

Landmarks Guide for Adolescents



Sol LeWitt

American, 1928–2007

WALL DRAWING #520

1987/2013

Colored ink wash on wall

Subject: Conceptual art

Activity: Create and execute a conceptual work of art with a partner

Materials: Paper, pencil, art-making materials

Vocabulary: Conceptual art, minimalism, geometric

i Introduction

Sol LeWitt (1928–2007) is recognized as one of the founders of conceptual art and minimalism. He valued the creation of a concept or idea over the execution of the work itself. In 1967 LeWitt famously said, “The idea becomes the machine that makes the art.” He often compared himself to classical music composers who draft their work for others to perform. Likewise, LeWitt’s work continues to be created by teams of people who follow the instructions he wrote when he was alive.

LeWitt is known for his wall drawings and structures. Simple geometric forms such as the cube appeared in both his two-dimensional and three-dimensional work. Basic visual forms provided him with building blocks for creating a system of instructions that others can use when creating his works, similar to the way composers use musical notes to express their ideas.

Wall Drawing #520 took a team of six people 20 days to execute. It was important for LeWitt that the artists who help create his work be recognized—their names are included with each piece they help to create.

? Questions

Must an artist use his or her own hands to create a work of art?

Which is more important: the object or the idea? Why?

How is Sol LeWitt similar to and different from an architect?

Sol LeWitt, continued



Activity

Picture a simple image in your mind. It might contain color, basic shapes, and lines. Using writing materials, create a list of instructions that your partner can use to create the image. Write simple directions such as “4 intersecting lines.” Trade with your partner and use the instructions to create your partner’s image. How similar is the image your partner drew to the image you had in mind?



Vocabulary

Conceptual art - Art in which the idea or concept for a work is more important than its execution

Minimalism - An art movement that began in the 1960s. Minimalist artists created work that had no subject, focusing instead on the materials used to create it. Minimalist artworks usually depict simplified, geometric forms.

Geometric - Based on simple shapes, such as straight lines, circles, or squares