

QUICK VIEW:

Synopsis

Donald Judd was an American born painter, writer and sculptor. His work placed him at the forefront of the Minimalist movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Judd rejected **Abstract Expressionism** through lack of imagery, composition, and by reducing painting and sculpture to its basic elements through using natural light, simple lines, industrial materials, and solid colors on flat surfaces. Therefore replacing the metaphor with literal truth. Possessing a strong allegiance to philosophy and theory, Judd's unique perspective on art and art-making resulted in a revolutionary and innovative aesthetic that would defy conventional artistic ideals.

Key Ideas

- Judd is known for using a repertoire of three forms known as, 'stacks', 'boxes', and 'progressions' that he used throughout 30 years of his career.
- Judd was a preeminent figure and at the forefront of Minimalism, a term which he detested, of the 1960s and early 1970s.
- He wrote for major art publications as a perceptive, tough, and opinionated art critic of the postwar period.
- Judd believed that art should no longer be representational nor presume to describe human emotion. It should purely just be.
- Judd's work is governed by a unique combination of reductive and highly distilled geometric forms.

DETAILED VIEW:

Childhood

Donald Judd was born June 3, 1928, in Excelsior Springs, Missouri. He spent much of his early childhood on his grandparent's farm where at a young age he became acutely aware of the physical world around him. Later on, his family lived in and around the Midwest. They finally settled in New Jersey and Judd, always an artistically talented child, enrolled in the Art Students League in 1948 to study painting and drawing.

Early Training

Only a few months after enrolling in the Art Students League he transferred to the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia and remained there until 1949. In a few months, Judd changed course again and moved back to New York to study philosophy at Columbia University while also taking classes at the Art Students League where he received most of his artistic training. Throughout the early 1950s, Judd studied and emulated artists such as Stuart Davis and William de Kooning. However, by the late 1950s, Judd had begun moving away from the flat picture plane to three-dimensionality. In 1957, Judd began a master's program in Art History at Columbia University. This same year, still constrained to the canvas at this point, the Panoramas Gallery organized his first solo exhibition. In addition to developing his art, during his tenure as a graduate student in 1959, Judd began writing art reviews for major art publications such as *Art News* and became a contributing editor for *Arts Magazine* until 1965.

Beginning in the early 1960s, Judd had completely abandoned painting to focus exclusively on sculpture or 'specific objects' as the artist called them. Furthering the example set by Marcel Duchamp, Judd combined found objects with industrial materials such as, steel, concrete, aluminum, plywood and Plexiglas, to create what would spark an international art movement, known as Minimalism. Oddly, Judd was not inspired by traditional sculpture but by architecture and the objects and installations that were being done by his contemporaries such as Claes Oldenburg and John Chamberlain as well as unconventional painters such as Jackson Pollock, Barnett Newman, and Piet Mondrian. Judd admired their innovation and courage to produce work that was solely original and radical. Early examples of the artist's specific objects were a series of bulky reliefs painted a cadmium red trimmed with black. He then quickly moved to a series of large, hollow boxes made out of steel or copper arranged geometrically on the floor. Defying all preconceived notions, Judd removed all convention from traditional academic sculpture; removing any semblance of representation of humanity or emotion, as well as the pedestal by placing the object directly on the floor. His purposes of his boxes were to manipulate space as well as to play with the concept of the parts within the whole that all contribute to unity and balance within the object.

Mature Period



By 1963, Judd's presence and importance in the international art scene was beginning to take form with his second solo show held at the Green Gallery in New York. However, in 1965 Judd started to explore and introduce sculpture that moved up the wall, known as 'stacks'. Consisting of ten evenly spaced units, Judd used this form to exploit several combinations of color, materials, and light. His stacks are considered to be his breakthrough works and along with his 'progressions', objects that moved across the wall, and his 'boxes', these forms would be his core vocabulary for the next thirty years. Judd's goal was to create an entirely new experience for the viewer; one that would make the viewer keenly aware of their presence and size in relation to the objects. He became very involved in the installation process that subsequently made him very critical of museum's installation and maintenance practices, a subject he wrote on extensively. He believed that once an object was installed it had a permanent home and was to stay there forever; a concept not practiced by most museums.

