

CAULEEN SMITH – IN SPACE, IN TIME

Black Utopia LP Performance + Two Nights of Short Films
Artist Cauleen Smith In Person

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LOS ANGELES (Feb. 13, 2023) – On the heels of her recent appointment at UCLA and critically acclaimed solo exhibitions at Morán Morán Gallery and LACMA, the UCLA Film & Television Archive and Hammer Museum are proud to present three nights of work by Los Angeles-based artist Cauleen Smith, including a rare performance of her evolving *Black Utopia LP* (Thursday, March 9, 2023) and two programs of short films (Friday and Saturday, March 10 and 11, 2023) at the Billy Wilder Theater inside the Hammer Museum. Smith will be in person on all three nights.

Smith, one of the leading American artists of her generation, defies easy categorization. Moving compellingly between multimedia installations, slide performances and a wide variety of films, Smith creates nuanced portrayals of African diaspora culture and its troubled history in the United States, as well as the issues facing Black women in contemporary life.

In July 2022, Smith was awarded a professorship at the UCLA Department of Art. Her previous appointments include positions as a visiting artist at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, a faculty member of California Institute of the Arts, and a faculty member at the Vermont College of Fine Arts low-residency M.F.A. program.

Smith's recent exhibitions in Los Angeles include *Give It or Leave It* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2020-21 and *My Caldera* at Morán Morán Gallery in 2022. Her previous solo exhibitions have traveled to the Whitney Museum of American Art, MASS MoCA, the Art Institute of Chicago, Institute of Contemporary Art in Pennsylvania, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, and the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. Her recent two person exhibition with Theaster Gates at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (*Future Histories: Theaster Gates and Cauleen Smith*) "display[ed] Smith's ability to be an activist while still being an artist," per Moksha Akil's review for the *Musée Magazine*.

Smith's films, objects, and installations have been featured in group exhibitions including the Whitney Biennial, Prospect 4 New Orleans, Studio Museum Harlem, the Contemporary Art Museum Houston, the New Museum in New York, and BALTIC Center for Contemporary Art in Gateshead, UK. Additionally, her films have screened at the New York, Rotterdam, Sundance and many other international film festivals.

This year, Smith will be awarded the Heinz Award which she adds to her slate of accomplishments, including a United States Artists Award, the Guggenheim Fellowship, the Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize from the Studio Museum in Harlem, the inaugural Ellsworth Kelly Award from the Foundation for Contemporary Art, the Herb Alpert Award for Film/Video, Rockefeller Media Arts Award, Creative Capital Film/Video, Chicago 3Arts Grant, the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, Artadia, a Rauschenberg residency, and an Artpace residency.

Cauleen Smith's tenure in Los Angeles already promises an unparalleled quality and quantity of a diverse body of work, beginning with her three nights of programming at the Hammer Museum.

Program Details:

[Cauleen Smith—In Space, In Time](#)

In person: artist Cauleen Smith; program curator Steve Anker; independent curator Jheanelle Brown; and Alena Williams, assistant professor in the department of visual arts at UC San Diego

Thursday, March 9, 7:30 p.m.

Program 1: Black Utopia LP Performance

In its first Los Angeles presentation since 2013, *Black Utopia LP* combines 35mm slide projection with the artist's own vinyl LP into a 90-minute 'film without film' that is both a passionate reflection and a mashup of contemporary African diaspora culture. Originally created in 2012 during a residency with Chicago's Threewalls Gallery and most recently presented in the Rotterdam International Film Festival, *Black Utopia LP* emerged from Smith's extensive research on Afrofuturism. The performance involves history, music, outer space and African divination, and it especially serves as an homage to the great avant-garde jazz musician Sun Ra. Each time the piece is performed Smith creates new slides pertaining to the political moment and current locale, and tonight's version includes material recorded in Los Angeles. These location-specific images are added to a pool of several hundred slides, including objects found in archives or appropriated from occult, astrological and historical sources. Smith's double LP *Black Utopia* is a collage of lectures, rehearsals and live performances by Sun Ra as well as commissioned contributions from Chicago artists Krista Franklin and Avery R. Young.

Friday, March 10, 7:30 p.m.

Program 2: Short Films - Black Echoes and Imperatives

A program of nine films that circle around urgent Black voices both real and imagined, ranging from the present to the past and from renowned political activists to artistic visionaries. Included are *H-E-L-L-O* (2014), which re-envision a somewhat revived New Orleans through a series of musical street tableaux; one of Smith's earliest and best-known films *Chronicles of a Lying Spirit by Kelly Gabron* (1992); the poignant and elegiac *Crow Requiem* (2015); the redolent utopian testament *Pilgrim* (2017); ; and *3 Songs About Liberation* (2017), *Human 3.0 Reading List Biblio* (2015-16), *Sine at the Canyon & Sine at the Sea* (2016), *The Name You Trust in Good Clean Family Fun* (2011) and *T Minus Two* (2010).

Saturday, March 11, 7:30 p.m.

Program 3: Short Films - Epochal Cultures – Chicago and New Orleans

Smith portrays two vital Black urban cultures, Chicago and New Orleans, through several fantasy and documentary films that focus on creative personalities and locations that are vital to these great cities. Included are selections from Smith's *The Way Out is the Way Two* (2012), a cycle of fourteen musical and philosophical short pieces made in Chicago; her little seen, richly expressive short feature, *The Fullness of Time* (2008); and the astonishing interventionist *Space Is the Place - A March for Sun Ra* (2011). The program will begin with the premiere of Smith's newest film, *My Caldera* (2022).

Further Reading:

[Cauleen Smith Projects a Futuristic Black Utopia](#)

[CAULEEN SMITH JOINS THE FACULTY OF UCLA'S DEPARTMENT OF ART](#)

[Cauleen Smith My Caldera](#)

[Cauleen Smith: Give It or Leave It | LACMA](#)

[Review: Cauleen Smith's marvelous Watts Tower wallpaper at LACMA gives toile a tweak](#)

[Interview with Cauleen Smith - Carla](#)

[Exhibition Review: Future Histories — Musée Magazine](#)

[**About the UCLA Film & Television Archive**](#)

A division of UCLA Library, the Archive is internationally renowned for rescuing, preserving and showcasing moving image media and is dedicated to ensuring that the visual achievements of our time are available for information, education and enjoyment. The Archive has over 500,000 film and television holdings conserved in a state-of-the-art facility at the Packard Humanities Institute Stoa in Santa Clarita, CA, that is designed to hold materials ranging from nitrate film to digital video at all preservation standards. Many of the Archive's projects are screened at prestigious film events around the globe.

The Billy Wilder Theater at the Hammer Museum is the home of the UCLA Film & Television Archive's public programs. The theater is among a handful of venues nationwide able to exhibit an entire century's worth of moving images in their original formats. From the earliest silent films requiring variable speed projection all the way up to cutting-edge digital cinema, the Wilder can accommodate an array of screen technologies.

For more information, please contact Marisa Soto at (310) 489-6002 or msoto@cinema.ucla.edu.

[**About the Hammer Museum**](#)

The Hammer Museum is part of the School of the Arts and Architecture at UCLA, and offers exhibitions and collections that span classic to contemporary art. It holds more than 50,000 works in its collection, including one of the finest collections of works on paper in the nation, the Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts. Through a wide-ranging, international exhibition program and the biennial, Made in L.A., the Hammer highlights contemporary art since the 1960s, especially the work of emerging and under recognized artists. The exhibitions, permanent collections, and nearly 300 public programs annually— including film screenings, lectures, symposia, readings, music performances, and workshops for families—are all free to the public.