

Artist Resources – David Smith (American, 1906-1965)

JORDAN SCHNITZER MUSEUM OF ART

[Smith at the National Gallery of Art](#)

[Smith at the Tate](#)

[Smith at Hauser & Wirth](#)

[Smith Estate](#)



Smith, 1962
Photograph: Dan Budnik

In 1964, [David Smith: Sculpture & Drawings](#) was on display at the Institute of Contemporary Art Philadelphia with thematic framing by Clement Greenberg.

The Fogg Art Museum installed [David Smith 1906-1965: A Retrospective Exhibition](#) in 1966, one year after the artist's passing.

[David Smith: Sculptures in Iron and Steel](#) was at the Kröller Müller Museum in The Netherlands in 1966, the first European exhibition of the artist's work.

The National Gallery of Art launched [David Smith: Seven Major Themes](#) in 1982, featuring the seven series of four hundred welded sculptures completed in the last decade of Smith's career.

In 1996, the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid installed [David Smith: 1906-1965](#) to illustrate "the dichotomy between America and Europe that begins during the post-war years."

Read a [review](#) of *A Memorial Exhibition: David Smith*, which was on view at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1996.

From 1997 until 1999, Storm King Art Center produced a three-year project of Smith's work entitled [The Fields of David Smith](#).

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum installed [David Smith: A Centennial](#) in 2006. The exhibition was the museum's first retrospective of the artist's work since 1969 and commemorated what would have been the artist's 100th birthday. Read a review in [Artforum](#) and another one in [New York Magazine](#).

Also in 2006, the Tate displayed [David Smith: Sculptures](#) as the largest display of the artist's work in Europe to that date.

David Smith: Cubes and Anarchy was organized by the [Los Angeles County Museum of Art](#) in 2011, the first major thematic exhibition of Smith's work featuring over 100 pieces. Read a review in [CAA Reviews](#) and watch a video excerpt of an [interview](#) with the artist and Frank O'Hara from 1964 that LACMA released online. The exhibition then traveled to the [Whitney Museum of American Art](#), where Karen Rosenberg reviewed it for the [New York Times](#).

Read an [essay](#) by Peter Stevens, "In the Artist's Words: David Smith Origins and Innovations" published by Hauser & Wirth in 2018.

In 2023, [Songs of the Horizon: David Smith, Music, and Dance](#) at the Hyde Collection was the first exhibition to focus on the influence of music and dance on Smith's practice. Read a [review](#) of the exhibition by Karen Wilkin in the Wall Street Journal.



Smith in his studio, 1951
Photograph: John Stewart

David Smith (American, 1906-1965)

Lunar Arc, 1961

Painted steel

Private Collection; L2025:89.1

Born and raised in Indiana, David Smith moved to New York in 1926 and began studying painting at the Art Students League. In the early 1930s, Smith shifted his focus to sculpture and became known for his sculptural counterparts to Abstract Expressionist painting. **Lunar Arc** is a central work in Smith's career. It was the first in his series of *White Sculptures*, which explore the interaction between sculpture and nature. The artist considered it "a sculptural stencil" that casts dynamic shadows and blurs the line between abstraction and representation of the crescent moon.

On view November 24, 2025 – February 27, 2026





David Smith (American, 1906-1965)

Anchorhead, 1952

Steel, painted

Private Collection; L2023:103.6

David Smith began his art career by studying painting at the Art Students League in New York, but shifted his focus to sculpture in the early 1930s. His linear, abstract, and geometric sculptures soon became known as sculptural counterparts to Abstract Expressionist painting. **Anchorhead** was completed when the artist was teaching sculpture at Indiana University in Bloomington. In a lecture a few years earlier, Smith said: “To understand a work of art, it must be seen and perceived, not worded.... The actual understanding of a work of art only comes through the process by which it was created—and that was by perception.”

On view February 28 – June 2, 2024

David Smith (American, 1906-1965)

Forging VI, 1955

Steel

Private Collection; L2023:74.12

American artist David Smith moved to New York in 1926 and began studying painting at the Art Students League with Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) and Robert Motherwell (1915-1991). In the early 1930s, Smith shifted his focus to sculpture and became known for his sculptural counterparts to Abstract Expressionist painting. **Forging VI** was completed when the artist first began using a power forge to realize line drawings in physical form. The ten *Forging* sculptures were all created in 1955 at an industrial factory in Bloomington, Indiana, where Smith bent, flattened, pinched, polished, and waxed them to create simplified vertical forms. As the artist said: "It is a line drawing really. I would never have done that if I hadn't been interested in drawing lines."

On view November 22, 2023 – February 25, 2024

