

PART 1

LISA DENNISON

My name is Lisa Dennison, assistant curator at the Guggenheim. And I would like to welcome you to the final lecture in our series on the Spanish sculptor, Julio Gonzalez. I have the honor of introducing tonight our distinguished speaker, Michael Fried, who is professor of humanities and the history of art at Johns Hopkins University. Professor Fried is well known for his writing on art history and criticism and has published books on Morris Louis in 1971 and on eighteenth-century French painting and art criticism in 1980 entitled *Absorption and Theatricality: Painter and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*. He is currently writing books on Courbet and [Monet?]. Professor Fried has also organized numerous exhibitions on Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, [00:01:00] Frank Stella, and Anthony Caro. His continuing interest in modern sculpture is reflected in his topic for this evening, Gonzalez’s Legacy: David Smith and Anthony Caro. Please join me in welcoming Professor Fried.

MICHAEL FRIED

Could we have the first two slides, please? Great. I’m grateful for the generous introduction. There’s a chastening feature, though, in the ground floor of the museum, which I saw today. Going through the exhibition, I noticed the poster set up there that advertises the three lectures by Rosalind Kraus, Hilton Kramer and me, in that order. And both Rosalind Kraus and Hilton Kramer, having given their lectures, have a black diagonal line that runs directly [00:02:00] through their names. So that one knows that one is going to have that oneself. It’s a pleasure to be here to speak tonight about Smith and Caro. The problem in dealing with two figures that formidable and important in a single lecture is a real one. I tried to bear this in mind as I pulled my slides. And I kept telling myself what I tell students under those circumstances, which is, take fewer slides. Take fewer slides. You always take too many slides. However many slides you pull, cut it by half. And I really wasn’t able to do that very effectively. So I probably have too many slides, and I’m going to try to keep moving in order not to keep you here far too long. I’m not going to -- again, for reasons of time -- to try to work back and forth as I speak. To [00:03:00] work back and forth between Gonzalez and Smith and Caro.

And it’s just as well because, going through the Gonzalez exhibition today, I realized how very little I had ever known about Gonzalez before seeing the exhibition. I think most of us are familiar with Gonzalez on the strength of a handful of sculptures in public collections in this country and Europe. And then mainly familiar with him through photographs, in books and catalogs. And he simply isn’t, I mean, no art is served very well by photographs or indeed by slides. But the gap between what you gather from a photograph of a Gonzalez and what you gather when you really see the thing is so tremendous. I want to say at the outset that I feel, and I wasn’t alone today in feeling, that it’s a stupendous exhibition. Really beautiful, and beautifully installed. [00:04:00] And with an excellent catalog to boot. And I think Margit Rowell and the Guggenheim Museum deserves, well, you know, our thanks for putting on something like that. Certainly for myself and I think for anyone who’s seen this exhibition, Gonzalez will be a different sort of presence in the future.

Well, it’s on your left is a small Gonzalez sculpture, his head [in iron?] around 1930. And on the right is a David Smith. David Smith was born in 1906 and died in 1965. As most of you,

and I'm going to have, I think, very little biographical information in what I say. What I really want to do is just simply look at a series of slides and try to say something about them, as if we were walking through a museum looking at these things. Smith started out as a painter. He'd had early experience welding in an automobile [00:05:00] factory, so he was well-equipped to pick up on working in metal and in welding as a medium. And he saw Gonzalez and Picasso sculptures, photographs, for example, early on. And the slide on the right, which isn't a very good slide, illustrates a sculpture of his called *Head With Cogs For Eyes* of 1933. So he was 27 years old. And you can see very quickly, we could also have a Picasso where the Gonzalez is or have a Picasso up there as well. You can see how quickly he's picking up on, well, it isn't something yet that could be called a tradition. The whole rise of what we would now regard as a tradition of constructed sculpture, as opposed to either carved sculpture or modeled and then cast sculpture, [00:06:00] in the twentieth century is a very interesting story and one that we're, I think at this point, still far from understanding completely. But let's say at the moment, when Gonzalez and Picasso start working in metal and welding, in the late twenties and around 1930 and on into the 1930s, in a way picking up on some what seemed in retrospect to have been prophetic and wonderful hints in Picasso's constructed, constructions, really, coming out of collage in the years around 1912 and after.

There isn't yet anything that one could call a tradition, and there certainly wasn't anything that one could call a tradition at the time that Smith did this sculpture. There is today something that we can call a tradition of constructed sculpture. And Gonzalez and Picasso and Gargallo and others seem to be the founders of it. But I think they are the [00:07:00] founders of it almost by virtue of what, in Freudian theory, is called (inaudible), a kind of retrospective shaping, largely owing to the achievements of the two sculptors I'm going to be talking about tonight. And that's David Smith and Anthony Caro. What we see in Smith and Caro is the elaboration of what amounts, really, to a kind of world of sculptural possibility that simply never existed before and which is hinted at in a way only in retrospect when we look at, even at Gonzalez. Smith responds very quickly to the possibilities in the medium that are starting to emerge. And the possibilities include not just [00:08:00] welding but placing discrete elements in some relation to one another. Even disparate elements. And at this point, and often throughout his career -- and this is unlike Caro -- Smith follows Gonzalez's lead and Picasso's lead in, for the most part, not getting very far from some sort of representational basis. For Smith, as we'll see, Smith is an abstract artist.

The whole issue of abstraction in twentieth-century art, and twentieth-century sculpture in particular, is a very interesting one and a difficult one and an elusive one. I think one would want to say that Smith is an abstract artist, even when he is retaining some sort of basis in representation, as he does here. This is a wonderful small sculpture, *Head With Cogs For Eyes*. What I'll say about it to begin with is just simply that there must have been a time, there must have been a moment when this would [00:09:00] have struck people as very machine-like in appearance, almost robot-like. People may have been put off by its machine-like appearance. And yet, I think to us today, it has an extraordinary elegance, an extraordinary almost preciousness. It almost has a gem-like, jewel-like quality. And this is something that Smith has in reserve whenever he wants it. Both he and Caro are as -- and this is true of Gonzalez, too -- extraordinarily elegant and refined artists. And something that we ought to bear in mind is that this medium of welded sculpture, of welded metal, which we may think of as having almost brutal possibilities in which, in the hands of certain artists, has been exploited for those possibilities, I think not very interestingly. In the hands [00:10:00] of Gonzalez and Smith and Caro, all three of them, it becomes a medium of extraordinary

refinement. And I think what you feel [at?] very strongly in the Gonzalezes, and I think we'll feel that even in some of the slides we'll see right now.

