

CHAPTER FIVE: ONE HUNDRED OBLONGS - One Thing After Another¹

[The Primary structure is] a vehicle for the fusion of distinct parts into an indivisible whole, for the incorporation of order and disorder, or the replacement of a rational geometric art with an alogical one.²

Donald Judd

In the Chinati Foundation's collection of installation art in the small south-west Texan town of Marfa, there are two ex-army artillery sheds known colloquially as the North and South gun sheds. The buildings contain an installation of one hundred aluminium boxes, entitled *Untitled*,³ (referred to as the 'Marfa boxes'), created by Donald Judd specifically for this site.⁴ The Dia Art Foundation provided funding for the project.⁵ This chapter examines this installation, the Marfa boxes, to trace direct and indirect influences of Taoism on its development, including factors in the artist's life's experience as a source of influence. Judd is an unlikely subject for this investigation. He rarely divulged any spiritual proclivities and refused conclusive statements about his artwork's content. Judd never professed any

¹ 'One thing after another', a quote in reference to his 'progressions' from Donald Judd, "Specific Objects, *Arts Year Book 8* (1968), reprinted in Donald Judd, *Complete Writings 1959 – 1975* (2005), Pub. Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design with New York University Press, New York. P 184.

² Donald Judd quoted by Lucy Lippard in Ann Goldstein's publication accompanying the exhibition, *A Minimal Future? Art as Object 1958 – 1968* (2004), pub. Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Here Judd's ideas correlate with the Taoist cosmology where the unified whole, "a fusion of distinct parts into an indivisible whole", is composed of a harmonious resolution, "incorporation", of polarities, – Judd's "order and disorder", "rational geometric art" and "alogical [art]". This statement accurately describes the aesthetic and meaningfulness of his installation, *Untitled* (1982–1986), of one hundred reflective boxes in the spatiality of Marfa's artillery sheds.

³ Donald Judd, *Untitled*, (1982–1986), mill aluminum, each box 41 x 51 x 72 inches (104 x 129.5 x 185.5 cm). 100 boxes. The South artillery shed is 63 feet wide, 17,000 square feet. The North artillery shed is 63 feet wide, 18,000 square feet. Built in 1939, they had room for 32 and 34 trucks respectively.

See Marianne Stockebrand, *The Making of Two Works: Donald Judd's Installations at the Chinati Foundation*. P 59. Marianne Stockebrand is the Director of the Chinati Foundation in Marfa. The essay, published in the Chinati Newsletter Vol 9, 2004, was presented as a lecture at the Courtauld Institute, London on February, 26, 2004. Translation, Fiona Elliott. <http://www.chinati.org/visit/collection/donaldjudd.php> Cited Dec. 2008.

⁴ Other buildings on the de-commissioned army base provided spaces for other artist's works including large-scale works by sculptor John Chamberlain, installation artists Dan Flavin, David Rabinowitch, Roni Horn, Ilya Kabakov, Richard Long, Carl Andre, Claes Oldenburg and Coosje Van Bruggen.

⁵ <http://www.chinati.org/visit/collection/donaldjudd.php> Cited June 2008. The DIA Foundation was established in 1974 by art patrons Heiner Freidrich and his partner Phippa de Menil, and funded by her family's oil drilling corporation, Schlumberger in Houston, Texas. Ref. *Donald Judd* (2004), Editor, Nicholas Seroto, Tate Publishing, London. Pp 259, 261. *Dia* is a Greek word meaning *through*, the organisation being the conduit for creativity in the visual arts. For example, Judd's purchase of properties and conversion of the decommissioned military base, Fort D. A. Russell into a permanent venue for large scale art works in Marfa, Texas was mainly funded by the Dia Foundation's contribution of five million dollars. Judd established the Chinati Foundation after a law suite against Dia, gaining custody of the Marfa project. See *Artillery Sheds* by Donald Judd. This essay first appeared in *Donald Judd*, Architektur, Kunstverein Munster, 1989. <http://www.chinati.org/visit/collection/artilleryshedsbyjudd.php> Cited Aug. 2008.

personal affiliations to Taoism. But in this chapter it is argued that Taoist precepts had so infiltrated Western thinking at this time in the development of a new art form, installation art, of which Judd's artwork in Marfa is a key example.

This analysis of Judd's oeuvre is predicated upon the theories of representation of Gilles Deleuze, advanced in *Repetition and Difference*, in that Judd's Marfa boxes present a creative catalyst for complex, pluralistic readings where the viewer's response is coloured by their subjectivity, aesthetic perception, knowledge base, and epistemological direction.⁶ An indication of Taoist influence upon Deleuze's theory of representation, that is, exposure to Taoist cosmology's esoteric pluralism juxtaposed to the quotidian, the subjective, the transitional, the contingent, is expressed in the conclusion to Lee Irwin's article, *Taoist Alchemy and the West: the Esoteric Paradigms*:

Post Modern theorists ...have seen in Daoism a theory of non-exclusive mutuality between pairs that undermines all oppositional metaphysics. Daoist theories of inter dependence, harmony and accommodation, its non-logocentric view of natural processes, and a pragmatic theory of immanence and transformation all contribute to a "post-philosophical" discourse that emphasises the value of diversity, alternate perspectives, and multi vocal language.⁷

This speculative assessment of the influences of Taoism on Judd's thinking and processes calls upon the "value of diversity, alternate perspectives, and multi vocal language"⁸ expressed by Deleuze to argue the indirect influences of Taoism on Judd's oeuvre.

Without overstating the case, knowledge of Judd's life experience is drawn upon in concert with an analysis of his studio methodology, an examination of his writings on his own and other's visual arts practices, to discern the direct and indirect Taoist influences upon the artist, and traits in the artwork. This is augmented by fieldwork in Marfa that allowed for direct on-site analysis of the major artworks' preparatory drawings for the fabricator, and first hand experience of the artwork itself, supported by detailed photographs of the installation (see Appendix #3). This is in turn compared to experiential responses of other viewers that noted cathartic, spiritual accord with Taoist precepts.⁹

⁶ Deleuze, G. 1968. *Repetition and Difference*. New York: Columbia University Press. See Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 6.

⁷ Lee Irwin, *Daoist Alchemy in the West: the Esoteric Paradigms*. P 44. Citing J. J. Clarke 2000, pp 184 – 193. <http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeVI/Dao.htm>

⁸ Ibid. Citing J. J. Clarke, 2000, pp 184 – 193.

⁹ For example, Jim Lewis, *One Hundred Boxes*, 2007, Texas Monthly, Vol. 35, No 10. Pp 128 – 138. Martin Gayford, *Some Aspects of Color in General and Red and Black in Particular*, in *Epic Minimalism* (2004), Modern Painters, Vol 17, No 1, Spring, P 94.

A long standing polemic between Judd and Rosalind Krauss about the significance of his artwork has focused attention on his contribution to departures from Modernist sculpture. Hal Foster observes that Krauss described Judd's artwork as an outcome of Modernism, a "modernist epitome".¹⁰ Foster argues that "minimalism is an apogee of modernism, but it is no less a break with it". The innovative, experimental aspects of Minimalism that Foster espouses are precisely, it is argued, the aspects of Judd's practice that reflect the West's synthesis of Taoist precepts, so will be the focus of this chapter.

Judd's intention to reject the illusionism of European painting and his desire for the real, led to his use of found objects in his early paintings. He finally took the painting, as a geometric object, off the wall onto the floor. Using the vernacular materials of industry to create totally non-illusionistic "literalism, (that is non-symbolic and non-expressive)"¹¹ objects that he preferred to call neither sculpture nor painting, Judd found his voice.

The installation in Marfa is typical of Judd's reflective works made of aluminium, perspex, or with a lacquered surface. These materials produce a depth of surface associated with the Chinese craft of lacquer painting as the material reality (page 71). The artworks' precise sculptural forms are a continuity, their ambiguous surfaces a medium of changing temporality in tune with precepts associated with Taoism.

Though vague and illusive
[The Tao] gives rise to form
Though dark and obscure
It is the spirit, the essence,
The life-breath of all things¹²

These correlations with Taoist explorations of the processes of nature and reality are an uncanny presence in Judd's installation of boxes at Marfa.

INSTALLATION ART – Background:

¹⁰ Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: the Avant-Garde at the Turn of the Century*, (1996), MIT Press. Pp 42, 43.

¹¹ Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: a critical History* (2005) Tate Publishing, London. P 53.

¹² Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*. Verse 21.



Fig 1: Marcel Duchamp's installation of *One Mile of String* for the exhibition, *First Papers of Surrealism*, at 451 Madison Ave., New York, Oct. 4th – Nov. 7th, 1942. Sponsored by the Co-ordinating Council of French Relief Societies.

The installation art of the 1980s, when Judd created *Untitled* in Marfa, had been foreshadowed by aspects of earlier experiments, such as Duchamp's *One Mile of String* in 1942, where he disrupted the space of an exhibition by unraveling string throughout the venue, interrupting the orderly presentation of artworks and drawing attention to its spatiality (Fig 1).¹³



Fig 2: Allan Kaprow, *Words*, (1962), installed in Smolin Gallery, New York.

¹³ Jacqueline Baas, in *Smile of the Buddha: Eastern Philosophy and Western Art from Monet to Today* (2005), University of California Press, builds a case that Duchamp was influenced by Eastern philosophy. Pp 86 – 87, 90 – 91, 173.

In the nineteen-sixties artists such as Allan Kaprow,¹⁴ who was a Zen Buddhist, Claes Oldenburg and Jim Dine moved from two dimensional collage to works like *Words (Fig 2)* where the whole space was filled with the detritus of ordinary life combined with spontaneous action. The viewer participated in the environment, or Happening, with the artist, whether it be an assemblage of things picked up off the street, cooking, writing, making sounds, smells, poetry, music. The genre combined the found objects of Duchamp, the subjective, corporeal action of Abstract Expressionism, the chance elements of John Cage who was a prominent influence at the Black Mountain College where young artists such as Kaprow studied. Here, in 1952, Cage was arguably the composer of the first interdisciplinary performance using dance, slide projection, lectures, poetry and music in one presentation.

At the heart of Cage's teaching was his refusal to impose his will upon the artwork, a radical prescription at a time when the artist's creative intention, decisiveness, and ambition were mythical tenets of post war American art. Having studied with the great popularizer of Zen Buddhism, D.T. Suzuki, Cage was predisposed to sit back, as it were, and witness the emptiness, the silence, the passage of time ... to foreground the ephemera of living.¹⁵

The same year he performed his most famous piece, *4'33"*, a 'silent' performance that brought the audience's mindful attention to chance sounds - noise as music - during a fixed time span. These creative methodologies of Zen Buddhist practices have their origins in China's Ch'en Buddhism and Taoism (page 39).

Earlier still in the nineteen-thirties, foreshadowing Judd's later preoccupations with spatiality and site specificity in installation art, Brancusi's public sculpture, *Targu-Jiu'* addressed spatiality, intriguingly within the context of Eastern philosophy.¹⁶ The teachings of eleventh century Tibetan ascetic, Jetsun Milarepa¹⁷ published in 1925, were for Brancusi both descriptive of his own life's journey and a constant source of philosophical inspiration.

¹⁴ Jeff Kelley, Allan Kaprow, David Antin, *Childsplay: the Art of Allan Kaprow*, University of California Press, 2004. P 16.

¹⁵ Ibid. P 17.

¹⁶ Constantin Brancusi (1876 – 1957). Born in rural Hobita, Romania, 1876. His sculptural talent was recognised by employers who supported his studies at the National School of Fine Arts, Bucharest. In 1904 he left Romania on foot for Paris. Fell ill near Basil and cared for by nursing sisters. He read Helena Petrovna Blavatski's 'Isis Unveiled', with which he felt an affinity. He sang in the choir of the Romanian Orthodox church in Paris, another indication of his spiritual journey. He lived an ascetic life in Paris sustained by friendships with artists such as Duchamp, Picasso, Leger, Modigliani and composer, Satie. His work was officially supported in Romania and collected privately throughout his life but he received little recognition of his work in Paris until after his death in 1957. He said, 'In art there are no foreigners'. Varia, R., 'Brancusi', 2002, Rizzoli International Publications, NY. P 212. It is significant for this thesis that Noguchi, another innovator in the area of installation art, worked as an assistant to Brancusi in Paris in his youth before travelling and studying in China and Japan.

¹⁷ *The Book of Milarepa*. See also *The Teachings of Milarepa*.
http://www.kagyu-asia.com/l_mila_t_advice_gampopa.html

See your true home as dharmata.
Recognize all homelands as illusion.
Experience whatever arises as Dharmakaya.¹⁸

Brancusi's understanding and belief in Eastern mysticism is an underlying influence on his sublime, abstract works, including the monument in Târgu Jiu, Romania, which is a memorial to Romanian heroes who fought the Germans in World War One.¹⁹ It comprises of three components placed in precise distances along a walk beside the Jui River. The spatial context and meditative walk performed by the viewer whilst contemplating the work is an integral aspect of the experience. The first ensemble is the *Table of Silence*, the next, *Gate of the Kiss*, then on to the *Endless Column*. Spatiality is at the core of Brancusi's sculptural expression (Fig 3, Fig 4, Fig 5).



