Aspen no. 5+6, item 17

Serial Project #1

SERIAL PROJECT #1, 1966 / SOL LEWITT
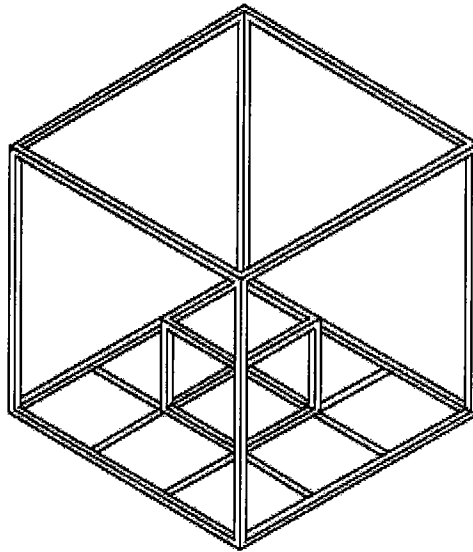
Serial compositions are multipart pieces with regulated changes. The differences between the parts are the subject of the composition. If some parts remain constant it is to punctuate the changes. The entire work would contain subdivisions which could be autonomous but which comprise the whole. The autonomous parts are units, rows, sets or any logical division that would be read as a complete thought. The series would be read by the viewer in a linear or narrative manner (12345; ABBCCC; 123, 312, 231, 132, 213, 321) even though in its final form many of these sets would be operating simultaneously, making comprehension difficult. The aim of the artist would not be to instruct the viewer but to give him information. Whether the viewer understands this information is incidental to the artist; he cannot foresee the understanding of all his viewers. He would follow his predetermined premise to its conclusion avoiding subjectivity. Chance, taste, or unconsciously remembered forms would play no part in the outcome. The serial artist does not attempt to produce a beautiful or mysterious object but functions merely as a clerk cataloging the results of his premise.

The premise governing this series is: to place one form within another and include all major variations in two and three dimensions. This is to be done in the most succinct manner, using the fewest measurements. It would be a finite series using the square and cube as its syntax. A more complex form would be too interesting in itself and obstruct the meaning of the whole. There is no need to invent new forms. The square and cube are efficient and symmetrical. In order to free a square within a larger square, the larger square is divided into nine equal parts. The center square would be equally distant from the outer square and exactly centered. A single measurement is used as the basis for the series. There is a large version and a small version. In the larger, the basic measure is 28" (A 28" tube can be made in one piece to fit through the smallest door—30"). The outer measure was formed by multiplying 28" by 3 and subtracting the width of the material (1-1/2"—the pieces were constructed of 1-1/2" square aluminum tubing) 28"x3 = 84 - (1-1/2 + 1-1/2) = 81". The two measurements for the large set are 28" and 81". All of the pieces in the series contain these measurements (The flat pieces are 1-1/2" high because that is the height of the metal. The two measurements used in the smaller set are 13-3/8"and 4-3/8".
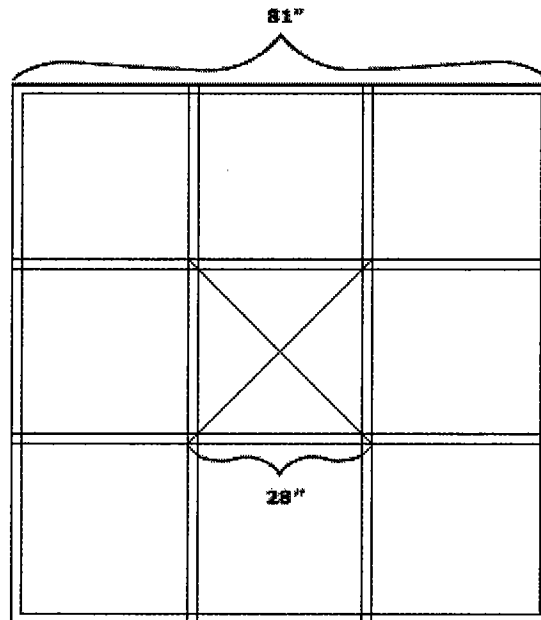
The set contains nine pieces. They are all of the variations within the scope of the first premise. The first variation is a square within a square. The other variations follow: a cube within a square, a square within a cube, an outer form raised to the height of the inner cube, the inner cube raised to the height of the outer, larger cube, a cube within a cube and all crossmatching of these forms. The first set contains nine pieces. These pieces are laid out on a grid. The grid equalizes the spacing and makes all of the pieces and spaces between of equal importance. The individual pieces are arranged in three rows of three forms each. In each row there are three different parts and three parts that are the same. The inner forms of one row of three are read in sequence as are the outer forms. The possible permutations of these rows are: 123, 456, 789, 147, 258, 369, 159, 357.

