

Hol Bulletin

April 08



In His Words

READING LAWRENCE WEINER

HAVING BEEN SAID

WRITINGS & INTERVIEWS
OF LAWRENCE WEINER
1968-2003

EDITED BY GERTI FIETZEK
& GREGOR STEMMRICH

Lawrence Weiner: AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE opens this month at the [Museum of Contemporary Art](#) in Los Angeles (April 13-July 14, 2008), following its run at the Whitney Museum in New York. For those new to Weiner, but serious about readings on contemporary art, there could be no better entree into his work than *Having Been Said: Writings & Interviews of Lawrence Weiner 1968-2003*, edited by Gerti Fietzek and Gregor Stemmrich (2004, Hatje Cantz, \$60,

9783775791946).

[Lawrence Weiner's](#) work is most often presented as words and phrases written, painted, or otherwise directly affixed to gallery walls. As a byproduct of this presentation mode and because of a particular gallery relationship early in his career, Weiner is most often associated with the Conceptual Art movement, which started in the U.S. in the late 1960s. However, encompassing 35-years of the artist's writing and interviews, *Having Been Said* goes far to demonstrate Weiner's work as actually quite material. In fact, Weiner most often refers to himself as a sculptor.

It is perhaps a testament to the validity of this position or just to the bullheaded dedication with which Weiner explains and elaborates it, that he could convince viewers that work he himself declares need not even be built is, in essence, material. His work, he states, deals with objects and objects' relations to other objects and to humans. He simply chooses language to present those sculptural relations to the public, rather than choosing a more traditional material like marble or bronze.

"Language is a more general material, not a better one..." says Weiner, it's a medium that avoids specificities. So in Weiner's work, "blue" is the same for everyone, it's just "blue" and however you might picture it in your head after having read it from the wall. But, paint the color blue on a canvas and suddenly one person's blue is another's navy, is another's royal, is another's indigo... they're all looking at the same work, but defining what they see rather differently.

Surprisingly little of the book gets down to discussion of specific works by Weiner that we might point to in example of his materiality, but in one interview from 1980, Weiner does give a brief description of his piece TAKEN TO A POINT OF TOLERANCE. Though not typical of the book itself, the excerpt works to shed some light on his process, its inherent materiality, and the effect of his choice to work with language as a medium:

"Interviewer: TAKEN TO A POINT OF TOLERANCE

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Exhibition Openings

New York

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Apr 13 - Jun 30

Museum of Modern Art

Los Angeles

[Lawrence Weiner: AS](#)

[FAR AS THE EYE](#)

[CAN SEE](#)

Apr 13 - Jul 14

Museum of Contemporary Art

Houston

[John Alexander: A](#)

[Retrospective](#)

Apr 13 - Jun 22

Museum of Fine Arts,
Houston

Boston

[El Greco to](#)

[Velazquez: Art during](#)

[the Reign of Philip III](#)

Apr 20 - Jul 27

Museum of Fine Arts,
Boston

"Weiner: That's the strain point that you get with all materials. I became fascinated personally with metal fatigue. Metal fatigue is an extremely material relationship between the usage of metal, the existence of metal... and when you can bring a piece of metal to a point of tolerance, you are, in effect, building any sculpture that's involved with tensions and various kinds of dynamics of tension... [My works are] not anything other than what I see and what seems to be the crux of the matter of the existence of various sculptures. They are the point. I would prefer to spend my life dealing with the point than dealing with the embellishment.

"Interviewer: Although you say they relate to objects and to sculptures, they could quite clearly relate to other spheres of human activity.

"Weiner: Oh, but that's the nice thing about art, and that's the nice thing about using language..."

* * *

Language and materiality are but the first, most fundamental aspects of Weiner's work that this collection offers for exploration. Many readers will find avenues into Weiner's oeuvre to suit their own interests: His progressive approach to working in the public domain; examinations of his films, his posters, or his books; or his belief in, and hope for, an American socialism.

Whether a reader picks out one or all of these to examine; whether they read the whole book cover-to-cover or only get through the first half before being drawn away to examine the work first hand; all responses and interests are welcomed, for in the end, *Having Been Said* does what every great art book should do, it illuminates our experience of art, without attempting to replace it.

