

# The Interior Life of DONALD JUDD

The famously rigorous artist designed his own private universe—down to the stools—in Marfa, Texas. *WSJ.* takes an exclusive tour of the Judd Foundation's long-secluded spaces as it prepares to release ready-made furniture for the first time next month.

BY TONY PERROTTET  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTIEN MULDER



**EVER SO HUMBLE**  
A pine studio table designed by Judd under an untitled 1984 wall piece by the artist in his Art Studio at the Judd Foundation in Marfa, Texas.

**1. Ranch Office**  
Houses Judd's wall relief pieces and ranch maps (purchased in 1991).

**2. Architecture Office**  
The former beauty salon was used for Judd's design projects (1990).

**3. Architecture Studio**  
This onetime bank holds Judd's furniture designs and furniture and painting collection (1989).

**4. Cobb House**  
Judd exhibited his early paintings in this former home (1989).

**5. Art Studio**  
The 6,000-square-foot grocery store became Judd's atelier (1990).

**6. Print Building**  
Houses the foundation's offices and archives (1991; photograph at right).

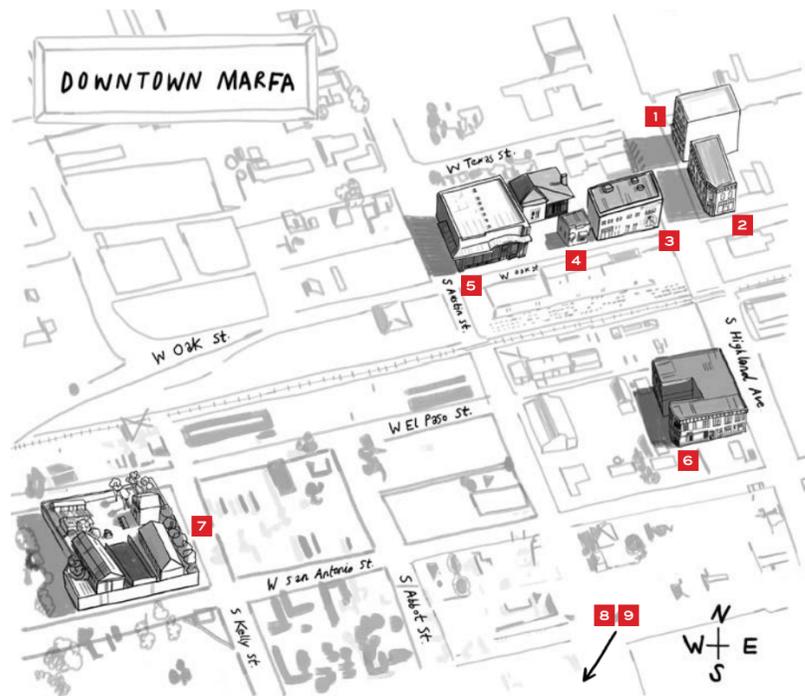
**7. The Block**  
Judd's first Marfa compound includes two airplane hangars and his residence (1973–1974).

**8. Chinati Foundation**  
One mile south. An independent art institution founded in 1986.

**9. Casa Morales, Casa Perez & Las Casas**  
Judd's three ranches are 45–80 miles southwest of town; he is buried at Las Casas (1976, 1982, 1989).

**S**PEEDING IN A PICKUP truck along an unpaved road in the Chihuahuan Desert, Flavin Judd, son of the late artist Donald Judd, lets out a hoot of delight as the horizon ahead is filled by the raw expanse of the Chinati Mountains. "This is why Don came to Texas," he says. "Marfa"—the lonely cattle town that Judd transformed into an art pilgrimage site—"was really just a grocery store and a school for him." Glimpsed through the cracked windshield are cattle grazing in fields dotted with cactus and buzzards soaring overhead. For the entire 90-minute drive, there's not another car to be seen. Wearing a weather-beaten Stetson, denim jacket and cowboy boots, Flavin, 49, has inherited his father's passion for this radical emptiness. The view is so poetic that he almost slows down. "This is the most dangerous stretch of road," he notes at one point, as the speedometer hovers at 90 mph. "It's where the deer hang out." Laughing, he presses his foot to the pedal and breaks 100.

