

**Breaking the Box:
The Alternative, Libertarian Exhibition Spaces Created by Rothko & Judd**

by
Stephanie Anne Webb

B.F.A., B.A. University of Victoria, 2001

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

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ABSTRACT

An exhibition space is neither neutral nor universal and meaning is continually constructed within these mediated spaces. My thesis is an examination of two instances where artists have broken outside the box and carefully crafted unique exhibition spaces within which an intentional dialogue between art works and viewer, art works and space, content and context is established. It considers two twentieth century artists from the United States of America, Mark Rothko and Donald Judd, both of whom rethought and ultimately rejected the mediating constraints prevalent in the conventional exhibition spaces of their time. Seeking to install their work on a permanent basis outside these pre-existing, traditional spaces, the alternatives they created -- the Rothko Chapel, Houston, Texas and The Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas, respectively -- are predicated, I argue, upon their anarchism and thus the anarchist paradigms of individual autonomy, liberty and non-coercion. In light of their politics, I assess how the core tenet of sovereignty not only had implications for Rothko and Judd -- for it fuelled the drive to create these alternative sites -- but that there are also implications for the viewer. More specifically, after an analysis of the sites I reflect upon the consequences for the spectator in terms of the following: the co-relation between anti-authoritarian 'open' social systems and the 'open' art experience; the value of directly experiencing anti-representational work; inter-subjectivity and the multiplicity of meanings; and last, the temporal nature of the embodied viewing experience.

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THIS IS DEDICATED TO MY DAD
WHO SHOWED, BY EXAMPLE, HOW TO WALK SOFTLY
WITHOUT BEING WALKED UPON
& WHO
TAUGHT ME HOW TO THINK...
FOR MYSELF...

INTRODUCTION

An exhibition space is neither neutral nor universal and meaning is continually constructed within these mediated spaces. Much has been written about how meaning is continually constructed in traditional exhibition spaces and it is my intention to develop this analysis further. My thesis considers two twentieth century artists from the United States of America, both of whom rethought and ultimately rejected the mediating constraints prevalent in the conventional exhibition spaces -- as configured by the more traditional art museum or those of the modernist gallery, for example, in their time. Concerned with the complex relationship between the artist, the work and the creation of alternative exhibition spaces, I will demonstrate that it is possible to exhibit work in such a way so as to circumvent art-institutional mediation and thus foster a more direct relationship between art and viewer. Discussing how this more immediate link between artist and spectator manifests itself when the work is permanently installed in unorthodox sites designed by the artist, I explore the constructed nature of the viewing experience and examine how content, or meaning, is shaped by context; i.e. by the artist and through the space in which the work is displayed.

Two sites were selected; the Rothko Chapel in Houston, Texas (1971), and The Chinati Foundation in Marfa, also in Texas (1979). Both of these spaces were created with extensive input from the artists in question, Mark Rothko and Donald Judd, respectively, with the express aim of impacting upon the experience of the viewer.¹ As a

¹Artists' dates are as follows: Rothko, age 67 (b. Dvinsk, 26th September 1903 – d. New York City, 25th February 1970); and, Judd, age 66 (b. Excelsior Springs, 3rd June 1928 – d. New York City, 12th February 1994).

consequence, these carefully crafted exhibition conditions result in an intentional dialogue between art works and viewer, art works and space, content and context. The Rothko Chapel was designed and constructed with careful collaboration between artist and architect. Funded by the de Menil family, this inter-denominational sacred space was inspired by, and created specifically for, a series of Mark Rothko's paintings. Donald Judd, artist, art critic and writer, became extremely disenchanted with the restrictions of the modern art gallery: his solution was to fund the creation of The Chinati Foundation as an alternative. Here, he transformed a three-hundred-and-forty-acre former army base into an art museum, show-casing permanent installations of his work.

In light of the radical politics of Rothko and Judd, I investigate how the creation of these alternative exhibition spaces was predicated, in large part, upon the anarchist paradigms of individual autonomy, liberty and non-coercion. Examining how both artists sought to control when and where their work was exhibited, I discuss the strategies these two individuals adopted for negotiating, adapting, circumventing and disrupting the limitations of the modern art gallery space. I trace these paths to their end points, namely the alternatives presented at the Rothko Chapel and The Chinati Foundation, wherein egalitarian relationships were intentionally created between art works, viewer and exhibition space. I argue that in the process of establishing individual autonomy for themselves they extended the self-same right to the viewer.

Bearing Richard Shiff's caveat in mind -- that, "actions reconfigure the context as much as they figure the objects addressed [...] writers should be responsible to (not for) what and how they say" -- and writing as one who is invested in an anti-authoritarian lifestyle, I believe that being attentive to the motivations of Rothko and Judd is key to

coming to understand their work on their terms, particularly as it relates to these two sites which privilege the sovereignty of the individual.² Engaged in a close reading, I have based my research on primary source materials and have made extensive use of the artists' explanations whenever possible. Although my thesis is not biographical, I have utilised this type of information at length for two reasons: it provides background material and aptly illustrates the decision-making processes of Rothko and Judd. Research gathered from these primary source materials was combined with first-hand knowledge gained through personal documentation and observations made during my experiences at the two sites.³

Judd was a prolific writer, and of particular worth for my thesis were primary sources, statements and criticism in Donald Judd: Complete Writings 1959-1975 (1975) and Donald Judd: Complete Writings 1975-1986 (1987).⁴ In relation to his thoughts on architecture and space *vis à vis* establishing The Chinati Foundation, the texts included in Donald Judd Architektur (1989), Donald Judd: Architecture/Architektur (2003) and The Chinati Foundation/La Fundación Chinati: Marfa, Presidio County, Texas (1987) were invaluable.⁵ So too were later statements in Donald Judd: Large Scale Works (1993) and

² Richard Shiff, "Afterword: Figuration", in Critical Terms for Art History, eds. Robert Nelson & Richard Shiff (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1996): 328.

³ Photography was allowed at The Chinati Foundation with the usual provisos regarding copywrite and publishing. All images of Judd's work included in this thesis are my own, taken during February/March, 2004. However, as per Rothko's express wishes that no photography be allowed inside the Chapel, I was only able to take shots of the exterior. The four illustrations of the interior included in my thesis were digitised from slides purchased at the Chapel. For a more complete understanding of how the paintings and site work in tandem to create a total environment, I refer you to the official website of the Rothko Chapel where it is currently possible to 'take' a virtual tour and 'see' a 360* panoramic view of the work in the space.

⁴ Donald Judd, Complete Writings 1959-1975 (Halifax; New York: NASCAD; New York University Press, 1975); and idem, Complete Writings 1975-1986 (Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 1987).

“Some Aspects of Color in General and Red and Black in Particular”, published in Donald Judd: Colorist (2000).⁶ For Judd’s thoughts on his art practice in general, an interview with John Coplans included in the catalogue for an exhibition held at Pasadena Art Museum in 1971 was also very helpful.⁷

Until recently, primary source materials for Rothko -- other than those printed in Possibilities, the periodical The Tigers Eye and a recorded conversation with Seldon Rodman from 1961, for instance -- were problematic because he assiduously avoided making comments about his work. Rothko firmly believed that art, like music, was preverbal.⁸ Recently, however, Christopher Rothko has sensitively edited his father’s previously unpublished ‘scribblings’, in The Artist’s Reality: Philosophies of Art (2004).⁹ More of Rothko’s previously unpublished letters and statements are printed in Miguel López-Remiro’s recent monograph Writings on Art (2006).¹⁰

⁵ Donald Judd, Donald Judd: Architektur (Munster: Westfälischer Kunstverein, 1989); Donald Judd: Architecture/Architektur, ed. Peter Noever (Ostfildern-Ruit; Portchester: Hatje Cantz Verlag; Art Books International, 2003); and The Chinati Foundation/La Fundación Chinati: Marfa, Presidio County, Texas (Zurich: Bodmer & Weber, 1987).

⁶ Donald Judd, “21 February 93”, in Donald Judd: Large Scale Works: Published in Conjunction with a Show of Recent Sculpture, exhib. cat. (New York City: Pace Gallery, 1993), 9-13; and idem, “Some Aspects of Color in General and Red and Black in Particular”, in Donald Judd: Colorist (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2000), 79-116.

⁷ “Don Judd: an Interview with John Coplans”, in Don Judd, exhib. cat. (Pasadena: Castle Press; Pasadena Art Museum, 1971), 19-44.

⁸ Mark Rothko, “The Romantics were Prompted”, in Possibilities (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, 1948), 84-86; idem, “The Ides of Art: the Attitudes of Ten Artists on Their Art and Contemporaneousness”, in The Tiger’s Eye No 2 (Dec 1947): 42-46, p.44; idem, “Statement on His Attitude in Painting”, in The Tigers Eye No 9 (Oct 1949): 114; and Seldon Rodman, “Mark Rothko”, in Conversations with Artists: 35 American Painters, Sculptors & Architects Discuss Their Work & One Another with Seldon Rodman (New York; Capricorn Books, 1961), 92-94.

⁹ Mark Rothko, The Artist’s Reality: Philosophies of Art, ed. Christopher Rothko (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

¹⁰ Mark Rothko, Writings on Art, ed. Miguel López-Remiro (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2006).

My use of secondary sources was limited to texts by those who have personal knowledge of the artists and their work, particularly scholars and critics who specifically discuss the sites in question. It would be prudent to acknowledge that a certain amount of slippage between ‘text’ and ‘image’, or text and reader, is unavoidable. However, because my thesis is concerned with the inherent possibilities of the unmediated art experience -- that engendered by a more direct communication between art and spectator when the viewing experience has been carefully orchestrated by the artist -- the slippage which occurs when consulting secondary sources is often valuable. It can provide important insights. Comparisons can be drawn and understanding becomes richer in the process, particularly as it pertains to the art experiences presented by Rothko and Judd in the Chapel and at Marfa.

For Rothko, two secondary sources of note are Dore Ashton’s About Rothko (1983) and James Breslin’s well researched Mark Rothko: A Biography (1993).¹¹ There is no published biography of Judd to date, but the comprehensive “Chronology” compiled by Jeffrey Kopie fills the void.¹² These three biographical sources refer to the radical politics of the artists, albeit to differing degrees. Although Rothko’s anarchism is rarely acknowledged, and often euphemistically labeled liberal at best, his politics are briefly noted by Ashton and by Breslin in an interview with his one-time assistant Dan Rice.¹³ Judd’s position is less ambiguous, and here I am thankful for a dissertation by David Raskin entitled Donald Judd’s Skepticism (1999): this is a thorough analysis of the

¹¹ Dore Ashton, About Rothko (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); and James Breslin, Mark Rothko: A Biography (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

¹² Jeffrey Kopie, “Chronology”, in Donald Judd, ed. Nicholas Serota (London; New York: The Tate; DAP, 2004), 246-270.

¹³ “The Murals 1958-1959: Interview by Arnold Glimcher”, in Marc Glimcher, ed. The Art of Mark Rothko: Into an Unknown World (New York: Clarkson N Potter, 1991), 65-71.

intersection of Judd's art production, his anarchism and his profound interest in pragmatic thought. Rudi Fuchs and Richard Shiff also allude to the political nature of Judd's work in "Decent Beauty" and "Donald Judd, Safe from Birds", respectively.¹⁴ Judd's actions and many recorded statements have proved invaluable and his position can be 'book-ended' by his response to the artist and politics symposium hosted by Artforum in 1970 and "*Nie Weider Krieg*" -- Never Again War -- a statement written in 1991 shortly before the eruption of the First Gulf War.¹⁵ It is here that my thesis will have most impact, for I will examine both artists' installations as they relate to their anarchism.

Several survey books on mid- to late-twentieth century art in North America include general information pertinent to both artists.¹⁶ The work of Clifford Ross and Stephen Polcari in relation to Abstract Expressionism is particularly relevant for Rothko.¹⁷ For Judd's contested relationship with Minimalism, and information about Minimal art specifically, the following were helpful: the excerpted primary sources edited by Gregory Battcock and also those compiled by James Meyer; Frances Colpitt's Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective (1990); and, Minimalism (1997) by David Bachelor.¹⁸

¹⁴ David Raskin, "Donald Judd's Skepticism" (unpublished Ph D Dissertation, University of Texas, 1999); Rudi Fuchs, "Decent Beauty", in Donald Judd: Large Scale Works, 5-7; and Richard Shiff, "Donald Judd, Safe from Birds", in Donald Judd, ed. Serota, 28-61.

¹⁵ Donald Judd, "The Artist and Politics: A Symposium", in Artforum, Vol 9 no 1 (Sept 1970): 36-37; and idem, "Nie Wieder Krieg", reprinted in Donald Judd: Architecture/Architektur, 16-19.

¹⁶ For example, see: Sam Hunter, American Art of the 20th Century (New York: Harry Abrams, 1972).

¹⁷ See: Clifford Ross, ed. Abstract Expressionism: Creators & Critics an Anthology, (New York: Harry Abrams, 1990). Also, Stephen Polcari, Abstract Expressionism & The Modern Experience (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹⁸ Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: EP Dutton, 1968); Minimalism ed. James Meyer (London: Phaidon Press, 2000); Frances Colpitt, Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective (Ann

Specific to the art production of Rothko and Judd were the readily available, comprehensive catalogue raisonnées. In terms of Rothko's art production, the essays that David Anfam included in his catalogue were very insightful, and for Judd's early work, those compiled by Brydon Smith were equally pertinent.¹⁹ With regard to Judd's later art practice, the previously mentioned companion book to the retrospective exhibition held at the Tate Modern, edited by Nicholas Serota, was most useful. Also helpful was information made available through recent art exhibitions that were premised upon re-thinking Minimalism, such as that curated by Ann Goldstein in Los Angeles during 2004.²⁰

Secondary sources that consider the work of Rothko in relation to the Chapel which bear examining are: Sheldon Nodelman's highly detailed, phenomenological reading of the Rothko Chapel; the exhaustive research regarding the Chapel Project, from inception to inauguration, by Susan Barnes; and, with a concern for the particular quality of the works -- the quidity of the paint and the mechanics behind the construction of the large scale canvases -- the extensive work of Carol Mancusi-Ungaro²¹ Other visual

Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1990); and David Batchelor, Minimalism (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1997).

¹⁹ David Anfam, Mark Rothko: The Works on Canvas: Catalogue Raisonné (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1998); and Brydon Smith, Donald Judd: A Catalogue of the Exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 24 May - 6 July, 1975 exhib. cat. (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975).

²⁰ This exhibition ran March-July and took place at Los Angeles MOCA. See: Ann Goldstein, A Minimal Future? Art as Object 1958-68 exhib. cat. (Los Angeles; Cambridge, Mass; London: Museum of Contemporary Art; MIT Press, 2004).

²¹ Sheldon Nodelman, The Rothko Chapel Paintings: Origins, Structure, Meaning (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997); Susan Barnes, The Rothko Chapel: An Act of Faith (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989); and Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, "Nuances of Surface in the Rothko Chapel Paintings", in Mark Rothko: The Chapel Commission (Houston: The Menil Foundation; Technigrafiks Inc, 1996), 25-29. See also that which she submitted for inclusion in the exhibition catalogue of a recent Rothko retrospective, namely: idem, "Material and Immaterial Surface: The Paintings of Rothko", in Jeffrey Weiss, Mark Rothko, exhib. cat. (Washington; New Haven; London: National Gallery of Art; Yale University Press, 1998), 282-300.

descriptions of Rothko's paintings and the Chapel commission can be gleaned from the work of David Snell, Lawrence Alloway, Anna Chave, Brian O'Doherty, Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit.²² Primarily, the secondary source material utilised for my analysis of Judd and The Chinati Foundation were as follows: Marianne Stockebrand's nuanced discussion in an exhibition catalogue from 1991; Barbara Haskell's understanding of how the work functions in relation to space; Robert Fones' evocative descriptions in C Magazine; David Raskin's "The Chinati Foundation: Order of Importance"; Rudi Fuch's contribution to Donald Judd: Architecture/ Architektur, which was constructive; and, once again, the essays and images included in Serota's monograph from 2004.²³

In terms of anarchism, Clifford Harper provided a concise history of the political movement to date.²⁴ However, when more specific detail was required I focused particularly upon the writing of Max Stirner, Michael Bakunin and Emma Goldman.²⁵

More recent analyses of anarchism were Todd May's study of anarchism and post-

²² David Snell, "Rothko Chapel: The Painter's Final Testament", in Smithsonian Vol 2 no 5 (Aug 1971): 46-55; Lawrence Alloway, "Residual Sign Systems in Abstract Expressionism", in Artforum, Vol 12 no 3 (Nov, 1973): 36-42; Anna Chave, Mark Rothko: Subjects in Abstraction (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1989); Brian O'Doherty, "Mark Rothko: the Tragic and the Transcendental", in American Masters: The Voice and the Myth (New York: Random House, 1974), 153-187; Brian O'Doherty and Barbara Novak, "Rothko's Dark Paintings: Tragedy and Void", in Jeffrey Weiss, Mark Rothko, 264-281; and Leo Bersani & Ulysse Dutoit, Arts of Impoverishment: Beckett, Rothko, Resnais (Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 1993).

²³ Marianne Stockebrand, "The Chinati Foundation – A Museum Created by Donald Judd", in Donald Judd: Selected Works 1960-91, exhib. cat. (Saitama; Shiga: Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 132-139; idem, "The Making of Two Works: Donald Judd's Installations at The Chinati Foundation", in Chinati Foundation Newsletter Vol 9 (2004): 45-61; Barbara Haskell, Donald Judd exhib. cat. (New York; London: Whitney Museum of American Art; W.W. Norton & Co, 1988); Robert Fones, "Amazing Space: Donald Judd's Works in Marfa, Texas", in C Magazine 50 (Jul-Sep 1996): 28-39; David Raskin, "The Chinati Foundation: Order of Importance", in New Art Examiner Vol 28 no 7 (April 2001): 14-15; and Rudi Fuchs, "The Ideal Museum: An Art Settlement in the Texas Desert", in Donald Judd: Architecture/ Architektur, 85-89.

²⁴ Clifford Harper, Anarchy: A Graphic Guide (London: Camden Press, 1987).

²⁵ Texts used included a compilation of primary sources and other original material, namely: No Gods, No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism Book One, ed. Daniel Guerin (Edinburgh; San Francisco; London: AK Press; Kate Sharpley Library, 1998); Michael Bakunin, God and the State (Sheffield, UK: Pirate Press, 1980); and Emma Goldman, Anarchism and Other Essays (New York: Dover Publishing, 1969).

structuralism and essays from a compilation edited by Allan Antliff.²⁶ On the intersection of art and anarchism -- particularly in relation to the correlation between Peter Kropotkin's 'open' social structures and those of the 'open' art experience -- the current work of Allan Antliff is also important.²⁷

To address the philosophical influences on Rothko and Judd, I consider Friedrich Nietzsche and pragmatism. *Vis à vis* my discussion of the recurring theme of individual sovereignty in Nietzsche's texts and of how this shaped Rothko's decision-making, the work of Leslie Paul Thiele and Richard White was of particular interest.²⁸ Taking into consideration Judd's keen interest in pragmatic thought, Raskin's dissertation is a foundational interpretation. For a primary source on this subject, I turned to Art as Experience (1934) to clarify my understanding of John Dewey's notion of 'funding' and the 'lived', embodied experience. Stephen Pepper's "The Aesthetic Object and the Consummatory Field" was most helpful, for it illustrated how 'funding' -- that is, how knowledge of the past is fused with that gained in the present or how memory fuses with perceptions of the present -- can be applied in the realm of art.²⁹ The work of Patrick Bourgeois and Sandra Rosenthal was valuable as well, particularly because their research

²⁶ Todd May, The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994); and Only a Beginning: An Anarchist Anthology, ed. Allan Antliff (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2004).

²⁷ Allan Antliff, "Open Form and the Abstract Imperative: Herbert Read and Contemporary Anarchist Art", in Re-reading Read: New Views on Herbert Read, ed. Michael Paraskos (London: Freedom Press, forthcoming); idem, Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics, & the First American Avant-Garde (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2001); and idem, Anarchy & Art: From the Paris Commune to the Fall of the Berlin Wall (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2007).

²⁸ Leslie Paul Thiele, Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul: A Study of Heroic Individualism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); and Richard White, Nietzsche and the Problem of Sovereignty (Urbana; Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

²⁹ Stephen Pepper, "The Aesthetic Object and the Consummatory Field", in Art & Interpretation: An Anthology of Readings in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art, ed. Eric Dayton (Peterborough, ON; Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Press, 1998), 174-181.

considers the intersection of pragmatism and phenomenology.³⁰ Whilst neither Rothko nor Judd was interested in phenomenology *per se*, both were intrigued by the way that a more complete understanding of a work of art can be achieved when all the senses are employed, not sight alone. Although my thesis is not written from a phenomenological position, I have, in the spirit of Dewey's lived experience and Rothko and Judd's anarchism, positively valued the highly contingent nature of the subjective individual experience. For this reason it was important to include my own observations of the two sites in this study.

Regarding my discussion on 'the gap' -- where the viewer becomes a producer, not consumer, of meaning in an open art experience such as that presented by Rothko and Judd in the Chapel and at Marfa -- recent scholarship by Jacquelyn Baas proved useful. Concerned with tracing the spiritual in art, she acknowledges the important role of the spectator during the process of deriving meaning. The viewer's role is also addressed in texts by G B Mohan Thampi and Denish Mathur.³¹ When the role of the spectator is privileged, apprehension of the work becomes subjective and a multiplicity of meaning occurs. Scholars and art critics who have considered this contingent nature of embodied viewing as it pertains to site are primarily focusing upon installation art. Here, texts edited by Claudia Swan and those written by Alex Potts, Julie H Reiss and Mark

³⁰ Of particular interest were the following: Sandra Rosenthal & Patrick Bourgeois, Pragmatism & Phenomenology: A Philosophic Encounter (Amsterdam: B R Grüner Publishing, 1980); and idem, Thematic Studies in Phenomenology & Pragmatism (Amsterdam: B R Grüner Publishing, 1983).

³¹ Jacquelyn Baas, Smile of the Buddha: Eastern Philosophy & Western Art from Monet to Today, (Berkeley; Oxford: University of California Press, 2005); G B Mohan Thampi, "'Rasa' as Aesthetic Experience", in The Journal of Aesthetics & Art Criticism Vol 24 no 1 (autumn 1965): 75-80; and Denish C Mathur, "Abhinavagupta & Dewey on Art and its Relation to Morality: Comparisons and Evaluations", in Philosophy and Phenomenological Research Vol 42 no 2 (Dec 1981): 224-235.

Rosenthal were most constructive, for they comprehensively analyse how context can shape meaning.³²

Being concerned with the temporal nature of the embodied viewing experience, I became interested in exploring how we, as individuals, come to understand ‘time’ and ‘space’. Writing from the perspective of an art historian, my knowledge of theoretical physics is partial, at best; however, studies that were very helpful include texts by Kevin Lynch, Martin Rees, Richard Mankiewicz and Brian Greene.³³ Concerning the relationship between art and physics, the work of Leonard Schlain was pertinent. His Art & Physics: Parallel Visions in Space, Time & Light (1991) documents the connections between these fields of knowledge, focusing upon major shifts within both. Although he never suggests that there are no verifiable, objective ‘truths’ in the field of science, he posits that the way we understand the world is subjective, for perception is observer-dependent.³⁴ Being observer-dependent, perception is more plastic, to a degree, and thus

³² More specifically: Perceptible Processes: Minimalism and the Baroque, ed. Claudia Swan (New York; Eos Music Inc, 1997); Alex Potts, The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2000); Julie H Reiss, From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art (Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press, 2001); and Mark Rosenthal, Understanding Installation Art: from Duchamp to Holzer (Munich; Berlin; London; New York: Prestel Publishing, 2003).

³³ Here I refer to: Kevin Lynch, What Time is This Place? (Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press, 1972); Martin Rees, Before the Beginning: Our Universe & Others (Cambridge, Mass: Perseus Books, 1997); Richard Mankiewicz, The Story of Mathematics (London: Cassell & Co, 2000); and Brian Greene, The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, & the Quest for the Ultimate Theory (Toronto; New York: Random House, 2003).

³⁴ Leonard Shlain, Art & Physics: Parallel Visions in Space, Time & Light (New York: William Morrow, 1991), 132.

As physicist Alan Sokal so pithily commented during the ‘fall-out’ from the so-called “*Social-Text* Affair” -- which took place in 1996, where he penned and submitted a parody of an article to a journal of cultural studies: “Anyone who believes that the laws of physics are mere social conventions is invited to try transgressing those conventions from the windows of my apartment. (I live on the twenty-first floor.)” “Alan Sokal”, *Alan Sokal*, n.d., <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Sokal>, 15 October, 2007. For a detailed examination of the issues and debates surrounding the affair, please visit the website hosted through the Department of Physics at New York University. “Alan Sokal”, 22 October 2007, <<http://physics.nyu.edu/~as2/>>, 31 October 2007.

we enter the realm of possibilities, not certainties, where the production of meaning is now open to interpretation. This is a core theme of my thesis.

Much has been written on the often conflicted and contested nature of the mediated viewing experience in art galleries and museum. Of particular interest is Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space (1986) by Brian O'Doherty. Indeed, that work inspired my thesis, for within the slim volume he argues that the contemporary gallery space, the pristine white cube, is predicated upon laws as stringent as those applied to the design and construction of a mediaeval church.³⁵ Also noteworthy on this subject is the work of Carol Duncan and Donald Preziosi, especially the analysis of power relations in Duncan's Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums (1995) and Preziosi's critique of the function of the museum and the negative aspects of instituted collections management and display strategies in In the Aftermath of Art: Ethics, Aesthetics, Politics (2006).

The scholarship and research relating to the work of Rothko and Judd to date provides a wealth of information on subjects such as the formal qualities of the works of art. Rarely, however, does it consider the Rothko Chapel or The Chinati Foundation in light of their radicalism. My thesis will redress this imbalance; I frame their desire to create alternative exhibition spaces as anarchist. Indeed, it is my position that the core tenets of anarchist thought -- liberty and non-coercion in a non-hierarchical open society - - fuelled a new trajectory for the viewing experience. I argue that when Rothko and Judd sought to orchestrate the viewing experience by carefully crafting both the container and the contained, they made space for subjective responses and privilege multiplicity and

³⁵ Brian O'Doherty, Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space (San Francisco: Lapis Press, 1986), 15.

complexity over uniformity. In the process of establishing autonomy for themselves they extended the self-same right to the viewer.

My thesis unfolds in three chapters. The first locates Rothko and his art production in the relevant socio-historical context. It considers his work and actions and also explores why he became disenchanted with established exhibition practices. This is followed by a section that examines his solution, wherein I discuss the Rothko Chapel and how this particular exhibition space functions in relation to the works displayed. After a basic visual analysis, the primary focus here is the viewing experience for visitors to the Chapel and how the various strategies Rothko intentionally applied result in a dislocation and disruption of traditional display mechanisms. Likewise, chapter two will frame Judd and his work exhibited in Marfa. Chapter three is a consideration of broader implications in light of the radicalism of Rothko and Judd. Focusing on the power of their personal convictions, this section reflects upon why their anarchist politics provided the impetus to create these alternative spaces and also upon the consequences for the viewer at the Rothko Chapel and The Chinati Foundation. It deals specifically with five inter-related themes: the pursuit of individual autonomy; the co-relation between anti-authoritarian 'open' social systems and the 'open' art experience; the value of directly experiencing anti-representational work; inter-subjectivity and the multiplicity of meanings; and, the temporal nature of the embodied viewing experience. This is followed by my conclusion, where I reiterate the salient points: over time, both Rothko and Judd became disenchanted with established exhibition practices; both sought alternative spaces for their work as a result; and, being predicated upon their personal convictions, the

alternatives they created championed not only their own individual autonomy but that of the viewer also.

CHAPTER ONE

Mark Rothko and the Rothko Chapel Commission

Although art critics have waxed lyrical and at length about Mark Rothko's art production, very few have acknowledged how his politics were instrumental in governing the choices he made regarding his art and life.³⁶ Despite the fact that Rothko was an anarchist, when and if texts reference his politics at all, they frame it as a variation of 'liberalism'.³⁷ One of the few exceptions is Dore Ashton, who describes Rothko as an intellectual aspiring to the "ideal of the self-educated anarchist."³⁸ Ashton argues that it was natural for Rothko -- and indeed, many other immigrants who arrived in the United States of America in the early twentieth century -- to respond positively to anarchism, especially if they had lived under an authoritarian regime in their place of birth.³⁹ She quotes one of Rothko's brothers, who mentions that the artist "eagerly attend[ed] the mass meetings at which such colorful anarchists as Emma Goldman...harangued on various issues, from the right to strike to birth control."⁴⁰

James Breslin's detailed research corroborates Ashton's observation. He has located a family letter containing the following: "But its youngest son gave the family's

³⁶ David Anfam perceptively observes that following the threads in the research concerning Rothko's work is like tracing twentieth century thought and theoretical *praxis*. Anfam, Mark Rothko, 12 & 22 fn 21.

³⁷ Much of the research to date has either ignored, or, at best, briefly acknowledged his politics as 'Leftist' with a capital 'L' and / or 'liberal' with a little 'l'. It is my intention to redress this imbalance and site Rothko's idealism within the frame of anarchist politics, particularly *vis à vis* the core values of: self expression as a means of establishing individuality; art as a powerful tool to effect social change; the rejection of all oppression; and, perhaps more importantly for this thesis, the resistance to authority and all externally imposed regulations that negate any potential for individual free will.

³⁸ Ashton, About Rothko, 10.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

left views a unique twist, by substituting the romantic individualism of anarchy for the collective consciousness of socialism.”⁴¹ Rothko’s radical politics are also noted by Jacob Baal-Teshuva; who writes, somewhat dismissively, that: “[h]is youthful anarchism seems to have been more a romantic pose than a political ideology.”⁴²

Ashton argues that Rothko’s politics influenced the style in which he painted and even the subject matter he chose to depict.⁴³ It is my position that Rothko’s anarchist ideals were not only instrumental in his decision to reject realistic representation, but that these ideals were fundamental to his desire to ‘control’ the presentation of his work and thus, ultimately, to affect the viewing experience by creating space for individual response.⁴⁴ Rothko was not alone in this refusal of realism. During a time of great political, social and economic turmoil he was one of a group of artists who sought a new

⁴¹ The source is a letter from Ed Weinstein to Clair Zanoisky. Breslin, Mark Rothko, 35.

⁴² Jacob Baal-Teshuva, Mark Rothko 1903-1970: Pictures as Drama (Köln; Taschen, 2003), 23. However, please note that an erroneous suggestion of Rothko somehow ‘out-growing’ his anarchic idealism is clearly implicit in this quote. There is nothing to suggest that this is the case. This misconception is, perhaps, a result of an interview, between Dan Rice who was Rothko’s assistant and Arnold Glimcher, for although there are no arrests on public record to substantiate Rothko’s statements, he often spoke to Rice about his years of activism: “This man was very engaged with sociological ideas. He used to tell me he went to jail a couple of times in political demonstrations, back in the 30’s.” Glimcher, The Art Of Mark Rothko, 69.

Rothko still referred to himself as an anarchist as late as 1959. According to John Fischer’s recollections, he recalls Rothko as saying:

While I was still in grade school [...] I listened to Emma Goldman and the IWW [Industrial Workers of the World] orators who were plentiful on the West Coast in those days. I was enchanted by their naïve and childlike vision. Later, sometime in the Twenties I guess, I lost faith in the idea of progress and reform. So did all my friends. Perhaps we were disillusioned because everything seemed so frozen and hopeless during the Coolidge and Hoover era. But I am still an anarchist. What else?

John Fisher, “The Easy Chair: Mark Rothko, Portrait of the Artist as an Angry Man, 1970”, in Writings on Art, 132.

⁴³ She states: “His anarchist instincts protected him from succumbing to the vast surge toward social realism.” Ashton, About Rothko, 32.

