

# James Barron Art

## *Sol LeWitt: Irrational Thoughts*

Opens September 27, 2023



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# *Sol LeWitt: Irrational Thoughts*

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“Irrational thoughts should be followed absolutely and logically.”

Sol LeWitt

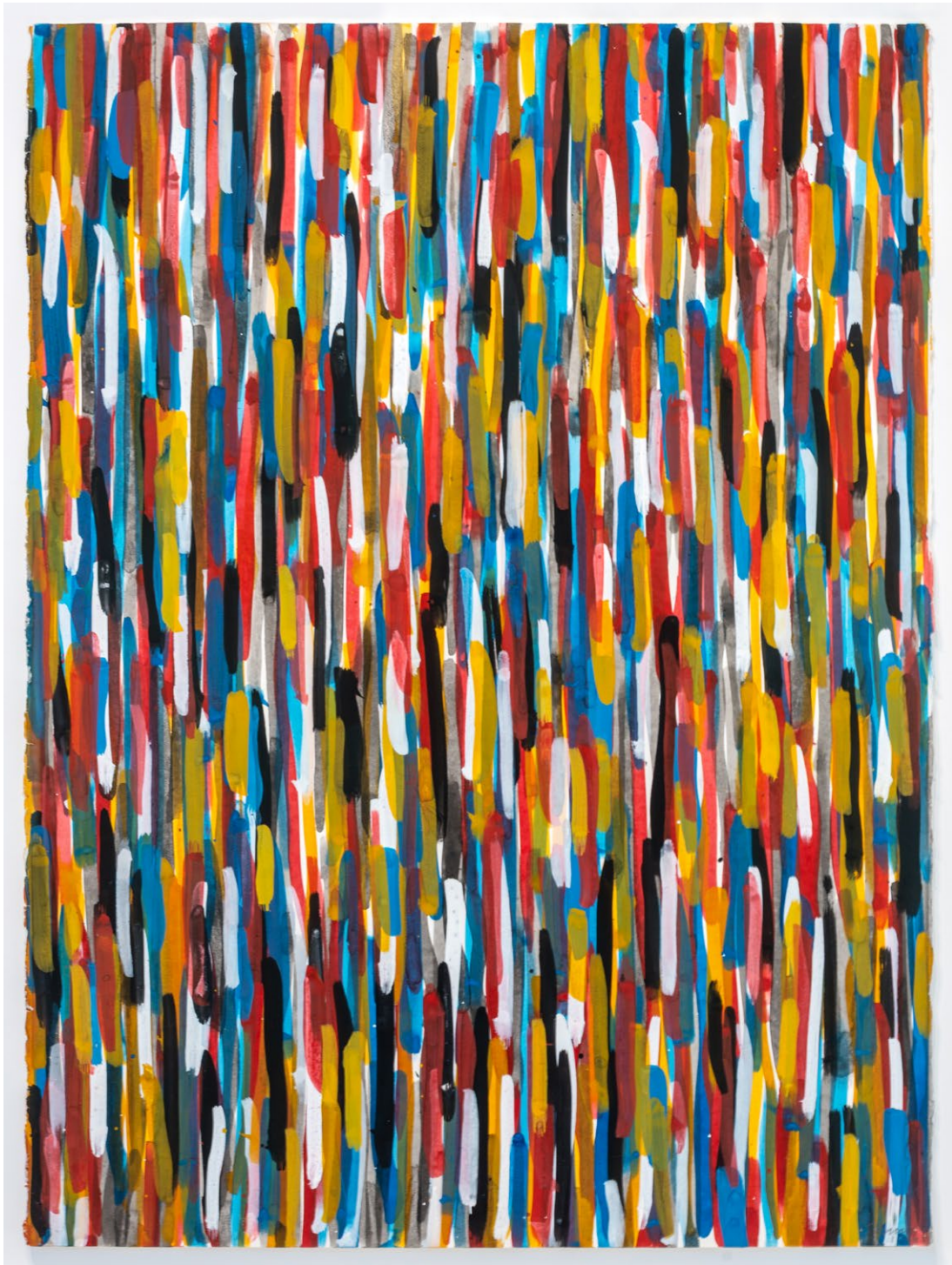
“To be truly objective one cannot rule anything out. All possibilities include all possibilities without pre-judgement or post-judgement.”

Sol LeWitt



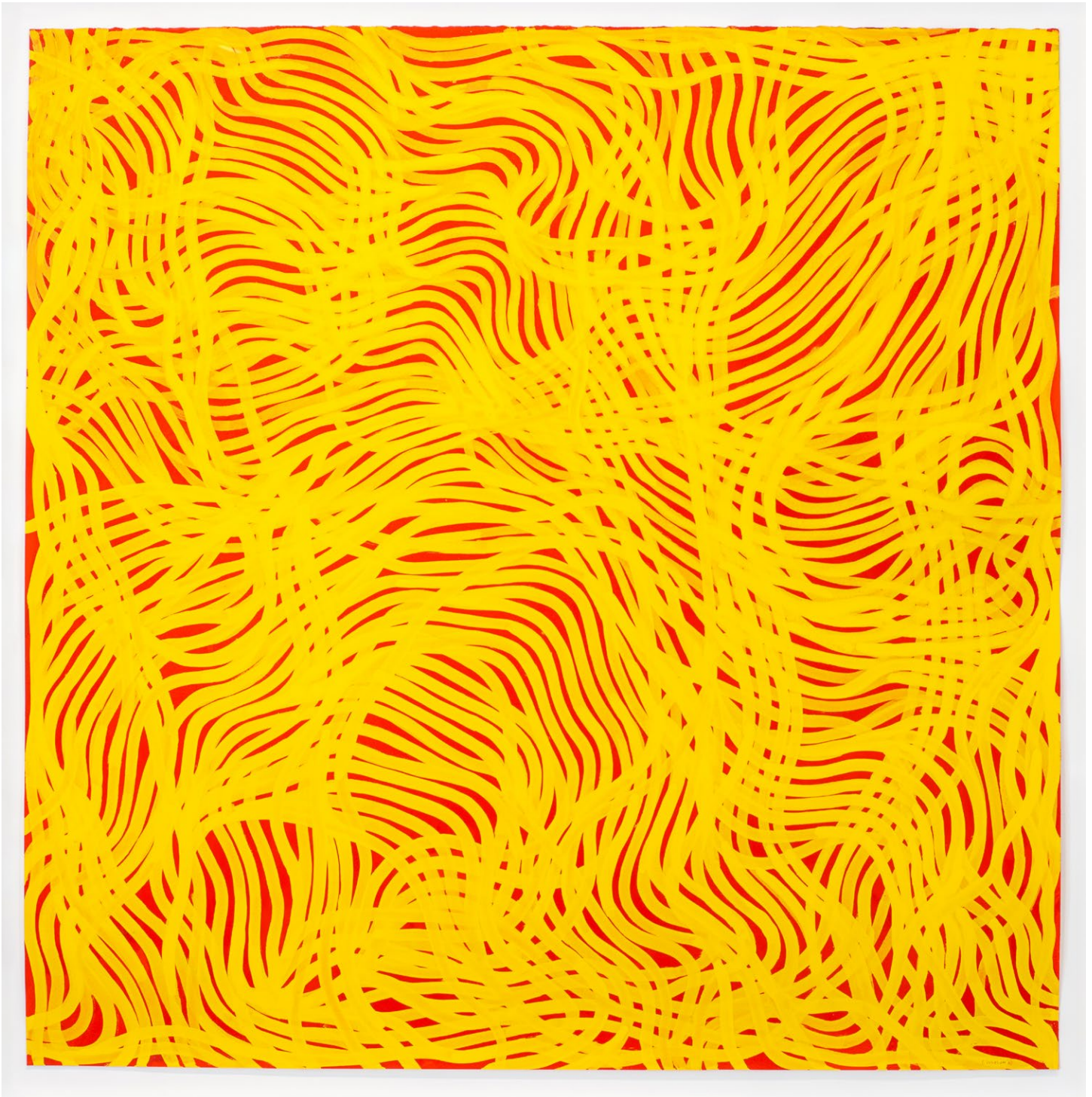
SOL LEWITT

*Color Brushstrokes*, 1994  
gouache on paper  
30 x 22 inches (76.2 x 55.9 cm)  
SL048

