



Leon Polk Smith: Back to Oklahoma

EDUCATORS RESOURCE



720 South Husband Street, Stillwater, OK 74074
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Exhibition Details

About the exhibition

This exhibition is drawn from a recent gift of works on paper to the museum from the Leon Polk Smith Foundation. A native of Oklahoma, Leon Polk Smith (1906-1996) moved to New York in 1945 where he pioneered a style of geometric abstraction that laid the foundation for Minimalism in the 1960s. Better known for his paintings, Smith created approximately 2,000 unique works on paper throughout his career. Their sheer number testifies to their significance to him.

Exhibition dates, events, and related programs

May 31, 2016 – September 03, 2016

Reception: August 16, 2016 at 5:00-7:00 PM

About the curator(s)

This exhibition is curated by Arlette Klaric.

Class Visits and Tours

The exhibition is suitable for all ages.

Curricular connections

Geometry, Abstraction, Design

Booking a tour/visit – “Beyond the Classroom”

Beyond the Classroom (the OSU Museum of Art’s PK-12 inquiry based tour program) encourages students of all abilities to engage with art and each other by looking deeply, and thinking creatively and critically. Students make personal and curricular connections through discussion, writing, and hands-on activities. We welcome both public school groups and home-schoolers. Admission to the museum is always free.

To book a tour, please visit <http://museum.okstate.edu/tours>. Please be advised that we require at least three weeks advanced notice for tours of 10 or more to allow for appropriate staffing.

For more information, to discuss programming, or to request a transportation or substitute teacher subsidy, please contact Carrie Kim, Curator of Education and Programming, at (405)744-2785 or carrie.kim@okstate.edu.

Booklist

Smith, Leon Polk, and Carter Ratcliff. *Leon Polk Smith: 5 Decades of Geometric Inventions: November 6-December 19, 1987*. New York, NY: DiLaurenti, 1987. Print.

Smith, Leon Polk, and Stephen Westfall. *Leon Polk Smith: Space Considered*. Chicago, IL: Valerie Carberry Gallery, 2013. Print.

Dow, Arthur W., and Joseph Masheck. *Composition: A Series of Exercises in Art Structure for the Use of Students and Teachers*. Berkeley: U of California, 1997. Print.

Online Resources

Follow the OSU Museum of Art Pinterest page at <https://www.pinterest.com/osumuseumofart/> to stay up-to-date on all educator resources, news articles, curatorial talks, artist talks, artist presentations, and more.

Explore Ada – Leon Polk Smith: Both Sides of the Line

A full length episode of Explore Ada about the life of Leon Polk Smith (produced by DustBowl Films and the City of Ada)

<https://youtu.be/JgNwZeCPITA>

Archives of American Art: Leon Polk Smith papers, 1938-1997

This site provides access to the papers of Leon Polk Smith in the Archives of American Art that were digitized in 2011. The bulk of this collection has been scanned and totals 9,145 images.

<http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/leon-polk-smith-papers-6162>

Leon Polk Smith Foundation

Explore the works and life of Leon Polk Smith.

<http://leonpolksmithfoundation.org/art-work/>

Art Movements? What they “-ism.” What they ain’t.

A 15 minute long video providing an overview of the modernist art movements of the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century.

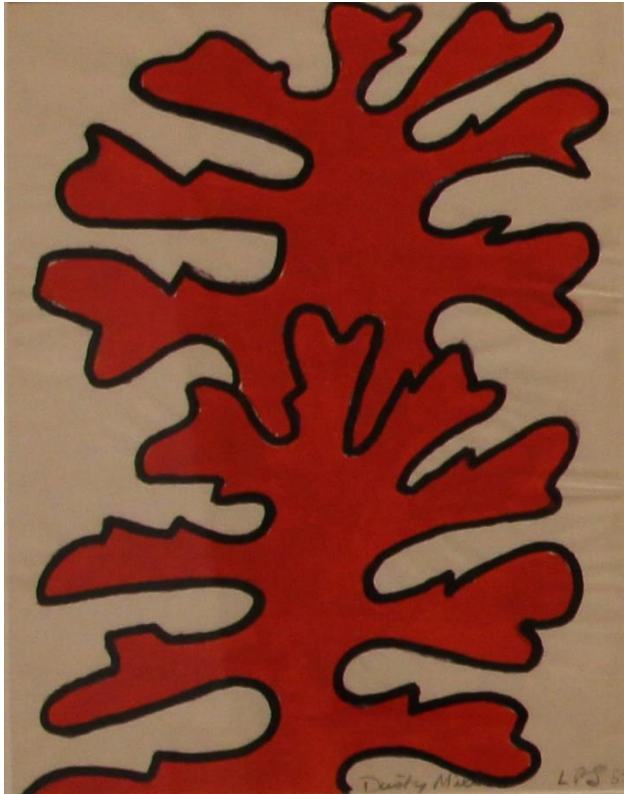
<https://youtu.be/akadc4thczo>

Discussion Questions and Lesson Plans

DUSTY MILLER

Lesson plan: Discuss the works depicted on the page. Ask the students what they see. Ask follow-up questions. Have students explore abstraction by sketching something and simplifying it in a variety of ways. Try only drawing the outline of the object/animal/person/etc. Try sketching the object lightly and then creating large shapes over the lighter drawing to explore simplification of the form.

