

## Tony Smith: Wall, New Piece, One-Two-Three

July 14 – August 18, 2023  
510 West 25th Street  
New York



Tony Smith, *One-Two-Three*, 1976 © Tony Smith / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

New York – Pace is pleased to present an exhibition of large-scale sculpture by Tony Smith at its 510 West 25<sup>th</sup> Street gallery in New York. On view from July 14 to August 18, the show will offer a unique opportunity for viewers to experience Smith's monumental works, highlighting the evolution of the artist's sculptural practice during the 1960s and 1970s.

Though he would become widely known for his sculpture, Smith began his career as an architect, working with Frank Lloyd Wright on Usonian homes and other projects in the late 1930s. The artist was an independent architectural designer from the early 1940s through the 1950s, crossing over into sculpture in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Smith often drew inspiration for his dynamic geometric abstractions from phenomena in the natural world. Through his artworks, Smith investigated the formal possibilities of crystalline structures, including octahedrons and tetrahedrons. Embracing the imaginative effects of chance and chaos, the artist produced sculptures that forged a new language of abstraction amid the rise of Minimalism.

Deeply engaged with architecture, science, mathematics, and philosophy, Smith's works encourage new modes of understanding and experiencing their surrounding environments. He often referred to his sculptures as "presences," a term that captures their undeniable power and charisma. Pace maintained a long relationship with Smith during his lifetime and began representing the Tony Smith Estate in 2017.

The gallery's focused presentation in New York this summer will spotlight three of the artist's large-scale, black-painted steel sculptures: *Wall* (1964), *New Piece* (1966), and *One-Two-Three* (1976). Inhabiting non-linear planes of space, these sculptures are meant to be experienced from a wide range of perspectives, speaking to the connections between sculpture, the body, and the environment.

Each of the three sculptures in Pace's upcoming exhibition presents the viewer with a different proposition. *Wall*, a rectangular work standing eight feet tall and stretching 18-feet wide, is an imposing, almost confrontational structure. With this work, Smith explores ideas of interiority and enclosure as well as exteriority and fluidity. Despite its boldness, *Wall* is a navigable artwork that reveals its phenomenological potential through physical engagement.

*New Piece* takes up another kind of spatial investigation. Stretching itself upwards in an energetic diagonal motion, *New Piece* can be understood as a study of the disorientating effects of shape and perspective—a visual provocation that points towards a new mode of experiencing and inhabiting space. Describing *New Piece*, Smith once said, “This piece is based not upon rectangular prisms nor on tetrahedral lattices but upon modular units made up of components of the rhomboidal dodecahedron. There is a connection with the tetrahedral structures, however, in that the rhomboidal surfaces of this figure are the same as the sections of the others.”

*One-Two-Three* comprises three distinct, modular units situated in dialogue with one another. Viewers are invited to approach the work from different angles to decipher enactments of fragmentation and wholeness among its constituent shapes: trapezoidal formations give way to individual triangles, and, conversely, groups of triangles coalesce into parallelograms. Notably, *One-Two-Three* was exhibited by the Art Production Fund in New York’s Bryant Park in 2013 as part of the Tony Smith Centennial Program.

“Smith’s works confound the boundaries between architecture and sculpture, between monuments and objects,” art historian Joan Pachner wrote in a publication produced by the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1998 on the occasion of *Tony Smith: Architect, Painter, Sculptor*, a retrospective that featured both *New Piece* and *One-Two-Three*. “The boundaries between inside and outside, the natural and the man-made, sculpture and architecture, are constantly called into question in Smith’s created spaces.”

As viewers move around the sculptures in Pace’s exhibition, new forms and meanings are brought into focus. Together, *Wall*, *New Piece*, and *One-Two-Three* reflect Smith’s ability to imbue his lyrical abstractions with spiritual import.

**Tony Smith** (b. 1912, New Jersey; d. 1980, New York) considered his process to be intuitive, his work resting close to the unconscious and exploring themes of spirituality and presence in a synthesis of geometric abstraction and expressionism. He studied painting at the Art Students League, New York (1934–36) and attended the New Bauhaus, Chicago (1937–38), before apprenticing with Frank Lloyd Wright (1938–39). For the following two decades, he worked professionally as an architect and held teaching positions at numerous institutions in New York and Vermont. In the early 1960s, Smith turned his focus to sculpture, with his architectural background informing one of his most radical innovations—having his work industrially fabricated. Widely recognized for his large-scale, modular works produced throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Smith was included in the seminal group exhibition *Primary Structures* at the Jewish Museum, New York, in 1966. His profound achievements in American sculpture have been honored with retrospectives of his work at The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1998); Institut Valencià d’Art Modern (2002); Menil Collection, Houston (2010); and Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2017).

**Pace** is a leading international art gallery representing some of the most influential contemporary artists and estates from the past century, holding decades-long relationships with Alexander Calder, Jean Dubuffet, Barbara Hepworth, Agnes Martin, Louise Nevelson, and Mark Rothko. Pace enjoys a unique U.S. heritage spanning East and West coasts through its early support of artists central to the Abstract Expressionist and Light and Space movements.

Since its founding by Arne Glimcher in 1960, Pace has developed a distinguished legacy as an artist-first gallery that mounts seminal historical and contemporary exhibitions. Under the current leadership of CEO Marc Glimcher, Pace continues to support its artists and share their visionary work with audiences worldwide by remaining at the forefront of innovation. Now in its seventh decade, the gallery advances its mission through a robust global program—comprising exhibitions, artist projects, public installations, institutional collaborations, performances, and interdisciplinary projects. Pace has a legacy in art bookmaking and has published over five hundred titles in close collaboration with artists, with a focus on original scholarship and on introducing new voices to the art historical canon.

Today, Pace has eight locations worldwide, including a European foothold in London and Geneva, and two galleries in New York—its headquarters at 540 West 25th Street, which welcomed almost 120,000 visitors and programmed 20 shows in its first six months, and an adjacent 8,000 sq. ft. exhibition space at 510 West 25th Street. Pace’s long and pioneering history in California includes a gallery in Palo Alto, which was open from 2016 to 2022. Pace’s engagement with Silicon Valley’s technology industry has had a lasting impact on the gallery at a global level, accelerating its initiatives connecting art and technology as well as its work with experiential artists. Pace



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consolidated its West Coast activity through its flagship in Los Angeles, which opened in 2022. Pace was one of the first international galleries to establish outposts in Asia, where it operates permanent gallery spaces in Hong Kong and Seoul, as well as an office and viewing room in Beijing.

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