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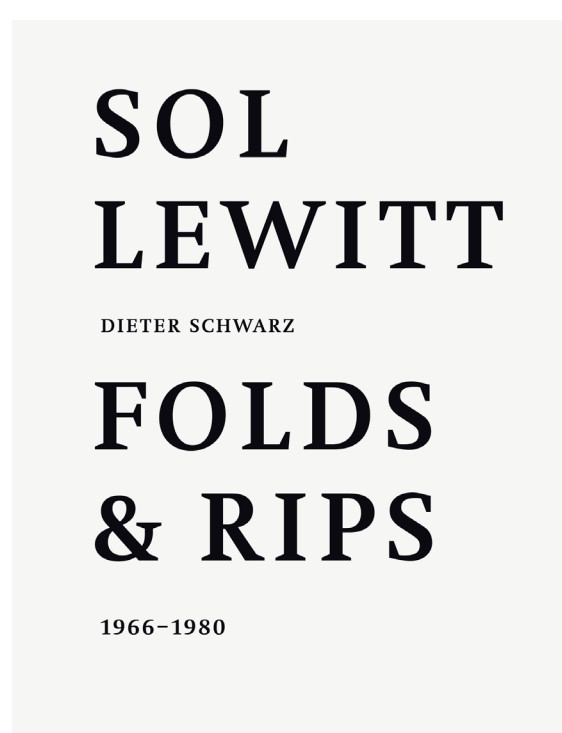
Dieter Schwarz | Office Zürich

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Gerhard Richter and Sol LeWitt

There could hardly be any two artists who diverge as diametrically in their work as Gerhard Richter and Sol LeWitt. Richter understands art as representation and thus necessarily as illusion and semblance, and so he has remained committed to painting as a medium. LeWitt regards art as the manifestation of an idea, which in turn is an instrument to override artistic conventions. And yet for Richter the work of LeWitt is, by his own admission, the most important that he has encountered in the art of his times, alongside Carl Andre and Robert Ryman. He said he found something hopeful in the elementary nature of their works.



This observation comes from a long conversation I conducted with Gerhard Richter on 20 November 2017. It was based on Richter's works in the collection of the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris, stemming from a period of five decades, and thus offering much to talk about. The discussion was intended for a Fondation brochure, but this publication was delayed and still hasn't appeared. So Richter took the initiative and arranged for the text to be published in German and English in the series of writings in the Richter Archive in Dresden. Given that this conversation addressed specific works, it focussed on practical aspects of how they were made, often bringing surprising details to light. The practice of painting thus took precedence over the programmatic considerations and the scepticism which Richter professed over the years regarding his work, leading to a positive closing comment about the goal-less pleasure of making art that he experienced when painting his most recent pictures.



In 1966, Sol LeWitt conceived a new type of work, "drawings without drawing," in which he replaced traditional drawing mediums with various ways of folding paper. In 1969, LeWitt started to regularly produce what he called Folds, first as gifts to friends, but increasingly as works to be distributed by his dealers. In 1971 he added the Rips, drawings made of ripped paper. Very soon, it became his custom to produce a number of Folds, or more usually Rips on the occasion of an exhibition and to leave them with his galleries. Always inventive, LeWitt went from ripping papers of various sizes and colors in different ways, to working with city maps, and airview photos of Florence, Manhattan, and Chicago from which he removed defined areas. The systematic approach on which LeWitt's Structures, Wall Drawings and ink drawings are based was also applied to the Folds and Rips; they were often created in series, for which LeWitt used all possible combinations of tearing sides or corners off of a sheet of paper. The importance of the Rips in LeWitt's oeuvre is underlined by the fact that he numbered them, similarly to the Wall Drawings, from 1 to 890. This order defined by the artist himself made it possible to identify the sequence of the works and trace their variations. The series of Folds stopped in 1976, followed by a small number of so-called Crumples; the series of Rips ended in 1980.

In order to propagate his democratic view that art should become accessible to a wide audience, LeWitt requested from his galleries that the Folds and Rips be sold for not more than \$100. The book that I have done presents a concise catalogue of these works which today are dispersed in many private and public collections in Europe and the United States.

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