May I have the next slide on the left, please? This is another small head, a 1938 by Smith. And again, if I want to take more time, I would put it up against synthetic cubist Picassos of the '30s and after. What you see very clearly already is Smith's ability to, the possibilities that he senses in a certain kind of drawing in space. And in particular, a certain kind of silhouetting and making the space read both positively and negatively. The shapes are powerful in their own right, but they're also powerful by virtue of what they do to the surrounding space. Gonzalez does something different [00:11:00] that's equally interesting. And that's the way in which he makes you bear down on the surface and bear down on the actual touch and working of the surface. Smith, too, has a wonderful touch. It's a quality we're used to discussing in terms of painting. It's a very elusive quality to talk about from slides. It's a quality that art history tends to neglect because it's the most, almost the most immediate characteristic of works. But you can take this entire Gonzalez exhibition as a testimony to a certain quality of touch. And Smith, too, has it. And you feel it in the way in which he places these things, the way in which he almost seems to determine or shape the very thickness of the steel that he works with here. And he moves beyond this in interesting directions.

May I have the next slide on the right, please? A wonderful small sculpture of about 1946, where he breaks with the verticality of the [00:12:00] head or of the figure pieces or animal sculptures that he was playing with throughout the late thirties and early forties. And moves into something more like a kind of surrealist landscape or dreamscape. And we also see a feature that will continue throughout Smith's entire career, which is his affection for color, his affection for painting. His desire which never leaves him and finds diverse expression throughout his career in getting color onto the sculptures, in getting color to work, both to define form and to work against the form. And very often, this will be at its best, at its most effective. I think there are large-scale examples where the color works. But I find the small pieces, sometimes of the late thirties and on into the forties, small pieces where he's using color, very often wonderfully effective. And (inaudible) [00:13:00] landscape, with its beautiful drawing and play of positive versus negative shapes and containing its own framing device. And then the marvelous way in which he breaks the framing device so that the framing device itself shapes the ambient space. One of his most elegant and, in a way, prophetic early pieces. Smith very quickly, I think, felt a desire to command a larger scale. His touch worked beautifully at this intimate scale, this small scale. That's, the (inaudible) landscape must be, [I don't know?], a few feet wide and maybe a foot and a half high. And Smith, as all of you are no doubt aware, characteristically worked much larger, though he would also, from time to time, go back down into a small scale.

May I have the next slide [00:14:00] on the left, please? The landscape possibilities are perhaps most dramatically exploited in a number of, and also the possibilities for this kind of drawing in space with the steel, in a number of sculptures of around 1951. There's a famous sculpture named Australia, which I'm not showing you. But this is Hudson River Landscape, an extremely well-known piece at the Whitney Museum. And you can see, I think, at a glance the way in which it goes on from sculpture like (inaudible) landscape. It has that same lateral spread, the same, one might want to say pictorial basis. It operates something like a painting operates. It is very forthright in its frontality and its assertion of a major plane that you're positioned in front of. But -- and this is the kind of thing that you can't gather from a slide, though I think the slide perhaps suggests it --[00:15:00] it's not just that Smith knew or

relied on the fact that what he was presenting in two dimensions physically existed in three dimensions. Therefore, sculpture could assert a certain kind of planarity.

It's also that he works back and forth absolutely beautifully within a depth of oh, maybe a foot and a half, all in all in that sculpture. But a foot and a half within which, it's such a charged space as he handles it, that forward and back, nuances of just an inch or a few inches or, and slight anglings tell very, very powerfully when you're in front of that sculpture. So you have the sense of, it's not even that you have the sense of great depth. But you have the sense of a shallow depth that's being occupied with such tremendous conviction and such tremendous nuance that nothing feels mechanical. Nothing feels merely planar. Everything is inflected against everything else. [00:16:00] And he has a marvelous feeling also -- and this is true in any Smith you'll ever see -- for the cross section of the steel. For the thickness of the steel and for the very character of the cross section. So that one will have pieces of steel that are rectilinear that then give way to pieces that are round in their cross section. And everything like that tells in his art. One must always resist seeing. You always have to resist seeing a Smith as if it were a photograph of that Smith. It may pick itself out very strongly as a silhouette. It may pick itself out very strongly as a kind of drawing in air. But what it wants you to do is go up to it, move around it, involve yourself in its materiality. Read it almost part by part, let's say, for a time, in terms of the thickness and the action and the behavior and the touch of the steel. What I'm calling the cross section, the thickness and so on. And then move [00:17:00] back again.

One of the things that we'll never understand about looking at art is how it happens that if you look at something up close, painting or sculpture, for a long time, and then back away and look at it again, what you've learned looking at it up close remains active in your perception at a distance, even when it's something that you can no longer exactly see. It's still there, and it's still helping to shape what you see and enrich what you see. So that one must always be moving up to paintings and moving back from them. And it's true in Smith, also. Anyway, it's a wonderful sculpture. And Smith exploited this possibility to the fullest. But he also exploited others. And he's an artist who, like a number of artists in this century, but a number of American and, in Caro's case, English artists of the last 20 or 30 [00:18:00] years, who have worked in series. And gotten a great deal out of the kind of internal variation that a series makes possible.

Can I have the next slide on the right, please? And I'm going to show you a few slides now. This is called *Sentinel I* of 1956. And it's obviously working from the norm of the human figure. And it's a sculpture which you may feel has certain parallels with, relationship to some of the thinner and airier Gonzalezes on exhibition upstairs. And I think that that wouldn't be wrong. Again, a slide like that is very inadequate. But I think you can see how remarkably the whole medium of welded metal allows a sculptor like Smith to empty out the sculpture, to get away from mass, to get away from bulk, to get away from any kind of opacity. And to [00:19:00] occupy space by making only, as it may seem, the most minimal incursion within it, just a few elements. And they can be very thin. They can be very elegant. They can be, as we say, a kind of drawing. And nevertheless, the entire space is charged and possessed. And in this case, you can also see the way in which he's working a number of different directional possibilities. There isn't just a single, dominant plane. There are a number of planes that work very powerfully. You both move around the sculpture, but also take it in very strongly from different points of view. It doesn't seem to insist on the rightness or inevitability of any point of view. This is as good or as dominant a point of view as any, by virtue of the fact that we're almost, you know, frontal relative, to say the way that

that strong axis, that comes clear at the bottom of the sculpture. But as we get to the top of the sculpture and we see those little almost [semaphoric?] elements moving out at angles, we again feel a tremendous drive to move around the sculpture, to circulate around [00:20:00] it.

