

Furniture and Artwork as Paradoxical Counterparts in the Work of Donald Judd

Nina Murayama

In 1986, Donald Judd recalled that when he was commissioned to design a coffee table in the late 1960s he modified a piece of his artwork to produce the table; this approach did not result in a successful object, by Judd's account.¹ Explaining that this coffee table had taught him a bitter lesson—that his furniture should not mimic his artwork—Judd excluded the table from the chronology he prepared for the 1993 catalog of his furniture. This anecdote helps to illuminate his struggle to draw a strict line between his art and his furniture. The story of Judd's first piece of commissioned furniture evinces an agenda concerning the formal and structural resemblance between Judd's artwork and functional objects that formed an undercurrent in his output throughout his life. In this paper, I explore the interrelationship between Judd's furniture and art with a view especially toward the practical aspects—the fabrication processes, the predominant formal configurations, his marketing strategy, and his installation schemes—while keeping in mind Judd's own ideas and the critical receptions of his furniture design.

The connections between art and design in modernist art movements had a critical influence on Judd's artwork and furniture. Judd's factory-produced art and functional objects had many historical precedents and parallels: the experimental products of the Bauhaus, some innovations of the De Stijl members and the Russian Constructivists, Duchamp's ready-mades, and Pop Art's consumer culture-oriented works, as epitomized by Claes Oldenburg and Richard Artschwager. In general, whether Judd acknowledged it or not, these practices had a major effect on the ways in which his artwork and furniture were created and configured. Further, while Judd's industrial-looking art and design objects would seem to represent a counter to the tactile warmth of sculptures and functional objects by Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957) and Isamu Noguchi (1904–88), all three artists were profoundly engaged with issues inherent in design and with the articulation of space.

Although Judd's artwork influenced the development of usable artworks and architectural installations created by succeeding generations of artists (e.g., Scott Burton, R. M. Fischer, Siah Armajani, Vito Acconci, and Robert Wilson), the discourse about the relationship between design and art was not extensive in the United

¹ Donald Judd, "On Furniture," *Donald Judd: Möbel, Furniture* (Zurich: Arche Verlag AG, 1986); reprint in *Donald Judd, Complete Writings 1975–1986* (Eindhoven, Netherlands: Van Abbemuseum, 1987), 107

- 2 Several reasons explain the neglect of Judd's furniture productions. First, American formalist art critics largely dismissed the intertwining of art and everyday objects, which had been one of the radical modernist practices of the pre-World War II period. Second, since Judd's furniture does not fit neatly into either the fine art or design categories, it is prone to being overlooked. Finally, artists who design functional objects often meet with a degree of skepticism among critics because of the objects' inevitable enhancement of the commodity status of art. Although there have been several exhibitions in recent years exploring the interrelationship between art and design, a substantial discourse has not yet been established. Alex Coles's *DesignArt, On Art's Romance with Design* (London: Tate Publishing, 2005) and an anthology of essays and interviews edited by the same author, *Design and Art* (London: Whitechapel; Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), are the latest contributions to this emerging scholarship. An exhibition, entitled "Design ≠ Art, Functional Objects from Donald Judd to Rachel Whiteread," held at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in 2004, was another attempt to explore this arena. Most recently, an exhibition on Judd's furniture was held at Ikon Gallery, Birmingham in England in 2010, and the exhibition catalog, *Donald Judd, A good chair is a good chair* (2011) was published. In his catalog essay, "It's hard to find a good theory of furniture," Alex Coles emphasizes the fundamental difference between Judd's furniture and artwork from the perspective of function in *Donald Judd, A good chair is a good chair*, ed. Nigel Prince (Manchester, UK: Cornerhouse Publications, 2011), 98–9.
- 3 Jim Cooper, email correspondence with author, October 24, 2007.
- 4 Jim Cooper and Ichiro Kato, interview by author, New York, May 9, 2006.
- 5 Ursula Menet at Lezni A.G., confirmed that Judd's art and furniture were developed at the factory in the same year, 1984; Ursula Menet, email correspondence with author, February, 18 2008.
- 6 Raul Hernandez and Lee Donaldson, interview by author, Marfa, TX, June 5, 2006.

States during the 1980s and 1990s.² The discourse does seem to have gradually shifted away from its emphasis on the meaning of the real in art during the 1970s and 1980s; in more recent decades, artists—including Andrea Zittel and Jorge Pardo—paid closer attention to the participation of audiences and continued to explore design-oriented works, which often entailed the involvement of users, including the artists themselves.

Judd's furniture making developed gradually, around the time in 1968 that he obtained large spaces by buying a five-story cast-iron building on Spring Street in SoHo. After he and his children moved to Marfa, TX in 1976, Judd increasingly developed various kinds of furniture with local carpenters, while incorporating standardized materials of planks and adopting simple construction techniques in his rustic wood furniture pieces. Judd's furniture production entered a new phase during the 1980s, as he began extensively to commission professional wood and metal furniture makers and workshops and actively sought quality craftsmanship abroad.

