Revaluing Minimalism: Patronage, Aura, and Place

Anna C. Chave

Patronage studies are scarce in the literature on contemporary art for a reason: patrons have rarely exercised a decisive sway over the course of that art, broadly viewed. But the leading patrons of the Minimalist movement may be counted as an exception. The spiritualized view of Minimalism held by Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo and the founders of the Dia Art Foundation, Heiner Friedrich and Philippa Pellizzi (née de Menil and later changed to Fariba Friedrich), led them to elevate certain artists within the Minimalist ambit and motivated them to undertake particular forms of Minimalist production, especially site-specific forms, at times on an epic scale. These predilections would culminate in various initiatives—such as Walter De Maria's 1977 Lightning Field or the Dia Beacon museum—that would often be likened by the press to pilgrimage sites or sanctuaries and would otherwise lead to an institutional framing of Minimalism putatively at odds with the movement's premises in their inception, for dominant critical accounts would have it that Minimalism is properly understood as an ineluctably secular, materialist undertaking.1

Count Panza began collecting art by Dan Flavin and Robert Morris in 1967, followed by the work of Donald Judd, Carl Andre, James Turrell, Robert Irwin, and others, monopolizing the market for Minimalism over the course of a decade when prices were low and competition from fellow collectors scant.2 What he discerned in Minimalist initiatives generally was "the research of truth through simple forms," a quest for the "essential" that endowed the work with aural qualities.3 Over time, with his "taste for the metaphysical..." Panza rewrote the Minimalist project to suit his own sensibilities, Rosalind Krauss charged in 1991.4 As for the founders of Dia, who largely succeeded Panza as the Minimalists' chief patrons, Village Voice critic Kim Levin inquired whether they were "propagating their own idealistic and somewhat mystical aesthetic" when they opened an exhibition space devoted to a limited number of outsize, long-term projects in an industrial building in New York's Chelsea neighborhood in 1987.5 Dia's establishment of stand-alone art projects in accordance with individual artists' designs was framed skeptically by Krauss in October in 1990, further, as the "reconstituting..." certain urban spaces to a detached contemplation of their own "empty presence," spaces that emanate an "inscuteable but suggestive sense of impersonal, corporate-like power to penetrate artworld locales and to reedit them to another kind of nexus of control."6

According to Dia's first annual report, of 1975, the foundation's aim was to "plan, realize and maintain public projects which cannot be easily produced, financed or owned by individual collectors because of their cost and magnitude."7 Heiner Friedrich chose the name Dia—Greek for "through"—to denote (albeit in a way arcane to most) the foundation's role as a "conduit." But dia is also said to mean "the godlike one," and the artists anointed by Dia as geniuses capable of "creating[ing] major works which would be gifts to mankind for all time," as Dia artist La Monte Young put it,8 were sometimes said by the press to have been "dia-fied," while the patrons themselves were shyly dubbed by Flavin the "dia-ties."9 In an age-old bargain, in short, artists and patrons each in a way affirmed the other as possessed of a superhuman spark. The press often compared the de Menil family generally to the Medici. And, for his part, Friedrich explicitly represented Dia's founding as a due response to a cultural moment of Renaissance-like dimensions: "We have artists of the magnitude of... Michelangelo, be it Dan Flavin; of the magnitude of Donatello, be it Walter De Maria."10

Heiner Friedrich and Philippa Pellizzi welcomed Flavin, Judd, Turrell, De Maria, Young and his partner Marian Zazeela, and performance artist Robert Whitman into their founding Dia stable, promising to capitalize major projects by all of these figures.11 Like Panza before them, the Dia founders generally sought work that they perceived as auratic, and (like Panza, too) they embraced some of the leading California Minimalists equally with certain of their New York counterparts. As the discourse on Minimalism evolved, however, numerous critics and historians would count the "light and space" artists—Irwin, Turrell, and others (all hailing from the West Coast)—not as full-fledged Minimalists but as exemplars of a tangential, spiritualized practice, or a "California sublime."12 In an influential essay of 1991, Krauss pointedly separated two geographically defined cadres of Minimalists while extrapolating from a comparison between black cruciform paintings by Ad Reinhardt and Frank Stella: whereas Stella's work was cast as a springboard for a "maternalist," forward-looking, East Coast cohort of Minimalists, such as Morris and Flavin, the meditative, subtly illusionistic Reinhardt painting was portrayed as generative for a West Coast, retrogressive group of "idealist" minimalists—according but a lowercase m—such as Irwin and Turrell.13

Indeed, Reinhardt's generation (born early in the twentieth century)—including Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko, Tony Smith, Ron Bladen, Agnes Martin, and Anne Truitt—had generally imbued their practices with a spiritual approach, alluding to either or both Judeo-Christian and Asian philosophies in doing so.14 Many of these artists, whose work affected an extreme geometric simplicity, would command deep respect among the succeeding generation of Minimalists (above all, Newman, whose work Judd had hoped to include in the Dia-funded Marfa, Texas, compound he devoted to the artists he most esteemed).15 Yet prominent narratives tend to index the Minimalists' use of geometric simplicity to the materialist, secular realm of the industrial or technological and to canonize a faction of East Coast artists said to be distinguished from their elders—as well as from their California counterparts—principally on that basis. In
his 2001 monograph on Minimalism, for example, James Meyer followed Krauss’s lead, justifying the exclusion of all the Californians (along with the California-born, New York-based De Maria) by referring readers to her aforementioned 1991 essay.16

At the time Minimalism visibly coalesced as a movement, in the mid-1960s, many would regard, say, Judd and Irwin as very much of a kind, as both attempted “to provide the viewer with an object of attention devoid of elements that might set the imagination wandering beyond immediate physical facts,” as Richard Shiff succinctly put it.17 Some of the key early exhibitions that included artists now called Minimalists—such as the legendary Primary Structures show at New York’s Jewish Museum in 1966—encompassed alike East and West Coast–based practitioners. But the essays included in the first book on Minimalism, Gregory Batcock’s 1968 anthology, mentioned only a few California-based artists in passing, and the Californians were slighted also among the works reproduced there. With time, this bias became further entrenched: California-based artists were excluded from or diminished in texts on Minimalism that emerged in the late 1980s and after, with the light and space artists particularly vulnerable to erasure.18 Thus, whereas James Meyer’s expansive 2000 anthology of writings by and about the Minimalists admitted certain California-based artists who produced discrete objects, such as John McCracken, Larry Bell, and Judy Chicago, Turrell and Irwin were omitted.19

Whether it is possible to generalize meaningfully about East and West Coast forms of Minimalism and, if so, how they intersected and how they might usefully be compared are questions that deserve fuller and subtler analysis than they have yet received. Among the most canonized Minimalists, it bears noting that Flavin was the lone New York City native. Judd and Morris were Missourians, although Morris spent a formative period in California before settling in New York and Judd would count Texas as his primary residence after a key period in New York City. Sol LeWitt and Andre were originally New Englanders, with Andre’s work often speaking deeply of that identity. Many artists crucial to the performance and musical dimensions of Minimalism hailed from California, although most became transplanted New Yorkers: Simone Forti and Yvonne Rainer on the dance side; John Cage, as a forefather, alongside La Monte Young and Terry Riley, on the aural side. California-born De Maria also settled in New York, whereas Irwin, Turrell, Bell, and McCracken remained based in the West, where they were raised (although not all of them stayed on the coast).20

Recent exhibitions centered on Minimalism at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City—the first ambitious historical surveys of the movement—might be taken as evidence of how Panza has indeed helped to foster a certain view of the Minimalist project. As homes to large portions of Panza’s former holdings, with their liberal mixture of East and West Coast practitioners, both museums elected to integrate New York and Californian Minimalist work.21 Further, and more enduringly, the recently established Beacon, New York, museum devoted principally to Dia’s permanent collection, DiaBeacon, grants pride of place to De Maria and Judd, among others, within a structure revamped by Irwin.

Panza’s initial forays as a collector of contemporary art proceeded in a fairly ordinary way, but rather than continue to acquire discrete objects that appealed to him, he developed an idealistic vision of the potential for public installations of contemporary art to “take the place of the cathedral.”22 That vision came to be strongly shared by the founders of Dia, who in time established numerous permanent (and would-be permanent) sanctuary-like art installations, such as De Maria’s 1979 Broken Kilometer in New York’s SoHo district. Though Panza could not afford to match Dia’s costly initiatives, he was responsive to artists’ interests in site-specific and environmental endeavors, and by the ways in which he commissioned, displayed, and dispersed elements of his own vast collection, he became a leading figure in driving such initiatives. For example, he commissioned Turrell and Flavin to mount installations at his villa in Varese, north of Milan—a place that long welcomed visitors and, more recently, became a public institution. Turrell completed his Skyspace I by 1975, and Flavin installed his Varese corridor in 1977 (Fig. 1).23 For years, Panza sought optimum sites to locate portions of his collection, beyond what his villa could continuously accommodate, as well as long-term housing for other projects by artists he supported, whether in historic buildings within Italy or elsewhere in Europe and the United States.24

Among those who facilitated Panza’s interest in site-specific work was Heiner Friedrich, who (prior to founding Dia) had established cutting-edge commercial galleries in Germany and New York.25 Friedrich opened his first gallery in Munich in 1963 with an erstwhile partner who recalls him as less a
businessman than a world-be, patron, one who revered artists as "the pinnacle of society" and art as "a system to build a new world." Born in 1938, Friedrich had grown up in war-torn Germany, the son of a man who became a wealthy industrialist following the war. Like Joseph Beuys—whose more Minimal-looking work Dia eventually acquired and showcased—Friedrich came to look at art as something that might induce a profound antidote to the shameful catastrophe of the war: "My early experience of total destruction made me want to create the permanence of indestructible properties, particularly the creative works of artists." Friedrich's galleries showed, among others, De Maria, Judd, Flavin, and Turrell, plus Young and Zazeela's jointly authored sound and light installations.

