

For the Leo Castelli Gallery's final show of the season, Don Judd and Richard Serra each exhibited a large piece of sculpture in the front room of Castelli's downtown gallery at 420 West Broadway. It was the best use of that space I have seen to date. Both pieces are noteworthy but I shall deal only with Judd's piece at this time.

DON JUDD

Judd's piece consists of five open plywood floor boxes, six feet high and wide, angling out from the wall in parallelograms spaced at 19" intervals. Judd first used the parallelogram in a series of woodblock prints begun in 1961. In his first one-man show (Green Gallery, December, 1963-January, 1964), he exhibited three of the

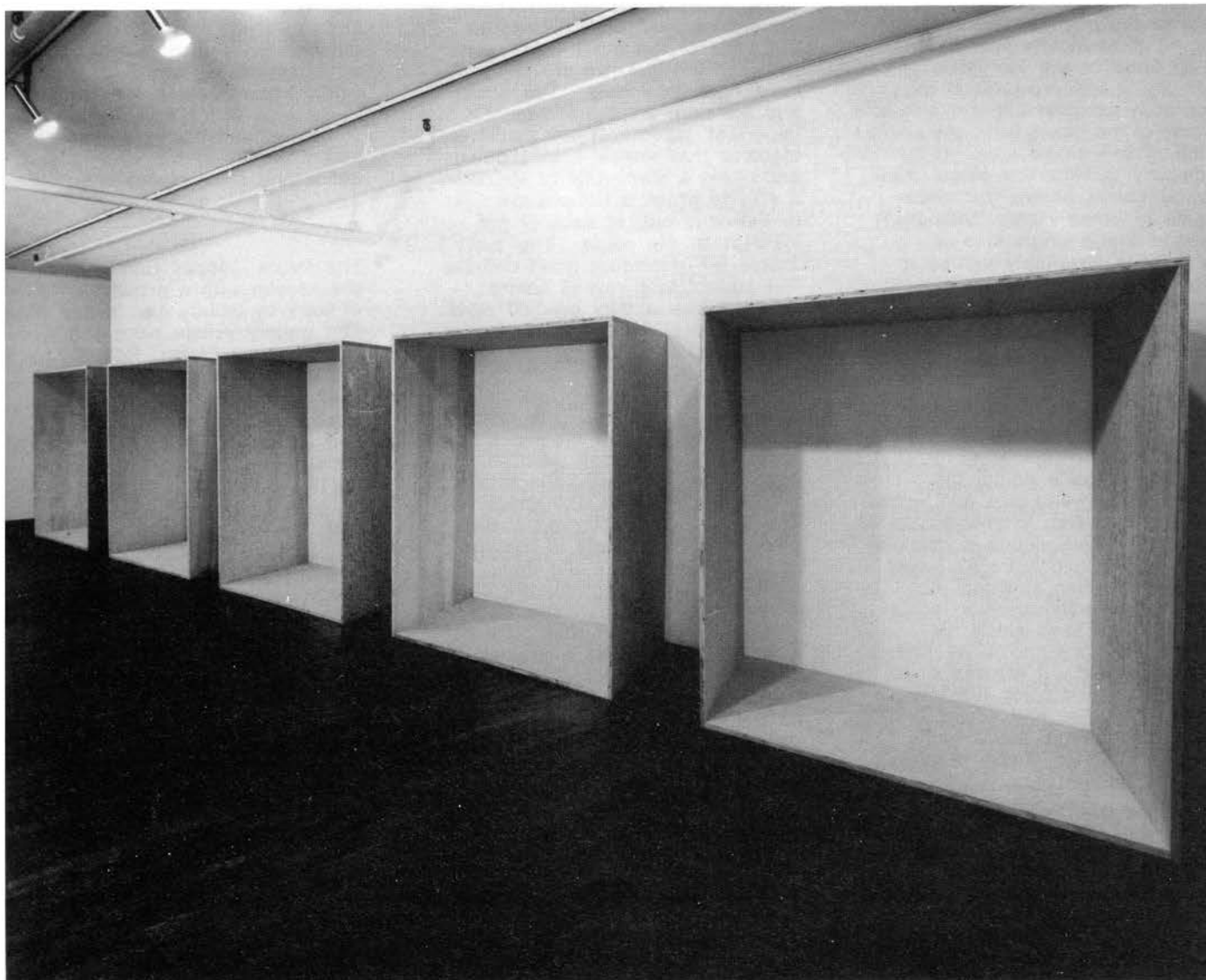
woodblocks themselves in a row on the wall. This was one source for the idea of boxes in rows, on the floor or the wall, of which this parallelogram-box piece is the most recent variation and the first to incorporate this second aspect of its source.

