


claude rutault

march 12 - april 26, 2024

"for each de-finition/method, there is a succession of appearances, interspersed by eclipses. there is night and there is day, which now become one. a sudden death, then a painting again, different and the same. i wrote in 1994 a little book called "my paintings are short-lived, but have many lives." it is indeed about time's stating a duration whose limit can't be imagined."

- claude rutault in conversation with
hans ulrich obrist, 2013



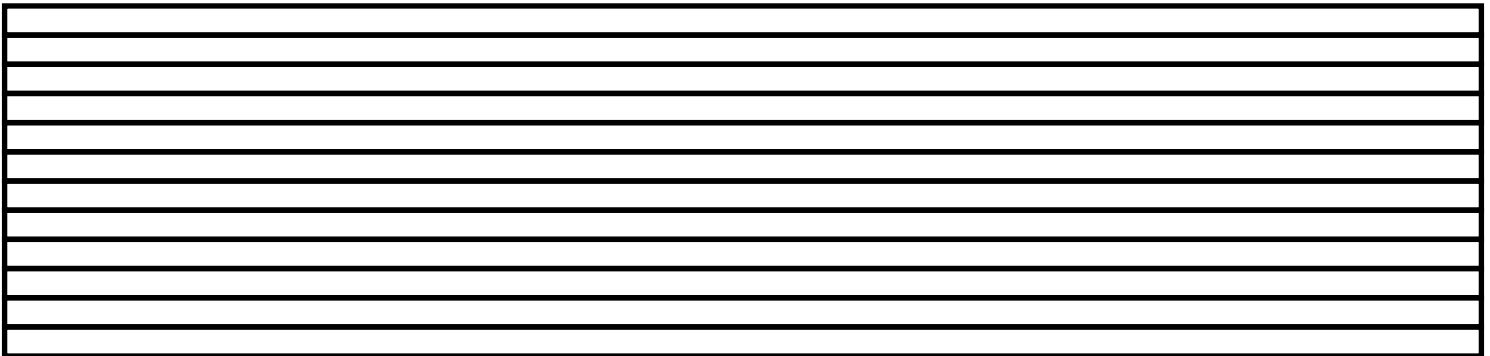
de-finition/method 178
between us and the eiffel tower, 1978

two identical canvasses hang at either end of a wall or on two adjoining walls, painted the same colour as them. between the two canvasses, the charge taker keeps the space as it was, with furniture, paintings, photographs, miscellaneous objects.

the two canvasses are hung vertically. the length of each canvas is equal to the width multiplied by four, but the size may vary depending on the activation site.

the description features the various elements that appear on the wall's surface between the two canvasses - other artworks, paintings, drawings, objects, furniture

variable dimensions according to the actualization

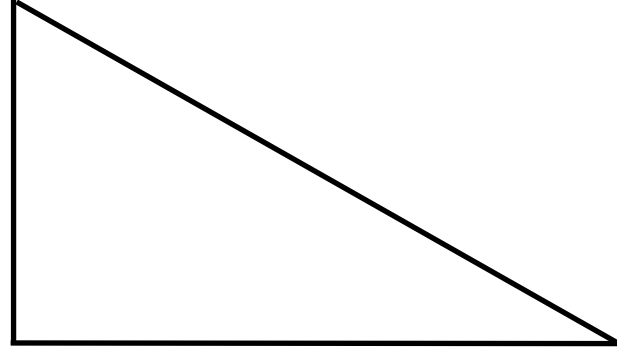


de-finition/method 553
tomb, 2001

twelve untreated canvasses mounted on stretchers measuring one hundred and ninety-five centimetres by sixty centimetres, assembled in a compact, regular group. this pile is approximately one meter in front of a wall, standing while the artist is alive, laid flat and parallel to the wall when he dies. after the artist's death the charge taker takes on the canvasses belonging to the deceased. they may reassemble them into a similar pile, whatever size they prefer, just as the artist decided before them. each new charge taker may reassemble the pile.

gradually, the tombs will need to be stored in the same museum. they will be presented in the form of recumbent effigies.

a first tomb was presented, ajar on the floor, for the solo show at the mies van der rose pavillion in barcelona in 2001. destroyed
variable dimensions according to the actualization



de-finition/method 57
positive/negative 3, 1975

a canvas mounted on a stretcher, in a traditional format, divided diagonally to form two triangles. one triangle is hung in the corner of a wall. the hanging restores the whole format. piece/response to rodchenko' diagonal drawn in blue pencil in the exhibition catalogue 5 x 5 = 25 in moscow in 1921
variable dimensions according to the actualization



de-finition/method 90
interchangeable 3, 1976

two canvasses mounted on stretchers, of identical size and shape, painted the same colour as the wall on which they hang, and which, put together, would form a traditional round format.