May I have the next slide on the left, please? And here, and this is a sculpture... I apologize for the inadequate slide, but I wanted you to see this called *Sentinel III* of 1957. It's a sculpture which perhaps comes closest to suggesting where Caro, two years later, will enter the field of abstract sculpture, welded steel sculpture. And it suggested, by virtue of its use of these eyebeam segments which, as you'll see, will be very important to Caro at the beginning of the work that he does in welded steel. Notice, by the way, Smith stands the sculpture on this little set of tricycle wheels, as it may seem. One of the characteristics, I think, that great artists have to have... You're getting this lecture after a couple of days of my hanging out [00:21:00] with some artist friends. So that I feel that this is less a certain kind of academic presentation and a continuation of the sort of discussions that have been going on. And I don't know if this is good or bad, but it's how it is. And one of the things that struck us is when one's in a studio, thinking about sculpture, trying things out, how important it is not to invoke some sort of internal censor too quickly. How important it is to allow all sorts of absolutely goofy or irresponsible ideas to come to the fore, and to try them out. Ninety-nine percent of the time, they will, in fact, be terrible ideas and goofy ideas. And that's okay. You can look at them and decide that they're no good. Every now and then, they aren't terrible. They're much more interesting than that.

And in Smith's case, I think putting this thing on wheels is one of those ideas. It's not that one... It would be hard to even sort of say [00:22:00] what's so terrific about it. It certainly isn't the formal solution to the problem, an inspired, formal solution to the problem of how to put a sculpture on the ground. But it works beautifully. Smith always seems to have stayed in touch with some basically wacky source within himself that allowed him to do things simply because he felt like trying them out. And he would let even the quality of the ideas sort themselves out later. And a lot that he did looks inspired, in retrospect, for reasons that we would find hard to give, even today. Why should it work so well to put this thing on wheels? I think those rounded shapes playing against all those rectilinear shapes is part of it. What one can't see simply is rounded shape. No one's that much of a formalist. There are also wheels, and it looks like a little tricycle. And the whole thing sits on a tricycle. And there's a kind of abstract, exalted humor in the whole thing, as [00:23:00] well. Anyway, it all works.

May I have the next slide on the right, please? All of these sculptures seem to be obeying some sort of figural norm or figural basis. This is a sculpture called *Tank Totem VII* of 1960. Smith is, like all major artists, Smith's work, like the work of all major artists, Smith's work is still, well, the truth about it is still coming out. The quality is still working out. It's not as if we know now which are the greatest Smiths, and which aren't, or we know exactly how good his art or indeed Caro's art is. We can say that he is a tremendous sculptor and has made many great sculptures. But let's say, take a piece like *Tank Totem VII*. For me, it's not one of his greatest sculptures, but it is a fascinating and original sculpture. And I can already [00:24:00] see that it is ending up being a better sculpture for me than I would ever have dreamed it was going to be. It seems it retains some sort of relation, anyway, to the uprightness of the human figure, though you both can and can't read it as a [figure?]. It's a perfect example of the way in which representation and abstractness can function in Smith's art. He can keep a kind of figural norm or basis going, and yet play against it so radically that we couldn't necessarily decipher the figure in one of those sculptures. But what I also

want to talk about here, and it’s something that will remain true of Smith’s art all the way, Smith is an abstract artist, I think I want to say, even when he retains some, as often he does some sort of representational basis. And the abstraction for him, I think, often comes in in his relation to the materials, in his handling of the materials.

Smith, one, I feel wanted [00:25:00] to work abstractly and knew that the figural constraints that he accepted almost meant that he had to put great pressure on the aspect of his art that had to do with the materiality of the art. And he very often chose almost unlikely or improbably materials. When I say materials, all the material is steel. But say the idea of taking that drumhead, that plane, and putting that together with those thin slicing, weightless arcs of metal, juxtaposing them, is in itself a striking and improbable idea. This is the sort of thing of which one wants to say, only Smith would have thought of this. No one else would have done it. And he gets, I think, a tremendous amount of the power and the surprise and the elegance of his art out of [00:26:00] these extremely unexpected juxtapositions of elements. Let’s look at another slide on the left, please, another tank totem. This is *Tank Totem IX*, one of his... This is a sculpture about which I and a number of other people feel no hesitation in saying that this is one of his best pieces. For me, let’s say it is a better piece than *Tank Totem VII*, though *Tank Totem VII* gets better. I mean, just simply sitting on the screen, it gets better. But here, this is an example. One of the great things that abstract art can make you feel is how easy art is, how simple it can be. And I think it is. I mean after all, look at all this. This consists of a total of, and you can count them, five elements. One thin rectilinear plane painted white, then three quite different [00:27:00] tubular elements curving in different ways and painted different colors, which provide the legs and inverted commas of this abstract figure in inverted commas. And then a cut-off drum head. We’re seeing the convex side of it. If we moved around to the other side, we would see the concave side operates obviously as a sort of head.

There’s no way of seeing this not as a figure. And yet, there is something so astonishing, so electrifying finally in the complexity and the elegance and the energy that gets released by this... You might see an absolutely simple and inevitable juxtaposition of elements. It’s just hard to understand how it happens, why it should deliver the charge that it does. I think part of it has to do with, the relations between the legs are beautiful. And then this plane just slices in there and seems to be held up by nothing. This is what welding allows him to do. [00:28:00] It just seems to stay there, as if he simply put it there in air, with some sort of sovereign gesture. And then poses on top of it that beautifully cut, perfectly proportioned head. There’s actually a dash of paint on the other side of it, if we could see the concave side. The whole thing seems to exist there by [fiat?], by virtue of some act of will on his part, just to simply materialize, just put those five elements there. And then they stay there forever because they have a kind of rightness among them that’s inevitable. That’s how it feels. And again, as one hangs around a piece like this and sees it, and I’ve been lucky enough to see it in a number of exhibitions, tremendous amount in Smith depends on, and this is true in abstract sculpture generally. It’s true in Gonzalez, again, on precisely the thickness of the elements, precisely the thinness but not paper-thinness of that rectilinear plane. And then the different cross sections [00:29:00] and thicknesses of the legs. And then the particular kind of density and character that that head can have.

May I have the next slide on the right, please? This is a sculpture in which we get the payoff out of those arcing elements that we saw earlier. It’s the last of the figure sculptures I wanted to run through here, just to show you. Within the figural norm, within the norm of the upright figure type, the tremendous variation that’s possible for Smith and how he generates

the abstractness of his art out of the relations among these very different and, in some certain sense, unlikely elements with which he realizes these abstract figures. This is a high sculpture. I think it must be about 10 or 11 feet high, anyway, called *Three Ovals Soar* of 1960. And here, the whole thing stands, again, absolutely [00:30:00] and probably on these thin, arcing, slicing elements that just barely touch each other and seem as if they oughtn't possibly to be able to stand vertically and support one another and support the entire piece.