The measurements for the large set are:

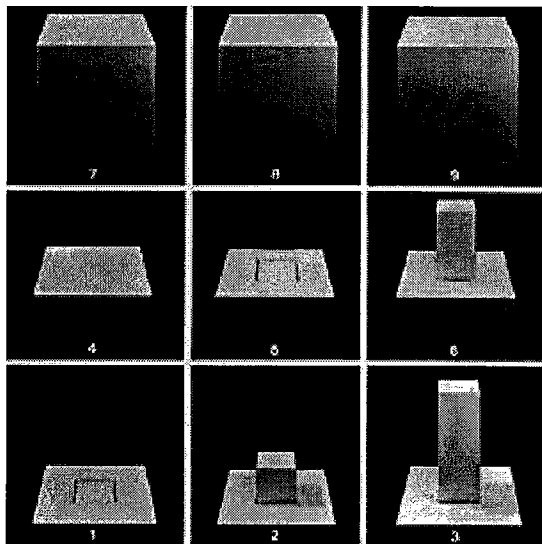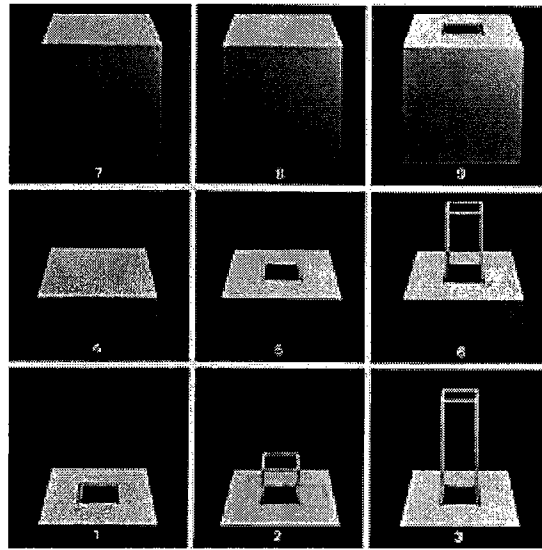|		

1. Inside 28" x 28"
   Outside 81" x 81"
	2. Inside 28" x 28" x 28"
	   Outside 81" x 81"
		3. Inside 28" x 28"81"
		   Outside 81" x 81"

4. Inside 28" x 28"
   Outside 81" x 81" x 28"
	5. Inside 28" x 28" x 28"
	   Outside 81" x 81" x 28"
		6. Inside 28" x 28" x 81"
		   Outside 81" x 81" x 28"

5. Inside 28" x 28"
   Outside 81" x 81" x 81"
	8. Inside 28" x 28" x 28"
	   Outside 81" x 81" x 81"
		9. Inside 28" x 28" x 81"
		   Outside 81" x 81" x 81"

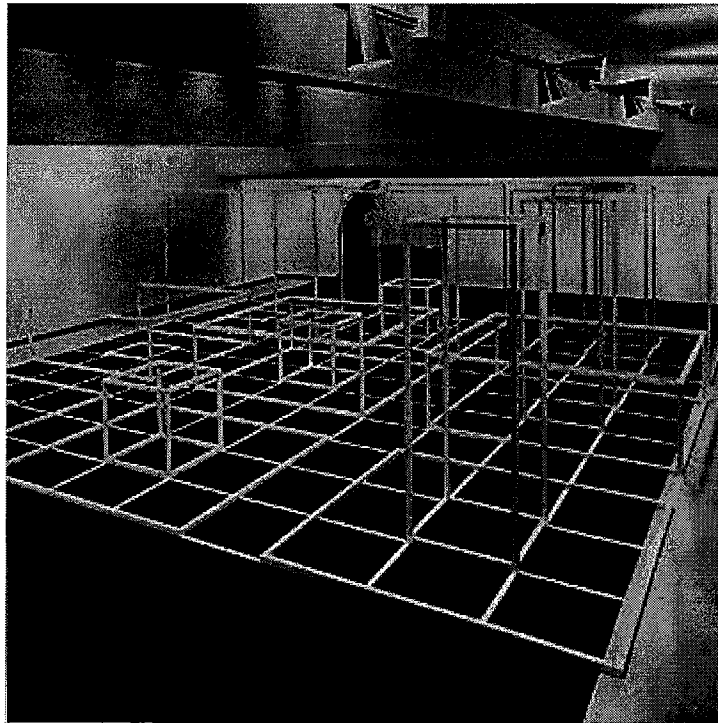For the small set substitute 13-3/8" for 81" and 4-5/8" for 28".

