

Keith Smith

April 18th - June 1st, 2013

Opening Reception: Thursday, April 18th 6-8pm



Bruce Silverstein is pleased to present the gallery's second solo show with the artist Keith Smith. Following a retrospective of Smith's artist's books, this comprehensive exhibition is comprised of Smith's earliest photographic-based works from his years at the Art Institute of Chicago, as well as prints and collages made in the 1960s-80s that combine drawing, stitching and painting. Smith, of his own volition, has never aggressively sought attention for his work, which makes this exhibition a rare opportunity to view a number of pieces that have never been shown.

By examining such a large group of Smith's works, the artist's love of repetition immediately becomes apparent. Smith constantly reuses his source imagery in various forms and formats in a manner similar to jazz music, which he is particularly fond of—the repeating elements are never quite the same. Interestingly, for an artist who has been working for over 40 years, his original source photographs are few—those images used over and over in his collages, prints, etchings, drawings and books. There are only a handful of pictures of individuals and events that Smith works with again and again, changing and evolving the original moment via different processes and techniques. Certain themes and motifs recur frequently—the human ear, the artist's self-portrait, his home—but the most provocative are the altered photographs of the men Smith has loved or desired, an opportunity to express that which the artist potentially could not do in person.

Perhaps his making very few straight photographs over the years points to the “problem” categorizing Smith's work, something those in the art world have struggled with from the time he was a student in the photography department at the Art Institute. Taking a non-purist approach to the medium has placed Smith on the boundaries of photography and printmaking. While the widely respected photography curator John Szarkowski included Smith's photo-etching, *Figure in a Landscape*, 1966 in the seminal exhibition and catalogue *Mirrors and Windows*, 1978, Smith did not follow the course of the other included artists who are now well known primarily as photographers. Rather, Smith turned to printmaking, collage and bookmaking—layering, sewing, painting and drawing on his photographs. What is important to note, is that it is exactly this free and irreverent approach to the photographic medium that continues to make Smith's images so remarkably engaging, bold, and exciting.

Smith (b.1938) has taught at the Visual Studies Workshop, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and the University of Illinois. He is a recipient of two Guggenheim Fellowships, a National Endowment of the Arts grant, and a Pollock/Krasner Foundation grant.

Smith's work is in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago; Center of Creative Photography, University of Arizona; Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University; International Museum of Photography at the George Eastman House; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Getty Museum, Los Angeles; and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London among others.

Smith has authored nine books on bookmaking, among them; *200 Books, An Annotated Bibliography*, published by Keith Smith BOOKS, First Edition, May 2000; *Books without Paste or Glue, Non-Adhesive Binding Volume I*, The Sigma Foundation, Inc., 1991; and *Structure of the Visual Book*, First Edition, The Sigma Foundation, 1984.