each canvas should be hung in a different space, so that they are not visible simultaneously, each part belongs to a different person. the work is authenticated by a joint description for both charge takers.

in the event of an exhibition, it would be possible to draw a pencil outline to show the shape that would be formed by the two parts of the piece together

variable dimensions according to the actualization

Legendary french painter CLAUDE RUTAULT was in New York City to present his first-ever solo exhibition in the United States at the Galerie Perrotin in New York. While in town, he met up with an old friend, the American conceptual artist LAWRENCE WEINER for this interview.

interview by ALEXIS DAHAN for purple magazine s/s 2015 issue 23

Fifty years ago European and American artists came up with the idea that simply thinking about art could lead to new ways of making it. They took art deeper into the mind than the eyes could perceive, straight into the realm of thought. French artist Claude Rutault and American artist Lawrence Weiner began as abstract painters, then started to make art delimited by descriptive analogy. Weiner stenciled statements, such as "To See and Be Seen," directly onto walls and spaces, using Helvetica typefaces. Each conveyed physical relations in mental images about space, time, and materials. Rutault stayed with painting, but followed his "de-finition/method," using store-bought canvases on stretchers – circular, oval, and rectangular, and in various sizes – painted the same color as the wall, and optionally but traditionally arranged. Strict as their methods might seem, both artists are stunningly aesthetic in their use of space and material. Their approach to art is conceived for the complexities of the Information Age to which we all belong, where minds are already full of images and memories.

ALEXIS DAHAN – Claude, could you tell us when you first heard about Lawrence Weiner?

CLAUDE RUTAULT – It was toward the end of the '60s or the early '70s, through the curator René Denizot, at a time when conceptual art was shown at Yvon Lambert, on the Rue de l'Échaudé in Paris. It was then I became interested in his work, especially in his well-known Declaration of Intent (1968):

1. The artist may construct the piece.
2. The piece may be fabricated.
3. The piece need not be built.

Later we would run into each other, but it was because of his Declaration that I was more interested in Lawrence's work than that of other conceptual artists.

ALEXIS DAHAN – And Lawrence, when did you first see Claude's work?

LAWRENCE WEINER – It must have been in '72 or '73, in a conversation with other Parisian artists like Michel Parmentier and Daniel Buren. I remember having seen his work in a little gallery in the sixth arrondissement. It was a time when Paris was quite open. Normally it's rather closed; each artist hangs out with his or her clique. But in the early '70s, perhaps because of the political confusion of that time, Paris was artistically wide open, and I learned a lot about French art. Claude talks about conceptual art, but for me, at that time, conceptual art did not exist. I was just beginning to create my sculptures, with their possibility of being read and written.

ALEXIS DAHAN – How would you compare the art scene in Paris with the New York scene of that time?

LAWRENCE WEINER – New York was stratified. It's different. There were many different kinds of artists, the Abstract Expressionists, etc. There were different groups, but they were not closed off to other practices. Some Abstract Expressionists supported my work.

ALEXIS DAHAN – Claude, you came to New York in the late '70s; what did you think of the scene here?

CLAUDE RUTAULT – I had a painting studio at PS1, but the art being made there did not interest me in the least – except for some artists from the previous generation, like Carl Andre or Donald Judd. And younger artists such as Allan McCollum. There was a lot of "pattern painting." It took over the scene and reminded me of the French scene and the groups like Support/Surface.

LAWRENCE WEINER – Absolutely, and of course Support/Surface was showing at Leo Castelli. At that time in New York in the '70s, it was possible to communicate with other artists. It was a more multilingual situation, while today I would say it's monolingual, entirely limited to English.

CLAUDE RUTAULT – That openness in Paris you mentioned before – I experienced it more as a European openness. In Holland, Belgium, Italy – you could be in touch with a whole circuit of artists that were leaving painting while still remaining true artists. The peak being in '72, '74 – we actually had a lot of hope.

LAWRENCE WEINER – But it didn't last, and now everything's changed.

ALEXIS DAHAN – Lawrence, did you have a similar experience?

LAWRENCE WEINER – I began in '64 with a first show using painting on 56th Street, in New York. I was friends with John Chamberlain and Donald Judd, from the generation before us. Claude, are we the same age? I was born in 1942.

CLAUDE RUTAULT – And I was born in 1941.

LAWRENCE WEINER – So we're the same age. Daniel Buren was four years older, but we started out at the same time.

