

TRANSCRIPTION OF TAPE OF

Artist's Symposium for

"7 for 67"

October 1, 1967

City Art Museum of St. Louis

Participants: Mark di Suvero
 Donald Judd
 Ernest Trova

Moderator: Emily Rauh, Curator

Trova: No, I'd rather do both simultaneously, actually. (Pause - titters)
The week is 7 days I guess - do certain things on Mondays, certain things on Tuesdays - No reason why we can't do it all.

Rauh: What about you? Why did you find you turned from painting to sculpture.

Judd: Finally, I couldn't do anything with painting and decided I thoroughly hated the whole thing. I painted for a long time and finally a number of the aspects of it seemed to be completely restrictive and I was painting paintings one by one rather than ones that had anything to do with one another. It was a pretty difficult and boring activity, so I wanted to find something that I could work more loosely in - where the whole thing had more natural development.

Rauh: And the development is between one series of pieces and the next in sculpture or is it a more conceptual thing?

Judd: Well, obviously one piece produces further ideas about other pieces and so forth. With only the first couple of things I did in three demensions there seemed to be a great number of possibilities and something really to think about. With the paintings I would get one painting I would rather like but which wasn't altogether satisfactory, and it didn't seem anything that had any openings or any possibilities - connected paintings of any kind.

Rauh: Your work, from what I've seen, has gotten bigger and bigger in scale. Is this a part of the fascination with working in sculpture and where is this leading?

Judd: The bigger scale is, in part, money.

Rauh: And if money were no problem at all, what?

Judd: They might be very enormous, I think.

(Laughter)

The first three demensional ones I did were plywood. Plywood comes in a 4 x 8 sheet and other than joining it "ad infinitum", there's not much you can do to make it any larger. I didn't want too many joints. Also I wasn't working in a very big loft. So a large piece at that time would be maybe one. I remember one that was 4 x 4 x 7 feet long or something, or 8 feet. So it was within range of plywood pretty much.

Rauh: And now in metal it's a question of production, I mean—

Judd: Yes.

Rauh: It's a question of money. But if that were aside, it's a matter of whatever industry could produce.

Judd: Yes. That's right, obviously metal's by the pound and it goes up immensely. I think though outside of that perhaps you get into it and your thinking - thinking or feeling' or whatever - gets a little clearer on it. The scale does increase somewhat. But I came - the

last paintings I did were already large scale painting, so it's not as if I invented - increased the scale within the third work. The scale was pretty much already there.

Rauh: What about the color that is applied to the sculpture? The paint skin on your work?

Judd: Well, I don't want to do only more or less grey colored things. And other than anodizing which has a lot of restrictions as to the size of the tank and everything there aren't any natural colors in the materials. So that in order to have, say, the brown, whatever it is upstairs, or the green - it has to be painted and I prefer it was in the material but I don't know how you can do that other than plastic and such things as anodizing.

Rauh: How crucial is color in your work, Mark?

di Survero: Immaterial. I can't be grilled, come on. I think as far as painting and sculpture goes they're two totally different things and what we've all ended up doing like what we're going to do best.

Audience: Louder please. Can't hear. Can you put the microphone forward?

di Survero: We should end up doing what we can do best.

(Laughter - Applause)

Rauh: The color changes on the pieces as they develop?

di Survero: Hey! You really have the list of questions.

(Laughter)

Rauh: When do you come to a conclusion about the color for your piece? Such as the "Blue Arch for Matisse", where color is obviously a fairly crucial part of it or you wouldn't have called it that.

di Survero: Well, I think that sculptors learn a lot from painters and when sculptors try to put color on top of the sculpture it generally ends up being bad. I really had like a long series of failures because of it. But there's some people that seem very natural with color. It's always been a hassle for me. It's never finalized. The color always changes. People rub it; it goes - rust comes through.

Audience: We cannot hear. It's a ~~shame~~^{shame} to waste the time and not understand.

di Survero: I sit up here and I don't understand either.

(Laughter and applause)

Audience: Can you pull your chairs up?

Rauh: Can you hear any of us?

Audience: Very poor.

