

# Don Gummer

**Born** Louisville, Kentucky, December 12, 1946  
Lives and works in New York, NY

## Education

1966-70 School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts  
1971-73 B.F.A., M.F.A., Yale University, New Haven Connecticut  
2009 Indiana University, Indianapolis, Indiana; L.H.D.e

## Awards

Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Grant  
National Endowment of the Arts  
American Academy in Rome, Visiting Artist

## Selected Solo Exhibitions

1973 112 Greene Street, New York, New York  
1979 “Surrounded by Divisions,” Castle Clinton, Battery Park, New York, New York  
1980 Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, New York, New York  
The Akron Art Museum, Akron, Ohio  
1982 “Spiral Crown,” Seagram Plaza, New York, New York  
1987 “Planes of Nature,” permanent installation, Evansville Museum of Arts and Science, Evansville, Indiana  
1993 “Planes of Nature,” permanent installation, Kitakyushu International Center, Kitakyushu, Japan  
1995 Ten-Jin Project, permanent installation, Kitakyushu, Japan  
1998 “Sculpture by Don Gummer,” 650 Madison Avenue Exhibition Program, New York, New York  
2000 “Primary Compass,” permanent installation, Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio  
2001-02 “The Lyrical Constructivist: Don Gummer Sculpture,” Evansville Museum of Arts, History & Science, Evansville, Indiana  
2004 “Southern Circle,” permanent installation, Meridian Street Plaza, Indianapolis, Indiana  
2005 MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts  
2010 “Country, City, Desert”, Imago Galleries, Palm Desert, California

## Selected Group Exhibitions

1980 University of Syracuse, Syracuse, New York

- “Art in Our Time,” H.H.K. Foundation for Contemporary Art, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- 1981 “Instruction Drawings,” The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection, Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan
- 1982 “Biederman/Gummer/Kendrick,” The Arts Club of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois
- “1982 Invitational Exhibition,” The Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, Massachusetts
- 1985 “A Sculpture on the Wall,” Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, Connecticut
- 1987 “The Kentuckians: 1987,” National Arts Club, New York; Owensboro Museum of Fine Art, Owensboro, Kentucky
- “40<sup>th</sup> Annual Academy/Institute Purchase Exhibition,” American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, New York
- 1993 “Yale Collects Yale,” Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut
- “Defining Structure,” Nations Bank Plaza, Charlotte, North Carolina
- 2005 Galleria d’Arte Benucci, Rome, Italy

### Public Collections

The Butler Institute of American Art  
 Chase Manhattan Bank, New York  
 Chemical Bank, New York  
 Creative Artists Association, Los Angeles  
 Evansville Museum of Arts and Science, Evansville, Indiana  
 The Equitable, New York  
 Hiroshima Lying-in Hospital, Hiroshima, Japan  
 International Creative Management, New York  
 Kitakyushu International Center, Kitakyushu, Japan  
 Louisiana Museum, Humlebaek, Denmark  
 McCrory Corporation, New York  
 Joseph E. Seagram Company, New York

### Public Commissions

Butler Art Institute, Youngstown, Ohio  
 Evansville Museum of Arts and Science, Evansville, Indiana  
 Kitakyushu International Center, Kitakyushu, Japan  
 Kitakyushu Concert Hall, Kitakyushu, Japan  
 MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts  
 Meridian Street Plaza, Indianapolis, Indiana  
 Ohio Valley Art League, Henderson, Kentucky

## Catalogues

- 1995 Yau, John. *East of Ocean/ South of Sunset*, (New York, New York: Lake Island, 1995)
- 2001 Plagens, Peter. *The Lyrical Constructivist: Don Gummer Sculpture*, (Chesterfield, MA.: Chameleon Books, Inc., 2001)
- 2005 Thompson, Joseph. *Primary Separation*, (North Adams, MA.: MASS MoCA, 2005)

