

## **Artists publications and the legacy of Sol LeWitt**

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## Conference:

### ***Artists Publications and the legacy of Sol LeWitt***

**Sheffield Hallam University and Site Gallery, Sheffield  
Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2010, 10am – 6pm, (registration from 9.15am)**

A conference hosted by Sheffield Hallam University in collaboration with the Research Group for Artists Publications (RGAP) and Site Gallery, Sheffield, to explore the relevance and position of artists' publications in contemporary art practice - focusing particularly on the bookworks of Sol LeWitt, and considering his legacy in terms of artist-publishing now.



#### **Keynote speakers and contributors:**

Professor Anne Moeglin-Delcroix, Simon Cutts, Clive Phillpot, David Bellingham, Elisabeth S Clark, and Philip Thomas

The position of artists' publications within contemporary art has its roots in the 1960's and 1970's, when the development of this area of practice became increasingly prominent and resonated with the shifts within culture as a whole. Fuelled by developments in commercial printing and in the socio-political climate of this time, the creation of books by artists became an exciting and liberating new way to create art works that could be produced in large numbers as a democratic means of disseminating ideas to a wider audience. In doing so, the artists' publication challenged the preciousness of the unique work of art.

A prominent figure in this development was the artist and co-founder of Printed Matter (New York), Sol LeWitt.

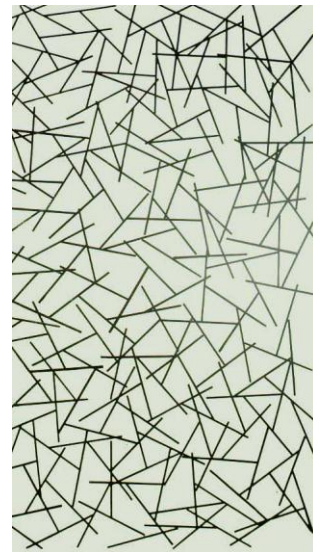
*'Artists' books are, like any other medium, a means of conveying art ideas from the artist to the viewer. Unlike most other media they are available to all at a low cost. They do not need a special place to be seen. They are not valuable except for the ideas they contain. Art shows come and go, but books stay around for years. It is the desire of artists that their ideas be understood by as many people as possible. Books make it easier to accomplish this'. (LeWitt, 1976)*

We now live in a time when there have been claims for 'the death of the book' due to the advent and dominance of other forms of media, particularly digital and web-based. However, the relationship described by LeWitt between artist and viewer/reader seems to be as strong and direct today.

This conference will directly relate to an exhibition of bookworks by Sol LeWitt, whose work will act as a historical and influential case study. To facilitate this, the conference will take place between Sheffield Hallam University and the nearby Site Gallery to view the exhibition, to see one of his wall-drawings in progress, and to listen to some specially commissioned live music performances.

'**Sol LeWitt - Artist's Books**', an exhibition at Site Gallery from May 8<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> 2010, is being brought to Sheffield by RGAP in a unique collaboration with Via Industriale, an artist-publishing organisation in Italy.

This exhibition of books by Sol LeWitt will be the only UK leg of this international touring exhibition, providing a rare opportunity to see a complete overview of LeWitt's work in this form. The chronological display of eighty of the artist's visual books dating from 1967 to 2002, will be complemented by a LeWitt wall drawing executed in the space, arranged between RGAP and the artist's estate especially for the exhibition at Site Gallery. The daily activity of constructing this work on the gallery wall will be an integral part of the project, allowing visitors to view the drawing as it progresses. A fully illustrated catalogue will be available.



Detail of Wall-Drawing #960  
Image © Estate of Sol LeWitt

**Music Performances** In tandem with the visual works, a sequence of contemporary music performances will take place in the Gallery in a commissioned programme. Brought together by the renowned pianist Philip Thomas, a specialist in performing new and experimental music including both notated and improvised music, the performances will feature guest musicians/composers and include all-day and evening events. Composers whose works will be performed include Manfred Werder, Tom Johnson, John Lely, Michael Parsons, Michael Pisaro, James Saunders, Gerhard Staebler, Alvin Lucier, Tim Parkinson, and Elisabeth S. Clark, plus works especially composed and performed for the exhibition by the *edges ensemble*. See websites [www.rgap.co.uk](http://www.rgap.co.uk) or [www.sitegallery.org](http://www.sitegallery.org) for dates, times, and programme.

Conference originated and co-ordinated by **Chloë Brown**, Art and Design Research Centre, Sheffield Hallam University and **Martin Rogers**, director, RGAP. [www.rgap.co.uk](http://www.rgap.co.uk)

The exhibition *Sol LeWitt: Artist's Books* has been curated by **Giorgio Maffei** and **Emanuele De Donno** at Viaindustriale, Sant'Eraclio di Foligno, Italy.

