

# AN EXCHANGE WITH SOL LEWITT

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January 23, 2011 – March 31, 2011

MASS MoCA

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The story of Sol LeWitt’s exchanges with other artists is widely known. Though most artists engage in this process at one point or another, LeWitt seemed fully committed to it as an artistic code of conduct, a way of life. Eva Hesse, Robert Mangold, Hanne Darboven, and Robert Ryman are just a few of LeWitt’s celebrated contemporaries with whom the artist exchanged works. Such exchanges were not limited to well-known artists—LeWitt consistently traded works with admirers whom he did not know but who had nevertheless sent their work to him, as well as amateur artists with whom he interacted in his daily life. LeWitt’s exchanges—he responded to every work he received by sending back one of his own—fostered an ongoing form of artistic communion and, in some cases, a source of support and patronage. The LeWitt Collection retains all of the works he received, as well as a record of what he offered in return.

For Sol LeWitt, the act of exchange seemed to be not only a personal gesture, but also an integral part of his conceptual practice. In addition to encouraging the circulation of artworks through a gift economy that challenged the art world’s dominant economic model, LeWitt’s exchanges with strangers have the same qualities of generosity, and risk, that characterized his work in general. This kind of exchange was designed to stage an encounter between two minds, outside the familiar confines of friendship.

If we consider the process of exchange as another of Sol LeWitt’s instructional pieces, then the rational (or irrational) thing to do is to continue to exchange work and ideas, if only symbolically, with him.

This exhibition, a curatorial project by Regine Basha, sprang from a call to those who share an affinity with Sol LeWitt’s legacy as a conceptual artist, to those who knew him and those who did not, to anyone who has ever wondered, “What would Sol LeWitt like?”

*Cabinet* and MASS MoCA issued an open call for gifts to Sol LeWitt in any form of an image, an object, a piece of music, or a film, books, ephemera, and other non-perishable items (e.g. wine) for a two-part exhibition taking place at MASS MoCA and at the offices of *Cabinet* (300 Nevins Street in Brooklyn) from January 20 through February 19, 2011. A publication documenting the contributions accompanied the shows and was presented at the conclusion of the project to all participants.

Steven Ball, *Ann and Pat*

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