

## RICHARD SMITH *KITE PAINTINGS*

October 15 - November 14, 2015  
Reception for the artist  
Tuesday October 20, 6 - 8pm

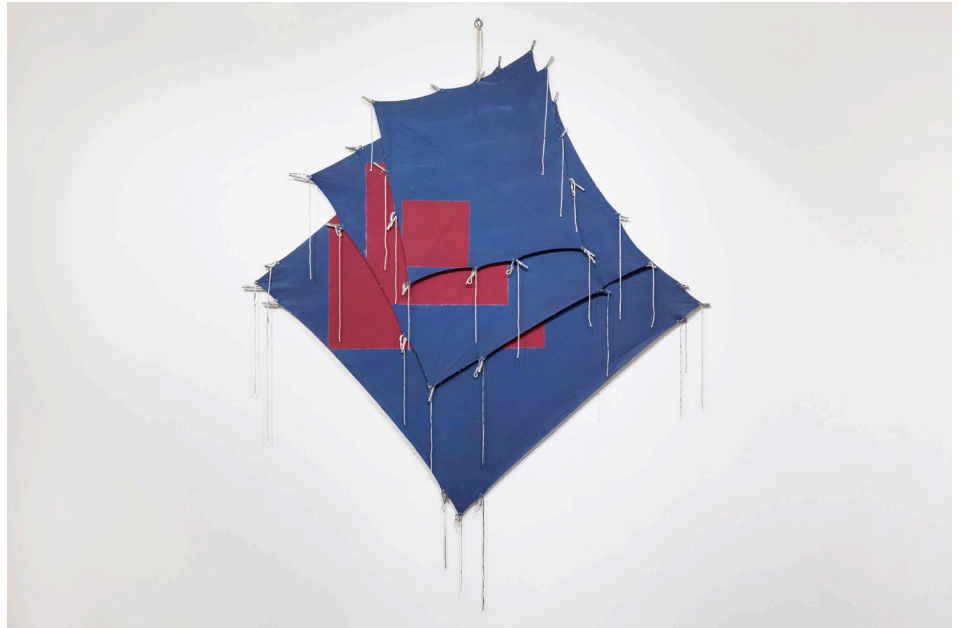
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Flowers Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of Richard Smith's Kite Paintings, bringing together works from the 1970s and 1980s in the most comprehensive presentation of Kite Paintings in the United States since 1978.

From the early 1960's Richard Smith was at the forefront of a new development in abstract painting which responded to the modern urban landscape, newly dominated by advertising billboards and the pervasive graphic styles of commercial imagery. Although his embrace of vibrant synthetic colors and references to consumer culture had links with the emerging British Pop movement, Smith developed a personal response to the sensory experiences of modern life, grounded by his physical encounters with the everyday visual and material world.



*Window II*, 1978, Acrylic on canvas, 76 3/4 x 72 1/8 in

Smith gained critical acclaim for extending the boundaries of painting into three dimensions, creating sculptural shaped canvases with monumental presence. Literally protruding into the gallery, the contoured structures radically altered the spatial qualities of his painting, exploring a newfound tension between volume, color and surface.

A reversal of the relationship between the canvas and its support took place in the early 1970s, when Smith replaced the bulky stretchers with visible lightweight wooden struts. Strings were used to tie and stretch the canvas to its supports and to suspend the paintings from the wall or ceiling, achieving a tautness and levity such as that of a kite.

Smith's Kite Paintings, first exhibited in New York in 1971, can be seen as a development of his freestanding installation 'Gazebo' exhibited at the Architectural League of New York in 1966, and a tent project at the Aspen Design Conference of the same year. Both were painted environments constructed from suspended canvas panels, which allowed the viewer to examine their forms from multiple aspects. The Kites continued Smith's investigations into the detachment of the canvas from the stretcher, while asserting his primary concerns with painting rather than sculpture. The spatial relationships are defined through a rhythmic overlapping of planes and serial arrangements of squares, rectangles, and curved shapes, forming crosses, zigzags and arcs.

Balanced at angles, the paintings were determined by their own centre of gravity. The strings hanging from the canvases present a painterly language of brush strokes and drips, accentuating also the pull of gravity and the relationship between the canvas and its place among the forces of nature in the world around us. As Barbara Rose has said: "Inevitably they echo the verticality of man's own gravity-determined stance... These consistent allusions to the human condition prove that abstract art is not necessarily divorced from man's experience."

Smith's Kite Paintings worked to redefine notions of the 'edge' of painting, as the artist rejected the limitations of the traditional rectangular canvas support. Drawn edge and physical edge are combined and allocated equal weight in Smith's examination of the surface, revealing a new visual language of representation.

In contrast to other painters working with flattened color fields in this period, Smith favoured to retain painterly, vigorous brushwork, constructing the illusion of depth within his layering of forms. This textured surface provides the works with a tangible physical presence and emotional lyricism, a powerful opposing force to his illusory surface space. These oppositions are echoed in Smith's contrasting color combinations of bold and radiant alongside dull and neutral tones.

The exhibition will also include a series of works on paper and preparatory models for the Kite Paintings, illuminating Smith's inventive working process. The show is accompanied by a new full-color catalogue with an essay by American Art Historian and Critic Barbara Rose, who has previously written the catalogue for Smith's seminal *Seven Exhibitions 1961 - 75* at Tate Gallery.

#### ABOUT RICHARD SMITH

Born in Hertfordshire in 1931, Richard Smith studied at the Royal College of Art, London from 1954-57. In 1959 Smith was awarded the prestigious Harkness Fellowship which facilitated his move to New York, where he has remained ever since.

Smith's work sits in the public collections of the Arts Council of Great Britain, The British Museum, London; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; TATE Gallery, London; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Whitney, New York; MIT, Boston; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC.

#### NOTESTO EDITORS

For more information and images, please contact Brent Beamon [Brent@flowersgallery.com](mailto:Brent@flowersgallery.com)

Opening Hours: Tuesday - Saturday 10am - 6pm

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*Inside Knowledge*, 1981, Acrylic on canvas, 72 1/4 x 50 in



Richard Smith in his Wiltshire studio, 1976  
Photograph by Rowland Scherman