



**USA25152E: MOMA**

**Judd**

**Final**

**Voices included:**

Ann Temkin

Mary Heilmann

Charles Ray

John Yau

Leslie Hewitt

Park McArthur

Jamie Dearing

**Stoplist:**

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- 621. Untitled 1960 [DSS 6] - Mary Heilmann, Ann Temkin
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## **Stop 620: Introduction**

ANN TEMKIN: Hi, I'm Ann Temkin, the Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis, Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture. We're delighted to welcome you to this exhibition of work by Donald Judd, the first retrospective of his work to take place in the US in more than 30 years.

JAMIE DEARING: Don had three main elements that he dealt with as the major themes in his work: color, materials, and space.

MARY HEILMAN: I'm always thinking about architecture when I look at Judd.

PARK MCARTHUR: It does feel, in some ways, like a space to inhabit or play.

CHARLES RAY: You don't have, like, a hidden meaning. It's a live action verb, in a way.

ANN TEMKIN: You'll notice when you walk through into the first gallery that there are no barriers between you and the works on view. One of Judd's chief principles was that the work he created was there to be experienced directly by the viewer without any separation. So in accordance with his guidelines, our galleries are free of the normal barriers or pedestals that often accompany sculpture.

If they are scratched or nicked, it's almost impossible to repair that surface. And for that reason, we especially ask for your consideration and your care in making sure that you don't either accidentally or intentionally touch a surface of a sculpture.

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## **Stop 621: Untitled 1960**

MARY HEILMANN: Hello, I'm Mary Heilmann

ANN TEMKIN: Artist Mary Heilmann has said that Judd is one of her artistic heroes.

MARY HEILMANN: Well, I love this painting. It looks like a landscape. It is very geometrically seductive. Even though it's flat, it looks three dimensional because of the curved lines. It's the, kind of a basic, simple image that somebody could love looking at for their whole life.

ANN TEMKIN: The yellow painting is oil on canvas. But the blue one actually adds sand to the oil, and it's made with a very nubby surface. ... The paint becomes a very textural element rather than a smooth, almost unnoticeable one.

MARY HEILMANN: I really love that idea. That the paintings are physical and tending to be sculptural. And that's a big part of my work, too.

# # #

## **Stop 622: Gallery 1 Overview**

ANN TEMKIN: Judd began as a painter and worked for several years in two dimensions before becoming the maker of three dimensional objects that we all know him for today. Walking into this first gallery, we encounter Judd's true beginnings as a sculptor.

Instead of expensive sculptural materials, like marble or bronze, he's wanting to use pipe and wood and nails and discarded materials to make three dimensional things. For me, he was announcing himself as somebody who was going to make art from the ordinary.

What you also notice going on in this gallery is that almost everything is painted with a cadmium red light paint. After trying a variety of colors, he realized that this was one that was very clearly indicative of edges and outlines. It would make them very sharp and apparent. And that was interesting to Judd.

### **Stop 623: Untitled, [DSS 30] [LOAF PAN] (Gallery 1)**

ANN TEMKIN: This untitled painting from 1961 has the very unusual feature of a normal metal loaf pan from the kitchen, stuck into the middle of it.

In Renaissance painting, one thought of the picture as a window into the imaginary world that the painting depicts. Here, it becomes very clear that Judd is not interested in art as a metaphor or some sort of an imaginary story. He's interested in it as a fact which will serve as, well, hard to call it a painting anymore, but something that will hang on the wall and be a work of art.

These are requiring of the viewer absolutely nothing but their willingness to pay attention and to engage their senses, and to think about, "Oh, here I am having a different experience than I've had before.

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### **Stop 624: Untitled, 1963 Cadmium red light oil on wood with violet Plexiglas - Jamie Dearing**

JAMIE DEARING: I'm Jamie Dearing, and I began working with Donald Judd as his assistant in 1967. Don had three main elements that he dealt with as the major themes in his work: color, materials, and space.

You immediately see that it's red, and it's intensely red. He built up the intensity of the pigment, so it became very, very powerful red, it's strident. It's almost aggressive. The division in it is purple. Purple is halfway between red and blue. And the piece is divided in half at the diagonal.

And the whole one side of the diagonal is missing. But the intensity of that violet diagonal expresses an incredibly intense missing bit of space.

9:20 I think it's helpful in looking through a retrospective of Judd's work to ask yourself along the way, "What is space? Where is the center? Is it open or closed? What is visible and invisible?"

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## **Stop 625. Drawings - Jamie Dearing**

JAMIE DEARING:

Don read all the time and drew all the time. And he used his drawing to work out his ideas. Unlike many sculptors, he didn't do mockups very often.

