

GALERIE THADDAEUS ROPAC

LONDON PARIS SALZBURG

PRESS RELEASE

DONALD JUDD

**CURATED BY FLAVIN JUDD
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR,
JUDD FOUNDATION**

6 April – 15 June 2019

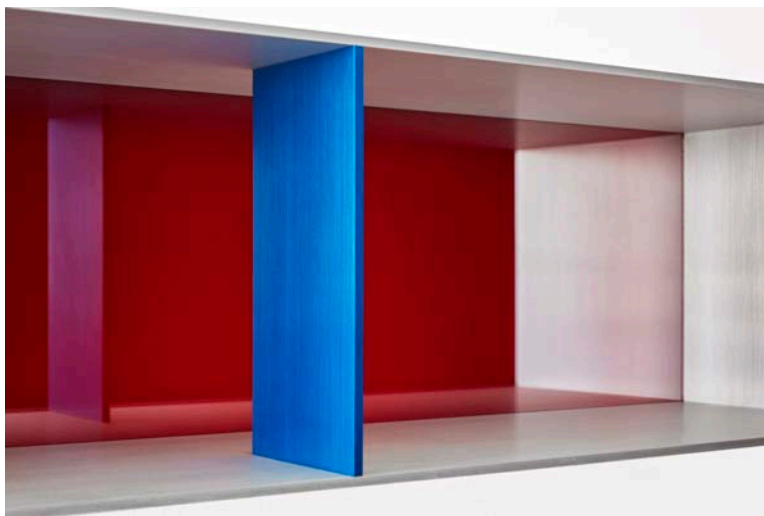
Press Preview

Friday 5 April 2019, 11am – 12pm

Opening

Saturday 6 April 2019, 6pm – 8pm

Paris Marais
7, rue Debelleyne
75003 Paris



1) **Donald Judd**, untitled, 1991 (Detail)

Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac is pleased to present an exhibition of works by American artist Donald Judd (1928–1994), the first solo exhibition of his work in three dimensions in France for 18 years. Curated by the artist's son Flavin Judd, Artistic Director of Judd Foundation, this exhibition marks the gallery's first collaboration with the Judd Foundation, represented since November 2018. One of the most influential artists of the post-war period, Donald Judd developed a unique visual vocabulary that broke with the conventions of modern sculpture, a non-representational art that exists purely in terms of its own physical presence.

The exhibition brings together key works selected by Flavin Judd, spanning three decades from 1963 to 1993. With a focus on freestanding floor works and wall-based works, the show constitutes a diverse overview of Judd's distinctive use of industrial materials, such as

plywood, aluminium and acrylic sheets. The works reveal a continuing investigation into the nature of space, form and material, with a particular emphasis on colour.

Highlights of the exhibition include an early freestanding floor work, a 'progression' work, a large aluminium floor piece with acrylic divider, and a group of late wall-mounted boxes. In the first-floor gallery, a set of 15 aquatints, a group of woodcuts and silkscreen prints will be shown alongside an example of Judd's furniture, Plywood Bench 76.

In his essay for the catalogue of this exhibition, Flavin Judd describes the essence of his father's art: 'Don said that he wanted to make art that was "everything at once", understandable in some sense at a glance. Not that you were finished with it in a second, but that you understood that it contained no internal contradictions and it was open to possibility. The work might have mystery because there was more there that you hadn't fully grasped yet, but given time, you would. [...] Don was after an art of the present, against time and against narrative – like a cinema film that reveals all its frames at once – fast and immediate with no translation necessary, no language required, no stories explicated. Don wanted to make art that dealt directly with reality and didn't partake in the anthropomorphizing of it. For him there is a direct line from the clarity of the art to the clarity of the thinking to the clarity of the moral stance to the clarity of the politics to the way of living. The basis of the art, of the design, of everything, is understanding the physical world and not contradicting it.'



