

Gifts and Acquisitions

Donald Judd, *Untitled*

Less a movement than a set of crucially new ideas about the nature of artistic practice, minimalism has profoundly influenced the most important art of the last four decades. Donald Judd was minimalism's philosopher, defining its principles through his work and writing, while disparaging the term. In recent years the National Gallery has made key acquisitions of work by other minimalist artists, such as Dan Flavin, but there has been no major work by Judd in the Gallery's collection to provide a center point for these holdings. The recently acquired *Untitled*, 1963, adds to the collection a major early work by Judd of exceptional historic significance.

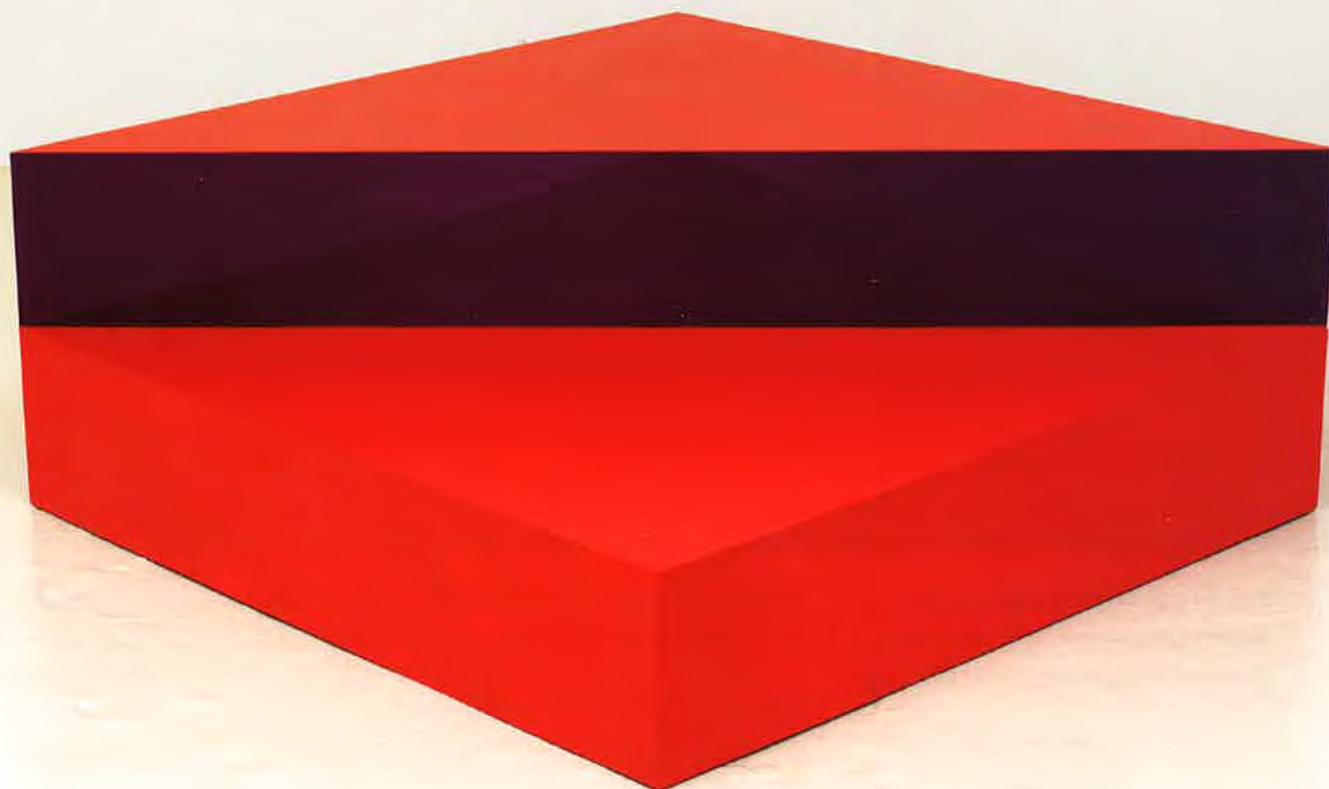
For Judd, 1963 was a watershed year, concluding with a solo exhibition at the Green Gallery in New York in December. Now widely considered a landmark for the definition of minimalism, the exhibition showcased a transformation in the artist's work, from painting to the creation of large, simplified three-dimensional objects. Among the works shown were two floor boxes—one of which was *Untitled*, 1963—that sat on the ground without pedestals, directly in the space of the viewer, brutally unframed in a way that almost no previous sculpture had been. With these two works Judd took aim at what he saw as the continuing illusionism of European modernism, pursuing instead a purely lucid form that would exist simply as an object. The floor boxes defined, as Judd wrote soon afterward, "the top, the whole shape, and the interior volume at once." From this point on, the box—either mounted on the wall or

placed directly on the floor—became Judd's principal form.

