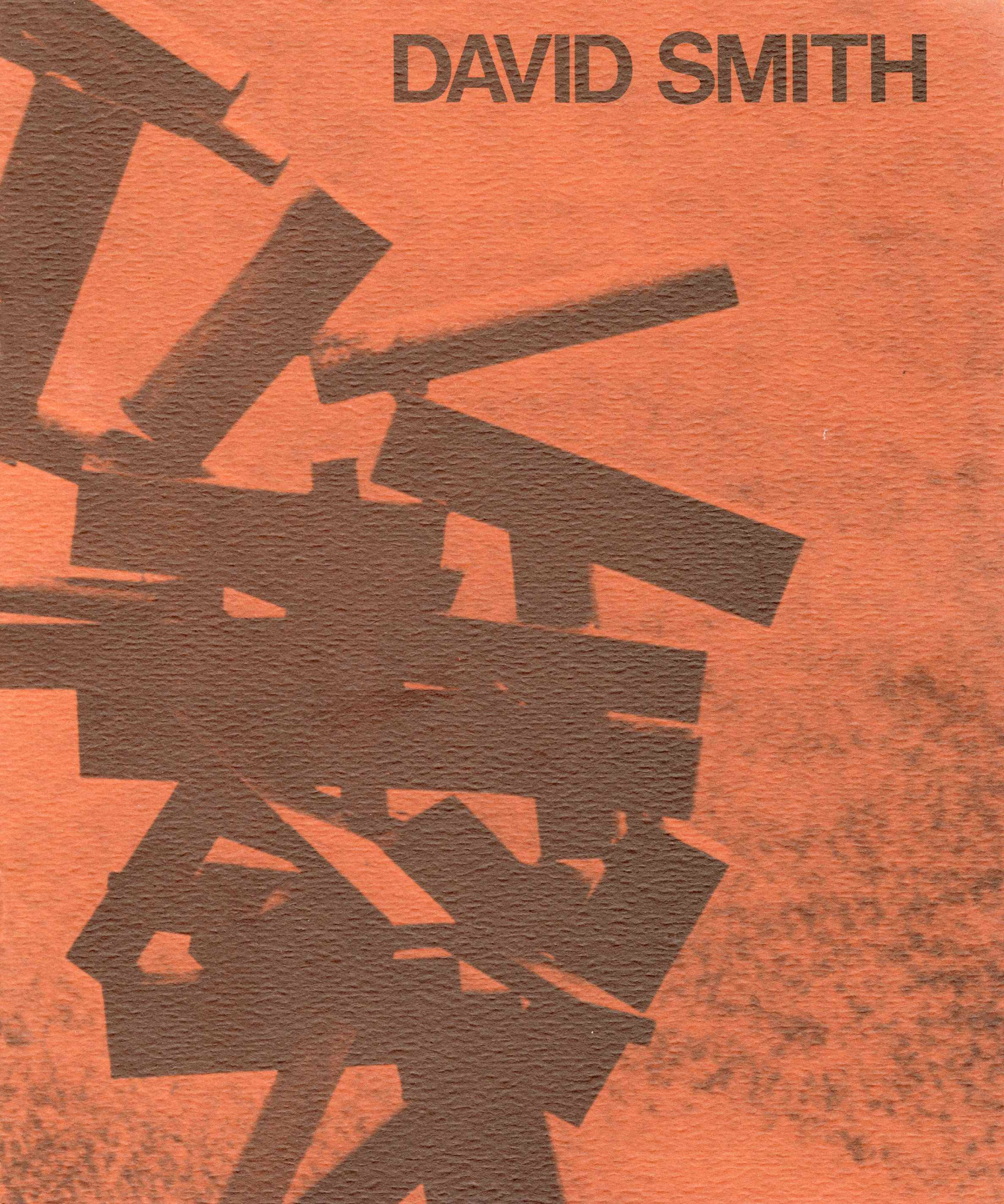


DAVID SMITH



SCULPTURE BY

DAVID SMITH

IN THE STORM KING ART CENTER COLLECTION

The Question — what is your hope
I would like to make sculpture that would rise from
water and tower in the air —
that carried conviction and vision that had not
existed before
that rose from a natural pool of clear water
to sandy shores with rocks and plants
that men could view as natural without reverence or awe
but to whom such things were natural because they were
statements of peaceful pursuit — and joined in the
phenomenon of life
Emerging from unpolluted water at which men could bathe
and animals drink — that
harboured fish and clams and all things natural to it
I don't want to repeat the accepted fact,
moralize or praise the past or sell a product
I want it to show the man made wonder that flowing water,
rocks, clouds, vegetation, have for a man in peace who
glorifies in existence
this sculpture will not be the mystical abode
of power, of wealth, of religion,
Its existence will be its statement
It will not be a scorned ornament on a money changers
temple or a house of fear
It will not be a tower of elevators and plumbing with every
room rented, deductions, taxes, allowing for depreciation
amortization yielding a percentage in dividends
It will say that in peace we have time
that a man has vision, has been fed, has worked

it will not incite greed or war
That hands and mind and tools and material made a
symbol to the elevation of vision
It will not be a pyramid to hide a royal corpse from
pillage
It has no roof to be supported by burdened maidens
It has no bells to beat the heads of sinners
or clap the traps of hypocrites, no benediction
falls from its lights, no fears from its shadow
this vision cannot be of a single mind — a single concept,
it is a small tooth in the gear of man,
it was the wish incision in a cave,
the devotion of a stone hewer at Memphis
the hope of a Congo hunter
It may be a sculpture to hold in the hand
that will not seek to outdo by bulky grandeur
which to each man, one at a time, offers a marvel, of
close communion, a symbol which answers to the holders
vision, correlates the forms of woman and nature,
stimulates the recall sense of pleasurable emotion, that
momentarily rewards for the battle of being

—David Smith

The observations by David Smith originally appeared in
ART IN AMERICA, January–February, 1966 and are
reprinted through the courtesy of the author, Cleve Gray.



David Smith

The sculptures by David Smith, which form a significant section in the collection of Storm King Art Center, cover an illustrious decade in the artist's work from 1954 through 1964. They are installed in extensive sculpture gardens much as they were when David Smith completed and placed them within his own fields at Bolton Landing and observed them throughout the changing seasons. The thirteen sculptures came to the Storm King Art Center collection as a gift from the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation in the spring of 1967. They stand as a tribute to a most distinguished American sculptor and serve as a focal point in a developing collection of 20th century sculpture.