⁴⁴ ‘Control’ is a term often encountered in texts about Rothko; it is an issue that I will return to later.

language and style to depict their experience. Eventually they were referred to as Abstract Expressionists, Action Painters or, more simply, the New York School.⁴⁵

Abstract Expressionism -- a label coined by Alfred H Barr, Jr., as early as 1936 in relation to Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) -- was first applied to New York artists in 1946, when Robert Coates reviewed an exhibition of works by Hans Hoffman (1880-1966).⁴⁶ Abstract Expressionist art was most closely linked to German Expressionism and the Surrealist movement, particularly in relation to the search for an expressive articulation of the subjective. Use of this term is problematic, for it refers to a loose affiliation of artists who were concerned with expressing themselves with immediacy, spontaneity and directness. According to Clifford Ross, Abstract Expressionist art works “invoke; they do not depict. They confront; they do not describe...fulfill[ing] Emerson’s dream of a great, indigenous art based on the individual.”⁴⁷ Stephen Polcari similarly argues: “[Abstract Expressionism is] a semiabstract and abstract art of urban, vitality, everyday emotions, quotidian concerns, visual perceptions, and a psychology of personal, autobiographical, subjective feelings.”⁴⁸ Characterising this art as “a sacred and profane

⁴⁵ The term “action painting” was first used by the critic Harold Rosenberg in 1952. Writing for ARTnews, he asserts:

At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act – rather than as a space in which to reproduce, redesign, analyze or ‘express’ an object, actual or imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event.

The painter no longer approached his easel with an image in his mind; he went up to in with material in his hand to do something to that other piece of material in front of him. The image would be the result of this encounter.

Harold Rosenberg, “The American Action Painters”, in Abstract Expressionism, ed. Clifford Ross, 233.

⁴⁶ Alfred Barr, Cubism and Abstract Art, 1936 also Robert Coates writing for The New Yorker Vol XXII no 7, (March 30, 1946). Excerpted by Ross, Coates states: “In part, too, it is due to his [Hoffman’s] style, for he is certainly one of the most uncompromising representatives of what some people call the spatter-and-daub school of painting and I, more politely, have christened Abstract Expressionism.” Ross, Abstract Expressionism, 230.

⁴⁷ Ross, Abstract Expressionism, 18.

allegorical epic, a biblical and ritual drama and romance for the modern age,” Polcari further nuances his description to incorporate some of the core ideas central to the loose conglomeration of highly individualist artists who came to be known by this term.⁴⁹

Ashton, who reads Rothko’s work in relation to his profound interest in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), summarises:

They [Abstract Expressionists] value the organism over the static whole, becoming over being, expression over perfectionism, vitality over finish, fluctuation over repose, feeling over formulation, the unknown over the known, the veiled over the clear, the individual over society, the ‘inner’ over the ‘outer’.⁵⁰

Irrespective of definition, Rothko himself adamantly resisted being subsumed into any group without his consent. Labels were abhorrent to his anarchist ideals; a group identity would inexorably overtake that of the individual; and common stylistic qualities would, by necessity, be applied to all, thus subjugating, even negating, specific, idiosyncratic approaches.⁵¹ In 1958, Rothko made two telling statements to this end. According to Irving Sandler’s recollection of a lecture at the Pratt Institute, Rothko adamantly stated that his work was more than self-expression and was in no way related to Abstract Expressionism.⁵² Furthermore, he asserted that “[r]eal identity is incompatible with schools and categories, except by mutilation.”⁵³ Prior to these declarations, in the

⁴⁸ Polcari, Abstract Expressionism, 349.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 368.

⁵⁰ Dore Ashton quoting William Seitz. Ashton, “The City and the Visual Arts”, in New York: Culture Capital of the World 1940-1965, ed. Leonard Wallock (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), 142.

⁵¹ She states: “As an artist he felt reluctant to join any groups, but as an individual concerned with social justice, he felt obliged to support group activities [such as the Artists Union].” Ashton, About Rothko, 31.

⁵² Irving Sandler, “The Sectionals, 1949-1969 Mark Rothko: in Memory of Robert Goldwater”, in The Art Of Mark Rothko, 88.

⁵³ Ashton citing Rothko to Elaine de Kooning. Ashton, About Rothko, 133.

winter of 1947/8, Rothko described the painting process as one of discovery which transcends all programmes:

The unfriendliness of society to his activity is difficult for an artist to accept. Yet this very hostility can act as a lever for true liberation. Freed from a false sense of security and community, the artist can abandon his plastic bank-book, just as he has abandoned other forms of security. Both the sense of community and of security depend upon the familiar. Freed of them, transcendental expressions become possible.⁵⁴

Opposed to any externally imposed label or a 'movement' defining his art, Rothko prized the anarchic ideal of individual autonomy and eloquently argued for both personal and artistic freedom.

In contrast to Clement Greenberg's rhetoric -- conflating abstract art with content-less formalism -- Rothko's large abstracts were, for him, always pregnant with a human dimension. One art critic perceptively observed that Rothko, ever the individualist, "was too sophisticated to bring into his discourse those two mutually dependent cripples, form and content [...yet he] was never a formalist painter. Content obsessed him."⁵⁵ Although his mature style was abstract in nature, Rothko never considered himself to be an abstractionist; for him, his works were always charged, emotionally.⁵⁶ In 1956, Rothko emphatically asserted:

⁵⁴ Rothko "The Romantics Were Prompted", in Possibilities, 84.

According to the editorial by Robert Motherwell and Harold Rosenberg, Possibilities aimed to present individual artistic practice, free from theoretical, political or group mandates. Disrupting the notion of straight narrative, the format in this single volume periodical was conceived as one of collage where the juxtaposition of different art forms creates multiple interpretations in an open system. For example Rothko's art work is interspersed between, and is therefore in direct dialogue with, Lionel Abel's translation of "On Mythology" by Andrea Caffi. It is also of note that an essay by the anarchist Paul Goodman, entitled "The Emperor of China" was also published in this edition.

⁵⁵ Brian O'Doherty, "The Dark Paintings 1969-1970: Rothko's Endgame", in The Art Of Mark Rothko, 146. Please note, O'Doherty's alter ego is none other than minimalist artist Patrick Ireland.

⁵⁶ Rothko always claimed that he was self taught and learned most from other artists; however, he sporadically enrolled in art classes at the Art Students League, between leaving Yale University in 1924 and 1926. It is well documented that he took anatomy with George Bridgman, also still-life and life

I'm not an abstractionist... I'm not interested in relationships of color or form or anything else...I'm interested only in expressing basic human emotions – tragedy, ecstasy, doom and so on – the fact that lots of people break down and cry when confronted with my pictures shows that I *communicate* those basic human emotions [...] The people who weep before my pictures are having the same religious experience I had when I painted them. And if you, as you say, are moved only by their color relationships, then you miss the point!⁵⁷

Conversations with Artists, from which this quotation is excerpted, is an important record of interviews which took place in 1956. After briefly mentioning other key artists who fell under the rubric of Abstract Expressionism -- such as Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), Willem de Kooning (1904-1997) and Robert Motherwell (1915-1991) -- Rodman introduces his conversation with Rothko in the following manner:

Rothko's rectangles and squares of dazzling color startle one with their forthrightness and purity. Thomas B. Hess has put it well: 'In depriving the painting of most of its traditional prerogatives and wiles, in reducing it – not to the skeleton, but to the skin – Rothko also enriches it with a directness of emotional statement.'⁵⁸

This notion of the painting being more than mere object is interesting to explore.

In conversation with his friends, Rothko compared his work to “skins that are shed and hung on a wall.”⁵⁹ Clearly, he was of the opinion that his canvases were living entities capable of communication and that any unwelcome manipulation of these anthropomorphic objects was, by extension, an oppression of Rothko, the creative

sketching with Max Webber, who was to be a great influence on Rothko during this early period. Rothko's art practice can be divided into three: the figurative 'Surrealist' years 1944-46; the move towards abstraction with the 'multiforms' 1947-48; and, his mature style, which began in 1949 when he started executing the totally abstract colour-field paintings sometimes referred to as 'sectionals'.

⁵⁷ Rothko to Rodman. Rodman, Conversations with Artists, 93-94.

Earlier in 1943 Rothko was to wrestle with this and, in a draft of the important letter sent to Mr. Jewel, editor of the Times, he notes the following: “#6 A picture is not its color, nor its form or its anecdote, but an intent entity idea, where implications transcend any of these parts [sic]” Mark Rothko, Writings on Art, 35.

⁵⁸ Rodman, Conversations with Artists, 92.

⁵⁹ Breslin quoting Rothko to Robert and Elizabeth Morrow but, unfortunately, he gives no indication of the timing of this particular conversation. Breslin, Mark Rothko, 306.

individualist. Many instances of this predilection to anthropomorphise are documented by Breslin.⁶⁰ For example, he claims:

Anthropomorphizing his works, Rothko closely identified with them, blurring the boundaries between the artist and his creation, as if the artist were never fully 'outside' his works even after their completion, or as if they were never really complete without him to protect their 'life and meaning.' Living presences, surrogate bodies, these paintings were also surrogate children, 'for as he explained they were his - his children - and not some objects in which he ever abandoned involvement.'⁶¹

This perception clearly stems from the fact that Rothko himself thought his work had a life of its own.⁶² In an untitled artist's statement published in 1947, Rothko emphatically declared:

A picture lives by companionship, expanding and quickening in the eyes of the sensitive observer. It dies by the same token. It is therefore a risky and unfeeling act to send it out into the world. How often it must be permanently impaired by the eyes of the vulgar and the cruelty of the impotent who would extend their affliction universally!⁶³

In 1952, at a time when he was as yet unable to live off the proceeds of his art practice, Rothko again wrestled with the complex issue of maintaining personal integrity whilst producing physical objects -- which he quite clearly saw as being analogous of self -- for the capitalist art market. When approached by the Whitney Museum of Art regarding a purchase, Rothko penned this letter of rejection:

Since I have a deep sense of responsibility for the life my pictures will lead out in the world, I will with gratitude accept any form of their exposition in which

⁶⁰ See also: James Breslin, "Out of the Body: Mark Rothko's Paintings", in The Body Imaged: The Human Form and Visual Culture Since the Renaissance, ed. Kathleen Adler & Marcia Pointon, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 43-51.

⁶¹ Breslin, Mark Rothko, 305.

⁶² Very early in his career, Rothko was to refer to his paintings as "dramas" and the contents as the "performers." Rothko, "The Romantics Were Prompted", 84.

⁶³ Rothko, "The Ides of Art: The Attitudes of Ten Artists on Their Art and Contemporaneousness" Tiger's Eye no 2 (December 1947): 44.

their life and meaning can be maintained and avoid all occasions when I think that this cannot be done...In my own life at least, there must be some contiguity between convictions and actions if I am to continue to function and work.⁶⁴

With these examples in mind, it may prove fruitful to consider his mature works and later mural projects in relation to his anarchism, particularly *vis à vis* the fundamental values of self expression as a means of establishing individuality; the rejection of all oppression; art as a powerful tool to effect social change; and the resistance to authority and all externally imposed regulations that negate potential for free will.⁶⁵ Fellow anarchist Paul Goodman attests that one of the primary functions of anarchism is to provide a social and political framework that will foster and promote personal autonomy, one that would “increase intrinsic functioning and diminish extrinsic power.”⁶⁶ Apropos of which, I believe it will be more beneficial to see Rothko’s aspiration to ‘control’ where, when and how his work was exhibited in a positive rather than negative light. Yes, it could be argued that Rothko’s desire to ‘frame’ his work in a particular way was rather autocratic -- for he was instrumental in controlling the reception and thus the perception of his work -- but this strategy also allows the viewer to experience the work according to his original intentions with less institutional mediation. Rothko was able to communicate

⁶⁴ Rothko had declined to participate in that year’s Whitney Annual and this particular letter was written in response to a request to submit two of his works to the purchasing committee at the museum; Rothko in correspondence with Lloyd Goodrich. Ross, Abstract Expressionism, 172-3. Rothko again refuses to submit work to the selection committee in 1957; see his correspondence with Rosalind Irving, dated April 9 1957. Rothko, Writings on Art, 123.

⁶⁵ Rothko’s work was always emotionally charged, for him. Unfortunately, however, discussions of these larger themes and aspects -- such as mysticism, and/or other spiritual / philosophical dimensions -- are far beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁶⁶ Paul Goodman, Drawing the Line: The Political Essays of Paul Goodman, ed. Taylor Stoehr (New York: Free Life Editions, 1977), 176.

more directly with the viewer as well as extend a degree of personal autonomy to his audience.⁶⁷ This is what I propose to acknowledge and explore.

The issue of control in relation to the lighting and the installation of his work became a real concern for Rothko as early as 1952.⁶⁸ From this point onwards, he began to speak about “controlling the situation”.⁶⁹ He demanded involvement not just in the production of his work but also in how it was presented and therefore in how it was, and would continue to be, perceived by the viewer.⁷⁰ In a letter of 1954, Rothko articulates his preference for a hanging style that would be sympathetic to the work. Regarding an

⁶⁷ Direct communication was a life-long concern for Rothko. For example in 1949 he was to argue :
The progression of a painter’s work, as it travels from point to point, will be toward clarity: toward the elimination of all obstacles between the painter and the idea, and between the idea and the observer. As examples of such obstacles, I give (among others) memory, history or geometry, which are swamps of generalization from which one might pull out parodies of ideas (which are ghosts) but never an idea in itself. To achieve this clarity is, inevitably, to be understood.

And in 1958:

I have never thought that painting a picture has anything to do with self-expression. It is a communication about the world to someone else. After the world is convinced about this communication it changes. The world was never the same after Picasso or Miró. Theirs was a view of the world which transformed our vision of things.

The second is important for it also acknowledges the anarchist ideal regarding the power of art to effect social change. Rothko, The Tigers Eye no 9: 114; and in his address to the Pratt institute, November 1958, idem, Writings on Art, 125, respectively.

⁶⁸ I refer to the “15 Americans” exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York City, held between 25th March and 11th June.

⁶⁹ Breslin, Mark Rothko, 303.

⁷⁰ Rothko was invited to participate in the show entitled, “15 Americans”, which provided considerable space to a limited number of artists and was curated by Dorothy C Miller. Other avant-garde artists invited to exhibit their work were Baziotés, Pollock, Ferber, Tomlin and Still. Wishing to preserve what he cherished and valued most about the reception of his work -- its potential to envelope the viewer -- Rothko changed the selection of paintings to be included at the last minute and stipulated that he, not Miller, would be responsible for hanging his work. The canvases, selected so that they would fill the four walls, were to be hung so closely that they would touch.

Rothko was also particular about the lighting effects for his canvases. For example, not wishing to use standard spots for the aforementioned “15 Americans” exhibition he sought a more constant, yet brighter light that would blaze down from the centre of the ceiling. Although willing to reverse his innovative position on the lighting -- and was later to go to the other extreme by demanding very subdued lighting for his canvases -- Rothko argued long and hard to ensure that viewers of this exhibition would be engulfed by the physical presence of his work. He was finally pressured by the museum’s director, René Harnoncourt, into accepting Miller’s less controversial style of hanging and lighting, for it was believed that such a disparity between rooms would interrupt, and thus disrupt, the cohesiveness of the exhibition. See his letter to Katherine Kuh, dated September 25, 1954”. Rothko, Writings on Art, 99-100; and also Breslin, Mark Rothko, 303 & 338.

upcoming exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago, he eloquently formulates his position:

Since my pictures are large, colorful and unframed, and since museum walls are usually immense and formidable, there is the danger that the pictures relate themselves as decorative areas to the walls. This would be a distortion of their meaning, since the pictures are intimate and intense, and are the opposite of what is decorative; and have been painted on a scale of normal living rather than an institutional scale. I have on occasion successfully dealt with this problem by tending to crowd the show rather than making it spare. By saturating the room with the feeling of the work, the walls are defeated and the poignancy of each single work had for me become more visible.

I also hang the largest pictures so that they must be first encountered at close quarters, so that the first experience is to be within the picture. This may well give the key to the observer of the ideal relationship between himself and the rest of the pictures. I also hang the pictures low rather than high, and particularly in the case of the largest ones, often as close to the floor as is feasible [sic], for that is the way they are painted. And last, it may be worth while trying to hang something beyond the partial wall because some of the pictures do very well in a confined space.⁷¹

Dan Rice, friend and one-time assistant to Rothko, was to later perceptively observe that this uncompromising need to create the ideal viewing experience was a career-long exploration for Rothko. Rice's reflections are important to our understanding of Rothko's search for direct communion with the viewer, an 'honest' transaction that would be unmediated by external forces and institutionalized constraints. Two passages, in particular, are worth considering in their entirety:

Rice: For many years, he had the concept that his work must or should hang together in some manner that would create a permanent environment, fixed only by the work itself [...] by controlling that environment he would give each of those pictures an added importance so that a symbiotic relationship developed between the pictures themselves, to the point that the entire environment in its particularity of each picture and its entirety of the many pictures together formed one experience.

Glimcher: This would allow Rothko to alter the perception of his paintings in general.

⁷¹ See Rothko's correspondence with Kuh, September 25, 1954. Rothko, Writings on Art, 99-100.

Rice: Yes, right, total to a part and the parts to a total, and the end achievement obviously was his great dream. Rothko would be able to place a person in an environment that he totally controlled and therefore this person could not help but see the message. And by this, he would finally communicate.

Also:

Glimcher: Rothko's paintings exist more as a place or natural phenomenon than they do as specific paintings. Were you aware of that in the studio?

Rice: Yes [...] there's a force – in spite of the extreme reduction of so-called painting concerns. The force is quite extraordinary [...] Rothko's paintings] are true environments. His concern about the control of environment would manifest itself in so many ways and was so repetitious, it amounted to almost a fix, a psychological fix. [...] Even after he finished the paintings, he considered what optimum position they could be placed in to control and create that environment. Quite an extraordinary man. I've never known anyone before or since that totally understood that particular kind of role that the painting plays.⁷²

Rice also records Rothko's reticence to hang his work with other paintings, even those of his own from a different period; interrupting the finely tuned harmonies he carefully crafted between works would render all hope of 'honest' communication impossible.⁷³

Rothko is reported to have become increasingly wary of group exhibitions during the early 1950's. He made the following, damning statement: "they [i.e. other artists and/or works included in group exhibitions] just drag you down, while you don't drag them up."⁷⁴ The concept of group exhibitions became problematic for Rothko because there was no apparent depth when only one or two works from each artist were exhibited together: arbitrary, artificial and shallow relationships were fostered. This was compounded by the fact that shows in institutions, even solo ones, not only present the

⁷² Arnold Glimcher in conversation with Dan Rice. Glimcher, *The Art Of Mark Rothko*, 66-67 & 76.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 71. See also the discussion in Breslin's biography. Breslin, *Mark Rothko*, 304.

⁷⁴ Ashton, *About Rothko*, 130. See also Rothko's correspondence with Lloyd Goodrich, dated December 20, 1952. Rothko, *Writings on Art*, 83.

work within historical narratives: they are, for the most part, temporary.⁷⁵ Among some rather cryptic and ungrammatically correct notes taken by William Seitz, during an interview in 1952, Rothko's thinking on this matter is made clear:

Objects to museum which request paintings for an Advanced guard exhibition with out knowing why. If they one director was mad, say Pollock, and had an exhibition of him, this would be good. I refuse to send paintings to such and exhibition, while I would never refuse to send my pictures to an exhibition based on knowledge. Notes objection to French-American (paired) exhibition planned by Sidney Janis (held 19) where I was to be paired with de Stael. Blobs vs. blocks. they both began with be. Comparisons are false! [sic]⁷⁶

Rothko's comment "Blobs vs. blocks. [T]hey both began with be" is telling, for it wittily brings another issue of 'control' to the foreground; his reticence to the 'smothering' of his work with language.

Art, for Rothko, was pre-verbal and more like music than text. Christopher Rothko attests to this in two astute observations. He confirms, first, that his father was "guarded in discussing his work, often finding that, the more he said, the more misunderstanding he generated. He did not wish to short circuit the process by which people came to know the work"; and second, that he was of the opinion that "art aspires to a loftier goal than commentary, and it needs to speak to the essentially human in us if it is to succeed."⁷⁷ Rothko himself wrote: "The function of great art is to produce generalizations [i.e. must deal with universal themes...] to express and move."⁷⁸ He also argued, "we cannot duplicate the statement of a painting in words. We can only hope to

⁷⁵ Rothko believed that the situation could be alleviated by dotting 'chapel-like' structures throughout the country which would be 'dedicated' to a single artist, to which end it is documented that he almost purchased a suitable structure in Lelant, Cornwall, England, during his visit there in 1959. Nodelman, *Rothko Chapel Paintings*, 39.

⁷⁶ Rothko in conversation with William Seitz, January 22, 1952. Rothko, *Writings on Art*, 78-79.

⁷⁷ Christopher Rothko, "Introduction", in *Artist's Reality*, xiii & xxvii.

⁷⁸ Mark Rothko, *Artist's Reality*, 129.

arouse with our words a train of similar associations, but these are subjective to the spectator and in no way duplicate the original statement.”⁷⁹ After his brief comments in 1951 about painting in a large yet intimate and human scale, Rothko said very little publicly about his art practice, for he was reluctant to have his work ‘reduced’ by and ultimately ‘imprisoned’ in language. Being pre-verbal, visual art had the innate ability to communicate through silence, without the imposition of a formalised language that would mediate meaning. Highly cognisant of the slippery nature of words, Rothko wrote:

Forgive me if I continue my misgivings, but I feel that it is important to state them. There is the danger that in the course of this correspondence an instrument will be created which will tell the public how the pictures should be looked at and what to look for. While on the surface this may seem an obliging and helpful thing to do, the real result is the paralysis of the mind and the imagination, (and for the artist a premature entombment) hence my abhorrence for forewards and explanatory data. And if I must place my trust somewhere, I would invest it in the psyche of the sensitive observers who are free of the conventions of understanding. I would have no apprehensions about the use they would make of these pictures for the needs of their own spirits. For if there is both need and spirit there is bound to be a real [and honest] transaction.⁸⁰

In one of numerous letters to Barnett Newman (1905-70), Rothko explained his reluctance to write artist statements for the Tiger’s Eye and the Magazine of Art. He admitted:

I simply cannot see myself proclaiming a series of nonsensical statements, making each vary from the other and which ultimately have no meaning whatsoever. The real reason is that at least at this time I have nothing to say in words which I would stand for. I am heartily ashamed of the things I have written in the past. This self-statement business has become a fad this season, and I cannot see myself just spreading myself with a bunch of statements, everywhere, I do not wish to make.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Rothko, Artist’s Reality, 49.

⁸⁰ See Rothko’s letter to Katharine Kuh, July 14, 1954. Rothko, Writings on Art, 90-91.

⁸¹ See Rothko’s correspondence with Newman, dated August 1950. *Ibid*, 72.

Rothko's lack of enthusiasm also extended to those who sought to encase art in language.

Non-artists in the art world were an anathema and, according to John Fischer's

recollection, Rothko reportedly railed against the situation as follows:

I hate and distrust all art historians, experts, and critics. They are a bunch of parasites, feeding on the body of art. Their work not only is useless, it is misleading. They can say nothing worth listening to about art or the artist, aside from personal gossip – which I grant you can sometimes be interesting. [...] Rosenberg [...] keeps trying to interpret things he can't understand and which can't be interpreted. A painting doesn't need anybody to explain what it is about. If it is any good, it speaks for itself, and a critic who tries to add to that statement is presumptuous.⁸²

Clearly, it was a risky proposition to let work out into the public domain where his painted "transcendental experiences"⁸³ could be co-opted by critics, submerged and smothered by language, regarded as content-less abstraction and sold as mere decoration. Yet, ironically, as Rothko's canvases expanded so did his reputation. As a consequence, he necessarily became more reliant upon wealthy patrons and institutions with both sufficient funds and wall-space for his large paintings.⁸⁴ Selling directly from his studio, he also began to actively search out opportunities that would allow him to circumvent the constraints I have enumerated and eagerly accepted projects where he would actively participate in providing solutions to where and how his work would be permanently installed.⁸⁵ The problematic Seagram and Harvard Commissions afforded him the opportunity to experience large-scale installations in secular settings and, in 1964-5,

⁸² John Fischer, "The Easy Chair: Mark Rothko, Portrait of the Artist as an Angry Man, 1970", in Writings on Art, 130-131.

⁸³ Rothko, "The Romantics Were Prompted", 84.

⁸⁴ For example, *Number 1*, 1949, was purchased by the Rockefeller's for \$1000. Breslin, Mark Rothko, 254.

⁸⁵ I refer to the annex for the Phillips' Collection at the National Gallery, Washington DC, the commission for a series of murals for the Seagram Building, New York City, and the Holyoke project for Harvard University.

Rothko eagerly accepted the commission presented by John and Dominique de Menil to provide an ensemble of canvases for a chapel in Houston. The opportunity to exhibit his work permanently in a way that would synthesise art and site so as to promote a purer, more complete communication with the viewer was too good to miss; this project was to afford Rothko the perfect chance to realise his ideal of the total environment.

The Rothko Chapel Commission:

The Rothko Chapel was designed and constructed as a collaborative venture between artist and architect. Rothko would accept the project only after he was assured of having considerable input regarding the design of both the internal and external space.⁸⁶ Phillip Johnson -- who was originally engaged as architect and later withdrew when the decision-making process became conflicted -- was replaced by the local team of Howard Barnstone and Eugene Aubry.⁸⁷ Funded primarily by the de Menil family, this inter-denominational sacred space was inspired by, and created specifically for, a series of Mark Rothko's sublime colourfield paintings.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ It has been posited that the Chapel commission presented both an opportunity and a threat. Nodelman states: “[Rothko] could repeat himself and appear in the eyes of the young as outmoded, an embarrassing survivor, or he could confront anew the issues already implicit within his own art.” Nodelman, Rothko Chapel Paintings, 41.

⁸⁷ Barnstone and Aubry were set to bring the project to completion however due to health reasons, close to project's end, Barnstone was forced to resign and Johnson was rehired in a consulting capacity. Barnes, Rothko Chapel, 49 & 86. Nodelman also notes that Johnson continued to collaborate with Barnstone and Aubry throughout the project. Nodelman, Rothko Chapel Paintings, 71-72.

⁸⁸ The contract specified \$250,000 + \$25,000 expenses and studio rental, which translated to \$100 per month for 3 years starting January 1965 and approximately \$3,500 per annum for the following 6 years as of January 1968. The original commission was for Rothko and Johnson to create a Catholic chapel in the grounds of the University of St Thomas with sketches and trial paintings to go to the University upon completion. Breslin, Mark Rothko, 464.

However, differences of opinion caused a change in plans and the Chapel is now situated in the neighbouring suburbs, a part of the city where the real estate is primarily owned by the de Menil family. The Chapel currently functions as an ecumenical institution.

Nestled to the rear of a large suburban lot and surrounded by tree-lined streets filled with a multitude of houses painted in the same warm grey-brown,⁸⁹ the windowless, truncated cruciform, red brick exterior of the Chapel is quiet, unprepossessing and uncompromising in its clarity (Figure 1).⁹⁰ Approaching from the front, the pathway leading to the entrance passes a large rectangular reflecting pool off to the left-hand side. This shallow pool is home to Barnett Newman's *Broken Obelisk*, (1963-67).⁹¹ The simple entranceway, topped by an unbroken black 'frieze-like' element, is dominated by two substantial black doors that are recessed beneath the porch. It, too, is understated and because there are no extraneous embellishments, the starkly precise lines of the interior are presaged. One of Rothko's friends at the time recalls:

Mark was very insistent as he went on that he did not want anything fancy or spectacular. He wanted a very simple envelope, octagonal in shape, something that would display the pictures because he did not want any stunts...he did not want anyone to feel that they would go to the Chapel because it was an architectural wonder.⁹²

And Rothko's demands were met; the Chapel is indeed an elegantly simple shell.

⁸⁹ Often referred to locally as 'Menil grey', it subtly identifies all the property that is owned by the family. Much is rented out, however, the area is also home to the new building that houses the Menil Collection, just a few blocks away, their Cy Twombly Gallery, their Dan Flavin Exhibition at Richmond Hall and the Byzantine Fresco Chapel Museum, funded in part by the Menil Foundation. Please note that unless indicated otherwise by the use of footnotes any descriptions and/or observations are directly from my own experience of the site.

⁹⁰ Comparing the Rothko Chapel to a "temple of a vanished civilization", Snell continues that the exterior has a "serene [façade] with geometric expanses of windowless brick that looked as impregnable as the battlements of Carcassonne." Snell, "Rothko Chapel": 46 & 48.

⁹¹ Made from cor-ten steel in two sections, with overall dimensions 7.75 x 3.2 x 3.2m, it was installed and dedicated to Martin Luther King Jr. in 1971. During my visit, the *Broken Obelisk* had been removed for conservation purposes and there are grave concerns about its longevity (Figure 2). Apparently a previous attempt to stabilize environmental damage has created even more problems for conservators, for foam previously inserted within the cavity has apparently compounded the issue.

⁹² Breslin quoting Bernard Reis. Breslin, Mark Rothko, 465.

The large heavy doors open onto a simple foyer that houses a centrally located desk, a few shelves and a lectern for the guest book. There is a feeling of compression in the foyer which appears dimly lit after the bright Texan sunlight. This liminal space is a site of transition signaling the potential for transformation. Doors located to the left and right of the desk lead into the sacred space (Figure 3). Interior architectural details of the Rothko Chapel include a slightly modified octagonal floor plan, reminiscent of a traditional baptistery; a slightly recessed area to the north that functions like an apse; eight large walls devoid of all ornament, the four major walls being oriented to the cardinal points with the four minor oblique walls completing the octagon; six featureless doorways -- two in the south wall which provide entrance into the chapel, and two each in the east and west walls leading to storage areas, originally planned to function as sacristy and confessional booths; and, the sectional ceiling that angles up to meet an octagonal, faceted oculus (Figure 4).

The interior finishings are also neutral. The walls and angled ceiling are of textured off-white plaster⁹³ and brown / black asphalt tiles cover the floor. Eight low metal barriers are discreetly installed in the floor to prevent viewers from getting too close to the work. Last, a large off-white baffle is suspended from the ceiling to obscure the oculus and thus prevent the harsh sunlight from damaging Rothko's work.⁹⁴ The

⁹³ These walls are now somewhat dingy. Rothko requested that the walls be "natural" rather than stark white and, as a result, the interior concrete blocks were sprayed with un-tinted plaster. Barnes, Rothko Chapel, 85.

Nodelman questions the widely circulating 'myth' that Rothko pointed to the skin on his inner forearm when asked what colour the walls should be painted originally. However, he does note that the walls were painted in a similar tone to that of Rothko's studio and that this colour was later changed to a lighter off-white when the baffle, over the oculus, was installed. This conflicts directly with Rothko's wishes and destroys the finely calibrated relationships by isolating and exaggerating the contrast between works. Nodelman, Rothko Chapel Paintings, 74, 139 & 353 fn 139.

seating plan is variable dependent upon function, for the Chapel is host to a variety of events. To accommodate the large numbers attending a symposium or one of the many colloquia that occur, individual chairs are installed and oriented towards the apse-like recess. For a smaller function, perhaps a wedding or funeral, a series of large low benches can be angled symmetrically in two halves within the space forming a central aisle and two side aisles, which thus allow unimpeded access to the apse. The more usual arrangement is four benches in an open square, oriented to face the north, west, south and east walls respectively (Figure 5).

