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Celebrating 175: Judd, Donald, 1965-1983

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ART FORUM/JUNE 1965

Born 1928.
Lives in New York City.
Donald Judd

[[caption]]
Donald Judd, untitled wall sculpture,
galvanized iron and lacquered aluminum,
33x141x30", 1965.
(Green Gallery).
[[/caption]]

[[image]]

Because, on first encounter, Donald Judd's sculpture is likely to look gratuitously self-generated, a discussion of his work ought to begin with a search for its sources and proper context. Since Judd's highly rational and calculated approach is hardly apt to have results that are arbitrary or capricious, these ought not to be hard to locate. But looking for the roots of Judd's work in sculpture alone is liable to end in frustration: like everything that is genuinely original, the pieces when viewed for the first time seem to exist without precedent. In Judd's case, the sense that the point of departure was an a priori assumption is especially strong because he has chosen not so much to extend the continuity of an existing tradition as to react against it by proposing an alternative set of terms. Thus, the relationship of Judd's work to traditional sculpture is negative; above all it constitutes a reaction to and an acutely focused criticism of the open welded sculpture of Picasso and his heirs, Calder, Smith, and Caro. To challenge the formal and technical premises of these latter, whose work even at this point appears as the fullest flowering of contemporary sculpture, is to exhibit first of all an outrageous ambition, even arrogance. But it is precisely through the exercise of such an ambition that radical work is defined, for



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