Leon Polk Smith's iconic paintings inspired by Mondrian aim to express the 'endless space' of artistic freedom.
A new exhibition at the Richard Gray Gallery in Chicago this month will feature paintings from Leon Polk Smith's iconic Correspondence and Constellations series which he produced over fifteen years between the 1950s and the 1970s.

Characterised by shaped canvases and pressurised compositions, the paintings of this era have come to represent the most signature works from the American artist’s career.

The show, entitled Endless Space, reveals Smith’s nimble and daring shift from rectilinear canvases to shaped supports, and from single-panel works to involved, polyptych installations.

Smith’s compositions exceed the confines of the canvas and fuse together bright colours at a curved edge. "I was fascinated by the interchange of the positive-negative aspect of [Mondrian’s] paintings with no background," Smith described in a 1966 artist statement. "I was thrilled to think that if I could liberate this quality which he confined to the rectangle into a free form, that I would be able to express the endless space."

Says the Gallery: "As Smith’s large-scale paintings reveal an abundance of formal ingenuity, they also contain elements of personal narrative that demand further examination. Smith was born in 1906 to mixed, half-Cherokee parents near the territory of Chickasha one year before it was incorporated into the state of Oklahoma.

"The artist’s Native heritage and proximity to indigenous traditions provide a nuanced background for the role of space and colour within his compositions. With this biographical context, Smith’s abstract expanses thereby reemerge as open roads, infinite plains, and vast skies – vestiges of the artist’s rural upbringing working on his family’s farm and constructing highways."

Offering an important frame of reference alongside Smith’s Native identity are his experiences living as a gay man in the McCarthy era of New York City. Art historian Jonathan David Katz discusses the artist’s painted forms as a coded representation of the then-illegal homosexuality, a "redirection of the impersonality of geometry towards the chaos of desire."

Irregular Motion: A Review of Leon Polk Smith at Gray Warehouse

SEPTEMBER 25, 2019 AT 1:01 PM BY CAIRA MOREIRA-BROWN

The Leon Polk Smith exhibition, “Endless Space” at Gray Warehouse, showcases abstract paintings made between the 1950s and 1970s.

The late New York-based artist frequently made use of non-standard canvas shapes, which integrate colors, space, objects and motion. Throughout each canvas, there are gestural drawings, irregular lines and distinctive strokes, all signature attributes of Smith’s work.

As one of the founders of hard-edge minimalism, Smith’s work, specifically the “Constellation and Correspondence” series on view, has a distinctive style. His use of geometry, both in the shape of his canvases and the paint on them, is apparent throughout the show.
The evolution of his work during this series is evident through the symmetrical shapes placed on folding screens and connected canvases. Each work, regardless of its canvas, takes on the overarching theme of circular and continuing motions. The distinctive, irregular motions in his work allow the viewer to question the space where the work exists. Instead of the works existing in the gallery, the gallery’s space transforms around each piece. Exploring the relationships between positive and negative space, most of the works are based on contrasting colors and shapes. The use of monochromatic colors and the explicit separation that exists on opposite sides of the hard-edge lines draws attention to the form and color of each piece.

![Installation view, Leon Polk Smith, “Endless Space” (Courtesy Richard Gray Gallery & The Leon Polk Smith Foundation)](image)

As his canvases evolved into intricate shapes, we see hourglass forms being created in the combined canvases, and how he distributed the paint on the canvas. The spaces on the gallery walls in between the differently shaped canvases allows the viewer to truly question this concept of endless space, and where the work starts and ends even when the canvas is not present.

Smith’s definitive lines, specifically those in black, convey the idea of unifying the viewer and the colors. Polk creates hope for the space we exist in through large strokes, incorporating vast amounts of colors in each shape.