Rauh: In your work you incorporate metal and wood that you find in the area around where you work. Do you conceptualize the form of your sculpture before you look for the materials. Does it develop as you find the materials? As you work along you pick up more and more. What is the progression of the material and the idea that goes together to make up the piece?

di Survero: Emily, I think that we work with what we have, huh? And I think in abstract art it really doesn't matter what the materials are. So that you end up seeing only - you end up only seeing the skin of the thing. If I use wood, I know that on the inside of the wood it's as - it can be as polished as this table or whatever, the floor, but it really isn't - if a work is at all structural it doesn't matter what the external material is. It's only a concept.

Rauh: Do you find this to be so with your work, Ernie? What about the external, the surface, how does it relate to the image.

Trova: Well, I have preferences that I would like to deal with. Certain materials I find interesting to experiment with. But like Mark said if I wasn't using bronze I'd be using something else. So it really depends on what you have available and if you have nothing available, then you paint. (Laughter)

Rauh: So that theoretically, if everything was available, sculpture would become larger and more important and richer.

Trova: We'd build cities and things of that nature.

Judd: Uh huh.

Rauh: Exactly.

Trova: Very much like what Disney is doing in Florida. There again it's a financial problem.

Rauh: But the direction is not make the small object that is within the room, but the total to organize the space around the object.

Trova: In between, outside the room everything, all sizes, all dimensions fit in spaces. Make things for rooms, for outside of rooms, for cities, I don't think we should be limited by size, that's usually a hang up. So working with certain materials, we're often limited by material itself.

Rauh: If the work can be mass produced; if the direction is toward casting where you can make any number of casting, then can't it be done in a much larger edition, much less expensively where many more people could have it, which would be the same thing I would think true in your work, Don, where it's not casting but fabricated. If you're making 8 boxes you can make 28 boxes or 58 boxes.

Judd: It gets somewhat cheaper. They don't seem to give me much discount on that sort of thing.

Rauh: But the cost involved is not just the fabricating it's the idea, so that if they were more and more ---

Judd: No, man, see if you make a great many, say, - say of one given piece - if you made a dozen and the whole dozen could be sold, obviously they could be sold because you wouldn't have to get that much out of each one.

Rauh: Would this be a goal, to work toward getting the cost down so they could be mass produced and exist every where?

Judd: It's not too live a goal. I want to make one piece at a time. If there are ten copies of it or one it doesn't matter too much. I want to get sufficient money out of it to live and make ^{the} next piece or the next several pieces. So however the market's arranged it's somebody's - the dealer's problem or whatever.

Rauh: But with yours is the concept but then it has to be in a specific kind of space. They're so big that with houses smaller there aren't very many houses or apartments that can hold the kind of -

Judd: People should live in larger houses. (Laughter)

(Stupid episode)

Child: You're stupid.

Mark: What did he say?

Judd: He was talking to his father. I think he said, "You're stupid."

Rauh: So that what you're doing is not necessarily for a specific audience, but specifically for you.

Judd: No - Yeah - the pieces are made for me. I have no idea what the audience is like - any idea, some generalized idea of the public. I don't see how you could work from that premise anyway. It's just something very vague that you don't know anything about. Obviously you're making pieces for yourself.

Rauh: Right, but aren't you also making pieces for a kind of space.

Judd: Yes, to some extent varying from piece to piece. They need a good deal of space around them. Sometimes they have to do with a particular demension of a room, something they don't. And they could have even more to do with a particular demension of a room. But again that get's into something more ambitious, making your own room and so forth.

Rauh: Is the complete simplicity and unclutteredness of your work in any way a reaction to the complexity and clutter of our visual environment?

Judd: Not really, the reaction might be that something like 99% of the usual environment's a total failure. So it might be a reaction to that but not to complexity or clutter or anything like that. ~~It's just~~

It's just that most of what you see doesn't amount to much. Architecture or anything else - I don't know. I'm not too keen on the word reaction actually. It implies what it says and means, it's not quite accurate.

Rauh: Are the images in your work, Ernie the starting point, the kick-off point, or is it the formal aspects?

Trova: Well I believe the image is a nucleus on which I base new work. New work comes out of old work. And I would say yes.

