

DEVALS

Biography

Everything sculpture has, my work doesn't.

— Donald Judd

Donald Judd was one of the most consequential artists of the second half of the twentieth century. Through his radical redefinition of the art object and his sustained examination of the relationships between form, material, space, and perception, he transformed the terms in which art could be conceived, produced, exhibited, and experienced. His work challenged inherited assumptions about sculpture, while his writings, architectural interventions, and commitment to the permanent installation of art extended his influence far beyond the studio. Today, his legacy continues to inform contemporary art, architecture, and design, as well as broader discussions concerning the relationship between artistic practice and lived experience.

Donald Clarence Judd was born on June 3, 1928, in Excelsior Springs, Missouri. After serving in the United States Army in Korea from June 1946 until November 1947, he returned to the United States and pursued an education that brought together philosophy, art, and critical inquiry. He studied at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, the Art Students League of New York, and Columbia University in New York, where he received a Bachelor of Science in philosophy in 1953 and subsequently undertook graduate studies in art history. This intellectual formation would remain central to his practice, which developed through an unusually close engagement with the conceptual foundations of art and the conditions under which it is made and encountered.



Fig. 1 Donald Judd. Photo: Leo Holub, courtesy Judd Foundation Archives, Marfa, Texas

Judd began his career as a painter, but by the early 1960s he had turned decisively toward three-dimensional work. Between 1959 and 1965, he was also a prolific art critic, writing for publications including *Arts*, *Art International*, and *Art News*, at times producing more than a dozen reviews in a single month. His criticism was not separate from his artistic practice: it provided a forum in which he examined the assumptions underpinning contemporary art and articulated the questions that would shape his own work. He continued to write throughout his life, addressing the relationships between art, architecture, design, political action, and everyday experience. He also advocated for land preservation, empirical knowledge, and engaged citizenship, reflecting a conception of artistic responsibility that extended beyond the production of objects.

In a series of influential essays written during the early 1960s, Judd argued against illusionism and the inherited conventions of representation, calling instead for an art grounded in tangible substance. His position helped establish a new understanding of the work of art as a real object occupying actual space, rather than as an image whose meaning depended upon the illusion of another world. In this pursuit, he shared important concerns with artists such as John Chamberlain and Dan Flavin, whose practices likewise engaged commonplace and industrial materials. Judd increasingly worked with professional fabricators to realize his designs, challenging the assumption that the artist's hand must directly produce the finished object. This approach expanded the possibilities of artistic production and anticipated procedures that would become significant within Conceptual art.



Fig. 2 Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1963, courtesy Judd Foundation Archives, New York.

Judd's three-dimensional works developed through a rigorous investigation of geometry, material, colour, scale, and spatial arrangement. Among his most recognisable forms are the stacks, vertically arranged elements installed at regular intervals, and the progressions, whose dimensions are determined by numerical sequences. These works establish relationships through repetition, proportion, and interval, making the space between objects as consequential as the objects themselves. Their apparent simplicity conceals a precise negotiation between the individual work and its surroundings: each form is encountered not in isolation, but in relation to the architecture it occupies and the viewer who moves through it.

From the mid-1960s onward, Judd produced hollow metal boxes, many with coloured interiors, that were placed directly on the floor or otherwise installed without recourse to the traditional sculptural pedestal. By refusing the pedestal's conventional separation of sculpture from its environment, he sought to diminish the physical and psychological distance between the work and the observer. His objects were not intended to function as self-contained representations, detached from the world around them; they were to exist as integral elements of that world. Their materials, dimensions, placement, and relationship to architectural space became essential to their identity and experience.



Fig. 3 Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1963, courtesy Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

This understanding of the artwork as inseparable from its setting led Judd to question not only how art should be made, but also how it should be installed and preserved. In 1963, Green Gallery in New York presented his first solo exhibition of mature work. Three years later, Leo Castelli organised the first in an extended series of solo exhibitions, while Judd participated in *Primary Structures* at the Jewish Museum in New York, a landmark exhibition curated by Kynaston McShine in 1966. The exhibition's presentation of geometric and reductive forms in relation to gallery space resonated with Judd's own approach, for which the organisation of objects within an environment was fundamental rather than incidental.