Fig 3: Constantin Brancusi, *The Table of Silence*, 1937 – 38. Stone. Târgu Jiu, Romania.



Fig 4: Constantin Brancusi, *The Gate of the Kiss*, 1937 – 38. Stone. Târgu Jiu, Romania. The mandala-like base relief imagery is reminiscent of the Taoist *yin yang* symbol.

¹⁸ Varia, R., *Brancusi*, 2002, Rizzoli International Publications, NY. P 10.

¹⁹ Ibid. *The Monumental Ensemble of Targu-Jui*. P 226.

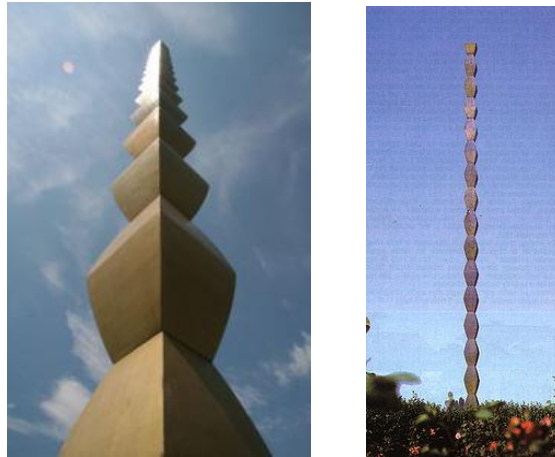


Fig 5: Constantin Brancusi, *Endless Column*, 1937 – 38. Târgu Jiu, Romania. *Endless Column* is 29.33 metres (96.23 ft) high and is composed of seventeen cast iron, rhombus-shaped modules.

Like Brancusi, Donald Judd's life experience and studies were punctuated by exposure to Eastern philosophy and art. It will be established that, however indirectly, Judd's practice was arguably informed by these rhizomic infusions. The emanation of Tao and Zen ideas and rejection of past European philosophy were part of the Post World War Two zeitgeist.²⁰ In his lecture at Yale University, Judd declared, "There is a breakdown in universal and general values. Grand philosophical systems ... are not credible any more".²¹ During the twentieth century, alternative, relational ways of perceiving "universal values" developed with the West's exposure to the ontological systems of non-Western cultures, including Eastern philosophies such as Taoism.

One such system was Phenomenology, which argues that the only tangible, reliable reality is that which can be perceived by the senses. The writings of phenomenologist, Merleau-Ponti, have been called upon to address the contribution of Phenomenology to Minimalism as an experimental art practice predicated upon the immersion of the viewer in a corporeal, experiential relationship to the artwork. He wrote about the matrix in which we perceive:

I do not see [space] according to its exterior envelope; I live it from the inside; I am immersed in it. After all, the world is all around me, not in front of me.²²

²⁰ *Zeitgeist*: spirit of the times. As with most visual artists, Donald Judd certainly did not identify as a 'Beatnik' or later, a 'Hippy'. The intellectual climate in which he was an active player turned to Eastern philosophy, including Taoism and Ch'en Buddhism, as alternative to European humanism, which had been discredited for many by cataclysmic developments in the twentieth century, including nuclear warfare, the First and Second World Wars. See Chapter Two for further discussion. Also, Lisa Phillips, *Beat Culture and the New America: 1950 – 1965* (1996). Pub. Whitney Museum, Flammarion. Pp 30, 73, 144, 197.

²¹ Barbara Haskell, *Donald Judd* (1988), Pub. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Exhibition catalogue. P 42.

²² Merleau-Ponti, *Eye and Mind* (1961), in Merleau-Ponti, *The Primacy of Perception*, Evanston, 1964. P 178.

This insight, which could be a description of Judd's objectives in his development of installation art, has exact parallels with the objectives of Taoist painters whose deployment of distortions of perspective, known as axonomic perspective, places the viewer inside the artwork's spatiality, not outside looking in as an 'objective' observer, whose singular view point "in front of me" determines their 'centre of universe'. Judd's adamant assertions that immersive spatial qualities are fundamental to his sculptural expression is reiterated by Rudi Fuchs's writing about Judd's Marfa boxes:

The sculptural and spatial rhythm, the geometry created by zones of light and shadow, the reflection of sunlight on the shiny surfaces and the pervasive strength of verticality and horizontality bare witness to Judd's sensitivity to spatial harmony.²³

Like a Taoist scroll painting's narrative unfolds seamlessly as one image, Judd's Marfa installation unfolds for the viewer as a stream of sequential, seemingly endless, interpolating episodes.

Parallels have been drawn between Phenomenology and the Zen and Taoist meditative practice of 'mindfulness'²⁴ that suggests, at the least, an osmosis of indirect influence of Eastern perspectives on Phenomenology's core assertions. Proof of the recognisably Taoist view of the verity of our immersion in experience as the source of a discerned reality, has been an objective of research in the cognitive sciences:

The methodological heart of the interaction between mindfulness, awareness, meditation, phenomenology, and cognitive science ... is a change in the nature of reflection from an abstract, disembodied activity to an embodied (mindful), open ended reflection. By embodied, we mean reflection in which the body and mind have been brought together.²⁵

Exploring Judd's Marfa boxes, and witnessing the approach of others, brings to life the claims for installation art that it can be a phenomenological, experiential activity, a walking meditation (Fig 6). In his colloquial account of "living with Judd's austere sculptures", Jim Lewis, artist in residence at the Chinati Foundation wrote:²⁶

... seeing one hundred [boxes] installed at Chinati was a revelation, like listening to Bach for the first time. Walking through the sheds, or even passing them on the path I could almost hear them, working a series of variations on a theme, growing ever more

²³ Donald Judd: *Architecture Architektur* (2003). Editor Peter Noever. Pub, MAK Centre, Los Angeles. Rudi Fuchs, *The Ideal Museum: An Art Settlement in the Texas Desert*. P 36.

²⁴ Mindfulness is also a Zen Buddhist practice.

²⁵ Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson, Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (1993), pub. MIT Press. Chapter Two, P 28.

²⁶ Jim Lewis, *One Hundred Boxes*, 2007, Texas Monthly, Vol. 35, No 10. Pp 128 – 138.

complex and contrapuntal, the aluminum boxes opening, unfolding and recombining, echoing one another in elaborate patterns of rhyme and dissonance.²⁷



Fig 6: Viewing the North shed.

Photo. B. Ely, 2008.

Lewis's correlation of Judd's installation and improvisation in music will be elaborated upon later in this chapter. But first, his experience of the installation's Taoist relationship to time as an element of expression common to Taoist garden art practices will be examined.

The articulation of actual space, not the illusion of space, "space made by somebody, space that is formed as is a solid, the two the same, with the space and solid defining each other"²⁸ is arguably the core concern of Judd's experimental practice. He expressed spatiality as inseparable from time, and the companion to both in this installation is movement - the movement of the viewer, the movement of light, movements in the environment it reflects. Judd wrote of time and space in the essay, *Some Aspects of Color in General and Red and Black in Particular*:

Space and time don't exist; they are made by events and positions. Time and space can be made and don't have to be found like stars in the sky or rocks on the hillside.²⁹

These spatial, temporal concerns, the sculpting of space and time, are shared by the Taoist and Zen garden artists, in particular the concept of *engawa*, an between space that is neither

²⁷ Ibid. P 134.

²⁸ Martin Gayford quoting Judd from his article, *Some Aspects of Color in General and Red and Black in Particular*, in *Epic Minimalism* (2004), *Modern Painters*, Vol 17, No 1, Spring, P 94.

²⁹ From Martin Gayford's *Epic Minimalism* (2004), *Modern Painters*, Vol 17, No 1, Spring, p 94.

inside nor outside³⁰ that Judd created in his installation using windows that allow an ambiguous melding of imagery and light from inside and outside on reflective surfaces. Qualities of *engawa* have their origins in *feng shui* in traditional Chinese design, described as an “acupuncture of the earth that plugs into positive forces”.³¹



Fig 7: Spatiality and time expressed using consecutive framing devices in the traditional Chinese garden in Beijing of Prince Gong, Qing Dynasty, 1777, echo Judd's use of windows to connect to and serially frame the landscape in his Marfa installations. Photo. B. Ely, 2008.

The example above (*Fig 7*) in Beijing, from the garden surrounding Prince Gong's palace from the eighteenth century, shows a series of shaped intervals along a path between two buildings that require a change of pace, a step up over each threshold that slows the passage of energies, or *ch'i*, through the space, framing a measure of the body of the viewer, and articulating the space through shaped framing. Martin Gayford writes of his direct experience of Judd's spatial articulation as a harmonious engagement with spatial and material ambiguity, and a meditation:

This great symphony of space and light in [the boxes] are real not fictional. And because the light is always changing the work itself is different each time you see it. In certain strong horizontal lights the boxes almost seem to dissolve in light ... This is a function of their physical nature. Under some conditions they seem diaphanous, their surfaces completely composed of soft reflections ... The whole work is a huge meditation on light and space, a meditation in concrete physical terms.³²

³⁰ Kishu Kurakawa, *Rediscovering Japanese Space*, John Wetherall Inc., NY. 1988. P 54.

³¹ Lucy Lippard, *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*, 1983, Pantheon Books, New York. P 136.

³² Martin Gayford's *Epic Minimalism* (2004), *Modern Painters*, Vol 17, No 1, Spring. P 96.

Jim Lewis, another witness to the artwork's phenomenological effects compares the installations in the sheds to "sundials, calendars, clocks" (Fig 8).³³



Fig 8: Morning light, South shed. The one hundred boxes are milled aluminium, 104.2 centimetres high by 129.7 centimetres deep x 183.2 centimetres wide. Photo: B. Ely, 2008.

These first hand accounts of the experience of viewing Judd's installation at Marfa bring into focus the other major Taoist concern of Judd's practice and life: our relationship to nature.

One of Judd's projects at Marfa was to buy adjoining ranches in the area to restore the endemic ecology by leaving the land to lay fallow, "[engaging] himself actively in the cause of promoting the protection and preservation of the natural environment".³⁴ This approach is reflective of Taoism's guidance for a life in harmony with Nature.

The world is Tao's own vessel
It is perfection manifest
It cannot be changed
It cannot be improved
For those who go tampering it is ruined³⁵

This quote from Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* serves as a warning of the earth's vulnerability to humanity's exploitation and neglect. Lee Irwin writes:

³³ Jim Lewis, *One Hundred Boxes*, 2007, Texas Monthly, Vol. 35, No 10. P 138.

³⁴ Donald Judd: *Raume Spaces*, 1993, (catalogue). Cantz Publisher, for Museum Wiesbaden. P 13.

³⁵ Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, Verse 29.

Daoism provides a genuine integrative perspective on relations with the natural environment and on values of co-operation and balance rather than on issues of control and the exploitative use of resources".³⁶

In relation to this David Ruskin concludes a summary of the dichotomy between Krauss's interpretation of Judd's work and Judd's position, noting that:

... the way in which people comprehend raw perceptions of art and of all things creates the social dimensions of self and world ... Judd's art shows how the self and world correspond and cohere, experience breathing both alive.³⁷

This accurately describes the compatibility with Taoist sentiments with the relationship of Judd's Marfa installation to the viewer's perception of its external natural environment and clearly expresses how, firstly, he wished to draw the natural life forms and energies into this artwork, like the 'borrowed landscape' of Taoist and Japanese gardens, and secondly, to heighten the viewer's sensitivity of the world as their 'vessel'.³⁸

Establishing these Taoist connections to nature in Judd's practice affirms how Taoist precepts and processes may have entered into what is now an exemplar of the canon of experimental visual art practices of the second half of the twentieth century, Judd's installation in the gun sheds of Marfa, Texas.

DONALD JUDD'S MARFA BOXES

Following is a detailed description accompanied by visual documentation and Judd's testament regarding the Marfa installation, *Untitled*, to provide evidence of Donald Judd's aesthetic and conceptual decision making that pertain to identifying notions associated with Taoism. Firstly, each of Judd's one hundred oblongs has the same outer dimensions, 41 x 51 x 72 inches,³⁹ but the articulation of the interior space of each piece is unique, following an improvisational method developed within certain parameters which has correlations with the improvisation upon characters found in Taoism's art form, calligraphy.⁴⁰ The oblongs are made from half inch,⁴¹ milled aluminium that has a satin sheen, giving them a soft, matte, reflective

³⁶ Lee Irwin, *Daoist Alchemy in the West: the Esoteric Paradigms*. P 18. Lee Irwin, Religious Studies, College of Charleston, Charleston SC 29455 <http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeVI/Dao.htm>

³⁷ Raskin, David. 2006. *The Shiny Illusionism of Krauss and Judd*. Art Journal (Spring 2006). P 21.

³⁸ See above, Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, Verse 29.

³⁹ 104.2 x 129.7 x 183.2 cm

⁴⁰ See Chapter Four.

⁴¹ 1.3cm

quality. Visible in certain lights, a golden, metallic 'bleed' translucently traces the roll out of the aluminium sheet, aesthetically relating to Taoism's transitionality (*Fig 9*).