## Selected Bibliography

- 1973 Mayer, Rosemary. *Arts Magazine* 4/1 (September/October), p. 67
- 1974 Heinemann, Sue. *Artforum* 12/6 (March), pp. 80-81
- 1977 Russell, John, *The New York Times* (march 4), p. C21
- 1979 Feinberg, Jean E. (ed.) *Interpretations '79*, National Park Service and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, New York
- Glueck, Grace. "Don Gummer," *The New York Times* (October 26)
- Huntington, Richard. "Albright Sculpture Exhibit a Treat," *Buffalo Courier Express* (April 1)
- Larson, Kay. "Castle Clinton," *The Village Voice* (July 2), p. 63
- Larson, Kay. "Imperialism with a Grain of Salt," *The Village Voice* (September 17), p. 79
- "New Sculpture at Fort Clinton Blends with the Shape of its Surroundings," *The New York Times* (August 29), p. 20
- "Sculpture: New Directions," *Buffalo Courier Express* (March 11)
- Zimmer, William. "Mask Marvel," *The Soho Weekly News* (November 8), p.58
- 1980 Kinder Carr, Carolyn. "An Interview with Don Gummer," *Dialogue* (November/December), pp. 44-47
- Danoff, I. Michael (introduction). *Art in Our Time*, H.H.K. Foundation for Contemporary Art, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- Tannenbaum, Judith, "Don Gummer," *Arts Magazine* 54/5 (January), pp. 27, 45
- Tannenbaum, Phyllis. *Art in America* 68/2 (February), p. 130
- Sheffield, Margaret. *Artforum* 18/5 (January), pp. 72-73
- 1981 Glueck, Grace. "Guide to What's New in Outdoor Sculpture," *The New York Times* (September 12)
- Phillips, Deborah C. *ArtNews* 80/7 (September), pp. 234-236
- The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection, *Instruction Drawings*, Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, pp. 22, 67
- 1982 Balken, Debra Bricker (introduction). *1982 Invitational Exhibition*, The Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, Massachusetts
- Cecil, Sarah. "Don Gummer," *Art News* 81/7 (September), p. 172
- Glueck, Grace. "A Critic's Guide to the Outdoor Sculpture Show," *The New York Times* (June 11), p. 75

- Haydon, Harold. *Chicago Sun-Times* (February 12)
- Krantz, Claire Wolf. "James Biederman/Don Gummer/Mel Kendrick," *New Art Examiner*, Chicago, p.14
- Larson, Kay. *New York Magazine* 15/23 (June 7), p. 75
- Tuchman, Phyllis. *Biederman/Gummer/Kendrick*, The Arts Club of Chicago
- 1983 Sandler, Irving. *Concepts in Construction: 1910-1980*, Independent Curators Incorporation, New York
- 1984 Hogrefe, Jeffrey. "New York, New York: Arts," *The Washington Post* (April 10), p. C7
- Raynor, Vivien, *The New York Times* (April 20), p. C23
- Yau, John. "Don Gummer," *Artforum* 23/1 (September), pp. 116-117
- 1985 Cathcart, Linda A. *A Decade of New Art*, New York
- Raynor, Vivien, *The New York Times* (February 10)
- 1987 Owensboro Museum of Fine Art, *The Kentuckians*, Owensboro, Kentucky, pp. 20-21
- 1988 "Fast Track," *New York Magazine* (May 16)
- Russell, John, *The New York Times* (May 20), p. C23
- Schwendewien, "Don Gummer," *Sculpture* (November/December), p. 32
- 1994 Frank, Peter. *Los Angeles Weekly* (April 1)
- Kandel, Susan. *Los Angeles Times* (April 15)
- 1996 *Art News*, vol. 95 (November), p. 134
- 2000 Cole, Burton. "Butler Branch Sculpture: A Real Community Effort," *Tribune Chronicle* (November 2)
- Johnson, Ken. "Art Guide: Don Gummer," *The New York Times* (September 15)
- Johnson, Ken. "Art Guide: Don Gummer," *The New York Times* (September 22)
- 2001 McBain, Roger. "Acclaimed Sculptor Returns for Opening of Exhibition," *Evansville Courier & Press* (November 25)
- McBain, Roger. "Like a Crowd of Friends," *Evansville Courier & Press* (November 30)
- Berry, Marilou. "Sculptor, Celebrity Wife Share Bill," *Evansville Courier & Press* (December 2)
- Plagens, Peter, *The Lyrical Constructivist: Don Gummer Sculpture*, (Chesterfield, Mass.: Chameleon Books; Evansville, Ind.: Evansville Museum of Arts, History & Science, 2001)
- 2004 Berry, S.L. "New 'Circle' in Town," *Indianapolis Star* (October 26, 2004), p. B1
- Berry, S.L. "Gummer Sculpture to be New City Landmark," *Indianapolis Star* (August 21) buzz page
- Art in America* (March)
- Lieber, Tammy. "Sculpture Boosts Art Plan," *Indianapolis Business Journal* (August 9), p. A1