The piece is ostensibly one-sided, repetitive and simple; but it is, like most of Judd's simplicity, exceedingly complex. The size and volume of the boxes are difficult to comprehend, for they alter according to the point of view from which the piece is seen. The boxes straighten out, enlarge and close off as they are passed; they open and flatten out when viewed from the front. From one end of the piece, the nearest box is a flattened parallelogram while the furthest

NEW YORK

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Don Judd: 'Untitled', 1972. Leo Castelli Gallery Downtown, New York. Photo Eric Pollitzer.



seems like a cube, a deep square volume. Judd's work has always involved certain aspects of frontality. First: in all his pieces, the various side are sufficient and separate from each other, whether different or identical. Second: the entire structure of a piece can almost always be seen or deduced from a single side, even though the piece may incorporate two sets of radically different sides. In fact, many of Judd's pieces, including the parallelogram-box piece, are viewed from only one side and it is part of Judd's accomplishment that they are no less three-dimensional because of this.

The parallelogram-box piece varies somewhat ironically from both these aspects of frontality. The angling of the boxes into parallelograms accounts for the variation. First: it makes the sides (both in and out) extremely visible from the front, so the piece is even more frontal than usual; thus, the separateness of the sides is eliminated and they are almost combined into one. Second: the angling causes a certain amount of ambiguity and distortion, so, in spite of the increased frontality, it is more difficult to accurately comprehend the size and volume of the boxes from any single point on this single side. It is necessary to view this single from several points before the piece begins to come clear. Ultimately, it seems that a single kind of frontality is absolutely denied in favor of complex, multiple, changing frontality which in some ways is no frontality at all.

This ambiguity of size and volume is somewhat unusual for Judd's work and it is interesting that his usual large and accurate scale seems unaffected by it. The work seems to substantiate, once again, the distinction between size and scale, and also between volume and scale. The scale of this pieces is strangely linear, determined more by edges and outlines than anything else. Also unusual is the plywood, which Judd has not used since his earliest sculpture and never before used unpainted. It is used in its natural state and color, like the metals often are, and seems entirely appropriate for the piece, since the parallelogram shape requires specially angled cuts, made most easily with a saw. It is also interesting to see Judd make a large piece in a material other than metal. It proves that the impressiveness of his work is in no way dependent on cognizance of or awe for the weight, expense, and installation difficulties implicit in large sheets of thick metal.

In May, Richard Nonas had his first New York one-man show at 10 Bleecker St., which is part of *Workspace*, a project of the Municipal Art Society which acquires unused space for artists to work or show in. This particular space is the burnt-out first floor of a loft building made available to artists until the owner begins repairs.

RICHARD NONAS

Nonas' work consists of wall and floor pieces made mainly of found «street» wood and other rough unpainted wood. The floor pieces are generally low to the ground and fairly simple in arrangement: a circle of heavy rough-hewn blocks, three squares of varying size and construction, and a 50-foot long row of beams placed side by side on the floor. The best floor piece is the largest square. Made of heavy beams, this piece is about 15 feet on a side and 15 inches high; it is large in scale, almost monumental. Two opposite sides of the square slant inward because the ends of the other two beams, to which the first two are bolted, have been truncated. The scale and the slant are the two most important aspects of the piece, for together they enable it to enclose and claim a great deal of space, a volume which is not shallow or flattened out, in spite of the lowness of the piece. The slant makes the enclosure more definite. The 50-foot long row of beams also involves a very gradual slant. The beams average 4-5 feet in length, which is the average width of the piece. On one side the beams are cut off even; on the other they are left uneven. The uneven side is raised a few inches, slanting toward the even edge, emphasizing it and again increasing the actual and visual intrusion into space. The formal ideas involved occur elsewhere, particularly in the work of Andre and Judd. But the similarity seems general; the use of the slants, for example, suggests a fundamentally different concern. Nonas' work involves a greater and different kind of arrangement, one which seeks to include both people and the space outside the piece in a very subjective way. His choice of materials also distinguishes Nonas' work from the recent work of either Andre or Judd. The rough wood give the work a romantic, almost intimate quality, making it looser and softer than it is formally. The floor pieces have a serene, calm quality, an unassuming yet pervasive presence. Just as most of Nonas' materials are found, the pieces themselves