In 1968, Walter De Maria's earth room (as it came to be called) premiered at Friedrich's Munich gallery, with the press release for "The Land Show: Pure Dirt Pure Earth Pure Land" citing a single ponderous sentence by the artist: "God has given us the earth, and we have ignored it." In 1977, De Maria installed his first New York earth room (Fig. 2)—110 tons of earth (including peat and bark), comprising 222 cubic yards, at a depth of 21 inches—in the 3,000-square-foot quarters occupied by Friedrich's first New York City gallery (opened in 1973) at 14 Wooster Street, a project later made permanent. The necessary resources to achieve that and comparable projects—such as The Broken Kilometer (which took over the space where Friedrich's New York gallery relocated, at 393 West Broadway)—came principally through the dealer's newfound connection to Philippa Pellizzi. Born in 1947, Philippa was the youngest child of Dominique and John de Menil. French-born, Houston-based heirs to the Schlumberger fortune. Known for their spiritually minded approach to art patronage (influenced by the French priest Marie-Alain Couturier, who had helped realize the Matisse chapel in Venice, in 1964 the de Menil's commissioned the Rothko Chapel in Houston (Fig. 3), close by where they later founded the Menil Collection museum. "It's in the desert that miracles happen," John de Menil once retorted to a friend who doubted the potential for successfully importing high culture to Houston: "Through art, God constantly clears a path to our hearts": so believed Dominique de Menil. Dedicated in 1971, the ecumenical Rothko Chapel has welcomed a spectrum of religious adherents, including a troupe of whirling dervishes whose Sufi faith found converts in Philippa and her second husband, Friedrich, whom she married in a Sufi ceremony in 1970, soon after taking the name Fariha bestowed on her by her spiritual leader. Sufism, a mystical, contemplative, quietist branch of Islam, has historically exalted and been deeply immersed in artistic and philosophical pursuits. Meshing their ardent commitment to their faith with their distinctive cultural predilections, the Friedricks housed Dia Art Foundation offices for some time, in fact, in a mosque they established in a former Soho fire station at 155 Mercer Street, replete with living quarters for their spiritual leader, as well as spaces for public performances, both secular and sacred (including the ritual dance of the dervishes), and a series of light installations by Flavin (Fig. 4). The Rothko Chapel may have served as a kind of template for the Friedricks in establishing this sanctuary, as well as for the other sanctuary-like spaces they would undertake in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The Friedricks' mosque, Masjid Al-Farah, was incorporated in January 1981 explicitly in order to:

Flavin had been commissioned in 1979 to provide works to illuminate the Mercer Street building, then intended as a "dance-performance center," and though he reportedly had qualms about its redecoration, by 1982 he produced an extensive series of works that served to light three floors and a stairwell of the mixed-use edifice. Heiner Friedrich recalled that he had experienced "the true insight for the unfolding and development of Dia"—namely, the supreme value of sponsoring a genius to make a masterpiece to occupy a harmonious space in perpetuity—in a youthful epiphany in the Arena Chapel at Padua, where he encountered Giotto's storied fresco cycle in 1957. (Friedrich later perceived a relation between the Arena Chapel and the Rothko Chapel, where he became the first person to spend an entire night.) The 1960s and 1970s would oversee an aggressive disinvestment in the concepts of genius and masterpieces within the avant-garde, through strategies of de-skilling, the removal of the artist's hand, and the use of ordinary materials, technologies, and forms, among others. Regardless, Friedrich believed that he knew genius when he
saw it, and he believed that masterworks could be induced to follow: works monumental in ambition, significance, and scale.

Proving unique in our era for the aggressiveness with which they drove a certain course of development for a key movement, Dia’s founders induced or encouraged certain artists to dream audaciously, as if money were no object and any given venue could be secured in perpetuity. “Heiner told me he wanted to establish a method of funding not seen since the Renaissance,” Whitman recalled. “He wanted to make a Sistine chapel, create a Shakespeare.” Avant-garde practices had been largely inimical to grandiosity until the advent in the later 1960s of the Earthworks movement and the contemporaneous emergence of Richard Serra’s amplified iteration of the Minimalist vocabulary. The versatile De Maria may be counted a kind of pioneer in the Earthworks initiative, along with Robert Smithson and Michael Heizer, both of whom built importantly from the foundation of Minimalism, and whose work was more recently adopted by Dia, along with that of Serra. While outside scale is an age-old mechanism for inspiring awe, in the event, Dia’s spectacular plans tended to be executed with a distinctively understated aspect. The somewhat generic, industrial, or institutional spaces that Dia mostly acquired for the art projects it sponsored were evidently chosen and architecturally customized precisely to reciprocate the endemic reserve of the Minimalist aesthetic itself.

In general, the Minimalists’ projects had not initially assumed an epic scale nor required great sums; rather, the (then impecunious) artists tended to use commonplace materials simply and on a moderate scale, exploiting resources at hand in the urban settings where the movement emerged. (The Californians mostly tended to master and deploy their chosen means of fabrication themselves, whereas the New Yorkers tended to be more removed, employing fabricators and more or less skilled assistants, or using ready-made materials.) Among the inaugural Minimalist sculptures, for example, was De Maria’s untitled 1961 box, easily carpentered out of four standard-issue 4-by-8-foot plywood boards capped at either end by another such board cut in two—a decidedly plain, fairly portable artifact by comparison, say, with the five hundred meticulously machined, regularly polished, solid brass rods, 2 meters (6½ feet) long by 2 inches in diameter, collectively weighing 37,500 pounds, permanently, precisely arrayed (one hundred to a line in five parallel lines) across a specially renovated and lighted 7,500-square-foot space; a summary description of The Broken Kilometer of 1979 (Fig. 5). While each individual rod remained loosely on a human scale—typical of Minimalism in its inception—the proliferation of those rods into a work that, in aggregate, constitutes a colossus attests to Dia’s fostering of an epic, high-financed stage in the movement’s development.

When The Broken Kilometer debuted as a Dia facility, Dia guards were asked to record the (unwitting) visitors’ comments. The remarks ranged from the financially and authority-minded.

“Am I supposed to be impressed with the scale and the cost?” “We all know the material world is rationalized by those who control it, why support that?” “You don’t really mean this is a non-profit organization; it is for the profit of one artist,” “Do you have to sign in or anything?” “It’s very fascist,” “rows of steel helmets,”

to the predictably baffled and outraged:

“Is this all you have to show?” “It’s criminal that it is here permanently,”

to the transported, one way or another:

“like Emerald City,” “an awe inspiring space,” “A church,” “like meditating at the bottom of a brilliant golden ocean.”

Among professional observers, April Kimsley perceived, “The effect is of a shimmering but inaccessible floor of gold,
like gold bars in the Treasury or priceless objects behind bullet-proof glass,” while Brian Wallis noted “a tense contradiction between the mechanical and the spiritual” in this “grandiose” work whose effect he compared to that of the Rothko Chapel.\(^6\)

The solemnity and quietness—at times, even secrecy—with which Dia would pursue its monumental projects, as well as the extreme solicitude it showed toward the mostly prominent artists it subsidized, generally helped insulate the foundation from pointed interrogation or critique concerning its unusually directive role. However, some came to question Dia’s isolating of artists from the larger forces of society and the marketplace. “Dia monopolized some artists so completely that they almost disappeared from circulation,” gallery owner Leo Castelli reportedly observed, and another New York dealer complained (anonymously). “It’s absolutely crazy what they did. . . You support artists by buying their work, not by making shrines to them.”\(^4\) At issue here in part, arguably, was a conventionally American trust in the inherent rightness of the outcome of free market operations relative to contemporary art production (notwithstanding that Castelli was himself European in origin), versus an “old-world” ideal of art patronage as reanimated by Panza and the Dia founders. For that matter, in 2001 critic Dave Hickey compared Judd and Flavin to certain “eighteenth-century neoclassical masters like Palladio . . . retained by old families who embodied the historical destiny of aristocratic European taste.”\(^42\)

While acknowledging Heiner Friedrich’s idealism, Dan Flavin himself reportedly asserted, in the mid-1980s, that his patron “really wanted control over a group of artists for his own ends.”\(^43\) Yet such open disgruntlement had proven rare among Dia’s chosen circle of artists prior to that moment—a moment when a financial crisis brought on by a collapse of oil prices caused the foundation to curtail and renege on numerous of its ambitious plans, after which Dia acquired a new administration, and Dia-affiliated artists were largely loose from their “retained” status.\(^44\)

So long as Dia remained the Friederichs’ exclusive domain, the artists whom they included in the foundation’s programs were figures whose work apparently resonated with their deeply held convictions.\(^45\) Friedrich already had established ties to most of the artists in question prior to his religious conversion. But in view of his, and Fariba’s, eventual adherence to Sufism, it bears noting that historically, Islamic tradition has tended to value an aniconic and “contemplative” visual art that “expresses above all a state of the soul that is open toward the interior, toward an encounter with the Divine Presence.” Within Islamic art and, more specifically, within Sufi poetry, beauty is considered of the essence, as beauty is tantamount to the “face of God.”\(^46\) Still, the Friederichs never extracted express spiritual commitments from the artists they supported, just as Dominique de Menil had demanded no profession of faith from the doubting Rothko before asking him to make paintings for a chapel, being secure in her own insights as to the spiritual moment of his work. Regardless of their individual creeds or lack thereof, “great artists are . . . the ministers of a mystery which cannot be fathomed,” Dominique de Menil affirmed at Dia in 1992.\(^47\)

Among those (Euro-American) artists whom the Friederichs favored, the only ones who approached their fervidly held beliefs were Young and Zazeela. In the Dia-funded Dream House, running from 1981 to 1985 at the revamped New York Mercantile Exchange at 6 Harrison Street, Young’s “electronic music played 24 hours a day and all six floors were bathed in the glow of [Zazeela’s] magenta light projections” (Fig. 6).\(^48\) Young held a Sufi belief that “music is capable of presenting the most perfect model of universal structure” and he spoke of “universal truths that are being transmitted directly through me.”\(^49\) Young and Zazeela were disciples and sometime accompanists of Indian vocalist Pandit Pran Nath,
who had been trained from childhood by the Sufi master Ustad Abdul Waheed Khan Sahib in the Kirana style of music. Characterizing the Kirana style as “a spiritual form preserved and expressed in the language of music,” Dia sponsored concerts by Pandit Pran Nath, who came at times to perform and also reside at 6 Harrison Street.\(^5^0\)

Besides the facilities Dia underwrote in urban and small-town enclaves along the East Coast, the foundation also sponsored certain Minimalists’ initiatives in drawing the art public into untrammelled nature, following the path of gallery owner Virginia Dwan, patron (about 1970) of seminal earthworks by Heizer and Smithson. Friedrich recalled how “living in the countryside after the war in purest relation to nature, in great peace, made a huge impression on me—seeing the manifestation of the divine”—and Panza would share with Friedrich a sense of the particular gloriousness of the western United States.\(^5^1\) Dia’s first such major undertaking, to which Panza contributed, was De Maria’s Lightning Field, completed in the high desert of New Mexico in 1977 (Fig. 10). Soon after came the first phases of what came to be called the Chinati Foundation. At a disused military installation that Dia purchased in tiny, remote Marfa, Texas, in 1979, Judd assembled discrete bodies of work by himself and other artists and placed each in dedicated, renovated buildings.\(^5^2\) Journalists almost reflexively described visits to The Lightning Field and Chinati as pilgrimages, signaling the ordeal entailed in reaching such far-flung places as well as a perception of aura inhering in them. In a world where art is normally concentrated in urban centers, and in an era rife with flux and transposition, such outposts stood out by design for the stunning fact of their remoteness and permanence (with even photographic dissemination strictly controlled), radiating a sense of distance and uniqueness or authenticity—qualities that Walter Benjamin specified as endemic to aura.

An artwork’s aura has to be discerned by a beholder, as Benjamin conceived it, and is not susceptible to being contrived by an artist. “A spiritual presence isn’t something you put into your work, but . . . art is human beings trying to do something for other human beings that is super-special,” affirmed James Turrell. That effort was epitomized in his case by the shaping of a celestial observatory at Roden Crater in rural Arizona, a project funded in part by Dia since 1975.\(^5^3\) Still incomplete, Roden Crater has remained inaccessible to all but invited visitors, such as the critic Kay Larson, who
declared (in 2004) that its “presence... feels sacred in its intensity and mystery.” At the end of a night spent there, “The lungs of the sky filled and expanded. The purple eyelid swung slowly open... Intimacy receded and vastness arrived. And I was altered—emptied out and shaken open. I had come out the other side, wordless.”