Behind a cattle gate stands Casa Perez, one of Donald Judd's three ranches on the 40,000 acres of land that he collectively called Ayala de Chinati. Framed by the bluffs of the Pinto Canyon, the plain adobe structure was built in the early 1900s. Beneath the windmill sits a circular water tank with a wooden deck, where Flavin and his



younger sister, Rainer, used to swim as kids. "Just watch out for rattlesnakes," he says before pulling out an old key to unlock the metal grilles over the doors and windows.

Inside the two-bedroom ranch house, there is a sense of casual domesticity, as if Judd might have just stepped out on an errand—which in a sense is true, since he left Marfa on a trip to Germany in late 1993 with no idea that he was terminally ill with cancer and would never return. Next to the back door is a small bookshelf with tomes that reveal his myriad interests. (*A History of Ottoman Architecture, Gaudi, Birds of Texas, Stars and Planets.*) As with all the buildings Judd acquired, he left the basic structure untouched but transformed the interior into a bright, open space. In this rustic isolation, it's startling to see one of Judd's signature box sculptures on the crisp white wall. During his 40-year career, he created over 3,000 artworks, most of them untitled, a catalog headache for curators. One renowned piece consists of 100 enormous milled-aluminum blocks displayed in two former artillery sheds at Marfa's Chinati Foundation; his passion for the box was such that a popular bumper sticker souvenir reads **I ■ JUDD**. No less striking is Judd's own furniture. In the ranch house's homey kitchen, where black frying pans hang over a rustic stove, stands a wooden counter he designed with the same clean, strong lines and rigorous craftsmanship as his sculpture. There is also a wooden daybed crafted in a raw style that has since been dubbed "Texas rough." The sparse layout—the furniture is deliberately pulled away from the walls—makes the pieces seem like site-specific works. "Judd's furniture was born of necessity, but each piece is a dissertation on proportion worthy of a Renaissance master," says Michael Govan, CEO and director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, which acquired, in conjunction with the Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Garden, a desk and chairs Judd made for Flavin. "You could not ask for something more simple—the wood is still the same width as when it came from the lumberyard—but it is transformed by his compositional intelligence. It's not as abstract as his art, since you actually sit on his chairs, but there is the same beauty."

"I would put Judd's furniture together with his sculpture, his writings, his houses," says curator Ann Temkin, who is overseeing a major Judd retrospective at New York's Museum of Modern Art when new construction there is complete. "The idea that a whole room would contain one simple steel box and Judd would consider it full has had a huge influence on the architecture and design world over the last 25 years."

Despite the furniture's influence, since Judd's death in 1994, its availability for purchase has remained a well-kept secret in the art world. Over the years, almost every high-end design company on the planet has made offers to reproduce it, but the not-for-profit Judd Foundation—which was established upon the artist's death to safeguard his property and artistic legacy and is overseen by Flavin and Rainer, 46—has always declined. Instead, it continued to produce his designs strictly on a made-to-order basis, resulting in the ultimate bespoke furniture: The metal pieces take 12 weeks to make in Judd's foundry in Switzerland; the wooden versions, created mostly in California by one of Judd's favorite craftsmen, Jeff Jamieson, take a minimum of 18 weeks. Each of Judd's designs can be done in 21 colors of anodized aluminum or copper and a variety of woods—for a total of 345 combinations for metal or over 900 combinations for wood—which are listed in two fat binders kept in his former loft home in New York, 101 Spring Street, now a combination Judd Foundation office, museum and shrine. The popular daybed costs \$12,600, while a wooden desk with chairs is \$14,500. (The pieces produced when Judd was still alive, known to aficionados as "pre-'94" or "lifetime furniture," are valued much higher, with some pieces fetching prices in the hundreds of thousands; one stainless-steel coffee table from the early '70s sold at Sotheby's in 2011 for \$506,500.)