David Smith began his career as a painter and often returned to painting during his more than thirty years as a sculptor. His interest in color, flat planes and reflections is to be seen in much of his sculptural works. He took special delight in applying weathered looking earth colors to steel and bronze and to the found industrial metals which he so skillfully fashioned into his own particular visual statement. The earliest of his sculptures in the Storm King Art Center collection, entitled *The Sitting Printer*, was completed in 1954. A cubist collage of found metal objects, it is built around a typesetter's composing tray which becomes the torso topped by a metal disc forming the head. A bronze with green patina, this seated personage measures seven feet in height. Its abrupt rhythms and forthright use of materials characterizes Smith's work of the mid 1950's.

A second work, begun in 1954 and entitled *The Iron Woman*, is one of a dozen pieces composed of steel slabs in various sizes which Smith actually forged, hammered or shaped in a metal press directly from the raw steel. This in itself was a remarkable feat even at Smith's Terminal Iron Works that was his studio at Bolton Landing. In this sculpture the upward and downward thrust of the forged forms meet in a central swirl of deftly contained shapes. The varied angles of the surfaces catch the light and give the piece a remarkable lightness and grace.

Smith restlessly explored many three dimensional visual patterns and movements leading finally to the great monumental steel sculptures of his last prolific years. In *Five Units Equal* of 1956 the cubed rectangles are set on a central shaft. These repeated blunt forms give a strong sense of solidity and changing intensity as the viewer observes the piece from different angles. Its mustard green color, quite different from the green patina of other pieces in this period, seems to accent the geometric images as they become a commanding part of the surrounding gardens. Two other works, *Portrait of a Lady Painter* and *Personage of May* are sculpture collages of found objects fashioned some three years later than the above mentioned *The Sitting Printer*. *Personage of May* is starkly simple in its vertical stance. Its spade-like head is supported by a long somewhat heavy shaft around which an irregular sheet of metal is attached to suggest the torso and its enveloping cloak. Its casual simplicity gives it a detached but haunting presence.

In 1958 David Smith began to use stainless steel in his creation of monumental outdoor sculptures. In Storm King Art Center's work, entitled *XI Books III Apples*, 1959, the artist employed an electric burnishing tool to create brush-like strokes that catch the changing light. The effect is one of dazzling calligraphy as the light shifts and changes on the surfaces of the squares and discs of stainless steel that compose this authoritative sculpture. This particular work heralds the imposing *Cubi* series of twenty-eight monumental stainless steel sculptures completed during the years from 1961 until Smith's death in 1965. Also completed in 1959 is *Study in Arcs*, painted a strong yellow orange, slightly weathered in tone. It is considered the most lyrical of Smith's later works. Growing out of a circular base are a cluster of nine curved slightly tapered lengths of steel. The modular steel form is repeated and built into a magnificently articulated, fully three dimensional image. Viewed from any angle its calligraphic tracery is a crescendo of soaring arcs.

Raven V and Albany I complete Smith's 1959 sculptures in the Storm King Art Center collection. Raven V is reminiscent of the artist's Royal Bird of 1948 in its horizontal composition and its bird iconography. More simplified than the earlier work, Raven V, in its forward thrust and its skeletal form becomes a strong, floating image that simplified, reappears in the smaller sculpture, Albany I. The latter, painted a flat black, is entirely abstract in its perfectly balanced discs and chunky rectangles. Perhaps it is Smith's bird iconography brought to its ultimate realization.

The 1960's representation of David Smith's sculpture in the Storm King Art Center collection is noted in Three Ovals Soar and Tank Totem VII. In such works David Smith again brings together the qualities of both sculpture and painting into visually eloquent and sophisticated imagery. The three oval shapes set on a very tall steel shaft are a prime example of the artist's stylistic solution to the attenuated forms made possible by the sheer strength of the material itself. Again, as in XI Books III Apples the burnished surfaces are highlighted by the changing light and the varying angles of vision. In Tank Totem VII familiar forms (the disc, the rectangle and the curved tapered length of steel) make up the principal structure. However to the steel components Smith has brought an added and intriguing dimension through the skillful use of painted rectangles within the structure itself. The large rectangle that constitutes the upper right section of the composition is painted white in exact proportion to a second white rectangle painted within the confines of the circular concave disc fashioned from a tank end. The dark blue background color and the single tapered and curved length of steel unite the two rectilinear forms. In this work the artist has achieved a remarkable pictorial study in lines and subtle planes.

In 1962 David Smith spent a month in Voltri, Italy near Genoa where, as the guest of an Italian metallurgical concern, he produced the prodigious number of twenty-six sculptures. This entire series was later exhibited at the summer festival at Spoleto. All welded

pieces, they record Smith's many stylistic interests in the early years of the 1960's. These works of industrial metal scrap of monumental proportions are very large assemblages. Storm King Art Center's Voltron XX is of more modest size. Its combination of industrial sections and tools — tongs, wrenches and weights — all serve not only as rugged forms in the composition but as expressive symbols as well.

Becca 1964, the latest Smith work in the collection, is a collage of many small steel units welded together. Its combined elements, although more complicated than those of Albany I, evoke a similar abstract power. A diminutive name for Smith's daughter Rebecca, the title Becca appears on a number of his sculptures during this period.