Rothko was instrumental in the selection of an octagon for the form of the project. His intention was to allude specifically to the baptistery of Santa Maria Assunta, Torcello, which had impressed him during his travels.⁹⁵ Clearly, the aim was to reinterpret his experience for the contemporary viewer using an abstract vocabulary. To this end he created a suite of fourteen canvases -- three triptychs and five single panels -- so large that they could be installed only by lowering them through the oculus. Bearing in mind that the initial commission was to create work for a Catholic institution, it has been suggested that the number of panels for the project alludes to the fourteen Stations of the Cross: “the paintings...are not decodable as specific episodes in Christ’s Passion, but

⁹⁴ The installation of the baffle is problematic, for it was installed after Rothko’s death and alters the viewing experience. This situation is further compromised by the fact that artificial lighting is occasionally used at the discretion of the people who work at the Chapel, as was the case during one of my visits. Also, please note, Nodelman has observed that the eight low guard rails are the same height as the bench in Rothko’s studio. Nodelman, Rothko Chapel Paintings, 74.

⁹⁵ It has been suggested that in order to rationalise the use of an octagonal plan, Rothko pretended to have consulted Meyer Shapiro about prior historical examples. Barnes, Rothko Chapel, 67 & 50. The use of the eight-sided octagon in religious architecture in general, and baptisteries in particular, is highly symbolic. Eight is the number of renewal, regeneration and transition whilst the octagon itself was believed to ‘square the circle’. Squaring the circle symbolises the notion of totality for it mediates between the two shapes with the square referencing earthly existence and the circle indicating eternity and / or heaven.

they do, as a total of 14 contiguous works, allude to the event as a whole.”⁹⁶ The original contract, however, was to supply “sufficient number of paintings to adequately illumine the interior [...] one to each of the sides, and three for the apse” totaling ten: it was only later amended to fourteen by Rothko himself for aesthetic reasons.⁹⁷ Any overt or indeed oblique references to the fourteen Stations of the Cross, intentional or otherwise, would have been negated as soon as the mandate for the chapel changed to reflect the requirements of an inter-denominational rather than Roman Catholic organization.

The proposition that Rothko’s use of triptychs refers to the spiritual in general is sound. Lawrence Alloway observes:

In the Rothko Chapel there are three triptychs, a form of picture with unbreakable associations to Christian art and to number symbols...these unitary schemes imply content by format, thus ascribing an expressive function to the environmental display itself.⁹⁸

Rothko’s intentional use of sombre shades suggests an additional reference to the Stations of the Cross. It may be interesting to note that the fourteen panels can further be divided equally into two types: the plum-coloured canvases, usually referred to as the ‘monochromes’; and, the black hard-edged rectangles on maroon grounds, referred to as the ‘black-forms.’ Seven is the number of the universe and, as such, signifies reintegration and synthesis, for it contains both the spiritual and the temporal (three plus

⁹⁶ Alloway, “Residual Sign Systems”: 39-40.

⁹⁷ Breslin, Mark Rothko, 651 fn 18.

Furthermore, it is well documented that the only concession Rothko was willing to make to the Fathers of St Thomas would be to place numbers on the outside walls and then only if absolutely necessary. Barnes citing a conversation which took place between Rothko and Dominique de Menil. Barnes, Rothko Chapel, 67.

⁹⁸ Alloway, “Residual Sign Systems”: 39-40.

four). This is fitting for a project that was to finally realise Rothko's aspiration to create a sympathetic environment that would synthesise art and site into a cohesive unit.⁹⁹

These two types, the 'monochromes' and the 'black-forms', were created specifically for the site and they represent an innovative break from Rothko's signature style -- namely the 'sectionals' composed of loosely formed, stacked rectangles held in tension by the edges. Susan Barnes explains the progression:

[Rothko] took his usual approach to two opposite extremes: in some of the paintings he eliminated form altogether leaving only their evanescent background; in others he consolidated form into a single, large rectangle whose taped, hard-edged limits are as absolute as its impenetrable blackness.¹⁰⁰

It has been suggested that possible sources of inspiration for the hard-edged 'black-forms' are the fenestration patterns found in Florentine Renaissance architecture and / or the internal architectural elements of the chapel, such as the featureless doorways.¹⁰¹

All fourteen canvases have the same two priming coats.¹⁰² The first consists of dry pigments, alizarin crimson and ultramarine blue, in a medium of hot rabbit-skin glue. Rothko added bone-black to the original dry mixture for the second coat, but this time the suspension liquid used was a synthetic polymer medium. The plum-coloured 'monochromes' consist of these two coats and also provide the background for the 'black-forms'. Variations in the base plum colour and the vertical striations in the

⁹⁹ It has been noted that Rothko intentionally specified that a total of eighteen canvases be delivered to Houston. Eighteen is an auspicious number in Jewish numerology because 18 or "chai" also means life. Nodelman, Rothko Chapel Paintings, 135.

¹⁰⁰ Barnes, Rothko Chapel, 57. However, Breslin notes that Rothko began to explore the use of hard edges in his painting as early as 1964. Breslin, Mark Rothko, 654 fn 52.

¹⁰¹ Barnes, Rothko Chapel, 57. These propositions are plausible but it would be difficult to say if the doorways inspired the black-forms or *vice versa* for the vision of both was Rothko's alone.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 58-59. However, according to William Scharf, who assisted Rothko on the project initially, there could be up to fifteen – twenty coats. Breslin, Mark Rothko, 468.

paintings caused by the orientation of the brush marks are a direct result of the size of the work; from necessity Rothko, with the help of assistants, mixed the paint in individual batches and, using 4-6" house-painters' brushes, then worked upon the huge canvases as they leaned on their horizontal axis against the studio walls.¹⁰³

The internal dimensions of the hard-edged rectangles in the 'black-forms' were "finely calibrated" by Rothko over a period of time, using charcoal in the initial stages.¹⁰⁴ Once a decision had been reached, the canvas was again rotated onto its side and an application of the black could begin. This coat is "an egg-oil emulsion, consisting of whole egg, oil paint, dammar varnish, and turpentine."¹⁰⁵ The plum ground was subsequently darkened to a deep shade of maroon, with a final coat of the crimson/blue/black mixture to reduce contrast between the black 'figure' and the ground.¹⁰⁶ Even after such careful deliberation, there is evidence of further subtle calibrations to this relationship between figure and ground. It is possible, when looking closely, to see where the taped hard-edge of a rectangle has been extended as little as one centimetre and repainted, thereby adhering to Rothko's stringent sensibility.¹⁰⁷ These *pentimenti* are not obvious and are best seen in a raking light.

Rothko, always a master of surface treatment, continued his career-long investigation of matte and shiny surfaces, and the canvases in the Rothko Chapel are again a celebration of the inherent qualities of paint; a study of quidity or 'what-ness'.

¹⁰³ Barnes, Rothko Chapel, 58-59.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 53.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 61.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 61-62.

¹⁰⁷ It has been suggested that because the 'black-form' triptych on the east wall shows more evidence of these fine calibrations that it was most likely painted first. Ibid., 62.

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro -- writing with extensive knowledge gained from her time as chief conservator for the Menil Collection -- eloquently describes Rothko's sustained exploration of the intrinsic nature of his medium:

The later paintings [...] reward the viewer with a distillation and refinement of the earlier works taken to another level, especially in terms of the complexity of surface. [...] Rothko continued to explore the impact of every facet of his painting in terms of the physical object. Deploring the use of varnish, which would diminish or even obliterate certain effects, he used color, transparency, viscosity and reflectance of paint in a relentless pursuit of the refined surfaces of his late work.

The surface is the final playing field; it is where the energy is expended and where the victory is won or lost. [...] Rothko's paintings bespeak a complete engagement with the surface."¹⁰⁸

And further:

Rothko brilliantly orchestrated the surfaces of the chapel paintings by exploiting the innate properties of materials to maximum effect with alternative techniques. To have ignored that achievement would have been to deny in part the genius of Mark Rothko.¹⁰⁹

A number of extra paintings were delivered to Houston and these three pairs -- known as *Pair A, B & C* (1966), respectively -- illustrate this exploration of promising permutations.¹¹⁰ Making use of the different relationships that are possible between the intrinsic qualities of paint, such as matte / shiny, transparency / opacity, these variations establish a tension within the picture plane. There is a push and pull in visual space which

¹⁰⁸ Mancusi-Ungaro, "Material and Immaterial Surface", 283-4 & 290.

¹⁰⁹ Idem., "Nuances of Surface", 29.

¹¹⁰ Please note, *Pairs A & B* -- on 7.8 centimetre strainers like those in the Chapel -- measure 450.2 x 244.5 centimetres, whilst *Pair C* -- on 3.8 centimetre strainers -- is 450.2 x 290.2 centimetres. Barnes writes that according to personal accounts, the single 'black-form' on the south wall and these four extra 'black-forms' (*Pairs A & B*) were painted by Rothko himself. The 'black-form' triptychs, however, were executed by his assistants -- at this time Ray Kelly and Roy Edwards -- under Rothko's direct and exacting supervision. It is interesting to note that when Rothko spoke to his assistants about this transition to the hard edge 'black-forms' he would ironically jest that "masking tape [was] the foundation of modern art." Barnes, Rothko Chapel, 75 fn 94 & 74 fn 80.

becomes even more ambiguous as the lighting changes throughout the day. Careful examination and scholarship by Mancusi-Ungaro has shown that *Pair A* relates to the lateral ‘black-form’ triptychs on the east and west walls, whilst *Pair B* is linked to the single ‘black-form’ to the south.¹¹¹

Rothko began work on the canvases after the interior space and / or all of the architectural details had been determined. Adamant that final decisions could be made only after experiencing the work at full size, Rothko built upon previous experience.¹¹² Adopting a similar *modus operandi* as that used for the earlier mural commissions, in the studio Rothko fabricated a full-size replica of three of the eight walls.¹¹³ Once finished, every single painting and triptych was carefully considered and brought into harmonious relationship with the other completed canvases. Rothko’s intention was to create a number of “voices in an opera” -- an ensemble, not merely a series.¹¹⁴ Starting at the apse and travelling clockwise around the space, the locations, titles, types, dates and dimensions are as follows, (Figures 3-6):

North apse wall	<i>Untitled</i> , (triptych - ‘monochrome’)	1965:
457.2 x 243.8 / 457.2 x 267.3 / 457.2 x 243.8		
North-east angle wall	<i>Untitled</i> , (single - ‘monochrome’)	1966:
450.9 x 342.9		

¹¹¹ Mancusi-Ungaro, “Material and Immaterial Surface”, 298.

¹¹² I should qualify this statement. During this project’s design process, Rothko made use of a scaled model, executed a series of drawings -- graphite on black paper to examine issues surrounding reflexivity -- and also made studies in paint. Mancusi-Ungaro is of the opinion that he used all modes concurrently to arrive at a solution. Despite this, the fact remains that the majority of decisions were made at full scale in the studio, even to the point of re-stretching the huge canvases again when Rothko deemed that slight changes in dimensions were essential. Idem., “Nuances of Surface”, 27.

¹¹³ Barnes, *Rothko Chapel*, 52.

¹¹⁴ Barnes quoting Motherwell. Ibid., 50.

East wall 342.6 x 182.6 / 342.6 x 259.1 / 342.6 x 182.2	<i>Untitled</i> , (triptych - 'black-form')	1966-67:
South-east angle wall 450.9 x 342.9	<i>Untitled</i> , (single - 'monochrome')	1966:
South entrance wall 457.2 x 266.7 ¹¹⁵	<i>Untitled</i> , (single - 'black-form')	1965:
South-west angle wall 450.9 x 342.9	<i>Untitled</i> , (single - 'monochrome')	1966:
West wall 365.4 x 182.6 / 365.4 x 259.1 / 365.4 x 182.6 ¹¹⁶	<i>Untitled</i> , (triptych - 'black-form')	1966-67:
North-west angle wall 450.9 x 342.9 ¹¹⁷	<i>Untitled</i> , (single - 'monochrome')	1966:

Testament to Rothko's desire to carefully orchestrate the viewing experience, he ordered "slight adjustments" to the size of the internal doorways, the elevation of the middle panels in both 'black-form' triptychs and the positions of all paintings within the space.¹¹⁸

Rothko completed the commission in April, 1967, and, in June of that year, Dominique de Menil and Barnestone made a visit to his studio to see the finished work. Canvases were installed on three mock-up walls and Rothko provided explicit details for the placement of the paintings upon the other five. This information was telephoned directly to Houston from his studio. The hanging-height was carefully considered to the smallest increments and the location of the works within the chapel was exact, for part

¹¹⁵ Please note: same height as the apse triptych.

¹¹⁶ Please note: same widths as the east wall panels but approx twenty centimetres larger in height.

¹¹⁷ All dimensions, in centimetres, supplied by Anfam, Mark Rothko.

¹¹⁸ Barnes, Rothko Chapel, 68.

The lateral panels of both 'black-form' triptychs are hung at a height of 78.7 centimetres, the middle panels are raised above this and the remainders of the ensemble are 53.3 centimetres from the ground. The internal doorways were extended by approximately 23 x 8 centimetres. Nodelman, Rothko Chapel Paintings, 129-130.

relates to part and part to whole.¹¹⁹ It has also been suggested that the ‘monochromes’ on the north-west and north-east angle walls, which flank the apse triptych, were shortened by approximately five centimetres in height so as to create a better “optical arrangement.”¹²⁰ If this is so, then Rothko must have originally intended these to be slightly larger, for the single ‘monochromes’ all have the same dimensions. It has been posited that four of the six extra canvases, *Pair A* and *Pair B*, may indicate the possibility of further on-site calibrations.¹²¹ It is uncertain as to what role, if any, these extra four canvases were to have played in the final scheme. What is certain, however, is that the present installation reflects Rothko’s last recorded measurements because the murals were hung in the chapel after his death according to his dictates.¹²²

With careful placement, Rothko was able to orchestrate the viewing experience by establishing subtle relationships of similarity and difference throughout the space. Recalling Rothko’s early statement about painting on a large but intimate scale so as to immerse the viewer, it was an uncanny experience, during my own visit, finally to find myself completely and utterly engulfed in his work.¹²³ With David Anfam’s warning that

¹¹⁹ Using existing architectural drawings as his source, Breslin records that the middle panel of the east wall triptych is raised by 22 centimetres and that on the west wall by 19 centimetres, mere fractions given the total dimensions of the work. Breslin, Mark Rothko, 480.

However, Nodelman’s opinion differs, for he expressly states that not only were the east and west triptychs transposed during re-stretching and installation, but that the middle panels of these ‘black-forms’ were also hung at the same height in error. His argument that this directly interrupts Rothko’s fine calibrations is convincing. Nodelman, Rothko Chapel Paintings, 141-142.

¹²⁰ Barnes, Rothko Chapel, 65.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 63. It is unlikely that *Pair C* would have been substituted because they are stretched on strainers of different size to those selected for the Chapel, (as per above foot note). Nodelman is also of the opinion that these extra canvases function as alternates -- not complements -- probably replacing the two triptychs with one half of a pair making the total 10 as per the original contract. Nodelman, Rothko Chapel Paintings, 118.

¹²² Barnes, Rothko Chapel, 63. Please see above footnote -- Nodelman disagrees with this position.

¹²³ In “How to Combine Architecture, Painting, and Sculpture, 1951”, Rothko stated:

“words tend to elide” in mind, I will describe my impressions of the Chapel in tandem with the documented experience of others.¹²⁴

The plum ‘monochrome’ panels are extraordinarily nuanced, despite the implicit connotations of the term. Just as the mind seeks to make sense of flames in the fire or shapes in clouds when left to contemplate for any length of time, so imagery became slowly apparent or evident when glimpsed out of the corner of the eye...a cross, a crown, a head. One overcast afternoon I sat for hours watching the play of light over the huge canvases; shadows moved slowly across the works, releasing other spectres from the painted surface. During this time I also became aware of the many shadows thrown by the architectural elements themselves. Muted shafts of light streamed down from the muffled oculus, creating purple hued shadows in, around and through the open doorways. As a result, the T-shaped walls became implicated in my reading of the work. The colours created by these diagonal shadow-lines of the dimly lit entrances harmonised with the plum tones in the border of the ‘black-form’ triptychs to such a degree that the works themselves virtually expanded into real space (Figure 6). Seemingly, they were no longer mere rectangles, but trapezoids, like the shaped canvases of Frank Stella (b.1936). As Sheldon Nodelman explains:

The differing sizes, proportions, and color of these units and their differing angles of view vis á vis the spectator trigger a set of mutually qualifying virtual readings

I paint very large pictures [...] precisely because I want to be intimate and human. To paint a small picture is to place yourself outside your experience, to look upon an experience as a stereopticon view or with a reducing glass. However you paint the larger picture, you are in it. It isn't something you command.

Rothko, Writings on Art, 74.

¹²⁴ Specifically in relation to the “proverbial discursiveness” of Rothko’s use of colour for it “elicits responses from the observer, but leaves attempts to voice their content sound silly or verbose.” Anfam, Mark Rothko, 81.

that jump the material boundaries of the panel to implicate the kindred shapes of environing wall segments and adjacent panels.¹²⁵

The ‘black-forms’ are more opaque, both visually and metaphorically, for their solid rectangles deny easy entry into pictorial space. It is also physically impossible to see all the canvas at once because of the intrinsic reflective quality of surface; the scale of the hard-edged ‘figures’ and the hard-edges themselves become paramount. This rather disconcerting viewing experience has been described:

In the Houston paintings the borders of the inner rectangles are often distinct, very sharply drawn...but the clarity of the line does not necessarily lead to the constitution of a figure: the line either extends too far, remains incomplete, or becomes invisible [due to the vagaries of natural light].¹²⁶

These ‘black-forms’ -- which interrupt and therefore reward only sustained viewing -- can be frustrating; yet they also make the work seem more ‘alive’, especially when one is willing actively to engage with the paintings as Rothko wished.

Allowing time to look, making the spectator present, is critical when engaging with these later, more sombre works of Rothko. Just as it takes minutes before our night vision begins to function, so it is necessary to spend time before we can begin to make sense of these expressions of darkness. Arguing for active looking, for the beholder to do their share, Lucy Lippard has said:

The education of the spectator’s eye must be taken into consideration. [...] Now our eyes are accustomed to the gloom of Rothko’s [...] black and blacker canvases, and our perceptual faculties have been heightened in the process. Work that once looked radically uncolorful or invisible now seems nuanced and visible.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Nodelman, Rothko Chapel Paintings, 101.

¹²⁶ Bersani & Dutoit, Arts of Impoverishment, 136.

¹²⁷ Lucy Lippard, “The Silent Art”, in Abstract Art in the Late 20th Century, ed. Frances Colpitt (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 53. She later continues that “empty” like “ugly” will eventually cease to exist as useful categories when beholders begin to take active responsibility for their share of the viewing process.

Certain areas seem almost to breathe, expanding and contracting at will. Some are more stable, either appearing to recede into the far distance or push forward in pictorial space, whilst others appear impenetrable, obdurately denying access.

The octagonal shape is critical to how the work is experienced; with no sharp right angles to impede the viewing process, the eye is free to traverse the panels at will. However, being literally in the work, I found it rather disorienting to find that the octagonal shape is also disruptive. Surrounded by the huge canvases and acutely aware of the other paintings to the rear, it was physically impossible for me to see all of them at once because of how the space is configured. This multi-faceted octagon destabilises normal viewing conditions by placing the observer inside a veritable kaleidoscope: “the octagon works against centered vision; it complicates structure while making impossible any single account of structure. The octagon multiples relationships without privileging any of them.”¹²⁸ It may prove fruitful to consider this non-hierarchical mode of viewing in relation to Rothko’s anarchism -- particularly in terms of individuality and free-will -- for once again the autonomy of the spectator is brought to the fore. Forced into motion, circumambulating the Chapel because of the placement of the immense work within the space, I was actively engaged in a kinesthetic dialogue. Nodelman describes this dynamic interaction between observer, work and space:

[T]he chapel demands a large scaled and necessarily conscious motion of the whole body, invoking a much stronger and wider range of tactile kinesthetic participation. It is the embodied viewer in [their] contingent physicality who is addressed here. [...] The visitor becomes aware of himself or herself not as passive spectator but as a determining factor in the installation.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Bersani & Dutoit, Arts of Impoverishment, 133.

¹²⁹ Nodelman, Rothko Chapel Paintings, 167.

The viewing experience is continually unfolding and reading is by necessity processual because everything is in flux. Everything is called into question, for the Chapel and its contents are in a state of continual transformation which is emphasised by the capricious nature and mutability of the natural light.

Anfam's observation that all Rothko's works have the "poise of a human being" due to their vertical symmetry is insightful, for these canvases do indeed have an uncanny physical presence.¹³⁰ This quality is heightened in the Chapel paintings by their architectonic scale and through the trope of repetition. Rothko reportedly stipulated: "if a thing is worth doing once, it is worth doing over and over again – exploring it, probing it, demanding by its repetition that the public look at it."¹³¹

Arguably, the Chapel is the embodiment of this sustained enquiry. The four repeating 'monochromes' on the oblique walls present a circular relationship which is underscored by the 'monochromatic' triptych in the apse. This circularity is disrupted by the fact that the lighter-hued middle panel has a kinship, through tone, with the single 'monochromes' to the rear on the south-west and south-east walls. The apse triptych relates by virtue of the number of panels to those on the east and west wall in triangulation, yet it posits difference through form; 'monochrome' *versus* 'black-form'. The privileging of the raised central panel in each 'black-form' triptych relates to the single 'black-form' on the south wall, which in turn refers back to the four single 'monochromes'. Again, the notion of difference is presented. More subtle relationships are further established, but these are tenuous at best because one is forced to rely upon

¹³⁰ Anfam, Mark Rothko, 17.

¹³¹ Ibid.

memory when making connections and comparisons.¹³² Canvases hover on the periphery of vision, destabilising that which you thought you had previously established through careful consideration. No photography is allowed and all viewers are forced to make these connections in real time.

Rothko juxtaposes the intrinsic nature of material in his work, such as transparency and opacity, materiality and immateriality. This investigation culminated in the Chapel, because here it is extended into physical space through contradictory considerations that include, for example, similarity and difference, symmetry and a-symmetry, stability and instability, being and not-being, presence and absence, the finite and the infinite. It has been observed that these antitheses are “neither synthesized nor neutralized in his work, but held in a confronted unity which is a momentary stasis.”¹³³ This transitory unity does not always provide the viewer with a state of ease: thus, the site is one of unease and self-confrontation. When speaking in relation to the luminosity of the ‘black-forms’, Nodelman refers to this highly fragile state of momentary stasis in terms of an uneasy coexistence and interpenetration. As a result, he argues, the space created within the picture plane is that of an “unfamiliar and uncanny sort, both inviting and forbidding entry, invading the ‘real’ spaces of the chapel to envelop the spectator while dilating the boundaries of that space into an ambiguous and vaguely menacing beyond.”¹³⁴

¹³² Unless one goes armed with the prior knowledge of Nodelman who, making use of the semiotic square, is able to present an incredibly nuanced understanding of the contrasting groups within the ensemble that are “caught in a continuous flux of combination and recombination.” Nodelman, Rothko Chapel Paintings, 233 & 272.

¹³³ Chave, Mark Rothko, 181.

¹³⁴ Nodelman, Rothko Chapel Paintings, 179.

Rothko himself was highly cognisant of this effect and referred to the single 'black-form' as "ominous."¹³⁵ Specifically intending to create works that "you wouldn't want to look at", he made those in the Chapel to disturb.¹³⁶ Drawing parallels between the placement of this single 'black-form' on the south wall and the 'monochromatic' apse triptych opposite, Rothko was intentionally quoting the placement of traditional scenes of doom and redemption.¹³⁷ This reference to historical and religious conventions in terms of the work and site has not gone unnoticed and the paintings have been interpreted accordingly:

The key to the Chapel pictures lies in a rhetorical coup which Rothko accomplished by raising the middle of the three touching panels in the two triptychs. This is a Christian and tragic gesture giving the triptychs a subject they would not otherwise have. [...] The raised central panels of the triptychs introduce the idea of tragedy. The process, with its obvious strokes, hesitations, and repainting, introduces the idea of fallibility.¹³⁸

And also:

[D]espite their absolute iconoclasm...there is an underlying level of historical allusion implicit in the structural organization and configuration of parts within the ensemble; for instance, the octagonal plan of the chapel and the disposition of canvases into groupings...are all iconographically resonant.¹³⁹

Indeed, many of the comments in the visitors' book poignantly attest to the spiritual nature of their experience and references to 'transformation', 'infinity', the existential

¹³⁵ Ibid., 9.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 301. Nodelman is of the opinion that Rothko actively sought to force the viewer "beyond the limits of expectation to confront a world that [their] available intellectual and emotional resources did not yet encompass" and this directly relates to Rothko's political beliefs that art was a powerful force for social change. Ibid., 301-2.

¹³⁷ Such as those found at Santa Maria Assunta, Torcello, where an image of the Madonna and Child is located in the apse whilst that of the Last Judgment is located at the entrance of the chapel. Barnes, Rothko Chapel, 67.

¹³⁸ O'Doherty, American Masters, 160.

¹³⁹ See the foreword, penned by Walter Hopps. Barnes, Rothko Chapel, 12.

‘void’ and ‘the light’ abound. Rothko, when pressed, was to later admit that he was painting “the infinity of death [...] the infinite eternity of death.”¹⁴⁰

But do all visitors to the Chapel ultimately confront their mortality? Is there only one meaning, or are there many? Because the Chapel deliberately privileges the embodied spectator, there is clearly space for multiple viewpoints and the subjective experience. Perhaps playing off an oft-used quotation about Rothko’s art -- that it “utters a single word, insistently. But everyone hears a different word”¹⁴¹-- Anfam refers to Rothko’s paintings as “parables.”¹⁴² This illustrates how Rothko’s work best functions, for parables condense highly complex ideas into a simple and more direct form. More important, because parables function through the use of analogies and metaphor, meaning is always subjective and therefore rarely specific. Parables offer space for personal interpretation and, as such, are open to a multiplicity of readings:

[Rothko’s] artwork exalts subjectivity. Reading it is, to an unusual pitch, indexed to the beholder’s powers of sentience. This undertow of self-reflexive awareness and duration goes toward configuring the experience; the art is structured to promote a transaction which clusters the seer and the thing seen in a tense, refracted union.¹⁴³

Spectators are relentlessly brought back to confront themselves, *ad infinitum*, within the kaleidoscope Rothko created with this carefully orchestrated unity of work and octagonal space. Continuing the literary trope further, one may also note that the way Rothko’s work communicates has been characterized as “faintly legible language, such inaudible

¹⁴⁰ Nodelman, Rothko Chapel Paintings, 306.

¹⁴¹ O’Doherty, American Masters, 153.

¹⁴² Anfam, Mark Rothko, 12.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 11.

speech”.¹⁴⁴ Leaving space for the subjective reading, his paintings “endlessly suggest and evoke, while just as endlessly declining to confirm and deny”.¹⁴⁵ And this is precisely the point. Rothko, the anarchist who passionately defended his right to control where, when, and how his paintings were exhibited, not only worked in a visual vocabulary that fostered individual response by denying absolute meaning, but, through creating the Rothko Chapel, was finally able exhibit his work with less mediation, in a space that challenges the viewer to be present. This is the ultimate gift, for while Rothko demanded and maintained his own personal and artistic freedom, in so doing, he defends our right to achieve the self-same goal of individual autonomy.

¹⁴⁴ Chave, Mark Rothko, 197.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO

Donald Judd and The Chinati Foundation

The tenor of art criticism shifted in the nineteen-sixties when artists -- such as Donald Judd, renowned for his perspicacious exhibition reviews -- no longer relied upon critics to define and discuss their work, but actively engaged with the process. Whereas Rothko pointedly remained reticent during discussions about his work, Judd was the exact opposite. Whilst maintaining, like Rothko, that art is a form of communication in and of itself functioning outside the boundaries of language, Judd contributed significantly to the discourse of contemporary art.¹⁴⁶ Writing as a critic, for Art News, Arts (later Arts Magazine) and Arts International, his keen observations were instrumental in shaping the understanding of the contemporary art scene in New York:

His [Judd's] critical writing and art reviews [...] helped precipitate a new consciousness in art, as much as any other intellectual activity of the period, and predicted a different kind of self-contained, concrete, three-dimensional art based on a simplified form-gestalt.¹⁴⁷

Judd's writing also provided a vocabulary to discuss the work that eventually fell under the rubric of Minimal Art.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ See Karl Beveridge and Ian Burn's interrogation of the relationship between Judd's work and his written word. Before engaging in their Marxist critique, they note the almost surgical precision of the language employed by Judd. They state:

Your writing does function differently to the writings of other artists, say Kasimir Malevich's, or even Barnett Newman's. Maybe the easiest way to summarize the function of your writing is to say it operates almost like a manual for the sculptures or objects you make. [...] Emphatically enough, you've insisted on the *terminology* you want your work *experienced* in relation to... 'specificness', 'wholeness', 'objectivity', 'facticity', 'large scale', 'simplicity', 'non associative', 'non anthropomorphic', 'anti-hierarchical', 'non-relational' and so on. These intermesh to provide a more or less linguistically defined context.

Karl Beveridge and Ian Burn, "Donald Judd", in Minimalism, ed. James Meyer, 260-261.

¹⁴⁷ Hunter, American Art of the 20th Century, 372.

Known by the alternative terms ABC Art, Cool Art, and Primary Structures, Minimalist works emphasise the objective.¹⁴⁹ Pared of all extraneous embellishments, these extremely simplified forms were developed in the United States during the 1960s, primarily in reaction to the emotional subjectivity of earlier Abstract Expressionist works.¹⁵⁰ Often making use of a monochromatic palette, Minimalist artists rejected

¹⁴⁸ According to Colpitt, Judd himself was to use the term 'minimal' as early as 1960. The first use of the term Minimal Art was in a text by the critic Richard Wollheim writing for Arts Magazine. marginally pejorative, he writes:

If we survey the art situation of recent times, as it has come to take shape over, let us say, the last fifty years, we find that increasingly acceptance has been afforded to a class of objects that, though disparate in many ways – in looks, in intention, in moral impact – have also an identifiable feature or aspect in common. And this might be expressed by saying that they have a minimal art-content: in that either they are to an extreme degree undifferentiated in themselves and therefore possess very low content of any kind, or else the differentiation they do exhibit, which may in some cases be considerable, comes not from the artist but from a non artistic source, like nature or the factory.

Colpitt, Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective, 3; and Richard Wollheim, "Minimal Art", in Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology, 387.

Rather than propose a specific definition for the contested nature of the expression Minimal –ist –ism, James Meyer explains that the term did not necessarily define a specific movement *per se* but would be better understood in terms of a "debate that surround[ed] a new kind of abstraction during the 1960's." He further clarifies:

'Minimalism' (or 'Minimal' art) denotes an avant-garde style that emerged in New York and Los Angeles during the 1960's, most often associated with the work of Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Sol Le Witt and Robert Morris, and other artists briefly associated with the tendency. Primarily sculpture, Minimal art tends to consist of single or repeated geometric forms. Industrially produced or built by skilled workers following the artist's instructions, it removes any trace of emotion or intuitive decision-making, in stark contrast to the Abstract Expressionist painting and sculpture that preceded it during the 1940's and 1950's. Minimal work does not allude to anything beyond its literal presence, or its existence in the physical world. Materials appear as materials; color (if used at all) is non-referential. Often placed in walls, in corners, or directly on the floor, it is an installation art that reveals the gallery as an actual place, rendering the viewer conscious of moving through the space.

Meyer, "Survey", in Minimalism, 15.

¹⁴⁹ Colpitt notes that Minimal art was also sometimes referred to as 'Dragnet Art' -- after the immortal words of Sergeant Friday, "Just the facts ma'am." The term "Primary Structures" came into use after the exhibition of that name held at the Jewish Museum in New York City, 1966. "ABC Art" is Barbara Rose's term from her article published in Art in America, where she argues that Malevich and Duchamp are forefathers of the movement. She eloquently proposes that this art is "boring" precisely because it is intended to be challenging to the viewer. Colpitt, Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective, 5; and Rose, "ABC Art", in Art in America, Vol 53 no 5 (Oct-Nov, 1965): 58 & 66.