In 1966, Leo Castelli, a prominent dealer and gallerist, organized the first of a long series of individual exhibitions for the artist at his gallery, The Leo Castelli Gallery, in New York. Always wanting to stretch his academic legs, from 1962 to 1964, Judd was an instructor at the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences. Then in 1966 he was also hired as a visiting artist at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, and in 1967 he taught sculpture at Yale University. By this time, Minimalism had a firm place within the timeline of art history and Judd was one of its leaders. However, Judd rejected the notions of what others were defining as Minimalist art. Critics defined it as either devoid of meaning, mathematical, or as a political and social commentary. Rather, Judd protested that although precise, his work was certainly not mathematical or political, but an intuitive process that played with space, natural light, unity and an object's existence and possibilities within that space. Judd was interested in recognizing his works as the objects that they literally were - steel, aluminum, and paint - and nothing more.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s Judd was the recipient of several grants and awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Swedish Institute, and the John Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. In 1968, The Whitney Museum of American Art organized the first retrospective of his work; a landmark and important achievement in any artist's career.

Late Period and Death

Beginning in the 1970s, after some success, Judd was able to expand his medium to

richer and more expensive materials such as copper and brass. The use of these materials allowed the simplicity and sleekness of his forms to possess even greater depth. However, towards the 1980s, critics began perceiving his work as repetitive. Thus while on a trip to Switzerland, Judd saw something there that would revolutionize his work; and that was enamel. Now Judd could achieve an ultra smooth surface with an ultra saturated color, this resulted in more dynamic and illuminated works.



In 1972, Judd purchased several ranches in Marfa, Texas in addition to owning his Spring Street studio in New York City. He had grown tired of the city and was yearning the wide-open spaces he so loved when he was a child on his grandparent's farm. Also, it would allow him to install a permanent home for his and his contemporary's large-scale installations. With the help of the Dia Foundation, Judd accomplished his goal by creating the Chinati Foundation, a large contemporary art museum to permanently display artist's work, including his own. For Judd, living in Marfa stimulated an expansion of his oeuvre. In 1984, he started designing furniture and interiors. He also expanded his color palette and materials for his iconic stacks, progressions, and boxes, such as anodized aluminum and acrylic. This allowed natural light to be picked up and reflected in a way that would illuminate the object like never before.

In 1988, The Whitney Museum of American Art organized another retrospective of his work that traveled extensively. Amongst several awards that the artist received, in 1992, Judd was elected a member of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm. By the 1990s, Judd was a powerhouse creator of Minimalist objects as well a successful and respected critic and writer. The artist died of lymphoma on February 12, 1994, in New York.

Legacy

Donald Judd was a master of innovation, defining a new lexicon of sculptural concerns. He is universally acknowledged as a key proponent of the Minimalist art movement of

the 1960s. Rejecting the sentimentality and self-indulgence conveyed by abstraction, Judd opted for precision, space, form, and intense color and texture. He was an educator and promoter of Minimalist sculpture as well as a prolific writer and art critic. His use of commercial manufacturing to create his objects re-defined traditional art making and challenged the idea that the presence the artist's hand equals quality aesthetics. His work helped inspire future artists and art movements such as Post-minimalism and Conceptual Art.

ARTISTIC INFLUENCES:

Below are Donald Judd's major influences, and the people and ideas that he influenced in turn.

