

FREE SOL LEWITT by SUPERFLEX 10/04 – September 2010

What is the artwork? An idea or an object? How are art works to be shared and valued in today's society?

The Van Abbemuseum has invited the Danish artist collective, SUPERFLEX to work with the museum's collection. They have responded with the exhibition *In-between Minimalisms* and a new work, *FREE SOL LEWITT* - an installation made specially for the second part of *Play Van Abbe*. The museum is sometimes described as a prison in which the artwork is 'locked-away' like a criminal. With *FREE SOL LEWITT*, the artists playfully ask the Van Abbemuseum to 'set free' the work of the American artist, Sol LeWitt, *Untitled (Wall Structure)*, 1972. SUPERFLEX has set-up a metal workshop inside the museum in which exact replicas of the specific artwork by LeWitt are made and then shared amongst the museum's public, free of charge. The copies will be distributed to the public through a random system which visitors to the museum can sign-up for.

The museum has the duty to collect and document cultural property and to make this accessible to stimulate critical reflection, so that fresh perspectives may be presented and new developments in the cultural and social fields made possible. Yet, copyright laws can potentially prevent the museum from being able to fulfil its task. What should the museum's position be in the current information age where the capacity to share and exchange information is restricted by the economic interests protected by copyright?

FREE SOL LEWITT will be put into context by SUPERFLEX in the exhibition *In-between Minimalisms*. This exhibition will consist of artworks from the periods of Minimalist and Conceptual art found in the Van Abbemuseum's collection. Issues such as mass production, intellectual property, seriality and the artwork as concept are raised. *FREE SOL LEWITT* will be accompanied by a seminar and a special publication.

Photocopier

"If someone borrows from me, it makes me richer, not poorer. We artists, I believe, are part of a single community sharing the same language." Sol LeWitt, in *Flash Art*, 1973.

SUPERFLEX considers *FREE SOL LEWITT* to be a homage to LeWitt and his ideas and describes his work as being like a photocopier. *FREE SOL LEWITT* contains instructions and resources with which the museum can replicate this specific work *Untitled (Wall Structure)*, 1972 by Sol LeWitt from its collection and then give free copies to its visitors.

Art as a concept

SUPERFLEX chose this artwork by LeWitt as he is regarded as one of the founding fathers of Conceptual art, an art form which considered the idea to be more important than the physical manifestation of the art work as an object. In this instance, the original artwork, *Untitled (Wall Structure)* was industrially manufactured by others (and not by the artist) and so carries within it the idea of reproduction. The work by LeWitt is concerned more with the idea, or concept than with the work's execution. As LeWitt said: *"In conceptual art the idea or the concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the executor is a perfunctory affair. The idea is a machine that makes the art"* (from *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art*, 1967).



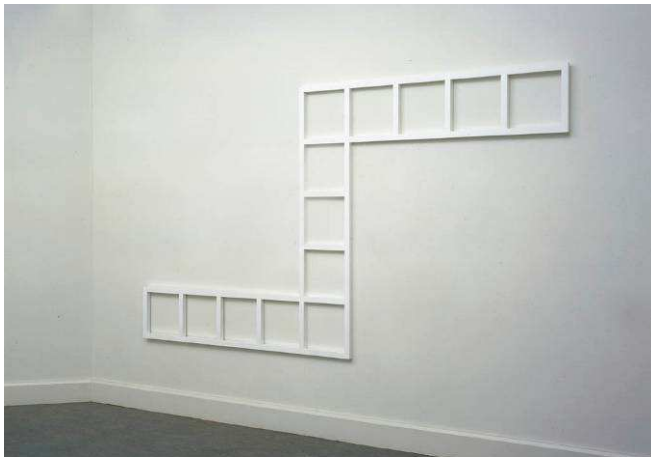
SUPERFLEX, *FREE SOL LEWITT*, 2010. Installation view Van Abbemuseum. Photo: Peter Cox

The copy machine

In the *FREE SOL LEWITT* workshop a couple of workmen work daily on reproducing LeWitt's *Untitled (Wall Structure)*. LeWitt commissioned a company to produce the work in 1972. Now in 2010, LeWitt's work is being reproduced in a museum room, where four tables have been set-up. Here, workmen cut the aluminium, weld it into a lattice structure, sand this form and then paint it white. The copies lie stacked in a corner awaiting their new destinations. The installation makes the production, presentation and distribution of an art work simultaneously visible.