Fig 9: Judd, *Untitled*, (1982 – 1985), one hundred boxes, 104.2 x 129.7 x 183.2 cm each, milled aluminium; installation, artillery sheds, Marfa, Texas. Box #66 showing the transparent golden 'bleed' that traces the roll out of the sheet metal. Photo. B. Ely, 2008.



Fig 10: Showing the recessed allan head screws, and the precision of the boxes' fabrication by the company, Lippincott, in North Haven, Connecticut. Photo. B. Ely, 2008.

The visible fittings are flat allan head screws, or socket screws, which are used sparingly and are visible on the boxes' exterior only (*Fig 10*). No fittings are visible in the interiors of the boxes where pins, welding and brackets are used.⁴² This quality of crafting relates to the mastery required of Taoist artists to capture the perfection of pure phenomena in calligraphy and brush and ink painting.

The boxes are arranged in three rows that run parallel through the two buildings, with forty-eight in the South Gun Shed, and fifty-two in the North Gun Shed, different quantities because the sheds are slightly different sizes, and the interior walls in the sheds are differently configured (*Fig 11*, *Fig 12*).

⁴² Information from Melissa Susan Gaido Allen's Masters thesis, *From the DIA to the Chinati Foundation: Donald Judd in Marfa Texas 1979 – 1994* (1995), Rice University. Figure 15: Detail of screws in the construction of the Mill Aluminum boxes.



Fig 11: North gun shed showing the three rows of boxes, and its walls differently configured to the South gun shed below. Photo. B. Ely, 2008.



Fig 12: South gun shed showing three rows of boxes and its central grey wall. Photo. B. Ely, 2008.

Judd prepared the sheds for the installation by removing all but the structural interior walls, and all the garage doors along the sides, which he replaced with squared, anodised, aluminium windows (*Fig 13*). The semi-circular curve of metal, Quansit hut roofing over what had been a long, squat profile, increased their height and vernacular monumentality in the landscape. The sheds are not aligned, they are at a slight angle to each other, end to end, following the curve in the road (*Fig 14*). Judd wrote of his repair of the leaking, derelict, sheds:

The height of the curve of the vault is the same as the height of the building. Each building became twice as high, with one long rectangular space below, and one long circular space above. The ends of the vaults were meant to be glass, but were temporarily covered with corrugated iron. With the ends open, the enclosed lengthwise volume is tremendous. This dark and voluminous lengthwise axis is above and congruent with the flat, broad, glass, crosswise axis. The buildings need some furniture and some use for the small enclosed space that is within each one.⁴³

⁴³ Judd's account of the creation of *Untitled* for the artillery sheds.

<http://www.chinati.org/visit/collection/artilleryshedsbyjudd.php> See also, See Marianne Stockebrand, *The*



Fig 13: Judd's renovation of the Fort Russell artillery sheds in progress.

The “furniture” Judd describes was the aluminium boxes. His description of the spatial articulation of the two artillery sheds is phrased as harmonised binaries reminiscent of the melding of the binaries, *yin* and *yang* in Taoism – the rectangular body of the buildings compared to the circularity of the roofs; the “dark and voluminous axis” of the roof “is congruent with”, that is in harmony with, “the flat broad glass”, that is, a light filled, “crosswise axis.”



Fig 14: The Chinati Foundation buildings are located on the outskirts of Marfa, and permanently house several artists' installation art, an artist in residence program, internships, archives and administration. The de-commissioned military buildings follow the curve of the access road.



Fig 15: The two gun sheds showing the squared aluminium windows and off set alignment.
Photo. B. Ely, 2008.

Viewers may enter at one end, and wander through, their direct passage obstructed by Judd's boxes, and exit at the other end; the interiors are accessed through humble metal doors at both ends of each shed (*Fig 16*). This is reminiscent of the shaped passageway discussed above in Prince Gong's Chinese garden. Each shed has a single sliding window for maintenance purposes.



Fig 16: (Left) Metal door to North gun shed. (Right) The pathway between sheds with their Quansit hut roofing.
Photo. B. Ely, 2008.

The sheds are located alongside a row of low-lying, non-descript military buildings on one side, and a large expanse of grassland on the other (*Fig 17, Fig 18*). Scrubby bushes, distant

mountains and a long line of Judd's concrete artworks⁴⁴ that stretch along the fence bordering Highway 10 are seen through the windows. "... Judd had set himself the task of creating one project in the open air and integrating the other into an interior and ... making a connection between the two".⁴⁵



Fig 17: On the Eastern side of the artillery sheds are military buildings. Photo. B. Ely, 2008.



Fig 18: The view looking West through the sheds across grassland to Donald Judd's outdoor installation and the mountains beyond. Photo. B. Ely, 2008.

The interiors of Judd's artillery sheds are unadorned. The concrete floors have a reflective gloss but show wear and spills. The red brick and concrete walls are in their original state, apart from one central one that interrupts the open flow of spatiality in the South shed. Judd

⁴⁴ Donald Judd, *Untitled*, concrete structures, grounds of the Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas. See Marianne Stockebrand, *The Making of Two Works: Donald Judd's Installations at the Chinati Foundation*.

<http://www.chinati.org/visit/collection/donaldjudd.php>

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* P 55.

painted it pale grey, presumably to tone down its impact on the continuity of the shed's spatiality (Fig 12).

Judd restored the sheds to an immaculate condition without obliterating evidence of their past functions and robust materiality. The palimpsest of history resonates like *wabi sabi*, a humble honest materiality, a sense of time and tradition contrasting with the intervention of Now expressed in the overwhelming aesthetic qualities within the sheds of a metamorphic, shifting, light filled spatiality, animated by the boxes. They draw in colour and imagery from the outside whilst reflecting the buildings' interiors back and forth, distorting the sheds' fixed spatiality (Fig 19, Fig 20).



Fig 19: Box # 53: Drawing colour and imagery from the outside in. See Judd's outdoor installation of concrete oblongs in the distance. Photo. B. Ely, 2008.



Fig 20: Box #66: Reflections distort the sheds' fixed, interior spatiality. Photo. B. Ely, 2008.

Picking up and amplifying every tiny sound like vast industrial cathedrals, visual reflection is matched by an acoustic reverberation. These ‘cathedrals’ contain objects that twang, ping and creak as they expand and contract with changing temperature, an uncanny sound piece by invisible performers.

The viewer is not so much dwarfed by the installations – the boxes are approximately waist high – as immersed within their spatiality, reflexiveness and sublime beauty. Other viewers, as they wonder through the halls, absorbed, their image polymerises, fragmenting and split then restored by the boxes’ shifting reflections, spatial gaps and unexpected obstructions, are like a Taoist demonstration of relativity (*Fig 21*).



Fig 21: A viewer’s body is fragmented by reflections.

Photo. B. Ely, 2008.

The process of designing the boxes was similarly metamorphic, spontaneous and seeking to form a unified yet polyphonous entity. Twenty-five of the boxes for Judd’s Marfa installation, *Untitled*, were drawn up during April and fifty in May, 1980. Another thirteen followed soon after. The remaining twelve were executed in May, 1984.⁴⁶ The drawings are a rapid fire, diagrammatic record of his inventive thinking process. The boxes were fabricated and installed between 1982 and 1986 with deep consideration of the complex context a part of Judd’s decision making, as he believed the objects could not be seen separately from the space, so permanent placement was critical to the success of the piece. He asserts “there is no neutral space”, due to meanings made by the “intentional” function or associations, however unintended. His decision making was guided by Judd’s deep conviction that:

⁴⁶ Donald Judd, *Untitled*, concrete structures, grounds of the Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas, adjacent to the artillery sheds. See Marianne Stockebrand, *The Making of Two Works: Donald Judd’s Installations at the Chinati Foundation*. P 57. <http://www.chinati.org/visit/collection/donaldjudd.php> Cited, Dec. 2008.

Any work of art is harmed or helped by where it is placed. This can almost be considered objectively, that is, spatially. Further, any work of art is harmed or helped, almost always harmed, by the meaning of the situation in which the work is placed. There is no neutral space, since space is made indifferently or intentionally, and since meaning is made, ignorantly or knowledgably. This is the beginning of my concern for the surroundings of my work. These are the simplest circumstances which all art must confront.⁴⁷

Judd's refusal to pin point any definitive sources or meaning for his work rules out an acknowledgement of influences on his ideas, such as Taoism. Judd even balked at calling his three dimensional artwork 'sculpture', and objected consistently to the label 'Minimalism'.

I've said and written many times that the label 'minimal' is meaningless in all ways ... that my work is definitely not impersonal – whatever that might be in art – and no one listens.⁴⁸

Judd called all of his works *Untitled* so the viewer is not given an entrée into his thinking through this linguistic means.

Fortunately Judd was a communicator and writer, so we do have his accounts of his approach to his oeuvre generally, and the Marfa installations in particular from which to glean insight into his thinking, passions, knowledge base and conceptualised processes. In an unpublished interview quoted by Melissa Susan Gaido Allen in her unpublished Masters thesis, Judd makes a statement about spirituality in his art as a vehicle for a sense of unique aliveness, energy, "out of the ordinary" or unexpectedness that captures the viewer's consciousness and sense of "oneness" with all things. He is quoted there as saying:

I avoid illusion, things are what they are. But all forms are spiritual. It is tedious that spirituality has become a contaminated word. I see it as an awareness which stems from reality – a kind of 'being'. Things and us are part of the same world, factually speaking we are one. Art must therefore be general, but at the same time out of the ordinary, different from different things.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Donald Judd, Rudi Fuchs, *Donald Judd: Large Scale Works*, (1993), Pace Gallery, New York. Essays published in conjunction with a show of Judd's sculpture. P 9. Elsewhere Judd critically compared the temporary exhibition of spatially orientated artworks in museums with the permanent installation of art in sites such as cathedrals in the past. See Rudy Fuchs, *The Ideal Museum: An Art Settlement in the Texas Desert*, in *Donald Judd: Architecture Architectur*, Ed. Peter Noever, pub. Hatje Cantz, Germany, 2003. P 85. Also, Franz Meyer's essay, *Marfa* in *Donald Judd: Raume Spaces*, 1993, (catalogue). Cantz Publisher, for Museum Wiesbaden. P 30.

⁴⁸ *Donald Judd* (2004), Editor, Nicholas Serota. Pub. Tate. P 262.

⁴⁹ Donald Judd, *Dutch Interview*, (1992, P 1. Quoted from Melissa Susan Gaido Allen's Masters thesis, *From the DIA to the Chinati Foundation: Donald Judd in Marfa Texas 1979 – 1994* (1995), Rice University, held in the Chinati Foundation archives, Marfa, Texas. P1. See Rice Digital Scholarship Archive: <http://scholarship.rice.edu/handle/1911/17040>

Verse Fifty-Four of Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* paraphrases his concept of the spiritual quoted above and accurately reflects the contemplative experience of viewing Judd's installation at Marfa:

Tao is everywhere
It has become everything
To truly see it, see it as it is

The following section calls upon Judd's written material in the light of Judd's direct and indirect exposure to Taoism, to speculate upon his knowledge of Taoism and assess its influences on the development of his oeuvre.

LIFE EXPERIENCE: Encounters with Taoism

In reviews of Asian artists' exhibitions Donald Judd, the art critic and commentator, reveals knowledge of Taoism as it appears in Chinese, Korean and Japanese cultural practices.⁵⁰ For example, the first art review in the book of his writings critiques paintings by Tao Chi, an artist from the Ch'ing Period. Judd writes:

Dissimilar strokes and washes are combined profoundly, and the whole or "oneness", the Tao, is enlarged by the disparity and increased by the inclusion of qualities resistant to expression.⁵¹

Here, importantly, Donald Judd succinctly reveals his understanding of Taoism. He understands that in Taoist cosmology binary polarities (the "disparity" of "dissimilar strokes and washes"), combine to create a harmonious, unified " 'oneness', the Tao", where the nature of the Taoist Way is inexplicable, unnamable, "resistant to expression".

Judd's refusal to 'name' the nature of his own creativity correlates with the Taoist concept that some aspects of our understanding are un-namable:

... they are called mysteries
Mystery upon mystery –
The gateway of the manifold secrets⁵²

⁵⁰ Judd reviewed eighteen exhibitions of Asian art over sixteen years, more than any other non-American nationality. See Donald Judd, *Complete Writings 1959 – 1975* (2005), Pub. Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design with New York University Press, New York. See Art News, Sept. 1959. Judd's eighteen reviews in sixteen years of Eastern art are: Tao Chi, P1; Yayoi Kasuma, Pp 2, 134, 155, 187; Tseng-Yu-ho, P 18; Tetsuro Sawada, P 29; Kenzo Okado, Pp 51, 120; The Kyoto Hamlet of Fine Arts, P125; Ch'I Pai-Shi, P129; Tadaki Kuwayama, P 133; The Art of Nepal, p 133; Japanese Prints, P 145; Tadasky, P162; Relics of Ancient China, P164; Toko Shinoda, P165; N. Fukui, P169. As an art critic, Judd's interest in Asian art outweighs his interest in any other non-American culture.

⁵¹ Ibid. P 1.

⁵² Lao Tsu, *Tao Te Ching*, verse 1.