Catalogue to the Exhibition:

· Lawrence Weiner: AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE (2007, Whitney Museum of American Art, \$60, 9780300126952)

[Find artist books by Lawrence Weiner at Printed Matter](#)

Los Angeles
[Bernd and Hilla](#)
[Becher: Basic Forms](#)
May 6 - Sept 14
Getty Museum of Art

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On Photography

THE WORK AND WRITING OF MOYRA DAVEY



Judged solely by the book that accompanies it, *Long Life Cool White: Photographs by Moyra Davey*, a small show now up at [Harvard University's Fogg Art Museum](#) (February 28-June 30) should be considered one of this year's photo exhibition highlights.

Davey's self-printed small to mid-size color photos picture everyday items and domestic scenes viewed up close. Where so much of contemporary photography is grandiose and manipulated, Davey's work is modest and direct. As evidenced in the exhibition book, this quality also marks Davey's writing.

The book itself -- *Long Life Cool White: Photographs & Essays by Moyra Davey* (2008, Yale University Press, \$24.95, 9780300136463) -- is a small format paperback, and is impeccably designed and produced. The first half is a simple presentation of Davey's photographs, the second includes two of her essays: "Notes on Photography & Accident", and "Fifty Minutes", which is actually a transcript of Davey's first video piece.

From the beginning, Davey speaks to connections between her photography, her reading and writing: "There is a *flânerie* of reading that can be linked to the *flânerie* of a certain kind of

reading that can be linked to the *flânerie* of a certain kind of photographing. Both involve drift, but also purpose, when they become enterprises of absorption and collecting."

And later: "Perhaps I still 'write' like a photographer -- I go out into the world of other people's writing and take snapshots." This snapshot quality is especially evident in Davey's "Notes on Photography & Accident".

While "Fifty Minutes" is the more personal and more fictional of the two pieces, "Notes on Photography & Accident" takes the best of Davey's more subjective writing qualities and blends them with a serious and meaningful examination of photographic theory.

The essay takes as its starting point, statements from some of the fields' most important writers: Walter Benjamin, Susan Sontag, and Jane Malcolm. In her following effort to "understand how the notion of accident might still be relevant" to contemporary photography, Davey considers the work and life of her three writers (also adding Roland Barthes to the mix) as she also does her own. And like her own photographic practice, Davey's approach to these often challenging theorists is forthright and unyielding, while still being grounded in the familiar. The result is a unique and rewarding take on some of photography's most fundamental ideas, and a view of both photography and art writing that is a happy alternative to the currently dominant contemporary scene.

In the end, as Davey herself reminds us, "...it is artifice that kills off what's interesting and vital in a photograph." The same might be said of writing, and in this gem of an exhibition text, Davey avoids all hints of artifice with aplomb.

Participation

AN ANTHOLOGY OF ART IN THE SOCIAL REALM



Yesterday's artistic practices inform today's mainstream culture. Given this, what could be more relevant to the culture at large now -- especially the culture at large online -- than to gain an understanding of artistic practices of participation?

Edited by Claire Bishop, *Participation* (2006, Whitechapel & The MIT Press, \$22.95, 9780262524643 -- one of the currently eight anthologies in the Documents of Contemporary

Art series) seeks to tell "the history of those artistic practices since the 1960s that appropriate social forms as a way to bring art closer to everyday life.... [projects which are] striving to collapse the distinction between performer and audience, professional and amateur, production and reception. Their emphasis is on collaboration, and the collective dimension of social experience."

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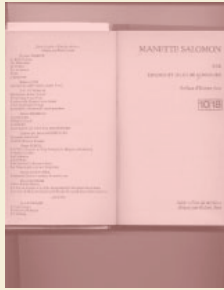
The Documents of Contemporary Art Series:

Whitechapel and MIT Press, \$22.95 each

- *The Archive*, Charles Merewether ed. (2006, 9780262633383)
- *The Artist's Joke*, Jennifer Higgie ed. (2007, 9780262582742)
- *The Cinematic*, David Company ed. (2007, 9780262532884)
- *Colour*, David Batchelor ed. (2008, 9780262524810)
- *Design and Art*, Alex Coles ed. (2007, 9780262532891)
- *The Everyday*, Stephen Johnstone ed. (2008, 9780262600743)
- *The Gothic*, Gilda Williams ed. (2007, 9780262731867)
- *Participation*, Claire Bishop ed. (2006, 9780262524643)