“Endless Space” challenges viewers on an emotional and mental level. Through color, lines and geometric shapes, existing on different planes, this exhibition showcases Smith’s compositional principles in a clear and direct way. This show will leave you with his universal idea that these simple aspects of our lives—colors, shapes, lines—go beyond us endlessly. (Caira Moreira-Brown)

*Leon Polk Smith: “Endless Space” is on view at Gray Warehouse, 2044 West Carroll, through November 23.*
Leon Polk Smith

16 November 2018 - 05 January 2019 / Lisson Gallery (27 Bell St) / Art Categories Events, Exhibition / Art Tags Leon Polk Smith, Lisson Gallery / ☰️ / 😁 / 😎

“I was born on the flat plains... And, ah, it seems that one could see 250 miles in every direction. And then, the sky seemed so big... almost like an endless space. Now that's the first space I saw, and that's the first impression I had of my surroundings... and I think that's influenced my paintings more than any other experience I've ever had.” Leon Polk Smith

An exhibition celebrating one of the founders of the hard-edge style of Minimalism, Leon Polk Smith. The show will feature nine large canvases, focusing on a period from 1965 to the mid-1980s. As the first major presentation of his work in the UK, this exhibition will introduce local audiences to the abstract multipart canvases of this still under-appreciated American artist.

Of Native American descent, Smith was born outside the Cherokee territory of Chickasha a year before it was incorporated into the state of Oklahoma, which joined the United States in 1907. He moved to New York in 1936 to study and in the early 1940s where he encountered the work of the Dutch painter Piet Mondrian and came to know Hilla Rebay, director of the fledgeling Museum of Non-Objective Art. Smith embraced Mondrian's defined Neoplastic arrangements but soon relaxed the grid through the use of soft curves and by employing circular canvases. While the mid-century American art world was focused on Abstract Expressionism, Smith subverted the prevailing orthodoxies and invented his own visual vocabulary, first gaining prominence in the late 1950s with his distinctive shaped canvas series, titled the Correspondences. Balancing formal and rational elements with contemporary abstraction, Smith distilled his own experiences into pure, geometric forms, becoming synonymous with the post-war, hard-edged school of Minimalism.
The exhibition at Lisson Gallery will bring together a range of works from the holdings of the Leon Polk Smith Foundation, largely from the late ‘60s and early ‘70s, and many seen publicly for the first time. Seven of the works in the exhibition are from Smith’s Constellation series. These clusters of smaller canvases highlight Smith’s astute geometric abstraction, dynamic form, and brilliant use of colour. Each painting has a distinct identity. Constellation Y (1968), for example, is defined by its static, Y-shaped form – three unified elements combining to form one structured object; yet the shapes that make up Six Involvements (1966) are curvilinear and unhinged, pushing at the boundaries of the edges and the canvas itself. Equally, works such as Blue, Red, Yellow with Black Crescents (1968) and Constellation V (1968) appear as if in internal dialogue, the colours and forms in playful movement. The centrepiece of the exhibition will be Smith’s largest painting, the double-sided Seven Involvements in One/Correspondence Red White (1966) which was last seen publicly in 1984 and 1985 at the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC and the Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven, Connecticut. The exhibition will also include a selection of Smith’s related drawings and collages.

Smith’s paintings powerfully reflect his formative encounters with the Native American aesthetics and philosophy combined with the artistic innovation and vibrancy of New York City and the global, modern artistic movements he was drawn to. In Smith’s work – from the concrete to the celestial – there is an inherent sense of a boundless, imagined space, invigorating our understanding of abstract art by reminding us of its potential for personal expression and relevance, alongside its universal possibility.

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<td>Contact</td>
<td>4402077242739 / <a href="mailto:contact@lissongallery.com">contact@lissongallery.com</a> / <a href="http://www.lissongallery.com">www.lissongallery.com</a></td>
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Leon Polk Smith

Art

Time Out says

Inspired by Piet Mondrian and others, Leon Polk Smith’s artworks are striking examples of American Minimalism. Clean-edged abstract shapes dominate the canvas, distilling the flat landscape of the artist’s youth into softly curving blocks of colour. This small collection at Lisson date from the late 60s and early 70s.
BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART ACQUIRES TROVE OF LEON POLK SMITH WORKS

August 16, 2017 at 1:21pm

The Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas at Austin has announced that it has been gifted seven works by American abstract painter Leon Polk Smith. The works come to the museum from the Leon Polk Smith Foundation and longtime Austin-based philanthropists Jeanne and Michael Klein.

“This concentration of works by Leon Polk Smith brings historical depth to our holdings of postwar American painting and allows us to highlight Smith’s pioneering role in the development of abstract painting in the United States, from the new dynamism he brought to geometric abstraction to his prescient shaped canvases,” museum director Simone Wicha said.