Rauh: Mark, do you think of-do you have in mind environments things like bridges, architectures, structures?

di Suvero: When Don was talking about the space within a room and the way he makes it so austere I sort of think about Lucas' room, the Lucas Samaris room, which to me is the most beautiful, most beautiful experience here in the Museum. A moment of spatiality in it which really gives you a sense of liberation without - without any fear. There's a tremendous amount of beauty just using commercial materials and it's this is the kind of a possibility that I think artists like Don, Samaris are beginning to explore and that possibility seems much more open and wild in sculpture than anything that has preceded it since - you know - in the past here in America. Do you like it (to Emmy)

Rauh: Yes.

di Survero: Why - - - - Why?

Rauh: Because of the unending possibilities in, I think, both of these pieces you're talking about. The infinity of directions, in dimension of the Samares Room, the transformation of the environment as the amount of light changes is an extraordinary thing; the mood involved. Agree?

di Survero: Yeah. I dunno. Everything that's said about art, especially off of these kinds of platforms, becomes like a lie no matter what happens. These filters - no, there's a real - It's a nonsense artificial, non one to one relationship and you really don't - -. It's a real denial of the art process. It becomes one of the horrors that artists end up being subjected to.

(Applause)

Rauh: On that note maybe we should let the audience subject us. Are there questions that people in the audience would like to ask? Yes?

Audience: I would like the sculptors to explain their works.

Rauh: Can you make the question a little more specific?

Judd: You'll have to have a specific question to get a specific answer.

di Survero: That's nice.

Audience: Could the men each talk about one work that's on exhibit?

Rauh: Mark, would you like to talk about "Elohim Adonai"?

di Survero: No. Ask Ernie.

Trova: Well, I have one piece that's 3 tons and I've never touched it.

Rauh: But other people have.

Trova: Yes. Yes.

Rauh: And therefore it continually needs to be repolished.

Trova: I think you're aware of this.

Rauh: Would you like to talk about, say, the brown boxes?

Judd: No.

Di Survero: I would.

Rauh: All right.

di Survero: I think that's probably the most radical piece in the show. The last time I was on a panel with Don we ended up fighting pretty, - pretty roughly. The piece itself, I think is a really - it's a totally negative piece in the sense that it throws off all your judgements

about what sculpture should be. Everything that you've learned sculpture should be, it isn't, which - there's a.

Judd: It's not sculpture.

di Suvero: Cause it's nothing - you think it's not sculpture? Do you think it's not sculpture?

Judd: Yeah.

di Suvero: You think it's not sculpture?

Judd: Yeah, I don't think of them as being sculpture.

di Suvero: Yeah, what do you think they are?

Judd: I don't know. That's somebody else's problem.

di Suvero: Why do you take the name away?

Judd: Sculpture?

di Suvero: Yeah.

Judd: I do when I can.

di Suvero: Take the name away?

Judd: Sculpture. I don't use the term.

di Suvero: Yeah, right. You call them objects.

Judd: I don't call them anything. I don't need to call them anything. But -

di Suvero: No I like to think of them as sculpture. and I know why. It's the same kind of negativity that Mondrian gave to all those people that originally like looked at - you know they came out of painting looking for brush strokes and so on. Does it have to be that.

Rauh: They say they can't hear.

Judd: Let's get up to them.

di Suvero:

I think those brown boxes, are a very fine piece and what happens is they deal with space - that kind of a blank refusal in a very, in a very very powerful way. I know that the first time that I saw Don's work originally it left me non-plussed. That was in the Green Gallery years ago. But since then I've seen that tremendous influence that this kind of an expression to the world around us has had as a moving force amongst the young sculptors in-all over the U.S. and Canada. In the cities the same kind of a draw that de Kooning had in painting. There were many young de Koonings painting like de Kooning in the late 50's. But what's happened is now there are a lot of -

Judd:

They're no longer painting.

di Suvero:

Yes they are. Some of them are but they're a lot of people who have taken Judd's idea and really repeated it essentially and there's that funny thing that that repetition does where it gives you that sense of blankness - it's as if the sacharin has been taken out of the - that horribly sweet you know, that Greek sculpture, that classic period ^{not the good} archaic things. I think it's a radical piece. Now you want to say something about it- or defend yourself?

