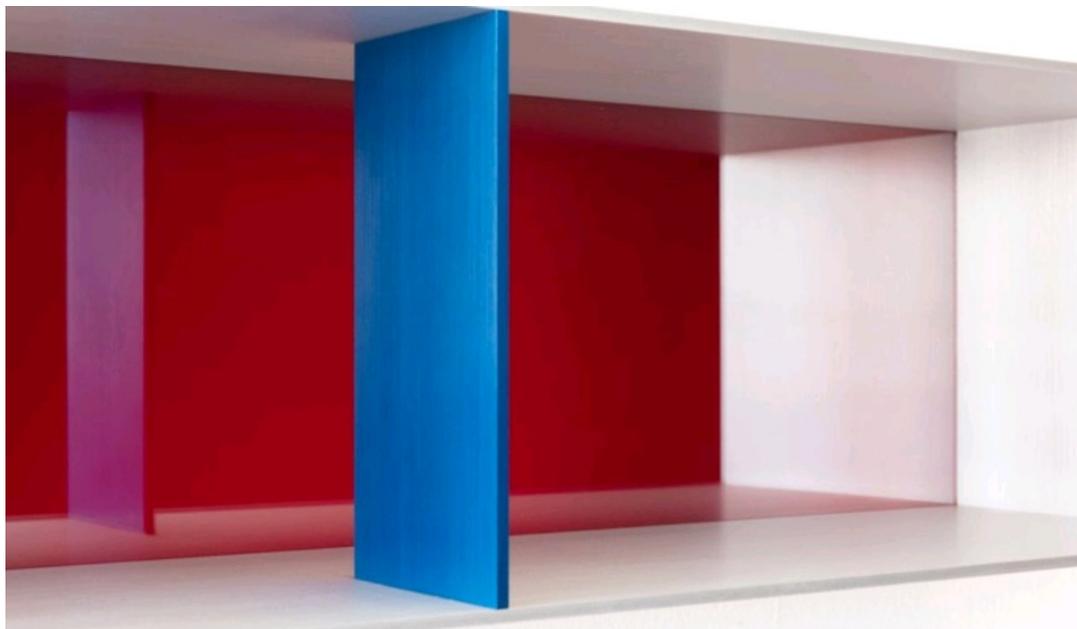

DONALD JUDD FOUNDATION

CURATED BY FLAVIN JUDD

PARIS MARAIS

06 Apr 2019 - 15 Jun 2019



Opening: Saturday 6 April, 6-8pm

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.'

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.' 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. 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 to multiply colour with an intense luminosity, underlining the volume within the box.

In the series of anodised aluminium wall-mounted works 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', that is reflected from within the surrounding aluminium frame and offers 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*.