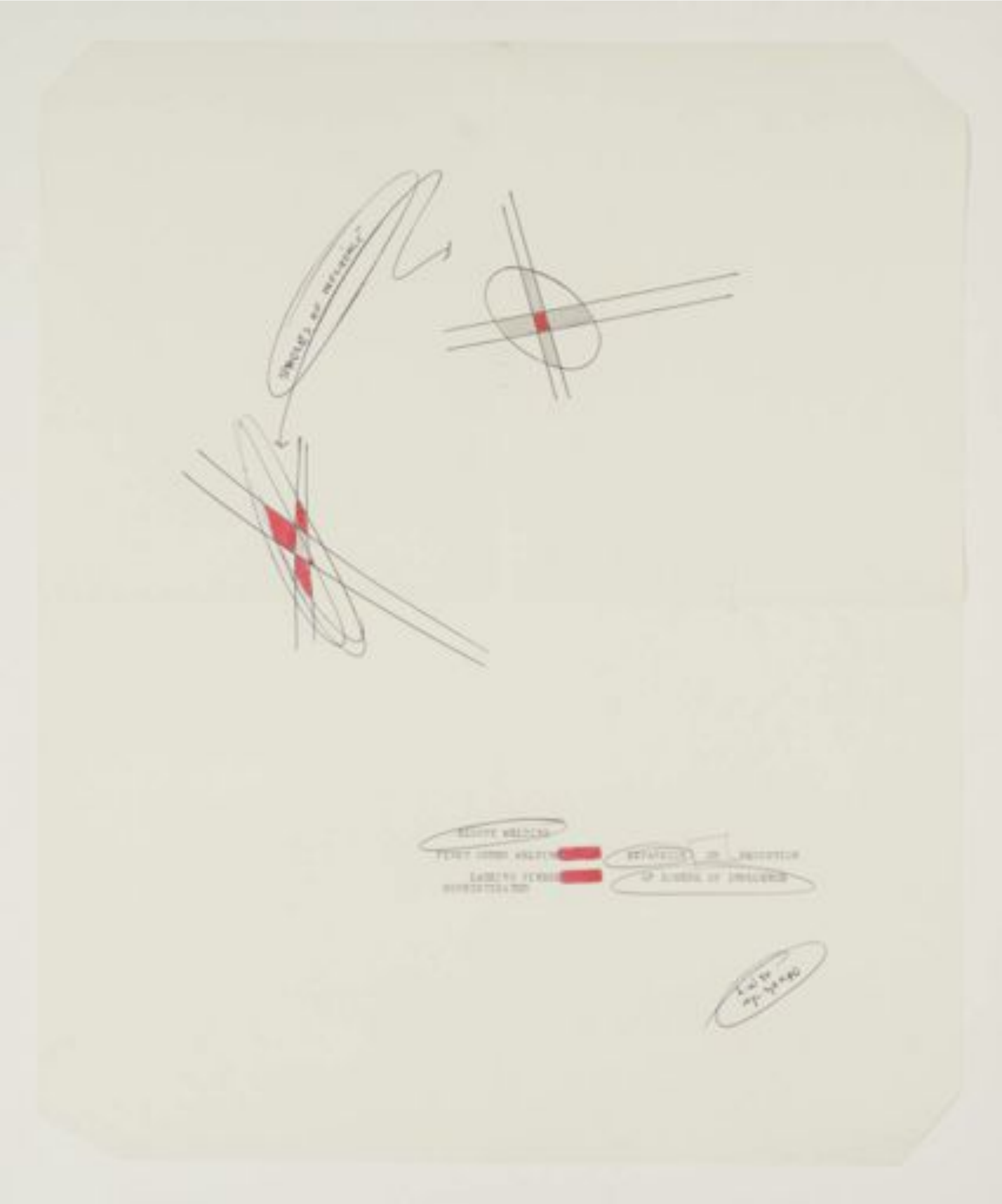
186e & 186f. Lawrence Weiner, *Factors In The Scope Of A Distance*, 1984



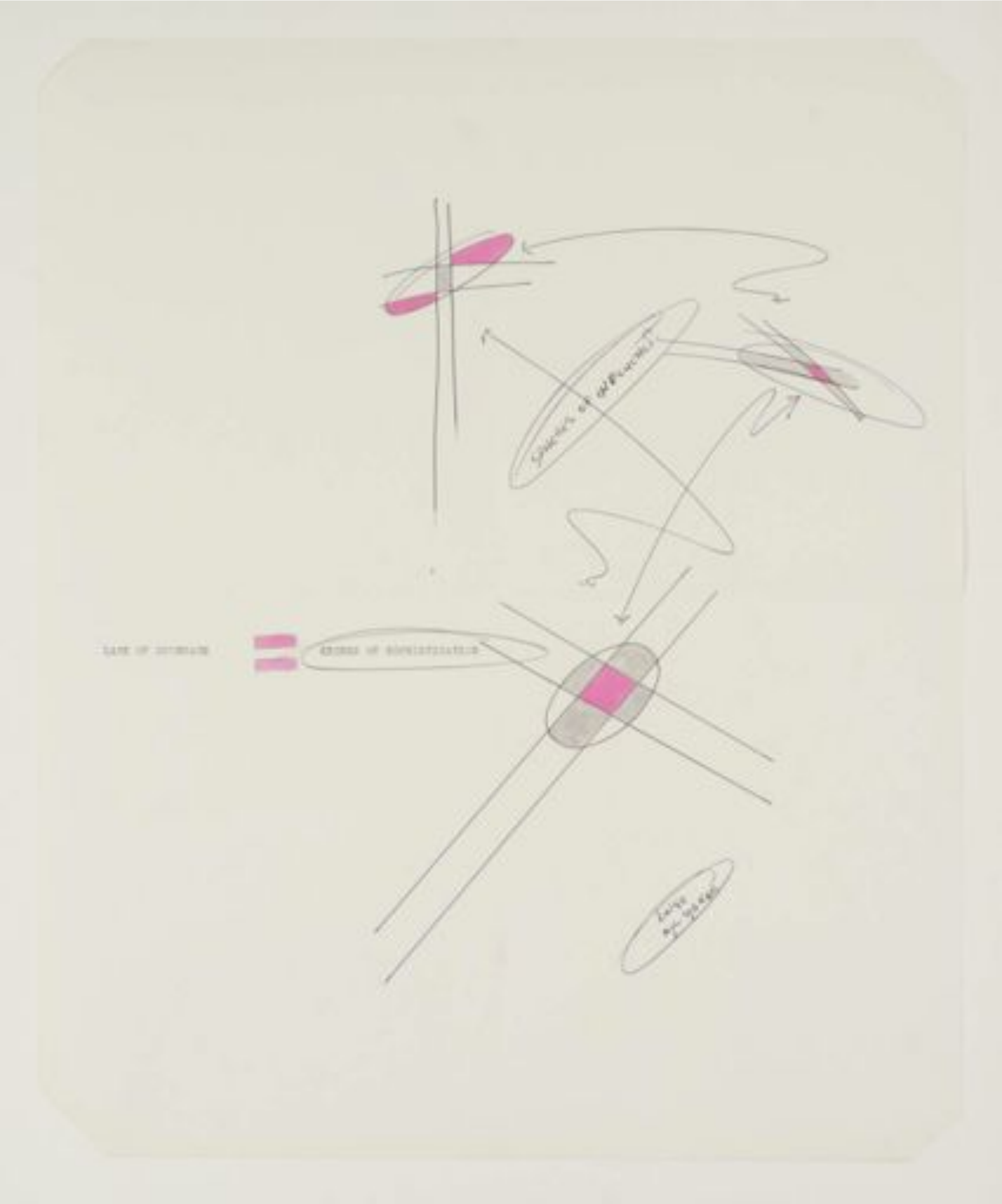


187. Lawrence Weiner Notebook October 1983 – January 1985, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

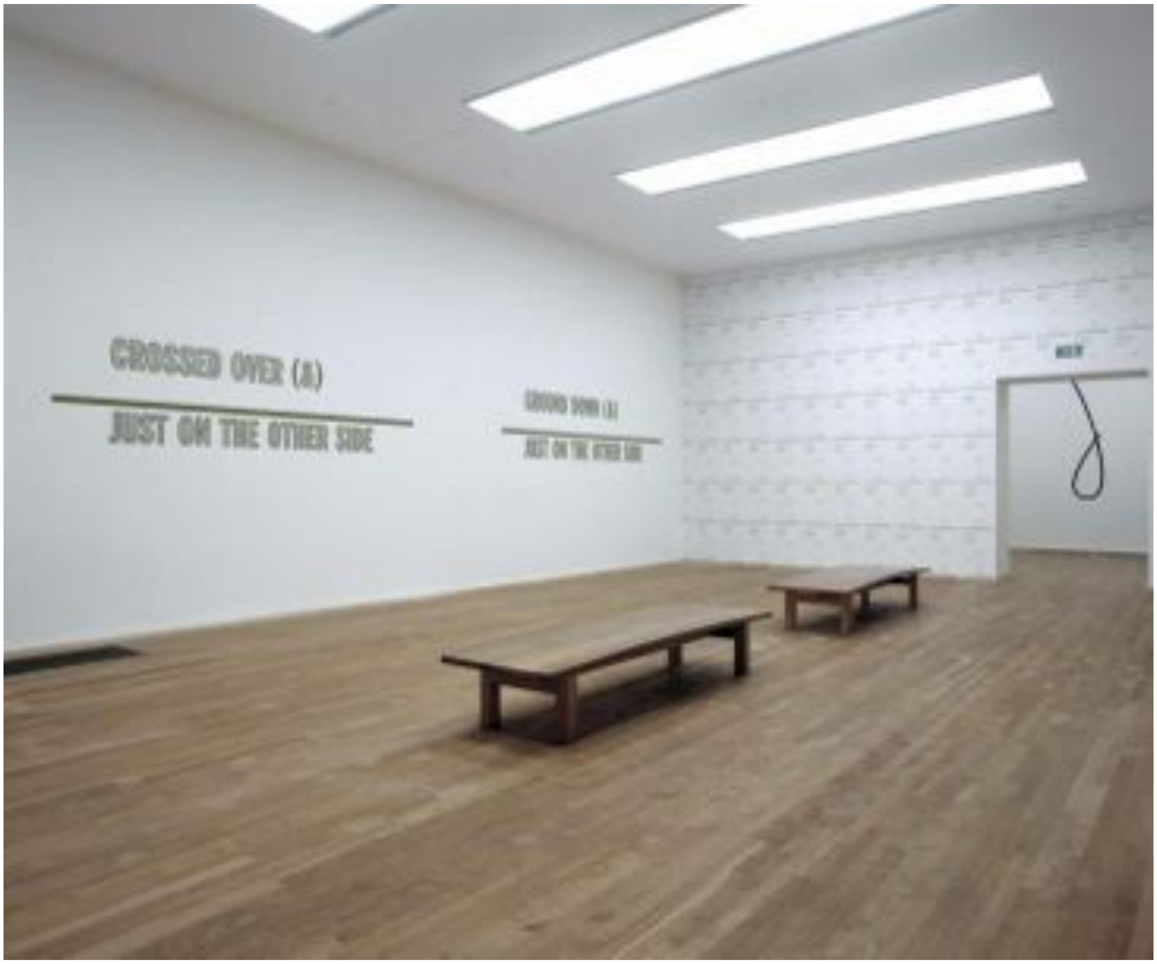
188. Lawrence Weiner Notebook June 1987 – May 1988, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



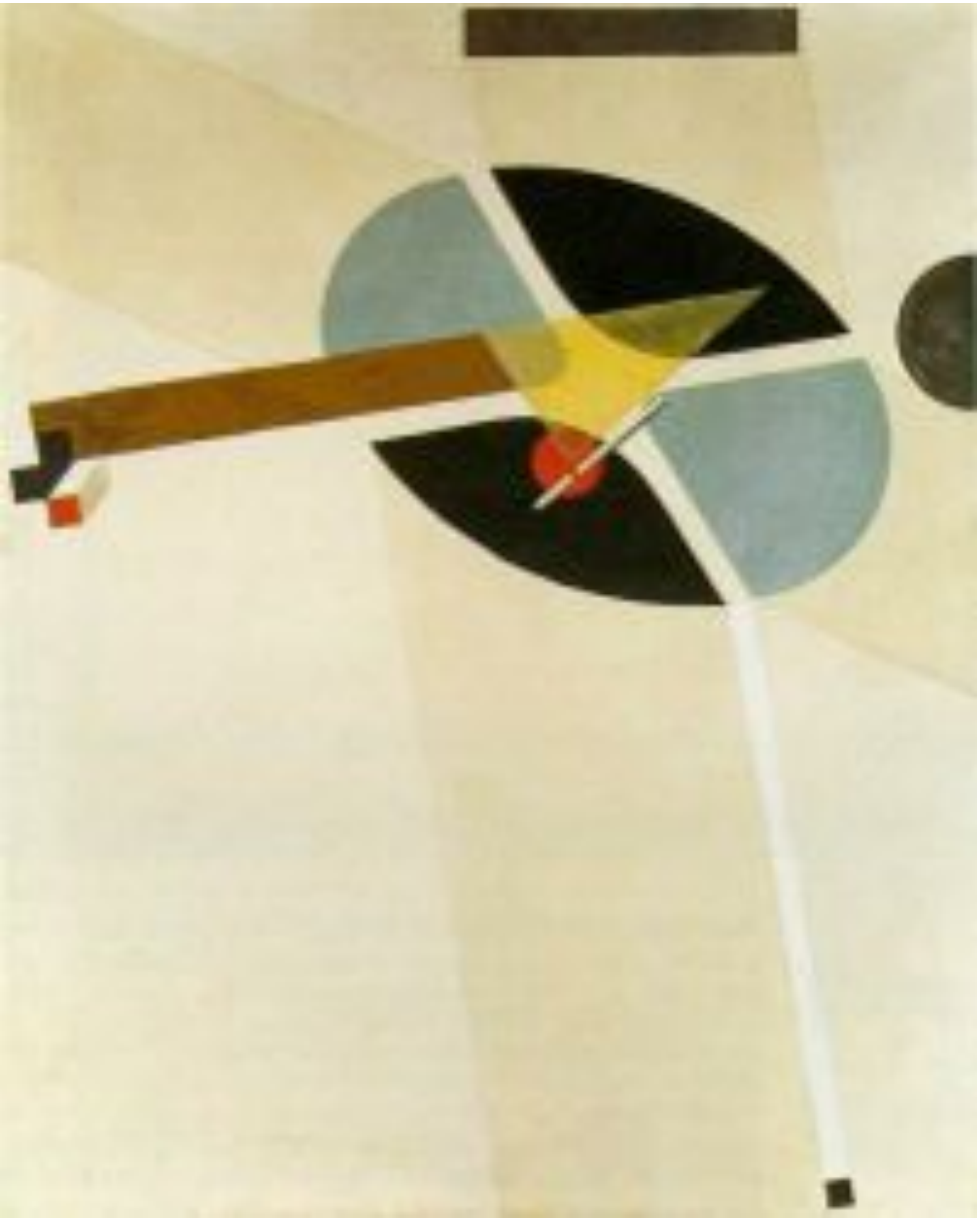
189a. Lawrence Weiner, *Spheres Of Influence*, series of 8 drawings, 1990



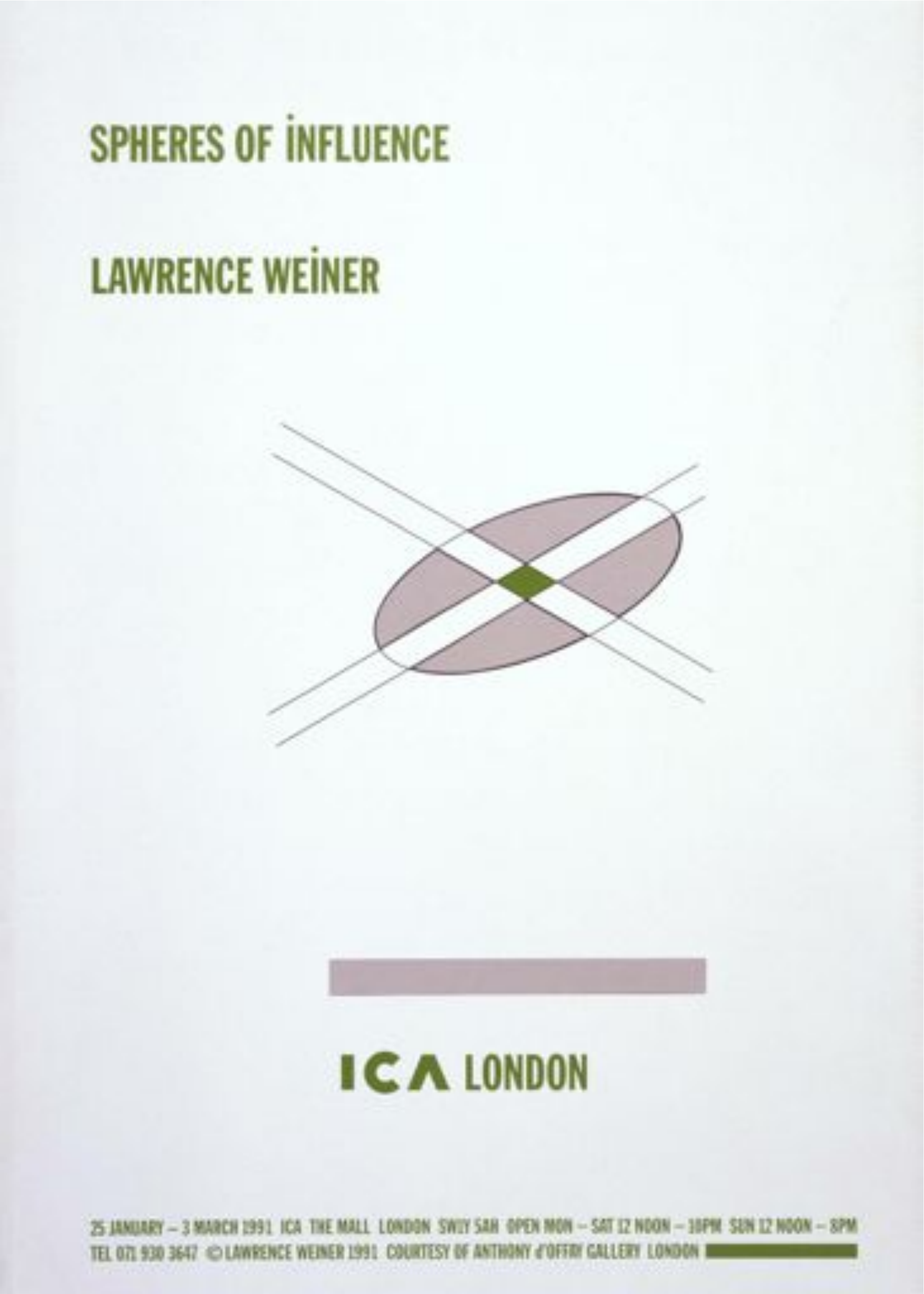
189b. Lawrence Weiner, *Spheres Of Influence*, series of 8 drawings, 1990



190. Lawrence Weiner, *CROSSED OVER (&) JUST ON THE OTHER SIDE*, 1990, installation at Tate Modern, London



191. El Lissitzky, *Proun G7*, 1923



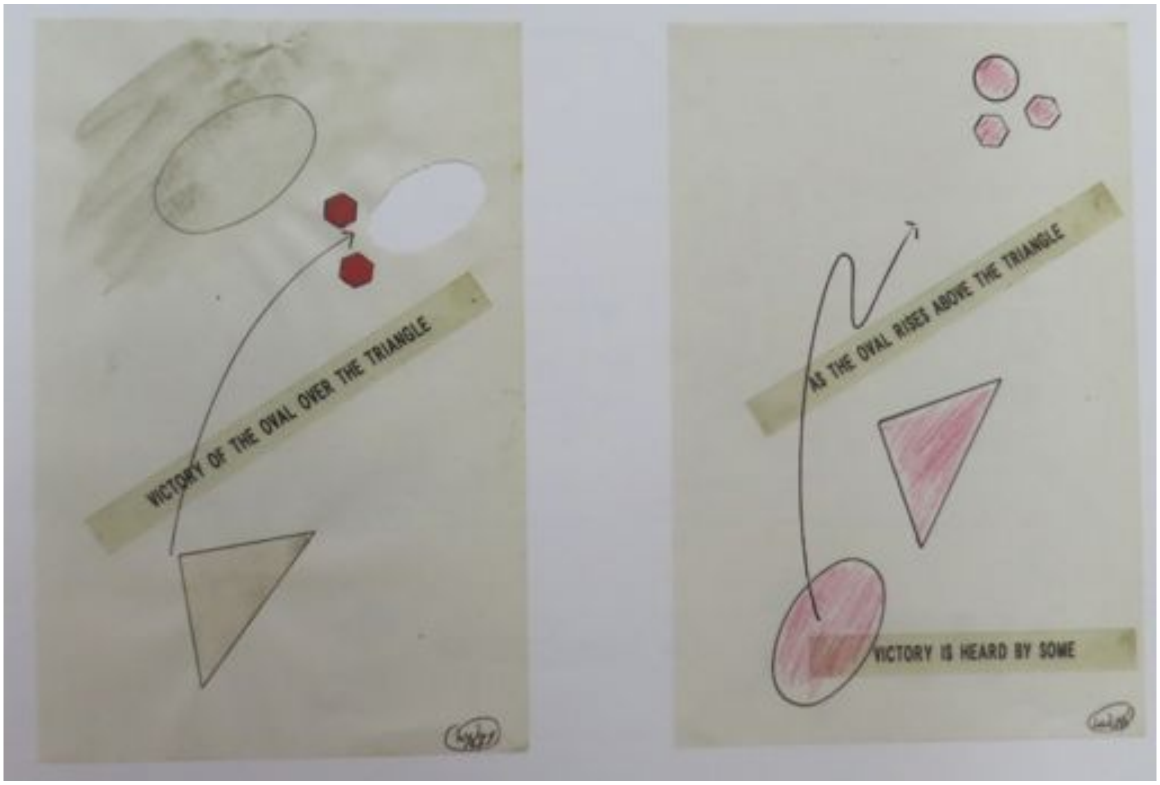
SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

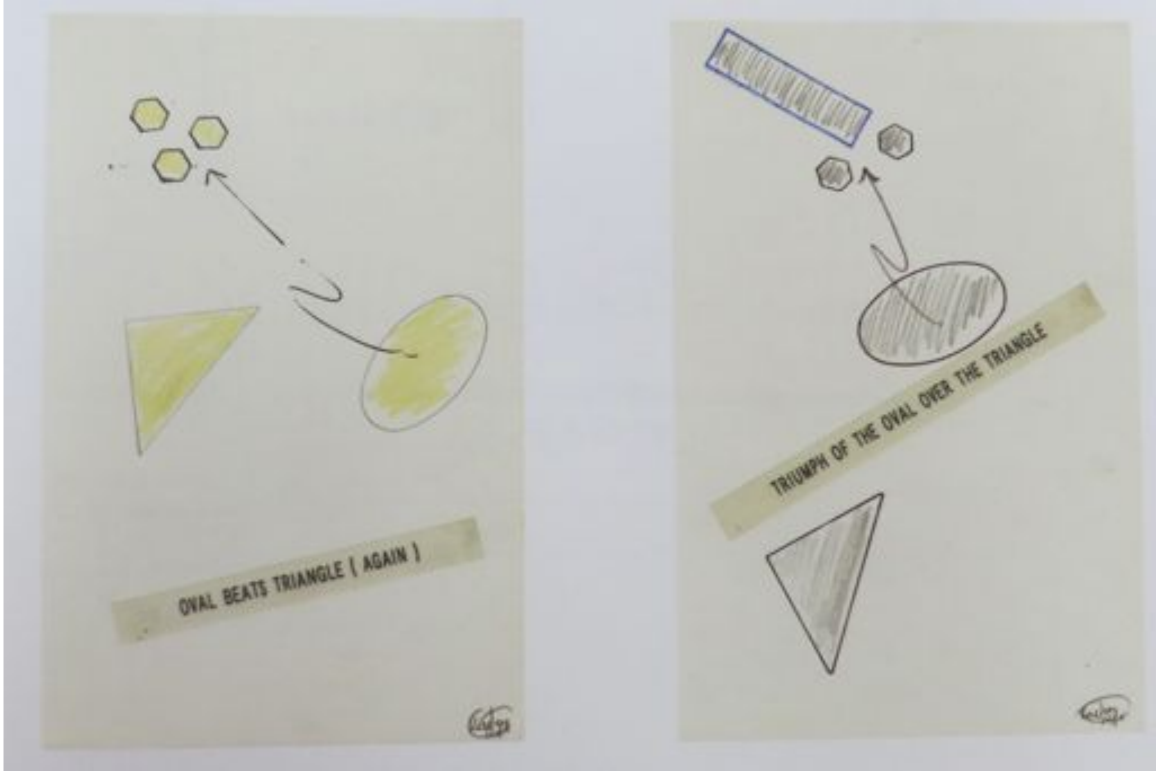
LAWRENCE WEINER

ICA LONDON

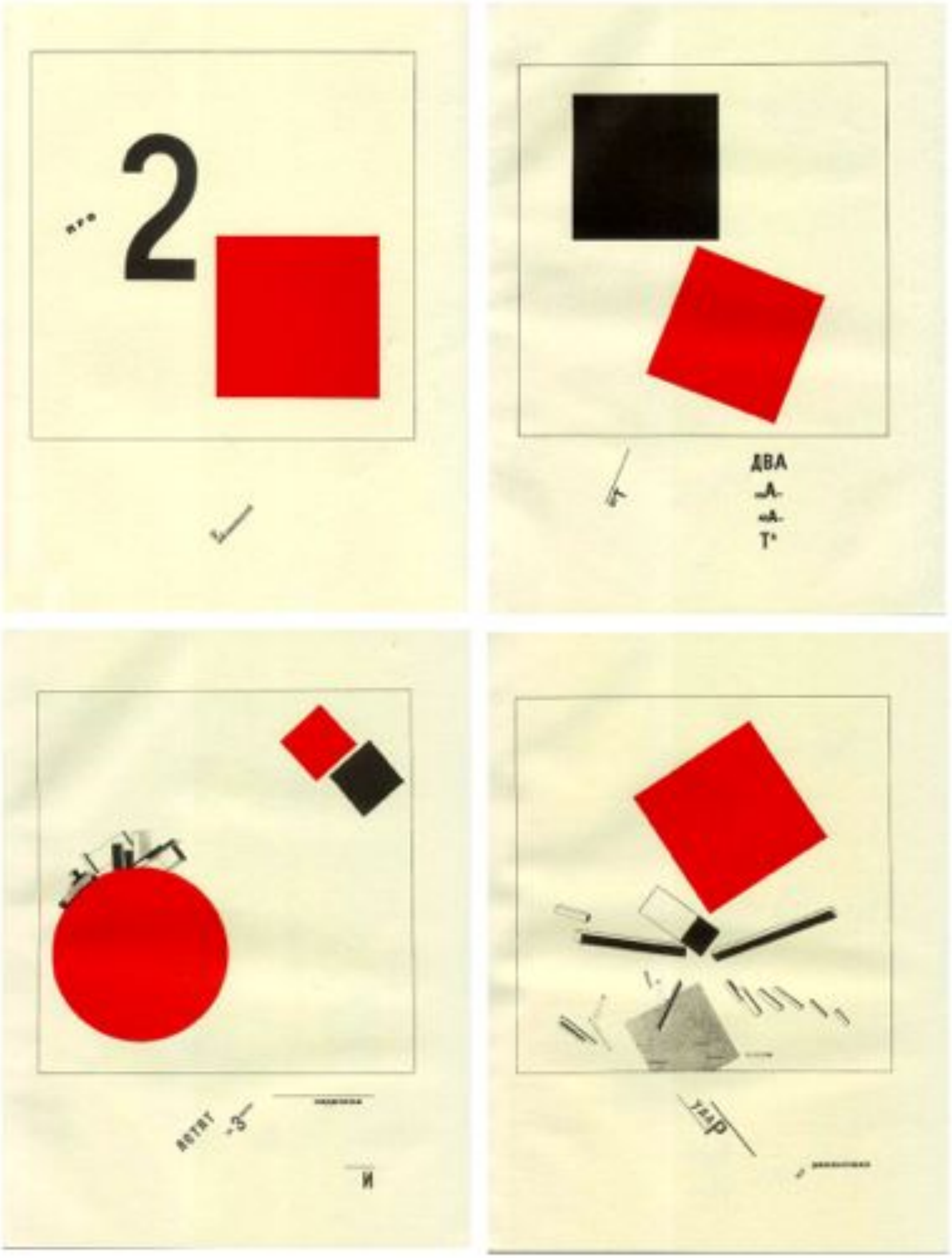
25 JANUARY – 3 MARCH 1991 ICA THE MALL LONDON SW1Y 5AH OPEN MON – SAT 12 NOON – 10PM SUN 12 NOON – 8PM
TEL 071 930 3647 © LAWRENCE WEINER 1991 COURTESY OF ANTHONY d'OFFAY GALLERY LONDON