Judd:

No. what you want is a simple explanation. Obviously nobody can give that or paraphrase. So that's why I don't want to answer. If you can ask something- a given question about it that I can deal with it. I can give you some sort of answer. If you ask enough of them maybe you'll learn something about it. But if you just ask some general question I can't get at anything because it's involves too many things.

Audience:

I'd like to ask Mr. Judd: Aside from people living in larger houses where do you think that your work could be placed? In Museums outside? in a home? Exactly where?

Judd: No I don't really think of it at all. Since I can't control the kind of space they go into I don't think about it. It's a pointless thing to worry about. I sort of invent places I'd like to live in if I could build one but otherwise I don't think about spaces they can go into and I don't see why they can't go into all 3 of those places. I think people are great suckers to live in such small spaces. I think it's very bad development. And it's very expensive too and it's still small.

Audience: Inaudible.

Judd: Little bit. I don't have too many there now. It's a very crowded loft I have some big things by other people which sort of pushes mine out.

They're right in there where we're living. I dunno.

Audience: (question relating to use of boxes)

Judd: I do but I'm very much against the practice. They used to use one of them at the Green Gallery to sit on and I was always quarrelling with Bellamy about it. They're not made to put glasses on or sit on or anything else

Audience: I'd like to ask Mr. di Suvero what "Elohim Adonai" means and what he meant to represent by that sculpture.

di Suvero: Well it's easier to reply to the first part than it is to the second part.

Audience: Can't hear you.

di Suvero: Easier to reply to the first part of the question than the second part. The word God in Hebrew is unutterable and so it has many different covers and I had originally meant that the titles and all titles on any sculpture are meaningless and at best they can reflect a different preoccupation than the truly sculptural. I think that all sculpture that makes it acts in a way of praise to ~~words~~ the world.

Audience: I can't hear. I'm sorry.

Rauh:

As I'm sure you all know this afternoon or today we are opening officially the exhibition of works of 7 sculptors. We're very pleased to have with us this weekend 3 of the artists whose works are in the show. Mark di Survero, Donald Judd and Ernest Trova.

We thought this afternoon we would talk in an informal fashion about sculpture, the show, their work, what's going on in general. I don't really know. And we'll see what develops. We've been talking all weekend and I hope that this afternoon is as enjoyable as the rest of the weekend had been.

We might start with sculpture in general. Why are these men making sculpture? I have a feeling that today sculpture is one of the areas of the arts that is the most vital, the most interesting where the most searching questions and solutions are being sought after. I think all art is always solving problems, is always searching for new solutions and in sculpture it seems to me there is more exciting work going on than ever, at least in recent history. I think in a way it's a little like science that the interest in certain areas shifts from time to time. At certain moments in history something like pathology or genetics is where the really exciting work seems to go on and then it shift to something else. I have a feeling that in recent years this is true in sculpture. One of the reasons, I think, is the whole new vast area of materials that are available for sculptors to work with. I think all of the men on the panel today started off as painters so I think it might be interesting to know why you switched from painting to sculpture or if you have switched completely, which I think for instance in the case of Ernie Trova is not so. But what do you find is the relationship between your painting and sculpture?

Trova:

Well in my case I think it would be the opportunity to make sculpture was the essential reason that made me continue. The opportunity alone was the deciding factor.

Rauh:

And if given complete freedom of choice in activities materials, etc. you would rather make sculpture?

di Suvero: I can't repeat that I'm sorry. What it represents is nothing because I think that any art that ends up being representational is less than what it hopes to represent. It should be itself. She want to go on?

Audience: Mr. Trova, how did the figure of the falling man begin.

Trova: Began as a drawing and used it later in paintings and then 3-dimensionalized it.

Audience: What does it represent?

Trova: It represents a man falling.

Audience: Inaudible.

Trova: It's optional really, if you want to invest certain attitudes into my work, everyone is free to do so.

Audience: Why is the man falling?

Trova: Why not? (Lougher) The artist must have some grace in exercising his idiosyncratic activity.

