Donald Judd Furniture: Wood and Metal

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101 Spring Street
June 5 – August 1, 2026

Public hours:
Friday – Saturdays
1:00 – 5:00pm

Program

This installation opened with the program 'Donald Judd Furniture: Reflections on what makes design relevant, useful, and transcendent' organized with Untapped, an independent design journal, and Salon 94 Design. The program aired live on Friday, June 5 and included conversations with Flavin Judd and Daniel Humm; Emily Adams Bode Aujla and Ben Bloomstein; Alexis Sablone, Misha Kahn, and Mireia Luzárraga.

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Furniture Checklist

Metal Chair 102 in Traffic Orange / RAL 2009 1984 (2025)
75 × 50 × 50 cm
29.5 × 19.75 × 19.75 in

Metal Chair 102 in Raspberry red / RAL 3027 1984 (2025)
75 × 50 × 50 cm
29.5 × 19.75 × 19.75 in

Metal Table 112 in Copper 1984 (2015)
50 × 100 × 100 cm
19.75 × 39 × 39 in

Double Back Bench 20 in Black Walnut 1981 (2025)
36 × 102.75 × 34.75 in
91 × 261 × 88 cm

Bookshelf 34 in Douglas fir 1983 (1991)
55 × 55 × 13 in
140 × 140 × 33 cm
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Library Desk with Drawers 79 in Douglas fir 1990 (2025)
75 × 150 × 100 cm
29.5 × 59 × 39 in

Slip Together Plywood Architecture Desk 74 in Black plywood 1990 (2025)
75 × 200 × 100 cm
29.5 × 78.75 × 39 in

Front Slant Plywood Chair 84-18 in Black plywood 1991 (2025)
30 × 15 × 15 in
76 × 38 × 38 cm

Photo Credit
Timothy Doyon © Judd Foundation

Please do not touch.
The furniture is not for public use.

Donald Judd outlined his concerns for the purpose, fabrication, representation, and exhibition of his furniture in the essay "It's Hard to Find a Good Lamp."[1] He determined that the quality of his furniture remain high through production specifications and craftsmanship. Donald Judd Furniture continues this considered approach forty years later.

Distinctions between art, architecture, and furniture were fundamental to Judd's practice. He designed furniture by letting function dominate, while considering the role of space, material, and color on the experience of the object. "Furniture and architecture can only be approached as such" he wrote. "Art cannot be imposed upon them. If their nature is seriously considered the art will occur, even art close to art itself."[2]

This selection of furniture shows the range of Judd's designs in various materials and finishes considered for living, working, and shared spaces. Selected by Flavin Judd, Artistic Director of Judd Foundation, the sets of furniture installed on the ground floor of 101 Spring Street embody Judd's understanding of use and proportion. The materials—wood, metal, and plywood—were chosen by Judd for their inherent qualities, such as color, surface, and volume.

The installation includes a Library Desk 79, first made in 1990 for Claes Oldenburg and used in his studio; a Double Back Bench 20, first made in 1981 for use outdoors at La Mansana de Chinati/The Block in Marfa; and a Bookshelf 34, made and used by Judd during his lifetime.

1 Donald Judd, 'It's Hard to Find a Good Lamp,' in *Donald Judd Writings*, 822-831.
2 Ibid

Donald Judd Furniture: Wood and Metal

On Furniture
1986

Eighteen years ago someone asked me to design a coffee table. I thought that a work of mine which was essentially a rectangular volume with the upper surface recessed could be altered. This debased the work and produced a bad table, which I later threw away. The configuration and the scale of art cannot be transposed into furniture and architecture. The intent of art is different from that of the latter, which must be functional. If a chair or a building is not functional, if it appears to be only art, it is ridiculous. The art of a chair is not its resemblance to art, but is partly its reasonableness, usefulness, and scale as a chair. These are proportion, which is visible reasonableness. The art in art is partly the assertion of someone's interest regardless of other considerations. A work of art exists as itself; a chair exists as a chair itself. And the idea of a chair isn't a chair. Due to the inability of art to become furniture, I didn't try again for several years. However, I've always been interested in architecture and continued to sketch ideas.