Judd's emphasis on the primal role of spatiality in his artwork, including context, "the meaning of the situation in which the work is placed",⁵³ arguably has its origins not only in his sensibilities as a sculptor, but resides in his life experiences which included first hand experience of the Taoist cultures of Korea and Japan, and his evident knowledge of the history, philosophy and culture of these countries. The aesthetic articulation of spatiality that is characteristic of Judd's oeuvre, as a trope for continuity and change, is also a primary characteristic of Taoist art forms such as calligraphy.⁵⁴

In the visual arts of China [Japan and Korea] empty space is as important as line [the object] ... that which is beyond time and change ... the whole, the mystery beyond all mysteries.⁵⁵

What were these life experiences? At the age of eighteen in June, 1946, Judd finished high school and in December, enlisted in the armed forces of the United States of America until November 1947 when, his military service completed, he was honourably discharged. During his military service Judd was posted to Korea where he worked in what is reported to have been a relatively informal regime as a foreman with engineers to establish an airstrip and install prefabricated buildings, the beginning of his interest in architecture and construction.⁵⁶ It was arguably also the beginning of his interest in Eastern art forms, aesthetics and philosophy.⁵⁷ Irrespective of whether, like many American soldiers posted in Korea, he spent time in Japan on leave,⁵⁸ this lived experience of Korean cultural morés that combine Taoism, Zen Buddhism and animism arguably stimulated Judd's life long study and appreciation of Eastern art practices, including Taoism. At the completion of his military service Judd enrolled in the Art Student's League in New York. Later, from 1958 to 1960, Judd undertook studies at Columbia University for a Master's degree, which included the subject, Far Eastern Art.⁵⁹

Judd's library in Marfa contains a significant number of books on Chinese, Japanese and Korean art and philosophy. These include Weber's *The Religion of China*, Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilisation in China* (seven volumes), William Willett's *Foundations of Chinese Art*, Seike's *The Art of Japanese Joinery*. Other titles are *Eastern Philosophy*, Morse's *Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings*, *Japanese Folk Houses* (Carver), *Hiroshige*

⁵³ Donald Judd, Rudi Fuchs, *Donald Judd: Large Scale Works*, (1993), Pace Gallery New York. P 9.

⁵⁴ See Chapter Four.

⁵⁵ Legeza, I., *Tao Magic: the Secret Language of Diagrams and Calligraphy*. 1975, Thames and Hudson, London.

⁵⁶ *Donald Judd*. 2004. Edited by N. Serota. Pub. Tate, London. P 248.

⁵⁷ In one of his Marfa studios there is a disc of Korean meditation chants (see below).

⁵⁸ During the Korean War, 1950 – 1953, soldiers took their Rest and Recreation Leave in Seoul and Tokyo. Ref. Stanley Sandler (Editor), *The Korean War: an Encyclopedia*, (1995) (Garland Reference Library of the Humanities) Garland Pub., New York. P x.

⁵⁹ *Donald Judd*. 2004. Edited by N. Serota. Pub. Tate, London. P 248.

(Cynthia Bozel and Israel Goldman); *Japanese Art In Transition* (Meiji), *Katsura* (Kenzo Tange Yishai); *The Genius of China*; Nagel's *Encyclopedic Guide to China*; *The Origin of the Chair in China* (C. P. Fitzgerald); *Chinese Domestic Furniture*; *Poems by Zen Masters*; *The Erotic Art of the East* (Rawson); *The Arts of Korea* (six volumes); *Chinese Calligraphy: a History of the Art of China*. Books on Asian architecture, ceramics, handicrafts, Buddhist art, Chinese and Japanese painting are complimented by items in his music collection – *The Buddhist Meditation Music of Korea*, and *Traditional Music of Korea*. Antique kimonos adorn one of the bedrooms in his workshop residence in a converted bank building in Marfa.

Judd periodically accompanied exhibitions to Japan and Korea from 1979 to 1992.⁶⁰

In a revue of Tetsuro Sawada's paintings⁶¹ Judd points out the inter cultural connections between Abstract Expressionism, traditional Japanese spatiality, sumi ink painting and calligraphy:

Wash drawings in sumi ink and occasional colour succeed last season's large oils which were painted in a synthesis of traditional Japanese space and Abstract Expressionist methods – a frequent amalgam whether the painter works in Japan, as does Sawada, or in New York.⁶²

This expression of awareness of the centrality of spatiality in Japanese cultural practices reflects his abiding frustration that spatiality was neglected as a primal element in the sculpture and architecture of his time. Expressed in the following quote, his frustration that the West's turning away from the totemic object had not turned to an understanding of spatiality as an alternative element of expression, given that, significantly, he knew of "the vocabulary of space" in the East, which he recommends should be considered anew. He wrote in 1993:⁶³

Space is new in art and is still not a concern of more than a few artists. It is generally accepted that vertical, anthropomorphic, totemic sculpture is no longer acceptable ... but an interest in space has not replaced the interest in such solids. ... There was a traditional vocabulary about space ... about proportion, volume and sequence, *East and*

⁶⁰ *The Sculpture of Donald Judd*, Watari Gallery, Tokyo, 1978; Gallery Yamaguchi, Osaka, 1989, 1990, 1992; Inkong Gallery, Seoul, 1991, 1992; Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art, Shizuoka, 1992; Kitakyushu Municipal Museum of Art, Kitakyushu, 1992; Gallery Seomi, Seoul, 1995. From *Donald Judd Colorist*, (2000), catalogue, pub. Hatje Cantz, Germany.

⁶¹ Tetsuro Sawada (1935 – 1999) Born in Hokkaido, Sawada graduated from Musashino Art University where he majored in Western painting. In 1960 he began painting abstract oils and in 1973 began producing lithographs and then silkscreen prints. In 1966-67 he travelled in North and South America and in 1969 studied in France and Spain. His works are in numerous collections, including the British Museum, Cleveland Museum, Cincinnati Art Museum and the Honolulu Academy of Art.

http://www.castlefinearts.com/Japanese_fine_arts_woodblock_prints/Tetsuro_Sawada_Biography.aspx Sited November, 2008.

⁶² Donald Judd, *Complete Writings 1959 – 1975* (2005), Pub. Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design with New York University Press, New York. See Art News, Sept. 1959. P 29.

⁶³ Donald Judd, Rudi Fuchs, *Donald Judd: Large Scale Works*, (1993), Pace Gallery New York. P 13. My italics.

West ...For both art and architecture, the vocabulary of space of the past should be reconsidered and in relation, but *newly* ...

It is to be presumed that this new, experimental approach to spatiality in relation to the history of Eastern traditions was Judd's objective, leading to the development of installation art such as the Marfa boxes.

The sensitivity Judd expressed to "traditional Japanese space" in Sawada's paintings is reiterated in his detailed description of his research of placement and spatial articulation in his own practice:

I found that if I placed a work on a wall in relation to a corner, or both corners, or similarly on the floor, or outdoors near a change in the surface of the ground, that by adjusting the distance the space in between became much more clear than before, definite like [the object] ...it's logical to desire the space in all directions to become clear.⁶⁴

Lee Irwin asserts that during the nineteen sixties and seventies, "eastern religions" were part of an emerging "new age" paradigm that was impacting many currents within American and European esotericism".⁶⁵ A direct Taoist influence at this time in America was the publication by "outstanding authors" of scholarly and popular books on Taoism.⁶⁶ For example, Alan Watts published *Cloud Hidden, Whereabouts Unknown* in 1968, and *Tao: The Watercourse Way* in 1975. He also had radio and television programs about Taoism and was on the lecture circuit to "about 100 cities".⁶⁷ Fritjof Kapra's *The Tao of Physics*, published in 1975, a very popular book, drew parallels between modern physics' relativity paradigm and Taoist principles such as holistic transformation, non-action, and brought a "credibility to Taoism by aligning it with science".⁶⁸ Joseph Needham's book, *Science and Civilisation in China* (seven volumes), which is in Judd's library in Marfa, does the same thing.

The following cultural practices and processes that have their origins in Taoism, some of them through Zen Buddhism, are arguably deployed in Judd's installation at Marfa as a direct outcome of his knowledge, or the implicit diffusion of Taoist ideas into the creative 'tool box' of artists at this time. Judd's decision to leave evidence of the artillery sheds' past functions is reminiscent of the Japanese aesthetic, *wabi sabi*, where the aging of materials is preserved

⁶⁴ Ibid. P 10.

⁶⁵ Ibid. P 12.

⁶⁶ Lee Irwin, *Daoist Alchemy in the West: the Esoteric Paradigms*. Pp 11, 12, 13. <http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeVI/Dao.htm>

⁶⁷ Ibid. P 12.

⁶⁸ Ibid. P 12. The Television series was called *Eastern Wisdom and Modern Life*.

to represent both the past and the currency of present detritus, a Taoist paradox expressive of continuity and change (*Fig 22*).⁶⁹



Fig 22: (Left) The stained concrete floor in Judd's sheds, Marfa Texas. (Right) The window frames show exposed applications of glue. Photo. B. Ely, 2008.

Intriguingly this “original state” includes two signs in German stenciled on a wall in the North shed, a contextualising reference to a history of interned German nationals who were employed in the artillery sheds during the Second World War (*Fig 23, Fig 24*). One suspects that Judd, who was involved in the anti-Vietnam War protests, was bemused that these decommissioned military installations were to be used, in perpetuity, for his art's serene purposes.⁷⁰ He wrote in reference to purchasing the property, “It had been an army base, which is not so good.”⁷¹



Fig 23: Above and below: Signs for German detainees that Judd retained from the Second World War when German nationals were detained in Marfa. Large sign: *Zutritt für Unbefugte verboten*: No unauthorised access. Photo. B. Ely, 2008.

⁶⁹ ⁶⁹ Kurokawa, Kishu. 1988. *Rediscovering Japanese Space*. New York. Pub. John Wetherall Inc. Pp 70 – 77.

⁷⁰ In 1971 Judd designed a signed poster “to benefit the Peace Activation Coalition and the Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam”. *Donald Judd*. 2004. Edited by N. Serota. Pub. Tate, London. P 256.

⁷¹ *Artillery Sheds* by Donald Judd. This essay first appeared in *Donald Judd*, Architektur, West Kunstverein Munster, 1989. <http://www.chinati.org/visit/collection/artilleryshedsbyjudd.php>



Fig 24: Den Kopf benutzen ist besser als ihn zu verlieren: It's better to use your head than to lose your head. Photo. B. Ely, 2008.

However inadvertently, in keeping with Taoism's non-hierarchical structure, Judd endeavored to integrate the processes of art making into his everyday life and the art itself into liminal zones that removed the work from traditional contexts. In a critique of the exhibition, *Twentieth Century Engineering*, which featured work by architect/engineers such as Buckminster-Fuller, he wrote:

The forms of art and non-art have always been connected: their occurrences shouldn't be separated as they have been ... It is better to consider art and non-art one thing and make the distinctions one of degree.⁷²

In this respect Judd followed the Taoist practice of integrating the prosaic and esoteric, the creative and practical, the diurnal and specialised. His life style is indicated by his pointed inclusion of kitchen and sleeping facilities in all of his studios as he did not separate work from the needs and routines of day to day living.

Deal with a thing when it is still nothing;
Keep a thing in order before disorder sets in.
The tree that can fill the span of a man's arms
Grows from a downy tip
A terrace nine stories high rises from hodfuls of earth;
A journey of a thousand miles
Starts from beneath one's feet⁷³

It is also reflected in his art practice, which embraced furniture design, architecture, landscape gardening and perhaps above all, established an abstract genre for sculpture that echoes the everyday world of engineering, construction, and building technologies.

⁷² Ibid. See article *Month in Revue*, Arts Magazine, Oct. 1964 on P 138.

⁷³ LaoTzu, *Tao Te Ching*, Verse 42.

IMPROVISATION

One of the major strands of Judd's oeuvre is known as 'progressions', where he made a series of sculptures that have the same external geometric form with a sequence of different spatial interventions. To use an analogy from music, Judd retains the rhythm of identical external forms, symmetrically placed, and improvises upon the melody, the changing interior of the forms. An analogy can also be drawn with calligraphic improvisation. Like the example of Taoist improvisation upon the longevity character discussed in the previous chapter, sculptural changes to the forms' interior spatiality are not erratic, they stay within the parameters of Judd's 'melody'. This improvisational method is described by Judd as not "based on ... *a priori* systems".⁷⁴ A reminder of Taoism's description of creation is apt here in its perception that from a primordial wholeness, the Tao, here symbolised by the artist, comes the creation, a flowering, of tuned yet different versions of phenomena – the serial sculptures, or 'progressions'.

*The Way (Tao) gave rise to the one,
The one gave rise to the two,
The two gave rise to the three,
The three gave rise to all the ten thousand things.*⁷⁵

Returning to Karl E. Weick's analysis of degrees of improvisation in the visual arts,⁷⁶ Judd's progressions are an example of true improvisation, spontaneous creativity, where ideas flow to create new forms:

IMPROVISATION: Improvisation is more than a paraphrase, modification or embellishment of existing motifs. The artist radically alters conventional forms or completely departs from known subjects, methods, genres and styles. The artist deploys methods of representation to make entirely new creations from the imagination and the properties of the medium, which may also have no precedent in convention.⁷⁷

This is an accurate description of Judd's methodology for the boxes at Marfa.

