

Kiki Smith

Light

15-17 Quai des Bergues, Geneva
9 September – 31 October 2020

Preview Day: Tuesday 8 September, 12 - 6PM



Left to right: Kiki Smith, *Sungrazer VI*, 2019, bronze © Kiki Smith, courtesy Pace Gallery; Kiki Smith, *Earth*, 2012, textile, cotton Jacquard tapestry © Kiki Smith, courtesy Pace Gallery; Kiki Smith, *Oak Leaves IV*, 2018, bronze © Kiki Smith, courtesy Pace Gallery

Geneva -Pace is honoured to return to its physical space with an exhibition of recent works by American artist Kiki Smith. Staged at 15-17 Quai des Bergues, *Light* will be presented from 9 September to 31 October 2020 and will examine Smith's central themes of spirituality, mortality, mysticism, and their interconnections with the natural world. The first exhibition of Smith's work presented at Pace in Geneva, *Light* will coincide with *Hearing You with My Eyes*, a solo-exhibition presented at MCBA Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts of Lausanne (9 October 2020 – 10 January 2021). Storm King Art Center currently features a site-responsive grouping of new and recent, large-scale flag works by Smith. It is on view until November 9, 2020.

Kiki Smith is recognized for her multidisciplinary practice through which she explores the human condition. Drawn to the cogency of repetition in narratives and symbolic representations, much of Smith's work is inspired by the visual culture of the past, spanning scientific anatomical renderings from the eighteenth century to the abject imagery of relics, memento mori, folklore, mythology, Byzantine iconography, and medieval altarpieces. Centered on the literal and symbolic meaning of *light*, the exhibition at Quai des Bergues will feature works from 1997 to 2019,

spanning the full spectrum of media including sculpture, tapestry, print, and works on paper. *Light* will underscore the truly multifaceted approach to art-making Smith has pursued throughout her oeuvre.

The 2017 series, *the light of the world* exemplifies Kiki Smith's interest in both the aesthetic and processes of light. Made by etching delicate marks onto Plexiglas plates and then placing them one on top of the other over light sensitive paper, these cyanotype prints are an innovative reworking of the artist's long-standing printmaking practice. By stacking the plates, Smith plays with the refraction of light, creating varying degrees of sharp and faint impressions. The resulting dreamlike compositions address not only the systems of nature, but also to the ways in which light shapes, distorts, clarifies and blurs the world around us. In contrast, *Spectrum I, II, III*, 2010, take man made electrical light from a hanging bulb as their subject. In so doing, Smith's practice seeks to explore the multitude ways in which light is harnessed and experienced.

"We are part of the natural world and our identity is completely attached to our relationship to our habitat and animals. I am making images for things I think merit attention. It's a quieter way." Kiki Smith.

It is this universal, yet oft forgotten, intersection of the human world and the natural world that captivates so much of Kiki Smith's work. Through her practice, Smith creates a world in which all things – be they humans, animals, nature or the cosmos – are given equal weighting. Whether it is a delicate bronze wall sculpture such as *Oak Leaves IV*, 2018, a minute bronze sculpture of a snail titled *Wives and Mistresses*, 2019, or a monumental intricately executed Jacquard tapestry like *Earth*, 2012, Kiki Smith approaches her subjects with a democratic view that is at once unifying and equalizing.

Integrating the celestial universe into this realm, *Quiver*, 2018, an installation made of bronze with gold and silver leaf depicts a female form partially obscured by small particles that radiate out into the surrounding space. Smith creates a feeling of other worldly spiritualism, commenting on our fluid relationship to the world around us. Similarly, the *Sungrazer* sculptures crystallize fleeting stars in motion through dense bronze. These wall mounted works are almost corporeal in their form, and much like *Quiver*, remind us that we are all made of the same substance. In the end, we are all just matter.

Through *Sorcery*, a series of nine etchings on Hahnemühle paper, Smith explores the mythological and folkloric within nature. These meticulously crafted artworks look to the minutiae of the natural world to examine themes of ageing, storytelling and magic. These works on paper resonate with *Shadow 1 and 2*, new bronze standing sculptures of the moon that speak to not only of the beauty of natural forms but also the forces that govern our universe.

Light follows the 2019 critically acclaimed exhibitions of Smith presented at Monnaie de Paris, France, and Modern Art Oxford, UK. Thirty years ago, Smith was the subject of an exhibition at Centre d'Art Contemporain de Genève. It was Smith's first solo-exhibition in Europe. On the occasion of the MCBA Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts' exhibition, a fully illustrated catalogue is forthcoming.

Kiki Smith (American, b. 1954, Nuremberg, Germany) cites her initial interest in craft and populist art forms as influences; however, her earliest introduction to art came from her father, sculptor Tony Smith. By 1974, she entered Hartford Art School in Connecticut and studied film. She left the school after eighteen months of enrollment, ultimately settling in New York City in 1976 where, two years later, she became an active member of Collaborative Projects, Inc. (Colab). As a collective of artists working outside of the commercial gallery system, Colab proposed a break from the post-Minimal abstraction of the 1970s in favor of representation, accessibility, and community-oriented art. It was during this time that Smith began printmaking, an aspect of her practice that would gain equal footing with her sculptural work.

