



DON GUMMER

Essays by Peter Plagens and Linda Wolk-Simon with introduction by John Yau. (The Artist Book Foundation, mid-July 2021). Hardcover, 288 pages with 223 color plates, 15 black-and-white illustrations. \$85.

Sculpting with Intention

Many of Don Gummer’s sculptures and wall reliefs seem to be complex and chaotic twists and turns of linear or curved forms. Rather, though, they are logical, sound and made with intention. In the new publication, *Don Gummer*, a retrospective of the artist’s career is chronicled and highlights his life, process and inspiration. It gives context to his Constructivist sensibility and how his personal history has influenced his artwork.

The publication opens with an artist’s statement Gummer wrote in February 2020. He outlines three principles that guide his artwork: it must have an inherent logic; the artwork often has a theme of separating and connecting; and one of the most crucial components is space—not just the space in his works but also understanding the sculptures exist within a space. The ideas gain focus in the essays from art critic and novelist Peter Plagens and Linda Wolk-Simon, a visiting professor at the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University.

Plagens discusses some of the artist’s most critical commissions in his essay “Elegant Energy.” This includes *Frontier*, which was created for the United States Embassy

in Moscow. The commission is prominently featured in the sculpture plates section of the book with sketches, a photo of the maquette, imagery of the installation and the final work. The sculpture combines hallmarks of Gummer’s art. It is vertical with fluidity of a rigid material, and there is a sense of movement easing the tension. In his own words, Gummer says, “*Frontier* celebrates openness and optimism. It represents the energy and freedom of our multicultural world as well as the individuality and interconnectedness of our countries.”

Wolk-Simon’s essay explains that the root of Gummer’s work is his drawing. This is how he prepares, and throughout the pages of the book are several sketches and watercolors paired with their final three-dimensional forms. Gummer approaches his art by having the discipline to start, and the start is important to finding direction. The idea of a career in art became real for Gummer during high school. And a simple notion from his art teacher, Elva Strouse, still resonates with him today. Her words are quoted as the beginning of this book, “Start by starting.” ●

- 1 *Frontier*, 2017, stainless steel and bronze 22 feet high, at the United States Embassy, Moscow, Russia.
- 2 Don Gummer in 2013 with 12-12-12.



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