



# **SCHEMATA 7**

**Interviews with the artists by ELAYNE H. VARIAN:**

**WILL INSLEY**

**MICHAEL KIRBY**

**LES LEVINE**

**URSULA MEYER**

**BRIAN O'DOHERTY**

**CHARLES ROSS**

**TONY SMITH**

**Opening May 12, 1967**

**Museum Hours: 1 to 5 P.M., Closed Mondays**

**Finch College Museum of Art  
Contemporary Study Wing**

**62 East 78th Street, New York, N.Y. 10021**

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## Foreword and Acknowledgement

The purpose of this exhibition is to show the attitude of contemporary sculptors to scale and enspheric space by giving each artist a gallery in which to exhibit the result of his visionary schema or plan. The working title for the show was WALK-IN SCULPTURE which emphasized the desire of artists to introduce the viewer to a visual and physical involvement in space, either actively or passively. It is possible to have positive (enclosure) and negative (exclusion) attitudes to a defined space, and each of the works represents a different attitude to what one might begin to call the ecology of the art-artist intercurrent situation.

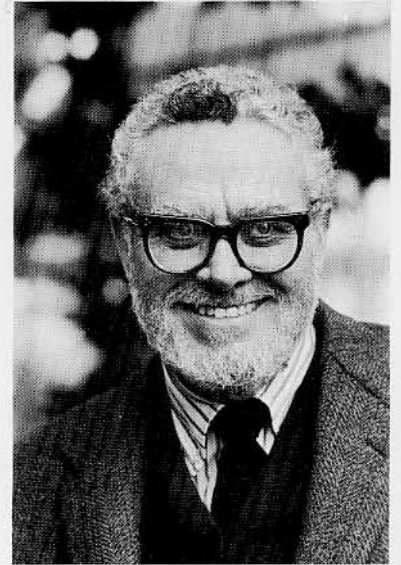
This exhibition poses this penetrating question also: Is the artist a Utopian pointing the way ahead of the crowd or is he the interpreter of the present—the revelator whose intensified inner sense must express itself in terms that illumine the vision of others.

In the interviews with the artists, the effects of their various backgrounds and college experiences on their personal philosophies, were particularly explored, emphasizing their philosophy of teaching with the aim of clarifying their approach to aesthetic development.

On behalf of the Trustees of Finch College, it is a pleasure to thank the participating artists for their inspiration, knowledge and interest which have made it possible to present this timely exhibition. We express our appreciation to the following galleries for their help: Byron, Fischbach, Park Place and Stable. Our gratitude is also extended to Dorothy Greene-Pepper for her enthusiastic assistance, Lia Libson for her cooperation and the Student Museum Committee for its constant aid. Credit is due the following photographers: Jim Collier, David Dalton, David Gahr, George McCausland, Carlos Pizzi, Allen Rattner, John F. Waggeman, Taylor and Dull. For special assistance, we wish to thank Dianne Aiello, Judith Jones and Mrs. William A. Potter, Head of Volunteers' Activities.

ELAYNE H. VARIAN  
*Director*  
*Contemporary Wing*  
*Finch College Museum of Art*

## Tony Smith



Your exhibition in Bryant Park gave not only gallery-goers but all of New York an opportunity to see your work. Congratulations on that exhibition and on your excellent one-man shows in 1966 and 1967 at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford; the Los Angeles County Museum and the Detroit Institute of Fine Art. Does your early background relate to the work you are now doing?

I attended the Art Student's League in New York and the New Bauhaus in Chicago. It was my intention to go on to architecture—that was the reason I went there—but it was just starting at that time and was not as stimulating as it is now. The following year I worked for Frank Lloyd Wright but I have never had formal architectural training. I worked on drawings, buildings, estimates and mainly did supervisory work. Since then I have done mostly residences and a few other building projects. I am a designer, not an architect, but I feel that this architectural background is evident in my present work.

Do you teach sculpture at Hunter College?