Judd's improvised progressions embody the Taoist theme, continuity and change: an element is continuously repeated without change - continuity, whilst other elements undergo

⁷⁴ Foster, Hal. 1996. *The Return of the Real: the Avante-Garde at the End of the Century*: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA. P 40.

⁷⁵ Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*. Verse 42. From Stephen Little with Shawn Eichman, *Taoism and the Arts of China*, 2000, Art Institute of Chicago, University of California Press.

⁷⁶ See Chapter Three. Karl E. Weick, *Improvisation as a Mindset for Organizational Analysis*, for the *Special Issue: Jazz Improvisation and Organizing*. *Organisation Science*, Vol. 9, No. 5 (Sept. – Oct.). Pp 543 – 555.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* . P 546.

metamorphosis - change. This style of practice is not unique to Judd. For example, many of the works of his contemporaries held in the Dia Beacon collection⁷⁸ are based upon either a graphic, or sculptural, improvisational premise upon a constant element – a graphic figure, a form, or process. Dan Flavin's series of placed fluorescent lights, Agnes Martin's and Sol Le Witt's drawings follow sequential graphic patterns and permutations. Serra's large scale, immersive iron forms are improvisations upon a particular spatial configuration, the truncated cone. On Kawara repeats the daily process of recording the date of each day noting differences, as in his *Today* series.⁷⁹ All these works manifest the theme, continuity and change (*Fig 25, Fig 26, Fig 27, Fig 28*).

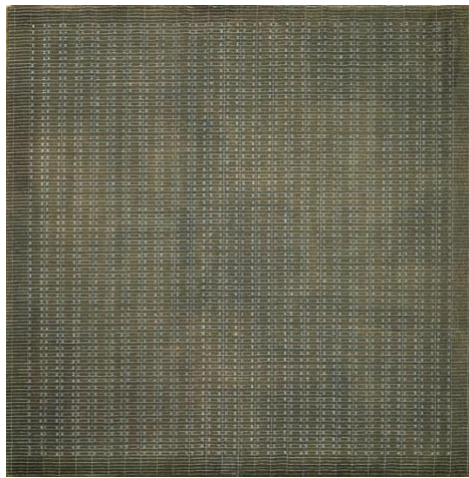


Fig 25: Agnes Martin, White Flower, 1960. Oil on canvas, 71 7/8 x 72 inches.

⁷⁸ <http://www.Diabeacon.org/> Dia:Beacon is a museum for Dia Art Foundation's renowned collection of art from the 1960s to the present. Beacon is a small town on the Hudson River, north of Manhattan. The building originally belonged to the Nabisco company and was a factory for manufacturing and printing cartons. Without the Dia Foundation's sponsorship of these distinctly American, extremely expensive, large scale works and their sites, it is possible that Minimalist art would not have developed to its extreme magnitude, expressed through a monumental, industrial scale. "Dia was supporting almost a dozen Minimal and conceptual artists, including such towering figures as Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, and John Chamberlain, with stipends, studios, assistants, and archivists for the individual museums it planned to build for each of them. It was also funding an array of monumental, site-specific artworks ranging from Walter De Maria's mile-wide *The Lightning Field* in New Mexico and James Turrell's 600-foot-high *Roden Crater* in Arizona to La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela's six-story *Dream House* in Tribeca. Along the way, it amassed some 900 artworks by those artists as well as by Barnett Newman, Joseph Beuys, Cy Twombly, and Andy Warhol." <http://www.vanityfair.com/magazine/archive/1996/09/colacello199609> Bob Colacello, "Remains of the Dia", *Vanity Fair*, September 1996. Cited Dec. 2008.

⁷⁹ <http://www.Diaart.org/exhibs/bindex.html> Cited Nov. 2008. The collection was viewed during a field trip undertaken in 2008 to analyse improvisational practices of the post World War Two period up to the 1990s in America, including the Dia Beacon collection and Judd's artwork at Marfa, Texas.

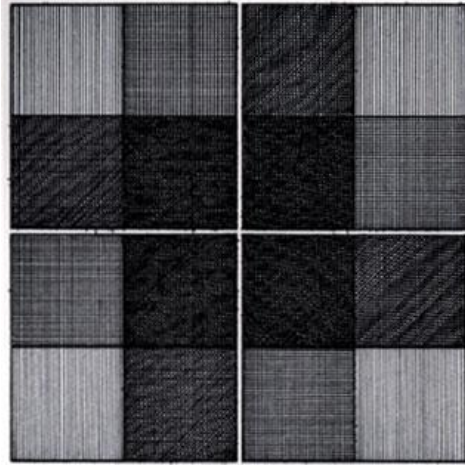


Fig 26: Sol LeWitt, Drawing Series—*Composite, Part I-IV, #1-24, A+B* (detail), 1969. Dia Beacon exhibition, 2008. © Estate of Sol Le Witt/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

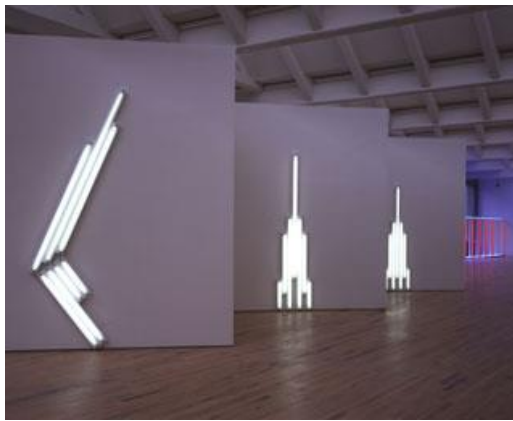


Fig 27: Dan Flavin. “*Monument*” to V. Tatlin XI, 1964; “*Monument*” to V. Tatlin, 1966; “*Monument*” to V. Tatlin, 1966—69; and *Untitled*, 1970. Dia Beacon exhibition, 2008. © Estate of Dan Flavin/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Bill Jacobson.



Fig 28: On Kawara, JUNE 16, 1966, Two Tankers and two tugboats crashed in a fiery disaster in Lower New York Bay, 1966, from *Today* series, 1966 - present. Dia Beacon exhibition, 2008. © On Kawara. Photo: Bill Jacobson.

This improvisational development in the experimental art of Post World War Two America has been attributed to the influence of Afro-American jazz on the visual arts.⁸⁰ Lisa Phillips writes in *Beat Culture and the New America*:

Like jazz performance, Beat art is essentially temporal in its understanding of experience and process-orientated in its forms of presentation. ... One result of this process-orientation was the embrace of additive and linear forms of presentation.⁸¹

A complementary cultural influence is arguably the improvisational practices derived from the Taoist calligraphy and painting underlying the performative in Abstract Expressionism,⁸² as discussed in Chapters Two, Three, Four, Six and Seven. Applied to sculpture, this free elaboration upon constant elements, or themes, extended the three dimensional object into active relationships to its formal and physical contexts of space, opening up the object to a spatial interiority. The foundations of this sculptural 'improvisation in stasis', is the preparatory, spontaneous drawing up of ideas, as we shall see below.



Fig 29: Richard Serra, installation view of *Torqued Ellipse II, Double Torqued Ellipse, and Torqued Ellipse I*, 1996, and 2000. Dia Beacon exhibition, 2008. Here the viewer enters the internal spaces of a series of huge, iron, truncated cones.

⁸⁰ See Lisa Phillips, *Beat Culture and the New America: 1950 – 1965* (1996). Pub. Whitney Museum, Flammarion. P 198. Barbara Zabel, *Assembling Art: The Machine and the American Avant-Garde*, 2004, pub. University of Mississippi. Chapter 7. *The “Jazzing” of the American Avant-Garde*, Daniel Belgrad, *The Culture of Spontaneity: Improvisation and the Arts in Post War America*, University of Chicago Press, 1998.

⁸¹ Lisa Phillips, *Beat Culture and the New America: 1950 – 1965* (1996). Pub. Whitney Museum, Flammarion. P 198.

⁸² Phillips writes of Pollock’s ‘action painting’: “Pollock substituted process and performance for narrative pictorial space, acting out body rhythms and primal motions on canvas.” *Beat Culture and the New America: 1950 – 1965* (1996). Pub. Whitney Museum, Flammarion. P 37.

The artists and viewers are all inter-active, curious, improvising players. Phillips describes this as the “present-minded, Zen-like fluidity of the experience”.⁸³ She attributes the indirect influence of Zen to the “return of US servicemen from occupied Japan, often accompanied by Japanese Buddhist wives; the relaxation of immigration laws in 1960, which permitted [the migration of] religious leaders from ... Japan”; the publication and popularity of D. T. Suzuki’s books on Zen.”⁸⁴

Jacquiline Baas in her book, *Smile of the Buddha: Eastern Philosophy and Western Art from Monet to Today*⁸⁵ which is essentially about the influence of Zen Buddhism, tracks publications in America and Europe on Eastern Philosophy, including Taoism from which Zen Buddhism is derived, back to the nineteenth century, beginning with the publication of Marco Polo’s thirteenth century account of his observations of China.⁸⁶

Of the *Tao Te Ching*, Agnes Martin wrote:

My greatest spiritual inspiration came from the Chinese spiritual leaders, especially Lao Tzu.⁸⁷

These accounts of Taoism’s rhizomic infusion into mainstream Western paradigms supports Irvine’s claims for its popularisation through Watt’s, Needham’s and Kapra’s publications, translations and publication of Chinese texts, the media and Eastern art and philosophy lectures and studies in Post World War Two in America.

One such text was the *I Ching*. The artist’s improvisational method described above is reminiscent of the calibration of the sixty-four hexagrams that provide the derivation of the commentaries in the Taoist *I Ching*, or *Book of Changes*. Here a line and a broken line are the constant elements that are combined to form eight trigrams, that is, eight different combinations of the line and broken line in vertically stacked combinations of three lines each.⁸⁸ The ‘constants’ are then differently combined to make the maximum number of

⁸³ Ibid. P 197.

⁸⁴ Ibid. P 144.

⁸⁵ Jacqueline Baas, *Smile of the Buddha: Eastern Philosophy and Western Art from Monet to Today* (2005), University of California Press.

⁸⁶ Ibid. P 21. The influential publications she writes of specifically on Taoism include, Henry Yule’s translation of Marco Polo’s *Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East* (1871); Ernest Fenollosa’s *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art*; Laurence Benyon’s *The Flight of the Dragon: An Essay on the Theory and Practice of Art in China and Japan* (1911); *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, first published in German in 1929; Ananda Coomaraswamy’s *Transformations in Nature and Art*.

⁸⁷ Ibid. P 215.

⁸⁸ “These eight trigrams were conceived as images of all that happens in Heaven and on Earth” and were given names, attributes, an image and family relationships, which represents different kinds of movement (for example restful movement, dangerous movement) and devotion (for example a gentle penetration, adaptable devotion).

combinations - sixty-four hexagrams - where trigrams are paired off to make different stacks of six linear elements.

John Cage said about his use of the *I Ching* for his compositions:

The mechanism by which the *I Ching* works is, I think, the same as that by means of which the DNA – or one of those things in the chemistry of our body – works. It's dealing with the number sixty-four, with a binary situation with all of its variations in six lines. I think it's a rather basic life mechanism. I prefer it to other chance operations ... I feel that I am liberated by it.⁸⁹

Like this Taoist method for maximising possibilities for intertwining relationships, Judd and his fellow artists' improvisational method used unchanging, constant elements to create multiplicitous variations, such as Sol LeWitt's vertical, diagonal and horizontal lines. Arguably, the *I Ching* may have inspired as a model for the graphic, improvisational games so fundamental to experimental art making of this time.

At Marfa, Judd authored both the installation's objects, and their site specific venue with its Taoist qualities of metamorphosis, inter relationships to nature, articulated spatiality, temporality, placed within a complex, encoded, built environment.



Fig 30: Donald Judd, *Untitled*, Marfa, Texas. South gun shed looking South-West in afternoon light. Photo: B. Ely, 2008.

They were conceived as transitional, “tendencies in movement”. When combined to make the sixty-four hexagrams, the inter-relationship of their significance composed not only an oracle, but a book of wisdom. From Richard Wilhelm's *Introduction* to his translation of the *I Ching*.

⁸⁹ From a 1980 interview with Cole Gagny and Tracy Caras, excerpted in Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage*, 233, 234. Jacqueline Baas, *Smile of the Buddha: Eastern Philosophy and Western Art from Monet to Today* (2005), University of California Press. Re Cage, the *I Ching* and chance see pp 168, 169, 174, 175.