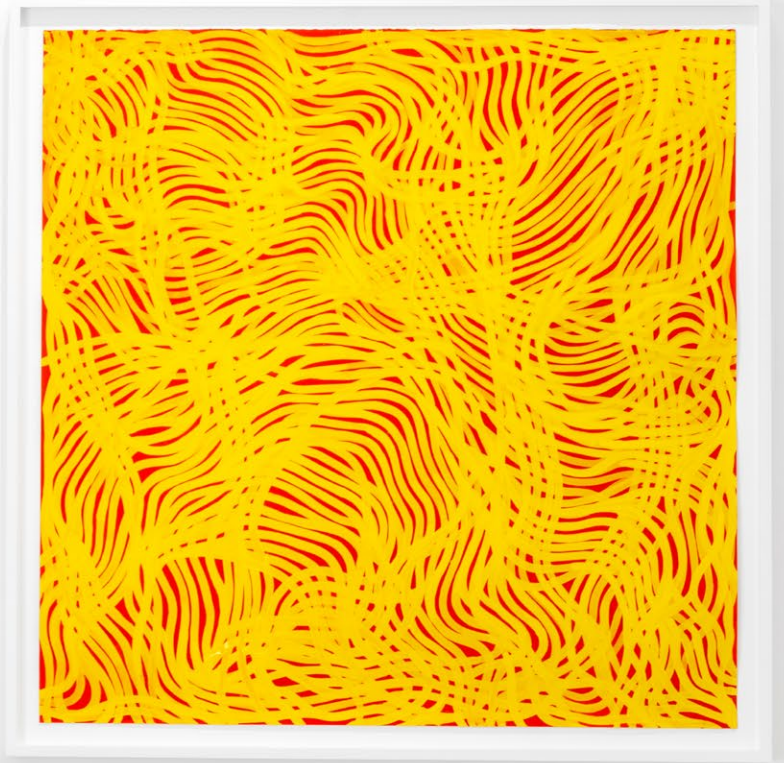


SOL LEWITT

*Tangled Bands*, 2001  
gouache on paper  
41 x 40 3/4 inches (104.1 x 103.5 cm)







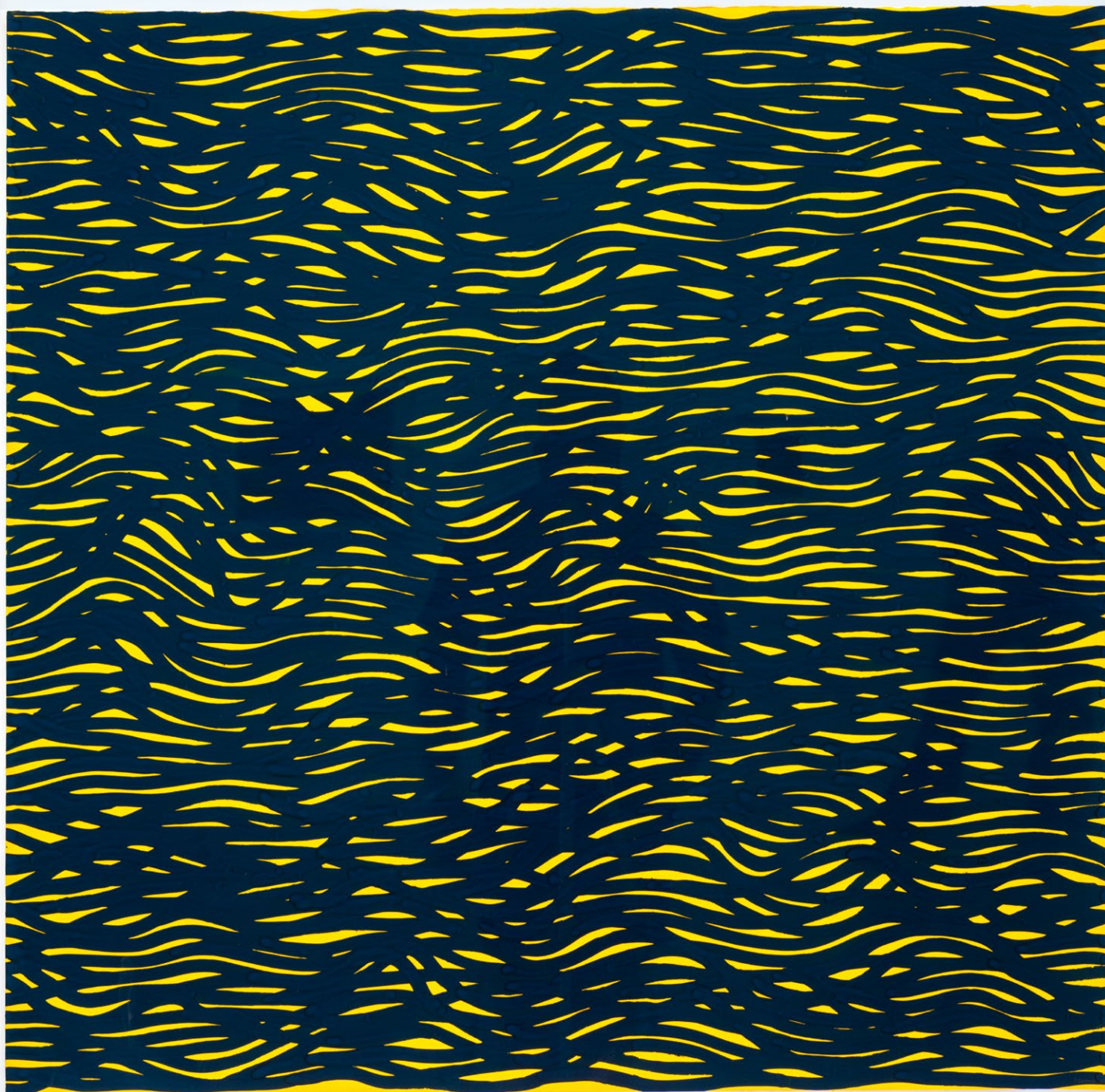
SOL LEWITT

*Horizontal Brushstrokes (More or Less)*, 2002

gouache on paper

45 x 45 inches (114.3 x 114.3 cm)

SL064



SOL LEWITT

*Parallel Curves*, 1999

gouache on paper

11 x 11 inches

(28 x 28 cm)

