Given the objectivity of Lawrence Weiner's work, it becomes redundant to reflect upon anything beyond that which is presented to us. In a certain manner this artist has left us longing for to a “light at the end of the tunnel”, something that might help to settle his work within a fixed, easily understandable category.

However, all of the efforts undertaken lead further and further from the truth, that his works possess. Lawrence Weiner is absolutely simple in his purposes and in his procedures. Trying to complexify his work takes it away from its aim as Art.

In fact, the works he carries out, in a clear concern for materiality, are veritable sculptures in the sense of being objects ready to undergo the processes inherent to any artistic performing. And it is hoped that they will be seen in this way: as materials set out as open to free reception.

And it is the reception of the work, rather than its production, that will concern us here. As the critic, as Jauss states, is necessarily a reader before being able to locate or understand the work, or to fundament his own judgement on awareness of its situation. Thus this text will not deal with the artist's modus operandi (which in fact does not exist) or the formal analysis of the work of art, but instead revolves around an element that is almost always set to one side but the leading role of which is of great importance to us. We are speaking about the spectator, and as this is a matter of works using words, about the reader.\(^1\)

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\(^1\) Hans Robert Jauss

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The Reader

*In the triangle formed by the author, the work and the public, the latter is not in any way a passive element which would only have a chain reaction, but rather a source of energy that contributes towards making the story itself. The life of the work in history cannot be considered without the participation of those to whom it is aimed*.

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In Weiner it is not a matter of using metaphors or phrases that intend to create ambiguities, multiple meanings or complex hermetic interpretations, but of demonstrating, through the permeability of language as a medium, how each work of art is the fruit of enormous freedom. Both for the person who produces it and the person who receives it. The work thus has access to existence through the act of interpreting, indifferent to the author’s intentions but focused on its receiver’s expectations and adaptations. The traditional aesthetics of production and representation is replaced by (or rather fused into) an aesthetics of reception and effects.

This is the importance of translation in Weiner’s trajectory: making the texts he uses more understandable and accessible, but also recontextualising them in the right setting and in the concrete conditions of their reception. Just as any translation is betrayal, any adaptation is poignant.

His work is formed within the perspective of a veritable dialectic: of the work with culture, of the author with the work, of the author with culture, of the work with its receiver, of the author with its receiver, of the receiver with culture, in a more open and infinite interaction of questions and answers. It is this dialogue that states the relationship of art in its broadest sense and life itself.

The social dimension that reinforces the importance of the receiver’s experience is that which states the way that the work intervenes on the expectation horizon of our everyday lives, guiding or modifying our view of the world. This is perhaps a mission that is too demagogical for Art, but through this conclusion we can state that without doubt, like the text itself, the opening and virtual nature of his works, in their interactive and performing dimensions, cause some kind of transformation in the person who receives it. This is the wonder of any experience around a reading: when the text stops having a practical function, now opening up to its more reflective dimension, leaving its public perplexed, and showing that, in Art, the process of perception is an end in itself.

Carla de Utra Mendes

1 Jauss, Hans Robert, Literaturgeschichte als Provokation (no translation into English available)
2 The importance of this in the works of Weiner was always acknowledged by him from the beginning of his sort of manifesto (we prefer declaration of intent) dated 1968:
   1. THE ARTIST MAY CONSTRUCT THE PIECE
   2. THE PIECE MAY BE FABRICATED
   3. THE PIECE NEED NOT TO 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