Artistic freedom

SUPERFLEX raise the issues of the functioning and obligations of the museum as the owner of a public collection in a modern democratic society. What are the obstacles the museum encounters along the way? What are the tensions that arise between the exponential increase and public demand for free access and exchange of information (i.e. the Internet) on the one hand and copyright; which can restrict this exchange, on the other? Like the current social debate about the illegal copying of images, music, film and digital media with this project, SUPERFLEX also raise issues concerning authorship, copyright and the ownership of culture that resonate throughout society. When a museum commits itself to artistic freedom in a public space, then it has to raise the issue of the rules and regulations that restrict this freedom.



Sol LeWitt, *Untitled (Wall Structure)*, 1972. Photo: Peter Cox

Play Van Abbe Part 2

FREE SOL LEWITT and *In-between Minimalisms*, both belong to Part 2 of *Play Van Abbe*, called *Time Machines*. In this Part, the Van Abbemuseum will show several museum models from the past and explore the possibilities latent in these models, for the present and future. With *FREE SOL LEWITT*, SUPERFLEX reflect on the current museum of contemporary art. By making the codes of conduct evident – which are embedded in our legal system and which restrict our freedom of action – they want to introduce the opportunity for change and innovation. SUPERFLEX re-introduce the museum as a progressive platform for the access, exchange and distribution of ideas.

Curators

SUPERFLEX, Daniel McClean and Christiane Berndes

Seminar and publication

On 14 May the seminar *Who Owns the Artwork?* (English spoken) takes place in the Van Abbemuseum. The aim of the seminar is to examine and discuss issues relating to

authorship, copyright and the ownership of artworks by public institutions.

In May, a publication will appear that will include essays which will discuss the *FREE SOL LEWITT* project, installation photographs and an interview with SUPERFLEX and with the curators.

Sponsors

Play Van Abbe is made possible by contributions from The Mondriaan Stichting, BankGiro Loterij, Provincie Noord-Brabant, VSBfonds and SNS REAAL Fonds.



The Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven is one of the first public museums for contemporary art to be established in Europe. The museum's collection of around 2700 works of art includes key works and archives by Lissitzky, Picasso, Kokoschka, Chagall, Beuys, McCarthy, Daniëls and Körmeling. The museum has an experimental approach towards art's role in society. Openness, hospitality and knowledge exchange are important. We challenge ourselves and our visitors to think about art and its place in the world, covering a range of subjects, including the role of the collection as a cultural 'memory' and the museum as a public site. International collaboration and exchange have made the Van Abbemuseum a place for creative cross-fertilisation and a source of surprise, inspiration and imagination for its visitors and participants.

Van Abbemuseum

Bilderdijklaan 10
Eindhoven, The Netherlands
For more information, please visit www.vanabbemuseum.nl

Opening hours

Tuesday to Sunday 11:00 – 17:00
Thursday 11:00 - 21:00
On Thursdays, entrance to the museum is free from 17:00

Entrance

Adults: € 9,00
Groups of 15 persons or more, senior citizens: € 6,50
Students; holders of the Dutch young people's cultural pass (CJP): € 4
Thursdays from 17:00 - 21:00: free entrance (until 31/12/2010)

For more information please look at our website
www.vanabbemuseum.nl

For the editors

More information and images can be downloaded from:
www.vanabbemuseum.nl/pers.

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