¹⁵⁰ On Minimalism's uneasy relationship with Abstract Expressionism and Pop art, see Colpitt: Minimal art describes abstract, geometric painting and sculpture executed in the United States in the 1960's. Its predominant organizing principles include the right angle, the square, and the cube, rendered with a minimum of incident or compositional maneuvering. Historically a reaction to what young artists saw as the autobiographical, gestural excesses of Abstract Expressionism, Minimal art, at the same time, pursues the formal innovations of Abstract Expressionism,

figuration and illusion, embraced industrial materials and explored new modes of making. According to Ann Goldstein, curator of a retrospective exhibition that sought to reassess the impact of Minimalism, its importance lay in the fact that this type of art not only challenged the status of the art object -- and thus how art itself was defined -- but that it fundamentally changed the relationship between the art and the viewer:

Minimal art objects contributed to an overall reconsideration of the art object that was taking place at that time: art's associative or symbolic function was being renegotiated in favor of its conception as a self-referential object situated in physical and temporal space that engages a self-reflexive spectator.¹⁵¹

Tony Craig-Martin likewise emphasises the significance of an active viewer when encountering Minimalist art:

Minimalism seeks the meaning of art in the immediate and personal experience of the viewer in the presence of a specific work. There is no reference to another previous experience (no representation), no implication of a higher level of experience (no metaphysics), no promise of a deeper intellectual experience (no metaphor). Instead Minimalism presents the viewer with objects of charged neutrality; objects usually rectilinear, employing one or two materials, one or two colors, repeated identical units, factory-made or store-bought; objects that are without any hierarchy of interest, that directly engage and interact with the particular space they occupy; objects that reveal everything about themselves, but little about the artist; objects whose subject is the viewer.¹⁵²

A working definition proposed during the sixties remains valid:

Minimal art, although it has strong negative connotations [...] seems to be the term most commonly used. The term 'minimal' seems to imply that what is minimal in Minimal art is the art, this is far from the case. There is nothing minimal about the 'art' (craft, inspiration or aesthetic stimulation) in Minimal art. If anything, in the best works being done, it is maximal, what is minimal about

particularly as laid out by the paintings of Jackson Pollock and Barnett Newman. Although Minimalism shares with Pop art anonymous design, deadpan flatness, and unadulterated or industrial color, and was in fact described as 'Imageless Pop' in 1966, the Minimalists eschewed any form of comment, representation, or reference.

Colpitt, Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective, 1.

¹⁵¹ The exhibition was held at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Goldstein, A Minimal Future?, 17.

¹⁵² Tony Craig-Martin, "Minimalism", in Perceptible Processes: Minimalism and the Baroque, 33.

Minimal art, or appears to be when contrasted with Abstract Expressionism or Pop art, is the *means*, not the ends.¹⁵³

However, the relevance of these definitions was perhaps null and void for Judd.

Like Rothko, he abhorred the use of extrinsically applied terms that would define and therefore restrict the understanding and appreciation of his work. Minimalism was not a label he subscribed to:

He [Judd] hated the term Minimal art, he said. He felt that it did not apply to his work, and never had. The term, of course, refers primarily to the formal aspect of the work; and that is where the problem lies. These were works that employed (certainly compared to Abstract Expressionism) simple forms in straightforward industrial materials – not artistic materials. So the focus became that formal simplicity. It was no longer necessary to look at these so-called ‘Minimal’ works with careful precision because they were just minimal – nothing more than shapes and outlines.¹⁵⁴

Judd himself, in the exhibition catalogue for “Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors” (1966), wrote:

‘Minimal’ and ‘ABC’ art are recent reductions of ‘reductive’. Both ‘minimal’ and ‘reductive’ were first used by critics who liked the work the words referred to, and later by those who thought it the end of the line. ‘Boring and ‘monotonous’ are also sympathetic words. I can’t see how any good work can be boring or monotonous in the usual sense of those words. And no one has developed an unusual sense of them. This negative characterization is glib; it’s another label and one not even concerned with what the work is. ‘Non-art,’ ‘anti-art,’ ‘non-non art’ and ‘anti-art art’ are useless. If someone says his work is art it’s art.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ John Perreault, writing in 1967 as critic for the Village Voice. John Perreault, Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective, 3.

¹⁵⁴ Fuchs, “Donald Judd (Artist at Work)”, in Donald Judd, ed. Serota, 19. Judd was not alone in his rejection of a label that would define and thus circumscribe this new abstraction. Meyer explains:

All of the artists associated with Minimalism rejected the idea that theirs was a coherent movement; there was never a manifesto, they pointed out, only differing or even opposing points of view. [...] As Judd observed at the time, ‘Very few artists receive attention without publicity as a new group. It’s another case of the simplicity of criticism and of the public...One person’s work isn’t considered sufficiently important historically to be discussed alone.’

James Meyer, Minimalism, 16.

¹⁵⁵ Ann Goldstein citing Judd. Goldstein, “Donald Judd”, in A Minimal Future? 260.

And later:

My work has the appearance it has, wrongly called ‘objective’ and ‘impersonal’, because my first and largest interest is in my relation to the natural world, all of it, all the way out. This interest includes my existence, a keen interest, the existence of everything and the space and time that is created by the existing things. Art emulates this creation or definition by also creating, on a small scale, space and time.¹⁵⁶

Clearly, to Judd his work is anything *but* Minimal, or even minimal. He also rejected the label ‘sculptor’ which implied, for him, a negatively charged connection to past art practices. When asked if he was indeed a sculptor, Judd replied, Richard Shiff notes:

“No, it means carving to me...I never had a word; I don’t know.”¹⁵⁷

There is, as Brydon Smith observes, an equivalency between Judd’s writing style and the art he produced:

Judd uses words more precisely and personally than they are often used. His writing is concrete, declarative, and descriptive, and like his work, it has immediate impact and is so compressed that often the complexity of his ideas is not fully understood. Furthermore, as in his work, unnecessary elements are left out.¹⁵⁸

‘Simple’ and ‘complex’ are not mutually exclusive. Judd wrote primarily about art, mostly about that which interested him as an artist; but a large portion of his written work also critiques the lack of consideration given to the installation of art works, the increasing commercialisation and institutionalisation of the art world, and other social and political issues that detracted from his preferred holistic approach to life.

¹⁵⁶ See “Art and Architecture”. Judd, in Complete Writings 1975-1986, 32-33.

¹⁵⁷ Shiff quoting Judd. Shiff, “Donald Judd, Safe from Birds”, in Donald Judd, ed. Serota, 61. Also, during an interview with John Coplans -- in response to the question: “d[o] you now consider yourself a sculptor?”-- Judd was to state: “I had always considered my work to be another activity of some kind.” Coplans, Don Judd, 30.

¹⁵⁸ Smith, Donald Judd: A Catalogue, 12-13.

It has been noted that Judd's more mature writing was often a catalyst for his personal politics. In Jeffrey Kopie's comprehensive chronology of Judd's life, the entry for May 1990 quotes from Judd's scathing attack "Una stanza per Panza":

And, as in most of his later essays, he uses his dissatisfaction with the art world as a springboard for broader arguments about the government and the public: 'in this century over and over again artists and architects have tried to make art and architecture *in media res* [sic -- in the middle of things] and *sub specie aeternitatis* [under the aspect of eternity i.e. in its essential, universal form or nature], in congruence with new scientific thought and new social circumstances, only to be defeated by fascist central government...and by bureaucrats, governmental, art and otherwise, who don't want to be disturbed.'¹⁵⁹

Whilst his work has no overt political content, an issue that will be elaborated upon later, Judd was not averse to using his art to promote his opinions. A poster created for an exhibition at the *Galeria Theospacio*, Madrid, spring 1991, quite clearly states his anti-war sentiments; the poster is a photograph of a brick wall upon which the text "SADAM ES MALO BUSH ES PEOR" is spray painted as graffiti. It translates as "Sadam is mistaken Bush [Senior] is worse."¹⁶⁰ Earlier that same year Judd, wrote an essay a few days before the First Gulf War began, entitled "*Nie Weider Krieg*", "Never Again War". He states: "War is failure. War is caused by carelessness, wastefulness, thoughtlessness, incompetence, complacency and laziness. That's why war is the solution and dream of governmental bureaucrats and as well the easiest way out for their subjects."¹⁶¹ Enlightened individuals are placed in opposition, by implication, and it is these enlightened individuals who must make a stand. Judd argues that a military economy

¹⁵⁹ Kopie, "Chronology", in Donald Judd, ed. Serota, 267.

¹⁶⁰ Any errors in translation are mine. For a copy of the image see above reference.

¹⁶¹ Judd, Donald Judd: Architecture/ Architektur, 16.

such as America's creates a "fake economy"; a "fake society" which, in turn, adversely affects art and architecture, rendering them fake, too:

The steady pressure of bureaucratization and militarization has pretty much destroyed art and architecture in the United States. [...] Art museums are the best form of fake architecture since neither the clients nor the architects take art seriously. And then many artists obligingly add fakes to those made by ignorance. The art museum becomes exquisitely pointless, a fake for fakes, a double fake, the inner sanctum of a fake society."¹⁶²

Judd was a staunch activist and his anarcho-individualist politics are apparent from his texts.¹⁶³ Always striving towards political decentralization and individual autonomy, he believed that art and life had to be combined for the betterment of humanity. His position is made clear in an essay entitled "Imperialism, Nationalism and Regionalism": "Just as no one should give up power to a larger organization except as a necessity, power should not be imposed by large organizations upon smaller ones or individuals except as a necessity." Also:

In solving a problem, an individual should join with another person or several only as a last resort. They should join a somewhat larger group in the same way and so on out to towns, counties, and states or provinces. At no point should the power exceed what is necessary to solve the problems at that point...And at no time should the group or institution become mysterious or moral, something greater than the problems it was created to solve...Local control has to develop: the people have to take power. But this is politics and economics, not art and science. For local control all you need is a place, political say and a way to make a living; it's a practical matter. For local art you need a whole culture. If the local control is more than practical it becomes dangerous, becomes mysterious and moral and overwhelming, like the present government.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Ibid., 17.

¹⁶³ Here I am using the term anarcho-individualism as per Thoreau, which holds with the tenet of negative liberty -- in the tradition of Locke -- and thus promotes the right for an individual's liberty from being subjected to the authority of others. Although Judd did not openly subscribe to the label in his own texts, one reference has been located where, in a book by Anthony Haden Guest, he reportedly described himself as an anarchist. David Raskin presents a finely nuanced understanding of Judd's anarchism. He states that his politics shifted from "leftist communitarian anarchism during the late 1960s and early 1970s to an individualistic rightist anarchism thereafter." Raskin, *Donald Judd's Skepticism*, 23 & ix, respectively.

¹⁶⁴ See "Imperialism, Nationalism and Regionalism". Judd, *Complete Writings 1975-1986*, 133.

David Raskin's close reading of the relationship between Judd's politics and art practice -- and how this in turn intersects with his keen interest in pragmatism -- is very insightful.¹⁶⁵ After fully exploring connections between Judd and notable anarchists such as Barnett Newman, H. R. Shapiro and possibly George Woodcock, Raskin considers Judd's awareness of the empirical underpinnings of pragmatism, a label Judd did ascribe to,¹⁶⁶ and how anarchist politics and this branch of philosophy serve to reinforce each other.¹⁶⁷

In 1970, a question was posed to a number of practicing artists regarding their position on political action and was published in Artforum under the heading "The Artist and Politics: A Symposium."¹⁶⁸ The responses were varied; Judd's reply is rather lengthy. According to Raskin, although Judd began to write "anarchist-inspired statements" by 1967, this was to be only the third instance where he openly stated that his art had political overtones. Judd begins his essay with: "I've always thought that my work had political implications, had attitudes that would permit, limit or prohibit some kinds of

¹⁶⁵ Raskin, Donald Judd's Skepticism, passim.

¹⁶⁶ In response to Barbara Rose's question, "do you think your background in pragmatic philosophy influenced your thinking about art?" during an interview in 1967, Judd replied, "yeah, I think so." Raskin citing Rose. *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁶⁷ Pragmatism was developed from a modified version of 18th century Empiricism that held with the view that "ideas are a product of experiences that come in the form of discrete perceptual units." Being "founded upon the [anarchic] principle that the individual was key to human liberty", it is a philosophy of "pure experience" linked to direct, unmediated observation. *Ibid.*, 51-52 & 63.

¹⁶⁸ The question was as follows:

A growing number of artists have begun to feel the need to respond to the deepening political crisis in America. Among these artists, however, there are serious differences concerning their relations to direct political actions. Many feel that the political implications of their work constitute the most profound political action they can take. Others, not denying this, continue to feel the need for an immediate, direct political commitment. Still others feel that their work is devoid of political meaning and that their political lives are unrelated to their art. What is your position regarding the kinds of political action that should be taken by artists?

"The Artist and Politics: a Symposium": 35.

political behavior and some institutions.” He continues: “I think everyone has to be involved in politics, in organizations that will defend their rights and obtain more, that will decide on what should happen in all public matters. If you don’t act, someone else will decide everything.”¹⁶⁹ Judd’s unerring defence of personal liberty likewise encompassed his refusal to compromise how his work should be framed within the exhibition space and he repeatedly argued against all that would interfere. His position on museum practices, particularly their collection and exhibition strategies, is rather damning: “A museum is the collection of an institution and it’s an anthology. A few anthologies are alright, but some hundred in the United States alone is ridiculous. It’s freshman English forever.”¹⁷⁰ An entry dated 27th August 1989, from Jeffrey Kopie’s chronology, illustrates this reluctance to participate in and therefore promote group shows. He refers to an exhibition catalogue for the *Staatliche Kunsthalle* in Baden-Baden, Germany, within which Judd’s position is made clear. Kopie notes: “in an interview [...] Judd declares that he will no longer participate in large museum survey shows, as he feels they are nearly always poorly installed, and attempt to categorise and falsify the contexts of artists’ work.”¹⁷¹

Holding the opinion that museums “patronize, isolate, and neutralize artists”, Judd became disenchanted with art establishments because they also caused a disconnect between art and life: “Most of the activities which should support art, which claim to support art, which justify themselves so, are nearly irrelevant to it...this new social

¹⁶⁹ These statements appear in Raskin, Donald Judd’s Skepticism, 37-38; and Judd, “The Artist and Politics: a Symposium”: 36 & 37, respectively.

¹⁷⁰ See “On Installation”. Judd, Complete Writings 1975-1986, 21.

¹⁷¹ Kopie, “Chronology”, 266.

structure is not part of the reality of art, and is killing it. This has to be resisted.”¹⁷² It was his opinion that museums and art galleries also failed because they could not show work sensitively and permanently. Existing exhibition practices adopted by museums and galleries are, by necessity, structured around finite periods of time. This not only interferes with the appreciation of the art on display; the relatively quick turn-around can be detrimental to the work itself. Work is often vulnerable, particularly if it is large, and therefore open to damage not only during the installation process but also during transit between various shows and even to and from the studio.¹⁷³ In an essay for an exhibition catalogue on Judd’s work, Rudi Fuchs argues that any damage is disastrous, no matter how slight, because Judd’s specific objects are so refined:

The meticulous and detailed construction and the physical perfection are obvious qualities – so obvious, perhaps, that people tend to forget how crucial they are to the work’s visual behavior. [...] Damage to a work of art is always terrible and disgraceful. But in most traditional painting, i.e., Impressionism or Expressionism, a small blemish, though always awful, tends to be visually absorbed by the complexity of the compositional arrangement and by the impulsive liveliness of the surface. Abstract art is, in this respect, much more vulnerable. In Judd’s case, the slightest scratch or stain on the surface or the slightest dent in the sharp edges of an object destroys the work. The

¹⁷² See “Complaints: Part II” & “Statement for the Chinati Foundation”. Judd, Complete Writings 1959-1975, 208; and idem, Complete Writings 1975-1986, 112-3, respectively.

¹⁷³ Judd was to rail extensively against mistreatment of work by museum staff, shippers and the general public. For example, he expressed his dissatisfaction in “Complaints: Part II”:

The various shippers are careless and usually the museum staff that handles art is careless. The public is awful and the guards don’t mind. The handling is even worse when a show is over and the museum wants it out of there fast. Insurance is a farce. [...] One [shipping] company, whose name I can’t remember, possibly connected to Auer, tied two large metal boxes on the tailgate of their truck, between the open doors, which pounded in a side of each box. Nothing is ever art to any of the truck men. My work is just metal; Flavin’s is just fixtures; Chamberlain’s just junk; and so on.

Guards have the same attitude; the stuff is not worth taking care of. Someone was putting more fingerprints on one end of a piece of mine in the Metropolitan extravaganza of ’69 while the other end was being cleaned. The guard said nothing. [...] It’s common at an opening for glasses to be on everything and for people to sit or lean on everything.

Judd, Complete Writings 1959-1975, 209.

damage destroys the work's physical integrity and, thereby, its visual consistency.¹⁷⁴

Judd's work was also vulnerable because of how it was installed. According to Judd, standard exhibition strategies were abysmal; yet, being pro-active, he supplies a possible solution. After stating: "[t]he installation and context for the art being done is now poor and unsuitable", he continues:

The correction is a permanent installation of a good portion of the work of each of the best artists...The main reason for this is to be able to live with the work and think about it, and also to see the work placed as it should be. The installations provide a considered, unhurried measure by which to judge hurried installations of my own and others in unfamiliar and often unsuitable places.¹⁷⁵

Clearly Judd, like Rothko, firmly believed that temporary exhibitions in a museum and / or gallery situation were detrimental because work was often exhibited inappropriately; again like Rothko, he sought to control how and where his work was exhibited.¹⁷⁶ He was actively involved in the installation process whenever the opportunity arose, for this was crucial to an authentic understanding of the work.¹⁷⁷ The

¹⁷⁴ See "Decent Beauty". Fuchs, Donald Judd: Large Scale Works, 5.

¹⁷⁵ See "On Installation". Judd, Complete Writings 1975-1986, 19.

Indeed, noting the importance of permanent installation being invaluable to the understanding of his work, in 1977 he writes "In Defense of My Work" and states: "The fine installation of early pieces in the National Gallery of Canada was possible because of the installation of early pieces in the south room of the east building in Marfa." *Ibid.*, 10.

Further clarifying his position on standard exhibitions spaces and practices in a later essay in 1984, he again railed:

Almost all art for 30 years has been shown in white plasterboard galleries, vaguely derived from modern architecture. [...]his is an unconsidered convention, one which was not demanded by the artists. It's a particular appearance, not a fact of nature, and affects the work. This is art seen in a commercial situation not as it should be seen. The lighting is always bad, created by spotlights so that the work will look precious, the saleable jewel. [...]

The problem of placing a good work of art in an existing institutional and architectural situation is painful.

See "A long discussion not about master-pieces but why there are so few of them: Part II". *Ibid.*, 82 & 84.

¹⁷⁶ See his essay, "On Installation", where explains his position clearly: "A bad location doesn't ruin a good work but it tends to reduce understanding to information: you know its good but you can't stand there long enough to find out why." *Ibid.*, 19.

search for an appropriate setting to install his and others' work on a more permanent basis began early in his career in a loft apartment and expanded when he moved to 101 Spring St, New York City, in 1968.¹⁷⁸ Within this five-storey cast-iron building, which he sensitively restored and reconfigured, Judd had the opportunity to live a more holistic existence, for here he was able to combine art, architecture and life. Each floor was designated for a particular activity -- for example, working and sleeping -- and all contained art that had been carefully and permanently installed.¹⁷⁹ Judd's desire for more space combined with his dissatisfaction over the failure to treat work with respect eventually caused him to relocate far away from established art centres to Marfa, Texas.

The Chinati Foundation:

Situated on a highland plain at the upper corner of the largest desert in North America, known as the Chihuahuan Desert, the town of Marfa is in the Trans-Pecos region of south-west Texas.¹⁸⁰ At an altitude of 1472 metres above sea level, the semi-

¹⁷⁷ In "Statement for the Chinati Foundation" he stated: "I've installed every public exhibition and have kept and installed work in my own spaces." *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁷⁸ See "Marfa, Texas", where he wrote: "The idea of large permanent installations, which I consider my idea, began in a loft on 19th St in New York and developed in a building I purchased in the city in 1968." *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁷⁹ As Kopie describes:

Purchases 101 Spring Street for \$68,000, a five-storey, 1870 cast-iron building designed by Nicholas Whyte, with two basement levels. [...] When complete in the mid 1980s, the ground floor is used for looking at new work and showing the work of other artists; the second floor for cooking and eating; the third floor as a studio. The fourth floor has wide, pine planks installed as both floor and ceiling, and serves as a formal dining room; the fifth floor is a bedroom. The second floor has a mural by David Novros on one wall, while the fifth floor is dominated by a barrier piece of almost 21.5 m (70 ft) with red and blue fluorescent lights by Flavin. Judd's work is also displayed, along with pieces by Chamberlain, Oldenburg, Reinhardt, Samaras, Stella and H.C. Westermann. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century furniture is mixed with twentieth-century modernist pieces by Alvar Aalto and Gerrit Rietveld, along with furniture designed by Judd himself.

Kopie, "Chronology", 253-4.

¹⁸⁰ All information about Marfa and the surrounding area was supplied by the town's official website. Please see bibliography for specific pages.

arid countryside is surrounded by a circle of mountains; the Davis Range to the north, the Chisos Mountains to the southeast and the Chinati Mountains to the southwest. Not far from the Mexican border, in a landscape dotted with yuccas, grasses and creosote bushes, the township of Marfa -- which according to posted road signs has a current population of 2424 -- is in the middle of nowhere (Figures 7 & 8). Judd wished to be as far from so-called civilization as possible.¹⁸¹

During 1978, he engaged in discussions with the DIA Art Foundation regarding the possibility of funding a large-scale project in Marfa.¹⁸² To which end, the Chinati site -- part of which comprised two abandoned WWI hangers on the former military base on

¹⁸¹ Judd decided upon Marfa after many years of deliberation. He had passed through the area as early as 1946 on foot to boot camp at Fort McClellan. A telegram to his mother reads "DEAR MOM VAN HORN TEXAS. 1260 POPULATION. NICE TOWN BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY MOUNTAINS LOVE DON." Kopie, "Chronology", 246.

Judd's move to this small town was to have a profound impact on the local economy, for it is now a major art destination:

What Donald Judd created in this small town in south-western Texas is overwhelming: it is one of the greatest aesthetic experiences possible anywhere. [...]

Today, Marfa has the air of a prosperous little town, laid out on a grid, with a square centered on a Victorian courthouse. It contains the usual number of churches, a small Spanish Colonial Revival hotel from the 1920's, a main street lined with former banks and stores, many of which are art galleries, and is bisected by the railroad. This is very different from the town Judd discovered in 1973, which was run down, dilapidated, and of little interest to anybody except its residents, who were fast disappearing. Judd, however, saw in the faded industrial buildings, the empty army post, and the seemingly empty landscape a reflection of his own aesthetic, and recognized the perfect setting for his art. He set about transforming some of the buildings but also creating new art that would complement what he saw as a raw art that just needed to be recognized.

Richard Guy Wilson, "Foreword" in Donald Judd: Architecture in Marfa, Texas (Basel; Boston; Berlin: Birkhäuser Verlag AG, 2007), 20-21.

Initially, Judd lived in rental accommodation and in 1973 he purchased two former army structures, which became part of what is referred to as The Block, also known as the Mansana de Chinati. Surrounded by an adobe wall, these two large sheds -- former airplane hangers, along with the adjacent former Quarter Master's headquarters that he purchased the following year -- were to finally become both a home and exhibition space, in 1979, after renovations and refurbishment. Judd later added other buildings, such as greenhouse, chicken coup and office, to complete the compound. Peter Fluckiger, "La Mansana de Chinati" in Donald Judd: Architecture in Marfa, 51.

Upon Judd's death, property owned in Marfa included: the Ranch Office, Architectural Studio, Locker Plant, Print Building, El Taller Chihuahuense (the art factory), Mansana de Chinati, the Trost House, Bingham House, Walker House and Porter House. Fones, "Amazing Spaces": 33.

¹⁸² Phillippa de Menil, daughter to John and Dominique de Menil, is a co-founder of said institution. She is married, also, to its former director Heiner Freidrich. When the relationship between Judd and DIA became problematic, Judd established the Chinati Foundation. Please see Kopie for a succinct summary of the conflicted relationship with DIA and the subsequent split. Kopie, "Chronology", 246-270.

the outskirts of town -- was purchased in 1979 (Figure 10). The abandoned Fort DA Russell compound, although problematic in some ways, was ideal because it provided an opportunity to create something new and authentic.¹⁸³ Judd's drive to establish an alternative to the traditional museum --The Chinati Foundation -- has insightfully been explained:

The Chinati Foundation is an expression of that invincible American individualism, of the inalienable right to individual freedom; and his disobedience toward the art business in the big city is the civil disobedience which Thoreau wrote about: the right of an individual to refuse to reconcile himself to injustice -- or the right, even the duty, of an artist to resist the erosion of art.¹⁸⁴

Whether his withdrawal from the consumer-driven New York art scene was hubristic or messianic, withdraw he did.

The buildings Judd selected to house his work and that of others provided a sharp contrast to that of the typical white-cube gallery space; this was intentional:

There is a striking contrast between the roughly finished buildings and the precision of the art works, raising the question of the supposed preference of the so called Minimalists for a "white cube." This preference is a myth. The white cube was never Judd's preferred option and his own praxis refutes any such suggestion. None of his buildings has the slickness that's common in designs nowadays, which is equally alien to the buildings he renovated for the Chinati Foundation. What they do have is clarity and coherence. Judd hated confusion.¹⁸⁵

In an essay entitled "Marfa, Texas", Judd, himself, outlined the reasons for this radical move:

¹⁸³ The commemorative plaque at the entrance of the military base was left in place. It reads:
Fort DA Russell. Originally named Camp Marfa, this installation began as a supply post for US Army Border Patrol stations in 1911. It was a cavalry camp during the years of the Mexican Revolution. Renamed for Civil War General David Allen Russell, it became a permanent army post in 1929.
Deactivated at the end of 1933, it was reopened in 1935 with artillery units. During WWII Fort Russell became an army training camp and was home to a chemical warfare battalion as well as German POWs. The fort was officially closed in October 1946.

¹⁸⁴ See "The Ideal Museum: An Art Settlement in the Texas Desert". Fuchs, Donald Judd: Architecture/Architektur, 89.

¹⁸⁵ Stockebrand, "The Making of Two Works": 59.

This place is primarily for the installation of art, necessarily for whatever architecture of my own that can be included in an existing situation, for work, and altogether for my idea of living. [...] The main purpose of the place in Marfa is the serious and permanent installation of art. I insist on this because nothing existing now, despite the growth of activity in museums and so-called 'public art', is sufficiently close to the interest of the best art. Museums are at best anthologies and 'public art' is always adventitious. But I also insist because the idea of permanent installations is in turn becoming debased.¹⁸⁶

In a later statement for The Chinati Foundation he wrote:

Somewhere a portion of contemporary art has to exist as an example of what the art and its context were meant to be. Somewhere, just as the platinum-iridium meter guarantees the tape measure, a strict measure must exist for the art of this time and place. Otherwise art is only show and monkey business.¹⁸⁷

In the summer of 1980, and with further funding from DIA, Judd was able to secure more land and the remaining Fort Russell buildings. It now became fully feasible for him to realise his vision of an alternative museum, one that would show his own work permanently, along side that of a select few artists. Judd said: "[Marfa] is nearly the only attempt I know of to show completely and naturally the present reality of art."¹⁸⁸ This was possible because the art is on permanent display and therefore open to sustained, thoughtful viewing. In "In Defense of My Work", he wrote: "The work [here] is not disembodied spatially, socially, temporally, as in most museums...Somewhere there has to be a place where the installation is well done and permanent."¹⁸⁹ That previous work be installed permanently was also important to Judd's own mode of making, for having it available to look at and consider carefully provided a spring board for further pieces.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ Judd, Complete Writings 1975-1986, 101.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

The Chinati Foundation includes the work of artists such as Carl Andre (1935-), John Chamberlain (1927-), Dan Flavin (1933-1996), Roni Horn (1955-), Ilya Kabakov (1933-), Richard Long (1945-) and Claes Oldenburg (1929-). Although Judd claims that his intention was not to imitate museums and present a “comprehensive collection” of work,¹⁹¹ the selection of artists was undoubtedly filtered through his aesthetic. Consider this later statement:

The installation and context for the art being done now is poor and unsuitable. The correction is a permanent installation of a good portion of the work of each of the *best* artists...the main reason for this is to be able to live with the work and to think about it, and to also see the work placed as it should be. The installations provide a considered, unhurried measure by which to judge hurried installations of my own and others in unfamiliar and often unsuitable places.¹⁹²

The mandate at Chinati was later extended to include a ‘temporary’ gallery space which holds exhibits longer than the average commercial gallery and / or art museum. Also, an artist-in-residency programme for emerging artists was established.

Adopting the same modus operandi as applied to Spring Street, New York, he sensitively reconfigured the existing spaces of the former military base to house the art; Judd’s intervention was slight but very telling:

I’ve carefully tried to incorporate the existing buildings into a complete complex. They are not changed, only cleaned up. Whatever nice but rudimentary ideas that were there, such as the clerestory, are taken to completion. It’s very important that all the structures work together, be ‘meek and bold’ among themselves. The old buildings should not drag down the new nor the new denigrate the old.¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ Judd stated: “I’ve always needed my own work in my own space to understand and think of further pieces. The brief time of gallery and museum exhibitions would be ultimately fatal if it were not for the permanence of my own installations.” Also: “Permanent installations are also important for the development of larger more complex works.” Ibid., 9& 24.

¹⁹¹ See “Marfa. Texas”. Ibid., 100.

¹⁹² My emphasis. Ibid., 19.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 101. Concerning Judd’s sensitive, “adaptive-reuse” of existing buildings, Peter Flückiger writes:

It has been noted that there is an opportune correlation between Judd's design aesthetic and the often pre-fabricated boxlike structures found at the base:

[T]he conjunction of Donald Judd's work with U.S. Army design is a very serendipitous one. Judd's use of standardized elements, repeating units and his technical perfection seem very compatible with such military systemization and discipline. Many [pre-existing] features, like the grid of concrete slabs that one encounters within every building, could easily be mistaken for Judd design, as could the concrete watering troughs scattered throughout Fort Russell that are curious prototypes for Judd's concrete boxes.¹⁹⁴

Symmetry was a guiding principle during the renovation period and proportion was likewise of critical consideration. For example, Judd very carefully installed specially designed rotating doors and windows -- to create lines of symmetry that were not present in the original structures -- and he felt that he was working towards something new in both art and architecture.¹⁹⁵ Intentionally utilizing local materials and local trades-people and ever mindful of his basic tenet that proportion is key, Judd made use of vernacular building styles during the restorations.¹⁹⁶

Judd was interested in giving his buildings a unity and grandeur experienced through space. He achieved this by closing openings, making new ones, and adding skylights. The effect, seen at [...] the Artillery Sheds [...] is powerful and dramatic. It is not obvious to the viewer what exactly was added or subtracted. [...] Judd did not intend to express the difference between old and new through architectural detailing; rather he wanted the visitor to focus on the entire experience. Just as he intended his artworks to be experienced as exterior expressions of the interior, Judd employed similar principles in his architecture. One can simultaneously perceive exterior and interior spatial relations in the Artillery Sheds. [...]

Architecture must be experienced in person to be understood and appreciated. One cannot see space; one can only see its boundaries, its limits. Similarly, music affects us most intensely as three-dimensional experience the sight, sound, and the very presence of the performer(s) and audience create an integrated experience for the senses.

Flückiger, "Introduction", in Donald Judd: Architecture in Marfa, 44.

¹⁹⁴ Fones, "Amazing Spaces": 37.

¹⁹⁵ In "Marfa, Texas, he stated: "[P]roportion and scale are very important. In contrast to the prevailing regurgitated art and architecture, I think I'm working directly toward something new in both." Judd, Complete Writings 1975-1986, 102.

