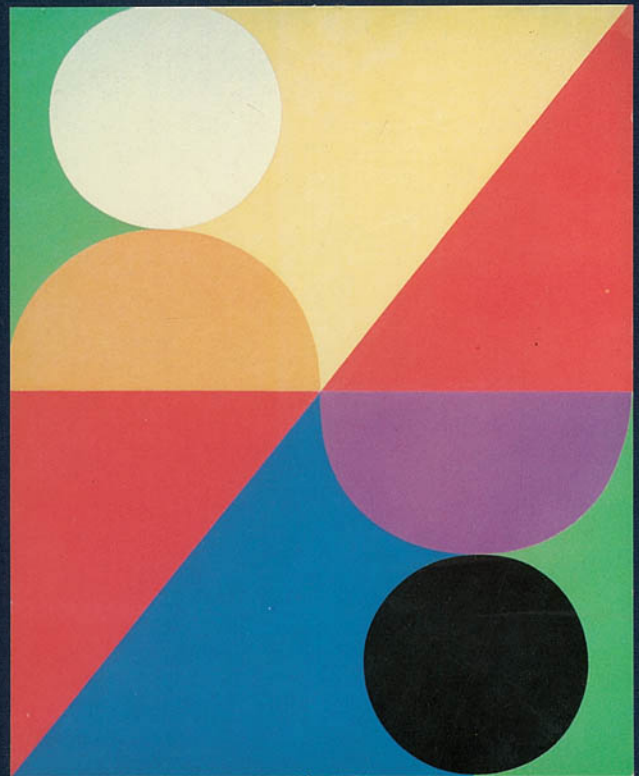


Claudine Humblet

The New American Abstraction 1950–1970



The New American Abstraction 1950–1970

This project was born and developed over time: the time the author devoted to it, interwoven with that of the artworks, and the time of the artists encountered. Choices, circumstances, and pleasurable meetings all contributed to the course the book followed.

The artists in this project proclaim a "New Abstraction," "hard-edge," a "new painterliness," "structurism," and a poetic adventure around the concept of the "fourth dimension" (Park Place).

The title of this book is borrowed from *Toward a New Abstraction*, the catalogue of an exhibition organized by Ben Heller at the Jewish Museum in New York, in May–September 1963, which included such artists as Frank Stella, Paul Brach, Kenneth Noland, and Raymond Parker.

The aim of the project was to connect in spirit artists chosen from the New Abstraction movement, as opposed to other movements that determined the "spirit of the times," such as emergent Minimalism and Pop Art.

Each individual must remain detached within his own context, which is what each of the chapters has attempted to do.

New Abstraction should be understood not as a movement—various signs indicate very well the importance of Abstract Expressionism for some artists—but a kind of convergence over a period of time of structural approaches that attract each other rather than form a precise group. A single "spirit of the times" did not exist.

What out of convenience we refer to here as "New Abstraction," besides its sometimes complex origins, intersects over time with other movements and trends, such as Neo-Dadaism, the beginnings of Minimal Art, and Process Art.

Structures triumph. There is nothing hermetic in this art with its open structures, though they are sometimes concealed, it is an outspread, joyous art. If sensuality seems absent at first, it is the keen joy of pure colors that attracts the viewer to what the work states in the space, with rare clarity. Color is structure. In each artist color is linked to the structure itself. The structure is the color and the color bursts out of the structure. Spontaneity sweeps it away, it is this that creates the domains of joy and of sensuality, in contrast to the "constructed" and "concrete" European art. Each artist invents his own art of color in bold or subtle ways, this is the guiding thread of this book.

Claudine Humblet

**The New
American
Abstraction
1950–1970**

First Volume

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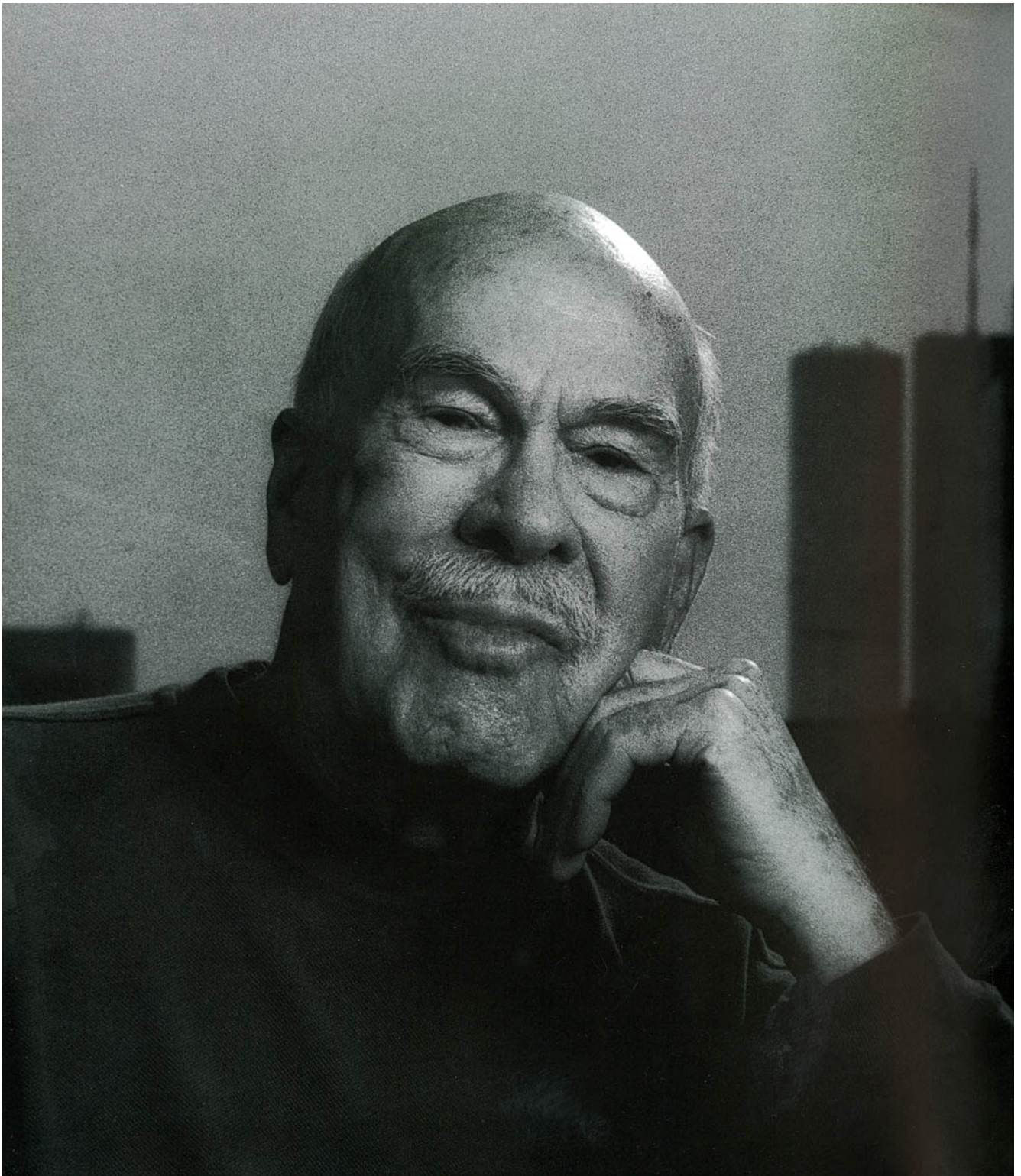
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section **2**

From Post-Mondrianism to New Abstraction

Leon Polk Smith



Leon Polk Smith

"The New Religion is faith in life"
(Mondrian, *A New Religion*?, ca. 1938–40)

Leon Polk Smith (born in Chikasha, Oklahoma, in 1906, died 1996) discovered Mondrian's work in the summer of 1936 on his first visit to the Albert Eugene Gallatin Collection¹ in the Museum of Living Art, then at the University of New York. The encounter was a liberating shock that made him aware of what he wished to achieve, but it was only gradually that he moved toward the mastery of purely abstract means of expression.

In 1936 Smith's compositions were still realist (inspired by the countryside and the farm he was familiar with in the state of Oklahoma) though they "unconsciously"² included surreal elements (*Chore Time*,³ oil on canvas, 1936; *Boy on a Mule*,⁴ oil on canvas, 1936).

The forms are flat, brightly colored, and boldly outlined. *Still Life Portrait*⁵ (oil on canvas, 1939) is bathed in a more markedly Surrealist atmosphere. Around 1940, Smith very intuitively developed a simplified, personal Cubism that originated in fragments of still life (*Repeated Forms*,⁶ oil on canvas, 1940) or portraits taken from urban life (*White Woman*,⁷ *Georgia Black Woman*,⁸ oil on canvas, 1940). *Repeated Forms* is one of the most abstract works due to the simplification and repetition of one element in a "stained-glass window" composition with the space divided into compartmentalized planes of color. His attraction to a flat surface and a flat treatment of color was already evident, and he took the final leap toward pure abstraction in 1942.

Guided by his admiration for the absolute, pure plasticity of Piet Mondrian's oeuvre, it seems that Smith wished to take up the challenge that anything is possible in abstract art. For Smith, Mondrian's work, far from being the ultimate outcome of the abstract adventure (or an "obstacle" to any attempt to transcend it)⁹ contained in embryo the idea of a new departure. It essentially triggered his own creative energy.

His first geometric abstract works at the beginning of the 1940s still drew their inspiration from familiar themes (*Little Dogies at Night*,¹⁰ oil on paper, 1942; *Oklahoma Territory*,¹¹ oil on canvas, 1943; *Git Along Little Dogies*,¹² oil on canvas, 1943). In November–December 1942, Leon Polk Smith exhibited at the Pinacotheca Gallery (in January–February that same year, Mondrian had exhibited for the first time in New York at the Valentine-Dundensing Gallery).¹³

In the manner of Theo van Doesburg,¹⁴ whose work *De Koe*¹⁵ Smith was familiar with (it was shown in the exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art* organized by Alfred Barr at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1936), his abstract development unfolded during a process of "aesthetic transformation" of an original theme. The echo of the motif, the object of the metamorphosis, persists in the grouping of the elements from which, unbeknown to the artist, there arises an abstract rhythm, a geometricized composition. The picture space is still divided up into compartments in the first abstract

Courtesy of
Robert M. Jamieson,
New York

compositions, whose elements are bars and square or rectangular blocks in earth shades, oranges, red, black, and white.

At first, the relationship between the form and the space ("the essential of space" that was expressed in the "new plastic" through "the relation of one color plane to another")¹⁶ magnified by Mondrian's art, had to be sought within the limits of a flat rectangular space in Smith's work. Nonetheless, the freedom of his first abstract compositions compared to the orthogonal grid in Mondrian's works, as well as the increasing mastery of the relationships between the formal elements and the space, very soon began to show signs of an individual artistic calling.

The different phases of the compositions from 1945 to 1952 expressed a desire to organize the abstract vision in a coherent space, rendered dynamic by the exchange between the formal elements.

*Duet Blue – Red*¹⁷ (oil on canvas, 1945) can be considered a forerunner of the Columns series. The title suggests the idea of a response or "exchange" with regard to an earlier correspondence. The surface attests to a search for unity or a formal whole that encompasses differences. The space "opens up" in this work, unlike the "compartmentalization" of the earlier works. The grouping of the elements (dark blue, red, black, and white rectangles and bars on a bluish gray ground) on either side of implicit vertical axes suggests structural responses. The smooth, flat surface lends itself to a subtle interplay of exchanges through the color and rhythmic arrangement of the elements.

The correlation of forms and space tends to become established in some works of 1945–47 where the "passages" between the structural groups in *Gray Columns*¹⁸ (oil on canvas, 1945) or the "columns" themselves in *Center Columns, Blue – White*¹⁹ (oil on canvas, 1946) become disengaged from the vertical axes. The works in this series and those related to them, such as *Blue, Black, White*,²⁰ an oil from 1946, and a gouache²¹ from the same year create optically more complex formal relationships through the alternation of dominant colored blocks and the relations that develop between one group and another, as well as the importance of the regular intervals of background color.

In 1945, works like *New York City*²² (oil on canvas) and *G. W. B. (George Washington Bridge)*²³ are compositions where the whole surface is the arena of a regular fragmentation. The surface of *New York City* (perhaps already an indirect homage to Mondrian) vibrates under the equal pressure of the nuanced grays and light blues of the different planes, the more shifting rectangles, and brightly colored bars. The total impression is that of a "woven" surface where the differences of the surface and the syncopated rhythms become reabsorbed in the colored harmony. In *G. W. B. (George Washington Bridge)* curves and circular shapes are introduced for the first time and overlap horizontal bars.

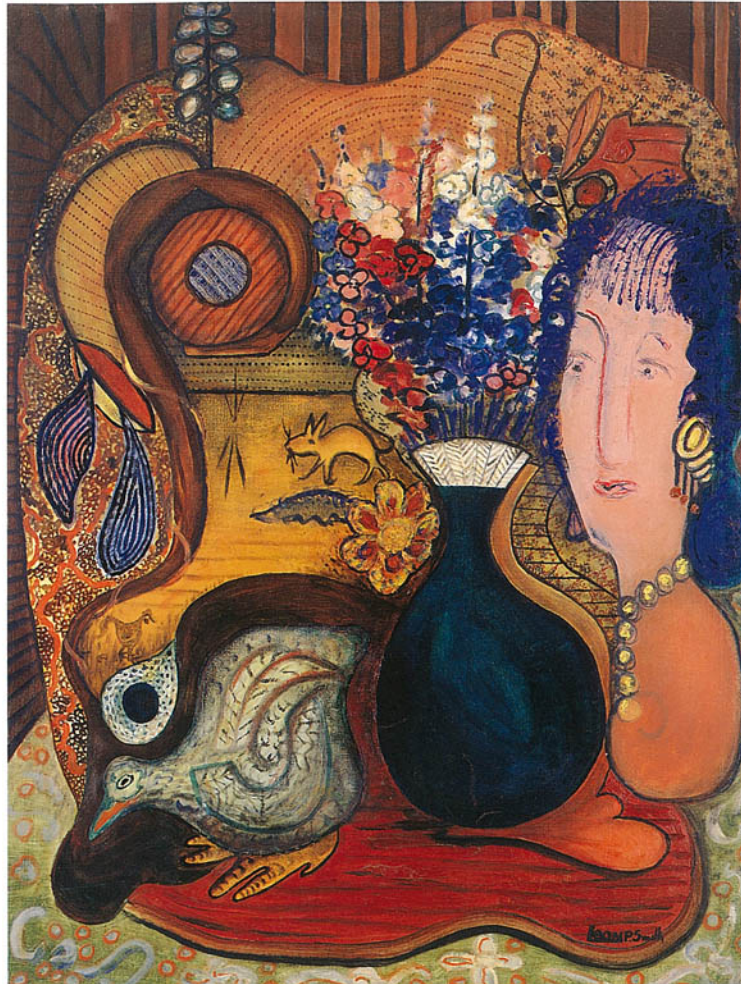
Smith's profound tendencies emerged in the course of a patient process of growth and self-determination. The totally spiritual encounter with Mondrian²⁴ reinforced rather than triggered the artist's own development toward a purified formal language governed by the idea of a superior plastic balance. This was the constant touchstone and keystone of Leon Polk Smith's entire oeuvre.

Smith's first "homage" to *Victory Boogie-Woogie* (1942–44), Piet Mondrian's final unfinished work—which featured in the exhibition devoted to him at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in March–May 1945²⁵—saw the light of day in 1946 (*Homage to "Victory Boogie-Woogie" #1*,²⁶ oil on canvas, 1946).

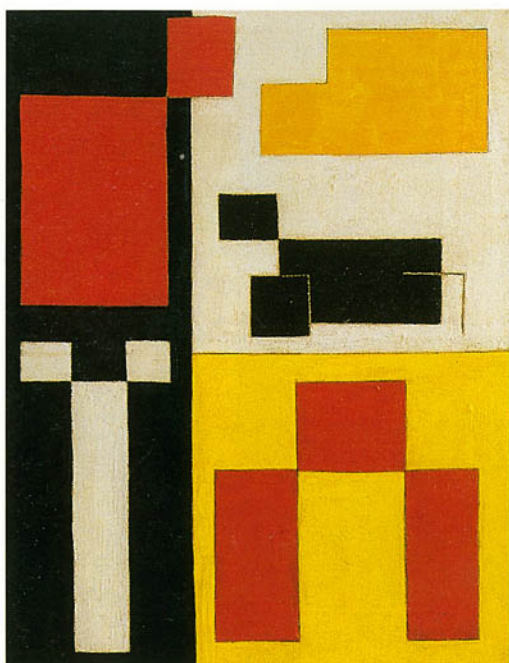
The most famous compositions of Mondrian's New York period (the "New York City" series, begun in 1940–41; *Broadway Boogie-Woogie*, 1942–43; *Victory Boogie-Woogie*, 1943–44)²⁷ were for some of his followers the catalyst that sparked a decisive turning point in their evolution. A dynamic rhythm is expressed through the overlapping bars (*New York City I*, 1942), and their fragmentation into small squares (*Broadway Boogie-Woogie*), which generates a "staccato"²⁸ rhythm, is most perfectly expressed in *Victory Boogie-Woogie*, a square work standing on one corner, where the multiplying and shifting colored accents suggest that a single pulsation animates the whole surface. The square on one corner format of *Victory Boogie-Woogie* serves the purpose of activating the internal space of the painting.²⁹

Smith's *Homage to "Victory Boogie-Woogie" #1*, 1946, is a rectangular composition, wider than it is

*Still Life with
Mouse*, 1939
Oil on canvas
47 x 33 in
(119.4 x 83.8 cm)
Museum of Fine
Arts, Springfield
(MA)
Gift of Ann
Pelham-Keller



Oklahoma Territory,
1943
Oil on canvas
16 x 12 in
(40.6 x 30.5 cm)
Brooklyn Museum
of Art, New York
Gift of the artist

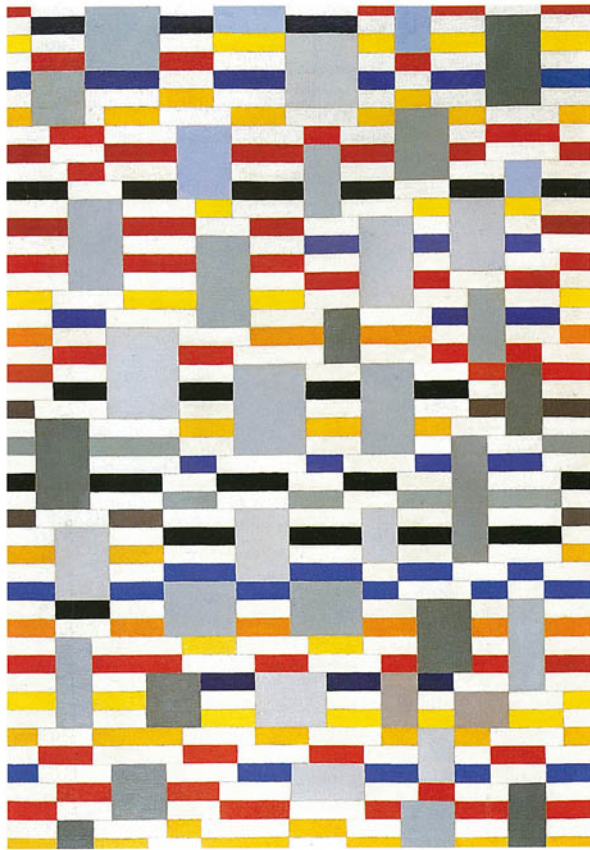


tall. A mosaic of squares is coordinated according to a subtle art of relationships between planes of color. The three main, larger, red, black, and yellow squares are fully saturated. The “secondary” squares stand out thanks to their more delicate range of grays and pale blues. The smallest squares contribute more vivid accents of dark blue, light red, and yellow. These three kinds of “harmony” establish relationships of color and form between each other, and also establish relationships with the space through the many linear axes. The still visible pencil lines in places reveal the existence of an initial grid that the artist intuitively modified by working on the color and balancing the elements, in the course of the process itself or the progression in the space.

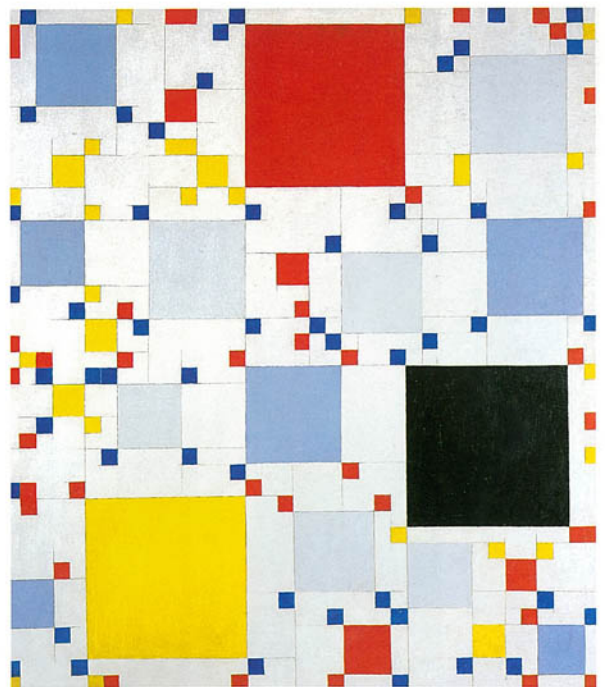
The second “homage,” *Homage to “Victory Boogie-Woogie” #2*, 1946–47³⁰ (oil on wood panel), is one of the first works in the shape of a “tondo.” It is a composition of squares inscribed in a partially effaced grid. The larger red squares outnumber the smaller blue, black, and yellow fragments. The link between the squares, some of which only meet at one corner, generates an irregular rhythm. Smith takes the idea of a rhythm that divides up the surface in a structure that is still orthogonal from Mondrian. The flat space gives no “indication” of depth.

*Black-Blue-Gray-White Squares*³¹ (oil on canvas, 1947) may appear an equally direct, if not more evident homage to *Victory Boogie-Woogie*. The format of a square standing on one corner accentuates the implicit diagonal axes that constitute the invisible interior grid. An intuitive balance governs the linking of the motifs. The pale register of slate blue-grays, light gray and black, brightened up by the larger white squares, already reveals the distance separating Smith from Mondrian.

The flat space of Smith’s “homages” is equally distinguished from the shifting and oscillating space of Fritz Glarner³² (born in 1899) and from the deep space of Burgoyne Diller (born in 1906), in their compositions of the same period. A work by Diller, such as *Third Theme*, 1946–48, is based both on the activation of the whole surface and on its fragmentation; this double effect results in the alignment and overlapping of strictly linear elements.³³

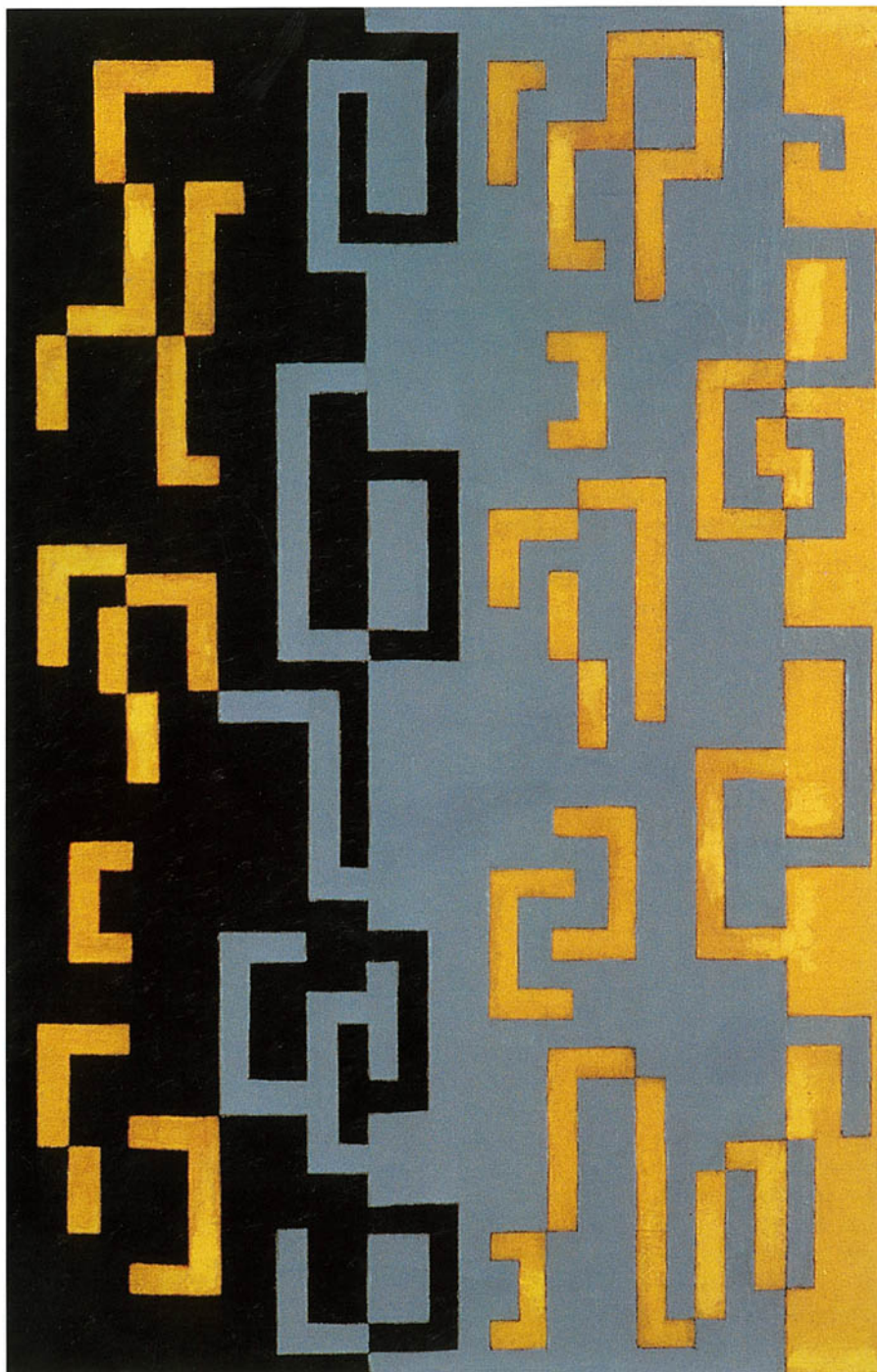


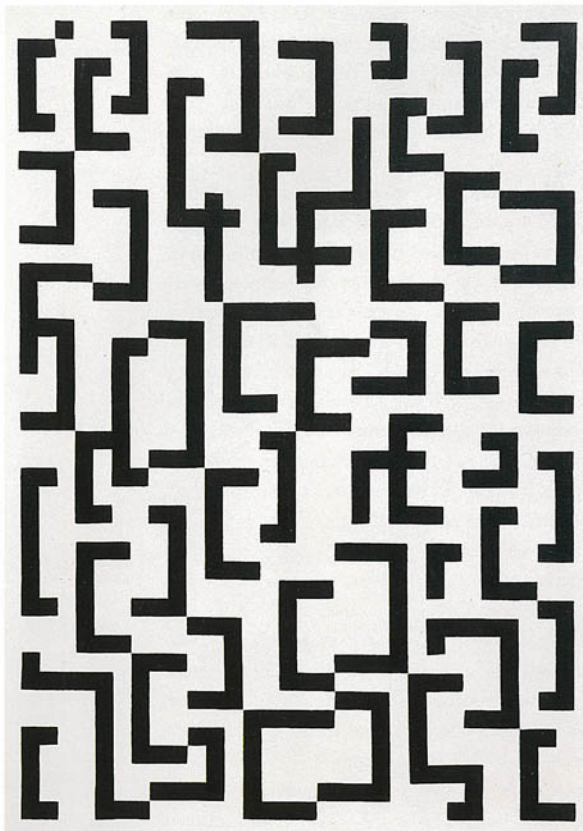
New York City, 1945
Oil on canvas
47 x 33 in
(119.4 x 83.8 cm)
Whitney Museum
of American Art,
New York
Gift of the Edward
R. Downe Jr
Purchase Fund
and the National
Endowment for the
Arts



