



The Oct. 13, 1967, cover of TIME TIME

## MEDIA

# 50 Years Ago This Week: The New American Art

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*Milestone moments do not a year make. Often, it's the smaller news stories that add up, gradually, to big history. With that in mind, in 2017 TIME History will revisit the entire year of 1967, week by week, as it was reported in the pages of TIME. [Catch up on last week's installment here.](#)*

## Week 41: Oct. 13, 1967

Tony Smith was the "most dynamic, versatile and talented new sculptor in the U.S. art world" [proclaimed this week's cover story](#) — but that wasn't the only reason why his work was so newsworthy.

The other factor worth considering was what his work at the time looked like. *Smoke*, the work discussed at the top of the article, was metal, crafted in a fabrication shop from his designs, and it was huge.

Smith was TIME's way of looking at a major new trend in contemporary art. As American cities grew and modernized, they needed art that could hold its own. Enter the new American artist:

In the year 1967, the styles and statements of America's brash, brilliant and often infuriating contemporary artists have not only become available to the man in the street, but are virtually unavoidable. And with proliferation comes confusion. Whole new schools of painting seem to charge through the art scene with the speed of an express train, causing Pop Artist Andy Warhol to predict the day "when everyone will be famous for 15 minutes."

...Tony Smith, who was thought of as primarily an architect at the time, witnessed the coming of age of the U.S. as a world art power in the 1950s. Many of the abstract expressionists who were responsible for that triumph were his friends, including Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman. Smith designed the Long Island homes of Painter Theodore Stamos and Gallery Owner Betty Parsons. Not the least important aspect of the abstract expressionists was the size of their paintings. To force the spectator to become a part of their huge gesture paintings, leaders of the movement expanded their canvases to the size of whole walls. The pop artists who came after behaved like delighted, bright-eyed children let loose in a supermarket. They too liked their objects big. Andy Warhol enlarged a Campbell soup can and made it an object of veneration; Tom Wesselman celebrated bathrooms and kitchens; Robert Rauschenberg painted his own bed, made a sacred relic out of a stuffed goat with a tire round his middle and walked off with first honors at the 1964 Venice Biennale. Onetime Sign Painter James Rosenquist composed his images of the modern U.S.A. —from hair dryers to atomic bombs—on a canvas titled F-III, which measures 13 ft. longer than the 85-ft. jet fighter-bomber itself. The painting was bought in 1965 for \$60,000 by Manhattan Collector Robert Scull, and is currently one of the hits of the U.S. pop art exhibition in Sao Paulo.

Meanwhile, sculptors, using materials untried in art, began building complex works that physically recreated the frenetic pace and brilliance of modern urban life. To Chryssa, all of Times Square's jangle of signs is one total work of art, and she has set out with neon tube and stainless steel to rival its garish, flickering magic. Kinetic Sculptor George Rickey equates movement with life itself; his own tall blades and semaphores sway in the wind above treetop level and are capable of almost infinite extension.

And, Smith believed, a single 1960s American style was on its way to emerging. "Art is becoming a tangible reality to the public," he said. "People are beginning to pass this stuff on their way to work. As art becomes public in this way, people will develop a judgment about it, a sense of universal style."

See photos of the work discussed in the article, [here in the TIME Vault](#).

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**Writing on the wall:** Amid the divisiveness of the era, Lyndon Johnson had finally helped achieve **something like national consensus** on an issue, the politics section noted. Unfortunately for him, it was a building feeling that he was doing a bad job.

**Hippie Fall:** Summer was over in more ways than one, **at least in San Francisco**. The Summer of Love came to an end with a mock funeral for the concept, attended by disillusioned flower children whose movement had been beset by part-time poseurs, hard drugs, STDs and a general sense of ennui.

**"The Desperate Dilemma":** This week's TIME Essay is an **enlightening look at the state of abortion** in the pre-*Roe* United States. At the time, it was estimated that between 200,000 and 1.5 million illegal abortions took place there each year — a number hard to reach due to the underground nature of the act — alongside 10,000 legal ones, and that abortion led to 1,000 deaths. Different states had widely differing laws but nearly 90% of American doctors surveyed thought those laws should be liberalized. And, beneath it all, TIME acknowledged, was "the stubborn reality that women denied legal abortions go on getting illegal ones."

**Great vintage ad:** A **nice reminder** that changing the channel on your television wasn't always so easy.

**Coming up next week:** **Rockefeller and Reagan**

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