192. Lawrence Weiner, poster for “Spheres Of Influence,” exhibition at ICA London, 1991

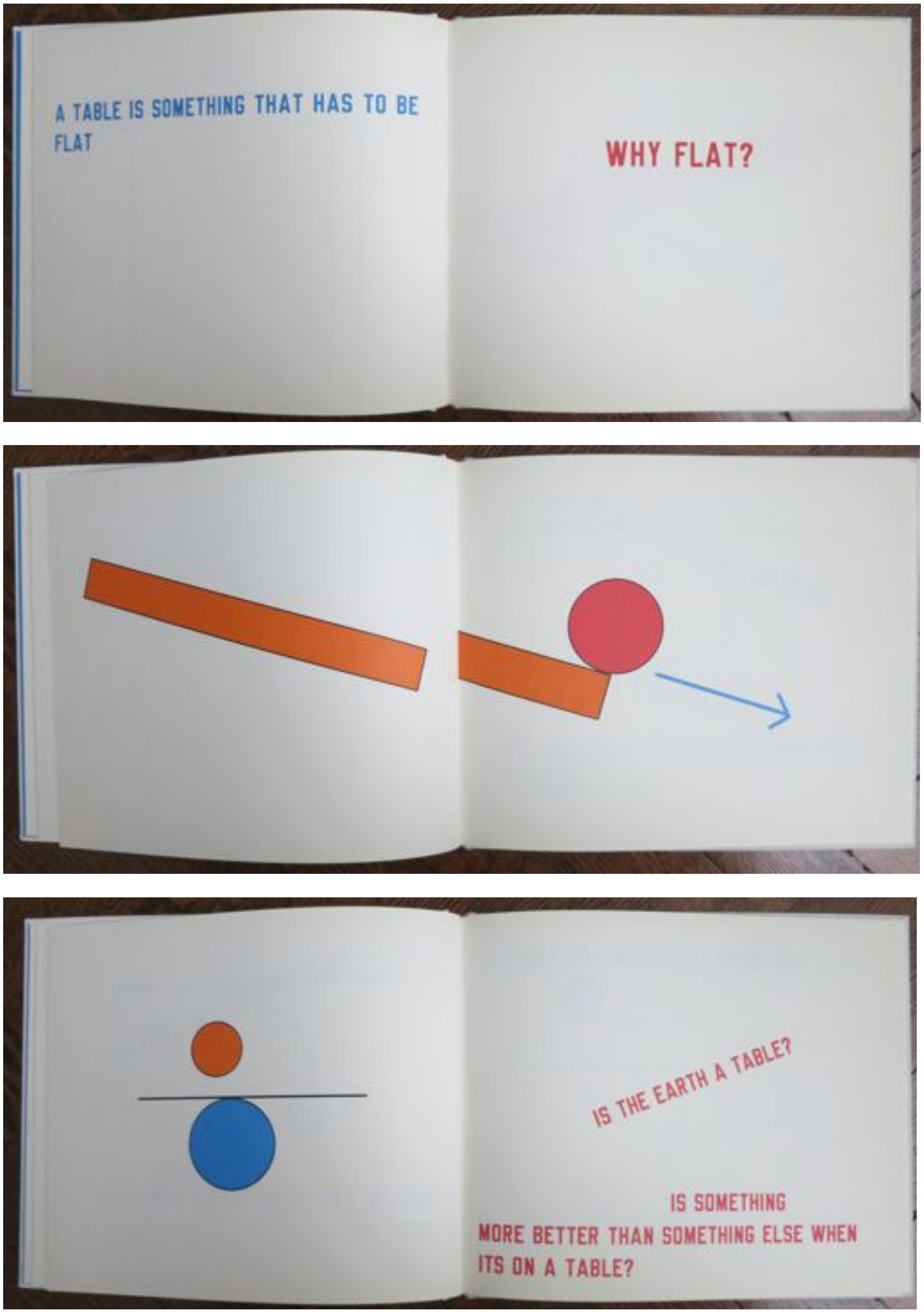

VICTORY OF THE OVAL OVER THE TRIANGLE
AS THE OVAL RISES ABOVE THE TRIANGLE
VICTORY IS HEARD BY SOME


OVAL BEATS TRIANGLE (AGAIN)
TRIUMPH OF THE OVAL OVER THE TRIANGLE

193a & 193b. Lawrence Weiner, *untitled (Oval Beats Triangle [Again]), untitled (The Oval Over The Triangle [Triumph]),* , *untitled (The Oval Over The Triangle [Victory]), untitled (Oval Rises Above The Triangle),* 1999



194. El Lissitzky, *About Two Squares*, excerpts, 1922



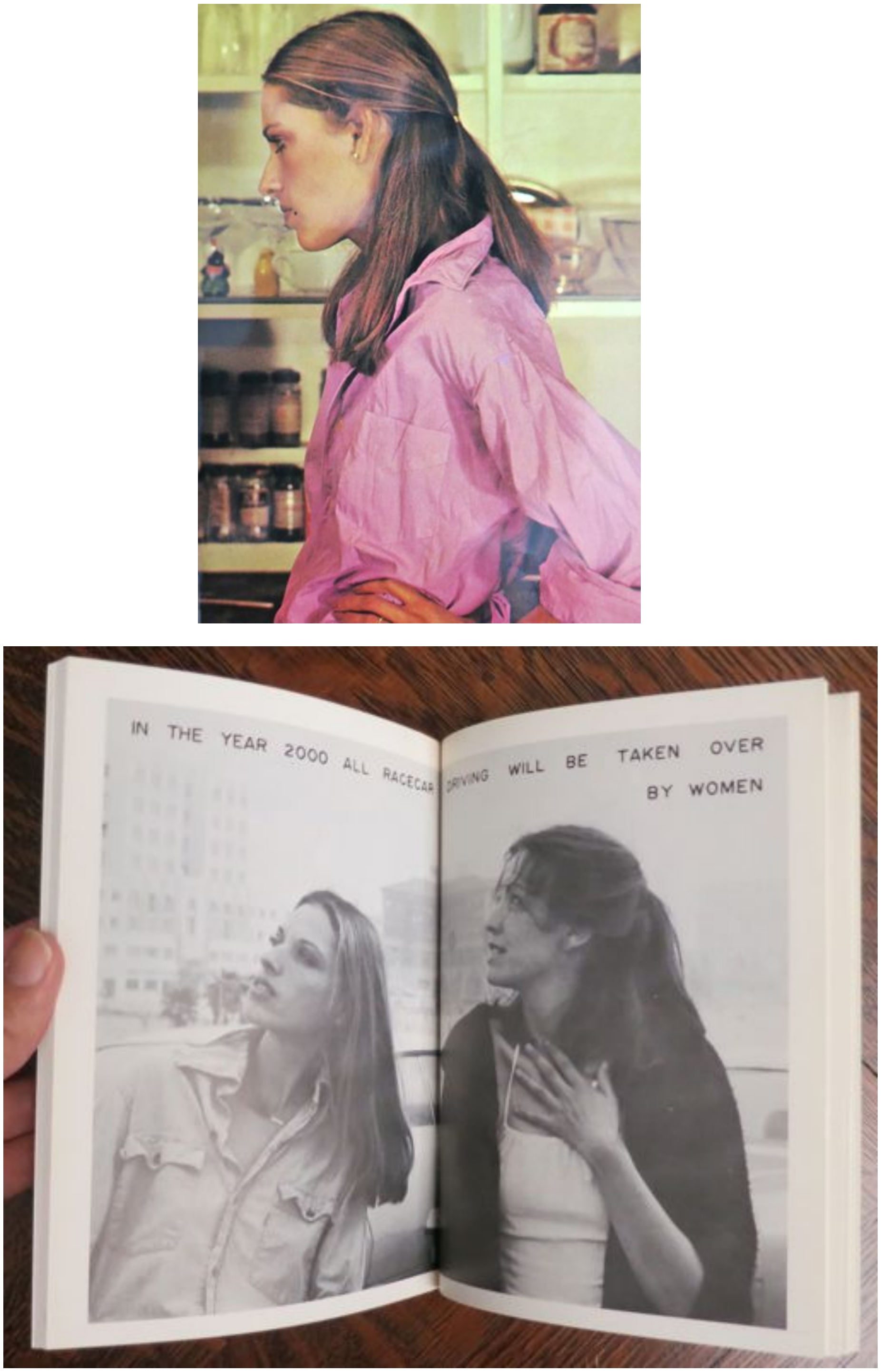
A TABLE IS SOMETHING THAT HAS TO BE FLAT

WHY FLAT?

IS THE EARTH A TABLE?

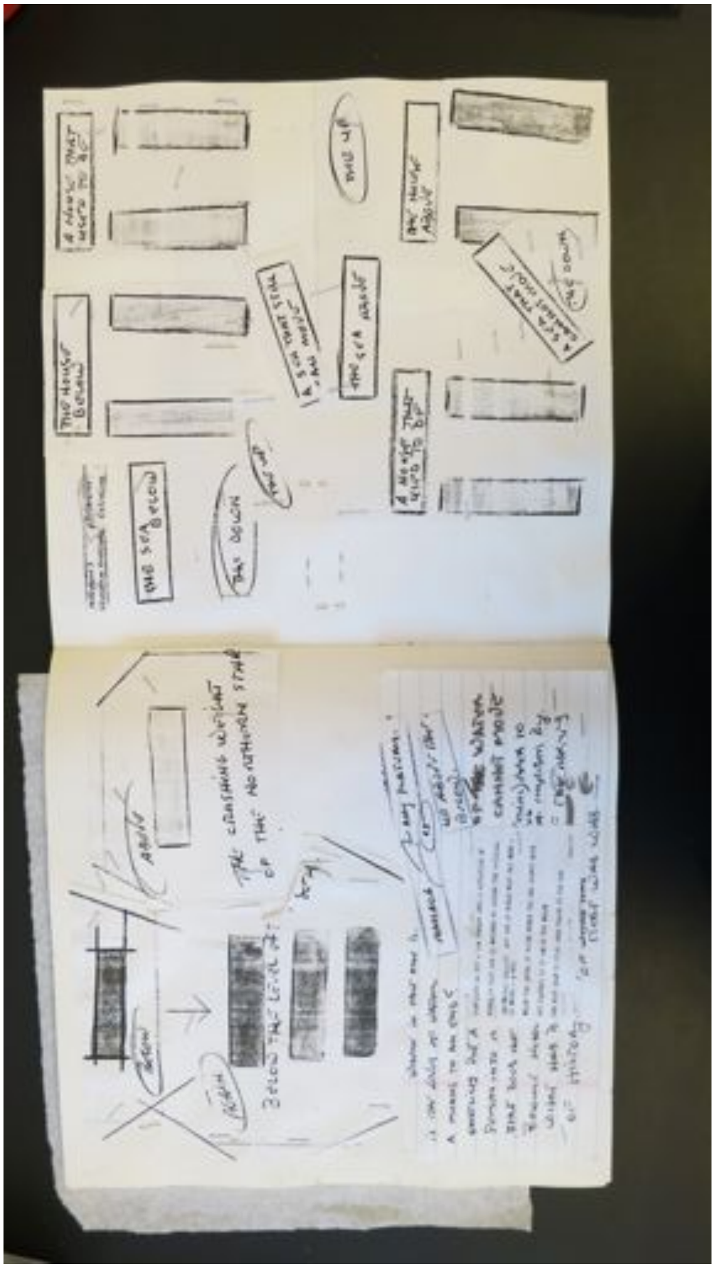
IS SOMETHING MORE BETTER THAN SOMETHING ELSE WHEN ITS ON A TABLE?

195a, 195b & 195c. Lawrence Weiner*, Something To Put Something On*, excerpts, 2008

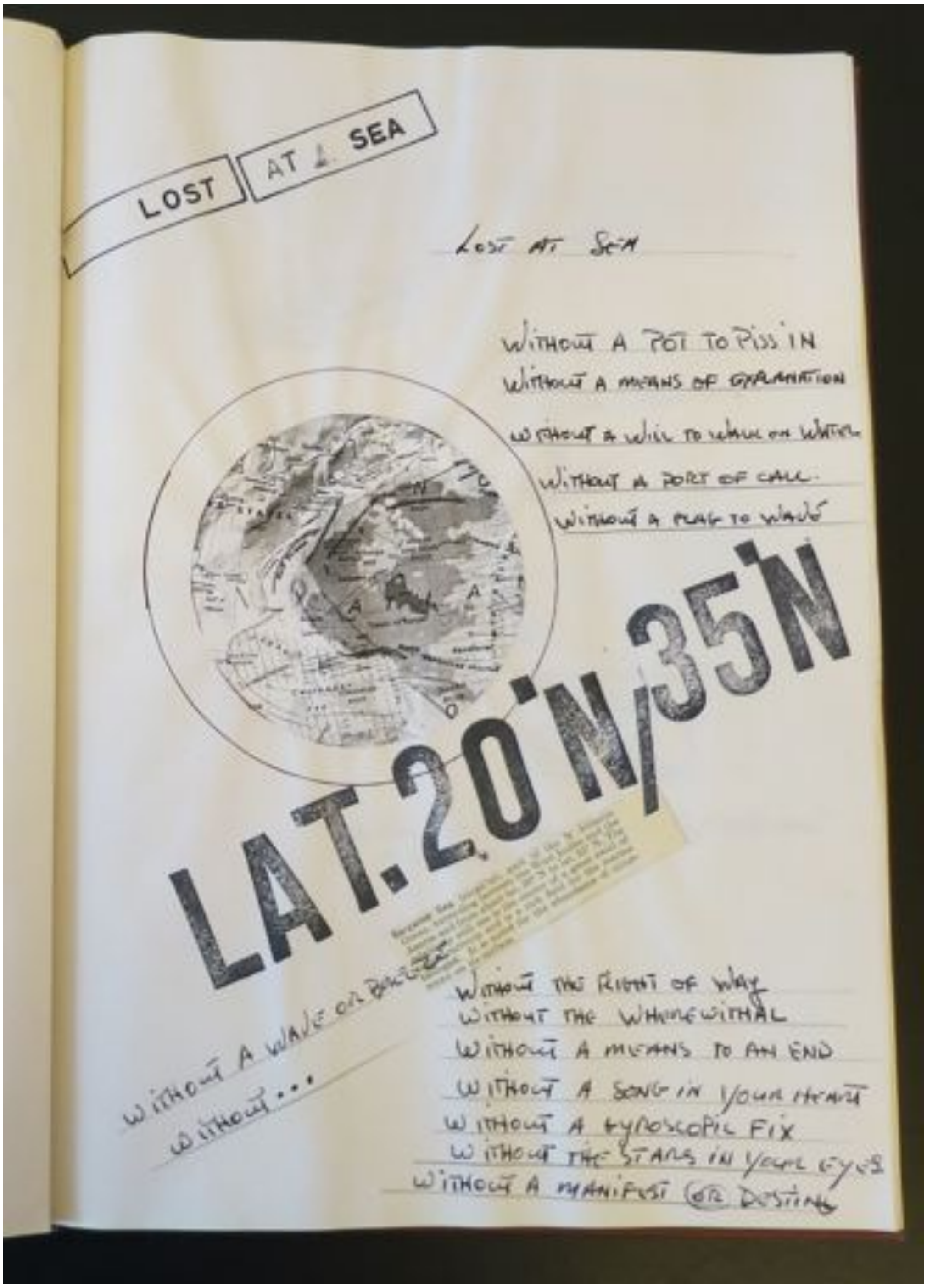


IN THE YEAR 2000 ALL RACECAR DRIVING WILL BE TAKEN OVER BY WOMEN

196a & 196b. Ed Ruscha and Lawrence Weiner*,* *Hard Light*, 1978



197. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 2002 – January 2003, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



LOST AT SEA

LOST AT SEA

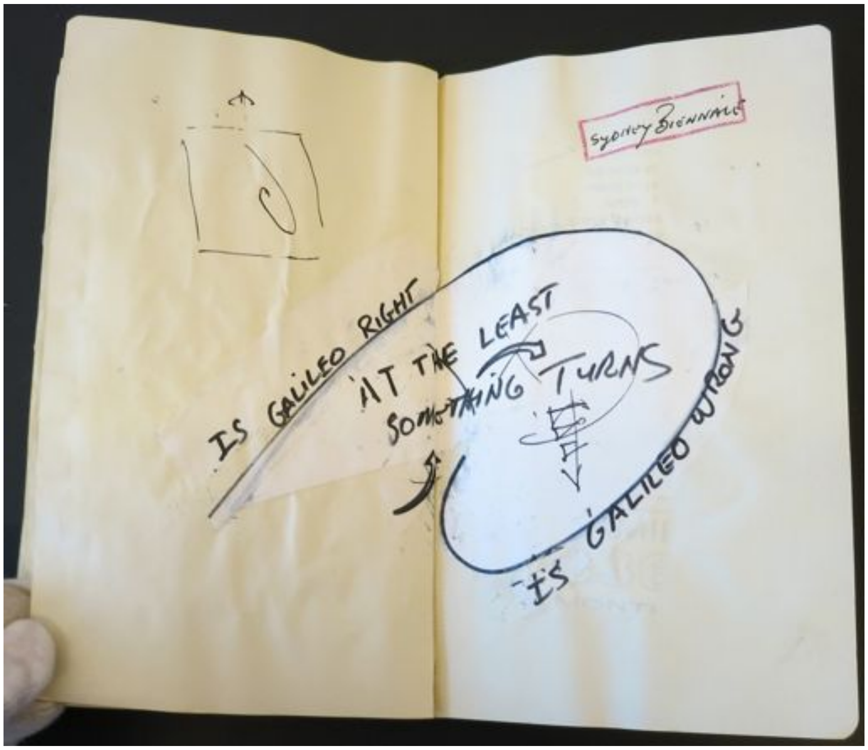
WITHOUT A POT TO PISS IN
WITHOUT A MEANS OF EXPLANATION
WITHOUT A WILL TO WALK ON WATER
WITHOUT A PORT OF CALL.
WITHOUT A FLAG TO WAVE

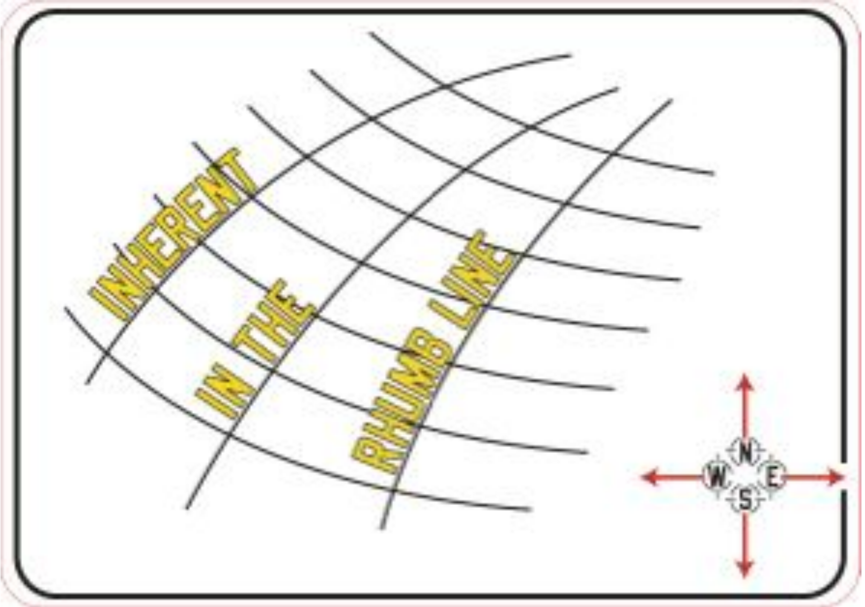
LAT.20˚N/35˚N

WITHOUT A WAKE OR BREEZE
WITHOUT...

WITHOUT THE RIGHT OF WAY
WITHOUT THE WHEREWITHAL
WITHOUT A MEANS TO AN END
WITHOUT A SONG IN YOUR HEART
WITHOUT A GYROSCOPIC FIX
WITHOUT THE STARS IN YOUR EYES
WITHOUT A MANIFEST OR DESTINY

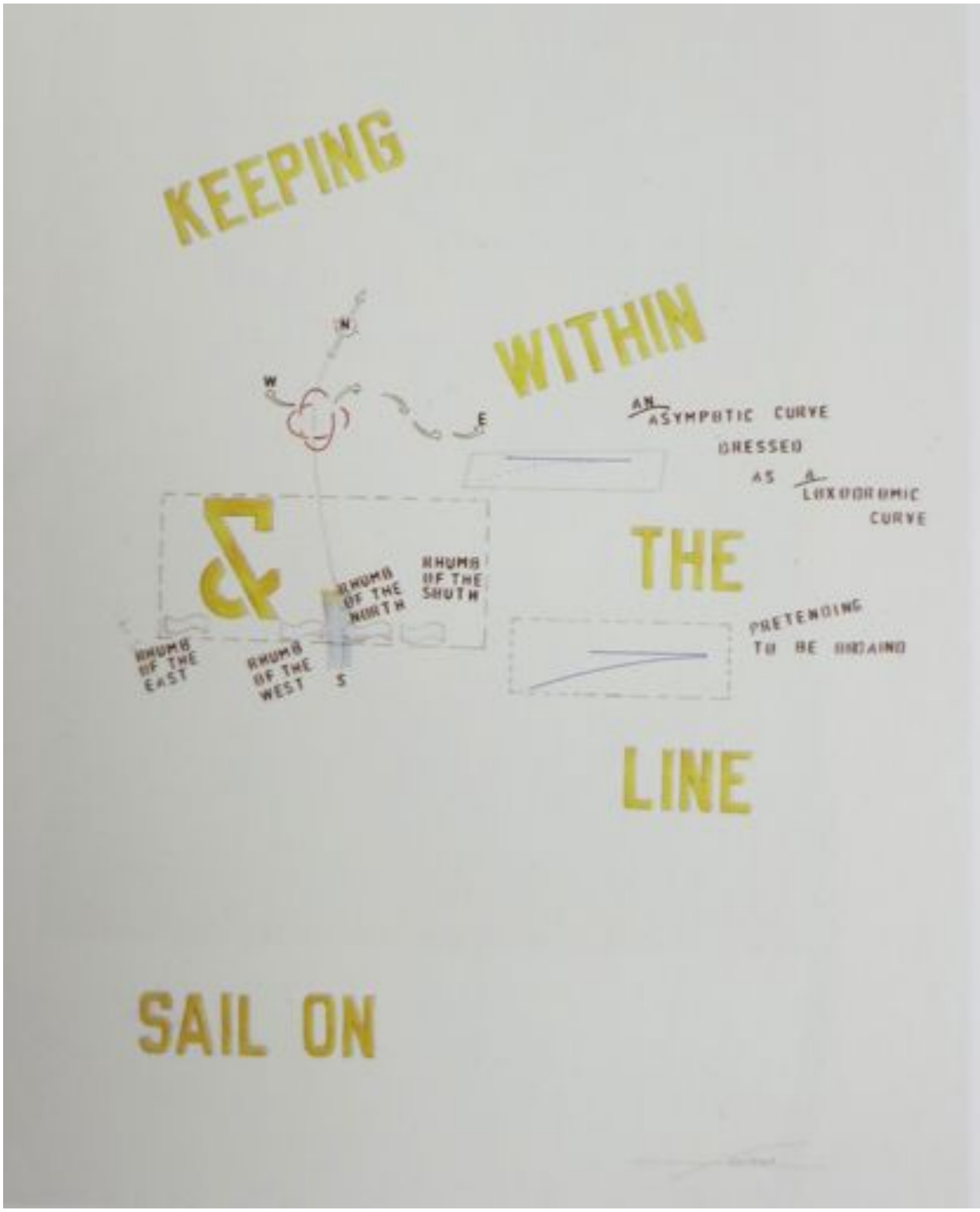
198. Lawrence Weiner Notebook Summer 1993 – July 1994, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



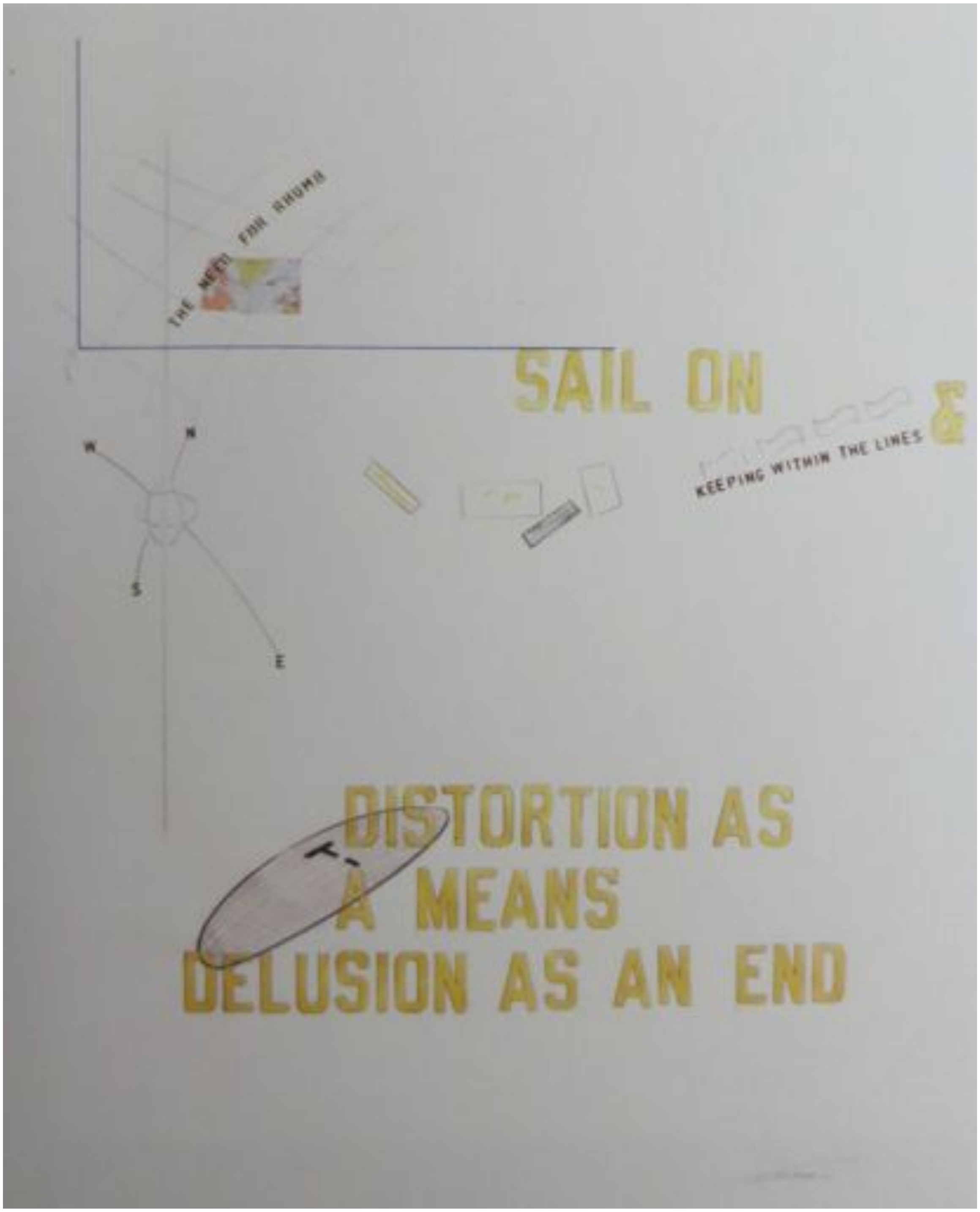


199. Lawrence Weiner Notebook January - September 2007, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

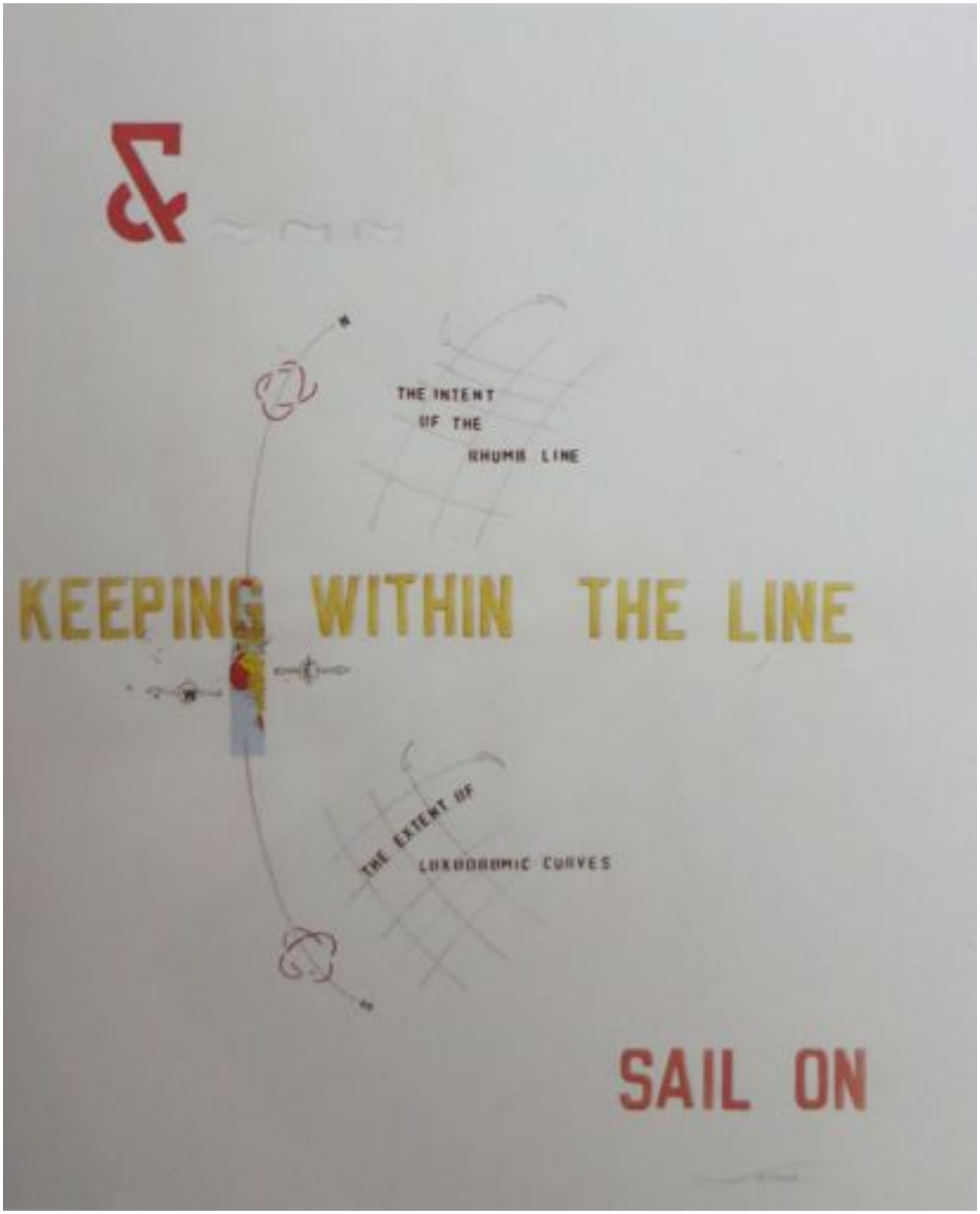
200. Lawrence Weiner, poster for “Inherent In The Rhumb Line” exhibition at National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, 2007