Judd's creative extemporisations for the design of the boxes for the Marfa installation are concealed in the installation. His drawings' sequential flow of ideas are concealed in the mixed composition of their placement (see Diagram below, *Placement of 100 Milled Aluminium Boxes, Marfa Texas*).⁹⁰ The boxes were installed in the sheds as they were delivered so Judd must have stipulated the order of production. Installation of the works in the South gun shed was completed before the North shed. Judd "ensure[d] that different kinds of boxes were placed directly next to each other so that ... optical multiplicity would be immediately apparent".⁹¹

The next section, *The Fieldwork: Judd's Untitled Installation, Marfa, Texas* (page 34), unpicks this "optical multiplicity" to analyse Judd's improvisational methodology. By examining Judd's drawings in numbered order for *Untitled*, to some extent we can 'get inside' his thinking and his process of improvisation at conception. The parameters Judd adhered to in the articulation of the boxes' internal spatiality of the otherwise identical boxes, also becomes apparent.⁹²

Marianne Stockebrand writes of his intent that:

... he always viewed seriality as a chance to develop the potential of a form. His systems were strictly non-didactic. During the design stages of the aluminum pieces, he had ensured that approximately the same number of boxes were open at the sides, the ends, or the top and he mingled these different versions in the hall so that the light could refract in the ensuing angles and corners, transforming their infinitely clear structures into magical moments of amazement.⁹³

This suggests an editing process accompanied or concluded the development of ideas. However, in the following section, an analysis of the numbered order of conception is predicated upon an apparent order of conception, arguably based on the discernably lucid development of ideas evident in Judd's numbering of the drawings as they were executed. I suggest his selection process to ensure "approximately the same number of boxes were open at the sides, the ends, or the top" was a 'tweaking' rather than a major edit. As I entered into the domain of Judd's creating mind by re-drawing Judd's drawings, a flowing lucidity became apparent.

⁹⁰ Marianne Stockebrand published a map of the boxes' placement in her article, *The Making of Two Works: Donald Judd's Installations at the Chinati Foundation*. P 57.

<http://www.chinati.org/visit/collection/donaldjudd.php>

⁹¹ Ibid. P 60.

⁹² From fieldwork undertaken in Marfa, at the Chinati Foundation, 2008, following an earlier viewing in 2004.

⁹³ See Marianne Stockebrand, *The Making of Two Works: Donald Judd's Installations at the Chinati Foundation*. Pp 61, 62. <http://www.chinati.org/visit/collection/donaldjudd.php> Cited Dec. 2008.

Judd's methodology for creating a sequence of improvisations upon the oblong also appears to follow closely the 'rules' of graphic improvisation, evidenced in the Taoist art form of calligraphy: the original common form of the character (for Judd, the repetition of identically proportioned oblong forms) is quoted as a creative parameter imposed on the improvisational 'game'.⁹⁴ The result is a harmonised relationship of the binaries, continuity and change.

THE FIELDWORK: JUDD'S *UNTITLED* INSTALLATION, MARFA, TEXAS

The detailed account of fieldwork carried out in Marfa, Texas, included here, is intended to assist in articulating how the complex outcomes of my practising artist's research methodology was employed in the analysis of another artist's studio practice. The skills set of the visual artist was deployed in this analysis. By redrawing Judd's drawings, then comparing them to the actual sculptures in order of their conception, a detailed understanding of his creative process was achieved.

The genesis of the fieldwork was my attendance of an Open Weekend at the Chinati Foundation in 2004 to thoroughly explore all of the Foundation's permanent Minimalist installations, including Judd's Marfa boxes. This first encounter made a similar impression as my first encounter with the prolific variations upon the longevity character in Hué in 1998 – an overwhelming sense of artists' capacity for exponential creativity in the visual arts, expressed by means of an improvisational methodology. However, as a visual artist, I knew that the *spontaneity* of this methodology is not to be found in Judd's perfectly formed, completed sculptures, but rather in the wellspring of his ideas – in his drawings.

These drawings have not been published and so access is permitted only through viewing in person photocopies of the drawings held in the Chinati Foundation's archive. The prime objective of this fieldwork was to analyse, in relation to the boxes, the conception of the boxes evident in the execution of Judd's drawings. These were not highly finished formal studies or precise mechanical drawings, but rather, spontaneous sketches. Judd's method of creative invention as evidenced in his preparatory drawings arguably indicates his direct and indirect exposure, as discussed in the previous section, to the improvisational Eastern methodologies that have their origins in, and characterise, Taoist art practices.

His completed, drawn ideas - for the fabricator - were found to be a series of rapidly executed sketches containing the absolute minimum amount of information necessary for the production of the geometric forms. This method was further confirmed by comparing the drawings with

⁹⁴ See Chapter Four.

the information supplied on the Purchase Orders for the fabricator. From my experience in the studio as a practising visual artist, the drawings clearly demonstrate that Judd's invention of one hundred different spatial interiors for his one hundred identically proportioned boxes may be compared to the rapid fire, bounteous outpourings of the calligrapher - combined with his extraordinarily masterful capacity for spatial perception.

OBJECTIVES OF THE FIELD RESEARCH IN MARFA

- Research the context and background of the Marfa installation, *Untitled*.
- Research Judd's improvisational method regarding his one hundred articulations of the internal spatiality of an identically scaled solid, the oblong, for *Untitled*, the installed series of 100 aluminium boxes at Marfa, Texas.
- Analyse the above using Donald Judd's preparatory drawings, which he made sequentially for the fabricator.
- Document the sculptures' sequential progressions as they appear in Judd's drawings.
- Research the aesthetic and conceptual elements contributing to the artist's successful combination of sculpture and site in the artwork.

BACKGROUND: JUDD'S PREPARATORY EXPERIMENTS

Fieldwork at the Dia Beacon Museum, Beacon, New York and at Donald Judd's studios in Marfa revealed that Judd had experimented with improvisations upon the oblong leading to the untitled, site specific installation in Marfa's artillery sheds. Judd's improvisational system, developed in 1975 for a series of fifteen identically proportioned plywood boxes, held in the Dia Beacon Museum, New York State, was documented using drawing as the medium (see below) to make a comparison with the boxes in Marfa (*Fig 31, Fig 113*).⁹⁵

Judd's artwork of 1975 at Dia Beacon foreshadows his installation of aluminium boxes in the gun sheds at Marfa, although not all of the ideas here are included in Marfa's one hundred boxes. Like the Marfa installation, they are placed in precisely proportioned rows (see the Diagram, *Judd's 15 Boxes, Dia Beacon*, below). Unlike the Marfa boxes, the Dia Beacon boxes are not reflective. They are made of fir plywood, a particularly decorative, knotted wood that contrasts with the austerity of Judd's boxes, yet like the aluminium at Marfa lend the sculptures a striking material aesthetic.

Like the Marfa improvisations, the interior form of the Dia Beacon boxes established several rules, or parameters, within which changes were made to the boxes' spatiality (see below), a method that Judd continued at Marfa:

⁹⁵ Photography is not permitted, but for my purposes, drawing was a better research tool.

Box # 1 and 3	A single Diagonal plane
Box # 2, 5, 9	4" indent into the wall/top of the box
Box #4, 6, 7, 14, 15	Box in a box
Box # 6, 13	4" rim around the top edge of the box.
Box #8	An open/closed box
Box # 10, 11, 12	A single horizontal plane



*Fig 31: Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1975, fir plywood, Dia Beacon exhibition, 2008. These oblongs are a more square form than the ones at Marfa, which were drawn up five years later.*

Judd repeated several of the Dia Beacon parameters in 1980 when drawing up the Marfa project.⁹⁶ They are marked with an asterisk on the Diagram below.

⁹⁶ His play with variations on a 4 inch rim around the box was not repeated at Marfa.

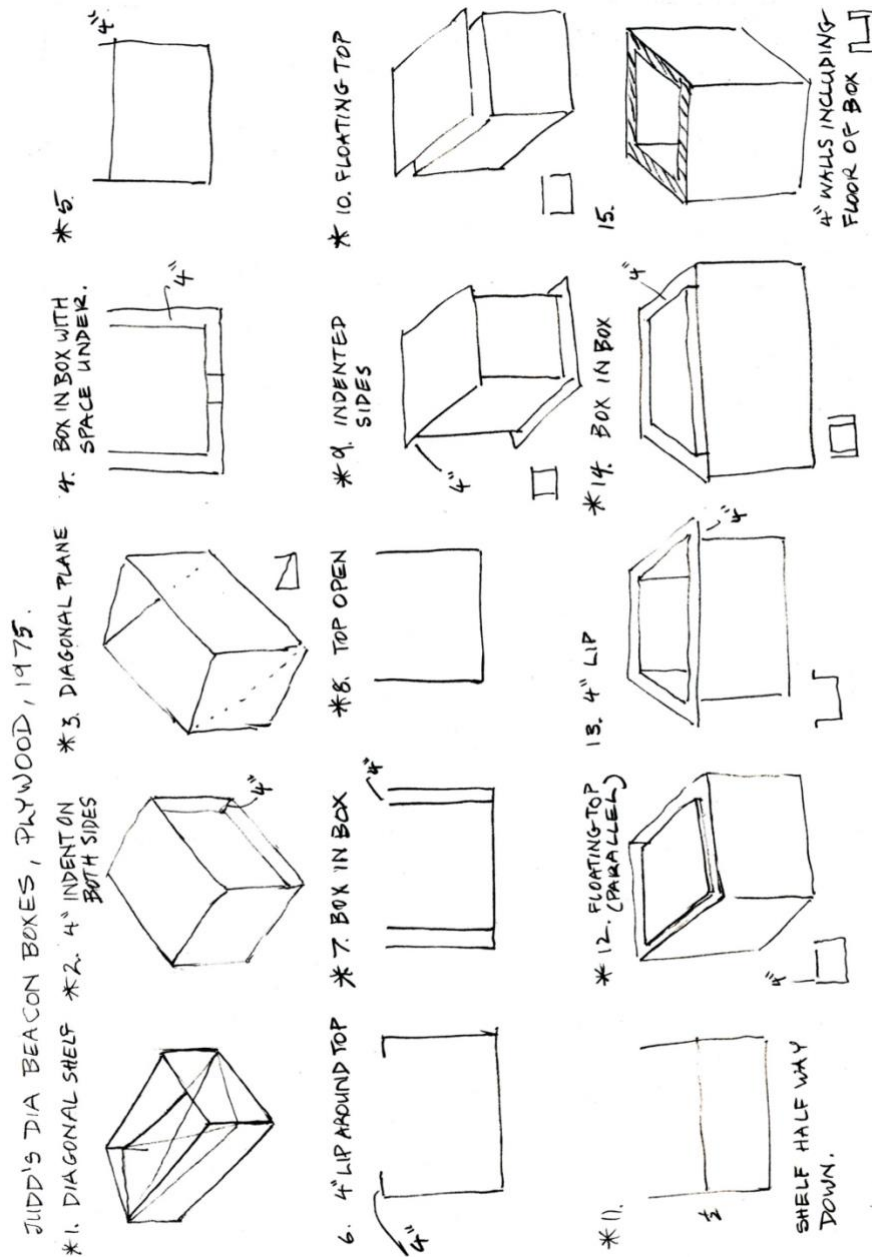


Fig 32: Bonita Ely, 2008, drawings of Donald Judd's 15 wooden boxes, from 1976, *Untitled*, at Dia Beacon. The drawings show Judd's improvisations upon the oblong and their placement.

For the Marfa installation, before proceeding to manufacture, Judd made several individual aluminium boxes of the same scale to test different metallurgical formulas for milled aluminium. The rejected experiment was darker and less reflective.

FIELD RESEARCH OF JUDD'S IMPROVISATIONAL METHOD

To retrace Judd's method of improvisation, his drawings were re-drawn to follow intimately Judd's thinking as he developed his sculptural ideas (Fig 33).

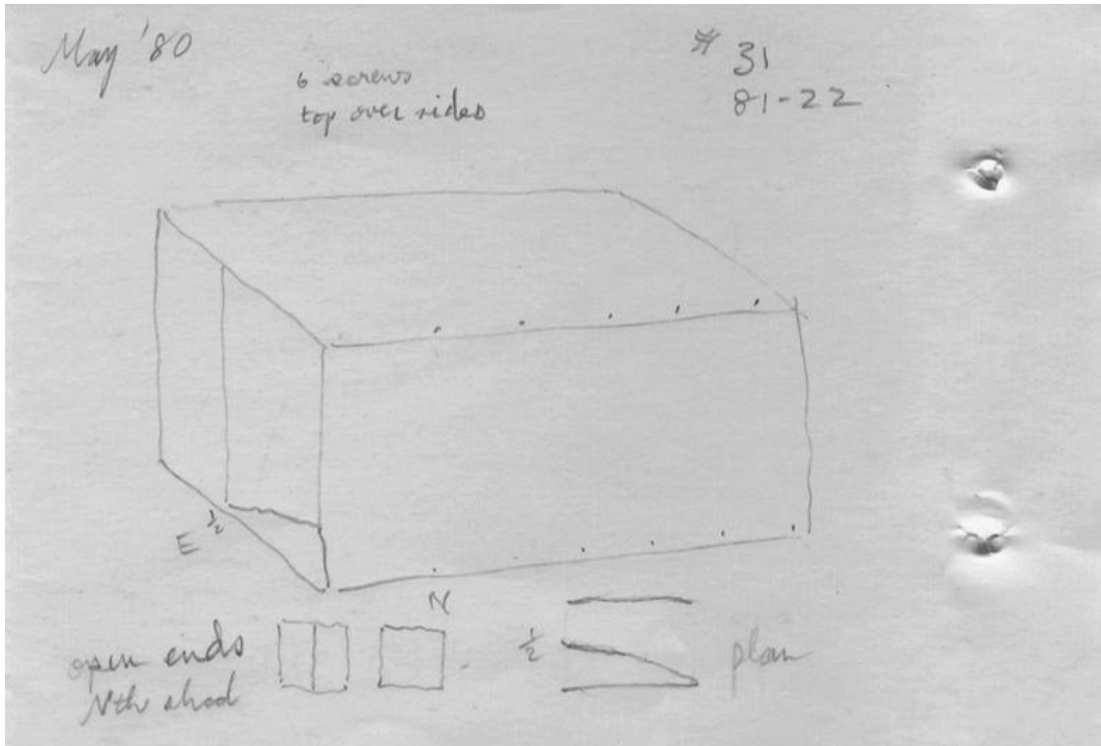
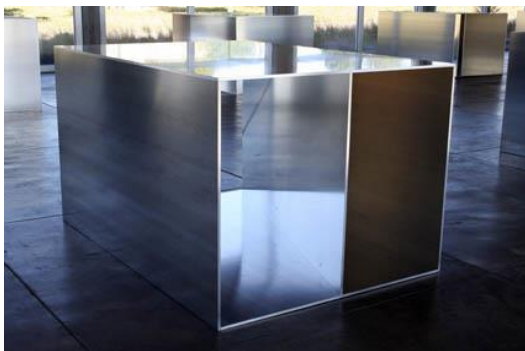


Fig 33: Bonita Ely, re-drawing of Judd's Box # 31. **Description** - Box# 31: Diagonal divide from centre to end corner, length wise. **Notations** (left to right, top to bottom): Drawing executed May 1980; 6 screws; top overlaps sides; Box # 31's Purchase Order number - 81-22. Open ends; North shed; Northern orientation (N) at bottom of drawing; plan.