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 _____   _____   _____
|   |   |   | |   |   |   | |   |   |   |
|---+---+---| |---+---+---| |---+---+---|
|   | 7 |   | |   | 8 |   | |   | 9 |   |
|---+---+---| |---+---+---| |---+---+---|
|   |   |   | |   |   |   | |   |   |   |
 _____   _____   _____
|   |   |   | |   |   |   | |   |   |   |
|---+---+---| |---+---+---| |---+---+---|
|   | 4 |   | |   | 5 |   | |   | 6 |   |
|---+---+---| |---+---+---| |---+---+---|
|   |   |   | |   |   |   | |   |   |   |
 _____   _____   _____
|   |   |   | |   |   |   | |   |   |   |
|---+---+---| |---+---+---| |---+---+---|
|   | 1 |   | |   | 2 |   | |   | 3 |   |
|---+---+---| |---+---+---| |---+---+---|
|   |   |   | |   |   |   | |   |   |   |
 _____   _____   _____
```

The sets of nine are placed in four groups. Each group comprises variations on open or closed forms.

closed inside closed outside	D	C	open outside closed outside
open inside open outside	A	B	closed inside open outside

In cases in which the same plane is occupied by both the inside and outside forms, the inside plane takes precedence. This is done so that there is more information given the viewer. If it were the obverse more forms would be invisible, impeding the viewer's understanding of the whole set. When the larger form is closed and the top of the smaller form is not on the same plane as the larger— but lower— the smaller form is placed inside. If the viewer cannot see the interior form he may believe it is there or not but he knows which form he believes is there or not there. The evidence given him by the other pieces in the set, and by reference to other sets will inform him as to what should be there. The sets are grouped in the most symmetrical way possible. Each set mirrors the others, with the higher pieces concentrated in the center. The grouping of sets allows additional sets to become obvious such as: A9, B9, C9, D9, or A258B258.

	D			C	
1	2	3	3	2	1
4	5	6	6	5	4
7	8	9	9	8	7

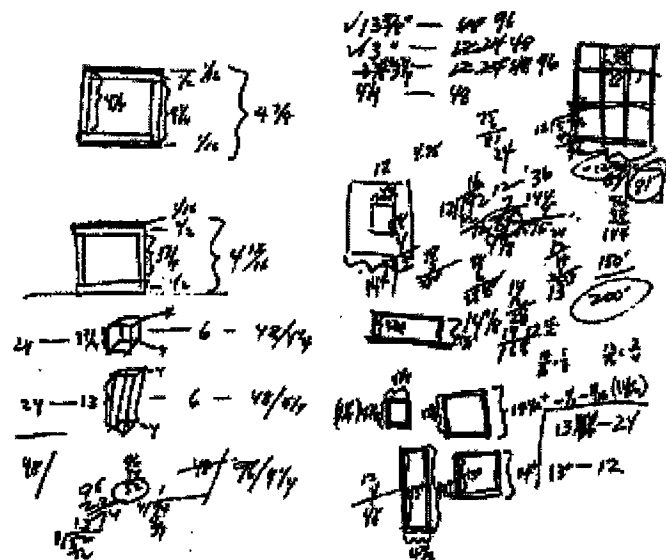|	A			B	
7	8	9	9	8	7
4	5	6	6	5	4
1	2	3	3	2	1

INSTALLATION / SET A / DWAN GALLERY / LOS ANGELES / APRIL, 1967

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Adapted for the web by Andrew Stafford. More by him here.
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