¹⁹⁶ Correct proportion, for Judd, created our time and space; see "Art and Architecture". Ibid., 33.

Although there are many works by different artists found in Marfa, a discussion of these is beyond the scope of my thesis. I will limit my discussion to Judd's art, considering what, where and how it relates to the site. As in the previous chapter, I will describe my impressions of the art and space in juxtaposition with the artist's thoughts, where possible, and also include the documented experience of others who have partaken of the Marfa experience.

Judd's words on how he transformed the artillery sheds at Fort Russell are valuable for they not only provide insight into why he made these particular changes, they also illustrate the close consideration he gave to how the intended work and renovated space would eventually relate (Figures 10 & 11).¹⁹⁷ He writes:

The Chinati Foundation is primarily Fort D A Russell, but also includes buildings for John Chamberlain's work in the center of Marfa and two square miles of land on the Rio Grande for a very large work of mine made of adobe. Most of Fort

¹⁹⁷ Please see Flückiger's contextual consideration of Judd's art and Judd's "adaptive-reuse" architectural projects in Marfa. On the importance of Judd's contribution to architecture he states:

Judd's architectural ideas are not based on any attention-seeking invention of new forms. His architecture is based on the classic principle of proportion and a concern for space. In many ways his ideas for adaptive-reuse of old structures in remote locations can serve as inspiration for architects today. His ability to reorchestrate the raw space of a military building, a warehouse, or a ranch, employing a minimum of change to create a maximum result, stands unparalleled. Judd understood a building's context as well as its limitations. [...] Judd's architectural work is timeless because it isn't about seeking a new form or trying to compete with the latest style. Judd's architecture works with the reality of rural America, and cannot fit within the traditional category of a style, because it is *not* a style; it is a philosophy of building.

From careful analysis of plans, elevations and sections, it is clear that although the two sheds are very similar there are differences:

[... T]he door on the northeast façade of shed number one is off center from the longitudinal axis and has three more windows than the remaining three façades. This first façade has seven windows altogether, four to the southeast and three to the northwest of the door. The other three façades show doors precisely in line with the longitudinal axis and a symmetrical window arrangement. Each building has on its northeast side a smaller room, like an antechamber, that prepares the visitor for the much larger spaces. Each of these smaller spaces contains four aluminum works, although the sizes of the rooms differ and therefore the positions of the works. The two later principal spaces differ in their number of bays (18 versus 16) as well as in the placement of shorter walls running across the spaces: two brick walls make a slight division in shed number one after the eighth bay, while in shed number two a short wall, painted grey, is placed in the center at the sixth bay.

Flückiger, "Introduction" & "The Artillery Sheds", in Donald Judd: Architecture in Marfa, 45-46 & 74-75, respectively.

Russell was a ruin. Other than the two artillery sheds and later the Arena, I was against buying it, it had been an army base, which is not so good, most buildings were without roofs, there was trash everywhere and the land was damaged, some of the barracks had been turned into kitsch apartments with compatible landscaping. Military landscape overlain with a landscape of consumer kitsch is hard to defeat, at any rate the artillery sheds were concrete and solid although they leaked.

The buildings, purchased in 79, and the works of art that they contain were planned together as much as possible, the size and the scale of the works. This then determined that there be continuous windows and the size of their divisions. The windows replaced the derelict garage doors closing the long sides. A subdivision of nine-parts, for example, would be too complicated in itself and as bars in front of the works of art, smaller to larger inside, rather than larger outside as part of the façade to smaller inside as part of the sub-division of the interior. The windows are quartered and are made of clear anodized extruded aluminum channel and reinforced glass [Figure 12]. One window of each building slides open, which isn't enough, but the sliding windows were much more expensive. The long parallel planes of glass façade enclose a long flat space containing the long rows of pieces. The given axis of a building is through its length, but the main axis is through the wide glass façade, through the wide shallow space inside through the other glass façade. Instead of being long buildings, they become wide and shallow buildings, facing at right angles to their length.

As I mentioned, the flat roofs leaked. In 84 the one hundred mill aluminum pieces in the two buildings were nearly complete and needed greater protection. Since patching the flat roof had been futile, and since installation was needed, and for architecture, I planned a second roof. In Valentine nearby, thirty miles, there was a metal storage building, one curve from the ground to the ground, with very deep and broad corrugation, obviously structure itself. Similar vaults were built as the roofs of the two artillery 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.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ Judd, Donald Judd: Architektur, 72-74.

Judd specifically designed, fabricated and installed two series: a sequence of large concrete structures installed in the landscape; and 100 mill aluminum boxes exhibited in the two aforementioned renovated artillery sheds (Figures 13 & 14).¹⁹⁹

The concrete structures series comprises sixty individual components, each measuring 2.5 x 2.5 x 5 metres, arranged in fifteen groupings in different configurations. The work is installed close to the edge of the property along a north-south axis and stretches over a distance of one kilometre. According to Judd's notes regarding placement:

The design for the 15 concrete pieces evolved in stages. [...] [T]he sculptures are to be placed in a straight line, as far as possible exactly on the north-south line of longitude, with every work centered precisely on this axis and equidistant from its neighbors. In the case of the works with a triangular configuration, one side was to coincide precisely with the east-west axis. [...] [T]here should be a distance of 60 meters from the center of one to the center of the next of the 15 concrete works, regardless of their individual dimensions or the number of parts they consisted of.²⁰⁰

This was the first piece of Judd's to be installed at Chinati and, due to the size, the reinforced concrete slabs were poured to a thickness of twenty-five centimetres in Marfa and the units then constructed, using butt-joints, in situ (Figures 15 & 16).²⁰¹ The process

¹⁹⁹ Both of these series are technically "*Untitled*" but, over time, have been given the sobriquets above for the sake of expediency. Other series were planned by Judd but not installed due to the fact that they were slated to be housed in a group of new structures which were never completed because of difficulties during the construction project. However, regarding Judd's thoughts and decision making process during the design and fabrication of the installed series, the concrete structures and 100 mill aluminum boxes, please refer to Stockebrand's highly detailed account which is supplemented by Judd's notes and sketches. Stockebrand, "The Making of Two Works", passim.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 47-8.

²⁰¹ This use of butt-joints was favoured by Judd throughout his career: "the principles of construction used in both his furniture and his sculpture: right-angled construction, butt joints, visible interior volume and sides in direct contact with the supporting surface." Fones, "Amazing Spaces": 33. Stockebrand elaborates further:

The poured slabs are [...] joined in such a way that the vertical slabs contain the floor, and the ceiling extends to the outer edges of the vertical slabs. This is the same structural system that Judd used for all his free-standing works. [...] The individual elements come in four types: one short

was lengthy and took place over a period of four years, from 1980-84. There are two to six units in each grouping but spacing of the elements within these groupings varies; two of the groups have touching components.²⁰² The number of units in the grouping sequence is as follows: 2, 3, 3, 5, 3, 4, 3, 3, 3, 4, 3, 6, 6, 6, and 6. As with all Judd's work, there are constants that become apparent through careful consideration: as previously stated, there are a minimum of two and a maximum of six units in each grouping. There are no completely closed structures. There are always only one or two open sides and if two sides are open, they are always opposite each other.²⁰³

The second series of 100 mill aluminum boxes is divided between the sheds unequally: there are forty-eight boxes in one and fifty-two in the other. Each box has the same dimensions, (104 x 130 x 183 cm) and -- being milled especially for the project by Reynolds Mill in McCook, Illinois -- all material is of the same thickness. The work was constructed according to Judd's stringent code by the Lippincott Company, based in Connecticut. Manufacture and installation took place between 1982 and 1986. There are

side open, both short sides open, one long side open, both long sides open. As a rule, any one type is used throughout a piece; there are only four cases where two types are combined. Stockebrand, "The Making of Two Works": 50.

²⁰² In a statement dated March/May 1968, Judd himself explains why there is a limit to the number of units in a group; he states: "One or four boxes in a row, any single thing or such a series, is local order, just an arrangement, barely order at all. The series is mine, someone's, and clearly not some larger order." Judd, Complete Writings 1959-1975, 196.

²⁰³ Judd used constants during the design process as a means of avoiding arbitrary and therefore subjective organising principles. This objective approach to organisation was also applied when installing the larger, multi-unit works such as those found in Marfa.

Judd typically used one of four mathematical progressions:

[A]rithmetic, as in the round and square form progressions; geometric; Fibonacci, which looks a little like geometric; and, inverse natural numbers – the last three found in the tube and box progressions. [...] Judd uses mathematical progressions to arrange things visually without composition. A system unifies the piece, but it is the perception of that unity, not the system which is prominent."

Smith, Donald Judd: A Catalogue, 24-25.

three rows of boxes in each shed, oriented with their long sides perpendicular to the glazed walls so their short sides face onto the windows:

Inside the Artillery Sheds, Judd installed 100 immaculately made aluminum boxes. The three-row arrangement reflects the division of the building into thirds by two rows of interior columns. Boxes were eliminated where brick walls and existing rooms interposed. Miraculously, one hundred boxes is exactly what fit. Three boxes across the width of the building are aligned, not with the grid of concrete floor slabs as you might expect, but with the bottom south quarter of each large window. Except for the snap and ping of the aluminum expanding in sunlight, there is no sound.²⁰⁴

Again, there are constants: apart from repetitions of material and external dimensions, a box may be divided along a horizontal, vertical or diagonal axis. It may have a recessed top or side and, whenever a box is partitioned with more than one divider, these are always set ten centimetres apart.²⁰⁵

As useful as these basic descriptions are, they do nothing to address how the work and space coalesce and how this combination affects the viewing experience. Here at Marfa, the value is in looking. The encounter with and prolonged experience of the totality are what matters. The first series I saw upon arrival at Chinati was the concrete structures standing way off in the distance. Walking down a scrubby roadway that leads to these units, I gradually became aware of their immense scale. From afar these structures had looked no bigger than all the other work by Judd I had experienced in a museum setting, yet as I drew nearer, it became apparent that this was not so because each individual component is large enough to enter and thus afforded much needed

²⁰⁴ Fones, "Amazing Spaces": 32.

²⁰⁵ In an interview with John Coplans, Judd explained why he sometimes recessed 'lids' or sides: It occurred to me if you took one of the sides and pushed it in, it would open the top surface up. I was always interested in edges and flanges [...] it defines what the boxes are made of by showing the thickness of the sheet metal, and thus becomes less arbitrary. More rigorous, with a more precise knowledge of the thickness of the material. So it shows, or makes, or emphasizes the edge more clearly.
Coplans, Don Judd, 41-44.

shelter from the whipping wind. Unless off to the side in the scrub, there is no single viewpoint, for it is only possible to see two groupings at once when amongst them. As

Robert Fones describes the ensemble:

You can't see all the boxes from either end or even from the middle. This work has to be physically investigated. As Richard Serra wrote: 'Judd's work is to be looked at, first and foremost. The experience is always rooted in perception, always physical, always kinesthetic' (Serra, [Artforum](#)).

Even when I had each arrangement of boxes mapped out in my mind I found the experience of investigating it surprising. Some boxes are open at one end or side while others are open at both. An open box may acquire an end by being abutted against another box. Until you go up to each grouping to investigate, you don't know exactly what you will find, particularly since the boxes are too high to see over.²⁰⁶

The 1: 1: 2 ratio of each structure is especially apparent when approaching a unit that is open on the short end, for it forms a perfect square (Figure 17). One can wander at will in and out of the groupings; some appear closed and dangerous, whilst others are welcoming. There is a physical and psychological power to this series. The use of a heavy material like concrete and the immense scale of these structures could so easily destroy; yet there is a sense of vulnerability about the work, too, for certain edges show signs of wear and appear to be crumbling, whilst some units have begun to bow slightly (Figure 18). This was unexpected. Relating her understanding of these structures,

Stockebrand remarks:

The row of concrete works stretches out over one kilometer flowing along like music – with certain repeated motifs and variations, starting with a simple 2-part piece and building towards a dramatic finale with a series of 6-part pieces. More than with the other groups these last ones enfold their spatial refinement over a long distance and with the change of sunlight and shadow, they change from clearly perceivable to enigmatic structures. The works are positioned on the edge of the property, visible from almost everywhere at the foundation, yet they remain inobtrusive. They expand parallel to the horizon line and correspond to the horizontality of the installation in the two artillery sheds. Their scale is perfectly

²⁰⁶ Fones, "Amazing Spaces": 32.

balanced between being visually present and physically integral to the landscape”²⁰⁷

Also:

I have to confess that this alternation between complete openness and closure, like the alternation between laterally expanding elements and the more dynamic triangular configurations, has never ceased to move me and fill me with a sense of joy. It gives an immediate sense of what Judd was capable of and bespeaks his unerring certainty as to which similarities and which differences are intrinsically of interest.²⁰⁸

Unless hidden from view by one of the structures themselves, the two artillery sheds can be seen from anywhere along the kilometre stretch, where the 100 mill aluminum boxes beckon.

When I first entered the artillery sheds, the actual weight of the material was made very apparent because I was able to handle a small sample of the same milled aluminium that Judd specified be used during the fabrication process. This was very informative. Intellectually and physically, I knew now that these boxes must be heavy, yet my visual experience was totally different.²⁰⁹ Upon entering, I experienced a sense of

²⁰⁷ Stockebrand records Judd’s own words regarding the positioning of this series: “About 100 feet off Northsouth road at north. Straight line on definite longitude, if possible. Pieces centered on line given. Distance apart, centered on distance. Eastwest exact.” Marianne Stockebrand, “The Chinati Foundation”, 136 & 135, respectively (sic).

In relation to his large scale works that are placed within the landscape, on 21st February 1993, Judd himself wrote:

Works outdoors, then, are either free-standing on a level surface, containing space within, or incorporate a level or a sloped surface or relate to an existing wall or demarcation. Some of the free-standing works are: [...] And, there are the fifteen works in concrete at the Chinati Foundation in Texas. These are on level land, but specifically, so as to avoid one protruding knoll and to end before another, extending one kilometer, aligned north to south. They were built on damaged land. [...]

Free-standing works, single or several, on level land are not a problem to place. The land is always beneficial as space and if not remade by man has no meaning.

Judd, Donald Judd: Large Scale Works, 10 - 11.

²⁰⁸ Stockebrand, “The Making of Two Works”: 52.

²⁰⁹ For Judd, weight and weightlessness were more than conditions and properties of material:

Although illusory effects of light and colour were for Judd non-referential, the suggestion of weight was a different matter: ‘I wanted to avoid any sensation of weight. This goes back to the

other-worldly-ness because these weighty boxes appeared to defy gravity. Edges seemed to disappear with whole sides and /or tops shimmering and hovering in the space, refracting and reflecting the natural light like huge glass prisms: the material is doing what it does best -- being true to its intrinsic properties (Figure 19). Barbara Haskell describes Judd's sensitive use of materials:

Industrial materials provided shimmery, incident-rich exteriors which visually dematerialized Judd's otherwise obdurate forms. Reflective polishes heightened the surface's optical quality and subsumed it within sinuous light patterns of vaporous insubstantiality.

Illusory surfaces and dematerialized effects did not contradict Judd's mandate for factuality, for they were intrinsic to the actual materials and shapes. Indeed, they substantiated Judd's implicit claim that every material possessed formal properties that belonged to it alone and that the artist must limit himself to forms that best allowed the materials to speak.²¹⁰

There are absolutely no clear boundaries between inside and outside, heavy and light, here and there. Stockebrand writes of her experience of the sheds:

Inside, the impact of the light is surprising and almost disturbing. As you walk between the rows of aluminum works, the pieces seem to be made interchangeably of mirror, glass or plexiglass, hardly visible, translucent, immaterial. Seen from certain angles some planes become highly reflective – in terms of color, almost white – others capture shadow and appear dark. This marvelous show happens everyday, whether the sun is shining or the sky overcast, but, naturally, depending on the weather there are gradations in color and light.²¹¹

business of representation. I think that most of the European tradition of art represented weight.' Shiff, "Donald Judd, Safe from Birds", 44.

²¹⁰ Haskell, Donald Judd, 72-73.

²¹¹ Stockebrand, "The Chinati Foundation", 134. Richard Guy Wilson similarly observes: The boxes stretch out, their metal surfaces shiny and reflective. Their space is defined by a polished concrete floor, two rows of cement piers that mark a central axis, a gridded reinforced concrete ceiling, a brick wall at the ends, and huge windows along the sides that open onto the landscape beyond. The space is open, luminous, and includes the forms one sees through the windows. Depending on the sun's height the boxes can directly reflect light, or if in shade silently gleam against the bright light outside. The boxes are static, each occupying its own space and volume, and in a sense isolated. But as the observer moves about the space the boxes take on different configurations, rows give way to diagonals, and depending on one's position, even randomness.

Wilson, "Foreword", in Donald Judd: Architecture in Marfa, 19.

Everything is in a continual state of flux due to position of the viewer, changing weather and ambient lighting conditions (Figures 20 & 21). Thus, everything is called into question.²¹²

In the sheds, a dialogue is established between the concrete and aluminium series. It is possible to see one from the other -- even one within the other -- and, although large by comparison, the distant, outlying, monolithic sentinels appeared more intimate when glimpsed in the myriad of reflections cast onto the reflective surfaces of the milled boxes or when viewed through the glazed expanses of the artillery sheds (Figures 22 - 24).²¹³ As Stockebrand notes:

[T]he main view is at ground level, looking from the side through the glass walls into the interior with the aluminum pieces and beyond them to the open field with the concrete pieces. From this angle everything connects – indoors and outdoors, aluminum and concrete, blocks and barrel shapes, transparency and closure, light and shade, nature and built spaces. Judd, who was so supremely sensitive to spaces – precisely able to grasp and to interpret them – responded to the polarization of longitudinal and latitudinal axes.²¹⁴

²¹² Any unit of the 100 mill aluminium boxes is, as Jonathan Flatley observes, “not a window through which we see another reality, but is an eye (which mimes our own even as it operates according to another systemic logic) that teaches us to see a different world.” Earlier in this text, Flatley describes his own experience of this series and states that:

Each box has been altered in some way – a side missing, a top recessed, sides taken off and another box put inside, diagonals running from one edge to another.

In the Aluminum Boxes we again see the effect mentioned above [where he notes, in relation to the stacks, that we are ‘often confronted with visual information that seems to exceed or contradict the rigorously non-composed object before us’]: an internal fold that reflects something outside of the object as an effect of the folding itself so that what we see when we look at a box is strictly speaking at once much more than the box itself – such as the landscape – and nothing but the box. It is not a representation, but is instead the effect of an internal refraction or fold, much like the camera obscura or the eye itself.

Jonathan Flatley, “Allegories of Boredom”, in *A Minimal Future?*, 63, 58 & 61, respectively.

²¹³ Commenting on the importance of these two series, Stockebrand notes:

The concrete pieces and the mill aluminum pieces are the largest works Donald Judd ever made. They document both his artistic strength and unique vision regarding art and the merging of art, architecture and nature. The clarity of his thinking is reflected in the clarity of his work, which is nevertheless complex.

Stockebrand, “The Chinati Foundation”, 136.

²¹⁴ Stockebrand, “The Making of Two Works”: 60.

The boundaries between interior and exterior, the work aligned in a rigid grid within the exhibition space and the sweeping grassy landscape without, are visually collapsed. This creates a sense of bewilderment at first that is quickly transformed into wonder and awe that such a thing as this is possible with such economy of means; the space and work combined became a container of all.

I had the opportunity to see these sheds on different occasions in different lighting conditions, and each time proved as unique as the boxes they contained. How his work was lit indoors was of primary concern to Judd, as it was for Rothko. At Chinati, the 100 mill aluminum boxes are illuminated solely by natural light which streams through the walls of windows.²¹⁵ My first experience of the sheds was on an overcast day with high winds.²¹⁶ The desert grasses were arcing -- bent almost horizontal in the blustery gusts -- and the trees lining the road in the distance were taking the path of least resistance. The 100 mill aluminum boxes are above waist height; not large enough to see your whole reflection, yet definitely of human scale. Nicholas Serota, colleague and Director of the Tate Gallery, explains the implication of scale in Judd's art: "He may have abhorred

²¹⁵ As Alex Potts notes:

What really mattered to Judd were the conditions of public display of sculpture or three-dimensional work in indoor gallery spaces. Most of his recorded commentary on the subject was straightforwardly negative and critical. [...]

What particularly taxed him about modern conditions of gallery display was the bad lighting, the main problem as he saw it being the use of spotlights and the disruptive effects of strong cast shadows these created.

Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*, 307.

In response to an observation that was posed during an interview -- namely, "You seem to have some difficulty in the stacks and progressions with the amount of shadows cast" -- Judd replied, "It has to do with the fact that museum lighting is pretty bad. The Whitney show was especially bad because of the spotlights. All my pieces are meant to be seen in even or natural light. The shadows are unimportant, they are just a by-product." Excerpted from "Don Judd: an Interview with John Coplans", in *Don Judd*, 41.

²¹⁶ The most dazzling display I experienced was during brilliant sunshine and, according to others lucky enough to experience the work at dawn and / or dusk, the effect of the rosy glows on the seemingly 'cold' aluminium is almost magical, as visually breathtaking and as it is stunning.

anthropomorphism in a work of art, but his sculpture is fundamentally connected to the human body and to the phenomenological experience of standing in a space and confronting the work.”²¹⁷

As previously stated, there are many constants in the 100 mill aluminum boxes, but all of the boxes are slightly different, individual. A tension exists between the intrinsic qualities of the boxes and the extrinsic properties of the two sheds, for similarities and subtle differences draw attention to the constantly changing conditions within the exhibition space. Judd carefully considered the location and placement of the boxes, but the strict lines seem to defy regimentation due to the movement created by the dazzling light reflecting and refracting on the pristine surfaces. Each shed has a pseudo anti-chamber, or vestibule, that houses a small number of boxes and opens into the large rectangular halls with two rows of concrete piers (Figure 25). Each shed also houses a partition wall (Figures 26 & 27). One is positioned centrally, painted grey, and creates two openings at either side; this obscures the middle row of boxes. In the other, this is reversed: the wall has one central opening so that sight lines of the two outer rows of boxes are limited.

As with much of Judd’s previous oeuvre, the viewer at Chinati is constantly faced with a work that proposes a solution that is ‘both / and’ not ‘either / or’. Similar to my viewing experience in the Rothko Chapel, here again, I felt only brief moments of stasis as opposites are neither neutralised nor synthesised due to the constant flux. Haskell’s insight regarding this quintessential quality of Judd’s work is useful:

²¹⁷ Nicholas Serota, “Donald Judd: A Sense of Place”, in Donald Judd, ed. Serota, 106. Brydon Smith also discusses the use of scale in Judd’s work. He states: “We do not have to measure Judd’s pieces against our own size or surrounding architecture to perceive their scale. Judd makes scale clear by disassociating it from size and also by sticking to sizes and arrangements which are comprehensive to the individual.” Smith, Donald Judd: A Catalogue, 27.

[It is] never of only one quality; essential to his criterion for success was the dialectic tension between two disparate aspects. This polarization, as he called it, [...] emerged from the conjunction of two dissimilar materials or colors, or from the play between the opulence of polished industrial materials and saturated colors and the almost puritanical restraint of the spare forms.²¹⁸

Here in the artillery sheds, the juxtaposition of opposites -- or Haskell's "dialectic tension" -- extends into the inside and outside space because of the continually shifting of view points of both series as one navigates through the installations.²¹⁹ Judd's art has always benefited from active viewing, but at Chinati embodied viewing is a necessity, for it is impossible to comprehend the complex relationship between the space and the work unless you walk through it, experience it for yourself. Minimal art, in general, requires an active spectator and, when first encountered, demands a new way of looking, one that rewards prolonged participation:

It is a kind of viewing that is continually shifting from one strongly felt aspect of the work to another, bringing with it a heightened awareness that the apprehension of the work that is not entirely instantaneous but takes place over a periods of time, a period enlivened by an intensified focusing of looking that does not occur in everyday perceptual encounters with things.²²⁰

This new awareness of our bodies in space, as we negotiate the art work in relation to the space, results in a "heightened sense of temporality".²²¹ I would argue that because of his unerring vision, both our spatial and temporal awareness are heightened when viewing

²¹⁸ Haskell, Donald Judd, 68.

²¹⁹ Wilson similarly observes:

Depending on the sun's position, the windows of this vast horizontal space are reflected on the opposite sides, creating large rectangles within which the aluminum boxes also appear. A transparency of reflections is created. From the exterior looking inside through the windows of the Artillery Sheds, the metal boxes and the concrete boxes or the gables of the nearby buildings appear, but they can also become mixed or combined with reflection. The impact is transparent and opaque, solid and void, real and or reflective, and the totality merges into a spatial continuum.

Wilson, "Foreword" in Donald Judd: Architecture in Marfa, 20. Please see figures 28 & 29, which visually document my experience of reflections cast.

²²⁰ Potts, The Sculptural Imagination, 301.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

Judd's installation at Marfa. The boundaries between thought and feeling are collapsed; all is experience. Such an effect would be important to Judd:

His attitude towards installation was [...] empirical and pragmatic, seeking the best position for each piece by a process of trial and error. [...] This intuitive process characterized Judd's whole approach to art making. When asked whether he wanted an observer to understand something, or to simply look at the work, he replied, 'that's the division between thought and feeling. You have to do it all at once. You have to look and understand, both. In looking you understand; it's more than you can describe. You look and think, and look and think, until it makes sense, becomes interesting'.²²²

In his essay "Art and Architecture", Judd also stated:

I've always considered the distinction between thought and feeling as at the least exaggerated...All experience, large and small, involves feeling; all thought involves feeling. All feeling is based on experience, some of which is thought, necessarily quick so that we can act quickly. It's not irrational, virtually the opposite. Thought is not strict, isolated and only logical but is continually using its backlog of experience which is called feeling. Otherwise we could never get from A to Z, barely to C since B would have to always be rechecked...it the nature of art is the same as our nature and if there is no division between thought and feeling, art is cognitive just as our experience is. And art is no more inferior than is our experience as a whole.²²³

Art, architecture, life, politics, thought, feeling -- all combined for Judd when he created The Chinati Foundation and finally achieved an holistic lifestyle. Nicholas Serota perceptively observes:

Judd's work as an artist, an architect, a designer of furniture and rancher is all of a piece [...and] at its centre lies a concern for space and for the phenomenological relationship between objects and the viewer. Judd explicitly denied that his ambition [at Chinati] was the creation of a spiritual experience or spiritual space. For Judd space was palpable, to be observed and felt. In contrast to the sacred contemplative space that we have come to associate with Rothko through his chapel in Houston [...] Judd's space lies much closer to the empirical observations of nature by Henry David Thoreau.²²⁴

²²² Serota, "Donald Judd: A Sense of Place", 106.

²²³ Judd, Complete Writings 1975-1986, 30.

²²⁴ Serota, "Donald Judd: A Sense of Place", 110.

No space is neutral. It could, perhaps, be argued that a space created by one man alone -- and thus stamped indelibly with his force of character -- is possibly even less neutral than those created by, and for, an impersonal institutional body.²²⁵ In a statement dated 21 February 1993, Judd himself said:

Any work, old or new, 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 it is placed. There is no neutral space, since space is made, indifferently or intentionally, and since meaning is made, ignorantly or knowledgeably. This is the beginning of my concern for the surroundings of my work. These are the simplest circumstances which all art must confront. Even the smallest works of mine are affected.²²⁶

Highly cognisant of how context shapes meaning for the viewer, Judd's legacy, The Chinati Foundation, is a momentary glimpse of how life could be lived more authentically.

²²⁵ As Alex Potts notes:

The space he created [at Marfa] is a hybrid space, ostensibly public, and given the trappings of a public institution through the special and complicated arrangements he made regarding his estate, and yet it bears the strong stamp, for good or ill, of a thoroughly private individual initiative. [...] The one arena of display that he thought would do real justice to his work was in his own private property where he could exert the control he felt was needed.

Potts, The Sculptural Imagination, 310.

²²⁶ Judd, Donald Judd: Large Scale Works, 9.

CHAPTER THREE:

Five Inter-Related Themes

After gaining personal experience of Rothko's abstract paintings and Judd's "specific objects" permanently displayed in-situ and in accordance with their original intentions, five inter-related themes became evident to me. These are: the pursuit of individual autonomy; the co-relation between anti-authoritarian 'open' social systems and the 'open' art experience; the value of directly experiencing anti-representational work; inter-subjectivity and the multiplicity of meanings; and, the temporal nature of the embodied viewing experience. As previously demonstrated, it is clear that anarchism directly impacted their art-making processes and what was produced. Anarchism also profoundly influenced their desire to manipulate how, when and where the art was to be experienced. The quest was for a more direct relationship between work and viewer. But why did the insistent need to stage their work as they saw fit become the crux of their anarchist politics and what are the ramifications for the visitor to the Rothko Chapel and Judd's Chinati Foundation? The following is an exploration in relation to these five themes.

The Pursuit of Individual Autonomy:

The term anarchy comes from the Greek word *anarchos*, *an - archos*, meaning 'without rulers' and understanding the root of the term provides insight into why anarchism was critical for both Rothko and Judd. Because, in the spirit of anarchism they consciously chose to be 'without rulers', they sought to present their art in a manner that

would remain authentic to the original intention and unmediated²²⁷ by external factors imposed by art institutions, such as curatorial bias and the grand narratives implied by survey exhibitions of visual art.²²⁸

There are multiple strands in the anarchist movement but central to all are the core tenets of liberty and equality in a society freed from oppression. Important to this discussion, in particular, is the ideal of the autonomous individual who is free to make temporary associations as the need arises. The individualism, or egoism, of Max Stirner (1806-1856) is an extreme example of this paradigm.²²⁹ According to Clifford Harper, egoism is a “cornerstone of anarchism” because it places the needs of the autonomous individual above all laws, duty and the state.²³⁰ In The Ego and His Own, published 1843, Stirner himself stated: “But, as far as my individuality goes, I do not want anyone

²²⁷ Here I am using the term ‘unmediated’ to suggest a more direct relationship between the artist, art and viewer. As Hakim Bey notes mediation is inevitable; it is a matter of degrees and dependent upon the amount of participation required:

All experience is mediated -- by the mechanism of sense perception, mentation, language, etc. -- & certainly all art consists of some further mediation of experience.

However, mediation takes place by degrees. Some experiences (smell, taste, sexual pleasure, etc.) are less mediated than others (reading a book, looking through a telescope, listening to a record). Some media, especially ‘live’ arts such as dance, theatre, musical or bardic performance, are less mediated than others such as TV, CDs, Virtual Reality. Even among the media usually called ‘media’, some are more & others less mediated, according to the intensity of imaginative participation, film less, TV even less, VR the least of all -- so far.

Hakim Bey, “Immediatism”, in Only a Beginning, 320.

²²⁸ As Donald Preziosi observes, in his perceptive critique of the function of the museum and the negative aspects of instituted collections management and display strategies:

However fragmentary, temporary, or terse the collection of exhibition, it exists today within the parameters of expectation established by two centuries and more of museums, galleries, salons, fairs, expositions, displays, and visual and optical demonstrations and experiments of many familiar kinds. Every exhibition is commonly understood as a fragment, or a selection out of, some absent and fuller whole. Every item in museological space is a *specimen* – a member of a class of like objects.

Donald Preziosi, In The Aftermath of Art: Ethics, Aesthetics, Politics (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2006), 69-70.

²²⁹ The name, Max Stirner, was a pseudonym for Johann Kaspar Schmidt. Daniel Guerin, No Gods, No Masters, 7.