The Fabricators of Judd's Artwork and Furniture

Judd initially made his artwork himself. In the beginning, he constructed simple wood furniture by himself or with the help of his father, a talented Sunday carpenter. However, Judd eventually found other craftspeople to do the task for him. Because he was neither a handyman nor had any interest in the actual production process, he hired the Bernstein Brothers in 1964 to fabricate his metal pieces. Judd's design objects, especially his prototypes for private use, were made by art fabricators from early in his career until the end of his life. The Bernstein Brothers made some early functional objects designed for the 101 Spring Street building, such as the aluminum chairs of 1971 and the steel sink of 1970–71. Jim Cooper and Ichiro Kato, both self-taught professional woodworkers of furniture and artworks, produced Judd's woodblocks from 1976 to 1981 and then began making furniture he designed.³ According to Cooper, he first fabricated a piece of wood furniture for Judd in 1982, at a time when the artist was rarely in New York City.⁴ The colorfully painted aluminum art pieces and furniture were both developed at the same factory, Lezni A. G., in 1984, most likely using the same materials, similar techniques, and a common fabrication process, or so the results would suggest.⁵ Later, in the early 1990s, some prototypes of steel furniture were made in Marfa by Lee Donaldson and Raul Hernandez, who were fabricators of Judd's Cor-ten steel art pieces. Donaldson and Hernandez recall that they approached the fabrication of Judd's art pieces and his furniture in the same way because the basic configurations of the art and furniture were alike.⁶ In short, the fabricators who made both art and furniture for Judd did not find much distinction in the materials and techniques they used to craft furniture and artwork, both of which achieved a similar level of careful refinement.⁷ Generally, once fabricators learned to

work out the logistics of meeting Judd's expectations with only a minimum of supervision, the making of any of Judd's objects seemed to unfold naturally, according to their own inner logic.

Furniture and Art Making Unfolding Side by Side

Judd began to make his so-called "stacks" in 1965. The work, untitled, is made of galvanized iron of seven units, each 9 x 40 x 30 in. (23 x 101.6 x 76.2 cm) with 9 in. (23 cm) intervals. The basic formula of the "stacks" is to create a box, or an open grid, lined up on the wall vertically and serially such that one can clearly comprehend the volume of each unit from the bottom to the top from almost any viewpoint. Similarly, in a work from 1966, Judd made a free-standing "stack" in which units of an oblong, square grid are simply lined up horizontally on the floor. This work, also untitled, is made of turquoise enamel on aluminum of 10 units, each 48 x 120 x 6.62 in. (122 x 304.8 x 16.8 cm) with 6 in. (15.3 cm) intervals. Each metal unit of the open grid structure creates a concrete sense of spatial volume that viewers easily grasp as they walk around the piece.

Interestingly, Judd applied comparable organizational principles of "stacks" to the bookshelves he made in 1966 with his father. The bookshelves are made of pine, and each unit has slightly different sizes: 13.4 x 33.5 x 9.5 in (34 x 85 x 24 cm); 13.6 x 33.5 x 9.5 in (34.5 x 85 x 24 cm); 8.5 x 33.5 x 9.5 in (21.5 x 85 x 24 cm). This early furniture project, consisting of multiple units of bookshelves, was made up of oblong frames that could be stuck up against a wall, depending on the size of the available wall space. In other words, the way in which the bookshelves were arranged could define the space of the wall, similarly to the way his "stacks" could define space as art pieces.

Most of Judd's works are not enclosed boxes; they are open, straightforward structures that one can look through, often self-evidently revealing the way they exist in space. Judd frequently used transparent or translucent materials in his art pieces (e.g., Plexiglas). In such pieces, one can see through to the interior; structurally and visually, then, nothing is hidden in his see-through art objects.

This formal feature in his art is generally shared with his furniture design. A close analysis of the fabrication process for Judd's artwork and furniture and a comparison of the results reveal that both kinds of output share complementary physical properties, as well as the basic formal characteristics of symmetry, geometry, and a clear sense of volume.

In considering these mute industrial art objects, art historians have offered many perspectives on the contingent encounters they provoke. Michael Fried criticizes their affinity with the mere effects of theater, whereas Rosalind Krauss projects a phenomenological model on Judd's objects.⁸ In his close analysis of the empirical philosophy that informed Judd's art, David Raskin characterizes Krauss's semiotic approach as being informed by the "linguistic face

7 Although many fabricators felt there was not a huge technological gap between making Judd's furniture and his art, Jeff Jamieson, a fabricator of Judd's wood and plywood furniture, claimed that it took a "very different mindset" to make Judd's art versus his furniture. Jeff Jamieson, telephone interview by author, November 13, 2007. There are some differences in terms of both materials and craft techniques between Judd's plywood art pieces and wood furniture. The first use of untreated plywood in his artwork came in the early 1970s, much earlier than his Finland-color plywood furniture, which was made almost two decades later. Moreover, the Finland-color plywood was never used to fabricate Judd's plywood art pieces.

8 Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 5:10 (June 1967); reprinted in *Minimal Art, A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock, *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 116–47; Rosalind Krauss, "Allusion and Illusion in Donald Judd," *Artforum* 4:9 (May 1966), 24–6; Krauss, "Sense and Sensibility: Reflection on Post '60s Sculpture," *Artforum* 12:3 (November 1973), 43–53.