Our Books Are Yours to Publish

FEATURED PROJECT BOOKS FROM HOL



A new translator is signed up and a project team has begun to form around **Manette Salomon**, by **Edmund and Jules de Goncourt**. Don't miss your chance to participate in bringing this classic novel to print for the first time in English. The team needs a project manager, editor, designer, publicist, and bookstore sponsor. [Read more about the project, download a sample of the text, or send an email to the translator.](#)



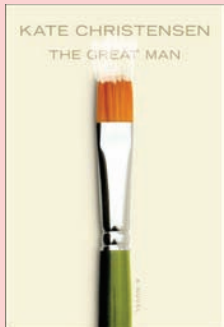
And new on the project book list is *New Yorker* writer **Janet Malcolm's, Diana & Nikon**. Photographer and writer Moyra Davey (her book *Long Life Cool White* is featured in this issue of the Hol Bulletin) said of Malcolm: "I admit to an acolyte's devotion to Malcolm, to a thirst for everything she writes. There's a thrill to reading her that comes from the moments when her writing breaks ever so subtly with the decorum of journalistic worldliness to hint at something

personal, painful even, about Malcolm herself." [Read more about this project and download a sample of the text.](#)

These books need your help. If you are interested in working on one as a translator, editor, designer, publicist, or sponsor, read more about [how publishing at Hol works](#) and about [joining a project team](#).

Congratulations to author Kate Christensen

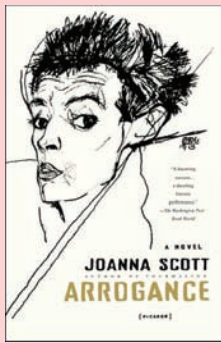
WINNER OF THE 2008 PEN/FAULKNER AWARD



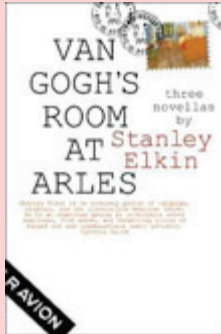
Announced in March, author Kate Christensen has won the [PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction](#) for her novel, **The Great Man** (2007, Doubleday, \$23.95, 9780385518451). From the press release:

"Acclaimed for its penetrating observation of character, exceptional comedy and insight, the honored novel, *The Great Man* is less about Oscar Feldman, the recently deceased 20th century American painter of the novel's title, than the three women who supported, loved, and survive him. Though an artist working during the generation of abstract painters in the 1940s and 50s, Feldman's consistent subject-on canvas and in life-was the realistic female nude. As his long-time mistress Teddy explains, 'He couldn't live without women around. It was like water to a plant for him.' These vital women, septuagenarians all three, are Abigail, Feldman's wife of more than four decades; Teddy, his bohemian mistress of nearly as many years; and the painter's sister Maxine, an esteemed abstract artist in her own right. The memories, resentments, and passions of Christensen's three vibrant protagonists are narrated to two biographers, vying to write accounts of the great painter's life.

"'I absolutely loved this book,' writes PEN/Faulkner Judge Molly Giles, 'It is intelligent, consistently entertaining, and original. It respects the vagaries of every character, catches the New York Scene it sets out to portray -- and it has art...'"



1991: *Arrogance*, Joanna Scott (2004, Picador, \$14, 9780312423889). Publisher's description: In Joanna Scott's breakthrough novel the Austrian artist [Egon Schiele](#) comes to prismatic life in a narrative that defies convention, history, and identity... A self-professed genius and student of August Klimt, Scott's Schiele repeatedly challenges the boundaries of early twentieth-century Europe. Told from a crosscurrent of voices, viewpoints and times.



1994: *Van Gogh's Room at Arles: Three Novellas*, Stanley Elkin (2002, Dalkey Archive Press, \$14.95, 9781564782809). Publisher's description: In the title story, a community college professor searches for his scholarly identity in a land of academic giants while staying in [Van Gogh's](#) famous room at Arles and avoiding run-ins with the Club of the Portraits of the Descendants of the People Painted by Vincent Van Gogh.

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