The drawings were checked against the Purchase Orders made by the fabricators, who included a sketched plan and elevation diagram from Judd's drawings. A verbal description of each piece was recorded (see the caption for *Fig 114* above).

To photograph the boxes in order of conception, the individual boxes were located in the artillery sheds using the Chinati map of where Judd placed the boxes.⁹⁷ They were documented from as many angles as required to capture the complexity of each box's three dimensionality (*Fig 112*).



Looking North West



Looking West

⁹⁷ Using Marianne Stockebrand's published a map of the boxes' placement in her article, *The Making of Two Works: Donald Judd's Installations at the Chinati Foundation*. P 57.



Looking South West



Looking West



Looking East



Looking East

Fig 34: Box # 31, showing the changes to a specific box's appearance when the viewer moves around the box at a specific time of day. Photo: B. Ely.

Finally, the Chinati Foundation's map was used to locate each box again and compare the actual sculptures with my drawings of Judd's drawings, in his numerical sequence of execution, to check accuracy and identify anomalies. Information about the sculptures not recorded on Judd's drawings was added to my drawings to make a complete, notated and graphic documentation of each sculpture.

On his drawings, Judd usually recorded information such as:

- the date of execution;
- either a plan or elevation;
- the number of the box;
- some written instructions for the fabricator to clarify the drawings.

A Chinati researcher has recorded the purchase order number and some written instructions to clarify the photocopied drawings.

My drawings include the following additional information:

- The gun shed where the box is located.
- The boxes' orientation regarding cardinal points.

- Fabrication details such as the number and location of screws; how the sheet metal overlaps at the edges of the boxes.
- Written descriptions and measurements where required for clarification.

OUTCOMES OF THE RESEARCH OF JUDD'S DRAWINGS

Observations:

Judd's drawings are surprisingly spontaneous and rudimentary. They were drawn up in sequence on several occasions as he gradually conceived of the final scale of the project and organised sponsorship (*Fig 35, Fig 36*).

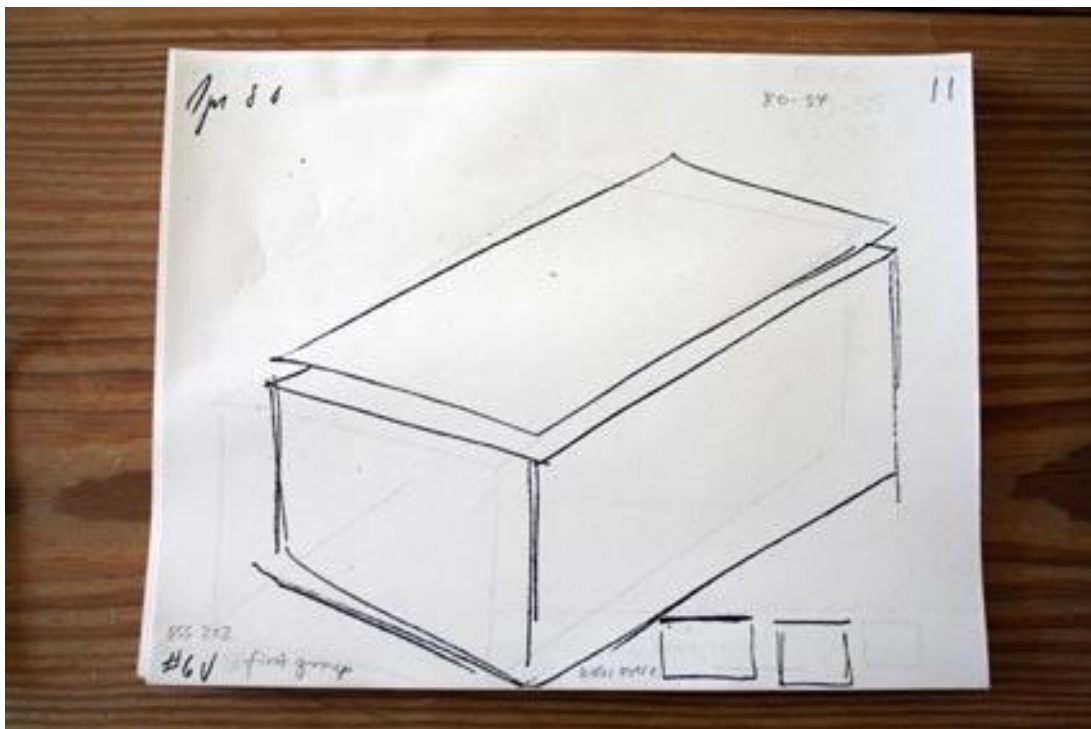


Fig 35: Photocopy of Donald Judd's drawing for Box #11, April, 1980, held in the Chinati Foundation's archives for researchers. The heavy lines are Judd's notations. Pale pencil notations have been added by Chinati Foundation researchers.

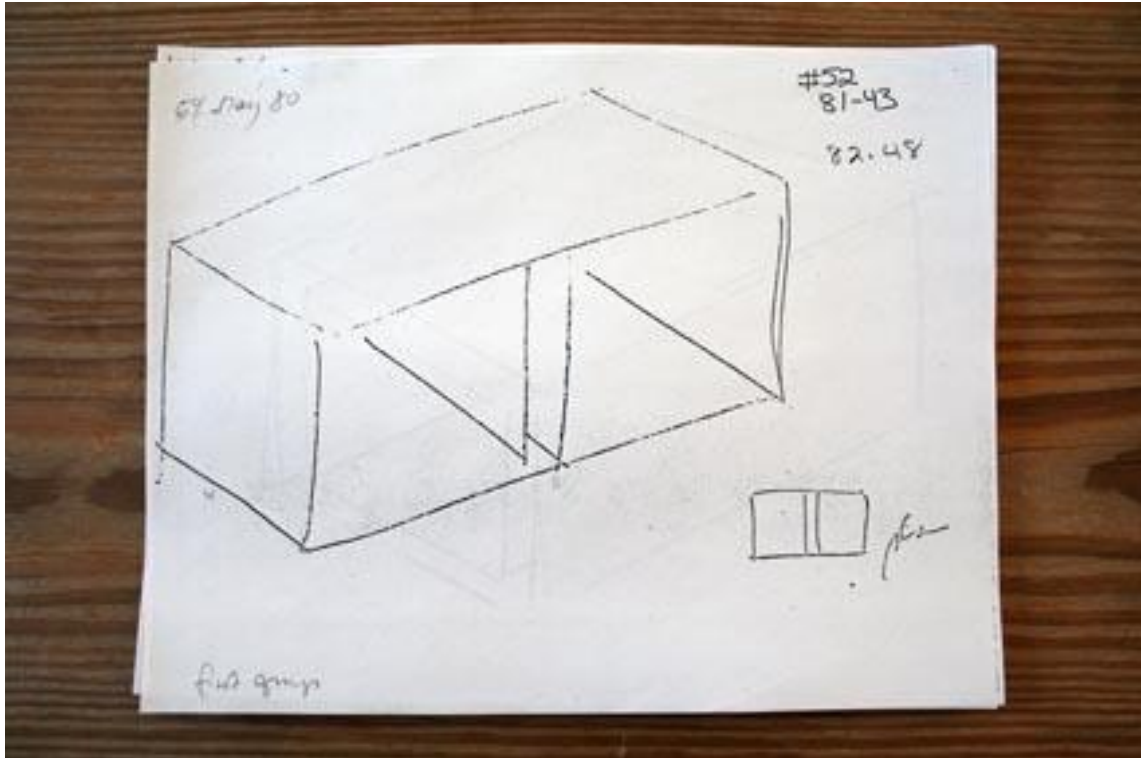


Fig 36: Photocopy of Donald Judd's drawing for Box #52, May 1980, held in the Chinati Foundation's archives for researchers.

The drawings arguably demonstrate that Judd's invention of the one hundred variations upon one form evolved as a sequential, rather than a randomly formulated series. Each change is based on a previous configuration within certain parameters, or rules, such as variations upon how a diagonal plane cuts across the space.

For example, for the diagonal planes the parameters were:

- extend from a top edge to the opposite bottom edge;
- extend diagonally across the space from a four inch inset parallel the top side or top end of the box;
- extend diagonally from a four inch inset from the bottom side or bottom end up to the box's opposite top edge.
- Extend diagonally to and from four inch insets, top and bottom.

Judd's method significantly changed the quality of light within these boxes, as well as the form of the sculptures. For example, blocking off the light into a space increases the tonal range of reflections from black to shiny white, whereas making openings draws light into the box to multiply reflective possibilities. These changes also transform with shifts in sunlight's direction throughout the day.

The following specifications demonstrate Judd's improvisational process for Marfa's site specific installation.

The Constant Specifications:⁹⁸

1. The external measurements of all boxes are 41 x 51 x 72 inches.
2. The thickness of all interior and exterior planes is approximately 1 cm.
3. When two sides are open, they are always facing one another (E and W may be open on one box but never E and N [as well]).
4. When two planes are used in the interior, they are always four inches apart and always parallel to each other.

The Ten Parameters of Judd's Marfa Variations:⁹⁹

1. An open/closed box
2. Box within a box
3. 4" indent into the wall/top of the box
4. A single horizontal plane
5. A single vertical plane
6. A single Diagonal plane
7. Two parallel horizontal planes 4" apart
8. Two parallel vertical planes 4" apart
9. Two parallel Diagonal planes 4" apart
10. A Diagonal shelf

The following photographs are examples of each colour coded category (*Fig 37 - Fig 46*):

⁹⁸ These four constants are from Melissa Susan Gaido Allen's Masters thesis, *From the DIA to the Chinati Foundation: Donald Judd in Marfa Texas 1979 – 1994* (1995), Rice University, Figure 14, held in the Chinati Foundation archives, Marfa, Texas. P1. See Rice Digital Scholarship Archive:

<http://scholarship.rice.edu/handle/1911/17040> Allen analysed Judd's variations upon the oblong, making two types of analysis. One description contains the following categories: sides open or not; the box within a box; elevated/floating lid; half an open side; a bent [sic] Diagonal plane; one open side; two open sides. Other descriptions give more information, such as whether bisections are diagonal or not, whether there are two parallel planes or not. Allen invented her own numbering system and visual code to locate Judd's placement of different types of boxes in the sheds, but Allen's research does not reveal the sequence of Judd's improvised invention of the different oblongs from his drawings, which was the main objective of my fieldwork. See Rice Digital Scholarship Archive <http://scholarship.rice.edu/handle/1911/17040>

⁹⁹ The colour coding here is used in all diagrams to identify these ten parameters.

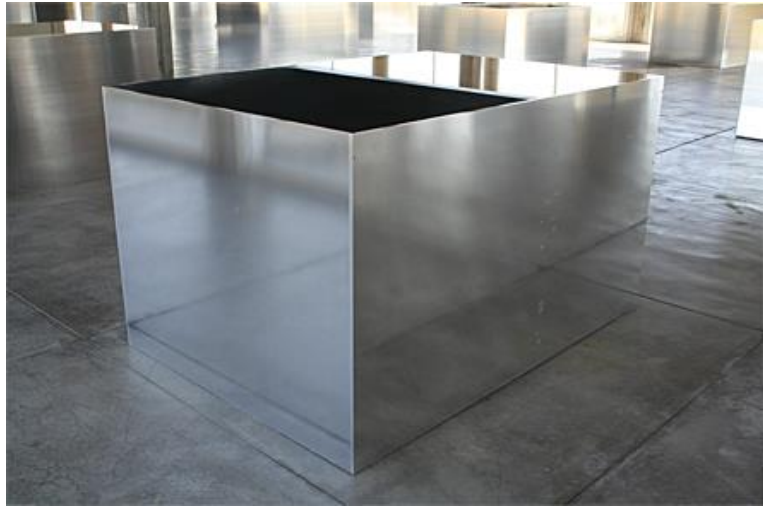


Fig 37: Box #2, an open/closed box.



