



Smug

1973/2005

Aluminum, painted black

11 feet by 78 feet by 64 feet

(3 meters by 24 meters by 20 meters)

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Photo: Iwan Baan

Tony Smith (b. 1912, South Orange, NJ, United States; d. 1980)

Born Anthony Peter Smith, Tony Smith was born on December 23rd, 1912. From age four until high school, Smith was quarantined with tuberculosis; he had a private tutor and nurse, and Smith later recalled building small models out of his medicine boxes during this period of his life. Long-term seclusion and a visit to the Pueblos near Taos, New Mexico at a young age were “formative experiences” on his art.

After attending Fordham University in 1930 and Georgetown University in 1931-1932, Smith returned to New Jersey and took night classes in painting, drawing, and anatomy at the Art Students League in New York City. Smith worked briefly for Frank Lloyd Wright, from 1938 to 1940, then continued to find work in architecture and higher education until he began his sculpture work in 1961. Smith called his often-monumental sculptures “presences”. His work evolved over time from simple

to increasingly complex geometric shapes that recall crystalline structures and other forms occurring in nature. He was well-versed in mathematics and modular systems.

Smug (1973/2005)

Smug was fabricated first as a full-scale plywood mock-up. Its lattice-like configuration creates patterns of positive and negative space, shifting like a kaleidoscope when the viewer circumnavigates the sculpture. In 1989, the full-scale wood model of Smug was installed on the St. John's Rotary in NYC. Through the efforts of the artist's widow, Jane Lawrence Smith, and his daughters, Kiki and Seton Smith, in conjunction with the Tony Smith Estate that Jane Smith established, the final aluminum version of Smug was fabricated and installed at Glenstone in 2005. Fabricated by Lippincott, LLC, the individual pieces are hollow and bolted from the inside. Installation required a team of trained cave-diving art handlers. The total piece weighs 27,500 pounds, or 13.75 tons.

Reflections

Take a moment to walk around Smug, 1973/2005. What reference points come up for you when viewing this sculpture?

Tony Smith trained as an architect and was well versed in mathematics, modular systems, and the geometry of nature. Do you see these influences in this work? How so?

Smug, 1973/2005 is made of aluminum. When the temperature of aluminum increases, the metal expands – a process called 'thermal expansion.' This process causes the work to naturally expand and contract, causing the sculpture to emit an audible sound. Were you able to hear Smug, 1973/2005 make a sound?