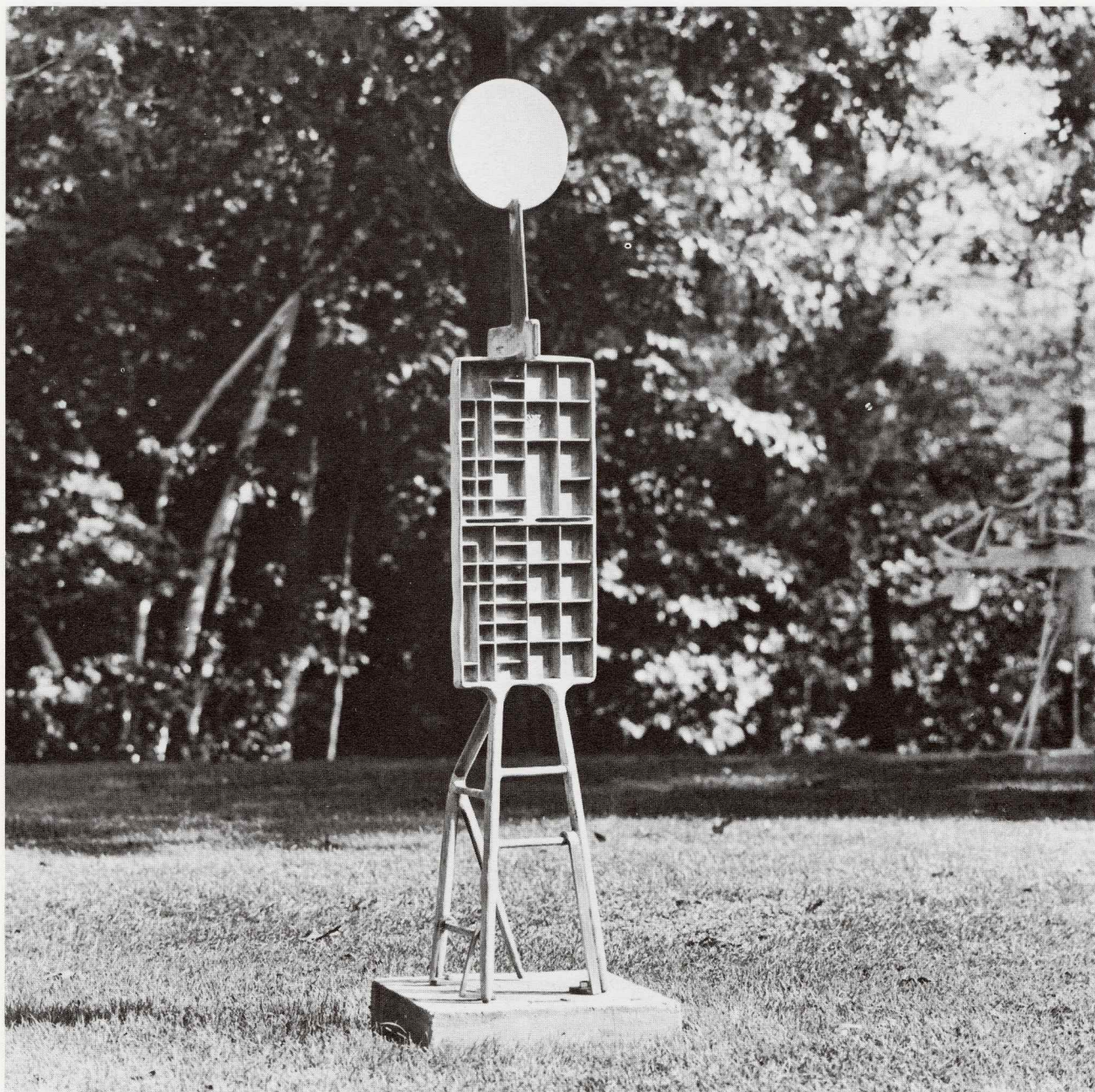
To his acceptance of 20th century idioms, materials and tools Smith also brought an extraordinary strength and integrity of vision. His large oeuvre mirrors the visual achievements, and on occasion, the human frustrations of the mid 20th century. David Smith has summed up his own ideas of the artist and his work: "You know who I am and what I stand for. I have no allegiance, but I stand, and I know I stand and I know what the challenge is, and I challenge everything and everybody. And I think that is what every artist has to do..."

— Una E. Johnson

Storm King Art Center
October, 1971

David Smith Sculptures
Storm King Art Center Collection
Gift from the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation, Inc. 1967

Measurements are given in inches, height preceding width.



SITTING PRINTER 1954

bronze with green patina 87¼ x 15¾ x 16

signed: David Smith 1954

exhibitions: *David Smith Sculpture — Drawings, 1954–56.*
Willard Gallery, New York. March 6–31, 1956

David Smith. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Sept. 10–Oct. 20, 1957. cat. no. 20. illus. p. 30

David Smith. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.
March 29–May 11, 1969. cat. no. 49. illus. p. 87



THE IRON WOMAN 1954-56

steel, painted with thin green paint 88 x 14½ x 16

signed: David Smith 1954-58 (1958 misdated by artist)

exhibitions: *David Smith Sculpture — Drawings 1954-56.*

Willard Gallery, New York. March 6-31, 1956

Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Sculpture, Watercolors, Drawings.

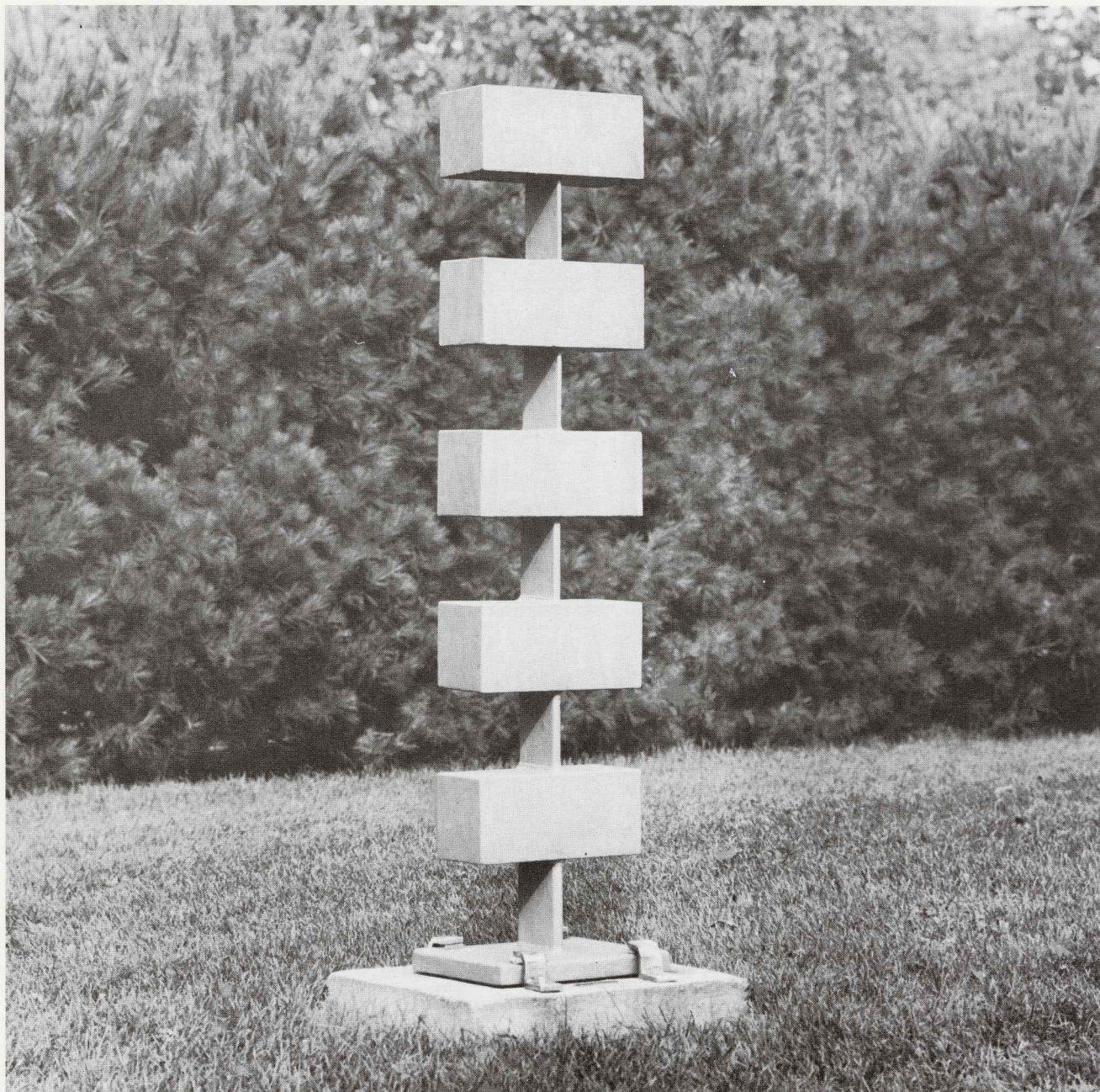
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. April 18-June 10, 1956

