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Laumeier Sculpture Park Completes \$200,000 Conservation Project for Donald Judd's *Untitled*, 1984

(ST. LOUIS, MO)—Laumeier Sculpture Park announced the successful completion of its \$200,000 conservation project for Donald Judd's *Untitled*, 1984, located on the South Lawn at Laumeier. The two-year conservation project was made possible by a 2012 Art Works grant from the [National Endowment for the Arts](#) (NEA) for \$100,000, with a 1:1 match by Laumeier. Donald Judd's *Untitled*, 1984, consists of three open-ended cubes made of concrete panels, placed in a row for the viewer to look through like a tunnel. An additional concrete panel is placed vertically inside each cube at varying angles, calculated to change the viewer's perception when looking through them. The square form appears frequently in Judd's work and is considered a prime example of the conceptual interests of the Minimalist movement.

Phase I of the conservation project began with research and design for new concrete panels using an original panel deemed unstable for reuse, Gamma Ray technology and soil testing. Phase II involved the de-installation of the original artwork, new site preparation and restoration of the original panels deemed stable for reuse, followed by the pouring, curing and sandblasting of the new panels. Phase II culminated with the re-installation of the conserved artwork, featuring eight of the original panels and seven new concrete panels, after which the project fencing was removed and the artwork was officially re-opened for public viewing. Finally, Phase III consists of the execution of an ongoing maintenance routine by Laumeier staff. The "Judd Conservation Team," under the leadership of Steve Colton, Conservator, Steve Colton Inc., Los Angeles, includes Nick Lang, Chief Preparator, and Liz Murphy, Collections Manager & Registrar, Laumeier Sculpture Park; Don Gerling, Operations Supervisor, St. Louis County Parks; [G.S. & S. General Contractors](#); [AEdifica Case Engineering](#); [ResTech Division of Waddell Concrete](#); and Kara Kelpé, Ashley Kopp and Manda Remmen, former Laumeier Sculpture Park employees.

"The Judd Conservation Team faced challenges at virtually every step of the project as work progressed, and delays were to be expected," said Colton. "With time running short, we were gifted a handful of mild-weather days this fall to complete the relatively uneventful re-installation. Old and new pieces of the artwork came together with rewarding ease, with only very minor adjustments needed. 'Minimalist' the artwork may be, but simple it definitely is not."

Laumeier, in partnership with St. Louis County Parks, has provided continuous care to protect and preserve the structural and artistic integrity of Donald Judd's *Untitled*, 1984, for its 300,000 annual visitors for nearly 30 years. "This project perfectly demonstrates the balance we must continually strike as object caretakers, between preserving an artist's aesthetic and assuring the structural integrity of an artwork for future generations," said Marilu Knode, Laumeier's Executive Director. "The successful completion of this massive undertaking—the largest and most significant conservation project in Laumeier's 38-year history, by far—is momentous, not only for Laumeier Sculpture Park, but also for all those involved with Judd's legacy, and the entire field of public art."

History of the Project

Donald Judd worked closely with concrete engineer Robert Kirk, Architectural Concrete Associates, Marble Falls, Texas, on the design and fabrication of *Untitled*, 1984, for its first exhibition at [Leo Castelli Gallery](#) in New York. Following the close of this exhibition, Judd and the Max Protetch Gallery loaned the artwork to Laumeier for two years. Because the artwork would be exhibited outdoors for the first time, Judd designed a temporary foundation for the piece and sent Kirk to supervise the installation at Laumeier in 1985.

His design “floated” the three concrete units on top of 8 x 8 foot timbers stacked 3 feet high on sand, with a hollow interior foundation below. Laumeier purchased the artwork from the artist for its Permanent Collection in 1988, and applied for a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to re-install the artwork on a more substantial foundation. Laumeier did not receive that grant, but took interim steps to stabilize the foundation working in partnership with St. Louis County Parks.

Ongoing conservation treatment plans and procedures, including a Condition Assessment and Proposal for Conservation Treatment in 1990, evolved over the next 25 years, with input from outside experts including Robert Kirk; Russell-Marti Conservation Services, St. Louis; the [Judd Foundation](#), Marfa, Texas; Francesca Esmay, Conservator, [Object by Object Modern and Contemporary Art Conservation](#); Bettina Landgrebe, Conservator, [Chinati Foundation](#), Marfa, Texas; and Steve Colton. Laumeier applied for another grant from the NEA in 2011, this time securing the necessary funds to carry out the massive conservation project beginning in late 2012.

About the Artist

Born Donald Clarence Judd on June 3, 1928, in Excelsior Springs, Missouri, Judd served in the United States Army from June 1946 until November 1947 before attending The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg; the Art Students League, New York; and Columbia University, where he received a B.S. in Philosophy, cum laude, in 1953. Judd’s first solo exhibition was held in 1957 at the Panoramas Gallery, New York, the same year he began graduate studies at Columbia University. Over the next decade, Judd worked as a critic for *ARTnews*, *Arts Magazine* and *Art International*.

Beginning in the 1960s, Judd exhibited regularly and widely at galleries in New York and throughout the United States, Europe and Japan. During his lifetime, major exhibitions of Judd’s work occurred at The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1968, 1988); The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (1975); Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands (1987); and the Saint Louis Art Museum (1991), among others. More recent exhibitions have taken place at The Museum of Modern Art, Saitama, Japan (1999); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2001); and Tate Modern, London (2004), among others.

Judd received grants and awards from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the Swedish Institute and the John Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, among others. He married dancer Julie Finch in 1964 (later divorced), with whom he had two children, son Flavin Starbuck Judd and daughter Rainer Yingling Judd. While still maintaining his building in New York at 101 Spring Street, Judd moved to Marfa, Texas, in 1972, where he lived and worked until his death in 1994.

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About the National Endowment for the Arts

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$5 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies and the philanthropic sector.

About Laumeier Sculpture Park

Laumeier Sculpture Park is a living laboratory where artists and audiences explore the relationship between contemporary art and the natural environment. Founded in 1976, Laumeier is one of the first and largest dedicated sculpture parks in the country, making it an institution of international significance as well as a unique complement to the cultural landscape of the St. Louis region. Laumeier is a nonprofit, accredited art museum that operates in partnership with St. Louis County Parks. Projects and programs are supported by the Mark Twain Laumeier Endowment Fund, the Regional Arts Commission, the University of Missouri-St. Louis, Missouri Arts Council and the Arts and Education Council of St. Louis. Laumeier presents 60 works of large-scale outdoor sculpture in a 105-acre park available free to the public year-round, and serves 300,000 patrons annually through temporary exhibitions, education programs, public events and sculpture conservation.