After the death of artist Donald Judd in 1994, his two children, Flavin and Rainer, found themselves with the mammoth responsibility of overseeing the foundation, overseeing the endowment, the museum, the body of work, and the maintenance of 22 buildings on 11 properties, including the five-story loft building on 116 Spring Street in Manhattan and the many spaces in Marfa, Texas. Partnership with Linda Yablonsky, the Judd Foundation has released the new Donald Judd Writings, a book which brings together new and previously unpublished texts by the late artist that have never before appeared in book form. It is the most comprehensive survey of Judd’s writing in one volume, including essays from his graduate study at Columbia University in the 1950s and critiques in his own words toward the end of his life. The book also allows for a glimpse into the intimate corners of his practice, with the addition of personal notes, most of which were transcribed by Flavin and his co-editor, Caitlin Mur- ray. There’s also an extensive number of footnotes referencing material drawn from Judd’s personal library, annotations, and an index at his Marfa home.

One common misconception is to consider Judd as synonymous with Marfa, the once sleepy southwestern
town in the Chihuahua Desert that practically claims the area as its unofficial founder. After all, Judd first visited El Paso in 1964, and it was here that Flavin and Rainer were first married, with Judd present from their mother, the choreographer and dancer Trudy Finck. Nevertheless, the town's current identity when David Zwirner refers to it as a "bolsho buntu"—as an unlikely artworld capital far from the "итесьВ"—was fixed there as a child in the 1970s. "People have a rigid view. They think Judd had this idea for all these buildings and then they act like it's the reverse," Flavin explains, when we visit the Judd Foundation property in Spring, where this past September, (Note: both Flavin and Rainer recall their father by his first name.) We started with just a little one-room house. There were no buildings. There were no buildings. It was all very simple and calm. When the house became too easy to contain Judd's art, several nearby buildings were rented and eventually purchased. "Don just drew circles on the map trying to line up houses where nobody lived and his friend Martin Flavin went."

Another misunderstanding is the relation of Judd's work to "minimalism," a classification the art as an artform, and Flavin insists, "I just don't understand the art as an artform, it's artform, Flavin insists, "It's one of the artforms, and Flavin insists, "It's one of the artforms, and Flavin insists, "It's one of the artforms, and Flavin insists, "It's one of the artforms, and Flavin insists, "It's one of the artforms, and Flavin insists, "It's one of the artforms, and Flavin insists, "It's one of the artforms."


david zwirner
Pollock. In a 1965 essay on abstract expressionism, for example, he writes about the "immediacy" of Jackson Pollock's work. "No more accurate art[d]ate I ever saw," he says, "is forced upon the representation of immediate intuition." All literature, at some time, is based upon its primary phenomenon." The same year, he writes a piece titled "A Long Discussion: No. 4 from Marcel Duchamp: The Large Glass: Why There Are So Few of Them, Part I." It discusses the decline of quality in art and "There have been almost no fine-art pieces in this time..." Despite all that's wrong in this society "it's the responsibility of the new artists to occur."

Judd: No whining allowed.

LACMA: Do you think your father was right? Do you see the decline in the quality of art all the way to what artists are doing today?

Judd: My cutoff is 1946. Basically from 1946 on, it's a slow slide downward... If Eva Hesse were doing her work today, she'd be the most radical artist alive. That's pretty precise. It shouldn't be that way. That's just an example. The same is true for Gordon Matta-Clark. I was reading Rebecca Pidgeon's, "The Transvestite Narrative." Nobody writes like this today. It's like a good "Transvestite," even all these people doing all this radical work and now we just have people commenting on it.

LACMA: I love that Don was so interested in what other artists were doing. In that same '65 essay on Marcel Duchamp, he says, "I was delighted that in the new book on him, Frides Kallos said that the United States looked like a chicken coop... and New York was a big coop, a three-park commercial operation." He picked out Kallos's comments, not his art, but in a sentence she shared an old-time planning.

Judd: No, I have a good vision. And relays in his book, "a negotiation of thought. New York is probably better than a lot of places, but he didn't like cities. There was a great conversation between Don and Santer, who is really sharp. Don is eminently, "Well, I live at the month, I don't like cities..."

LACMA: Because they're symbolic. They're city. The concentration of people and capital in a small island is kind of silly, too. (CONTINUES)
David Zwirner

more JUDD

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LACMA. To the many, "Art and Architecture," from 1998, he says, "My aspiration is not that form follows function but that it never violates it."

JUDD: Right. If you're going to build a farmhouse, you don't build it upside-down just because you think it'll look interesting. It's going to be a nightmare. If you want to be interesting, and a better way.

LACMA. The question of function was primarily that of architecture, and he also notes a decline in the quality of modern architecture.

JUDD. During his lifetime, they built great buildings like the Guggenheim, the Broad Building, and the Rembrandt Hotel in Fort Worth. You have all those in about a 15-year span. You also have the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., which looks like a shopping mall. Anyway, the problem is, you had these very good buildings, and they don't last very long afterward. So it doesn't make much of a difference to the writer that it's been done.

LACMA. I think it's been anything but since he was a boy. JUDD. I think Zunhammer's buildings, the Rembrandt Hotel, the thermal baths in Yale.

LACMA. Why would he have liked those? JUDD. They're very ordinary. You have to visit them to understand. There is also, for instance, the CAPC, museum of art contemporaneo de Bordeaux, which is a georgeous building.

