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ICONIC WORK BY TONY SMITH ACQUIRED BY NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

Tony Smith
Die, 1962/1968
steel, 72 x 72 x 72
National Gallery of Art, Gift of the Collectors Committee

Washington, DC -- ***Die*** (1962/1968), Tony Smith's first steel sculpture, is the newest addition to the National Gallery of Art's growing collection of modern and contemporary art. An indoor work, it is on view on the mezzanine of the Gallery's East Building. The acquisition of this classic icon of post-World War II American art was made possible by the Gallery's Collectors Committee.

"*Die* is the germ of all Tony Smith's later work in steel and has achieved great stature as a celebrated landmark object of art since midcentury," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art.

The Sculpture

The form of *Die*, a large black box, was inspired by an index card file, but its scale (72 x 72 x 72 inches) and fabrication were a response to an advertisement for the Industrial Welding Company in Newark, New Jersey, which read: "You specify it: we fabricate it." The dimensions, according to Smith, were determined by the human body, as in Leonardo da Vinci's drawing of the Vitruvian man, whose outstretched arms and legs are inscribed within a circle and a square. Smith said that larger dimensions would have implied the work was a "monument," while smaller ones would have reduced it to the role of a mere "object." This observation became the subject of key debates among the philosophers of the minimal-art generation, including Robert Morris and Michael

Fried. Smith's deceptively simple title has multiple allusions: to industry (die casting), to chance (roll of the dice) and to death, as implied in the title and based on Smith's other observation, "Six foot box. Six foot under."

There are four examples of *Die*. Only two were produced during the artist's lifetime. One was manufactured in 1962 and belongs to the Whitney Museum of American Art. The other, now owned by the National Gallery of Art, was produced by Smith in 1968 and was kept by the artist at his home until his death in 1980. The two posthumous examples belong respectively to a private collector in Philadelphia and to the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

The National Gallery of Art owns one painting by Smith, as well as three major sculptures, which are installed outdoors: *Moondog* (model 1964, fabricated 1998-1999) and *Wandering Rocks* (1967) are in the Sculpture Garden, *The Snake is Out* (model 1962, fabricated 1992) is in front of the East Building's Japanese garden.

The Artist

Tony Smith (1912-1980) studied architecture at the New Bauhaus in Chicago and apprenticed with Frank Lloyd Wright. He practiced architecture for twenty years in New York City, where he taught at New York University, Cooper Union, and Pratt Institute, among other schools. His buildings were essentially modernist, although many of the most boldly experimental designs were never realized. He began producing sculpture in 1960 as an extension of his architectural pursuits, especially his interest in the creation of complex volumes through a modular-based system of "organic" form.

Collectors Committee

Since 1975 the Collectors Committee has made possible the acquisition of more than two hundred works of art. Approximately half of these acquisitions have been works by living artists. The committee was formed in 1975 under the leadership of Ruth Carter Stevenson, chairman of the Gallery's Board of Trustees from 1993 to 1997. Barney A. Ebsworth and Doris Fisher, both major collectors of 20th-century art, currently chair the Collectors Committee. Ebsworth, from St. Louis, is the founder and retired chairman of INTRAV, Royal Cruise Line, and Clipper Cruise Line. Fisher lives in San Francisco and

is co-founder, with her husband Donald, of The Gap.

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General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit www.nga.gov/renovation (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter at twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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