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**Exhibition Media Kit and Photos:** <https://heard.org/lpsmediakit>

**Exhibition Link:** <https://heard.org/leonpolksmith>

**HEARD MUSEUM EXPLORES ONE OF THE GREAT AMERICAN ARTISTS OF THE 20TH CENTURY  
WITH NEW GRAND GALLERY EXHIBITION**

*Leon Polk Smith: Hiding in Plain Sight* presents fresh scholarship and appreciation for this Modernist master's inspiration from American Indian culture and the Oklahoma Plains

**PHOENIX (Nov. 10, 2020)** — The Heard Museum is pleased to announce a new original exhibition, *Leon Polk Smith: Hiding in Plain Sight*, opening on Feb. 4, 2021. Leon Polk Smith, one of the great American artists of the 20th century, has been studied and celebrated through major exhibitions, publications and scholarship over many years – and yet, a significant source of inspiration and influence on his artistic production remains largely unexplored. *Leon Polk Smith: Hiding in Plain Sight* takes visitors on the journey of how a young Smith, influenced by American Indian culture in his native Oklahoma, became one of America's most accomplished painters and a founding icon of midcentury modern art and design.

Leon Polk Smith was a renowned Modernist painter and one of the founders of the Hard-edge Painting Movement, an art form of the late 1950s and '60s that emphasized geometric forms in bright colors. The exhibition will illustrate how Smith's paintings connect with the colors and patterns of Southern Plains beadwork, ribbon work and painted hides. In the words of Leon Polk Smith, "I grew up in the Southwest, where the colors in nature were pure and rampant, and where my Indian neighbors and relatives used color to vibrate and shock."

"Indian Territory was a place of creativity, lawlessness and invention. Leon Polk Smith has rewritten the narrative of place in the endless horizons, single lines and hard edges of his work," says Joe Baker, guest curator of *Leon Polk Smith: Hiding in Plain Sight*.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue featuring essays by Heather Ahtone (Choctaw/Chickasaw), chief curator at the First Americans Museum in Oklahoma City; Joe Baker (Enrolled Delaware), exhibition co-curator and director of the Mashantucket Pequot Museum; Dwanna McKay (Muscogee Creek), assistant professor of sociology and Indigenous studies at Colorado College; Diana Pardue, Heard Museum chief curator and exhibition co-curator; and Dana Whitney, former Richard DeMartini Family Curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art and current independent curator. The catalogue includes a statement by Patterson Sims, president of the Leon Polk Smith Foundation, and a foreword by Heard Museum Dickey Family Director and CEO David Roche.

*Leon Polk Smith: Hiding in Plain Sight* is on display from Feb. 4 to May 31, 2021, at the Heard Museum. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit <https://heard.org/leonpolksmith>.

*Leon Polk Smith: Hiding in Plain Sight* is made possible by:

*Lead Support*

**LEON  
POLK  
SMITH**  
FOUNDATION

*Exhibition catalogue made possible through the generous support of  
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*Additional Support*

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and  
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*About the Leon Polk Smith Foundation*

The Leon Polk Smith Foundation was established to preserve and promote the art and legacy of Leon Polk Smith (1906-1996). The Foundation encourages and assists museums and other educational organizations to organize and produce exhibitions of and publications on Smith's work and to create online resources about his art and career.

*About the Carl & Marilyn Thoma Art Foundation*

The Carl & Marilyn Thoma Art Foundation recognizes the power of the arts to challenge and shift perceptions, spark creativity and connect people across cultures. We lend and exhibit artworks from our collection and support innovative individuals and pivotal initiatives in the arts.

**About the Heard Museum**

Since its founding in 1929, the Heard Museum, a private nonprofit organization, has grown in size and stature to become recognized internationally for the quality of its collections, world-class exhibitions, educational programming and unmatched festivals. Dedicated to the advancement of American Indian art, the Heard successfully presents the stories of American Indian people from a first-person perspective, as well as exhibitions that showcase the beauty and vitality of traditional and contemporary art. The Heard Museum is supported, in part, by the generosity of Heard Museum members and donors, the Arizona Commission on the Arts, and the City of Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture. In association with the Smithsonian, the Heard Museum is part of a select group of museums and cultural, educational and arts organizations that share the Smithsonian's resources with the nation.

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