Lipton, Rothko, Smith, Tobey.

XXIX Biennale, Venice. 1958. cat. no. 27

David Smith — 25 Sculptures — U. S. Representation.

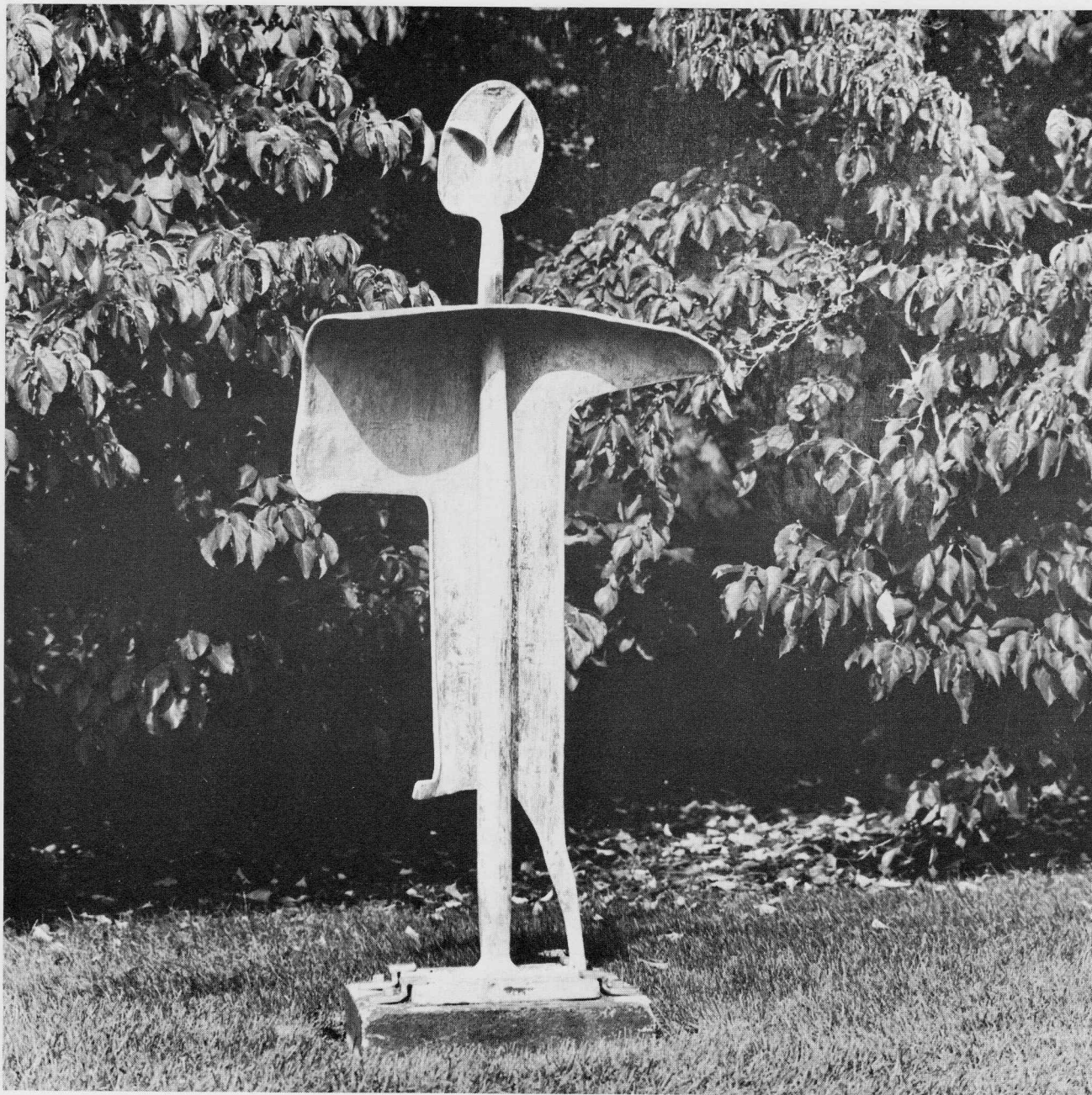
V Sao Paulo Bienal. Sept.-Nov. 1959



FIVE UNITS EQUAL 1956
steel, painted mustard green $73\frac{1}{4} \times 16\frac{1}{4} \times 14\frac{1}{4}$
signed: David Smith 11-27-1956

exhibitions: *David Smith Sculpture*.
French & Co. Feb. 1960. illus. cat. no. 17

The Art of the Real, U.S.A. 1948-1968.
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, June 1, 1968-June 1,
1969. illus. p. 26 of catalogue by E. C. Goosen. (International
Circulating Exhibition)