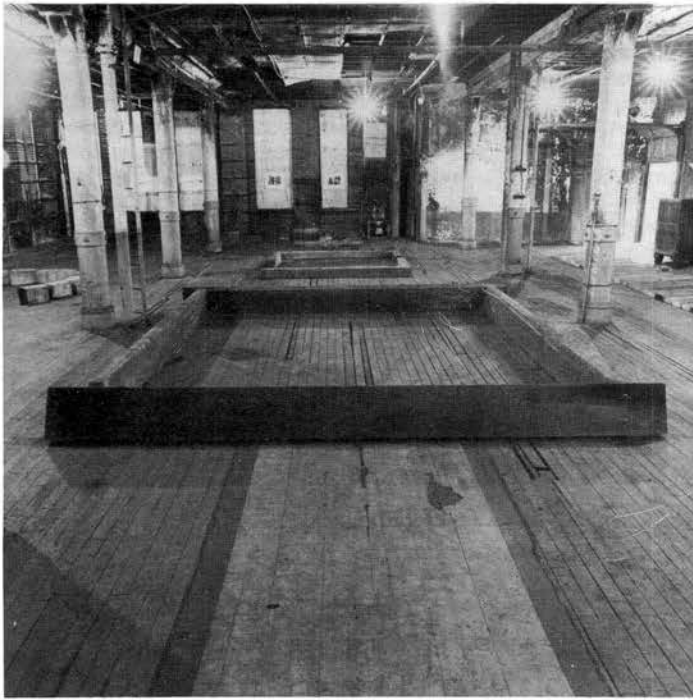
seem found, in the way old ruins and foundations are. Their arrangement, although found in other art, is characteristic of other things more useful and general. This resemblance accounts somewhat for their presence. The presence is also definitely supported by the space, which is burnt-out and barren, close to some kind of nature, as is Nonas' work. I would like to see these pieces in a more neutral setting, a setting less like the work.

Nonas' wall pieces are more difficult to describe even though they are as simple as the floor pieces. They are smaller, more object-like and made of cleaner wood. The wall pieces are more abstract, less evocative and also somewhat more original. Nonas has also done some very large outdoor pieces which interest me a great deal. In the spring of 1971 he built a large brush corral at Vassar College consisting of a circle 100 feet in diameter with a narrow opening. Two long arms of brush extended and widened outward from either side of this opening, like a funnel. In all of his work, Nonas seems interested in the idea of a place, in both the subjective and the visual sense, and with having his work alter, define and claim places in both ways.

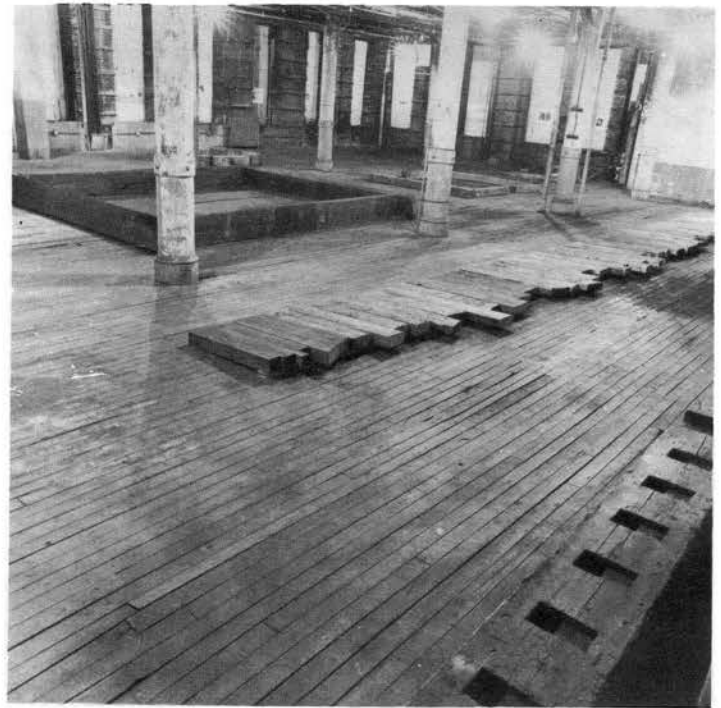
The Paula Cooper Gallery ended the season with a group show of work by gallery and invited artists. The gallery artists were Lynda Benglis, Joel Fisher, Robert Grosvenor, Ulrich Rückriem and Joel Shapiro. The invited artists were Karl Beveridge, Sol LeWitt and Jackie Winsor. The work was various and generally good, the installation delightfully sparse.

