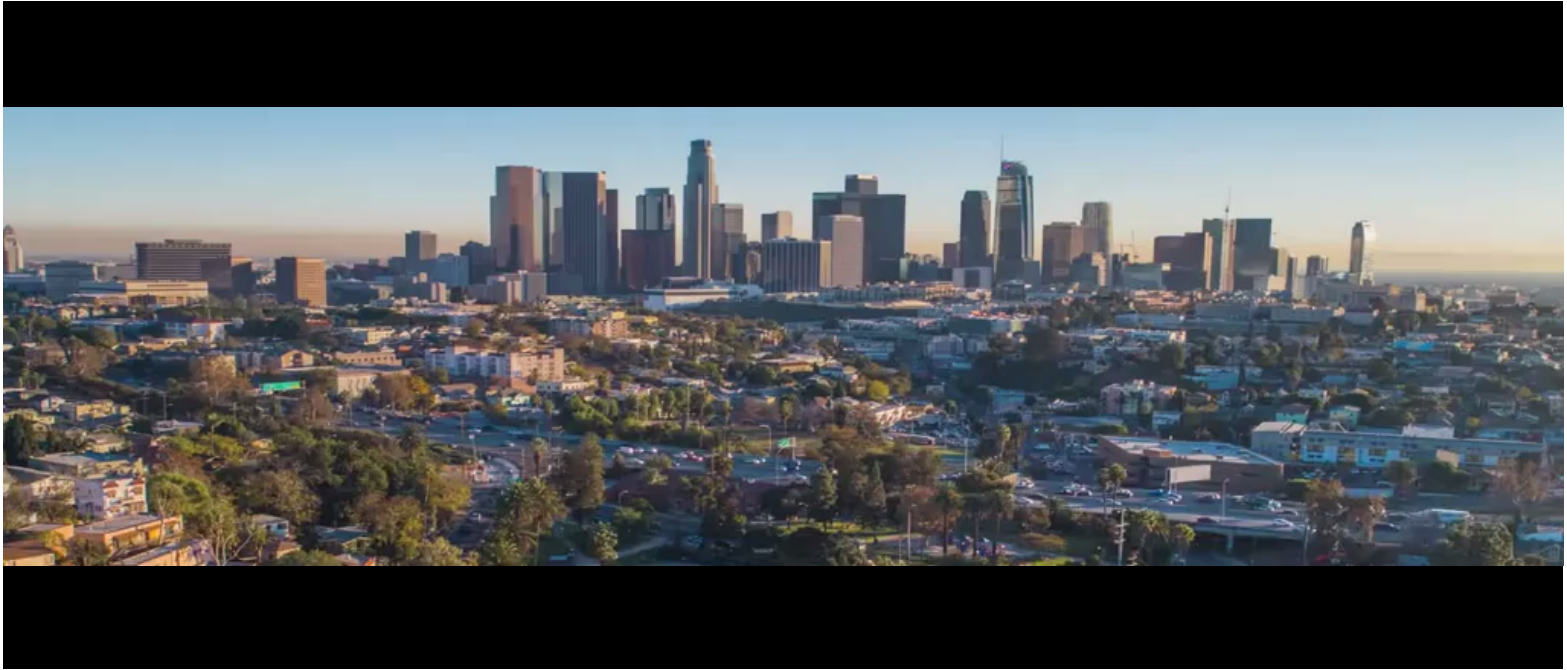


LAWEEKLY

(<https://www.laweekly.com/>)



Cauleen Smith (Photo by Harry Gamboa)

MEET INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTIST CAULEEN SMITH



SHANA NYS DAMBROT ([HTTPS://WWW.LAWEEKLY.COM/AUTHOR/SNDAMBROT/](https://www.laweekly.com/author/sndambrot/)), x FEBRUARY 8, 2021



([HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/SERACOMBINED/?](https://www.facebook.com/seracombined/)

[U=HTTPS://WWW.LAWEEKLY.COM/INTERDISCIPLINARY-CAULEEN-SMITH/](https://www.laweekly.com/interdisciplinary-cauleen-smith/)

[INTERDISCIPLINARY-CAULEEN-SMITH/](https://www.laweekly.com/interdisciplinary-cauleen-smith/)

[ARTIST-](#)

[ARTIST-](#)

[ARTIST-](#)

[CAULEEN-](#)

[CAULEEN-](#)

[CAULEEN-](#)

[SMITH/\)](#)

[SMITH/\)](#)

[SMITH/\)](#)