Starting next month, for the first time, the Judd Foundation is making available pieces that will be ready to purchase directly



IN MARFA,  
"PRESERVATION OF  
THE SPACES HAS  
PRIORITY OVER  
PUBLIC ACCESS."  
—RAINER JUDD



**LIGHT WORK** Top right: Flavin and Rainer Judd in the Architecture Studio. Clockwise from center, scenes from *The Block*: A Judd-designed swimming pool; an untitled 1963 Judd piece; a pair of Bonnie Lynch sculptures; Judd's residence; a Navajo blanket.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: UNTITLED, 1984, PULVER ON ALUMINUM, 30 X 180 X 30 CM.; DONALD JUDD ART © 2017 JUDD FOUNDATION ARS/NY. THIS PAGE: MAP: ILLUSTRATION BY PATRICK VAIL

BOTTOM RIGHT: UNTITLED, 1983, CADMIUM RED LIGHT OIL ON WOOD AND PURPLE ENAMEL ON ALUMINUM, 48 X 83 X 48 IN.; DONALD JUDD ART © 2017 JUDD FOUNDATION ARS/NY. EXTERIOR SHOT: LA MANSANA TABLE, PINE, CHAIR, BENCHES & END CHAIRS (23); ALL DONALD JUDD FURNITURE © 2017 JUDD FOUNDATION ARS/NY. GROOMING BY SUSANNAH LIPSEY (RAINER)

“DON TOOK THE WAY THINGS LOOKED SERIOUSLY. THERE IS A REASON FOR EVERYTHING, AND IT’S ALL INTERCONNECTED.”

—FLAVIN JUDD



PREVIOUS PAGE: STEEL AND SLATE TABLE (60), 44.75 IN.; FRAME CHAIR (72), DOUGLAS FIR, LIBRARY CHAIR (42), PINE. ALL DONALD JUDD FURNITURE © 2017 JUDD FOUNDATION/ARS, N.Y. THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: FROM TOP: UNTITLED, 1985, PULVER ON ALUMINUM, 30 X 24.0 X 30 CM.; UNTITLED, 1989, ANODIZED ALUMINUM, 100 X 200 CM.; UNTITLED, 1981, STAINLESS STEEL, 100 X 100 X 1 CM.; ALL DONALD JUDD ART © 2017 JUDD FOUNDATION/ARS, N.Y. STUDIO TABLE (04), PINE, DONALD JUDD FURNITURE © 2017 JUDD FOUNDATION/ARS, N.Y. FOLLOWING SPREAD: 49.5 IN. FRAME TABLE (70/71), CHERRY, DONALD JUDD FURNITURE © 2017 JUDD FOUNDATION/ARS, N.Y.; GERRIT RIETVELD, NO TITLE © 2017 ARS, NY/CO PICTORIGHT AMSTERDAM (CHAIRS)

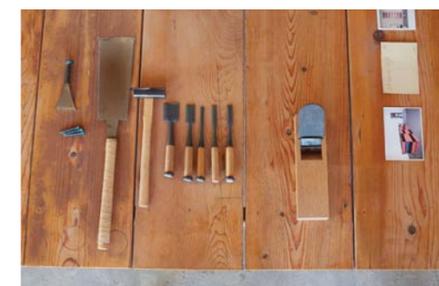
from inventory, meaning that impatient Judd fans can acquire them without a lengthy wait time. For the first release, the foundation selected the Corner Chair and the Library Stool as iconic pieces that Judd used in Marfa. More will be added each year. Anodized aluminum was chosen for the \$6,900 Corner Chair, while the wood for the \$1,900 Library Stool is pine, an homage to the first pieces Judd made in Marfa from the materials that were on hand. Also in May, an exhibition of Judd’s “pre-’94” furniture will be on view at the foundation’s New York headquarters at 101 Spring Street.

The renewed attention to Judd’s furniture provides more than just a curious footnote to the life of one of the 20th century’s most significant American artists. It also gives insight into his complex character and his grandiose vision in Marfa. “There was no separation between Judd’s art and life,” says Jenny Moore, director of the Chinati Foundation. According to his children, the desire to live with his own designs grew from his rejection of the strip-mall culture that he felt was being imposed on American society by corporations, along with a deluge of disposable, dispiritingly ugly objects. “Don took the way things looked seriously,” says Flavin. “There is a reason for everything, and it’s all interconnected.”

