



Sable Elyse Smith | @sable_elyse

What exactly is trauma and how does it make itself known in the world? How does it live on and in our bodies? These are the questions that loom over the practice of interdisciplinary artist Sable Elyse Smith as she grapples with the fallibility of language, the malleability of memory. These entities are objects themselves for the artist as she dissects the overlooked violence of mass incarceration. This is to say that Smith is not merely just interested in the theoretical frameworks that govern much of our contemporary dialogues about the harm caused by the carceral state. Instead, she focuses her attention to the ways in which one's encounter with the bureaucracies of this system and the transgressions that result from those confrontations map themselves onto the body over time, with a specific interest in sculpture, cinematography and text.

Smith's *Untitled* (2015), an aluminum signboard that was included in the 2017 exhibition "Without a Body" at Andrea Rosen Gallery, offers a direct and haunting declaration about the nature of communications between a visitor and inmate: "Their words passed through—with a blue-greenness the thick of the glass the fluorescent light it buzzes and can't be drowned out. If you think it's ceased it's because the buzz has now become part of you. You walk around with it. I walk around with it. Becoming." How else does one describe this quotidian duress, to use Smith's own words, if not as a threat? *scapeG.O.A.T.*, (2017), is a large lightbox photograph



depicting a prison basketball court contemplating the very stakes of leisure itself within the contested grounds of the prison. Even the terms of recreation must not be taken for granted.

Smith undoes the conventional boundaries of language and form even as she offers her viewers a prophecy of sorts: perhaps the only way through which we might contend with the behemoth of a structure such as the prison industrial complex is with consistent public undoing of syntax that point us to its small, quiet, raging symptoms.