



News Release | For Immediate Release

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OSU MUSEUM OF ART CELEBRATES OKLAHOMA ARTIST IN *LEON POLK SMITH: BACK TO OKLAHOMA*

(STILLWATER, Okla., May 19, 2016) — The Oklahoma State University Museum of Art is pleased to introduce *Leon Polk Smith: Back to Oklahoma*. The exhibition is on view from May 31 – Sept. 3, with a reception scheduled for Tuesday, Aug. 16, from 5 to 7 pm.

Late in 2015, the Leon Polk Smith Foundation in New York City brought the artist back home. The Foundation gifted more than 700 drawings to the OSU Museum of Art, to be shared with art institutions across the state. A native of Oklahoma, Smith (1906-1996) pioneered the Hard Edge painting movement, which favored abstracted, clean-edged forms, flattened space, simple color schemes, and economic compositions.

Best known for his paintings, Smith created more than 2,200 unique works on paper throughout his career. This exhibition offers an introduction to Leon Polk Smith's works on paper. Never widely exhibited or studied, the drawings provide a more complete picture of Smith's development and working habits. The 30 works in the exhibition survey his art from his early figurative work and his testing of different European modernist styles to the pared-down, hard-edge abstractions that were refined over the remainder of his career.

Born in 1906, Smith grew up and received his education in the new state of Oklahoma, which was a formative influence on his character and artistic development through his early thirties. In 1945 Smith moved to New York City where he pioneered the Hard Edge style of abstraction that brought him national recognition in the 1960s.

“In working on this show I discovered what a quick study Leon Polk Smith was,” said Arlette Klaric, exhibition curator. “His drawings show his rapid advance from figurative painting to abstraction after taking only a few art courses while completing his Master's degree in art education at Columbian University Teachers College.”

This major gift from the Leon Polk Smith Foundation created the largest public collection of works-on-paper by the artist. It also represents the largest number of works given to the OSU Museum of Art by a single donor.

The exhibition is organized by the OSU Museum of Art and curated by Arlette Klaric, Ph.D., OSU Museum of Art Associate Chief Curator and Curator of Collections.

About the OSU Museum of Art

Exhibitions and programs at the Oklahoma State University Museum of Art are sponsored by OSU Museum of Art Advocates, OSU/A&M Board of Regents, and the Oklahoma Arts Council. For more information about the OSU Museum of Art, visit museum.okstate.edu or call 405-744-2780.

Oklahoma State University is a modern land-grant university that prepares students for success. OSU is America's Brightest Orange. Through leadership and service, OSU is preparing students for a bright future and building a brighter world for all. As Oklahoma's only university with a statewide presence, OSU improves the lives of people in Oklahoma, the nation, and the world through integrated, high-quality teaching, research, and outreach. As America's Healthiest Campus, OSU is committed to the health and well-being of its students, employees and the community. OSU has more than 36,000 students across its five-campus system and more than 25,000 on its combined Stillwater and Tulsa campuses, with students from all 50 states and around 120 nations. Established in 1890, OSU has graduated around 255,000 students to serve the state of Oklahoma, the nation and the world.