Of course, it's the nature of welding. It's the strength that's possible through a spot weld that make, on the right, this completely new vocabulary of form. And it really amounts to almost the greatest single innovation of a technical sort in the major arts that we've had since, I don't know the discovery of oil paint, the invention of oil paint or something like that. And then at the top, that stainless steel complex unit, almost as if those are ears or something, head and ears, held up there in the air. A wonderful sculpture, stainless steel, dazzling in the sunlight, seeming almost to be dematerialized in its thinness and its dazzle as you look at it. But not quite dematerialized. And finally, [00:31:00] you look past that dazzle to the materiality, to the stuff of the sculpture. And you see again how much Smith generates out of a feeling for the stuff and the particular kinds of elements that he works with.

May I have the next slide on the left, please? Another sculpture of his that seems to me less than one of his greatest pieces, but we can see how he goes on from it. This is the first in a series that he called *Agricola*. This is *Agricola I*, in which he deploys various farm elements in the sculptures, 1950-52. And I think you can see it's sort of a figure. It also involves that drawing in space that I talked about. It shapes the surrounding space. It deploys these different elements. It has a certain centrifugal aspect to it. It both spreads and rises. And something about it, for me, just fails to take off, to get into that realm of completely successful effect that we've seen in these other sculptures. [00:32:00] But within a short time, and I apologize for the slide here now. But the sculpture itself, which was actually on view in the Guggenheim in the David Smith exhibition years ago, and knocked me out at that time.

May I have the next slide on the right, please. *Agricola IX*, in which he's taken those rings of various sorts and other elements and has put them at the end of these almost anemone-like lengths of metal, deploying them all both horizontally but also forward and back. So he's going against the figure now, into that more lateral option that he has. On the one hand, the piece seems to face us in a planar way. On the other hand, all those rings are at almost a right angle to us, so that one immediately wants to move around to the end of the sculpture, so to speak, and look down and see all the rings, which are not aligned with one another, which move back and forth. The [00:33:00] feeling one gets here is... I've rarely seen a sculpture where what happens in the sculpture shapes the surrounding air. And here shapes it not through a kind of drawing but through evoking a character of movement so that you almost feel that this sculpture exists in an atmosphere, in a dense atmosphere, even a watery atmosphere, as if these things are moving back and forth at the bottom of the sea, and the whole sculpture is in the bottom of the sea. It's just not just shaping the space around it, but changing its very character, changing its density. It's a splendid sculpture, I think.

May I have the next slide on the left, please? What I'm trying to show is something of the diversity of Smith's art and also the power that's possible within it. Here is a sculpture which, again, you can feel has something in common with but is also very different from *Agricola* [00:34:00] *IX*. This is a sculpture called *Animal Weights* of 1957. It reminds me of a whole series of pieces that Smith made, a wonderful series called the Albany series. Where

he’s working now, the stuff, none of these sculptures gets very large. They are all sort of on the scale of, I don’t know, the top of this lectern or something. And the steel now is very thick. You feel it’s immensely heavy. He really makes its heaviness tell. He involves you. And here, you really feel it with a vengeance. I mean, what I’ve been saying all along, the sense in which you’re involved in an apprehension of cross section and an evocation of the density of the material, the stuffiness of the steel. And everything else is happening [until?] you feel its heaviness. And yet that heaviness is deployed in what’s finally a kind of heavy, slow dance of its own. That’s a quality that Caro, too will exploit marvelously.

The main [armateur?] [00:35:00] of this sculpture is obviously the remains of some piece of steel from which various discs and rounded elements have been cut away, been stamped out. And you feel the stamping out that’s taken place. And it’s as if the air, as if the air around this sculpture itself has done that stamping out. And then these rounded and other elements affixed to it that move seemingly in response to one another and in response to that stamping action, so that you feel the density. You feel the heaviness. You feel the sharpness of the cut. You participate vicariously, it seems to me, in some sort of imaginary making, not just of this sculpture but bringing into being of the very stuff of this sculpture, kind of imagination of steel itself. And its expressive and emotional, not to say formal, possibilities. Steel, after all, it’s just a heavy, inert material. It has, in itself, no expressiveness [00:36:00] whatsoever. It just, say, lies there. Or, if you lean it against a wall, it leans there. And yet, what comes out in a sculpture like this is an entire poetry of the material, just drawn out of it by the glimpsing of formal and expressive possibilities. And then the realization of them in objects, in entities of a kind that have never existed, that would never naturally exist. And required some sort of incredible imaginative enterprise to bring into being. And then, once you see them, once you get them, steel itself is different. I mean, the world is different. Ordinary stuff is different. It’s never quite the same. It can never quite go back to mere inertness. It’s got this dance, this poetry, this set of expressive possibilities as part of it from then on. (inaudible) probably one of the problems for younger artists faced [00:37:00] with predecessors like Smith and Caro is to get back to a vision of material that maybe is as inert as it was before all this got done to it. Because what got done to it here bears the stamp of the people who did it.

May I have the next slide on the right, please? Sculpture of a different sort, one of a number that Smith did in the course of a very short space of time in Italy, in a town called Voltri in 1962. This is *Voltri IX*. I show this to you not because I think it’s an absolutely great sculpture, but it’s one that I’ve gotten to see a fair amount of. And it gets better for me all the time. And I think it again brings out, even in the slide itself, you can see the importance of the cross section here. You can see the importance of the thickness of the steel. And you have to pay tremendous attention in Smith, as in Caro, [00:38:00] as in Gonzalez upstairs. And Gonzalez, in a way, forces one to do it most of all, by virtue of the small scale and the thinness of the metal and the beautiful way in which the metals work, the touch. But here, with Smith, the sculpture may seem merely planar, merely flat. But the plane jumps back a little bit, just an inch or three-quarters of an inch from this element (inaudible). And then there’s that beautiful [rectilinear?] (inaudible) there. So instead of this being as simple (inaudible) jump back, [stutter?]. And then [pick up echo?] at the bottom. So the whole thing doesn’t merely sit as it would [if it’s rested here?]. But you’ve got that great (inaudible) down there (inaudible) those cuts, versus the largeness of the drawing and the shaping of the elements, is something that ends up activating this piece that, at first, may seem merely elegant. [00:39:00]

May I have the next slide on the left, please? This is a sculpture about which one could, I was going to say talk all night, but anyway try to talk all night. The other option is to just shut up and admire it. It's called *Zig IV* of 1964. I think, if there's a single sculpture of Smith's that has won the admiration of just about anybody involved in modern art, more than any other, it would be this particular piece.