Audience: Mr. di Suvero why do you use sculptural media instead of other type of material?

Judd: The big question again.

di Suvero: Yeah. I think that the only way I can answer is that I used to, I found the cheapest way to work was working with discarded timbers and I found that they did a certain line drawing in space which seemed to *satisfy* I dunno, a structural need in me, huh. That's about- that's why I continue to do that - I like to put things together.

Winfield: (in audience) I would like to ask if the gentlemen at the table if they could be objective about something which interests them. What would you people like to really talk about?

Judd: Nothing. The work's upstairs.

Trova: In Rodney's case I'd say come over some afternoon and we'll have lunch.

Audience: It's interesting you don't feel like talking about anything. Yes. All of these people are here this afternoon on the assumption you were going to talk about something and I think it's reasonable to assume that you would be interested in what you're talking about.

Judd: The chronic fallacy,

Rauh: Is this perhaps more a sociological problem?

di Suvero: Umhum - Listen, that's what we dread, you know.

Audience: I'd like to ask Mr. Trova if you feel there is any loss by having someone else create your work for you or do you feel the sculptor should be directly involved in his material?

di Suvero: Ernie, listen, I don't think any body creates things; we just reform them.

Audience: It's to Mr. Trova.

di Suvero: I'm sorry.

Trova: What was the last question, Mark answered the first, what was the last?

Audience: My question is directed to Mr. Trova, T-R-O-V-A. I'd like to know if Mr. Trova feels something is lost by having someone else create the work for him.

Trova: Well, number one, Mark can answer for me, I mean, adequately and I concur with what he said but no, I don't feel any loss at all, absolutely none. I wish that I would have more people helping me produce my things. If you can come round Saturday afternoons I think I can put you to work always need some help.

Audience: Inaudible.

Trova: There's two different kinds of talk, there's talk at a Symposium and there's private talk that seems to be much more adequate than this theatrical of speaking.

Audience: Why don't you get up and just leave? *type*

Trova: We were invited and I'm sitting right now, I'd just as soon.

di Suvero: It's the gig, man.
(Laughter)

Audience: I'd be interested to hear what your opinions of form are. Painters are usually turned on, so to speak, by color. Sculptors are turned on by form. What about form? How do you feel about form?

Trova: I feel fine.

Judd: In the first place I wouldn't want to split it up the way you've split it up so, Painting isn't primarily color and sculpture - whatever- isn't primarily form. The term form's pretty hard to handle.

di Suvero: Don, don't you think that there's a difference before there was - I mean before, historically- there was a kind of very rig~~id~~^{id} about form and recently I think that with the new geometries, with the new concepts what becomes much more important is the destruction of form, the deformations, the warpages, the use of light, whether off a reflectd surface, or as a source of illumination, projection and so on. It's a, I think it's just part of a continuing revolution against that, you know, hysterical, reactionary society which we're all bound up in. We're living, well, we're living right now in a murder society. We're all criminals here. We're all participating in a war which is obvious murder of innocent people and I think that when you get to that point you can't make forms which really praise society.

Rauh: And yet this is what you're trying to do with something like Elohim Adonai which is a praise.

di Suvero: Well if - it sure ain't for the society then, It's for - I think then it's for like it's for the flower children, for the people who have a little but of peace and love and not you know. It isn't for those people who are accomplices to the acts of destruction that we do so frequently to each other. That limits the audience.

Audience: Mr. Judd. I'd like to know why the Storefronts-

Judd: Those aren't mine.

Rauh: Those are not by Mr. Judd.

Audience: -----inaudible.

Judd: I didn't hear the last part of that.

Rauh: Why the Storefronts are considered to be art.

Judd: It's really Chresto's problem who made them. But my answer on all that is that if somebody wants to call something art he's perfectly right to call it so. You can call it bad or be bored with it or whatever but if he says it's art, it's art. I think that sort of takes care of all possible situations on that subject. (Laughter)

di Suvero: Bravo.

Audience: I'd like to ask if there are any contemporary artists who influenced your work if so who, to Mr.-- I'm sorry I can't pronounce your last name.- Mark di Suvero

Judd: di Suvero.