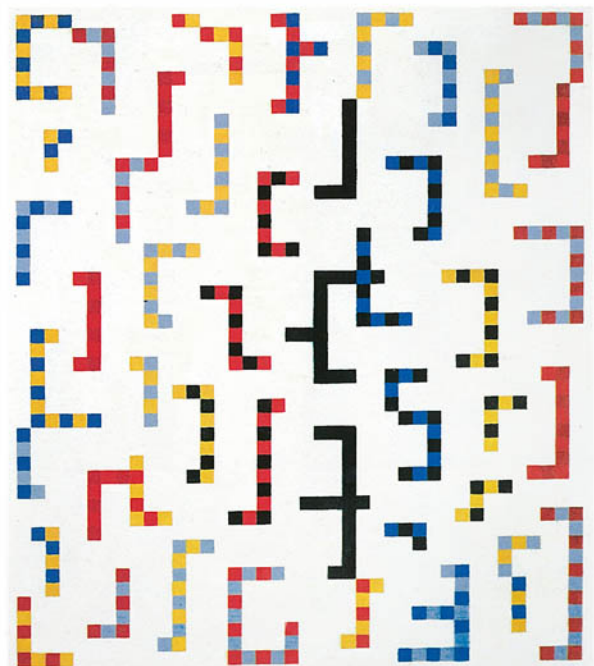
*Homage to "Victory
Boogie-Woogie" #1,
1946*
Oil on canvas
42 x 37 in
(106.7 x 94 cm)
Dallas Museum
of Art, The Art
Museum League
Fund
Photographic
credit:
Brad Flowers

*Gray Yellow Black
Exchange, 1946
Oil on canvas
23 x 14 in
(58.4 x 35.6 cm)
Estate of the artist*

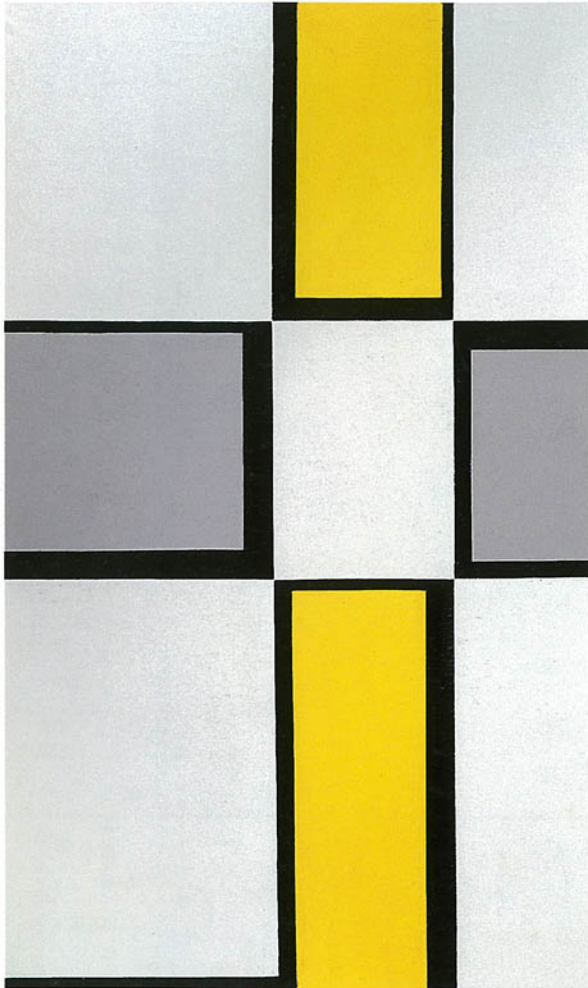




*Black-White
Definition
New York, 1946
Oil on canvas
45 x 32 in
(114.3 x 81.3 cm)
Brooklyn Museum
of Art, New York
Gift of the artist*



*W. P. I., 1949
Oil on canvas
48 x 32 in
(121.9 x 81.3 cm)
Solomon R.
Guggenheim
Museum, New York
Gift of Dr. and Mrs.
Arthur Lejwa, 1971
Photograph by
David Heald
© The Solomon
R. Guggenheim
Foundation,
New York*



The first of the "Exchanges" series (*Gray Yellow Black Exchange*, 1946, and the works that followed from 1946 to 1949) and the "Diagonal Passages" date from the same period as the "homages." Leon Polk Smith had an exhibition at the Egan Gallery in March 1946.³⁴

The concept of "exchange" takes shape more clearly in such works as *Gray Yellow Black Exchange*³⁵ (oil on canvas, 1946), based on silvery gray, orange, and matt and glossy black. In this composition the colors of the formal elements and those of the plane are "exchanged" in the search for a unified space. The elements are "hooks," bars or rectangular fragments. In *Black-White Definition New York*³⁶ (oil on canvas, 1946), the elements are inverted as they "respond" to each other and share the portions of space. The parallel diagonal axes appear to join the corners of the shapes. The colors are reduced to two tones (*Black-White Definition New York*; *Red-Black*,³⁷ oil on canvas, 1946–47) or to three in the compositions that are particularly pared down such as *Blue-Red-White*³⁸ (oil on canvas, 1946) and *Red-Black-White*³⁹ (oil on canvas, 1948). The structural "exchanges" between similar formal elements create a unified or homogeneous surface. Certain works with "all-over" (Lawrence Alloway)⁴⁰ motifs were included in the exhibition *Post-Mondrian Painters in America*⁴¹ organized by the Sidney Janis Gallery in May–June 1949 (in which Joseph Albers, Ilya Bolotowsky, Burgoyne Diller, Fritz Glarner, and Harry Holtzman participated).

*W. P. I.*⁴² (oil on canvas, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York), 1949, is the most colorful work in this structural series, which it definitively brings to a close. The bars and fragments are divided into numerous little squares, in primary colors, gray and black, on a white ground (this work's interior dynamics and surface division suggests that it is an indirect homage to *Broadway Boogie Woogie*).⁴³

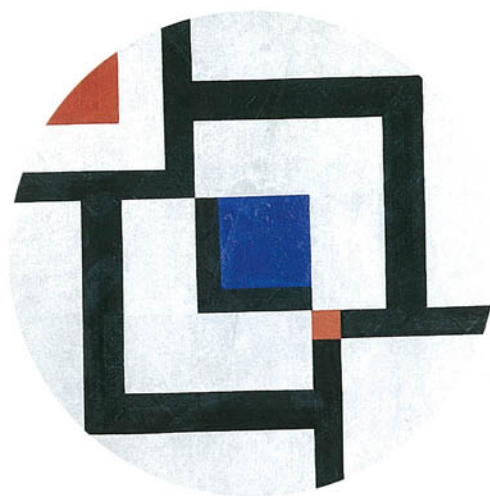
The "Diagonal Passages" (from 1946–47 to 1950) adopt different formats, the tall rectangle, the square standing on one corner, and the circular form (or the "tondo").

The more static compositions in a rectangular format consist in an arrangement of asymmetrical rectangular elements in the three primary colors, pearly gray, and different shades of white, meeting at

Diagonal Passage
White, Yellow,
Black, Gray (no. 1),
1949
Oil on canvas
42 x 26 in
(106.7 x 66 cm)
Rhode Island
School of Design,
Museum of Art,
Providence (RI)
Albert J. Pilavin
Collection of
Twentieth Century
American Art

Diagonal Passage
120.1, 1947–48
Oil on wood panel
diam. 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ in
(60.3 cm)
The Cleveland
Museum of Art,
Cleveland (OH)
Purchased with

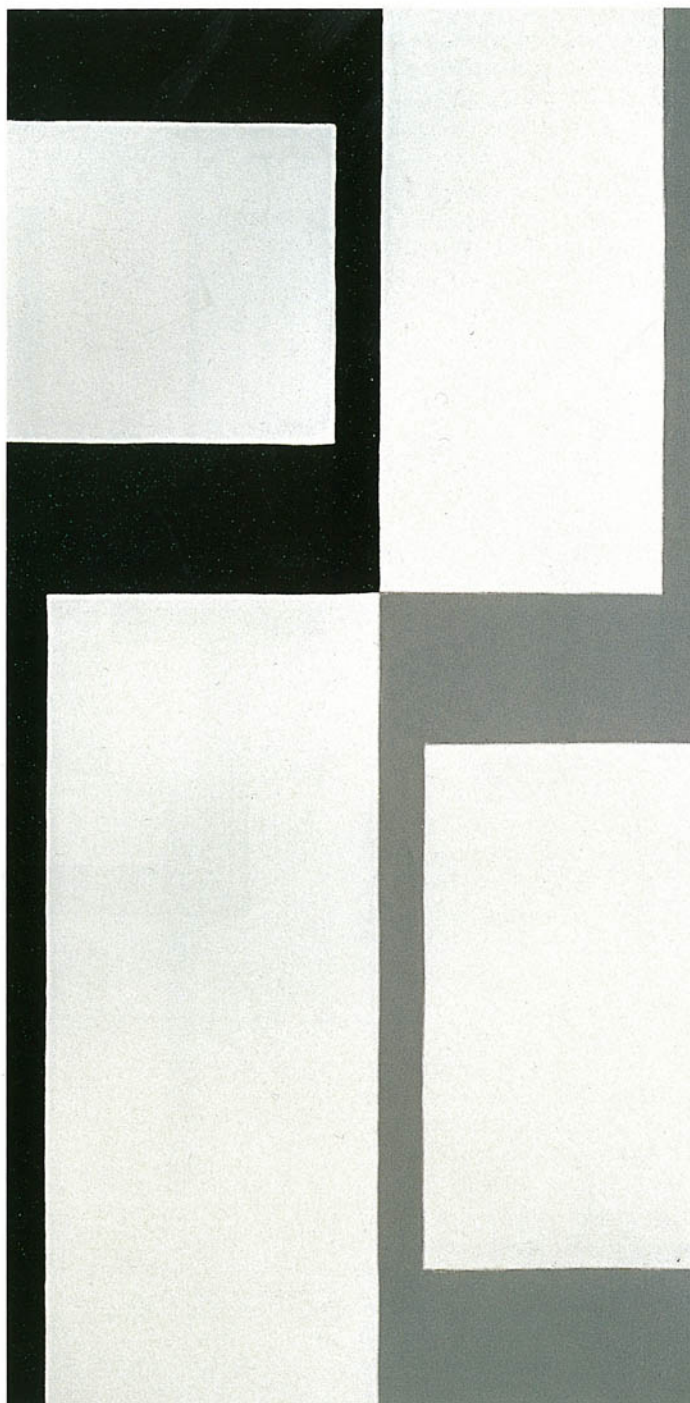
a grant from the
National
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and matched by
gifts from members
of the Cleveland
Society for
Contemporary Art



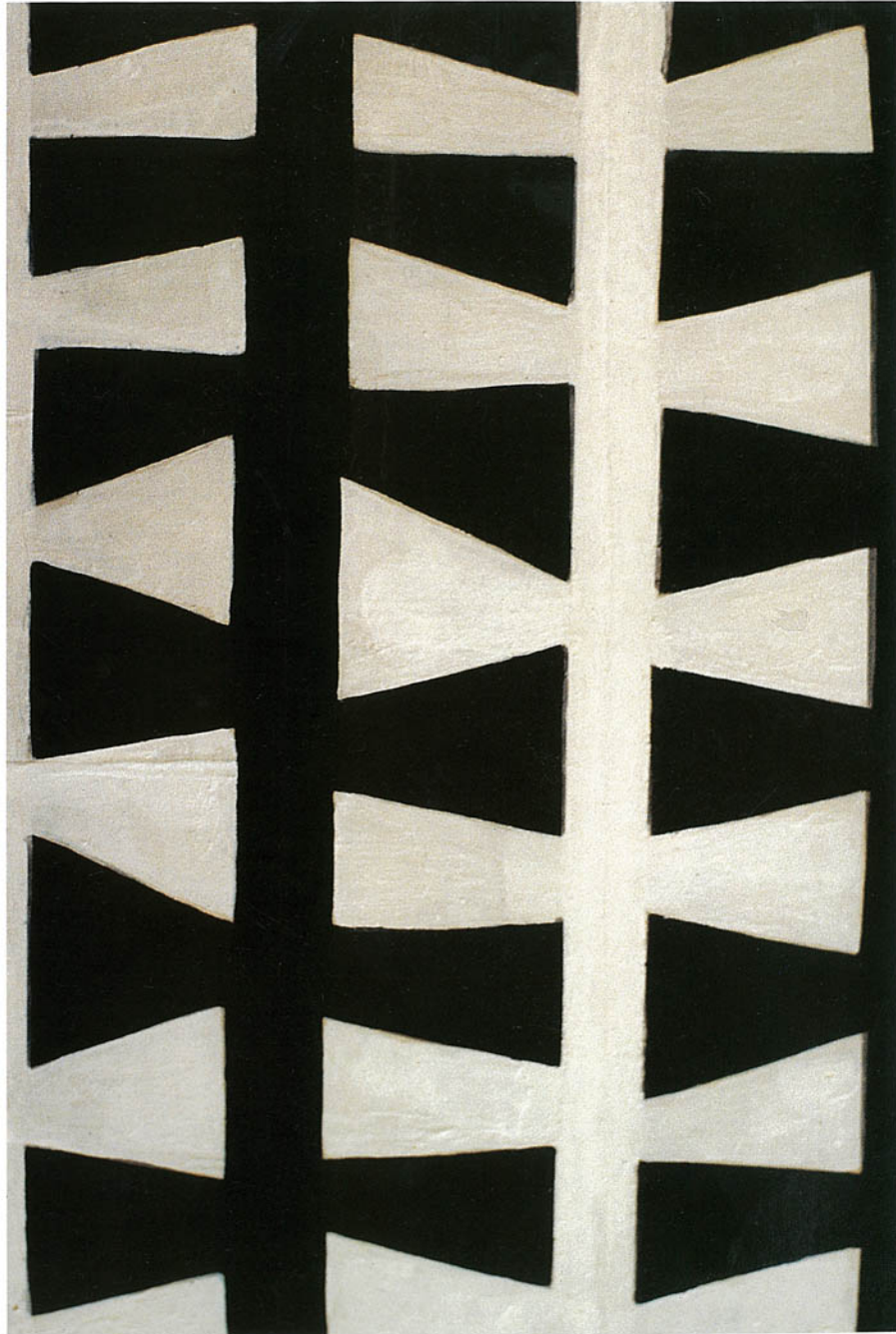
Diagonal Passage
120 Large, 1947–51
Oil on canvas
diam 80 in
(203.2 cm)
Brooklyn Museum
of Art, New York
Gift of the artist

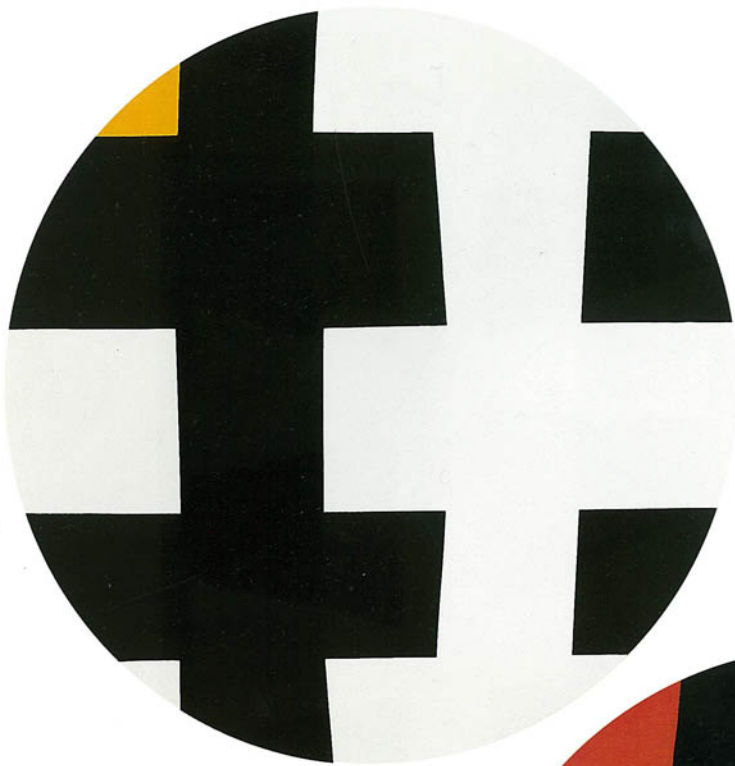


*Opposite Angles –
Black and Gray,
1949–50*
Oil on canvas
24 x 12 in
(61 x 30.5 cm)
Estate of the artist



*Black - White
Repeat, 1952*
Oil on canvas
51 x 38 in
(129.5 x 96.5 cm)
Private collection,
Cambridge (MA)





*Black - White Duet
with Yellow, 1953*
Oil on canvas
diam. 58 in
(147.3 cm)
Brooklyn Museum
of Art, New York
Gift of the artist

*Black - White Duet
with Red, 1953*
Oil on canvas
diam. 39 1/2 in
(100.3 cm)
Hirshhorn Museum
and Sculpture
Garden,
Washington, D.C.
Hirshhorn Museum
and Sculpture
Garden,
Smithsonian
Institution, museum
purchase with
funds donated
by Edward
R. Downe Jr, 1982
Photographic
credit:
Lee Stalsworth



First One, 1954
Oil on canvas
diam. 39 1/2 in
(100.3 cm)
Dr. Irving and
Natalie Forman
Collection, Santa Fe
(NM)



right angles, and surrounded by black lines of different thicknesses (*Diagonal Passage no. 2*,⁴⁴ oil on canvas, 1946–47; *Diagonal Passage no. 9*,⁴⁵ oil on canvas, 1949).

*Diagonal Passage White, Yellow, Black, Gray (no. 1)*⁴⁶ (oil on canvas, 1949) and *Diagonal Passage no. 3*⁴⁷ (oil on canvas, 1949), the latter in the square on one corner format, develop discreet harmonies where gray and yellow dominate. The elements open on one side (turned toward the edges of the frame) indicate a drive toward the external space. The corners only meet to suggest the idea of a passage in the interstices between the planes. This is clearer in the internal axes of a composition reduced to four elements (*Diagonal Passage with Horizontal*,⁴⁸ oil on canvas, 1950).

In other “Passages,” a diagonal direction determines the position or sequence of the elements (*Diagonal Passage Red-Blue-Yellow*,⁴⁹ oil on canvas, 1948, and *Diagonal Passage no. 7*,⁵⁰ oil on canvas, 1949).

The attempt to reconcile the orthogonal order of Neoplasticism⁵¹ with a diagonal movement achieves a more complete solution in the circular format of *Diagonal Passage 120.1*⁵² (oil on wood panel, 1947–48).

*Composition #1502*⁵³ (oil on wood, 1947), which is earlier, already breaks with the stasis inherent in the orthogonal design (which still dominates a work like *Homage to “Victory Boogie-Woogie” no. 2*). It is the first attempt to fuse the colored planes and the circumference in a diagonal arrangement.

Diagonal Passage 120.1 takes the theme of the “passage” a stage further by involving the whole picture space. Like its larger copy, *Diagonal Passage 120 Large*⁵⁴ (oil on canvas, 1947–51), it is one of the most significant 1940s works as regards the force of its plastic cohesion. The conceptual mastery of the work contributes toward ensuring the plastic beauty of its relationships. The initial grid is yet again merely the means of gauging the mathematical relationships of the surfaces. Here the plane-space “in extension,” in its orthogonal framework, gives way to a surface that creates the suggestion of a circular movement within the composition itself. The diagonal axis that links the corners of the central square and the two angles inscribed in the circle acts like its

pivot. *Diagonal Passage 120.1* is striking in the extremely precise work on the proportions and meeting points of the planes, the flat facture, and the density of the colors.⁵⁵ Through another ideal of synthesis, Smith gave renewed vigor to the art of the “relationships” of Neoplasticism.⁵⁶

The mystic and philosophical meaning that Glarner gave to the symbol of the circle⁵⁷ (his first tondo dates back to 1944)—“the strongest form symbol of oneness”—is absent from Smith’s first circular works.

At first the circular form allowed him to reconcile Mondrian’s “determined” space (“complete space-determination”)⁵⁸ with movement. While initially it was a question of finding a solution to a problem of a purely formal nature, by contrast Smith’s oeuvre acquired a cosmic dimension when the artist began to develop the features of his own individual style in the second half of the 1950s.

In a still static work of 1947, *Circle in the Square*⁵⁹ (oil on wood), the intrusion of the circumference into the square format is another evident sign of the artist’s attraction to circularity.

The diagonals of the “Passages” become transformed into other structural themes. First there are the Inch Squares of 1948–49 (*Inch Square no. 3*; *Inch Square no. 5*, oil on canvas),⁶⁰ in a vertical format, which increase the diagonal axes in mosaics of little squares in the basic colors black and white. Then comes the series of “Diagonals,” which are simplified compositions of four rectangular planes in a continuous line (*Four Blue Diagonals*,⁶¹ *Black Yellow White*,⁶² oil on canvas, 1950). And finally the “Opposite Angles” of 1949–50 (*Opposite Angles*,⁶³ 1949–50; *Opposite Angles – Black and Gray*,⁶⁴ 1950, oil on canvas) with opposite wide bars where the intuition of “interchangeability” can already be discerned.

The “Opposite Angles” offer a plastic synthesis of the problems that the former “Exchanges” and “Passages” posed, though extremely pared down and showing a concern for expressive simplification.

Homages to white and black, two colors with which the artist never ceased to have a particularly intense relationship throughout his career, *White – White no. 1*⁶⁵ (oil and graphite on canvas, 1948) and *Black – Black*⁶⁶ (oil on canvas, 1950) are among the early works in American art focusing on mono-

Yellow Edge, 1954
Oil on canvas
diam. 31 1/2 in
(80 cm)
Mr. Robert
M. Jamieson
Collection,
New York





chrome and the modulations of a single tone. The interior structure of *White – White no. 1* in an elongated vertical format lends itself only to a purely formal comparison with *Opalescent Vertical*⁶⁷ by Ilya Bolotovsky, 1955—a work conceived in a more architectonic spirit and in a very different color register. Smith's work attests to the artist's desire to draw personal trajectories in space and color, to imprint a secret path in the material. The poetry of this white work is created by the rare density of the same whites whose successive layers can be guessed at, and the linear path that challenges, despite appearances, an order that is strictly geometric or pre-established.

Black – Black is a composition of squares and rectangles of different sizes and black modules with sometimes uneven and shaky lines, based on a contrast between matt and glossy blacks and dark grays.

From 1952 on, Smith's oeuvre followed its original path toward new dimensions, leading to constant renewal. The quest for a new picture space took place in various stages. *Black – White Repeat*⁶⁸ (oil on canvas, 1952) translates into a rectangular format the governing idea of "interchangeability of form and space"⁶⁹ in the potential structural exchange of white and black.



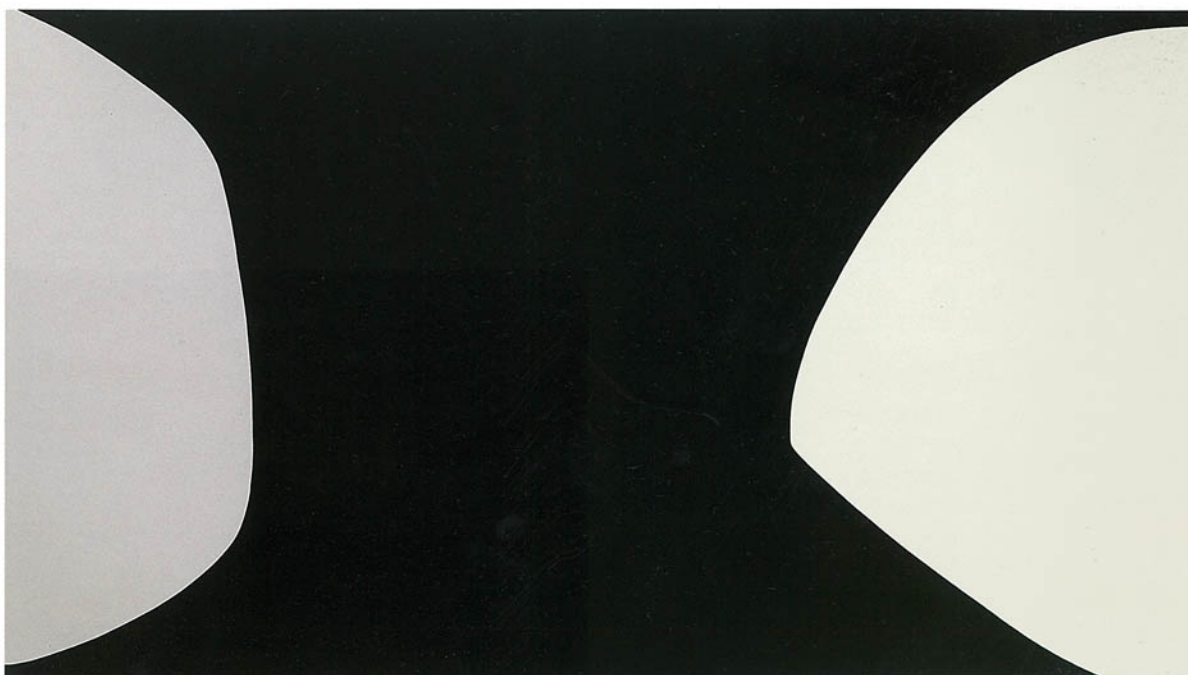
The 1950s

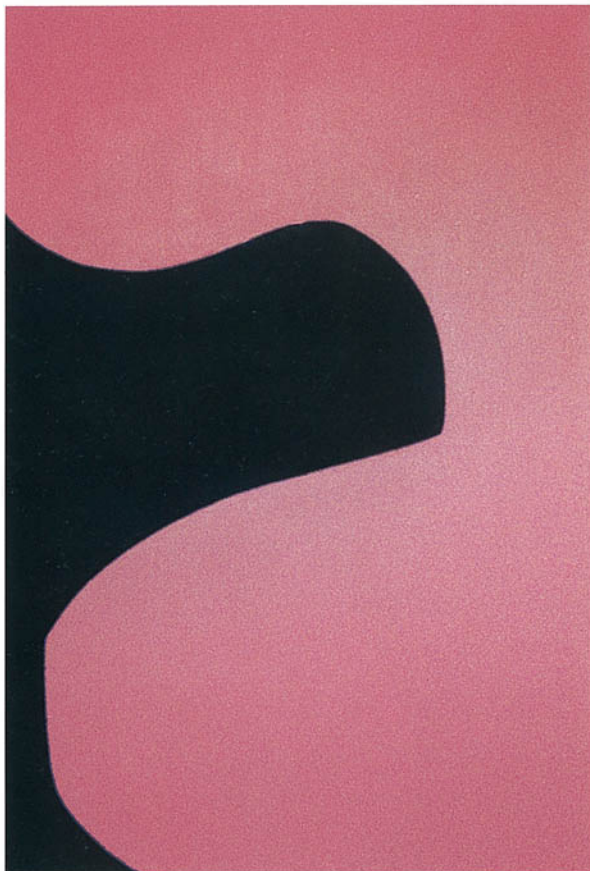
The theme of the round shape (the structure of the support acquires its full importance here before dictating the intuition of the internal forms) never ceased to overwhelm Leon Polk Smith's spiritual and plastic world, from the moment when the idea of the "complementarity" of form and space first came to him ("I observed a concomitant situation wherein the idea of space and form were complementary to each other as well as interchangeable").⁷⁰ From 1953 onwards, the "spherical" format became Smith's favorite for the expression of his fundamental insights. The idea of the "interchangeability" of form and space could be better expressed on a circular surface whose very roundness invited an in-depth exploration of the concept of perpetual motion (perhaps the artist dreamed of the symbol of the wheel and of its ceaseless movement or simply of

Okemah, 1955
Oil on canvas
diam. 47 in
(119.4 cm)
Estate of the artist

Anitou no. 1, 1958
Oil on canvas
diam. 56 1/4 in
(143.8 cm)
The Museum
of Modern Art,
New York
Gift of Dr. and Mrs.
Arthur Lejwa
Photograph © 2001
The Museum
of Modern Art

Black Anthem, 1960
Oil on canvas
72 x 120 in
(182.9 x 304.8 cm)
Brooklyn Museum
of Art, New York
Gift of the artist





Autumn Easy, 1961
 Oil on canvas
 52 x 38 in
 (132.1 x 96.5 cm)
 Estate of the artist



Stretch of Black III,
 1961
 Oil on canvas
 24 x 19 in
 (61 x 48.7 cm)
 National Gallery of
 Art, Washington,
 D.C.
 Gift of Eleanor
 Ward
 © 2001 Board of
 Trustees, National
 Gallery of Art,
 Washington, D.C.