- 9 David Raskin, "The Shiny Illusionism of Krauss and Judd," *Art Journal* 65:1 (April 2006), 17.
- 10 Anna Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," *Arts Magazine* (January 1990), 44–63.
- 11 David Raskin investigates Judd's philosophical allegiances to empiricists David Hume and Charles Sanders Peirce and considers how they were reflected in his art pieces that provoke a viewer's active response to objects as material facts that test prior knowledge. David Raskin, "Specific Opposition: Judd's art and politics," *Art History* 24:5 (November 2001), 684–87.
- 12 Donald Judd, "Discussion with Donald Judd," in *Donald Judd*, ed. Roland Wäspe (St. Gallen, Switzerland: Kunstverein St. Gallen, 1990), 54.
- 13 Moritz Schlick, "Über das Fundament der Erkenntnis" (The Foundation of Knowledge) *Erkenntnis* 4 (1934); reprint in *Logical Positivism*, ed. A. J. Ayer (New York: Free Press, 1959), 219–20. The book *Logical Positivism* is found at Judd's library at the Block, his main residence in Marfa.
- 14 Brigitte Huck also points out the ambiguity of functions in Judd's own formal determinations: "Judd often combines different functions in a single piece: table and bench, for instance, or table, bench and shelf unit. He also repeats elements, producing bench-table-bench combinations arranged in a line or rectangle, and exploiting the repetitive potential. Repetition as one of the central elements in his furniture also means openness and freedom, in that the focus is on recurring and new elements. Donald Judd's furniture designs always comply with the demand for conciseness and for the definition of the object in terms of its form and material." Brigitte Huck, "The Furniture," in *Donald Judd, Furniture Retrospective* (Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, 1993), 95.
- 15 Peter Ballantine, interview by author, New York, April 14, 2006

and antirealist temper" that is part of established art criticism.⁹ Anna Chave provides critical insights into the social implications of power among artists associated with Minimalism, as manifested in their industrial configuration of mute objects and masculine rhetoric.¹⁰ Although I agree with Raskin's empirical philosophy in investigating the context of Judd's output, I prefer in this paper to focus on the paradox in Judd's thinking revealed by the specific relationship between his art and design productions.

Having studied empirical philosophy, Judd was preoccupied with presenting a matter-of-fact effect in his art objects, eliciting immediate comprehension among viewers of his work instead of trying to prompt a metaphysical process of perception and interpretation.¹¹ Similarly, Judd's furniture can provoke a kind of empirical experience comparable to that posed by his artwork. Judd once responded to a question about his interest in the viewer's experience of either looking at or understanding his works: "That's the division between thought and feeling. You have to do it all at once. You have to look and understand, both. 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."¹²

In "The Foundation of Knowledge," Moritz Schlick, a German philosopher of logical positivism, summed up how the individual's direct observations could be the foundation of knowledge. Empirical knowledge operates by a method of induction, which uses "guessing" to generate principles, without depending on previous assumptions.¹³ This knowledge should be promptly perceived because the nature of observation is not aimed at a metaphysical process; rather, the empirical experience of the present moment has more validity with respect to the reality of the physical world than something written or memorized in the past.

This here-and-now, empirical approach of immediately perceiving Judd's artwork and furniture in the same space reinforces their essential physical similitude, regardless of one's prior knowledge about the cultural hierarchy between art and non-art objects. Like his art, Judd's skillfully made furniture poses an immediate question about its specific identity: "Is this furniture?" "Is this a bench or a table and a bed or a bench?" Some of his furniture pieces are oversized and certainly appear to be finely crafted, rigid cubic forms to be looked at, comparable to his art.¹⁴ In a sense, Judd approached his furniture and art in the same way, by configuring them on the basis of material fact in precise proportions.

Marketing Judd's Furniture

Except for some prototypes of his furniture pieces, Judd employed separate fabricators for his art and furniture productions in the late 1980s. Judd adhered to the dominant social and economic system at the practical level of production. A rational and economic reason was also behind Judd's usual separation, later in his career, of art

- 16 Jeff Jamieson started to work for Judd on the occasion of his retrospective at the Whitney Museum in 1988, as Judd needed extra help for the show. Having learned about Jamieson's fabrication of Alvar Aalto's furniture for his personal use, Judd decided to commission Jamieson for his furniture productions. Jamieson's educational background is in art, including ceramics; he received his B.A. in fine art and was not trained as a cabinetmaker. Jamieson also made two plywood art pieces (prototypes or studies) for Judd that are now in Marfa. Jamieson and his business partner, Rupert Deese, worked together at a small workshop equipped with basic, simple woodworking machinery, such as table saws, in the basement of the Spring Street building until 1994, four months after Judd's death, when Jamieson moved to California. He was the sole fabricator of Judd's wood furniture after Judd passed away until 2006; he resumed the position in November 2009 and is still serving in that role; Jeff Jamieson, interview, November 13, 2007 and email correspondence, June 27, 2008 and April 17, 2011. Judd also worked with other wood workshops located abroad, such as Pro Raum in Germany, where he made plywood furniture in the early 1990s. Jamieson recalls that he and Deese began to fabricate plywood furniture around 1991, but they never contacted other furniture fabricators with whom Judd was working; Jamieson, email correspondence with author, December 2, 2007.
- 17 The Judd Foundation, which was established by Judd's children in 1996 according to Judd's last wishes, holds the copyright for Judd's furniture designs, their production, and distribution. While Judd was alive, things operated somewhat informally; the artist was occasionally involved with selling his furniture via his own office, but as Robert Weiner told me, after Judd died in 1994 the business of marketing his furniture was officially passed to the Judd Estate (later, the Judd Foundation); Robert Weiner, Associate Director at Chinati Foundation, telephone interview by author, October 25, 2007.
- 18 Weiner, interview, October 25, 2007.
- 19 I am grateful to Urs Peter Flückiger, Professor at the College of Architecture, Texas Tech University, for drawing my attention to the fact that there were cases when Judd promoted and sold his furniture through art galleries where he was represented.

