Exhibition Unites Visionaries
Carmen Herrera and Leon Polk Smith for First Time

Leon Polk Smith, *Six Involvements in One*, 1966 (recto of *Seven Involvements in One*, 1966), acrylic on canvas mounted on wood panel, 6 panels: 86 5/8 × 157 1/2 × 1 5/8 inches overall, Private collection. Image courtesy Lisson Gallery, © Leon Polk Smith Foundation

Andover, MA (January 15, 2026) — *Both Sides of the Line: Carmen Herrera & Leon Polk Smith* unites two of the 20th century's most visionary abstract artists, offering a profound exploration of their intertwined legacies and shared impact on American abstraction. Although the artists enjoyed a decades-long friendship, this exhibition marks the first examination of their work side by side, offering a profound exploration of their intertwined legacies and shared impact on American abstraction. Organized by the University of Michigan Museum of Art (UMMA), *Both Sides of the Line* opens at the Addison Gallery of American Art on February 21 and runs through July 31, 2026.

Curated by Dana Miller, a renowned expert on Carmen Herrera, the exhibition reveals how the artists' journeys redefined the language of geometric abstraction, even as they navigated an art world often indifferent to their groundbreaking innovations. Through more than 45 works, including paintings, works on paper, and three-dimensional objects, *Both Sides of the Line* examines the dynamic relationship

between Herrera's crisp lines and bold colors and Smith's sweeping curves and expansive forms, revealing how these two artists redefined the visual language of modern art.

The artists perspectives intersect, diverge, and resonate, offering new ways to understand abstraction, identity, and the power of friendship. Their paths, distinct yet parallel, reveal a shared commitment to pushing the boundaries of abstraction in a mid-century art world that too often overlooked them. Born in Cuba, Herrera navigated a world that often marginalized her contributions, while Smith, a gay man who was born in Indian Territory, similarly pushed against the boundaries of a system that never fully recognized his work.

A Personal and Professional Dialogue

In 1964, Herrera and Smith became neighbors in downtown New York City, forging a friendship and creative exchange that lasted decades. While Herrera's art was frequently relegated to exhibitions devoted to Cuban or female artists, and Smith's work was sometimes neglected in favor of other male contemporaries, their shared commitment to abstraction challenged dominant artistic narratives. Together, their work illuminates how two artists pushed the boundaries of form, color, and line in ways that remain deeply relevant today.

"This exhibition is a testament to the quiet yet radical ways Carmen Herrera and Leon Polk Smith shaped the trajectory of modern art," said Miller. "Despite their vastly different backgrounds, they shared a profound friendship and artistic dialogue that shaped their approaches to abstraction. This exhibition not only celebrates their friendship, it also examines their contributions to American modernism in aspects that have been overlooked for far too long."

Allison Kemmerer, the Mary Stripp and R. Crosby Kemper Director of the Addison Gallery added, "we are looking forward to presenting *Both Sides of the Line* at the Addison. As an institution dedicated to provoking new discourse and insights into the field of American art, we are delighted to share with our visitors a groundbreaking re-appraisal of these under-recognized artists."

Through iconic works like those from Herrera's *Blanco y Verde* series and Smith's *Correspondence* series, the exhibition showcases how their artistic innovations prefigured movements like Minimalism and Color Field painting. Yet, as contemporaries like Frank Stella and Ellsworth Kelly gained international acclaim, Herrera and Smith continually faced the systemic barriers of gender, race, and xenophobia. While Smith did achieve modest success with sales and gallery representation, Herrera's work remained largely neglected until her later years.

A fully illustrated publication with essays by Dana Miller, art critic and poet John Yau, and Cleveland Museum of Art contemporary art curator Nadiah Rivera Fellah, published by the University of Michigan Museum of Art, accompanies the exhibition.

Lead support for *Both Sides of the Line: Carmen Herrera & Leon Polk Smith* is provided by Irving Stenn, Jr., Lizzie and Jonathan Tisch, Luptak Family Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the University of Michigan Office of the Provost. Additional generous support is provided by the Robert Lehman Foundation. Support for the exhibition catalogue and programming is provided by Tony Bechara and the Leon Polk Smith Foundation. This exhibition is organized and circulated by the University of Michigan Museum of Art. The Addison's presentation is generously supported by the Elizabeth and Anthony Enders Exhibitions Fund.

Also on view at the Addison this Spring

***Parasol Press: Breaking New Ground* (January 24–July 31, 2026)**
This exhibition features the innovative prints that defined Parasol Press's first decade and established it as one of the most influential print publishers of the twentieth century. Founded by Robert Feldman (1937–2022) in 1970, the publisher came to prominence for introducing a generation of Minimalist and Conceptual artists to printmaking, including Mel Bochner, Sol LeWitt, Robert Mangold, Agnes Martin, and Dorothea Rockburne. Working with printers at workshops such as Crown Point Press in California and Edition Domberger in Germany, these artists approached the medium in new ways, embracing its serial nature and exploring the materiality of printed surfaces. Parasol quickly earned a reputation for taking risks on technically daring feats, supporting artists and printers as they tested the limits of the medium. *Parasol Press* reveals how the publisher helped forge transformative connections between artists and printers, highlighting the significance of risk-taking, collaboration, and experimentation in pushing the boundaries of artistic expression.

***Playing to Our Strengths: Highlights from the Permanent Collection* (January 31–July 31, 2026)**
The third iteration of this series explores how American artists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries grappled with the contradictory nature of modern life, laying bare the tensions between appearance and reality as well as the orderly and the chaotic. The exhibition includes paintings, photographs, and prints that reveal the complex and often disordered lived realities of interwar New Yorkers navigating a rapidly modernizing city.

***Little Boxes* (February 7–July 31, 2026)**
Featuring works drawn entirely from the Addison's permanent collection, *Little Boxes* invites viewers into a nuanced exploration of the square and the rectangle, two essential geometric forms that have served as powerful tools in artistic expression. Across media and contexts, artists have used these shapes in many ways: from meticulously crafted three-dimensional assemblages to rigorously ordered grids; from symbols of homogeneous suburban and institutional architecture to diagrammatic organizational charts and visualizations of data. This exhibition explores the ways in which the deceptively simple "box" not only serves as a practical strategy for pictorial composition but as a symbolic container for complex narratives about the human condition and the rigidly structured realities we inhabit.

About the Addison Gallery of American Art
Devoted exclusively to American art, the Addison opened in 1931 and holds one of the most important American art collections in the country. Its collection includes more than 29,000 works by artists such as John Singleton Copley, Thomas Eakins, Winslow Homer, George Bellows, Georgia O'Keeffe, Jackson Pollock, Jennifer Bartlett, Kara Walker, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Kerry James Marshall, and Mark Bradford, as well as photographers Eadweard Muybridge, Walker Evans, Robert Frank, Cindy Sherman, Laurie Simmons, Sally Mann, Dawoud Bey, Lorna Simpson, Carrie Mae Weems, and many others. The Addison Gallery, located in a stand-alone building on the campus of Phillips Academy—a residential school of grades 9 through 12 in Andover, Massachusetts—offers a continually rotating series of exhibitions and programs, all of which are free and open to the public. For more information on the Addison, visit www.addisongallery.org.

Press Contact
Rebecca Mongeon
Addison Gallery of American Art
978-749-4342
rmongeon@andover.edu