



Part of Yorkshire Sculpture International
22 June 2019–5 January 2020
Underground Gallery and Open Air

DAVID SMITH Sculpture 1932-1965



TALKING TOGETHER

This exhibition celebrates the artwork of sculptor David Smith from the United States of America. He was a pioneer who was the first known artist in the USA to weld steel together to make sculptures. In this exhibition there are works made over 40 years starting with David Smith's early experimental works and leading to his large scale, monumental sculptures.

Talk together to discover more about his work and ideas. Feel free to ask Gallery Assistants questions about his work.



David Smith is celebrated for working in steel. Steel is a metal that is most often used in industry. It has been used for over 3,500 years, and is one of the most widely used materials in the world today – from hairpins and cutlery, to large buildings and bridges. Steel is long lasting, able to be shaped, bent, stretched and squeezed.

- Why do you think David Smith chose this material?

David Smith never made the same sculpture twice. All his artworks are a one-off. He always experimented and tested new ideas, saying 'I have only just started, I have lots more ideas'.

- What does this tell us about him?

- What steel objects do you have in your home?
- How would David Smith's sculptures change if he had chosen traditional sculpting materials like marble, plaster, or wood?
- Imagine his sculpture made out of temporary materials like ice, chocolate or even mud. How might this change their shape?

David Smith loved to use his creative making skills. He made toys for his children and fixed broken items for his neighbours.

- What skills do you have that can be used in different ways?

David Smith worked in factories and made parts for cars on an assembly line.

- How has he used the skills from this job in the making of his sculpture?
- See if you can spot these skills in any of his sculptures. Discuss with your group to see whether they agree.

Choose a sculpture that really intrigues you. Spend some time looking and thinking about it.

- How solid is the sculpture?
- How has the artist made it balance and stand?
- How has the artist used space between the materials to create shapes?
- Notice the surface texture. How has he created marks?
- David Smith trained as a painter. How has he used this skill?

Find the sculpture titled 'Blackburn, Song of an Irish Blacksmith'. Spend some time moving around it.

- What do you find that is surprising?
- How does the sculpture change as you move?
- Which position do you find most interesting?
- How do you think David Smith's sculptures are best viewed? From one spot or walking around?

David Smith wanted his work to be shown outside. He often arranged his sculptures in rows like crops in the fields outside his house.

- Look outside at his work. How does the work change when it is outside?
- Do you prefer looking at his sculpture in the gallery or outside? Why?

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