SOL LEWITT

A wall drawing by Sol LeWitt, executed in lead pencil by Wautauabe & Co., measures 11 feet by 14 feet. Its basic structure is a grid of six-inch squares. Each square is divided vertically by straight lines which increase in number from bottom to top and horizontally but not straight (wavy) lines which increase in number from left to right. So the bottom of the drawing, particularly the left side, is near and sparse, while the top, particularly the right side, is relatively distant and dense. Consequently the entire drawing is equally visible, although at the bottom it is the lines which are accumulation. The top of the drawing does not diminish with



Richard Nonas: 'Untitled', 1972.
Photo Jane Anneken/Randal Arabie.



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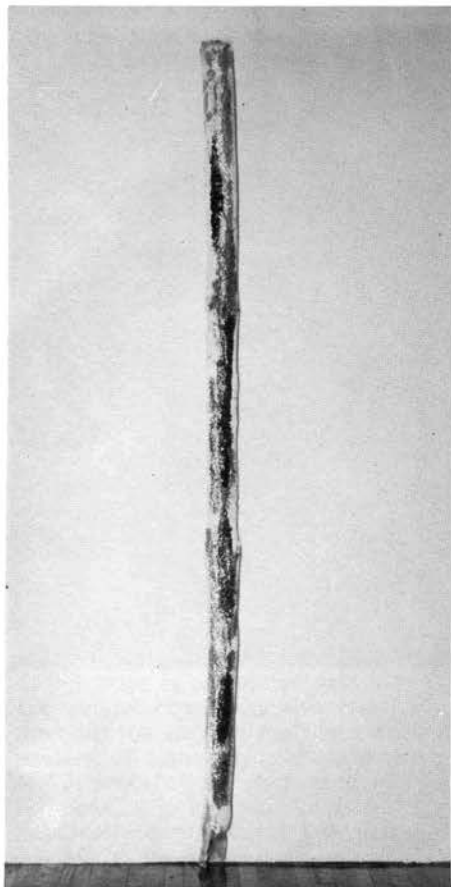
distance, as it should. LeWitt's wall drawings may be his best work, for though they are conceptually consistent with his sculpture, they vary more visually and are therefore more interesting, singly and as a body of work. Conceptually they are simple and factual, quite mathematical, yet their visual outcome remains somewhat unpredictable. It is always interesting and usually rewarding to see what kind of drawing will result from one of LeWitt's proposals. In this case, the result is very beautiful, like a good, good-sized Agnes Martin.

LYNDA BENGLIS

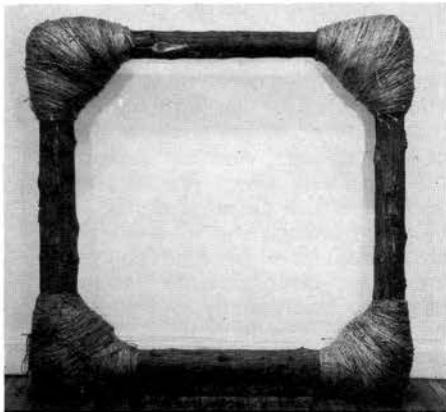
Lynda Benglis exhibits two very recent works. Benglis' work has been changing rapidly lately. She has (momentarily, at least) abandoned the poured latex and wax from which she made wall and floor pieces. Instead she has been making long, narrow tube-like structures of wire screen and bunting on which she works with

plaster, pigments and any other material which appeals to her. Benglis shower several of these new pieces in the «Painting: New Options» exhibition held at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis this spring. These pieces average eight feet in height and 4-8 inches across. Mounted vertically to the wall, they are coated with plaster and rubbed vertically in a few places with one to three shades of pigment. Soft and absorbent, these pieces are mostly white and seem to spread somewhat into the wall with a very light, transparent quality. The pieces at the Cooper Gallery follow these. Still using the same size and structure of wire, bunting and plaster support, Benglis has added pigmented plaster and, on top of that, fairly continuous areas of gold, green, magenta and turquoise sparkle, and has appropriately titled the results *Hoofers I* and «*Hoofers Too.*» These pieces are completely different from those at the Walker and seem to combine and reorder various aspects of