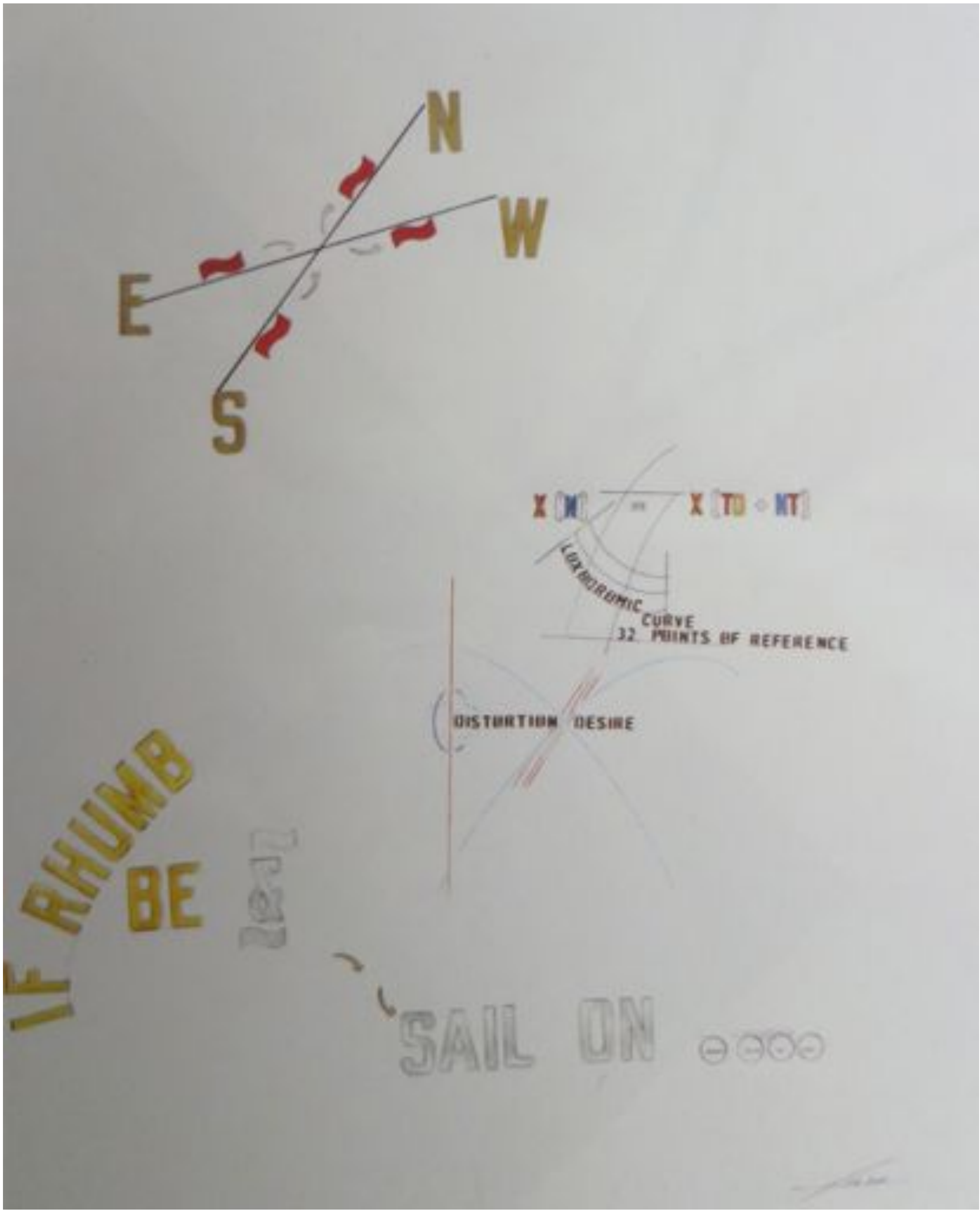
201a. Lawrence Weiner, *Inherent In The Rhumb Line*, series of 12 drawings, 2007



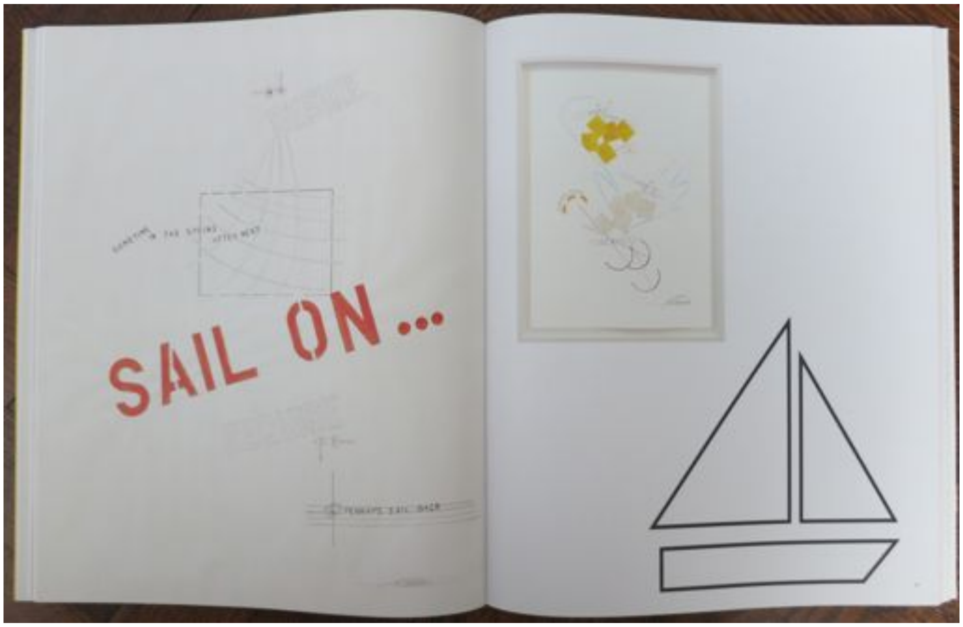
201b. Lawrence Weiner, *Inherent In The Rhumb Line*, series of 12 drawings, 2007

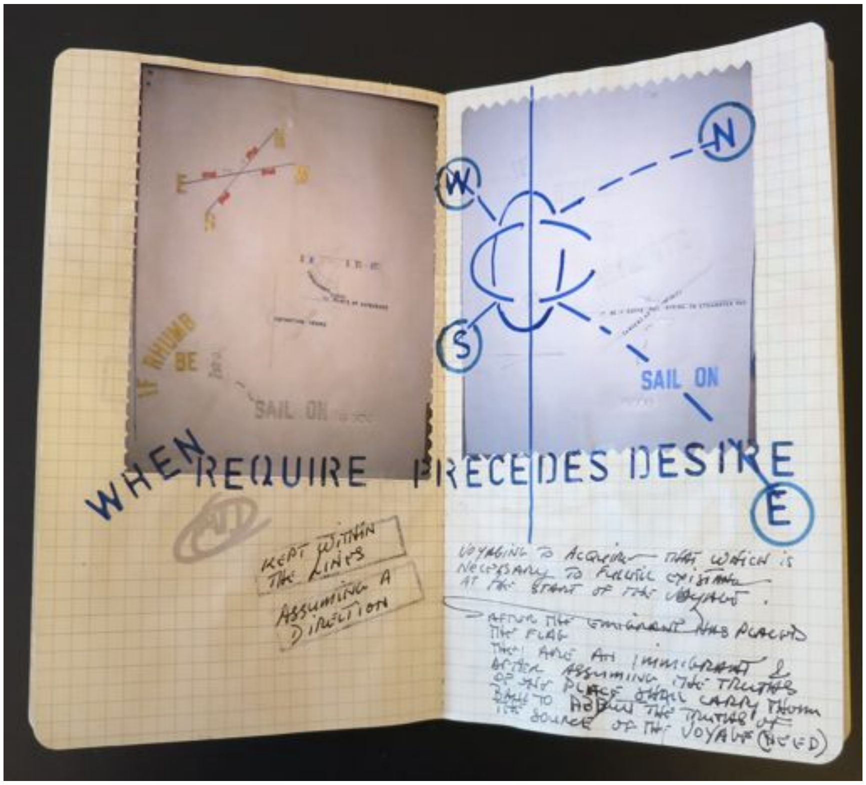


201c. Lawrence Weiner, *Inherent In The Rhumb Line*, series of 12 drawings, 2007



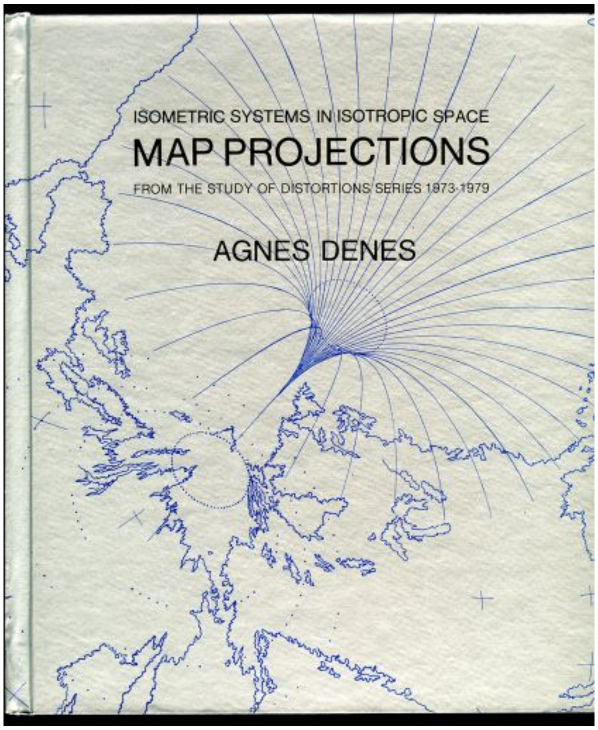
201d. Lawrence Weiner, *Inherent In The Rhumb Line*, series of 12 drawings, 2007

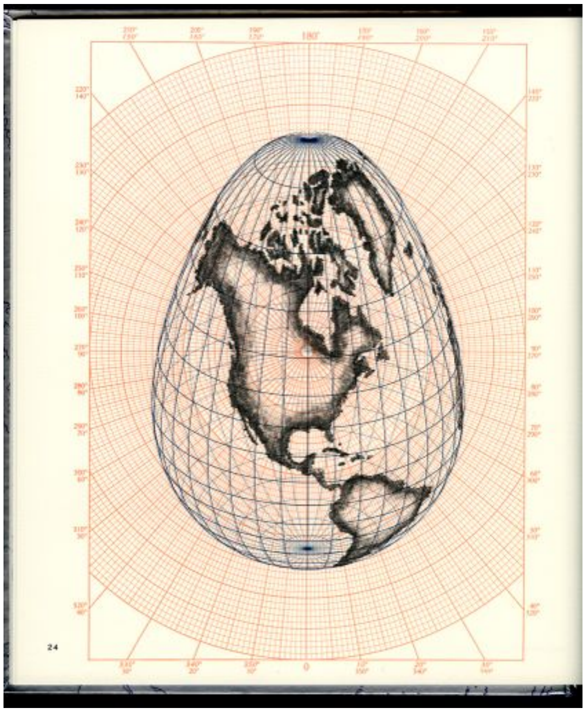



W
N
S
E
IF RHUMB
BE
SAIL ON
SAIL ON
WHEN REQUIRE PRECEDES DESIRE
KEPT WITHIN THE LINES
ASSUMING A DIRECTION
VOYAGING TO ACQUIRE THAT WHICH IS NECESSARY TO FULFILL EXISTANCE AT THE START OF THE VOYAGE.
AFTER THE EMIGRANT HAS PLACED THE FLAG
THEY ARE AN IMMIGRANT &
AFTER ASSUMING THE TRUTHS OF THE PLACE SHALL CARRY THEM BACK TO ADD TO THE TRUTHS OF ITS SOURCE OF THE VOYAGE

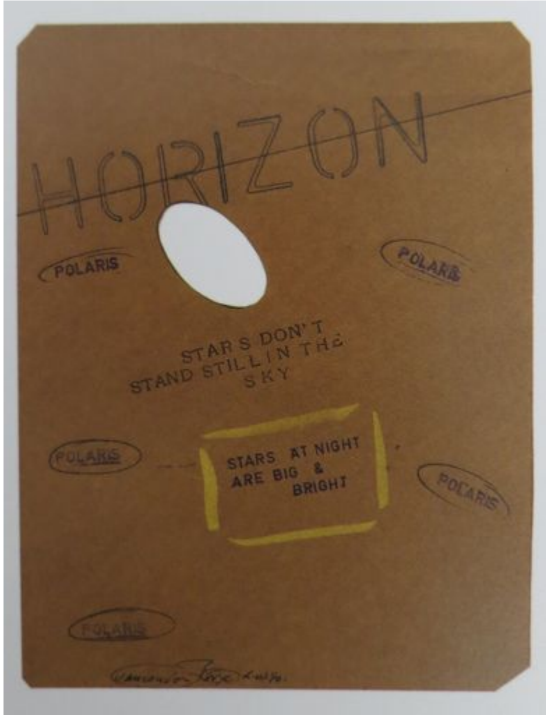
201e. Lawrence Weiner, *Written On The Wind: Lawrence Weiner Drawings,* exhibition catalog (2013) featuring drawing from *Inherent In The Rhumb Line* series, 2007

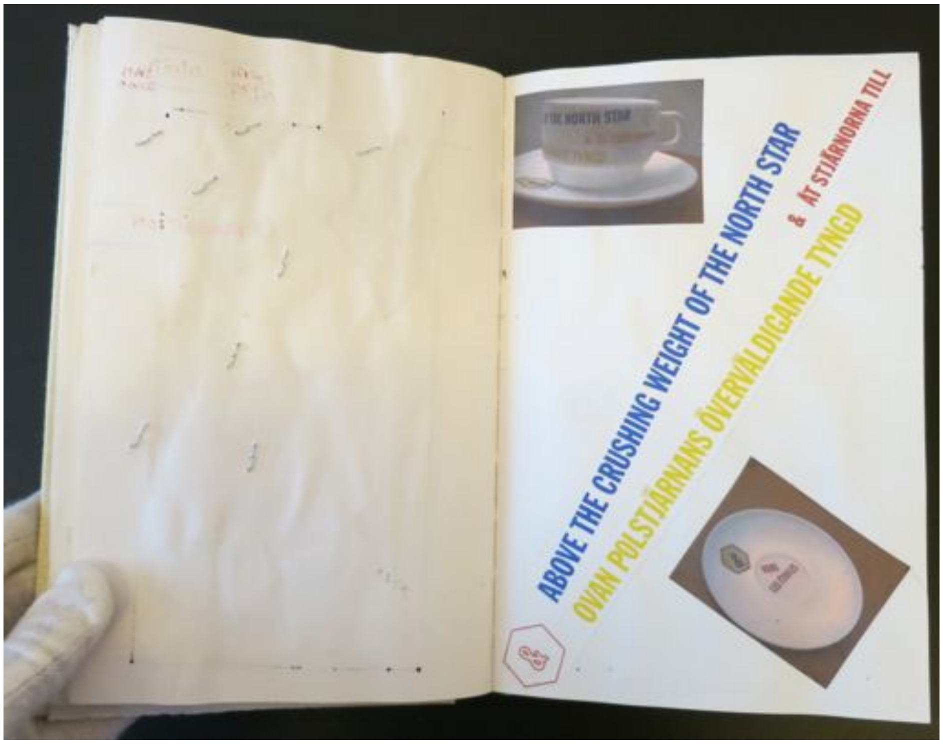
201f. Lawrence Weiner Notebook May 2006 – January 2007, Moved Pictures Archive, New York


ISOMETRIC SYSTEMS IN ISOTROPIC SPACE
MAP PROJECTIONS
FROM THE STUDY OF DISTORTIONS SERIES 1973-1979
AGNES DENES



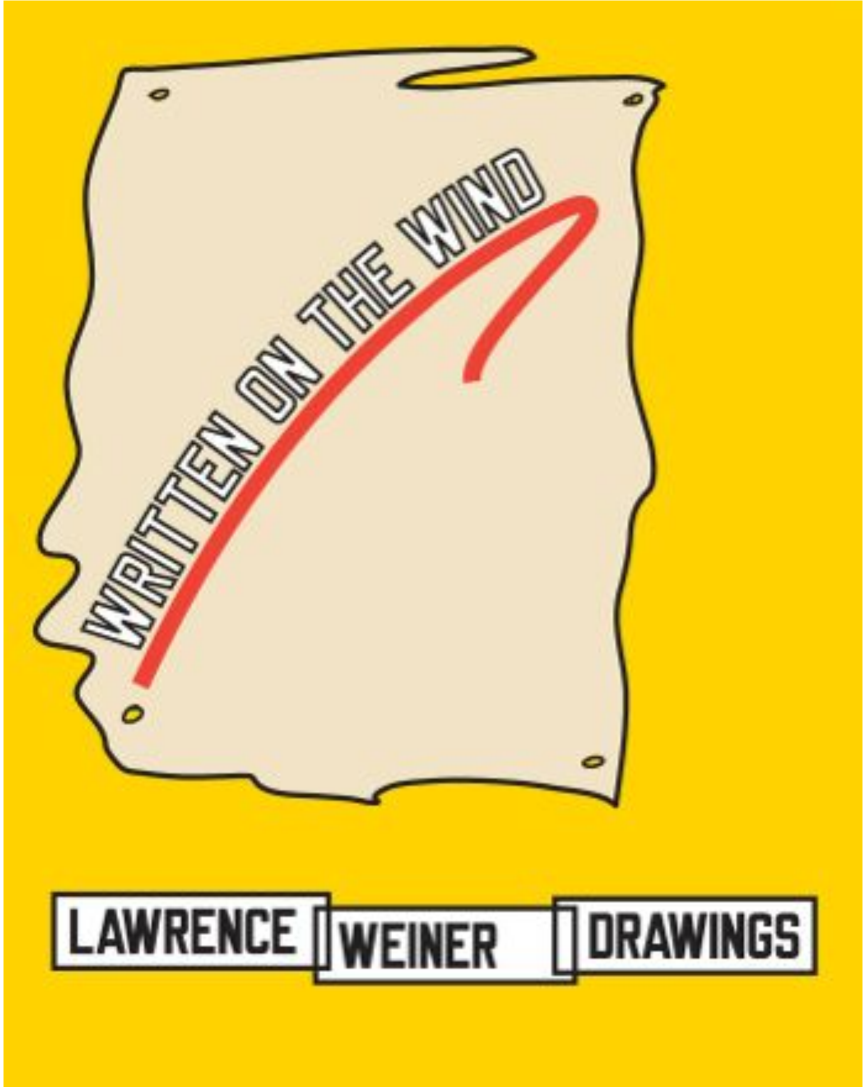
202a & 202b. Agnes Denes, *Isometric Systems In Isotropic Space: Map Projections From The Study Of Distortion Series, 1973 – 1979, "The Egg",* 1979


HORIZON
POLARIS
POLARIS
STARS DON'T STAND STILL IN THE SKY
POLARIS
STARS AT NIGHT ARE BIG & BRIGHT
POLARIS
POLARIS

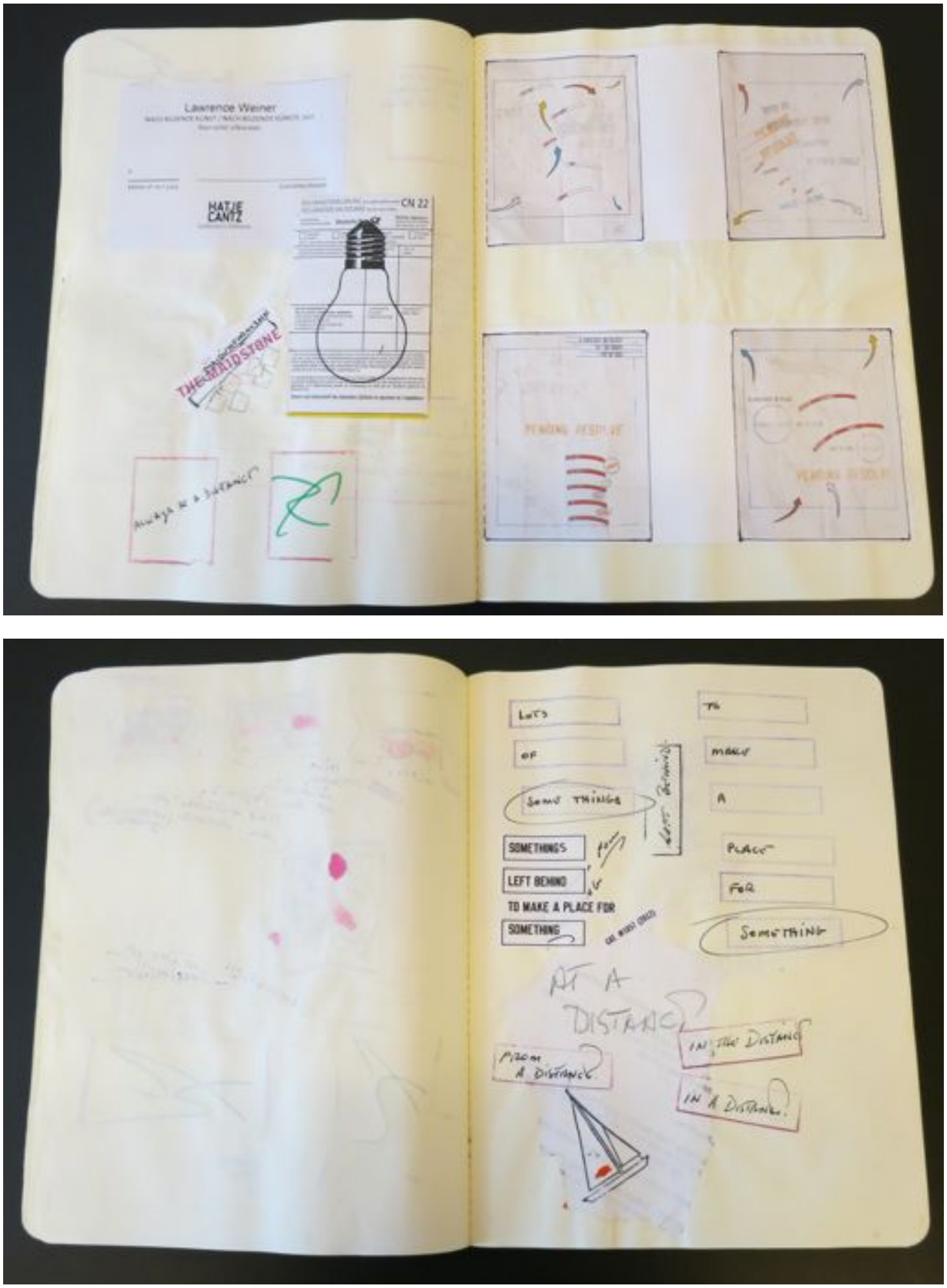

THE NORTH STAR
ABOVE THE CRUSHING WEIGHT OF THE NORTH STAR
& AT STJÄRNORNA TILL
OVAN POLSTJÄRNANS ÖVERVÄLDIGANDE TYNGD

203. Lawrence Weiner, *Stars At Night Are Big & Bright (Polaris / Stars Don't Stand Still In The Sky / Horizon),* series of six drawings, 1990

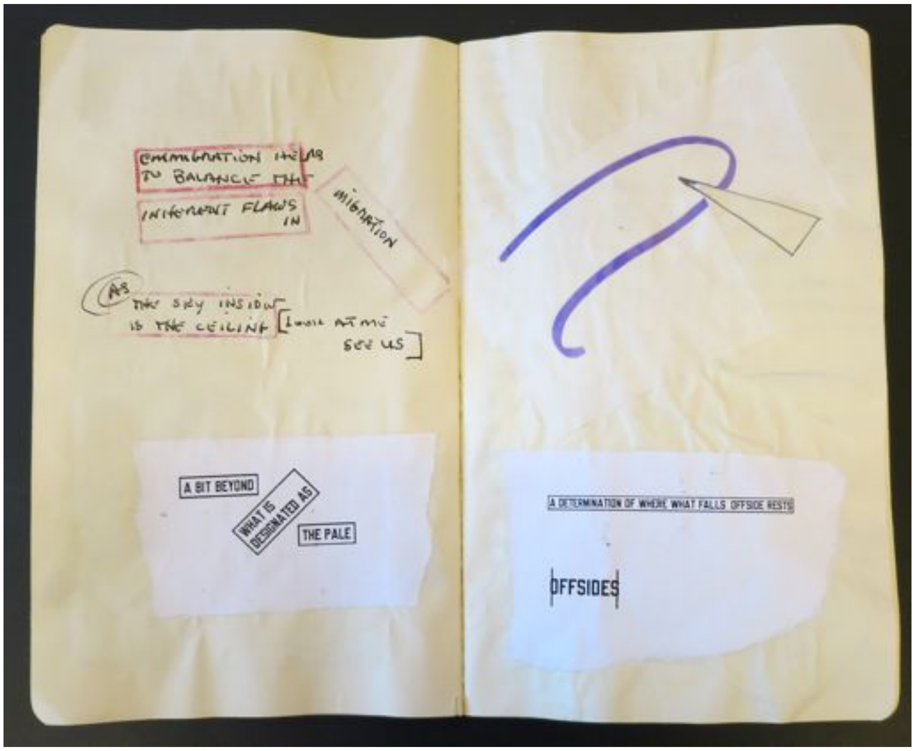
204. Lawrence Weiner Notebook September 1999 – August 2001, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

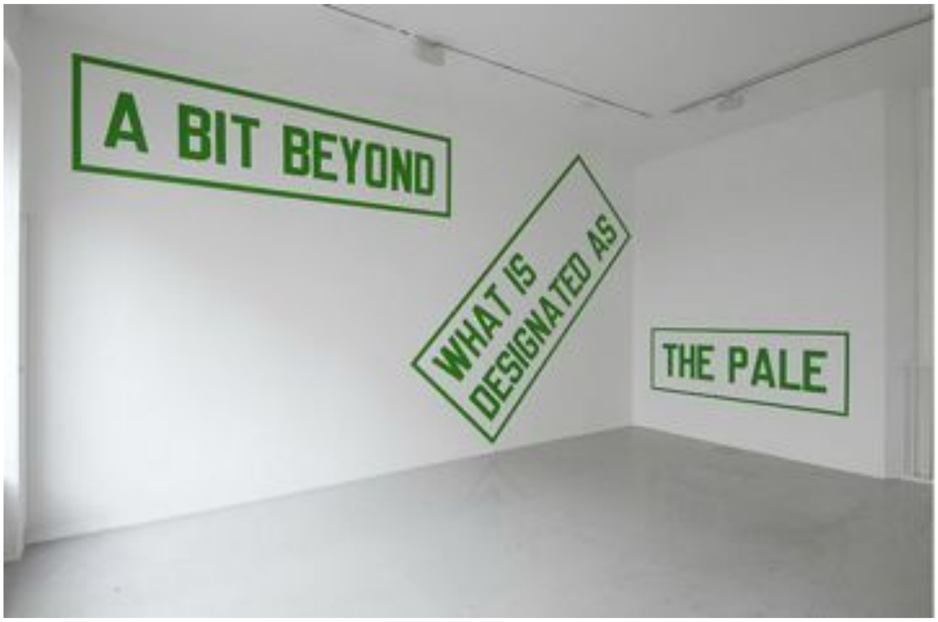


205. Lawrence Weiner, *Written On The Wind: Lawrence Weiner Drawings*, exhibition catalog, 2013



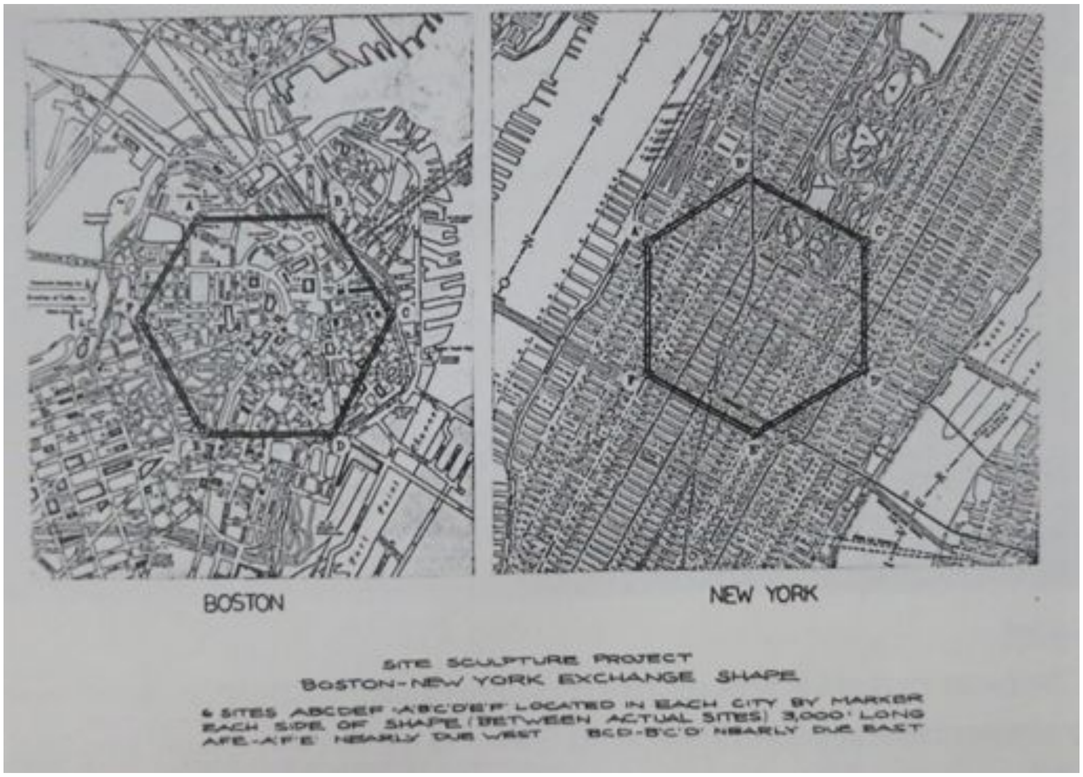
206a & 206b. Lawrence Weiner Notebook July 2010 – May 2012, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

