

MNUCHIN GALLERY

For Immediate Release

MNUCHIN GALLERY PRESENTS *DAVID SMITH: THE FORGINGS*

FRIEZE MASTERS
October 15 – 19, 2014



New York—At this year's edition of Frieze Masters, Mnuchin Gallery will present a solo exhibition of work by acclaimed American sculptor David Smith featuring a selection of sculptures from the artist's historic *Forging* series. This will be the first solo exhibition of Smith's work in London since the retrospective, *David Smith: A Centennial*, traveled to the Tate Modern in 2006. Frieze Masters will take place October 15-19, 2014, in London's Regent's Park.

The monolithic linearity of the *Forgings* is emblematic of Smith's groundbreaking use of industrial processes, materials and fabricators—a shift in approach that dramatically altered not only the future of his own oeuvre, but also the course of twentieth-century sculpture. He created the series in 1955, while working as a visiting artist at the University of Indiana, in his home state. With the assistance of a power forge operated by Leroy Borton of Seward & Company, Bloomington, Smith flattened, cut, plugged, bent and joined raw steel bars to create totemic vertical forms. By polishing, rusting, lacquering and painting their surfaces, he

assembled a group of related but individually independent works that vary widely in scale and finish, each one imbued with its own powerful personality.

The *Forgings* embody immediacy and unity, what a critic writing at the time of their first presentation in 1956 described as a, “force and vigor and gleam full of powerful expression...as if pulsating from the echoes of a triumphant shout.” They bring to mind the spare human figures of Alberto Giacometti and the linear “zips” of Barnett Newman, manifesting in three dimensions Smith’s career-long exploration of the drawn line and his belief in the creative imperative of the human impulse towards mark making. Although clearly engaged in a sophisticated dialogue with art history, Smith boldly titled his *Forgings* after the mechanical process used to create them, underscoring his pivotal role as the sculptor whose works bridged the conceptual divide between the intensely humanistic poetics of Alberto Giacometti and Constantin Brancusi and the industrial assertiveness and monumentality of Donald Judd and Richard Serra.

Working closely with Peter Stevens, Executive Director of The Estate of David Smith, Mnuchin Gallery has curated an exhibition at Frieze Masters that will contextualize the *Forgings* with other works by Smith that share their totemic qualities and emphasize the dramatic diversity of his oeuvre. Spanning the years from 1955 to 1963, these sculptures echo the abstract verticality of the *Forgings* and demonstrate Smith’s mastery of a wide range of materials—including bronze, painted steel, and found objects—and subject matter, including surrealist human figures and machine-like assemblages. On view will be *Ninety Father* (1961), *VB XVII* (1963), and *Untitled*, an intimate unique bronze dating from 1955. The gallery’s presentation will also include several works on paper that highlight the ways in which Smith’s sculptural processes are deeply rooted in the practice of drawing.

Artist’s Biography:

David Roland Smith was born on March 9, 1906, in Decatur, Indiana, and died in Bennington, Vermont, on May 23, 1965. Following his graduation from high school, Smith took a summer job working as a spot-welder on the assembly line of an automobile factory.

He moved to New York in 1926, and entered the Art Students League. Upon seeing illustrations of the first iron works by Julio González and Pablo Picasso, Smith was inspired to apply the skills he had learned in the automobile factory to his art. His constructions of 1933 are likely the first welded metal sculptures made in the United States. Quickly transcending his European influences, he continued to innovate, becoming the singular sculptor of the Abstract Expressionist generation, and one of the preeminent sculptors of the twentieth century.

Smith represented the United States at the 1951 International Biennale in Sao Paulo, and at the Venice Biennials of 1954 and 1958. He was included in “Twelve Modern American Painters and Sculptors,” organized by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, which traveled to Paris, Zurich, Düsseldorf, Stockholm, Helsinki, and Oslo in 1953-54, and was included in “Dokumenta” in Kassel, Germany, in 1959 and 1964.

In 1961, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, organized a Smith exhibition that traveled throughout the United States. In 1962, the Italian government invited Smith to exhibit at the

Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto. Given access to an abandoned steel mill and provided with a group of assistants, he created an international sensation by producing the 27 sculptures of the *Voltri* series in 30 days. He extended the series the following year, in Bolton Landing, producing the 25 works that comprise the *Voltri-Bolton* series.

David Smith was appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson to the National Council on the Arts in 1965. Smith died at the height of his creative maturity in a car crash on May 23 of that year. He was 59 years old.

Among his numerous international exhibitions of drawing, painting and sculpture, Smith's solo retrospective exhibitions include: Museum of Modern Art, New York (1957); Los Angeles County Museum of Art (1965); Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo (1966, traveled to Tate Gallery, London, Kunsthalle Basel, Städtische Kunstsammlung, Nuremberg and Wilhelm-Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg, through 1967); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (1969, traveled to Dallas Museum of Fine Arts and Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C.); Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1979, traveled to Serpentine Gallery, London and Detroit Institute of Art, through 1981); Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. (1982-83, traveled to San Antonio Museum of Art); National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (1982-83); Sezon Museum of Art, Tokyo (1994, traveled to Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, Shiga, and Kawamura Memorial Museum of Art, Chiba); IVAM, Valencia (1996, traveled to Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid); Storm King Art Center, Mountainville, New York (1997-99); and Tel Aviv Museum of Art (2000). A centennial retrospective organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2006) traveled to Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris and Tate Modern, London (through 2007). "David Smith: Cubes and Anarchy," a survey that included sculpture, painting, drawing and photography that focused on Smith's exploration of geometric abstraction, was organized by Los Angeles County Museum of Art and traveled to Whitney Museum of American Art, New York and Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus (2011-12).

About Mnuchin Gallery:

Mnuchin Gallery is located in the historic townhouse at 45 East 78th Street on Manhattan's Upper East Side and is dedicated to presenting museum-quality exhibitions of postwar and contemporary art. Owner and founder Robert Mnuchin, whose passion for the arts developed through his childhood and his long career in the financial sector as head of trading at Goldman Sachs, began a successful second career as a dealer in 1992, forming reputable partnerships with Los Angeles dealer James Corcoran, C&M Arts (1992) and Dominique Lévy, L&M Arts (2005). In 2012, Mnuchin and Lévy parted ways and the gallery was reborn as Mnuchin Gallery in January 2013. Mnuchin Gallery is now under the direction of Robert Mnuchin and Partner Sukanya Rajaratnam.

Mnuchin Gallery carries on the tradition of presenting thoughtfully curated, carefully researched exhibitions, documented by scholarly publications. Its first year of programming included solo shows by some of the most influential artists of the 20th century, including Ellsworth Kelly and Alexander Calder, as well as thematic exhibitions that re-contextualize masterworks from the modern and postwar periods.

For more information on Mnuchin Gallery, please visit www.mnuchingallery.com.

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Image: From left to right: *Forging VI*, 1955, *Forging VIII*, 1955, *Forging VII*, 1955, *Yellow Vertical (Construction in Three Elements)*, 1955, *The Woman Bandit* (unfinished), 1956- 58, and *Construction with Forged Neck*, 1955.

Photograph taken by the artist at Bolton Landing Dock, Lake George, New York, c. 1956. © Estate of David Smith/Licensed by VAGA, New York.

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