Fig 38: Box #55, Box within a box



Fig 39: Box #14, 4" indent into the wall/top of the box



Fig 40: Box # 24, A single horizontal plane



Fig 41: Box # 33, A single vertical plane

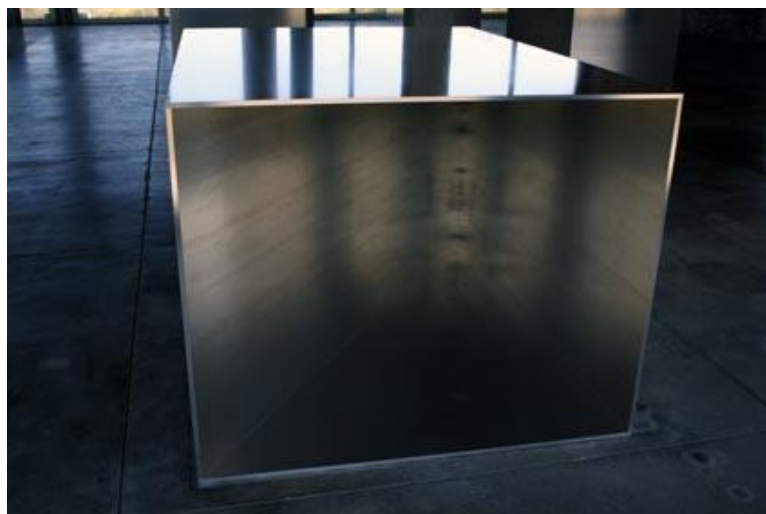


Fig 42: Box # 28, A single Diagonal plane



Fig 43: Box #66, Two parallel horizontal planes 4" apart.



Fig 44: Box #90. Two parallel vertical planes 4" apart

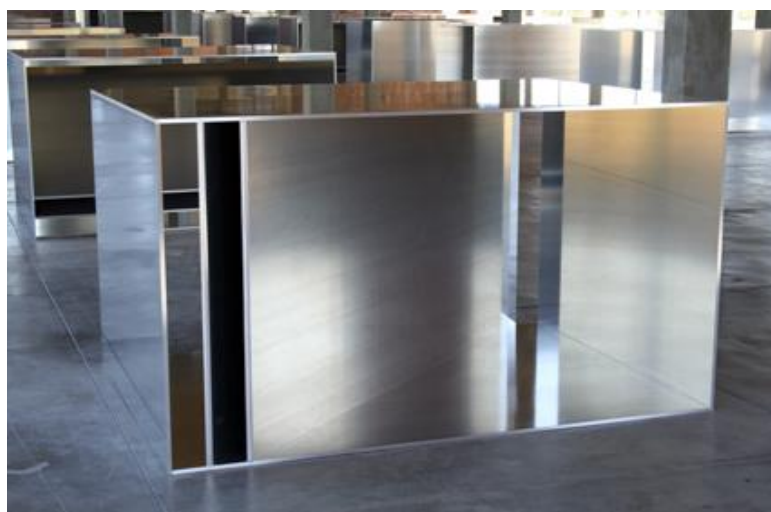


Fig 45: Box #51, Two parallel Diagonal planes 4" apart



Fig 46: Box #100, A single Diagonal shelf

Below, the improvisations are categorised according to Judd's parameters. They are grouped in colour coded sequence to show the parameters Judd adhered to throughout the process of invention; the variations are colour coded to show how he followed one, then switched to another, another, then back again as ideas flowed. Switching from one variation to another usually followed a related pattern of improvisation, for example, from # 20 to #25 he bisects the box from the centre diagonally, then vertically, then horizontally, so the sequential flow is not as ruptured as it appears here.

ANALYSIS OF JUDD'S IMPROVISATIONS

BOX #	PARAMETER	SUM OF IMPROVISATIONS WITHIN A PARAMETER
1 – 3	An open/closed box	(3)
4 – 7	A single Diagonal plane	(4)
8	Box within a box	(1)
9 – 11	A single horizontal plane	(3)
12 , 13	An open/closed box	(2)
14	4" indent into the wall/top of the box	(1)
15	Box within a box	(1)
16 - 19	4" indent into the wall/top of the box	(4)
20 – 21	A single Diagonal plane	(2)
22, 23	A single vertical plane	(2)
24, 25	A single horizontal plane	(2)
26	A Diagonal shelf	(1)
27	A single vertical plane	(1)
28 - 32	A single Diagonal plane	(5)
33, 34	A single vertical plane	(2)
35 – 39	A single Diagonal plane	(5)

40	A single vertical plane	(1)
41 - 47	Two parallel Diagonal planes 4" apart	(7)
48	Two parallel vertical planes 4" apart	(1)
49 – 51	Two parallel Diagonal planes 4" apart	(3)
52	Two parallel vertical planes 4" apart	(1)
53 – 56	Box within a box	(4)
57, 58	A single Diagonal plane	(2)
59 – 62	Two parallel Diagonal planes 4" apart	(4)
63, 64	Two parallel vertical planes 4" apart	(2)
65 – 66	Two parallel horizontal planes 4" apart	(2)
67, 68	An open/closed box	(2)
69 – 74	A single Diagonal plane	(6)
75, 76	Two parallel Diagonal planes 4" apart	(2)
77, 78	A single Diagonal plane	(2)
79 – 82	Two parallel Diagonal planes 4" apart	(4)
83, 84	A single Diagonal plane	(2)
85 – 88	Two parallel Diagonal planes 4" apart	(4)
89	A single vertical plane	(1)
90	Two parallel vertical planes 4" apart	(1)
91, 92	A single Diagonal plane	(2)
93, 94	An open/closed box (using two parallel planes 4" apart)	(2)
95, 96	A single Diagonal plane	(2)
97	An open/closed box	(1)
98, 99	An open/closed box (with a single horizontal plane)	(2)
100	A Diagonal shelf	(1)

This sequential development is shown in graphic form in *The Sequence of Judd's Improvised Variations* (below). These diagrams, typical of the plans and elevations drawn on Judd's drawings and the purchase orders for Judd's boxes, show his train of thought. The following chart, *Placement of 100 Milled Aluminium Boxes, Marfa, Texas* (page 52), shows how Judd distributed the boxes to maximise the unexpected in the viewer's encounter with each box. This placement deletes evidence of Judd's initial, sequential conception.

THE SEQUENCE OF JUDD'S IMPROVISED VARIATIONS

KEY

- Numerals indicate order of conception and remain the archival method used to identify the boxes.
- Elev. – elevation (side view)
- Plan – bird's eye view
- The width of the rectangular format indicates a side view (long) or end view (short)

1. elev.



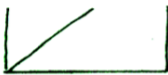
2. elev.



3. elev.



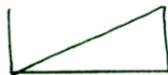
4. elev.



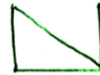
5. elev.



6. elev.



7. elev.



8. elev.



9. elev.



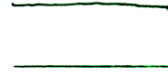
10. elev.



11. elev.



12. elev.



13. elev.



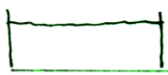
14. elev.



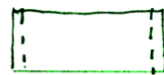
15. elev.



16. elev.



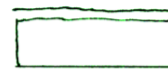
17. elev.



18. elev.



19. elev.



20. elev.



21. elev.



22. elev.



23. elev.



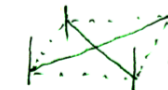
24. elev.



25. elev.



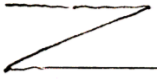
26. elev.



27. elev.



28. plan



29. elev.



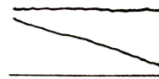
30. plan



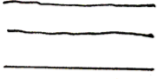
31. plan



32. plan



33. plan



34. plan



35. plan



36. elev.



37. plan



38. plan



39. plan



40. elev.



41. elev.



42. elev.



43. elev.



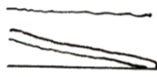
44. elev.



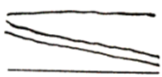
45. plan



46. plan



47. plan



48. elev.



49. plan



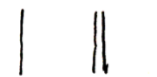
50. plan



51. plan



52. plan



53. elev.



54. elev.



55. elev.



56. elev.



57. elev.



58. elev.



59. elev.



60. elev.



61. elev.



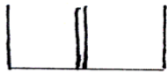
62. elev.



63. elev.



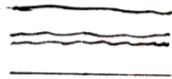
64. elev.



65. elev.



66. elev.



67. elev.



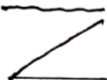
68. elev.



69. elev.



70. elev.



71. elev.



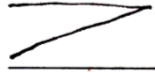
72. elev.



73. elev.



74. elev.



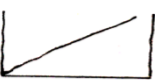
75. elev.



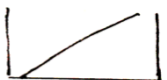
76. elev.



77. elev.



78. elev.



79. elev.



80. elev.



81. elev.



82. elev.



83. elev.



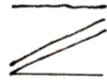
84. elev.



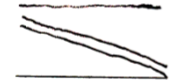
85. elev.



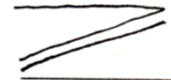
86. elev.



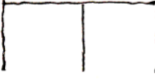
87. elev.



88. elev.



89. plan



90. elev.



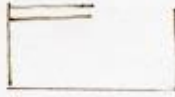
91. elev.



92. elev.



93. elev.



94. elev.



95. plan



96. plan



97. plan



98. plan



99. plan



100. elev.



PLACEMENT OF 100 MILLED ALUMINIUM BOXES, MARFA, TEXAS

North Artillery Shed			South Artillery Shed		
45	71	51	7	15	3
50	23	75	54	27	4
49	40	37	67	52	1
68	31	20	9	12	2
44	58	24	13	5	48
25	86	47	16	8	10
88	34	66	79	11	14
22	62	74	32	39	73
65	38	57	83	72	78
====		====		=====	
61	36	60	35		26
87	43	28	77	80	82
53	85	59	69	6	76
91	96	21	63	30	55
17	56	93	84	42	29
19	92	95	70	89	64
94	90	18	=====		=====
=====		=====		41	33
	97	98			
	100	99		46	81

KEY: The numerical identification of the boxes is the Chinati Foundation's archival method, calibrated from Judd's drawings. For the key to the colour coding refer above to the diagrams: *The Ten Parameters of Judd's Variations; Analysis of Judd's Variations; The Sequence of Judd's Improvised Variations.*

RESEARCH OUTCOMES

Judd seems never to have professed a personal interest in Taoism, although he arguably was exposed to its processes and precepts both directly and indirectly. The literature on Judd's work has not made this connection, although references to meditation and other spiritual, or metaphysical associations accompany descriptions of experiential encounters with his Marfa installation. The field research of Judd's method based on analysis of the drawings in numerical sequence to establish a correlation with the free flow of Taoist creativity must be described as speculative. At worst, we have no record of the conditions in which the drawings were executed, no definitive statement from the artist, no time frame other than the months, at best, in which they were executed, no record of his rejected ideas, and no record of whether he numbered the drawings in retrospect, or whether the numbering is in order of execution. Marianne Stockbrande claims he edited his ideas to equalise, approximately, the types of variations.¹⁰⁰ However, the mark making of his numbering is consistent with the drawings' rapid fire aesthetic, so it seems inconceivable that the drawings were not numbered as he drew them, and therefore drawn, conceived, for the most part, in the numerical sequence Judd notated on the drawings.

The speculative conclusion that Judd's drawings reflect a spontaneous approach to invention reminiscent of calligraphic technique introduces to this evaluation Judd's insistence on a subjective dimension for his artwork. This is supported by the drawings for his installation at Marfa, which, with great energy, intensity and spontaneity, express a playful game to discover every new permutation of the oblong box within a set of self imposed rules. Judd's sculptural improvisations' conceptual rapport with the site may be described as a perfect resolution of co-existing binaries, an intellectual and emotional engagement. This integration of mental gymnastics, heightened sensibility and masterful creativity certainly is expressed in the completed installation and relates completely to the methodology of a Taoist art practice (page 258).¹⁰¹

To add another speculation – Judd could have fitted more boxes into the smaller spaces at the southern end of both sheds. Could the number of boxes be an unstated reference to the Taoist practice of creating one hundred variations upon a calligraphic character, or just a neat one hundred? ... We will never know.

¹⁰⁰ See Marianne Stockbrande, *The Making of Two Works: Donald Judd's Installations at the Chinati Foundation*. Pp 61, 62. <http://www.chinati.org/visit/collection/donaldjudd.php> Cited Dec. 2008.

¹⁰¹ See Kiyohiko Munakata and Yoko H. Munakata (1974), *Ching Hao's Pi-fa-chi: A Note on the Art of Brush*. *Artibus Asiae Supplementum*. Vol. 31. Pp 1 - 56.