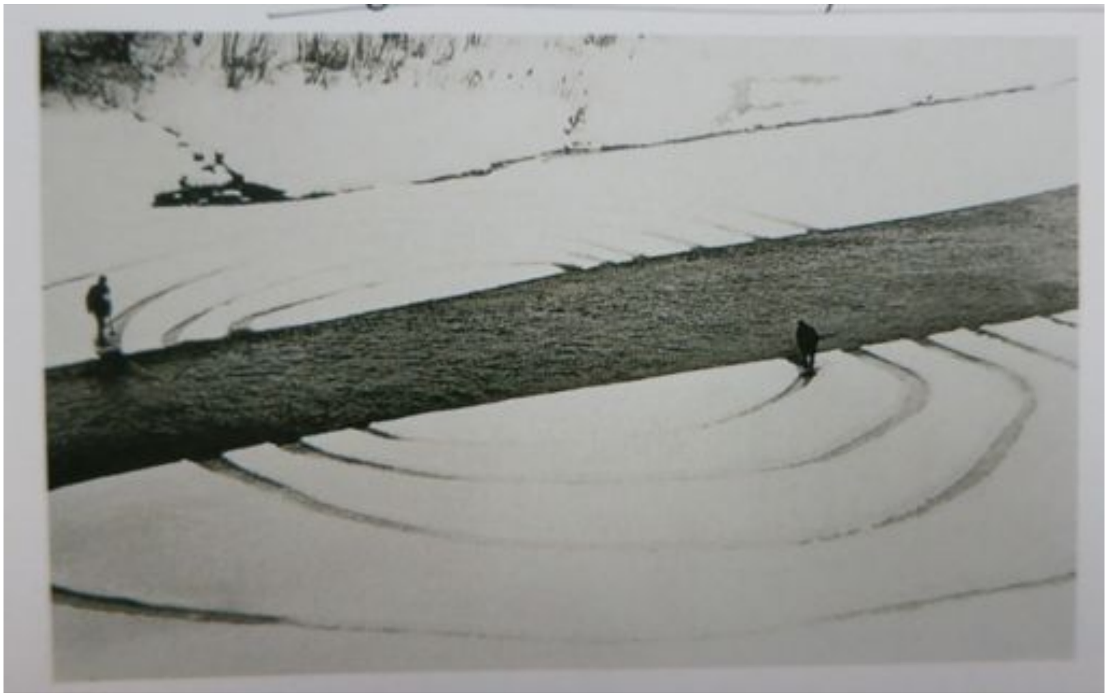




207. Lawrence Weiner Notebook September 2007 – June 2008, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

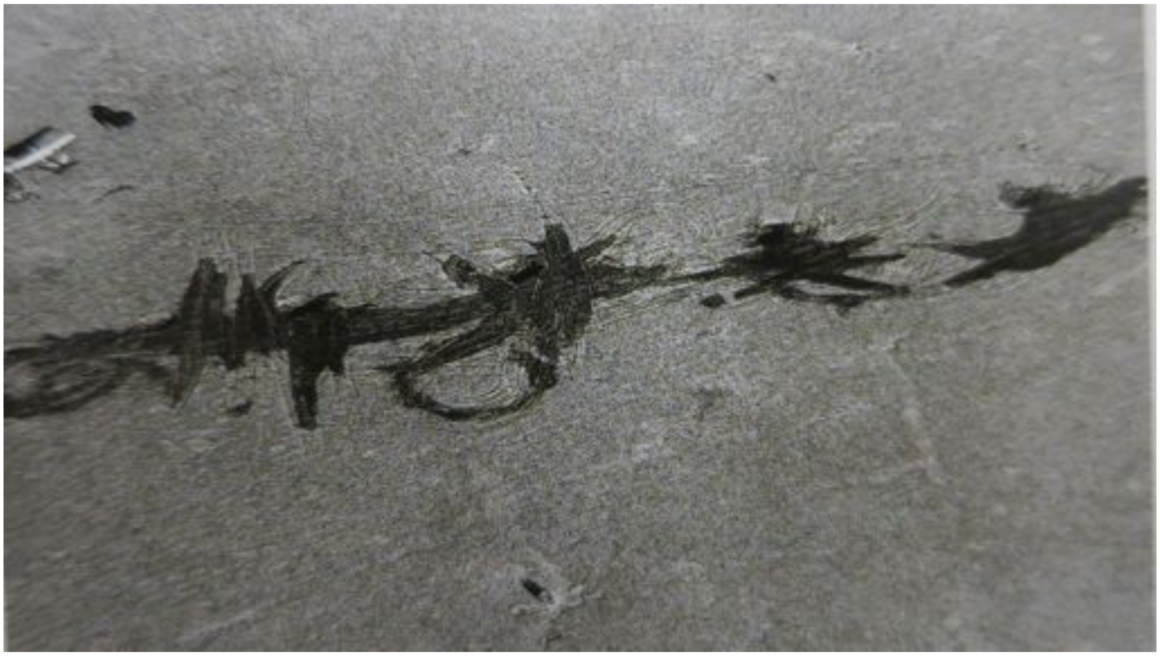
208. Lawrence Weiner, *A BIT BEYOND WHAT IS DESIGNATED AS THE PALE*, 2007, installation at Lisson Gallery, London

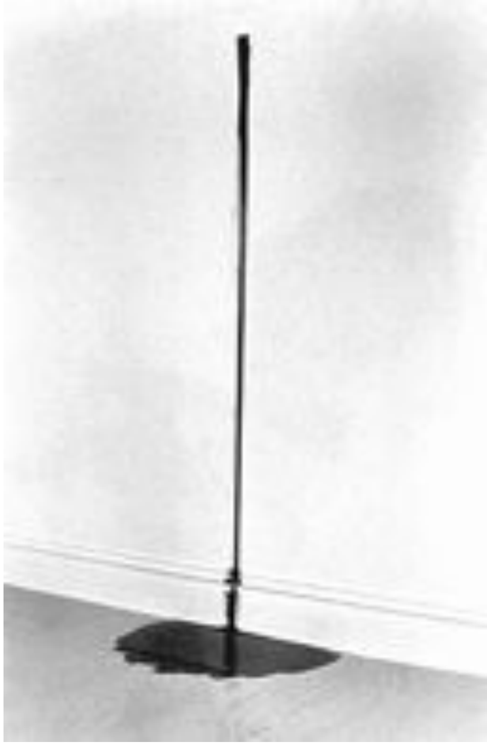

BOSTON
NEW YORK
SITE SCULPTURE PROJECT
BOSTON-NEW YORK EXCHANGE SHAPE
6 SITES ABCDEF-A'B'C'D'E'F' LOCATED IN EACH CITY BY MARKER
EACH SIDE OF SHAPE (BETWEEN ACTUAL SITES) 3,000' LONG
AFE-A'F'E' NEARLY DUE WEST BCD-B'C'D' NEARLY DUE EAST



209. Douglas Huebler, *Boston-New York Exchange Shape*, 1968

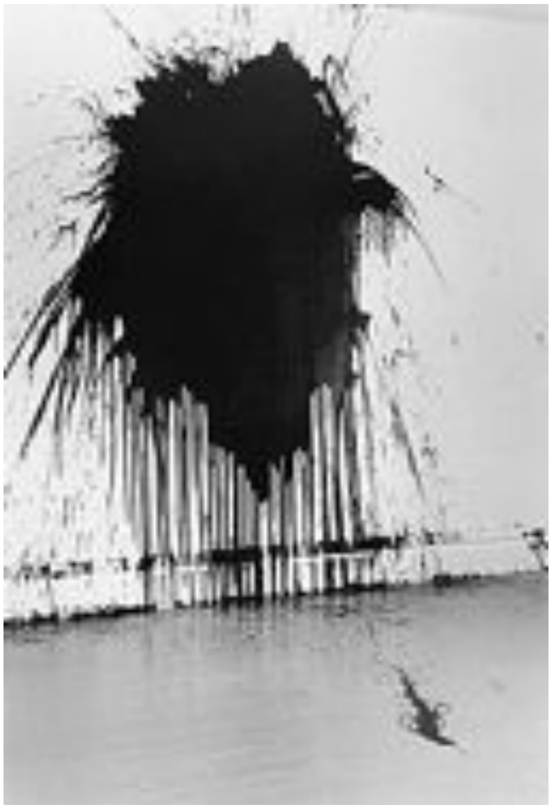
210. Dennis Oppenheim, *Annual Rings*, 1968

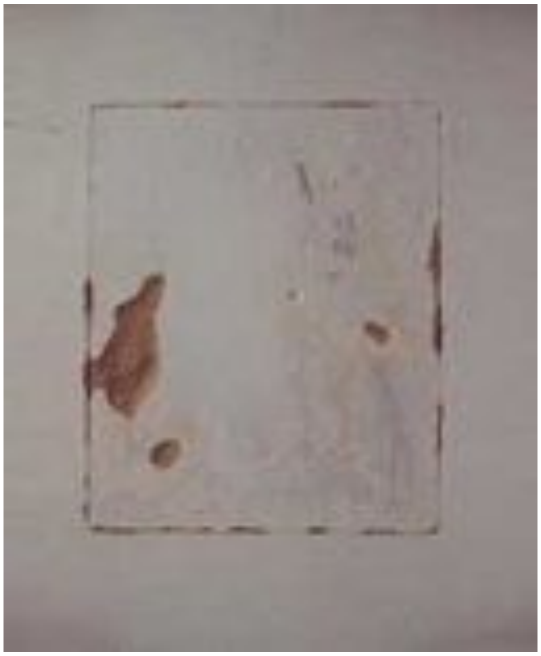




211. Michael Heizer, *Five Conic Displacements*, 1969

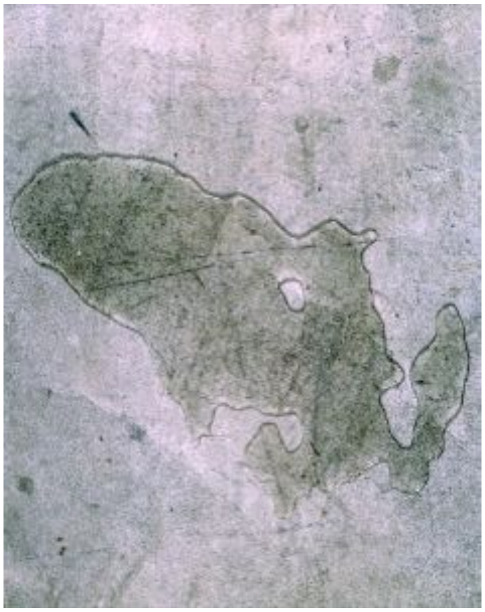
212. William Anastasi, *Untitled*, one gallon of industrial high gloss enamel poured, 1966

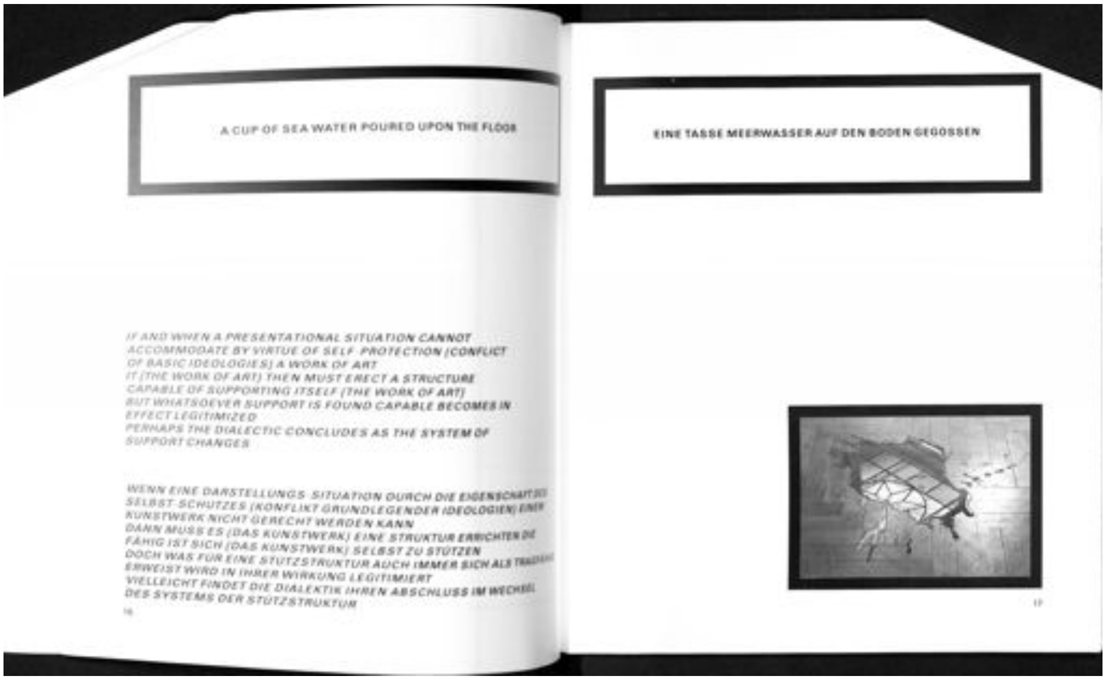




213. William Anastasi, *Untitled*, one gallon of industrial high gloss enamel thrown, 1966

214. William Anastasi, *Trespass* (1966), wall removal with stone installed at Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh, 1991





A CUP OF SEA WATER POURED UPON THE FLOOR

IF AND WHEN A PRESENTATIONAL SITUATION CANNOT
ACCOMMODATE BY VIRTUE OF SELF PROTECTION (CONFLICT
OF BASIC IDEOLOGIES) A WORK OF ART
IT (THE WORK OF ART) THEN MUST ERECT A STRUCTURE
CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING ITSELF (THE WORK OF ART)
BUT WHATSOEVER SUPPORT IS FOUND CAPABLE BECOMES IN
EFFECT LEGITIMIZED
PERHAPS THE DIALECTIC CONCLUDES AS THE SYSTEM OF
SUPPORT CHANGES

WENN EINE DARSTELLUNGS SITUATION DURCH DIE EIGENSCHAFT DE
SELBST SCHUTZES (KONFLIKT GRUNDLEGENDER IDEOLOGIEN) EINEM
KUNSTWERK NICHT GERECHT WERDEN KANN
DANN MUSS ES (DAS KUNSTWERK) EINE STRUKTUR ERRICHTEN DIE
FÄHIG IST SICH (DAS KUNSTWERK) SELBST ZU STÜTZEN
DOCH WAS FÜR EINE STÜTZSTRUKTUR AUCH IMMER SICH ALS TRA
ERWEIST WIRD IN IHRER WIRKUNG LEGITIMIERT
VIELLEICHT FINDET DIE DIALEKTIK IHREN ABSCHLUSS IM WECHSEL
DES SYSTEMS DER STÜTZSTRUKTUR

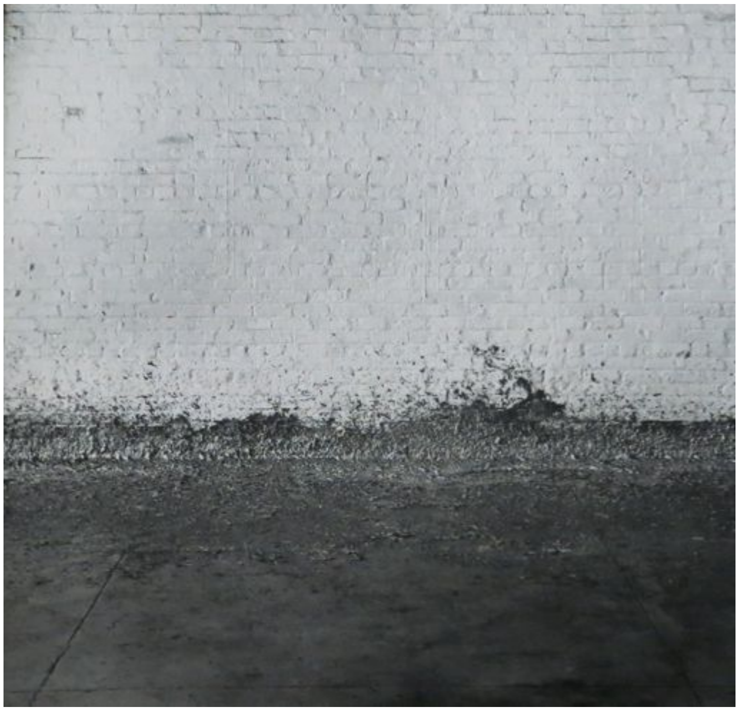
16

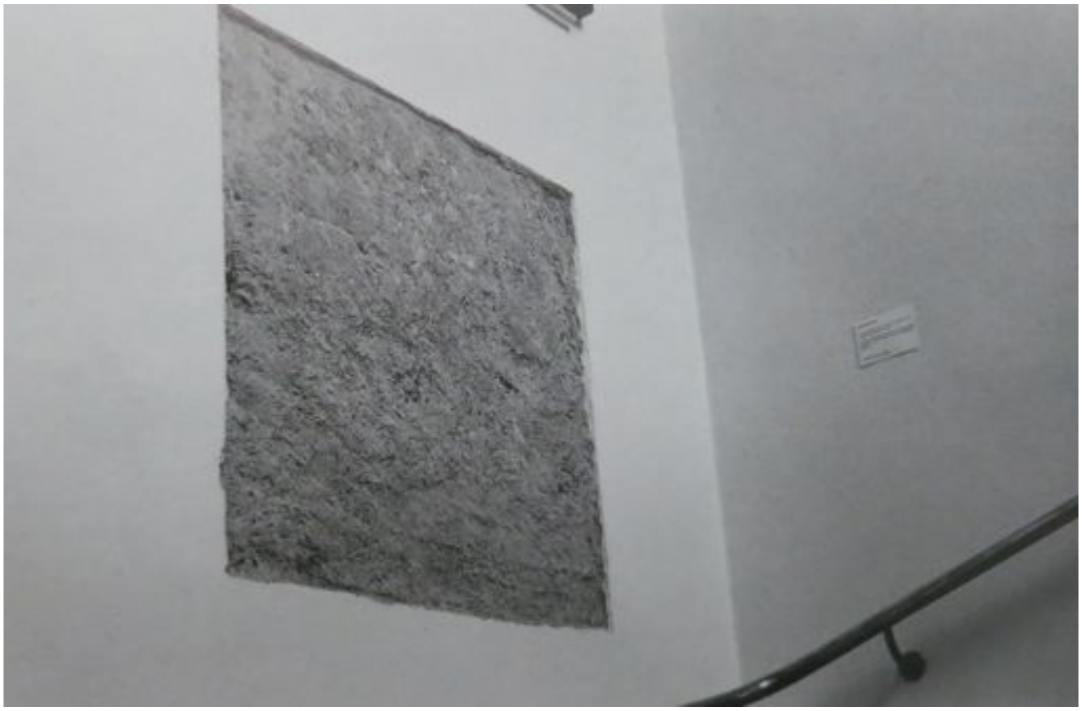
EINE TASSE MEERWASSER AUF DEN BODEN GEGOSSEN

17

215. William Anastasi, *12 Ounces of Tap Water On A Floor*, 1966

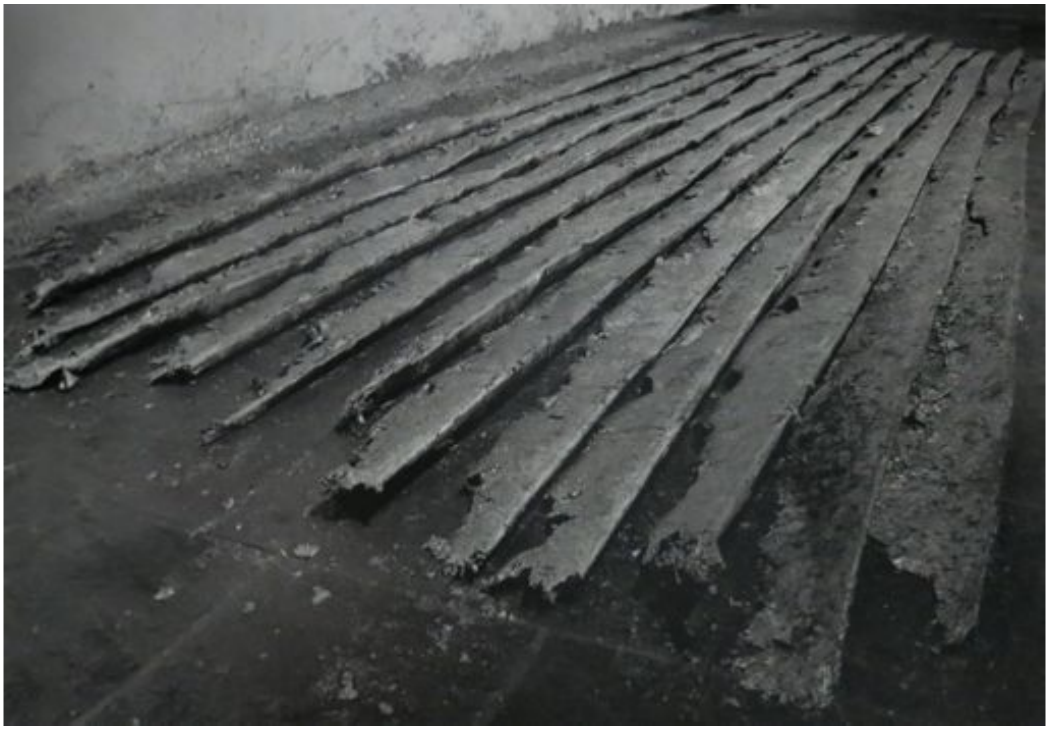
216. Lawrence Weiner, *A CUP OF SEA WATER POURED UPON THE FLOOR* (1969) in *Works and Reconstruction: Lawrence Weiner*, exhibition catalog, 1983

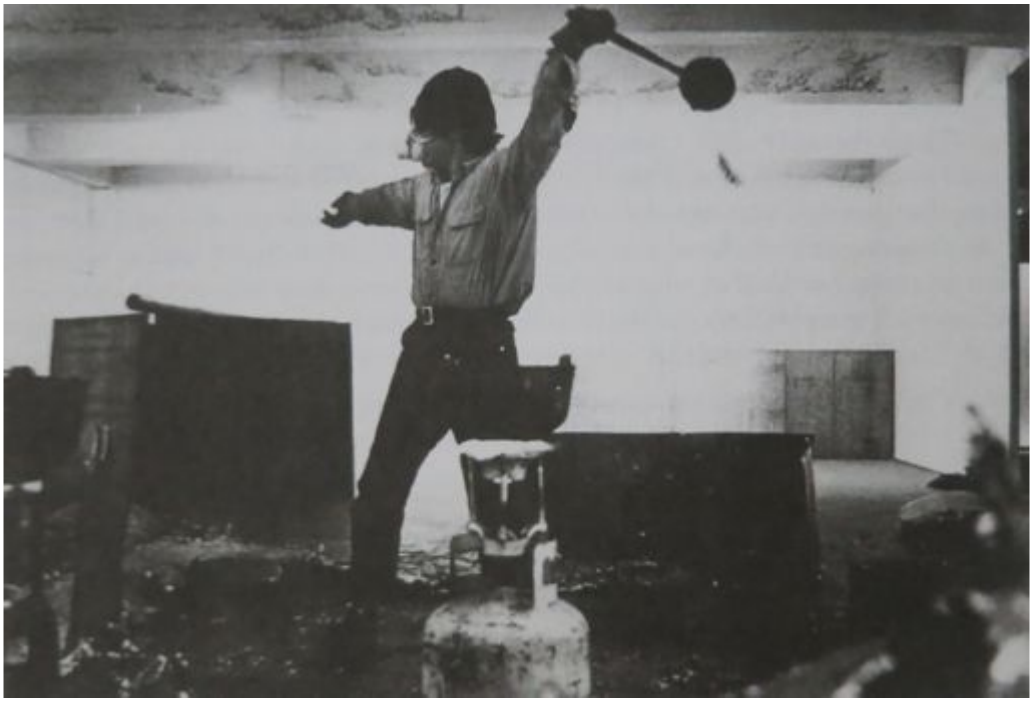




217. Richard Serra, *Splashing*, installation at Leo Castelli Warehouse, New York, 1968

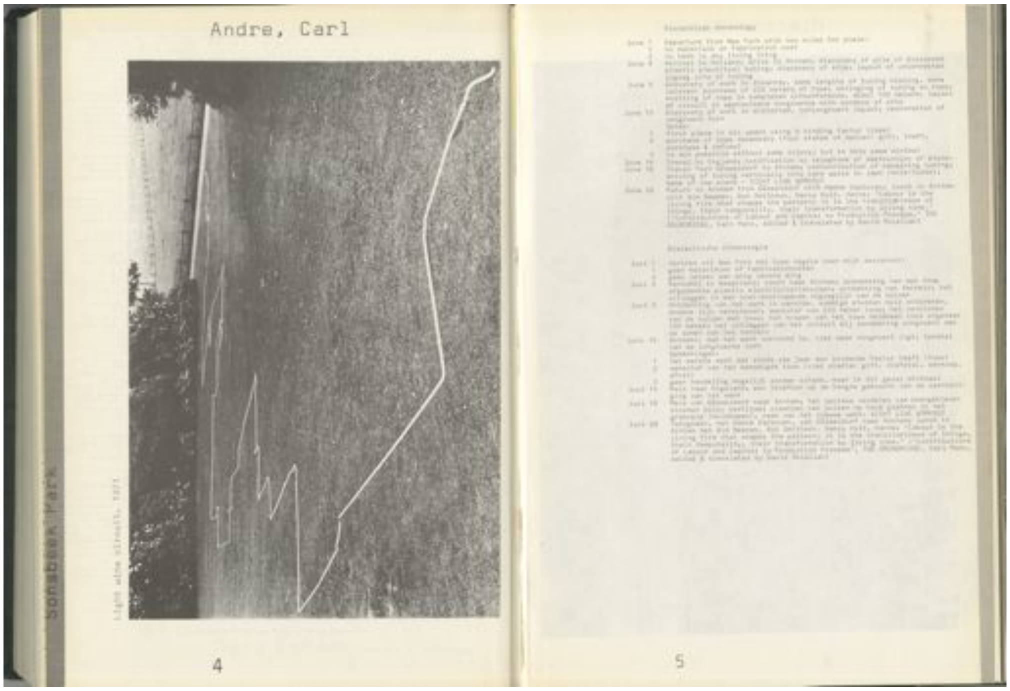
218. Lawrence Weiner, *36” X 36” REMOVAL TO THE LATHING OR SUPPORT WALL OF PLASTER OR WALLBOARD FROM A WALL*, installation at Kunsthalle Bern, 1969