What do you see in the images below? Do they remind you of anything?



This plant is called “dusty miller.” Like many artists who work with abstraction and minimalism, Leon Polk Smith looked to nature for inspiration. Can you see a resemblance between this plant and his designs, both titled “Dusty Miller,” below. How are they similar? How are they different? How might you take Smith’s designs even further?

Left: Leon Polk Smith, *Dusty Miller*, 1953. Tempera on paper. Gift of Leon Polk Smith Foundation, New York

Right: Leon Polk Smith, *Dusty Miller*, 1955. Tempera on paper. Gift of Leon Polk Smith Foundation, New York

INSPIRED DESIGN

What do you see in the image below? Does it remind you of anything?



Leon Polk Smith, like many artists, looked at objects for inspiration. Notice the stitching on the baseball. Do you see any similarities in the shapes on the baseball to the shapes on Smith's work "Untitled" above? What else do you notice about the artwork above?

Click the link to create your own Inspired Design.

[\[LINK TO INSPIRED DESIGN\]](#)

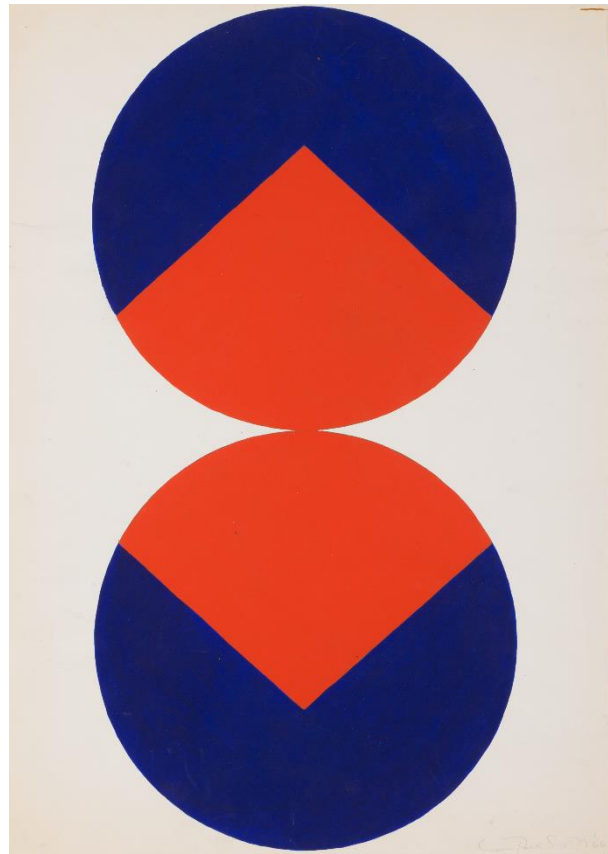
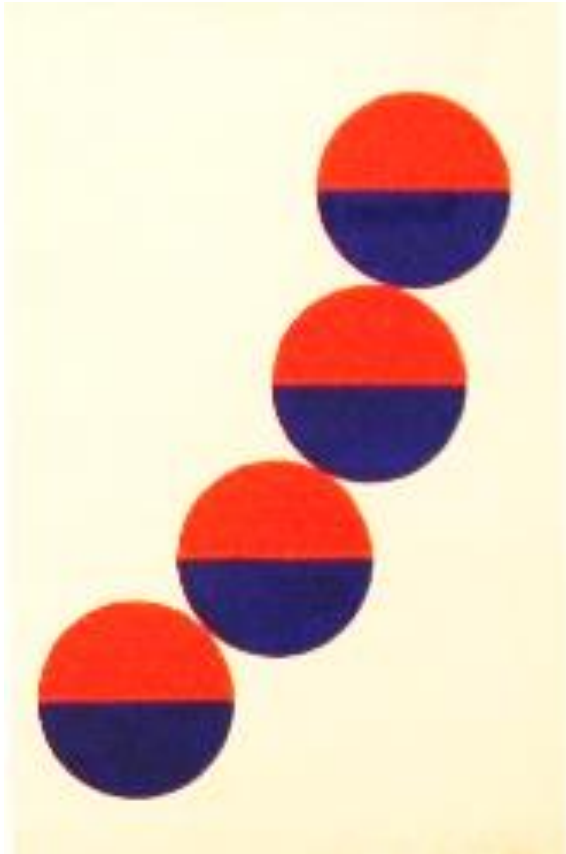
Click here for an example.