In 1968, Judd purchased 101 Spring Street, a five-storey cast-iron building in SoHo, New York, which served as his residence and studio for the following twenty-five years. The building became a sustained investigation into the relationship between art and architecture, allowing him to develop and test his ideas about the placement of works within specific spaces. Rather than treating exhibition design as a neutral framework imposed upon completed objects, Judd regarded the spatial conditions of presentation as intrinsic to the work's experience. His commitment to permanent installation emerged from this conviction: artworks, architecture, light, and the movement of viewers were to be understood in relation to one another, without the repeated displacement and recontextualisation that conventional exhibition practices often entail.



Fig. 4 Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1968, courtesy Judd Foundation, New York.

In 1973, Judd began acquiring properties in Marfa, Texas, where he continued to install his own work and that of other artists. The studios, living quarters, buildings, and ranches he developed there reflect the breadth of his interests and the sustained integration of artistic practice with the organisation of space and the preservation of land. Marfa became the setting for an ambitious long-term project in which works could be experienced in carefully considered architectural and environmental conditions. His undertaking there was not simply a matter of establishing a place to display art; it expressed his belief that the physical circumstances of an artwork's presentation were inseparable from its meaning and integrity.

Judd formalised his commitment to preserving his work and its context by establishing the principles of the Judd Foundation in 1977. The Foundation was conceived to safeguard his art, spaces, libraries, and archives, while maintaining standards for the installation of his work. In 1986, he founded the Chinati Foundation, or La Fundación Chinati, specifically to provide permanent installations of large-scale works by himself and his contemporaries. Both institutions embody his conviction that art should be encountered through sustained engagement with the objects themselves and with the environments for which they were conceived. They also preserve the material and intellectual dimensions of his legacy, bringing together artistic production, architecture, documentation, and the wider conditions of cultural life.



Fig. 5 Donald Judd, *100 untitled works in mill aluminum*, 1982-1986, courtesy Judd Foundation, Chinati Foundation, Marfa.

Over nearly four decades, Judd exhibited throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia, and his work entered museum collections around the world. Major exhibitions include presentations at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York in 1968 and 1988; the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven in 1970; the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa in 1975; Tate Modern in London in 2004; and the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2020–21. These exhibitions reflect the continuing significance of an artistic practice that altered the understanding of sculpture and expanded the relationship between art, architecture, and the spaces of everyday life. Donald Judd died in 1994. His legacy, however, extends beyond the forms that have become emblematic of his work. It resides equally in his insistence on clarity of thought, the specificity of materials, the integrity of spatial relationships, and the importance of presenting art in conditions attentive to its actual nature. As artist, writer, and advocate for permanent installation, Judd established a lasting framework for thinking about how objects occupy space and how people encounter them. His work continues to shape artistic and architectural practice internationally, not as a closed style or a fixed historical category, but as an enduring inquiry into the physical, intellectual, and lived dimensions of art.



Fig. 6 Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1976, courtesy Dia Beacon, Riggio Galleries, Beacon, New York. Dia Art Foundation.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2024

Donald Judd. Gagosian, Basel, Switzerland.

2023

Donald Judd. Gagosian, 976 and 980 Madison Avenue, New York, NY.

2020–2021

Judd. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY.

2018

Donald Judd: Specific Furniture. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA.

2013

Donald Judd. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA.

2004

Donald Judd. Tate Modern, London, England.

2003

Donald Judd. Dia Beacon, Beacon, NY.

2002

Donald Judd: Der ganze Raum – Das Frühwerk 1955–1968. Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Bielefeld, Germany; travelled to the Menil Collection, Houston, TX.