The seven works, which were created between 1942 and 1959, showcase the artist’s interests in line, color, and the concept of space as “a positive force.” Three paintings—GWB, 1945/94, Moon, 1958–59, and Yellow White Sun, 1958–59—will be displayed at the museum this fall and one of the works on paper will be part of an exhibition in museum’s paper vault gallery, opening in the spring.
These Four Painters Won’t Be Ignored Any Longer

A new exhibition tells us what we’ve been missing in the work of Marina Adams, Paul Feeley, Joanna Pousette-Dart, and Leon Polk Smith.
For years the art world has worn blinders. In the 1960s, it seemed that only poet-critics bothered with artists who were not allied with Pop Art, Minimalism, or Color Field painting. Since then, each decade and its theorists have focused on a narrow band of “significant artists” almost to the exclusion of all else. There were those who were considered central, and everyone else was assigned a lower rank. But for various reasons, that kind of hierarchical thinking no longer holds as much sway as it once did. Artists who were ignored have gotten fresh consideration. With the recent shows of Flora Crockett, Carmen Herrera, Jack Whitten, Ed Clark, Peter Saul, Merrill Wagner, and others, the art world shows signs of cracking open even further. Everyone knows that major revisions are needed, but no one knows what to do about it except to kick the can down the road and act like everything is hunky-dory.

This is one reason why Aspects of Abstraction at Lisson Gallery (June 23 – August 11, 2017) is so interesting: it further upsets the apple cart without declaring that as its purpose. The exhibition’s circumspect title makes no grand or inclusive claim. It brings together four diverse artists from different generations who share similar tendencies: Leon Polk Smith (1906-1996); Paul Feeley (1910-1966); Joanna Poussette-Dart; Marina Adams. If the exhibition is about connections and affinities – which I think it is – then Smith and Feeley are the starting points.
Marina Adams, "Wild Flower" (2017), Acrylic on Linen, 68 x 38 inches. (© Marina Adams; Courtesy Salon 94. Photo by Jack Hems.)
In the art world’s currently fluid situation, it is worth remembering the way Leon Polk Smith and Paul Feeley were regarded in their lifetimes. Smith, who was born in Chickasha, Oklahoma, in 1906 (one year before it became a state), and was Cherokee, brought Native American and cattle ranching motifs into hard-edged geometric abstraction. Influenced by Piet Mondrian and Hans Arp, Smith was perpetually relegated to secondary citizenship, while the work of an artist like Ellsworth Kelly was considered central. As revealed in the recent exhibition *Carmen Herrera: Lines of Sight*, which was held at the Whitney Museum of American Art (September 16, 2016 – January 9, 2017) when the artist was 100 years old, there was a lot more going on in the area of American hard-edged geometric abstraction than had been looked at, taken seriously, and written about for nearly half a century. Smith and Herrera, who were neighbors and friends, were ignored in different ways. Smith was considered less than Kelly, and Herrera was not even mentioned.

Paul Feeley, who was born in 1910 (two years before Jackson Pollock and Agnes Martin), taught at Bennington College for many years, where his student was the young Helen Frankenthaler. Starting in 1960 and lasting until his death in 1966, Feeley made work that was recognizably his, and had nothing to do with Color Field painting or Minimalism. Both Smith and Feeley were marginalized to some extent, either because they were seen as less significant, or because they did not fit in. This kind of ranking system, which the art world thrives on, is a disservice to art and artists. You get the feeling that many critics, curators, and collectors prefer to have guidelines than to allow themselves, as Frank O’Hara said, to “just go on your nerve.” They prefer to feel safe.
The four artists are represented in the exhibition by one painting each, complemented by works on paper. Smith and Feeley shared an interest in rounded and wavy forms. Their works on paper make it clear that drawing is central to their practice. The other connection between them is their interest in color and light, from muted hues to strong primaries. Neither developed a system for their use of color.

While Feeley works with squares and rectangles, the forms inside are rounded and often push in from the edges. He shares this approach with Marina Adams, as well as an interest in classical architecture and art. The classical influence is particularly evident in the three watercolors that Feeley did between 1958 and ’59, and the works on paper by Adams from the series, “Caryatid.”