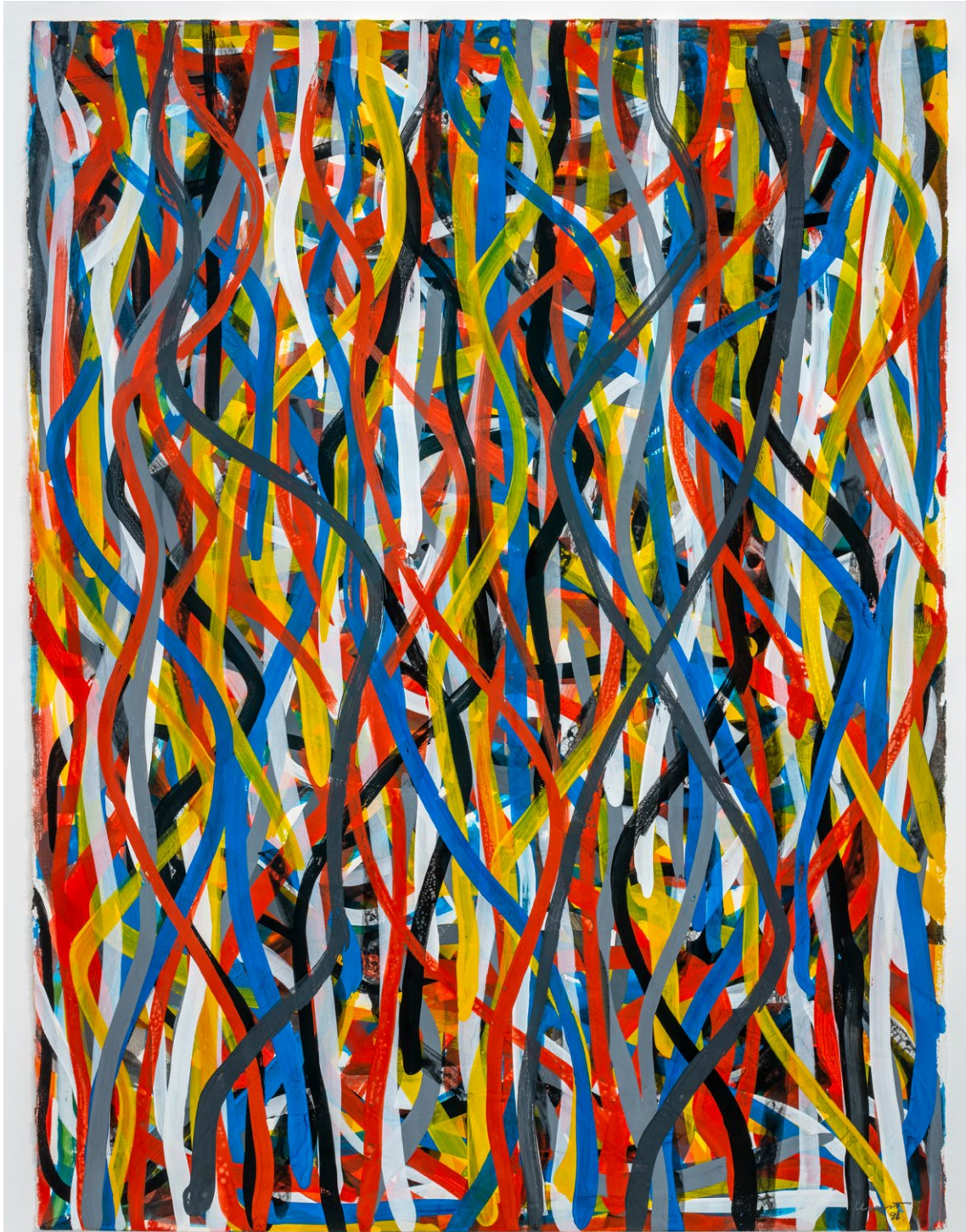
SL133





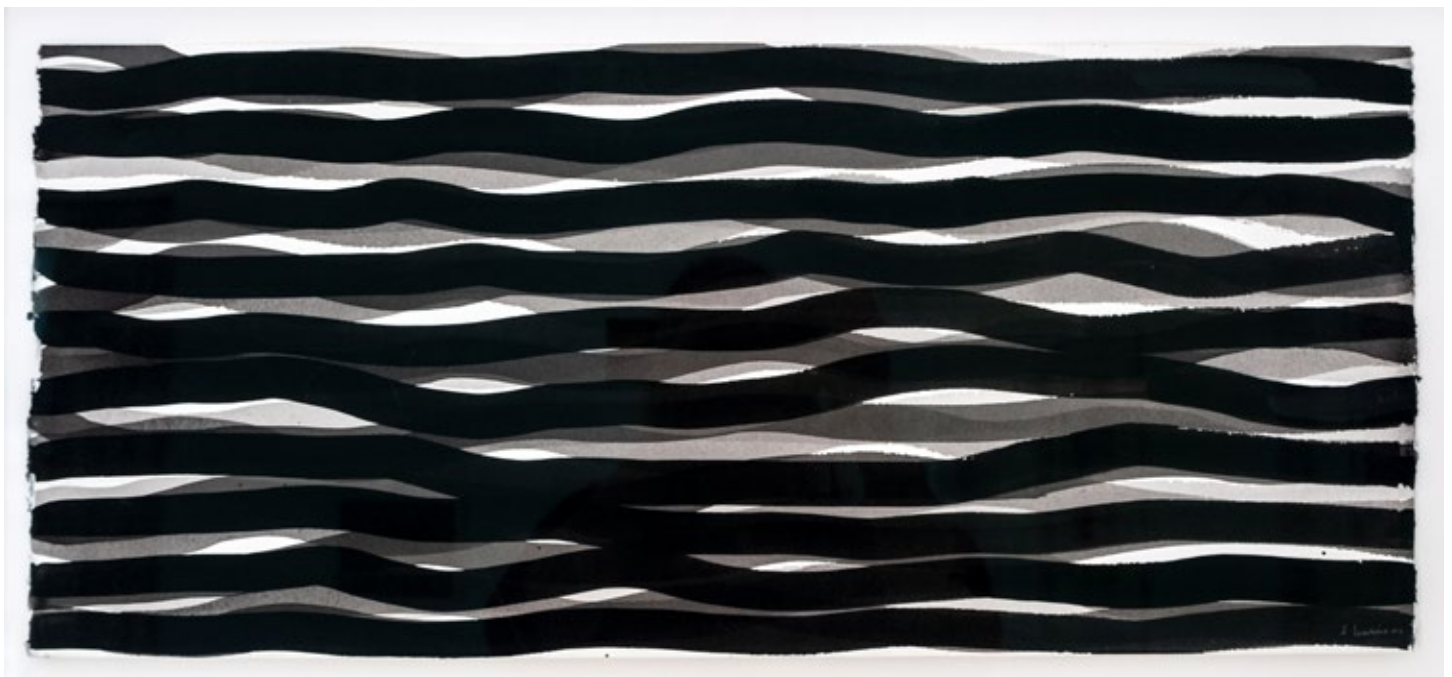
SOL LEWITT

*Wavy Brushstrokes*, 1996  
gouache on paper  
30 x 22 inches (76.2 x 55.9 cm)  
SL083



SOL LEWITT

*Horizontal Brushstrokes*, 2004  
gouache on paper  
10 x 22 1/2 inches (25.4 x 57.2 cm)  
SL134





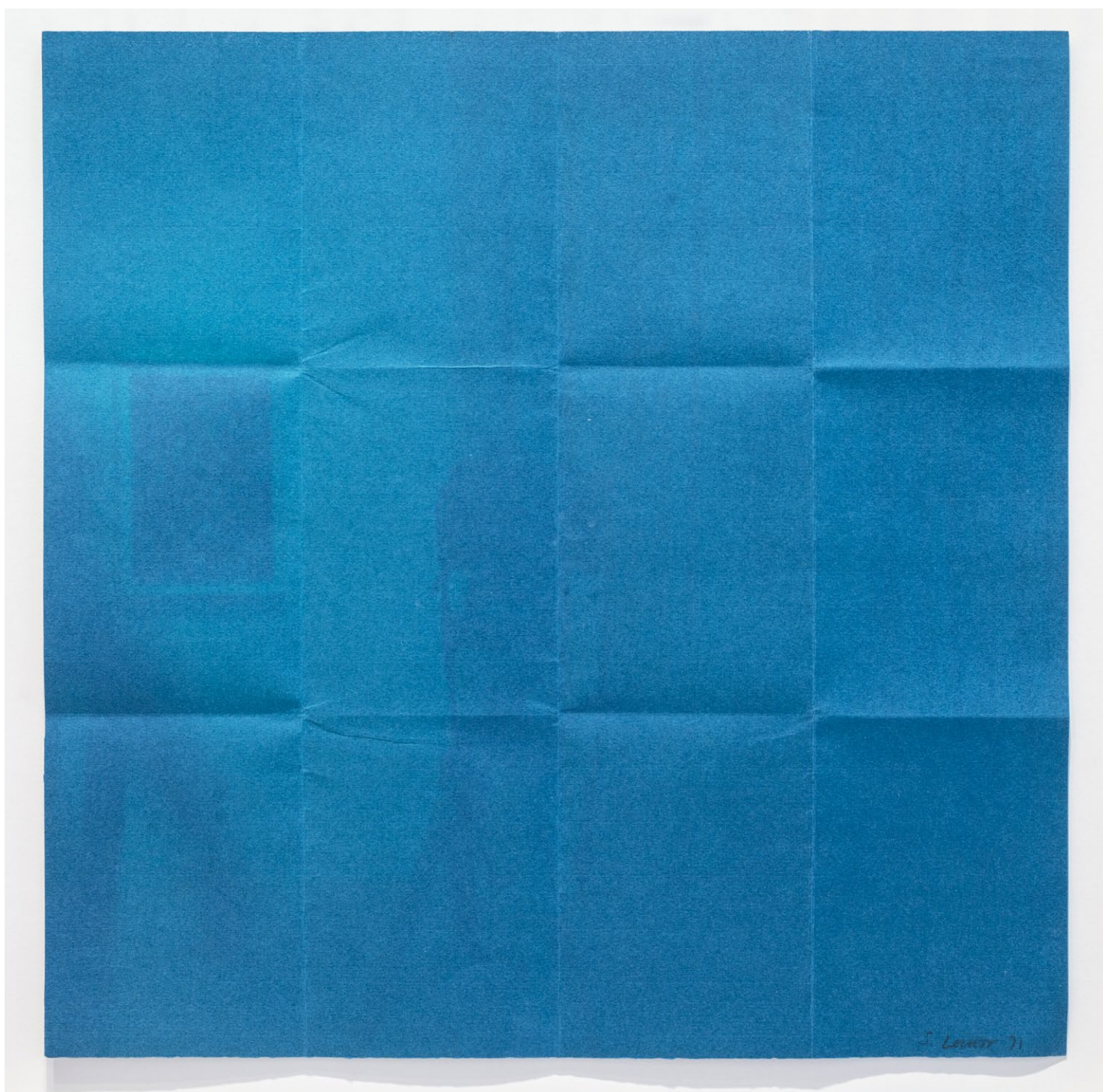
SOL LEWITT

*Fold Drawing, 1971*

paper

17 3/4 x 17 3/4 inches (45.1 x 45.1 cm)