²³⁰ Harper, Anarchy, 30.

tampering with [my absolute freedom]. Now, it is precisely individuality that society targets and means to subject to its power.”²³¹ He argued that there is a fundamental difference between oppressive laws that are externally imposed by society and those freely accepted or rejected by the individualist in “association” as needs dictate. Making clear his reasons for privileging the individual over an established social order, he explained:

Where individuality is concerned, the difference between State and association is considerable. The former being its foe, its murderer, and the latter its daughter and auxiliary. One is spirit that demands our adoration in spirit and truth; the other is my handiwork, my creation. The State is the master of my spirit; it demands my fealty and forces an article of that, the creed of legality, down my throat. It wields over me a moral influence, commanding my spirit, dispossessing me of my Ego so as to supplant it as my real self. In short, the State is sacred and, set alongside me, the individual, it is the authentic man, the spirit, the spook.

Association, by contrast, is my own doing, my creature. It is not sacred. It does not impose itself as a spiritual power superior to my spirit. I have no wish to become a slave to my maxims, but would rather subject them to my ongoing criticism. I afford them no citizenship rights within myself. [...] I am and will always remain, with regard to myself, more than the State, than the Church, than God etc., and thus, infinitely more than the association also. [...]

In association, you invest all of your power, all that you own, and you bring it to bear. Society exploits you and exploits your labor power. In the first case you live as an individualist, whereas in the second, you have to labor in the master’s vineyard. [...]

Society is more than you and overwhelms you. Association is nothing more than an instrument in your hands, a sword that gives an added cutting edge to your capabilities. [...] Society makes use of you, but it is you that makes use of association.²³²

With respect to art, Harper observes:

Stirner’s individualist anarchism, which seeks the end of all authority and asserts nothing in its place except the unique reality of the individual, has had a

²³¹ Stirner, “The Ego and His Own”, in No Gods, No Masters, 15.

²³² *Ibid.*, 17-18.

tremendous influence upon anarchism. It has been *especially* attractive to artists, who possess a great deal of independence in their creative activity.²³³

In the late 19th century, anarchists frequently interpreted the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche in these terms. Rothko shared this interest: Nietzsche was a major influence throughout his life. Although not a self-proclaimed anarchist, Nietzsche was profoundly engaged with the notion of the sovereign individual and the theme of sovereignty to which he returned repeatedly.²³⁴ According to Richard White, Nietzsche's investigations are intentionally "evocative and inspirational rather than didactic" in order to leave space for the individual.²³⁵ White relates this to the theme of sovereignty as it occurs throughout the texts:

The sovereign individual is sovereign because he is capable of gathering the various threads of his own existence in order to pledge and control himself for the future. Thus sovereignty is a product and an outcome, but at the same time it represents a new beginning and a meaningful appropriation of the fundamental powers of life. In this respect, the sovereign individual actually *creates* a retrospective justification for the indifferent accumulation of history.

²³³ My emphasis. Harper, *Anarchy*, 34.

²³⁴ Richard White states:

To be sure, Nietzsche does not have an explicit 'theory' of sovereignty that is sustained and developed throughout his texts. But it is a theme that he returns to over and over again, from *The Birth of Tragedy* to *Ecce Homo*. And at key points in his writing he presents the image of the 'sovereign individual' – or the imperative of sovereignty – in ways that leave no doubt as to its importance.

White, *Nietzsche and the Problem of Sovereignty*, 5.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 8. Antliff likewise explores how Nietzsche's theme of sovereignty intersects with the anarchist paradigm of individual autonomy. He states:

Nietzsche regarded his philosophy as a revelation which heralded the coming into consciousness of a new kind of individual – the "superman" – who would constantly transform every aspect of the self in an unending quest for life's affirmation. He called this process "the will to power." The prototypes for the superman were humanity's greatest creative artists, religious visionaries, and philosophers. Those who failed to aspire to such a state, choosing instead to follow values and beliefs shaped by custom or decree, were dismissed by Nietzsche for their lesser "herd" mentality. This arch-individualist philosophy, which subjugated all knowledge, morals, and ethics to the individual's will and gloried in the attainment of the most intense, qualitatively satisfying experience of life, held a powerful attraction for anarchists, even if its elitist aspects – and Nietzsche's sexism – were roundly criticized in the movement.

Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism*, 8; and, also see the discussion of the "will to power" as a "continuous act of self-assertion". *Idem*, "Nietzschean Matrix", *ibid.*, 145-166.

And he transfigures nature by bestowing meaning where none had existed before, or creating new meaning in place of old.

Let us say, then, that ‘sovereignty’ is the condition of the individual *as an* individual, or the determination of the individual *as such*. For Nietzsche, however, the latter is not the individual who is determined by the various codifications of class, race, sex, and so on, and thus subjected to the herd. The sovereign individual is a ‘free spirit’ who possess the strength to will his own will, and who thereby appropriates his own proper selfhood.²³⁶

“Since sovereignty is a matter of self-commandment,” White elaborates, “it appears to follow that any attempt to *specify* its nature may actually destroy the sovereignty of the individual by circumscribing it in advance.”²³⁷ The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit in Music, first published in German in 1871-2, was of particular importance to Rothko. Again, according to White -- who describes Nietzsche as a “performative writer” because he sought a “transformation of the individual soul”²³⁸ -- this particular treatise also critiqued established modes of thought. “In *The Birth of Tragedy*,” White states, “Nietzsche’s task is certainly not to provide us with a ready-made mythology the limitations of our rationalist perspective and the need for alternative ways of thinking.”²³⁹ White suggests, then, that Nietzsche encouraged his readers to question authority and to seek alternatives that would engender the transformation of the autonomous individual. Despite the fact that the notion of sovereignty was a recurring theme for Nietzsche and thus meshes with certain anarchist paradigms, many scholars position Rothko’s engagement with The Birth of Tragedy solely in existentialist terms²⁴⁰ and, consequently,

²³⁶ White, Nietzsche and the Problem of Sovereignty, 6.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

²⁴⁰ See, for example: Ashton, About Rothko, *passim*.

disregard the fact that individual autonomy was paramount for Rothko also because of his politics.

Anti-Authoritarian ‘Open’ Social Systems and the ‘Open’ Art Experience:

The second concept to consider when framing Rothko’s and Judd’s desire to construct alternative viewing experiences in relation to their anarchist politics is Peter Kropotkin’s (1842-1921) notion of an ‘open’ social system. Advocating a constructive rather than destructive approach, Kropotkin argued that individualism would flourish the further we progressed towards an anarchist society.²⁴¹ His contribution to anarchist thought is profound and springs from knowledge gained during his scientific studies.²⁴²

According to Kropotkin:

Anarchy today is the attack, the war upon all authority, all power, every State. In the society to come, anarchy will be the veto, the prevention of the re-establishment of any authority, any power, any State; full and complete freedom for the individual who, freely and driven by his needs alone, his tastes and his sympathies, bands together with other individuals into a group with others within the commune or neighborhood; freedom of development for communes which federate within the region and so on; the regions within the nation; the nation within humankind.²⁴³

Clearly, Kropotkin maintained that civilization will progress only when we direct ourselves towards a more openly-structured society, one that actively embraces the concept of mutual aid and where non-coercive, de-centralised forms of self government are the norm. The correlation between this anarchist preference for open social systems and abstract art has been recently explored by Antliff:

²⁴¹ Harper, *Anarchy*, 57-58.

²⁴² In *Mutual Aid* (1902), he argued against social Darwinian thought and proposed that the notion of the ‘survival of the fittest’ in the animal kingdom was counter-productive to the health of any species.

²⁴³ Peter Kropotkin, “Anarchy and Communism”, in *No Gods, No Masters*, 249.

Anarchism is characterized by an insistence that you cannot achieve social freedom through authoritarian means. Anarchists call for egalitarian socio-political structures wherein hierarchical relations are done away with and everyone is empowered to participate in the running of society. Anarchist self-governance would involve organizations, communities, associations, networks, and projects on every conceivable scale, from the municipal to the global, freely cooperating in ways that have yet to be worked out. The point is, so long as the participants act through anarchist modes of self-governance, the social structure is a sphere of freedom responsive to the desires of each and every participant. Conflicts will be dealt with through consensual processes rather than the rule of force, and no individual or group will exercise power over any one else.

Anarchists have often compared this open cooperative social structure to a biological organism. Organisms are living beings which evolve of their own free will through a process of perpetual becoming that is unbounded and non-deterministic. Similarly, an anarchist society emulates this openness through a harmonious social structure that is free, dynamic, and ever-evolving.²⁴⁴

So, how do these core anarchic values of individualism and organic open-ended structures of self governance relate to abstract art in general? Barnett Newman, self-professed anarchist and friend of Rothko, speaks of the correlation between his own abstract style, which requires completion from the viewer, and the ideal of open-systems proposed by Kropotkin. According to Antliff, Newman saw his abstract works, such as *Onement #1* (1948), as “anarchist statement[s].” He cites Newman:

If my work were understood it would be the end of state capitalism and totalitarianism. Because to the extent that my painting was not an arrangement of objects, not an arrangement of spaces, not an arrangement of graphic elements, it was an open painting, in the sense that it represented an open world – to that extent I thought, and I still believe, that my work in terms of its social impact denotes the possibility of an open society, of an open world, not of a closed institutional world.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ Antliff, “Open Form and the Abstract Imperative”, in Re-reading Read, forthcoming.

²⁴⁵ Antliff cites one of Barnett Newman’s last interviews in spring, 1970. Ibid..

Antliff also notes that in a preface to a reprinting of Kropotkin's Memoirs of a Revolutionist (1968), Newman unequivocally connects his abstract style with the "freedom animating Kropotkin's society of 'spontaneous, self-organized communes.'"²⁴⁶

What then, are the ramifications for this paradigm in relation to Rothko and Judd and how does the anarchist concept of an open social system intersect specifically with their art and their desire to direct how, when and where it was exhibited? Again, Antliff's analysis of Kropotkin proves fruitful:

Developing his argument, Kropotkin extrapolated, from nature, fundamental laws that pertained to humanity's evolution. He posited that the natural world tended toward a condition of dynamic equilibrium, in which each species spontaneously adapted to its environment and in so doing, contributed to the make-up of the ecological organism as a whole. Nature was dynamic because as species evolved and new ones came into being the conditions of equilibrium changed.²⁴⁷

This idea of dynamic equilibrium is valuable to explore in relation to the art presented by these two artists. There is a congruency between dynamic equilibrium and the fluid viewing experience intentionally presented by both. When encountering the work in the space at the Rothko Chapel and The Chinati Foundation, periods of momentary stasis offer not one, single solution but a series of solutions and thus suggest infinite possibilities. The closed certainties of an authoritarian world bound by the norms promulgated by and through institutions are absent. Intentionally avoiding didacticism and focusing on providing a space for individual responses, the art-viewing experiences at the Chapel and Marfa are filtered by the politics of Rothko and Judd in the spirit of non-coercion: the values of freedom and equality are what they cherished and explore, here.

²⁴⁶ Ibid..

²⁴⁷ Ibid..

Historically, anarchy within the United States of America has two strands: “so-called ‘native’ individualism stemming from the Puritan tradition of respect for personal liberty and conscience, and the radicalism of the new immigrants.”²⁴⁸ Figures such as Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) belong to the former category whilst Emma Goldman (1869-1940) is in the latter.²⁴⁹ Goldman was a gifted orator who tirelessly advocated for the “sovereignty of the individual” and social change through direct action.²⁵⁰ Her legacy is long and her published essays give important insights.

Likening the individual to “the heart” and society to “the lungs”, her anarchism is rooted in Kropotkin’s anarchist-communism.²⁵¹ Anarchism, according to Goldman, is “[t]he philosophy of a new social order based on liberty unrestricted by man-made law; the theory that all forms of government rest on violence, and are therefore wrong and harmful, as well as unnecessary.”²⁵² Placing the onus to live an ethical life squarely upon the individual, Goldman’s position is further nuanced by the following statement:

²⁴⁸ Harper, Anarchy: A Graphic Guide, 74.

²⁴⁹ Both Thoreau and Goldman are important to consider in relation to this topic. As discussed in chapter one, Rothko was greatly inspired by his personal experience of Goldman’s speeches. Goldman, like Rothko, was of Russian-Jewish extraction and both undoubtedly experienced feelings of dislocation at times. Literally transplanted and without voice, due to lack of language, Rothko was traumatised by the long train journey from east to west coast when he arrived in America with his mother, in 1913. This experience was to haunt him periodically throughout his life and he had first hand knowledge of being alienated by both his Jewish-ness and his personal politics.

According to Serota, Judd’s achievement at Marfa is in the spirit of the “empirical observations” of Thoreau. Although Thoreau himself did not ascribe to the anarchist label his essay Civil Disobedience -- originally published as Resistance to Civil Government from 1848 -- is undoubtedly radical in content. Within the text he argues that the best government is that which governs the least.

Breslin, Mark Rothko, passim; Ashton, About Rothko, passim; and, Nicholas Serota, “Donald Judd: A Sense of Place”, in Donald Judd, ed. Nicholas Serota, 110.

²⁵⁰ See “Anarchism: What it Really Stands For”. Goldman Anarchism and Other Essays, 67.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 52. For a moving tribute to Kropotkin see idem, “Recollections of Kropotkin”, in No Gods, No Masters, 287-294.

²⁵² Goldman, Anarchism and Other Essays, 50.

“Anarchism urges man to think, to investigate, to analyze every proposition.”²⁵³ Consider the actions of Rothko and Judd with this imperative in mind. When it became untenable for them to contribute to how, when and where their work was exhibited, after careful thought, investigation and analysis they both took direct action and actively sought change.

Direct Experience of Anti-Representational Art:

In his chapel, Rothko aspired to offer a more honest transaction between work and viewer whilst Judd’s vision for Marfa was to present not just a new way of looking at art, but a more complete way of *being* with art -- one where art and life could be combined authentically without constraints.²⁵⁴ Again Goldman’s words are perceptive: “As a mass

²⁵³ Ibid..

²⁵⁴ Judd, who had studied philosophy whilst at university, was greatly influenced by pragmatic thought. John Dewey’s position on the relationship of art to the ‘real’ world and the inherent dangers of the artificial separation between art and life is also pivotal, for it echoes those found in anarchism. Although ‘wordy’ two quotes are worth considering in their entirety:

So extensive and subtly pervasive are the ideas that set Art upon a remote pedestal, that many a person would be repelled rather than pleased if told that he enjoyed his casual recreations, in part at least, because of their esthetic quality. The arts which today have most vitality for the average person are things he does not take to be arts: for instance, the movie, jazzed music, the comic strip [...] For, when what he knows as art is relegated to the museum and gallery, the unconquerable impulse towards experiences enjoyable in themselves finds such outlet as the daily environment provides. Many a person who protests against the museum conception of art, still shares the fallacy from which that conception springs. For the popular notion comes from a separation of art from the objects and scenes of ordinary experience that many theorists and critics pride themselves upon holding and even elaborating.[...] The factors that have glorified fine art by setting it upon a far-off pedestal did not arise within the realm of art nor is their influence confined to the arts. [...]

There must then be historic reasons for the rise of the compartmental conception of fine art. Our present museums and galleries to which works of fine art are removed and stored illustrate some of the causes that have operated to segregate art instead of finding it an attendant of temple, forum, and other forms of associated life. An instructive history of modern art could be written in terms of the formation of the distinctly modern institutions of museum and exhibition gallery. I may point to a few outstanding facts. Most European museums are, among other things, memorials to the rise of nationalism and imperialism. Every capital must have its own museum of painting, sculpture, etc., devoted in part to exhibiting the greatness of its artistic past, and in other part, to exhibiting the loot gathered by its monarchs in conquest of other nations; for instance the accumulations of the spoils of Napoleon that are in the Louvre. They testify to the connection between the modern segregation of art and nationalism and militarism.

Dewey, “Art as Experience”, in Art & Interpretation, 157 -159.

[the majority's] aim has always been to make life uniform, gray and monotonous as the desert. As a mass it will always be the annihilation of individuality, of free initiative, of originality."²⁵⁵ Both Rothko and Judd took the initiative when they sought to present their later works in the unconventional spaces of the Chapel and Chinati. These unmediated alternatives are far removed from the normal constraints associated with traditional exhibition spaces keyed to mass culture. There are, for example, neither audio-tours nor didactic text panels to close down meaning and no artificial relationships between unrelated works or implied grand narratives. Their alternatives to the nexus of problems that surrounded the issue of direct communication -- how to present their work in an anti-hierarchical and thus more direct manner that would facilitate, even encourage, the personal and subjective viewer response -- are inspiring, original and anything but "monotonous and gray". Being liberated by a radicalism that is predicated upon the

For a current critique of the museum as a construct and a culturally inscribed fiction, please see Donald Preziosi. He argues:

Museums, in short, established exemplary models for 'reading' objects as traces, representations, reflections, or surrogates of individuals, groups, nations, and races, and of their 'histories'. They were the civic spaces designed for European ceremonial engagement with (and thus the evocation, fabrication, and preservation of) its own history and social memory.

Also:

The museum is one of the most brilliant and powerful genres of modern fiction, sharing with other forms of ideological practice – religion, science, entertainment, the academic disciplines – a variety of methods for the production and factualization of knowledge, and its sociopolitical consequences. Since its invention in late-eighteenth-century Europe as one of the premier epistemological technologies of the Enlightenment, the museum had been central to the social, ethical, and political formation of the citizenry of modernizing nation-states. At the same time, museological practices have played a fundamental role in fabricating, maintaining, and disseminating many of the essentialist and historicist fiction which comprise the social realities of the modern world. [...]

For some two centuries, the museum had been a powerful and effective crucible in which modern historiography, psychology, ethics and aesthetics have been brought into mutual alignment as coordinated and complementary systems within the Enlightenment project of commensurability – the transcribing of all human experience and expression into a common, universal frame of reference; into a common 'language'.

Preziosi, *In The Aftermath of Art*, 71 & 56-57, respectively.

²⁵⁵ Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays*, 55.

autonomy of the sovereign individual, their personal politics provided the impetus to propose and then create these unorthodox, permanent, exhibition spaces.²⁵⁶

Examining the issues that face the anarchist in relation to existing political systems and unequal power relations, Todd May raises concerns that are pertinent to our discussion:

Some anarchists [...] even resisted the immersion into any political activity at all, arguing that the moment one enters into political organizing one begins playing the very game that needs to be overcome; liberation arises through the construction of alternatives, not through the destruction or reformation of insupportable realities.²⁵⁷

May considers why the construction of new alternatives is imperative. He argues for “intersecting networks of power”, not pyramidal, top – down, hierarchies,²⁵⁸ which will eventually negate externally imposed power structures and keep power in the hands of those who are most affected by the process:

What motivates the critique of political representation is the idea that in giving people images of who they are and what they desire, one wrests from them the ability to decide those matters for themselves. Representation, in the anarchist tradition, must be understood not merely in its political connotations but more widely as an attempt to wrest from people decisions about their lives. The political instance of this is only the most obvious, for it occurs on other planes as well: the ethical, the social, and the psychological, for instance.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ Although the desire to install work in a permanent location has prior precedents -- such as the Rosaire Chapel, Vence (1948-51) by Matisse -- the alternatives presented by Rothko and Judd were to have a profound effect upon current display strategies. In relation to Judd’s contribution specifically, Serota notes: The installation of his own work and that of others, notably Chamberlain and Flavin, both at Spring Street and in Marfa, although not yet fully realized, are more complete and more authoritative than almost any other permanent installation. As such they have encouraged a general move towards long-term installations, such as those achieved for Cy Twombly at The Menil Collection in Houston 1995, and more recently the installation of the Dia collection itself in Beacon, New York. Serota, “Donald Judd: A Sense of Place”, 103.

²⁵⁷ May, The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism, 48.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 52.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 48.

Clearly, these “planes” of power are far-reaching and must, by extension, influence art production, thus impinging upon the power-relations between the art world, the artist and, ultimately, the viewer, who responds uniquely. Privileging multiplicity over uniformity, May states that: “the anarchist alternative is that of fragmentation, fission rather than fusion, diversity rather than unity, a mass of societies rather than a mass society.”²⁶⁰

Anarchism eloquently makes space, as do Rothko and Judd, for multiple subjectivities.

Thus, there is a correlation between the multiplicity defended by anarchism and that proposed by the abstract art of Rothko and Judd’s “specific objects”, for their apparently ‘content-less’ art rejects representation in favour of presentation.²⁶¹ It does not represent but instead *re* - presents. An art of pure relationships, it is contingent upon the viewer and, as such, is “constituted in receptivity”.²⁶² It “offers the beholder an experience of consciousness” and ultimately, “disinterested judgment” is rendered

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 64.

²⁶¹ The term “specific objects” was one that Judd used repeatedly to refer to his works for they were “neither painting nor sculpture”, but something new. Avoiding representation and thus thwarting possible co-option by others was a conscious decision for many artists. “There was a historical explanation,” Antliff notes, “for why so many artists were drawn to abstraction. Hostile towards capitalism, fascism, and communism, they were seeking ‘to escape into a world without ideologies’ through art that focused on ‘biological structures’ independent of human history.” Antliff, “Open Form and the Abstract Imperative”, forthcoming. The “abstract imperative” is rooted in the anarchist politics of Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876). In God & State, first published in America by Goldman’s Mother Earth Press, Bakunin clearly privileges art over science. He states:

Science cannot go outside of the sphere of abstractions. In this respect it is infinitely inferior to art, which, in its turn, is peculiarly concerned also with general types and general situations, but which incarnates them by an artifice of its own in forms which, if they are not living in the sense of real life, none the less excite in our imagination the memory and sentiment of life; art in a certain sense individualizes the types and situations which it conceives; by means of the individualities without flesh and bone, and consequently permanent and immortal, which it has the power to create, it recalls to our minds the living, real individualities which appear and disappear under our eyes. Art, then, is as it were the return of abstraction to life; science, on the abstractions.

Bakunin, God & the State, 56-57.

²⁶² Paolo Berdini, “Similar Emotions/Dissimilar Objects: the Pilkington Paradigm and Minimalist and Baroque Art”, in Perceptible Processes, 47.

impossible.²⁶³ Furthermore, in the post-1945 context, ‘content-less’ art -- such as that proposed by Minimalism -- became a catalyst for new viewing practices, the ramifications of which were wide and far-reaching. When display strategies shifted to include the placement of works directly upon the floor, as in the case of Judd’s objects, the viewers were implicated when they were impelled to negotiate the art whilst navigating the exhibition space. Likewise, when Rothko sought to “saturate” and “defeat” the walls with his closely hung, large-format abstracts, spectators were implicated by virtue of the fact that they are literally immersed by, and in, the work. The viewing process became embodied and, as a result, increasingly subjective:

The object’s space – its stage – has been suppressed or, perhaps extended so as to include the beholder in it. He or she is enveloped in a continuum that denies a view from the outside, that prevents external scanning practices. Literally caught in the act, the beholder takes on a critical task that is not sustained by exterior co-ordinates [...] the ‘specific object’ is a work whose meaning is wholly contingent on the experience of the beholder and open, consequently, to diverse paradigms.²⁶⁴

Meaning in ‘content-less’ art is derived by the beholder, who is now cast in the role of active agent. It is, therefore, no longer fixed but open-ended and highly fluid because it is continually constructed and reconstructed.²⁶⁵

Inter-Subjectivity and Multiplicity of Meaning:

But what is the implication of embodied viewing as it relates to Rothko and Judd? As previous chapters discuss, both artists place the onus of creating meaning squarely upon the shoulders of the beholder whose role, therefore, is reoriented and thus

²⁶³ Ibid..

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 45.

²⁶⁵ Indeed, Berdini also notes that as: “meaning loses its stability [it] becomes a variable open to connotations of gender, class and ideology.” Ibid., 47 & 45.

transformed. Perception is rendered reflexive by this re-orientation and reception now becomes contingent upon individual experience. The viewer, in the position of active agent, is no longer a mere consumer but now a producer of meaning. Actively engaged in the act of deciphering and interpreting the abstract art works exhibited in both the Chapel and at Chinati, spectators themselves become an intrinsic part of the creative process. This ‘gap’ that allows space for individual response is -- according to Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) -- where the meaning of art actually lies. In “The Politics of Art: Part II”, of 1967, Barbara Rose traces the reorientation of the viewer back to Duchamp’s ready-mades, which shift the focus onto how, not what, we see:

The invention of withdrawing esthetic content from art and making it a function not of what is seen but how a thing is seen is obviously yet another Duchampesque legacy. The artist’s intention is not necessarily to destroy art [...] but to make the art the property of everyman. The gift of the artist to his audience in this case is no longer a unique object that can only be owned by the rich and powerful or buried in the museums, but a *way of seeing*.²⁶⁶

“The creative act”, Duchamp himself alleged, “is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualification and thus adds his [/ her] contribution to the creative act.”²⁶⁷ Also: “What art is in reality is this missing link, not the links which exist. It’s not what you see that is art, art is the gap.”²⁶⁸ David Raskin alludes to this gap, the

²⁶⁶ Barbara Rose, “The Politics of Art II” Artforum, Vol 7 no 5 (Jan, 1969): 46.

²⁶⁷ Marcel Duchamp, “The Creative Act”, Marcel Duchamp: Source-Texts and One Liners <<http://www.iaaa.nl/cursusAA&AI/duchamp.html>> 24August 2007
Duchamp’s actions and art production were inspired, in part, by his exploration of Stirner’s ‘egoism’ coupled with his interest in possibilities proposed by inter-subjectivity and multiplicity of meaning:
Duchamp [...] corrode[d] art’s ontological viability by bringing the public and public subjectivity into play as generative components in the formation of both the “artist” and the “art” object. In Duchamp’s variation of anarchism, the unending flux of Stirner’s shifting, decentered “I” was complemented by antiart productions that were equally unbounded and undetermined, contingent things of discourse, rather than of Kantian qualitative difference.
Antilff, Anarchist Modernism, 90.

completion of the art work by the active viewer, *vis à vis* the installation of the 100 mill aluminum boxes in the artillery sheds at Marfa. “[O]ur active engagement with Judd’s work,” he writes, “offers a fresh, ever new visual tableau, as if the work comes alive *only* when we are there.”²⁶⁹

An insightful analogy of this gap, referred to as *rasa* in the Sanskrit language, is that it resides in the consumer, not the producer, like the taste of wine.²⁷⁰ This sense of the gap aptly demonstrates that artistic value is located outside not within the object when meaning is created by, not for, viewers who must actively participate using their imaginations to complete the work. In an article that examines the correlation between the non-western concept of *rasa*, the pragmatism of John Dewey (1859-1952)²⁷¹ and the way we come to understand a work of art, Dinesh Mathur makes observations that are invaluable:

If we could set aside metaphysical overtones in Abhinavagupta’s aesthetics we would be surprised to find that both he and Dewey employed a common methodology and appealed to a phenomenological analysis of what was actually *presented* in a work of art whether it was a drama, novel, poem, or painting. The same method was adopted for analyzing aesthetic experience from the point of view of the spectator or of the appreciator. No wonder there

²⁶⁸ Baas citing Duchamp. Baas, [Smile of the Buddha](#), 55.

²⁶⁹ My emphasis. Raskin, “The Chinati Foundation: Order of Importance”, 15. Please note that at the time of writing, a slightly modified version of this article, extended with footnotes, was available online at <http://www.artic.edu/%7Edraski/orderofimportance%201.pdf>.

²⁷⁰ Baas observes: “*Rasa* resides not in the artist or the object, but in the mind of the viewer -- just as the taste of the wine exists not in the vintner or in its bottle, but in the mouth of the one who drinks it.” Baas, [Smile of the Buddha](#), 55.

The term *rasa* is multivalent and according to Mohan Thapi,

[...] it has, indeed, a bewildering variety of meanings. The dictionary records, among others, the following meanings: Sap, juice, water, liquor, milk, nectar, poison, mercury, taste, savor, prime or finest part of anything, flavor, relish, love, desire, beauty. The meanings range from the alcoholic *soma*-juice to the Metaphysical Absolute – the *Brahman*. In different periods new meanings evolved out of earlier ones and in different disciplines *rasa* acquired different connotations.

²⁷¹ As stated previously, Judd was greatly influenced by pragmatic thought.

is a marked resemblance between Abhinava's theory of *rasa* and Dewey's concept of 'consummatory experience.' Both of them analyzed the aesthetic object or work of art in terms of the total pervasive quality of the aesthetic situation which is neither purely objective nor purely subjective but is a dynamic union of various constituents. For both, a work of art clarifies, heightens, and accentuates the quality of experience by a proper use of sense, emotion, and imagination. And lastly, both of them gave a prominent place to the factor of conflict and its resolution in artistic creation. They realized that life is not all milk and honey, and therefore a creative artist makes proper use of the factors of resistance and tension in carrying forward the work to its fulfilling consummation, giving rise to an intensified and heightened experience.²⁷²

In the words of Dewey -- the quintessential American pragmatist and someone who rued the lack of an equivalent for *rasa* in English²⁷³ -- the role of the imagination is vital in this process of creating meaning:

Esthetic experience is imaginative. [...] imagination is the only gateway through which these meanings can find their way into a present interaction; or rather [...] the conscious adjustment of the new and the old *is* imagination. [...] There is always a gap between the here and now of direct interaction and the past interactions whose funded result constitutes the meanings with which we grasp and understand what is now occurring.²⁷⁴

Here Dewey describes how an individual uses knowledge of the past to understand the present; i.e., how memory fuses with present perceptions. Apprehension is processual, ongoing and ever-changing and is not grasped at once but proceeds through a series of perceptions. This fusion of past and present is how -- to paraphrase Judd -- we are able to progress "from A to Z" without constantly having to recheck that which has been

²⁷² Mathur, "Abhinavagupta & Dewey on Art": 224-225.

²⁷³ G B Mohan Thampi, paraphrasing Dewey and explaining why this was problematic for the philosopher, writes:

We have no word in the English language that unambiguously includes what is signified by the two words 'artistic' and 'aesthetic'. Since 'artistic' refers primarily to the act of production and 'aesthetic' to that of perception and enjoyment, the absence of a term designating the two processes taken together is unfortunate.' *Rasa* is a term which designates both these processes and also the objective embodiment of the first which causes the second.

Mohan Thampi, "'Rasa' as Aesthetic Experience": 75.

²⁷⁴ Dewey, "Art as Experience", in Art & Interpretation, 166.

previously confirmed.²⁷⁵ Stephen Pepper, using as an example a Flemish painting, illustrates how Dewey's term "funding" is useful to our understanding of how we look at art. "The perception of a complex object like Breughels's *Winter*", he observes, "is necessarily selective and partial," and continues:

No one in a single act of perception can experience the totality of that picture in all its discriminated detail. [...] How, then, ever to get the perceptions of the whole picture? It is through funding that a person does it. When one is focusing his attention on the figures in the foreground, he is aware of the figures and hills in the background in the fringe of his vision and the memory of an attentive focusing upon them is funded into the perception of the figures in the foreground. [...] Literally one can never see the whole picture in all its detail in focus at one time. But one can feel the whole picture in all its detail in a funded consciousness with certain details in clear focus and the rest fused into these as memories of their character and interrelationships.²⁷⁶

Dewey once said: "Science states meanings; art expresses them,"²⁷⁷ and this is only possible because visual art is a powerful form of communication despite the fact that it is, primarily, a non-verbal mode of expression: "[I]n contrast to language's propositional and factual status, art is symbolic and illusionistic [...] the symbol and illusion are not inherent in the artistic creation; they are as much the creation of the responder as the creator who can at best, only suggest."²⁷⁸ How, then, is meaning derived -- using alternative means such as metaphor, imagination and, through funded perception -- when meaning is bound by, and rooted in, the relational and transactional lived

²⁷⁵ From the essay "Art and Architecture", the quote in full is as follows:

All experience, large and small, involves feeling; all thought involves feeling. All feeling is based on experience, some of which is thought, necessarily quick so that we can act quickly. It's not irrational, virtually the opposite. Thought is not strict, isolated and only logical but is continually using its backlog of experience which is called feeling. Otherwise we could never get from A to Z, barely to C since B would have to always be rechecked."

Judd, Complete Writings 1975-1986, 30.

²⁷⁶ Pepper, "The Aesthetic Object and the Consummatory Field", in Art & Interpretation, 176.