Benglis' other work. The sparkle results in a fine, precise surface, brittle and reflective, which has all the garishness of Benglis' poured latex pieces and the intimate detailing of her wax paintings. It is a surface at once strident and voluptuous, flagrant and organic and in this is generally consistent with most of Benglis' work. The contained verticality of these pieces is shared with the smaller-scaled wax paintings, rather than with the violently spatial poured latex pieces. Yet, due to the surface of sparkle, the pieces have their own kind of violence and aggressiveness through which they each dominate a large area of wall space. Another aspect of the verticality which results from the surface is the extreme density of these pieces; the tube-like structures have become solid columns. Benglis' work ranges from the traditionally and seductively beautiful to the irresistibly ugly (and sometimes in the same piece); the constant is her continuing formal invention based primarily



Lynda Benglis: 'Hoofers Too', 1972, wire, bunting, plaster, pigments, sparkle. Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. Photo Geoffrey Clements.



Jackie Winsor: 'Bound Square', 1972, wood and hemp. Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. Photo Geoffrey Clements.

upon her highly original use of materials.

JACKIE WINSOR

Jackie Winsor's work called « Bound Square » is pretty much just that: a huge square of six-foot logs bound at each corner with enormous amounts of brown hemp, which simply leans against the wall. The scale of this piece is perverse. The accumulation of hemp (itself a rather fine material) make the heavy logs look relatively small. The effect is colossal; it makes the viewer feel rather undersized yet not at all intimidated. In the heavy immobility of this piece, in its ponderous stasis is the quality of absolute safety. Winsor's piece has a « found » quality similar to that in Nonas' work. This piece is more primitive and seems to have little to do with art; it might have had an earlier, more functional use. There has been a lot of stick-and-string sculpture this year; Winsor's piece is about the best I have seen, because she uses her materials with tremendous scale and simplicity.

JOEL FISHER

Joel Fisher's piece, « Double Six Sectional », is a 36-foot long rope braided from handspun sheepswool fiber. Two pins, one at each end, hold it on the wall at about eye-level. From a distance it is a long, thin line, slightly curved. The line gets fuzzier and more distinct as the distance lessens. Close up, its color, fibrous quality and fine braiding are apparent. From either point it is a very beautiful piece. Fisher makes all of his material literally from scratch and does little else besides make it; that is, his arrangements, like this one, are minimal, in the general sense of the word. Other pieces of his consist of squares of handmade paper tacked to the wall in a similarly straightforward fashion. Fisher's art results from simple age-old skills: paper-making, spinning, braiding. He does not put two or more materials together to make a piece. He chooses a single material, submits it to an appropriate process and ends up with another single material. The material undergoes a fundamental transformation which is also obvious and functional. Prior to technology, Fisher's skills were basic to the survival and progress of man; they are still basic to his work for they completely determine its form. At the same time, Fisher's skills seem visually obscured by their own singularity.

Each activity is essential and intrinsic to the form of the resulting piece. Thus, the work is generally very spare, austere and simple. These qualities are visually abstract and universal and more prominent than any specifically « hand-crafted » quality. Ultimately, one's awareness of the forming activity is relatively conceptual. Fisher's thinking is obviously rigorous and what goes on in his head seems more important than what he may do with his hands, despite the success with which the three work together.

There is a large six-part piece by Mel Bochner in a group show at the Sonnabend Gallery's downtown space. The show exhibits work by thirteen artists who are in Documenta 5 this summer, including: Vito Acconci, John Baldessari, Bernd & Hilla Becher, Christian Boltanski, Pier Paolo Calzolari, Joel Fisher, Gilbert & George, Dan Graham, Mario Merz, Giulio Paolini and William Wegman.