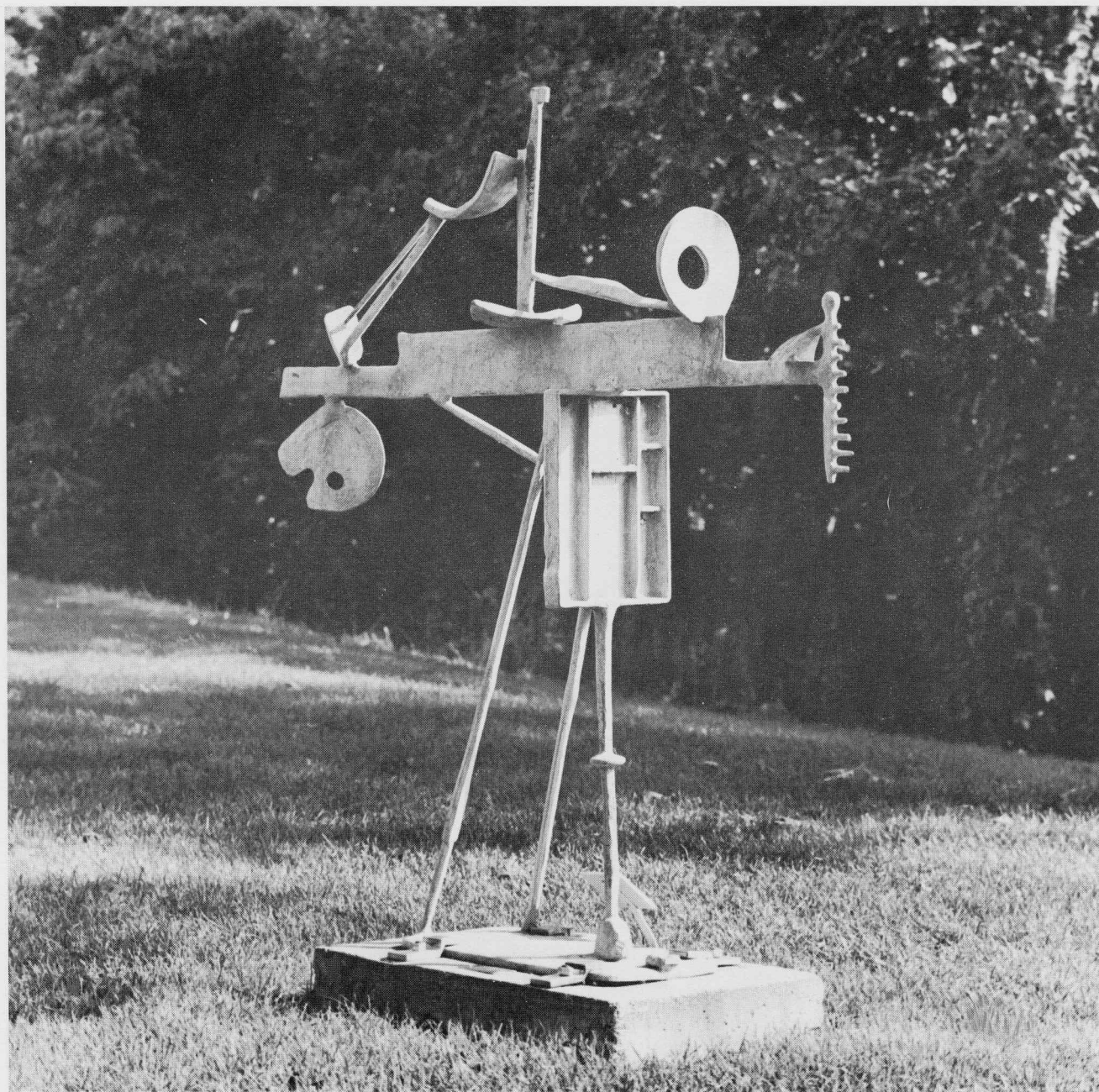
PERSONAGE OF MAY 1957
 bronze 71 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 32 x 19
 signed: David Smith 1957 May

exhibitions: *David Smith*. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
 Sept. 10–Oct. 20, 1957. cat. no. 34, illus. p. 28

Lipton, Rothko, Smith, Tobey.
 XXIX Biennale, Venice. 1958. cat. no. 34

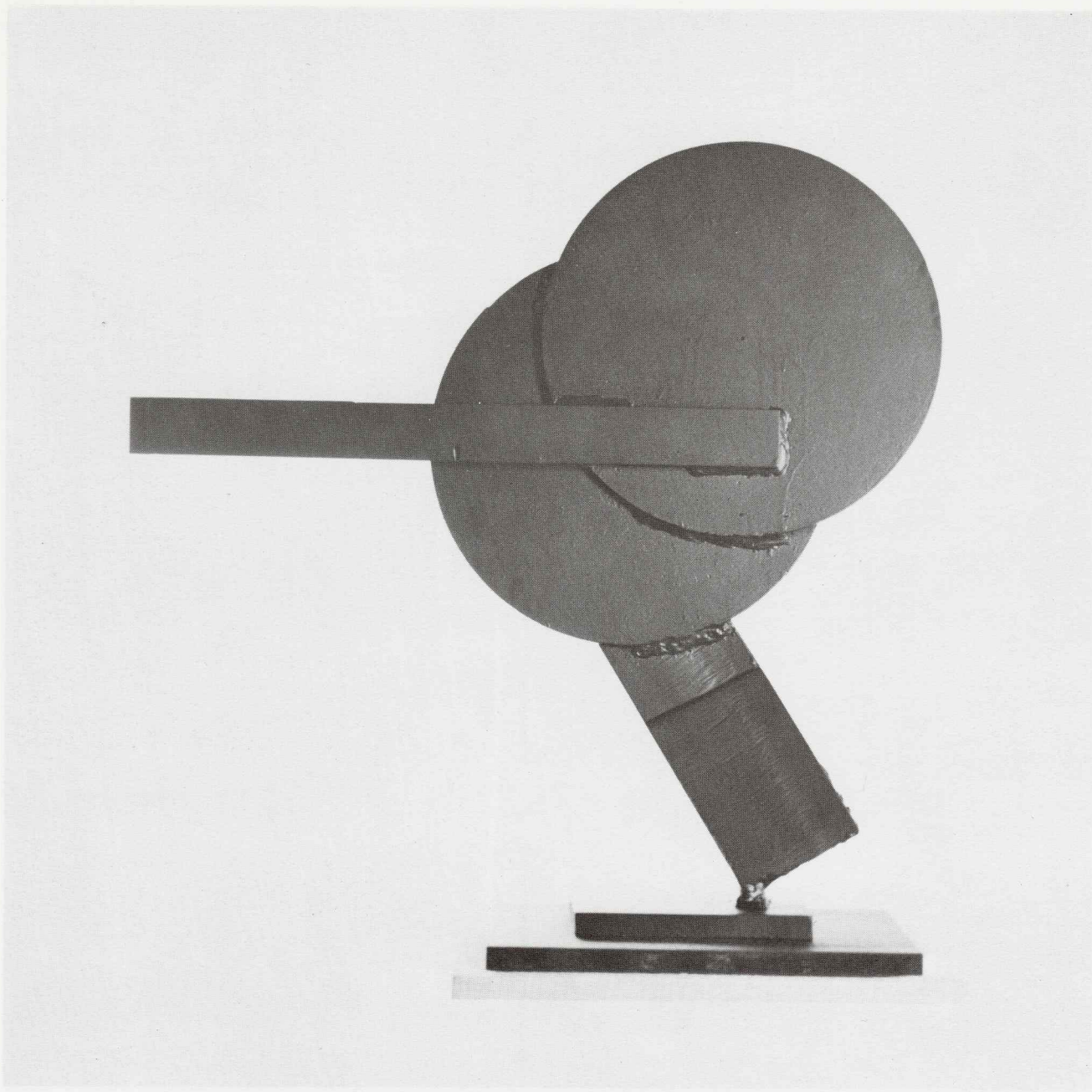
David Smith — 25 Sculptures — U.S. Representation.
 V Sao Paulo Bienal. Sept.–Nov. 1959