*Cobalt Violet –
Deep Yellow, 1960*
68 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 46 $\frac{1}{4}$ in
(173.7 x 117.5 cm)
Estate of the artist

the celestial orbs that show us only one face at a time).

The problem of “exchange” seems to have been transposed onto the circular form of *Black – White Duet with Yellow*⁷¹ (oil on canvas, 1953) and *Black – White Duet with Red*⁷² (oil on canvas, 1953) where the (optical) inversion of black and white illustrates yet again the interpenetration of form and space. The orthogonal order of the black and white planes becomes more flexible to adapt to the flat form of the circular shaped canvas.

*First One*⁷³ (oil on canvas, 1953), in dense gray and black, is perhaps the first work in which the artist attempts to translate the line and flow of a curve (the gray form), swelling slightly along its asymmetrical course (numerous drawings prepared the artist for original work on the “particular space concept”⁷⁴ that the curved space gave him) and influencing the perception of an already moving space (“the curved space which moves in every direction”).⁷⁵ The contours of this curve delimit the portions of (black) space around it. The white form in *Yellow Edge*⁷⁶ (oil on canvas), painted that same year, that is both bulbous and flat, and penetrates the orange plane, is similar.

*Inner – Outer Circles*⁷⁷ (oil on canvas, 1954), renders more explicitly the meeting between two superimposed, circular planes (in gray and black).

The theme of sphericity and the geometric division of a “curved space”⁷⁸ predominates in some tondo works such as *Black – White – Black*⁷⁹ (oil on canvas, 1954), the black and white *Approaching Spheres*⁸⁰ (enamel paint on a painted aluminum panel, 1955), the red and black *Stonewall*⁸¹ (oil on canvas, 1956), and *Black Crevice*⁸² (oil on canvas, 1955).

The space itself must, to use the artist’s words “absorb” the form, “releasing it of its every need to behave any longer as form.”⁸³ In this kind of work, two unequal portions of a circular shape share the spherical space, separated by a fissure that creates the suggestion of a fluctuating space between the curves (the theme of *Approaching Spheres* provides the symbolic connotation of these works). The intuition of the curvature of space is expressed here.

The later tondo works of the same decade reveal how important the discovery of the plastic possibil-

ities inherent in the circle or stemming from it were for Smith, in order to express the spirit of a total space through the internal plasticity of the planes.

The circular works such as *Black Rock*⁸⁴ (oil on canvas, 1955) in black and gray, *Red Black Rock*⁸⁵ (collage and oil on canvas, 1955), *Okemah*⁸⁶ (oil on canvas), painted the same year in black and white, *Black – Copper*⁸⁷ (oil and copper paint on canvas, 1956–57)—this painting was shown in the exhibition *Construction and Geometry in Painting – From Malevich to “Tomorrow”* at the Galerie Chalette, in March–May 1960, one of the first exhibitions to launch the debate on the “New Geometry”—translate the idea of this space into interlocking planes, evoking not so much the concept of “exchange” but rather an uninterrupted flow. In *Black Rock*, two symmetrical planes meet on either side of a deep curve. The expressive curvature of the single line is like a juncture of two worlds, whose chance encounter creates constant movement on the surface. The black concentrated form of the central plane of *Okemah* (oil on canvas, 1955) determines and contains the curves of the two white forms that are linked to it, suggesting a whole. The planes are heightened by the harmony of black and white.

The formal content of *Anitou no. 1*⁸⁸ (oil on canvas) and *Anitou no. 3*⁸⁹ (oil on canvas), from 1958—where the position of the black and the white is reversed—affirm a concern for cohesion met by the sober majesty of the black and white. The large white form of *Anitou no. 3* was included in *Modern Classicism* held at the David Herbert Gallery, New York, in February 1960, alongside works by Josef Albers, Ellsworth Kelly, Myron Stout, George Terasaki, Sidney Wolfson, Alexander Calder, and Louise Nevelson. Affirmatively asymmetrical, this form pushes the black areas toward the periphery and the lateral elements create the illusion of a deep space that extends to the other, invisible side of the surface.

The relationship between all the planes in *Furtherest Point*⁹¹ (oil on canvas), another work in a circular format dating from 1958, rests on an intuitive plastic balance. The dark black and brown forms with their sharp profile and clean-cut edges are further accentuated by the matt density of the white zone surrounding them, and this only

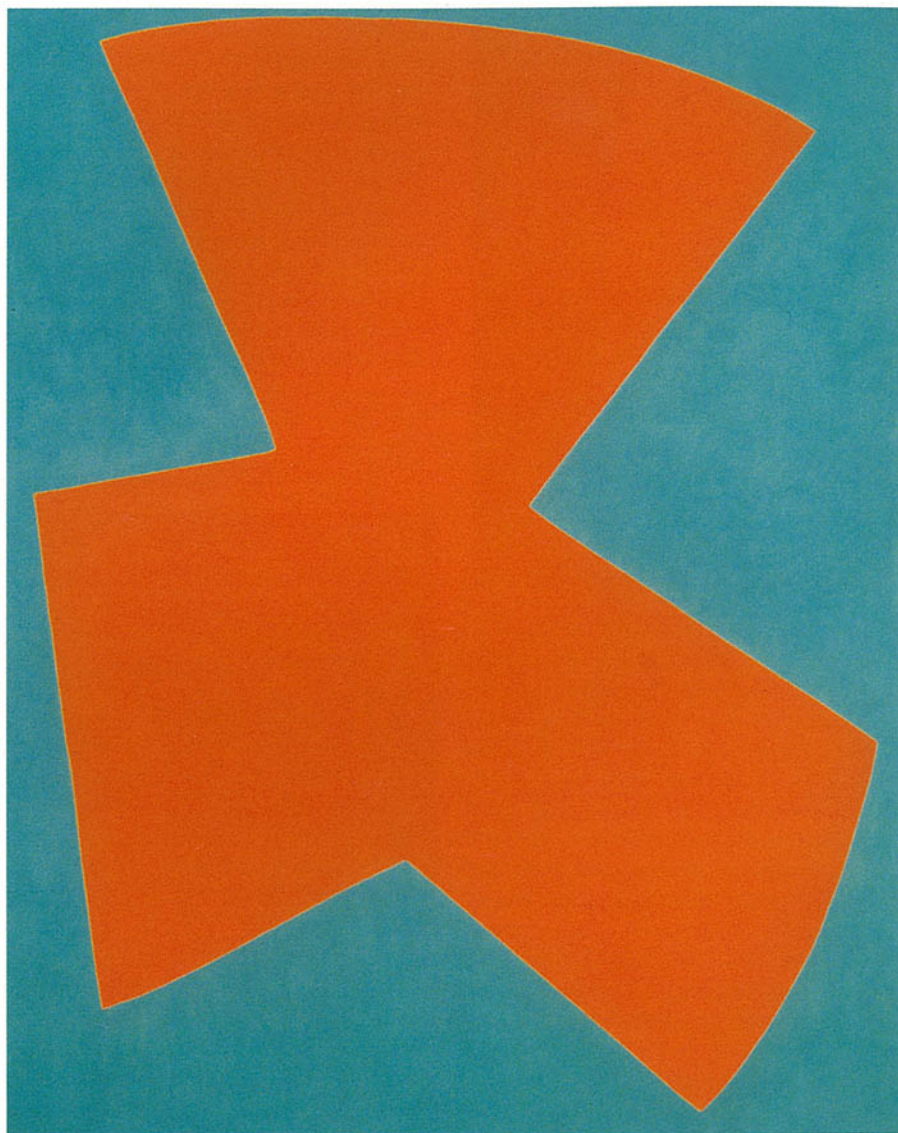


Correspondence
Yellow Point, 1961
 67 x 53 1/4 in
 (170.2 x 135.3 cm)
 Galerie Hoffmann,
 Friedberg
 (Germany)



Correspondence
Red - White no. 1,
 1963
 Oil on canvas
 86 x 68 1/2 in
 (218.4 x 174 cm)
 Galerie Hoffmann,
 Friedberg
 (Germany)

Correspondence
Green – Orange,
1963
Oil on canvas
50 x 40 1/2 in
(127 x 102.9 cm)
Estate of the artist



acquires its full resonance through the interaction of the forms.

The spirit of concision becomes naturally combined with fullness in the serene articulation of the three planes in *Iami*⁹³ (1958), sustained by the subtle association of light gray, black and white.

The work on the concept of space, and on the line as the meeting point of the planes, continues in some works dating from the end of the 1950s, the first "cut out" canvases, in unusual formats (triangles⁹³ from 1954–55 or squares⁹⁴ from 1956–57 with rounded corners, the oval of *Geronimo*,⁹⁵ oil on canvas, 1957, and the long rectangles with four curved sides of *Moon*⁹⁶ and *Sun*,⁹⁷ oil on canvas, 1958–59). The shaping of the external support, the "cut out canvas," perhaps permitted Smith to approach his intuition of a curved and continuous space in a more concrete manner. The shape of the frame is part of the imagery of the forms. In *Sun* and *Moon* (1958–59) the curved planes structurally match the winding line that divides them, like the two sides of the universe, one lit up and the other still in darkness (the black and gray of *Moon*; the yellow and white of *Sun*). The internal line is echoed by the form of the contours.

The possibilities of the spherical space are subsequently adapted to the rectangular plane through mastery of the flatness, so typical of Smith, in which his majestic and precise, flexible or irregular curves are inscribed.

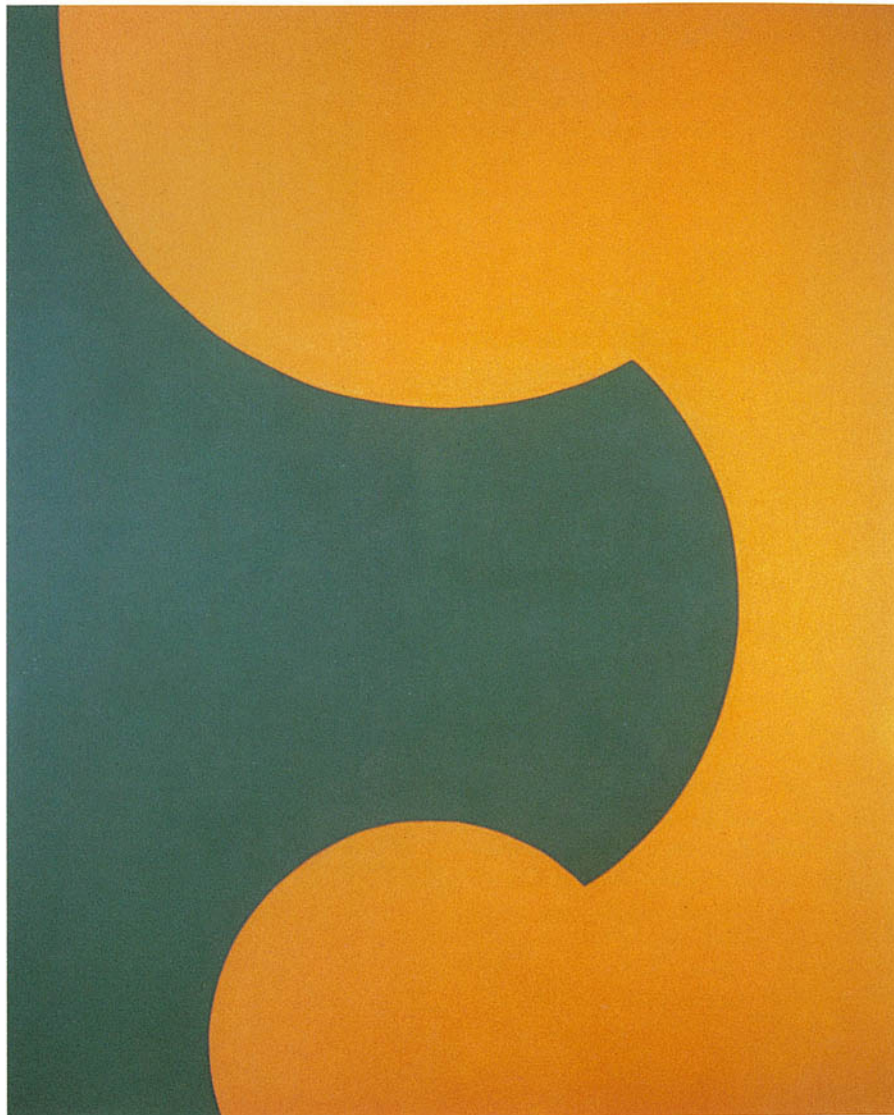
At the end of the 1950s, Smith's work acquired greater freedom and diversity, albeit preserving a concern for control, accompanied by a particularly expressive interplay of similar shades such as the different blacks in *Nicangi*⁹⁸ (oil on canvas, 1957), the contrast of black and white in *Ada*⁹⁹ (oil on canvas, 1958) and in *Expanse*¹⁰⁰ (oil on canvas, 1959), and the association of gray, black and white in *May Twenty*¹⁰¹ (oil on canvas, 1959) and *Black Anthem* (oil on canvas, 1960).

The almost daring lightness of the irregular form in *May Twenty* seems to want to make the rigorous frame explode. The curves in *Expanse* (1959), which do not close in on themselves, express the power radiating from a form that expands and dilates, whilst remaining "self-contained."

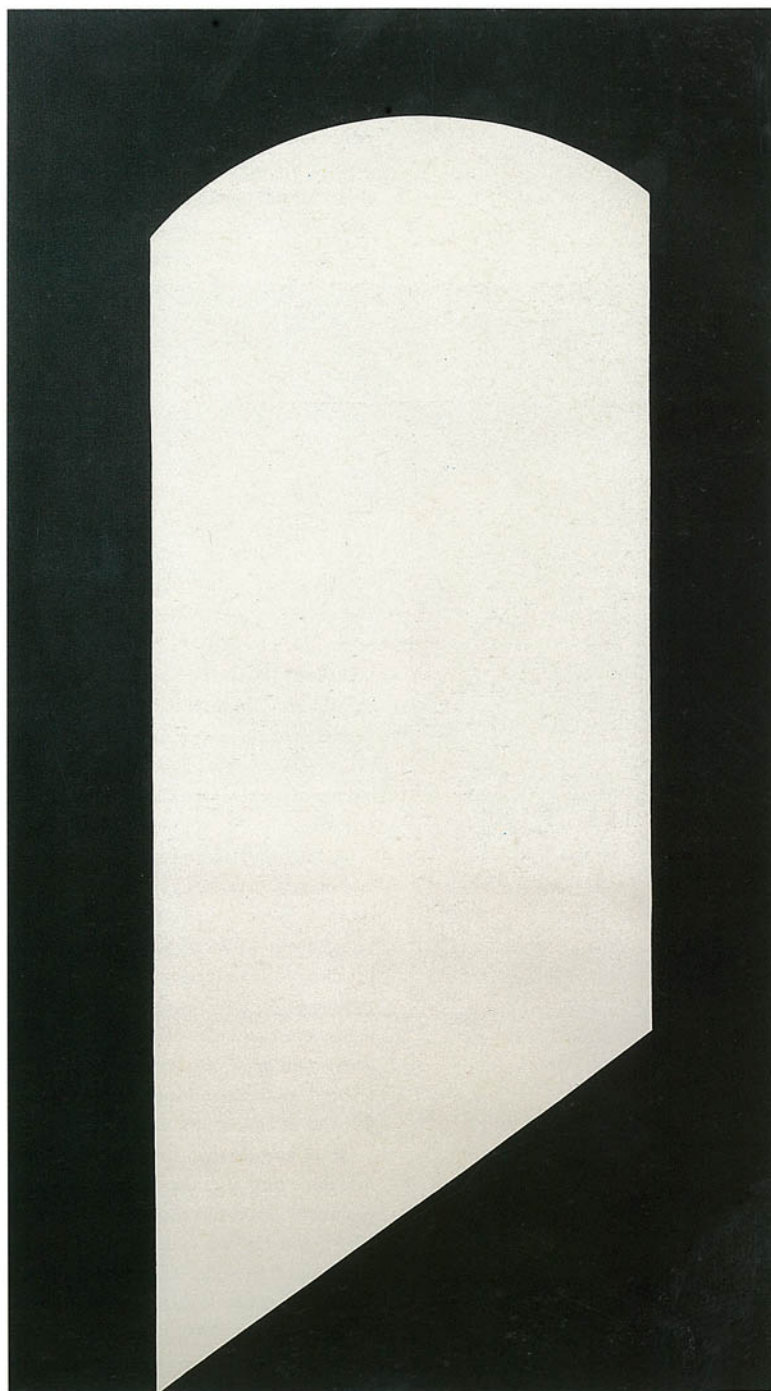
Correspondence
Violet – Scarlet,
1965
Oil on canvas
86 x 40 in
(218.4 x 101.6 cm)
Estate of the artist



Correspondence
Green – Orange,
1966
Oil on canvas
82 x 69 in
(208.3 x 175.3 cm)
Estate of the artist



Correspondence
Black – White, 1967
Acrylic on canvas
90 x 50 in
(228.6 x 127 cm)
Brooklyn Museum
of Art, New York
Gift of the artist



Correspondence
Yellow – White,
 1967
 Oil on canvas
 94 x 94 in
 (238.8 x 238.8 cm)
 Estate of the artist



In *Black Anthem* (1960), which displays great formal and tonal mastery, two light and slightly dissimilar forms spring from the sides as though out of nowhere, drawn within the curves of the vast black plane. The extremities of these forms seem to extend beyond the edges of the frame, and their “hard” angles (turned toward the latter) would already be an example of Hard-Edge abstraction if the unified field did not resemble these forms in the sumptuous orchestration of silvery pale gray, black and white. Within the context of New Abstraction this work is distinguished by its forms, its sobriety and its impressive size.

With their tall, rectangular format, *Over Easy*¹⁰³ (oil on canvas, 1958) and *Autumn Easy*¹⁰⁴ (oil on canvas, 1961), in light mauve and black, anticipate the major series of “Correspondences” by linking two forms-planes that “correspond.” at the limit of their common edge.

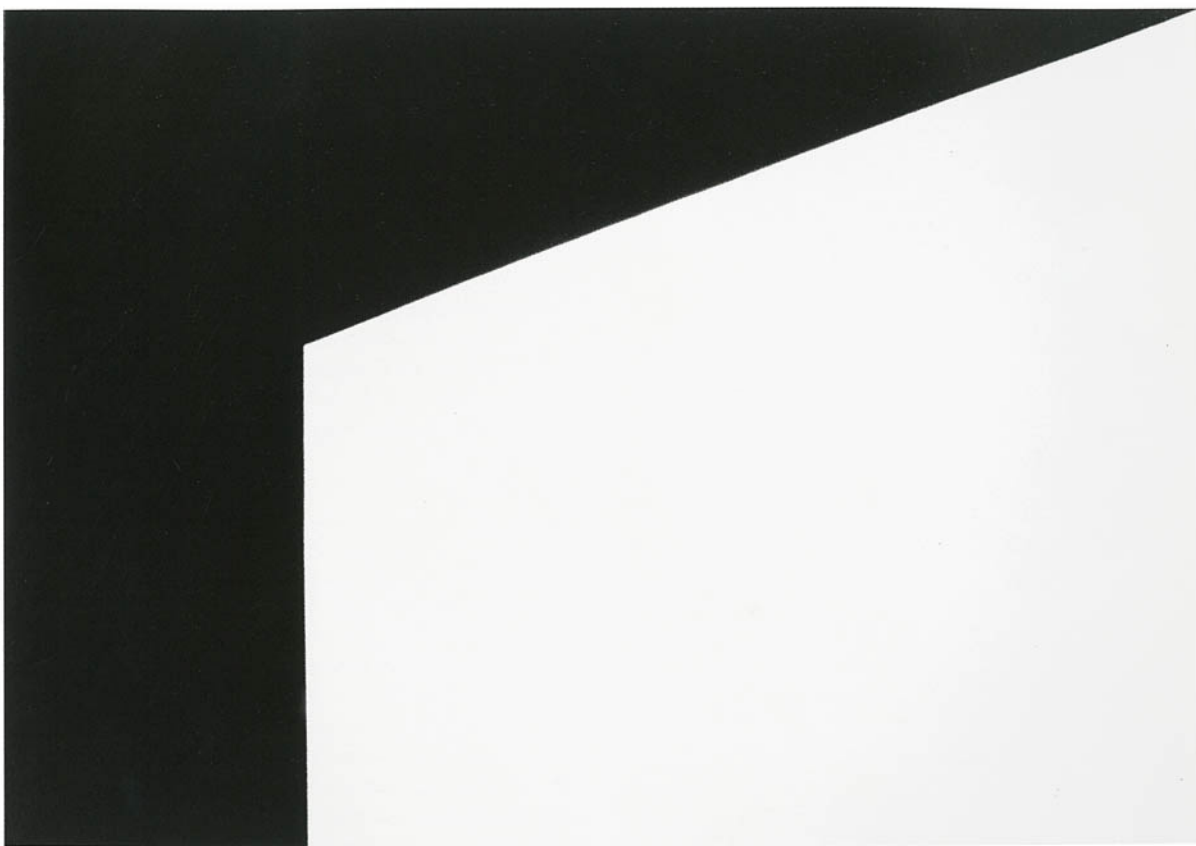
*Black Bend*¹⁰⁵ (oil on canvas, 1960, exhibited in *Geometric Abstraction in America*, Whitney Museum of Art, March–May 1962), *Two Way Stretch*¹⁰⁶ (oil on canvas, 1961), and *Stretch of Black III*¹⁰⁷ (oil on canvas, 1961) are similar in their nuanced tonal register of black, light or dark mauve, and red (or red ochre). These works still attest to the essential role of a central plane that restrains the strong, asymmetrical curves.

A 1961 work by Smith, *The River*¹⁰⁸ (oil on canvas) was associated to the context of *American Abstract Expressionists and Imagists* (Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, October–December 1961) because of the sensibility evident in the line of its moving plane. It was doubtless an example, according to a certain logic, of the “Imagist wing of free abstraction” that questioned what H.H. Arnason referred to as “the arbitrary demarcation between free and geometric abstraction.”¹⁰⁹

It is known that this major exhibition was held some time after the debate began on the “new geometry,” “modern classicism” (*Modern Classicism*, The David Herbert Gallery, New York, February 1960), and “Hard-Edge” (*Six American Painters*, Arthur Tooth Gallery, London, January–February 1961).

May Twenty (1959), *Black Anthem* (1960), *Two Way Stretch* (1961) were exhibited at the Stable Gallery in January 1962.

Correspondence
Black – White, 1968
Oil on canvas
86 x 120 in
(218.4 x 304.8 cm)
Estate of the artist



Three Yellow Ovals,
1967
Acrylic on canvas
105 x 52 in
(266.7 x 132.1 cm)
Estate of the artist



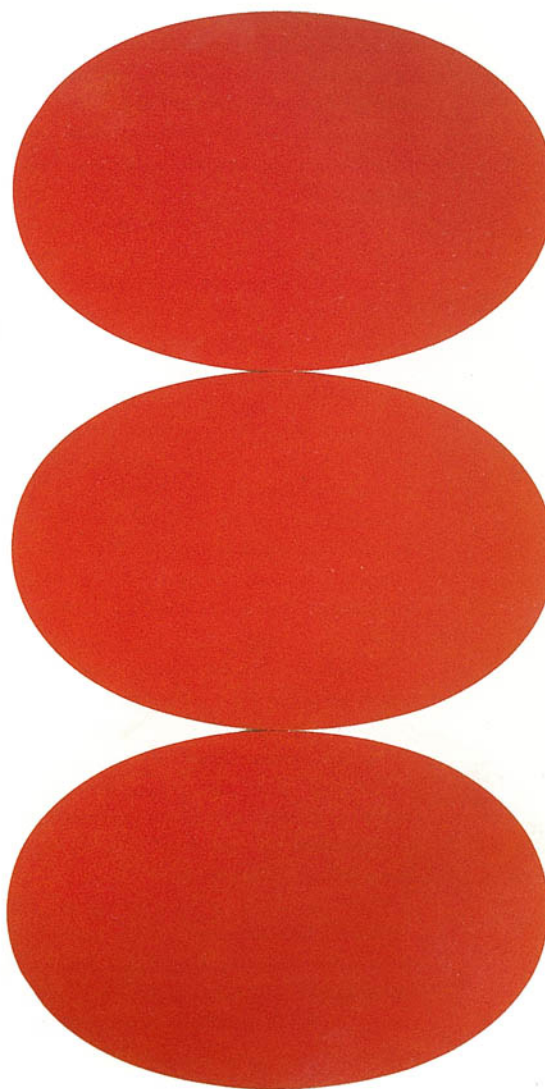
The Correspondences

The concept of the line evolved in the series of "Correspondences" (1960–68), one of the most significant periods of Smith's mature oeuvre. The full development and structural variety of this group of works make it one of the most original contributions to New Abstraction. These works, thus titled to indicate the fundamental concept underpinning the entire group, permitted Leon Polk Smith to renew his approach to the relationship between line, form and color in a unified space (the Stable Gallery exhibited a first group of "Correspondences" in March–April 1963).¹¹⁰ The correspondence of two distinct planes of color, which meet on either side of the line that links them,¹¹¹ was born after a gestation that remains a mystery. From a quest for the line there emerged the creation of two opposite "worlds" that adjust to each other¹¹² guided by the intuition of harmony and the balance of colored masses.

The "Correspondences" rest on the principle of the "adaptation" of two planes through the power of the line, and the search for a subtle plastic equivalence through the action of the color. The internal scale of the forms increases to meet a new need for expansion and unity. A dialogue between forms is established in each work, rather than the simple resolution of a polarity.¹¹³ Another group was exhibited at the Galerie Chalette in October 1965, accompanied by "torn drawings," which are a kind of collage where the line, created from two torn pieces of paper, has been shifted to the interior of the plane (*Torn Drawing*, cardboard-paste, 1960).¹¹⁴

The "exchange" between two forms animated by tension is created by starting from the line. The 1960–61 "Correspondences" are characterized by the fullness of the curve that joins two forms (*Cobalt Violet – Deep Yellow*,¹¹⁵ 1960; *Correspondence Yellow Point*,¹¹⁶ 1961, shown in the *65th Annual Exhibition of American Art* at the Art Institute of Chicago, 1962). The equal intensity of the tones unifies the surface like an energy field. *Cobalt Violet – Deep Yellow* featured in the exhibition *Six American Abstract Painters* (introduction to the catalogue by Lawrence Alloway) at the Tooth Gallery, London, in January–February 1961, which presented works by

*Constellation Three
Red Ovals, 1968
Acrylic on canvas
96 x 47 in
(243.8 x 119.4 cm)
Estate of the artist*



Ellsworth Kelly, Alexander Liberman, Agnes Martin, Ad Reinhardt, Sidney Wolfson and Leon Polk Smith. This was one of the most important exhibitions as regards the search for concepts and unifying aesthetic criteria (the relationship between classicism and free inventive geometry, the effects of new texture and of finish as the “antithesis” of Action Painting, surface unity, “hard-edge,” and the “control factor”).¹¹⁷ Referring to *Cobalt Violet – Deep Yellow*, Alloway remarked on the “oscillation which involves the whole picture” and the “mysterious sense of movement.”¹¹⁸

The line in *Correspondence Red Green Large no. 8*¹¹⁹ (1961, in blue-green and red) becomes rounded and subsequently breaks, seeking its direction that may perhaps be found on the other side of the surface. A seemingly whimsical line encloses the planes in its twists and turns in *Correspondence Black – Silver*,¹²⁰ 1962. The indefinable nature of the line in *Correspondence White – Yellow*,¹²¹ 1962, corresponds to the diffuse luminosity of the combination of orangey- yellow and white.