I teach painting and I try to relate my own experience to whatever problems we are dealing with and see in what way the student can verbalize it or give some kind of structure to it, which would be related to other ideas and knowledge generally. I can't stand exercises. I would rather have a student involved in some emotional way and do something which I would consider, well, perhaps, spontaneous or not fully realized, in order to see some of the unconscious potentials as well as something that has been developed in any way. I do not believe that I am particularly interested in the quality of work as such. I do not have standards of work. I am much more interested in the students' approach and attitude—am much more interested if I feel that the student is learning through the work and relating his experience to his developing knowledge as a general thing. I think my ideas are very much like a liberal arts approach for any other subject. It is simply an instrument—since every discipline has certain limitations—to make it possible to think about it with some clarity and at the same time relate it to other experience.

Recently I read a statement by you on "Modules." Can you explain further the ordering of plans for structural regularity rather than bi-lateral symmetry?

For the last couple of thousand years most buildings have been based on symmetry of some kind, by far, most of them on bi-lateral symmetry. There were relatively few towers and, of course, almost no buildings were symmetrical at that point as total buildings. However, there were domes, which are symmetrical, but they were usually incorporated in structures which were basically either radial or bi-lateral. Therefore, I think we can say that almost all buildings were based on bi-lateral symmetry. So this is the basis on which plans were regulated at this period of time. At the beginning of the twentieth century, factory buildings, commercial buildings, etc., began to be regulated according to bays, according to column centers, without any organic symmetry or anything based on point, line, or plane being imposed on them, so that it would just be a repetition of units. It did not make any difference where a building ended. For instance, Mies Van der Rohe has said of the repetition in New





England factories that they run out; that is, that the bay sides, the small windows between the wall sections, are so small and repeated so often that it is impossible to comprehend the building as a complete unit. At the same time, architects began to take over this column-spacing as the basis on which buildings would be organized. This gave them far greater freedom and flexibility in regulating the plan. They were not reduced to introducing elements of false masks and all sorts of things just for the purposes of symmetry; they utilized as much of the building envelope as possible. As soon as we begin to think of front and back we are almost always involved in some form of bi-lateral symmetry, unless, of course, it lacks symmetry altogether, which is a much more contemporary idea.

Do you have the drawing of the design for the structure entitled THE MAZE that you created for this exhibition?

Yes. I realize it is not a maze in the sense of being confusing but I think the over-all impression is that of a complicated structure. Instead of having any obvious order, it has a sense of many elements which are either opened or closed passages.

Are you aware that Brian O'Doherty is very interested in labyrinths and wells?

I do not know him but we are both Irish. This interest in labyrinths comes from New Grange, I suppose.

How high will the structure be?

It will be 6 feet 8 inches. Leaving 3 feet and 30 inches on each end of the gallery, which is the width of an ordinary door on either side, the piece is 10 feet long by 30 inches wide by 58 inches high. When I was given the dimensions of this gallery, I decided to use a five-foot module, dividing that again in half, and thus making 30 inches the size of the units. I did not think of the symmetry of the piece as I was doing it, but I just happened to notice when I was making this drawing that the central part is a five-foot square; the part including all the passages is a ten-foot square; then if you take the extension along the room, it is a fifteen-foot square; if you extend 30 inches on either end like that, the entire thing becomes a twenty-foot square. So that you see it is a lot of expanding squares. Then, on the other hand, if you take different divisions of the thing, for instance, if you take all these squares and carry them through, they make a grid which inter-penetrates—the two sets of grids inter-penetrate one another. In a certain sense, it is a labyrinth of the mind; you can see that it becomes quite complex, but at the same time, everything falls in very, very simply. In height, it is just a half of the height of the room in which it is being exhibited. I just noticed it after I did it. I did not design it that way. But I suppose, after a time, some kind of organization becomes second nature.

I think my pieces look best with very little light. In my studio I like to show them at dusk without any lights on and I have canvas stretchers over the windows so that there is a very subdued light. In my studio they remind me of Stonehenge. I like dawn or dusk light. Since there is nothing else in the room, I think that if light is subdued a little, it has more of the archaic or prehistoric look that I prefer. Actually, my work is best presented when it is outdoors surrounded by trees and shrubs where each piece can be seen separately by itself.

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