LACMA. He says largeness is not the goal. JUDD. Yeah. The building in Bordeaux (originally built as a warehouse) is vastly superior to the Pompidou, which was built as a museum.

LACMA. Your father also offers guides of sorts, where he lays out how he feels about a city. What is it to you, to see and to understand, and what you should go see and what you shouldn't see.

JUDD. We went from the 16th to the 20th century. The reason he could write about New York like that back then was that the city did have a lot of art in it, and people were working and living there. If you go to a gallery in Chicago now, the art could be from anywhere; the gallery could be from anywhere. There's a complete disconnection from any kind of localism. And I think that's pretty evident in modernism and lack of modernism. In the 1960s and '70s, our neighborhoods were the who's who of the avant-garde, it was an incredible mix, I asked my mom once, "Who are our neighbors?" And the list was unbelievable.

It was Tish Brown, John Chamberlain, Jack Newhouse, Dee Reese, Hallie Kates, Bob New, and Frank Stella's studio. And this was amongst like 3 blocks.

LACMA. Another passage that I have, which includes, I quote, the art critic, "New York is from 1955 when they first talked about about Leo Castelli. We wrote on, "Other than some artists like Leo Castelli is the most important person in art in the last 30 years. No great reason and had." JUDD. That's on the brink of its rupture with Leo, right before it happened. They got a divorce. That was a big deal because Leo was among his friends. His first art dealer was Richard Bellamy. LACMA. What made his relationship with Richard work?

JUDD. I think Richard was hard to deal with. They got in a fight over an old painting. You were an artist and one was an artist who just wanted art and couldn't keep track of what was a painting. Like, "Oh, is that in you? No! We sold it for $200!" Bellamy was great. He was really happy to have a long-term friendship with them. I think they broke up, but when Don died, he was very nice. After Don died, everything flipped upside-down.

LACMA. And then there was Leo. JUDD. Then Don went to Leo. Leo wanted Don to come to his gallery originally, and Don said no because it was too big. Then he was at Leo for a long time.

LACMA. Isn't that the origin of your name? JUDD. Obviously, I'm named after Don Flavin, and the name is named after "Vonne Flavin." LACMA. What was the relationship between your father and Don Flavin?

JUDD. They were very, very good friends. Don Flavin judged people by their artwork, so Don Flavin was pretty fair-minded.

LACMA. Do you have any specific memories of that dynamic? How would you describe it?

JUDD. Don came from the East, and so I knew how he would want to be on the West Coast. He was an East Coast or European guy. He was an interesting guy, very very nice. But we didn't see him much because he either lived in squares New York or Long Island.

LACMA. When did you realize your father's legacy would become your full-time job?

JUDD. The day after Don died, I asked the lawyer, who went to look what he would do, and they said, "Well, what do you want to do?" I realized that the lawyer was just tools like hammers, and they're not tools, everything becomes a hammer. Our case, we couldn't find anybody else who could make decisions. There was no deliberation possible. Immediately out of the gate, the case was muddled in death and everything was a mess. The art market had recently crashed, and I thought, "I'll do this for five years, and then make sure that you take it over." Well, that was 25 years ago.

LACMA. Are you happy being the executor and representative of the Flavins? Do you enjoy it?

JUDD. It's a good thing. We get to do books. Who gets to do books these days?

LACMA. So many of the references in your father's essays come from his own personal library—what was the library like?

JUDD. My wife, a curator, a data expert, [Michelle] used a program called 'Flavin's Memory of a Dollar,' which is very similar to this, was writing about Greek history and philosophy at the University of Texas with Peter Green on my grandfather, and I grew up off his books on Don. So I knew all the philosophical works off by heart.

LACMA. Your father never stopped working. In a way, he was self-taught, and it continued for his entire life. And it seems like his interests went in every direction and discipline.

JUDD. I thought everybody did that. I thought everybody was interested. There is no such thing as a kid who wasn't interested in something else. I was interested in science fiction, so I bought J.G. Ballard. LACMA. Don mentioned that, at some times in the '70s, he took you and your sister to see a ballet by Balanchine about Noah's ark. He wrote, "It was embarrassing having truth and to the children at all... Do you remember that? It shows how you all were on the same level.

JUDD. I don't. But I have friends in Marfa who, to this day, say to me, "I liked Don because he talked to me like an adult." And there were 20-year-old kids from the wrong side of the tracks. Again, everything was small. Everything was on the same level. Balanchine can't talk to you, that's just the truth.

LACMA. Throughout the writing, there's that large absence of reality.

JUDD. Again, I thought that it was normal. If you're going to do something, you're going to do it in your own words. And your reactions for being the way it is can't be shared by anyone else.

LACMA. What is the role of the writer in our world today?

JUDD. Always. We always have the need for someone's voice. We always have the need for someone who can tell a story. We always have the need for someone who can make decisions. We always have the need for someone who can make decisions. We always have the need for someone who can make decisions. We always have the need for someone who can make decisions. We always have the need for someone who can make decisions. We always have the need for someone who can make decisions. We always have the need for someone who can make decisions. We always have the need for someone who can make decisions. We always have the need for someone who can make decisions. We always have the need for someone who can make decisions. We always have the need for someone who can make decisions.