SL078



SOL LEWITT

*Fold Drawing, 1974*

paper

27 1/2 x 19 1/2 inches (69.9 x 49.5 cm)

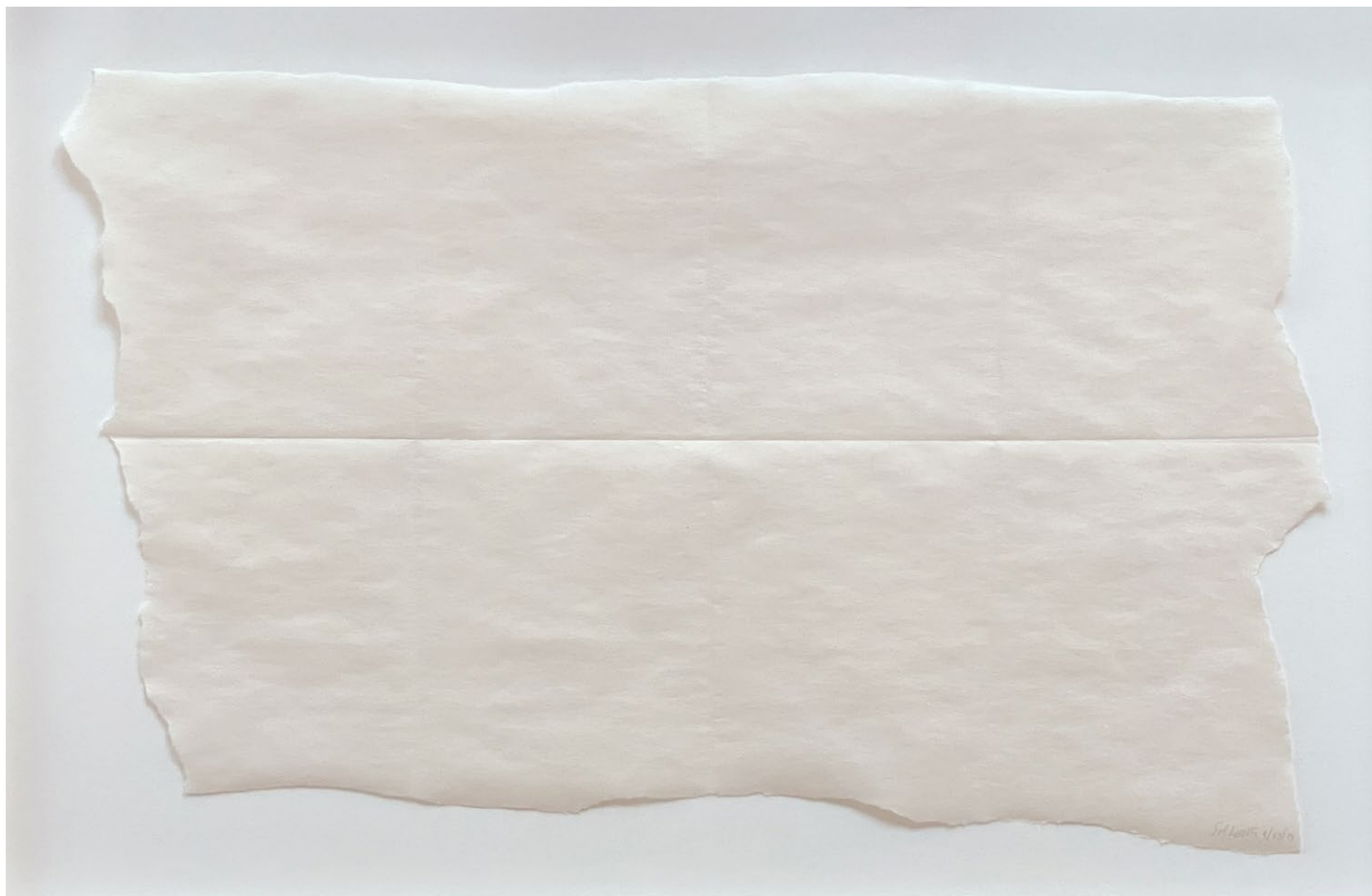
Loan / NFS





SOL LEWITT

*Fold Drawing*, 1973  
torn and folded wove paper  
11 x 19 1/2 inches (28 x 49.5 cm)  
SL100



SOL LEWITT

R409, 1975

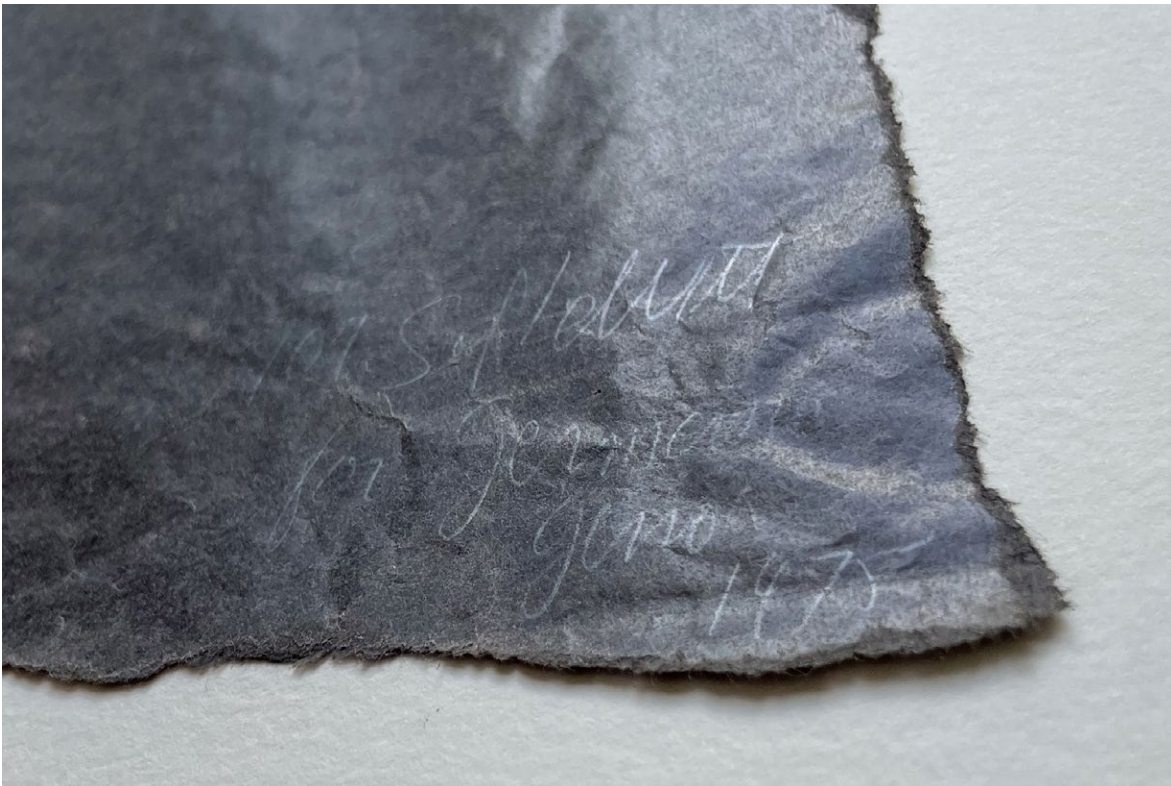
torn paper

16 3/4 x 16 5/8 inches (42.6 x 42.2 cm)

SL127







Signed, bottom right: 'R409 Sol LeWitt / for Germano / Genoa 1975'



R409 was previously in collection of Germano Celant (pictured above), the noted art historian, critic, and curator. Celant coined the term “Arte Povera.” Celant wrote hundreds of books, essays, and articles over the course of his career, establishing him as a leading voice in contemporary art. Celant served as the Artistic Director of the Prada Foundation from 1995 to 2014, and then as its Scientific Superintendent until his death in 2020.

SOL LEWITT

*Irregular Form*, 1997

tempera on paper

11 1/5 x 11 1/3 inches (28.5 x 28.8 cm)

SL102





“The Conceptual artist Sol LeWitt, who died in [2008], was our Fra Angelico... The ideas in Fra Angelico’s frescos are demanding and unworldly. The ideas in LeWitt’s drawings — in the monumental, abstract annunciations and visitations and sacred conversations at Mass MoCA — are exhilarating and of this moment on earth. So are we talking about Conceptual Art or spiritual art? I’d say both.”