and furniture fabricators. Peter Ballantine, a fabricator of Judd's plywood artworks, explains that the division between art and furniture fabricators was rather a matter of convenience because Judd employed fabricators at small workshops with one or two craftsmen. If entire workshops were engaged with his furniture productions, they would not be able to produce any new artwork, which would pose a serious problem in preparing for Judd's upcoming exhibitions.¹⁵

After 1989, Judd's wood furniture was produced in New York by Jeff Jamieson and Rupert Deese (collectively, Wood and Plywood Furniture (WPF)).¹⁶ Lehni A. G., a furniture factory in Switzerland known for its sophisticated techniques in bent sheet metal furniture, began to produce Judd's art and furniture after 1984. However, Judd ceased doing business with Lehni A. G. in 1987 because he was beginning to divide his fabricators of art pieces and furniture. The sheet metal furniture began to be fabricated at Janssen C. V., in Holland in 1989, whereas aluminum art pieces were made at Menziken A.G. in Switzerland after 1988. Almost a decade after Judd's death, in 2002, Lehni A. G. resumed fabricating his aluminum furniture under the authorization of the Judd Foundation.¹⁷ The factory remains the sole fabricator of Judd's aluminum sheet furniture still in production today.

Judd's first two furniture exhibitions were mounted in 1984 and were held almost simultaneously at private and public spaces: He exhibited at his home at 101 Spring Street (November 17–December 15, 1984) and at the Max Protetch Gallery (December 7, 1984–January 5, 1985) in New York City. In addition, Judd's new, large-scale art pieces, made of concrete and steel, were also on view at Leo Castelli's two galleries in SoHo. In short, four exhibitions simultaneously featured one artist in the same neighborhood of New York City. Perhaps such concentrated showings were not unheard of during the 1980s; nevertheless, such an opportunity surely was reserved only for the most established of artists. This plethora of shows also suggests the artist's ample productivity, achieved through his skilled professional fabricators, and it demonstrates Judd's capability as the manager of an entire business operation. Judd carefully orchestrated the presentation and distribution of works among different venues: pieces of wood furniture were handled by Jim Cooper, who curated the solid wood furniture exhibit at the semi-homey setting of 101 Spring Street; colorfully enameled aluminum furniture fabricated at Lehni A. G. in Switzerland was shown at the Max Protetch Gallery, known for representing both artists and architects; and art pieces of ambitious scale went to the Leo Castelli galleries run by the internationally prominent Castelli (1907–99), who was an influential dealer of contemporary art. Judd tried to separate his furniture dealers from his art dealers from the outset as a means of promoting his furniture in the public arena.¹⁸

However, there were cases in which some art galleries dealt with his furniture, and Judd's new art and design works were often shown around the same time in close proximity.¹⁹ In the 1980s, his design projects were represented by such art galleries as the Paula Cooper Gallery in SoHo, the Rhona Hoffman Gallery in Chicago, and the Annemarie Verna Gallery in Switzerland, as well as at Protetch. It seems that Judd became stricter about the division between his furniture and art dealers in the late 1980s, when he instigated a complete separation between his fabricators of furniture for sale and his fabricators of art pieces.

Judd handled his furniture as more of a small business operation as he developed new designs meant especially for his family members and close friends. In some cases, his furniture functioned as a token of friendship for the local community.²⁰ "I try to keep the prices as low as possible, but because all of the work is done by hand, the cost of a chair still comes to \$1,500," Judd said to an interviewer in 1993.²¹ Although such a price for a chair is not affordable for the average household, compared with a recent sharp rise in prices for Judd's artwork at auction houses, the prices for his furniture seem rational, and even modest.²² Aware of the logic of business in the art world, Judd might have realized that when each piece of furniture is manufactured with highly sophisticated craftsmanship and the furniture is sold through editions shown at galleries, it would be priced as a luxury item.

Adopting galleries as the main marketing venues for distributing his furniture might seem to contradict the spirit of Judd's intention to separate his furniture from his art in public, official arenas of display and production. However, placing his furniture in galleries also might have allowed Judd to avoid competition in the wider arena of the design market. Judd tried to maintain a fair price for each piece of his furniture because he saw it as constituting a "real" functional object.²³ Nevertheless, Judd was not eager to reach out to wide audiences. He rejected the dominant process of mass-production and favored the small workshop operation for the creation of both his art and functional objects.

As a designer, Judd appealed to the highbrow, upscale market, more so than the middle market consisting of "art crowds." In fact, Judd's furniture is likely best appreciated by audiences who are familiar with his artwork.²⁴ Meanwhile, major art and design museums generally have shown little interest in collecting Judd's furniture. Not having been formally trained as either a designer or an architect, Judd has remained an outsider in both fields; thus, occupying a pivotal role in the disciplinary or historical currents of design and architecture seems an impossibility for him. His furniture has not yet established a brand status in the design field, while his artwork is generally perceived as part of the canon of Minimalism. Judd faced a dilemma in marketing his art and furniture separately, even though their formal configurations and production processes

20 For instance, Judd placed advertisements for cultural activities at the Chinati Foundation in a local newspaper, *Big Bend Sentinel*, run by Robert Halpern. When the Chinati Foundation owed \$2,000 to the news agency in 1992, Judd asked Halpern if he would like to have Judd's furniture to pay the debt, and Halpern agreed and chose a table-bench from a catalog Judd showed him. The furniture piece was made by Raul Hernandez using 2x12 pine obtained at a local lumberyard, and it now sits in Halpern's office in Marfa as a witness to the "friendship" between them; Robert Halpern, interview by author, Marfa, TX, June 5, 2006. Shaw Skinner, a CPA in Alpine who worked for Judd from 1987 to 1994, asked Judd for permission to make a copy of Judd's library desk for his own office. Judd verbally approved the request and, when he saw the new desk at Skinner's office, stated, "Oh, this is familiar to me," per Shaw Skinner, interview by author, Alpine, TX, June 6, 2006.