Of course if a person is at once making art and building furniture and architecture there will be similarities. The various interests in form will be consistent. If you like simple forms in art you will not make complicated ones in architecture. "Complicated," incidentally, is the opposite of "simple," not "complex," which both may be. But the difference between art and architecture is fundamental. Furniture and architecture can only be approached as such. Art cannot be imposed upon them. If their nature is seriously considered the art will occur, even art close to art itself. The mistake I made with the table was to try to make something as unusual as I thought the work of art to be. Back of this was the assumption that a good chair was only a good chair, that a chair could only be improved or changed slightly, and that nothing new could be done without a great, strange effort. But the furniture slowly became new as I dealt easily with the reality. A good chair is a good chair. The particulars slowly created the general forms that could not be directly transferred. I can now make a chair or a building that is mine without trying to derive forms from my own works of art.

After a few years I designed a pair of sinks for an old building that I bought in New York City and for which I've designed much subsequently. These were designed directly as sinks; they were not a conversion; I didn't confuse them with art. The basin of the sink is an ellipse, which so far I've never used in art, instead of a circle, which I do use. I also designed a large table with chairs, somewhat like benches, to be made of folded one-eighth-inch stainless steel, brass, or copper. These were never made because the floor in the building in which they were to be is very open, primarily two planes, floor and ceiling, while the table and chairs are very closed. The latter would ruin the space. I later made some bookshelves for the third floor.

I kept the building but moved to West Texas with my two children, where I rented a small house on the edge of town. The house was quartered into eleven-by-eleven-foot rooms. There was no furniture and none to be bought, either old, since the town had not shrunk or changed much since its beginning in 1886, or new, since the few stores sold only fake antiques or tubular kitchen furniture with plastic surfaces printed with inane geometric patterns or flowers. The two small children played and slept in one of the four rooms. In order to give them each an area of their own notwithstanding the one room, I designed a bed which was a closed platform of one-by-twelves with a central, freestanding wall, also of one-by-twelves. The bed was designed so that the lumberyard could cut the few different lengths to size and I could then nail them together in place. I liked the bed a great deal, and in fact the whole house, for which I made other furniture. Later, in a large place in town, I designed desks and chairs for the children using the same method of construction. More furniture developed from this beginning, now made better, but still simply, by Celedonio Mediano. Later, in New York, Jim Cooper became interested in making the wooden furniture, which he does in a very fine and sophisticated way. This furniture was the first to be made for anyone else.

In 1984 I began making works of art at Lehni AG in Dübendorf. Their business is mainly that of making metal furniture, itself practical and handsome, without affectation, which is present in almost all furniture, including that which is usually said to be "well designed." Their furniture does not symbolize the past, the furniture, the rich, or the rustic. This furniture was designed by Andreas Christen for Rudolf Lehni, who died in 1981. Today, the wife, Doris Lehni Quarella, owns and manages the factory. The workmanship of the factory is very good, which is rare. Industrial technique far from guarantees care. The attitude and capacity of the factory, the old metal table, and the new ideas of the wooden furniture quickly and naturally suggested the possibility of metal furniture. In less than two weeks, thanks to the foremen Alfred Lees and Willy Bühler, who made it, there was an aluminum chair, later colored red, in baked enamel. Doris Lehni Quarella and I discussed the furniture and we made several more, finally making ten for a show at the Max Protetch Gallery, New York, in December 1984. Then we added one more for a show at the Annemarie Verna Gallery, Zürich, in February 1985. Today there are fifteen pieces of furniture, each piece available in fifteen different colors.

First published: *Möbel Furniture*, exh. cat. (Zürich: Arche Verlag, 1986); reprinted: *Eindhoven*, 107–9; Münster, 133–36 and 125–31 (in German); *Paris*, 182–85 (in French).

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