- 2005 De La Mater, Benning. "Art Showcase Draws Celebrity Gathering," *The Berkshire Eagle* (October 7), p. A1  
 Gardner, Karen. "Sculpture Grew From '60s Turmoil," *North Adams Transcript* (October 7, 2005), p. A1  
 Rowland, Hobart. "Conversation: Don Gummer," *Gulfshore Life* (April), p. 46  
 Sandler, Irving. "Deconstructive Constructivist," *Art in America* (January), pp. 111-115
- 2006 Drost, Jayne. "A Boulder Approach," *ARTnews* (February), p. 36  
 Thompson, Joseph. *Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art. Don Gummer: primary separation* (North Adams, Mass.: Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, 2006)

## About the Artist

As a boy growing up in Indiana, Don Gummer liked assembling model airplanes, Erector-set constructions, tree houses and forts. He lived in a neighborhood where a great many houses were being built. He admired their frames and enjoyed playing in the construction sites. In 1960, at age 13, he drew a small picture of a house, which incorporated a ladder, stairs with a banister, and open windows, set against curving trees in the background. He could not have known it then, but he already was disposed toward construction in space and had fastened on the kinds of shapes that would be prevalent in his mature sculpture. Gummer began to build abstract sculptures in a Constructivist vein in 1968. In a seminal work, *Separation* (1969), he started with a stone that attracted him because it looked like Brancusi's *Fish*.

In 1970, upon obtaining a BFA from the Boston Museum School, Gummer went on to graduate studies at the Yale School of Art. Developing the organic/geometric theme of *Separation*, he began to create earthworks in his studio, the "formless" earth and stones in each piece spread on the floor and overlaid with a geometric wire grid, as in *Lake* (1971).

After his graduation with an MFA from Yale in 1973, Gummer moved to New York City. The following year, he was selected by Richard Serra to mount a solo show at Artists Space. There he built his most ambitious installation to date. Titled *Hidden Clues*, it was a massive, room-size structure, composed of Sheetrock, wood and paper. From a distance it looked Minimalist, but as one experienced it from different viewpoints it became increasingly complex. The incremental process of exploration called for a lengthy dialogue with the work, during which viewers' awareness of both space and time was intensified. Most of Gummer's subsequent works would also be complex, and would have to be experienced in time.

He continued to create large-scale installations in his studio. A few had table like structures whose tops were open geometric configurations composed of wood slats. In 1974, with these two-dimensional "tabletops" in mind, Gummer eliminated the bulky walls in his installations and began to compose new frameworks made up of linear and planar elements. Contributing to this change was his job as a union carpenter at the Olympic Tower on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue, where he was employed from 1973 to 1975.

From the mid-1980s to the present, the dominant components in his sculptures have been planes composed of parallel horizontal and vertical slats or bars. The repeated linear elements form "systemic" geometric compositions, like those of Max Bill or Richard Lohse. Unlike the

work of these Constructivists, however, Gummer's forms evoke motion, like the lines of three in Futurist paintings. The sense of movement is enhanced when the slatted forms resemble ladders, suggesting climbing and descending, doubling back, or twisting and turning vertically and diagonally. When varied in size and shape and situated in different parts of a work, the ladderlike elements are choreographed, as it were, giving rise to rhythms that course through the entire piece. Spiraling and spinning upward and outward, his works not only create a sense of motion but look top-heavy, off balance, as if about to tumble. At the same time, the top-heavy elements often seem to rest gracefully on a tiny base, balanced like a ballet dancer on pointe. The works, while clear, are also ambiguous; a number look ramshackle, jerry-built, jumbled, even chaotic. Visually following Gummer's ladderlike forms and other open configurations, and seeing through them to still other forms and complexes of forms, requires prolonged viewing.