

MIT List Visual Arts Center

Tony Smith

MEDIUM Sculpture

NATIONALITY American

LIFE DATES South Orange Village, New Jersey 1912 - 1980 New York, New York

Tony Smith was born on September 23, 1912 in South Orange, New Jersey. He attended a Jesuit high school in New York and Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., but left university without graduating. He worked in his family's ironworks business and studied evenings at the Art Students League in New York.

Smith made several forays to Chicago, in 1937 to study architecture at the recently established New Bauhaus School set up by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, and again in 1938, to seek an apprenticeship with Frank Lloyd Wright's office as a clerk of works. Under Wright's influence, Smith investigated new approaches to low-cost modular housing with smooth, angular design and opened his own architectural practice. In 1955 he returned to New Jersey and began to teach sculpture at Bennington, Hunter College, and Princeton University. From the late 1950s he focused on sculpture, drawing on his experience in building design. He became known for sleek, reductively geometric and monumental works associated with Minimalism.

From 1966, Smith was featured in solo shows at venues including the Wadsworth Athenaeum; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Newark Museum, Newark, N.J.; the Pace Gallery, New York; and the Museum of Modern Art, New York. His work appeared in important exhibitions of modern sculpture including American Sculpture of the Sixties, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (1967); Scale As Content, Corcoran Gallery, Washington D.C. (1967); and 200 Years of American Sculpture, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1976). His many awards, fellowships and recognitions include a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1968, a Fine Arts Medal from the American Institute of Architects in 1971, a Distinguished Teaching of Art Award from the College Art Association, and a Creative Arts Award for Sculpture from Brandeis University. He was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1978.

Smith died in 1980 in New York. He is the father of artists Kiki Smith and Seton Smith.