He did hundreds of drawings, sometimes, for a single piece, worked out proportions, worked out scale, chose material. But essentially they're incredibly rich, because they say so much about his thinking.

There's a good deal of arithmetic. And one of the reasons he left painting was, although they're incredibly lyrical and beautiful, they weren't offering him the kind of rigor and spatial investigation that he was after.

# # #

## **Stop 626. Untitled, 1963 [DSS 44] Purple lacquer on aluminum, cadmium red light oil on wood - Jamie Dearing, Ann Temkin**

JAMIE DEARING: This is a very interesting piece.

ANN TEMKIN: This is the artist Jamie Dearing, who worked for many years with Judd in his studio.

JAMIE DEARING: If you look at it on the end, it's a square, and he's taken the front corner away and he's replaced it with a tube, where you can see the entire interior space of the tube. He's liberated the square, he's changed the box, but he's replaced it with a horizontal interior space parallel to the wall.

And below it in each alternate side, are entryways into the interior of the piece, into the invisible inside space. So he has perpendicular, invisible space emerging away from the wall, and he has visible horizontal space running along the wall. It's both viewable and hidden at the same time.

# # #

## **Stop 627: Gallery 2 Overview 1960s (Breakthrough Sculptures)**

ANN TEMKIN: Walking around this second gallery, you'll see some of Judd's works from between 1964 and 1969. This is the period when Judd became widely recognized as a leading voice of his generation—a generation of sculptors who, basically, revolutionize the whole idea of what it is that sculpture is.

And so by the end of 1964, Judd transformed himself from an artist who made things in a typical messy artist's studio with the smell of paint or the smell of sawdust, and instead began working together with sheet metal fabricators, and essentially giving them drawings that he made for these forms that you see on the floor or on the walls.

They're made, not by Judd's hand,, but by Judd's mind and by his working very closely in concert with these skilled workmen who knew how to create the forms in the way that he wanted.

# # #

## **Stop 628: Untitled, 1964 [DSS 53 Orange pebbled Plexiglas and hot-rolled steel]**

MARY HEILMANN: When you come up and stand next to the cube and look at it for a while, think about the pretty color, or the fact that that doesn't have any color. Think about what it's made of. Why did he choose to make it a certain height? Walk around it and think about how long it takes to walk around. Those are a few ideas to help have that experience yourself and then even maybe include other people in your experience.

# # #

## **Stop 629: Untitled, 1966 [DSS 92 TURQUOISE FLOOR “CHANNEL”]**

ANN TEMKIN: This 10 by 10 foot work on the floor is one of the types of work known as a “channel piece.” Each of these 10 rectangular channels, painted this beautiful turquoise, is identical in size and is spaced identically from the next one from the beginning to the end.

CHARLES RAY: My name is Charles Ray. I'm a sculptor. What makes that not an industrial frame? For instance, let's say electrical grid generator or something would be slid into it? It wants to slip into non-art. And it always comes back out and wins as art.

One time a collector who bought my sculpture I crated the sculpture, and I sent 12 empty crates with the sculpture. And when he arrived, he was just furious that, you know, why did he have to pay for these 12 empty crates?



I said, they're not empty, that they contain the space that goes around the sculpture. And it was just my point that the sculpture is made of space. It doesn't need space the way furniture needs space, it needs the space to make itself, in a way.

ANN TEMKIN: Space is as much of an ingredient or an actor within this piece as the aluminum itself. It's almost like our materials description on the label should say, "aluminum" and "air," instead of just "aluminum."

# # #

**Stop 630: Untitled, 1968 [687.1980] [Brass Cube] Leslie Hewitt**

LESLIE HEWITT: My name is Leslie Hewitt. We're looking at this Untitled brass floor work.

There's a power, a demand to pay attention to it, to physically have a relationship with it, to think about what it means to pare down anything to its essence. And then you question, well, what is essence? So, I think that's the power of it.

The relationship between the way that light penetrates or that light reflects is so a part of my looking at this work. And that it becomes an enigma, I love. It draws you in, it asks you a question, it doesn't give you the answer, it is asking for you to have an engagement with it that's active. It's not passive. To make sense of the object through direct experience. I respect that.

Something that I find very striking is you can't help but see certain mathematical principles made physical. Which for me on a personal level, I'm from a family of people who are connected to math. My mother was a math teacher, my dad was a computer programmer.

So as an artist, I think minimalism, when I first saw certain works, I thought, wow, I see, it's making certain concepts concrete and visible.