21 Donald Judd, interview of Judd, in Melissa Susan Gaido Allen, Appendix A: Dutch Interview, c. Mid-1993. Melissa Susan Gaido Allen's Ph.D. dissertation, "Donald Judd and the Marfa Objective," is an impressive, comprehensive study of Judd's permanent installations in Marfa and focuses, with extensive visual documents, on Judd as an architect. Her work is based on her own long-term eye witnessing of the history and development of the Chinati Foundation and Judd Foundation and the changes in the installations during the period of time before and after Judd died. Melissa Susan Gaido Allen, "Donald Judd and the Marfa Objective" (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 2005), 196.

22 For instance, Dennis Dickinson, Director of 2D gallery in Marfa, ordered a solid wood chair in 2002 (the chair is stamped "Judd 2002© C CP 5 376 WPF") through the Judd Foundation. It was fabricated by Jeff Jamieson, and Dickinson paid \$1,100 for the chair.

23 As he stressed in 1991, "The main point is it's not art. It's not artist's furniture, it's real furniture. We do sell it now, though we don't make much of an effort to do so yet, which I think we should because people want it. And we try to keep the price down. It's still kind of expensive." Donald Judd, "Donald Judd's 'Real' Furniture," *XXIst Century* 1:1 (Winter 1991/92), 77.

24 Early clients of Judd's furniture tended to be people that both Judd and Cooper/Kato knew, including artists, collectors, dealers, and designers; Jim Cooper recalled the following clients: "Chuck and Leslie Close, Lynda Benglis, Joel Shapiro and Ellen Phalen, Leo Castelli, Peder Bonnier, Larry Gagolian, Ronald Greenberg, Bill Katz, Hiroshi Murata, Ed Downe, Frank Benedict, Eric Silverman, Paula Cooper"; Jim Cooper, email correspondence with author, October 24, 2007. As Ulrich Fiedler recalled, Judd's furniture shows at his gallery in Cologne, Germany in 1992 and 1993 were not very enthusiastically received by journalists, nor was it a business success; Fiedler, correspondence, October 29, 2007. Gianfranco Verna also recalled that buyers of Judd's furniture shown at Annemarie Verna Gallery in 1985 were mostly those who knew about Judd's art. There was little media attention given to the show, but it marked the slow start of Judd's furniture business; Gianfranco Verna, telephone interview with author, April 8, 2008. Elisabeth Cunnick remembers that clients of Judd's furniture included interior designers, and that Judd's furniture show in 1992 at A/D Gallery was well received compared to the previous one in 1989; Elisabeth Cunnick, telephone interview by author, November 7, 2007. Jeff Jamieson also recalls that he and Deese produced 160 pieces of furniture between 1989 and 1994. Almost all customers of Judd's furniture were connected to the art world. Although they came from many nations, a small majority came from the United States; Jamieson, correspondence, April 7, 2008.

25 Judd often used "found measurements" in both his art and furniture; for instance, the dimensions of the plywood art pieces made in 1973 and of the pine dining table placed at the 101 Spring Street building were derived from the width of a window of the building; thus, the pre-existing space was taken into account when Judd designed site-specific furniture pieces; Peter Ballantine, interview by author, New York, January 20, 2006. See also David Raskin's insightful argument on scale of Judd's artwork in his "Art's Scale" in *Donald Judd* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 9–39.

were alike. In short, it seemed that for Judd, the division between art and furniture was a social necessity once the furniture left his workshops for the public arena of the market. They remained together, however, in his own private environments in the Spring Street building and later in Marfa, which became his primary working and living site in the 1970s.

Installations of Judd's Furniture and Artwork

Some pieces of early furniture by Judd were designed for specific sites, just as some art pieces were intended for permanent installations. Often, the placement of furniture was permanent in Judd's residences; for example, a low bed on the fifth floor of the 101 Spring Street building was nailed to the floor and integrated into a permanent installation with other artworks and furniture.²⁵ Judd's oversized tables, beds, and benches, made of solid and thick planks, were too heavy to be easily moved around. As such, unlike ordinary portable pieces of furniture, the oversized furnishings tended to exist site-specifically in his residences, where both functional objects and artworks were carefully chosen and arranged by Judd himself. Of course, there were exceptions: The sheet metal chairs with arms, fabricated by the Bernstein Brothers in 1971, were initially designed specifically for the interior of the Spring Street building, but they were removed because Judd thought they didn't fit well in the space.