Cauleen Smith works in film, installation, sculpture and performance that explore the world-building capacity of radical imagination. The sensational traveling exhibition *Give It Or Leave It* (<https://www.lacma.org/art/exhibition/cauleen-smith-give-it-or-leave-it>) incorporates all of these idioms in a body of work centered around Southern California’s fascinating legacies with regards to utopian experiments in society and in the arts in particular — from the Vedantic Center to the Watts Towers to her own lived experiences. *Give It Or Leave It* is technically “on view” at LACMA through October 3, but while the physical show remains

postponed, Smith and LACMA have organized virtual related programming, especially in the form of conversations. The [second installment](https://www.lacma.org/event/cauleen-smith-confabulations-series-tisa-bryant) (<https://www.lacma.org/event/cauleen-smith-confabulations-series-tisa-bryant>) in the *Confabulations* series happens Tuesday, February 23, when Smith welcomes acclaimed author and poet Tisa Bryant.



Installation view of Cauleen Smith: Give It or Leave It, at LACMA

L.A. WEEKLY: WHEN DID YOU FIRST KNOW YOU WERE AN ARTIST?

CAULEEN SMITH: Oh I'm still trying to determine whether or not I am an artist or just someone who really likes having a job where I get to pursue questions and ideas that seem important. It's such a difficult and yet privileged social role that artists play. I'd be more comfortable with the title/vocation if I felt like the criteria were more valued for its actual function in one's community and as a citizen, as opposed to how it feels now — as a title bestowed upon those who have received commercial and institutional validation.

WHAT IS YOUR SHORT ANSWER TO PEOPLE WHO ASK WHAT YOUR WORK IS ABOUT?

My work is about mining the past for social and cultural practices that enable us to imagine futures that build relations, consciousness, and shared-determination (as opposed to say, self-determination). I love using the what-was of the past to wrap protective cloaks around the people and things that are in our present that we fail to value and have a hard time even seeing.



Installation view of Cauleen Smith: Give It or Leave It, at LACMA

WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF YOU WEREN'T AN ARTIST?

I really like chemistry, but because of that one time in 8th grade chemistry class when I combined some stuff wrongly and we had to evacuate the lab, I feel like maybe the world is safer if I stick to making stuff... I'm very jealous of the people who get to take care of plants at Huntington Gardens...

DID YOU GO TO ART SCHOOL? WHY/WHY NOT?

I went to film school. I really did not understand that art school was a real thing separate and apart from film. I mean I accidentally discovered film school! I still have a hard time understanding the ways the disciplines are divided and isolated, but that's why I teach at CalArts. We know better there.

WHY DO YOU LIVE AND WORK IN L.A., AND NOT ELSEWHERE?

I'm a California Native. L.A. still feels like some really experimental things are possible. Especially now that the unreasonable cost of housing is forcing people to flee the state for cheaper real estate and less driving, maybe there will be some breathing room. The overbearing power of developers is daunting here, but the vastness and endless discovery of each city block, and the way people love and live in this city seems limitless.

I enjoy the way L.A. makes you earn a relationship with it. You can't just show up and be embraced and noticed and find your way. You have to hustle, you have to make connections, you have to learn your way around, and you really have to engage a community in order to feel situated and sited. People from elsewhere never think of L.A. having distinct neighborhoods, they have a hard time actually seeing that there is not one L.A., there are many many L.A.s, all overlapping each other, some very obvious, some visible only to people who want to see. I love that.



Installation view of Cauleen Smith: Give It or Leave It, at LACMA

WHEN IS/WAS YOUR CURRENT/MOST RECENT/NEXT SHOW?

Right now sitting in the Broad Contemporary Art Museum (BCAM) at LACMA is my show *Give It Or Leave It*, which has traveled here from ICA Philadelphia where I developed the work. It's a gorgeous installation that ruminates on the evidence that it's possible to create generative communities of radical generosity and creativity. It's thinking about the absolute necessity of cultural production in our lives. It's listening to black women visionaries like Rebecca Cox Jackson, Alice Coltrane, and the collective declarations of the Combahee River Statement to help us imagine ways of being more together than what we imagine alone.

DO YOU LISTEN TO MUSIC WHILE YOU WORK? IF SO WHAT?

Mostly audio books when I'm working with my hands. Right now listening to Archie Schepp, Beverly Glenn-Copeland, and the Black Pumas.

WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA HANDLES, PLEASE!