In one of the exhibition’s two vitrines, there is an ink and graphite calendar, “Untitled (August)” (1964), which Feeley made in order to keep a visual record of the paintings he completed, along with his notes and appointments. In the other vitrine there is an ink drawing on paper, “Untitled” (1946), in which Polk has made a field of bracket-like forms facing left and right. Over it he has superimposed a large, open rectangle (or frame) with two lines extending from it, each with two right-angled bends in them. Both the bracket-like forms and the large open, rectangle are derived from the cattle brands Smith knew well from his years in Oklahoma.

The inclusion of these works on paper, along with notebook drawings by Pousette-Dart and an accordion-fold book of eight consecutive etchings by Adams opens up the focus of the exhibition, so that it is not just about looking at paintings. It also reminds us how radical an act it is to make things by hand at a time when fabrication and production – signifiers for the triumph of outsourcing and capitalism – are rampant.
Pousette-Dart’s painting, “Three Part Variation #11” (2017), consists of three curvilinear forms (they resemble canoes) stacked vertically, from the smallest at the bottom to the largest at the top. Each canvas, which has its own three-color palette, is distinct in color and shape from the other two. The curvilinear forms can also be seen as the slice of a circular shape. The proportions and curves of the left and right edges change in each form, so that they are distinct. In each of these shapes, which consists of two areas of flat color, a rounded form (or semicircle) is on the left, with its outer edge defined by the painting’s edge. Over these two forms, the artist superimposes a linear structure that echoes but does not repeat the outer edge of the curvilinear form. Once you begin noticing the echoes that connect the painting’s three dominant shapes with the forms inside the painting, you begin seeing how intricate the relationships are. The beauty of this painting is like that of a mathematical equation.
Leon Polk Smith, “Constellation C” (1969), 95” x 95”. (© Leon Polk Smith Foundation; Courtesy Lisson Gallery. Photo by Jack Hems.)
Smith’s painting “Constellation C” (1969) is made of four panels with rounded edges. Divided from corner to corner into two colors, with red or orange on the outside, and blue or green on the inside, the four panels are mounted on the wall in a diamond-like shape, with the open space at the center resembling a four-pointed star (a twinkle of light), adding a whimsical note to the painting. This use of the open center (or wall) is very different from anything Ellsworth Kelly did, and should make it clear that the two artists are not to be confused.

Frankly, I think putting together works by these four artists was a stroke of genius. One gets tired of seeing the same combinations repeatedly. It is like eating in a parody of a Chinese restaurant from the 1950s, where there is only one item in column A and one in column B. The other thing about this exhibition: there is joy in the work. For some, it might appear unseemly to express any kind of joy at this moment in American history, but not for me. It is a joy that can only be found in art, and makes no claims to be about more than that. That’s not fake news.

Aspects of Abstraction continues at Lisson Gallery (138 Tenth Avenue, Chelsea, Manhattan) through August 11.
Lisson Gallery announces representation of Leon Polk Smith foundation

Lisson Gallery has announced its representation of the foundation of the painter Leon Polk Smith, who was a pioneer of the hard-edge style of Minimalist art. The New York branch of the gallery is planning an exhibition in September of paintings and works on paper from the 1960s and early 1970s, most of which have never been on show before.

Smith rose to fame in the late 1950s and early 1960s with his Correspondences series, large-scale, brightly coloured canvases featuring simple undulating shapes. His work is said to have influenced
younger artists such as Ellsworth Kelly, Jack Youngerman, John McLaughlin and Al Held, who all visited Smith’s studio in the mid-1950s.

Smith, who was born outside Chickasha, in what was then called Indian Territory, in 1906, settled in New York in the early 1940s. There he befriended a tight knit group of painters, including Carmen Herrera and Barnett Newman. Their style of geometric abstraction painting has gained popularity in recent years; Herrera had her first solo exhibition at a major museum in New York last year.

Meanwhile, the Brooklyn Museum organised a retrospective of Smith’s work in 1996, the year the artist died and his foundation became active. Smith is also represented by New York’s Washburn Gallery.
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Leon Polk Smith’s geometries—best represented by his “Correspondences” and “Constellations” series—are hallmarks of minimalist art. This presentation unveils a selection of his paintings and works on paper from the ’60s and ’70s, most of which have never previously been exhibited. lissongallery.com
Art in Review; Leon Polk Smith

By Grace Glueck
Feb. 4, 2005

'Forms and Functions' Washburn 20 West 57th Street, Manhattan Through March 5

Spaces and their boundaries fascinated the hard-edge abstractionist Leon Polk Smith (1906-1996), and in this show of his biomorphic paintings from the 1950's his elegantly calculated contrivance of one space impinging on another pleasingly asks the eye to tease out figure-ground relationships.