219. Richard Serra, *Casting*, installation at Whitney Museum of American Art, New York , 1969

220. Richard Serra throwing lead at Castelli warehouse, 1969



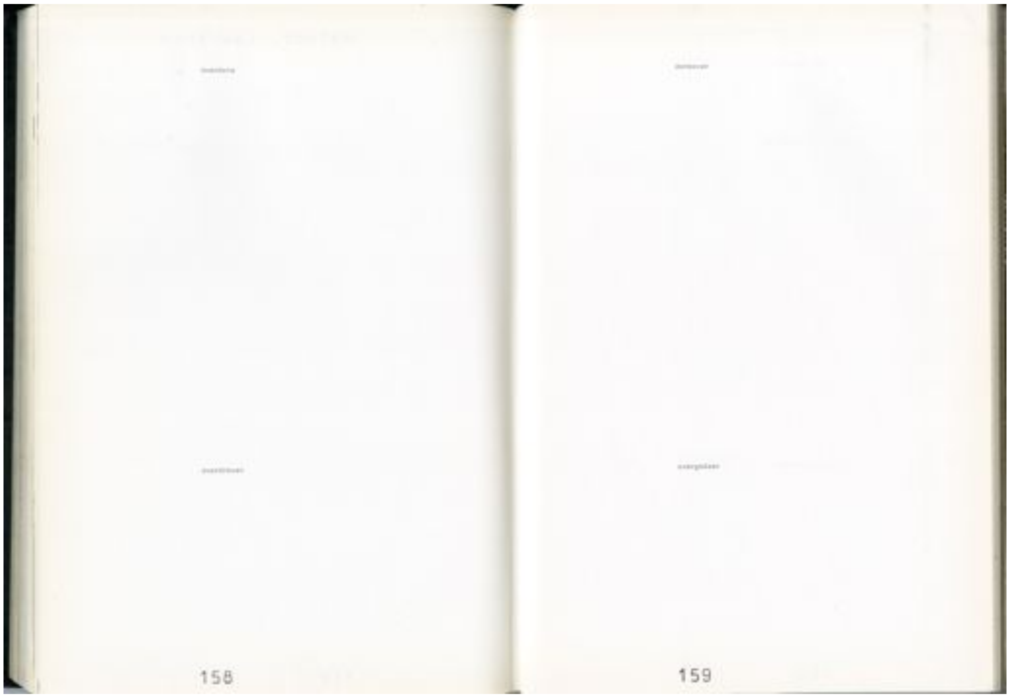
Andre, Carl

Sonsbeek Park

Light wine circuit, 1971

4

5

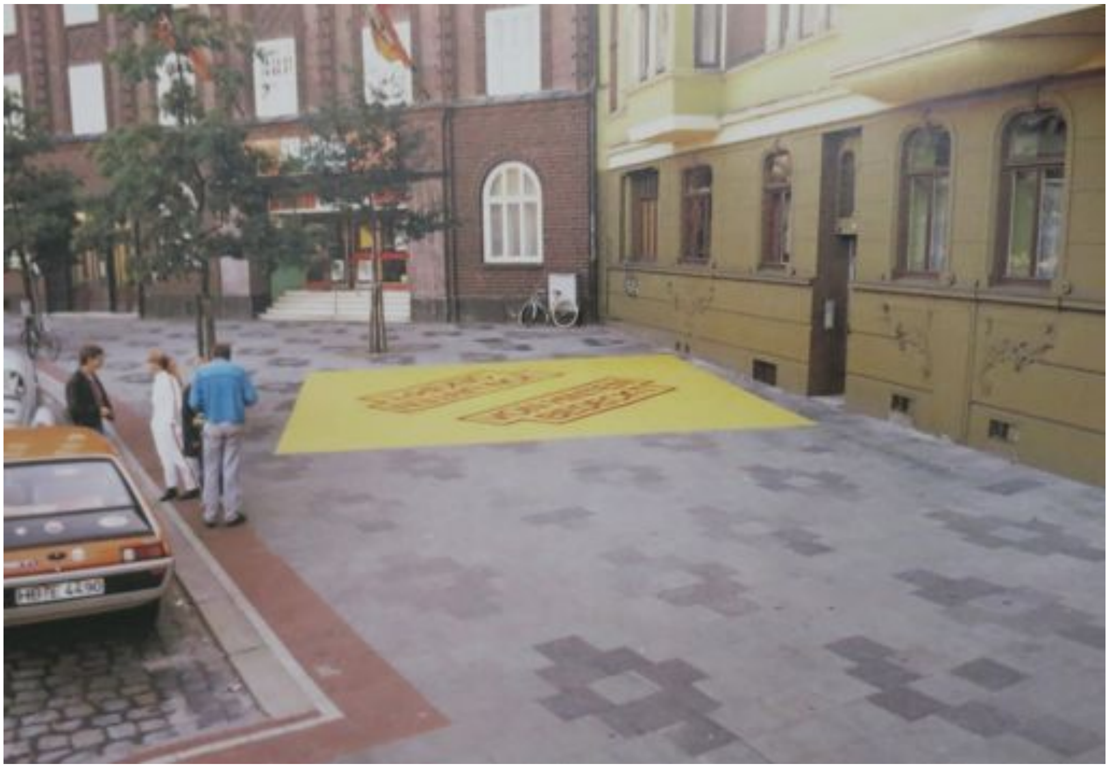


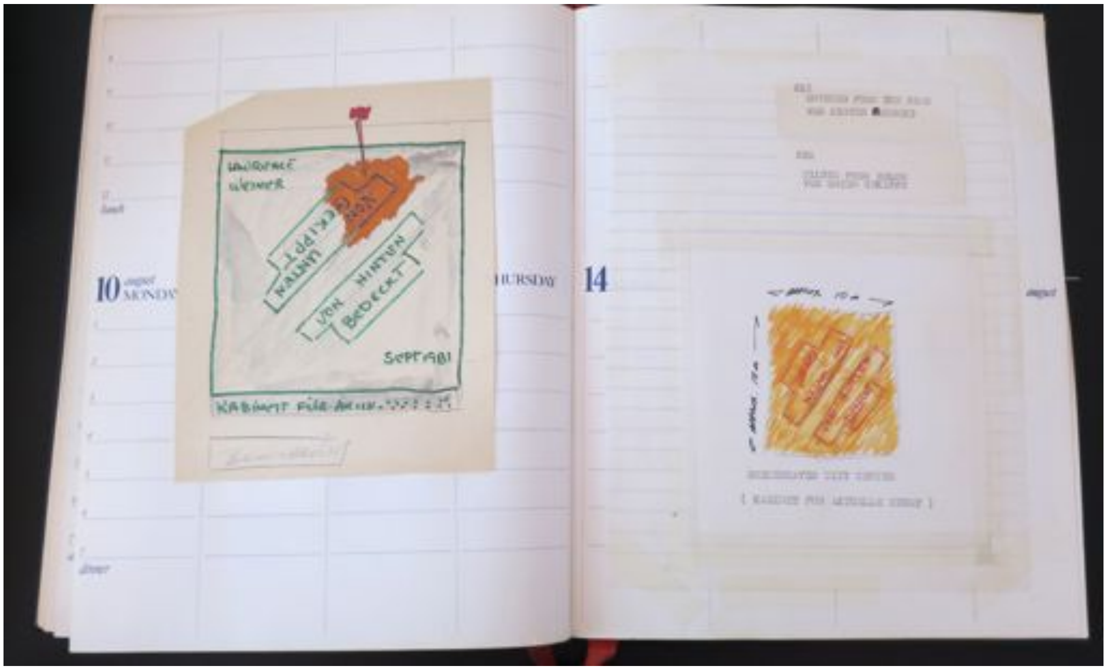
158

159

221a. Carl Andre, *Light wine circuit,* catalog contribution for “Sonsbeek 71” 1971

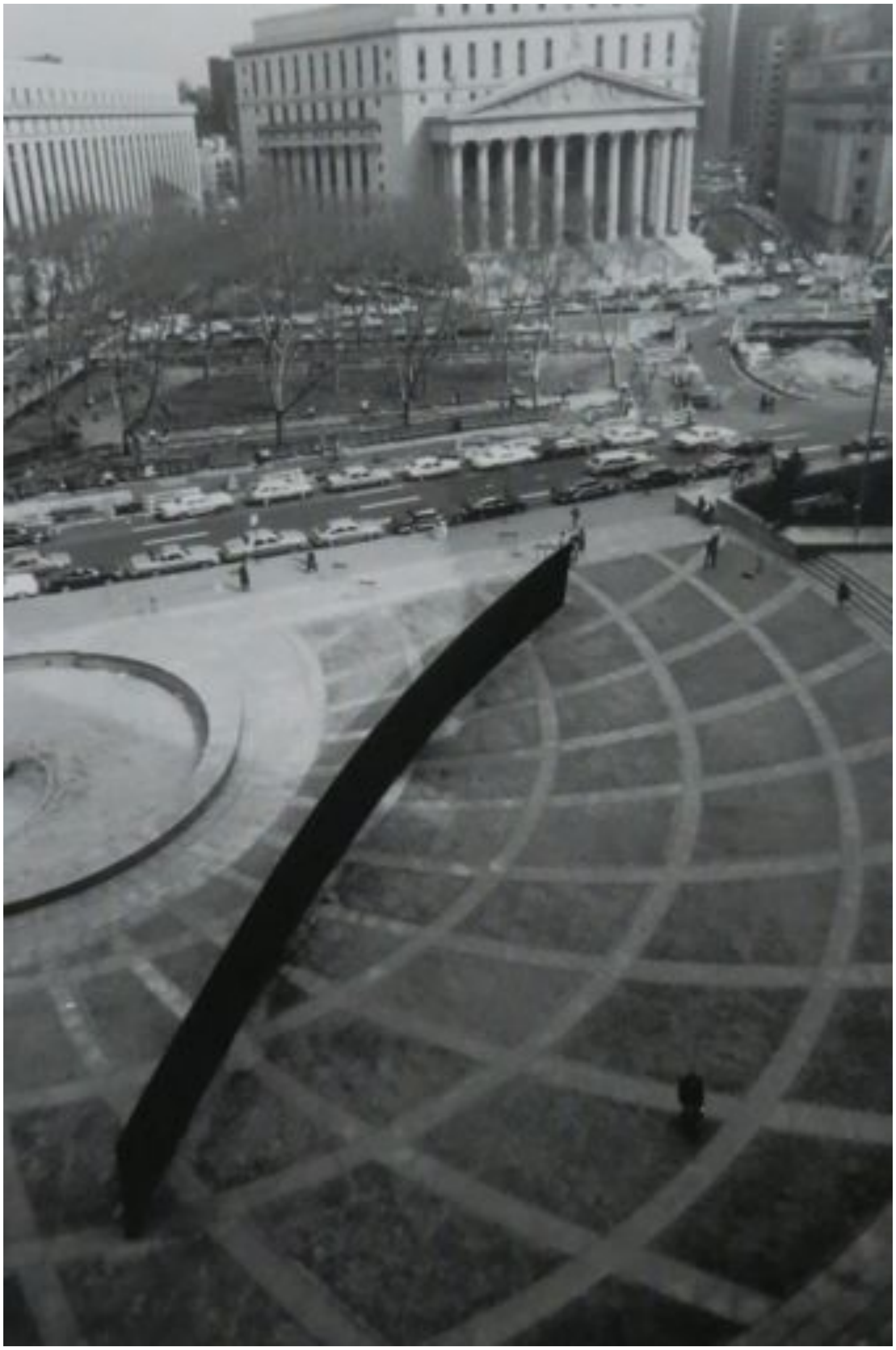
221b. Lawrence Weiner, *OVERDONE DONEOVER AND OVERDONE AND DONEOVER*, catalog contribution for “Sonsbeek 71” 1971



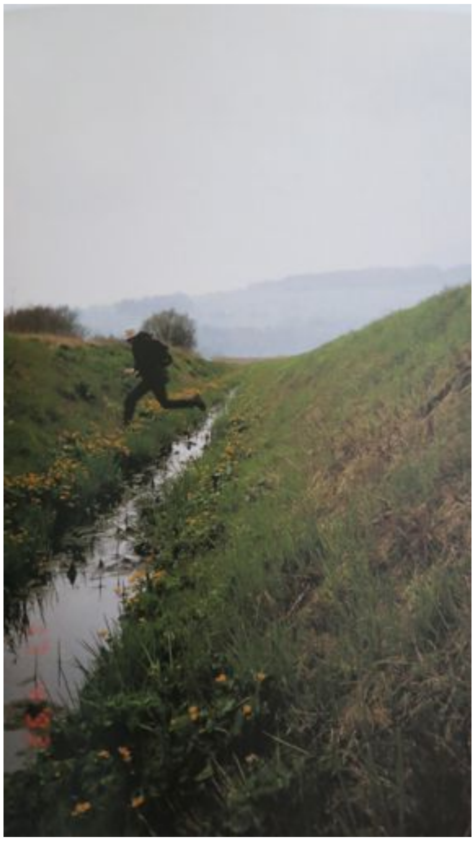


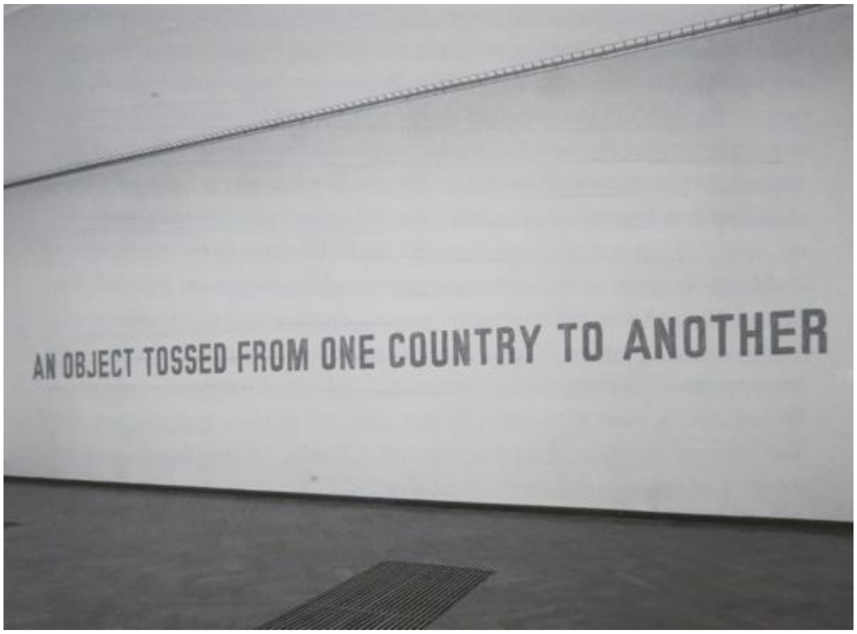
222a. Lawrence Weiner, *TILTED FROM BELOW COVERED FROM THE REAR* (1970) installation at Bremerhaven, Germany 1981.

222b. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1981, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



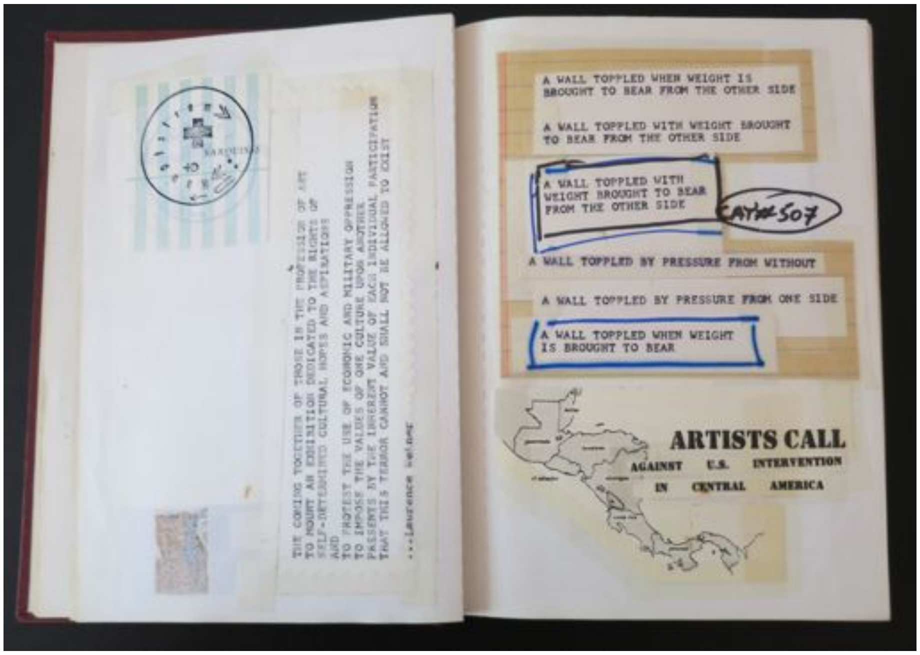
223. Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc*, installation New York, 1981





224. Christian Philipp Müller, *Illegal Border Crossing between Austria and Principality of Liechtenstein*, 1993

225. Lawrence Weiner, *AN OBJECT TOSSED FROM ONE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER* (1968) installation at Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1988



THE COMING TOGETHER OF THOSE IN THE PROFESSION OF ART
TO MOUNT AN EXHIBITION DEDICATED TO THE RIGHTS OF
SELF-DETERMINED CULTURAL HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS
AND
TO PROTEST THE USE OF ECONOMIC AND MILITARY OPPRESSION
TO IMPOSE THE VALUES OF ONE CULTURE UPON ANOTHER
PRESENTS BY THE INHERENT VALUE OF EACH INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATION
THAT THIS TERROR CANNOT AND SHALL NOT BE ALLOWED TO EXIST

...Lawrence Weiner

A WALL TOPPLED WHEN WEIGHT IS
BROUGHT TO BEAR FROM THE OTHER SIDE

A WALL TOPPLED WITH WEIGHT BROUGHT
TO BEAR FROM THE OTHER SIDE

A WALL TOPPLED WITH
WEIGHT BROUGHT TO BEAR
FROM THE OTHER SIDE

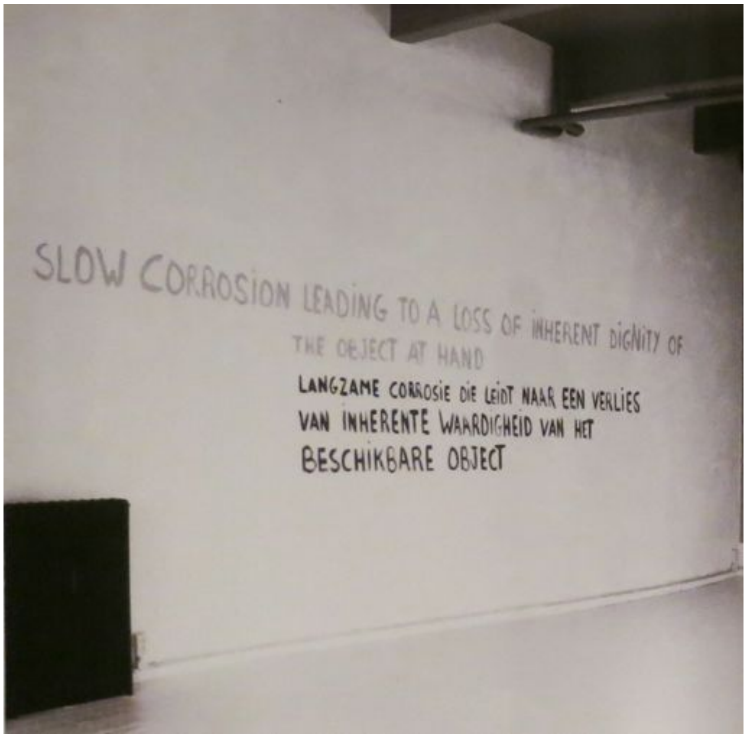
CAT#507

A WALL TOPPLED BY PRESSURE FROM WITHOUT

A WALL TOPPLED BY PRESSURE FROM ONE SIDE

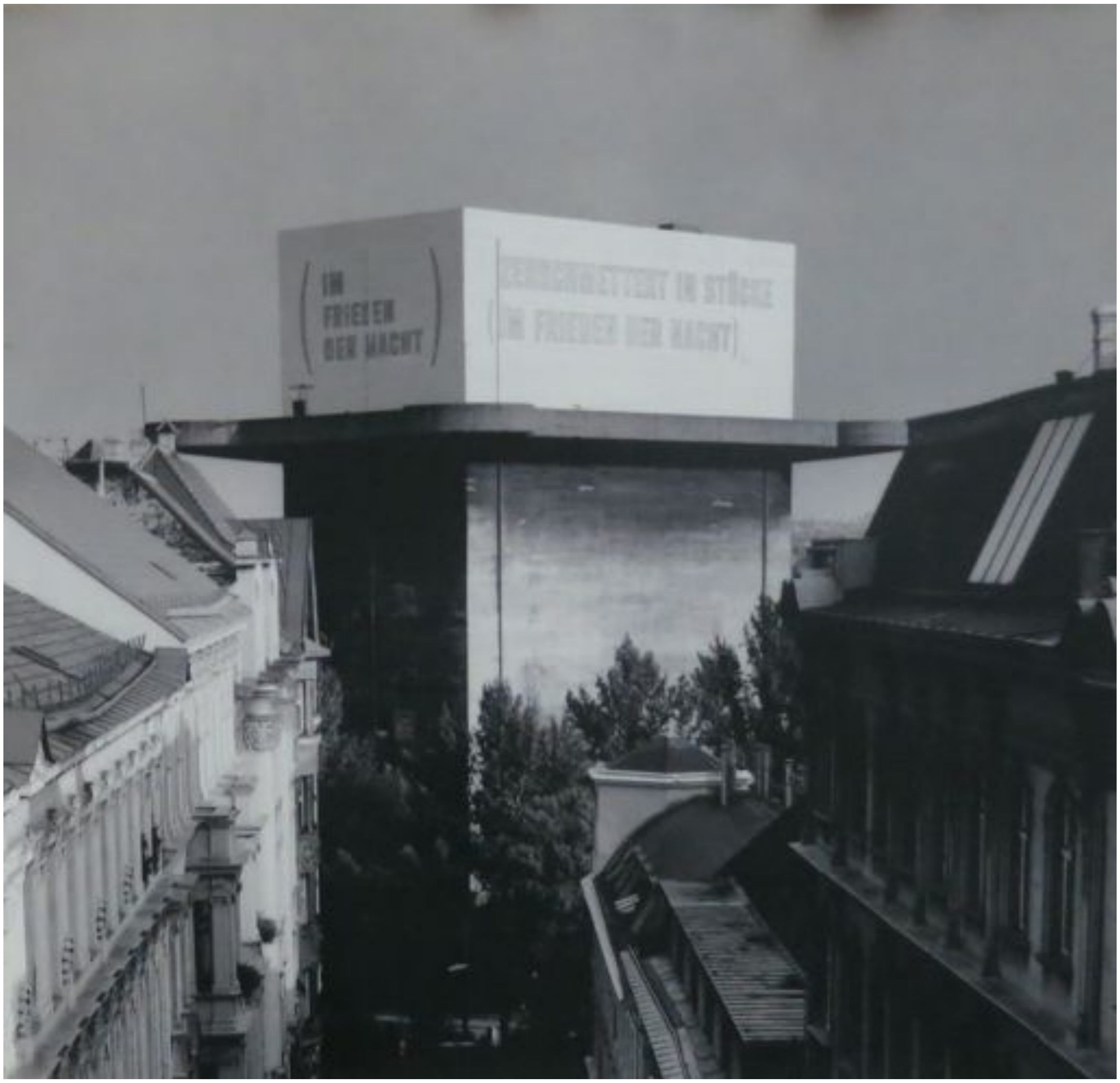
A WALL TOPPLED WHEN WEIGHT
IS BROUGHT TO BEAR

ARTISTS CALL
AGAINST U.S. INTERVENTION
IN CENTRAL AMERICA

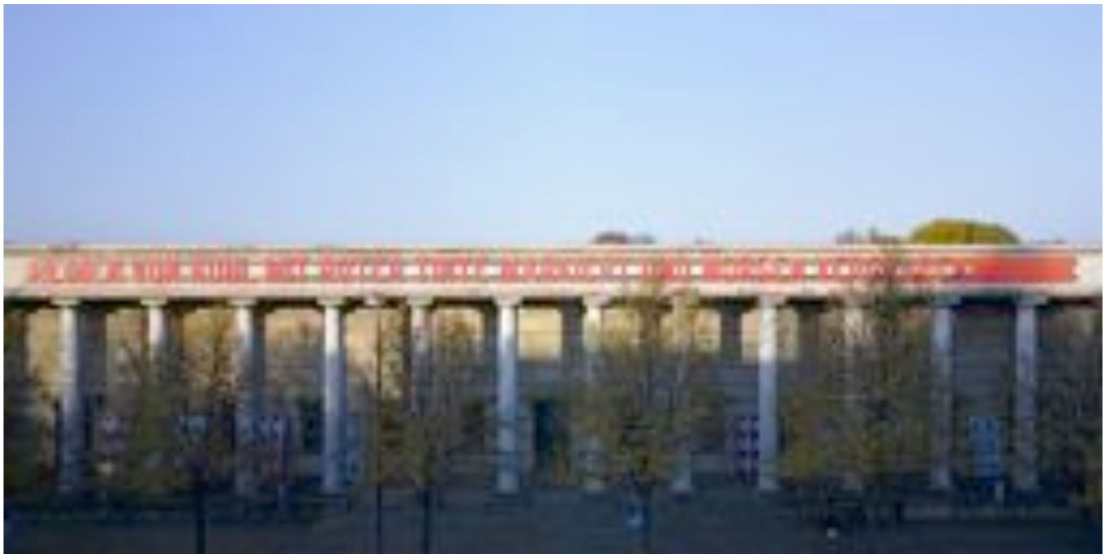

SLOW CORROSION LEADING TO A LOSS OF INHERENT DIGNITY OF
THE OBJECT AT HAND
LANGZAME CORROSIE DIE LEIDT NAAR EEN VERLIES
VAN INHERENTE WAARDIGHEID VAN HET
BESCHIKBARE OBJECT

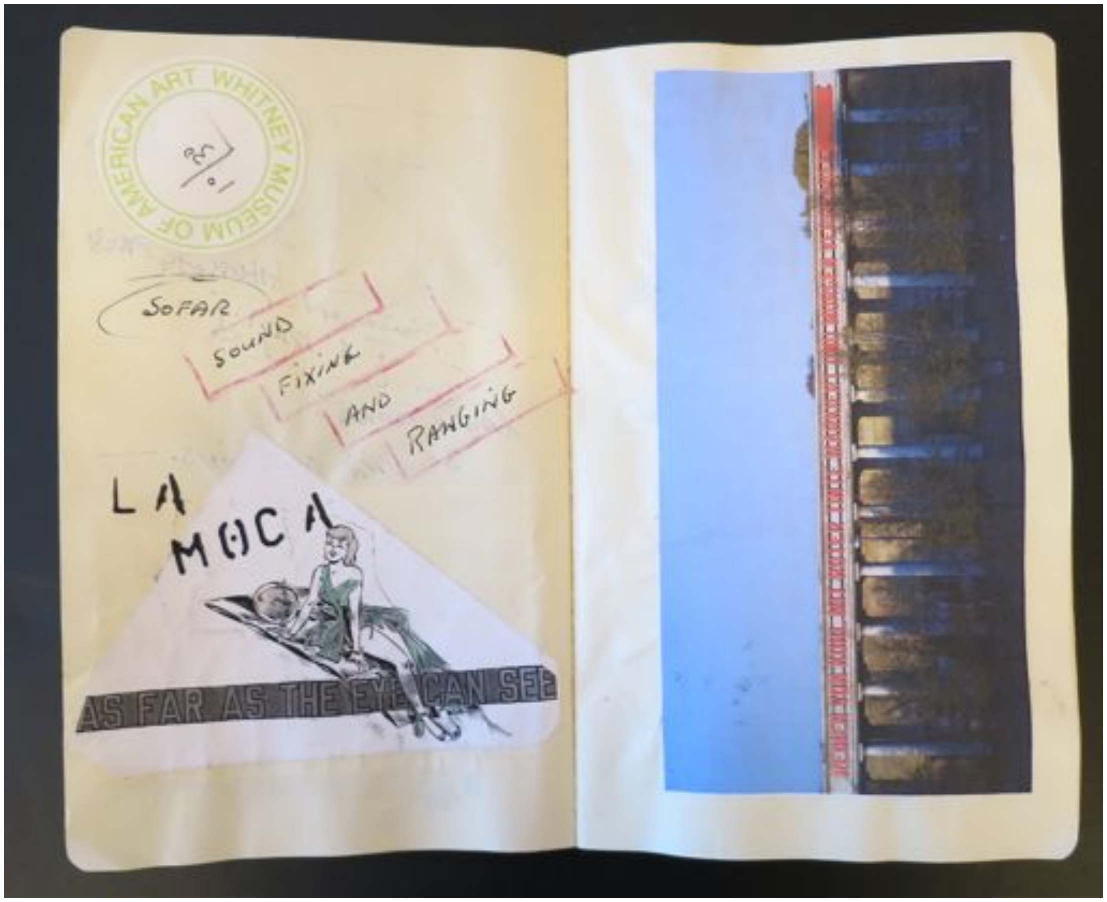
226a. Lawrence Weiner Notebook October 1983 – January 1985, Moved Pictures Archive, New York. *A WALL TOPPLED WITH WEIGHT BROUGHT TO BEAR FROM THE OTHER SIDE* was included in the exhibition “Sculpture” at *ARC – Musée d’art moderne de la ville de paris, 1985*

226b. Lawrence Weiner, *SLOW CORROSION LEADING TO A LOSS OF INHERENT DIGNITY OF THE OBJECT AT HAND*, installation for “3 Sculptures” at Art & Project, Amsterdam, 1985



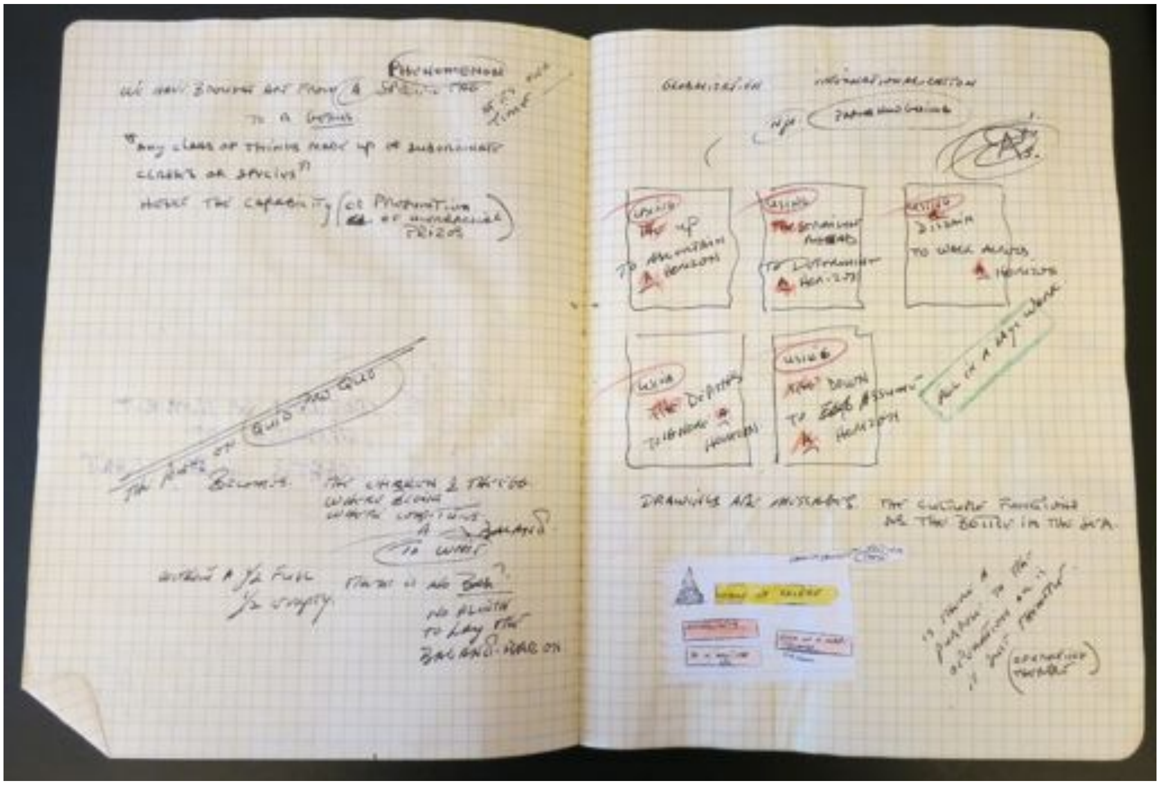
227. Lawrence Weiner, *SMASHED TO PIECES (IN THE STILL OF THE NIGHT),* installation at Flakturm, Vienna, 1991