Some “Correspondences” of 1961–62 were included in the exhibition *The New Formalists – Contemporary American Painting* (The University of Michigan Museum of Art, January–February 1964).¹²²

In 1963, the “Correspondences” rendered more evident the quest for a unified plane, where the “weight” and intensity of the colors, like the narrow blue form of *Correspondence Blue – Yellow* that meets the luminous yellow plane coming from one side, respond to contrasting forms with unequal surfaces (*Correspondence Red – White no. 1*;¹²³ *Correspondence Blue – Yellow*,¹²⁴ oil on canvas).

The two planes in *Correspondence Black – Yellow*,¹²⁵ 1963, are joined and interlocked by the zigzag line, while the limpid winding line in *Correspondence Red Black “S” On Oval*¹²⁶ (oil on canvas, 1963) is in structural harmony with the oval support.

In *Correspondence Green – Orange*¹²⁷ (oil on canvas, 1963), *Correspondence White – Orange*¹²⁸ (oil on canvas, 1964), and *Correspondence Yellow – Red*¹²⁹ (oil on canvas, 1965), an unusual shape stands out frontally in the “colorform” that envelops it¹³⁰ (the center of gravity is situated above or below the mid-

dle of the canvas). The centered shape in *Correspondence White – Orange* (exhibited in *The Responsive Eye*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, February–April 1965) lends itself to a powerful visual contrast with the ground.

In *Correspondence Violet – Scarlet*¹³¹ (oil on canvas, 1965) the scarlet curve stops a few inches from the lower edge. The tondo *Correspondence Black – White Reversed*¹³² (oil on canvas, 1965) echoes yet again the balance of a world perceived as a whole, through the interaction of the interlocking forms.

Within the context of the exhibition *Systemic Painting* (Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, October–November 1966) the pure curve of the blue arc in *Correspondence Orange – Blue*¹³³ (oil on canvas, 1965), cutting through the orange ground from one side, is a new contribution to the universe of non-systematic geometry, stemming from an inner force.

In 1966, a work like *Correspondence Blue – White*¹³⁴ (oil on canvas) again expresses through the fullness of a curve the color harmony of two forms, while the need for precision of line translating a contained force and a kind of straightness in the suppleness characterizes *Correspondence Green – Orange*¹³⁵ (oil on canvas, 1966) with the equal “value” of its two planes.

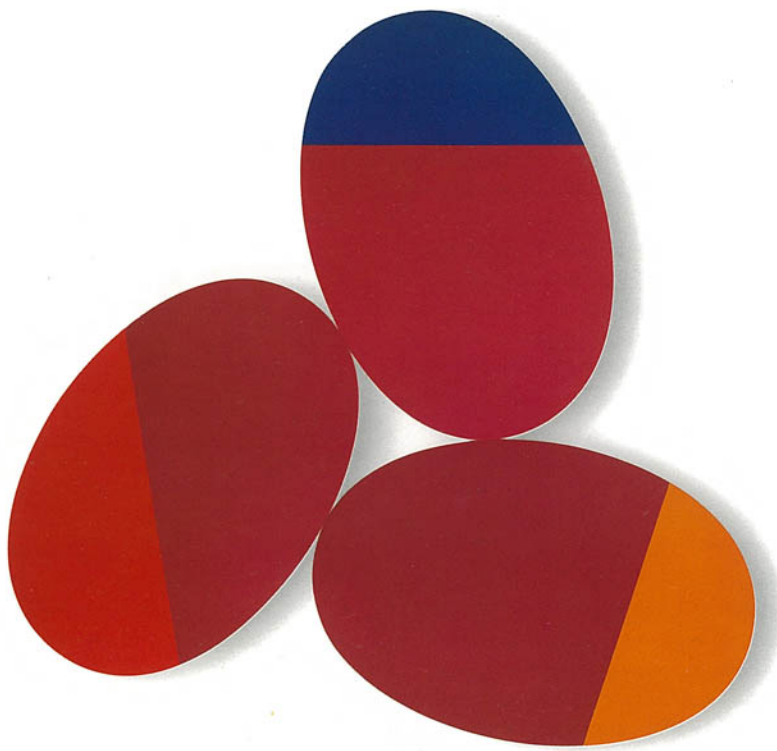
Not only the size of the canvas, but also the inner scale expands in the more geometricized 1967–68 “Correspondences.” In *Correspondence Black – White*¹³⁶ (a tall rectangle) and *Correspondence Yellow – White*¹³⁷ (a large square from 1967), the nature of the line serves to give mysterious expression to a white form, with mixed contours (combining two straight lines, a curve, and a diagonal), like a window opening onto infinity in its black and yellow ground. The thrust of the diagonal and the response of the upper curve seem to bear upward that ideal of harmony whose hidden meaning doubtless lies in the artist’s alliance with universal forces.

The evolution of the line can be gauged by the development that took place from *Stonewall* (see note 81), 1956, to *Correspondence Green – Red*¹³⁸ (oil on canvas, 1968), or from *Black Anthem* (see note 102), 1960, to *Correspondence Black – White*,¹³⁹ 1968. The cohesion of the circular surface of *Correspondence Green – Red* is based as much on

*Constellation Far
Out Red – White,*
1967
Acrylic on canvas
130 x 30 in
(330.2 x 76.2 cm)
Estate of the artist



Constellation M,
1969
Oil on canvas
3 panels
83 1/4 x 88 1/2 in
(212.4 x 224.8 cm)
each
Rose Art Museum,
Brandeis University,
Waltham (MA)
Gift of Dr. and
Mrs. Arthur Lejwa,
New York

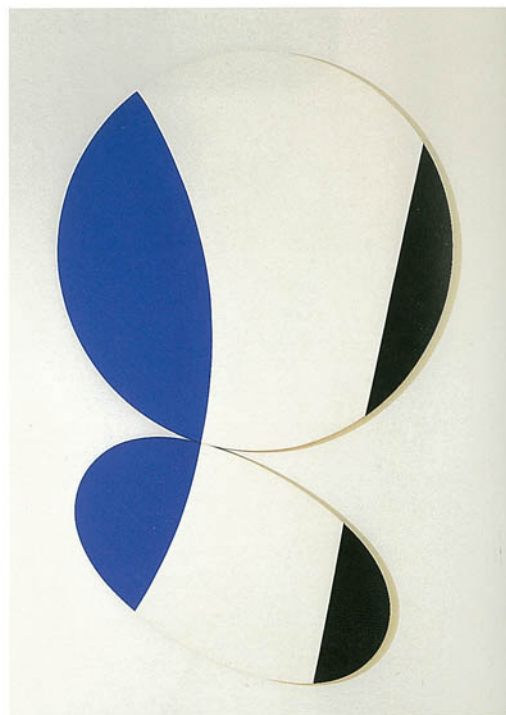




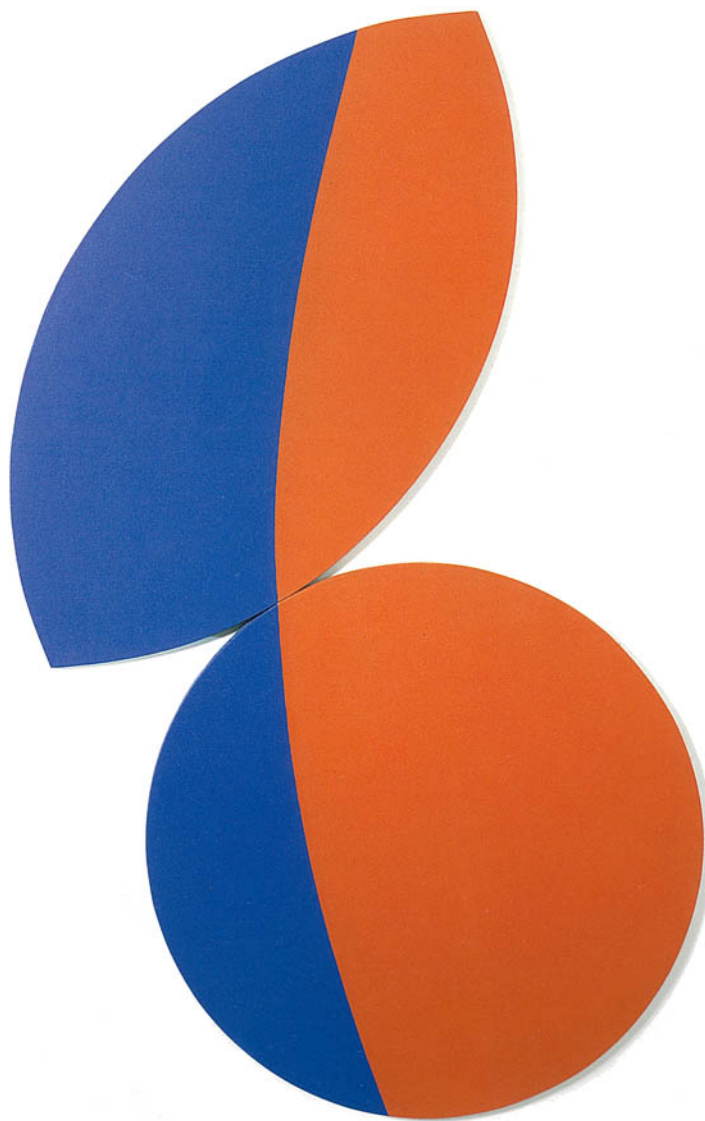
Constellation A',
1969
Acrylic on canvas
77 x 104 in
(195.6 x 264.2 cm)
Estate of the artist



*Constellation
Twelve Circles,
1969
Acrylic on canvas
102 x 146
(259.1 x 370.8 cm)
Estate of the artist*



*Constellation Milky
Way, 1970
Acrylic on canvas,
2 panels,
circle: diam. 78 in
(198.1 cm); oval:
67 x 40 in
(170.2 x 101.6 cm)
Brooklyn Museum
of Art, New York
Gift of the artist*



*Constellation #5
Blue - Red, 1972
Acrylic on canvas
2 panels: 94 x 47 in
(238.8 x 119.4 cm)
Museum für
Konkrete Kunst,
Ingolstadt
(Germany)*



the complementary colors as on the compact unity of its full forms. In its vast proportions, the angle in *Correspondence Black – White* becomes a rectilinear join (without a right angle)¹⁴⁰ that unites the equally saturated black and white planes.



The Constellations

Smith's greatest work on the power of forms and on their dynamic relationship with space is concentrated in the 1967–75 "Constellations," thus titled because of their reference to the "celestial configurations."¹⁴¹ The parameters in this evolution are the line as "forces of energy,"¹⁴² space, and movement. The first exhibition of these works was held at the Galerie Chalette in October–November 1969.¹⁴³ His works were executed in acrylic from then on.

The "Constellations" represent new work on form and space, which takes concrete shape in an ensemble of two or more panels that constitute a single plastic unit. The geometric language from which they borrow is transformed or reinvented according to the artist's inspiration and consists of circles and large ovals divided by planes of color, pointed ovals, squares and rectangles with slightly rounded corners.

Each "Constellation" draws a particular trajectory in the wall space. The straight or curved line that transects the forms and extends from one tangential point to another takes on the role of linking the planes. The line is animated by force; it is also the carrier of direction or movement. The orientation of the panels (or the forms) and the points of linear continuity, submitted to the most extreme control, condition the relationship between the form and the space it calls out (henceforth form is called *space-form* [spaceform]); the "Constellations" move from "top to bottom, from bottom to top," in every direction, the forms constitute "shifting patterns of complexity".¹⁴⁴

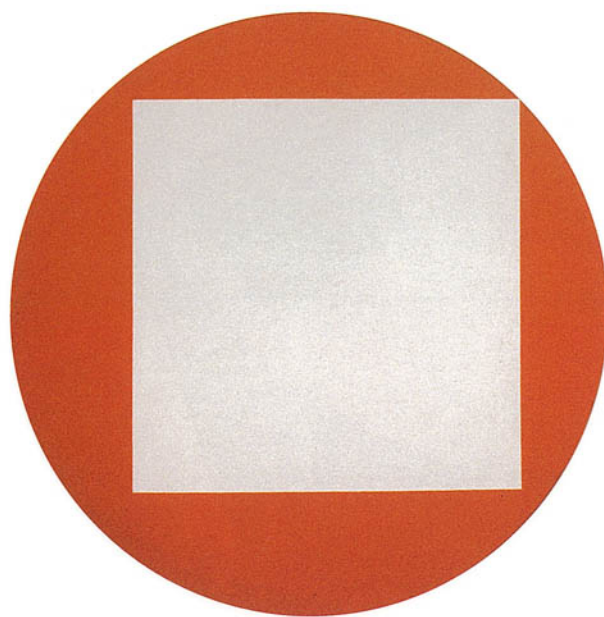
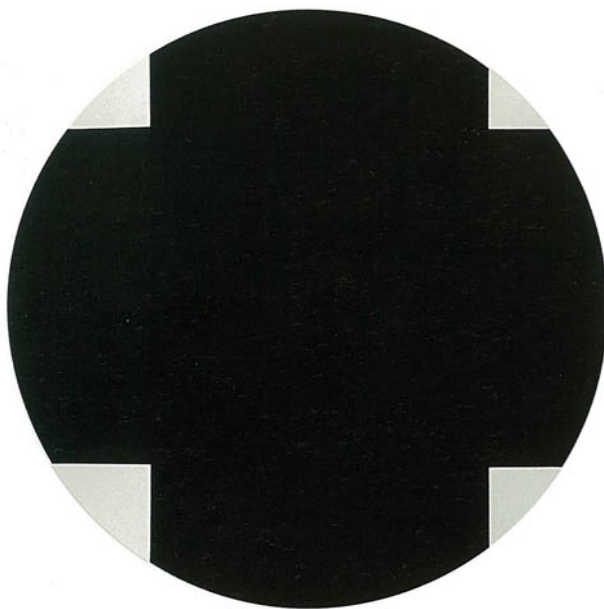
The "Correspondences" at times refer to the idea of the fluctuation of an infinite space reduced to the plane, whose flat surface is stripped of any illusion of depth. In the "Constellations," the "shaped" forms that preserve their autonomy actively project into the external space. Each work seems to improvise new formal relationships that underpin, however, the intuition of the balance of expertly mastered plastic laws.

*Constellation Green
Square Accent,
1971*

Acrylic on canvas
6 elements:
1 square 31 1/2 in
(80 cm);
2 squares 23 1/2 in
(59.7 cm);
3 squares 13 1/2 in
(34.3 cm)
Estate of the artist



*Constellation
Yellow – Blue
Violet, 1972*
Acrylic on canvas
76 x 46 in
(193 x 116.8 cm)
Estate of the artist



*Three Yellow Ovals*¹⁴⁵ (acrylic on canvas, 1967) was described by the artist as an intermediate stage¹⁴⁶ between the "Correspondences" and the "Constellations". A diagonal symmetrically divides into equal portions three tangential oval panels of the same size. The direction of the line suggests a displacement of the forms in the space. Smith stressed the "multiple" role of the line that "regulates the speed of movement," "a reverberator for the forces of energy which build up about it..."¹⁴⁷

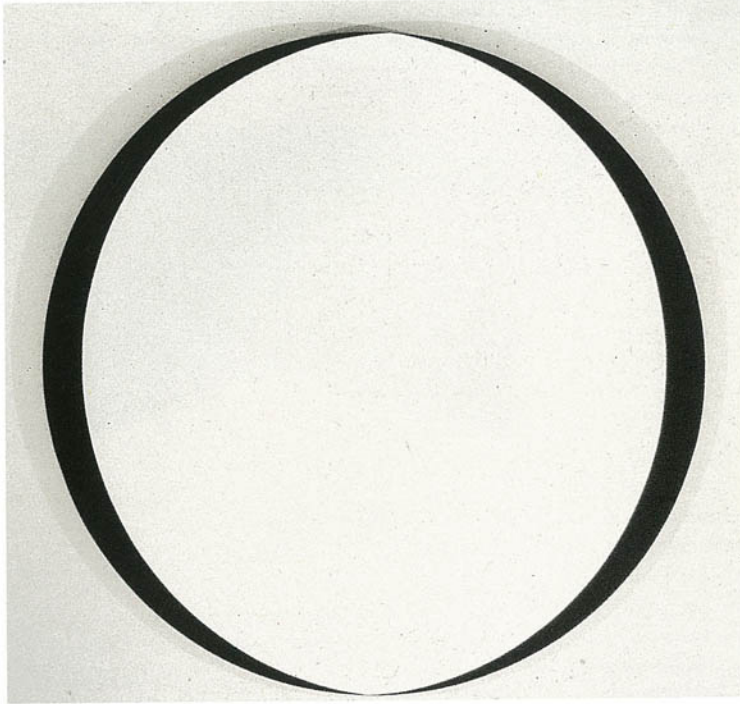
In *Constellation Far Out Red - White* (acrylic on canvas, 1967), whose variable position on the wall can change one's perception of it, an oblique line creates a regular division, in the homogeneous sections of two colors, in five square panels with rounded corners, evenly positioned in relation to it. A sphere and an oval meet in *Constellation Green - Blue*¹⁴⁹ (acrylic on canvas, 1968), where a vertical line unites two forms whose asymmetrical planes correspond only in density of color. Tensions become annihilated in the "complementarity" of the two colors, dark yellow and cobalt blue, in *Constellation I Deep Yellow and Blue Dark*¹⁵⁰ (acrylic on canvas, 1968-69). The line in *Constellation S Blue - Yellow*¹⁵¹ (acrylic on canvas, 1968), broken in several parts, determines the equal paths between the centers of four spheres.

The role of color remains unifying, as in *Constellation M*¹⁵² (oil on canvas, 1969), where three equal ovals asymmetrically divided up by colored planes and each pointing in a different direction, combine three warm shades ranging from mauve to blue, orange and yellow.

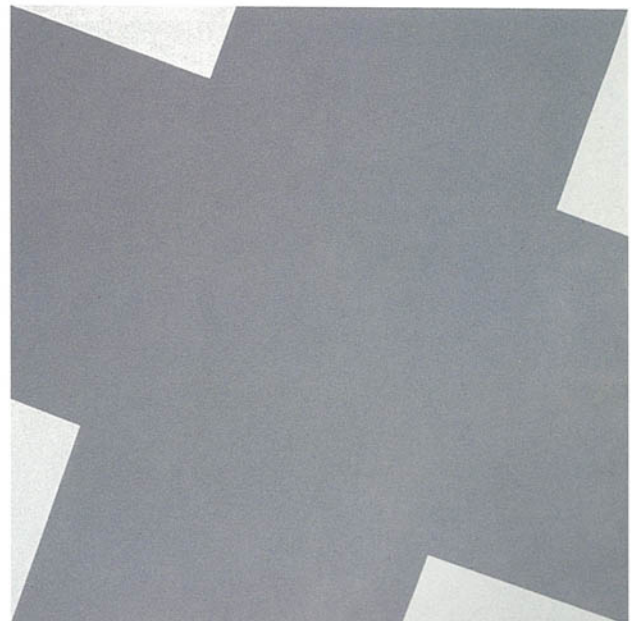
Color is closely associated with the shape of the panels and the intervention of the wall space in some works of 1969, in which the fragments of painted elements recompose internal geometric forms, for instance, the hexagon cut out of the circumference consisting of six tangential circles in *Constellation A*¹⁵³ (acrylic on canvas, 1969), and the three round shapes of *Constellation Red - Blue - Red*¹⁵⁴ (acrylic on canvas, 1969), which are hollow in the center and link the square planes that they cover in a regular sequence. In this painting the plastic interaction of the painted form and the concrete panels achieves a unique symmetrical balance.

*Pearl Gray and
Black Cross*, 1976
Acrylic on canvas
diam. 59 1/2 in
(151.1 cm)
Estate of the artist

*Correspondence
White Square -
Orange Circle*, 1968
Acrylic on canvas
diam. 80 in
(203.2 cm)
Estate of the artist



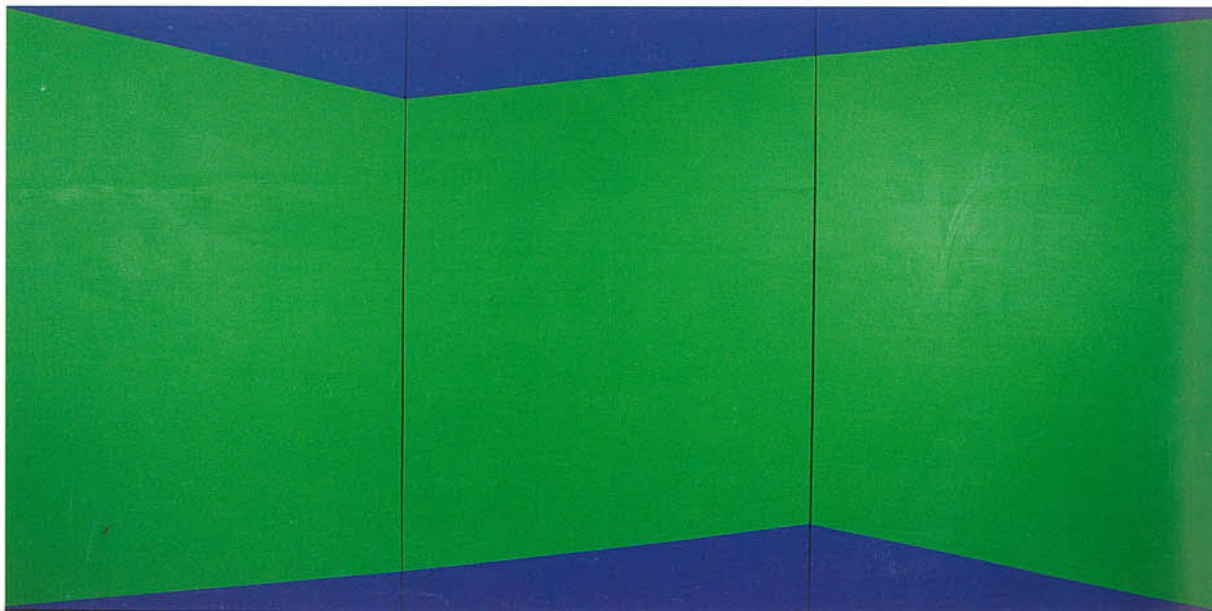
#7801, 1978
Acrylic on canvas
diam. 80 in
(203.2 cm)
Estate of the artist



Cross Roads Gray,
1978
Acrylic on canvas
82 x 82 in
(208.3 x 208.3 cm)
Mr. Robert
M. Jamieson
Collection,
New York



Red Wing, 1979
Acrylic on canvas
48 1/2 x 181 in
(123.2 x 459.7 cm)
The Museum
of Modern Art,
New York
Helen Acheson,
William A.M.
Burden and
Blanchette
Rockefeller Funds
Photograph © 2001
The Museum of
Modern Art



Long Journey, 1986
Acrylic on canvas
90 x 180 in
(228.6 x 457.2 cm)
Estate of the artist

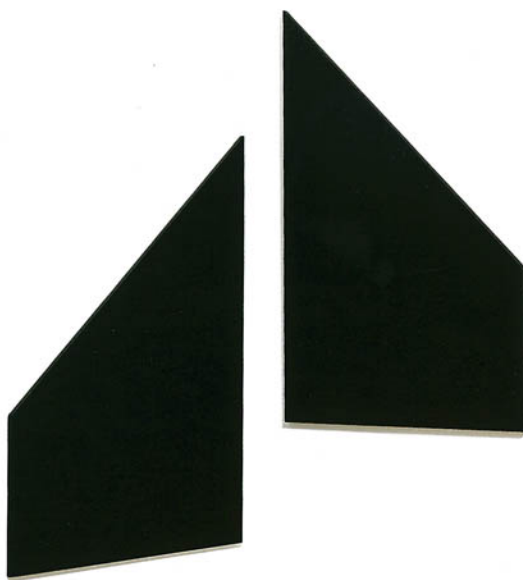
The number of units increases in the most lyrically exuberant “Constellations” (*Constellation Twelve Circles*,¹⁵⁵ acrylic on canvas, 1969), which “send back” segments of colored circles from one form to another in a multidirectional space. The activation of the whole surface—the internal space of the work with the interstices of wall space and the invitation to multiply the forms in all directions—is the objective attained (“The mystery is this situation, coupled with an endlessly silent contemplative serenity”).¹⁵⁶ Smith’s “Constellations” thus express the explosive and joyous force of the forms brought together in a structured universe, and yet again exchanging ranges of color.

This innovation in the spirit of the forms yet again broke new ground. *Constellation Milky Way*¹⁵⁷ (acrylic on canvas, 1970) combines an oval and a sphere (in blue, white and black) in a movement where the two forms seem to draw apart and come together, seemingly inspiring the suggestive power of the line in the contrast between the continuous curve and the two straight lines separated by the section of wall.¹⁵⁸

*Constellation #5 Blue – Red*¹⁵⁹ (acrylic on canvas, 1972) is an originally shaped work created by the combination of a sphere and a pointed oval.