As for the impact of Chinati, journalist Daphne Beal exclaimed in 1997 that seeing Judd’s art situated in a landscape that appeared “at the very least mythical, if not holy,” could be “transforming;” and she told of a visiting Jesuit priest who commented to Judd, “you and I are in the same business.”

Mark Stevens characterized Marfa as featuring “exactly the sort of wilderness that has attracted prophets and visionaries since biblical times, which is what Judd has become.” And to critic Michael Kimmelman, the pair of renovated artillery sheds that form a centerpiece of Chinati are “twin cathedrals” housing “Minimalism’s great shrine,” namely, the one hundred shining mill aluminum boxes of 1982-86 that Dia commissioned of Judd (Fig. 7).

(While richly diverse in their internal articulation, the boxes were identical in external dimension, on a scale individually moderate, but aggregately amounting to a kind of colossus, making it—like The Broken Kilometer—a stunning testament to Dia’s means.)

Notwithstanding this journalistic penchant for religious metaphor and effusion, the general press, and specialist writers, too, have mostly omitted mention of the fervent religiosity of Dia’s founders; thus, Dia’s historic identity as a quasi-religious institution never has formed a conspicuous part of its public profile. The impression that Dia projects emanated a sacred quality remained a commonplace among journalists, and not among journalists alone, even after the foundation’s pious founders had largely stepped aside. For example, in the mid-1990s, artist Ilya Kabakov—to whom Judd had accorded a large space at Marfa for his own (non-Minimalist) work—spoke of perceiving in Judd’s mill aluminum boxes “an enormous sense of an almost cosmic order,” liberating the viewer “from all that is chaotic,” while Chinati as a whole impressed him as “similar to a holy place... like some sort of Tibetan monastery.”

Some critics tried to align their responses to the epic Minimalism sponsored and engineered by Dia with the critical narrative predominant within academic circles, predicated on account of an originary Minimalist moment said to be stringently materialist. In Artforum in 2000, for instance, Libby Lumpkin observed that Flavin’s (posthumous) Chinati project brought the “trock” of the Marfa “pilgrims” to a “dead end,” as his fluorescent lights’ “standard, factory-issue hues” served to dispel the “2,000 year old association of luminescence with mysticism and spirituality.” At the same time, Lumpkin described entering the buildings containing Flavin’s works as tantamount to a trip “out of the world,” while comparing his palette (aptly) to that of Matisse’s stained glass at Venice. Fixed, however confusedly, on Flavin’s legacy as one of “resolute secularism.”

Lumpkin did not mention the permanent installation of 1997 that the artist designed for a church near Milan; the works made for the Friedrichs’ mosque; or the deconsecrated Baptist church in Bridgehampton, New York, that houses the Dan Flavin Art Institute opened by Dia in 1983. Containing various discrete Flavin works in niches formed by a zigzagging wall running the length of the former sanctuary, the Bridgehampton building has been termed by Arthur Danto “an environment that bears comparison with a great stained-glass interior.”

It was not just during the high Minimalist moment underwritten by Dia that Flavin’s art trafficked in the sacred, however. Among his earliest works incorporating light was the 1982 East New York Shrine, with its kitschy Madonna bulb elevated over a can of “Pope” brand tomatoes, ready to be lit by the pull of a rosary chain. Eight of these works were fabricated (by Flavin’s first wife, Sonja Severdija, who served initially as electrician for the intensely hands-off artist), each inscribed with the phrase: “HOly MoTher LOaded With Grace PLease Help [name of friend or purchaser] SONIJA AND DAN FLAVIN” and the date. In addition, Flavin called his first
series of works to involve fluorescent light (together with monochrome panels) icons, and he accorded conventionally religious subtleties to some, such as *icon I* (the heart), *icon II* (the mystery), *icon III* (blood) (the blood of a martyr), and *icon VII* (via crucis) of 1961–63. Flavin dedicated some of his icons to people for whom he deeply cared, especially *icon IV* (the pure land), inscribed to his fraternal twin brother David John Flavin, who died in 1962 of polio. The phrase “the pure land” references “a Buddhist notion of a beautiful, blissful waystation on the spiritual journey to complete enlightenment,” and *icon IV* was white, the color traditionally worn by Buddhists at funerals.62

Although light is historically, widely indexed to the spiritual,63 fluorescent bulbs emit a harsh, cheap light typically reserved for institutional or functional contexts, not sanctuaries. Reviewing Flavin in 1968, Phil Lieder astutely delineated the contradiction between work that could appear “gaudy, playful, secular,” on the one hand, yet “severe, monastic, otherworldly,” on the other; between objects that were “not easily classifiable as sculpture,” and so posed the problem of “establish[ing] his work in some minds as art at all,” on the one hand, while exhibiting a “rich romanticism with religious and atmospheric overtones,” on the other.64 In 1962, Flavin himself had sardonically characterized his icons as “dumb ... inglorious ... mute and indistinguished [sic],” while in the same breath claiming that they shared a “magical presiding presence” with a Byzantine icon of Christ.65 In a rambling autobiographical statement of 1964, moreover, Flavin expressly framed his artistic development in terms of his ultrareligious upbringing within the Catholic Church, detailing that past in conflicted, at once scathing and nostalgic terms.66

Among the first works Flavin made exclusively of fluorescents is the nominal three (to William of Ockham) of 1963, sold some years later to Panza (Fig. 8). This work is dedicated to the fourteenth-century Nominalist philosopher who defined prevailing doctrine to argue “that reality exists solely in individual things and universals are merely abstract signs,” as Flavin put it, a view that “led [Ockham] to exclude questions such as the existence of God from intellectual knowledge, referring them to faith alone.”67 Thus, Flavin insinuated a sculpture consisting of six eight-foot-long white bulbs positioned vertically in groupings of one, two, and three—a highly rudimentary counting exercise enacted by a highly banal object—squarely, if incongruously, within a religious frame. This tension between inscription and erasure of markers of the spiritual (a tension loosely comparable to that induced by Rothko’s art)68 is felt perhaps most acutely in a Greek cross done in 1971, also acquired by Panza (among others).69 Flavin positioned the outward-facing two-foot-long blue bulb that formed the horizontal arm of the cross such that it spanned a corner that was aglow from the vertical, inward-facing pink bulb, so as to ensure the work would “be beautiful,” he said70—like a favored Russian icon or a Kasimir Malevich painting that referred to the same. Also germane are the neon crosses once used to sign the exteriors of many poor churches, including the one Flavin adapted on Long Island, where he directed Dia to have the cross restored and reinstalled inside, adjacent to his own work, together with a collection of the church’s artifacts.71

For De Maria, too, Catholicism provided his “strongest and earliest sensations.” And exposure to the Zen-informed thinking of Cage crucially marked De Maria’s young adult years. His *360 Degree 1 Ching/64 Sculptures* of 1981, made of 576 rods of lacquered wood, engaged the ancient Chinese divination system that also enthralled Cage. But religious or culitic emblems had emerged much earlier in his practice, as in *Candle Piece* of 1965, with a votive light illuminating a stainless steel plaque inscribed “Dear God,” and in *Cross* (Fig. 9) and *Museum Piece* (a swastika) of the mid-1960s, followed by *Star* (of David) in 1972, all formed incongruously of aluminum troughs.72 Like elegant, elementary game boards, this trio of works each contained a ball the artist added, he said, “to disturb the purity of the symbol” (a disruptive impulse perhaps similar to aspects of Flavin’s practice).73

In his 1968 * Beds of Spikes*, De Maria alluded elliptically to the ancient ascetic practices of yogis who reclined on beds of nails. Organized according to a hermetic, progressive, mathematical logic, the *Beds of Spikes* revealed his interest in numerological play, which became apparent also in *The Lightning Field* (Fig. 10). In the field’s one-mile-by-one-kilometer grid, the number of poles on the mile side equals the square of five; the number of poles on the kilometer side is the square of four; altogether the poles amount to the square of twenty (400). Squares and square roots were considered magical numbers from ancient Greece into the Middle Ages, when mathematics was generally the province of monks, for whom it often had sacred overtones.

The commitment of time and money entailed in visiting *The Lightning Field* might have ensured that devotees alone would trouble to visit, but the work has instead met with a spectrum of responses. When it was premiered to local journalists (who had to press *Dia* for access), Heiner Friedrich struggled to persuade Fritz Thompson, for one, of the mag-
afternoon, when the then prosaic-looking poles may be seen only a few at a time and only in direct proximity. Through an implicitly choreographed exercise in the experience of epiphany, visitors must wait for the sun’s slow descent to cause the full expanse of poles to emerge to view, glowing or radiating as the sun nears the horizon. De Maria considered that “the great appreciation for slow time is the contribution of the drug sensibility of the ’60s,” and the 1960s conceit of the “trip” may indeed seem apropos to the experience on offer at The Lightning Field. Although De Maria’s succinct text about his most ambitious work framed it largely in factual terms, he interspersed those terms with some more gnomic pronouncements, notably: “The invisible is real.”

The Lightning Field has of course found its true believers as well, including Panza, for whom it afforded an authentically metaphysical experience. A letter to Philippa Pelizziz characterized his 1978 trip there as:

like a necessary pilgrimage to a sanctuary where we can recognize our condition of man into the Universe; never was built cathedral or temple to tell to everybody this truth so clearly. . . . [P]ure thin beams of light pointing to the sky making a relationship between our finite terrestrial condition and the infinite space. . . . Because of you a so great work was made. It will be forever a landmark of our time, like the Rothko chapel.

Among other visitors, a New Mexican cardiologist found that his “Cosmic fantasies came alive”:

Interplanetary visitors would be most comfortable at this site, and would surely get a most positive first impression of Earth and the works of Earthlings. . . . It is incredibly glorious in the moments before the sun first emerges over the eastern ridge, the tops of the poles glowing in the early morning tangent, as if to herald the Second Coming.

From the first, numerous critics perceived in The Lightning Field intimations of a contemporary reformulation of the sublime. Commonly defined as an ultimate, awesome experience of “high spiritual, moral, or intellectual worth,” the sublime is often art historically associated with spectacular landscape painting, such as that of the Hudson River school. But the fairly featureless landscape where De Maria’s work was erected evokes the scenery favored by, say, Albert Bierstadt, simply by virtue of its vastness (although mountains encircle the site, they are so far distant as to be dwarfed in the viewers’ perception). The very monotony or plainness of the topography—as also at Marfa—is in effect what allows the Minimalist work, in all its apparent sameness and simplicity, to stand out and slowly offer up its subtleties. And vice versa: the landscape’s subdued qualities in a sense may be revealed by the artwork. In a realm rich mostly in tumbleweed, cactus, and clotted earth—a realm apparently off the all-consuming grid—the pristine grids of De Maria and Judd may achieve, by contrast, a shining, stunning, precious, as if wondrous, presence.