With additional thanks to the Estate of Sol LeWitt and to the Music Department at the University of Huddersfield

Notes on the conference speakers:

**Professor Anne Moeglin-Delcroix** has been teaching philosophy of the Arts at the University of the Sorbonne in Paris, and was in charge of the artists' books collection at the Bibliotheque Nationale de France between 1979 and 1994. As a champion of the idiom, she has written numerous commentaries and articles on artists books, and has published a number of important reference works including *Livres d'artistes*, (Editions Herscher and Centre Pompidou, 1985) *Esthétique du livre d'artiste* (Jean-Michel Place and Bibliotheque Nationale de France, 1997, revised edition autumn 2010), *Sur le livre d'artiste: Articles et écrits de circonstance 1981-2005* (Le mot et le reste, 2006) and edited *Guardare, Raccontare, Pensare, Conservare: Four directions of the artist's book from the Sixties to the present* (Edizioni Corraini, 2004).

**Simon Cutts** is a poet and publisher. He began working with Stuart Mills at Tarasque Press in the 1960's, and in 1975 founded Coracle, which in the subsequent years has become an influential publishing enterprise internationally, and a seminal project for the development of alternative forms and spaces in which artists can operate. More recently, he curated the project '*Certain Trees: the constructed book, poem, and object*' (2006) involving both a reference publication and touring exhibition, which developed equivalences and associations between books and objects. His publication '*Some Forms of Availability*' (RGAP and Granary Books, 2007) comprises essays, interviews and commentaries on the nature and history of small press publishing. Together with Erica Van Horn, he currently directs Coracle from its base in Tipperary, Ireland. [www.coracle.ie](http://www.coracle.ie)

**Clive Phillpot** is a writer, curator and former art librarian, with an ongoing specialist interest in artist-publishing. He was Director of the Library at the Museum of Modern Art, NYC, from 1977-94 where he established the Artist Books Collection; Librarian at Chelsea School of Art, 1970-77; President of Printed Matter Inc., 1992-93, and President of the Art Libraries Society of North America, 1989-90. He acted as co-curator/co-editor: for *Voids: a Retrospective*, Paris 2009; *Outside of a Dog*, Gateshead, 2003-04; *Live in Your Head*, London & Lisbon 2000-01; *Edward Ruscha Editions*, Minneapolis 1999; *Artist/Author*, USA 1998-99; *Fluxus: Silverman Collection*, New York 1988-89; *The Art Press*, London & Toronto 1976,1979. Other publications include *Ray Johnson On Flop Art*, London 2008, and *Ray Johnson: Jean Dubuffet Fan Club*, Roslyn NY 1988. He has written for a number of exhibition catalogues, and has also contributed to many art magazines including Artforum, Art Journal, Art Libraries Journal, Art Monthly, and Studio International.

**David Bellingham** is an artist based in Glasgow where he is a lecturer and research fellow at Glasgow School of Art. For many years he has published books, cards, editions, and multiples – both his own works and as collaborations with other artists - under his imprint WAX366. His recent publications include *Ideas Leave Objects Standing*, Platform Projects 2005, and *Fresh Fruit and Vegetables*, The Changing Room, 2008. [www.davidbellingham.com](http://www.davidbellingham.com)

**Elisabeth S. Clark** is a fine artist based between London and Paris. She received her MA from the Slade School of Fine Art in 2008. Since graduating, she has presented solo exhibitions of her work at the Galerie Ho (Marseille), the Observatoire de Paris, and ROOM gallery (London). She was recently invited by leading fashion designer label *Hermès* to develop a project within their manufacturers. She has also been commissioned by *Penguin Books* to present a new performance of her "Book Concerto" work, in commemoration of their 75th year anniversary in May 2010. Clark has been awarded a prestigious eight-month residency at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, scheduled for later this year. She is co-editor of *Turn Press* and will be included in the *Northwestern University Press'* upcoming publication release of *Against Expression*, edited by Kenneth Goldsmith and Craig Dworkin. Her work 'Between Words: Piece for Four Instruments' was published and first performed in 2008. She negotiates her practice sculpturally, musically, linguistically and performatively.

**Philip Thomas** specialises in performing new and experimental music, including both notated and improvised music. He places much emphasis on each concert being a unique event, designing imaginative programmes that provoke and suggest connections. Philip's most recent solo projects have included a survey of recent American experimental music; portrait concerts of Markus Trunk and Laurence Crane, including world premieres by both composers; a survey of the piano music of Christian Wolff, including the European premiere of his latest work for solo piano 'Long Piano (Peace March 11)' at the 2007 Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, alongside premieres of new works by Stephen Chase, Tim Parkinson and Michael Parsons; concerts of music composed by improvisers, including premieres of new works by Mick Beck, Chris Burn and Simon H.Fell; premiere performances of major new works by Richard Emsley and Christopher Fox; a highly successful three-concert festival of the music of Morton Feldman, alongside three specially commissioned new works by British composers (this took place in October 2002 at the Mappin Art Gallery, Sheffield, and subsequently toured venues across the country); performances of solo music by Lachenmann, Zimmermann and others in Spring 2002; and a John Cage and contemporary British composers festival in February 2001, including a number of world and British premieres. Philip is a regular pianist with leading experimental music group Apartment House. [www.philip-thomas.co.uk](http://www.philip-thomas.co.uk)



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