Holland Cotter, *The New York Times*

SOL LEWITT

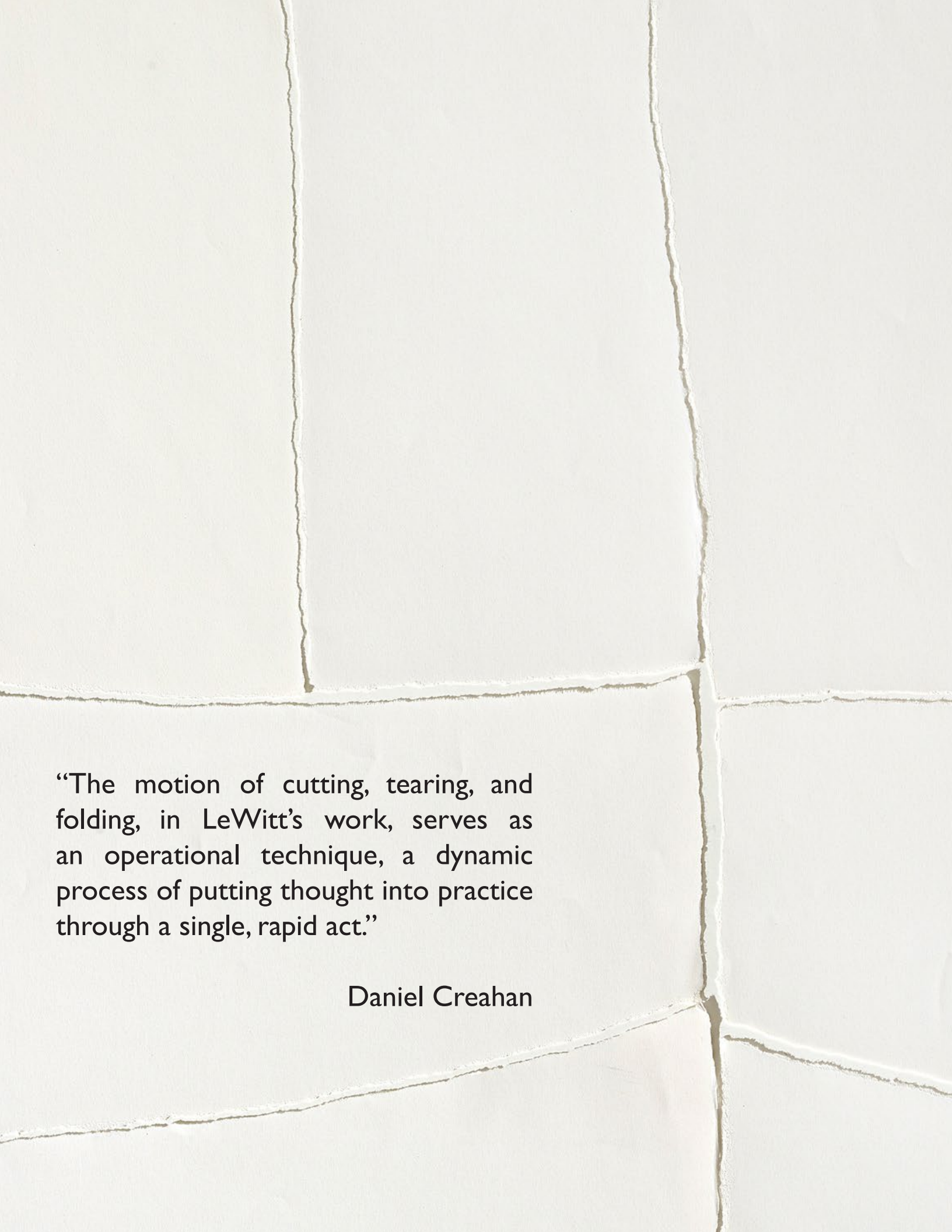
R78, 1972

ripped white paper

23 1/2 x 23 1/2 inches (60 x 60 cm)

SL104





“The motion of cutting, tearing, and folding, in LeWitt’s work, serves as an operational technique, a dynamic process of putting thought into practice through a single, rapid act.”

Daniel Creahan

SOL LEWITT

*Form Derived From a Cube*, 1991  
gouache on paper  
10 x 7 inches (25.4 x 17.8 cm)  
SL108



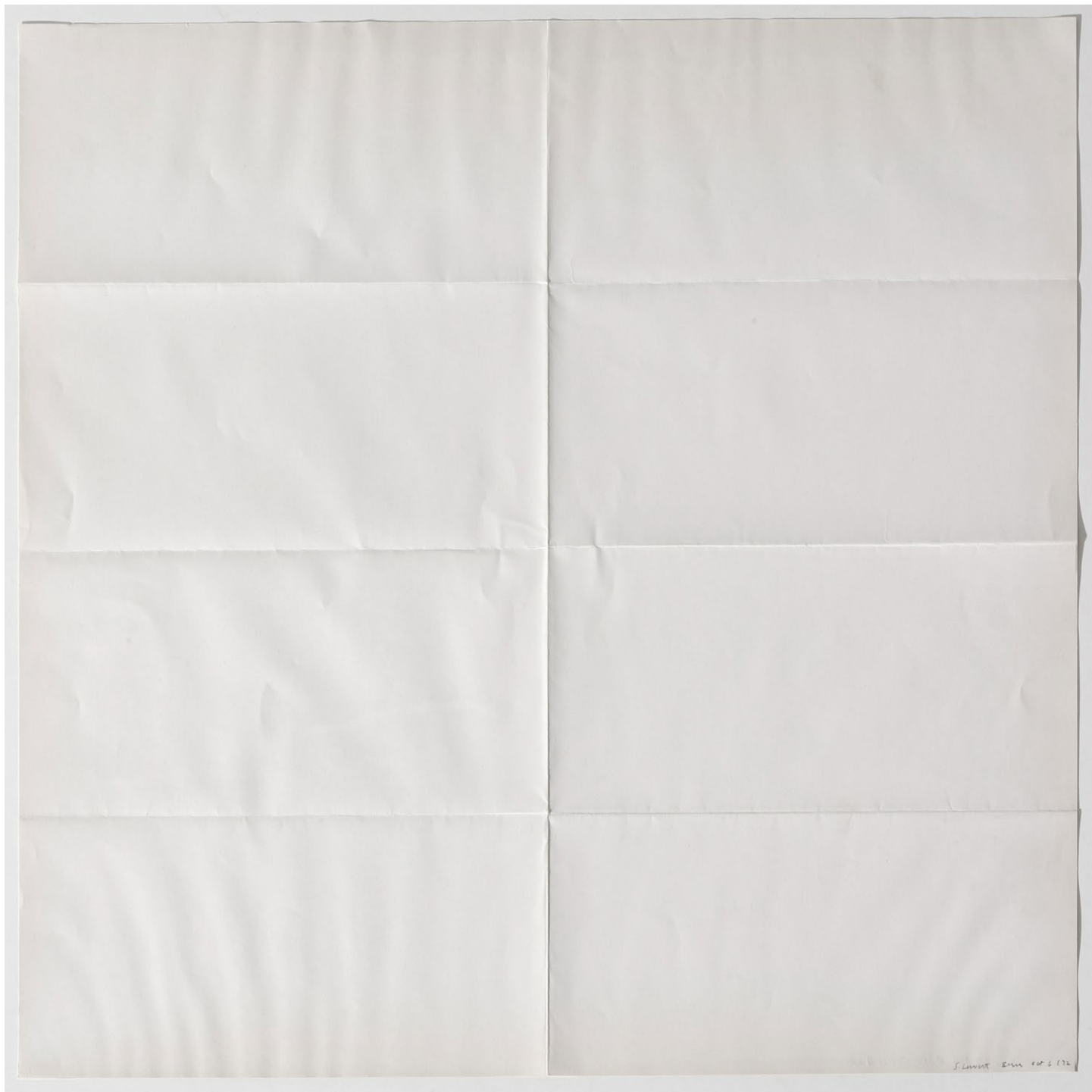
SOL LEWITT

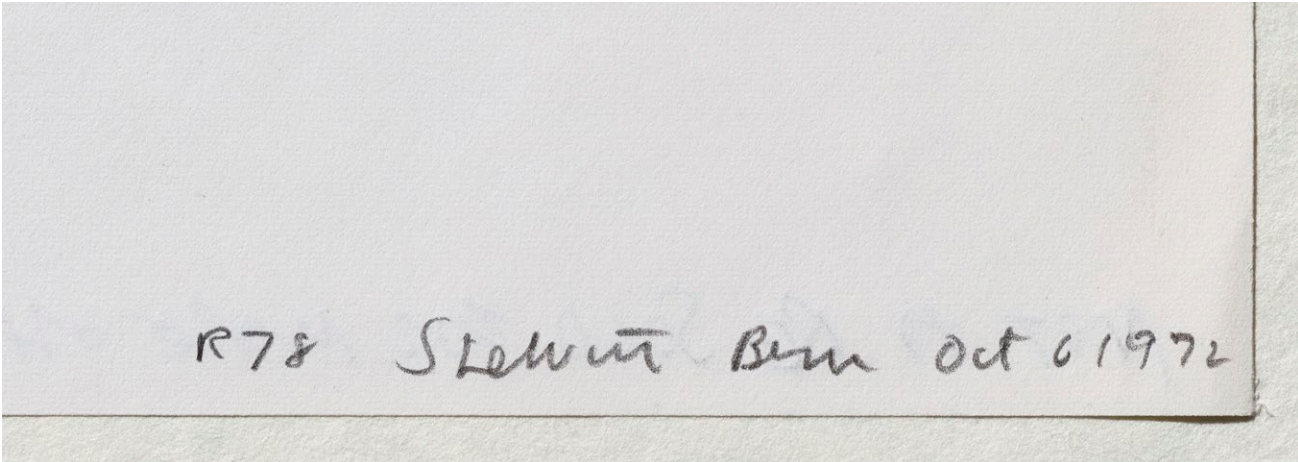
*Fold Drawing, 1972*

folded paper

24 1/2 x 24 1/2 inches (62.2 x 62.2 cm)