**J**UDD BOUGHT 101 Spring Street in 1968 for a modest \$68,000. Each floor of 101, as the 19th-century factory is familiarly known, has enormous windows and soaring ceilings, creating an exhilarating sense of space, within which every piece of furniture and art is meticulously placed. There is the same elegant *morsa*, or prosciutto holder, as in Marfa, the same Dean & DeLuca olive oil bottles. It was here that Judd created his first piece of furniture in 1970, a double bed built a few inches off the floor, despite the inconvenience for his then-wife, choreographer Julie Finch, who was pregnant at the time. “It was hell,” Finch says, laughing as she recalls having to roll over and make the bed before she got up, since she couldn’t reach it while standing. She never asked Judd why he had made it so low and large. “It was very elegant in the room. Why would he consult me? He was designing a bed!” Furniture was already a serious business: A fight over a brown corduroy sofa Finch bought from Bloomingdale’s was one of the most tumultuous in a volatile marriage, the kids remember. (The couch is still in their mother’s possession, they add. “It’s actually really nice,” Rainer says.)

In 1977, Judd made the move to Marfa. By then, he was renowned for his ever-more-monolithic abstract sculptures—he was only 39 when he had a major show at the Whitney—but had become disillusioned with the New York art scene, which he described as “harsh and glib.” In SoHo, gentrification had begun, galleries were sprouting, tourists were arriving in droves, and Judd, a shy man, found his celebrity a burden. Finch recalls people stopping him in the street to make comments. “There was a lot of envy of his fame,” she says. “Other artists were resentful. So he just stopped walking around SoHo.” On a creative level, Judd had rejected the gallery system, in which his work was shown only for a short time in less-than-ideal spaces and sometimes even damaged during installation. He had a vision of finding a remote site where his work could rest permanently.

The choice of West Texas has become part of the Judd legend. He first considered Baja California, and then turned to the high grasslands of Presidio County, the emptiest corner of Texas, which he had first seen in 1946 as a young G.I. on his way to Korea. (When the bus stopped in Van Horn, he famously sent a telegram to his mother: DEAR MOM VAN HORN TEXAS. 1260 POPULATION. NICE TOWN BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY MOUNTAINS LOVE=DON.) Twenty-five years later, in 1971, he came across Marfa by chance. “There was no plan,” Flavin says. (In one essay, Judd says that he might have chosen Australia had he visited it earlier.) When a military base, which had been set up in the early 1900s, and an Army airfield closed after World War II, Marfa lost perhaps half its population. Land and buildings were cheap, and Judd had funds.



In the following years, he bought eight properties within the town itself, including an abandoned bank, supermarket and beauty salon as well as the three ranches in brush country. Soon they were converted into his art studio, architecture office, galleries and library, employing over 50 people. None of these personal spaces were intended to be seen by the public. (“He was building it for himself,” Flavin says; his father was creating “different buildings for different parts of his brain. Think of Marfa as one big house with the structures as different rooms.”) The heart of this self-contained world was known as The Block, where Flavin and Rainer lived until high school. According to those who visited in the ’80s, there was a sense of entering a different dimension presided over by Judd. Locals still like to reminisce about the artist’s difficult ways, his drinking, his fits of fury, as well as his crackling intelligence and charm.

Not everyone was welcoming. West Texas was still trapped in the conservative ’50s, and many of the old rancher and Border Patrol residents looked askance at Judd’s ponytail and free-spirited family. (“We were the hippie, Commie f—s,” recalls Flavin.) Still, Judd moved to Marfa full time in 1977, coinciding with an acrimonious divorce with Finch that included Judd picking up the kids after school one afternoon in New York and whisking them to Texas, from where he conducted a custody battle that he ultimately won.