²⁷⁷ Dewey, "Art as Experience", in Art & Interpretation, 165.

²⁷⁸ Patricia Gentner, "Breaking into a 'Semiotic Enclave': How Art Critics Refer to the Works of Rothko and Bacon", in Semiotica, Vol 79 no 3/4 (1990): 285.

experience, the sensing being interacting with and in her / his environs? Dewey has much to say on the lived experience, the conscious interaction or transaction between person and environment.²⁷⁹ By bringing together the “knowing by man of the world and the being of man in the world,” the pragmatists reconsidered and resolved the duality of mind / body, advocated by René Descartes (1596- 1650) and, in the process, privileged the sensing being.²⁸⁰ Dewey presented the mind as a product of “natural processes and the web of interactive relationships between human beings and world.”²⁸¹ We come to understand the world not through objects but through the transactional “unity” between ourselves and our environment; this lived experience is fundamental to our understanding

²⁷⁹ It is interesting to note that this more complete way of being in the world, the lived experience as a sovereign individual, was also of paramount importance to Nietzsche who, according to Thiele, valued it highly: “Experience is not to be equated with a purely intellectual activity; it is the incorporation of one’s thought into life. ‘I have always written my writings with my whole body and life,’ Nietzsche averred, ‘I do not know what purely intellectual problems are.’”

Thiele, Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul, 131.

²⁸⁰ Bourgeois and Rosenthal, Thematic Studies in Phenomenology & Pragmatism, 1.

According to Denish C Mathur:

He [Dewey] endeavored to break down the alleged unbridgeable ‘dualisms’ between the natural and the supernatural, mind and body, the spiritual and the material. His key aesthetic concept, ‘consummatory experience’ or ‘*an experience*’ [not mere experience], was an elaboration and enrichment of his general concept of experience developed in his Experience and Nature (1929). [...] Experience for him is not a series of disjointed particulars but is a product of a dynamic transaction between a live organism and a changing natural and social environment. It is constituted by ‘doing and underdoing’, and is always situational. [...] It is an ongoing process of continuous change as the organism responds to one situation after another. It is not a passive reception of external sensations, nor is it merely a ‘subjective’ something occurring exclusively ‘inside’ a mind. He replaced the ‘spectator’ concept of an aloof self by the dynamic concept of a live organism who, in its encounter with objects and events, brings to bear upon the environment its entire past experience in the form of habits, attitudes, and funded meanings.

Mathur, “Abhinavagupta & Dewey on Art”: 228.

For a thought provoking consideration of the mind / body problem in relation to issues of gender please see Linda Martin Alcoff’s, “Phenomenology, Post-structuralism, and Feminist Theory on the Concept of Experience”, in Feminist Phenomenology eds. Linda Fisher and Lester Embree (Dordrecht; Boston; London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000): 39-56.

²⁸¹ Baas, Smile of the Buddha, 58.

of how the art object functions in relation to the space and the embodied viewer.²⁸² In Art and Experience (1934) Dewey, it has been noted, wrote:

In common conception, the work of art is often identified with the building, book, painting, or statue in its existence apart from human experience. Since the actual work of art is what the product does with and in experience, the result [of this misconception] is not favorable to understanding.²⁸³

Although this statement is, according to Jacquelyn Baas, “typically Deweyesque in its impenetrability”, she clarifies further and states that, “what Dewey is saying is that the ‘work’ of art does not reside in the art object, but in what the object ‘does’ within the mind of the viewer.”²⁸⁴

The primacy of the sensing being is also rooted in anarchism. As Antliff notes, Stirner’s The Ego and Its Own is a materialist critique that values “individualist materialism” above “generalizing metaphysics”.²⁸⁵ All things are composed of material matter and all phenomena are the result of material interactions. Physical matter -- including the mind -- is the only thing that truly exists. There can be no mind / body split and/or body / soul dualism, for it is impossible for the “intellect” to exist apart from a body located in real time and space.²⁸⁶

²⁸² Barbara Rose was to speak of the self-same thing in an edition of Artforum, from 1969. Investigating pragmatic thought in relation to current art practices and / or how contemporary art production was to be understood; she states: “Pragmatism [...] rejects any kind of mind-body dualism in favor of a synthetic perception, involving motor, retinal and kinesthetic as well as emotive factors in a single response.” Rose, “The Politics of Art II”: 48.

²⁸³ Baas, Smile of the Buddha, 58.

²⁸⁴ Ibid..

²⁸⁵ Further:

Stirner argued that the metaphysical thinking underpinning religion and the notions of absolute truth structuring a wide range of thought laid the foundation for the hierarchical division of society into those with knowledge and those without, from here a whole train of economic, social, and political inequalities ensued, all of which were antithetical to anarchism.

Antliff, Anarchist Modernism, 78 & 76, respectively.

The Temporal Nature of the Embodied Viewing Experience:

As previously noted, both Rothko and Judd intentionally disrupted ‘normal’ viewing practices that are discrete, yet seemingly timeless, when they created a unified experience of their work and space which had to be experienced bodily. Denied a single perspective, the embodied viewer comes to understand the work through multiple perspectives as s / he is made aware of their own physical relationship to these unities in real time. Literally immersed in the work when visiting the Chapel and Marfa, the spectator is highly conscious of the temporal nature of the viewing experience as s /he negotiates the space. Here is the crux; meaning is derived and transactional because it is embedded and / or enmeshed in the temporal process of the production of meaning as perceived by the active viewer.

The temporal nature of the embodied viewing experience is central to our understanding of the permanently exhibited art of Rothko and Judd because the exhibition space becomes implicated in the work as soon as it is installed *in situ* and in perpetuity. Of installation work in particular -- and, by extension, also that of the Chapel and Chinati in general because the installed art there is likewise situational²⁸⁷ -- it has been said:

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 78.

²⁸⁷ For Judd, it was paramount that we come to understand his “specific objects” in relation to the exhibition space, as installations; this was, after all, precisely the point of his move to the desert and the subsequent creation of his alternative museum in Marfa. That Rothko’s work be thought of in terms of installation art is a little more problematic until we consider his driving need to create “a” space, an environment for his paintings, where the work and space be experienced in concert. If we consider the words of Glenn Phillips -- who co-edited a recent reassessment of Rothko’s work and believes that it would be beneficial to reframe these mural projects as proto-installations -- the situation becomes clearer. He argues: “Rothko’s genuine concern that his specifications for hanging height, room size, lighting, and wall color be followed invites us to expand our classification of his work beyond painting to the area of proto-installation art – or at least to consider the shared impulses between the two.” Glenn Phillips, “Irreconcilable Rothko”, in Seeing Rothko. eds Glenn Phillips and Thomas Crow (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2005), 8.

The lifelike qualities of installation art group themselves around two paramount matters: space and time. The viewer is asked to investigate the work of art much as he or she might explore some phenomenon in life, making one's way through actual space and time in order to gain knowledge. Just as life consists of one perception followed by another, each a fleeting, non-linear moment, an installation courts the same dense ephemeral experience. Whereas painting and sculpture freeze time and perhaps suggest something eternal, installation abhors such an effect. The viewer is in the present, experiencing temporal flow and spatial awareness. The time and space of the viewer coincide with the art, with no separation or dichotomy between the perceiver and the object. In other words, life pervades this form of art.

With this unframed form of art sharing the space of the viewer and being as authentic as any other space in the viewer's experience, we have reached a pinnacle in art's evolution toward the accurate depiction of space, time, and the world.²⁸⁸

The viewing experience for the spectator in any installation, then, is clearly very different from that encountered in a gallery space where discrete, unrelated works of art are on display. With no real division between the perceiver and the object in an installation -- because 'time' and 'space' coalesce for the embodied viewer -- the art work and the exhibition space become enmeshed in the highly subjective, experiential, act of beholding in 'space-time'. According to pragmatic thought, "[the] immediate 'feel' of temporality,

²⁸⁸ Mark Rosenthal, Understanding Installation Art, 27.

The term installation art is, like all terms, problematic. Usually presented in an enclosed space, installations provide a contrived experience where the role of the spectator is paramount in the completion of the work. According to Julie Reiss:

Although the term [...] has become widely used, it is still relatively non-specific. It refers to a wide range of artistic practices, and at times overlaps with other interrelated areas including Fluxus, Earth art, Minimalism, video art, Performance art, Conceptual art, and Process art. Site specificity, institutional critique, temporality, and ephemerality are issues shared by many practitioners of these genres. [...] The essence of Installation art is spectator participation, but the definition of participation varies greatly from one artist to another, and even from one work to another by the same artist. [...] Spectator participation is so integral to Installation art that without having the experience of being in the piece, analysis of Installation art is difficult. [...]

Perhaps more importantly *vis á vis* both Rothko and Judd's radicalism, she continues:

Installation art has been an important development in the twentieth century, but it has received only marginal scholarly attention. Because Installation art is not easily collected and thus not easily experienced after it is dismantled, it has resisted traditional art historical approaches.

Indeed this resistance to historicization has been the lure for many of the artists who have chosen to work in this genre.

Reiss, From Margin to Center, xiii-xv.

knower and known cannot be distinguished because the flow belongs to both.”²⁸⁹ Reality, and all this entails, can only be revealed over time and *vice versa*.

The questions ‘what is real- ity’ and what is ‘time’ have been pondered and argued over the years by scholars, philosophers, religious practitioners and artists alike. The answer to the first is far beyond the scope of this thesis. However, note that here I am using the terms ‘real / reality’ in reference to what is perceived as real by the individual as a sentient being. Knowledge is dependent upon personal experience for, as individuals, we both “create and respond” to our environment.²⁹⁰ ‘Time’, like ‘real- ity’, is also contingent upon the personal, despite the fact that it is generally considered a verifiable scientific absolute in the quotidian experience because it can be rigidly divided into the smallest increments. The problem posed by ‘time’ is more readily answered and it is crucial not only to our basic understanding of how the known universe functions, but to how the unities of space and art work, presented by Rothko and Judd, operate as well.

When Albert Einstein (1875 - 1955) postulated that the speed of light was a constant, not a variable, it became evident that neither space nor time were disconnected absolutes as previously believed.²⁹¹ Indeed, according to Leonard Shlain, Einstein’s

²⁸⁹ Bourgeois and Rosenthal quoting the pragmatist, William James (1842-1910). Bourgeois and Rosenthal, Thematic Studies in Phenomenology & Pragmatism, 37.

²⁹⁰ As Bourgeois and Rosenthal state:

If a real object can be known at all, it can be known only in its relation to a mind; and if that mind were different the nature of the object as known might well be different. Nevertheless the description of the object known is a true description of an independent reality [...] knowledge is absolute because it conveys an absolute truth, though it can convey such truth only in relative terms.

Ibid., 29.

²⁹¹Greene writes: “Einstein’s work showed that concepts such as space and time, which had previously seemed to be separate and absolute, are actually interwoven and relative.” Earlier he explains: “The constancy of the speed of light has resulted in a replacement of the traditional view of space and time as rigid and objective structures with a new conception in which they depend ultimately on the relative motion between observer and observed.” Greene, Elegant Universe, 51 & 47, respectively.

postulation “turned *everything* upside down.”²⁹² Observing that as sentient beings we are highly cognisant of how we move through space, the theoretical physicist Brian Greene explains that, generally, we are less conscious of the fact that we are moving through time as well.²⁹³ Often referred to as the “Arrow of Time”, our physical everyday experience of the temporal is that time flows onwards in a linear fashion, unceasingly, from one point to the next.²⁹⁴ However, the “Arrow of Time” is contingent for each perceiving individual; ‘time’ is interwoven with ‘space’ and therefore relative to the motion of the observed and the observer at the macroscopic, or human, scale.²⁹⁵

²⁹² My emphasis. Shlain further notes:

Newton had asserted that space was absolute. It was flat, homogenous, and inert. Space, according to Newton, was everywhere the same. [...] Space and time were inviolably separate; neither affected the other. Space and matter, too, had no reciprocal functions; space did not interact with objects placed in it.

Newton also held that time was absolute: an ever-constant, irresistible river that flowed in but one direction. Even though human consciousness might perceive time differently, depending upon whether an individual is in a dentist’s chair or riding in a roller coaster, time itself remained outside consciousness.

Shlain, Art & Physics, 120-121.

²⁹³ Greene states: “Motion through space is a concept we learn about early in life. Although we don’t often think of things in such terms, we also learn that we, our friends, our belongings, and so forth all *move through time*, as well.” Greene, Elegant Universe, 49.

²⁹⁴ That there is a perceived linearity is evident from the fact that even though there is no apparent difference between films run forwards or backwards at the microscopic -- or atomic and / or subatomic level -- the situation is very different at the macroscopic and therefore human scale. Martin Reese observes:

[T]he *macro*-scopic physical world [...] manifests a definite arrow of time, set by increasing disorder (or entropy). [...] Our subjective perception of time is obviously asymmetric [...] and] throughout our ordinary experience, time’s arrow is utterly unambiguous. Any movie of everyday (*macroscopic*) events looks grotesquely different when run backwards.

Rees, Before the Beginning, 211-212.

²⁹⁵ As Reese explains:

Clocks tick at different rates, depending on where they are or how they move [...] We experience three spatial dimensions: left and right; forward and backward; up and down. Three numbers are therefore needed to locate an event in space. We also need a fourth number to define an event; the *time*, measured on some kind of clock. Time is clearly different from the other three dimensions; we have some freedom to move in the three spatial dimensions, but are carried along willy-nilly by the “flow” of time. Einstein showed that time and space are linked. Two events [...] have a definite separation in four-dimensional space-time; their distance apart in space and their separation in time, depend on how the observer is moving.

Ibid, 209.

The ramifications of Einstein's work were profound. In an examination of the connections between art and physics, Shlain stresses how this shift modified our basic understanding:

[T]he fallout from the special theory of relativity changed some very fundamental beliefs about reality after 1905. Henceforth, the following principles would have to be integrated into an entirely new conception of the world:

Space and time are relative, are reciprocal coordinates, and combine to form the next higher dimension called the *space-time continuum*. They are not constant, absolute, and separate.

There is no such thing as a favored point of view. For objects of substance, there is no inertial frame of reference at absolute rest, and the ether does not exist.

The rules of nineteenth-century causality under certain relativistic circumstances are abrogated.

Color is not only an inherent property of matter but it depends also upon the relative speed of an observer.

A universal present moment does not exist.

Observations about reality are observer-dependent, which implies a certain degree of subjectivity.²⁹⁶

All things are not 'relative', according to Einstein's special theory; however the way we understand the world is, for our "perceptions" are "observer-dependent."²⁹⁷ The observer and the observed are inseparable. Shlain also acknowledges the great debt owed to the physicist, Niels Bohr (1885 – 1962), and his concept of "complementarity":

[Bohr's] grand conception, ironically, had more to do with philosophy than with science. His original paper contained not a single equation and was published in a journal of philosophy. The broad, inviting arms of his concept allowed physicists as well as nonphysicists to begin to integrate the paradoxes of relativity and quantum mechanics. Bohr specifically addressed the paradox that light appears to be both wave and particle, but his theory can be applied equally well to the dichotomies of space/time, right/left, and art/physics. He appreciated that observer and observed are also a reciprocal indivisible pair, and proposed that there can be no such thing as objective reality. Combining any of these pairs creates a reciprocal duality that together form a seamless unity. According to Bohr, opposites are not always contradictions; rather, they maybe complementary

²⁹⁶ Shlain, *Art & Physics*, 137.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 132.

aspects of a higher truth. ‘The opposite of a profound truth is another profound truth.’

One of Western civilization’s most important accomplishments has been to separate the *out there* of objective reality from the *in here* of reflective thought. At the outset of the scientific method, Descartes declared that these two were disconnected and distinct phenomena, and in the ensuing centuries, science, the left brain’s most aggressive agent, clarified the confusion that had been wrought by mingling them. The theory of complementarity, however, fuses the *out there* back together with the *in here*.²⁹⁸

Thus, through the subjective lens of relativity and complementarity, any attempts to perceive the outside world objectively and as separate from the observer become problematical.²⁹⁹

But how does the application of this double lens -- which acknowledges the subjective nature of reality and time -- relate to our understanding of the work displayed at the Chapel and in Marfa? As previously discussed, the privileging of the subjective over the objective and the possibility of uniting two seemingly disparate and contradictory dyads were of great interest to both artists. Consider Rothko’s continual exploration of the inherent qualities of paint -- its transparency juxtaposed against opacity (for example, lights against darks) -- and also his innovative solution to the Chapel suite, the fact that he created two different ‘types’, the ‘monochromes’ and ‘black-forms’.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 430.

²⁹⁹ Writing of our debt to Einstein, in particular, Shlain summarises:

The special theory of relativity also weakened the sacrosanct notion that the world outside our consciousness is an objective reality. Aristotle, Bacon, Descartes, Locke, Newton, and Kant all based their respective philosophical citadels upon the assumption that regardless of where you are, the observer, were positioned, and regardless how fast you were moving, the world outside you *was not affected by you*. Einstein’s formulas changed this notion of ‘objective’ external reality. If space and time were relative, then within this malleable grid the objective world assumed a certain plasticity too. The simultaneity or sequence of events, the colors of objects, and the shapes of forms did not solely belong to a world outside human affairs; instead they were also dependent on the speed of the mind hurtling through space that was doing the observing.

Ibid., 136.

Likewise, Judd continually constructed works that investigated the intrinsic properties of material and dichotomies such as open / closed.³⁰¹ At Marfa, he expanded this exploration to include polarised dyads such as inside / outside, here / there and heavy / light.

Due to the inseparability of the observer and the observed, any perception of the real and temporal is highly contingent. The experience of time varies from person to person and sometimes even within that same individual on different occasions, for it depends upon how one experiences an event. Different emotional states and differing circumstances can make time appear to slow or quicken. For me, time in the *Rothko Chapel* seemed to hang, even expand. Although the experience was disorienting on occasion -- due to the vast scale of the paintings that hovered on the periphery of vision -- darkened shapes appeared to loom beside and behind me as I moved through the octagonal interior. There always seemed to be more than enough time to look at and absorb the subtleties. I could always slow the process of looking when I chose by sitting on one of the benches provided. Indeed, spending time with these darker works was Rothko's intent; the finely nuanced canvases don't merely require sustained looking: they demand it. Each time I entered the chapel, I found it was almost impossible to see anything more than impenetrable rectangles on white walls at first because my eyes needed time to adjust to the vastly differing light levels between inside and out. Subtleties

³⁰⁰ Recall the words of Mancusi-Ungaro cited in chapter one: "Rothko brilliantly orchestrated the surfaces of the chapel paintings by exploiting the innate properties of materials to maximum effect with alternative techniques. To have ignored that achievement would have been to deny in part the genius of Mark Rothko. Mancusi-Ungaro, "Nuances of Surface", 29.

³⁰¹ As cited previously in chapter two, Haskell notes that Judd's works are, "never of only one quality; essential to his criterion for success was the dialectic tension between two disparate aspects. This polarization, as he called it, [...] emerged from the conjunction of two dissimilar materials or colors, or from the play between the opulence of polished industrial materials and saturated colors and the almost puritanical restraint of the spare forms." Haskell, *Donald Judd*, 68.

only revealed themselves after a while. Nodelman speaks of this time lag, noting that it was an intentional strategy on Rothko's part:

The viewer's eyes adjust to the lower threshold of contrast that is offered and begin to discriminate some of the elements at play in what had previously been an undifferentiated field. Soon the viewer is actively engaged in searching them out, in evoking their finer aspects and interrelations, and in exploring the emotional resonances that they carry and the chains of association that they set off. The engendering of this mood of attentive awareness, in which the boundaries of the self become permeable, is the goal of the principal features of the chapel *mise-en-scène*.³⁰²

Hypothesising about why and how the gap between initial sight and insight of this suite of deeply dark works occurs, Nodelman explains:

Resituating the chromatic contrasts determining a picture's internal articulation towards the lower extreme of the value scale makes the decipherment of pictorial content initially difficult, requiring a heightened state of attention. But this enhanced attention is not instantaneous in its results: the eye must acclimatize to the abnormally low value range before it can draw the fine discriminations upon which all depends.³⁰³

My experience at Marfa, however, was completely different. When I encountered Judd's work in the artillery sheds, the dazzling display of the light reflecting on the 100 mill aluminum boxes, time appeared to quicken. No seating is provided and boundaries became confused because the general experience of the modified space is always with other viewers. I was never completely sure if I was glimpsing a limb through an actual opening in one of the highly polished boxes or a refracted reflection -- and whose leg or hand was it, anyway? (Figure 30). Was it mine, or did it belong to someone else? Where are the walls? Is the sky inside? Everything was called into question. David Raskin describes his thoughts and experience of these "specific objects" located in this particular space in the following statement:

³⁰² Nodelman, *Rothko Chapel Paintings*, 180.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 175.

In coordinating these objects in their carefully designed environment, Judd presented a fully unified sensation of a particular view in a specific place at a unique moment. The work is a distinctive arrangement of not only reflective aluminum objects, but also of the windows and walls, Texas fields, buildings, blue sky, and the reflections themselves. Each step the viewer takes gives a new sensation a new arrangement of all these perceptual variables, one “snapshot” after another.³⁰⁴

Richard Shiff posits that, for Judd, both ‘time’ and ‘space’ were not absolutes but contingencies. They were “abstractions” and / or “generalities” because they are realized “*only* through a person’s specific actions.”³⁰⁵ Judd himself stated:

[W]hat is needed is a created space, space made by someone, space that is formed as is a solid, the two the same, with the space and the solid defining each other. Time and space 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 a hillside.³⁰⁶

Also, consider a statement for an exhibition catalogue, of February 1993, where Judd addressed, again, how space was contingent because it is a construction:

I found that if I placed a work on a wall or on the ground, I wondered where it was. I found that if I placed a work on a wall in relation to a corner or to 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 work. If the space in one or two directions can

³⁰⁴ Raskin further elucidates:

Like the other Minimalists who were active in politically progressive causes [...] Judd hoped that we would apply this empirical test to all areas of our lives. Because it was meant to be experienced in the moment, his art taught that ideas that fail in experience should be dismissed, whether those ideas are about art, democracy, the U.S. government, or the Vietnam War.

Raskin, “The Chinati Foundation: Order of Importance”: 15.

Please note that the slightly modified version of this article, extended with footnotes, is available online, within which Raskin further argues: “Does what we see fit what we believe? This question lies at the heart of Judd’s devotion to the inductive method of acquiring knowledge – testing specific observations against general ideas. If the ideas prove true through experience, keep them; if not, reject.”

<http://www.artic.edu/%7Edraski/orderofimportance%201.pdf>, not paginated.

Daphne Beal also alludes to the shifting open-ended quality of Judd’s installation at Marfa. “The boxes”, she observes, “play back the surrounding environment differently giving muted reflections of the window views of bright sun, tan grass and moving clouds. The light changes, the boxes change: it is an ever-permutating work.” Daphne Beal, “The Chinati Foundation: Museum in Progress” in, *Art in America*, Vol 88 no10 (Oct, 2000): 120.

³⁰⁵ My emphasis. Shiff, “Donald Judd, Safe from Birds”, 36, fn 26.

³⁰⁶ See “On Russian art and its relation to my work”, Judd, *Complete Writings 1975-1986*, 17.

become clear it's logical to desire the space in all directions to become clear. This usually requires more than a unit or it requires a space built around a unit or it requires the amplification of a unit to an enclosure containing a great deal of space. This is so of some large indoor works and of most large outdoor ones.³⁰⁷

During a panel discussion on art in the landscape, held at Marfa, Richard Shiff argued that space was not a measurable, concrete absolute for Judd; rather, it was felt and highly subjective. Closely reading one of Judd's last texts,³⁰⁸ he noted that when objects are a certain distance apart, the viewer's memory is brought into play because time and / or movement is required to make sense of space between them.³⁰⁹ "I don't think Judd thought of distance in terms of measurement", he explains,

but instead as an experiential relationship that varies from person to person – a different kind of distance that begins at whatever point you decide two things are too far apart to sense the space. This distinction between the space you understand without needing to move and this space that appears only as a kind of memory as you engage in movement would have many implications for the creation of art in the land, which is after all very big space.³¹⁰

Clearly, both 'space' and 'time' were subjective -- 'open' for Judd and others.³¹¹

³⁰⁷ Judd, in Donald Judd: Large Scale Works, 10.

³⁰⁸ See: "Some Aspects of Color in General and Red and Black in Particular". Judd, Donald Judd: Colorist, 79-116.

³⁰⁹ Shiff, "Panel Discussion", in Art in the Landscape: A Symposium Hosted by the Chinati Foundation, Marfa Texas on September 30 & October 1, 1995. (The Chinati Foundation/La Fundacion Chinati & Authors, 2000), 116.

³¹⁰ Ibid.. Elsewhere, Shiff argues:
[Judd's] claim to inventiveness rested on his having created paradigms for works that would define space and time in a new way without becoming part of a synthetic environment of metaphor and anthropomorphism: 'I developed space as a main aspect of art.' He said 'a main aspect' not 'the main aspect'. Instead of becoming a field encompassing all things, rendering each thing like all others in occupying a position within *the* space, Judd's space was a distinct quality to be sensed along with shape, colour, light and simple proportions such as 1:2. His space was a primary among equals. It became an active element rather than a passive container, no longer the homogenising background of a 'picture'.

Shiff, "Donald Judd, Safe from Birds", 50.

³¹¹ For example, consider Kevin Lynch:

But unlike spatial constructs, temporal ones are less easily verified by direct perception. Thus time structure is more subject to modification by internal state or external suggestion. The

According to Richard Mankewicz, artists can play a pivotal role in locating and disseminating important shifts in scientific thought, such as Einstein’s special theory of relativity, Bohr’s theory of “complementarity” and questions surrounding our understanding of ‘time’ and ‘space’.³¹² “The arts”, he notes, “are often the most public expression of philosophical shifts and of the personal relations of artists to the changing technological environment.”³¹³ Further,

The new multi-dimensional and non-Euclidean geometries, which started life as abstract mathematical theories, were not only being employed in the new physics but were an inspiration to artistic and philosophical movements which sought to overthrow established modes of thought. In the world of art these expressions took on a variety of forms, ranging from the spiritual to the anarchic – and even both simultaneously. The abandonment of Euclidean

location of self in time feeds on thinner stuff than the sense of place, and that may be the reason for a conscious policy of thickening the external references to time. Estimates of duration are notoriously subjective; the past seems longer the more recent it is or the more filled it is with notable events. Time ‘goes more quickly’ for the aged. Or when internal processes speed up as in fever or in fantasy, then external events seem to occur much more slowly. Apparent duration decreases with inattention, as we are more active or act with greater success or with stronger motivation, or as perceptible changes are better organized. It is far more difficult to make a mental representation of a measure of time than of a measure of length, or to match observed durations of lengths to those mental units.

Lynch, What Time is This Place?, 123.

³¹² On the meshing of ‘time’ and ‘space’ Rothko himself observed:

[...O]ur own notions of time and space today are prone to be combined in a single formula called *timespace*. Yet this conception, which is popularly alluded to as “the fourth dimension,” must remain an abstraction for, to our sense still, space and time are measured by two different standards, and the relation needs an intellectual process for its combination.

Also:

We might say that all natural laws have always existed, and the universe has operated accordingly; man’s failure to apprehend them, or his denial of them when they are first apprehended, does not undermine the universality of their existence in relation to both space and time. (Thus the fact that not everyone can understand relativity does not refute its existence.)

Rothko, “Plasticity and Space” & “Beauty”, in The Artist’s Reality, 48 & 63, respectively.

³¹³ Referring specifically to the relationship between mathematics and the arts, he continues:

It is certainly not the case that mathematics was the only influence or even the main influence in various cultural movements, but it is interesting to look at those areas in which mathematics has played a unique and important role. The very use of mathematical terms within artistic discourses has shown that artists have taken on board the language and ideas of mathematics and transformed them through the prism of artistic life.

Mankewicz, Story of Mathematics, 166.

geometry as *the* spatial paradigm meant that space was created for new perspectives on life, the universe and everything.³¹⁴

Clearly, art is a powerful form of communication that operates on a multiplicity of levels; it speaks to both the individual and the collective alike. Although all understanding is conditional -- for, “[k]nowledge”, as Linda Martin Alcoff notes, “is always unfinished and incomplete precisely because of the open-ended nature of experience and of meaning” -- art can help to make sense of the known world through locating, expressing and disseminating important shifts in thought: and this where politics re-enter the picture.³¹⁵

Both Rothko and Judd sought to avoid art-institutional mediation because they became dissatisfied with existing exhibition strategies and wished, to reiterate the words of Goodman, to “increase intrinsic functioning”. Their desire to avoid art institutional mediation and thus “extrinsic power” necessitated radical solutions, to which end they established new paradigms in Houston and Marfa. The alternatives they created -- the Rothko Chapel and The Chinati Foundation -- are not only models of new exhibition strategies but, because they were founded by artists who actively engaged with the ideals

³¹⁴ Richard Mankiewicz, Story of Mathematics, 171. When considering this connection between art and mathematics, Mankiewicz earlier observes:

In the twentieth century, Cubism, Futurism and Surrealism all came to terms with concepts from the new geometries, such as non-Euclidean geometry and multi-dimensional space, specifically the fourth dimension. In the early years of the century the new geometries were an important influence on individual artists more than on each movement as a whole. By the end of the 1920s the temporal fourth dimension of Einstein’s theory of relativity had gained prominence, but before then there had been much investigation of a spatial fourth dimension. [...]By the end of the 1920s the fourth dimension as a spatial dimension was almost wholly replaced by the idea of a fourth dimension that was temporal. Time and hence motion became of prime concern to artists.

Mankiewicz, Story of Mathematics, 166-168.

For a thought provoking and thorough examination of this topic in relation to Marcel Duchamp please see Linda Dalrymple Henderson, The Fourth Dimension & Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

³¹⁵ Alcoff, “Phenomenology, Post-structuralism, and Feminist Theory”, in Feminist Phenomenology, 48.

of autonomy and liberty in a non-coercive society, these spaces are examples of how art can be a force for positive social change. Predicated upon the anarchism of Rothko and Judd, these two sites are poignant reminders that there is no single, privileged point of view and that individual sovereignty is not merely a dream, but a lived possibility.

CONCLUSION

The first two chapters examined why Rothko and Judd became disenchanted with conventional display strategies in light of their personal politics. Using primary sources where possible, chapters one and two traced the trajectories of this dissatisfaction to two very distinct sites where art and space are experienced in tandem -- the Rothko Chapel in Houston and the Marfa, Texas, installations. Both artists constructed distinctive spaces, one sacred the other secular, which broke with the tradition of the neutralised white cube gallery. “Unshadowed, white, clean” and “artificial” the space of the white cube, as explained by Brian O’Doherty, is “devoted to the technology of esthetics”.³¹⁶ Further,

Works of art are mounted, hung, scattered for study. Their ungrubby surfaces are untouched by time and its vicissitudes. Art exists in a kind of eternity of display, and though there is lots of ‘period’ (late modern), there is no time. This eternity gives the gallery a limbolike status; one has to have died already to be there. Indeed the presence of that odd piece of furniture, your own body, seems superfluous, an intrusion. The space offers the thought that while eyes and minds are welcome, space-occupying bodies are not – or are tolerated only as kinesthetic mannekins for further study.³¹⁷

Hypothesising about why these un-inflected, depersonalised spaces became so prevalent during the twentieth century and also about how they function, O’Doherty elucidates:

The ideal [modernist white cube gallery] subtracts from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is ‘art’. The work is isolated from everything that would detract from its own evaluation of itself. This gives the space a presence possessed by other spaces where the conventions are preserved through the repetition of a closed system of values. Some of the sanctity of the church, the formality of the courtroom, the mystique of the experimental laboratory joins with chic design to produce a unique chamber of esthetics.³¹⁸

³¹⁶ O’Doherty, Inside the White Cube, 15.

³¹⁷ Ibid..

³¹⁸ Ibid, 14.