The panels of *Constellation Yellow – Blue Violet*¹⁶⁰ (acrylic on canvas, 1970) and *Constellation Green Square Accent*¹⁶¹ (acrylic on canvas, 1971), consisting of five and six sections respectively, are part of a geometric curve that could become a complete circumference. The internal relationships of a work like *Constellation Green Square Accent* are rendered more complex by the introduction of a geometric progression in the size of the panels, which is matched by the gradation of colors. The line intervenes again in the context of a simple progression (the series begun in 1967)¹⁶² in the oblique sequence of panels of the same diameter (*Constellation Six Circles Black and White*,¹⁶³ acrylic on canvas, 1974), which it separates. The line stops when the surface of the opposite color corresponds to a portion of the lower color. In the simplicity of the concept, the relationship between the inclination of the forms and the movement of the internal line is one of great conceptual rigor. In *Constellation Tall Black – Red*¹⁶⁴ (acrylic on canvas, 1975), three panels succeed each other at an imperceptibly increasing dif-

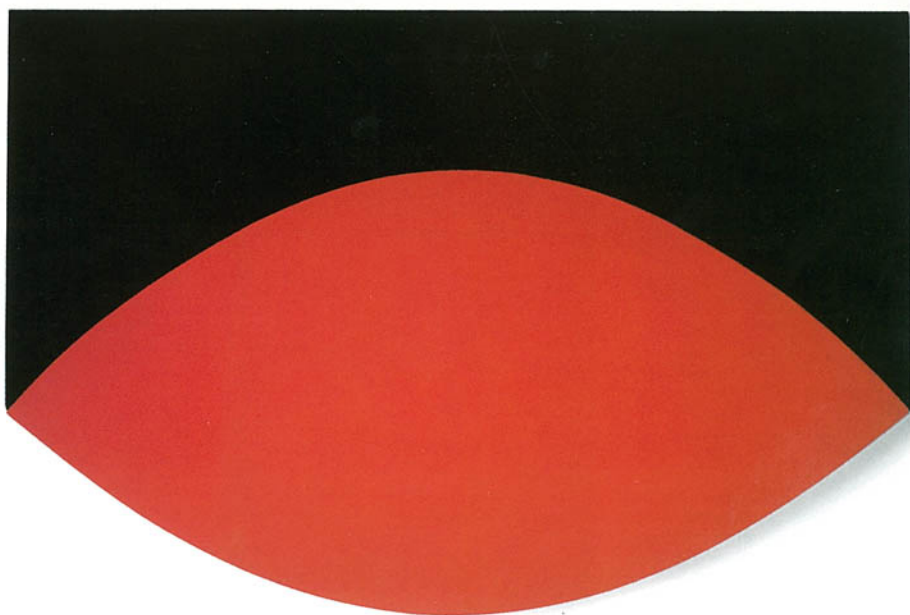
Form Space #2,
1980
Acrylic on canvas
2 panels: 90 x 144 in
(228.6 x 365.8 cm)
Brooklyn Museum
of Art, New York
Gift of the artist



Sunset Caribe, 1983
Acrylic on canvas
60 x 112 in
(152.4 x 284.5 cm)
Private collection

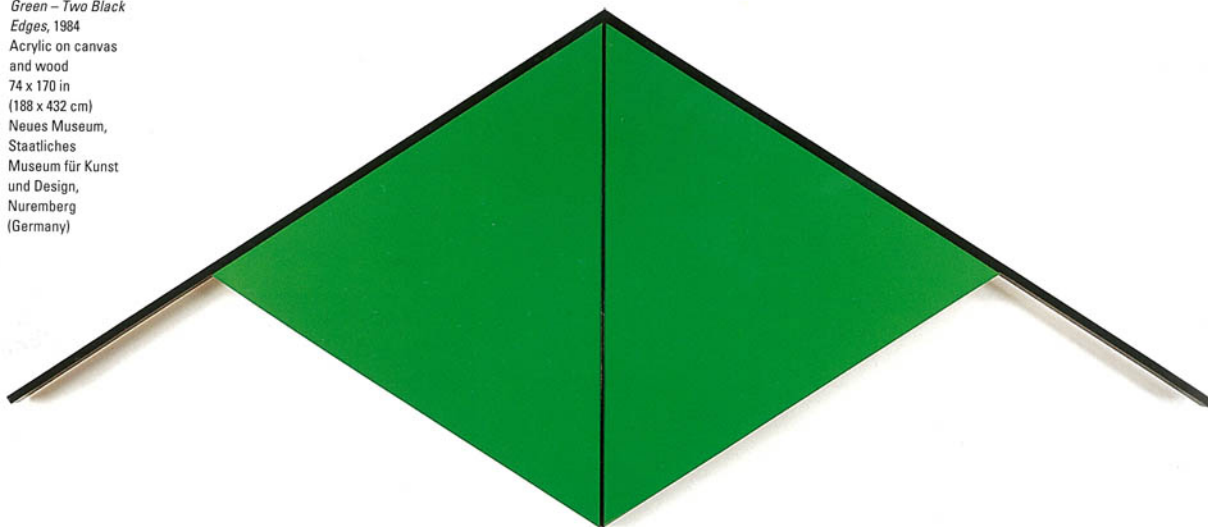


New Moon for
August, 1983
Acrylic on canvas
120 x 60 in
(304.8 x 152.4 cm)
Estate of the artist

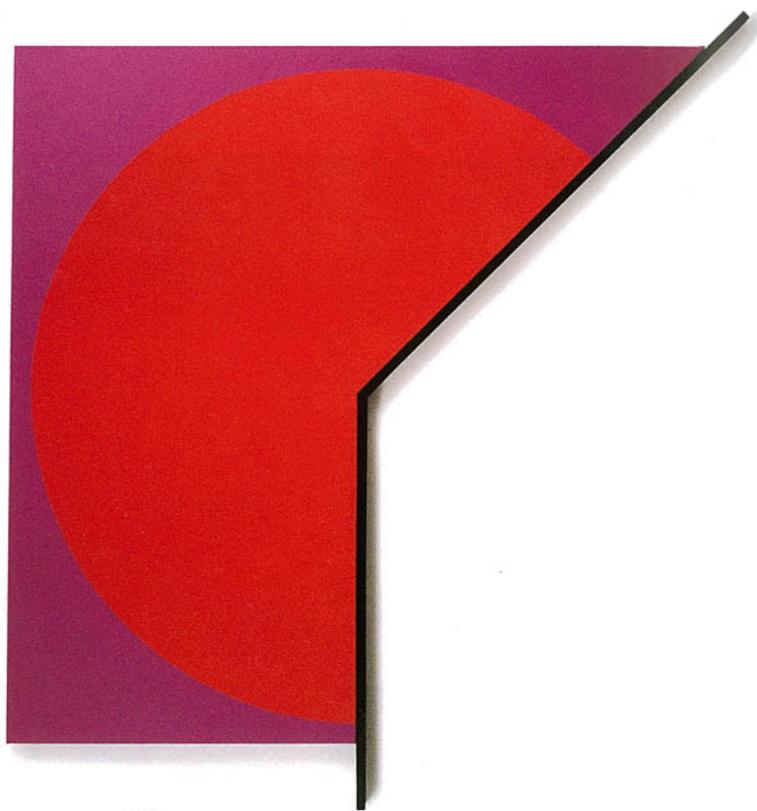


At Sunrise, 1983
Acrylic on canvas
40 x 72 in
(101.6 x 182.9 cm)
Estate of the artist

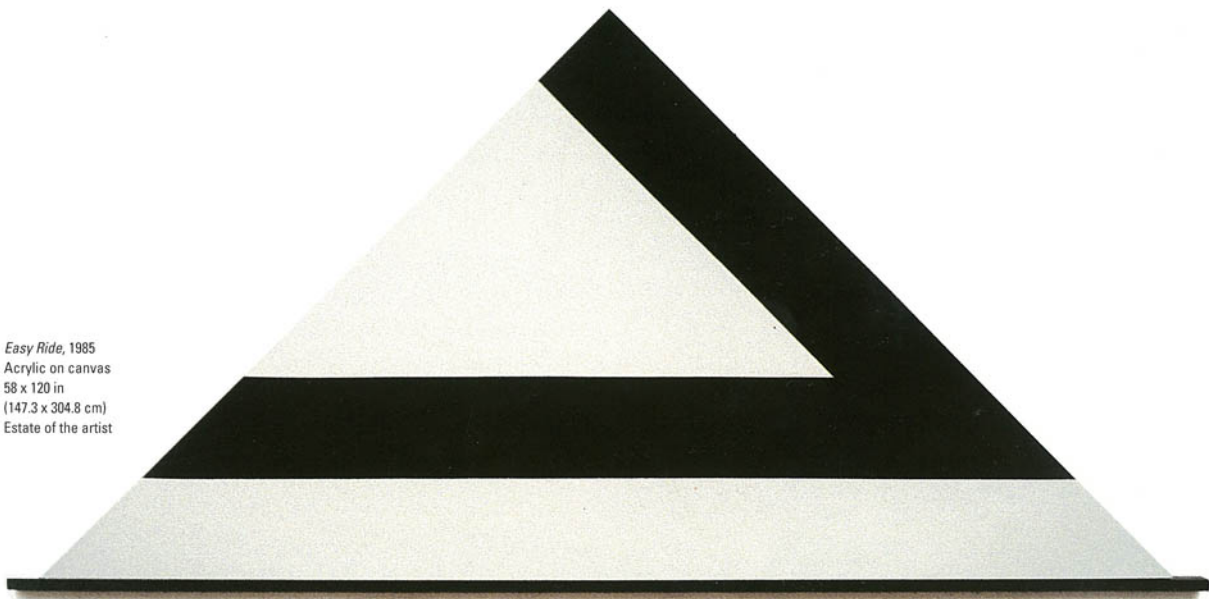
*Green – Two Black
Edges, 1984*
Acrylic on canvas
and wood
74 x 170 in
(188 x 432 cm)
Neues Museum,
Staatliches
Museum für Kunst
und Design,
Nuremberg
(Germany)

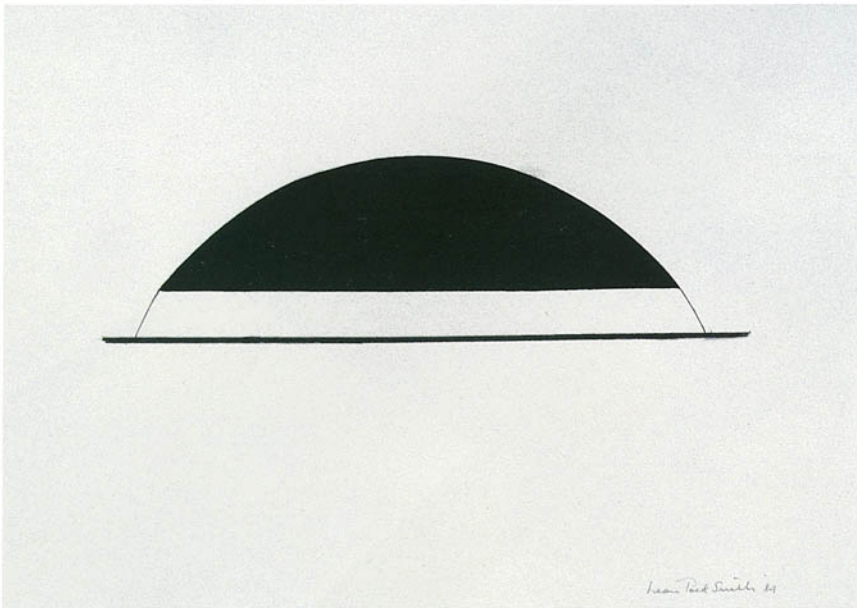


*Violet with Red
Curve, 1985*
Acrylic on canvas
with wood frame
72 x 84 in
(182.9 x 213.4 cm)
Estate of the artist

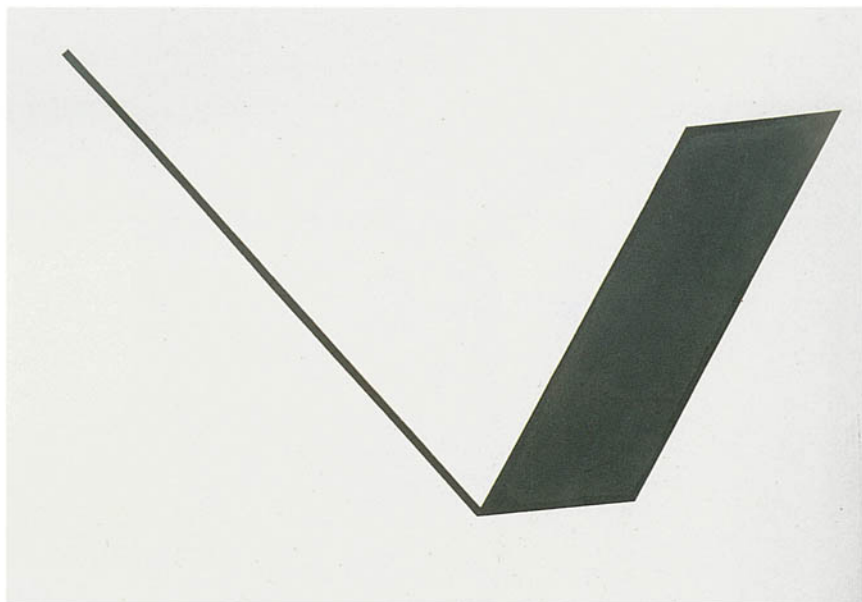


Easy Ride, 1985
Acrylic on canvas
58 x 120 in
(147.3 x 304.8 cm)
Estate of the artist





Long Horizons, 1984
Acrylic on canvas
65 x 216 in
(165.1 x 548.6 cm)
Estate of the artist



Big Space - Black Line, 1990
Acrylic on canvas
80 x 56 1/2 in
(203.2 x 143.5 cm)
Estate of the artist

ference in level, so that the line dividing the colors is horizontally recomposed.

The “architectural” purity of a transitional work, *Constellation Architectural Rhythms Black – White*¹⁶⁵ (acrylic on canvas, 1970), consisting of two tondos, anticipates the single “tondo” works of 1976. The 1970 work is innovative in its use of adjacent “tondos,” while the twin right-angles invite the viewer to perceive them as a single form.



In 1976, a new series of “tondo” works, in black and white, saw the light of day. A first group was exhibited at the Galerie Denise René in February–March 1977,¹⁶⁶ preceded by preliminary drawings whose rigor can only be compared to the early circular compositions of Neoplasticism.

The austere, geometric elements of Leon Polk Smith’s art subtly assert themselves in these works through their absolute frontality. A simplification of the form-space relationship in pure flatness still guarantees, as in certain works of the end of the 1950s, the possible interplay of inverted planes that the relationship of black and white particularly lends itself to (#7612,¹⁶⁷ acrylic on canvas, 1976). A central form in the shape of a cross appears with its corners on the periphery (#7619 – *White Cross*,¹⁶⁸ acrylic on canvas, 1976; *Pearl Gray and Black Cross*,¹⁶⁹ acrylic on canvas, 1976).

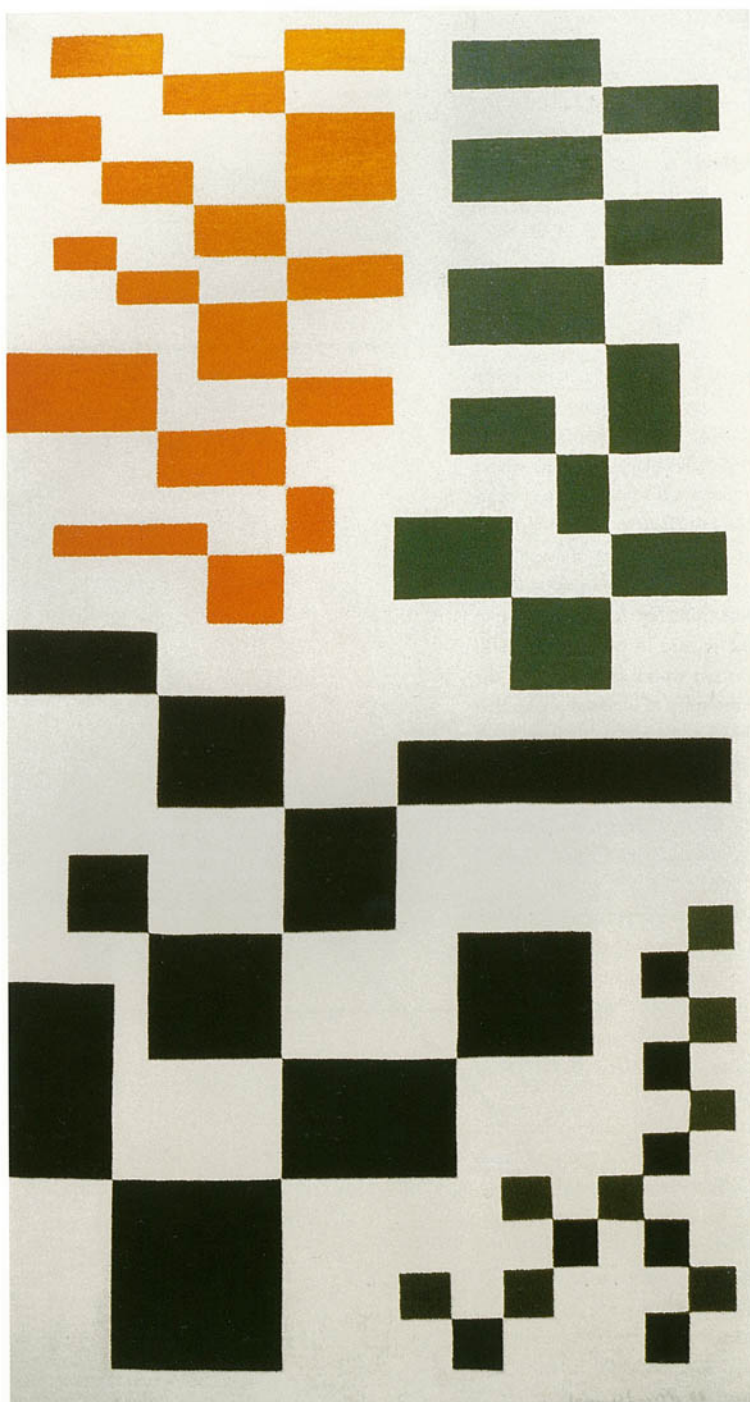
Doesn’t severity become merely apparent when an eloquent, mixed form (renewing the formal combination of straight line and curves) is integrated with the circular format (#7602,¹⁷⁰ acrylic on canvas, 1976), or when the rigor of the concept is softened by the quality of the pearly gray (the edges of *Pearl Gray and Black Cross*)?

Forms with rectilinear edges develop from the square like the form that advances to meet the black plane in #7612. A white rectangular element “suspended” from the upper edge by its curve is another invitation to penetrate its mystery, through the subtle elevation, suggested by the curvature (#7601 – *Open Door*,¹⁷¹ acrylic on canvas, 1976).

In a different and extremely refined color register, diffuse light gray and white, of which Smith is a great master, the angular gray shape of #7616¹⁷²

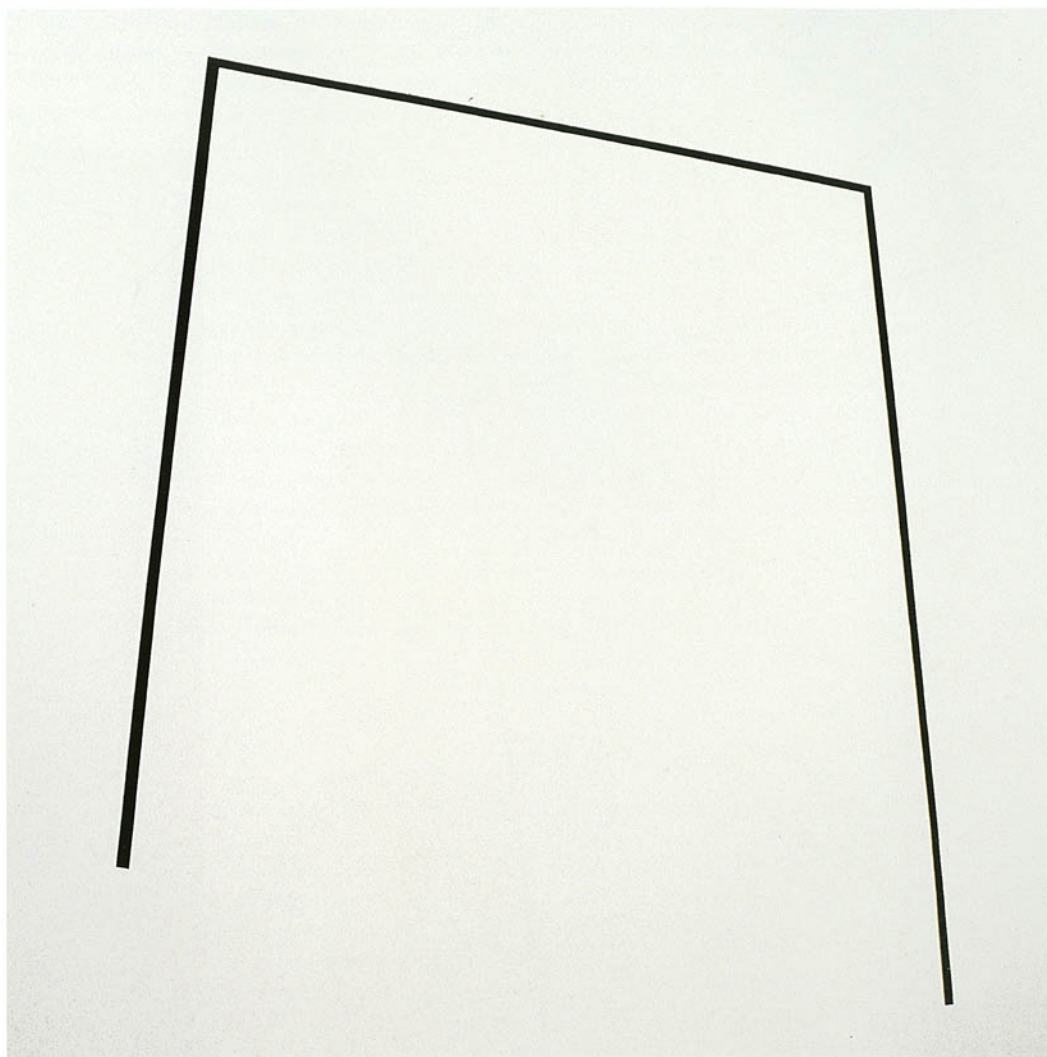
Yonder Orange,
1990
Acrylic on canvas
77 x 120 in
(195.6 x 304.8 cm)
Estate of the artist

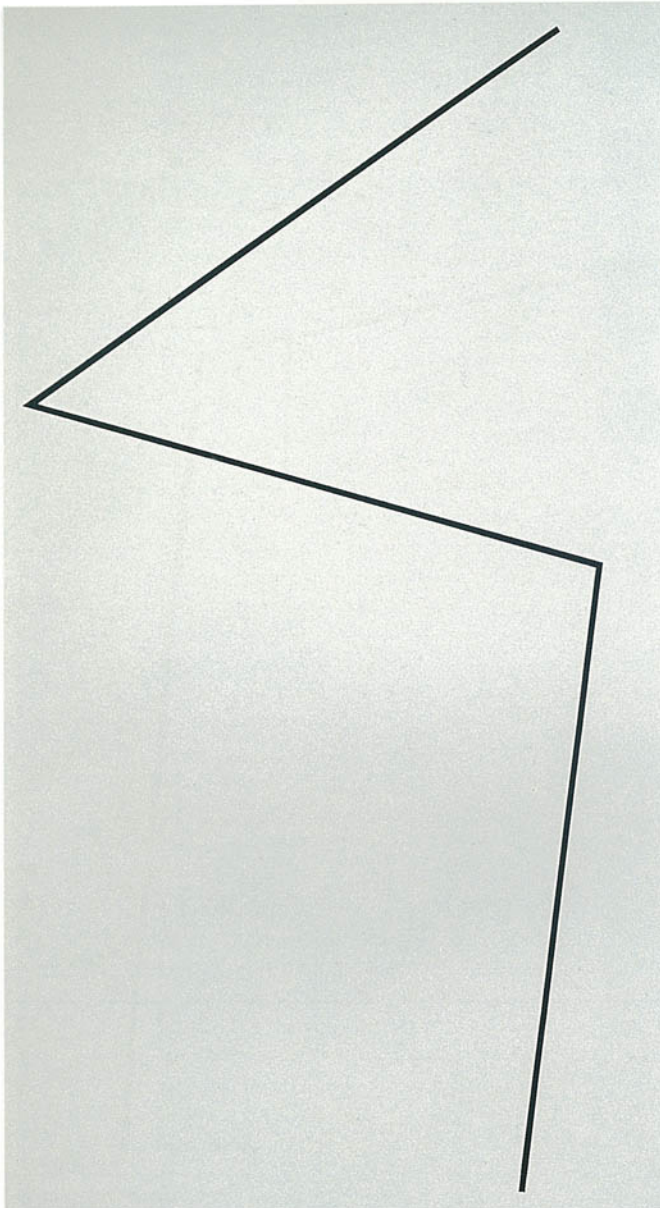




Open Composition,
1946
Oil on canvas
52 x 28 in
(132.1 x 71.1 cm)
The Museum of
Fine Arts, Houston
(TX)

Open Space, 1990
Acrylic on canvas
68 x 60 in
(172.7 x 152.4 cm)
Estate of the artist





Open Doors, 1992
Acrylic on canvas
90 x 52 in
(228.6 x 132.1 cm)
Estate of the artist



Event in Red, 1994
Acrylic on canvas
72 x 24 in
(182.9 x 61 cm)
Estate of the artist

(acrylic on canvas, 1976), with two straight sides transected by an oblique line, is adapted to the circular form. With this work the artist's art of exacting plasticity, with its inner radiance rendered by color and the quality of the relationships, makes a lasting mark.

The year 1978 was dominated by the spirit of a form, for example, the impenetrable oval curve in #7801¹⁷³ (acrylic on canvas), which is perhaps the last echo of the curves of the 1950s (*First One*) to be found in the interdependence of two curved spaces (the enlarged oval withdraws at the points of possible "intersection" with the circumference).

Form can be the expression of the fullness of a contained tension, like the impressive one in #7802 *Cross Roads*¹⁷⁴ (acrylic on canvas, 1978), a large oblique cross implying a movement created on the plane by its edges parallel to those of the square element.

Yet again the transposition of a structural theme onto a different tonal relationship (the gray and white of *Cross Roads Gray*,¹⁷⁵ acrylic on canvas, 1978) is a device deployed to give the color an indefinable expressive power.

It is still the expansion of the form that is evoked by the planes of *Ax – Black White*¹⁷⁶ (acrylic on canvas, 1978) and the radiant form of *Rising Red*¹⁷⁷ (acrylic on canvas, 1978).



*Red Wing*¹⁷⁸ (acrylic on canvas, two panels, 1979) was one of the works that creates to a high degree the dynamic balance which lies at the core of Leon Polk Smith's entire oeuvre. It appears first and foremost like a composition in space, an actual, bold conquest of the wall plane through the originality of the configuration. The unity of the work rests on the relationships of tension created in the asymmetry of the colored planes and through the "exchange" of straight lines and curves between one panel and the other. The art of equilibrium, of the intuitive calculation of the measure of the colored surfaces is added to the purely geometric combination. The response between the two panels arises from the adjustment of the straight lines and curves and from the intense dialogue between black and

red. If the whole—the pregnant unity of a form—is more than the sum of its parts, Smith's art of synthesis illustrates and magnifies this principle of gestalt psychology in this work.

Some works from the end of the 1970s consisting of several parts are composed of assembled panels, to which the internal form gives a sense of continuity, as in *George Washington Bridge #2*¹⁷⁹ (acrylic on canvas, three "tondos," 1979) and *Long Journey*¹⁸⁰ (acrylic on canvas, three rectangular panels, 1980).

The form-space relationship was still to evolve and change in the works of the "Form Space Series"¹⁸¹ (1980–82). Two (identical or dissimilar) geometric shapes confront each other on either side of a space (the spatial arrangement of the panels is different in each work). The works in the "Form Space Series" embody one of the artist's fundamental aspirations, the integration of form and space (of which the "Constellations" were the first stage). The idea of a dialogue of forms in a diptych relationship is expressed here. Though Smith chooses simplicity (the reduction of color in the monochrome panels),¹⁸² these flat forms, the most "architectural" in the whole of his oeuvre, have the power to metamorphose their internal relationship each time (*Form Space Series #2*, acrylic on canvas, 1980; *Form Space Series #4*, acrylic on canvas, 1980; *Form Space Series: Black Red*, acrylic on canvas, 1981; *Form Space Series: Yellow – Blue*, acrylic on canvas, 1982).

The spiritual lightness of *White Painting nos. 1–4*,¹⁸³ 1987, a group of four panels whose increasing interior divisions modify the profile and create a suggestion of levitation, anticipates the spirit of the final period.

Smith was anxious not to consider any formal solution definitive. Each series contains the embryo of the following one, and, at the same time, older ideas also take shape in a new mold, enriched by recent innovations.

Smith returned to a new series of "shaped canvases" in 1983. *Sunset Caribe*¹⁸⁴ (orange and blue-green), *New Moon for August*¹⁸⁵ (white and blue) and *At Sunrise*¹⁸⁶ (red and black), acrylic on canvas, 1983, both grave and joyous, combine their asymmetrical planes, with recurring curves bending back onto expressive ovals.

In the 1984–85 works, wooden bars, the visible part of the construction, contribute to the originality of the new shaped forms, with marked edges. Their extended width is another way of opening up the form to the space and accentuating its expansion (*Purple under Curve*,¹⁸⁷ *Green – Two Black Edges*,¹⁸⁸ acrylic on canvas, 1984, or *Violet with Red Curve*,¹⁸⁹ acrylic on canvas, 1985).

The form remains extraordinarily compact, as is attested by a new series of black and white works including *Floating Black*¹⁹⁰ (acrylic on canvas, 1984), *Easy Ride*¹⁹¹ and *Long Horizon*¹⁹² (acrylic on canvas, 1985).¹⁹³

*Big Space – Black Line*¹⁹⁴ is a large angle made by a pure line and a narrow black plane. The artist first experimented with this on the walls of his studio, and the last stage is this work of acrylic on canvas (1990). The relationship with the space becomes immaterial in the association of a line and a plane that are not closed. The supreme relationship of a full form and a single line is reminiscent of the wallreliefs of 1978 (*The Place 1, 2, 3*, wallreliefs) that combined a wooden shape in relief with a drawn line on small panels (*The Place no. 1*).¹⁹⁵ or the same shape and its painted equivalent (*The Place no. 3*).¹⁹⁶

The work on the line, color and space appear together in the “Yonder” series (*Yonder Orange*,¹⁹⁷ acrylic on canvas, 1990; *Yonder Purple*,¹⁹⁸ acrylic on canvas, 1990; *Yonder Blue*,¹⁹⁹ acrylic on canvas, 1990; *Yonder Turquoise Green*).²⁰⁰ The “Yonder” works express nostalgia for something out of sight, for a dim distance (as the title itself suggests), rendered plastically by a single form linked to a line that could be limitlessly extended.

