In November of 1988, the city hall of the Swiss city of Winterthur called a competition for the remodelling of several urban spaces in the historic city centre. The event brought together architects, engineers and landscape architects of the above-mentioned city of the canton of Zürich. They tried to revitalise and reform the traditional city centre to improve its social and functional aspects (figures 1 and 2). All the foregoing was the starting point for a large number of architectural studies, which would develop their proposals around some very specific lines of research, based on the pacification or rationalisation of the centre and the subsequent traffic restriction. The projects submitted for the contest by all the participants, who were local professionals in their entirety\(^{12}\), pursued the idea of preserving the open space of the different urban locations, making room for the ongoing urban activity. Likewise, they intended to express the spatial proportions of those enclosures with a simple design that used the pertinent materials. 

In mid-1989, in a European context marked by a whole series of revolutions that lead to the dissolution of the Iron Curtain, König, the architects got in touch with the American artist Donald Judd, who in the spring of 1991 visited the place and immediately accepted the commission to work on the proposed intervention in the Steinbergstreet 48.

**SPACE ACTIVATION**

Donald Judd was always very interested in the close relationship existing between the work of art and the location where it was placed for its exhibition and exhibit. His connection with architecture, which served as the framework or setting for his creations, can be easily recognised since his early works, which he carried out under the name of specific objects. In general, all of them present a common feature: they are conditioned by the space where they are located, and in that respect, the concern of the artist for the environment of his pieces, as he has expressed it: “the most basic circumstance is that the art must face the place it is located in.”\(^{13}\) Judd finally achieves that his art is a direct expression of the place, not only because he is located in it, but because it is the place where he decided to call topographic objects. With this mechanism, Judd tried to take over that essence of the place that existed in each location, which he decided to call “space activation.”

The construction of the topographic objects refers explicitly to the geography, being the concrete rings those that give meaning to the space on which they are inserted. The first work of this characteristics is the one carried out in 1971 in the gardens of the Philip Johnson Glass House in New Canaan, Connecticut (figure 5). However, the one that has acquired greater importance was the one carried out for the project Stülerquai Projekt 77 six years later in the city of Montréal, Westphalia. It owed its relevance to the fact that it linked water and earth through two concrete concrete elements, whose upper edges were parallel to the lake and the slope, respectively (figure 6). In both, the different tones and textures acquired by the concrete adapt to the environment conditions and reveal, in the roundness of its volume, the inviolable passage of time. Bearing that in mind, and without forgetting those qualities related to form, geometry and materiality, as well as to space itself, “we find these objects from our most recent past in present, developing our understanding of them based on time, movement and our mental capacity.”

The construction of the topographic objects is an art intervention that aims to revitalise and reform the traditional city centre, to prevent the mobility within the city. Among the indications noted in the minutes issued by the board, the organisers proposed to carry out a public participation that would allow the architects to make the final decisions, paying attention to the activities of the immediate environment. 

The urban landscape designed by Thomas Schneider-Hoppe and Gerfried Prêtre for the Naunhofer square and Kneistockstrasse street responded to the original idea of paving and to the creation of drainage from the dominant geometry of space. However, in the case of Steinbergstreet, the consolidation of the proposal was not so immediate. The owners of the shops located in the historic road expressed great interest in the intervention having the potential to improve its social and functional aspects (figures 1 and 2). All the foregoing was the starting point for a large number of architectural studies, which would develop their proposals around some very specific lines of research, based on the pacification or rationalisation of the centre and the subsequent traffic restriction. The projects submitted for the contest by all the participants, who were local professionals in their entirety\(^{12}\), pursued the idea of preserving the open space of the different urban locations, making room for the ongoing urban activity. Likewise, they intended to express the spatial proportions of those enclosures with a simple design that used the pertinent materials. 

In mid-1989, in a European context marked by a whole series of revolutions that lead to the dissolution of the Iron Curtain, König, the architects got in touch with the American artist Donald Judd, who in the spring of 1991 visited the place and immediately accepted the commission to work on the proposed intervention in the Steinbergstreet 48.

**THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLACE**

The notion of place for Judd was closely linked to the perceptive condition. The open or closed locations chosen for the installation of his work. This purpose can be observed from his first objects (figure 4), integrated into a space that would be activated beyond the simple three-dimensional element. The open or closed locations chosen for the installation of his work. This purpose can be observed from his first objects (figure 4), integrated into a space that would be activated beyond the simple three-dimensional element. The open or closed locations chosen for the installation of his work. This purpose can be observed from his first objects (figure 4), integrated into a space that would be activated beyond the simple three-dimensional element. The open or closed locations chosen for the installation of his work. This purpose can be observed from his first objects (figure 4), integrated into a space that would be activated beyond the simple three-dimensional element. The open or closed locations chosen for the installation of his work. This purpose can be observed from his first objects (figure 4), integrated into a space that would be activated beyond the simple three-dimensional element. The open or closed locations chosen for the installation of his work. This purpose can be observed from his first objects (figure 4), integrated into a space that would be activated beyond the simple three-dimensional element. The open or closed locations chosen for the installation of his work. This purpose can be observed from his first objects (figure 4), integrated into a space that would be activated beyond the simple three-dimensional element. The open or closed locations chosen for the installation of his work. This purpose can be observed from his first objects (figure 4), integrated into a space that would be activated beyond the simple three-dimensional element. The open or closed locations chosen for the installation of his work. This purpose can be observed from his first objects (figure 4), integrated into a space that would be activated beyond the simple three-dimensional element. The open or closed locations chosen for the installation of his work. This purpose can be observed from his first objects (figure 4), integrated into a space that would be activated beyond the simple three-dimensional element.
that flowed through the city centre. With this approach, concrete was the material chosen to make a large part of the topographic objects. In this case, the Steingasse street’s fountain. An exceptional material due to its uniqueness and permanence, it offers both durability and its formal configuration and that in turn, stands out from the rest seen with a sense of permanence. In conclusion, it "offers many possibilities to directly interact with the conditions of the ground, water and the built environment".

A few days after his visit to the place, in April of 1991, Judd presented some preliminary drawings in which he proposed the creation of the three new fountains with an elliptical shape. They would go down the slope of the street from east to west, as the abovementioned historic river that flowed out into the Eulach River. However, in his second proposal (figures 7 and 8), the artist delves into that material quality defined with his work since the sixties. Originally, Judd suggested the use of natural stone for the fountains, but the high price made him decline this option and use a concrete subject to numerous treatments to achieve the desired stone appearance. According to Schneider-Hoppe: "Sieve tests were carried out before finding the exact mix of gravel and cement mortar so that it would provide the desired surface and so that it would also meet the structural requirements". The city of Winterthur, however, had already decided to pave the street with asphalt, breaking the idea of the stone that Judd defended from the beginning. The economic reasons that led to such an election did not convainc any of the parties, however; they considered that the fountains could be lost in the indefinite expansion of asphalt.

Despite all the setbacks arising in the development of the project46, Donald Judd found in concrete the most appropriate material to express the values of the place. This material allowed him to make concrete rings that, with a very specific geometry, seemed to refer to the prehistoric constructions that tried to link heaven and earth, in the same way as Robert Morris did with his work of 1977 entitled Observatory. The concrete was in Judd’s project, just like the earth in Morris’s, an expression of the materiality of the ground that emanates from the soil itself.

The intervention in Steingasse street supposed the culmination of its topographic objects, which had been carried out during more than twenty-five years. This work reflected as no other any of the different periods and stages of the artist’s career. The material condition of the place, perceived as a pastured urban space.

Judd’s regular collaborator and art curator Peter Fuchs was in charge of overseeing the last phases of the project’s execution after the artist’s death in 1994. Certain inevitable deviations from the original idea of Donald Judd were found (figures 9 and 10). Nonetheless, the desire to express with the concrete the connection with the place was preserved and the proposal was completed in the 1997. The minimal artist managed, in this way, to express his personal concern for the material perfection recognised by Rudi Fuchs47, thanks to a deep understanding of that meaning implied by the fact of working with the place.

WATER AS AN ELEMENT OF COHESION

The strategic operation of placing single-material fountains in a row in a space-support has a very significant historical background. Examples such as the three baroque fountains of Rome’s Piazza Navona, or even the ponds located on the banks of the Wei river in Beijing, have been an inspiration for Judd to achieve the space activation with those elements. However, the artist focused his attention on works of Land Art that flowed through the city centre. With this approach, concrete was the material chosen to make a large part of the topographic objects installed in open landscapes. Those external rings had to be removed from the proposal for reasons of space. Those external rings, whose upper edge was parallel to the ground, in the same way that it would have been developed through external rings, whose upper edge was parallel to the ground, in the same way that it would have been developed in open landscapes. However, this was expressed through external rings, whose upper edge was parallel to the ground, in the same way that it would have been developed in some topographic objects installed in open landscapes. Those external rings had to be removed from the proposal for reasons of space.

These topographic objects were the most important elements in the intervention, would be the engine of his proposal. For this purpose, Judd considered essential the need for constant discovery —as happened with the objects analysed by Gaston Bachelard— of the deepest secrets of its internal configuration. A proposal that pointed to a phenomenological realism, where the senses, perception and experience became relevant.

Judd’s project for the redevelopement of Steingasse street in Winterthur, as well as a great variety of other contemporary architecture references, “synthetizes craftwork and industry, sensory perception and reason, subjectivity and objectivity, art and technology”. As it happens with Donald Judd’s project, the space-support is the engine of his proposal. For this purpose, Judd reproduces the mechanisms used with their pieces for a long time, and by extension regarding their pieces for the project: the work, which went down from the upper part of Steingasse street, moved in the east-west direction until it reached the pre-existing fountain, evidencing the course of the abovementioned stream that crossed the street in its longitudinal direction. This layout established a strong connection with the environment that Judd invited to discover from places that seemed to say: “I am like you see me, and I belong to this place”.