[\[LINK TO INSPIRED DESIGN SAMPLE\]](#)



ANAGRAMS

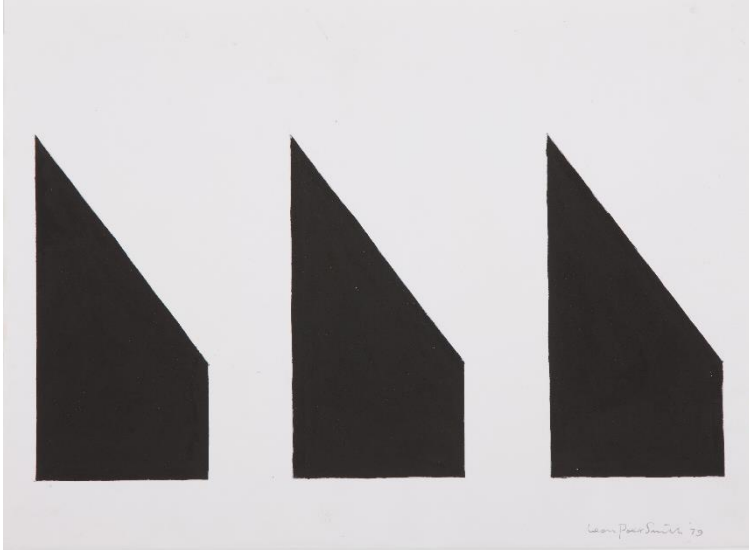
An anagram is word, phrase, or name formed by rearranging the letters of another, such as *cinema* and *iceman*. Rearrange the shapes in Leon Polk Smith's **compositions** to create new compositions. The works depicted below are untitled, so create a title for your new composition. Can you rearrange the shapes again? Try using the title you gave your last composition as an anagram for the title of your next one! How many compositions and titles can you make using the same shapes?



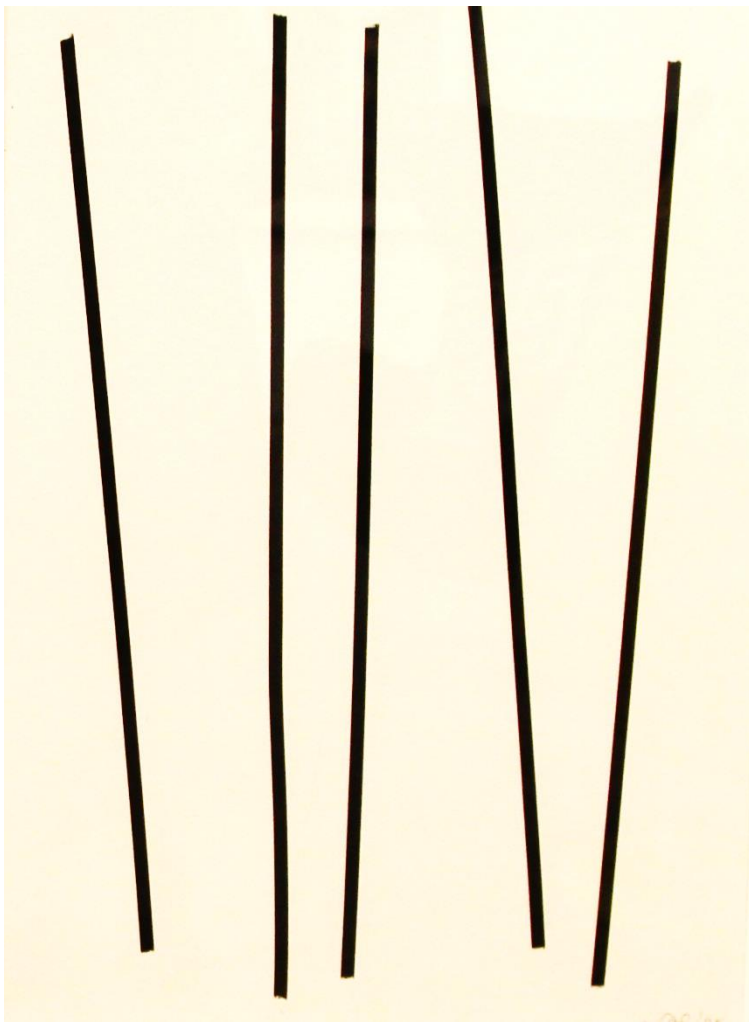
Top Left: Untitled, 1968, acrylic paint on paper

Top Right: Untitled, 1966, acrylic paint on paper

Bottom: Untitled, 1968, acrylic paint on paper



Untitled, 1979, acrylic paint on paper



Untitled, 1995, artist tape on paper

COMPOSITION: the placement or arrangement of visual elements or ingredients in a work of art