

REGEN PROJECTS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

SABLE ELYSE SMITH *FAIR GROUNDS* **SEPTEMBER 9 – OCTOBER 26, 2023**

PRESS PREVIEW: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 11:00 AM

OPENING RECEPTION: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 6:00 – 8:00 PM

GALLERY HOURS: TUESDAY – SATURDAY, 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM



Image: Sable Elyse Smith, *Coloring Book 118*, 2023. Screen printing ink, oil pastel and oil stick on paper, 63 3/8 x 53 1/8 x 2 1/2 in (161 x 134.9 x 6.4 cm) each.

Regen Projects is pleased to announce *FAIR GROUNDS*, the gallery's first solo exhibition with New York-based artist **Sable Elyse Smith**. For over a decade, Smith has parsed the materiality of ideology and its insidious infrastructures. Spanning work in video, sculpture, photography, works on paper, and text, she samples and combines distinct visual cultures and architectural forms to visualize the carceral state, scrutinizing how power and inequity solidify and delimit real lives. Featuring two powder-coated stainless-steel sculptures, new works from her *Coloring Book* series, a neon text sculpture, as well as several photographic works, the exhibition stages a dialogue of site, language, and shape to interrogate how distinctions and definitions of space dangerously weave violence, spectacle, and entertainment together.

"I make work that complicates our understanding of prison and how we name, identify, and locate violence," wrote Smith, on the occasion of the *Whitney Biennial 2022, Quiet As It's Kept*. "At times I use the word Prison and mean the brick-and-mortar prison, yet that's not the only prison," Smith elaborated. "That's not even the beginning of prison, or the end. Sometimes I talk about an actual prison and show an image, and people get fixated on that. But I'm saying 'prison' and meaning 'the world.' Meaning *The Weather*. And the weather is the machines in which we live, in which we loop..."

Smith regularly works across a variety of media and formats in pursuit of a comprehensive conceptual project. By invoking "*The Weather*," Smith references the writings of scholar Christina Sharpe, who—in her 2016 book, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*—writes, "It is not the specifics of any one event or set of events that are endlessly repeatable and repeated, but the totality of the environments in which we struggle; the machines in which we live; what I am calling the weather."

For both Sharpe and Smith, "the weather" exemplifies the omnipresent persistence of regimes of control and oppression, well beyond supposed boundaries constructed by language or history. Tracing the atmosphere at hand, Smith's *Coloring Book* paintings continue a series the artist has developed over the course of several years, featuring pages from an activity book designed to teach children about the judicial process. Enlarged to monumental scale, bright color and expressive marks jar with the tenor and formal qualities of the found image. In her photographic works, Smith revises the genre of family portraiture. Photographs produced in prison visiting rooms—with features of loved ones obscured or displaced to protect their privacy—appear against expansive fields of black suede. The labor of incarcerated people creates both the photographs and the backdrops, often of tropical locales, which distinctly contrast with the inscrutable flatness of the suede surface. Meanwhile, *Landscape VII* posits an illuminated text as both heir and short circuit to historic American landscape paintings. Echoing the violence that was perhaps always looming in minimalist sculpture of the 1960s, the two steel sculptures combine and give new meaning to stools designed specifically for use in prisons. Striped walls in the same black-and-cream palette used for these forms frame the space, frustrating distinctions between sculptural figure and atmospheric background. Each work materializes a kind of visual word play, conjuring double (if not even more polyvalent) meanings throughout.

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Sable Elyse Smith (b. 1986, Los Angeles, CA) lives and works in New York. She received a BA from Oglethorpe University in Atlanta and an MFA in Design and Technology from Parsons School of Design, New York.

Solo exhibitions include *Ordinary Violence* at the Queens Museum, Queens, NY (2017) and Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI (2019); and *How We Tell Stories to Children*, Atlanta Contemporary, Atlanta, GA (2018).

Smith's work has been included in numerous landmark group exhibitions: *The Milk of Dreams*, 59th Venice Biennale (2022); *Whitney Biennial 2022: Quiet as It's Kept*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2022); *Off the Record*, Guggenheim Museum, New York (2021); *Grief and Grievance: Art and Mourning in America*, New Museum, New York (2021); *Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration*, MoMA PS1, Queens (2020); *Colored People Time: Banal Presents*, ICA Philadelphia (2019) and MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge (2020); and *Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon*, New Museum, New York (2017).

Work by Smith is included in institutional collections including Brooklyn Museum; Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson; Institute of Contemporary Art Miami; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Studio Museum in Harlem; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others.

Smith is the recipient of grants and fellowships from the Rema Hort Mann Foundation, Queens Museum, Creative Capital, and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, among others.

Publications include *And Blue In A Decade Where It Finally Means Sky* (JTT and Regen Projects, 2022), *Ordinary Violence* (Haggerty Museum, 2018), and *LANDSCAPES & PLAYGROUNDS* (Sming Sming Books, 2017).

For all press inquiries, please contact +1 310 276 5424 or Grant Johnson at grantjohnson@regenprojects.com.

For all other inquiries, please contact Jennifer Loh, Stephanie Dudzinski, Magnus Edensvard, or Anthony Salvador at sales@regenprojects.com.