2) **Donald Judd**, untitled, 1963

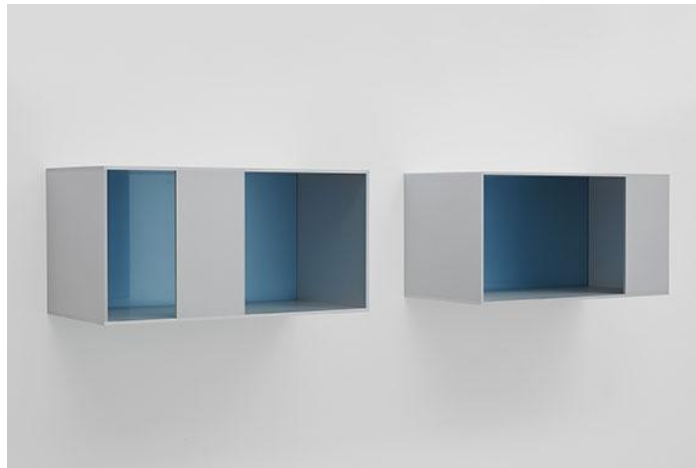
The exhibition includes one of Judd's earliest three-dimensional works, untitled, 1963, presented in France for the first time. Drawing directly from his earlier paintings, which also employ the use of red-cadmium paint, the work marks his departure from painting to working in three-dimensions, which he described as a decisive move into 'real space'. The use of rectangular forms at a right angle liberated Judd from the one-dimensional plane of painting, setting the ground for his more widely known works included in this exhibition.

With an emphasis on volume, clarity of structure and simplicity of form, Judd stripped down the conventions of sculpture with a matter-of-fact empiricism, seeking to expose the purity of materials simply 'for themselves, for the quality they have'. He later wrote, of the shift to work in three dimensions, 'The new work seemed to be the beginning of my own freedom, with possibilities for a lifetime.' Included in the exhibition, untitled, 1963, is one of three examples

which have been previously included in major Donald Judd retrospectives at The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, in 1968 and 1988.

Curator Flavin Judd comments on this decisive transition: 'After Don's initial freestanding painted wood works of 1963 he started working with thin sheet metal. This allowed him to make works that were larger and that could project further off the wall than the heavier wood allowed. With this transition he moved away from classical painting and sculpture and more towards works that were his own, that (...) interested him independent from the concerns of the accepted art practice and history.'

Judd later developed horizontal 'progressions' that incorporate the absent space across the wall. In *untitled*, 1970, a central aluminium tube is juxtaposed above a set of eight purple aluminium boxes, which increasingly 'progress' in length. Extending over 6 metres long, the work dominates the longest wall of the gallery, inviting the viewer to move around the piece to understand its inner logic. The organisation of empty space defined and circumscribed between materials is a central preoccupation for Judd, who considered it to be as important as visible tangible materials.



3) **Donald Judd**, *untitled*, 1988

In the central gallery, a 1-metre-high freestanding open-box in anodised aluminium reveals its deep blue interior. The work, *untitled*, 1989 is remarkable for its treatment of volume, material and, particularly, colour. The work was originally conceived to be exhibited alongside 11 other variations at the Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, in Germany in 1989. The technical treatment of the anodised aluminium creates a subtle reflective surface, which is reactive to modulations in the surrounding natural light. As a result, the slightly shimmering inside of the aluminium frame reflects the acrylic base's intense luminosity, underlining the volume within the box.

In the series of anodised aluminium wall-mounted works shown alongside the 1989 floor piece, acrylic sheets of varying colours and opacity create an indefinite sense of colour and depth, varying with one's own position and height. For instance, in *untitled*, 1991, yellow and black acrylic sheets are juxtaposed to render a unique and indefinable 'golden green', as reflected from within the surrounding aluminium frame, offering Judd the opportunity to create new colours,

The specific combination of materials, dividers and different colours characterizes these individual works within a number of variable possibilities. Although simple in form, Judd's

works create a complex perceptual experience through the interaction between contrasting materials. Judd described his intention twenty years before producing these works in an interview with *Artforum* in 1971: 'the inside is radically different from the outside. While the outside is definite and rigorous, the inside is indefinite.'