The Museum & Its Friends. 18 Living American Artists.
 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.
 March 5–April 12, 1959. no cat. no.



PORTRAIT OF A LADY PAINTER 1957
bronze with green patina $63\frac{5}{8} \times 59\frac{3}{4} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$
signed: David Smith 1957 P.O.A.L.P.

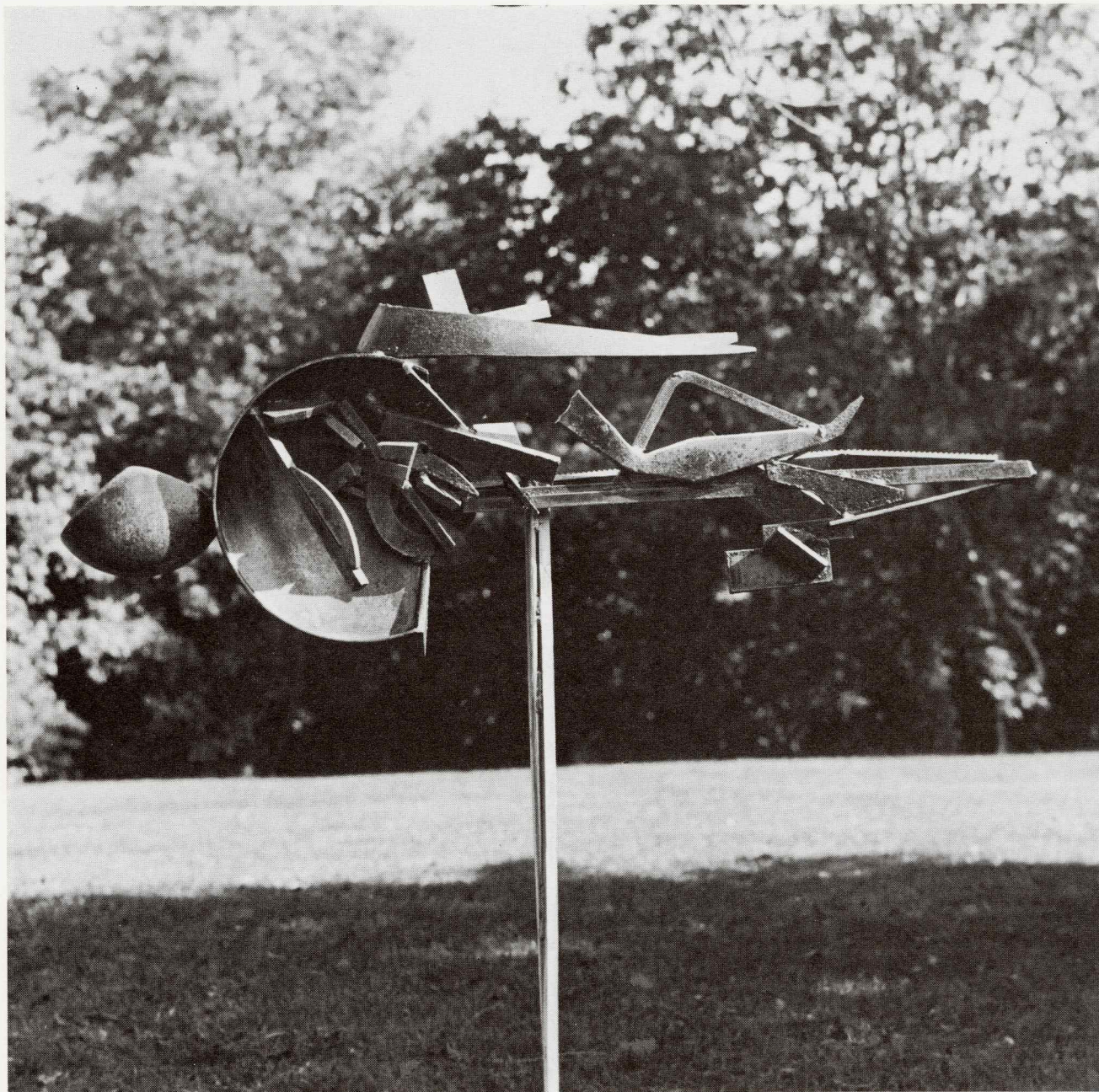
exhibitions: *David Smith*. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Sept. 10–Oct. 20, 1957. cat. no. 32



ALBANY I 1959

steel, painted black $24\frac{3}{4} \times 25\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{4}$
signed: with symbols for Psi and Iota

exhibitions: *David Smith Sculpture*,
French & Co. Feb. 1960. illus. cat. no. 29



RAVEN V 1959
 steel 58 x 55 x 9½
 signed: David Smith 1959 10-30

exhibitions: *David Smith Sculpture*.
 French & Co. Feb. 1960, illus. cat. no. 36

