

MIT List Visual Arts Center

Bernar Venet

MEDIUM Sculpture

NATIONALITY French

LIFE DATES France, 1941 -

Bernar Venet was born on April 20, 1941 in a small village in the French Alps. Encouraged by a local artist, he began drawing and painting at the age of 10. He studied for a year at the Municipal Art School of Nice in 1959 before becoming a stage designer at the Nice City Opera. While performing his national military service in Provence during 1961-63, he converted an attic of the local army reception center to a studio and produced his first mature works of art.

Initially painting gestural works on the floor with his feet, Venet later experimented with black tar. He expanded from these "fetishist" works to photographs of heaps of coal and gravel and then his first sculptures of *Coal Piles*, piles of loosely arranged pieces of coal whose arrangement varied with each installation.

In 1964, impressed by other artists working in the Nouveaux Réalisme style, Venet made works that used discarded industrial material, such as flattened cardboard. On a visit to New York in 1966 Venet encountered Minimalist artists Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, and Sol LeWitt. He moved to New York in 1967 where he produced conceptual art that used systems, often based on scientific ideas. Venet also made sound works such as the vinyl recording *The Infrared Polarization of the Infrared Star in Signus*, and organized a performance in 1968 at the Judson Church Theater, during which three physicists delivered simultaneous lectures.

Venet halted his artistic production between 1971 and 1976, when he returned to Paris to teach, lecture, and exhibit his past work at home and abroad. In New York again, he resumed his work based on mathematical systems, in paintings, wood reliefs, and sculpture. He produced public sculptures of *Arcs* and *Indeterminate Lines*, installed in France, Germany, and the U.S. In 2000, he began a series of monumental wall paintings. Venet also created sound recordings, films, the ballet *Graduation* (music, choreography, and stage design), as well as furniture and stained glass.

A large number of international solo exhibitions have featured Venet, at venues including P.S.1, Long Island City, New York; Museum of Modern Art, Rio de Janeiro; the Institute of Contemporary Art, London; Total Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, Korea; Hong Kong Museum of Art, Kowloon; Shanghai Museum of Art, China; the Galerie Denise René, Düsseldorf; ARCA, Marseille, France; and the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Nice, France. His works are currently in the collection of the Georgia Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Musée d'Art



et d'Histoire, Geneva, Switzerland; Sonje Museum of Contemporary Art, Kyongbuk, Korea; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Guggenheim Museum, New York; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C.; and The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. In 2005, Venet was named Chevalier de la Legion D'Honneur of France.