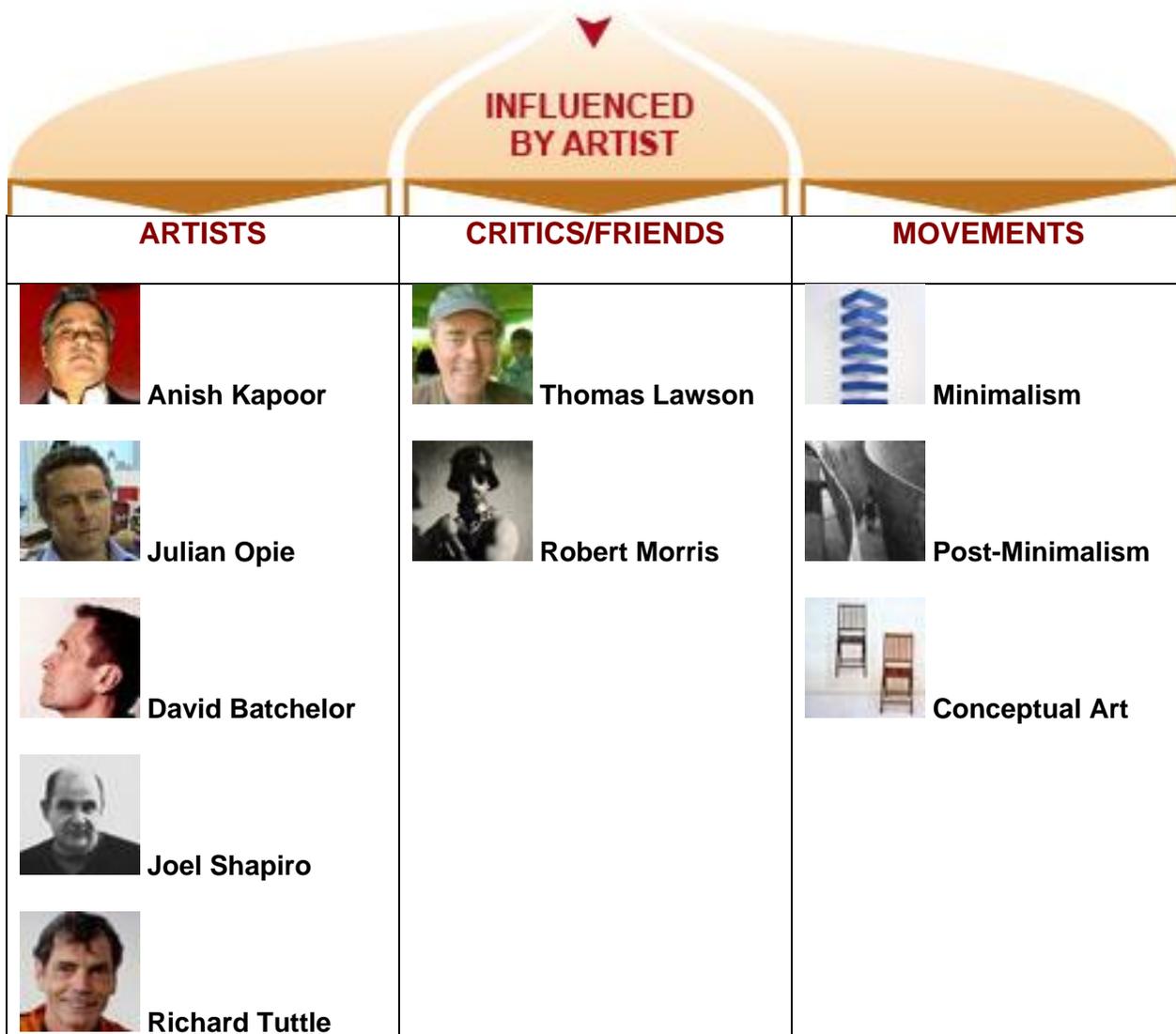
ARTISTS	CRITICS/FRIENDS	MOVEMENTS
 Dan Flavin	 Frank Stella	 Abstract Expressionism
 Barnett Newman	 John Chamberlain	 Dada
 Piet Mondrian	 Leo Castelli	 Modernism
 Mark Rothko	 Michael Fried	 Neo-Plasticism
 Marcel Duchamp		

INFLUENCES
ON ARTIST



Donald Judd

Years Worked: 1948 - 1994



Quotes

"Well, I am not interested in the kind of expression that you have when you paint a painting with brush strokes. It's all right, but it's already done and I want to do something new. I didn't want to get into something which is played out and narrow. I want to do as I like, invent my own interests. Of course, that doesn't mean that people who, like Newman, still paint are worn out. But I think that's a particular kind of experience

involving a certain immediacy between you and the canvass, you and the particular kind of experience of that particular moment. I think what I'm trying to deal with is something more long range than that in a way, more obscure perhaps, more involved with things that happen over a longer time perhaps. At least it's another area of experience."

"It takes a great deal of time and thought to install work carefully. This should not always be thrown away. Most art is fragile and some should be placed and never moved again. Somewhere a portion of contemporary art has to exist as an example of what the art and its context were meant to be. Somewhere, just as the platinum iridium meter guarantees the tape measure, a strict measure must exist for the art of this time and place."