Untitled offered a cubic structure that was generated by geometrical logic rather than by appealing to the language of expression: bisected across the diagonal, one half was double the height of the other, creating a step formation. Judd's pursuit of literal rather than apparent space emerges in *Untitled* as a challenge to the terms of traditional perspective in painting; the rising volume makes it nearly impossible to see the work as a cubic form with orthogonals receding in space.

All objects shown at the Green Gallery exhibition were made of plywood painted a matte cadmium red; this serial use of color imposed uniformity on the objects and denied surface variation. Judd explained the choice on optical grounds, saying that it allowed him to create a sharply perceptible form. "Other than a gray of that value," he wrote, "[red] seems to be the only color that makes an object sharp and defines its contours and angles." It also marked the artist's sense of debt to Barnett Newman, who used such a red in paintings like *Vir Heroicus Sublimis*, 1950–1951, and whom Judd saw as breaking importantly with artistic tradition, his famous "zips" suspending the traditional opposition of figure and ground. Color was particularly central to Judd's thinking with *Untitled*: the purple panel bisecting the work is the first use of Plexiglas in the artist's career. He later described his interest in the industrial resin as a way of incorporating color that was integral to the material and not merely applied, and it subsequently became a signature material for Judd.

The ideas developed in creating the objects for the 1963 Green Gallery



exhibition facilitated what followed and were articulated in a key text the next year, “Specific Objects,” which became a minimalist credo. In it, Judd defines a new type of work, neither painting nor sculpture in the traditional sense, that would jettison both the vestiges of representation and traditional notions of composition—“the relics of European art”—with a driving sense of ethical imperative. “Three dimensions are real space,” he wrote. “That gets rid of illusionism and of literal space, space in and around marks and colors.” These volumes would be non-additive, nondivisible entities that challenged the “part to part” organization of European modernism. Though modern sculpture conventionally was unpainted, exposing the material and

marks of its manufacture, Judd’s own specific objects would be intensely so, always with nonnatural hues that made no claim to representation. No work better represents these principles than *Untitled*—in both its manifesto-like clarity and its historic role in the Green Gallery exhibition, it stands at the conceptual origins of minimalism.

Acquired soon after its making in an exchange of work between Judd and his friend and fellow minimalist Dan Flavin, *Untitled* remained in Flavin’s possession during his lifetime, a testament to the relationship between the two artists. The acquisition of this work was made possible by the Patrons’ Permanent Fund. • Leah Dickerman, *Acting Head, Modern and Contemporary Art*

Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1963, oil on wood with Plexiglas, National Gallery of Art, Patrons’ Permanent Fund



Paul Guigou, *Washerwomen on the Banks of the Durance*, 1866, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Chester Dale Fund

Paul Guigou, *Washerwomen on the Banks of the Durance*

Paul Guigou (1834–1871) was the leading representative of the Provençal school of landscape painters in France before his contemporary Paul Cézanne overtook him in fame. Guigou's great promise was cut short by a fatal stroke in 1871, when he was only thirty-seven. Born near Apt in the Vaucluse region of southern France, Guigou trained in Marseille and Paris but remained devoted to his home region of Provence. He worked primarily along the river Durance (which runs about ten miles north of Aix-en-Provence), near the towns of L'Isle-sur-Sorgue and La Roque d'Anthéron, depicting the rough, rocky landscape of the area with its sun-bleached crags and wide blue skies. He exhibited regularly at the Paris Salon.