“Isolation is the essence of Land Art,” De Maria declared. His stress on The Lightning Field’s remoteness; on the visitors’ solitariness; on the project’s expansive dimension; and, of course, on the experience of light, manifest most intensely in
the desert sunsets, sunrises, and strikes of lightning (though direct strikes are exceedingly rare): all of these emphases resonate with ideas of sublimity, as does the artist’s deployment of uniformity and repetition. For that matter, a comparable case might be made for Judd’s grids of aluminum boxes in Marfa, which also explore uniformity and repetition while relying for their effects on the natural light delivered by the continuous fenestration the artist had installed along the side walls of the sheds housing the boxes.²⁷

“Where an Object is vast, and at the same Time uniform, there is to the Imagination no Limits of its Vastness, and the Mind runs out into Infinity, continually creating as it were from the Pattern,” John Baillie observed in his 1747 Essay on the Sublime.²⁸ Limitlessness is another attribute of the sublime, in short, and The Lightning Field does and does not answer to that description, being explicitly bound by units derived from Enlightenment-based systems of measurement, yet being imaginable as infinitely extensible, as any grid might be. Just as the Field’s spiked, steely poles impose the ubiquitous, tyrannical regularity of the grid on the randomness of nature, nature simultaneously imposes its own insistent randomness over the regularity of the grid: De Maria’s perfectionist demand that “the plane of the tips” should “evenly support an imaginary sheet of glass” necessitated strictly differentiating all those apparently identical poles, making each a singular height, ranging all the way from 15 feet to 26 feet 9 inches, to accommodate—while, as it were, canceling—the randomness of terrain chosen in part for its seeming flatness.²⁹

Like De Maria, James Turrell was also signal influenced at a formative moment by the Zen-infused aesthetics of Cage, and Turrell eventually pursued an independent investigation of certain Eastern philosophies, including Zen.³⁰ Like De Maria and Flavin both, Turrell also worked through an at once personal and institutional spiritual history—in his case, that of Quakerism, a faith that came to unusual prominence in the Vietnam era because of its pacifism. By contrast with Flavin’s agonistic encounter with his (patriarchal and bureaucratized) faith, Turrell recalled more benignly the worship services, called “meetings,” held to “greet the light,” which signifies the divinity within and without in Quakerism. A generally aniconic faith, Quakerism shuns intercessors between worshipers and their god. And Turrell liked to say, with
respect to his light-based art: "Light is not so much something that reveals, as it is itself the revelation." His Skycon of 1980–86 at P.S.1 in New York City, called Meeting, with its humble benches ranged around the perimeter of a plain room, evokes a miniature Quaker meetinghouse (albeit with unusual fenestration). (Turrell has had a return to Quakerism more recently through his involvement in designing a Houston meetinghouse.)

As for Roden Crater—where a calendar of astronomical events for thousands of years to come has been attempted, so as to align the crater’s observatory chambers with planetary and celestial movements—an astronomer involved in the project compared it to places ranging from “the inner sanctuary of Newgrange, [and] the High Room of the Sun at Karnak . . . [to] the sacred ground inside a Kogi temple.” When Turrell wrote to Panza in 1989 seeking funds for the crater, he explained: “Within this setting are to be made spaces which engage celestial events, a music of the spheres played out in light.”

When Turrell wrote to Panza in 1989 seeking funds for the crater, he explained: “Within this setting are to be made spaces which engage celestial events, a music of the spheres played out in light.”

Panza in his turn, once he visited, perceived that the crater could provide “the best education giving a real hope in front of the Greatest Reality.”

The leading narratives of the Minimalist movement have generally separated Turrell’s aims from those of his New York counterparts, to reiterate. Yet Turrell shared with the New York–based Minimalist Morris, for one, his engagement with the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. And a number of the New Yorkers would share, or come to share, with Turrell aspects of his bent toward a practice complicated by loosely spiritual valences. Morris, who is said to have been deeply affected by a visit to Turrell’s studio in Ocean Park, California, in 1969 (though he dissembled on this subject),

produced two primitive observatories in Holland in the 1970s and framed a three-dimensional maze patterned on that in the floor of Chartres Cathedral (emblematic of the rite of pilgrimage) in a work of 1974, acquired by Panza. As for Andre, who had what he called a “momentous” encounter with Stonehenge in his youth, he directly emulated Neolithic construction, explicitly so in his Henge works of the early 1970s.

The New Yorker who specifically shared Turrell’s engagement with light was, of course, Flavin, who concentrated mostly on the effects of artificial light, whereas Turrell focused on natural as well as artificial light, or combinations thereof. Panza juxtaposed Turrell’s work with that of Flavin in his Villa Litta in Varese in an arrangement that Krauss criticized for making Flavin’s work appear uncharacteristically science-fiction–like and metaphysical, thereby leading the Minimalist project off course such that it became “folded at last into the arms of the California Sublime.”

But, though he lacked Turrell’s unalloyed sincerity, in his own contradictory ways Flavin also investigated the spiritual, and his work could look science fiction–like of its own accord (as many have noted)—never more so than when his 1992 retrospective effectively turned the Guggenheim Museum as viewed at night into a giant, vibrant, technicolor UFO landed hard by Central Park.

Even when we look to a moment antedating these artists’ connections with Panza and the Friedricks, comparing, say, Ursula’s one and two picture of 1964 (2 feet by 4 feet) by Flavin (which Panza eventually acquired; Fig. 11) and Turrell’s Ros-
sectors in the United States, the contemplative practice of meditation was being prized apart from particular religious systems, whether to be studied in scientific and medical ways or to be investigated in an ecletic, esoteric context sometimes summarized or derided as “New Age” spiritualism.\textsuperscript{165} Thus, Yve-Alain Bois, for one, recently complained that the quasi-religious interpretation of Minimalism proposed by New Age zealots such as James Turrell is forever on the rise, despite its staunch rejection by most Minimal artists; Judd foremost among them.\textsuperscript{106} While Judd indeed suspected the Friedruchs’ religious fervor, it remains an open question whether their view of his practice in some degree permeated or reciprocated aspects of his own view. “To make good things, you have to have some sort of belief,” Judd himself once averred.\textsuperscript{107} “[A]ll forms are spiritual...” he observed, further, in an interview in 1993: “I see it as an awareness which stems from reality—a kind of ‘being’.”\textsuperscript{108} Meditation was not an area of formal study for Judd or the East Coast Minimalists, evidently, whereas Turrell and Irwin seriously investigated meditative practices and “alpha conditioning” (the brain-wave cycles that typically occur during meditation), and Turrell imagined viewers of his work potentially “back[ing] into a subtle form of meditation.”\textsuperscript{109} In 1965, in a founding article of Minimalist discourse, Barbara Rose perceived that the “protracted asceticism” characteristic of Minimalism (which she then termed “ABC Art”) “is normally the activity of contemplatives or mystics, ... Like the mystic, in their work these artists deny the ego and the individual personality, seeking to evoke, it would seem, that semi-hypnotic state of blank consciousness, of meaningless tranquility...
and anonymity that both Eastern monks and yogis and Western mystics...sought."

In 1967, literary critic Ihab Hassan noted, "Mystics have always maintained that the way down is also the way out and that the end of things heralds a new beginning—negative transcendence, as we call it today, is a form of transcendence nevertheless." From the retrospective (1985) vantage point of Irwin, a later inductee into the Dia fold, "The wonder of it all is that what looked for all the world like a diminishing horizon—the art-object's becoming so ephemeral as to threaten to disappear altogether—has, like some valuable philosophical riddle, turned itself inside out to reveal its opposite," that is, a newly "phenomenal art...which seeks to discover and value the potential for experiencing beauty in everything."

There are meditative practices that entail concentration on objects (such as grids), as well as those calling for an objectless state of focus. From Irwin's and Turrell's perspective, finally, the very act of "experiencing the object," whereas Judd, Flavin, De Maria, Andre, and Morris would not forgo some form of material object. (Judd at times partially dissolved the object through illusionistic effect, however, while Flavin's objects depend heavily on the immaterial medium of light.) But that difference does not correlate with any broader East–West divide, inasmuch as Californians Larry Bell and the mystical John McCracken, for example, persisted in producing objects (just as Irwin had at the outset of his career). With or without a material object, in New York, California, and outposts in between, the Minimalists broadly sought to alter public consciousness through their practice, an aim that was conceived in various quarters during the 1960s as harboring a social, spiritual, or utopian potential. As literary critic Leslie Fiedler grandly pronounced in 1964, "We can see a different world without firing a shot or framing a syllabism, merely by altering our consciousness; and the ways to alter it are at hand."

Minimalists across the United States may be said to have pursued, in diverse ways, the capacity for authentic experience—a capacity thought to be in decline in the technological age. In 1964, Susan Sontag famously lamented the widespread "hypertrophy of the intellect at the expense of energy and sensual capability" in a jeremiad "Against Interpretation." For De Maria, as for Heiner Friedrich, rapt silence was the ideal state for communion with great works of art, from which perspective any exercise in interpretation could represent a kind of violation. As for Irwin, his work is said to have become "all about the sort of attention that precedes verbalization, about what it's like to experience—or rather, what it is to experience—before being overwhelmed by words." Many of the Minimalists were drawn to the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, moreover, who wrote a phrase that has lately been proposed by Pepe Karmel as a very motto for Minimalism generally: "What can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence." Karmel elaborates:

Wittgenstein's observation is subject to two mutually exclusive interpretations. One is that anything that cannot be stated clearly does not exist, and therefore is not worth discussing. . . . The other interpretation is that there are ethical and spiritual matters of supreme importance that cannot be discussed clearly...[that] will be distorted and perverted by any attempt to discuss them. . . . It might be argued that what Minimal art aims to communicate is precisely this sense of supreme and therefore inexpressible meaningfulness."

Take the case of Flavin's nonunal three of 1963, with its white bulbs counted out in groupings of one, two, and three, or of Andre's iconic Leiver of 1966, with its 137 firebricks laid side by side: in 1962, Hugh Kenner argued that the "dominant intellectual analogy of the present age is drawn...from general number theory," which introduced the concept of the "closed field"—that is, "a set of elements, and a set of laws for dealing with these elements"—as a "condition for learning." Kenner pointed out that in the novel Molloy by Samuel Beckett (whose writings appealed to many of the Minimalists), Molloy sits "on the beach to meditate" with "the elements of a closed field," namely, sixteen stones, arrayed before him; "his problem is to suck on each in turn until he has completed the set, and then begin again." Though sucking the stones may appear an "instinct for order," it can afford "no nourishment" to Molloy. Nonetheless, reading Beckett's narrative may yield "not only laughter, but also nourishment for the affections and the intellect." Concluded Kenner, "One way or another, when it is focused by art, the closed field becomes that point of concentration which in proportion as it grows smaller concentrates more intensely the radiant energies of all that we feel and know."

Benjamin had also cherished an ideal of an authentic, sensually aware aesthetic experience, "demanding of art" that it "undo the alienation of the corporeal sensorium, to restore the instinctual power of the human bodily senses for the sake of humanity's self-preservation, and...do this, not by avoiding the new technologies, but by passing through them," as Susan Buck-Morss has described. Many of the Minimalists explored fairly new technologies and materials, such as contemporary plastics, but much of the Minimalist corpus deployed older materials associated with the common culture, from timber and bricks to various metals, glass, and plywood. As virtuality and the simulative have come to have an ever increasing purchase on contemporary life in the West, the Minimalists preferred materials have accrued an aura of authenticity. Simple plywood may look less ordinary than special, less processed than richly natural, for example, at a moment when the computer screen is the most signal of contemporary surfaces and actual wood graining is more and more restricted to the domains of the affluent.

