

Janice Mason Art Museum
LESSON PLANS FOR WIER EXHIBIT
Background Information

ARTIST NAME : Sol LeWitt

ART PIECE(S) ON DISPLAY: “Red Lines from Midpoint of the Left and Right Sides, Blue Lines from the Midpoints of the Top and Bottom Sides” and “Maquette”

About the Artist

Sol LeWitt was born in Hartford, Connecticut in 1928. He earned his B.F.A degree from Syracuse University in 1949 and moved to New York City in 1953. He found various jobs to support himself, first in the design department at *Seventeen* magazine. From 1955 to 1956, he worked for architect I.M. Pei as a [graphic designer](#). In 1960, LeWitt took a job at the Museum of Modern Art, working first at the book counter and later as the night receptionist. He met other young artists working there who were also searching for a new direction that would lead away from the popular ideas of [Abstract Expressionism](#). He created his first [relief sculpture](#) in 1962 and soon went on to become one of the key artists of the 1960's. His first sculptures were constructed from cubes that could be arranged in various patterns, and they often occupied entire gallery spaces. The structures were usually disassembled at the end of the show, and the cubes were saved for reuse in later projects. LeWitt also began producing innovative drawings done directly on the walls in an effort to make these art pieces as [two-dimensional](#) as possible.

LeWitt began to create works that utilized simple and impersonal forms, exploring [repetition](#) and [variations](#) of a basic form or line. Most importantly, LeWitt evolved a working method for creating artworks based on simple directions that could be executed by others rather than by the artist himself to complete the final art piece. For LeWitt, the idea or concept, not the finished product, was the art. Le Witt said, “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. The idea becomes the machine that makes the art”.

The late '70's and early '80's marked a broadening of LeWitt's practice. The circle, square and triangle emerged as the major emblems of large wall drawings and on paper. These [geometric shapes](#) were transformed into [three-dimensional](#) shapes. From 1982, [color](#) and [tone](#) began to play a more important role in the artist's work. Recently he has been working with intensely colored [acrylic](#) paint on walls and with [gouache](#) on large sheets of paper.

In what must be a record for a living American artist, in the last fifteen years, in addition to 100 solo gallery exhibitions, Sol LeWitt has had more than 50 museum shows. He is considered to be one of the most influential artists alive today.

About the Art

The work of Sol LeWitt bridges [Minimal](#) and [Conceptual art](#), movements that abandoned the content and ideals of [Abstract Expressionism](#) in the 1950's. LeWitt has never forsaken the fundamental approach that he developed in the 1960's, emphasizing ideas over emotional expression and letting other people bring those ideas into physical and visual forms. He has produced art works across a wide range of [media](#), producing [photographs](#), [graphics](#), structural

installations, works on paper and hundreds of large –scale wall drawings for galleries and museums, private collections and public spaces. Although he has worked extensively in all of these areas, he is usually considered to be primarily a [sculptor](#). LeWitt’s most characteristic sculpture works are based on connected open cubes. Because he works with cube modules and systems and his early wall drawings are based on grids, LeWitt is described as a [Minimal artist](#). However, his most recent work is usually colorful and often quite complex. His works are [abstract](#) and are normally based on [geometric](#) designs and formulae.

One of the LeWitt pieces in this exhibit is entitled “Red Lines from Midpoint of the Left and Right Sides, etc.” The “idea” or formula in this work is the title of the work. The [medium](#) used is pencil and ink on paper and the drawing measures h 15” X w 15”. The work was completed in 1975.

The other Le Witt work in this exhibit is made of wood and is entitled “Maquette”. This [maquette](#) was made as a model for a large exterior wall piece for a building in downtown Chicago. Several [maquettes](#) were made and sold to provide some funds to build the wall piece. This art piece was completed in 1985 and measures h 24 ¼” X w 18 ¼” X d 8”.