Washerwomen on the Banks of the Durance, painted in 1866, when the artist was at the height of his powers, is a work fully characteristic of Guigou. It shows a group of local washerwomen, wrapped against the heat of the sun, at work on the riverbank. But the true

subjects are the harsh southern light and the Provençal landscape. In a noticeably austere composition, we see a broad sweep of the Durance as it rounds a bend, the arid alluvial plain, and the edge of the Lubéron mountain range at left, all spread out under a brilliant blue sky.

Guigou was one of a generation of French landscape painters at midcentury who, reacting against the political centralization and cultural domination of Paris, asserted their provincial identity and autonomy by celebrating their local landscapes and ways of life. The example of Gustave Courbet's regionalist realism lies behind this movement, and indeed, Guigou was friendly with Courbet's greatest patron, Alfred Bruyas, whose collection he frequented in the nearby town of Montpellier.

Guigou's manner of painting is strong and heavily impasted, a painterly equivalent for the typically rugged Provençal terrain that he favored. This rough and textured surface came to exemplify a "Provençal" style of painting, which was soon adapted and refined by Cézanne—as, for example,

in the National Gallery's *Houses in Provence: The Riaux Valley near L'Estaque*, c. 1883. Guigou's spare composition and bold palette of ocher and blue influenced another young contemporary painter from Montpellier, Frédéric Bazille (1841–1870), as seen in the Gallery's *The Ramparts at Aigues-Mortes*, 1867. These works by Guigou, Cézanne, and Bazille are currently exhibited in the West Building.

Washerwomen on the Banks of the Durance is not only a fine and characteristic work by one of France's greatest regional painters of the nineteenth century, but it also speaks directly to major works by his contemporaries in the Gallery's collection. The acquisition of this important painting was made possible by the support of the Chester Dale Fund. • Philip Conisbee, *Senior Curator of European Paintings*

Attributed to François Duquesnoy, *Christ Bound*

The power inherent in the ivory statuette of *Christ Bound*, a work barely a foot high, marks it as the most important addition to the National Gallery's sculpture collection in many years. Several kinds of evidence support its attribution to the Flemish artist François Duquesnoy, who became a leading sculptor in baroque Rome. In his brief career there, Duquesnoy joined the celebrated Gian Lorenzo Bernini and two other sculptors in the prestigious commission to create four colossal marble statues of saints to decorate the piers that support the dome of Saint Peter's. Duquesnoy's statue of Saint Susanna in Santa Maria di Loreto set a standard for classical feminine beauty in the seventeenth century, and his bronze statuettes of ancient gods modeled with fluidity and grace were sought after by collectors; but the gift that launched his career was carving ivory.

Duquesnoy's design of the ivory Christ is confirmed by its close relationship to a terracotta statuette of Christ, attributed to him in a print of 1709 depicting the collection of the French royal sculptor François Girardon. This alone would not confirm his authorship of the ivory, for Duquesnoy's poignantly beautiful model of the standing captive Christ clearly had an impact in its time and survives in many variations in bronze and ivory, often with old attributions to him. The quality of the version recently acquired by the National Gallery, however, surpasses that of any known example.

The ivory manifests Duquesnoy's characteristic balance between naturalism and idealization. Beauty and anguish are conveyed in a painstaking treatment of detail that shows the feats of which this artist was capable. Veins swell on the arms and the hands that tremble in the air, cut completely free of the slender body. Fine textures define the rope around the wrists, the paper-thin folds hanging from the loin-cloth, and the delicate beard on the sorrowful face. Turning the curve of the elephant's tusk to advantage to express both the grace and the fragility of Christ's body, Duquesnoy created a figure that sways in the precarious balance he particularly favored. The elegant twisting movement would have reminded connoisseurs of the work of his fellow Fleming then active in Italy, the sixteenth-century Medici court sculptor Giambologna. An even more famous forerunner was Michelangelo, whose statue of the Risen Christ in the church of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva in Rome is admirably evoked in the ivory figure.

Conflating several moments in the story of the Passion of Christ, the statuette was probably meant to inspire meditation rather than portray a particular event. While a Christ with bound hands usually stands at the column where he suffered flagellation, no column is found here nor is there evidence that one was lost. But the figure

did once wear a crown of thorns, an attribute forced on Christ when he was mocked following the flagellation. Vestiges of this crown, cut away long ago, survive around the top of the head. An owner may have demanded its removal because the crown had been broken beyond repair, or because its inconsistency with the order of events in the Gospels was considered disturbing. The decision to have the crown cut away suggests how seriously an early owner took this work.