May I have the next slide on the right, please? I said I was, by and large, going to avoid comparative and historical material. But I think it's worth pointing out, this is Picasso's first collage. It's a talismanic object in twentieth-century art called *Still Life With Chair Caning* of 1912. And the collage elements are not just that rope frame that goes around the entire work, but the, I'm sure most of you know this, but this [00:40:00] piece right here is a piece of (inaudible) time and again. I think it's very interesting to see... Occasion seems not just to jut out from the surface but maybe to break right back through that surface. And I think this is something that interests Smith a great deal, too. Anyway, a sculpture like this, whether or not this was on Smith's mind, and I'm not making the claim now that it was. I think this would be something that one could investigate and try to see whether he could have been thinking in these terms. What you really feel the way in which a sculpture like this, I feel the way [in which?] a sculpture like this formally and expressively harks back to that epical cubist moment. And just occupies, realizes a whole set of possibilities that, by virtue of their realization, can be seen retrospectively to have been implicit in that moment. I think it would [00:41:00] be ahistorical to say they were really implicit in that moment. In a way, they're put in that moment by virtue of this kind of achievement. And working from something like [vestigial?] picture [plane?], then rising from it by a series of these kind of arcing gestures. And again, the thickness of the steel is all-important. The physicality of this is tremendous. And you feel it. You feel a kind of cross section. You're involved in the cross section of that steel, [by virtue?] of the way it comes out from that plane at you, and then positions that last disc and takes you right back down to the surface. You've got little, [got a?] wedge-shaped element there that seems almost to be rising from it, maybe even breaking through from behind it. The whole thing further activated by the tilt of that diamond-shaped plane, and then everything further poised on that little assembly at the bottom. It's an extraordinary sculpture. It's also one where Smith is giving vent to his desire [00:42:00] to paint the sculpture. I think the painting is not as strong as the rest of the sculpture. Nevertheless, I think it doesn't get in the way. And this is a tremendous piece.

May I have the next slide on the left, please? That impulse to break through the plane turns up in another, I think, less great but very powerful, splendid *Zig* sculpture of Smith's called *Zig VIII* of 1964. And here, you have that central disc of red [rended white?], set within a black diamond, the whole thing on wheels. And then that eyebeam segment, which has elbows and goes back through, pierces that center. And if we could see the sculpture from a side view, (inaudible) you can get a hint of that breaking back through it. It's a sculpture with a... Formally and expressively generates a tremendous sense of violence and violation, as that plane that we instinctively [00:43:00] feel ought not to be violated is absolutely punctured, just broken through by this... You know, we find very disturbing eyebeam element. And I just always found it for myself, maybe out of some desire simply to domesticate that violence, I found it tempting to think of it... But also, it amounts to, in a way, to leading one to read a kind of violence back into these classic Picassos [and Brachs?]. Above all, Picassos, where something like that same impulse to simultaneously, very powerfully assert and affirm a plane, but also by kind of an almost counter-reaction to that, to break through that plane. To pierce it, to violate it in a way that can almost seem anti-aesthetic happens in both Picasso and Smith.

May I have the next slide on the right, please? [00:44:00] Just to show you the extraordinary range of the work, this is *Voltri VI* of 1962. Going further with the wagon idea, and here presenting this almost Morris Louis-like silhouette of steel, with that gap down the middle. And again, if we had it here, how important it would be not to simply accept it as a silhouette, but to move around it, to feel the thickness of the steel. Smith is an artist that makes me, I don't, I shouldn't say this exactly, and I don't mean to recommend it. But I always find myself in a museum with Smith's, waiting until the guards leave, and then going up and feeling the sculptures. And I feel that the sculptures want one to do it. They want you to do it. They want you to feel the thickness, feel the cross section, feel even the ribbing of the steel, how it's been cut exactly.

May I have the next slide on the left, please? *Voltri XX* of 1963. [00:45:00] A kind of abstract work table with a, there's a central hole cut in it, but then that [vies?] various implements, a ball, and there's kind of abstract, wonderful star shape leaping up from it. These are years, the sixties are, Smith is in a wonderful exploratory mood. And you feel that there are all sorts of possibilities in front of him. And some of them are quite grand and massive and powerful, like this. But even at his most ambitious and, in a way, largest scale, he's capable of effects of extraordinary elegance.

May I have the next slide on the right, please? A wonderful small sculpture of his called *Bronze Planes* of 1964. It's made of bronze, with a silver [patina?]. And you see something like that, and it seems to just go back. And this is also true of Caro's bronzes, and I'll be showing you two of those towards the end of this lecture. It seems to just go back to some ancient culture. It's as if one... This reminds me always of jade, of [00:46:00] something Chinese, say on the order of, you know, 3000 or 4000 years old. Yet you know it's made possible by synthetic cubism. It's a product of the constructed sculpture tradition. And yet, it seems to go back to just the earliest [art effect?] in its elegance, in its unconcern for the onlooker.

May I have the next slide on the left, please? Coming really to the end of the slides of Smith's that I want to show you, and the next slide on the right. And the very end of his career, Smith did a whole series of sculptures, which we, I'm sure, are familiar to you, called Cubis. Working in stainless steel with tremendous regard for the surface, but also forming the pieces of the steel. This stuff into these closed elements so that, elements that one feels the hollowness of. I mean, it's as if looking at these sculptures, you have a sense of the sound they'd make if you knocked [00:47:00] on them. You don't actually get the cross section exactly, though you get edges where you can feel the cross section. But you feel the hollowness, and you feel the stuffiness of the stuff. So he forms these things into elements that are themselves volumetric, and yet which are, whose surfaces are very activated and whose hollowness is somehow made palpable to us. These are sculptures that are about a kind of central hollowness at the same time that they're about this highly burnished surface. And then the problem, really, that he faced is what to do with these elements. I think the main feeling that he had was for the stuff being made into the constitutive elements, being made into these rectilinear drums and tubes and the like. And the feeling was for the hollowness. And the problem, then, was how to assemble these things into abstract entities that were themselves meaningful, and that were themselves as felt as that initial [00:48:00] idea of making the stuff into the very elements. And I think sometimes he succeeds, and sometimes he fails. These two sculptures, as fine and as interesting as they are, seem to me

not among the most interesting Smiths that we have. Whereas, may I have the last slide, please, which is on the left? *Cubi XXVII*, which happens to belong to...

## PART 2

MICHAEL FRIED

Smith died in 1965, at the age of 59. In no way we feel, at the end of his career, I mean, it makes no sense to look at these Cubis and think of them as late works or even as last works. It's a career that simply... As with Morris Louis, the stripes just don't mark the end of a career in any meaningful way. Both of them are careers that are simply cut off.

But one can take this, *Cubi XXVII*, these gate-like Cubis as Smith's furthest statement in this particular direction. He would certainly have explored other directions, had he survived. Okay. I want to talk now about Anthony Caro, who was born in 1924. So he was 18 years younger than Smith. I'm not going to... I might as well have the next two slides, please, left and right. I'm not going to show you Caro [00:01:00] before he started working abstractly in welded steel.