Minimalist projects typically entailed a paradoxical combination of humbleness and pretension, being ordinary in their forms and, seemingly, in their materials and means, yet grandiose in their claims to art status. In art, as in architecture—namely, including the spaces remade by Dia—the appearance of extreme simplicity can disguise great difficulty and expense, however. Once their patrons offered to capitalize ambitious schemes, the Minimalists devised projects that often appeared austere even as they occasioned hidden extravagance. For that matter, such a conjoining of simplicity and cost is deeply identified with a kind of patrician taste, a taste
for which some members of the de Menil family happened to be particularly renowned.122

Dave Hickey has recalled how his conversations with Judd and Flavin "circled around two obsessive subjects: first, the vulgarity of everything and everyone else (including me) and, second, the possibility of patronage from the old families of Europe and America, who represented the aristocracy of taste toward which they aspired."123 As one example of such refinement of taste, when John de Menil died, Dominique arranged for his body to be housed in a plain pine box—just as her children in due course would arrange for her to lie, in that case in a pine box crafted by the carpenters of the Menil Collection.124 To the cognoscenti, the specter of those ostensibly humble artifacts might well have evoked the (albeit differently proportioned) horizontal box sculptures that Judd had had meticulously carpentered of Douglas fir plywood in the 1970s. Formerly, a plain pine box was generally a pauper's coffin, but by late century, the stereotype of the cheap casket tended more to the gaudy and ersatz (in emulation of the stereotypically rich casket), whereas the exquisitely simple pine box could be instead the discerning choice of arbiters of taste, marking their predilection for "sumptuous austerity."125

Besides their famously restrained and selective material tastes, Dominique and her youngest daughter both had deeply spiritual ambitions. As events transpired then, those most responsible for capitalizing the Minimalist project—for securing its luxury commodity status—would also be those most responsible for constructing that project in transcendental terms, in fulfillment of their own twinned spiritual and cultural aspirations. Like Dominique and John de Menil, Fariha and Heiner Friedrich founded religious as well as art institutions—or artistic religious institutions and, more loosely, religious or culicar art institutions, marked by an affinity for austerity.126 A "commitment to austerities" is often intrinsic to meditative and contemplative practices broadly, which typically aim for "a purification of consciousness."127 In writing on Minimalist architecture, Deyan Sudjic has astutely remarked "the interconnection between perceptions of simplicity, moral force, and beauty," as well as the "spiritual aspect to simplicity," citing examples ranging from Cisterian and Zen monasteries to Shaker design.128 And Turrell has acknowledged Quaker plainness as instrumental in shaping his vision.

In his canonical 1967 broadside against Minimalism, "Art and Objecthood," Michael Fried famously opened with a quote from Puritan preacher Jonathan Edwards—about the "world exist[ing] anew every moment," and so providing at every moment "proof of a God"—in pointing to what he perceived Minimalism as lacking, namely, access to the "continuous and perpetual present," which he discerned in more worthy artworks.129 In fact, the loaded terms "presence" (integral to Benjamin's concept of aura) and "presence" haunted Minimalist discourse from the outset.130 Writing on Morris in 1969, for instance, Annette Michelson observed, "Absolute presentness being the attribute of Divinity, to experience 'the work in all its depth and fullness' as within 'a single, infinitely brief instant'—there she was citing the phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty—is to dwell in Presence, in 'conviction' as in Revelation."131 But Michelson hastened to add that Morris was a secularist, and at the time he would likely have agreed; although he occasionally mentioned "presence" as a desideratum for contemporary sculpture in his writings of the mid-1960s, unlike, say, Flavin or De Maria, Morris did not evince an ongoing preoccupation with the spiritual.132

But did the spiritualized construction of Minimalism fostered by its leading patrons eventually color Morris's view? For he now unabashedly avers that "a charged world hovers over... these in-your-face [Minimalist] objects. And this world is the same idealist and transcendent one once preached by that great puritan, Jonathan Edwards," who "identified God himself with empty space."133 Minimalism wanted it both ways, Morris has lately argued: "tough-minded empiricism" and "tender-minded transcendence": "Minimalist art at its zenith in the sixties was a kind of religious art. Unrocked perhaps, but religious nevertheless." Morris posits further, suggestively, that through Minimalism, "that old-time religion of Puritanism and transcendentalism crafted to Deweyan pragmatism's aesthetics of wholeness achieves its full blown ideological synthesis."134

The 1960s was a time of vital spiritual ferment in the United States, devolving in part from the 1950s avant-garde embrace of Zen with its impetus toward "overcom[ing] the rift between contemplation and ordinary life in this world."135 In Andre's ordinary bricks or Flavin's off-the-rack fluorescent bulbs, some would discern a moment of transfiguration, such as is associated with spiritual modalities ranging from Zen to transcendentalism, or simply transfiguration into the aurotic realm of the aesthetic. Others, of course, would persist in seeing mere things and either champion Minimalism, on that account, as instantiating a form of radical materialism or dismiss it out of hand, as the uninitiated public has all along tended to do. For that matter, Minimalism's aura still generally requires a rite of initiation to reveal itself, or the intervention of the "priest-critic," as Morris put it, "to explain and give blessing" to the Minimalist object.136

Dia has actively bolstered the initiatives by funding projects tantamount to pilgrimage sites and, more recently, a kind of mother church for its permanent collection: an enormous factory in the former precincts of the Hudson River school, redesigned by Irwin (Fig. 12). Some would mention Chinati's concentrated bodies of work in dedicated spaces as a model for Dia:Beacon. (Judd did not live to see the Beacon facility, but he himself believed that "Friedrich had gotten the idea of permanent installation from me, and perhaps by way of Panza."137) Though Friedrich now stands officially apart from Dia, he mentored Michael Govan, the former director of Dia who conceived the Beacon museum,138 and we can discern a form of Friedrich's, Judd's, and Panza's vision in the result, which some called a Vatican for Minimalist and post-Minimalist art. Indeed, journalists rhetorically framed Dia's latest project, perhaps more than any before it, as a form of religious undertaking—but without remarking the institution's actual history in this regard. Thus, for instance, Nancy Princenthal greeted Dia:Beacon in Art in America as "the great pyramid of Minimalism's kings" and as "monumental in the way of cathedrals," with its "major works by anointed masters, enshrined individually, in august splendor."139
primary patrons successfully ensured a fuller development of a spiritualized and epic chapter to the Minimalist story than would otherwise have been possible. Panza and the Friedlichs ensured, as well, against prevailing critical bias, the institutional assimilation of some of the California Minimalists to that chapter. But even if we could imagine a history of Minimalism absent the extreme largesse of these patrons, we would not be left with a movement as rigorously materialist as some would have it. Minimalists, east and west, were demonstrably marked by the 1960s romantic pursuits: by the quest for diverse, enhanced states of experience and by the idealization of the land. Andrea Zittel, whose artwork builds interestingly from Minimalist paradigms (Fig. 13), lately observed:

The first thing that stands out about Minimal art was that it shifted the modes of perception themselves. . . . I have a sneaking suspicion that the sources of this innovation may have been not only a reaction against the subjectivity of the Abstract Expressionists or the illusionism of spatial representation but also hallucinogenic-drug culture, grassroots political movements, and the era’s newfound interest in Eastern religion, which opened new modes of experience and of reading the “self” in relationship to the greater whole.140

Zittel’s insight may help explain why Minimalists on both coasts—however they individually felt about the spiritualized vision of Panza or the Friedlichs—readily let their art be annexed to their patrons’ profoundly cultic designs.

Anna C. Chave authored “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power” in 1990 and “Minimalism and Biography” in 2000, as well as numerous other essays concerned with issues of reception, interpretation, and gender in modern art practices. She has also published monographs on Rothko and Brancusi (Yale University Press, 1991, 1993) [Queens College and the Graduate Center, CUNY, 365 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017, annachave@aol.com].

Notes

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1. On the emergence of a dominant account of Minimalism and the professional and personal investments it embodies, see Anna C. Chave, “Minimalism and Biography,” Art Bulletin 82 (March 2000): 149–63.


3. Christian Knight, “Interview with Giuseppe Panza,” in Art of the Sixties and Seventies: The Panza Collection (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), 42. (Panza uttered the terms cited here in response to a question regarding his view of Morris and Flavin’s work, but they apply to his view of Minimalism generally.) Walter Benjamin famously used the term “aura” to judge the magic, cultic origins of works of art. Dictionaries define aura as an “emanation or radiation” surrounding a person or thing, from the Greek word for air, breath, or vapor—a different etymology from the term “aura” which some say better fits the phenomenon Benjamin delineated, in its more explicit connotations of radiant light and the spiritual; see Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Michael Martin, eds., Mapping Benjamin (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 83, 189. Benjamin most famously developed his arguments about aura in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1935), in Illuminations, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), an essay with a complex history, summarized in Susan Buck-Morss, The Origin of Negative Dialectics (New York: Free Press, 1977), 986–97 n. 98. Some recent analysis points to the contradictory character of Benjamin’s view of aura, claiming that for him, “the aura really was—indeed there really was something to be said about aura—still, notwithstanding technology’s acceleration; Robert Kalfenstein, “Aura, Still,” October 99 (Winter 2002): 80.

4. Krauss, “Overcoming the Limits of Matter,” 137. “[I]t is now clear that we are no longer able to mention art or spirit in the same sentence,” Krauss had earlier contended; Rosalind E. Krauss, “Grids” (1978), reprinted in On the Ordinarity of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985), 12.


7. Dia Art Foundation, annual report, 1976, quoted in Bob Colacello, “Remains of the Dia,” Vanity Fair, September 1996, 185. The Dia founders set up a separate entity, the Lone Star Foundation, to collect discrete art objects of more manageable scale, as it did extensively before it merged with Dia in 1980. However, this more conventional collecting initiative included Philps less than the outsized projects where she felt herself, with Heinrich a kind of partner in creative endeavor with the artists; see ibid., 198, and Grace Glueck, “The de Menil Family: The Medici of Modern Art,” New York Times Magazine, May 18, 1989, 106. In Benjamin, “The Work of Art,” 244 n. 6, the collector emerges as one to whom “the aura,” as he describes it, is immanent to the object. In this passage, “the aura” is ascribed to the object itself, and not to the object itself, but rather to the object’s creator. The collector treats the aura as a mark of the artist’s individuality. In this sense, the aura is a sign of the artist’s indistinguishability from the work itself. The aura is not an abstract concept, but a concrete reality that is immanent to the object. The collector’s role in the aura is to recognize and appreciate this immanence.

8. Philippa de Menil is cited regarding the naming of Dia in Colacello, “Remains of the Dia,” 181; La Monte Young is quoted in ibid., 191, 196.


