

To Donald Judd; To the Chinati Foundation's Board of Directors and Staff; To the Concrete Buildings

On April 1969, Donald Judd wrote in *Studio International*: *"I haven't written anything in quite a while; I have a lot of complaints. Most of these are about attempts to close the fairly open situation of contemporary art. There are a lot of arguments for closure: a whole aesthetic or style, a half aesthetic or movement, a way of working, history or development, seniority, juniority, money and galleries, sociology, politics, nationalism. Most discussions of these aspects are absolute; something is the only true art and something else has to go"* (Complaints: Part I Collected Writings, 197).

In the blazing midday sun – for there is a chance of rattlesnakes when it cools down – we stand here before the concrete buildings at the Art Museum of the Pecos to say that we have a lot of complaints. The fairly open situation of contemporary art you were referring to no longer exists. The situation is hermetically closed.

You had plans for this part of the land. This project would be your magnum opus. Tired of reworking old buildings, you started designing the ten Concrete Buildings, which were to become the only buildings you ever proposed.

You said about them in 1989: *"For the work in storage I planned new concrete buildings placed on a grid. The site is high and as usual the view is long. The land is apparently open rangeland but in the grass there are the foundations and walks – even a couple of little rock gardens – of a complex which housed prisoners of war from Germany during World War II. The land was already used and damaged, and will be cleaner when the new complex is finished than when it began. The buildings are placed directly on the rangeland without any border or transition and the drainage of the roofs is conserved so that the buildings are not bordered by weeds. The ten buildings are centered on ten squares of twelve, the two in the middle remaining empty. Narrow walks on a grid determined by the doors of the buildings connect them all, making two grids, one major but not linear, and one minor but linear. There is no reason to enclose the complex since it is away from town. Two buildings will each contain a large steel work on the floor, two will each contain three vertical pieces, four will contain three horizontal pieces, and two will have two stories containing offices and living spaces. These are completely new buildings under construction"* (Architektur 1989).

At this moment on June 12 2014, we don't see ten buildings, but only one and a half. One building seems finished, but is on the verge of collapse. The other one is under heavy construction, metal is sticking out and the wooden frame to pour the concrete is deteriorating. The failure is imminent and we feel that we are meeting you at your weakest point. The potentiality of the unexpected is so great it might become uncontrollable.

At least for you.

We know you wrote in *The Chinati Foundation catalogue* in 1987: *"It takes a great deal of time and thought to install work carefully. This should not always be thrown away. Most art is fragile and some should be placed and never moved again. Some work is too large, complex and expensive to move. Somewhere a portion of contemporary art has to exist as an example of what the art and its context were meant to be ... The best (art) is that which remains where it was painted, placed or built."*

With all due respect, we think you have enough buildings to execute this plan. However, for your final experiment of uniting art, architecture and nature, we would like to add a fourth component, namely the development of a shared site.

In the blazing midday sun, at the highest part of Chinati ground, we have an overview of the magnitude of the space, the mountains in the desert landscape, the open sky and the yellow grass. We stand before the concrete buildings to say that we claim these constructions. Not just the one and the half-structure that is visible, but all ten of them. The whole grid. Small, medium and large.

We claim the existing plans, and the ideas for the future. We claim the restriction put down on working here. We claim the private outlook of these buildings to make them public. We claim the whole of the concrete ruin that flickers mysteriously on the skyline. Without negotiation; for a new collaboration.

We believe we have the right to claim them. The plan for the Chinati Foundation was and is more than an aesthetic testament: it is a manifesto challenging the economic and institutional structure of the art world. Judd withdrew to Marfa in search of new possibilities in an autonomous location. However, time has shown that the idea of Marfa as an

independent site is no longer applicable. It looks like the Judd legacy functions as an unmovable rock in an increasingly complex landscape. Today it seems that this place of artistic freedom has become a strictly regulated site that we have to trespass to start over again. We are confiscating this lost freedom to turn it into a place of options.

The buildings are now ours.

They will be used for future projects by non-artists and artists, off or on the multiple artworlds' map. Off or on the multiple worlds' map. By those who want to drop out, disappear or research new forms. By those who need it. By the storytellers and the liars, the claimers and the occupiers and the squatters. By those with a plan and those in refuge. By we the people who are claiming this site. And just like the plans of others, Judd's plan as well will be validated. From now on, these constructions will be open to possibilities.

We are standing here before you in the blazing midday sun to say that you are being claimed for basic needs, experimental thinking, research and other things related to potential. You will become part of the commons, a place where no one will profit individually. Neither privately owned nor state-owned, you will be freely available to everyone. Judd's idea about openness of space is translated into openness for us. So be ready.

Read on the fence of Ranch Road 2810 outside the Chinati property on Thursday June 12, 2014

Witnessed by Sarah Jones & Ralph McKay

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