

ART

## Judd Foundation celebrates 8th annual 'Ranch Day'



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BY SAM KARAS

NOVEMBER 8, 2023 5:53 PM

**PINTO CANYON** — Last Sunday, the Judd Foundation marked its eighth annual "Ranch Day" at Casa Perez, a rarely-toured property once occupied by the artist along Pinto Canyon Road. With a two-year hiatus during the pandemic, the nonprofit has opened the property to the public once a year since 2014 to further explore Judd's connection to the land and local flora and fauna.

Each year, guests enjoy free food, music and guest lectures along with the opportunity to tour Casa Perez, an early 19th century home that was originally part of a goat ranch. Judd named the property after the Perez family, who lived and worked there in the 1940s.

The house features antique Mexican furniture, two untitled works by Judd and an etching by Spanish artist Francisco Goya.

Casa Perez is just one of three properties in the Pinto Canyon area formerly owned by Judd, including Las Casas, where the artist was buried. For Judd, who preferred the solitude of Pinto Canyon to the bustling little town of Marfa, buying the properties — and leaving them mostly untouched — was an investment in his ability to create.

He also felt he could play an important role in the preservation of local history and landscape. “Here, everywhere, the destruction of new land is a brutality,” he wrote in 1989, in response to a neighbor who had cut extensive roads on his property. “I have never built anything on new land.”

This year’s guest lecturers included botanist Patty Manning of Twin Sisters Natives, a plant nursery where she and her partner tend to and propagate plants native to the Trans-Pecos. She spoke in conversation with Dr. Michael Powell, a professor of botany at Sul Ross and a co-founder of the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute in Fort Davis.

Rainer Judd, president of the Judd Foundation, said that Manning’s and Powell’s work informed the current-day caretaking and conservation of the foundation’s spaces. Over the past year, the Judd team has been working to eradicate invasive species of grass to make room for native plants to take over. “The expertise of Dr. Powell and Patty Manning is a constant source of knowledge and inspiration, and we wanted to share that,” Judd said.

She said that — beyond its educational component — Ranch Day is part of a larger project to re-frame popular notions about her father’s interest in the Big Bend. “Our hope is that in opening his spaces and sharing his ideas we can inspire new ways of approaching his work and living in our world,” Judd said. “Any opportunity to create conversation around issues which affect residents of the tri-county area and beyond is impactful in ways large and small.”