The date does give you a timestamp. In American history, I think 1968 is a charged date. We can't undo that. I can't not see the world as being radically changed, not only as a woman, but also a woman of color. Seeing that date holds me as a viewer to account to other histories that aren't literally reflected, but it doesn't mean that they're not pivotal.

# # #

**Stop 631: STACKS Untitled, 1965 [DSS 65] and Untitled, 1967 [DSS 104]**

ANN TEMKIN: This vertical column of shelf like units, painted green is a signature form that have come to be called "stacks."

CHARLES RAY: My name is Charles Ray. The presence of the column of air that that went through the stack is as strong as the fabricated boxes. You can't move the column off the wall. Not because of the screws that, obviously, hold it onto the wall, but because of that column of air, in that specific place, is locking the sculpture.

MARY HEILMANN: I'm Mary Heilmann. And my favorite one is the green one. Beautiful green. You can't not think of a tree or a vine or some kind of nature, geometric nature. He really was good at that.

The fact that they're ascending rectangular-shaped shelves means that as you look at it you see movement. You travel with your eyes up and down into the wall and out. I imagine how big they are, how many inches. I measure them in my mind. I'm always thinking about architecture when I look at Judd.

# # #

**Stop 632: Untitled, 1969 St. Louis Art Museum CH2017, 1182 - Charles Ray**

CHARLES RAY: You look at a Judd, initially, you feel self-conscious and awkward. "Why am I looking at this box?" "Where's the art?" "What's artful about Judd?"

I would let go of that and feel and think about the piece rather than going immediately to, "I like it, I don't like it," and turning it around and walking out of the room. Think about how we view it and where we find ourselves in relationship to the work.

This piece is not separated from you. It's part of you. It's part of at this very moment in this place, in this time, even if it was made 30 years ago. And in that, you're connected to Donald Judd. He's at one end of a temporal spectrum, feeling and making and fabricating, and you're at the other, thinking and looking.

# # #

### **Stop 633: Gallery 3 Overview 1970s, (Marfa & Scale)**

ANN TEMKIN: Here in this gallery, one's immediately aware Judd's work is getting closer and closer to the architectural.

Judd decided that he needed space and property much larger than his studio on Spring Street in Soho in New York could ever offer. He set off to Marfa, a small town in West Texas, not too far from the Mexican border. He was able to buy a complex of sites in which his art could be permanently displayed, and in which he could make art and envision art of far greater scale than what he could do in Manhattan.

Here in this desert town with open skies and the vista of the Chinati mountains, I believe there is a sense of expansive, almost infinite space and scale that suited what Judd's imagination needed at that moment.

# # #

### **Stop 634: Untitled, 1973 [DSS 280] – [PLYWOOD WALL GROUPING]**

PARK MCARTHUR: I'm Park McArthur. I'm an artist living here in New York. I'm particularly interested in this Untitled 1973, plywood units. Their size, it does feel, in some ways, like a space to inhabit or play.

You can read it frontwards or backwards. The openings are kind of skewed in the way that you might have the optical effect of a piece that is shifting its surface based on your own position.

The piece seems to amplify itself or shrink along a horizontal plane. And so you get ... a kind of elongation or an exaggeration around the primary structure of a box or a square.

ANN TEMKIN: I like the plywoods for what they show about the sensuality of Judd's materials, even when they weren't rare or expensive materials. In these plywood planes, it's almost like an animal skin pattern. Like a leopard, or a cheetah with these shades of brown.

And there's a great variety among the different sheets of plywood within this one work. But for Judd, it was important to accept all of that happenstance in the materials that he chose to use, or that the fabricator sourced.

# # #

### **Stop 635: Untitled 1976-1977 (FLOOR PIECE, "TRAYS") – Ann Temkin**

ANN TEMKIN: These are these individual units, 21 of them, that are just four inches tall that are almost like little trays and sit directly on the floor the lowest work in the exhibition.

These are works that are set according to Judd's specifications, thirteen and a half inches apart from each other. For all of Judd's work, it is specified by him what those gaps between different units need to be. And that isn't because he was being fussy or a control freak. That was really because the space in between the units is as important as a component of the sculpture as the solid part.

And Judd often spoke about that he gave as much thought to the positioning of a piece as to the making of it. Sculptures really are beings in a place. And the being that is a sculpture depends for its life on the space in which it's being seen.

# # #

### **Stop 636: Gallery 4 Overview 1980s (Late work, Color & Form)**

ANN TEMKIN: This final, very large, gallery is devoted to that decade from the early eighties until Judd's death in 1994. I think it is in this last decade of his life that one remembers that Judd was a painter for the first decade of his adult life. Even just glancing briefly at this gallery, it's quite full of joy and exuberance.