10. Heiner Friedrich, quoted in Colacello, “Remains of the Dia,” 182. “You have to understand,” says La Monte Young, “there were the MoMA and then there were Heiner and Philippa.” (Quoted in ibid., 191.)” Art patronage, he understood, was a creation of the Renaissance, states Jill Burke; such patronage involved a relationship of mutual benefit between two parties, with the patron typically “holding the lion’s share of power or resources.” Named families in Renaissance Florence, in general, “attempted to create a public identity for their lineages through material objects and buildings, thus confirming and making permanent their newfound social status,” while the Medici family, in particular, “tended to be at the vanguard of new cultural fashions.” Burke, Changing Patronage: Social Identity and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Florence (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980), 139, 6, 17, 18. Whether the de Menil and Heiner Friedrich (who married into the family) belonged to a “vanguard” or, rather, a rear guard, for their role in reviving a Renaissance model of patronage in the late twentieth century, the family became renowned not simply for their own creativity, but for their highly personalized or idiosyncratic tastes, shaped in significant part by their “belief in art as art,” as Philippa’s brother Fransisco said of his parents; François de Menil, “The Belief in Art as Art,” in Sanctuary: The Spirit of Art/Architecture, ed. Kim Slikapich and Susan de Menil (Houston: Menil Foundation, 1987), 39.

11. Philippa de Menil married Italian anthropologist Francesco Pellizzi in 1969. “She was already interested in Buddhism and Satanism when she met Heiner Friedrich in New York in 1973”; Colacello, “Remains of the Dia,” 182. Pellizzi subsequently married Friedrich and took his surname. In running Dia, the couple worked in an administrative trio with Helen Winkler, a former employee of Philip’s parents, John and Dominique de Menil.


13. Ibid., 123–41. Among the East Coast Minimalists, Judd was at times noted Krauss’s view of a broad-based adherence to a strict materialist position; see David Raskin, “The Shiny Illusionism of Krauss and Judd,” Art Journal 65, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 7–21.

14. Badlen, Smith, and Martin all came of age artistically somewhat after their chronological peers, and they tended to be positioned in limbo between the New York school and Minimalist cohorts. Trend, whose mother was present in Europe, emerged later than that of her New York school contemporaries, is cast as a first-generation Minimalist in James Meyer, Minimalism: Art and Politics in the Sixties (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), while that designation is not widely accepted, neither is it generally accorded to, say, Newman, whom the reviewer, Yves Klein, referenced a mythic iconic vision. The identity was recognized by those who saw the “aura” or “aura-like” quality of the work. The identity is not so much about the art itself, but about the identity of the artist who made the art. The identity is not about the art, but about the artist who made the art.

15. Though Judd particularly valued Newman, he also admired Agnes Martin, whose distinctive bent for replicating the grid while living at times off it in solitary southwestern retreats, Judd himself acquired in his turn. The artists Judd targeted for Dia were by no means all in the Minimalist ambit, he particularly admired John Chamberlain, for example.

16. Meyer, Minimalism: Art and Politics, 273 n. 5. Meyer, 273 n. 23, omission De Maria on the grounds that his position within Minimalism “has yet to be fully assessed.” While De Maria is a heterodox figure whose earliest works coda Dada and who later verges into Earthworks, the same might be said of Morris, whose centrality to Minimalism goes unrecognised. In Edmund A. Burke’s Minimalism and Modernism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), by contrast, De Maria emerges as a pioneer of Minimalistic sculpture.


20. Regarding Meyer's decision to sideline these figures, see Meyer, Minimalism: Art and Philosophy, 271 n. 8. For an argument that the mostly forgotten Forst deserves to be cast instead as a founder of the Minimalist project, see Chave, "Minimalism and Biography," which also addresses Rainer's place. Regarding Minimalism and music, see Strickland, Minimalism: Origin, and Diedrich Diedrichsraben, "The Primary Functions and Anti-Political Continuities Between Minimal Music and Minimal Art," in A Minimal Future? Art as Object, 1932-1968, by Ann Goldstein et al., exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2004), 111-31.

21. See Nancy Spector et al., Singular Forms (Sometimes Repeated): Art from 1951 to the Present, exh. cat. (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2004); and Goldstein, A Minimal Future? The latter catalog contains an essay addressing West Coast Minimalism by James Meyer, "Another Minimalism," 19-39. Meyer's essay focuses mainly on Bell and McCracken, however, on the grounds that they were present in New York for a time during Minimalism's formative period. Meyer attributes the critical neglect Bell and McCracken have suffered to a lack of authentic "literality" in their work (adopting Fried's term for Minimalism) and in Bell's case, to the artist's failure to theorize his own practice—although a resistance to theorization never similarly penalized, say, Flavin. In 1991, Kraus, "Overcoming the Limits of Matter," 40, foresaw "the impact of the release of Panza's collection back into the public realm. For that collection, which has been inscribed by another, interpretive act, those of Panza himself, has, through the effect of its remaining together, become a kind of framing device through which Minimalism is being reintroduced as an historical object. And that device will tend to...the rethink the movement according to its supposed interest in a metaphysical entity." In the numerous temporary showings of Panza's holdings internationally, while the collection remained in his hands, it typically worked a substantial control over the installations, at times allegedly usurping the artists' own prerogatives. Regarding the installation of Panza's collection at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art in 1988, in "chapel-like" rooms devoted each to a single artist (similar to displays at Panza's villa), for example, see Knight, "Interview with Giuseppe Panza," 30.


23. The Fondo per l'Amboleto Italiano (FAI) now operates Panza's Villa Littina as a public facility, although the collector continues to reside there. A decade related simply "April He" from Philippa Pellizzii to Panza thanks him for allowing her to collect in Varese. "Your works are living in those rooms. And the big room is elsewhere—a stable to become a chapel?"; Pellizzii to Panza, Panza Archive, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (hereafter, Panza Archive).

24. See Knight, "Interview with Giuseppe Panza," 65-68; and the Panza Archive.

25. While a dealer, Friedrich had sold work to Panza and in other ways cultivated his support for artists who mutually interested them. For that matter, the connection between Fried and Flavin necessary to the commission of the Varco Museum was facilitated by Friedrich, per Michael Gowan, "Irony and Light," in Gowan and Bell, Don Flavin, 107 n. 97. In time, Panza served on Dia's advisory council and, as detailed below, contributed otherwise to certain Dia initiatives.

26. Friedrich's business partner was Franz Dahlem, whose description of Friedrich is cited in Colacello, "Remains of the Dia," 186.


28. A prospective, fantastically outsize work of De Maria's (which Friedrich would try to induce Panza to fund) was also announced in this flier (in all capital letters): "A Double Complete Project". In the project, a square shape will be made on the land in the desert of the United States. A horizontal line in the Sahara and a vertical line in India. When all of the lines are photographed from the air, the photos are placed one on another and each receives the image of a cross within a square will appear!" Galleria Heiner Friedrich München, press release, Panza Archive (archography corrected). Panza proved an easy mark, in general, for works in the form of a cross; he acquired such works by De Maria, Morris, and Flavin, for instance, though they would finally make up but a small fraction of a collection otherwise largely free of forms historically coded as sacred.

29. The press release for De Maria's 1977 New York Earth Room advertised the work as being for sale: "subsequent installations...may be various in depth as long as the cubic yardage, 222, remains the same." Dia Art Foundation Archives. The workinstead became permanent at the Wooster Street site under Dia's auspices in 1979.


32. The Friedrichs' spiritual guide was Sheikh Musafer, Musafer, the Istanbul-based Sufi master of the Hafiz-Jahani Order of dervishes. Sheikh Musafer had contacted Philippa in 1978...the following April in a Sufi ceremony. Philippa says, we "took hand with him, joined the order, exchanged Islam, and got married, all in about four or five minutes." Colacello, "Remains of the Dia," 186. Regarding the Rothko Chapel, see Barnes, The Rothko Chapel; and Sheldon Nodelman, The Rothko Chapel: Paintings: Origins, Structure, Meaning (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997). Dominique de Menil cited the Qur'an in her preface to the Rothko Chapel project from this period.

33. The dervishes sponsored by Dia on an American concert tour were not the Mevlevi or "whirling dervishes" whom Dominique de Menil had sponsored, but the Jafari, who perform the swooning and being music and movement and matickly dhikr, a ritual called "the shortest way to achieve God."根据 cetera el jehili in a undated pamfarm advertising the tour in question, Dia Art Foundation Archives. "Night of Dhikr," an undated handout on the Dia letterhead, states that when the dervish "rose [es] himself in God" through dhikr, he becomes the heart whose beat becomes, for a moment, the very living pulse of Mankind, unified, for an even broader moment, in Divine Love and mystical equanimity with all of His Creatures. For the devout understand, and know that there is only one path to God, it is from Heart to Heart...in the way of Love," Dia Art Foundation Archives. "Love is the source, love is the way, love is the goal," adds Fatima Friedrich, that is the spirit in which the Dia Art Foundation was built"; quoted in Colacello, "Remains of the Dia," 291. Since the thirteenth century, the Sufi orders of the Ottoman Empire have been especially associated with important Turkish poetry, music, and art—although by no means of a Minimalist aspect.

34. Certificate of Incorporation of Majdis Al-Farah, 1-4, Dia Art Foundation Archives. The congregation's "educides...shall be used to serve the religious, educational and philanthropic needs of the Congregation": moreover, "The Imam as spiritual head of the Congregation...shall guide and oversee the Congregation's religious programs and is ultimately responsible for the spiritual life and activities of the Congregation": By-Laws of Majdis Al-Farah, 2-3, Dia Art Foundation Archives. The monies derived from and other Islamic projects reportedly prompted concerns about Dia's chosen artistic as a device of resources and attention by the foundation—concerns that the Friedrichs could not fully assuage. See Hoban, "Medics for a Moment," 54. Richard Glueckman, an architect involved in numerous Dia projects, alleged that for one, "the Sufis were being taken over and were going to build a retreat in Marin"; Glueckman, quoted in Colacello, "Remains of the Dia," 198. It bears noting that Dia's archives pertaining to its formative years are extremely spotty; some materials reportedly were missing in the foundation's repeated moves, and the Friedrichs had no role in the storage or disposition of projects. These factors render construction of an exact time line somewhat difficult. Besides its crass offices at the Mercer Street mosque, however, Dia also maintained an office during the early 1980s at 107 Franklin Street, By 1985, during a reorganization of Dia prompted by financial ills and questionable management, the Sufi mosque was relocated (minus the Dia offices) to 245 West Broadway. Friedrich maintains an office in the new mosque's premises, having been ousted from his former role at Dia; see Hoban, "Medics for a Moment," 54. Dia's reorganization and Friedrich's forced resignation from its board are described also by Glueckman, "De Maria Family," 184; and Colacello, "Remains of the Dia," 186.

35. See Gowan and Bell, Don Flavin, 352-357, which states that the works were dismantled "around 1987." A memorandum of January 1981 notes, "It will not be possible for Dia's lighting to be installed in time for the Dervishes opening in March due to required for the foundations installation," and that the completed installation "respected the various functions of the building," although its "resistance to change in program of the building is noted in Gowan and Bell, 185.

36. Friedrich's night in the chapel was recalled by Simone Swan, identified as a public relations official for the Menil Collection, in Colacello, "Remains of the Dia," 185.