Aware of the potential confusion between his art and furniture, Judd was known for his practice of not showing his art and furniture together in the same rooms of galleries or museums. Nevertheless, his policy was not so strictly enforced, particularly at some of the institutions exhibiting his work in the 1980s. For example, both his art and furniture were on display at the same gallery and museum spaces or shown at nearby locations in New York City around the same time. Judd's retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1988 included two wood benches and coincided with his design works being shown at the Paula Cooper Gallery in New York.²⁶

Almost a year after his first furniture shows in New York City, his artwork and furniture were exhibited together in the same space at the Rhona Hoffman Gallery in Chicago, from October 18, 1985, through November 16, 1985. The show was titled "Donald Judd, Sculpture/Furniture." The owner of the gallery, Rhona Hoffman, said that, at the time, Judd didn't come to supervise or advocate for separate installations of his furniture and artwork.²⁷ Judd knew and approved that they were shown in the same space.²⁸ The installation views in photographs indicate that his furniture (e.g., a desk set, library chair, table bench, and bench) uniformly occupied floor space, whereas his art works were uniformly installed on the walls of the gallery. Both art and furniture had been similarly treated as physical volume, presenting formal kinship and existing in space with a perfect sense of balance among the pieces.

About three years later, in 1988, Judd had a design show titled “Donald Judd, Drawings, Furniture, and Sculpture” at the Paula Cooper Gallery. This exhibition was held at the gallery simultaneously with Judd’s second retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art. At the time, Judd instructed Paula Cooper, the owner of the gallery, to install his sculpture and furniture in different spaces. Thomas McEvilley reviewed the exhibition and noticed Judd’s intention to divide the two. But he couldn’t help but notice the similarity between them:

At the Paula Cooper Gallery, Judd showed furniture, sculpture, and architectural drawings. Understandably, the installation tried to keep the first two categories separate. Many of Judd’s boxlike sculptures of the 1960s and 1970s looked vaguely furniture-like. But by the time of this show, his furniture pieces—angular beds, chairs, and a drawing table, all of which appeared to be uncomfortable—looked vaguely like sculpture. Meanwhile, the new sculptures themselves—multicolored industrial beam assemblages—were located in the back room, mounted high enough on the wall so that they couldn’t be confused with furniture.²⁹

Interestingly, Judd’s 1988 retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art actually included a piece of furniture, as shown in the installation photographs. In fact, the presence of furniture in the retrospective at the Whitney Museum was a surprise for Judd’s fabricators and other persons affiliated with him who continued to strictly follow the artist’s stated protocol of presenting his furniture separately from his art pieces.

A drawing of the layout of the works found in the archives of the Whitney Museum doesn’t indicate the presence of any pieces of furniture. Nevertheless, Judd’s furniture was indeed exhibited along with his art pieces, according to photographs and a review of the retrospective. Two benches were displayed at a pivotal spot at the entrance area. Phyllis Tuchman wrote about her encounter with Judd’s furniture as she stepped into the fourth floor of the museum where Judd’s retrospective took place:

First, two oversized wood benches crafted to the influential 60-year-old’s specifications greet you. Then, rather than encountering a panoramic vista of objects on display, you’ll find an unorthodox installation.

The work isn’t presented chronologically nor tidily arranged by type or category. Instead, a series of four huge concrete cubes immediately blocks out everything else to your left. And to your right, a number of smaller, bright-red wood objects suggest someone with no sense of proportion orchestrated this show.³⁰

26 And later in 1993, a year prior to his death, when Judd’s first furniture retrospective was held at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen and traveled to Villa Stuck in Munich, his prototypes of the new series of Finland-color plywood furniture were being exhibited at the initial site of Judd’s first furniture show at the 101 Spring Street building. Robert Weiner curated the exhibition with Judd, and he remembered that the show was organized to introduce these new types of Finland-color plywood furniture made by Jamieson and Deese (WPF); since it was held at Judd’s private home, it was operated in an informal manner, and furniture was sold through Judd’s office with some assistance from the art gallery; Robert Weiner, email correspondence with author, October 16, 2007.

27 Rhona Hoffman, email correspondence with author, July 13, 2007.

28 To my question about Judd’s express preference for separating the art and furniture, Hoffman replied, “Maybe he thought it was old hat or he simply changed his mind... [it was] his prerogative,” underscoring the artist’s right to make a decision about how to show his work. Hoffman also noted that the show was well received by visitors and that some pieces of furniture were sold; Hoffman, correspondence.

29 Thomas McEvilley, “Donald Judd,” *Artforum* 27:6 (February 1989), 125.

30 Phyllis Tuchman, “The Shapes of Prose,” *Newsday*, Friday, October 28, 1988, 15.

By Tuchman's account, there was a doubly confusing effect from the crowded installation, amplified by the rather aggressive physical characteristics of the works, particularly in the expansiveness of the cubic concrete forms and the vibrant red color of the woodworks. In this disorienting setting, the presence of oversized benches may have been too perplexing to comprehend at once.

The Critical Reception of Judd's Furniture

There were not many exhibition reviews of Judd's furniture shows in New York during the 1980s and 1990s. Judd had firmly established himself by that time as a canonical artist of Minimalism, and his furniture design was taken as a secondary venture and mostly ignored. Nevertheless, a small number of reviews indicate that critics saw Judd's furniture in relation to his artworks, which were increasingly perceived as "beautiful" or "elegant" objects, meticulously crafted with the finest, most visually appealing materials.