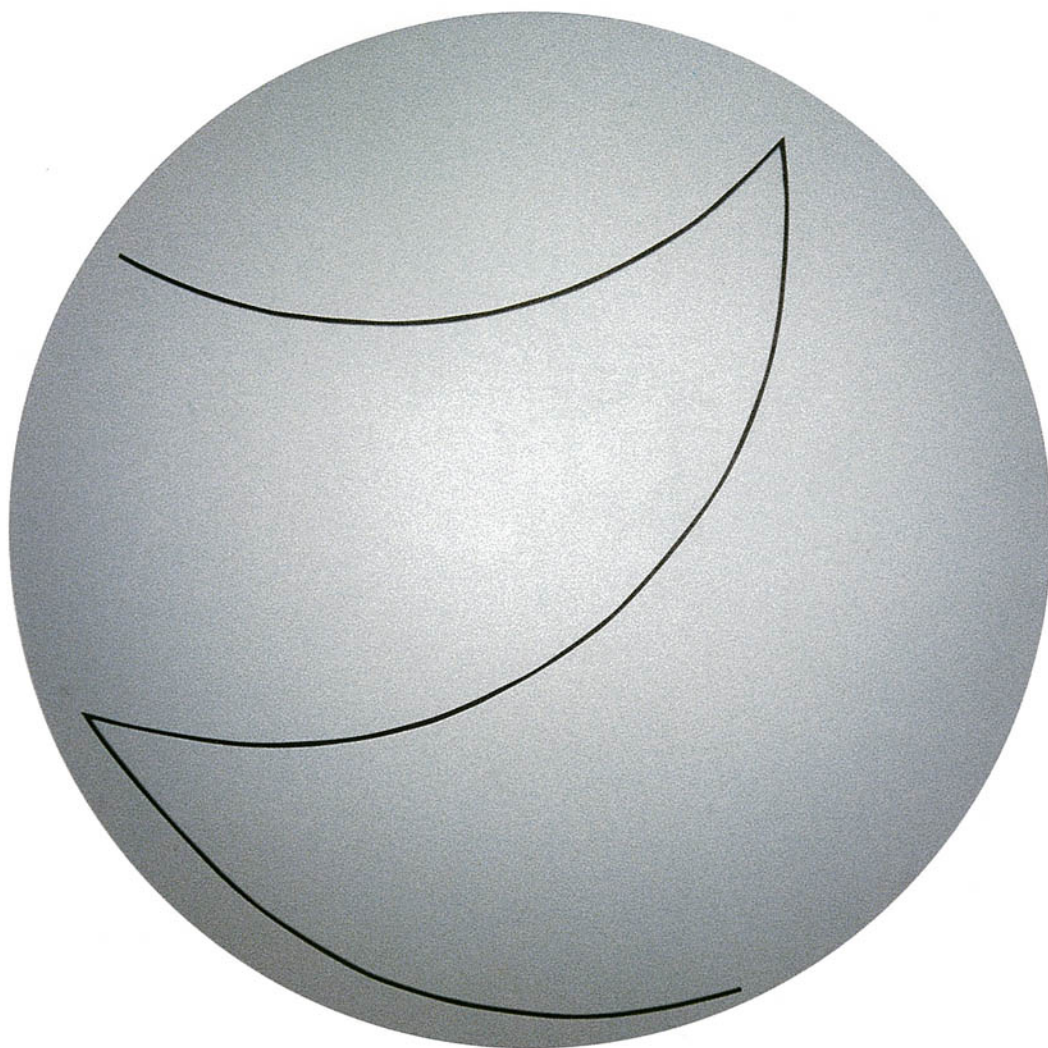
The desire to open up the space already underpinned the significance of certain works from the 1940s. *Open Composition*²⁰¹ (1946, contemporary of the first “Exchanges”) symbolically expresses this through the spaces between the carefully arranged groups of forms. The distance covered between *Open Composition* and *Open Space*²⁰² (1990, the lightest work inscribed on a wall space) throws light on the inner logic of the development of Smith’s whole oeuvre. In *Open Space*, the simple ribbon can replace the acrylic line when installation in a gallery (Galerie Hoffmann, Friedberg, 1991–92) or a museum (Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York, installations of

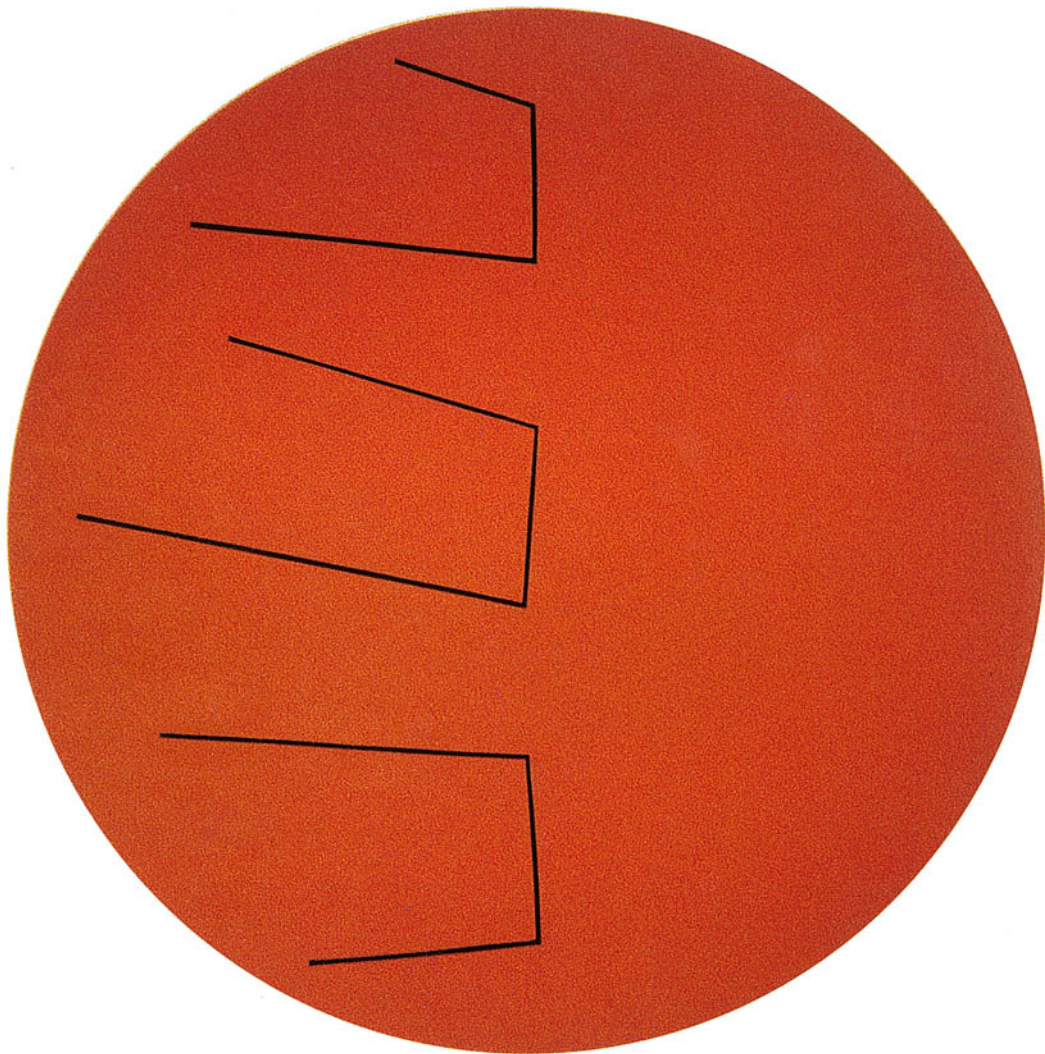
1993 and 1995) demand it.²⁰³ Can *Open Space*, a wide open angle constituted by three lines whose orientation and thickness may vary, be merely a symbol?

In 1992, in an impressive series of gray works (the color of the panel), Leon Polk Smith invested the line with a new power. The black lines determine new relationships with space and invent unexpected and sometimes humorous configurations. Pairs of inverted lines dialogue whilst containing portions of indefinable space as in *Jubilee*²⁰⁴ (acrylic on canvas, 1992), *Playing One*²⁰⁵ (acrylic on canvas, 1992), *Jubilee Square*²⁰⁶ (acrylic on canvas, 1992). Sometimes the isolated, but not disembodied, line expresses the force of a path, a broken line cutting deep angles (*Open Doors*,²⁰⁷ acrylic on canvas, 1992), the angular line and plane (*Black Angle on Grey*,²⁰⁸ acrylic on canvas, 1992), the continuous line of an uninterrupted movement (*Zig-Zag Gray*,²⁰⁹ acrylic on canvas, 1994).

The line-form concept is taken to the extreme of an internal distillation but the intrusion of the luminous or saturated color yet again upsets the formal elements. The black angle on a deep blue plane (*Dark Cobalt Blue*,²¹⁰ acrylic on canvas, 1992) is more than a transposition of the angle onto a wall space (“Open Space”). This work discreetly anticipates the fullness of life-forces that only has an equivalent in the profound universe of color and line, both symbolic and concrete, the line cutting through the tall, orangey-red rectangular plane (*Event in Red*,²¹¹ acrylic on canvas, 1994), the concise stable line in a radiating blue (*Event in Blue +*,²¹² acrylic on canvas, 1994), or the white curve that harmonizes with the bluish green of the “tondo” (*Event in Green*,²¹³ acrylic on canvas, 1994). Elsewhere a fluctuating curve gives rise to an immaculate gray in a curved space (*Event in Gray*,²¹⁴ acrylic on canvas, 1994) and a regular angular line rigorously cuts through another enveloping blue (*Event in Blue*,²¹⁵ acrylic on canvas, 1994). Meanwhile, the “open” angles recurring at the top of a circular canvas (*Event in Orange*,²¹⁶ acrylic on canvas, 1994), the “spiritual” angles “opening up” the sides of a black tondo (*Event In Black*,²¹⁷ acrylic on canvas, 1994), and the black contained lines cutting through deep red (*Event in Scarlet*,²¹⁸ acrylic on canvas, 1995) yet again give the angle and the pure line an essential life function.

Event in Gray, 1994
Acrylic on canvas
diam. 58 in
(147.3 cm)
Estate of the artist





We must salute the gestalt and conceptual mastery of Leon Polk Smith's art, which permitted him to confront, completely independently, the younger generation of New Abstraction from which he was separated by only twenty years or so.

The rigor and poetry of his oeuvre link him to Hard-Edge²¹⁹ and pure abstraction, however, the

original and solitary vocation that guided his most springing impulses and innovations led him, inevitably, to transcend the limits of pure relational art, whose mysterious power he never ceased to feel. A cosmic intuition runs through his prolific oeuvre, which caused him tirelessly to invent new plastic relationships, through gradual and decisive stages, and his art became even more purified in its final distillation.

Event in Orange,
1994
Acrylic on canvas
diam. 58 in
(147.3 cm)
Estate of the artist

¹ History of the collection: the A.E. Gallatin Collection, set up in spring 1927, was housed in New York University library under the name Gallery of Living Art. In 1933, it was renamed Museum of Living Art and it was only in 1943 that the collection became a definitive part of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. A.E. Gallatin had already acquired two works by Mondrian, in 1933 and 1936 (*Composition – White Blue and Yellow*, 1932; *Composition – White and Red*, 1936, reprod. in *Museum of Living Art*, New York University, 1937, cat. nos. 92 and 93, introduction by A.E. Gallatin, Dec. 1936, essays by James Johnson Sweeney, "On America and a Living Art" [Oct. 1933] and by Jean Helion, "The Evolution of Abstract Art as Shown in The Museum of Living Art" [Oct. 1933]).

The 1937 edition of the Museum of Living Art catalogue mentions, among others, works by Arp, Brancusi (artists Leon Polk Smith stated he was interested in), Braque, Cézanne, Delaunay, Duchamp, Gris, Helion, Klee, Kandinsky, Léger, Miró, Picasso... as well as works by pre-war abstract painters (Charles Demuth, Charles Green Shaw, George L.K. Morris).

The history of the Gallery of Living Art is recounted by Susan C. Larsen, "The Quest for an American Abstract Tradition, 1927–1944," in *Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America 1927–1944*, John R. Lane and Susan C. Larsen (eds.), Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute Pittsburgh, in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, New York, 1983–84, pp. 18–19, and in the essay by Susan C. Larsen, "A.E. Gallatin," *ibid.*, pp. 144–46; see also *Albert Eugene Gallatin and his Circle*, exh. cat., Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, Oct.–Nov. 1986, p. 11 ff., and Susan C. Larsen, "The Evolution of the Gallatin Collection," in *The American Abstract Artists Group: A History and Evaluation of its Impact upon American Art*, Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of Art History, North-Western University, 1974, p. 9 ff.

The A.E. Gallatin Collection crystallized the great interest American artists showed in Piet Mondrian and how influenced they were by him, specially Burgoyne Diller and Ilya Bolotovsky, who visited it in 1933,

and Harry Holtzman, urged by Diller, who visited it in 1934. On Diller's relationship with the collection, see Susan C. Larsen, "The Evolution of The Gallatin Collection," *op. cit.*, p. 95; on Bolotovsky's visit, see the note on Ilya Bolotovsky in *Geometric Abstraction*, University of Nebraska – Omaha, Apr.–May 1974; University of Nebraska – Lincoln, May–June 1974 (Part I, Historical Background, p. 11) and on the interest Bolotovsky showed in Mondrian in the A.E. Gallatin Collection, see "On Neo-Plasticism and My Own Work: A Memoir," in *Leonardo*, vol. 2 (p. 224), reprinted in Robert Pincus-Witten, introduction to *Post-Mondrian Abstraction in America*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Mar.–May 1973. Essay by John R. Lane on Harry Holtzman in *Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America, 1927–1944*, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

² "The Paintings of Leon Polk Smith, A Conversation between Leon Polk Smith and d'Arcy Hayman," in *Art and Literature*, 3 (Autumn–Winter 1964), p. 86.

³ *Chore Time*, oil on canvas, 1936, 36 × 46 in (91.4 × 116.8 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in b/w in *Leon Polk Smith*, exh. cat., Wilhelm-Hack Museum, Ludwigshafen am Rhein (Germany), Feb.–Mar. 1989 (introduction by Richard W. Gassen), p. 13; Musée de Grenoble, Grenoble (France) May–July 1989 (introduction by Jean-Paul Monery), p. 13.

⁴ *Boy on a Mule*, oil on canvas, 1936, 36 × 44 in (91.4 × 111.7 cm), the estate of the artist. Reprod. in b/w in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble exh. cat., *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁵ *Still Life Portrait*, oil on canvas, 1939, 47 × 33 in (119.4 × 83.8 cm), *Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield* (MA). Reprod. in Grenoble exh. cat., *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁶ *Repeated Forms*, oil on canvas, 1940, 38 × 26 in (96.5 × 66 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble ex. cat., *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁷ *White Woman*, oil on canvas, 1940, 51 × 36 in (129.5 × 91.4 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., The Brooklyn Museum of Art (NY), Sep. 1995–Jan. 1996 (essays by Carter Ratcliff, Arthur C. Danto and John Alan Farmer; interview by Brooke Kamin Rapaport).

⁸ *Georgia Black Woman*, oil on canvas, 1940, 53 × 36 in (134.6 × 91.4 cm), estate of the artist. In this period (from 1939 to 1942), Leon Polk Smith held a teaching post at the Teachers College, University System of Georgia.

⁹ The title of a work from 1954, *Stonevall* (meaning obstruction) alludes to this (see the interview with Leon Polk Smith in *Nike New Art in Europe* no. 19, 5. Jahrgang (July–Aug.–Sep. 1987), p. 15.

¹⁰ *Little Dogies at Night*, oil on paper, 1942, 25 1/2 × 20 in (65.4 × 50.8 cm), private collection. Reprod. in color in Ludwigshafen exh. cat., *op. cit.*, p. 17 (under the title *On the Ranch*) and in b/w in Grenoble exh. cat., *op. cit.*, p. 15.

¹¹ *Oklahoma Territory*, oil on canvas, 1943, 16 × 12 in (40.6 × 30.5 cm), *Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York* (gift of the artist). Reprod. in b/w in Grenoble exh. cat., *op. cit.* (introduction, p. 12); in *Leon Polk Smith, Selected Works 1943–1992, Promised Gift to the Brooklyn Museum*, The Brooklyn Museum of Art, Jan.–Feb. 1993 (introduction by Robert T. Buck); in color in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 3.

¹² *Git Along Little Dogies*, oil on canvas, 1943, 18 1/2 × 14 1/2 in (46.4 × 36.8 cm), private collection. Reprod. in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble exh. cat., *op. cit.*, p. 29. In Nov.–Dec. 1942, Leon Polk Smith had his second solo exhibition in New York, at the Pinacotheca Gallery. That same year Piet Mondrian had exhibited for the first time in New York at the Valentine Gallery in Jan.–Feb.

¹³ *Paintings by Leon Polk Smith, Nov. 23rd to Dec. 12th 1942*, The Pinacotheca Gallery (future Rose Fried Gallery). The Mondrian exhibition at the Valentine-Dudensing Gallery is reviewed by Barbara Rose, in "Mondrian in New York," *Artforum* (1971).

¹⁴ In the 1987 interview, *op. cit.* (p. 14), Leon Polk Smith admits Van Doesburg's influence on *Git Along Little Dogies*: "It was more or less an abstraction from nature. Forms were still organic. And I would say when I did that painting the influence there was more Van Doesburg than Mondrian."

¹⁵ Theo van Doesburg, *Composition (The Cow)*, oil on canvas, 1918, *The Museum*

of *Modern Art*, New York (acquired in 1948). The work under its original title *Esthetic Transformation of the Object* was shown in *Cubism and Abstract Art*, The Museum of Modern Art, 1936; new edition Alfred H. Barr Jr., *Cubism and Abstract Art* (Cambridge [MA] and London: The Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 1986) (no. 52A in the cat., reprod. p. 145, fig. 144; the illustration reproduces the four stages leading to abstraction. It was only in 1947 that Van Doesburg had his first solo show in New York at Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century Gallery, Apr.–May 1947. See: *The Société Anonyme and the Dreier Bequest at Yale University – A Catalogue Raisonné* (New Haven [CT] and London: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 195.

¹⁶ Piet Mondrian, *A Nieuwe Beelding in de schilderkunst*, 1917; English translation by Harry Holtzman, "The New Plastic in Painting," (1917) in *The New Art – The New Life – The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian*, edited and translated by Harry Holtzman and Martin S. James (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), p. 38: "The new plastic expresses the essential of space through the relationship of one color plane to another."

¹⁷ *Duet Blue – Red*, oil on canvas, 1945, 31 × 22 in (78.7 × 55.9 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble exh. cat., *op. cit.*, p. 32.

¹⁸ *Gray Columns*, oil on canvas, 1945, 72 × 48 in (182.9 × 121.9 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble exh. cat., *op. cit.*, p. 33 (dated 1947). This essay refers to the chronology suggested by Lawrence Alloway in the Galerie Chalette brochure, *Geometric Paintings 1945–1953 by Leon Polk Smith*, Nov. 1970 (the structural group comprised works from 1945 to 1947).

¹⁹ *Center Columns, Blue – White*, oil on canvas, 1946, 59 1/4 × 37 1/4 in (151.8 × 94.6 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in *Leon Polk Smith, Paintings 1945–1950 – Recent Paintings*, exh. cat., Washburn Gallery, Sep.–Oct. 1982 (dated 1946); in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble exh. cat., *op. cit.*, p. 32 (dated 1947); in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 6.

²⁰ *Blue, Black, White*, oil on canvas, 1946, 27 × 50 in (68.6 × 127 cm), *Birmingham Museum of Art* (AL).

²¹ *Gouache*, gouache on paper, 1946, 24 × 16 in (61 × 40.6 cm), *Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield* (MA).

²² *New York City*, oil on canvas, 1945, 47 × 33 in (119.4 × 83.8 cm), *Whitney Museum of American Art*, New York. This work was shown in the exhibition *Geometric Abstraction*, University of Nebraska, exh. cat., *op. cit.* (reprod. in b/w, p. 56) and in *Mondrian and Neo-Plasticism in America, A Reassessment* (Nancy Troy), Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven (CT), Oct.–Dec. 1979 (reprod. in b/w in exh.

cat., no. 41). This work is also reproduced in the Ludwigshafen and Grenoble exh. cat., 1989, *op. cit.*, p. 99 (in b/w). The title alone can be seen as an early homage to Mondrian (*New York City*, the first of the series, oil and adhesive tape, dating from 1940–41). Reprod. in color in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 4.

²³ *G. W. B. (George Washington Bridge)*, oil on canvas, 1945, 52 × 22 in (132 × 55.9 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color (black, yellow and white) in *Leon Polk Smith*, exh. cat., Galerie Denise René, Dec. 1973.

²⁴ Unlike certain "disciples," Leon Polk Smith did not have any personal contact with Mondrian (see Nancy Troy, *op. cit.*, p. 17).

²⁵ Piet Mondrian, *Victory Boogie-Woogie*, oil, paper, and adhesive tape on canvas, 1944, 70 1/4 × 70 1/4 in (179.7 × 179.7 cm), (with "unfinished" written in Mondrian Memorial Exhibition, exh. cat., The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Mar.–May 1945). The work, lent by the collector Burton Tremaine, features in the list of works on exhibit. *Victory Boogie-Woogie* (diagonal) was shown at the Sidney Janis Gallery in the exhibition *Piet Mondrian – Paintings 1910 through 1944*, Oct.–Nov. 1949.

²⁶ *Homage to "Victory Boogie-Woogie" #1*, oil on canvas, 1946, 42 × 37 in (106.7 × 94 cm), *Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas* (TX). This work was shown at the Galerie Denise René in 1973, exh. cat., *op. cit.* (reprod. in color) and in the exhibition *Paris – New York*, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, Paris, June–Sep. 1977 (Daniel Abadie, *Autour de Mondrian*, pp. 437–43, reprod. in b/w, p. 441); in the exhibition *Mondrian and Neo-Plasticism in America*, 1979, exh. cat., *op. cit.* (reprod. in b/w no. 42), and *Amerikanische Malerei 1930–1980* (Tom Armstrong), Haus der Kunst, Munich (Germany), Nov. 1981–Jan. 1982 (Munich: Prestel-Verlag Munich, and Whitney Museum of American Art), (reprod. in color, p. 68, no. 58). Reprod. in b/w in *L.P. Smith – Collages 1981–1983*, exh. cat., Nationalgalerie Berlin, May–July 1984, p. 8; in color in *L.P. Smith – 5 Decades of Geometric Inventions*, exh. cat. (introduction Carter Ratcliff), DiLaurenti Gallery, Dec. 1987, pl. 1, and in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 7.

²⁷ Piet Mondrian: *New York City I*, oil, paper (adhesive tape) on canvas, 1942, 47 1/4 × 56 1/4 in (120 × 144 cm); reprod. in H.C.L. Jaffé, *Piet Mondrian* (Paris: Éditions Cercle d'Art, 1970), p. 159, and in Daniel Abadie, *op. cit.* The other versions of *New York City* are reproduced in Daniel Abadie, *ibid.*, pp. 434–35: *New York City II*, oil, paper (adhesive tape) on canvas, 1942–44, *Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf* (Germany).

Broadway Boogie-Woogie, oil on canvas, 1942–43, 50 × 50 in (127 × 127 cm), *The Museum of Modern Art, New York*; reprod. in H.C.L. Jaffé, *op. cit.*, p. 161 and in Daniel Abadie, *op. cit.*, p. 433. *Victory Boogie-Woogie*, oil and paper on canvas, 1942–44, 50 × 50 in (127 × 127 cm), (unfinished), 70 1/4 in (178 cm) in diagonal, on permanent loan to *Gemeentemuseum, The Hague (Bank of Holland)*; reprod. in Michel Seuphor, *Piet Mondrian, sa vie, son œuvre* (Paris: Flammarion, 1956), p. 19; in H.C.L. Jaffé, *op. cit.*, p. 163; in E.A. Carmean, *Mondrian, The Diamond Compositions*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., July–Sep. 1979 (cat. no. 425); in *Piet Mondrian Victory Boogie-Woogie*, Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, 1998.

²⁸ H.C.L. Jaffé, *Piet Mondrian, op. cit.*, p. 160.

²⁹ Another celebrated composition, in a square standing on one corner, *Fox Trot A* (1930), also featured in the Mondrian retrospective. It had previously been shown in an exhibition organized by the Société Anonyme (founded by K.S. Dreier on Apr. 20, 1920) in 1931, for the Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo (NY), *An International Exhibition Illustrating the Most Recent Development in Abstract Art*, Feb.–Mar. 1931 (*Catalogue Raisonné, op. cit.*, pp. 484, 778). *Fox Trot A* was later exhibited in *The White Plane*, The Pinacotheca, New York, Mar.–Apr. 1947 (with works by Josef Albers, Hans Arp, Ilya Bolotovsky, Burgoyne Diller, Fritz Glarner, Piet Mondrian, Theo van Doesburg). Review in *M.K.R.'s*, "Art Outlook the White Plane," (Mar. 31, 1947), vol. 1, no. 38.

³⁰ *Homage to "Victory Boogie-Woogie" #2*, oil on wood, 1946–47, diam. 29 1/2 in (74.9 cm), *Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth* (TX). Reprod. in b/w in cat. of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 1984, *op. cit.*, p. 8; in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble exh. cat., *op. cit.*, p. 31; in color in *Selected Works from the American Collection – 1940 to the Present*, cat., Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, 1988, p. 22 and in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 8.

³¹ *Black-Blue-Gray-White Squares*, oil on canvas, 1947, 48 × 47 1/4 in (121.9 × 121.3 cm), *University of Nebraska at Lincoln, Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden*. Reprod. in color in the publication of the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery: *Resource / Reservoir – Geometric Abstraction in America* (Donald Bartlett Doe), Resource Series, vol. 1, 4 (1986), and in *The American Painting Collection of The Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery* (Lincoln [NB] and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), note 87, p. 175.

³² The work of Glarner (born in 1899) was influenced by Mondrian at the beginning of the 1940s, as is evident in *Relational Painting*, oil on canvas, 1941, Kunsthau Zurich (Switzerland) (reprod. in *Fritz*

Glärner im Kunsthau Zürich, Kunsthau Zürich, Sammlungsheft 8, p. 57); *Relational Painting*, oil on canvas, 1943, 42 1/4 x 40 1/4 in (107 x 102 cm), Yale University Art Gallery (reprod. in *Catalogue Raisonné*, op. cit., p. 300, no. 305; in *A Checklist of American Paintings at Yale University*, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven (CT), 1982, no. 579; it developed with the "tondos," *Relational Painting Tondo #1*, oil on panel, 1944, diam. 52 1/4 in (133 cm), Kunsthau Zürich (reprod. in cat., op. cit., p. 175), and evolved toward his mature style from 1945 on, as can be already seen in *Relational Painting Tondo #3*, oil on panel, 1945, diam. 37 1/4 in (96 cm), (reprod. in Fritz Glärner, Kunsthalle Bern [introduction by Max Bill], Aug.-Sep. 1972, no. 2, and in Margit Staber, Fritz Glärner [Zürich: A.B.C. Verlag, 1976], p. 76). See also *Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America 1927-1944*, op. cit., essay by Nancy Troy, pp. 147-49.

³³ Burgoyne Diller (born in 1906), *Third Theme*, oil on canvas, 1946-48, 42 x 42 in (106.7 x 106.7 cm), Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (reprod. in Barbara Haskell, *Burgoyne Diller*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Sep.-Oct. 1990, fig. 112, p. 99; in *Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America 1927-1944*, op. cit.). The structure of this work is closest to that of Mondrian's *Broadway Boogie Woogie*. On Diller's evolution, see cat. nos. 36-38, 40-42 (essay by Nancy Troy, pp. 70-72).

³⁴ B.W., "Abstracted by Leon Polk Smith (Egan Gallery)," *The Art Digest* (Mar. 15, 1946), p. 16.

³⁵ *Gray Yellow Black Exchange*, oil on canvas, 1946, 23 x 14 in (58.4 x 35.6 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in Lawrence Alloway, "Leon Polk Smith: Dealings in Equivalence," *Art in America* (July-Aug. 1974), p. 58; in Ted Castle, "Leon Polk Smith: The Completely Self-Referential Object," *Artforum*, Sep. 1979, p. 34.

