

JANE LOMBARD



Howard Smith

Tomorrow isn't Yesterday

September 9th - October 24th, 2026

Opening Reception: September 9th, 6-8 PM

Jane Lombard Gallery is pleased to present *Tomorrow isn't Yesterday*, a solo exhibition of new and historical works by Howard Smith. Spanning more than five decades, the exhibition examines Smith's sustained investigation into the singular brushstroke, the painted and unpainted ground, and the capacity of color to shape light and perception. Rather than presenting a chronological survey or tracing the evolution of a style, *Tomorrow isn't Yesterday* reveals how these fundamental concerns continue to generate new formal capabilities. Reflecting its title, the exhibition considers painting as an ongoing process in which each work emerges through a dialogue between what has come before and what remains possible.

At the core of Smith's practice is the brushstroke, where hand, eye, material, and imagination converge. Working entirely freehand, he approaches each painting as a process of looking, adjusting, and responding, allowing each mark to determine what follows. This investigation emerges in *Red Shape* (1966), one of the earliest works in the exhibition. Reduced to a single painted form suspended within an expanse of paper, the work asks how little is needed to create a complete visual experience. The painted shape and the surrounding ground carry equal weight, establishing a dialogue between presence and absence, a concept that remains central to Smith's work. Reduction, for Smith, is never an act of simplification but a means of expanding the expressive possibilities of color, form, and surface.

Unfolding through the accumulation of brushstrokes, Smith's examination extends into the fields of color, light, and perception. *Orange over Green* (1981) develops the singular form into thousands of repeated marks that generate a luminous color plane. Rather than working figuratively, the brushstrokes construct light, atmosphere, and depth through subtle shifts in density and hue. The untouched linen complements the painted surface, dissolving distinctions between the painted and unpainted ground.

These investigations unfold alongside key moments in Smith's practice. In the early 1980s, his involvement with the Radical Painting movement affirmed his commitment to abstraction's essential conditions. Later in the decade, Smith's move from New York City to the countryside heightens a study already underway, deepening his sensitivity to shifting light, atmosphere, and spatial openness. The brushstrokes increasingly fracture the painted surface, while the broad

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palette gradually gives way to more unified fields of color. Rather than serving as subjects, these experiences become conditions for painting itself, informing Smith's evolving exploration of color, gesture, and surface.

This spirit of inquiry continues in Smith's quasi-grid paintings, where the hand-drawn grid transforms into a dynamic compositional structure. Rather than functioning as a rigid matrix, the grid becomes a flexible framework through which subtle shifts in color generate rhythm and gesture. In Smith's ongoing series, *Universe* and *Beginnings*, this modular logic expands beyond the individual work. These paintings generate an expansive grid that unfolds across physical space, inviting an immersive experience through the work's fluctuation in scale and placement. Together, these bodies of work demonstrate how the grid serves not as a fixed system, but as an open structure capable of continually producing new relationships. Moving beyond the surface, Smith's questioning extends to painting itself as an object. *Black Circle* (2000) distills this exploration into a single monochromatic form. The circular canvas rejects the conventions of the traditional rectangle, integrating the shape of the painting into the composition itself. Color, gesture, and scale become inseparable, demonstrating how even the most restrained formal decisions can be transformative.

Reveling in the remarkable continuity of Smith's practice, *Tomorrow isn't Yesterday* looks across individual works rather than between discrete periods, allowing unexpected relationships to emerge. Each painting enters a conversation that not only reflects its own moment of making but also reshapes the way the others are seen.

About Howard Smith

Howard Smith (b. 1943, Chicago, IL) lives in Pine Bush, NY and works in New York City and Paris, France. Smith earned his B.A. from Colorado College (1965) and went on to graduate school at Stanford University (1966). He has taught at the University of Colorado, Pratt Institute, School of Visual Arts, New York University and CUNY College of Staten Island. He is a long-term artist-in-residence at the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts Studio Residency in New York, NY, and was selected as a grantee of The Adolph & Esther Gottlieb Foundation. Smith's work has been exhibited at Kunstmuseum Appenzell, Switzerland; the Design Museum, Finland; Kunstmuseum Villa Zanders, Germany; Kimmel Galleries, New York University, New York; Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia; Noyes Museum of Art, Atlantic City; Williams College Art Museum, Williamstown, Massachusetts; The Culture Center, New York; The Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, Colorado; The Milton Resnick and Pat Passlof Foundation, New York; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Grenoble, France; Magazzini di Palazzo Gatti, Italy.

Artwork: Howard Smith, *Orange over Green*, 1981. Oil on linen. 36 x 33 1/4 in. 91.4 x 84.5 cm.