

# SOL LEWITT

1997 / 2017

## *Glossy and Flat Black Squares*

For more than twenty years, Rice University Art Gallery has been the only university gallery in the nation devoted to commissioning site-specific installation art. Artists early in their careers, as well as artists of international reputation, have constructed temporary works, each transforming the Gallery's signature "white box" space in a completely different way. In spring 2017, Rice Gallery comes full circle by bringing to life a second time one of its earliest installations, *Glossy and Flat Black Squares* (Wall Drawing #813) by Sol LeWitt. It is fitting that it is the gallery's final exhibition, on view through May 14, 2017.

Sol LeWitt (1928-2007), a pioneer of Conceptual art, designed *Glossy and Flat Black Squares* for the Rice Gallery space in 1997. Inherent in this work and in the more than 1,000 wall drawings done by LeWitt between 1968 and 2007 is that they are temporary and can be re-created, even existing in more than one place at a time. Conceptual art gives precedence to the idea of the work of art, rather than its execution. Thus, similar to traditional musical scores or architectural drawings, *Glossy and Flat Black Squares* "resides" on paper as a set of instructions until it is re-created. The LeWitt Collection in Chester, Connecticut granted permission to re-install Wall Drawing #813 and sent Michael Vedder, an artist trained in making LeWitt's wall drawings, to initiate the installation

and to work alongside David Krueger, the Rice Gallery preparator and his crew.

*Glossy and Flat Black Squares* gains its perceptual impact through LeWitt's inventive use of art's basic elements including color, shape, and space. LeWitt conceived of this work in the last decade of his life as he began to use paint for the first time to create his wall drawings. LeWitt did not refer to these works as murals or paintings because he wished to stress that they still fit within the artistic concerns that motivated his earlier wall drawings done in ink, crayon, or pencil.

One thread that unifies LeWitt's wall drawings across such disparate media is his lifetime interest in art's relationship to architecture. *Glossy and Flat Black Squares* is painted directly on Rice Gallery's pre-existing walls; nothing was changed to accommodate them. Their scale and proportion fit into and expand within the work's architectural container, thus echoing, reverberating, and drawing attention to the fundamental qualities of spatial experience. The ceiling height, the width of the gallery's rectangular walls, the limestone squares that compose its flooring, as well as its vertical rectangles of glass delineated by black mullions, are integral to and inseparable from the experience of LeWitt's installation.





First Drawn by: Peter Clarke, John Hosford, Eliza Howard, Kathleen McShane, David Sisson, Paula Wynn, Peter Wynn

*Glossy and Flat Black Squares*  
(Wall Drawing #813), 1997



Members of the wall drawing crew with Sol LeWitt from L to R: Paula Wynn, Peter Clarke, Eliza Howard, Kathleen McShane, Sol LeWitt, David Sisson

For the first installation of *Glossy and Flat Black Squares*, two of LeWitt's assistants, John Hosford and Kathleen McShane, worked with Rice students to execute LeWitt's instructions. Then student, now Rice alum, Paula Wynn, M.D. emailed her reflection on this pivotal experience to Rice Gallery director, Kimberly Davenport. Jaye Anderton, now retired, was Rice Gallery's manager. >>

TOP Photo: Paul Hester  
LEFT Photo: Rice Gallery Staff

Date: January 24, 2017 at 1:25:47 AM CST  
To: Kimberly Davenport  
Subject: hello!

Greetings from Portlandia, Kim!

The Rice University Art Gallery and you and Jaye Anderton have been on my mind recently. When I received the notification about the re-installation of the Sol LeWitt piece, it brought back so many memories of working on the installation with his assistants, Kathleen McShane and John Hosford.

I cannot believe that it has been nearly 20 years since I worked on that installation. What a terrific experience to have had as a 19 year-old woman! That experience was a defining moment in my life in many ways. It opened my eyes and mind to the world of installation art, and modern and contemporary art. And the experience lead to my internship at Pace-Wildenstein in the summer of 1998, which broke open the art world and the world to me in none other than New York City!

Although I did not pursue a career in art, I ended up at Columbia University for medical school because of the Pace-Wildenstein internship experience and my love of art and the city. It's amazing how that one little stone (*Glossy and Flat Black Squares*) had so many ripples in my life.

My art classes and all the time spent helping with installations at Rice University Art Gallery were the foundation for what I know will be a lifetime of appreciating art. I think it will tickle you to know that I have random museum memberships sprinkled across the country, because I love to travel specifically to see art shows and support the museums. I have a particular love of installation art because of my time at Rice.

You might find this even funnier. When I was a medical student at Columbia, I installed my own Sol LeWitt wall drawing on the living room wall of the apartment I shared with 2 roommates. The cover and end papers in my copy of *Sol LeWitt: Twenty-Five Years of Wall Drawings* served as my instructions. I traced and scaled up the drawings with the color codes. I had learned the technique of how to paint them in from Kathleen McShane. I still remember to this day how to do it, too! Our apartment was in a building owned by the university and I often wonder if the building manager or residents after us painted over it or left it.

Art has also shaped my life and career in another way. I ended up specializing in ophthalmology and sub-specialized in retinal surgery. It turns out that ophthalmology is the most visually rich medical specialty and retinal is ophthalmology on steroids. I never would have imagined when I started medical school that is where I would end up, but it's perfect.

Thanks for remembering us and also for all your amazing work for the art gallery over the years! You have curated an extraordinary collection of site-specific installations. I have been keeping track through the years!

I hope that you are well!!

Paula

1997

# 2017

Sol LeWitt

*Glossy and Flat Black Squares*

(Wall Drawing #813), 1997

Site-specific installation for

Rice University Art Gallery

Reinstalled as Rice Gallery's closing exhibition

On view 9 February - 14 May 2017

Drawn by: Tom Carter, Andrew DiMatteo, David Krueger, Joseph McGlone, Marcel Merwin, Mari Omari, Kalen Rowe, Andrew Colton Schmidt, Lydia Smith, Michael Benjamin Vedder, and Hayden Henry Wright.

Special thanks to Sofia LeWitt, John Hogan, and Janet Passehl.

Rice Gallery thanks all who have supported this idea, this space, and its artists.

#### SUPPORT AND SPONSORSHIP

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**Rice Gallery**