Web: [corbettvsdempsey.com/artists/cauleen-smith](https://www.corbettvsdempsey.com/artists/cauleen-smith) (<https://www.corbettvsdempsey.com/artists/cauleen-smith>)

IG: [@cauleen_smith](https://www.instagram.com/cauleen_smith/) (https://www.instagram.com/cauleen_smith/)




Installation view of Cauleen Smith: Give It or Leave It, at LACMA

Share this:

 [Twitter \(https://www.laweekly.com/meet-interdisciplinary-artist-cauleen-smith/?share=twitter&nb=1\)](https://www.laweekly.com/meet-interdisciplinary-artist-cauleen-smith/?share=twitter&nb=1)

 [Facebook \(https://www.laweekly.com/meet-interdisciplinary-artist-cauleen-smith/?share=facebook&nb=1\)](https://www.laweekly.com/meet-interdisciplinary-artist-cauleen-smith/?share=facebook&nb=1)

 [LinkedIn \(https://www.laweekly.com/meet-interdisciplinary-artist-cauleen-smith/?share=linkedin&nb=1\)](https://www.laweekly.com/meet-interdisciplinary-artist-cauleen-smith/?share=linkedin&nb=1)

 [Reddit \(https://www.laweekly.com/meet-interdisciplinary-artist-cauleen-smith/?share=reddit&nb=1\)](https://www.laweekly.com/meet-interdisciplinary-artist-cauleen-smith/?share=reddit&nb=1)

 More

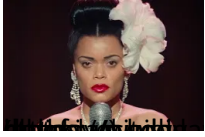


LATEST ARTICLES



MASEGO LOOKS FOR HIS MYSTERY LADY
([HTTPS://WWW.LAWEEKLY.COM/MASEGO-LOOKS-FOR-HIS-MYSTERY-LADY/](https://www.laweekly.com/masego-looks-for-his-mystery-lady/))

MARCH 1, 2021



ANDRA DAY GIVES US ALL OF LADY DAY IN *THE UNITED STATES VS. BILLIE HOLIDAY* ([HTTPS://WWW.LAWEEKLY.COM/ANDRA-DAY-GIVES-US-ALL-OF-LADY-DAY-IN-THE-UNITED-STATES-VS-BILLIE-HOLIDAY/](https://www.laweekly.com/andra-day-gives-us-all-of-lady-day-in-the-united-states-vs-billie-holiday/))

MARCH 1, 2021



L.A. COUNTY TEACHERS AND FIRST RESPONDERS NOW ELIGIBLE FOR COVID-19 VACCINE ([HTTPS://WWW.LAWEEKLY.COM/L-A-COUNTY-TEACHERS-AND-FIRST-RESPONDERS-NOW-ELIGIBLE-FOR-COVID-19-VACCINE/](https://www.laweekly.com/l-a-county-teachers-and-first-responders-now-eligible-for-covid-19-vaccine/))

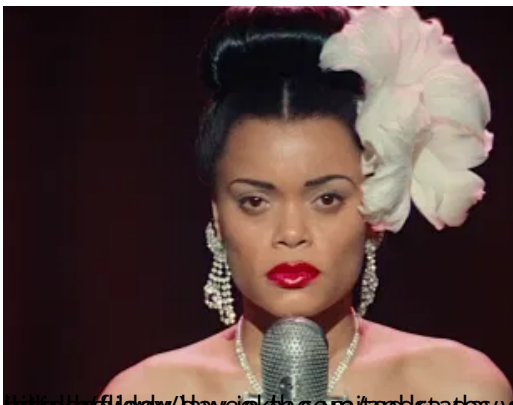
MARCH 1, 2021



MEET PHOTOGRAPHER TATIANA WILLS
([HTTPS://WWW.LAWEEKLY.COM/MEET-PHOTOGRAPHER-TATIANA-WILLS/](https://www.laweekly.com/meet-photographer-tatiana-wills/))

MARCH 1, 2021

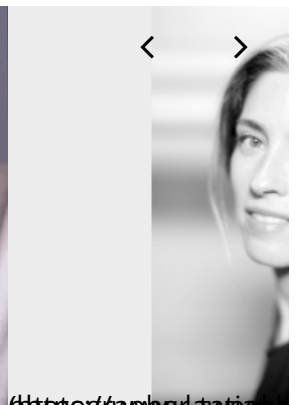
RELATED ARTICLES



ANDRA DAY GIVES US ALL OF LADY DAY IN *THE UNITED STATES VS. BILLIE HOLIDAY* ([HTTPS://WWW.LAWEEKLY.COM/ANDRA-DAY-GIVES-US-ALL-OF-LADY-DAY-IN-THE-UNITED-STATES-VS-BILLIE-HOLIDAY/](https://www.laweekly.com/andra-day-gives-us-all-of-lady-day-in-the-united-states-vs-billie-holiday/))