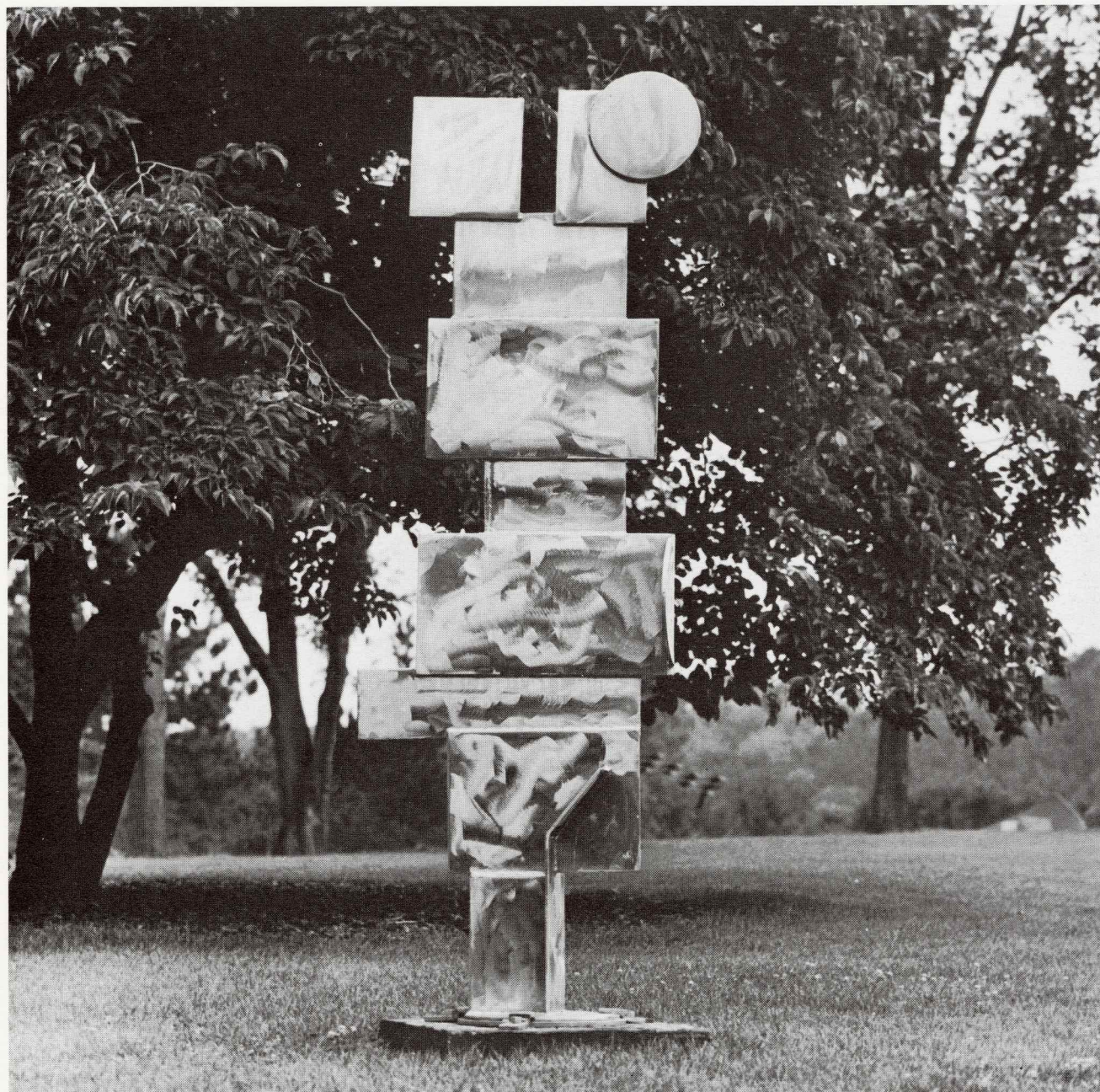
"Smith made a series of Six Ravens between 1956 and 1960.
 (It is) a collage of great many small steel units welded together.
 Smith continued to use this technique well into the 1960's on works
 of considerable scale." from Guggenheim catalogue of 1969



STUDY IN ARCS 1959

steel, painted yellow-orange 132 x 115½ x 41½
signed: David Smith 1949 (misdated by artist)

exhibitions: *David Smith*. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.
March 29–May 11, 1969. cat. no. 64. illus. p. 108 (color).
Travelled to the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, June–Sept. 1969;
The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. Oct.–Nov. 1969



XI BOOKS III APPLES 1959

stainless steel 94 x 31¼ x 13¼

signed: David Smith 6-20-59 XI BOOKS III APPLES

exhibitions: *David Smith — 25 Sculptures — U. S. Representation.*
V Sao Paulo Bienal. Sept.-Nov. 1959.

David Smith Sculpture. French & Co. Feb. 1960. illus. cat. no. 8

David Smith. The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls, New York. June 7-Aug. 1, 1964

Continuity and Change, 45 American Abstract Artists.

Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Conn. April 12-May 27, 1962

"This is the only time, in these stainless steel pieces, that I have been able to utilize light. I depend upon the reflective power of light . . . it does have a semi-minor reflection. I like it in that sense because no other material in sculpture can do that." *David Smith by David Smith* p. 125



TANK TOTEM VII 1960

steel polychromed dark blue and white 84 x 36½ x 14¼

signed: David Smith 64 1960 TNK VII

exhibitions: *David Smith Recent Sculpture.*

Otto Gerson Gallery, New York. Oct. 10–28, 1961. illus. cover cat. no. 1

Spotlight on Sculpture 1880–1961.

Otto Gerson Gallery, New York. Dec. 1960–Jan. 1961

Annual Exhibition of Contemporary Sculpture and Drawings.

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Dec. 12–Feb. 3, 1962

David Smith. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

March 29–May 11, 1969. cat. no. 69. illus. p. 118.

Travelled to the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, June–Sept. 1969;

