

GAGOSIAN



Una Stanza Per Panza

Donald Judd

"I hope that this is far more fun to read than it is to write."
— Donald Judd, "Una Stanza Per Panza"

In the March 1990 issue of *Art in America*, Donald Judd took out an advertisement which read:

THE FALL 1989 SHOW OF
SCULPTURE AT ACE GALLERY
IN LOS ANGELES EXHIBITED
AN INSTALLATION WRONGLY
ATTRIBUTED TO DONALD JUDD.

FABRICATION OF THE PIECE
WAS AUTHORIZED BY
GIUSEPPE PANZA
WITHOUT THE APPROVAL
OR PERMISSION OF
DONALD JUDD.¹

This was the first of many efforts by Judd to inform the public of the collector Giuseppe Panza di Biumo's forgeries of his work. His next public charge was made in a Letter to the Editors of *Art in America* in April 1990 in which he wrote:

Panza thinks my work has no existence beyond the paper in his files and that it can come and go as he pleases and as he designs it; now it can be multiplied as he pleases... This attitude destroys my work.

Published in installments between May and November 1990 by *Kunst Intern* of Bonn, Germany, "Una Stanza Per Panza," is Judd's longest essay at more than 25,000 words.² It is also the culmination of years of private efforts to defend his work that Judd had, out of necessity, turned public. As Judd writes, lawsuits are "one of the institutional problems and are a way to hide vicious and mercenary behavior. They are never about the 'substance' of the conflict..." Consequently, Judd is eager to get to the substance of his argument, moving from examples of his dealings with Panza to broader political, historical, and societal analyses. Otherwise, "Panza alone is not worth writing about."

Judd's account of his relationship with Panza proceeds, "chronologically and in detail, for defense, for thoroughness, for clarity," and he provides the receipts. He recounts multiple meetings with Panza, beginning with their introduction at Castelli Gallery around 1970; he quotes from letters sent to Panza and Panza's responses; he recalls conversations with leading museum directors; and he quotes heavily from Panza's own public statements in catalogues and magazines. All of this is crucial in Judd's effort to set the record straight and to prevent the falsification of his "own efforts and circumstances."

In "Una Stanza" Judd details wrongs done to him by an unscrupulous collector and his proxies, gallerists and museum administrators who are all too eager to prop up a collector's wrongdoing. Significant aspects of Judd's animus relate to forgery, and his belief in an artist's right to establish terms for their work and that those terms should retain significance in perpetuity. Additionally, Judd uses his experience with Panza to illustrate what he sees as the increasing degradation of the arts, which he believed could lead to their disappearance. This point, made early in the essay, articulates the stakes of Judd's opposition:

Many supposedly interested in art are not going to understand. I think the situation has declined so far that even many artists will not understand, as can be foretold by their work. Panza, many, have no respect for art, the artists, for the integrity of the activity. Panza's only purpose is to be a rich big shot. This is in art because he thinks it's a soft spot in the society, an easy place for a soft predator, a foggy swamp full of willing victims and lots of clear loopholes.

Art doesn't have to exist; there is no assurance that it continue. It has lapsed before and is disappearing now.

From 1990 to 1992 the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum purchased nearly 350 works from Panza and his wife Giovanna for \$32 million dollars. Judd immediately objected to the purchase arguing that many of the acquired works existed only on paper and that others were forgeries. For ten years the Guggenheim Museum's Panza Collection Initiative (PCI) has researched the Panza Collection. Part of this research has been dedicated to the works which Judd and other artists considered forgeries and case studies of this research have been recently published in *Object Lessons: Case Studies in Minimal Art – The Guggenheim Panza Collection Initiative*.³ Judd's position on this matter was unequivocal, as he stated in a letter to the Guggenheim at the time of the Panza purchase:

The Guggenheim has bought dubious pieces of paper, some completely unfounded claims not on paper, and some forgeries, as well as a few pieces made under my supervision. Needless to say I have no intention of helping the Guggenheim by supervising a great deal of work, the construction of which has been lost for twenty years in this disgusting situation. The purchase without research is very irresponsible of the Guggenheim.

In 1989, Panza suggested in a letter to Judd that lawyers should be engaged to appoint an independent expert to decide whether works he attributed to Judd were correctly made and therefore legitimate. The audacity of Panza's cynical suggestion remains astounding. For Judd, research into the legitimacy of the works in Panza's collection was as simple as asking the artist. One can imagine that from Judd's perspective the PCI's re-adjudication of the Panza ordeal reaffirms the cynicism, bad faith, and broken promises that were the artist's concern from the beginning.

An additional reason for Judd's anger is his belief that Panza used the promise of permanent installation to buy works cheaply, later abandoning his promise and selling the works at substantially higher prices to museums. Panza's "debasement of the idea of permanent installation," however, and Judd's critique of such behavior is probably best understood when juxtaposed with Judd's formulation, in 1977, of Judd Foundation and the realization of the Chinati Foundation, in 1986.

In the essays "Judd Foundation" (1977) and "Statement for the Chinati Foundation" (1987), Judd describes the necessity of permanent installation on terms suitable to the work, as determined by the artists themselves. As he wrote, "The space surrounding my work is crucial to it: as much thought has gone into the installation as into a piece itself."⁴ The two foundations demonstrate that he knew other artists felt similarly. Judd's foundations were created by an artist for artists, in full knowledge that people like Panza and art world bureaucrats would attempt to seize control of the activity for their own purposes.

Thirty-one years after the publication of "Una Stanza Per Panza," Judd's efforts remain rare examples of the preservation of an artist's vision. Still more rare are foundations established by artists which exhibit work by anyone other than their founder. There are considerably more museums founded by collectors, or which serve them. The reasons for this are as clear now as they were in 1990, and the threats to the integrity of art remain considerable.

— Caitlin Murray, Director of Archives and Programs, Judd Foundation

1. This advertisement has been reproduced on the cover of this supplement.

2. Unless otherwise noted all quotations are from "Una Stanza Per Panza." First published (in four parts): *Kunst Intern*, nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, 1990 (in German, with an English supplement); reprinted: *Donald Judd Writings*, ed. Flavin Judd and Caitlin Murray (New York: Judd Foundation / David Zwirner Books, 2016), 630-699.

3. *Object Lessons: Case Studies in Minimal Art – The Guggenheim Panza Collection Initiative* (New York: Guggenheim, 2021).

4. "Judd Foundation" (1977), *Donald Judd Writings*, 284.