MEL BOCHNER

Bochner's piece is the most interesting of an interesting exhibition; in fact, it is more interesting and substantial than his one-man show earlier this year at Sonnabend. The piece consists of six separate but related parts done in chalk and small stones on the floor. One part, « Theory of Sculpture /6A », is four circles, each containing five white stones. In each circle, the stones are grouped in one of the four numerically possible combinations: 1,1,1,1,1; 2,3; 1,4; 5,0; circles are also drawn around these groups. Two other parts of the piece are arrangements of numbered stones with the spaces between them also numbered. A circle of three stones has as many spaces and is called « Three Stones, Three Spaces ». On the other hand, a row of five stones has only four spaces and is called « Five Stones, Four Spaces ». In two other parts, the stones and chalk assume an equal and identical relationship, rather than complementary or explanatory. In these Bochner uses different amounts of chalk marks rather than the symbols for those numbers. One part, « Theory of Sculpture /2 », begins in a corner of the gallery with one stone and one mark. Along one wall the stones and marks both increase, forming groups of 2,3,4, and 5 marks and stones. Along the other wall, the stones remain constant and single in each

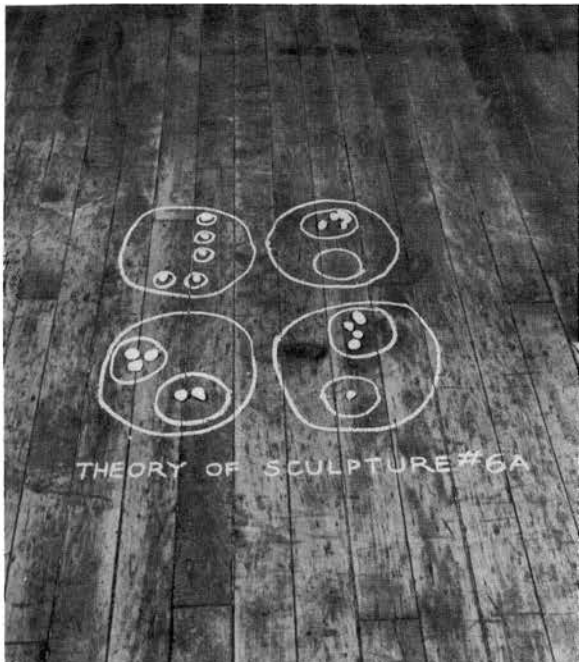
group while only the chalk marks increase to 5. The other piece of this kind is a circle of seven stones each with a single chalk mark outside the circle; in the middle of the circle is a group of seven marks. The piece is called «Singles Out.» A statement accompanies the entire piece: «It is not difficult to understand what is meant by saying that a physical object more or less resembles a euclidean circle, but what could be meant by saying a group of stones resembles the number 10?» Brian Ellis, *Concepts of Measurement*. And, as if to present one possible answer to this question, the sixth part of Bochner's piece consists of ten stones arranged to form the number 10.

Bochner's work is called conceptual. It is obviously dealing with various concepts of counting, grouping and measuring. I don't know much about mathematics or logic, but Bochner's use of various ideas is very mundane and accessible, which I like. The ideas are obvious and interesting to almost anyone who

can count. They seem open to several levels of comprehension; their complexity and interest probably increase with one's knowledge of mathematics. The ideas apply very specifically to the stones and marks and are simultaneously completely abstract, like mathematics, and could apply to anything or nothing. Another prominent aspect of Bochner's work is its humor. This comes partly from the ideas, which for all their obviousness, are not thought about too much, like the ten stones forming the number 10. It also comes from the physical quality of his work, for the stones and chalk are a very casual, simple, funny way to present these ideas. There is something both pragmatic and mocking about their use. Like many conceptual artists, Bochner works very well with his hands. His work has a recognizable, attractive physical quality, decided by nothing more than his own handwriting, but nonetheless present in all his work.

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Mel Bochner: 'Theory of Sculpture / 6A',
1972, chalk + stones on floor.
Sonnabend Gallery, New York.
Photo Nick Sheidy.



Mel Bochner: 'Theory of Sculpture / 2',
1972, chalk + stones on floor.
Sonnabend Gallery, New York.
Photo Nick Sheidy.