**R**AINER AND FLAVIN are today so close that they sometimes seem like telepathic twins, finishing each other’s sentences or giving the punch lines to each other’s jokes. They grew up discussing philosophy around the dinner table in The Block and still enjoy bouncing abstract ideas back and forth, probing them with restless curiosity. They also have a playful sense of humor. For much of the time talking about their father (whom they have always called “Don” rather than “Dad”), they sit on a couch in a friend’s house playing with her son’s Legos, joking that they feel like they are in a therapy session. (Flavin, who is named for Judd’s close friend Dan Flavin, is married with three children and based in Los Angeles, while Rainer lives in New York.)

**SQUARED AWAY**  
Judd’s Art Studio, clockwise from left: A 1981 floor piece by Judd with his aluminum 1989 sculpture and a 1985 wall piece; three of his pine studio tables; tools at the ready. Opposite: Judd’s chairs and table in the Gate House, which adjoins the Cobb House.

They explain that Judd's decision to make furniture in Texas was a direct response to a practical need. "The furniture you could buy in Marfa was so, so, so, so, so bad that he couldn't look at it," says Rainer. Judd also reacted against his parents' overstuffed suburban décor in Excelsior Springs, Missouri, and yearned for the simplicity of his grandparents' rural lifestyle. "They were farmers, so they just had the stuff they needed, damn it, and they weren't going to pretend to be anything they weren't," Flavin says. One of Judd's favorite dictums was, "A good chair is a good chair."

When they moved to Marfa, Judd decided to make beds for the kids, among only a few pieces he built with his own hands. "He was not a natural carpenter," says Rainer. "He was not what you would call a handy dude. But that allowed him to excel in collaboration. He was really good at getting people to trust themselves and use whatever craftsmanship they had, to take a risk." Soon he hired two local brothers to execute his designs. Desks, daybeds, chairs, bookshelves and tables followed as he needed them.

Judd had already spent years studying "scale and proportion and harmony and even our needs in regard to light and space, the psychological effects of how much ceiling you have over you," says Rainer. "He had a Ph.D. in all these subjects by the time he started making furniture." Its popularity in art circles followed naturally as the first intrepid visitors to Marfa saw and admired the pieces. In 1984, Judd expanded into metal furniture, although he always distinguished between his art and the utilitarian pieces. These were not released in editions but were instead individually numbered and stamped, and unlike his immaculate artworks, they were made to be used and touched, gaining a patina of age.

It's hard now to remember just how radical Judd's furniture designs were at the time, inspiring several exhibitions during the '80s and early '90s in New York and Europe. Not everyone in the art world was adulatory; there was a sense that Judd was outside his field. "There was a whiny article," Flavin recalls. "It was like: 'We had to suffer through Dan Flavin's drawings, and now we have to suffer through Donald Judd's furniture.' It was considered, 'Why are you guys doing this? You shouldn't be doing this—you're artists!'"

But Judd approached the furniture with utmost seriousness. Govan recalls visiting him in Marfa in the early '90s and seeing the latest drawings scattered across his desk. As with his art, the fabrication process itself was a key element. "Judd used materials straight from the factory—industrially produced materials—and added the quality of the handmade to them," Govan says. (One of his most radical, and influential, innovations in the '60s was to argue that an artist's work could be physically made by others, as in the workshops of Raphael.) He created elegant furniture from humble plywood. "The clarity of thinking about modern design icons was amazing," says Govan. "He studied all the great modernist furniture makers, and he was definitely competing with them. Besting them at times."

**N**EITHER OF THE Judd children expected to be running a foundation in their father's honor. His death at the age of 65 came as a complete shock. The first news of his illness came over the phone from Germany in 1993. "Don said, 'I'm going to get a biopsy,'" says Flavin. "I said, 'What the hell is that?'" Judd's growing sense that something was wrong—the doctor in Marfa had told him he had a stomach bug and not to worry—turned out to be correct: He was suffering from advanced lymphoma. Three months later, he died in New York. Judd never saw Marfa again.

Taking over Judd's Texan empire "definitely was not on my agenda," says Rainer, who was 23 at the time. She and Flavin, then 26, were surprised to learn that they had been named as executors in Judd's will back when they were both under 10. "I knew we were supposed to have conversations about what he wanted when he died, but it was very abstract—'some day in the future....' I didn't

#### BARE NECESSITIES

A pair of red-back chairs by Gerrit Rietveld share space in Judd's Architecture Studio with his own cherrywood frame table.