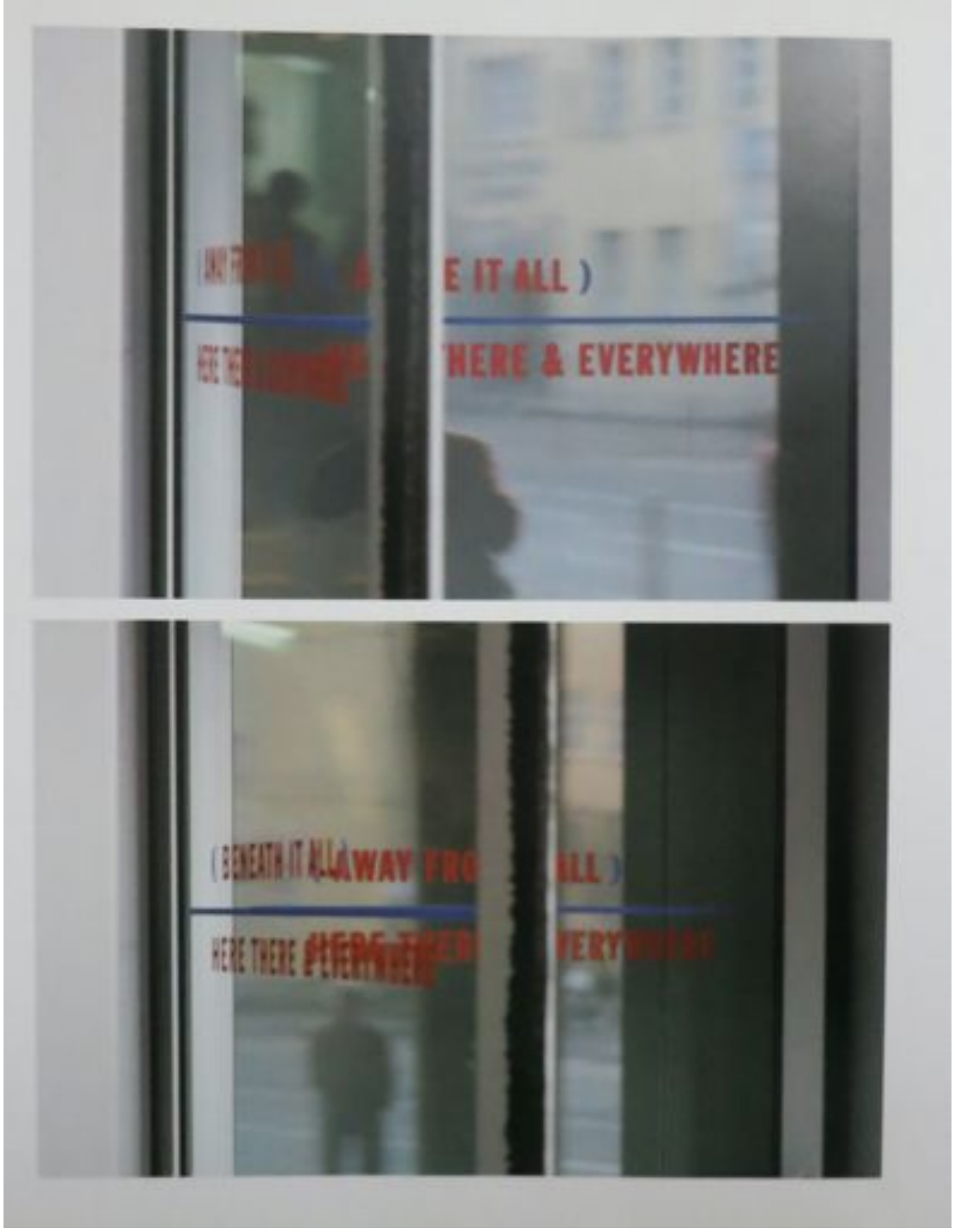


228a. Lawrence Weiner, *ROWS OF CABBAGES MARKED WITH RED AND BURIED TOMORROW* (1996) installation at Haus der Kunst, 2007

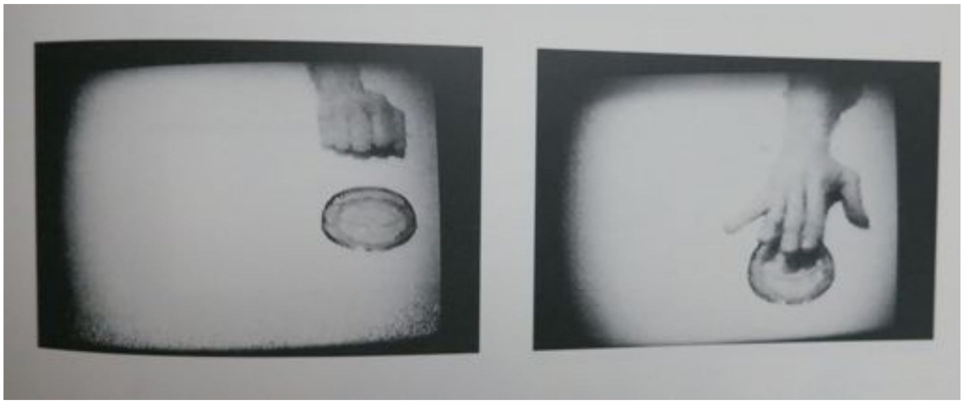
228b. Lawrence Weiner Notebook September 2007 – June 2008, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

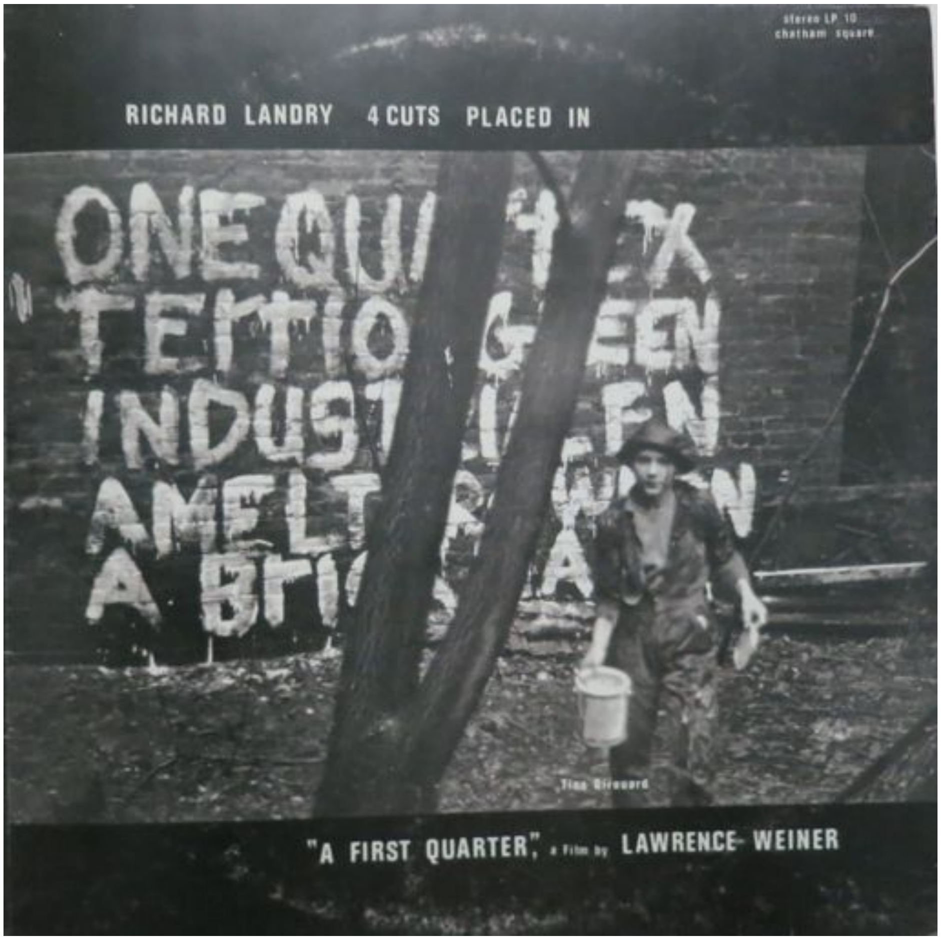


229. Lawrence Weiner Notebook July 2008 – December 2009, Moved Pictures Archive, New York


(AND FROM IT ... E IT ALL)
HERE THERE ... HERE & EVERYWHERE
(BENEATH IT ALL) AWAY FRO... ALL)
HERE THERE & EVERYWHERE ... VERYWHERE

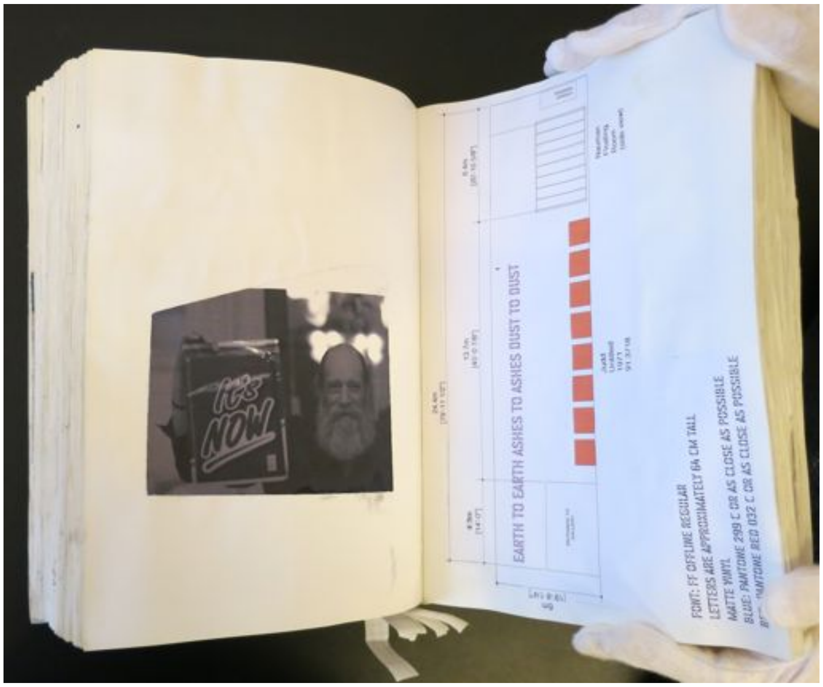
230. Lawrence Weiner, *HERE THERE & EVERYWHERE* (1989) installation at Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt Germany

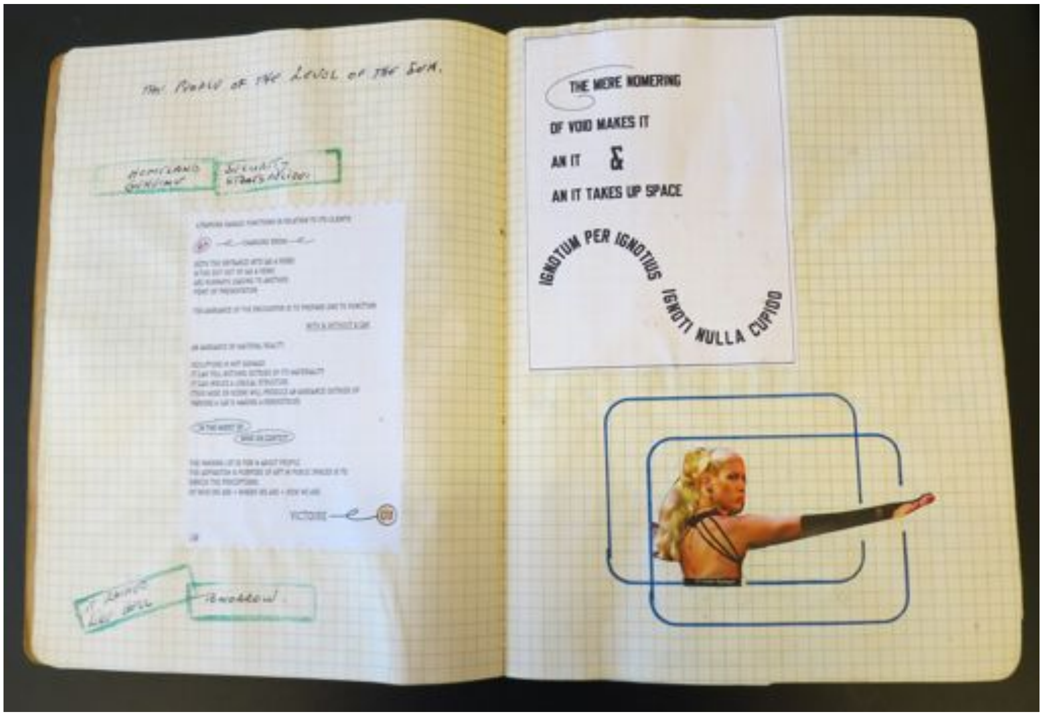



stereo LP 10
chatham square
RICHARD LANDRY 4 CUTS PLACED IN
Tina Girouard
"A FIRST QUARTER", a film by LAWRENCE WEINER

231. Lawrence Weiner, *To And Fro. Fro And To. And To And Fro. And Fro And To.,* video stills, 1972

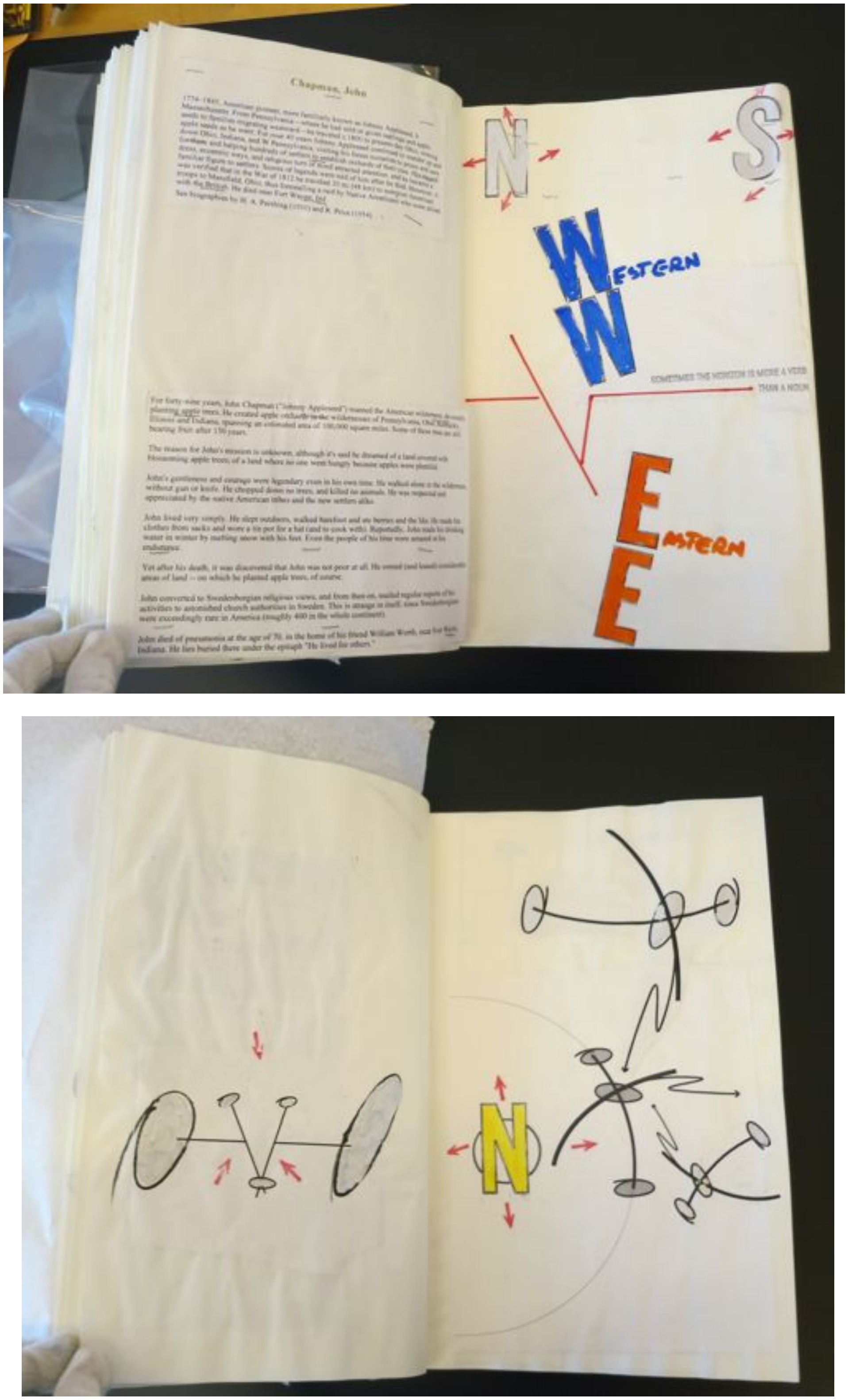
232. Cover of Richard Landry's soundtrack for Lawrence Weiner's film *A First Quarter,* 1973


It's NOW
EARTH TO EARTH ASHES TO ASHES DUST TO DUST
FONT: FF OFFLINE REGULAR
LETTERS ARE APPROXIMATELY 64 CM TALL
MATTE VINYL
BLUE: PANTONE 299 C OR AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE
PANTONE RED 032 C OR AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE

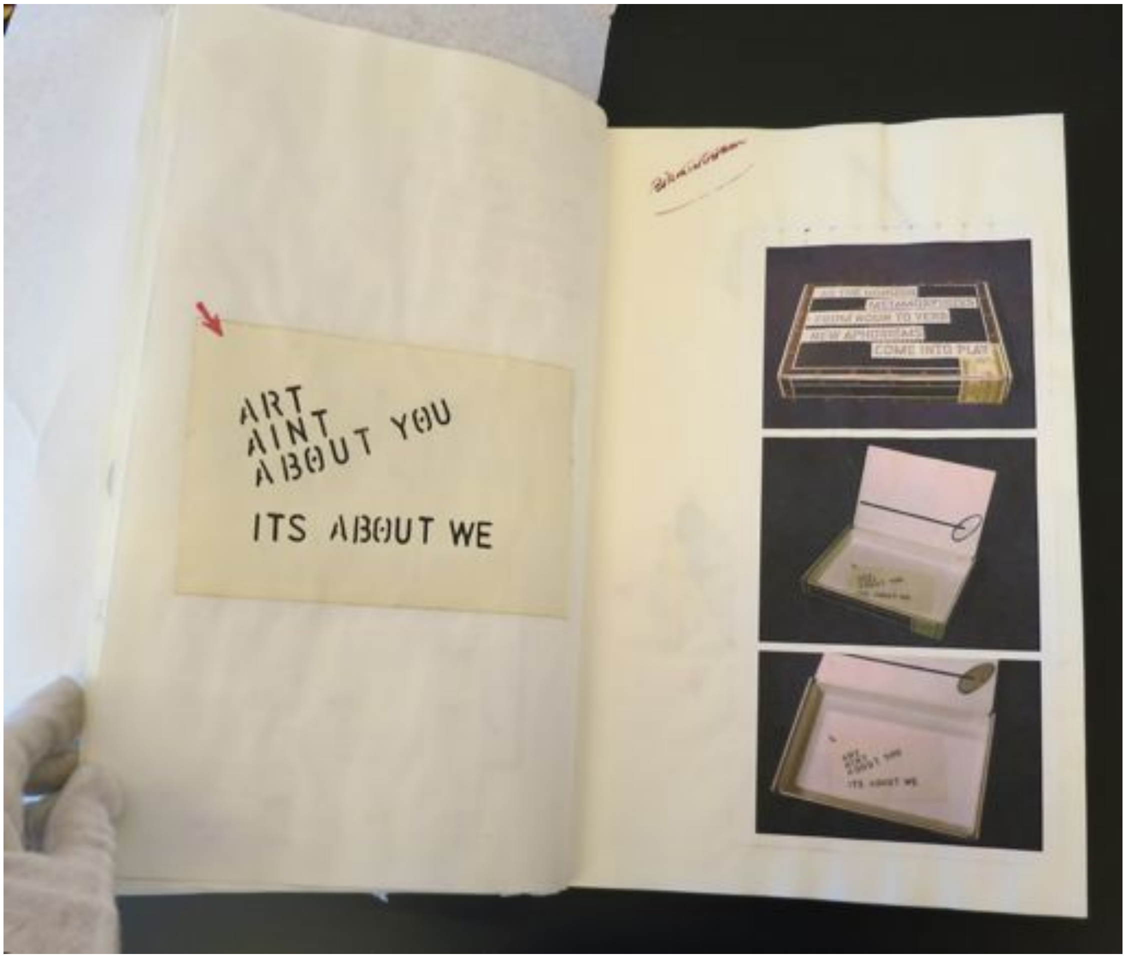


233. Lawrence Weiner Notebook June 2005 – November 2009, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

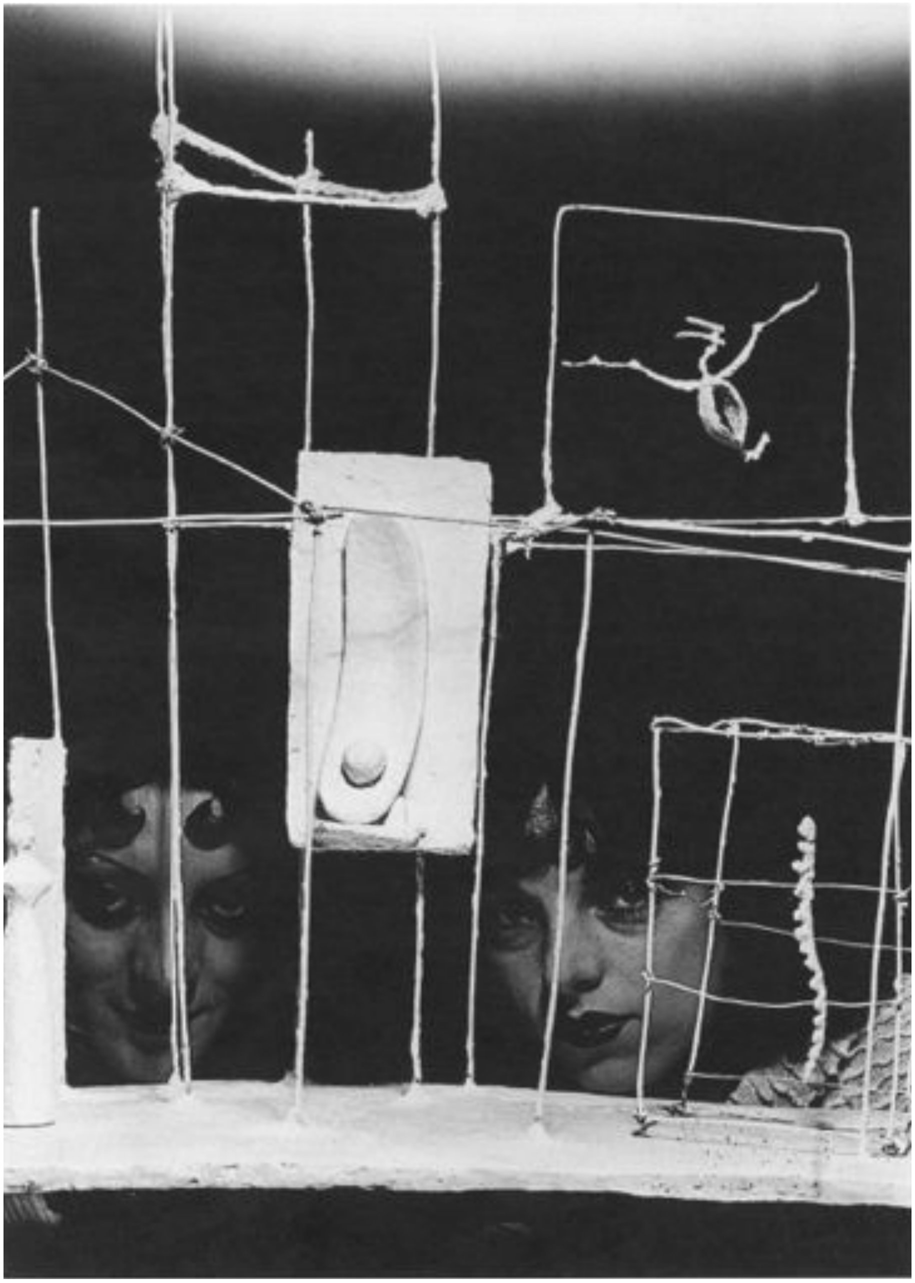
234. Lawrence Weiner Notebook July 2008 – December 2009, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



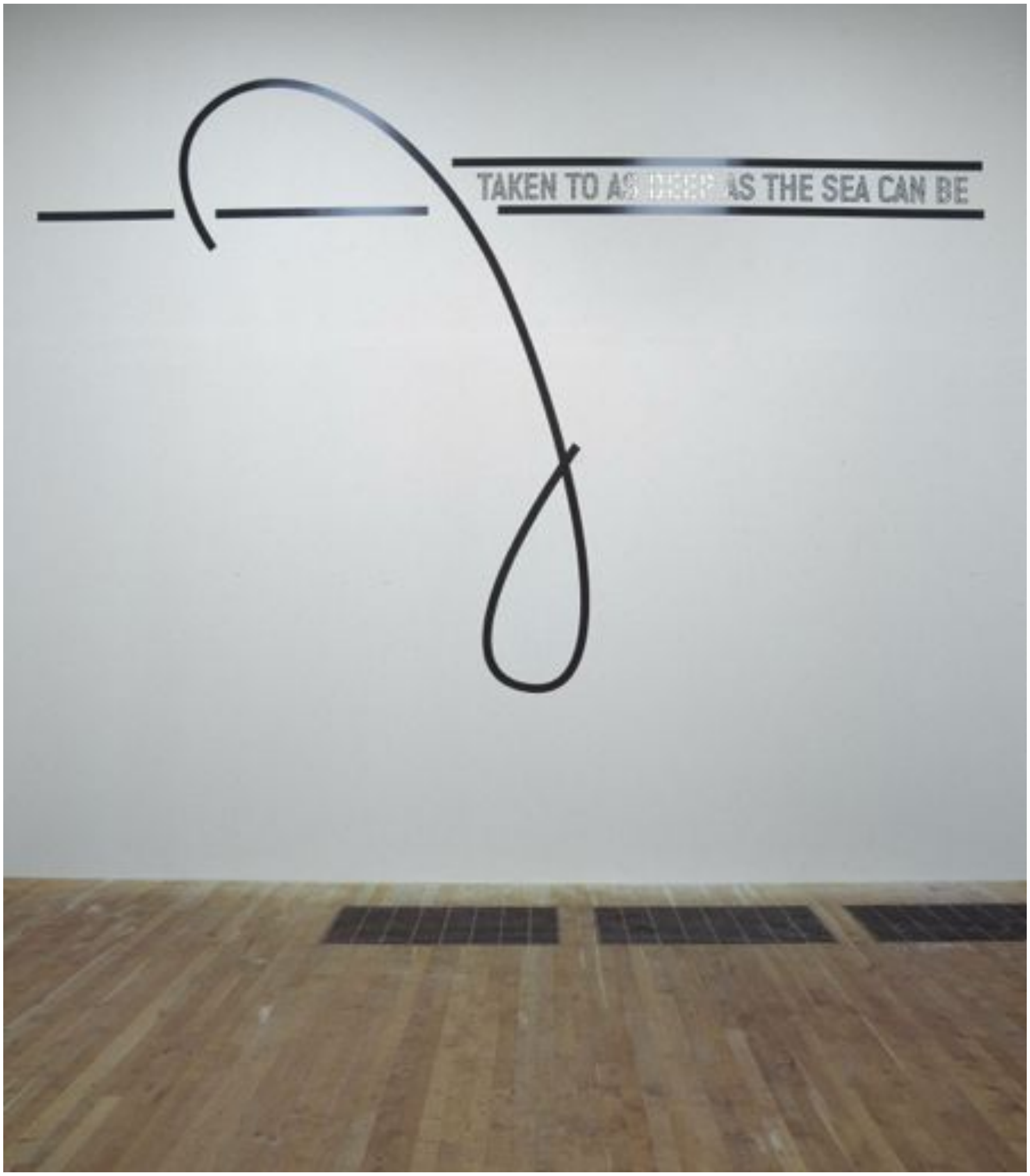
235a & 235b. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 2001 – January 2002, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



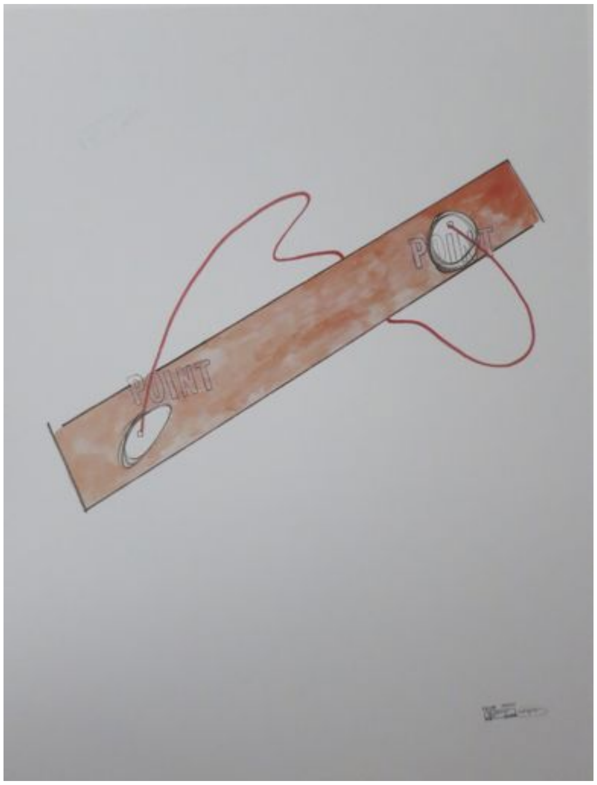
235c. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 2001 – January 2002, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