SL094



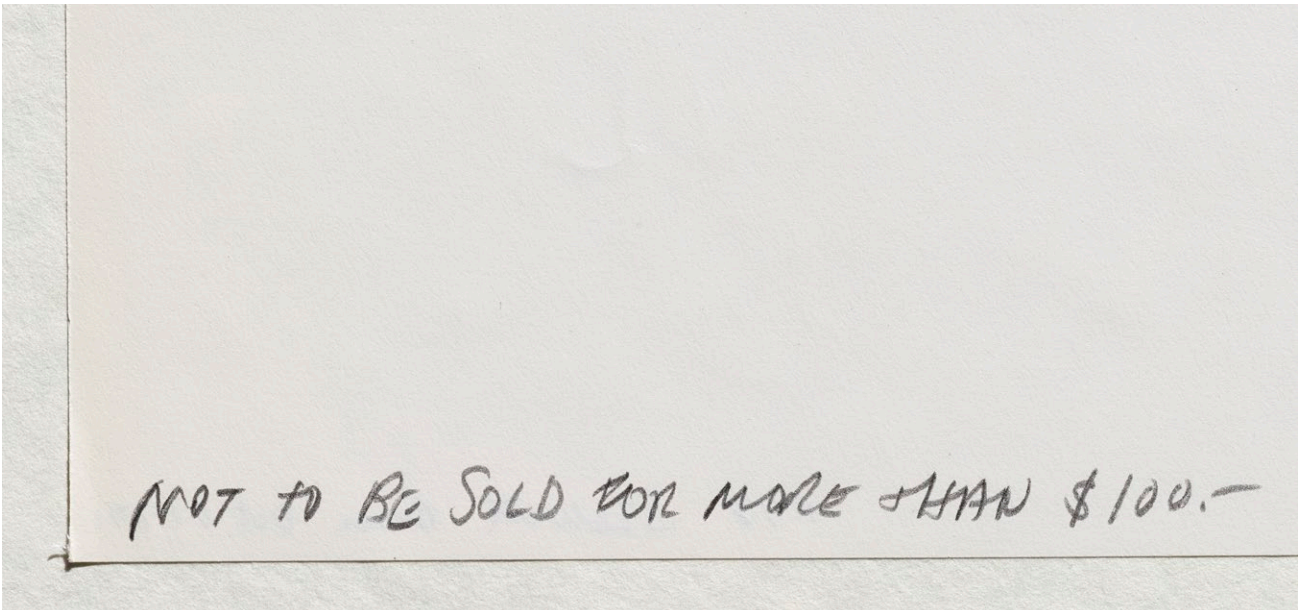


R78 Stewart Bern Oct 6 1972

As LeWitt's reputation and career grew in the late 1960s, he decided to create a series of works whose versos were inscribed "Not to be sold for more than \$100." He intended for these works to be an accessible counterpoint to his structures and Wall Drawings, which were already selling for thousands of dollars. Known collectively as the R Series, these works consist of simple acts of "drawing" on a sheet of paper.

In his early Wall Drawings, LeWitt amplified basic shapes, lines, and primary colors. The R Series echoes this impulse, taking basic ways of manipulating paper and making them the sole focus of each piece.

*Folded Drawing* and *R78* are both dated October 6, 1972 and were executed in Bern, Switzerland on the day of the opening of his first major museum exhibition at the Kunsthalle Bern. They are emblematic of two of the primary modes of creation in LeWitt's R Series: folding and ripping.



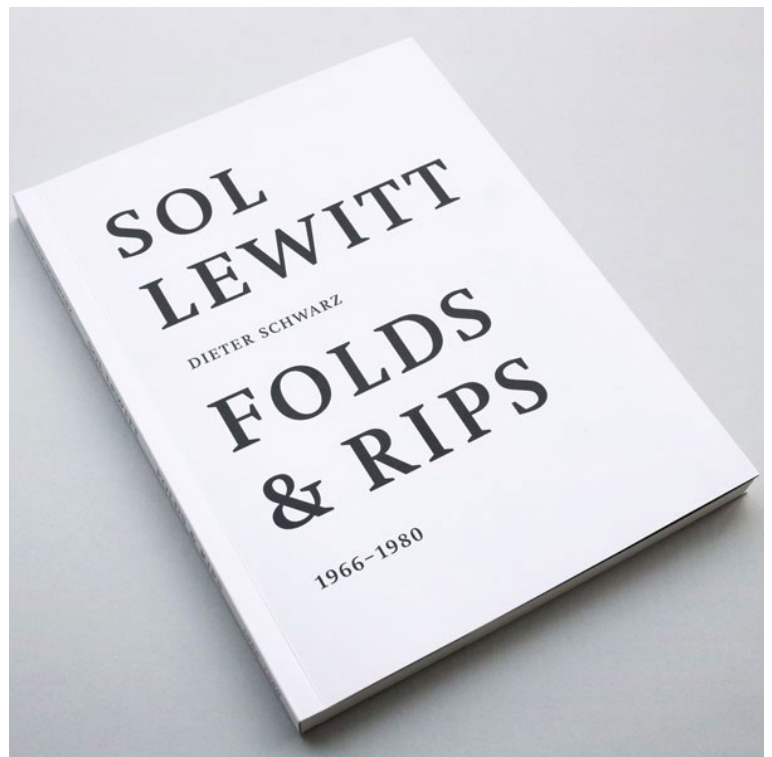
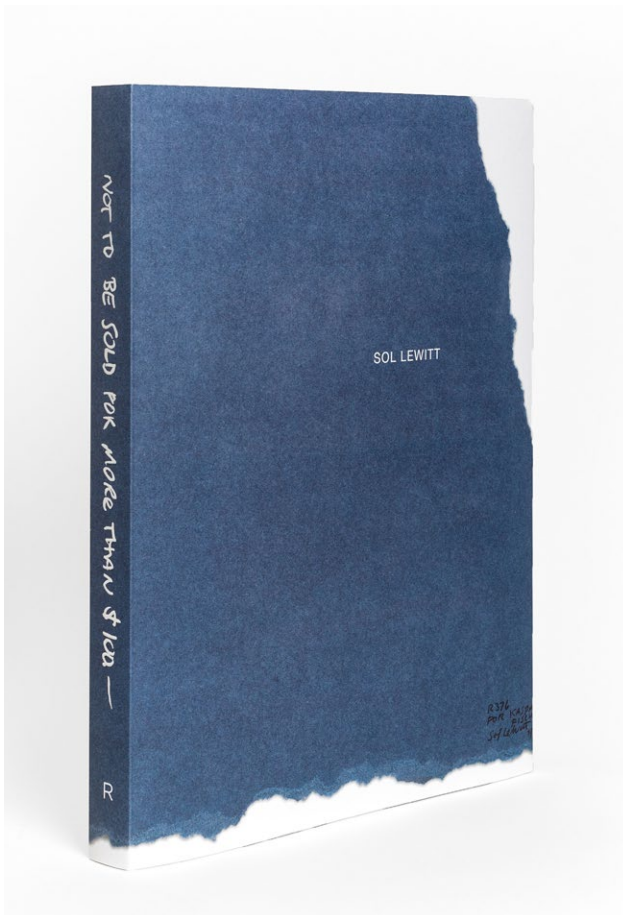
NOT TO BE SOLD FOR MORE THAN \$100.-



The R Series has been the subject of a recent wave of critical interest, including two publications in 2020.