**LAND ART**  
Clockwise from above: A combination seat and table at Judd's Casa Perez ranch; the plunge bath at Casa Perez; untitled red works from the '90s in the Ranch Office, along with a Judd pine table; the kitchen at Casa Perez; Rainer Judd looks out at the Texan landscape near Casa Perez; Judd's Perez daybed in pine.



PREVIOUS PAGE: FURNITURE: SEAT/TABLE/SEAT BENCH (26), PINE; PEREZ DAYBED, PINE; STUDIO TABLE (14), PINE; PEREZ KITCHEN COUNTER, PINE; ALL DONALD JUDD FURNITURE © 2017 JUDD FOUNDATION/ARS, N.Y.; ARTWORK: UNTITLED, 1992, PLY WOOD WITH PAINT AND SAND, WITH FOUND OBJECT, 46.5 X 46.5 X 4 IN.; UNTITLED, 1991, PAINTED PLYWOOD AND ALUMINUM TUBE, 39.5 X 40 X 30.5 IN.; BOTH DONALD JUDD ART © 2017 JUDD FOUNDATION/ARS, N.Y.

even know the word *executor*.” Judd himself had not considered his own mortality. “He thought Marfa shouldn’t be destroyed,” she says. “But he certainly didn’t set it up for the public in the future after he died. He didn’t want to think about that.” Suddenly, Rainer and Flavin were sorting out Judd’s sprawling estate, which was in financial disarray, and sorting through Judd’s drawings, letters, notes and papers. If handled badly, there was a good chance that Judd’s entire pharaonic project in Marfa might have to be abandoned. “I didn’t know what it entailed, didn’t know how to get from A to Z,” says Flavin. “But I found out it wasn’t going to be easy.”

Each decision on restoring Judd’s interiors, for example, meant intellectually re-engaging with their father. This can have its emotional limits, as Flavin found recently when editing his father’s critical essays, which were often scrawled in near-illegible pencil script. “Going through the writing was like sitting with him and reliving all these conversations,” he says. “Which was beautiful. It was bizarre. It was like visiting him for three weeks. But the problem is that you get to the end of the notes and that’s it.”

The Marfa properties managed by the Judd Foundation cover 90,000 square feet—an area larger than the exhibition spaces in the new Whitney Museum in New York. Some can be visited by the public by appointment, while others remain off-limits. Seeing them all is like a tour of Judd’s psyche, with the furniture left just as he used it. In the Architecture Studio, the former bank, his sandals and a flashlight still sit by the daybed he used for naps, and his last drawing folders lie on the desks under colored chunks of mineral used as paperweights. In a cupboard are a Greek helmet and a Luristani dagger he picked up on his travels; a favorite Rembrandt etching is framed in an alcove. Judd turned the nearby Cobb House, a humble adobe-style residence from the 1920s, into a private gallery for his youthful paintings from the ‘50s, which he called “sophomoric abstractions,” and the Whyte Building, once a storage room for the local five-and-dime, into a space for his paintings from the ‘60s. (Soon his canvases began to take on a third dimension, extending from the wall, before he abandoned painting and moved on to sculpture.) The former Safeway supermarket became his cavernous art studio, littered with Judd’s unfinished works and color codes. (One favored color is listed as Harley-Davidson Hi-Fi Blue.)

The Block complex remains the emotional core of Judd’s world. Protected by an adobe wall, its six buildings and gravel courtyard once resounded with the noise of children playing in the pool, wandering farm animals and a pet German shepherd. Now silent, it houses his private galleries with his favorite artworks, a Dan Flavin fluorescent sculpture and a massive library that includes the Icelandic sagas in the original tongue, even though Judd could not read a word. Among the personal touches are a row of plum trees planted at Rainer’s request—Judd disliked trees—and a set of Scottish bagpipes he was learning to play.

