

# Walter De Maria

Walter De Maria's *360° I Ching/64 Sculptures* (1981) consists of 576 white-lacquered wood rods arranged into 64 groups of 6 parallel rows. Each row features either one long or two short rods, which are placed in a pattern determined by the sixty-four hexagrams of *I Ching*, an ancient Chinese book of philosophy and divination. Drawing on the binary system of the yin and yang, this ancient book acts as a guide for individuals to navigate the world and understand their daily experience of it. In the simplest sense, users randomly select two trigrams—unique combinations of three solid and/or broken lines (yin and yang)—that represent various natural elements. When two chosen trigrams merge, they form a complex and symbolically resonant hexagram.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, *I Ching* was a popular tool for artists interested in chance, in large part thanks to John Cage's early experiments that used the book to determine aleatory compositional arrangements. De Maria had close ties to Cage's circle. In *360° I Ching/64 Sculptures* he carefully mapped each of the possible hexagrams of *I Ching* in order to make visible the underlying mathematical structure behind the book's chance operations. *360° I Ching/64 Sculptures* demonstrates a clear system of permutations, exhausting all of the possible ordered arrangements. That is, the sixty-four hexagrams represent every combination of three solid and/or broken lines paired with another three solid and/or broken lines.

De Maria used measurement and number as compositional principles throughout his career. In particular, he subversively deployed numerical systems in ways that emphasize the limits of visual perception. His *Gold Meters* (1976–77) and *Silver Meters* (1976), for example, confound the seemingly optical correlation between an increase in size and a corresponding increase in weight. In *360° I Ching/64 Sculptures* the hexagrams are placed directly on the floor and seen from various angles in the round, as the title of the work suggests. As a result, the rods at times relinquish their iconographic meaning and become purely sculptural.

*360° I Ching/64 Sculptures* was commissioned by Dia Art Foundation in 1981. The concept of placing the rods on a bright red carpet was envisioned by De Maria in 1990. This is the first public viewing of *360° I Ching/64 Sculptures* in more than twenty-five years and the second installation with the red carpet.

# Walter De Maria

Walter De Maria was born in 1935 in Albany, California, and studied history and art at the University of California, Berkeley. In 1960 he moved to New York City, where he lived and worked until the end of his life. With Robert Whitman in 1963, De Maria founded a gallery at 9 Great Jones Street in New York City and exhibited his sculptures there later that year. He also performed as a jazz percussionist with Don Cherry and other figures, and joined the band the Primitives, which later evolved into the Velvet Underground. After his first solo exhibition at a commercial gallery in 1965, De Maria's work was included in the *Primary Structures* exhibition at the Jewish Museum, New York, in 1966. He subsequently had numerous international shows at venues including the Kunsthau Zurich (1999), the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt (1991), the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart (1987), and the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam (1984). Dia maintains De Maria's *The Lightning Field* (1977) in western New Mexico, *The Vertical Earth Kilometer* (1977) in Kassel, Germany, and *The New York Earth Room* (1977) and *The Broken Kilometer* (1979) in New York City. De Maria died in July 2013.

*360° I Ching/64 Sculptures*, 1981  
Lacquer on wood  
Dia Art Foundation

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