This brings us back to the fundamental ways in which we experience sculpture, and ultimately, the real world. An artist and a thinker who sought 'the simple expression of complex thought', Judd compels the viewer to consider what we mean by 'experience' in its most elementary form: 'In looking you understand: it's more than you can describe. You look and think, and look and think, until it makes sense, becomes interesting.'

This exhibition will be accompanied by a specially designed publication featuring an essay by renowned art historian Catherine Millet, a text by Flavin Judd, and the artist's seminal essay 'Some Aspects of Colour in General and Red and Black in Particular'.

A selection of monumental works by Donald Judd are concurrently on view at Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac Pantin until 27 April 2019, as part of the exhibition *Monumental Minimal*.



4) **Donald Judd** in Marfa, Texas, 1993

About the artist

The work of Donald Judd (1928–1994) prepared the ground for a new artistic language and established the sculptural parameters he modulated throughout his career. For Judd, investigating spatial configurations and geometric forms was a means of distancing his work from symbolic meaning, often associated with Minimal art, a categorisation he adamantly opposed. His practice was embedded in the qualities of the materials he used, despite the industrial process of their production.

Judd first came to public attention in the mid-1960s for his distinctive use of industrial materials in uniform, serialised works. A prolific writer and critic in his own right, and author of

the seminal essay 'Specific Objects' (1965), he broke decisively with the traditions of painting and sculpture, paving the way for practices that continue to define contemporary art today.

In 1968, the first major museum exhibition of his works in three dimensions was held at the Whitney Museum of American Art. In the same year, Judd purchased 101 Spring Street, a five-storey cast-iron building in New York, where he developed his idea of the permanent installation, and his belief that the placement of a work of art was as critical to its understanding as the work itself. The building became a platform for his art and that of others, with Judd's works permanently exhibited alongside those of his contemporaries.

In 1971, Judd first visited Marfa, Texas, where he eventually established studios, living quarters and ranches, now part of Judd Foundation. In Marfa, his work increased in scale and complexity as he started making room-sized installations. In 1986, he transformed the public part of this unique large-scale project into the Chinati Foundation, a landmark of contemporary art in which his work was to be exhibited permanently alongside fellow artists including Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Richard Long, Ilya Kabakov, and Claes Oldenburg. Until the end of his life in 1994, he endeavoured to question the notion of the art object, using a variety of materials, a crafted approach and rigorous experimentation with colour.

Judd's work has been exhibited throughout the United States, Europe and Asia and acquired by museum collections worldwide, including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris; and Tate Modern, London. Major exhibitions of his work include the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York in 1968 and 1988. In 1987, a retrospective was organised by the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven and travelled to the Städtische Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, and Castello di Rivoli, Turin. In 2000, *Donald Judd: Colourist* was organised by the Sprengel Museum, Hannover, and travelled to Kunsthau Bregenz, Switzerland, and Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, Nice. In 2004, a survey exhibition was staged by Tate Modern, London, which travelled to the K20 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf and the Kunstmuseum Basel. A retrospective of Judd's work is forthcoming at The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Judd Foundation

Judd Foundation maintains and preserves Donald Judd's permanently installed living and working spaces, libraries and archives in New York and Marfa, Texas. The Foundation promotes a wider understanding of Judd's artistic legacy by providing access to these spaces and resources and by developing scholarly and educational programmes. For further information please visit www.juddfoundation.org.



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Credits

Photos: Thomas Lannes
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1) **Donald Judd**, untitled (Detail), 1991
Clear and turquoise anodised aluminium with transparent blue over red acrylic sheets
25 x 100 x 25 cm (9,84 x 39,37 x 9,84 in)

2) **Donald Judd**, untitled, 1963
Cadmium red light oil on wood, and purple enamel on aluminium
121.9 x 210.2 x 121.9 cm (48 x 82.75 x 48 in)

3) **Donald Judd**, untitled, 1988
Clear anodised aluminium and blue acrylic sheets, 2 units
Each 50 x 100 x 50 cm (19.69 x 39.37 x 19.69 in)

4) **Donald Judd** in Marfa, Texas, 1993
Photo ©: Laura Wilson

[Image Download Donald Judd 2019](#)

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