

Lawrence Weiner

& UNA CERTA MASSA ALLA BASE DI TUTTO | & DETERMINED MASS AT THE BASE OF IT ALL

10.09.2026

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MASSIMODECARLO is pleased to present & UNA CERTA MASSA ALLA BASE DI TUTTO | & DETERMINED MASS AT THE BASE OF IT ALL, a solo exhibition by Lawrence Weiner, the late American artist who redefined sculpture by making language its material.

For more than half a century he set words on walls, buildings, manhole covers, skin, often in the lettering he designed himself (Margaret Seaworthy Gothic), in the language of wherever they were read. The words are the sculpture, and a sculpture can live anywhere.

He slipped past every label placed on him – he had come up through painting, shaped canvas and performance, out of the same years as Arte Povera and Land Art – and kept one democratic instinct throughout: the work asks no prior knowledge, only the willingness to read it. Its subject was never the sentence, but what the sentence holds – the way one material meets another.

& UNA CERTA MASSA ALLA BASE DI TUTTO | & DETERMINED MASS AT THE BASE OF IT ALL, was conceived along with the Lawrence Weiner Estate for Casa Corbellini-Wassermann, the 1930s house Piero Portaluppi lined in rare marble. Two men who thought in materials, a century apart: Portaluppi choosing which stone should meet which, Weiner naming sandpaper against cold stone, tiles upon mortar, glass broken in changing light. As his Estate puts it, "one thing has to be on top of the other thing, and then you build a building."

Horizons run through the show. In a room, a single yellow line travels straight across a wall: *green glass broken in the light of day, milk glass in the light of sunset, brown glass in the morning light*. In another room hangs a suite of four *St Martin* drawings, where the horizon keeps returning, sea and sun and the line between them. Together they become a way of taking one's bearings – as Weiner's family describes it, of "figuring out where we are and who we are as a people in a time and a place."

Weiner's bond with Italy reached back to the 1960s, to an art close in spirit to his own. Weiner and Massimo De Carlo began working together in the late 1990s; their first show, *UNDER THE APPLE TREE*,

opened in Milan in 2000, and the collaboration continued for the rest of Weiner's life and beyond – from *WITH A LINE OF GRAPHITE | CON UNA LINEA DI GRAFITE* in Milan in 2008 to *SUR UN CÔTÉ DE LA MÊME EAU* in Paris in 2025, a Parisian chapter of a bond rooted in Milan. Massimo engaged the whole of Weiner's practice – the editions, the drawings, the sculpture – and, Weiner's family recalls, "saw him as an artist making work, and didn't try to change him." Or, more simply: "it was love."

One thing set upon another, and it holds: a wall on its foundation, a word on a wall, a life's work on the plain fact of matter. This was always Weiner's ground. The rest, as he left it, is up to whoever walks in.

Lawrence Weiner

Lawrence Weiner (1942–2021) was born in the Bronx, NY, and lived and worked in New York City and Amsterdam. In the late 1960s, he turned from painting to adopt language as his primary material. His subsequent work has altered the ways we think about artistic production, the mode of presentation, and an artwork's ultimate reception. Weiner explored these possibilities for over fifty years. His work is widely accessible, as reflected in the posters, books, films, editions, and public installations he produced during his lifetime.

In 1969, Weiner issued a Declaration of Intent:

1. THE ARTIST MAY CONSTRUCT THE WORK
2. THE WORK MAY BE FABRICATED
3. THE WORK NEED NOT BE BUILT

EACH BEING EQUAL AND CONSISTENT WITH
 THE INTENT OF THE ARTIST
 THE DECISION AS TO CONDITION RESTS WITH
 THE RECEIVER UPON THE OCCASION OF
 RECEIVERSHIP

In this collaborative synthesis of the work, whether the work is physically manifested or not, Weiner's artworks can be presented in a specific site but are not created as such. His materials and their formal presentation in museums, galleries, homes and public spaces vary. Works appear on a multitude of surfaces, from walls to matchbooks to manhole covers, pins and t-shirts, spoken or sung. The same work can appear in different formats as to placement, color, typeface, format, and scale and with texts, for example, painted, printed, stenciled, or in vinyl. Weiner's work continues to disrupt our notion of art's use, authorship, display, and material.

His work has been shown in major solo exhibitions at UCCA Centre for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China (2024); Albertina, Vienna, Austria (2022); Museo Nivola, Orani, Italy (2019); Pérez Art Museum, Miami, FL, USA (2017); Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire, UK (2015); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (1988, 2014); Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Spain (2013); Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany (2007);

Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporaneo, Mexico City, Mexico (2004); Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany (2000); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, USA (1994); and Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC, USA (1990).

A major retrospective survey was shown at the Whitney Museum, New York; MoCA, Los Angeles, and K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf (2007–2009).

He participated in documenta 5, 6, 7, and 13 (1972, 1977, 1982, 2012); the 36th, 41st, 50th and 55th Venice Biennale, Italy (1972, 1984, 2003, 2013); and the 27th Biennale de Sao Paulo, Brazil (2006).

The artist was the recipient of major honors, including fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts (1976, 1983); a Guggenheim Fellowship (1994); the Wolfgang Hahn Prize, Museum Ludwig, Cologne (1995); a Skowhegan Medal for Painting/Conceptual Art (1999); an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from the Graduate Center, CUNY (2013); the Roswitha Haftmann Foundation Prize (2015); and the Wolf Prize and the Aspen Award for Art (2017).

Weiner completed numerous public commissions worldwide. In addition to publishing multiple artist books and editions, Weiner created music, films and videos, including *Beached* (1970), *Do You Believe in Water?* (1976) and *Plowman's Lunch* (1982).