

## What to do in Oklahoma on Aug. 23, 2016: See 'Leon Polk Smith: Back to Oklahoma' at Oklahoma State University Museum of Art



by **Brandy McDonnell**

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Today's featured event:

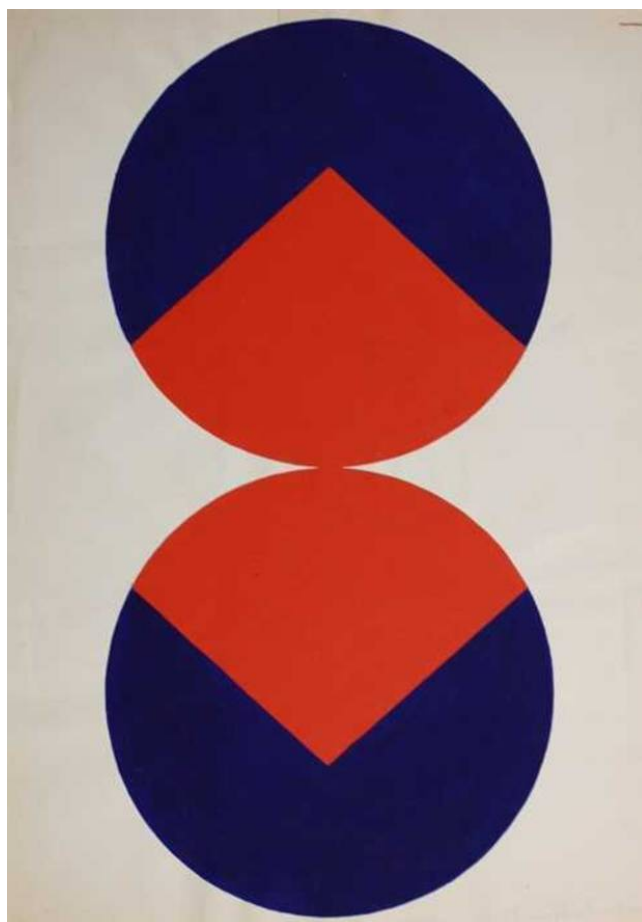
**STILLWATER** — See the exhibition "Leon Polk Smith: Back to Oklahoma" through Sept. 3 at the Oklahoma State University Museum of Art, 720 S Husband Street.

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, according to a news release.

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 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.



Leon Polk Smith's "Untitled" (1966, acrylic paint on paper) is part of the exhibit "Leon Polk Smith: Back to Oklahoma," on view through Sept. 3 at the Oklahoma State University Museum of Art. Image provided

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 30s.

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, in the release. “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.

Museum hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. For more information, go to [museum.okstate.edu](http://museum.okstate.edu).

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