An important piece of Judd’s legacy is the Chinati Foundation, a museum with 34 structures scattered over 340 acres, most of it the old Army base on the edge of town, Fort D.A. Russell. One of its hangars contains the famed 100 metal boxes, each one slightly different and gleaming in the crystalline Texan sun. In fields outside, a series of 15 concrete boxes frames the bare horizon. Many visitors still find the works to be coolly impersonal. “Judd rejected the Romantic idea that an artist’s psyche is somehow revealed or transmitted through what he or she did,” says Temkin of MoMA. “Judd didn’t care about expression or emotion. It was hard for a lot of people to handle. It still is, all these decades later.” Although dubbed the “high priest of minimalism,” Judd never liked the label, which he felt bunched together a wide variety of very different artists and denied their warmth and the craftsmanship involved in their work. “The term made their art sound reductive,” says Temkin, “when they saw it as complex and full.” Despite accusations of megalomania, Judd considered Marfa a place for permanent exhibitions of works by like-minded friends, including Robert Irwin and John

Chamberlain. “A number of American artists at the time were going into the desert, but they were creating situations for their own work specifically,” says Moore, the Chinati director. “Judd extended the invitation to other artists, on a scale not possible anywhere else. Marfa set a standard.”

It’s hardly surprising that Rainer and Flavin are nostalgic for the Marfa of their youth, when only 10 visitors might drift in annually and every October their father would host a big party for locals and art world friends called Open House weekend. “There would be 50 people staying in our house. There was no disjointedness. There was one bonfire and one place to eat—it was all one,” says Rainer. Marfa still has the feel of a dusty cattle town: The railway line runs through the center, so conversation is often stopped by the roar of passing freight trains. Getting there is almost as much of an expedition as it was in the ‘70s, involving flights to El Paso and a meandering three-hour drive along the Rio Grande. Yet the utter isolation that Judd relished began to change around 2000, according to Rainer and Flavin, as visitors from Houston, L.A. and New York put the town on the international art map. The “new” Marfa exists alongside the old in what can seem a parallel universe. There are galleries, coffee shops and swank restaurants. Meanwhile, the sleek Hotel Saint George looks as though it was teleported in from Santa Monica, California, although even hardened locals confess their relief that its bar was the first place in town to serve food seven days a week.

Visitors to the Chinati Foundation have increased from around 15,000 three years ago to nearly 40,000 in 2016, and as a public institution it is evolving to meet the changes. But the Judd Foundation’s aim is to keep its fragile spaces intact rather than to increase numbers. One model for the foundation was Baxter State Park in Maine, which was purchased by the state’s former governor Percival P. Baxter beginning in the 1930s and given to the state on condition that access be limited. “In the deed, he said that the plants and animals would always be more important than the people visiting the park,” Rainer says. “That influenced our strategic plan: Preservation of the spaces has priority over public access.”

Rainer and Flavin hope that the furniture offering this year will expand the understanding of the artist and his legacy. It’s also a testament to their stubborn patience. After his untimely death, some at the foundation argued that the furniture was a distraction. There was pressure, Rainer says, “to pare things away, to simplify things, because we had so much to do.” But she and Flavin decided to maintain low-key production, which kept the relationships open with the fabricators. “If people could find us, they could order it,” Flavin says. For over two decades, the furniture line remained in the distant background. The ‘90s were devoted to securing finances, with an auction in 2006 creating an endowment for the foundation. Next came restoration of 101 Spring Street, which reopened to the public by appointment in 2013. Last year, Judd’s collected writings were published in a 1,048-page tome. Only now is the furniture finally getting its turn.

“It’s not a frilly, fluffy thing, the furniture,” says Rainer. “Its intellectual rigor is not advertised and not evident. You don’t question the joinery or its engineering. It seems so easy. Of course! Everybody thinks they could do it. Then they should—they should try to go make that chair.” But the desire to engage with their father’s artistic spirit doesn’t extend to his unmade designs, the children say. There are no plans to use his sketches to conjure pieces that were on Judd’s drawing board when he died.

“If Don was really passionate about something, he would get it made,” says Rainer. “He has this beautiful quote: ‘Things that exist, exist, and everything is on their side.’” ●

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—ANN TEMKIN