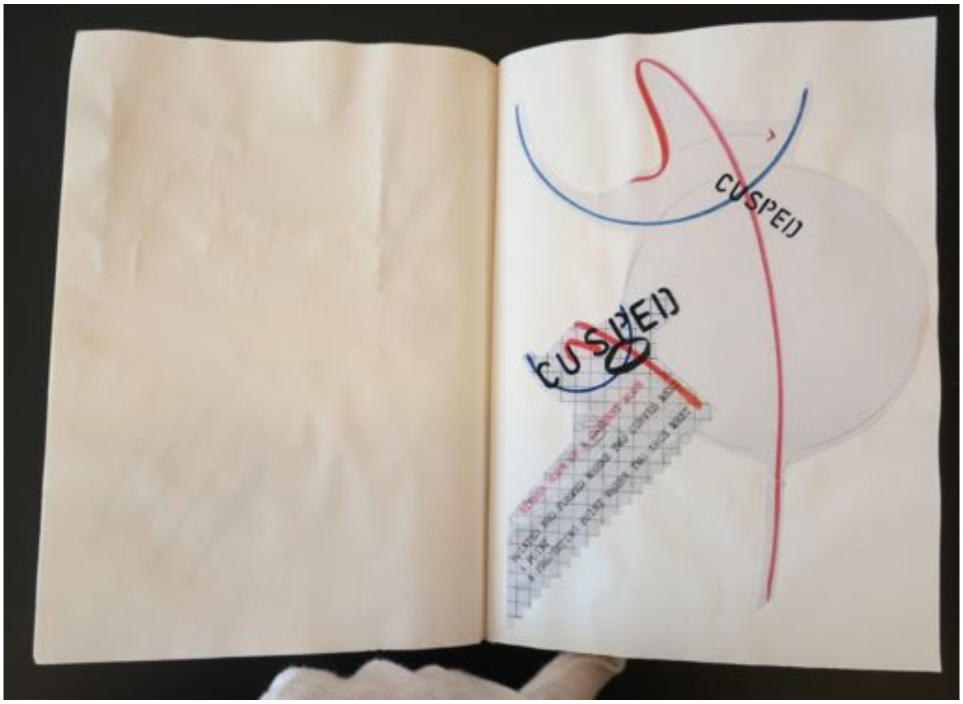


236. Man Ray photograph of Alberto Giacometti's *The Palace at 4 a.m.*, 1932 plaster version, destroyed



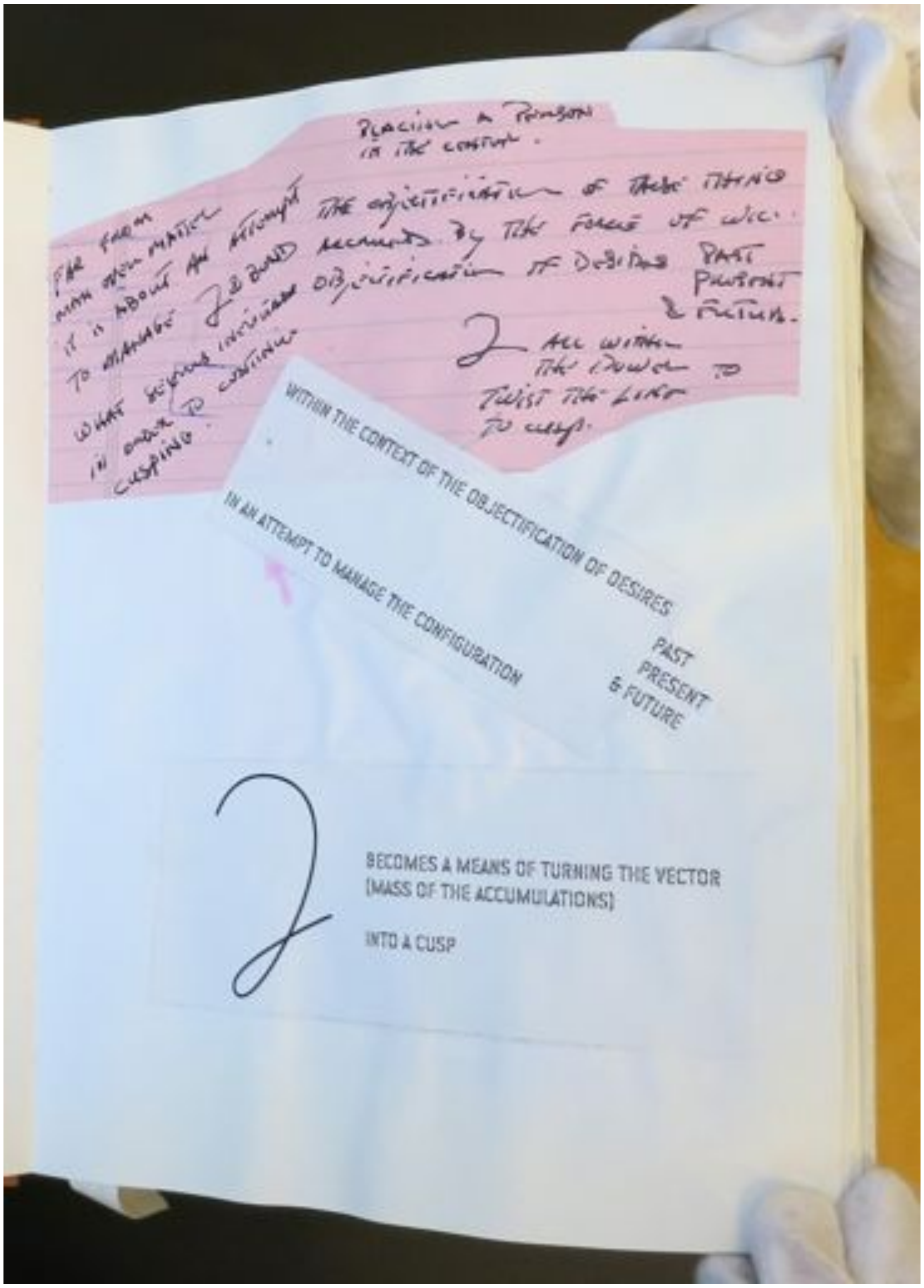
237. Lawrence Weiner, *TAKEN TO AS DEEP AS THE SEA CAN BE,* 2005, installation at Tate Museum, London





238. Lawrence Weiner, *From Point To Point*, 1995

239. Lawrence Weiner Notebook February 2003 – August 2004, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



PLACING A POSITION
IN THE CONTEXT.

FAR FROM
MAN OVER MATTER
IT IS ABOUT AN ATTEMPT THE OBJECTIFICATION OF THESE THINGS
TO MANAGE & BOUND ACCRUEMENTS BY THE FORCE OF WILL.
WHAT SEEMS INCIDENTAL OBJECTIFICATION OF DESIRES PAST
IN ORDER TO CONTINUE PRESENT
CUSPING. & FUTURE.

ALL WITHIN
THE POWER TO
TWIST THE LINE
TO CUSP.

WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE OBJECTIFICATION OF DESIRES

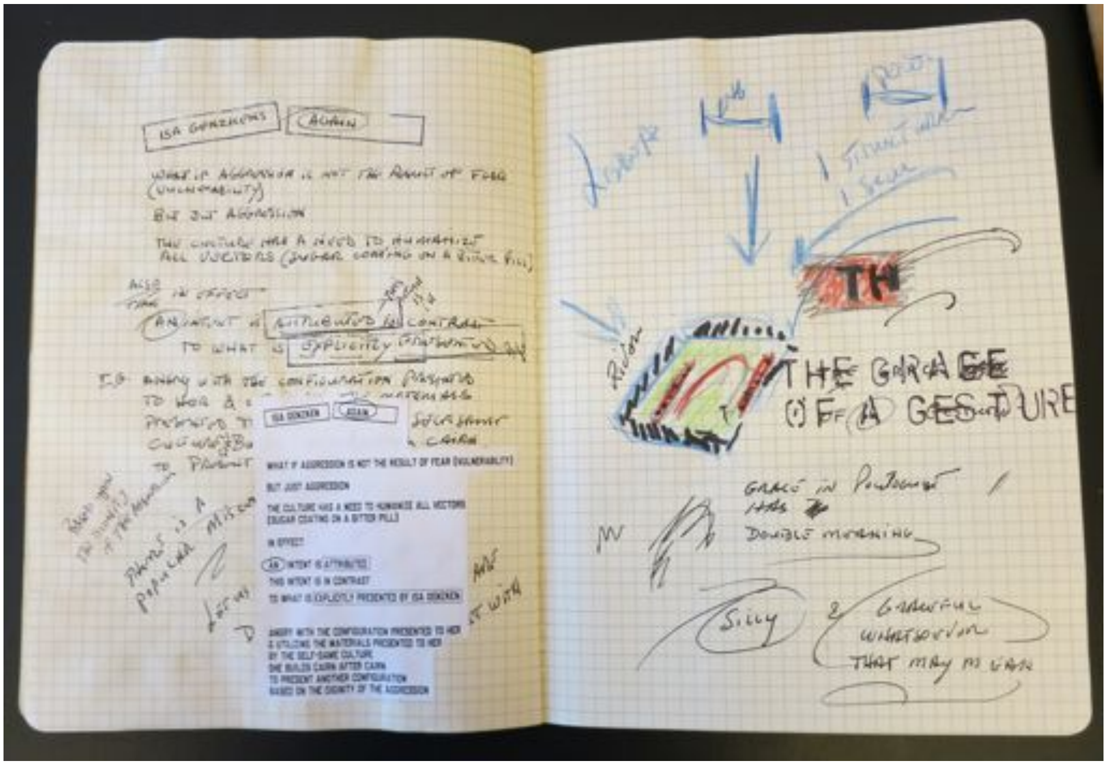
IN AN ATTEMPT TO MANAGE THE CONFIGURATION

PAST
PRESENT
& FUTURE

BECOMES A MEANS OF TURNING THE VECTOR
(MASS OF THE ACCUMULATIONS)

INTO A CUSP

240. Lawrence Weiner Notebook June 2005 – November 2009, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



ISA GENZKEN AGAIN

WHAT IF AGGRESSION IS NOT THE RESULT OF FEAR (VULNERABILITY)

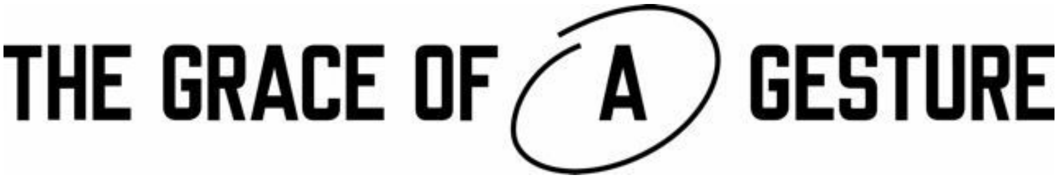
BUT JUST AGGRESSION

THE CULTURE HAS A NEED TO HUMANIZE ALL VECTORS
(SUGAR COATING ON A BITTER PILL)

IN EFFECT

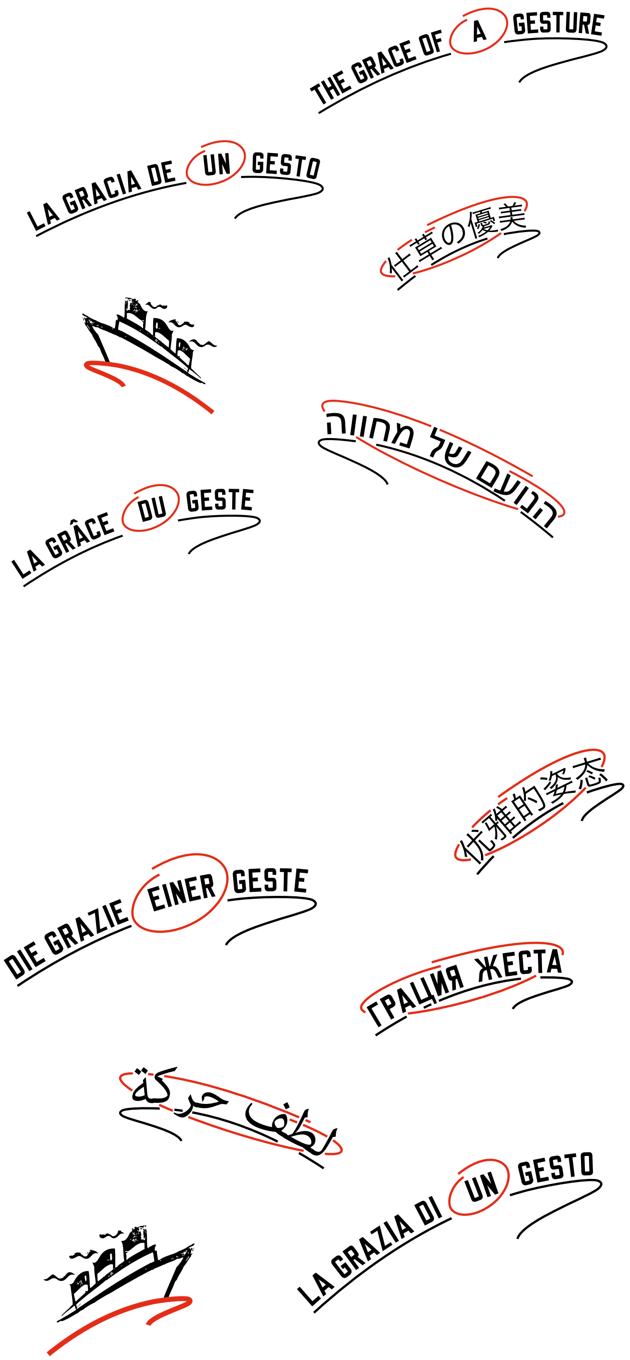
AN INTENT IS ATTRIBUTED
THIS INTENT IS IN CONTRAST
TO WHAT IS EXPLICITLY PRESENTED BY ISA GENZKEN

ANGRY WITH THE CONFIGURATION PRESENTED TO HER
& UTILIZING THE MATERIALS PRESENTED TO HER
BY THE SELF-SAME CULTURE
SHE BUILDS CAIRN AFTER CAIRN
TO PRESENT ANOTHER CONFIGURATION
BASED ON THE DIGNITY OF THE AGGRESSION

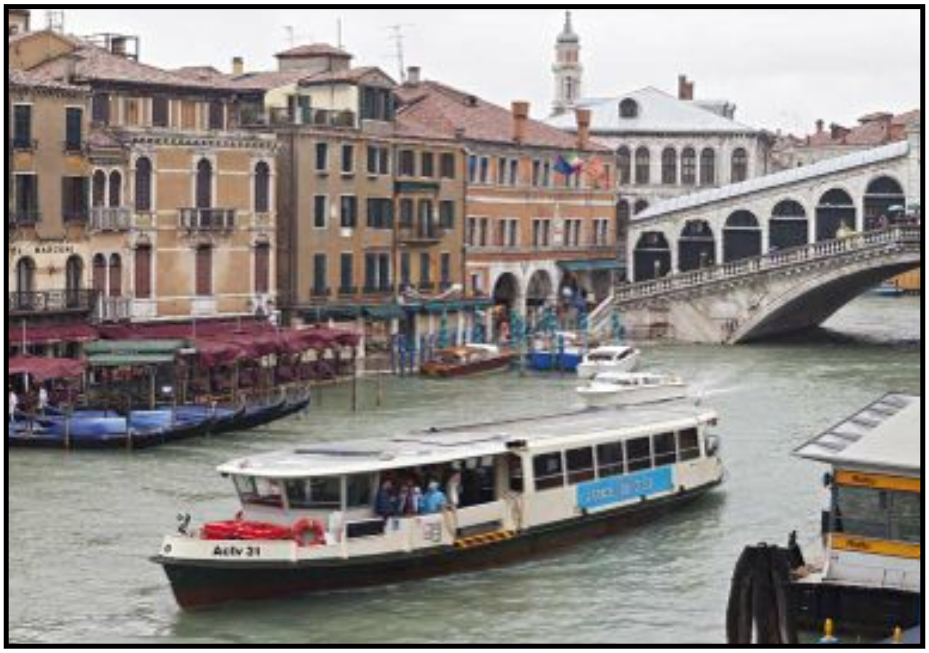


241. Lawrence Weiner Notebook July 2008 – December 2009, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

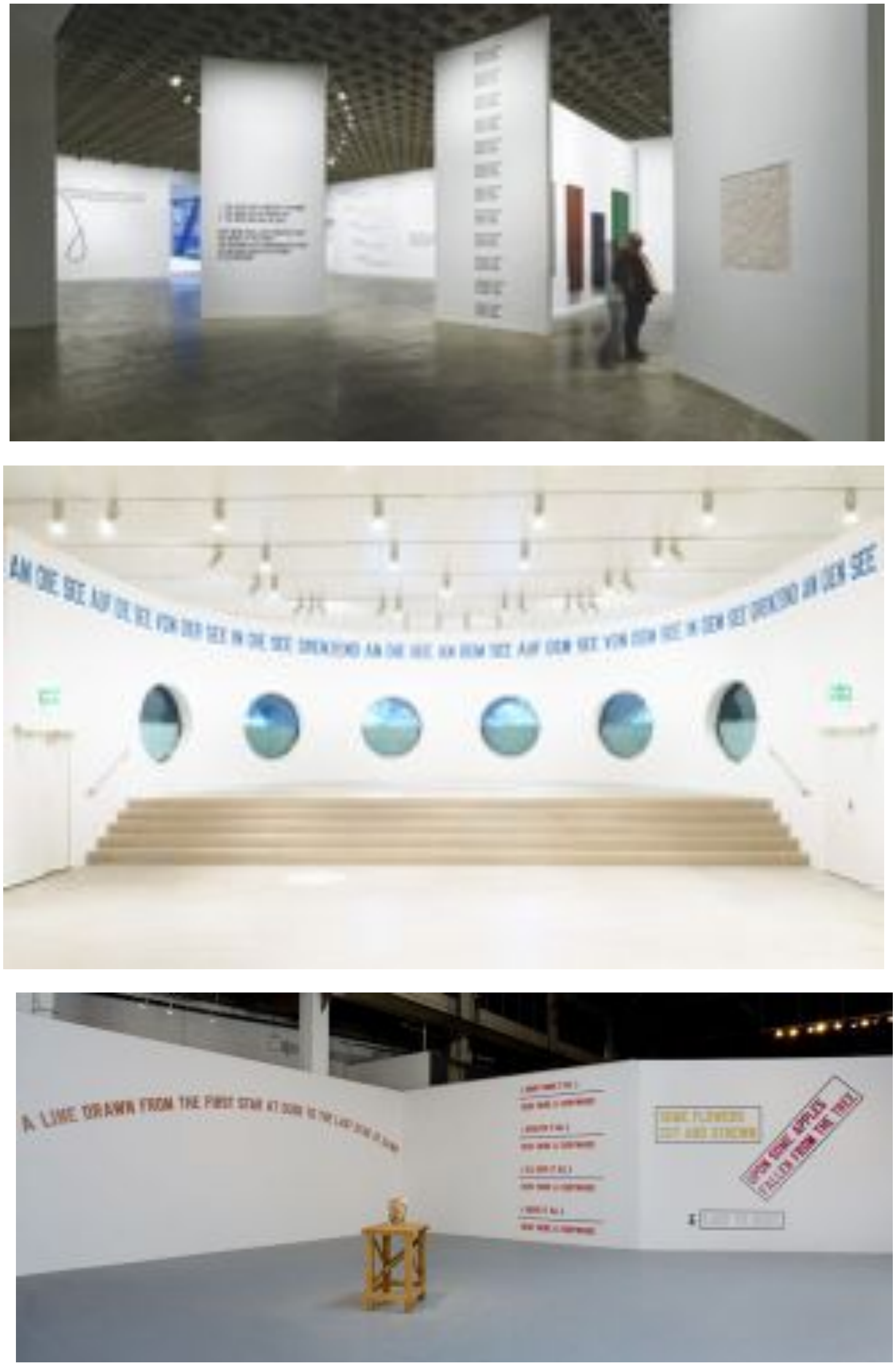
242. Lawrence Weiner, *THE GRACE OF A GESTURE* (2010), Art Basel installation, 2011



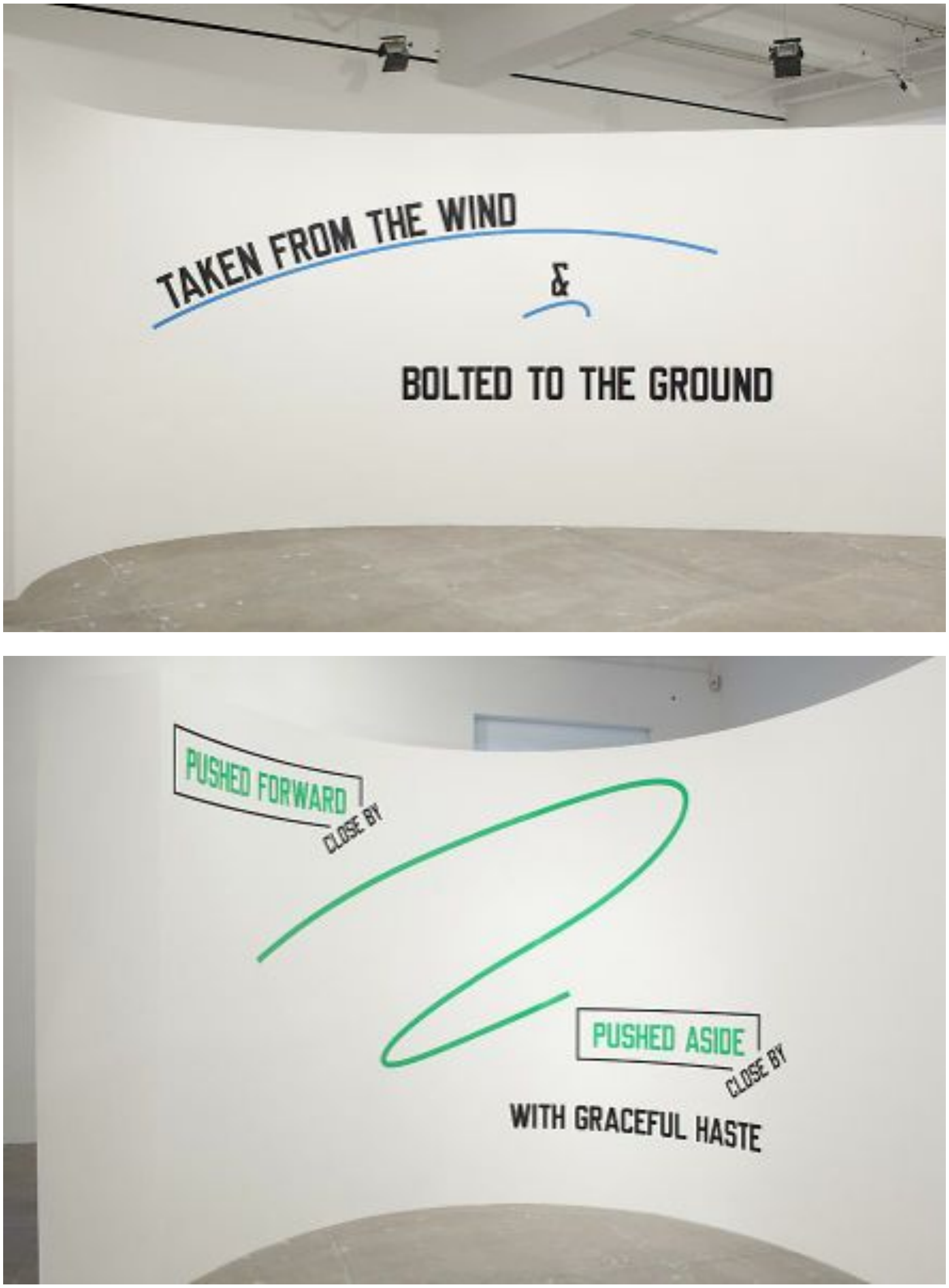
243a. Lawrence Weiner, *The Grace Of A Gesture*, excerpts from catalog for exhibition at Palazzo Bembo, Venice Biennale, 2013



243b. Lawrence Weiner, *The Grace Of A Gesture*, exhibition catalog for Venice Biennale exhibition at Palazzo Bembo, Venice Biennale, 2013. *THE GRACE OF A GESTURE* (2010) was installed in ten languages on five Vaporetto.

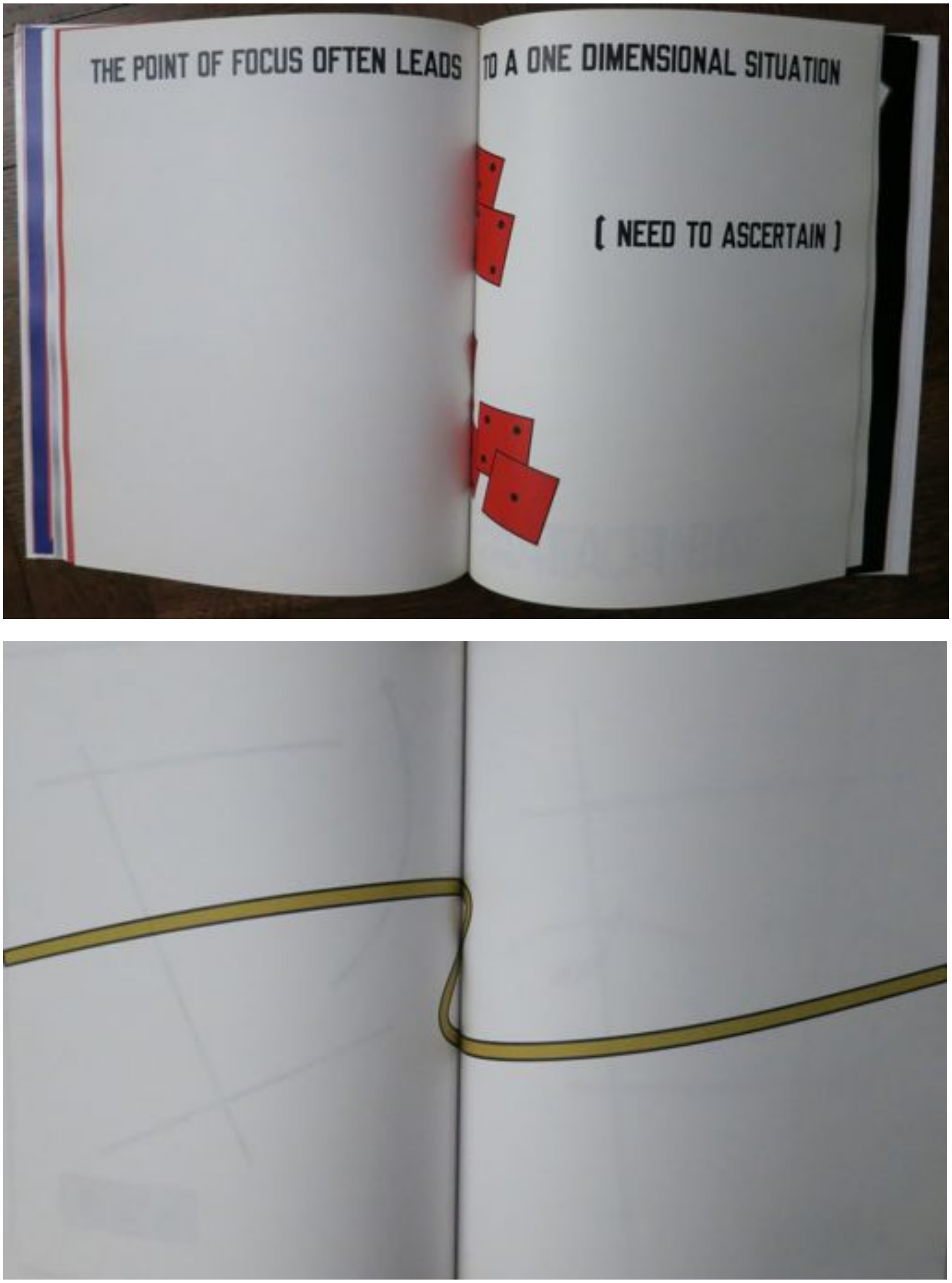

AN DIE SEE AUF DIE SEE VON DER SEE IN DIE SEE DREHEND AN DIE SEE AN DEM SEE AUF DEM SEE VON DEM SEE IN DEM SEE DREHEND AN DEN SEE
A LINE DRAWN FROM THE FIRST STAR AT DUSK TO THE LAST STAR AT DAWN
SOME FLOWERS CUT AND STREWN
UPON SOME APPLES FALLEN FROM THE TREE

244a, 244b, 244c. Installation views of "Lawrence Weiner: As Far As The Eye Can See" at Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen; LA MoCA; 2007 - 2009



255a & 255b. Installation views of Lawrence Weiner, “Gyroscopically Speaking” at Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, 2010 - 2011