Related terms

abstract	graphic
Abstract Expressionism	graphic designer
acrylic	maquette
architect	media
art elements	Minimalist
color	photograph
concept	relief sculpture
Conceptual art	relief sculpture
cube sculpture	repetition
cubes	sculptor
drawing	sculpture
formulae	structural installations
geometric design	three-dimensional
geometric shapes	tone
gouache	two-dimensional
	variations

Specific Lesson Plans

Grades K-5

Kentucky Core Content

AH-E-4.1.32 Art elements-line, shape, form, texture, and color (primary and secondary hues) and color groups (warm, cool, neutral).

AH-E-4.1.33 Principles of design- organization of visual compositions: emphasis (focal point), pattern, balance (symmetry), contrast (light/dark).

AH-E-4.1.34 Describe a variety of media and processes used to produce two-dimensional (2-D) and three-dimensional (3-D) artwork.

AH-E-4.2.35 Recognize that artists choose to express themselves in different styles and subject matters.

AH-E-4.1.42 Use a variety of media and art processes to produce two-dimensional (2-D) and three-dimensional (3-D) artwork.

AH-E-4.2.31 Identify various purposes for creating works of art.

AH-E-4.2.32 Purposes of Art- expressive (express emotions and ideas), narrative (describe and illustrate experiences), functional (decorate objects).

Objectives

- To learn that Sol LeWitt had numerous jobs prior to becoming a key American artist in the 1960's.
- To understand that Sol Lewitt's first **sculptures** were called **relief sculptures** and were made of **cubes**.
- To realize that Sol Lewitt sometimes did his innovative drawings directly on the walls of museums and art centers.
- To learn that LeWitt used the **art elements** of **line, shape, and form**, plus the **principles of design; pattern and symmetry**, in a new way while producing his art.
- To understand that LeWitt developed a working method for creating artworks based on simple directions that could be executed by others rather than by the artist himself to complete the final art piece.
- To understand that Sol Lewitt has produced art works across a wide range of media, producing **photographs, graphics, structural installations**, works on paper and hundreds of large-scale wall **drawings**, but is usually considered a **sculptor**.
- To realize that much of Lewitt's work is made of certain **geometric designs** and **formulae**.
- To be able to describe the work entitled "Red Lines from Midpoint of the Left and Right Sides, Blue Lines from the Midpoints of the Top and Bottom Sides" using correct art terminology.

Suggested Questions

1. What were some of the jobs that Sol Lewitt did before he became an artist?
2. How did Lewitt use **cubes** in his first **sculptures**? These were called **relief sculptures**.
3. How was Lewitt's art different than the art work prior to his time?
4. Explain about Lewitt's drawing on the walls in museums and art centers.
5. What were some of the **geometric shapes** Lewitt used in his **sculptures** and other works.
6. Sol LeWitt developed a different method for actually completing the art work? What was it?

7. What are some of the different art forms that LeWitt has created?
8. Describe LeWitt's work entitled "Red Lines from Midpoint of the Left and Right Sides, Blue Lines from the Midpoints of the Top and Bottom Sides". Explain what you know about this work.
9. Lewitt believed that the idea or concept behind the art, was the art. Explain what you think this means.

Related Activities

1. Have students divide into pairs. Have both students individually make- up directions for producing a picture which utilizes only one [geometric shape](#). The students will exchange directions with their partners. Then each partner will construct the others picture according to the directions. Students may not talk or make gestures to give hints until the exercise is finished. After the pictures are completed, partners will give feed back as to how well the directions were followed for their picture. Discuss how Sol Lewitt had to have the idea for the art and then be able to describe it completely so that others could draw it or make it into a [sculpture](#).
2. Give each of the students a pattern for making a paper [cube](#). Help the students make several [cubes](#). When the [cubes](#) are completed have the students stack and arrange their cubes to form a [cube sculpture](#). Have a class discussion evaluating the [cube sculpture](#) in terms of its artistic value.
3. Provide pictures of Lewitt's work which you may obtain from the internet or library. Share these with the class members so that students may get a taste of what [Conceptual art](#) is really like. Stress what makes it different from previous art movements.

