

Donald Judd

aus Artfan 4, 1991

I thought there would be a public questioning.

- I thought so too.

Dann mußte ich selber fragen.

- *Do you live in exactly the places you want to live in?*

- Pretty much. I live in a very beautiful part of the world, in west Texas. It's very empty. It's rather high in altitude. It's a very nice place. Very few people, which helps.

- *And the houses? The views inside?*

- The houses are mostly buildings that have already existed, which I fixed up or changed, but we tried to make new buildings also. What you see here (Im Museum für angewandte Kunst) is pretty much of what I see all the day, these are places where I live but here it's little like Texas. I have a building in New York but I'm not there very much. I like what I have done to it. But New York is not very pleasant to live in.

- *And America is it pleasant to live in?*

- No, it's not. It's even worse. America doesn't mean much. America is a disaster right now. I like the land where I live. In Texas.

- *The things, they are so expensive even as they look...*

- plain, plain is the word.

We tried to keep the costs down, but there is a certain limit to how far you can keep it, we tried to keep the prices low on the middle furniture. It's meant to be cheap but it's still about 2000 Dollars. Time you make it, time till I get something, time the distributor gets something.

- *I've seen an exhibition of yours in Barcelona, and there for the first time it didn't look so American, perhaps because of the light there and the sight outside, but I don't know if you had been there.*

- Yes, I have been there, except I don't know what American means?

- *I meant the difference between the mess outside and the cleanliness inside. Like New York is such a dirty place-*

- It's horrible

- *and then you live in these clean white open spaces.*

- This shows you the complete political breakdown. You don't have any kind of social or political organization that works, the contrast is a classic case of a failed society. People on the street, people cold, people hungry. It looks exactly as bad as it looks, and it's just as dangerous as it looks.

- *But you live inside.*

- I live in buildings. I try to maintain the inside. It's an island in New York. New York is breaking down.

- *But what are your feelings? I mean you are laughing.*

- I'm against it but I'm living right in it, therefore it's got its grim side and its comical side, but I'm against what the United States is doing it gets worse and worse.

- *But that's not the step to going into politics?*

- US is too conventional, that's why you have Bush. I wouldn't get anywhere. And parties. There are only two parties, both parties are very conservative, there is not much difference. One is a little worse than the other. Both parties supported the cold war for fifty years. So they are not going to have anything to do with anybody who disagrees with them.

- *So the artists in America they come together in spaces like this and talk?*

- Yes but not too much, they are not sociable. Artists don't count very much in the US.
- *But they earn money and to earn money counts.*
- Yes it counts. But to make your money as an artist means that it counts less. My money in the little town of west Texas, which for the little town is important, is less important because of the way I make it. Artist is a strange thing.
- *You support the town by taxes?*
- No, by hiring people. You can't support it by taxes because the government takes it away from them to Washington, to fight Irak. You can't control your taxes. It's a lot of money taken away from me and everybody in the town. So the way I put money into the town economies is by employing people and buying things.
- *So you employ as many people as you can afford or as many as you need?*
- Afford is it, if I have money it grows and if I don't have money it shrinks. We are mostly working on buildings, fixing up buildings but I do have a shop there which has four people but used to have five or six. We still make business. Considering that the town has no factories, which is a problem, it's the only factory in town. It's a cattle town, but the cattle business, agriculture in general goes down it used to be rather rich as a cattle town in the thirties, twenties and before and for economic reasons it goes down and down.
- *You feel at home in these aesthetic things?*
- Ya, I don't like to look at a lot of ugly things it's like listening to bad music. The music on the airplanes or something. It's really disagreeable to have to look at ugly things, stupid. I like the piping. (Auf die Frage vom Volksstimme Reporter welche Musik er mag)
- *That was your suggestion (Daß ein Dudelsackspieler im großen Ausstellungsraum auf und ab geht)?*
- Yes
- *Do you have any Scottish ancestors, you are also wearing a plaid?*
- I like it, it's pretty.-A little bit. All anglos in the United States have a little Scottish. It's widely spread.
- *Because they were so poor. Do you come from a poor family?*
- Middle class, middlemiddle.
- *And then you went to art school?*
- Sorry?
- *And then you went to art school?*
- Yes.
- *Your sculptures, do you polish them yourself?*
- No, most is done by factories.
- *But in your house when they get dirty.*
- I usually have somebody else do it, it makes me nervous doing it.
- *Do they look different in Texas?*
- Texas has a tremendous light because of the altitude. Most of Texas is low but this part is 1500 meters.
- *Then you can run faster.*
- Less wind resistance.
- *How long are you staying in Vienna?*
- Friday night.
- *Did you meet any Viennese artists?*
- Not so much.
- I know them from earlier trips.
- *Whom?*
- Franz Graf, he is not here today, went somewhere. But I don't know what is being done here.
- *How much do you look around?*

- You are always here for such a short time. I went to the openings last night. That's because I know Kabakov.

- *But you didn't go to the party, sort of your party too?*

- No, there were too many people, but to know what is happening in Vienna you have to be here for some time.

- *And in America how much do you look around?*

- Not so much. I'm interested a great deal but I don't think the levels of it are very high. In New York there is so many bad shows you wouldn't.

- *And in Texas?*

- There are a few artists in Dallas but the next artist is thousand kilometers from the place where I live.

(Die Volksstimme fragt nach amerikanischen Wurzeln)

- I don't think it means to much. It's a different situation coming from a land that was rather empty a while ago but it's usually exaggerated. I don't think it means too much. The level of the European culture that got to the United States, if it was good as in the case of Thomas Jefferson, it never lasted to long and anyway most of it never got there so I think the level of civilization is pretty low.

And the exports are military culture and hamburgers, not much art came and I think the Europeans in general don't estimate the American painting which was done and American painting never had anything to do with the government it was against the government, so whatever culture got exported was rock and roll, hamburgers, Mac Donald and that stuff

(Die Volksstimme will wissen, ob Donald Judd ein politischer Künstler ist- er sei ein politischer Mensch- und ob man als politischer Mensch zur Zeit als politischer Mensch eingreifen soll. Politisch.)

- You should do it. I'm perfectly pessimistic about what anyone can do, but if nobody wants to do it nothing is going to change. I don't think art does anything and nobody pays any attention to art, nobody pays any attention to any kind of opposition, to any changes, so I think it's a very pessimistic situation. But obviously the only answer is that people have to try to change it and I think it's something I think everyone should naturally spend a lot of time for. They have to make a living but I think they also have to spend perhaps a third of their time dealing with other people which is what it is. Politics have been taken away from them by the central government but they have to get them back. First they take the money away, then they take the politics away.

(Katharina Noever erklärt sie sei sehr gerührt, weil alles worum sie sich immer bemüht hätte sei in der Ausstellung.)

- *How did you come to work with metal?*

- I like the surface and the idea that it can be made somewhere else. I don't like the handwork.

- *No? You never painted?*

- I did, but I didn't want to do it any more. I want the quality of it done by a factory.

- *You make sketches and then you say that's blue, that's yellow?*

- We use colour charts, rem, this is a European colour chart, we use the numbers. I could make a lot of art. Making art is to be sure you are not making art to make a living, you have to keep it clear, to make the art to make art, not to turn the art into a way to make money.

- *You are not making art to make your own living circumstances?*

- No, not primarily, that comes afterwards. That's distinctuous of work.

- *But when you say being an artist counts so less in America then you make your living circumstances when you decide to be an artist in choosing a socially weak position.*

- Yes, in a way you join the weak.

- *And you did that?*

- Yes it's like being one of the minorities. It's strange.

- *What are you going to look at until Friday?*