ALEXIS DAHAN – What were your influences, Claude?

CLAUDE RUTAULT – I was very influenced by the events of May '68 in France, and it was only after that that I gave up on images, and then my approach changed radically in '73. But during this period, Daniel Buren...

LAWRENCE WEINER – And Robert Barry...

CLAUDE RUTAULT – had gotten started way before that. As if two completely different trajectories came together at a certain moment.

ALEXIS DAHAN – Let's talk more about the particularities of both of your practices. Lawrence, could you tell us what interests you the most in Claude's work?

LAWRENCE WEINER – Don't misunderstand me, but there is an arrogance in it that I find interesting. It means that people have to take the trouble to enter Claude's world.

CLAUDE RUTAULT – Yes, there are formal elements, but if you're really looking to develop an interest in my work, you have to make an effort. It's not a type of painting that opens itself up directly. Beginning with the object, you have to also consider the consequences of that object. And this requires attention and reflection.

ALEXIS DAHAN – A little like when you want to read philosophy, you have to pay a sort of intellectual tax to get into it.

CLAUDE RUTAULT – Absolutely. Even I had to wait while I figured out what I was doing.

LAWRENCE WEINER – It's the difference between American existentialism and completely French existentialism. When a Frenchman gets up in the morning, he knows his own context, his history, his world. When an American wakes up, all

that matters is what he makes. It's what I make, that's it, that's all I am. The other existentialist – and this is why I used the word "arrogance" earlier – he takes for granted that there is a world out there that understands Flaubert or Diderot. I don't take that for granted in my life. I'm aware of it, but I don't take it for granted. And the work I make is placed in such a context that you don't have to know anything. You don't have to agree to anything.

ALEXIS DAHAN – Does this have something to do with your three rules?

LAWRENCE WEINER – When I said "You may construct the piece," and such and such, it really was all about opening it up to the fact that anyway you get it is fine with me. And if I'm careful, I make something that cannot be used for sexist or racist purposes. For Claude, it's important how the work is used, which is fine. For Robert Barry, too, this is important. I personally would prefer that these things be just in the world, so that I can see what is done to it.

ALEXIS DAHAN – I cannot help but notice this apparent similarity in your work: the artwork exists before it is produced.

LAWRENCE WEINER – But it's like that for all artists!

CLAUDE RUTAULT – Well, it depends on what "production" means.

ALEXIS DAHAN – Okay, let's say material production as opposed to simple formulation or enunciation.

LAWRENCE WEINER – Formulating and enunciating is an object!

CLAUDE RUTAULT – I agree with Lawrence.

LAWRENCE WEINER – This is why it is stupid to say that some forms of art are "conceptual." All artists are conceptual!

CLAUDE RUTAULT – The instant the work is brought to our knowledge, it exists. I personally call that a "de-definition/method." The difference between us in terms of the use of text is that Lawrence's text is already the work, whereas for me the text is not the work.

LAWRENCE WEINER – I know.

CLAUDE RUTAULT – But it is a significant difference. That is why I don't think it would be possible to confuse our two ways of using text. Lawrence's third rule..

LAWRENCE WEINER – "The piece need not be built."

CLAUDE RUTAULT – Yes. For me the work must be executed. What I produce is a painting. The work may be dictated with the intermediary of a text, but that text is not yet the work. On the contrary, with Lawrence, the text contains all the possibilities.

LAWRENCE WEINER – For me it's the opposite. The object is foreplay; the text is the orgasm. That being said, the two practices function in the same context with the same aspirations.

ALEXIS DAHAN – Is this aspiration analogous to dematerializing the art object?

LAWRENCE WEINER – Absolutely not. For myself – and I think I also speak for Claude – it's not a question of dematerialization; it is a question of objectification.

CLAUDE RUTAULT – I agree entirely.

LAWRENCE WEINER – With Claude, the objectification takes place when an object is produced. But I create texts that are also objects; it is not the same thing. They are different decisions.

ALEXIS DAHAN – All right, but there is nonetheless a difference of tangibility between a spoken text and a marble sculpture.

CLAUDE RUTAULT – I have often wondered if I should have been satisfied just writing the definitions, not actually painting my paintings, saying, "It can be

done after I die," something like that. In fact I thought of that too late – as soon as I started painting, I had to continue.

ALEXIS DAHAN – Any regrets?

CLAUDE RUTAULT – I'm not saying I regret it! I have no idea. In any case, this question exists. In addition, what interests me most is that starting with the text, people are completely free to execute the painting, so it escapes me completely. I've never seen more than half of my own pieces!