But Caro visited the United States in the fall of 1959. He was 35 years old. In America, he met a number of people, including the critic Clement Greenberg, the artist Kenneth Noland. He was I think, at that moment, as always, extraordinarily open to change, looking for stimulation, wanting to alter the way he was working. He had been working by and large representationally, some would say expressionistically, in plaster and clay and then casting in bronze within the norm of the human figure. Very much involved with conveying a sense of bodily states, like waking or stretching or lying down, the whole feel of what it was like to be inside a body.

He visited America. I think he was particularly struck by [00:02:00] some of Noland's earliest pictures, concentric rings and the like. And I think what struck him was something that we've I think, by now — and I said a little bit about it before — how abstract works of what may seem extraordinary simplicity, and you have Noland's, where there are just two or three concentric rings of color on bare canvas. By virtue of the precise choice of hues, the precise attack of the paint just exactly the way in which it rests on the surface of soaks into the surface, just precisely what the intervals are between these colors, just exactly what the scale is of the whole thing, ends up generating a tremendous richness, complexity, even emotional density.

And I think Caro saw that the same thing could be possible in sculpture. I think at this point, he had had just, in effect, a glimpse of Smith's work and knew Smith's work somewhat from photographs. [00:03:00] It's not a case, I think, of having steered directly into Smith's work. And what he saw was, by changing completely the way he was working and just moving into abstraction and starting to work with steel and welding and bolting in a way that, in the first place, in a certain sense, wasn't at all congenial to him just materially. I mean, you had to somehow have people there to help you just move these I-beams around. It wasn't as if doing this was anywhere near as enjoyable as say, moving clay around in your hand. Nevertheless, the same combination of simplicity and richness would be possible.

And this is an early masterpiece of his called *Midday*. One of the very, very first sculptures he made, it's an extraordinary [fact?]. I myself saw it for the first time in, at some point in the year 1961, '62, visiting him [00:04:00] in a house in Hampstead. And I had met him the week before. He had invited me to come see his work. I had expected that his work would be like what most British sculpture was at that time, namely, sort of semi-abstract crows in bronze. And I was prepared for a long and painful day. And I had not heard of him, and I walked into his yard. And there was simply this sculpture sitting in his garden. And this sculpture was sitting there in beautiful, pristine, domestic Hampstead. This sculpture and another large piece of steel. And there was just this wonderful sense of, you know, a new world of sculptural possibility. I mean, there was Smith and now, there was this character doing this stuff in this extremely unlikely place.

Anyway, and what you see here is something, in a way, we glimpse just a little bit of the possibility that gets realized here in a big way. [00:05:00] In that Smith we looked at earlier called *Animal Weights*, where I was talking about the thickness of those elements of steel and how they were made to move in very surprising ways against one another, and one felt the kind of stamping out of the steel. But then also this slow dance among these elements that were juxtaposed in that surprising way.

Here, Caro's working not with anything in itself curvilinear. His early predilections are all for rectilinearity of the elements. He wants elements that are even more, at this stage, anonymous, even more anonymous and mechanical, if you like, than what Smith used. Caro wants to generate everything that's distinctive about his art out of the relations between the elements rather than getting a certain inspiration out of the stuffiness and the nature of the elements themselves. I mean, this is an oversimplification.

But for Smith, it was very important to get some very unlikely elements and start juxtaposing them. [00:06:00] For Caro at this point, it's very important to get the most anonymous elements possible. And notice how much of a certain kind of relationness is built into the various elements themselves. I mean, a single I-beam segment consists of two planes parallel to one another, another plane at right angles to them both. And then the drawing of all those edges. And you feel that in a work like this. There may just be... This I-beam segment juxtaposed to this one, and then that going on up there. But so much is in place, so many lines and planes are now moving in relation to one another. And right from the start, [he has the ability?] to simultaneously [assert?] (inaudible) the heaviness, the massiveness of the steel.

And of course, a number of the early critics of these pieces saw them as, this would be testimonies to something like the mechanicalness of modern society or criticisms of the mechanicalness... Obviously, they have nothing to do with [00:07:00] any of that. But he isn't failing to acknowledge the massiveness of those elements. But then he turns that massiveness against itself and allows this, by virtue of the spacing, the precise placement of these things, the poising of that key element on edge. And then the poising of that topmost plane at an angle, all these elements seem slowly to, as it were, be moving, revolving. Anyway, [tending?] in some relation to one another. So the whole thing gets very activated and abstract. May I have the next slide on the left please, and the next slide on the right? And the next on the right, please.

A sculpture that Caro goes on to make, and again, I'm having to abbreviate here and leave out an awful lot of wonderful pieces. This is a sculpture [imitate?] called *Early One*

*Morning*. It's of 1962. [00:08:00] It's fascinating because you see how quickly Caro senses that what really interests him, or one of the things that really interests him in the set of sculptural possibilities that welding and construction have opened up for him, is the idea of really pushing the dispersal and the openness as far as it can go. Because he isn't constrained in the way that Smith was by the figural norm, say. He is willing, right from the start, [and I mean?] anxious to start moving those elements apart from one another, as far as they can go. And then try to sort of reconstitute, recapture a kind of unity and coherence for the sculpture at the extreme point of their tending to fly apart.

And here, the unity is ultimately, I think, almost a choreographic one. You feel these elements almost dancing apart from one another in space. For me, this happens [00:09:00] almost, in *Early One Morning*, those relations of... What finally binds together the separateness of those elements is, for me, in the end, almost too literal, almost as if I can sense the choreography too strongly. Though I love the end view of that sculpture. There's a black-and-white slide. And what happens when you look down that sculpture from this end. And all of this [kind of?] telescopes, you know, the sense of a tremendous amount of distance there being collapsed emphatically into that one extraordinarily vivid, almost gestural end view, I think is absolutely marvelous.

The sculptures where he really is able to push the openness into a new world of expressiveness and formal possibility for sculpture and one that we are still exploring and that we have still, in no way, got to the end of. And it's one of the tremendous creative achievements in modern art, happens in sculptures like, may I [00:10:00] have the next slide on the right, please? On the left, please, and on the right.

On the left, we have a sculpture called *Titan*, 1964, and one the right, *Wide* of 1964. These sculptures, in a way, come out of the same moment and are part of the same inspiration. They are by now part of, for anyone involved in contemporary art, these are familiar works. And the way they behave is familiar. Actually, could we even shut the projector on the right for a moment? Is that possible? Thanks. Just so that we at least have a clear look at *Wide*. First of all, Caro has... We saw a lot of different things that Smith did, but the one thing Smith didn't do, or one thing that Smith didn't do was get, force us to start looking, lead us to start looking down, to activate the ground plane in this way. It's as if the ground...