These metal works are all made on a system that was developed in partnership with a Swiss design company outside Zurich that allowed him to do the kind of things he had only dreamed of. For example, with aluminum, the individual planes of the sculptures aren't welded together, they're actually folded by machine.

So the new technical advantages that he found here unleashed this creative spurt that caught people completely off guard. A lot of people barely recognized these as Judds. So it's a particular pleasure to be able to realize that they're very continuous with his early interests. You look back to the works of the 70s and 60s and see, "Oh my God, he really loved color all along."

# # #

### **Stop 637: Color samples from RAL chart and pencil on paper – Ann Temkin**

ANN TEMKIN: We've borrowed for the exhibition a small set of the many collages that Judd made as he was thinking through the multicolored aluminum works. And he would make these collages out of the little color chips from the RAL color charts that he worked with.

RAL is a German-derived system that set up universal color across industries. So, for example, if you needed traffic signs for all of the highways in a certain country, that all of those traffic signs would be the exact same green. He liked the idea that here was this set of a couple hundred absolutely ready-made colors that you would pick from. They were colors that didn't involve any kind of romantic association with genius or creativity.

# # #

### **Stop 638: Untitled, 1989 Glenstone CH2017, 243 – John Yao**

JOHN YAU: I'm John Yao and I'm a poet and art critic, and I write about art.

Here's Judd, it's very liberating, his work, which is not what I would expect to say. There's something liberating about the fact that he's using industrial materials that are fabricated, boxes, all these, kind of, obvious things and suddenly they become something more.

It's funny, he's called minimalist, but I think he thought expansively. And I think that side of him is not acknowledged enough, that he was an expansive thinker who put

limitations to see what he could do, and that he tried to eliminate the personal, all these things. But yet, when he does get into the work there's a kind of feeling. In a way, it's kind of celebratory. It celebrates color just for being what it is, that color.

I think as a society, we're always driven to be productive, meaningful in some way that we can use. And he's saying, "It might be meaningful in a way that you can't just use. Maybe you should just enjoy it. Right?"

Wallace Stevens said "A poem must give pleasure." I get a lot of pleasure looking at Donald Judd's work. It makes me happy. It changes my mood. How many people can do that?

# # #

### **Stop 639: Untitled 1986, [WALL PIECE – PLYWOOD W COLOR] - John Yao**

ANN TEMKIN: During the 1980s, Judd continued to keep the basic box but he began to divide those boxes into units, into smaller sections, that activated all of the space within the box, as well as this space around it.

JOHN YAU: He's using something almost generic, a box, and yet his boxes are not like anybody else's. There's something really subtle and fairly remarkable about what he does. By walking around the side of this piece, you see the colors differently, cause there'll be shadow inside the box.

He's really asking you, or challenging you, to see how sensitive you can become to what's in front of you. And I think, "I want that challenge!" [laughs] I think it's great. It's good to be reminded, because you know our life is so routine in a way. You kind of stop seeing things, and he's saying, "No, don't stop seeing, don't stop looking, don't stop engaging."

ANN TEMKIN: In today's terms one thinks of mindfulness. And the mindfulness of being in the presence of a thing which has a very ... thought out, very considered construction and, in a sense, the nobility of that, and the care that went into making that work in that particular way, with this set of angles, not that set of angles. This is something that had great meaning to him in a way that went far beyond the world of art itself, and instead stretched much more into how to be a person in this world.

# # #

### **Stop 640: Untitled 1991 [MULTI-COLORED FLOOR PIECE] – Ann Temkin**

ANN TEMKIN: This large piece from 1991, it's a very basic system of five columns and five rows in a variety of colors. These works you can see very clearly their construction because you can see the screws that put one box next to another.

JOHN YAU: He really makes it so there's no focal point, right? How do you use all these colors? Not make it look arbitrary, and keep your interest. That's pretty difficult.



ANN TEMKIN: John Yau is a long time writer on art and poet.

JOHN YAU: Because you start to see connections in the colors. As soon as you see that, your eye wanders off to another connection and you just keep looking, and then suddenly you're in another state of looking, which I would say is poetic, [laughs] and it's not just purely analytical.

And I think the poetry's the color. It's color that stands for itself.

ANN TEMKIN: We invite you to spend some time in the reading area outside the exhibition. This is filled with chairs and tables designed by Judd that were newly produced for this occasion. Furniture occupied a large part of his thinking about what he did, and he wanted there to be a connection between art and life.

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