Christ Bound is the first work attributed to Duquesnoy to enter the Gallery's collection. Its acquisition was made possible through the support of the Patrons' Permanent Fund.

• Nicholas Penny, *Senior Curator of Sculpture and Decorative Arts*, and Alison Luchs, *Curator of Early European Sculpture*

Attributed to François Duquesnoy, *Christ Bound*, c. 1625, ivory, National Gallery of Art, Patrons' Permanent Fund





Martin Schongauer, *Christ Enthroned, with Two Angels*, 1475/1480, engraving, National Gallery of Art, Gift of the MSST Foundation, New Century Fund, and Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund

Martin Schongauer, *Christ Enthroned, with Two Angels*

Martin Schongauer (c. 1445/1450–1491) was born in the small town of Colmar, south of Strasbourg in the Rhine Valley. His father was a goldsmith, the profession that fostered the art of engraving, and there can be no doubt that the younger Schongauer learned how to handle the engraver's burin at an early age. However, he was principally trained as a painter, and although this was a more prestigious profession, it was the masterful joining of his painting and engraving skills that accounts for his uncontested place among the great artists of the late Gothic. Geographically positioned at a point of interchange between German and Netherlandish styles, Schongauer drew the best from both traditions and contributed to each in return. His virtuosic command of engraving technique was unparalleled in his time. Indeed, it was Schongauer who made Albrecht Dürer's success as a printmaker possible.

Schongauer's engravings are especially notable for their precision and control, and in particular for the deeply cut lines that not only generate brilliant graphic effects but also allow the copperplate to yield a greater number of sharp impressions. As a painter, he brought a highly developed sense of pictorial space and physical structure to his prints. In his approach to modeling we can also perceive the sensibility of a sculptor where he shapes a contour, defines a highlight, or models the intricate turn of a garment fold through a dense complex of cross-hatching and stippling.

With the support from the MSST Foundation, New Century Fund, and the Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund, the National Gallery recently acquired *Christ Enthroned, with Two Angels*, a superb impression of one of the finest compositions from Schongauer's mature period in a corpus of well over a hun-

dred prints, most already represented in the Gallery's collection. The engraving depicts Christ in his manifestation as God the Father, redeemer of the world. Haloed, crowned, and enthroned, he bears a scepter and an orb, all symbols of celestial royalty. Two angels beneath a canopy draw apart curtains to reveal the figure of the deity bestowing his blessing. In performing this service, the angels also enact a theological metaphor. The Latin word for veil (*vela*) is the root of the word "revelation," literally "to unveil." Thus, in the modest dimensions of a print, Schongauer has presumed to perform no less than a revelation, as if to evoke the famous passage: "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12). • Peter Parshall, *Curator and Head of Old Master Prints*

Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Oberwesel*

This transcendent view down the Rhine River from the hillside vineyards near Oberwesel, Germany, is a brilliant masterpiece by one of the great icons of British art, J. M. W. Turner. Executed in Turner's signature medium of watercolor, it encapsulates all the most admired qualities of the artist's celebrated works in that demanding technique. With its dazzling combination of light, color, and atmosphere, this magnificent piece not only marks the pinnacle of Turner's career as an artist but also bears eloquent witness to his stature as a supremely gifted and innovative watercolorist.

Turner traveled widely over the course of his career, both in England and abroad, filling sketchbooks with rapid pencil studies that later served as the inspiration for his watercolors. This luminous view of Oberwesel, for example, was the direct result of a trip he made along the Rhine in 1839. Topographical accuracy was not his first concern here, for he repositioned such

significant local monuments as the white Ochsturm (Ox Tower) at left and the Schönburg Castle in the middle distance at right to improve the composition, framing the sun-glazed view down the river in a manner intended to evoke the grand classical landscapes of Claude Lorrain (1604/1605–1682). Turner's transcription of nature is firmly rooted in reality, but his inimitable combination of radiant light and vaporous color imbues his vision of the river and the surrounding hills with an extraordinary sense of spirituality and cosmic grandeur. Enhancing that quality is the contrastingly more detailed and down-to-earth handling of the foreground, which is animated with figures and objects that could hardly be more ordinary. Even in those more mundane passages, however, Turner's handling is extraordinarily fine; particularly beautiful is his deft use of scratching out to indicate the grapevines trailing down the hill at right.