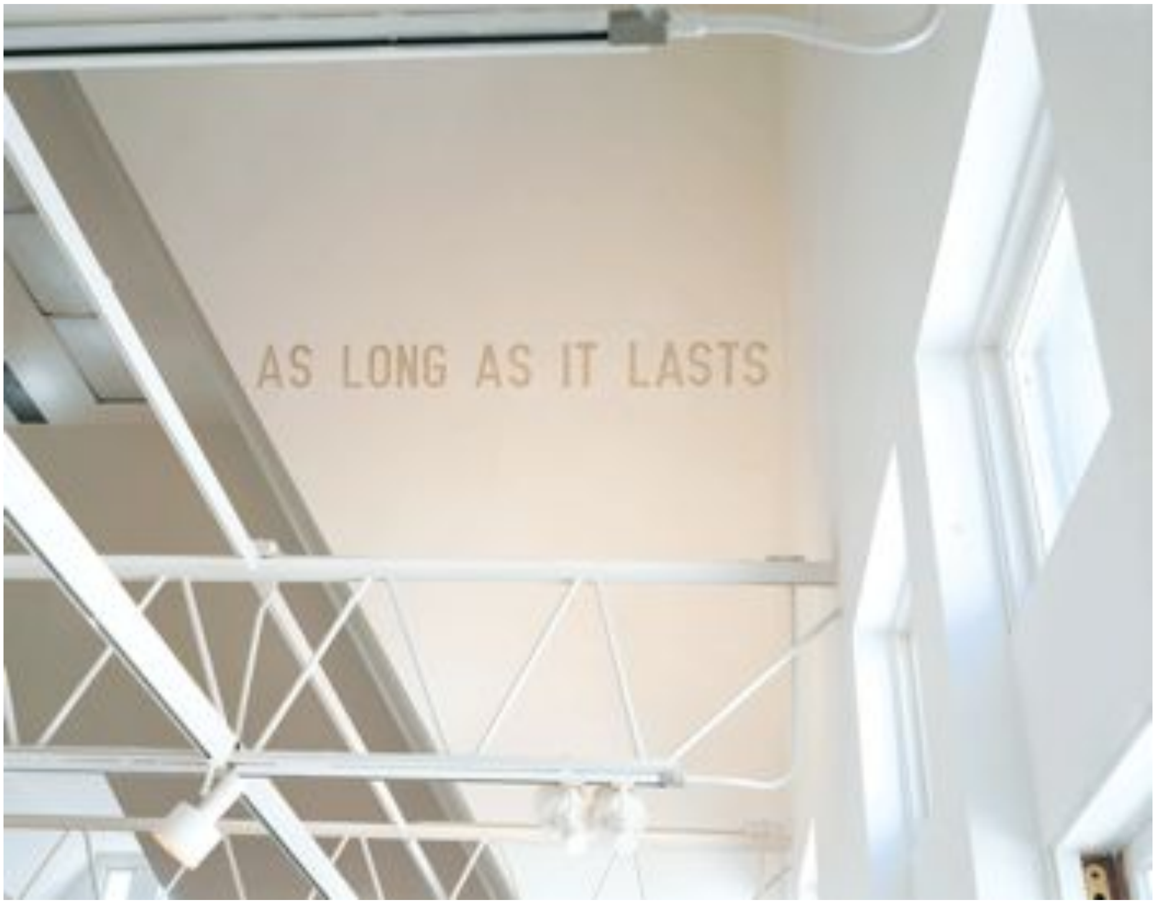
186



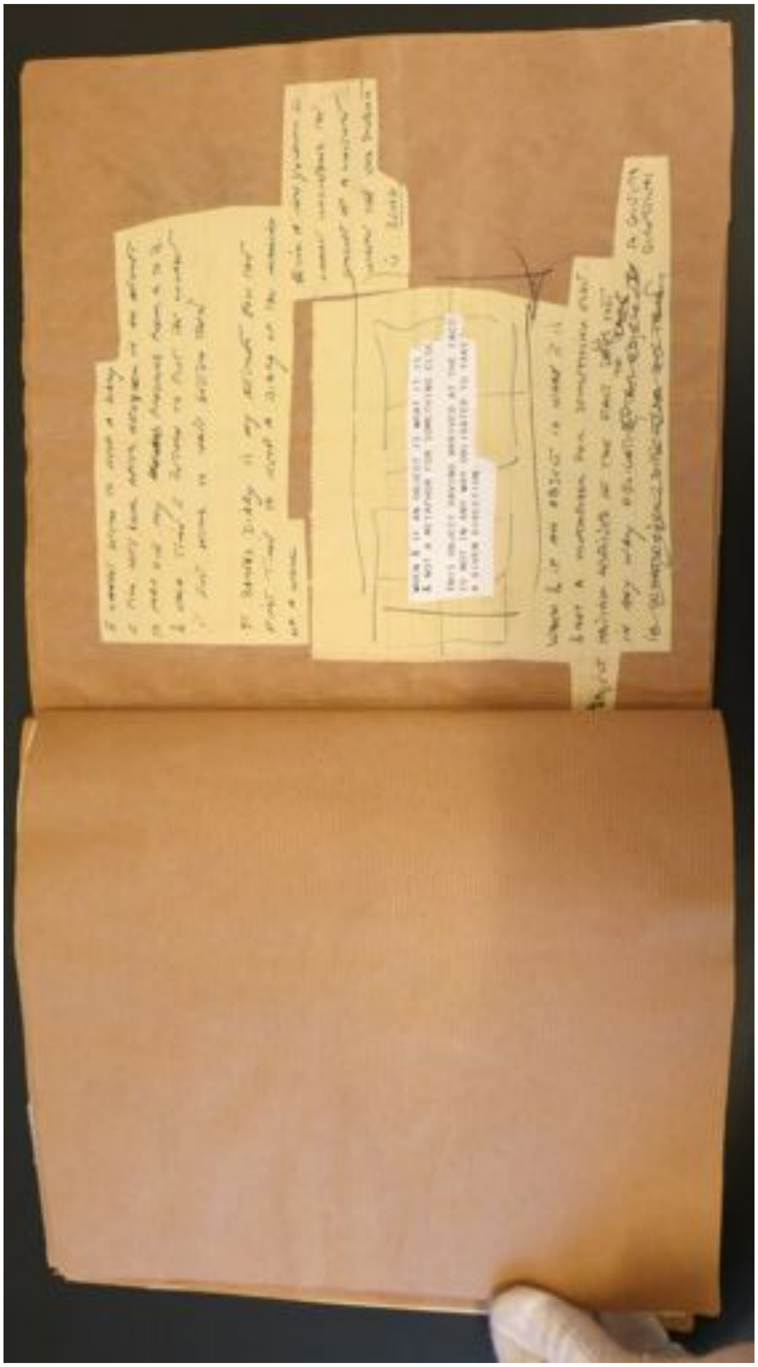
THE POINT OF FOCUS OFTEN LEADS TO A ONE DIMENSIONAL SITUATION

(NEED TO ASCERTAIN)

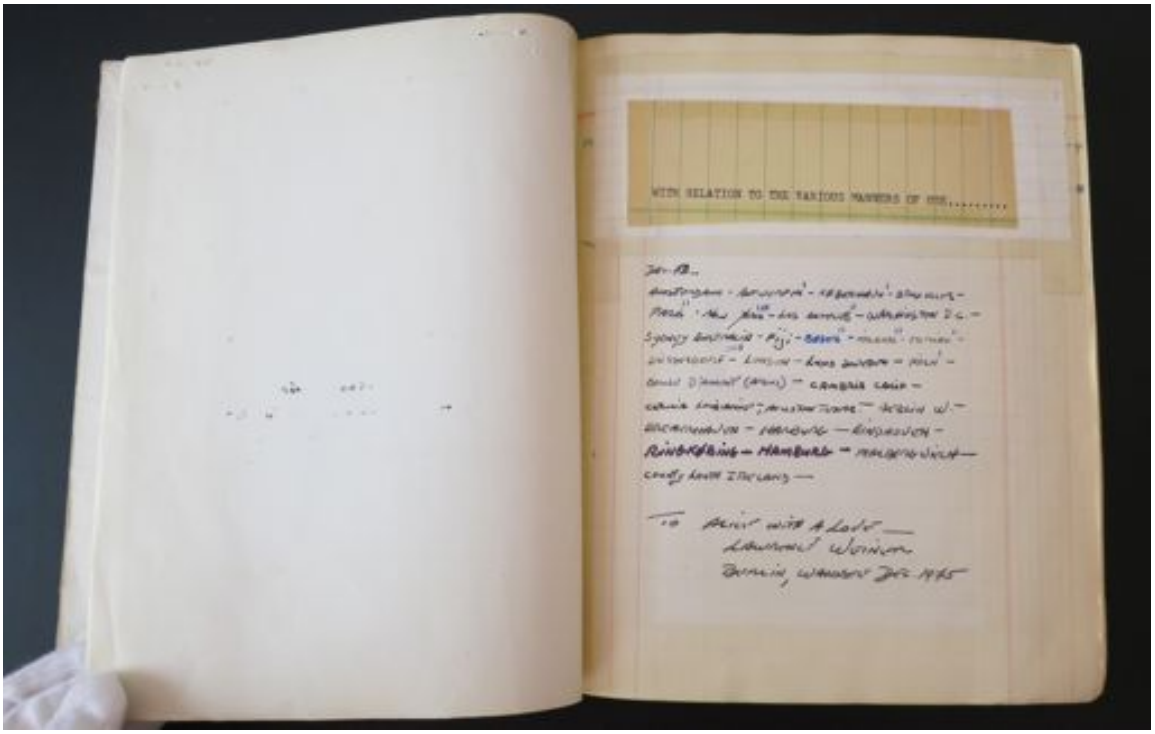
256a & 256b. Lawrence Weiner, *Turning Some Pages*, 2007



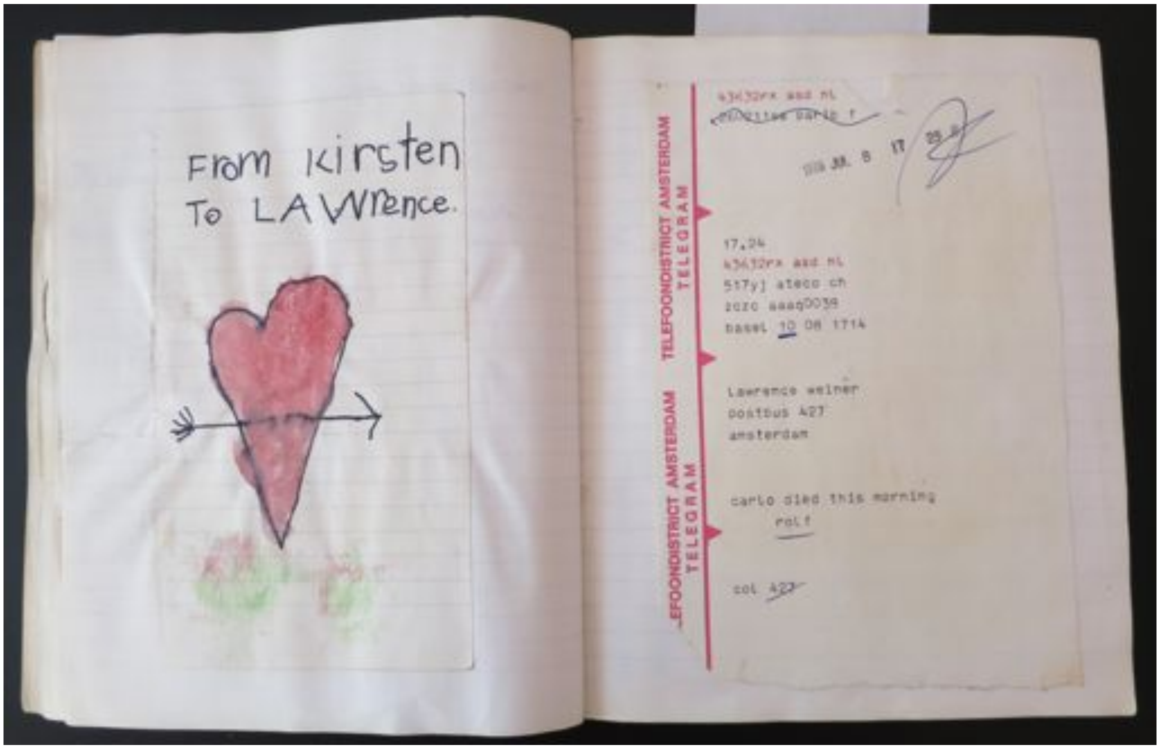
257. Lawrence Weiner, *AS LONG AS IT LASTS* (1992) installation carved on Renaissance Society wall, Chicago, 1994



258. Lawrence Weiner Notebook January 1988, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



WITH RELATION TO THE VARIOUS MANNERS OF USE..........



From Kirsten
To LAWrence.

TELEFOONDISTRICT AMSTERDAM
TELEGRAM

43632rx asd nl

17.24
43632rx asd nl
517yj ateco ch
zczc aaaq0038
basel 10 08 1714

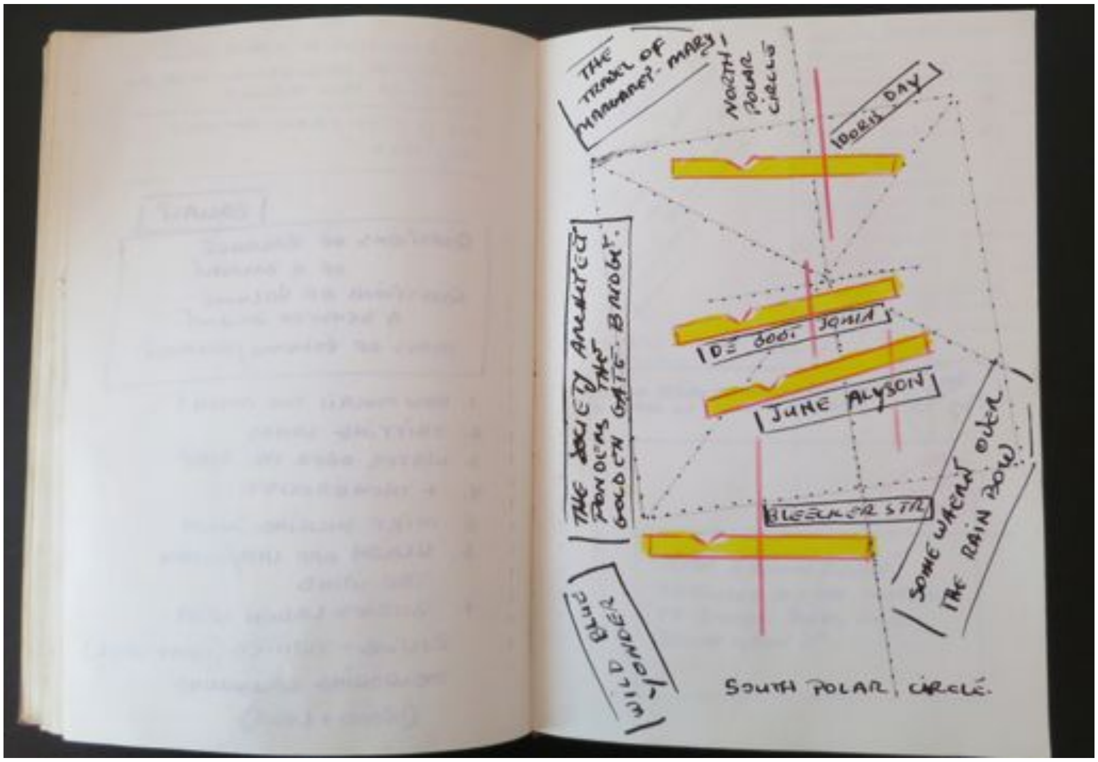
lawrence weiner
postbus 427
amsterdam

carlo died this morning
rolf

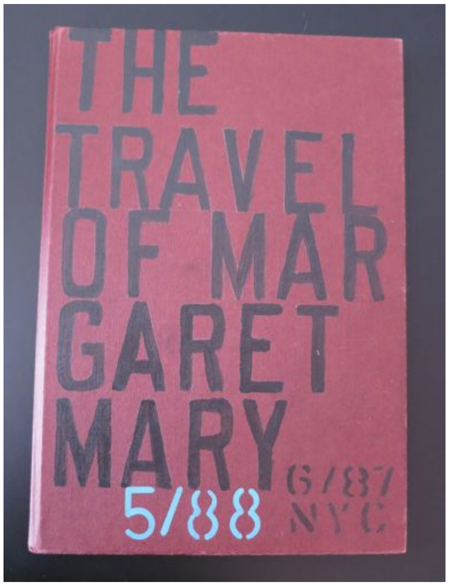
col 427

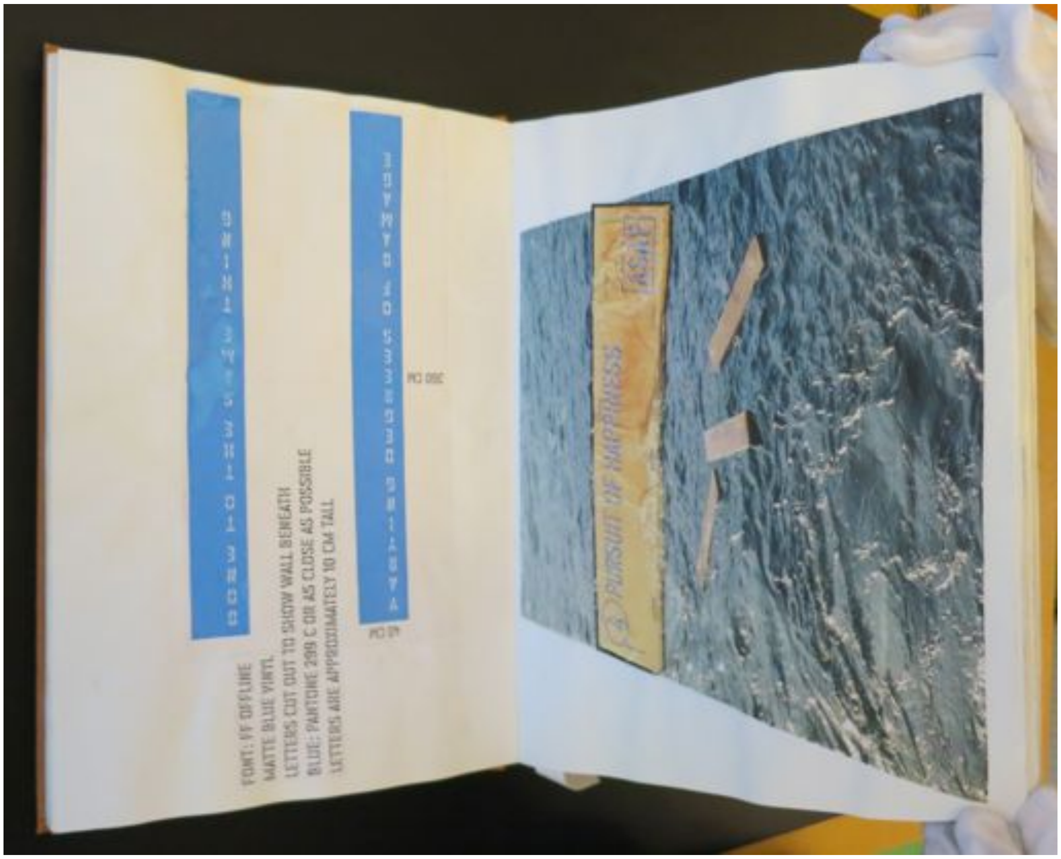
259. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1975, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

260. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 1975-1978, Moved Pictures Archive, New York


THE TRAVEL OF MARGARET-MARY
NORTH-POLAR CIRCLE
DORIS DAY
THE SOCIETY ARCHITECT PONDERS THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE.
DE GOOI JOMIAS
JUNE ALYSON
BLEECKER STR
SOME WHERE OVER THE RAIN BOW
WILD BLUE YONDER
SOUTH POLAR CIRCLE.

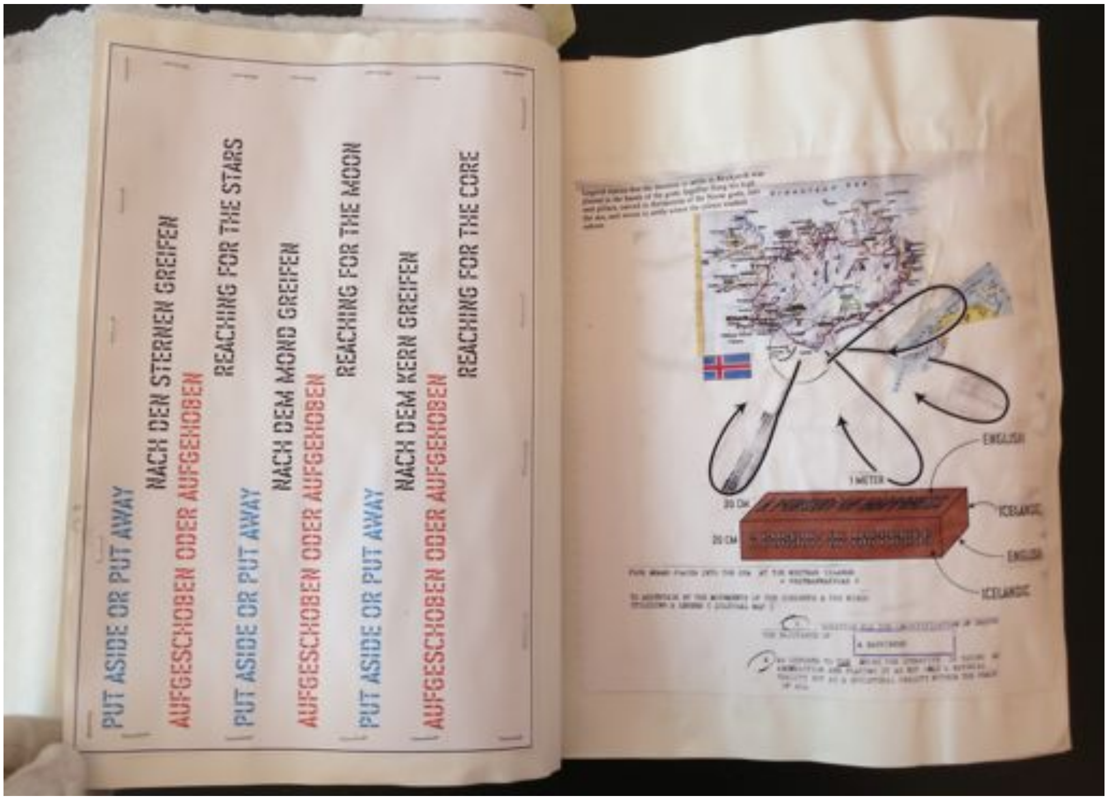
261. Lawrence Weiner Notebook January 1985 – August 1986, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

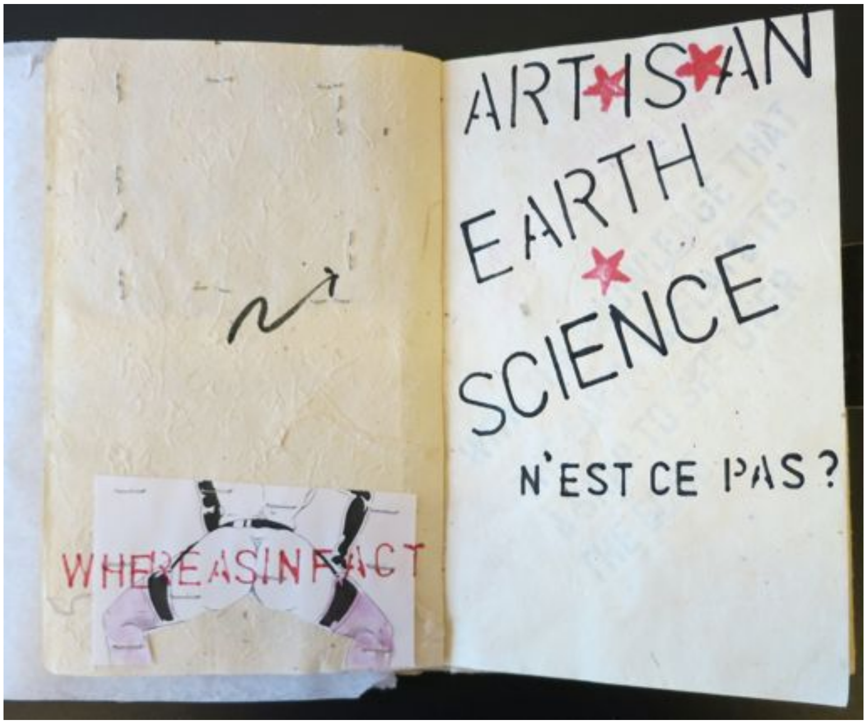



FONT: FF OFFLINE
MATTE BLUE VINYL
LETTERS CUT OUT TO SHOW WALL BENEATH
BLUE: PANTONE 299 C OR AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE
LETTERS ARE APPROXIMATELY 10 CM TALL
PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

262. Lawrence Weiner Notebook June 1987 – May 1988, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

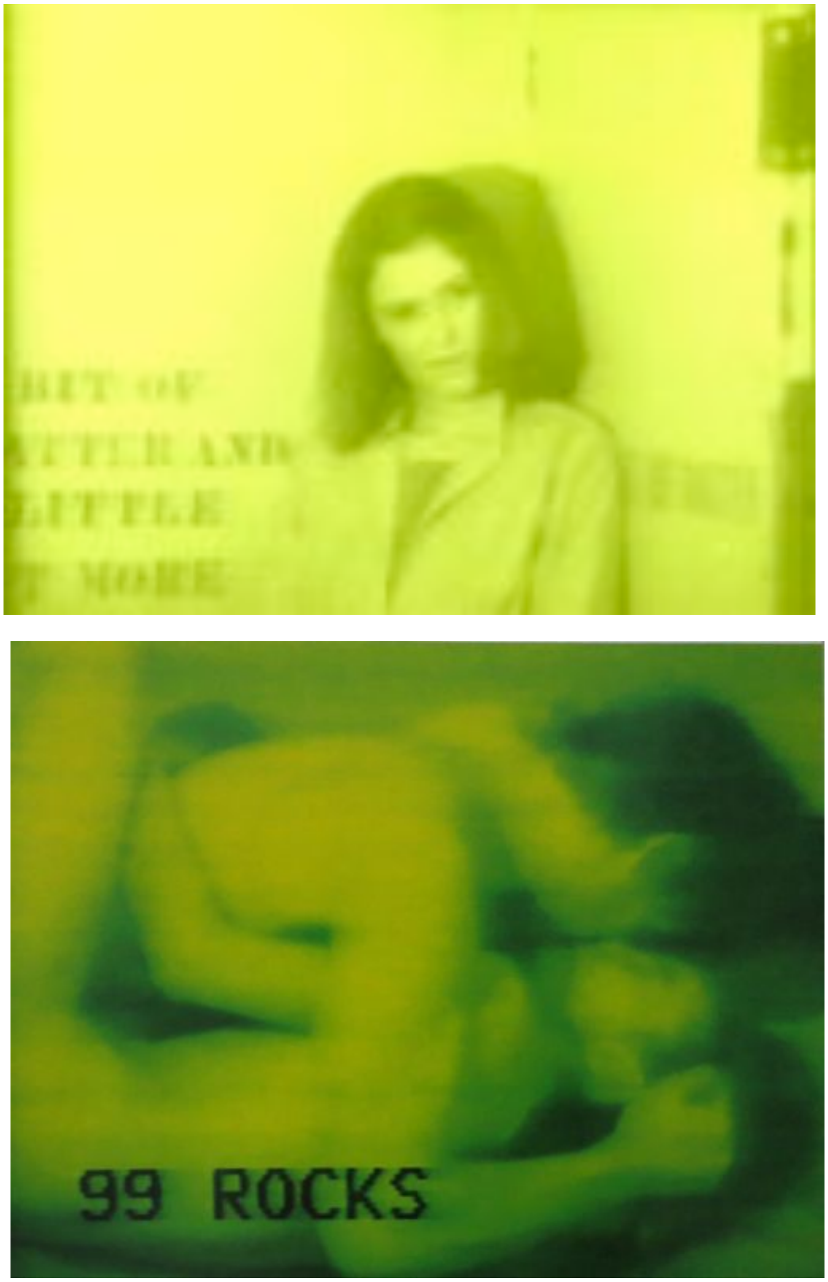
263. Lawrence Weiner Notebook June 2005 – November 2009, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



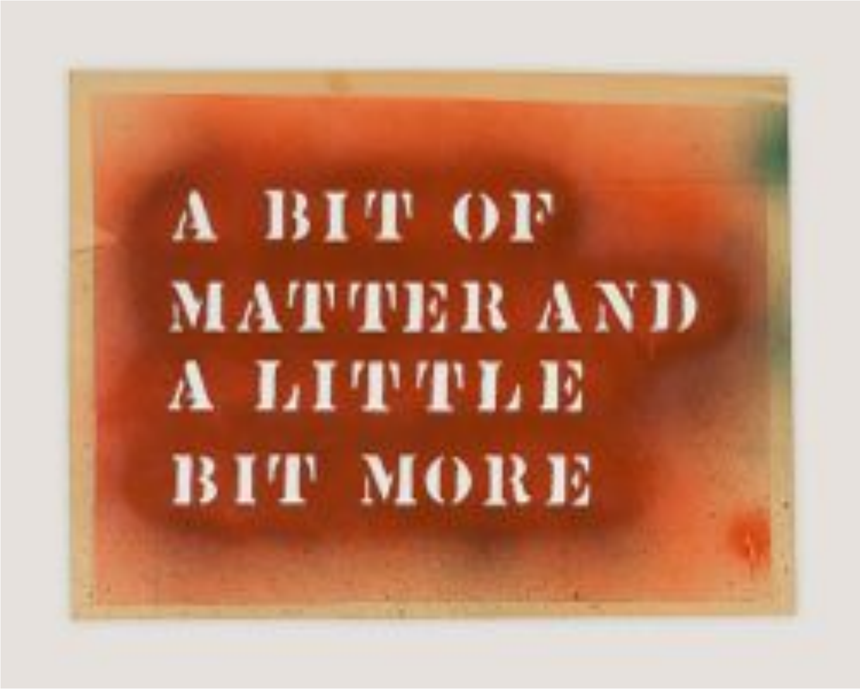


264. Lawrence Weiner Notebook March 2004 – June 2005, Moved Pictures Archive, New York

265. Lawrence Weiner Notebook 2002, Moved Pictures Archive, New York



266a & 266b. Lawrence Weiner, *A Bit Of Matter And A Little Bit More,* video stills, 1976



267. Lawrence Weiner, *A BIT OF MATTER AND A LITTLE BIT MORE,* 1976

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The Guggenheim Museum Archive, New York

The Museum of Modern Art Archive, New York.

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____________. "Preface To Stripe Painting." In *Sixteen Americans*, edited by Dorothy C. Miller. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1959. Reprinted in *Cuts: texts 1959 – 2004 / Carl Andre*: 267.

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