Grades 6-8

Kentucky Core Content

AH-M-4.1.32 Art Elements: line, shape, color (tints and shades) and color groups (monochromatic), form texture, space (positive/negative and perspective), and value (light and shadow).

AH-M-4.1.33 Principles of Design: repetition, pattern, balance (symmetry/asymmetry), emphasis (focal point), contrast (light and dark), rhythm, proportion, and movement.

AH-M-4.1.34 Identify and describe a variety of art media, art processes, and subject matter to communicate ideas, feelings, experiences, and stories.

AH-M-4.1.35 Media: two dimensional-crayon, pencil, fabric, yarn, paint (tempera, watercolor), ink and pastels.

AH-M-4.1.36 Media: three-dimensional-clay, paper-mache', found objects (used to produce artwork), wood, glass, metal, and stone (Properties of media need to be known in order to respond to artworks).

AH-M-4.1.39 Subject Matter: landscape, portrait, still life, abstract, and non-objective.

AH-M-4.2.31 Describe and compare the characteristics and purposes of works of art representing various cultures, historical periods, artists, and/or styles.

Objectives

- To understand that Sol Lewitt's first **sculptures** were called **relief sculptures** and were made of **cubes**.
- To learn that LeWitt used the **art elements** of **line, shape, and form**, plus the **principles of design; pattern and symmetry**, in a new way while producing his art.
- To know that Sol LeWitt believed that the idea or **concept**, not the finished product, was the art.
- To understand that LeWitt developed a working method for creating artworks based on simple directions that could be executed by others rather than by the artist himself to complete the final art piece.
- To be able to explain the meaning of LeWitt's statement. "The idea becomes the machine that makes the art".
- To learn how Sol LeWitt's art work has changed or evolved over time.
- To know why Sol LeWitt is considered one of the most influential and prolific artists alive today.
- To explain how Sol Lewitt's art is different from the **Abstract Expressionists** of the 1950's and how his work bridges the gap between the Minimalist and Conceptualist art movements.
- To understand why Sol Lewitt is usually considered a **sculptor** even though he has produced art works across a wide range of **media**, including **photographs, graphics, structural installations**, works on paper and hundreds of large-scale wall **drawings**.
- To realize how much of Lewitt's work is made of **geometric designs** and **formulae**.
- To be able to critique the work entitled "Red Lines from Midpoint of the Left and Right Sides, Blue Lines from the Midpoints of the Top and Bottom Sides" using correct art terminology and the Four Steps for Art Criticism model found on this web site.

Suggested Questions

1. Describe and explain Sol Lewitt's first **sculptures** which were called **relief sculptures**.
2. How did Sol Lewitt use **geometric designs** and **formulae** in his art creations?
3. Explain the meaning of LeWitt's statement, "The idea becomes the machine that makes the art".
4. Explain LeWitt's method for creating artworks which was very unique and basically unheard of in the art world at the time.
5. Describe how Sol Lewitt's art has evolved over time. How is it different today, than when he first became famous in the 1960's.
6. How is Sol Lewitt's art different from the **Abstract Expressionists** before him?
7. Sol Lewitt is one of the fathers of the **Conceptualist art** movement. What characteristics delineate the Conceptualists?
8. Why is Sol Lewitt considered a **sculptor**, even though he has produced several other art forms?
9. What are some of the things to be considered when critiquing a piece of art?
10. What points would you emphasize if you were trying to convince someone that Sol LeWitt should be considered a great influence in the art world today?

Related Activities

1. Have students divide into pairs. Have both students individually make- up directions for producing a **sculpture** which utilizes only one **geometric shape**. The students will exchange directions with their partners. Then each partner will construct the other's **sculpture** according to the directions. Students may not talk or make gestures to give hints until the exercise is finished. After the **sculptures** are completed, partners are to give feed back as to how well the directions were followed for their **sculpture**. Discuss how Sol Lewitt developed a **concept**, which for him was the art, and then prepared directions and formulae so that others could construct the art object. This exercise reflects how difficult his process can be.
Give each of the students a pattern for making a paper **cube**. Give the students time to make several **cubes**. When the **cubes** are completed have the students divide into groups and devise the plans for a large **sculpture**. Each group will construct their structure and critique its artistic value. The class will vote on the structure they like the best.
2. Have students go on the internet or library to find and print copies of Lewitt's art works. The students will then select two of them and write a paper comparing and contrasting the works.
3. Have the students write a paper explaining the art movement they believe they would be associated with if they were an artist. Have them analyze and support the reasons for their decision.

