

For immediate release

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Three Paintings by Hyong-Keun Yun / Donald Judd, untitled works in plywood

Special exhibition of works from Chinati's collection on view through summer 2022



Three Paintings by Hyong-Keun Yun, 1993 / Donald Judd,
untitled works in plywood, 1978. Photo by Alex Marks.



Donald Judd, untitled works in plywood, 1978. Photo by Alex Marks.

Marfa, Texas (September 20, 2021) — On view through the summer of 2022 is a special exhibition of works from the permanent collection of the Chinati Foundation. It pairs plywood works by Donald Judd (born 1928 in Excelsior Springs, Missouri; died in 1994 in New York City) with ink on linen paintings by Hyong-Keun Yun (born 1928 in Miwon-ri, Chungcheongbuk-do, Korea; died 2007 in South Korea).

"Each artist's work brings out the quiet materiality of the other," says curator Ingrid Schaffner. "The grain of Judd's plywood pieces and the ink layers of Yun's paintings are profoundly present in the naturally lit gallery space at Chinati."

Special exhibitions at the Chinati Foundation expand the historical context and contemporary understanding of the permanent collection. The American and Korean artists were contemporaries, who met in Seoul 1991 through Inkong Gallery. Hyong-Keun Yun gifted these three paintings to the collection after they were shown at Chinati in 1994 in an exhibition, organized by Sueyen Locks Gallery in Philadelphia, that expanded on Donald Judd's presentation of six works by Yun at 101 Spring Street, New York, in 1993.

Three Paintings by Hyong-Keun Yun, 1993

Monolith forms built from thin layers of oil pigment on raw linen hold open space between Western and Eastern traditions of abstraction. Hyong-Keun Yun emerged as a leading figure of Korean art during the 1970s, when he reduced his palette to monochrome. Working in umber and cobalt—gradually omitting even the blue—he created what he called "gateways" between earth and sky, substance and void. An oft-referenced encounter with a giant tree, decaying in the woods and becoming one with the soil, inspired the artist to embrace a powerful simplicity he equated with nature. Yun wrote:

What on earth is a painting? I have yet to find the answers. It may be something of a vestige for my consumed life. ... I just want to draw something that is nothing, something that is always resounding of its own creation.



Using lines of pigment drawn on barely primed canvas, which he stretched himself and laid directly on the floor of his studio, Yun's way of working seems as close to elemental as he could get. He is known to have admired traditional Korean objects expressive of an aesthetic that minimized the presence of the hand—vessels that appear formed by fire, stone carved as if shaped by wind—and to have held an affinity for the work of Mark Rothko, another artist to draw space, light, and darkness from the penumbra of paint.

Donald Judd, untitled works in plywood, 1978

This suite of variations within a set form prefigures the 100 works in mill aluminum that Judd would soon begin conceiving for the artillery sheds at Chinati, where the spatial configurations realized in this group of sixteen wall works were developed on a much larger scale of magnitude.

Judd created these wall works at the same time that plans for what would become the Chinati Foundation were first being formulated. Plywood was long an important material for Judd. He began working with painted plywood in his breakthrough floor pieces in the early 1960s and first used exposed, natural plywood in a series of floor works in 1974. The plywood wall pieces in Chinati's collection form a group composed of sixteen individual works. All sixteen have identical exterior measurements of 50 x 100 x 50 cm, but bear unique internal compositions. Diagonal and vertical divisions based on a 1/2 or a "slot" measurement (1/8 of their depth or height, 1/16 of their length) are recurring motifs.

These motifs and variations appear to come together within the internal composition of a monumental work of 1980: an 80-foot long plywood wall construction. Relative to which, the individual pieces at Chinati appear as elements in a fugue. One of the most intellectually challenging forms of composition, in which each part of a complexly textured work is built from a single musical theme, the fugue is synonymous with the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, which Judd greatly admired. That each part is "the first among equals," further relates this democratic form of composition to Judd's vision and politics.

About Chinati Foundation

The Chinati Foundation/La Fundación Chinati is a contemporary art museum based upon the ideas of its founder, Donald Judd. The specific intention of Chinati is to preserve and present to the public permanent large-scale installations by a select group of artists. The emphasis is on works in which art and the surrounding land are inextricably linked.

The Chinati Foundation is located on 340 acres of land on the site of former Fort D.A. Russell in Marfa, Texas. In 1978, with financial support from the Dia Art Foundation, Judd began repairs and renovations to the fort's historic buildings, followed by the fabrication and installation of artwork. Chinati opened to the public in 1987 as an independent, nonprofit museum. Today, Chinati is supported through the generosity of our donors and members.

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