

ART ADVENTURES: THE MYTH ABOUT MARFA

By Alexander Mason Hankin— April 20, 2018



Marfa's own town slogan is perhaps the best description of this place: it's like nowhere else on Earth. Sometimes it's easier to say what it is not than what it is. Once a year, Marfa is home to the anti-festival festival: A four-day music, art, performance, and visual experience known as Marfa Myths. A collaboration between record label Mexican Summer and contemporary cultural arts space, Ballroom Marfa, the festival draws in a diverse crowd and creates the perfect opportunity to explore a magical mythical town and all that it has to offer.

One of the greatest art collections in Marfa is The Chinati Foundation. Originally a military base, it was started in the 1970's by Donald Judd and The Dia Foundation. Today, all 15 buildings are home to the works of greats like Judd, Dan Flavin, Richard Chamberlain, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Irwin, and Bridget Riley, amongst others. The full tour takes over 6 hours, but is well

worth the experience. One of the most-notable pieces on the tour was Judd's 15 untitled works in concrete. Set against the West Texas backdrop, these concrete structures of various sized squares and rectangles let the imagination run wild.

Marfa wouldn't be Marfa without Donald Judd so it's only fitting that one of the most sensational works in this town is his personal residence, known as The Block. What was a former military facility, Judd transformed into his private oasis. Behind an adobe built wall, Judd mastered symmetry and design in his home; everything inside stands as a time capsule to Judd's legacy. Judd's libraries were built by him and organized by his own methods. There were objects and early works of Judd's interspersed throughout, which gave a truly unique look into his personal life and his obsession with order, shapes, and mathematics of everything.



At Ballroom Marfa, there is a group exhibition known as Hyperobjects. Organized by Timothy Morton and Laura Copelin, the exhibit explores land and environmental issues. We were captivated by Tara Donovan's work, *Untitled (Plastic Cups)*. This work consists of clear plastic cups arranged in an angular wave. The varying heights created a tranquil surf-scape in the room. Just like the cups, the message is clear: alone, each individual cup is a non-factor, but when crafted together, something beautiful is created.

Of course one could not make a trip to Marfa without visiting the Mirage Sculpture, better known as Prada Marfa. Prada Marfa is a Prada store built on the side of the highway, about 30 miles outside of town. While this sculpture has become synonymous with the town, maybe the myth is greater than the reality since it isn't even located in Marfa. It is, however, well worth an Instagram post.

The entire weekend was rounded out by unique musical experiences. The festival took on many locations throughout Marfa, creating a sense that the entire town was truly one

big art installation. Some of the weekend's musical highlights include a modern Moroccan dance party with Innov Gnawa at the luxury Native American inspired camp group El Cosmico, electronic pioneer Suzanne Chinati creating an existential experience at Chinati, and tropical vibes coming to life at the Tom Zé pool party at Hotel Saint George. The English rock band the Wire brought down the house at the outdoor music venue Capri, but perhaps the best moment was the drum and base dance hall-esque group Equiknoxx, keeping everyone dancing into the wee hours of the morning.

Marfa is an enchanting place unlike any other. When seeing it in person, you are able to experience all of the multidimensional performances for yourself. Small-town heroes, like Marfa that are literally off the beaten path and proudly march to their own drum, is a must-see living, breathing art installation.

Go marvel at Marfa, I dare you.