

Tony Smith

Source, Tau, Throwback

510 West 25th Street, New York

April 26 – June 22, 2019

Opening Reception:

Thursday, April 25, 6 – 8 PM

“I like a certain amount of mystery involved, which demands involvement on the part of the person seeing it. I think the guise of the work has something to do with the kinetic quality. It demands a certain amount of action.” Tony Smith, interviewed for “Art of the Sixties: The Walls Come Tumbling Down.” Eye on Art CBS, 1968.



New York—Pace Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of monumental sculptures by Tony Smith. Encompassing three works—*Tau* (1961-62), *Source* (1967), and *Throwback* (1976-77)—the exhibition touches on key moments in the artist’s evolving sculptural practice. Shaped by his training and prior career as an architect, Smith’s work is animated by a dynamic concept of space and a commitment to sculpture as an object to be catalyzed by the direct engagement of the human body. Possessing no traditional front or back and occupying non-linear planes of space, Smith’s sculptures reward an ambulatory viewing experience, offering a range of perspectives and understandings as one circulates the work. Pace represented Smith during his final years and following from 1979 – 1983, and this will be the first exhibition dedicated to the artist since the gallery began representing the Tony Smith Estate in 2017. *Tony Smith: Source, Tau, Throwback*, will be on view from April 26 to June 22, 2019 at 510 West 25th Street, with an opening reception held on Thursday, April 25 from 6 – 8 pm. A full color catalogue with an essay by Christopher M. Ketcham will be published in conjunction with the exhibition.

Spanning Smith’s career in the medium, from the early 1960s to the late 1970s, the works in the exhibition epitomize the artist’s characteristic black-painted aesthetic articulated in large-scale and mathematically-determined geometric forms. The works also illustrate the artist’s shifting modes of formal construction and geometric massing, as well as his evolving approach to sculpture’s relationship to the body and surrounding environment.

The artist's first work to be placed on permanent display in a public space in New York, *Tau* (1961 – 62) was one of a series of new sculptures conceived by Smith as a speculation in pure form. While *Tau* was not installed outside Manhattan's Hunter College until 1984, four years after the artist's death, Smith created the sculpture with a vision to animate its immediate environment, not simply adorn it—to powerfully confront the daily masses of students and the public that traveled the corner each day. In a manner that would come to characterize many of Smith's sculptures, *Tau* is constructed of tetrahedral modules that have been precisely and idiosyncratically stacked; yet the fundamental geometry of the piece is concealed by Smith's distinctive material and finish – steel painted in semi-gloss black.

Conceived by Smith in 1967, *Source* was first exhibited the following summer at *Documenta IV* in Kassel, Germany and more recently was presented by Pace at Art Basel Unlimited in 2017. Encompassing two, united sections that span more than twenty-five feet across and rise over nine feet high at the tallest point, *Source* marked a significant moment in the trajectory of Smith's work. Whereas *Tau* functions as an intrusive object in space, in *Source*, Smith advanced sculpture's ability to create a spatial field of its own. Through its composition of various-height walls, cantilevered forms, and competing acute and oblique angles, the sculpture activates the area that surrounds it, drawing people into a heightened level of physical engagement and fostering its own sense of interior and exterior space.

Developed in 1976-77, *Throwback* was presented in Smith's first exhibition at Pace Gallery in 1979. That exhibition, *Tony Smith: Ten Elements and Throwback*, featured a painted plywood version of the sculpture realized at Smith's full intended size, as well as a smaller version in black-painted steel. Now, exactly forty years later, Pace will exhibit *Throwback* as the artist originally envisioned—rendered in painted black aluminum at full scale. While composed of Smith's familiar combination of tetrahedrons and octahedrons, *Throwback* ranks among Smith's most complex and dynamic forms. Its crystalline shape projects erratically into space, destabilizing the boundaries between sculpture, viewer, and environment. Entirely resistant to a stable, singular point of perspective, the energy and force of *Throwback* compel the viewer's movement and direct confrontation.

Tony Smith (b. 1912, South Orange, New Jersey; d. 1980, New York) developed his sculptural practice through his experience in architecture and as an expansion of his work in painting, and drawing. Often taking on a monumental scale, his sculptures relate directly to the human body and the surrounding architectural environment as reference. Although Smith was a contemporary of the Abstract Expressionists and his sculpture shared some visual and stylistic affinities with the reductive geometry and structural discipline of Minimalism, his work belies association to either movement. He considered his process to be intuitive, his work resting close to the unconscious and exploring themes of spirituality and presence in a synthesis of geometric abstraction and expressionism.

Smith has been the subject of over sixty monographic exhibitions, including posthumous retrospectives at The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1998); Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Spain (2002); and The Menil Collection, Houston

(2010). Other one-artist exhibitions include *Smoke*, at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2017), celebrating his work across mediums and highlighting *Smoke* (1967, fabricated 2005), the only large-scale sculpture by Smith specifically intended for an interior space, which was installed in the museum's Ahmanson Building atrium in 2008.

Smith's work is held in public collections across the United States and abroad, including Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark; Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge; The Menil Collection, Houston; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Nasher Collection, Dallas; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Samsung Foundation of Art and Culture, Seoul; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Shizouka Museum, Shi, Ikeda, Japan; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others.

Pace is a leading contemporary art gallery representing many of the most significant international artists and estates of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Under the leadership of President and CEO Marc Glimcher, Pace is a vital force within the art world and plays a critical role in shaping the history, creation, and engagement with modern and contemporary art. Since its founding by Arne Glimcher in 1960, Pace has developed a distinguished legacy for vibrant and dedicated relationships with renowned artists. As the gallery approaches the start of its seventh decade, Pace's mission continues to be inspired by our drive to support the world's most influential and innovative artists and to share their visionary work with people around the world.

Pace advances this mission through its dynamic global program, comprising ambitious exhibitions, artist projects, public installations, institutional collaborations, and curatorial research and writing. Today, Pace has ten locations worldwide: three galleries in New York; one in London; one in Geneva; one in Palo Alto, California; one in Beijing; two in Hong Kong; and one in Seoul. Pace will open a new flagship gallery at 540 West 25th Street in New York in September 2019.

Image: Tony Smith, *Source*, 1967, steel, painted black. 9' 5-1/2" × 25' 1/4" × 24' 5-3/8" (288.3 cm × 762.6 cm × 745.2 cm), overall. Edition 2 of 3 + 1 AP. Installed at *Sotheby's Beyond Limits*, Chatsworth House, Derbyshire, United Kingdom, September 15 – November 12, 2017. Photography courtesy Sotheby's. © 2019 Estate of Tony Smith / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

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