L.A. COUNTY TEACHERS AND FIRST RESPONDERS NOW ELIGIBLE FOR COVID-19 VACCINE ([HTTPS://WWW.LAWEEKLY.COM/L-A-COUNTY-TEACHERS-AND-FIRST-RESPONDERS-NOW-ELIGIBLE-FOR-COVID-19-VACCINE/](https://www.laweekly.com/l-a-county-teachers-and-first-responders-now-eligible-for-covid-19-vaccine/))



MEET PHOTOGRAPHER TATIANA WILLS
([HTTPS://WWW.LAWEEKLY.COM/MEET-PHOTOGRAPHER-TATIANA-WILLS/](https://www.laweekly.com/meet-photographer-tatiana-wills/))

MARC



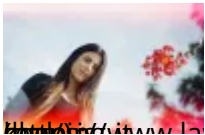
UCLA Extension
Entertainment Studies

**COURSES &
CERTIFICATES
IN FILM, TV,
AND MUSIC**

Instructors with real
world experience
and connections.

The advertisement features a blue background with white text. On the right side, there are three small images: a man with a beard looking at a screen, a large brick building with a tower, and a person in a dark room looking at a screen.

LA WEEKLY FAVORITES



**YARIN GLAM IS KEEPING IT REAL
([HTTPS://WWW.LAWEEKLY.COM/YARIN-GLAM-IS-KEEPING-IT-
REAL/](https://www.laweekly.com/yarin-glam-is-keeping-it-real/))**



**BEYOND THE TACO – AT COOK’S TORTAS IN MONTEREY PARK,
TELERA IS KING ([HTTPS://WWW.LAWEEKLY.COM/BEYOND-THE-
TACO-AT-COOKS-TORTAS-IN-MONTEREY-PARK-TELERA-IS-KING/](https://www.laweekly.com/beyond-the-taco-at-cooks-tortas-in-monterey-park-telera-is-king/))**



**SUNDANCE AT HOME: AMERICA’S LARGEST INDIE FILM FESTIVAL
GOES VIRTUAL ([HTTPS://WWW.LAWEEKLY.COM/SUNDANCE-AT-
HOME-AMERICAS-LARGEST-INDIE-FILM-FESTIVAL-GOES-VIRTUAL/](https://www.laweekly.com/sundance-at-home-americas-largest-indie-film-festival-goes-virtual/))**



**A NEW FILM PRESENTS M.C. ESCHER IN HIS OWN WORDS
([HTTPS://WWW.LAWEEKLY.COM/A-NEW-FILM-PRESENTS-M-C-
ESCHER-IN-HIS-OWN-WORDS/](https://www.laweekly.com/a-new-film-presents-m-c-escher-in-his-own-words/))**



MADE IN

high quality
N95 masks
and PPE

delivered to
your door in
1-3 days

AMERICA

www.clinicalsuppliesusa.com

(<https://www.instagram.com/laweekly/>) (<https://www.facebook.com/LAWeekly/>) (<https://twitter.com/LAWeekly>)

SEARCH LA WEEKLY

Search..



laweekly



LAWeekly Instagram: Featuring the culture of LA since 1978 🙌
(<https://www.instagram.com/laweekly/>)

(<https://www.instagram.com/p/CL0bwfHHtJj/>)

(<https://www.instagram.com/p/CLxcz1TnPWv/>)

(<https://www.instagram.com/p/CLxO3UfHS1f/>)

(<https://www.instagram.com/p/CLu6AwUniFS/>)

Load More...

 Follow on Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/laweekly/>)

LAWEEKLY

[\(\[HTTPS://WWW.LAWEEKLY.COM\]\(https://www.laweekly.com\)\)](https://www.laweekly.com)

[PICK US UP \(\[HTTPS://WWW.LAWEEKLY.COM/PICK-US-UP/\]\(https://www.laweekly.com/pick-us-up/\)\)](https://www.laweekly.com/pick-us-up/)

/

[CONTACT \(\[HTTPS://WWW.LAWEEKLY.COM/CONTACT-PAGE-BEFORE/\]\(https://www.laweekly.com/contact-page-before/\)\)](https://www.laweekly.com/contact-page-before/)

/

[POLICIES \(\[HTTPS://WWW.LAWEEKLY.COM/POLICIES/\]\(https://www.laweekly.com/policies/\)\)](https://www.laweekly.com/policies/)

COPYRIGHT LA WEEKLY