Since 1982, Smith has been the subject of one-person exhibitions worldwide including over twenty-five solo museum exhibitions. Notable exhibitions include *Directions—Kiki Smith: Night*, held at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (1998); as well as *Prints, Books and Things*, at The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2003). Organized by the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, a retrospective of her work titled *A Gathering, 1980–2005* opened at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 2005 and traveled throughout the United States before closing at La Colección Jumex, Mexico City, in 2007. Solo exhibitions of her work include *Constellation*, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri (2007); *Her Home*, which opened at Museum Haus Esters, Kunstmuseen Krefeld, Germany (2008), and traveled to Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, as *Her Memory* and the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, Brooklyn Museum, as *Sojourn; I Myself Have Seen It: Photography & Kiki Smith*, Henry Art Gallery, Seattle (2010), which traveled to Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York, and Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, Arizona; *Rituals*, High Museum of Art, Atlanta (2012); *Kiki Smith and Paper: The Body, the Muse and the Spirit*, Oklahoma State University Museum of Art, Stillwater (2017), which traveled to Syracuse University Art Museum, New York; and *Procession*, Haus der Kunst, Munich (2018) which later travelled to Sara Hildén Art Museum, Finland; *Below the Horizon*, Museum at Eldridge House, New York (2018), among others. In 2019, Smith has one-artist exhibitions at Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich, Germany; Palazzo Pitti, Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Florence; Belvedere Museum, Vienna; and Monnaie de Paris.

Smith has been featured in hundreds of group exhibitions, including the Whitney Biennial, New York (1991, 1993, 2002); La Biennale di Firenze, Florence, Italy (1996–1997; 1998); La Biennale di Venezia (1993, 1999, 2005, 2009, 2017); and the 2017 Canadian Biennial in Ottawa. Recent group exhibitions include: *Queensize: Female Artists from the Olbricht Collection*, Me Collectors Room / Olbricht Foundation, Berlin (2014); *Sleeping Beauty*, Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Japan (2014); *Masterpiece in Focus: Kiki Smith and Tony Smith*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (2016); *Stampede: Animals in Art*, Denver Art Museum, Colorado (2017); *The Time. The Place. Contemporary Art from the Collection*, Henry Art Gallery, The University of Washington, Seattle (2017); *Like Life: Sculpture, Color, and the Body (1300–Now)*, The Met Breuer, New York (2018); and *The Moon – From Inner Worlds to Outer Space*, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark, which traveled to Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Oslo (2018).

Smith's work is held in public collections throughout the United States and abroad including the Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, de Young Museum; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; National Museum of Art, Osaka, Japan; National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Gwacheon, South Korea; Tate, London; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others.

Among her numerous accolades, awards, and honors, Smith received the Skowhegan Medal for Sculpture from the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine (2000), was elected a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2005), and was granted the Athena Award for Excellence in Printmaking from the Rhode Island School of Design (2005). She received the Medal Award from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2006), and was recognized by TIME Magazine as one of the "TIME 100: The People Who Shape Our World" (2006). Smith received the Women in the Arts Award from the Brooklyn Museum (2009), the 50th Edward MacDowell Medal (2009), the Theo Westenberger Women of Excellence Award (2010), the Nelson A. Rockefeller Award, Purchase College School of the Arts (2010), as well as the U.S.

Department of State Medal of Arts, conferred by Hillary Clinton (2013). In 2017, she was elected Honorary Academician by the Royal Academy of Arts, London.

Kiki Smith is an adjunct professor at NYU and Columbia University and has lectured extensively at institutions including the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2003), the University of Washington, Seattle (2010), and the Johnson Museum at Cornell University, Ithaca (2015).

Kiki Smith has been represented by Pace Gallery since 1994. Major exhibitions of her work at the gallery include *Drawings* (1994); *New Work* (1995); *Field Operation* (1996); *Reconstructing the Moon* (1997); *Of Her Nature* (1999); *Realms* (2002); *Lodestar* (2010); *Wonder* (2014); *Glass* (2016); and *Murmur* (2019).

Pace is a leading contemporary art gallery representing many of the most significant international artists and estates of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

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Pace advances this mission through its dynamic global program, comprising ambitious exhibitions, artist projects, public installations, institutional collaborations, performances and interdisciplinary projects through Pace Live, and curatorial research and writing. Today, Pace has seven locations worldwide: two galleries in New York—including its newly opened headquarters at 540 West 25th Street, and an adjacent 8,000 sq. ft. exhibition space at 510 West 25th Street—as well as galleries in Palo Alto, London, Geneva, Hong Kong, and Seoul.

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