³⁶ *Black-White Definition New York*, oil on canvas, 1946, 45 x 32 in (114.3 x 81.3 cm), Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York (gift of the artist). Reprod. in "États-Unis d'Amérique - Vue d'ensemble et Tendances diverses," in *Art d'aujourd'hui* (June 1951); Ludwigshafen and Grenoble exh. cat., op. cit., p. 35 (dated 1946); in *Leon Polk Smith - A Dialogue in Black and White - an Exhibition of Paintings from 1946-1978*, exh. cat., State University of New York, Old Westbury, Long Island (NY), Nov. 1978 (dated 1946-47); in Lawrence Alloway, 1974, op. cit. (dated 1946-47); in *Leon Polk Smith, Selected Works 1943-1992*, op. cit.; in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., op. cit., pl. 5.

³⁷ *Red-Black*, oil on canvas, 1946-47, 40 x 30 in (101.6 x 76.2 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in Galerie Chalette brochure, 1970, op. cit., and in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble exh. cat. op. cit., p. 34.

³⁸ *Blue-Red-White*, oil on canvas, 1946, 35 x 38 in (88.9 x 96.5 cm), estate of the artist.

³⁹ *Red-Black-White*, oil on canvas, 1948, 38 x 38 in (96.5 x 96.5 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble exh. cat., op. cit., p. 34.

⁴⁰ Lawrence Alloway, introduction to the Chalette Gallery brochure, 1970, op. cit. Lawrence Alloway applied the all-over concept to paintings in the structural series whose formal elements are reminiscent of letters or motifs he describes as cattlebrands.

⁴¹ Lawrence Alloway, *ibid.*, *Post-Mondrian Painters in America*, May-June 1949, Sidney Janis Gallery ("For Release"; type-script document, Sidney Janis Gallery Archives). List of participants: Albers, Bolotovskiy, Diller, Glärner, Holtzman, Model, Pereira, Salemm, Smith. The press release says: "This exhibition introduces to the public a group of purist American artists under the title of Post-Mondrian Painters. Their work as presented here may be briefly described as horizontal-vertical, 2-dimensional space painting."

⁴² W. P. I., oil on canvas, 1949, 48 x 32 in (121.9 x 81.3 cm), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (gift of Dr. and Mrs. Arthur Lejwa). Reprod. in color in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., op. cit., pl. 12.

⁴³ This work is closest to the rhythm and linear division of Mondrian's *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (oil on canvas, 1942, The Museum of Modern Art, New York).

⁴⁴ *Diagonal Passage no. 2*, oil on canvas, 1946-47, 48 x 24 in (92 x 61 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in Washburn Gallery brochure, 1982, op. cit. and in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble exh. cat., op. cit., p. 36.

⁴⁵ *Diagonal Passage no. 9*, oil on canvas, 1949, 46 x 36 in (116.8 x 91 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble exh. cat., op. cit., p. 36.

⁴⁶ *Diagonal Passage White, Yellow, Black, Gray (no. 1)*, oil on canvas, 1949, 42 x 26 in (106.7 x 66 cm), Rhode Island School of Design, Museum of Art, Providence (RI). Reprod. in Lawrence Alloway, "Leon Polk Smith: Dealings in Equivalence," 1974, op. cit., p. 59.

⁴⁷ *Diagonal Passage no. 3*, oil on canvas, 1949, 36 x 36 in (91.4 x 91.4 cm), private collection, Los Angeles. Reprod. in Galerie Chalette brochure, 1970, op. cit. (in color) and in Kenneth Baker, "New York, L.P. Smith, Galerie Chalette," *Artforum* (Feb. 1971), p. 76. This work was exhibited in *Post-Mondrian Abstraction in America* (introduction by Robert Pincus-Witten), cat. op. cit. (reprod.); view of the layout of the exhibition with Leon Polk Smith's work in Jack Burnham, "Mondrian's American Circle," *Arts Magazine* (Sep.-Oct. 1973). See Edward B. Henning's analysis in "Diagonal Passage 120.1 by Leon Polk Smith (Two New Paintings in the Neo-Plastic Tradition)," in *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* (Apr. 1975),

p. 117 (reprod. in b/w). This work was shown in the exhibition *Mondrian and Neo-Plasticism in America*, 1979, cat. op. cit. (no. 13); reprod. in b/w in cat. Nationalgalerie Berlin, op. cit., p. 9 and in color in cat. *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, op. cit., pl. 11.

⁴⁸ *Diagonal Passage with Horizontal*, oil on canvas, 1950, 42 x 26 in (106.7 x 66 cm), estate of the artist.

⁴⁹ *Diagonal Passage Red-Blue-Yellow*, oil on canvas, 1948, 54 x 20 in (137.2 x 50.8 cm), estate of the artist.

⁵⁰ *Diagonal Passage no. 7*, oil on canvas, 1949, 43 x 15 in (109.2 x 38.1 cm) The Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit (MI).

⁵¹ For Mondrian, as opposed to Van Doesburg, only the purely orthogonal relation (the "universal expression" resulting from "an equivalence of horizontal and vertical expression") embodied the ideal of Neoplasticism and could permit it to extend into architecture and the environment. See on this subject the interview printed in *The New Art - The New Life - The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian*, op. cit., pp. 356-57 ("An Interview with Mondrian," 1943, by James Johnson Sweeney).

⁵² *Diagonal Passage 120.1*, oil on wood panel, 1947-48, diam. 23 1/4 in (60.3 cm), The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland (OH). Reprod. in b/w in Edward B. Henning, 1975, op. cit., p. 116.

⁵³ *Composition #1502*, oil on wood, 1947, diam. 24 in, private collection.

⁵⁴ *Diagonal Passage 120 Large*, oil on canvas, 1947-51, diam. 80 in (203.2 cm), Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York. Reprod. in Ted Castle, op. cit., p. 35; in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble exh. cat., op. cit., p. 37; in *Leon Polk Smith, Selected Works 1943-1992*, op. cit., and in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., op. cit., pl. 9.

⁵⁵ See Lawrence Alloway on the way Leon Polk Smith used the oil medium (the first layer diluted with turpentine was followed by many other layers), in his introduction to *Leon Polk Smith*, exh. cat., Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham (MA), Apr.-May 1968, and San Francisco Museum of Art (CA), May-June 1968, p. 3.

⁵⁶ For Mondrian "form" became the synonym of "relation" ("colored planes through their position and size as well as through the color value plastically express only relations not forms"), in *Le Néoplasticisme, Principe général de l'Équivalence plastique* (Paris: Léon Rosenberg, 1920).

⁵⁷ The mystic circle, symbol of the infinite summed up in the "One" is doubtless the most important response to the philosophical idealism of Piet Mondrian. Fritz Glärner's evolution became crystallized in the "tondo." It is in this favored shape that the artist introduces the slanting or oblique plane "to determine" the space and "to liberate" the form. "My concern in painting has been to bring about a purer and closer

inter-relation between form and space. [...] This may be seen clearly in the circle, the strongest form symbol of oneness. A multiplicity of similar quadrilaterals, one side of each segment of the circumference, establishes the structure and becomes one with the space." ("A Visual Problem," lecture given at The Club, 8th Street, Feb. 25, 1949; extracts published in *Twelve Americans*, The Museum of Modern Art, 1956, Dorothy C. Miller ed., p. 28; and Dorothy C. Miller, "Fritz Glarner," in *New Art in America, Fifty Painters of the 20th Century*, John I.H. Baur, Lloyd Goodrich, D. Miller [eds.], NY Graphic Society, 1957, p. 226). This text was published in French ("États-Unis d'Amérique – Vue d'ensemble et Tendances diverses") in *Art d'Aujourd'hui* (June 1951). A German version was titled *Relational Painting* and printed in *Fritz Glarner*, exh. cat. Kunsthalle Bern, Aug.–Sep. 1972.

⁵⁸ The concept of the "determination" of Neoplasticism's abstract means of expression already appears in Mondrian's early writings for the Dutch review *De Stijl*: "De Nieuwe Beelding in de schilderkunst," *De Stijl* (1917); "The New Plastic in Painting" (translation by Harry Holtzman, in *The New Art – The New Life – The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian*, op. cit., p. 28 ff.). See also "Mondrian, A New Realism" (1943) in *Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art and other Essays*, 1st edition 1945 (New York: Wittenborn, Dec. 1944) (introduction by Harry Holtzman), reprinted in Harry Holtzman (*A New Realism*), op. cit., pp. 345–50: "The action of plastic art is not space-expression but complete space-determination" (p. 348).

⁵⁹ *Circle in the Square*, oil on canvas, 1947, 23 1/4 x 23 1/4 in (60.3 x 60.3 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in DiLaurenti Gallery cat., 1987, op. cit., pl. 2. The placement of certain surface fragments near the periphery already anticipates the 1958 work, *Furtherest Point*.

⁶⁰ *Inch Squares no. 3*, oil on canvas, 1948–49, 48 x 14 in (121.9 x 35.6 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in b/w in Ted Castle, 1979, op. cit., p. 36. *Inch Squares no. 5*, oil on canvas, 1949, 48 x 14 in (121.9 x 35.6 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in b/w in the introduction to the Grenoble exh. cat., op. cit., p. 14.

⁶¹ *Four Blue Diagonals*, oil on canvas, 1950, 15 x 12 in (38.1 x 30.5 cm), private collection.

⁶² *Black Yellow White*, oil on canvas, 1950, 12 x 24 in (30.5 x 61 cm), estate of the artist.

⁶³ *Opposite Angles*, oil on canvas, 1949–50 (red, gray, black, white), 31 x 19 in (78.7 x 48.3 cm), estate of the artist.

⁶⁴ *Opposite Angles – Black and Gray*, oil on canvas, 1950, 24 x 12 in (61 x 30.5 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in *Leon Polk Smith – A Dialogue in Black and White*, exh. cat., op. cit.

⁶⁵ *White – White no. 1*, oil and graphite on

canvas, 1948, 43 x 15 in (109.2 x 38.1 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in Galerie Denise René cat., 1973, op. cit. and in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., op. cit., p. 38. See also the larger version: *White on White no. 2*, 1950, 43 x 30 in (109.2 x 76.2 cm), private collection; reprod. in Galerie Denise René cat., 1973, op. cit. and in *Leon Polk Smith – A Dialogue in Black and White*, exh. cat., op. cit.

⁶⁶ *Black – Black*, oil on canvas, 1950, 50 x 33 in (127 x 83.8 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in Galerie Denise René cat., 1973, op. cit.; in b/w in *Leon Polk Smith – A Dialogue in Black and White*, exh. cat., op. cit., and in color in DiLaurenti Gallery cat., 1987, op. cit., p. 15, no. 3.

⁶⁷ Ilya Bolotovsky, *Opalescent Vertical*, oil on canvas, 1955, 34 x 11 in (86.4 x 27.9 cm), private collection. Reprod. in *Ilya Bolotovsky*, exh. cat., Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1974, no. 27.

⁶⁸ *Black – White Repeat*, oil on canvas, 1952, 51 x 38 in (129.5 x 96.5 cm), private collection, Cambridge (MA). Reprod. in Galerie Denise René cat., 1973, op. cit. (dated 1953); in *Leon Polk Smith – A Dialogue in Black and White*, exh. cat., op. cit. (dated 1953); in DiLaurenti Gallery exh. cat., 1987, op. cit. (dated 1952–53); in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., op. cit., p. 39 (dated 1952), and in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., op. cit., pl. 14.

⁶⁹ *A Statement by the Artist*, 1961, typescript, Galerie Chalette, 1968 (note published in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., op. cit., p. 91).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Black – White Duet with Yellow*, oil on canvas, 1953, diam. 58 in (147.3 cm), Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York (gift of the artist). Reprod. in color in Ludwigshafen cat., op. cit., p. 40 and in *Leon Polk Smith. Selected Works 1943–1992*, op. cit.

⁷² *Black – White Duet with Red*, oil on canvas, 1953, diam. 39 1/2 in (100.3 cm), Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Reprod. in Galerie Denise René cat., 1973, op. cit.; in Robert Hughes, "A Disciple's Progress," *Time* (Dec. 31, 1973), p. 44; in color in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., op. cit., pl. 13.

⁷³ *First One*, oil on canvas, 1954, diam. 39 1/2 in (100.3 cm), Dr. Irving and Natalie Forman Collection, Santa Fe (NM). Reprod. in Lawrence Alloway, "Leon Polk Smith: New Work and its Origin," *Art International* (Apr. 25, 1963), p. 52; in Lawrence Alloway, 1974, op. cit., p. 59, and in Ted Castle, 1979, op. cit., p. 37.

⁷⁴ "The Paintings of Leon Polk Smith: A Conversation between Leon Polk Smith and d'Arcy Hayman," op. cit., p. 85.

⁷⁵ *A Statement by the Artist*, 1961, op. cit.

⁷⁶ *Yellow Edge*, oil on canvas, 1954, diam. 31 1/2 in (80 cm), Robert M. Jamieson Collection, New York. Reprod. in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., op. cit., p.

41. Preparatory drawings in 1954 generated these forms that had an important impact on the development of the work (reprod. in Lawrence Alloway, 1963, op. cit., p. 52, and in the introduction to *Systemic Painting*, exh. cat., Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Sep.–Oct. 1966, p. 13).

⁷⁷ *Inner – Outer Circles*, oil on canvas, 1954, diam. 24 in. (61 cm), private collection.

⁷⁸ *A Statement by the Artist*, 1961, op. cit.

⁷⁹ *Black – White – Black*, oil on canvas, 1954, diam. 31 1/2 in (80 cm), estate of the artist.

⁸⁰ *Approaching Spheres*, enamel paint on painted aluminum panel, 1955, diam. 13 in. (33 cm), private collection.

⁸¹ *Stonewall*, oil on canvas, 1956, diam. 35 1/2 in (90.8 cm), Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York (gift of the artist). Reprod. in b/w in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., op. cit., p. 42. It was shown in the exhibition *Abstraction-Geometry-Painting Selected Geometric Abstract Painting in America since 1945* (Michel Auping) (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., in association with the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo [NY], Sep.–Oct. 1989), p. 126. Reprod. in color in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., op. cit., pl. 15.

⁸² *Black Crevice*, oil on canvas, 1955, private collection. Reprod. in cat. of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 1984, op. cit., p. 11.

⁸³ *A Statement by the Artist*, 1961, op. cit.

⁸⁴ *Black Rock*, oil on canvas, 1955, diam. 25 1/4 in (64.2 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in *Leon Polk Smith – A Dialogue in Black and White*, exh. cat., 1978, op. cit.; in cat. of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 1984, op. cit., p. 11.

⁸⁵ *Red Black Rock*, collage and oil on canvas, 1955, diam. 25 1/2 in (64.8 cm), estate of the artist.

⁸⁶ *Okemah*, oil on canvas, 1955, diam. 47 in (119.4 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in DiLaurenti Gallery, exh. cat., 1987, op. cit., pl. 5; in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., op. cit., p. 42, and in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., op. cit., pl. 17.

⁸⁷ *Black – Copper*, oil and copper paint on canvas, 1956–57, diam. 32 in (82.3 cm), private collection. Reprod. in *Construction and Geometry in Painting – From Malevich to Tomorrow*, exh. cat., (introduction by Michel Seuphor), Galerie Chalette, Mar.–May 1960 and in Barbara Butler, "Contemporary Classicism," *Art International* (May 1960). The exhibition *Construction and Geometry in Painting* brought together works by the European and American "pioneers" of abstraction (including Malevich, Kandinsky, Van Doesburg, Mondrian, Lissitzky, Kupka, Delaunay, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Moholy-Nagy, Bruce, Russell and MacDonald Wright) and the painters of a new "generation" ("the contemporaries") including exponents of Constructivism and Neoplasticism (Diller, Glarner, Von Wiegand).

and Op Art (Agam, Tomasello, Vasarely). Leon Polk Smith's development at that time already separated him from other followers of Mondrian's art; see also the review by H.C., "To the Pure," in *Artnews* (Apr. 1960).

⁸⁸ On the debate on the "new geometry," see: Sidney Tillim, "What Happened to Geometry," in *Arts* (June 1959), p. 44 ("Smith accepts the modern dogma of surface unity, but the almost rococo inclination of a self-sufficient image sums up all the dexterity that manipulates the discipline. Economy and virtuosity serve each other—through an image at once graphic and elegant"); H.H. Arnason, "The New Geometry," in *Art in America*, 3 (1960), p. 60 ("Geometry, whether for structural or expressive effect, whether classic or romantic in approach, whether narrowly interpreted as regular, 'hard-edge' shapes or broadly to include 'soft-edge' simplification, seems to be with us still and again. Now the only question is: 'What do we call it?'" See also Hilton Kramer, "Constructing the Absolute," in *Arts Magazine* (May 1960) (review of the exhibition at the Galerie Chalette). The second work by Leon Polk Smith, *Composition 1100*, oil on metal, 1959, diam. 11 in (27.9 cm), private collection, is reproduced in the article by Hilton Kramer, p. 41.

⁸⁹ *Anitou no. 1*, oil on canvas, 1958, diam. 56 1/2 in (143.8 cm), *The Museum of Modern Art, New York* (gift of Dr. and Mrs. Arthur Lejwa). Reprod. in Irving Sandler, *The New York School: The Painters and Sculptors of the Fifties* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1978), pl. 171.

⁹⁰ *Anitou no. 3*, oil on canvas, 1958, diam. 57 in (144.9 cm), estate of the artist. This work was shown in *Modern Classicism*, The David Herbert Gallery, New York, Feb. 1960 (introduction to the cat. by Barbara Butler, reprod.). Reprod. in cat. of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 1984, *op. cit.*, p. 11 and in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 42.

⁹¹ *Furtherest Point*, oil on canvas, 1958, diam. 80 in (203.2 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in *It Is*, 5 (1960) (work exhibited in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble). The similar structure of *South-West* (oil on canvas, 1959, diam. 55 in [139.7cm], estate of the artist) is the complement of the first painting in color.

⁹² *Tami*, oil on canvas, 1958, diam. 78 in (198.2 cm), estate of the artist. This work was shown in Nov. 1958 in 'Section 11' of the Betty Parsons Gallery (see E. Burchhardt, "Leon Polk Smith," in *Artnews* [Nov. 1958], p. 16).

⁹³ *White Triangle no. 5*, oil on canvas, 1954, 23 1/2 x 23 1/2 in (59.7 x 59.7 cm), estate of the artist. *Untitled*, oil on canvas, 1955 (black, white and gray), estate of the artist.

⁹⁴ *Black - Black*, oil on canvas, 1956, 35 x 35 1/2 in (88.9 x 90.2 cm), estate of the artist. *S-Curve*, oil on canvas, 1957, 13 1/2 x 13 1/2 in

(34.9 x 34.9 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in b/w in *Leon Polk Smith - A Dialogue in Black and White*, exh. cat., *op. cit.* *Blue Black "S"*, oil on canvas, 1957, 17 x 17 in (43.2 x 43.2 cm), estate of the artist.

⁹⁵ *Geronimo*, oil on canvas, 1957, 67 x 45 in (170.2 x 114.3 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in DiLaurenti Gallery, exh. cat., 1987, *op. cit.* and in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁹⁶ *Moon*, oil on canvas, 1958, 77 x 38 in (195.6 x 96.5 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in b/w in cat. of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 1984, *op. cit.*, p. 12 and in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 44.

⁹⁷ *Sun*, oil on canvas, 1959, 77 x 38 in (195.6 x 96.5 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in b/w in *Leon Polk Smith*, exh. cat., Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham (MA) and San Francisco Museum of Art (CA), *op. cit.*, p. 6, no. 4; in b/w in cat. of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 1984, *op. cit.*, no. 4 and in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 45.

⁹⁸ *Nicangi*, oil on canvas, 1957, 43 x 50 in (109.2 x 127 cm), *Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven* (CT). Reprod. in b/w in *A Checklist of American Paintings at Yale University*, *op. cit.*, no. 1328.

⁹⁹ *Ada*, oil on canvas, 1958, 87 x 60 in (221 x 152.4 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in "The Paintings of Leon Polk Smith, A Conversation between Leon Polk Smith and d'Arcy Hayman," *op. cit.*, no. 3; in *Leon Polk Smith - A Dialogue in Black and White*, exh. cat., 1978, *op. cit.*; in *Leon Polk Smith*, exh. cat., Rose Art Museum and San Francisco Museum of Art, 1968, *op. cit.*, p. 5, no. 2; in Ted Castle, 1979, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

¹⁰⁰ *Expanse*, oil on canvas, 1959, 68 x 74 in (172.7 x 188 cm), private collection. Reprod. in "The Paintings of Leon Polk Smith, A Conversation between Leon Polk Smith and d'Arcy Hayman," *op. cit.*, p. 91; in Galerie Denise René cat., 1973, *op. cit.*; in Irving Sandler, *The New York School*, *op. cit.*, p. 226, pl. 172 (chap. 11: "Hard-Edge and Stained Color-Field Abstraction and Other Non-Gestural Styles: Kelly, Smith, Louis, Noland, Parker, Held and Others"; in cat. of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 1984, *op. cit.*, p. 13 and in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 19.

¹⁰¹ *May Twenty*, oil on canvas, 1959, 68 x 68 in (172.7 x 172.7 cm), estate of the artist. This work was shown at the Stable Gallery in Jan. 1962 (reprod. in V.R., "Leon Polk Smith, Stable," *Arts Magazine* [Feb. 1962], p. 40). It is mentioned in the list of works in the exh. cat. of the solo exhibition *Leon Polk Smith*, Rose Art Museum and San Francisco Museum of Art, 1968, *op. cit.* Reprod. in b/w in Irving Sandler, *The New York School*, *op. cit.*, chap. 11, p. 217, pl. 160.

¹⁰² *Black Anthem*, oil on canvas, 1960, 72 x

120 in (182.9 x 304.8 cm), *Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York* (gift of the artist). This work was exhibited at the Stable Gallery in Jan. 1962 (description in G.R.S., "Leon Polk Smith, Stable," *Artnews* [Feb. 1962], p. 12). Reprod. in color in DiLaurenti Gallery, exh. cat., 1987, *op. cit.*, no. 7; in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 48; in *Leon Polk Smith. Selected Works 1943-1992*, *op. cit.* and in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 20.

¹⁰³ *Over Easy*, oil on canvas, 1958, 43 x 33 in (109.2 x 83.8 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 46.

¹⁰⁴ *Autumn Easy*, oil on canvas, 1961, 52 x 38 in (132.1 x 96.5 cm), estate of the artist.

¹⁰⁵ *Black Bend*, oil on canvas, 1960, 86 x 68 in (218.4 x 172.7 cm), estate of the artist. This work was shown at the Stable Gallery in Jan. 1962 (reprod. in G.R.S., "Leon Polk Smith, Stable," *op. cit.*). It also featured in *Geometric Abstraction in America*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Mar.-May 1962 (introduction to the cat. by John Gordon). Reprod. in b/w in *Leon Polk Smith*, exh. cat., Rose Art Museum and San Francisco Museum of Art, 1968, *op. cit.*, no. 8, p. 10 and in *Quadrant*, 12 (1961), p. 152.

¹⁰⁶ *Two Way Stretch*, oil on canvas, 1961, 67 x 55 in (170.2 x 139.7 cm), estate of the artist. This work was shown at the Stable Gallery in 1962 (reprod. in Dore Ashton, "New York Commentary, Leon Polk Smith, The Stable Gallery," *The Studio* [Apr. 1962], p. 157). Reprod. in b/w in cat. of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁷ *Stretch of Black III*, oil on canvas, 1961, 24 x 19 in (61 x 48.7 cm), *National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.* Reprod. in color in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 21.

¹⁰⁸ *The River*, oil on canvas, 1961, 68 1/2 x 68 1/2 in (173.4 x 173.4 cm), *The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York*. This work was exhibited in *American Abstract Expressionists and Imagists*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Oct.-Dec. 1961 (introduction to the cat. by H.H. Arnason; ill. pl. 54). The "Abstract Expressionists" and "Imagists" exhibited works in this vast show, which also included exponents of the emerging New Abstraction (Al Held, Ralph Humphrey, Ellsworth Kelly, Kenneth Noland, Raymond Parker, Frank Stella, Jack Youngerman). Reprod. in Lawrence Alloway, "Easel Painting at the Guggenheim," *Art International*, vol. V, 10 (Dec. 1961), p. 32.

¹⁰⁹ H.H. Arnason, introduction to the cat., *op. cit.*, p. 30.

¹¹⁰ See Sidney Tillim, "Leon Polk Smith, Stable Gallery," in *Arts Magazine* (May-June 1963), p. 107 (general view in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 118); L.C., "Leon Polk Smith (Stable),"

in *Artnews* (Mar. 1963), p. 14. Sidney Tillim was the first critic to call Leon Polk Smith a "hard-edge painter."

¹¹¹ Leon Polk Smith explains the role of the line in "The Paintings of Leon Polk Smith, A Conversation between Leon Polk Smith and d'Arcy Hayman," *op. cit.*, p. 83 ff.

¹¹² Leon Polk Smith, 1964, *ibid.*, p. 83, expressed himself as follows: "This does create two worlds, in direct opposition to each other and yet so well related that they fit into each other as a jigsaw puzzle must."

¹¹³ This nuance of interpretation appears in the conversation of 1964, *ibid.*, p. 84: "the negative and the positive are interchangeable."

¹¹⁴ Exhibition at the Galerie Chalette, Oct. 1965 (*Leon Polk Smith: Torn Drawings*): Amy Goldin, "Leon Polk Smith (Galerie Chalette)," in *Arts Magazine* (Nov. 1965), p. 57; Lucy Lippard, "New York Letter," in *Art International* (Jan. 1966). Leon Polk Smith explored this concept in the "torn" line from the end of the 1950s (statement by Leon Polk Smith in "The Paintings of Leon Polk Smith, A Conversation between Leon Polk Smith and d'Arcy Hayman," *op. cit.*, p. 98) with paper or cardboard: *Torn Drawing*, cardboard-paste, 1960, 30 x 22 in (76.2 x 55.9 cm), **Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York**; *Torn Drawing*, paper covered with gouache, torn and pasted, 1961, 24 x 18 in (61 x 45.7 cm), **The Museum of Modern Art, New York**.

¹¹⁵ *Cobalt Violet - Deep Yellow*, 1960, 68 1/2 x 46 1/2 in (173.7 x 117.5 cm), estate of the artist. This work was shown in *Six American Abstract Painters*, Arthur Tooth Gallery, London, Jan.-Feb. 1961 (ill. in cat.). Reprod. in Lawrence Alloway, 1974, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

¹¹⁶ *Correspondence Yellow Point*, 1961, 67 x 53 1/2 in (170.2 x 135.3 cm), Galerie Hoffmann, Friedberg (Germany). This work was shown in 65th *Annual American Exhibition: Some Directions in Contemporary Paintings and Sculpture*, The Art Institute of Chicago, 1962 (reprod. in cat.). Reprod. in b/w in cat. *Formen der Farbe - Shapes of Color*, Kunsthalle Bern, Apr.-May 1967.

¹¹⁷ Lawrence Alloway, introduction to *Six American Abstract Painters*, exh. cat. *op. cit.* The writer concludes his essay with the following words, which he applies to Leon Polk Smith in the context of hard-edge abstraction: "Thus, in Smith, as in the best of the painting which is sampled in this exhibition, the work of art confronts one, as real as an object, bright as heraldry, and charged with an enigmatic spatiality." The same critic defined the characteristics of the hard-edge style in an article referring to this exhibition: "Six from New York," in *Art International* (Mar. 1961).

¹¹⁸ Introduction to the cat. *Six American Abstract Painters*, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁹ *Correspondence Red Green Large no. 8*, oil on canvas, 1961, 60 x 38 1/2 in (152.4 x 97.8 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in DiLaurenti Gallery, exh. cat.,

1987, *op. cit.*, no. 8 and in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 47 (not exhibited).

¹²⁰ *Correspondence Black - Silver*, oil on canvas, 1962, 68 x 45 in (172.7 x 114.3 cm), estate of the artist.

¹²¹ *Correspondence White - Yellow*, oil on canvas, 1962, 68 x 35 1/2 in (172.7 x 89.5 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in b/w in "The Paintings of Leon Polk Smith, A Conversation between Leon Polk Smith and d'Arcy Hayman," 1964, *op. cit.*, p. 94; in *Leon Polk Smith*, exh. cat., Rose Art Museum and San Francisco Museum of Art, *op. cit.*, p. 19, no. 11 and in cat. of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, *op. cit.*, p. 13; in color in DiLaurenti Gallery cat., 1987, *op. cit.*, no. 9.

