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*Archives of American Art*

## **Celebrating 175: Judd, Donald, 1965-1983**

Extracted on Feb-05-2023 06:22:34

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rules were clear and properties were unequivocally possessed. These desires are reinforced by reactionary art. There is no doubt why Nixon removed all the abstract art from the White House when he moved in. Abstract art seldom provokes a clear affection for the past.

Art which mirrors the present moves in a different way, from another cause and toward another effect. Its mainspring is the status quo. It is unidealized, displaying both the good and bad aspects of the now. Pop Art is the most obvious example but Machine Art, technological light works and most painting and sculpture in plastics are also typical. Other commemorators of the contemporary scene are Earth Art (reflecting the ways of our environment); the New Realism (recording the peoples and places of today); Protest Art (reproducing sado-masochistic brutalities); and that pair of sexual solipsisms currently known as Concept Art and Color Painting (rejoicing in the separative forces of our old friend, the mind-body problem). It is interesting to observe how intimately these art movements are joined to modern media, with their heavy reliance on promotion for distribution of products (and it is no accident to find their best customers in the bourgeoisie), for all these art ways and works of the present are entertainment commodities. They posit no radical changes and deal with conundrums, not problems. Their net political effect is a tacit support of the present system.

There is a radical art in America today, an art which innovates and is aimed at the future, but elucidation of its effects must wait until that future.

[[image]]

Since the consequences of radical art are unavailable, it is only possible to sort out some of the issues engaging radical artists of the past twenty-five years. The most far-reaching endeavor has been the reordering of subject matter so that the art object itself dominates its particular parts. Figure/grounds and hierarchical arrangements give way to paintings that picture their own shapes and pigments and sculptures that render their own shapes and matter. In prior works a figure/ground or hierarchical arrangement is imposed from outside the structure arbitrarily. In the new work, forms arise internally and the materials function to prescribe their own arrangements. Some recent work develops and explores interdependences between these new configurations and their surrounds, work-process in its relation to material and form, and a reintegration of color with black and white. These new ways have political implications that bear on the sovereignty of the subject and the nature and ramifications of self-determination. Other new work is obsessively concerned

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