At the furniture show curated by Jim Cooper at the Spring Street building in 1984, a critic noted, "The wood furniture is no less rigorous than the artist's sculpture; meant to be useful, it is elegantly unsentimental."³¹ In another review, Robert Mahoney reported on Judd's drawings, furniture, and sculpture shown at the Paula Cooper gallery in 1988:

The Couch/Bed creates a visually nice enclosure, but the ability of a body to hide in it creates potentials most beds don't. The Standing Desk and Stool/Stand look rather too finely polished for draft-work, and its underslits seem only to pull the grain out from underneath the wood. This motif—the underslit, the visual and functional transfer of the closure from Judd's boxes—has its most visually elegant but functionally paranoid expression in his Desk Set, where the perfect nothing-out-of-order desk is made nervous in its clean pride by the close underlayer of who knows what could be hidden there.³²

Judd's art and furniture may have evoked a sense of confusion among many viewers, as suggested by such reviews. In the "please do not touch" context of an exhibition, Judd's furniture was treated and perceived more as artwork than as usable, functional objects. Above all, his furniture pieces were as exquisitely manufactured as his artworks, and there are formal resemblances in the overall structural principles of both. Elisabeth Cunnick, the owner of A/D gallery, recalled that at Judd's 1992 furniture show at her gallery, the visitors thought Judd's furniture appeared too uncomfortable and beautiful to actually use.³³ In response to such criticism, Judd might have contended that his "furniture is comfortable" to him, as when he stated, "A straight chair is best for eating or writing. The third position is standing."³⁴

31 Pilar Viladas, "Furniture designs by Donald Judd," *Progressive Architecture* 66 (January 1985), 28.

32 Robert Mahoney, "Low, Messy and Repressed," *New York Press*, November 25, 1998, 20.

33 Elisabeth Cunnick, in Aric Chen, "Making More of Donald Judd," *Interior Design* 73:8 (August 2002), 204–05.

34 Donald Judd, "It's Hard to Find a Good Lamp," in *Donald Judd, Furniture Retrospective* (Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, 1993), 21.

When Judd's furniture was displayed abroad, the exhibitions generally followed the same logic as his installations of art, and viewers tended to perceive the furniture more as artwork. The installation for the 1993 furniture retrospective at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam was designed by resident curator Piet de Jonge. Consisting of various pieces of furniture of different designs and materials, the show was organized spatially rather than chronologically; all the pieces of furniture were symmetrically arranged. Interestingly, de Jonge decided not to have a label placed beside each object, believing that a piece of furniture presented a self-evident reality through its material physicality.³⁵ Like his art pieces, Judd's furniture was never meant to be placed on a pedestal. However, in the peculiar context of an exhibition, the furniture was meant to be *looked at* instead of *used*, casting doubt on its actual identity as a utilitarian object.

Local writers and reporters primarily viewed Judd's furniture retrospective at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in relation to Judd's own artworks, as well as to Holland's early modernist designer and architect, Gerrit Rietveld. In one of the exhibition reviews, Jaap Huisman noted that some of Judd's large pieces of furniture have an imposing presence, comparable to those of his artwork, whereas his chairs didn't have such a strong sense of existence.³⁶ This perspective suggests that mingling Judd's art and furniture was certainly possible in the minds of some viewers. Inevitably, the furniture appears to be more about abstract, formal qualities as soon as the viewer focuses on looking at it instead of on using it. As illustration, John Pawson wrote about the 1993 furniture retrospective in *Blueprint*, a British architecture magazine:

The furniture is like his boxes, in that it is unforgiving, and demands not only to be placed correctly in a space, and in relationship to the other things in it, but also needs to be perfectly made and kept pristine. The space that the chairs create around themselves is also important, as a visual repetition of the forms of the furniture itself.³⁷

In her discussion on Judd's furniture in *du* magazine in Germany, Helga Leiprecht also claimed a tie between Judd's art and furniture: "Every table is a 'specific object' forming each space into its own reality."³⁸

Judd's adaptation of the empirical approach toward his art and furniture means that they exist as paradoxical counterparts; they resemble each other even as they test each other's identity. They both challenge common assumptions about their conventional identities. Judd's art pieces deny the practice of "composition" in art and look like design objects, whereas his geometrical, hard-edged chairs appear too rigid and his oversized benches too large—they are at odds with ordinary furniture and resemble his own beautifully

35 Piet de Jonge recalled of his installation: "it is a very seventies approach I suppose. Just show things as they are. All objects are more or less contemporaries of the viewer, so he/she should be able to understand what is being shown. As a curator I was very much in favor of that attitude as well." As a curator of modern art, de Jonge also found it challenging to organize the artist's furniture show at the museum because he was not the curator of the applied art department; Piet de Jonge, email correspondence with author, October 11, 2007.

36 Jaap Huisman, "Meubels als een alfabet," *De Volleskiant*, May 22, 1993.

37 John Pawson, "Judd and the Art of Reason," *Blueprint* 99 (July/August 1993), 34.

38 Helga Leiprecht, "Alphabet der Einfachheit," *du* (April 1995), 71–2. I thank Heike Bergdolt, landscape architect, for this translation.

crafted artwork. Some of his furniture pieces have dual or multiple identities: bed / couch, bed / bench, or table / bench. Thus, the viewer is presented with an additional puzzle as to the exact functions of Judd's furniture, endowing the objects with a greater sense of ambiguity.

Even though Judd generally tried to maintain a separation between the fabricators, marketing venues, and public display of his art and furniture, toward the late 1980s, they remained closely linked and were generated side by side. The development of Judd's furniture production paralleled post-Minimalist trends, in which a number of artists explored the relationship between art and furniture. Examining the development of functional objects made by Minimalist and post-Minimalist artists, Barbara Bloemink noted that, unlike Judd, who was preoccupied with the Kantian definition of fine art existing for the eyes, as opposed to design existing for its utility, many post-Minimalist artists refused to categorize their own work as either art or non-art.³⁹ Likewise, in the conclusion to *DesignArt*, Alex Coles suggests that the perception of the user and beholder decides whether a seemingly hybrid object made by an artist should be classified as art or as a design object.