ALEXIS DAHAN – Another similarity in both your practices is the responsibility that is given to the "receiver" for Lawrence, and to the "charge-taker" for Claude.

LAWRENCE WEINER – Yes, the work only exists when it comes in contact with other people. And I think this applies to all art. All art exists with a receiver. Why shouldn't Claude use the same words that I use? He should because he is part of the same society.

CLAUDE RUTAULT – What I go after is the painting itself, the finished work. I speak of the "charge-taker," because without that person my work does not exist as a painting. It is necessary for that person, the "receiver," to take actions in order for the painting to exist.

ALEXIS DAHAN – He or she is an active receiver.

CLAUDE RUTAULT – Exactly. It's a problem of activity, and this is what makes it somewhat difficult because the charge-taker may completely betray my project, and if that happens it is probably because I didn't lay out my ideas clearly enough. The work is completely open. The fact that the work has no ending is a characteristic we have in common – at different levels, because I am more about painting than sculpture.

ALEXIS DAHAN – How about you, Lawrence, does the acquirer or the collector have an active function in the work?

LAWRENCE WEINER – For me, very simply, when the work is presented, it enters the world. It just has to be seen by more than one person. As far as responsibility goes, I have a different attitude with what you call the collector or the persons involving themselves. I'm not having an affair with them. They don't have to know anything about me. Basically, I'm giving value to something, and I don't think they assume responsibility for it until the cash arrives in my bank account. I'm sorry, but as far as use, there is no way that a person can own a work of mine and tell somebody that he or she owns it without saying what it is.

ALEXIS DAHAN – So the responsibility is not in the realization of the work but in its communication?

LAWRENCE WEINER – No, not in its communication, rather in its declaration.

CLAUDE RUTAULT – In some ways, over the years, Lawrence and I have continued a conversation in which it is not necessary to actually be in contact.

LAWRENCE WEINER – In 2014, there is the possibility of having a work by Claude or a work by me. All in the same context: fabulous! Claude made a choice: painting. I made a choice: nomenclature and sculpture.

ALEXIS DAHAN – Another major difference I am pointing out is how Lawrence's work lights up when it is installed in a public space, whereas your work, Claude, is more focused on the intimacy of a private space.

CLAUDE RUTAULT – Yes, the public space is not my priority. Lawrence may accentuate the idea of entering the world. I think I am more about trying to leave it. My proposition is about exiting the pictorial context. Getting away from the painting. Going beyond the insignificance of the monochrome. For me, putting up paintings outside is a spectacle. But I could create posters with my

"de-finition/method" texts and have them displayed outside.

LAWRENCE WEINER – Painting requires rules. Sculpture in the '60s radically changed: they abolished the rules. I felt that I could work best when there were no rules because I don't depend on art history to dictate my existence. It was a personal choice. This is why when I first met Claude, whenever it was, we spoke as colleagues who had made different choices.

CLAUDE RUTAULT – Exactly.

LAWRENCE WEINER – And that was considered a normal thing: two artists making different choices. It's the same with Daniel Buren: he made a choice about what the context of art is, and I made another choice. What happens is that all these different choices came together and built another kind of culture.

ALEXIS DAHAN – And what about today's culture?

LAWRENCE WEINER – We have a culture that is not related to 1960, but it does relate to Now.

ALEXIS DAHAN – Are you characterizing the current period as one where artists do not maintain friendly dialogues?

LAWRENCE WEINER – There is no dialogue. The international art culture that we have now is a society. It has terrible people in it. It has people in it that are even too good.

CLAUDE RUTAULT – So now we are talking about political problems. We are dealing with a political moment in art, not in the partisan meaning, more in the economic meaning. There was some kind of gratuity in the actions of Lawrence Weiner with his words, or Daniel Buren with his stripes, but that's all gone now.

ALEXIS DAHAN – Where do you place yourself?

CLAUDE RUTAULT – I feel closer to someone like Niele Toroni, as he is more an "inside" painter than an "outside" painter. We may summarize his approach as being the first and the last gesture of painting, at the same time.

ALEXIS DAHAN – I have to ask this, as you are both now part of art history: any thoughts on today's art world?

LAWRENCE WEINER – We have a fairly healthy art world right now, but the majority of the art is academic. And the academy exists by giving answers. At the very least it gives solutions. Art is not about having answers; it has to be about asking questions.

CLAUDE RUTAULT – It is difficult to contradict yourself. You can explain Malevich's return to the figurative by examining the precise context in which it happened. In any case, I have no intention of putting flowers on my canvases!

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