¹²² *The New Formalists Contemporary American Painting*, The University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor (MI), Jan.-Feb. 1964 (Richard Anuszkiewicz, Alexander Liberman, C. Marca-Relli, Kenneth Noland, Jerry Okimoto, George Ortman, Oli Sihvonen, Leon Polk Smith).

¹²³ *Correspondence Red - White no. 1*, oil on canvas, 1963, 86 x 68 1/2 in (218.4 x 174 cm), Galerie Hoffmann, Friedberg (Germany). Reprod. in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 46.

¹²⁴ *Correspondence Blue - Yellow*, oil on canvas, 1963, 86 x 68 in (218.4 x 172.7 cm), **Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (TX)**. Reprod. in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 52 and in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 23.

¹²⁵ *Correspondence Black - Yellow*, oil on canvas, 1963, 76 1/2 x 51 in (193.7 x 129.5 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in Galerie Denise René cat., 1973, *op. cit.*; in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 49.

¹²⁶ *Correspondence Red Black "S" On Oval*, oil on canvas, 1963, 68 1/2 x 39 in (174 x 99 cm).

¹²⁷ *Correspondence Green - Orange*, oil on canvas, 1963, 50 x 40 1/2 in (127 x 102.9 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in b/w in *Leon Polk Smith*, exh. cat., Rose Art Museum and San Francisco Museum of Art, 1968, *op. cit.*, no. 13, p. 17 and in color in Galerie Denise René, 1973, *op. cit.*

¹²⁸ *Correspondence White - Orange*, oil on canvas, 1964, 68 x 60 in (172.7 x 152.4 cm), estate of the artist. This work was shown in *The Responsive Eye*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Feb.-Apr. 1965, reprod. in cat. no. 100; general view of the exhibition in Magdalena Dabrowski, *Contrasts of Form - Geometric Abstract Art 1910-1980 from the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art Including the Riklis Collection of McCrory Corporation* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1985) (introduction by John Elderfield), p. 210.

¹²⁹ *Correspondence Yellow - Red*, oil on canvas, 1965, 68 x 56 1/2 in (172.7 x 143.5 cm), private collection.

¹³⁰ The expression "colorform" was used by the critic Jules Langsner in the context of the exhibition *Four Abstract Classicists*, San Francisco Museum of Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Sep.-Oct. 1959 (introduction to the cat., p. 10).

¹³¹ *Correspondence Violet - Scarlet*, oil on canvas, 1965, 86 x 40 in (218.4 x 101.6 cm), estate of the artist.

¹³² *Correspondence Black - White Reversed*, oil on canvas, 1965, diam. 47 1/2 in (120 cm), private collection.

¹³³ *Correspondence Orange - Blue*, oil on canvas, 1965, 90 x 68 in (228.6 x 172.72 cm), **Museum Moderner Kunst, Sammlung Ludwig, Vienna (Austria)**. Reprod. in color in Nicolas Calas, "Maximal and Minimal, Constructivism and Structures," *Arts Magazine* (Summer 1968), p. 35 and in cat. *Museum moderner Kunst - Sammlung Ludwig - Wien 1979*, in b/w in cat. of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, *op. cit.*, p. 13. It was exhibited in *Systemic Painting*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Oct.-Nov. 1966 (reprod. in cat. introduction by Lawrence Alloway). Participants included Jo Baer, Robert Barry, Thomas Downing, Paul Feeley, Dean Fleming, Al Held, Ralph Humphrey, Will Insley, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Mangold, Agnes Martin, Howard Mehring, Kenneth Noland, David Novros, Larry Poons, Edwin Ruda, Robert Ryman, Frank Stella, Neil Williams, Jack Youngerman.

¹³⁴ *Correspondence Blue - White*, oil on canvas, 1966, 68 x 54 in (172.7 x 137.2 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in b/w in *Leon Polk Smith*, exh. cat., Rose Art Museum and San Francisco Museum of Art, 1968, *op. cit.*, no. 23, p. 20.

¹³⁵ *Correspondence Green - Orange*, oil on canvas, 1966, 82 x 69 in (208.3 x 175.3 cm), estate of the artist. This work was exhibited at Ludwigshafen and Grenoble (not reprod. in the cat.).

¹³⁶ *Correspondence Black - White*, acrylic on canvas, 1967, 90 x 50 in (228.6 x 127 cm), **Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York** (gift of the artist). Reprod. in color in Galerie Denise René cat., 1973, *op. cit.*; in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 54 and in *Leon Polk Smith. Selected Works 1943-1992*, *op. cit.*

¹³⁷ *Correspondence Yellow - White*, oil on canvas, 1967, 94 x 94 in (238.8 x 238.8 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in Lawrence Alloway, 1974, *op. cit.*, p. 60; in color in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 27.

¹³⁸ *Correspondence Green - Red*, oil on canvas, 1968, diam. 80 in (203.2 cm), estate of the artist (exhibited at Ludwigshafen).

¹³⁹ *Correspondence Black - White*, oil on canvas, 1968, 86 x 120 in (218.4 x 304.8 cm), estate of the artist (exhibited at Ludwigshafen; not reprod. in the cat.).

¹⁴⁰ A right angle is drawn inside *Correspondence Green - Yellow*, tondo, oil on canvas, 1968, diam. 80 in (203.2 cm), estate of the artist.

¹⁴¹ Galerie Chalette typescript, 1969 (presentation of the exhibition).

¹⁴² See statement by the artist on the subject of *Three Yellow Ovals*, published in *The Maximal Implications of the Minimal Line*, cat., The Edith C. Blum Art Institute, Milton and Sally Avery Center for the Arts, The Bard College Center, Annandale-on-Hudson (NY), 1985, p. 73 (introduction by Linda Weintraub; Donald Kuspit, "The Minimalist Line as an Attenuated, Tragic Act of Art"). Exponents of Minimal Art and Conceptual Art participated in this exhibition, including Robert Morris, Sol LeWitt, Carl Andre, Douglas Huebler.

¹⁴³ Exhibition at the Galerie Chalette, Oct.–Nov. 1969; Galerie Chalette press release; Nicolas Calas, "L.P. Smith, Galerie Chalette 1969," in *Arts Magazine* (Nov. 1969), p. 60 and N.E., "L.P. Smith – Chalette," in *Artnews* (Dec. 1969), pp. 70–71.

¹⁴⁴ Text written by Leon Polk Smith, "Spaceform Spaceforms," in 1969, published in *Art Now*, vol. 1, 8 (Oct. 1969). In this text of poetic form, the "spaceform" concept is stressed.

¹⁴⁵ *Three Yellow Ovals*, acrylic on canvas, 1967, 105 × 52 in (266.7 × 132 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in *The Maximal Implications of the Minimal Line*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*; in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 59 and in *Abstraction-Geometry-Painting*, exh. cat., Albright-Knox Art Gallery, *op. cit.*, p. 127. *Constellation Three Red Ovals*, acrylic on canvas, 1968, 96 × 47 in (243.8 × 119.4 cm), estate of the artist. Exceptionally, no internal line delimits the panels.

¹⁴⁶ Statement of the artist, 1985, *op. cit.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Constellation Far Out Red – White*, acrylic on canvas, 1967, 130 × 30 in (330.2 × 76.2 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 58; the installation was different in the 1989 exhibition and in that of Oct.–Dec. 1992 at the Galerie Ivan Schlegel, Zurich (Switzerland), *Leon Polk Smith. Wegbereiter der hard-edge Malerei*.

¹⁴⁹ *Constellation Green – Blue*, acrylic on canvas, 1968, 86 × 86 in (218.4 × 218.4 cm), Galerie Hoffman, Friedberg (Germany). Reprod. in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 62 and in DiLaurenti Gallery cat., *op. cit.*, no. 15.

¹⁵⁰ *Constellation I Deep Yellow and Blue Dark*, acrylic on canvas, 1968–69, 86 1/2 × 54 1/2 in (219.7 × 138.4 cm), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

¹⁵¹ *Constellation S Blue – Yellow*, acrylic on canvas, 1968, diam. 23 1/2 in (59.7 cm) each, estate of the artist.

¹⁵² *Constellation M*, oil on canvas, 1969, 3 panels, 83 1/8 × 88 1/2 in (212.4 × 224.8 cm) each, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham (MA) (gift of Dr. and Mrs. Arthur Lejwa).

¹⁵³ *Constellation A'*, acrylic on canvas, 1969,

77 × 104 in (195.6 × 264.2 cm), estate of the artist.

¹⁵⁴ *Constellation Red – Blue – Red*, acrylic on canvas, 1969, 71 × 213 in (180.3 × 541 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in brochure *Leon Polk Smith Constellations 1967–1973*, Washburn Gallery, Jan.–Feb. 1984 and in b/w in the cat. of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹⁵⁵ *Constellation Twelve Circles*, acrylic on canvas, 1969, 102 × 146 in (259.1 × 370.8 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in *Eight Modern Masters*, exh. cat., Amarillo Art Center, Amarillo (TX), Apr.–June 1985, p. 27; in Washburn Gallery brochure, 1984, *op. cit.* and in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 60.

¹⁵⁶ The reproduction of the work in the Amarillo Art Center cat. is accompanied by the following statement by the artist: "The various areas are still flat, but they do not remain so. With careful observation, they (the various areas) begin to curve in every direction, like sculptured space moving in, out, up, down, around, back and forth. Each area pressing the other. The mystery is this situation, coupled with an endlessly silent contemplative serenity."

¹⁵⁷ *Constellation Milky Way*, acrylic on canvas, 1970, two panels, circle: diam. 78 in (198.1 cm); oval: 67 × 40 in (170.2 × 101.6 cm), Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York (gift of the artist). Reprod. in color in DiLaurenti Gallery cat., *op. cit.*, no. 16, in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 63, in *Leon Polk Smith. Selected Works 1943–1992*, exh. cat., *op. cit.* and in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 29.

¹⁵⁸ The opposition of the lines and the role of the space on the wall is found again in the 1975 "Constellation," *Constellation Yellow – Black – Red*, acrylic on canvas, 53 × 37 in (134.6 × 94 cm), estate of the artist.

¹⁵⁹ *Constellation #5 Blue – Red*, acrylic on canvas, 1972, two panels: 94 × 47 in (238.8 × 119.4 cm), Museum für Konkrete Kunst, Ingolstadt (Germany). Reprod. in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 65.

¹⁶⁰ *Constellation Yellow – Blue Violet*, acrylic on canvas, 1972, 76 × 46 in (193 × 116.8 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 64.

¹⁶¹ *Constellation Green Square Accent*, acrylic on canvas, 1971, six elements: 1 square 31 1/2 in (80 cm), 2 squares 23 1/2 in (59.7 cm), 3 squares 13 1/2 in (34.3 cm), estate of the artist. Gradation of red, light red, orange, yellow, lemon yellow. A work with overlapping pointed ovals within the curve of an ellipse is reproduced in the Washburn Gallery brochure, 1984, *op. cit.* Also in this same series, *Constellation Northeast Gate*, acrylic on canvas, 1972, 54 in (137.2 cm) in height, private collection, is reproduced in Lawrence Alloway, 1974, *op. cit.*

¹⁶² *Constellation Black – Violet*, acrylic on

canvas, 1967, three circles, 53 1/2 × 18 in (135.9 × 45.7 cm) each, private collection.

¹⁶³ *Constellation Six Circles Black and White*, acrylic on canvas, 1974, six panels, diam. 18 in (45.7 cm) each, private collection.

¹⁶⁴ *Constellation Tall Black – Red*, acrylic on canvas, 1975, 58 × 174 in (147.3 × 442 cm) estate of the artist (exhibited at Ludwigshafen).

¹⁶⁵ *Constellation Architectural Rhythms Black – White*, acrylic on canvas, 1970, 47 × 95 in (119.4 × 241.3 cm), private collection. Reprod. in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 10 and in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 28.

¹⁶⁶ Judith Tannebaum, "L.P. Smith, Galerie Denise René," in *Arts Magazine* (Apr. 1977), p. 31. Some 1976 "tontos" were later shown in the exhibition *Leon Polk Smith – A Dialogue in Black and White*, 1978, exh. cat. *op. cit.*

¹⁶⁷ #7612, acrylic on canvas, 1976, diam. 80 in (203.2 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in *Black and White Tondos* brochure, Washburn Gallery, Dec. 1981–Jan. 1982 (general view of the exhibition) and in Ted Castle, 1979, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

¹⁶⁸ #7619 – *White Cross*, acrylic on canvas, 1976, diam. 48 in (121.9 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in Washburn Gallery brochure, 1981–82, *op. cit.*; in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 66 and in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 31.

¹⁶⁹ *Pearl Gray and Black Cross*, acrylic on canvas, 1976, diam. 59 1/2 in (151.1 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 66.

¹⁷⁰ #7602, acrylic on canvas, 1976, diam. 79 1/2 in (201.9 cm), estate of the artist. The form is inscribed with all its corners in a circular frame (unlike a geometrized 1968 work, *Correspondence White Square – Orange Circle*, estate of the artist, where the white square only has one corner within the orange circumference).

¹⁷¹ #7601 – *Open Door*, acrylic on canvas, 1976, diam. 58 in (147.3 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in *Leon Polk Smith – A Dialogue in Black and White*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*; this work was exhibited in *Leon Polk Smith* at the Galerie Hoffmann, Friedberg (Germany), Dec. 1991–Mar. 1992 and at the Galerie Schlegel, Zurich (Switzerland), Oct.–Dec. 1992.

¹⁷² #7616, acrylic on canvas, 1976, diam. 79 1/2 in (202.6 cm), private collection.

¹⁷³ #7801, acrylic on canvas, 1978, diam. 80 in (203.2 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. on the cover of the Washburn Gallery brochure, 1981–82, *op. cit.*

¹⁷⁴ #7802 – *Cross Roads*, acrylic on canvas, 1978, 84 × 84 in (213.4 × 213.4 cm) Robert M. Jamieson Collection, New York. Reprod. in Joseph Masheck, "Iconicity," *Artforum* (Feb. 1979), p. 30 and in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 67.

¹⁷⁵ *Cross Roads Gray*, acrylic on canvas,

1978, 82 × 82 in (208.3 × 208.3 cm), private collection. Reprod. in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 32.

¹⁷⁶ *Ax – Black White*, acrylic on canvas, 1978, 82 × 86 in (208.3 × 218.4 cm), estate of the artist.

¹⁷⁷ *Rising Red*, acrylic on canvas, 1980, 90 × 120 in (228.6 × 304.8 cm), estate of the artist. This cohesive force characterizes another work from 1988, *Prairie Moon*, acrylic on canvas, 1988, 84 × 84 in (213.4 × 213.4 cm), estate of the artist.

¹⁷⁸ *Red Wing*, acrylic on canvas, 1979, 48 1/2 × 181 in (123.2 × 459.7 cm), **The Museum of Modern Art, New York**. Reprod. in *L.P. Smith Paintings* brochure, Washburn Gallery, Mar.–Apr. 1981 (see also B. Gallati, "Leon Polk Smith, Washburn," in *Arts Magazine* [June 1981], p. 29); in color in DiLaurenti Gallery, exh. cat., 1987, *op. cit.*, pl. 7A and in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 34. There exists a more symmetrical version of this exchange of two "wings," *Beyond the Blue*, 1981, 96 × 85 in (243.8 × 215.9 cm), private collection (reprod. in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 76; in Lawrence Alloway, "Leon Polk Smith: Large Abstract Paintings, 1969–1981," *Arts Magazine* (Dec. 1981) and in b/w in *Leon Polk Smith Large Paintings 1979–1981*, exh. cat., The Fine Arts Center, State University of New York at Stony Brook, Oct.–Dec. 1981 (introduction by Lawrence Alloway).

¹⁷⁹ *George Washington Bridge #2*, acrylic on canvas, 1979, 80 × 220 in (203.2 × 558.8 cm), private collection. Reprod. in b/w in *Leon Polk Smith Large Paintings 1979–1981*, exh. cat., *op. cit.* and in color in *Leon Polk Smith* brochure, Washburn Gallery, Mar.–Apr. 1981. A work consisting of three equal, round panels, *Midnight Pyramids (Midnight Teepees)* (acrylic on canvas, 1986, 80 × 240 in (203.2 × 609.6 cm) each, diam. 80 in (203.2 cm), **Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York** (gift of the artist), is the last work with circular planes united by their plastic cohesive force (reprod. in color in *Leon Polk Smith. Selected Works 1943–1992*, *op. cit.*, and in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 39).

¹⁸⁰ *Long Journey*, acrylic on canvas, 1980, 90 × 180 in (228.6 × 457.2 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 23 and in b/w in cat. of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹⁸¹ *Form Space Series #2*, acrylic on canvas, 1980, two panels, 90 × 144 in (228.6 × 365.8 cm), **Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York** (gift of the artist). Reprod. in color in *Leon Polk Smith. Selected Works 1943–1992*, *op. cit.* *Form Space Series #4*, acrylic on canvas (dark green), 1980, two panels, 73 × 118 in (185.4 × 299.7 cm), estate of the artist. This work was exhibited at the Burnett Miller Gallery, Los Angeles, in May–June 1987 (see Colin Gardner's review in the *Los Angeles Times*, May 22,

1987). Reprod. in b/w in *Leon Polk Smith Large Paintings 1979–1981*, exh. cat., *op. cit.* and in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 74. *Form Space Series: Black – Red*, acrylic on canvas, 1981, two panels, 108 × 55 in (274.3 × 139.7 cm) / 60 × 54 in (152.4 × 137.2 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in Washburn Gallery brochure, 1982, *op. cit.*; in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 75 and in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 37. *Form Space Series: Yellow – Blue*, acrylic on canvas, 1982, two panels, 108 × 54 in (274.3 × 137.2 cm) each, estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in Washburn Gallery brochure, 1982, *op. cit.*

The "Arrangements" also develop from the "Form Space" concept: *Form Space Series: Arrangement in Black and Red*, acrylic on canvas, 1980, six panels, 120 × 180 in (304.8 × 457.2 cm), **Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York** (gift of the artist). Reprod. in color in Washburn Gallery brochure, 1981, *op. cit.*; in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 71 and in *Leon Polk Smith. Selected Works 1943–1992*, *op. cit.* *Form Space Series: Arrangement in Blue and Gray*, acrylic on canvas, 1981, 90 × 164 in (228.6 × 416.6 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in Washburn Gallery brochure, 1981, *op. cit.*

¹⁸² Each panel is painted a single color. Some works are based on one color, others on two (*Form Space Series: Black – Red*), respecting the principle of binary opposition.

¹⁸³ *White painting nos. 1–4*, acrylic on canvas, 1987, group of 4 canvases, from one to four panels, each 46 × 126 in (116.8 × 320 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. of *White Painting no. 3* in DiLaurenti Gallery, exh. cat., 1987, *op. cit.*, no. 13; view of the whole group in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, pp. 84–85. See description by Carter Ratcliff, in "Leon Polk Smith: 5 Decades of Geometric Invention" (introduction to the DiLaurenti Gallery exh. cat., 1987, *op. cit.*), p. 9.

¹⁸⁴ *Sunset Caribe*, acrylic on canvas, 1983, 60 × 112 in (152.4 × 284.5 cm), private collection. Reprod. in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 78 and in b/w in cat. of the Nationalgalerie, Berlin, *op. cit.*, p. 18; this work was exhibited at the Galerie Hoffmann in Oct.–Dec. 1992.

¹⁸⁵ *New Moon for August*, acrylic on canvas, 1983, 120 × 60 in (304.8 × 152.4 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 79.

¹⁸⁶ *At Sunrise*, acrylic on canvas, 1983, 40 × 72 in (101.6 × 182.9 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 36.

¹⁸⁷ *Purple under Curve*, acrylic on canvas, 1984, 74 × 108 in (188 × 274.3 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. on the cover of the *Leon Polk Smith New Works* brochure,

DiLaurenti Gallery, Jan.–Mar. 1986; in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 81.

¹⁸⁸ *Green – Two Black Edges*, acrylic on canvas, 1984, 74 × 170 in (188 × 431.8 cm), **Neues Museum, Staatliches Museum für Kunst und Design, Nürnberg (Germany)**. Reprod. in color in *Leon Polk Smith New Works*, exh. cat., *op. cit.* and in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 77.

¹⁸⁹ *Violet with Red Curve*, acrylic on canvas with wood frame, 1985, 72 × 84 in (182.9 × 213.4 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color on the cover of the DiLaurenti Gallery brochure, 1986, *op. cit.*

¹⁹⁰ *Floating Black*, acrylic on canvas, 1984, estate of the artist. Reprod. in DiLaurenti Gallery brochure, 1986, *op. cit.* and in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 80.

¹⁹¹ *Easy Ride*, acrylic on canvas, 1985, 58 × 120 in (147.3 × 304.8 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in DiLaurenti Gallery brochure, 1986, *op. cit.* and in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 83.

¹⁹² *Long Horizons*, acrylic on canvas, 1984, 65 × 216 in (165.1 × 548.6 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in Ludwigshafen and Grenoble cat., *op. cit.*, p. 121.

¹⁹³ Some works in this series were exhibited at the DiLaurenti Gallery in 1986 (see Addison Parks, "Life Line, Leon Polk Smith," in *Arts Magazine* [Feb. 1986]).

¹⁹⁴ *Big Space – Black Line*, acrylic on canvas, 1990, 80 × 56 1/2 in (203.2 × 143.5 cm), estate of the artist.

¹⁹⁵ *The Place no. 1*, relief (wood), 1978, 13 × 10 1/2 in (33 × 26.7 cm), estate of the artist.

¹⁹⁶ *The Place no. 3*, relief (wood) and paint, 1978, 13 × 10 1/2 in (33 × 26.7 cm), estate of the artist.

¹⁹⁷ *Yonder Orange*, acrylic on canvas, 1990, 77 × 120 in (195.6 × 304.8 cm), estate of the artist.

¹⁹⁸ *Yonder Purple*, acrylic on canvas, 1990, 90 × 60 in (228.6 × 152.4 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 40.

¹⁹⁹ *Yonder Blue*, acrylic on canvas, 1990, 40 × 60 in (101.6 × 152.4 cm), courtesy Galerie Hoffmann, Friedberg (Germany).

²⁰⁰ *Yonder Turquoise Green*, acrylic on canvas, 1990, 60 × 40 in (152.4 × 101.6 cm) estate of the artist. *Yonder Turquoise Green* and *Yonder Blue* were exhibited in *Leon Polk Smith* at the Galerie Hoffmann, Friedberg (Germany), Dec. 1991–Mar. 1992 and in *Leon Polk Smith. Wegbereiter der hard-edge Malerei* at the Galerie Ivan Schlegel, Zürich (Switzerland), Oct.–Dec. 1992. Doubtless a somewhat formalist similarity could be found in Smith's 1981–83 series of collages, exhibited at the Nationalgalerie in 1984, which was a precedent for the Yonder series. However, the spirit of the work is different.

²⁰¹ *Open Composition*, oil on canvas, 1946, 52 × 28 in (132 × 71.1 cm), **The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas**. Reprod. in

Carter Ratcliff, "New York Letter," *Art International* (Feb. 1971), p. 66.

²⁰² *Open Space*, acrylic on canvas, 1990, 68 × 60 (172.7 × 152.4 cm), estate of the artist.

²⁰³ Leon Polk Smith "Open Door." *Gemälde und Collagen von 1949–1991*, Galerie Hoffmann, Friedberg (Germany), Dec. 1991–Mar. 1992. *Leon Polk Smith. Selected Works 1943–1992. Promised Gift to the Brooklyn Museum*, Brooklyn Museum, New York, Jan.–Feb. 1993. Review by Holland Cotter, "A 12-Work Gift Sampler from Leon Polk Smith," in *The New York Times* (Friday, Mar. 19, 1993). 1995 installation for the exhibition *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, Brooklyn Museum, Oct. 1995–Jan. 1996 (review by Howard Halle, "Leon Polk Smith: American Painter," in *Time Out New York* [Oct. 11–18, 1995]; Roberta Smith, "Leon Polk Smith Goes beyond his Inspiration," in *The New York Times* [Friday, Sep. 29, 1995]; Michael Fressola, "Modern influences," in *Punch, Staten Island Sunday Advance*, Section E [Oct. 8, 1995]).

²⁰⁴ *Jubilee*, acrylic on canvas, 1992, 90 × 52 in (228.6 × 132.1 cm), **Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York** (gift of the artist). Reprod. in color in *Leon Polk Smith. Selected Works 1943–1992*, *op. cit.*

²⁰⁵ *Playing One*, acrylic on canvas, 1992, 56 × 38 in (142.2 × 96.5 cm), private collection.

²⁰⁶ *Jubilee Square*, acrylic on canvas, 1992, 90 × 52 in (228.6 × 132.1 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*

²⁰⁷ *Open Doors*, acrylic on canvas, 1992, 90 × 52 in (228.6 × 132.1 cm), estate of the artist.

²⁰⁸ *Black Angle on Gray*, acrylic on canvas, 1992, 72 × 48 in (182.9 × 121.9 cm), estate of the artist.

²⁰⁹ *Zig-Zag Gray*, acrylic on canvas, 1994, 56 × 38 in (142.2 × 96.5 cm), estate of the artist.

²¹⁰ *Dark Cobalt Blue*, acrylic on canvas, 1992.

²¹¹ *Event in Red*, acrylic on canvas, 1994, 72 × 24 in (182.9 × 61 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 45.

²¹² *Event in Blue +*, acrylic on canvas, 1994, 66 × 54 in (167.6 × 137.2 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 44.

²¹³ *Event in Green*, acrylic on canvas, 1994, diam. 58 in (147.3 cm), estate of the artist.

²¹⁴ *Event in Gray*, acrylic on canvas, 1994, diam. 58 in (147.3 cm), estate of the artist.

²¹⁵ *Event in Blue*, acrylic on canvas, 1994, diam. 58 in (147.3 cm), estate of the artist.

²¹⁶ *Event in Orange*, acrylic on canvas, 1994, diam. 58 in (147.3 cm), estate of the artist. Reprod. in color in *Leon Polk Smith American Painter*, exh. cat., *op. cit.*, pl. 43.

²¹⁷ *Event in Black*, acrylic on canvas, 1994, diam. 58 in (147.3 cm), estate of the artist.

²¹⁸ *Event in Scarlet*, acrylic on canvas, 1995, diam. 18 in (45.7 cm), estate of the artist.

²¹⁹ Allusions to the hard-edge style appear in Sidney Tillim, in 1963 ("Leon Polk Smith, Stable Gallery," *op. cit.*) and J.R. Mellow, "Leon Polk Smith" in *Art International* (May 1968), p. 66. Leon Polk Smith himself recognizes the implication of the "hard-edge image" in "this severe pure color combination" ("The Paintings of Leon Polk Smith, A Conversation between Leon Polk Smith and d'Arcy Hayman").

Claudine Humblet

The author was born in Brussels in 1946 and graduated with a degree in art history and archaeology from the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, the Free University of Brussels. She was appointed to the Conseil Culturel de la Communauté Française de Belgique in 1972.

In 1977, she obtained her doctorate from the University of Amsterdam with a thesis (written in Amsterdam, Darmstadt, and Berlin) on the influence of Constructivism and Neoplasticism on the evolution of the Weimar Bauhaus, titled *Le Bauhaus*, and published by L'Âge d'Homme, Lausanne, in 1980. At the same time she became a member of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA).

Seeking a subject that would cement her artistic specialization, the author devoted herself to intensive research on the American avant-gardes of the 1960s, under the late Professor Hans L.C. Jaffé (Amsterdam), which brought her into close contact with contemporary society. She pursued this research during her many trips to the United States where she tirelessly sought out the artworks that were to directly inspire this book. The author reaped the benefits of her personal contacts with the artists as well as the works themselves. She constantly added new authentic documents, acquired from archives, galleries that were important in the 1960s, and the numerous institutions she visited, to the existent wealth of information.

This vital work reflects a concern to faithfully represent the artworks described, the spirit of their times, and the artists' messages. It encourages reflection and enlightens the reader as to the aesthetic of Modernist art in its purest and most distilled forms.