In the small painting "Blue Black 'S,'" a curvaceous Yin of blue and a twin Yang of black divide the canvas, or is it a Yang of blue and a Yin of black? "Expanse" can be read as two black curves, squared off at sides and bottom, thrust apart by a fat white circular form that bleeds off the canvas at top and bottom; or as two black curved forms muscling in on the fat white one.

In "Over Easy," part of a big, roughly heart-shaped figure of mauve thrusts onto a black ground at an angle; or is it the curvy black space that cuts into the aggressor?

In a nice ploy on the gallery's part, these clean, flat surfaces, each restricted to two colors, are shown with examples of sleek, minimal, contoured furniture by front-line designers of the period: Arne Jacobsen (Denmark), Bruno Mathsson (Sweden), and the Americans George Nelson, Charles and Ray Eames and Isamu Noguchi.
While not derived from Smith's canvases (nor was his work derived from theirs), the biomorphic shapes of the furniture and in the paintings are remarkably similar. Noguchi's coffee table has a rounded glass triangle as a top supported by two irregular curves, one at right angles to the other.

Colors relate, too. Jacobsen's "Egg Chair," upholstered in deep orange over foam, cradles the body in a supportive nest made by deep hard-edged curves. The saucy curves of the Eames "LCW," the feisty little all-purpose black chair, circa 1950, would not be ill at ease in a Smith painting. And his "After 'First One'" of 1954, a silver circle partly bounded by a black ring (or a part circle resting on a full one), looks quite at home with the familiar Eames "Kik-Step Stool," introduced in 1957 and here shown in silver and black.

GRACE GLUECK
Leon Polk Smith, whose austere, uneven, yet often inspiring retrospective is at the Brooklyn Museum, is one of a sprawling generation of American artists for whom geometry came naturally. His original inspiration, as it was for some of the others, was the work of Piet Mondrian, which Mr. Smith encountered shortly after arriving in New York from Oklahoma. The year was 1936 and Mr. Smith, a young art teacher, was just becoming aware that he wanted to be an artist.
By the late 40's, he had moved decisively beyond Mondrian into an unexplored terrain, where his fellow travelers included Myron Stout, Paul Feeley, Ellsworth Kelly and Alexander Liberman. Untouched by the gathering momentum of Abstract Expressionism, which would propel American art onto the international map, each of these artists evolved a distinct way of distilling ideas and experiences into a vocabulary of seemingly pure geometric form. Each helped pave the way for the abstract paintings and sculpture of the 1950's and 60's that would be gathered under the umbrella of Minimalism.

It may be a cliche to say that the work of these artists, especially in its scale and overt simplicity, often seems quintessentially American, but in the middle of Mr. Smith's exhibition, this cliche acquires a decided reality. A painting like "Twilight" (1980), with its broad expanse of deep violet pressing down upon two narrow symmetrical wedges of black, seems to describe in abstract form a dramatically receding perspective and an openness of space reminiscent of the American Southwest, even as the two colors lock together into a plane of perfect flatness. The painting is also part of an American tradition of distilled landscape images that stretch throughout the century, from Georgia O'Keeffe to Ed Ruscha. Similar arguments could be made for "Hill-House Green," from 1978, which posits a house shape on a field of blazing red, disguising the fact by pivoting the square canvas into a diamond, and the more blatant "Midnight Pyramids (or Midnight Tepees)," from 1986, in which black triangles intrude into three tondo canvases of night-sky purple.

The reality of an American esthetic becomes almost undeniable if Mr. Smith's biography is taken into account. Born outside Chickasha, Indian Territory, in 1906, one year before it was incorporated into the state of Oklahoma, Mr. Smith was exposed to the open spaces of the American West from the start. He grew up in a farming community that included Chickasaw and Choctaw Indians, and Mr. Smith's parents, who were both part Cherokee, imbued their son with a belief in equal opportunity for all: a second kind of openness. Furthermore, when the Depression delayed his education, Mr. Smith worked as a rancher and on highway construction for seven years after high school.
In 1934, he graduated from Oklahoma State College (now East Central University) in Ada. In 1936, he came to New York City, which he loved on first sight, to pursue graduate study in art education at Columbia University's Teachers College. It was during his first semester that one of his painting teachers took him to see the Gallatin Collection, then at New York University, where he had his formative encounter with the work of Mondrian, as well as Brancusi's and Arp's.