The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. Oct.–Nov. 1969



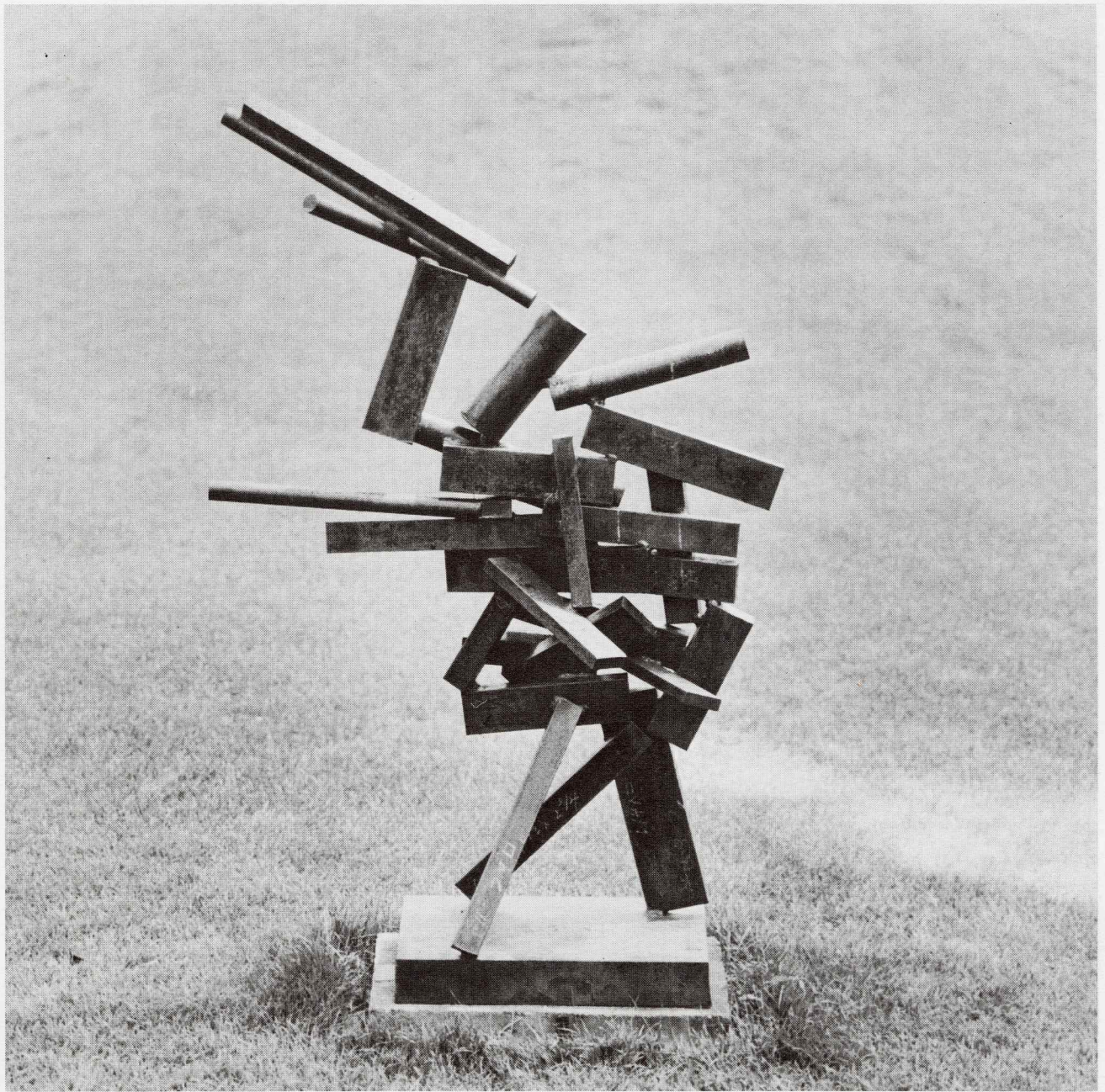
THREE OVALS SOAR 1960
stainless steel 135½ x 33 x 23
signed: David Smith I-I-1960 3 OVALSSOAR

exhibitions: *David Smith Sculpture*.
French & Co., New York. Feb. 1960. illus. cat. no. 18
David Smith. The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls, New York.
June 7-Aug. 1, 1964



VOLTRON XX (VOLTON XX) 1963
 steel 62¼ x 37½ x 26½
 signed: David Smith Feb 4'63 VOLTON XX

"He called the new series "Voltron"—a word he coined to link Voltri in Liguria to Bolton, New York State on the shore of Lake George, where he has been living since 1940..." Carandente, Giovanni. *Voltron*. 1964. Institute of Contemporary Art. U. of Pennsylvania. Illus. p. 71.



BECCA 1964
steel 78 x 47½ x 23½
signed: David Smith

DAVID SMITH

- | | | | |
|---------|---|---------|--|
| 1906 | born March 9 in Decatur, Indiana | 1948-50 | teaches at Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, New York |
| 1923 | takes correspondence course from the Cleveland Art School | 1950 | receives John Simon Guggenheim Foundation fellowship — renewed in 1951 |
| 1924 | attends Ohio University in Athens, Ohio | 1953 | begins "Tank Totem" series |
| 1925 | works as welder and riveter at Studebaker plant, South Bend, Indiana | | teaches University of Arkansas, Fayetteville |
| 1926 | moves to Washington, D. C. and attends evening courses in art and poetry at George Washington University | 1954 | teaches Indiana University, Bloomington |
| | moves to New York and attends evening classes at the Art Students League with Richard Lahey | 1955 | teaches University of Mississippi, Oxford |
| 1927-32 | studies painting (full time) at the Art Students League with teachers John Sloan and Jan Matulka | 1957 | begins "Sentinel" series |
| 1929 | buys property in Bolton Landing, New York for summer use | | retrospective exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, N.Y. |
| | (painting in abstract surrealist style at this period) | 1959 | begins "Albany" series |
| 1932 | makes first sculptures of welded steel — (in 1933 he painted welded steel — he may have been the first to do so in the United States) | 1961 | one-man exhibition Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh and Otto Gerson Gallery, New York |
| 1934-40 | rents working space and use of the forge in Terminal Iron Works on Brooklyn waterfront | 1962 | spends one month in Voltri, Italy where he makes 26 sculptures (2 were commissioned) for the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto |
| 1935-36 | travels in Europe | | "Voltron" series made from tools he used in Italy |
| | studies etching with Stanley William Hayter | 1963 | starts "Cubi" series of stainless steel sculptures |
| 1937 | works on Federal Art Project of W. P. A. | | The Museum of Modern Art circulates retrospective exhibition of 50 drawings to the United States and Canada |
| | begins <i>Medals for Dishonor</i> | 1964 | continues "Cubi" and "Zig" series |
| 1938 | first one-man exhibition at Marian Willard's East River Gallery | | completes about 140 paintings of nude models |
| 1940 | moves permanently to Bolton Landing and produces large amount of sculpture | 1965 | appointed by President Johnson to National Council on the Arts |
| 1942-44 | works at American Locomotive Company in Schenectady, New York assembling locomotives and tanks | | Died May 23 in an automobile accident |
| | | | The Museum of Modern Art organizes retrospective exhibition which travels throughout Europe |

Catalogue

Research by Emily B. Shields

Photograph of David Smith by Harry A. Gitlan, D.D.S.

Photographs of the David Smith Sculpture by Derek St. John

Designed by Barbara Hastie, Hefferan, Hastie & Leibman, Inc., Kingston, N.Y.

Published by Storm King Art Center, Mountainville, New York

STORM KING ART CENTER, MOUNTAINVILLE, NEW YORK 10953