*Sol LeWitt: Not to Be Sold For More Than \$100*, by Veronica Roberts, was published in June 2020 by Radius Books. It includes a forward by the pioneering conceptual art dealer Virginia Dwan, an introduction by Jason Rulnick of Artnet, and an essay by Roberts. Veronica Roberts is currently the Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art the Blanton Museum of Art, and previously served as the Director of Research for the catalogue raisonné of LeWitt Wall Drawings.

*Sol LeWitt: Folds and Rips: 1966–1980*, by Swiss curator and author Dieter Schwarz, was published in April 2020 by Walther Koenig. The book extensively catalogues LeWitt's *Folds* and *Rips*, with an in-depth essay from Schwarz.



SOL LEWITT

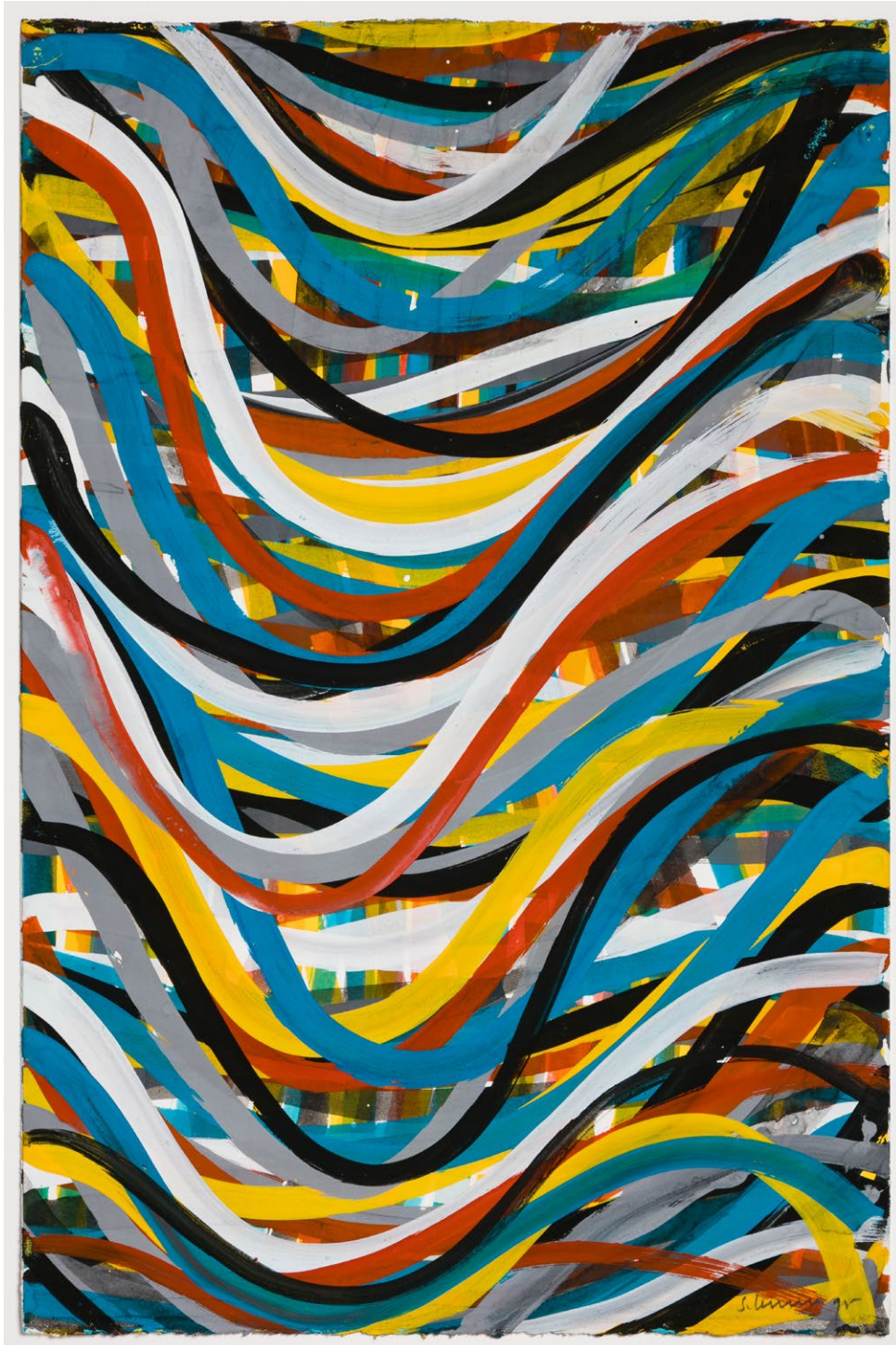
*Floating Cube*, 1987  
gouache on paper  
22 3/8 x 22 3/8 inches (57 x 57 cm)  
SL122