Audience: I'm sorry Mr. di Suvero.

di Suvero: You know like every artist only continues from where other artists began and I - no I wouldn't like to answer your question like influences and so on. That's for art historians, and supposedly you're supposed to- you know like if we do anything here you're supposed to look at the work a little clearer. I think art history, like blinds one. O.K?

Audience: Can you name some of the sculpture which you personally like and collect. Give an example of your taste.

di Suvero: Go ahead, Don.

Judd: You talking to me?

di Suvero: Yeah.

Audience: To Mr. Judd.

Judd: Yeah I can. I don't have my hands on all that I want to get them on yet. I have a painting by Frank Stella, a piece by Dan Flavin, a piece by Bob Morris. A painter named E. Kusama, a piece by Craig Kaufman, piece by Samaris, and a number of other people owe me pieces. Larry Bell and Bob Irwin and Carl Andrey and if I had some money to work with I could get one of Newman's paintings, perhaps one of Mark's pieces or whatever.

There's quite - you get quite a list after awhile. Conceivably there's 2 or 3 dozen people whose work I would like to have, either alive or recently dead which is pretty good. Quite a bit of good work.

Audience: Inaudible.

Judd: The space between the boxes is very important so that's my doing. As I told somebody the other day it wouldn't do even an inch or so one way or another. They should have a fair amount of space around them and they should have a reasonably even light and my control in the matter depends on whether I'm there or not when they're set up and lot of circumstances.

Audience: Inaudible.

Judd: Yes of course again that's a very general question. You're asking me what the work's all about and I can't answer just like that.

Audience: Inaudible.

Judd: Yeah of course. Otherwise they'd be four separate ones.

Audience: (mature work affect us?)

di Suvero: Ah no.

Rauh: Who were you addressing the question to.

Judd: Who's that.

di Suvero: You're asking too much

Rauh: Ernie

Trova: Will you repeat the question? What's the question?

Rauh: Would you like to rephrase the question?

Audience: ----- which is the.

Trova: Well we all have a personal stake in these things. I can't say which one would work for you but I work partially with some rationale and partially with my instinct. I can't pinpoint it. I think we use all these elements somewhere along the line.

Rauh: Isn't it really very hard to separate out the material from the form? From the sculpture, I mean, it all goes together part and parcel.

Trova: It all ends up one thing.

Audience: Inaudible - Has any of you really started to alter- in a large way some new- I'd like to appreciate - progress.

di Suvero: I'm still stuck in the same place. I think that- I've found that my progress is very, very slow if there is any. It seems a lot of time I just repeat. What about you, Don.

Judd: It's the same thing. It changes slowly and perhaps it's doubtful if you can call it progress as Mark implied.

di Suvero: Yes.

Judd: But there is a change so the pieces a couple of years old start to look rather peculiar after a while.

di Suvero:

Inaudible.

Rauh:

So it's a problem of being too intimate with the work in the very moment that it's being done to be able to abstract yourself for enough to say progress, difference, change, something, a variation but it's not necessarily progress until you get a little bit of perspective.

Judd:

I don't know maybe it's not you know the person gets organized somehow maybe it's not progress perhaps somebody does - like Smith does good sculpture for 20, 25 years. I like ones in late 40's early 50's as much as I like ones couple years ago just before he died. So they changed a great deal but I don't know that Hudson River Landscape is somehow an earlier stage before the late pieces.

Rauh:

Is there -

Judd:

It's an earlier stage if you start putting it into a big scheme maybe and calling it art history and so forth. But as far as Smith's work goes that's one thing, later work is a different thing and it's pretty even up.

Rauh:

Yes. I think progress has a qualitative connotation that really doesn't belong in terms of the development and change in work. I mean once an artist becomes mature and so it would be a question of different approaches, not necessarily a better solution.

Judd:

Yeah you'd want to do something new because you don't want keep - you get bored with doing the something over and over again. But the new thing is not necessarily superior, perhaps.

Rauh:

Right. Well I think since these men have done essentially their work long before they came here and that it's on view in the galleries and this is after all the medium in which they have chosen to speak that it would be good now to go to the galleries and to look at the actual works themselves.

Thank you.

(Applause)