Most striking about Mr. Smith's show is the extent to which these experiences -- of Oklahoma, of modernist abstraction and of New York City -- are played out in his art and accessible to the viewer. He juggles them with particular smoothness in the show's early works. Among the lively semaphore of red, white and yellow in "O.K. Territory" of 1943, a cluster of black shapes has a tail, suggesting a cow whose origins lie in both Theo van Doesburg's famous de Stijl deconstruction of that animal and Mr. Smith's own life. In the 1945 "N.Y. City," one of the best paintings in the show, horizontal bands of bright color suggestive of an Indian textile are overlaid with a veritable cityscape of carefully spaced gray rectangles, a work that restates the syncopated rhythms of Mondrian's art by independent means.

Nearby, the less autonomous "Homage to 'Victory Boogie-Woogie,' No. 1" of 1946 tackles Mondrian's last masterpiece (which is included in the Museum of Modern Art's Mondrian show opening Sunday) head-on. All vestiges of the Dutch artist's famous grid are eliminated so that squares of pure color -- some large and many small -- bounce up and back in space. Deliberately derivative as it is, this work exudes the buoyant, slightly unhinged optimism that is at the heart of Mr. Smith's sensibility.

Mr. Smith's declaration of independence from Mondrian is the tondo painting "Diagonal Passage 120 Large" (1947-50), which greets the viewer at the start of the show's third gallery. In many ways it sums up both the artist's strengths and weaknesses. Here the grid reappears, fragmented and thick, pushing against the painting's edges to create a spatial pressure that will become his consuming interest. Yet with its carefully placed segments of red and blue, the work also has the flashiness of graphic design. It's
almost a logo, the first occurrence of a brittleness that mars several subsequent works, especially in the late 1980's and 90's.

For the next few years, Mr. Smith largely avoids exclusively straight lines and simple right angles as if to get as far away from Mondrian as possible. In "Expanse" (1959), a curvilinear white shape suggestive of an overweight genie freed from its lamp seems to flow onto and nearly obliterate a field of black. In "Stonewall" (1956), two spheres of red bump against each other on a round field of black, creating the impression that one is seeing a circular fragment of a much larger abstract design.

During the 60's and 70's the shapes in Mr. Smith's painting push aggressively against one another, flipping back and forth between solid and void, and also press toward the real space of the wall. He may be at his best in the "Correspondence" series, in which the competition is between two colors, divided in eccentric, unpredictable ways. In "Correspondence: Blue-Red" (1964), a huge noselike shape of blue pushes in from the left. In "Correspondence: Blue-Yellow" (1963), the intrusion is much more restrained: a narrow curve of blue, little more than a folded bird wing.

The idea of fragments, of a painting as a glimpse of a much larger configuration, occurs frequently after 1970, as Mr. Smith pushes his designs into real space. In "Constellation Milky Way" (1970), in which a butting tondo and ellipse are divided into areas of blue, white and black, the eye encounters a tremendous rush of space, as if tracing a meteor's trail. Similarly "At Sunrise" (1983) presses an ellipse of red against a rectangle of black, as if the sun's top edge had suddenly popped into view.

In one of the show's text panels, Mr. Smith is quoted as saying that he found Abstract Expressionism "very naturalistic in content." The accompanying implication, that his own work has nothing to do with nature, is not borne out by his art. In his best paintings, the immediate experiences of form, color and space are continually balanced by the sense of worldly experience, of nature seen and life lived. His art disputes the view, prevalent in many quarters, that abstract art is impersonal, devoid of meaning and without larger relevance. Mr. Smith's ability to embed his own story in the larger one of modernist abstraction and to make his vision unusually accessible to the viewer is his greatest achievement.
"Leon Polk Smith: American Painter" remains at the Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Parkway, at Prospect Park, through Jan. 7. It was organized by Brooke Kamin Rapaport, the museum's associate curator of painting and sculpture, and Robert T. Buck, the director.