From his many journeys and his extensive reading, Turner was steeped in historical and literary knowledge about the places he visited and drew. He must have been well aware, for example, that in 1813 field marshal Blücher led his Prussian troops across the Rhine below Oberwesel—at the distant spot that lies exactly in the center of Turner's composition—to drive Napoleon's army out of the Rhineland. That is one reason the artist may have chosen to populate the foreground of his composition with laborers and their families resting in the midday sun, thus contrasting their present tranquil existence with the ravages of war in the past. Turner also undoubtedly knew Lord Byron's many verses in praise of the Rhine in Canto III of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, and it has been suggested that he was specifically inspired by verse 46 to include nursing mothers and babes-in-arms among the foreground figures:

**Joseph Mallord William Turner,
Oberwesel, 1840, watercolor over graphite
with gouache and scratching out,
National Gallery of Art, Paul Mellon Fund**





“Maternal Nature! For who teems like thee, / Thus on the banks of thy majestic Rhine?”

Acquiring a major watercolor by Turner has long been a top priority for the National Gallery, for while the paintings collection boasts an extraordinary array of ten outstanding oils by Turner, his work as a watercolorist has been represented by only two relatively minor “color beginnings.” With the acquisition of *Oberwesel*, made possible by the Paul Mellon Fund, this huge lacuna in the collection of British watercolors is finally filled in stellar fashion, with a masterpiece that has everything one could possibly want and expect in a great Turner. • Margaret Morgan Grasselli, *Curator and Head of Old Master Drawings*

Sid Grossman, *San Gennaro Festival, New York City*

Sid Grossman (1913–1955) deeply influenced American photographers of the 1940s and 1950s, both through his own art and as a teacher. Yet because he made very few prints during his lifetime, he is not well known today. *San Gennaro Festival, New York City*, 1948, is among the finest of Grossman’s rare prints, exemplifying many of the characteristics of his work during the 1940s.

In 1936 Grossman and fellow photographer Sol Libsohn founded the Photo League, where they offered classes in photography primarily to young, working-class New Yorkers from Brooklyn, the Bronx, and the city’s Lower East Side. In the Photo League’s early years Grossman advocated the use of photog-

Sid Grossman, *San Gennaro Festival, New York City*, 1948, gelatin silver print, National Gallery of Art, Gift of Private Collection

raphy as a tool for social reform, but during World War II he embraced a more creative approach. Thereafter he urged those who studied with him to break all the accepted rules of photography—to use available light, for instance, and to allow photographs to be blurred, out of focus, off kilter, and even apparently random in choice of subject matter. In essence, he encouraged his students to do anything that would enable them to capture their experience of the world rather than simply to document what they saw.

San Gennaro Festival, New York City is an excellent example of how Grossman applied these principles in his own work. The photograph depicts a bustling street in Little Italy during the evening celebrations of a popular New York festival. Because Grossman used a long exposure time and only the light from the neon arches to illuminate the scene, the central figure is blurred, conveying a sense of the motion of the crowd. By including the uncertain—perhaps even wary—gazes of the woman at the lower right and the little girl at the bottom center, Grossman draws his viewers into the action of the photograph, rather than leaving them in the role of uninvolved observers. By contrasting the bright lights and playful mouse-eared balloon with the harsher expressions of the people in the crowd, he also succeeds in capturing the strange discord present in the scene. Even the blurred central figure seems to scowl as he lays a protective hand on the shoulder of the little girl holding the balloon string, which itself creates an unexpected division in the picture plane. In this photograph Grossman offers a raw narrative of largely anonymous human interaction, conveying the wisdom of his belief that “a photograph is not merely a substitute for a glance” but “a sharpened vision...the revelation of new and important facts.”

San Gennaro Festival, New York City is one of six prints by Grossman the National Gallery acquired through a generous gift from a private collection. These photographs, along with three others already in the collection, superbly encapsulate both the style and subject matter that Grossman championed and forcefully demonstrate this artist’s significant contributions to American photography. • Sarah Greenough, *Senior Curator of Photographs*