One of the things that's often said is that Caro gets sculptures off the pedestal and puts them on the ground. If that were all he [00:11:00] did, it wouldn't be that important. Because simply putting sculptures on the ground, you could put anything on the ground, let's say. It's that he made sculptures that have to be on the ground and which, by virtue of being on the ground, lead us into an entirely different mode of looking, mode of attention, open up entirely new modes of formal possibility and expressive possibility, that get the ground plane itself seemingly moving and active as if it were part of the sculpture.

And here, you can see also this desire for openness, for separation. There are two key elements, this planar element here, this [candid?] I-beam here. They are as far away from one another as they could possibly be. They're even on different sides of this rectilinear, this thin rectilinear wall. That leans that way, this leans that way. And yet, they, how can one say it? They respond to one another across that gap. The assertion of [00:12:00] a certain kind of rectilinearity helps hold the whole sculpture together but also leads to a sense of wonderful cursive movement that happens now, not by virtue of any kind of cursive drawing,

but just the feeling of these tilts and these interplays across this great gap. May I have the next slide on the right? We can turn on the projector.

A sculpture named *Wide* of 1964. Caro very much working against the idea of the density of steel, of the density of metal, the whole thing as light and as open as eyesight itself. May I have the next slide on the left, please? Again, could we shut the projector on the right?

This is a sculpture which is one of the works in Caro’s career which has something of this talismanic status that Smith’s *Zig IV* does, for example, for aficionados of Smith. This is a sculpture called *Prairie* of 1967. [00:13:00] And it goes further than any other work that Caro has ever made, I think, in the direction of kind of extreme assertion, of openness, weightlessness, just these different planes hovering in relation to one another. Almost seeming, in its own right, to be about to dissolve away, but finally held in by a very powerful upright plane that suspends the nearest of those long tubes. And it’s a sculpture where everything about how it’s engineered is openly visible to us. It’s a sculpture in which nothing is hidden. We can, by moving around that sculpture, understand it structurally, completely. And yet, the mode of seeing that we perform as we take it in entirely eclipses what we can understand about it. I mean, we work out its engineering if we want to. But it immediately [00:14:00] moves itself into a realm of expressivity, which is almost entirely illusory, in which those poles hover in a wonderfully weightless way, in which they seem to be in a kind of beautiful syncopation relative to one another, relative to the other elements in the sculpture, to the corners of those wings that go up, to the grooves that run in that plane over there. And the whole place seeming, finally, to hover before us and to be in some sort of abstract movement as we look at it. May I have the next slide on the right, please? And the next slide on the left.

The slide on the right is called *Source* of 1967. On the right *Cool Deck*, 1972. And again, we can... Caro’s sculptures, I think, characteristically, very often want to distance us. They want to [00:15:00] involve us in them and even to suggest that we could enter them, even suggest that we could be part of them, move through them. And yet they do this by virtue of keeping us away from them. A peace-like source holds open the possibility of an experience of something like being in a room looking out through a screen, looking out through a large window. And yet, we never enter that space between that plane that’s nearest us and the upright grid. We stand back from it.

On the left, on your left, the sculpture called *Cool Deck*, which Caro worked on in his studio for a number of years. For a long time, he simply had these stainless-steel elements. I apologize for the slide, but had these stainless-steel elements joined to one another, lying on the floor of the studio, trying to figure out what to do with them. One of the things that you, again, you discover hanging out with artists is how much they very often hate to throw something away, even when it looks as if it’s quite hopeless. And that what you would do yourself, if you were handed [00:16:00] this partly-finished work is abandon it. And then one day, I mean, I remember this stuff lying around. Very obdurate very unforgiving, very unpromising, absolutely inert, just [stuff?]. And then one day, I came back to his studio when I visited him. Caro had added this long, thin X cross of metal in the foreground, in a way keeping us away from the steel. Immediately abstracting the stuff and moving the piece into an expressive realm, which was completely different from that, of the steel simply in its own right. And making into an absolutely beautiful sculpture.

In 1966 and '67, Caro started another whole series of pieces. And it's another whole aspect of his achievement, and I'm only going to be able to suggest it very quickly. And these are small sculptures. He wanted to make small sculptures. The problem very quickly emerged as one that you could put this way, if you're committed to a kind of abstract [00:17:00] art and relational vision like his. And the problem could be phrased like this: how do you make small sculptures that aren't simply small versions of larger sculptures, that don't look as if they're simply maquettes or models, or small replicas of large sculptures? May I have the next slide, left and right, please?

The slide on the right is called *Table Piece Number XXII*, from 1967. And the slide on the left, which is later his *Table Piece Number 88*, of '69-'70. Early on, one of the things that Caro did was use handles, as in that piece on the right, to key the touch of the piece, the feel of the piece, to something as scaled to the hand. So you felt it was kind of, the scale of an object you could pick up. But the other thing that he did, and there are over 300 table sculptures where something like this goes on, though he eventually got to command the scale so that it was no longer [00:18:00] necessary or desirable to do this. But at least one element in most of the sculptures goes below the level of the tabletop. That happens with the tube in the sculpture on the right. It happens with a lot of these elements in the foreground here. And of course, what that does is, in a way, anchor the piece abstractly to the tabletop and to the scale of objects that you'd find on a tabletop. Once you go below the tabletop, the piece obviously can't be transposed, either physically or imaginatively, emotionally, to the floor. It's a way of nailing down abstractly, relationally, in that sense essentially, the scale of the sculpture. And building something like a kind of abstract smallness by virtue of this tableness into the piece itself. These are pieces that are not literally small, so much as they are abstractly small. And indeed, [00:19:00] they turn out to be capable of considerable elaboration in terms of size. May I have the next slide on the right, please?

Out of the many table pieces that there are, I'm really showing you just three. A lovely little piece from 1973, *Table Piece 116*. (inaudible) Caro made a number of sculptures where the tabling got built into the sculpture itself. May I have the next slide on the left, please? One of his great sculptures called *Orangerie*. And here, the table is moved up to become a kind of shelf or ledge in the sculpture. And these elements seem to spring up from it or to come down from it to the ground. I think you feel, as you look at this piece, that the crucial plane, the generating plane, the plane that would have the function of something like a base within the sculpture, is not the ground but this rather narrow shelf up here with beautiful angling, oblique element coming off it. And these things spring up or come down and then seem to hit the ground [00:20:00] and bounce up again. It's as if the ground itself, again, is made active, almost trampoline-like, because of the [still off of?] this ledge, which is, of course, physically suspended. Physically, it can't be primary. This is the support surface physically. In an engineering sense, everything comes up from the ground. But everything in the piece comes up and down from that ledge that's within the piece. And may I have the next slide on the right, please, and on the left.

Another sculpture where something like this happens, a very beautiful sculpture called *Sun Feast* of 1969, 1970. And I'm showing you two different views of it so you can get a sense of the kind of internal richness of it. And here, the crucial plane is, of course, this one back here. All of this culminates in a remarkable sculpture, public commission, in the [00:21:00] East Wing of the National Gallery called *Ledge Piece* of 1978. May I have the next slide on the right, please?