38. As events unfolded, the Friedrichs finished unparalleled largesse on De Maria, inasmuch as they funded three separate, permanent, large...
scale projects by him—funding sustained even after the foundation met with financial difficulties (contrary to the experience of Whitman and some others). From the time he began he was joined by Heinrich Friedrich, De Maria had evoked some mystical ideas of his own as to the patron’s role: “Owners of art should be desperately sensitive about what energy they absorb or enslave. They can bring something to the act to make it more elegant, lofty and spiritual—or sacrilegious. It shouldn’t be just another piece of art, but something that’s really there”; quoted in David Bourdon, “Walter De Maria: The Singular Experience,” Art International 7, no. 10 (December 20, 1968), 40.

Though De Maria does not adopt the French’s faith, the appended to their project as The Broken Kilometer might be explained in part by the fact that within Islam, “The artist who wishes to express the idea of the ‘unity of being’ or the ‘unity of the real’... has actually three means at his disposal: geometry or, more precisely, the in- formation inherent in modular geometric forms; rhythm, which is reduced in the temporal order and also indirectly in space; and light, which is to visible forms what Being is to limited existences,” Titus Burckhardt, “The Spirituality of Islamic Art,” in Islam and Spirituality: Manifestations, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1997), 519.


42. Dave Hickey, “The Luminous Body: Sourceless Illumination as a Metaphor for Grace,” in Light in Architecture and Art: The Work of Pan Flavin, by Tiffany Bell et al. (Marfa, Tex.: Chinati Foundation, 2002), 156. Hickey further described Judd as having “re-treating into the stratosophere of annistic patronage, and created this Potempkin in West Texas.” He recalled the artist’s last remark to him, following Dia’s withdrawal of support, as being, “How can I possibly make art when I’m worried about the bills?” (157–58). Dia’s support was renewed to a limited degree after Judd’s death.

43. Dan Flavin, quoted in Hoban, “Medics for a Moment,” 58.

44. See ibid., 54; and Colacello, “Remains of the Dia,” 198, which describes the legal action (over breach of contract) threatened by Judd. Panza, too, eventually alienated certain artists, by his at times proprietary treatment of their work through schemes to fabricate independently, repudiate, or sell elements of his collection to the artists had, in some instances, envisioned as unique or permanently situated within the Panza’s estate. In 1982, Panza had confirmed that some artists “make works that are directly connected to an already existing space,” citing as examples projects by Turrell and Irwin at his villa, Galleria Panza di Rozelle, “Giuseppe Panza di Rozelle,” The First Show Painting and Sculpture from Eighty Collections, 1940–1980, ed. Julia Brown and Bridget Johnson, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1983), 71. By 1988, around the time he was talking with Thomas Krens about housing part of his collection at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams, Panza’s position had shifted: those works by Turrell and Irwin were commissioned for the existing space. They could be made elsewhere, but only with the participation of the artist,” Knight, “Interview with Giuseppe Panza,” 50–51. After the Guggenheim Museum announced its acquisition of a substantial portion of Panza’s collection, a 1989 Panza, flatly denied[ed] anything in his collection is site-specific,” Susan Hapgood, “Remaking Art History,” Art in America, July 1980, 120. Regarding Panza’s disputes and those of the minimalist, see also Martha Buskirk, The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983), chap. 1.

45. On that basis, conceivably, the chameleonic Morris and self-proclaimed materialist Andre, whose work bore a family resemblance to that of some of the chosen, remained among the unrivaled, although they appealed regardless to Panza.

46. Burckhardt, “The Spirituality of Islamic Art,” 506–7. Further, “Islamic art, by which we mean the entirety of plastic arts in Islam, is essentially the projection into the visual order of certain aspects or dimensions of Divine Unity” (517). This volume is also a useful source on the various regional dispensations of Sufism. Regarding the relation of Sufism to Islam more broadly, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, ed., Islamic Spirituality: Foundations (New York: Crossroad, 1987), pt. 3.

47. Dominique de Menil, remarks at Dia Center for the Arts, New York, October 28, 1992, as published (in printed capital letters) in Shikapich and S. de Menil, Sanctuary, 110.

48. Description by Colacello, “Remains of the Dia,” 198. One of Young’s major works, The Tontine, His Dreams and Journeys, begun in 1964, entailed “continuous electronic drones... intended to be permanently installed in a room of the (the Dream House) along with a slowly changing light environment designed by Marian Zazeela، which Young’s group(s) of musicians would occasionally enter to perform. When the musicians left, after up to eight hours of performance, the piece would continue as the drones were hooked up—therefore forever,” John Schneider, New Sounds: Marian Zazeela’s Modular Music (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 73. “In July 1969 we were given our first opportunity to make a public presentation of a model short-term House at Galerie Heiner Friedrich in Munich,” notes Dream House/Introduction, “an undated, unsigned text (authored by Zazeela and Young) according to an oral communication from Zazeela to the author, January 5, 1998) in the Dia Art Foundation Archives. By this account, Dia promised funds to make the Dream House permanent in December 1975. (Zazeela thus became the only woman to enjoy the largesse of Dia, in its initial formation.) Zazeela "made the first installation using colored lights projected on mobile forms in 1966... but remained with the limited palette of dichromatic colors until 1977 when a commission from the Dia Art Foundation enabled me to begin experimenting with theatrical spotlights and modular gel colors." Further funding in 1978 permitted experimentation with "glass filters in invariably saturated colors" that had to be specially fabricated to create the desired environment she sought; Zazeela, edited with La Monte Young and Michael Byrons, "Light for Raga Cycle," in Pandit Pran Nath & India's Mystik Vedic Veela, May 1981, Dia concert brochure, Dia Art Foundation Archive. Young and Zazeela's programs especially would come to symbolize the highly unusual lengths Dia was prepared to go to in support of its artists. Within this "continuous and evolving life-art project... every note played and every word spoken was recorded. Meals prepared by the staff cooks—6 Harrison Street engaged a staff of more than twenty—were photographed and minutely annotated. For example, many berries were used in the food and in what direction the peaks were cut were logged”; Allan Schwartzman, "Born-Again Patrons," Manhattan, Apr 4, no. 10 (October 1987): 178. Although the Dream House was closed in 1983, since 1993 Young and Zazeela’s MELA Foundation has run a revamped version at 275 Church Street in New York as an "affiliated project" of Dia.


50. "Pandit Pran Nath and the Kirana Style," in Pandit Pran Nath, "Since 1979 the Dia Art Foundation, in cooperation with the Kirana Center for Indian Classical Music, has presented frequent concerts of Pandit Pran Nath’s work. Rarely involved a performance from the Dia Art Foundation to establish a performing, teaching and archival facility for the presentation and preservation of the Kirana tradition" (ibid.). According to Swati philosopher Hariz Layat Khan (in ibid.), the Kirana singer does not set the instrument before rather, "he becomes the instrument of the whole cosmic system, open to all inspiration, at one with the audience, in tune with the chord of the tamboura, and it is not only music, but spiritual phenomena that he gives to the people." (A close friend of Young’s), who moved with him to New York in 1960, De Maria also participated in the "new music" scene in New York in the 1970s. As a drummer, he performed with Jon Hassell, another student of Pandit Pran Nath.

51. Heiner Friedrich, interview by Michael Kimmelman, quoted in Kimmelman, "The Dia Generation," New York Times Magazine, April 8, 2005, 33. Panza, "The Panza Collection," 15–13, also revered the "deserts of the Far West where light, in all of its beauty and splendor, the most distinct to a native," he explained. "Time leads away, and there appears an immaterial, unattainable, yet at the same time totally present, sense of reality."

52. Marfa is three hours from the nearest major airport, at El Paso, just named Chinati for a nearby mountain in 1986 after his split with Dia, see Donald Judd, "Statement for the Chinati Foundation" (1988), in Meyer, Minimalism, 88.


56. "He is certainly not religious," the passage continues, "yet the scale and intensity of what he’s doing in West Texas... has an unmissable-


60. Arthur C. Danto, "The Light Fantastic," Artnews, April 2004, 97. Although Flavin's work has often been generally deployed in secular settings, his 1992 Guggenheim retrospective was characterized as "transforming" [in] Frank Lloyd Wright's rounda into a neo-Catholic chapel—where, indeed, the artist chose to consecrate his most recent installation. Robert Rosenblum, "Name in Lights" (1997), reprinted in Meyer, Minuscule, 290.

61. The series was produced through 1966; see Govan and Bell, Dan Flavin, 214.

62. ibid, 211-21, 26. Further, "One 1962 drawing shows the icons 

63. A book in groups, with an overt reference to an iconostasis" (29). The inscription "The Pure Land" would appear in due course on Flavin's own tombstone (at whose direction is not specified), together with the words, "ETERNAL SOURCE OF LIGHT-DRAWN," presumably drawn from Handel's Christian hymn of the same name (106 n. 25). Flavin's long-time practice of dedicating his works eventually included numerous projects inscribed to the Friederichs, whose New York City home he extensively built in 1979 (on installations since dismantled, 348). The earliest work dedicated to Friederichs was named "In Tenderness and Memory" (1970, 290). (Chorost Mccler is director of Galerie Heiner Friedrich in Munich and Cologne.) See also the monumental untitled (for you, Heiner, with admiration and affection) (1973, 318).

64. Within the Islamic tradition upheld by the Friederichs, specifically: "God is the light of the heavens and the earth," says the Quran (XXI, 27). The Dervish Light brings things out from the darkness of nothing;" further, Light is, in fact, itself reducible; its nature is not altered by its relation into colors nor diminished by its gradation into clarity and darkness;" Burchhardt, "The Spirituality of Islamic Art," 519.


67. Dan Flavin, "...in daylight or cold white...an autobiographical sketch" (1964), reprinted in Govan and Bell, Dan Flavin, 189-92. Flavin persisted in employing this text, with minor modifications, as his primary artist's statement. In an endnote (192 n. 1), he stated that in using the term "icon" he did not mean a "strictly religious object," characteristically leaving open the possibility that he might mean instead a loosely religious object, Flavin tended to use traditional interpretations of his work (as well as accounts of his art generally not dictated by him); his objections to Kenneth Baker's reading of his work as "making" in his musical qualities uncompromisingly evident are cited in Govan, "Irony and Light," 79.

68. Dan Flavin to Mel Bochner, November 1, 1966, quoted in Govan, "Irony and Light," 37.


70. Conceived as an edition of fifty (twenty-one were fabricated), inscribed (to Barbara Nash), 1972, constituted by far the largest edition of any work Flavin produced; the next largest of his editions (including the Last New York Show) numbered ten, while most works were issued in editions of three (for larger works) or five. See Govan and Bell, Dan Flavin, 298, 260.

71. Dan Flavin, statement of 1968, quoted in Raghed et al., Dan Flavin, 43.

72. A Dia "Activities Report" (internal memorandum) for the period May 1 to July 31, 1983, submitted by Eileen Wells, program administrator, includes Tiffany Bell's report detailing her and Flavin's contacts with members of the Baptist church who helped provide relevant material, including a pulp, for the room memorializing the building's prior use. Flavin also commemorated the building's installation as a firehouse was also discussed, though never so ambitiously pursued.) The first floor of the church was to be devoted to changing exhibitions by Flavin and other artists; among the possible candidates mentioned in this report is Turrell, whose "light projection diagrams [were] to be borrowed from Heiner's personal collection": Dia Art Foundation Archives.