Grades 9-12

Kentucky Core Content

AH-H-4.1.31 Describe works of art using appropriate terminology.

AH-H-4.1.32 Art Elements: color and color theory: primary and secondary hues, values (tints and shades), intensity (brightness and dullness); color relationship: triadic, complementary, and analogous.

AH-H-4.1.33 Principles of Design: Balance (symmetry/asymmetry), emphasis (focal pattern), pattern, repetition, contrast, variety, movement, rhythm, proportion, transition/gradation, and unity.

AH-H-4.1.34 Defend personal interpretations of works of art and architecture by using arguments.

AH-H-4.2.32 Media: two-dimensional-paint (watercolor, tempera, oil, and acrylic), fabric, yarn, paper, ink, pastels (oil and chalk), fibers, photography, and computer design.

AH-H-4.2.33 Media: three-dimensional-clay, wood (constructive), glass, metal, stone, and plaster.

AH-H-4.2.39 Purposes of Art: persuasive (advertising, marketing, propaganda); formalist (abstract, non-objective, arrangement of elements and principles as subject matter).

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- To learn that LeWitt used the **art elements of line, shape, and form**, plus the **principles of design; pattern and symmetry**, in a new way while producing his art.
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- To understand that LeWitt developed a working method for creating artworks based on simple directions that could be executed by others rather than by the artist himself to complete the final art piece.
- To be able to explain the meaning of LeWitt's statement. "The idea becomes the machine that makes the art".
- To explain how Sol Lewitt's art is different from the **Abstract Expressionists** of the 1950' and how his work bridges the gap between **the Minimalist** and **Conceptual** art movements.
- To understand that Sol Lewitt has produced art works across a wide range of **media**, producing **photographs, graphics, structural installations**, works on paper and hundreds of large-scale wall **drawings**, but is usually considered a **sculptor**.
- To be able to critique the work entitled "Red Lines from Midpoint of the Left and Right Sides, Blue Lines from the Midpoints of the Top and Bottom Sides" using correct art terminology.

- To learn to critique a piece of Lewitt’s art by utilizing the questions in the [Four Steps for Art Criticism](#) found on this website. “

Suggested Questions

1. Describe and explain Sol Lewitt’s first [sculptures](#) which were called [relief sculptures](#).
2. How did Sol Lewitt use [geometric designs](#) and [formulae](#) in his art creations?
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Related Activities

1. Have students divide into pairs. Have both students individually make- up directions for producing a sculpture which utilizes only one [geometric shape](#). The students will exchange directions with their partners. Then each partner will construct the others [sculpture](#) according to the directions. Students may not talk or make gestures to give hints until the exercise is finished. After the [sculptures](#) are completed, partners are to give feed back as to how well the directions were followed for their [sculpture](#). Discuss how Sol Lewitt developed a [concept](#), which for him was the art, and then prepared directions and [formulae](#) so that others could construct the art object. This exercise reflects how difficult his process can be.
2. Give each of the students a pattern for making a paper [cube](#). Give the students time to make several [cubes](#). When the [cubes](#) are completed have the students divide into groups and devise the plans for a large [sculpture](#). Each group will construct their structure and critique its artistic value. The class will vote on the structure they like the best.
3. Have students go on the internet or library to find and print copies of Lewitt’s art works. The students will then select two of them and write a paper comparing and contrasting the works.
4. Have the students write a paper explaining the art movement they believe they would be associated with if they were an artist. Have them analyze and support the reasons for their decision.
5. Have students create a work of art that would be representative of their favorite art movement. Students would then explain on paper why they think their work is representative.