

# MODERN ART OXFORD

## Kiki Smith Biography

Kiki Smith was born in 1954 in Nuremberg, Germany, before her family moved to the United States in 1955. The daughter of the American actress and opera singer Jane Lawrence and the architect, painter and Abstract Expressionist sculptor Tony Smith (1912–1980), she grew up in an artistic environment which informed her sense of possibility.

Virtually self-taught, Smith describes herself as a “thing-maker.” In the 1970s she was drawn to representational art because when she moved to New York at that time many artists were interested in figuration. Around 1978, she joined Collaborative Projects, Inc. (Colab), an artists' collective devoted to making art accessible through exhibitions outside commercial gallery settings. It was during this period that she made her first artworks, monotypes and drawings of everyday objects.

Kiki Smith's works explore emotional states such as fear and dissonance as well as existential responses to being in the world. Her attention to themes of death and mortality evolved from her own life experience. Her father died in 1980 and in the late 1980s, Kiki Smith's younger sister died from an AIDS-related illness, along with many of her colleagues from the art community.

Kiki Smith had her first solo exhibition in 1988 at the Fawbush Gallery in New York, and her first one-person museum show in 1989 at the Dallas Museum of Art, followed by her first European exhibition at the Centre d'art Contemporain in Geneva in 1990. In 1991, she was included in the Whitney Biennial in New York for the first time. Many exhibitions followed, especially in the United States, a prominent one among them being the retrospective *Kiki Smith: A Gathering, 1980–2005*, which opened at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, then toured throughout 2005–06. In New York, the Museum of Modern Art presented *Prints, Books and Things* in 2003. The great appreciation for Kiki Smith's work in Europe is demonstrated by exhibitions such as that at the Kunstverein Bonn (1992), the Fondazione Querini Stampalia in Venice (2005), and the Palais des Papes in Avignon (2013). Her work has been part of the Viva Arte Viva exhibition at the 57th Venice Art Biennale (2017), and her exhibition *Procession* was first shown at Haus der Kunst, Munich in 2018.

Her work is included in several public collections including Centre Pompidou in Paris, Museum of Modern Art in New York, Moderna Museet in Stockholm, Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, Tate Gallery in London, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and Whitney Museum of American Art in New York among many others.

Kiki Smith is an adjunct professor at NYU and Columbia University. She lives and works in New York City and Upstate New York.