In the new building, I. M. Pei’s East Building of the National Gallery. And here, about 15 feet above the floor is this superb, large sculpture which spills over the edge and uses the edge in something like this same way. It’s a sculpture made under the most horrible conditions imaginable, as the building itself was being finished on the inside. And you’d have to say that anyone seeing it, going up and down and up and down and sort of sheer quantity of suffering that attended the erection of this sculpture, would have bet very heavily against its being the kind of absolute masterpiece that it ends up being.

Just to show you some other pieces of Caro’s from the ’70s and [00:22:00] early ’80s. In 1974, ’75 outside Toronto, he had the opportunity to work with a kind of heavy steel, elements of a sort that he’d never been able to work with before. And he produced a series of sculptures that are known as The Flats. May I have the first please, on the left, which is called *York Flat* of 1974, ’75. And this is, in a way, these are very characteristic works of Caro’s. I think one of the things he wanted to do here was very much take advantage of the material, use the material, do as little as possible to it.

Here, he had these wonderful big flats of steel. And I think he cares a great deal about it, and the precise thickness, density, weightiness of the steel. And is looking to just juxtapose a few of those pieces in a way that brings out, I mean, not just their density but also their very planarity, even their very [00:23:00] inertness, their featurelessness, their blankness. To try to rest, and I think this is something that has interested a number of most advanced American artists over the last 10 years, to kind of rest expressivity and power and energy out of something that comes very close to featurelessness, blankness, inertia. In the same way that very often in abstract art, it’s at the very edge of the decorative, of becoming merely decorative. That the most powerful formal and expressive effects can be evoked, going right up to the very edge of the decorativeness and then galvanizing it, charging it in some way. So that it isn’t merely decorative. But on the contrary, is very powerfully expressive.

So in a certain amount of the best painting and sculpture of the last [00:24:00] 10 years, we have seen artists go right up to the edge of complete inertia, in this case, almost a blank statement of the blankness and featurelessness of the plane of the steel. And then, by virtue of just a little bit of the feeling for the shape of the steel, for the precise size relations among these elements, and then that beautiful inflection. That tilt... This goes back to one of the earliest predispositions of Caro’s art. We saw it in *Midday* a few minutes ago, the way in which, by inflecting one I-beam against another, he opens up a whole world of expressiveness that is absolutely keyed to the possibilities of this medium of working in welded steel and juxtaposing things in the way that’s possible within it.

So here, that little tilt back and that sense of a gap, [gives a?] sense almost of something almost that you could move [through?], just opening it a little bit, opening it in a way that doesn’t really open it but nevertheless airs it out. Suddenly, you get something with [00:25:00] all the grandeur, all the monumentality of the large, dark Morris Louis veils, say. And with this extraordinary expressiveness suddenly integrated into the place. Another wonderful sculpture in this series, and I’ll show you two views of it. May I have the next right and left, please?

Probably my favorite sculpture. These are incredibly hard pieces to photograph. *Toronto Flat* of 1974, ’75. Taller than the other and essentially consisting in something like just the presentation of these two large, [somewhat?] shaped planes of steel. It’s as if they’re just presented to us, in all their blankness, in all their featurelessness. But tilted back from the

upright, tilted in relation to one another. Now this wonderful opening between the two, hinged, as it were, in a [00:26:00] few places. And then you even have a view from the side. Monumental, elegant, [movemented?], extraordinary sculptures. And finally Caro, within the last several years, got very interested in working in bronze, which meant working up things in clay and related materials. And then having the sculptures cast in bronze. And I think has ended up making absolutely great sculpture in that medium, as well. My favorite pieces in that medium tend to be not the largest bronzes, and not the smallest, either. But a kind of middle size. May I have the next slide on the right, please?

Here’s a piece called *Late Quarter*. It’s one of the versions of a piece called *Late Quarter* of 1981. And these are extraordinarily [00:27:00] hard pieces to talk about from the slides. But he again, it’s as Smith did in that bronze piece that I showed you, of 1964. It’s as if you feel the connection back into absolutely ancient sculptures. [Without?], I think, is trying to make explicitly some sort of connection with [Shaun and Joe?] bronzes. These pieces, I think, have something, and this is the highest praise one can give to anything made out of bronze, something of the extraordinary power and resonance and yet elegance and refinement of those Chinese bronzes. And I think, in a number of these, he gets a great deal out of these almost box-like forms played off against certain curves. And notice how important the sense of the cross section is, a sense of the thickness of the material. And may I have the next slide?

This will be the last slide that I show you called *Half and Half*, another piece in that same series of bronzes. Again, one has a tremendous desire to move around that piece, [00:28:00] to see the way in which things are enclosed within other things. Anything you can do for the focus, good. And the wonderful play all through these, of thin profiles of metal versus thick ones versus quite thick ones, concave, convex, and all played off against the rectilinear. Works of tremendous richness, which I think we’ll be learning about and getting the feel of for a very long time.

All right. I’ve really reached the end of my remarks. There’s no dramatic end to reach. In the case of Caro, we’re talking about an artist absolutely at the height of his powers with all sorts of projects underway, already moving beyond these bronzes. But I think, in the next few years, there will be the opportunity to see more of the bronzes, even [that has?] been possible until now. [00:29:00] And I think we’ll increasingly appreciate just how important the achievement in those is. And also, I think they will themselves be working themselves out in terms of relative quality. And we’ll start to increasingly be able to distinguish the greatest from the very good but not quite the greatest. And so on and so forth.

The only general thing that I say in closing is that in Smith and Caro, I think we are talking about two great sculptors. We might as well say it, face it. We have great artists among us. We’ve had great artists among us all through the twentieth century. We’ve had great artists among us in this country, from the 1940s and ’50s on. And Caro, as a sculptor, I think, will already rank as one of the, not just one of the major artists of the twentieth century but one of the greatest [00:30:00] sculptors in the entire history of the art. And we have, in Smith and Caro taken together, something really extraordinary, which is, well, say Gonzalez and Picasso, and then Smith and Caro. And in those figures alone, an entire tradition of sculpture, with something like the richness and the variation of traditions that have occupied much larger periods of time and involved many more artists. It’s amazing how much space those few names take up. It’s amazing how, what a wealth of possibility, formally, expressively, in terms of handling of the material, in terms of just sheer vision. How much

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terrain has gotten staked out by such, finally such a small number of figures. We really can [00:31:00] talk about there being a tradition with this very restricted number of practitioners. And that in itself is remarkable. Thank you.

END OF AUDIO FILE

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9009323\_01-The-Legacy-of-Gonzalez-2-of-2.mp3

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