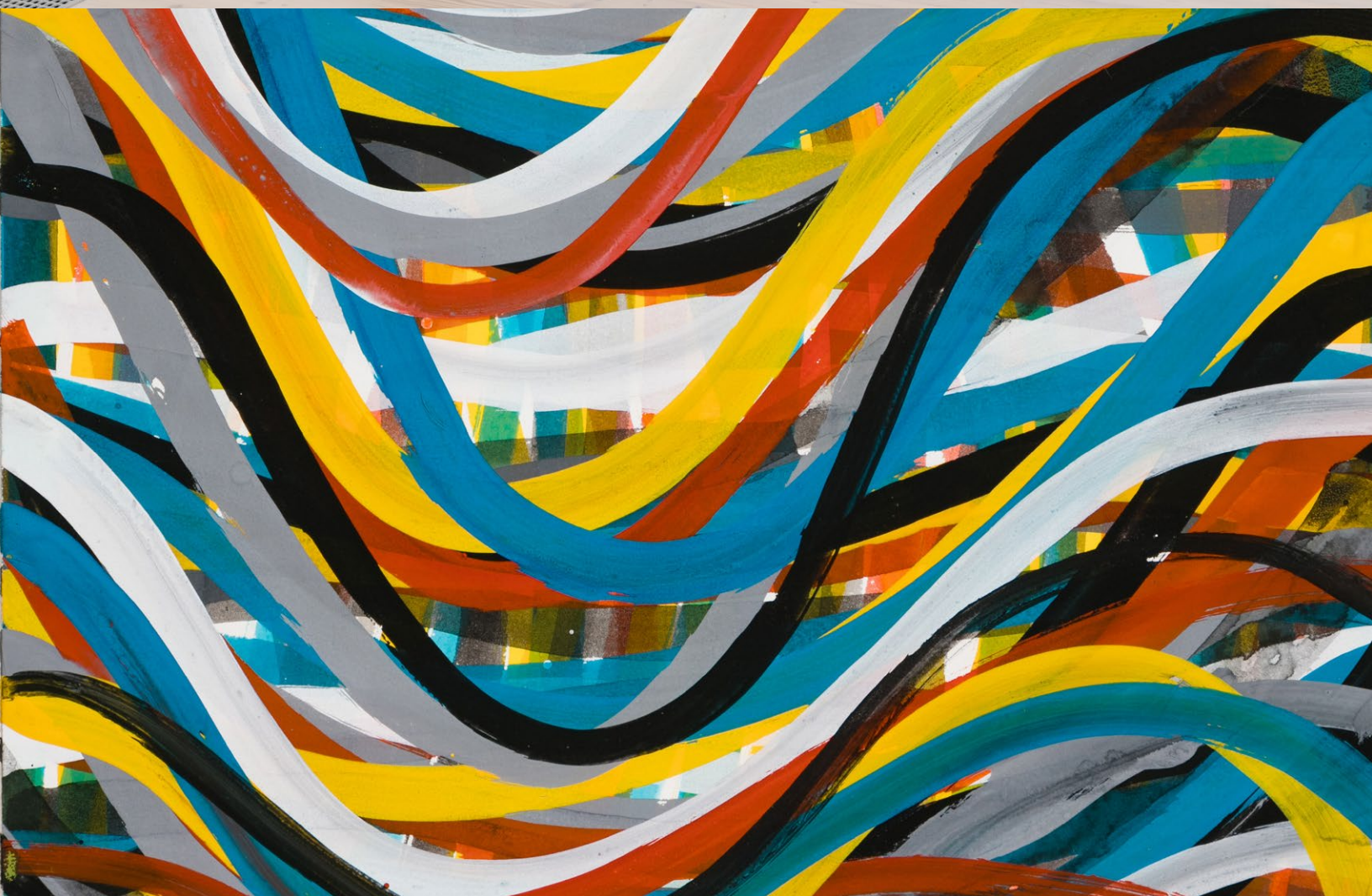




SOL LEWITT

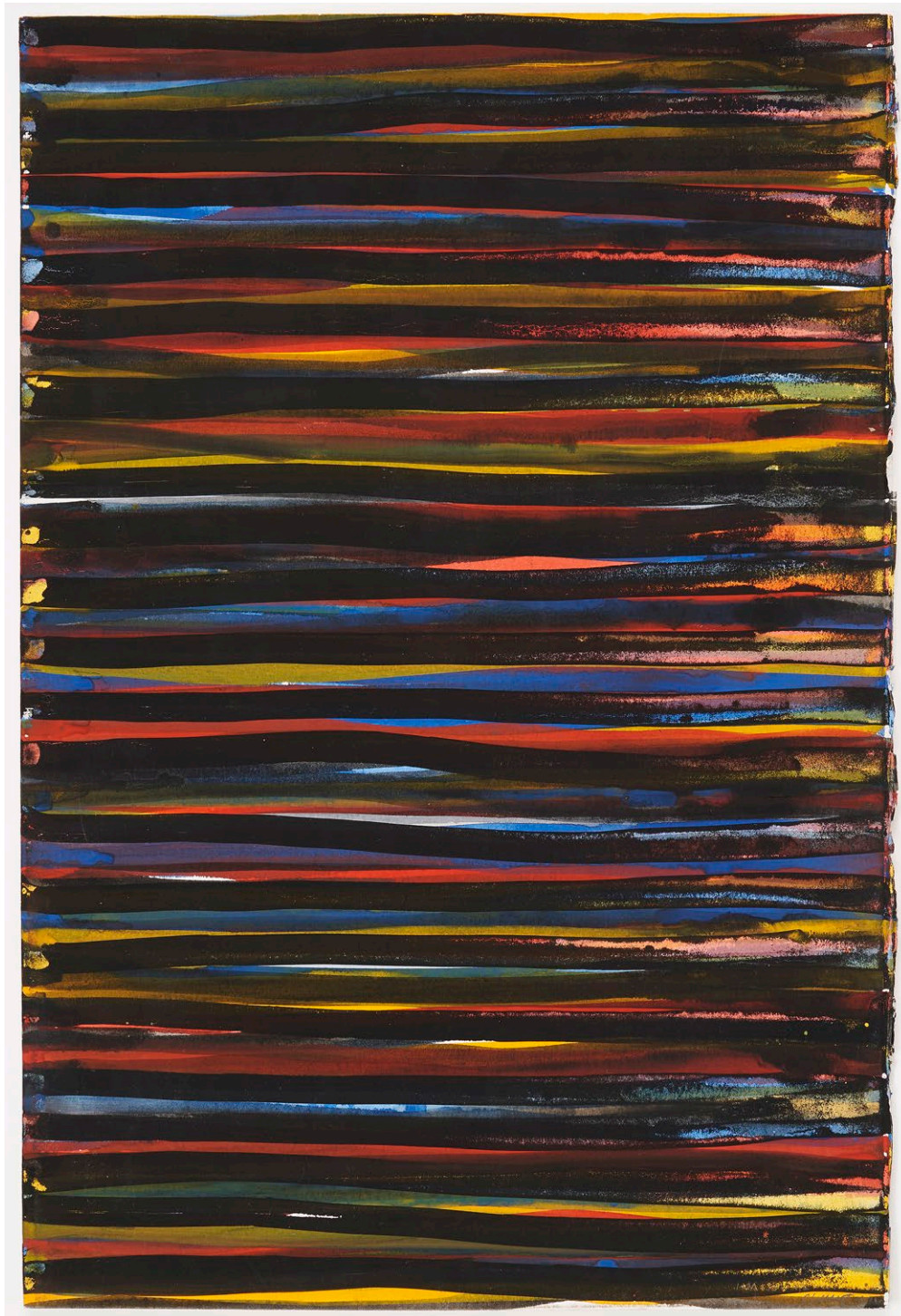
*Wavy Bands*, 1995  
gouache on paper  
22 x 15 inches (55.9 x 38.1 cm)  
SL057





SOL LEWITT

*Horizontal Brushstrokes*, 1994  
gouache on paper  
24 x 16 inches (60.9 x 40.6 cm)  
SL091





“I strive to create something I would not be ashamed to show Giotto.”

Sol LeWitt

SOL LEWITT

*Squiggly Brushstrokes*, 1997

gouache on paper

22 1/2 x 29 3/4 inches (57.1 x 75.6 cm)

SL125







# Interview / Susanna Singer

## Rome, February 2014

**James Barron:** How long did you work with Sol LeWitt?

**Susanna E. Singer:** I met Sol in 1975 when I was the secretary at John Weber Gallery and we became friends. Two years later, I became Director. In 1980, I left the gallery to work directly with him (and with Robert Mangold) and worked with him until his death in April 2007. We spoke almost everyday, often several times a day, for almost 30 years.

**JB:** Did you see him create work?

**SES:** He worked alone in his studio. I managed everybody else so he could be alone.

**JB:** Did he want his \$100 drawings to be sold for \$100 forever?

**SES:** Yes. The idea was that everybody could afford an original work of art.

**JB:** I like that; it's such a sharp contrast to the art market today.

**SES:** He was not interested in the art market. He lived very frugally until the 1980s and money never mattered to him. Even though Peter Schjeldahl wrote a review titled "Saint Sol," Sol was not a saint. He was very shy, which contributed to his humility.

**JB:** I see Sol LeWitts everywhere in Rome, in floor patterns, on walls, lunettes...

**SES:** I do, too. Italian frescos were extraordinarily influential to his work. He started doing the Wall Drawings with the ink washes after living in Italy.

**JB:** Take the figures out of Piero della Francesca's work or Giotto's, and you have a LeWitt.

**SES:** That's right. Andrea Miller-Keller asked Sol, What do you strive for in your art? He said, Something I wouldn't be embarrassed to show Giotto.

**JB:** What is it about simplicity that intrigued him?

**SES:** His whole work was based on specific elements: straight, not straight, broken lines, red, yellow, blue, arcs, circles and grids, like *Yellow Circles*. He began, as most Minimalist artists, with very constricting rules, developed a complex and beautiful language, and then broke the rules, because he felt if he made the rules, he could break them.

**JB:** What do you most miss about Sol?

**SES:** The voice. Both his spoken voice, and in his work, but more what he said and stood for and made, and would have continued to do. I miss also that he was so steadfast – bordering on stubborn – and his wit.



# Interview / Yoshi Nakama

Rome, February 2012

**James Barron:** How long did you work as Sol LeWitt's fabricator?

**Yoshi Nakama:** 27 years.

**JB:** Do you see the *Splotches* as a natural evolution in LeWitt's work or was it a dramatic turning point?

**YN:** I think it was natural. As you can see from the progression of the Wall Drawings or the development in gouache, the *Splotches* are an extension of those ideas in three-dimensional form.

**JB:** Do you agree the *Splotches* are indebted to chance? How much of LeWitt's other structures had the element of chance?

**YN:** The *Splotches* have a controlled chance like many of the wavy, curvy drawings. Unlike the geometrical structures, though, the *Splotches* are the only three-dimensional structures that have organic form.

**JB:** Did LeWitt think about the *Splotches* as references in the world?

**YK:** Sol used subtitles like *Splat*, *Blob*, *Loopy Doopy*, etc. to describe his works, so I believe it was simply just that.

**JB:** Why did LeWitt only make 22 *Splotches*? Were there others planned?

**YN:** He died before he could see the completion of the last *Splotch*. However, I'm sure there were more still forming in his head.

**JB:** Did he ever alter the shape after seeing it as a cardboard mold, before it was cast in fiberglass?

**YN:** Just once, in order to change the height of a peak.

**JB:** Tell us a bit about the computer's role in the work.

**YN:** It may have taken forever to make *Splotches* without the computer. The computer could visualize the prospective piece in all directions before fabrication so that Sol could decide whether he liked it or not far more easily.

**JB:** Looking at the drawing for *Splotch #17*, it is apparent that LeWitt created an irregular shape within a square. Do you feel the *Splotches* are shapes that imply an invisible cube structure?

**YN:** There are many similarities when you see the drawings of the *Open Cubes*, the *Concrete Blocks*, and the *Splotches*. I believe because LeWitt used the same grid paper for many of his works, including his *Splotch* drawings, the cube shape is always implied.

**JB:** What did LeWitt say when he saw the completed works?

**YN:** He always said, "It looks good." Never said a negative comment. His ideas were enormous and expandable. I wish that he was still alive so he could make more works. I believe his ideas will continue to grow and develop within the hands of other artists.