Unlike these traditional “chambers of esthetics” -- where the art is mediated by external factors and accessible only “under conditions that are mostly safeguarded by institutions” that, as a consequence, require “certain patterns of behaviour” on behalf of the beholder,³¹⁹ -- the unmediated alternatives presented by Rothko and Judd in Texas circumvent the interventions of the art institution’s white cube.

Rothko’s transition to the end point, the Chapel, came slowly. He had been exhibiting since 1933 and from that point onwards, his frustration with the exhibition spaces became increasingly evident. Although he always gave institutions explicit instructions and hung his own work when possible, the Seagram Building commission (1958-59) gave him the first opportunity to explore the potential of creating a total environment with large-scale canvases. Lessons learnt from this project and the later Harvard commission were invaluable to his understanding of how a total environment could be realised. Although the process of creating a unity of work and space was highly conflicted at times, Rothko’s vision finally came to fruition in the form of the Chapel as we see it today.

Judd, on the other hand, consistently worked towards the permanent unification of his art and the exhibition space.³²⁰ Always vocal about the harm done to art through poor installation practices in the existing gallery system, Judd continually sought alternatives. As early as 1959 he installed his “specific objects” and the work of others in his loft on a more permanent basis and his subsequent move to 101 Spring Street, in 1968, was

³¹⁹ Wolfgang Kemp, “The Work of Art and its Beholder: the Methodology of the Aesthetic of Reception”, in *The Subjects of Art History: Historical Objects in Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. Mark Cheetham, Michael Ann Holly & Keith Moxey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 185.

³²⁰ In “On Installation” from 1982, Judd himself writes: “After the work itself, my effort for some eighteen years, beginning in a loft on Nineteenth Street in New York, has been to permanently install as much work as possible, as well as to install some by other artists.” Judd, *Complete Writings 1975-1986*, 19.

pivotal. This five-storey building was sensitively renovated by Judd and each floor was assigned a different activity. Judd again permanently installed his work alongside that of others within the space. The move to Marfa became necessary because his vision outgrew the confines of the city. In this sparsely populated area of the desert, he was able to expand and breathe life into his dream to create an alterna-museum; what is now known as The Chinati Foundation is the result.

The third chapter considered five inter-connected themes arising from the alternative exhibition spaces of these two radical artists. First is the pursuit of individual autonomy, which was analysed in relation to the anarchist paradigms presented by Stirner and Goldman and the model of sovereignty, proposed by Nietzsche. Next, the correlation between anti-authoritarian ‘open’ society of anarchism and the ‘open’ art experience of their exhibition spaces was considered. Third, the value of directly experiencing anti-representational work and how seemingly ‘content-less’ art such as Rothko’s large abstracts and Judd’s “specific objects” do not represent but re-present was explored. This, in turn, led to a consideration of inter-subjectivity and the multiplicity of meanings. Last, the contingent nature of the temporal embodied viewing experience as a result of the indivisible nature of the relationship between observer and the observed was investigated.

If, as Dewey averred, art is a distillation of the lived experience,³²¹ it follows that each work of art contains tremendous potential and thus can be a force for social change.

As explored earlier, when all the senses are willingly employed by an embodied

³²¹ As Dayton explains:

The key concept in his philosophy is experience, which Dewey conceived of as a set of natural transactions with the environment within which both values and goals emerge. [...] Experience for Dewey is not internal but rather the field of lived human activity; accordingly, art is not something esoteric and removed from ordinary living, but merely an intensification of the meaning potential which every experiential transaction has. An art object is an expression of this intensification of significance in experience.

Eric Dayton, “Part 2: Expression and the Aesthetic Object, Introduction”, in Art & Interpretation, 126-127.

spectator, the experience is profound. How much more compelling will the embodied viewing experience be, then, when radical artists such as Rothko and Judd remove their work from traditional exhibition spaces -- be they commercial galleries or established art museums promulgating grand narratives -- and take total command of when, where and how the spectator encounters their work?

Although generally reticent, Rothko made his thoughts on the power of art to affect social change through direct action became apparent when he argued:

Man's senses collect and accumulate, the emotions and mind convert and order, and through the medium of art, they are emitted to participation again in the life stream where in turn they will stimulate action in other men. For art is not only expressive but communicable as well, this communicability imparts to it a social function.

Also:

Art is not only a form of action, it is a form of social action. For art is a type of communication, and when it enters the environment it produces its effects just as any other form of action does. It might be said that its use as a means of social action is dependent upon the numbers which it affects.³²²

Judd's position is equally evident, as chapter two discusses. Recall his response to the question posed during Artforum's symposium on the "Artist and Politics".³²³ More oblique indications become plain if we consider how he constantly focused upon individuality when critiquing the work of other artists -- his refusal to subsume their art production into artificial categories and movements -- and also the way he used his catalogue essays as platforms for his politics -- for example, the inclusion of "*Nie Weider Krieg*" in the promotion material for the exhibition entitled "Donald Judd: Architektur" (Vienna, February, 1991). According to David Raskin, there is absolutely no doubt of

³²² See "The Satisfaction of the Creative Impulse" ca.1941 & "Art as a Form of Action", Rothko, Writings on Art, 28 & 10, respectively.

³²³ To reiterate, Judd began his essay with the following: "I've always thought that my work had political implications, had attitudes that would permit, limit or prohibit some kinds of political behavior and some institutions." Raskin, Donald Judd's Skepticism, 38.

Judd's intent: "For Judd, in attempting to secure for his works of art only their accord with empirical facts, the individual was sovereign, rights were not abstract, and truth was not a product of complex philosophy or civil government."³²⁴

During an examination of the inherent power relations in the institution of the art museum, Carol Duncan argues that the values presented and promoted by these bodies are those which it comprehensively endorses. "To control a museum," she explains,

means precisely to control the representation of a community and its highest values and truths. It is also the power to define the relative standing of individuals within that community. Those who are best prepared to perform its ritual – those who are most able to respond to its various cues – are also those whose identities (social, sexual, racial, etc.) the museum most fully confirms. [...] What we see and do not see in art museums – and on what terms and by whose authority we do or do not see it – is closely linked to larger questions about who constitutes the community and who defines its identity.³²⁵

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, the question of control, who wields it and why, was of intense interest to both Rothko and Judd, especially in relation to their art and how it was to be experienced. The solutions they proposed were filtered through their anarchist politics -- which are also informed by a sustained interest in Nietzsche (Rothko)

³²⁴ Raskin, "Specific Opposition: Judd's Art and Politics", in *Art History*, Vol 24 no 5 (Nov, 2001), 703. Rudi Fuchs also alludes to the congruency between Judd's art and his politics, how his "specific objects" can be read as manifestations of his desire to live a "moral" life; Fuchs suggests:

Size, then, as I said earlier is not a great issue in Judd's art. The real issue, next to material perfection, is scale and proportion – and these properties, too, are, in Judd's mind and in the logic of his art, of a moral order. Things in life and human society are wrong when the scale and the proportions are wrong (as, for example, in the case of most corporate architecture). Muddled proportions are disruptive. Today, politicians and businessmen excitedly speak of the global market, but at the same time that market destroys small communities because it destroys small-scale manufacture. It goes too far, perhaps, to relate the careful and precise way in which Judd subtly articulates scale and proportion in his work – keeping it humane and gentle – to his political beliefs. The work is not simply an illustration or model of life. Yet the obstinacy he applies to maintaining human scale and identifiable proportion, formulated in a clear vocabulary, somehow must come from the same practical idealism with which he is revitalizing a traditional ranch on the Rio Grande in West Texas. There is an unmistakable closeness between his art and life which, I believe, makes his work particularly exemplary.

Fuchs, "Decent Beauty", 7.

³²⁵ Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 8-9.

and pragmatism (Judd) -- and privileged the sovereignty of the embodied, subjective spectator.

Although Rothko did not live to experience the final result himself, his mark is indelibly stamped upon the Chapel project, a combination of art and space that forms a cohesive unit. His desire to synthesise site and work was made manifest here and it afforded him the perfect opportunity to create a total environment that would foster the more honest, 'open' communication between viewer and work he so passionately desired. The Rothko Chapel commission gave him the chance to consider how best to control viewing conditions for his paintings whilst still maintaining the autonomy of the beholder. "In this ensemble," write Barbara Novak and Brian O'Doherty, "[Rothko] posed for himself questions (how to coerce the spectator while insisting on his/her freedom?)"³²⁶ The finely calibrated, large scale canvases are hung with exacting precision in the octagonal space at the Rothko Chapel in strict accordance to the artist's dictates. Yes, the spectator is undoubtedly immersed in the work, yet never totally overcome. Highly aware of 'seeing ourselves see' we as viewers become very conscious of our role as active agents. Any meaning derived from this 'open' art experience must be contingent -- and therefore subject to multiple readings -- because the paintings are anti-representational abstracts that do not represent but re - present, instead. Viewers are required to fill the 'gap', to undertake the critical task of producing meaning for themselves.

The same is true of the Marfa experience. Judd's "specific objects" are meticulously installed with intention and precision at The Chinati Foundation. The 100 mill aluminum boxes in the renovated artillery sheds and the concrete structures installed

³²⁶ Novak and O'Doherty, "Rothko's Dark Paintings: Tragedy and Void", 274.

outside in the landscape are likewise contingent, anti-representational, ‘content-less’ forms. As with all of Judd’s art, both of these series can function as individual units, as groupings and as complete wholes that even combine at times.³²⁷ The art critic Germano Celant explains:

[Judd’s] sculpture always presents wholes of separate entities, which are not however separable, which differentiate and limit one another in a reciprocal basis in order to constitute an indivisible whole. Because the entities are interactive, the relationships are multiple and dynamic and each and every sculpture is never closed, because it establishes a continuous dialogue between the solid and the empty. [...] In addition to this, the materials that make up the whole can be of various depth, refraction, color, finish, transparency, and weight. It therefore follows that Judd excludes, from sculpture, all hierarchic value between the front and the back, above and beneath, between material and immaterial; and therefore on the interior of a single element the choice is always binary. In this way, the sculpture will be autonomous in and of itself, and the act of privileging one datum over another will be only a question of environmental position.³²⁸

Installed *in situ* and in perpetuity, presented in time and space, the eye and the body of the beholder are implicated as they are impelled to walk through the space. No longer passive, no longer mere a consumer, the active, embodied spectator is made responsible for creating meaning that is, again, extremely subjective and highly fluid.

Knower and known are enmeshed in these encounters with the work at the Chapel and in Marfa, for the “lived experience” is highly individualised. This more complete

³²⁷ There is a direct relationship between the way Judd’s “specific objects” are structured and exhibited, and his thoughts on how society should best be organised. Judd advocates the decentralised ‘open’ social system of Kropotkin, the implementation of anti-hierarchical, “intersecting networks” of power proposed by May. Recall his words from the essay “Imperialism, Nationalism & Regionalism” cited previously, where he stated:

In solving a problem, an individual should join with another person or several only as a last resort. They should join a somewhat larger group in the same way and so on out to towns, counties, and states or provinces. At no point should the power exceed what is necessary to solve the problems at that point...And at no time should the group or institution become mysterious or moral, something greater than the problems it was created to solve...Local control has to develop: the people have to take power.

Judd, Complete Writings 1975-1986, 133.

³²⁸ Germano Celant, “Minimal Art, Conceptual Art, Land Art”, in New York, New York: Fifty Years of Art, Architecture, Cinema, Performance, Photography & Video, eds. Germano Celant & Lisa Dennison (Milano; Monaco (MC): Skira; Grimaldi Forum, 2006), 253-4.

way of being in the world is, of necessity, “open-ended, plural, fragmented, and shifting not because of the limitations of language, but because of the nature of embodied, temporal existence.”³²⁹ It is, however, crucial to remember that this subjective embodiment is always “culturally inscribed”.³³⁰ Meaning, then, is not necessarily fixed for all time or for any one particular individual either, for conditions vary greatly. The temporal nature of the perception process demands the use of both memory and anticipation. Open to continual revision, our “funded” apprehension -- Dewey’s fusing of past experience with the present -- is constructed and reconstructed in perpetuity, according to changing circumstances. Meaning is in constant flux. Embodied, temporal encounters with Rothko and Judd’s work at the Chapel and in Marfa foster ideas of complexity and multiplicity -- perhaps an expression of the contemporary condition -- and, in the self-reflexive process of “seeing ourselves see”, self-awareness is heightened.³³¹

It is precisely this element of theatricality, when viewers ‘see themselves see’, that the art critic Michael Fried railed so passionately against when he critiqued the work of Judd and others, in 1967.³³² Installations such as these proposed by Rothko and Judd in Texas must be encountered through the body, with all the senses engaged, and thus self-

³²⁹ Alcoff, “Phenomenology, Post-structuralism, and Feminist Theory”, in Feminist Phenomenology, 49.

³³⁰ Ibid.. Although far beyond the scope of this thesis, please note that Debra Bergoffen presents a convincing argument for the lived experience as being “always sexed and gendered”. This is because the “lived body” does not, and indeed can not, function in isolation. Debra B Bergoffen, “Gendering the Perceiving Subject”, in Feminist Phenomenology, 61.

³³¹ Rosenthal, Understanding Installation Art, 64.

Hal Foster also argues that this reorientation of the relationship between the art and the spectator complicates instead of simplifies, for it opens the viewing experience and makes space for the subjective. He states: [in the process p]erception is made reflexive [...] and so rendered complex.” Hal Foster, The Return of the Real: The Avant-garde at the End of the Century. (Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press, 1996), 36

³³² See: Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood”, in Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology, 116-47.

awareness is an intrinsic part of the viewing process. This quality of ‘seeing oneself see’ is often underscored when art is installed with care and intention within a particular space so as to orchestrate the viewing experience.³³³ The viewer, in effect, becomes the subject. Douglas Crisp observes:

[Objects installed in real time and space] redirected consciousness back on itself and the real-world conditions that ground consciousness. The coordinates of perception were established as existing not only between the spectator and the work but among spectator, artwork, and the place inhabited by both. [...] Whatever relationship was now to be perceived was contingent on the viewer’s temporal movement in the space shared with the object. Thus the work belonged to its site; if its site were to change, so would the interrelationship of object, context, and viewer. Such a reorientation of the perceptual experience of art made the viewer, in effect, the subject of the work, whereas under the reign of modernist idealism this privileged position devolved ultimately on the artist, the sole generator of the artwork’s formal relationships.³³⁴

The subjective nature of ‘seeing’ has a propensity to objectify the thing seen and there is a certain ironic quality to the self aware spectator. This irony occurs because all experience is unavoidably filtered through what has been referred to as the “medium of reflection”.³³⁵ I argue that it would be a grave error, however, to privilege this more cerebral and aloof “medium of reflection” over the more complete knowledge gained

³³³ “That quality”, according to Mark Rosenthal, “of beholding oneself beholding is often a crucial behaviour associated with much installation art, especially of the site-specific variety.” Rosenthal, Understanding Installation Art, 64.

³³⁴ Douglas Crisp, On the Museum's Ruins (Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press, 1993), 154.

³³⁵ Karsten Harries, The Meaning of Modern Art: A Philosophical Interpretation (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1968), 50. He continues:

The look tends to degrade the seen by transforming it into an object. Objects have their foundation in the subject. [...]

The interesting depends on a movement of reflection which enables the individual to detach himself from his engaged being in the world in order to enjoy it. [...]

Like a diarist who enjoys not so much life as the entries in his diary, he puts life at a distance and filters it through the medium of reflection; it is precisely this distance which safeguards his freedom and enables him to pick some things and leave out others, transforming life into something more interesting. [...]

Interest is the negation of boredom. Both are brought out into the open by reflection.

Ibid., 54 -55.

through transactional unity, especially in relation to the permanent installations of Rothko and Judd. Both deliberately eliminated established hierarchies between audience and work, shifting creative responsibility to the viewer. Consequently, meaning becomes open ended at these sites.

This creative responsibility for interpretation, the *rasa* mentioned in chapter three, is referred to in literary theory as the “blank” and / or the “aesthetics of indeterminacy”.³³⁶ The reader completes the work using her / his imagination and personal experience. Wolfgang Kemp explains: “works of art are unfinished in themselves in order to be finished by the beholder. This state of unfinishedness or indeterminacy is constructed and intentional. [... T]his impulse turns its ‘blanks’ into important links or causes for constituting meaning.”³³⁷ Clearly, the process is open-ended and results in multiplicity of meaning. There is, however, an inherent danger when using language to describe a work of art, for -- as both Rothko and Judd were aware -- they are essentially different modes and meaning derived from the visual is often problematised by the use of words.³³⁸ “Naming the visual”, as Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe perceptively observes, not only clouds our understanding because verbal /written

³³⁶ Kemp, “The Work of Art and its Beholder”, 188.

³³⁷ Ibid., 188.

³³⁸ However, as Patricia Gentner observes, art criticism does have a role to play in art appreciation and she suggests that it may prove fruitful to consider the critic as a different kind of artist. Highly cognisant of the slippery nature of words when used to describe the visual, she suggests that their value is not in confining but broadening understanding, in providing a parallel ‘text’ to augment not lock down meaning. She writes: [It would be beneficial to view] critics as artists in their own right – but artists in a different manner. In a different art where the precise values of words try to extract not a meaning but an appreciation for a work, and to try to communicate this appreciation to an audience. Gentner, “Breaking into a ‘Semiotic Enclave’”: 285-6.

communication “lodges” the visual “in language” but “robs” it of its “visuality”.³³⁹

Further,

[O]ne difference between the visual and language is that while paintings etc. may point to ideas, words are ideas. And what is more, they’re as often as not ideas which convey themselves through an implicitly visual image, so that when describing a painting the writer is likely to submerge one visual image, the painting, in the images conjured up to describe it.³⁴⁰

How, then, is one to short-circuit any predisposition on the part of the viewer to “lodge” the “visual” in “language”? The solution to this conundrum, as practiced by Rothko and Judd, was to carefully orchestrate the viewing circumstances so that all encounters with the art works at the Chapel and in Marfa are kinaesthetic. The beholder is able to derive meaning more directly and is given the opportunity to come to a fuller appreciation of the fusion of work and exhibition space because all the senses are engaged in the process of decoding and deciphering to create meaning.

Although there may be similarities between different viewers’ experiences any understanding is contingent because it is unique to the individual. Dewey’s pragmatic principle of the highly subjective, temporal, “lived experience” was reinforced by significant changes in scientific thought that came to light during the first half of the twentieth century. From the field of theoretical physics, Einstein’s Special Theory of Relativity and Bohr’s Theory of Complementarity unequivocally confirmed that perception is observer dependent. Dependence on the observer is central to a deep understanding of the works of Rothko and Judd installed in the Chapel and at Marfa. Of particular pertinence to these permanent installations are: that ‘time’ and ‘space’ have a

³³⁹ Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, *Beyond Piety: Critical Essays on the Visual Arts, 1986 – 1993* (Cambridge; New York; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 41.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

certain plasticity because, being reciprocal coordinates they form a malleable grid; ‘time’ and ‘space’ are relative and not absolutes as previously believed; there is no favoured point of view; there is no absolute objective external reality because the observer and the observed are reciprocal and indivisible. The Cartesian split -- that privileged the mind over body, the external over the internal, the objective over the subjective -- is now called into question.³⁴¹ That perceptions of the outside world can never be totally objective and separate, but are always inextricably linked to the observer, had now been verified, theoretically, beyond question. This suggests the possibility that knowledge can be situational and contingent because, as it is observer dependent, it will always be subjective and therefore highly fluid; the individual perspective is privileged and this is where politics enters the picture.

That the individual should be privileged over an established externally imposed social order is, of course, a core tenet of anarchism. The paradigm of the autonomous being -- the person who constantly self-interrogates and continually questions the power relations between themselves and others to ensure freedom and liberty for all -- is central to all strands of the political movement. A free, non-coercive, anti-hierarchical society is the ultimate goal. Stirner’s extreme individualist is at liberty to freely accept “associations” as needs dictate and yes, the egoist places the needs of the autonomous individual above all, but not at the expense of the needs of others’. The openly structured, dynamic society proposed by Kropotkin is one where autonomous individuals again

³⁴¹ As Leonard Shlain notes;

Subjectivity – which before the twentieth century had been the *bête noire* of all science while revered as inspiration of all art – crossed the great divide. With a sense of foreboding and unease, science was forced to admit this bastard child into its inner sanctum. The so-called objective world changed size, form, color, and sequentiality when a subjective observer changed speed and direction relative to it.

Shlain, Art & Physics, 136

profit by loose, free-forming associations as needs arise. Established in the spirit of mutual aid, they function in a world where decentralised, non-coercive forms of self-government are the norm. As Antliff argues, these ‘open’ social systems are analogous to the ‘open’ art experience. This is what Rothko and Judd explore. Denied one privileged vantage point at the Chapel and Chinati, the embodied spectator is prompted to move through the installation and thus, the temporal, individual response is valued in the egalitarian relationships intentionally established by the artists between art, architecture / space and viewer.

As creative individuals, both Rothko and Judd fashioned unique solutions to the nexus of issues which surrounded the reception and perception of their works, solutions that were predicated upon their political convictions. As these two radical artists sought to orchestrate the viewing experience at the Rothko Chapel and The Chinati Foundation they fought to lessen “extrinsic power” by furthering “intrinsic functioning”.³⁴² Standing testament to Nietzsche’s maxim that, “the worth of art rests with its experiential origin”,³⁴³ they made space for the subjective responses of the embodied viewer and thus, in the process, poignantly champion and celebrate the rights of the sovereign individual.

³⁴² Goodman, Drawing the Line, 176.

³⁴³ Thiele, Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul, 133.



Figure 1:

The Rothko Chapel exterior looking north towards the front façade across reflecting pool with Barnett Newman's *the Broken Obelisk* (1963-67) in front. Note the window-less, red brick, uninflected exterior, the two recessed black doors beneath the black frieze-like element atop the porch on the south arm and also the west and east arms of the truncated cruciform shape to the left and right.



Figure 2:

The Rothko Chapel from the reflecting pool looking north, towards the main entrance, *without* Barnett Newman's *the Broken Obelisk* (1963-67). Note the south-west and south-east oblique walls which presage the octagonal interior.



Figure 3:

The interior of the Rothko Chapel with feature-less doorways leading back out to the foyer in the south wall.

Painting programme from left to right: *Untitled* (1966) the single 'monochrome' on the south-east angle wall; *Untitled* (1965) the single 'black-form' on the south entrance wall, (opposite the apse triptych); and, *Untitled* (1966) the single 'monochrome' on the south-west wall.



Figure 4:

The interior of the Rothko Chapel featuring the slightly recessed apse-like area to the north and also the sectional ceiling -- which is angled up to meet the faceted, octagonal oculus now obscured by a baffle. Note as well, the different scale of the major walls oriented towards the west and north and the minor oblique walls to the north-west and the north-east. The un-adorned doorway in the west wall leads to a small storage area.

Painting programme from left to right: *Untitled*, (1966-67) the west wall 'black-form' triptych with raised central panel; *Untitled*, (1966) the single 'monochrome' on the north-west angle wall; *Untitled*, (1965) the 'monochrome' triptych in the recessed apse to the north; and, a partial view of *Untitled*, (1966) the single 'monochrome' on the north-east wall.



Figure 5:

The usual seating plan for the Chapel, four low benches oriented toward the major walls.

Painting programme: *Untitled*, (1965) the apse triptych on the north wall (three 'monochromes') flanked to the left and right by single 'monochromes' on the oblique north-west and north-east walls, both *Untitled*, (1966).



Figure 6:

Please note the dark triangular shadow in the right-hand doorway, which visually extends the rectangular painting further into the viewer's space.

Painting programme from left to right: a partial view of *Untitled*, (1965) the apse triptych; *Untitled*, (1966) the single 'monochrome' on the north-east wall; *Untitled*, (1966-67) the east wall 'black-form' triptych with a centrally raised panel; and, a partial view of *Untitled*, (1966) the single 'monochrome' on the oblique south-east wall.



Figures 7 & 8:

The road to Marfa, TX.



Figure 9:

Artillery Sheds 2 & 1, off in the distance and purchased in 1979. The other buildings on the de-commissioned Fort D.A. Russell site to the left -- the u-shaped barracks, for example -- were obtained the following year.



Figure 10:

Artillery Shed 1, exterior.

Note the semi-circular, metal Quonset roof. With new proportions of 1 : 1 -- original structure : roof -- Judd transformed the squat military structure into an elegant building. The a-symmetrical, red-brick front façade features seven windows and an off-central axis single door.



Figure 11:

Artillery Shed 2, exterior.

Note the red-bricked, symmetrical front façade with a door on the central axis flanked by two windows either side.

Judd's original intention was to glaze the semicircular ends of each new roof and establish a long, length-wise axis. Intended as a counter-balance to the broad cross axis that was created with the addition of the series of large windows on either side, this change never took place because of financial constraints.



Figure 12:

Detail of the fenestration in the Artillery Sheds.

By replacing the original garage doors with a series of large, almost square (6 : 5), quartered windows, Judd emphasised the width of the buildings; the main axes now run through the glass façades not from door to door along the length of each shed.



Figure 13:

Untitled, (1980-84) - Judd's concrete structures in the landscape at Marfa, three groupings.

Close to the edge of the property line and stretching one kilometre along a north-south axis, this series is comprised of 60 individual units arranged in fifteen groupings.

There are a minimum of two and a maximum of six units in each grouping. The distance between each grouping from centre to centre is always constant, at sixty metres. However, spacing and configuration within the groupings varies with two of the groupings having components that touch. One or two sides of each element may be open -- there are no completely closed units -- and, if two sides are open they are always opposite.



Figure 14:

Untitled, (1982-86) – A portion of Judd's 100 mill aluminum boxes.

Installed in three rows -- fifty-two in Artillery Shed 1 and forty-eight in Shed 2 -- the 100 mill aluminum boxes are oriented perpendicular to the glazed walls so that their short sides face onto the windows.

The boxes can be divided horizontally, vertically or diagonally, they may have a recessed top or side and, if partitioned with more than one divider, these are always parallel and set four inches apart. They are all different.



Figure 15:

Untitled, (1980-84) – detail of a grouping of Judd’s concrete structures in the landscape at Marfa.

Note the use of butt joints and also how the poured concrete slabs are joined -- the sides contain the floor and are topped by the roof.



Figure 16:

Untitled, (1980-84) – detail of a single concrete structure

Evidence of the manufacturing process is still evident; note the imprint of the wood grain left from the original mould.



Figure 17:

Untitled, (1980-84) – detail of a grouping of concrete structures

The 1 : 1 : 2 ratio of the individual units becomes evident as short ends of one unit, which form a perfect square, are glimpsed through two open long sides of another.



Figure 18:

Untitled, (1980-84) – detail of a single unit

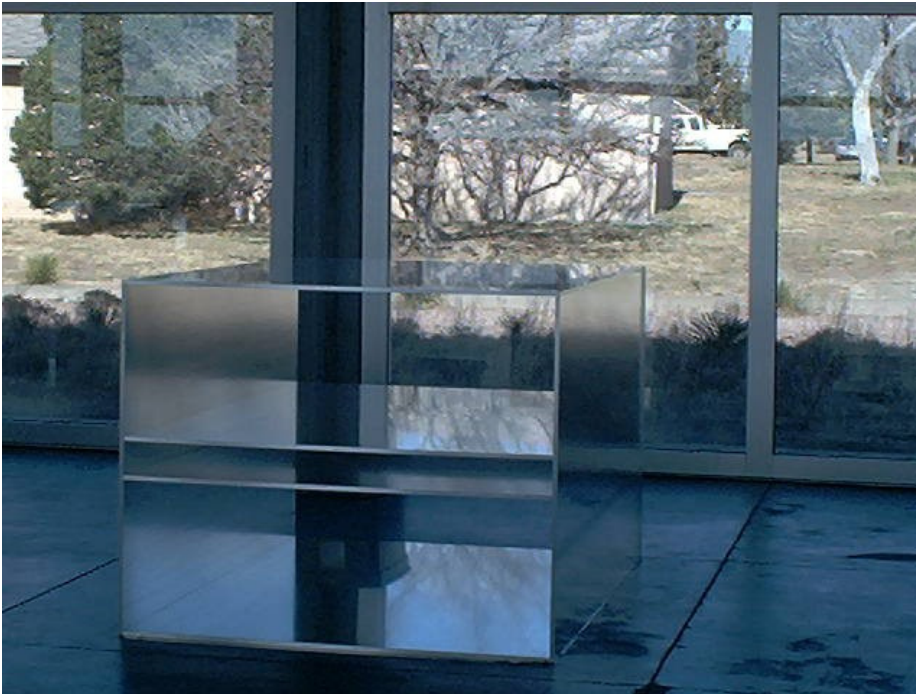
One of Judd's concrete structures showing signs of wear in the top right hand corner note, also, the slight bow in the top slab.



Figure 19:

Untitled, (1982-86) – Three of the four 100 mill aluminum boxes in the vestibule of Artillery Shed 1.

Please note the contrasting qualities of a 100 mill aluminum box: transparency versus opacity; the real versus the reflected; the solid and the void; and, materiality and immateriality.



Figures 20 & 21:

Untitled, (1982-86) – a single, mill aluminum box

Two views of the same box illustrating how light and position of the viewer impacts the appearance what had been solid and grounded now seems to float, even disappear.



Figures 22 & 23:

Artillery Shed 1, vestibule and main hall.

Looking through a Judd designed window in vestibule towards the concrete structures in the distance (above). Boundaries collapsing between inside and out, here and there; the juxtaposition of the concrete structures installed in the landscape and a single, mill aluminum box in the sheds (below).



Figure 24:

Spectators viewing both the concrete structures in the landscape and the 100 mill aluminum boxes within.



Figure 25:

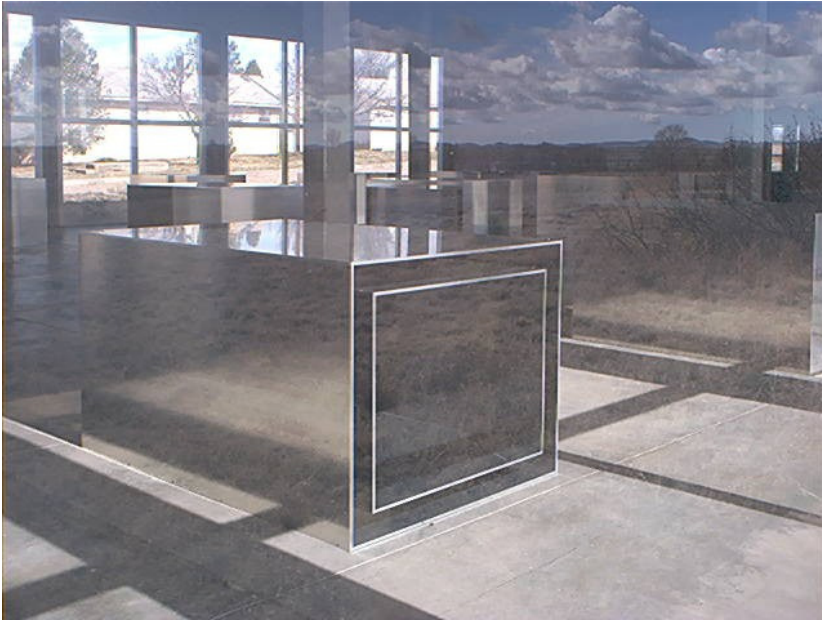
Artillery Shed 2 - side elevation showing vestibule and fenestration details.



Figure 26 & 27:

Main halls of Artillery Sheds 1 & 2 (above & below).

Note the dividing wall in the eighth bay, natural brick left exposed which obscures the sight line of the outer rows of boxes, above, and the centrally located dividing wall, painted grey which masks the middle row, beneath.



Figures 28 & 29:

Shadows and reflections collapse boundaries between here / there and interior / exterior.



Figure 30:

Note the reflections: the legs refracted in the central mill aluminum box belong to the viewer to the right of the picture frame *not* the spectator in the centre.

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