Tony Smith, *Smug*, 1973/2005



Tony Smith, *Smug*, 1973/2005.

1 Close Looking and Principles of Design

- What do you see as you approach and walk around the sculpture?
- What do you think the artist was trying to communicate about movement or space?
- What do you wovnder about the choice of material or the way it's placed in the landscape?

*Consider using terms like **line, form, scale, balance,** and **negative space.***

2 Learn More About the Artist:

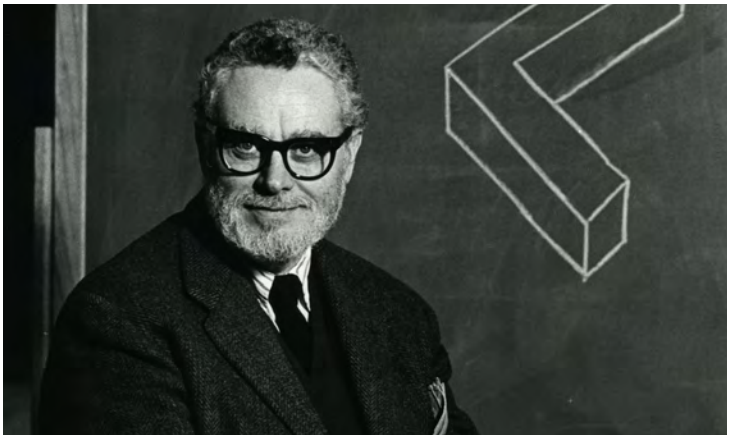
- Tony Smith was born in South Orange, New Jersey in 1912 and died in 1980 in New York City. While in New York City, he worked at Hunter College teaching design.
- Smith was a major American sculptor and architect known in the 1960s and 1970s for large, **geometric** steel sculptures that blended **minimalism** and **abstraction**. He also worked in drawing, painting, writing, and architecture.
- Smith often called his sculptures "presences" because he wanted people to think about how the artwork feels in the space around them. He was interested in the relation between solid form and space. His ideas were influenced by his interests in math, science, philosophy, and literature.

About the Artwork:

- *Smug* is the third sculpture in a series of three large, geometric works. The first two are called *Smoke* (1967, on view at LACMA) and *Smog* (1969–70, on view at Middlebury College in Vermont).
- *Smug* was not fully built during Smith's lifetime, but a full-size model made of plywood was installed in New York in 1989. The final version, made of painted aluminum, was installed **posthumously**, after Smith's death, at Glenstone in 2005.
- Smith designed the sculpture to be a spatial experience. As people walk around it, the shapes and empty spaces change—almost like looking through a kaleidoscope.
- It is made of repeated geometric modules, an interlacing **tetrahedrons-octahedral honeycomb.**

Glenstone Connection:

- *Smug* was completed with the help of his wife, Jane Lawrence Smith, and his daughters, Kiki and Seton Smith. Kiki said that completing this sculpture was very meaningful for her father's legacy.
- A company called Lippincott, LLC, which specializes in metal sculpture, built the piece in New Haven, Connecticut. The sculpture is made of hollow pieces that are come together from the inside, so the installation was tricky. It required a special team of trained art handlers and **spelunkers,** or cave-divers, to get inside the sculpture and bolt the pieces together.
- The location of the sculpture was carefully chosen with help from Charles Gwathmey, the architect of Glenstone's Gallery. The sculpture was built and installed just as Smith had planned, thanks to a team effort between Glenstone and the Tony Smith Estate.



Tony Smith, 1967. Photo by David Gahr.



Overhead view of *Smug* at Glenstone.



Smug installation with a spelunker working in the sculpture.

3 Reflect

Worldview and Social Impact

Imagine you are the sculpture, or a person encountering it for the first time.

- Why do you think Tony Smith chose the title *Smug* for this sculpture, and how could different people understand its meaning in different ways?
- How might seeing a large sculpture like Smug in a public space change the way people think about others or treat one another?
- How might the artist's background or cultural context shape the work?

*This invites discussion of **empathy, interpretation, and perception.***

Details and Material

Closely examine a section of the structure.

- What shapes, edges, or surfaces do you notice when you focus on one specific section of *Smug*? Do those details change depending on where you stand?
- How does the material of the sculpture look up close (smooth, rough, reflective, dull), and what does that make you think or feel about how it was made?

*Introduce terms like **presence, tetrahedrons, spatial relation,** and **spelunker.***

Personal Reflection

After moving through the sculpture, reflect:

- I feel... (emotion or reaction)
- I think... (insight or idea sparked)
- I am... (state of being or identity)

Connect art to personal meaning, mindfulness, and self.

Tony Smith, Smug, 1973/2005 © 2023 Tony Smith Estate /Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
Photo: Iwan Baan

Accessibility Note:
Gravel ground may be difficult for some wheelchair users.