2001

The Essential Donald Judd. Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN.

1988

Donald Judd. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

1978

Donald Judd. Nationalgalerie, Berlin, Germany.

1976

Donald Judd: Zeichnungen/Drawings, 1956–1976. Kunstmuseum Basel, Basel, Switzerland.

1975

Donald Judd. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada.

1971

Don Judd. Pasadena Art Museum, Pasadena, CA.

1970

Don Judd. Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, Netherlands; travelled to Folkwang Museum, Essen; Kunstverein Hannover; and Whitechapel Art Gallery, London.

1968

Don Judd. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

1966

Don Judd. Leo Castelli Gallery, New York, NY.

1963

Don Judd. Green Gallery, New York, NY.

Selected Group Exhibitions

2025

Minimal. Bourse de Commerce – Pinault Collection, Paris, France.

2024

If Not Now, When? Max Vorst Collection. Museum Beelden aan Zee, The Hague, Netherlands.

2023

Icônes: An Exhibition of Works from the Pinault Collection. Punta della Dogana, François Pinault Foundation, Venice, Italy.

2023

New York: 1962–1964. The Jewish Museum, New York, NY.

2023

Less: Minimalism in the 1960s. Acquavella Galleries, New York, NY.

2022

Minimal Art: Bodies in Space. Bucerius Kunst Forum, Hamburg, Germany.

2022

A Chair and You. Museum of Contemporary Design and Applied Arts, Lausanne, Switzerland.

2022

Balance. Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin, Germany.

2021

The Poetics of Exactness. Juan Carlos Maldonado Art Collection, Miami, FL.

2020–2021

Judd. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY.

2018

Flavin, Judd, McCracken, Sandback. David Zwirner, Hong Kong, China.

2016–2017

From the Collection: 1960–1969. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY.

2015–2016

Take an Object. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY.

2013

Andre, Flavin, Judd, McCracken, Sandback. David Zwirner, New York, NY.

2009–2010

1969. MoMA PS1, Long Island City, NY.

1982

Documenta 7. Documenta, Kassel, Germany.

1977

Documenta 6. Documenta, Kassel, Germany.

1976

Rooms. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY.

1975

Sculpture: American Directions 1945–1975. National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C..

1974

Inaugural Exhibition. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C..

1969

Five Sculptors: Andre, Flavin, Judd, Morris, Serra. Art Gallery, University of California, Irvine, CA.

1968

The Art of the Real: USA 1948–1968. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; travelled to the Grand Palais, Paris; Kunsthaus Zürich; and Tate Gallery, London.

1968

Documenta 4. Documenta, Kassel, Germany.

1967

Guggenheim International Exhibition 1967: Sculpture from Twenty Nations. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY.

1966

Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors. The Jewish Museum, New York, NY.

PUBLIC & INSTITUTIONAL COLLECTIONS

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, USA
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, USA
The Broad, Los Angeles, California, USA
Centre Pompidou, Paris, France
Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas, USA
Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio, USA
Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, USA
Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas, USA
Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas, USA
Denver Art Museum, Denver, Colorado, USA
Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, Iowa, USA
Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Michigan, USA
Dia Art Foundation / Dia Beacon, New York, USA
Eskenazi Museum of Art, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, USA
Escher in Het Paleis, The Hague, Netherlands
Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Switzerland
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., USA
Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields, Indianapolis, Indiana, USA
Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel
Judd Foundation, New York, New York, and Marfa, Texas, USA
Kunstmuseum Basel, Basel, Switzerland
Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, Germany
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California, USA
Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich, Switzerland
Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands
Museum für angewandte Kunst, Vienna, Austria
Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, Germany
Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany
Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, USA
Museum of Modern Art, Shiga, Japan
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York, USA
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., USA
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada
National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland
Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, New York, USA
Palazzo Grassi / Pinault Collection, Venice, Italy
Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, Italy
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, California, USA
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, New York, USA
Tate, London, United Kingdom
Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York, USA