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PALM SPRINGS ART MUSEUM ANNOUNCES LEON POLK SMITH EXHIBITION

Innovative 20th century painter becoming increasingly recognized

PALM SPRINGS, CA (Jan. 24, 2022) Palm Springs Art Museum has announced an exhibition featuring the work of the innovative painter, **Leon Polk Smith** (1906-1996), whose significant contributions to twentieth-century art are becoming increasingly recognized. The exhibition, *Leon Polk Smith: 1945-1962*, will run March 26 – August 28, 2022 in the museum’s main downtown location.

This presentation focuses on paintings and works on paper from the 1950s when Smith’s mature style began to flourish. Using a vocabulary of brilliant colors and simple, minimal forms, he challenged some of the most fundamental conventions of painting by dissolving the distinction between foreground and background and freeing his paintings from the boundaries of a rectangular format.

Born to half-Cherokee parents, Smith grew up and worked on his family’s farm in Oklahoma. At age twenty-seven, Smith became fascinated by art, enrolled in a painting class during his senior year in college and decided to become an artist. In 1952, at age forty-six, Smith moved full time to New York City. Soon afterwards, his groundbreaking paintings attracted the attention of art dealers and several ambitious young abstract artists. Though Smith was never as widely recognized as some of his peers, he was a pioneer of “Hard-Edge Painting,” a movement characterized by clean, unvarying, sharply refined fields of color.

Leon Polk Smith: 1945-1962 is an expanded version of *Leon Polk Smith: Big Form, Big Space*, curated by Nigel Prince and organized by the Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver.

The Palm Springs Art Museum presentation is curated by Adam Lerner, JoAnn McGrath Executive Director/CEO. Special thanks to the Leon Polk Smith Foundation. This season’s exhibitions are sponsored by the Herman & Faye Sarkowsky Charitable Foundation and Yvonne & Steve (in memoriam) Maloney.

Upcoming exhibitions at Palm Springs Art Museum include *Gonzalo Lebrija: Miracle of the Eternal Present*, a survey of recent work by the celebrated Mexican artist who works in a wide range of mediums including photography, video, sculpture, and painting. It runs April 22 – October 2, 2022 at the

main downtown museum. At the Palm Springs Art Museum, Architecture and Design Center, *Pattern Play: The Contemporary Designs of Jacqueline Groag* will consider the work of one of the most influential and versatile post-war pattern designers. The exhibition runs from May 12 – November 20, 2022.

For more information about Palm Springs Art Museum exhibitions, programs, and events, please visit psmuseum.org or call (760) 322-4800.

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About Palm Springs Art Museum

Palm Springs Art Museum is the largest cultural institution in the Coachella Valley and includes three locations in Palm Springs and Palm Desert. The flagship building, located in downtown Palm Springs, features compelling art exhibitions, a vast permanent collection, and the Annenberg Theater, all in a 150,000-square-foot, architecturally significant building. The Palm Springs Art Museum Architecture and Design Center, Edwards Harris Pavilion, features exhibitions and programming that explore the rich topics of architecture and design. In Palm Desert, Palm Springs Art Museum's four-acre Faye Sarkowsky Sculpture Garden is open to the public from sunrise to sunset, seven days a week.