Through the meticulous study of organisation, behaviour and routes (figure 13), the artist uses the scale control to create an urban planning that is linked to the built space. Judd had expressed his interest in these questions regarding proportion and scale with his sculptural works, since, as Rudi Fuchs puts it, “Judge the space that contains them, the size is relative”. Thus, the scale plays an essential role in this urban planning, because it provides a system of relationship with the environment, which forces the spectator to be a participant in the idea of orderly place through discovery—as happened with the objects analysed by Gaston Bachelard— of the deepest secrets of its internal configuration. A proposal that pointed to a phenomenological realism, where the senses, perception and experience became relevant.

The project for the Steingasse street and the topographic objects that he carried out in the immediately prior years shows a clear cohesion: be it a landscape or an urban space, in both space is always determined by the nature of the place, but a landscape is something that we learn to discover through perception. This recognition of the phenomenological essence that underlies the proposal in Winterthur allows us to recover a plot of historical and cultural meanings48, crucial in the organisation of the assembly proposed by the artist himself. In addition to the deeper meaning offered by the sensory experience of the place, which completes the third spatial category proposed by Edward Soja and defined as lived space, the work with sculptural objects in the urban landscape of Steingasse street points to a spatiality that is activated beyond the limits of its elliptical fountains.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Upon the analysis of Donald Judd’s project for the Steingasse street in Winterthur, carried out in collaboration with the studio Schneider and Prêtre, it was observed how the space-support offered by the abandoned portion of the street. The street setting is thereby taken as a reference structure, constituting a space-support on which the intervention is carried out. Judd integrates the whole set of characteristics that define this space as the general structure of the place and its topography. He creates a total work of art, which gives the place a great multitude of sensory experiences obtained through perception.

Therefore, in the approach to the landscapes of the American geographer Edward Soja, Judd establishes three orders of spatial experience in Steingasse street: the material condition of the street, the ideal condition of water from the fountains and the phenomenological condition of the spectator’s experience. As a consequence, through these levels, the necessary phenomenological stimulus that allows men to dialogue with the physical reality of the place, going beyond the space-support of the street as mere functional reality, would be reached. Therefore, this location becomes the framework in which spatial activation takes place, in an urban intervention in which Judd reproduces the mechanisms used with their specific objects.
Bearing in mind the foregoing, the project manages to encourage the perception and the typical relationships of the public space of the Steinberggasse street, incorporating a new social dimension, which becomes evident on market days and during the celebration of cultural events and festivals. Accordingly, Judd’s fountains have managed to fit in with the daily life of the city, but clearly keeping their space (figures 14 and 15). The spatial activation that Donald Judd pursued with his objects is enriched in the Winterthur project, which no longer only activates the space-support where it develops, but also activates that social dimension that also defines the urban landscape.

1. Since the mid-sixties, and under the influence of theoretical reflections such as those included in the Buchanan Report published in 1963, many European cities opted for improving the quality of their interior spaces, through a basic premise that was based on the traffic restriction.
7. The British philosopher Richard Wolheim managed to establish that name to define the new art, replacing others that were also being used such as ABC Art, Cool Art or Primary Structures. See WULLNEMER, Richard. Minimal Art. In: Arts Magazine. Nueva York: The Art Digest, 1965, January, p. 26-32. ISSN 0004-4059.
8. JUDD, Donald, op. cit. supra, note 5, p. 15.
9. This is closely related to the approaches of Rosalind Krauss, which define a wide variety of creative possibilities in the new art under the name of sculpture in the expanded field. See KRAUSS, Rosalind. Sculpture in the Expanded Field. In: October. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1979, no. 8, p. 30-40. ISSN 0162-2870.
14. Ibid.
15. JUDD, Donald, op. cit. supra, note 5, p. 16.
16. LAWRENCE, James, op. cit. supra, note 12, p. 8.
17. Ibid., p. 17.
21. LAWRENCE, James, op. cit. supra, note 12, p. 7.
22. SCHNIEDER-HOPPE, Thomas, op. cit. supra, note 4, p. 13.
23. Ibid.
24. When in May 1993 the Winterthur City Hall decided to reject Judd’s project for economic reasons, a large group of citizens created the Judd Project association. They organised several events and activities and finally, they raised the necessary funds to carry out the proposal.
26. LAWRENCE, James, op. cit. supra, note 12, p. 7.
28. In his desire for greater perfection, Donald Judd delegated the manufacture and assembly of his works to workshops with highly qualified staff, eliminating any vestige of his own personality and authorship.
29. GOMPertz, Will. op. cit. supra, note 29, p. 374.
31. Ibid.
33. SCHNIEDER-HOPPE, Thomas, op. cit. supra, note 25, p. 7.
38. JUDD, Donald, op. cit. supra
39. Ibid., p. 17.