73. Bourdon, "Walter De Maria," 41-43. This account implies that De Maria may have been introduced to Cage's ideas through his friendship with Young, while they were students at the University of Californi-

74. Walter De Maria, telephone interview by Brian Wallis, December 18, 1978, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, collection files. In the same conversation, De Maria reportedly insisted (contrary to my reading here) that the toughness was "in no way to be thought of as games or participatory pieces."

75. Fritz Thompson, "The Redundant Riddle in Carson County," Impact (Amsterdam journal of art) 2, no. 12 (March 27, 1979): 16-21. Thompson noted the even deeper skepticism of the ranchers directly neighboring The Lighting Field.

76. John Beardsley, "Art and Authoritarianism: Walter De Maria's Lighting Field," October 16 (Spring 1981): 35, 39. Beardsley, 39, detailed the strong efforts of De Maria and Dia to control photographic representation of the site. He concluded, "From a critical perspective...the management of the Lighting Field is no trivial matter. Not only do the machinations of the artist and his sponsors in this case reveal contempt for the enterprise of criticism, but, more importantly, they call into question the aspirations of the site." Subsequently, Beardsley took a softer tone, calling The Lighting Field "the means to an end for those viewers susceptible to an awesome natural phenomenon." Beardsley, "Traditional Aspects of New Land Art." Art Journal 42, no. 4 (Summer 1983): 91-116.


78. "The emphasis on the momentary, ephemeral character of auratic experience is linked to a Messianic concept of time, in particular the notion of 'eternitatis, the time of the Now," noted Miriam Hansen, "Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology," New German Critique 40 (Winter 1987): 189 n. 17.


81. Draft of a letter from Pina to Philippe [Pellizzi], November 23, 1978. Piana Archive (orthography corrected). Historically intrinsic to the world's major religions, "The logic of pilgrimage is to go one of the high sacred shrubs in space, draw on its merit and convey that to the periphery"; moreover, "the person who practices mysticism arrives at a kind of numinous holiness which he imparts both to people and to objects around him. This was particularly marked in Sufism, for that saints' tombs ended up as places of pilgrimage." Ninian Smart, Dimensions of the Sacred (London: Academy of the World's Religions, 1996), 85, 109.


84. For that matter, at The Lighting Field, as at The New York Earth Room and The Broken Kilometer, De Maria's distinctive way of rendering a three-dimensional installation as loosely pictorial emerged in his positioning of the viewer at a fixed distance from the scene, which is framed at The Lighting Field to a roughly pictorial way by the post of a porch for visitors (whose number is strictly limited). Consequently the work is denied in the New York City project, but De Maria permits movement around The Lighting Field, although the terrain's ruggedness may discourage lingering there.

85. Dia initially acquired "five or more sections (a section is a square mile, or 640 acres) northeast of Quentinpont" for De Maria [per Beardsley, Art and Authoritarianism], 36]...and had electricity run to the site, which had been off the electrical grid. Dia required the cables be buried to maintain the effect of untrammeled nature, even (to the amusement of the locals) having the weeds replanted over the mile and a half trench that was dug (per Thompson, "The Redundant Riddle," 20). By using kilometer and mile units to define The Lighting Field, De Maria pointedly referred to the "miles" in which much of the earth—and most particularly [in the case of the mile unit] the American West—was surveyed, appropriated, and settled," Beardsley, "Traditional Aspects," 228. Since Thomas Jefferson's 1785 Land Ordinance, land has generally been plotted and organized on a grid in the United States, regarding the ethnically American aspects of that plan, see Mark Pimlott, "Carl Andre: More Like Roads Than Like
103. James Turrell, quoted in Adcock, James Turrell, xiv, 158.


105. Although far from a New Age phenomenon, Sufism is nonetheless notable among the world's spiritual philosophies that tend to have "a more open view both of other religious traditions and of scientific and humanistic knowledge," notes Smith, "Dimensions of the Sacred," 296–97, adding that for those seeking "a deeper global ethics which combines, in a complementary way, the values of religions, then some guidance from the Sufis and the Like will be in order.


107. Donald Judd, quoted in Stevens, "Art Oasis," 110. To Stevens, further, "Judd represents an important tradition of American pluralism: he is more like a Shaker, it now seems, than a Soto monk...[1] He has even postulated a shadow community, an implied gathering of true believers from anywhere who are willing to make a pilgrimage to see an important art."

108. Donald Judd, interview (1993, in the Archives of the Judd Foundation), quoted in Missy Gaito Allen, "Donald Judd and the Marfa Objective" (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 2005), quoted in Raskin, "The Shiny Illusionism," 15. In 1966, when asked by Barbara Rose if his work possessed "expressive quality," Judd responded by summing up his then incomplete sculptural practice in a spiritual way: "Yes, of course. I don't exactly like talking about spirituality, mysticism and that sort of thing because those words have old meanings, and I think they may as well be dumbed because their old meanings are stronger than their new meanings," quoted in Mark D. Sovero et al., "New Sculpture," in Meyer, Minimizations, 211. At the debut of Dia:Beacon there was "a group of wall-hung sculptures including six plywood boxes that are among Judd's last works," a corpus where "the surprise is that they incorporate a cruciform element...Perhaps Judd intended what seems to be a clear reference to Reinhardt, and perhaps even to Barasso Newman's Stations of the Cross as well," suggested Nancy Princenthal, "Dia:Beacon / The Impermanents," Art in America, July 2005, 68.


110. Barbara Rose, "ABC Art," 1966, in Battcock, Minimalism, 296. Continued Rose, citing La Monte Young's "Dream Music" and "many of Fluxus' works" by way of example: "The equilibrium of a passionless mirana, or the reorganized perception of the mystical sense requires precisely the kind of detachment, recreation, and annihilation of ego and personality we have been observing," Rosalind Krauss would refute this mystical construction at the time (Krauss, "Allusion and Illusion in Donald Judd," 1966, reprinted in Meyer, Minimizations, 211). And Meyer more recently (Minimizations: Art and Polonca, 149) deemed Rose's interpretation a "staring betrayal."


113. James Turrell, quoted in Adcock, James Turrell, 68.

114. Leslie Fiedler, Waiting for the End (1964), quoted in Hassan, "The Literature of Silence," 6. Adda Hassan, "This is the dream of a revolution to end all revolutions—and perhaps all dreams."


116. "I have nothing to say about works of art," said Heiner Friedrich, who rarely talks about anything else. "They speak for themselves. [M]y wish is that we visit the Giotto chapel in Padua and stand for an hour, you silently and I silently, and we see what happens to us. It is as contemporary as anything in the world today. That is what Dia is about;" quoted in Calvin Tomkins, The Mission, New York, May 19, 2003, 46. It bears adding that contemporaneous traditions generally tend to involve a matching of discourse. "The aim of the Sufis is to be the Truth within the Truth... ...Those at this level cannot express their state in words, for the words necessary are not given in human language;" undated pamphlet advertising a Diasponsored performance tour of desserts, Dia Art Foundation Archives. Although she underwrote numerous historical exhibitions, she herself opened the opening of Sufism ultimately "are always beyond what may be said of them... Perhaps only silence and love do justice to a great work of art;" quoted in De Mentré, The Belief in Art as Faith, 99.


121. For example, at Dia:Beacon, "The kinds of effort you would put into the last 20 percent of the design of a new building—the details—is what we spent our entire process on," explains [Michael] Govan. So the old, rusted steel corner guards stayed limply on the concrete columns. The wood floors were picked to a lighter color, but you can see all the scratches and marks of use, notes [Robert] Irwin. A partner in the architectural firm that collaborated on revamping the building observed, "To edit yourself out is a kind of metaphysical process, but a meaningful one." The means by which the architecture refused itself ranged from the discrete to the obsessive. OpenOffice worked with Arup [the engineer] to arrange rooftop HVAC units so they would not cast shadows through the sky-light and ganged high-volume air diffusers between rows of monitors to avoid running ductwork. ... They custom sized the fluorescent tubes to visually recede by fitting them exactly into the light-monitor bays." James S. Russell, "Dia: Beacon," *Architectural Record* 191, no. 10 (October 2003): 109.

122. Said a friend, "That’s the maze of the de Menil—simple, perfect, incredibly expensive, yet unpretentious. I mean, it looks like money, but it isn’t Mercedes Benz." Colacello, "Remains of the Dia," 182. In context, this comment specifically alludes to Philippe’s sister: Adelaide de Menil and her husband Ted Carpenter, but comparable comments are made about Philippa Dominique de Menil.


124. "I want to be buried in wood, like the Jesus. The cheapest wood will be good enough. Any wood will do. ... I would prefer a pickup or a flat bed truck to the conventional hearse," John de Menil, statement, December 13, 1972, published (all in capital letters) in Shkpich and S. de Menil, *Sanctuary*, 9. See also Ghezzi, "The de Menil Family," 49, and Calvin Tomkins, "The Benefactor," *New Yorker*, June 8, 1998, 67. I am indebted to Barbara Martin for her insights into the casket’s significance.

125. Michael Ennis aptly noted "the precision and peculiarly unpropitious austerity that is characteristic of many of Dia’s projects"; Ennis, "The Martha Art War," *Texas Monthly*, August 1984, 86.

126. Now an emeritus member of Dia’s board of trustees, Eartha Friedrich went on to become one of the leading Suff teachers in this country, according to Tomkins, "The Mission," 49. (Indeed, as a Shayka, she is presently the leader of the Nur Ashki Jerrahi Suffi Order at Masjid Al-Farah, a status that is "quite revolutionary and remarkable, inasmuch as most Islamic sects do not accept women as leaders," notes Zaceca, e-mail communication to the author of January 3, 2008.) Among Renaissance patrons, "Artworks and buildings were generally designed to present the dominant social virtues of family permanence, of neighborhood and civic solidarity, of piety and charity, and of intelligence and learning. Those who paid for these works could be seen as contributing to the common weal and as possessing those virtues they were helping to promote," observes Burke, *Changing Patrons*, 188. During the cinquecento, further, "The building and decorating of a church or chapel was the most common avenue open to women as patrons of art and architecture, and was often a joint venture between a husband and a wife," states Katherine A. Melver, *Women, Art, and Architecture in Northern Italy, 1520–1580* (Hanover, N.H.: Ashgate, 2000), 174.


135. Morris, "Size Matters," 480. At the opening of Dia:Beacon that I attended—one where the local (largely working and middle-class) townspeople were invited en masse—the guards were repeatedly asked by bewildered visitors for the whereabouts of the art, which was evidently unrecognizable as such to many.

136. Donald Judd, "Una stanza per Pazzi," pt. 4, *Kunst Intern* 7 (November 1990): 9. Chinua has been said to represent "to the advantage of the sixties and seventies what St. Peter’s was to the High Renaissance: a marriage of fully matured artistic vision with financial and cultural power, marking both the height of an empire and the beginning of its decline"; Ennis, *The Martha Art War," 140.

137. See Kimmelman, "The Dia Generation," 61. Govan’s predecessor, Charles Wright, had also sought out Friedman as a mentor, regularly visiting him in his mosque office; see Colacello, *Remains of the Dia," 200.