Because Judd's artwork does not deal solely with the eyes, and his furniture does not solely serve a function, the conventional argument for defining fine art and furniture according to whether it has a visual appeal or functional utility no longer remains valid. Both Judd's art and his furniture induce a physical and mental interaction with the viewer; an element of the furniture's identity is present in the artwork, and an element of the artwork is present in the furniture as a kind of implied counterpart. This implied presence is different from the more overt hybridity between fine art and usable objects in the functional art created by Burton, which calls attention to being both at once. Although Judd of course had a right to specify what is art and what is not in his production, the act of naming turned out to be more a matter of moral conviction and a way of facilitating the social status and function of creations after they left the workshop—a way of determining or influencing how things are priced, handled, traded, consumed, and received in particular social, cultural, and economic systems. Judd's furniture continued to be produced after the artist died, whereas his art pieces would not be legally fabricated any longer, even though, technically speaking, it is possible to reproduce Judd's pre-existing art pieces as long as qualified craftsmen and the same materials are available.⁴⁰

The moral dilemma attached to continuing production of Judd's artwork posthumously bears on the paradoxical nature of Judd's art and furniture production and marketing. Judd tried to exert maximum control over this paradox in his creations. Although he made no attempt to push his empirical approach so far as to challenge the assumption that fine art should be privileged over decorative art, he did undermine the rigid socio-cultural hierarchy

39 Barbara Bloemink, "Introduction: Sameness and Difference," in *Design ≠ Art, Functional Objects from Donald Judd to Rachel Whiteread* (New York: Merrell and Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, 2004), 33; Bloemink, "Dialogues on the Relationship of Art and Design: Donald Judd," in *Design ≠ Art*, 37.

40 Once artists' works leave their studios, they inevitably come to serve, to a certain degree, the ends and visions of the patrons who or institutions that own the artwork. Regarding the issue of reproducing artwork, See Susan Hapgood's "Remaking Art History," *Art in America* 78:7 (July 1990), 114–22, 181. Judd had a problem with his collector Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo, whose unauthorized reproductions of the artist's works for the purpose of exhibition made him furious. Donald Judd, "Una Stanza Per Panza," *Kunst Intern* 4:7 (November 1990), 3–22. For a specific issue of preserving Judd's works, see Ann Temkin, "Wear and Care: Preserving Judd," *Artforum* 42:10 (Summer 2004), 204–08, 289. More recently, Anna Chave's essay, "Revaluing Minimalism: Patronage, Aura, and Place," further touches on critical aspects of the patronage and quality of aura in Minimalist objects and installations. Analyzing Minimalist works on the east and west coasts, she observes an underlying formal structure entailed in Minimalist objects and spatial environments that emanates an awe-inspiring appeal to patrons who seek their own spiritual connections to Minimalist works, even as these works are shaped by institutional anticipation of their patrons' visions. Anna C. Chave, "Revaluing Minimalism: Patronage, Aura, and Place," *Art Bulletin* 90:3 (September 2008), 466–86.

at the levels of production, marketing, and public display. In the end, Judd resolved this paradox only in his own private living environments and in the permanent installations where his furniture and artwork could successfully coexist without specific labels or price tags, reflecting Judd's singular vision of spatial wholeness.

Meanwhile, the categories of fine art and design object continue to exist in the public arena of cultural institutions and the marketplace. In the scholarship and public discourse, the lesser social status of furniture should not preclude a critical examination of the functional objects designed by the artist. Judd's entire output bespeaks a continuation of his empirical philosophies of art extended to his design principles and installation schemes. Like his artwork, Judd's furniture in situ is not entirely about aesthetic proportions but more about the immediacy of physical and mental interaction between the user and the furniture pieces in a particular space.

It was inappropriate for Judd to handle his furniture as fine art, yet the conventional division imposed on them led to his furniture's being underrepresented in the public arena. Meanwhile, the question about seeking something profound, real, and truthful in art is associated with the Western aesthetic convention of connoisseurship, which is limited to the eyes and knowledge of scholars. By way of contrast, the ethical values of art are more linked to the specific political, cultural, and economical systems found in everyday life. In the 1990s and 2000s, the discourse on design and art seems to have shifted from questions about the hierarchy between the two disciplines and the perception of the real in art experiences to a closer examination of the social nature of participatory observers and users of functional art objects.⁴¹ This trend would not have been possible without the intervention of functional art objects into the public arena during the 1980s instigated by Burton and others.

As is the case with his artwork, Judd's furniture can best be understood when viewed at the center of action in space by its users. Judd generated his art and furniture as paradoxical counterparts blended into the totality of his own living environments and permanent installations. As such, they do not revive the modernist idealistic unity between art and design in the hope of creating a new society to come. Instead, they rigorously pose a matter-of-fact inquiry into the discourse of art and the everyday from the perspectives of their users and participants at the mundane level of practice.

41 See Claire Bishop's introduction and other essays on the theory and criticism of viewer participation with artwork in *Participation*, ed. Claire Bishop (London: Whitechapel; Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006) and for the extensive discussion on art and design discourse in Nina Murayama, "Donald Judd's Furniture, From Do-It-Yourself to the Art of Lifestyle" (Ph.D. diss., The Graduate Center of the City University of New York, 2009), 227–52.

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