

Cauleen
the Smith
volcano
manifesto

12.12.25 -
22.3.26

we are running
running and
time is clocking us
from the edge like an only
daughter.
our mothers stream before us,
cradling their breasts in their
hands.

oh pray that what we want
is worth this running
pray that what we're running
toward
is what we want.

— Lucille Clifton, undated

Introduction

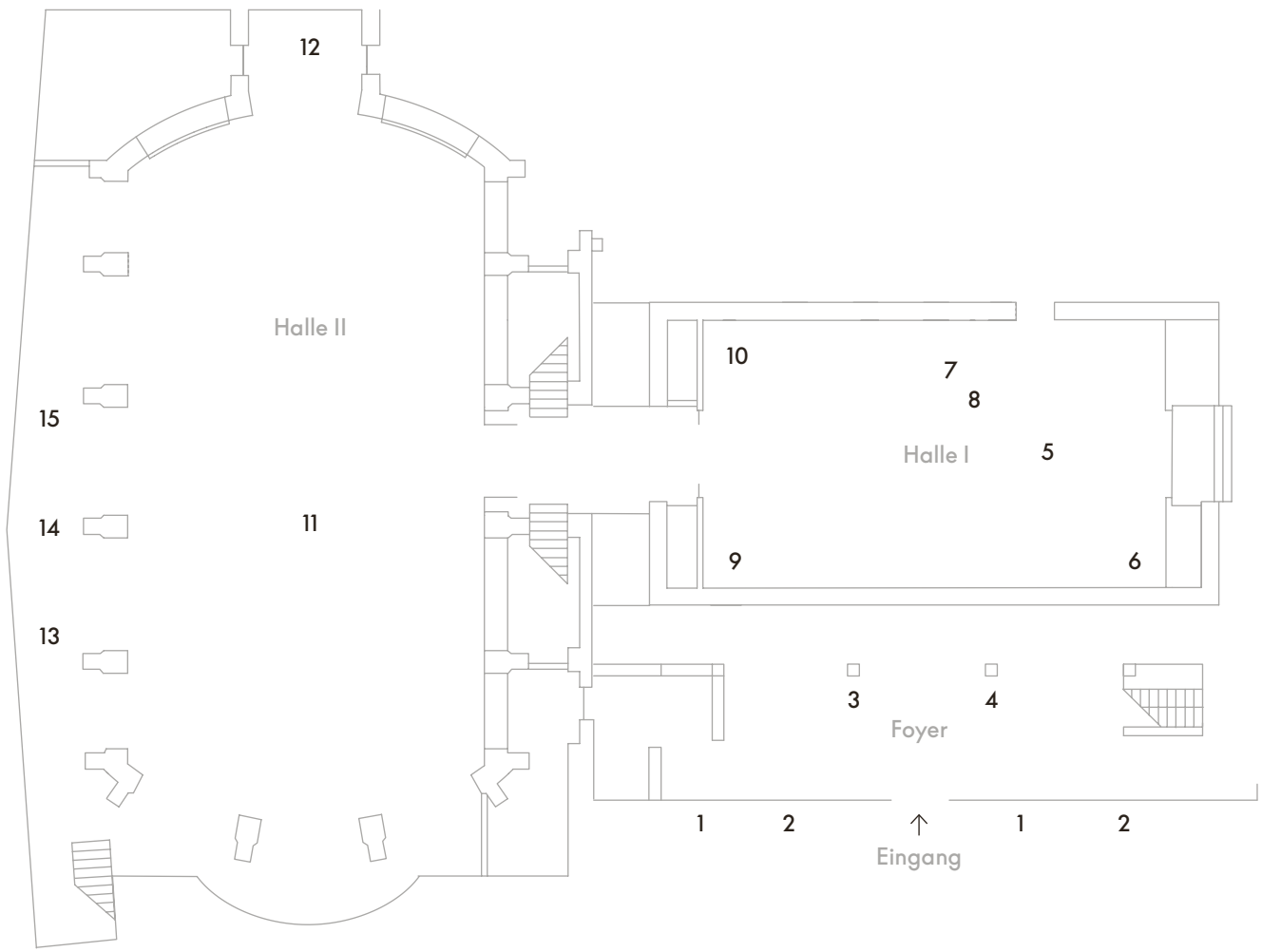
Since her influential 1998 debut feature *Drylongso*—created while she was still an MFA student at UCLA—internationally acclaimed filmmaker and artist Cauleen Smith (b. 1967, Riverside, CA) has developed a prolific multidisciplinary practice that expands film into visual arts and immersive exhibition-making. Informed by the politically engaged experimental cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, by feminist and Afro-Futurist movements, and by jazz, poetry, discourse, and literature, Smith combines moving image, sculptural forms, sound, and experimental narrative structures to challenge imperial modes of Western knowledge production. In their place, she proposes new imaginaries and speculative futures grounded in Black culture and Afro-diasporic experience.

At the center of this monographic exhibition at Kestner Gesellschaft—her first comprehensive presentation in Germany—is the film trilogy that gives the show its title, *The Volcano Manifesto*, comprising *My Caldera* (2022), *Mines to Caves* (2023), and *The Deep West Assembly* (2024). Building out from this core, visitors encounter work from the past two decades, including the large-scale video installation *...we are running...* (2019), a series of drawings of book covers from her research reading list (2024), newly produced textile flags and banners (2025), the hand-poured topological candle sculptures *NONCONFORMITY 1–5* (2024), and her ongoing *Ikebana* videos (since 2010), all set within site-specific architectural interventions. Together, the works unfold complex, non-linear meditations on geological and cinematic time, volcanos and caves, human responsibility, transformation, and the possibilities and potentials that might emerge from apocalyptic devastation.

The exhibition begins with a reading and listening room designed for collective reflection, rest, and exchange. Activated throughout the show's duration, the space features books, LPs, and custom-made wallpaper derived from Smith's research on the *Pandanus candellabrum*, an endangered palm that grows in soil above diamond-bearing kimberlite in parts of tropical Africa. As Smith notes, "I aim to create inviting spaces where people can linger as long as they wish to reflect on the questions raised by the works; for me, contemporary art is an active space that should encourage engagement and conversation as much as possible."

Biography

Cauleen Smith is based in Los Angeles, where she is a professor of fine arts at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). Her work has been featured in numerous international group exhibitions and biennials. Recent solo exhibitions include *Mines to Caves* (2023) at the Aspen Art Museum; *The Wanda Coleman Songbook* (2024) at 52 Walker, New York; *The Deep West Assembly* (2024) at the Astrup Fearnley Museet in Oslo; and the survey exhibition *Afflict the Comfortable, Comfort the Afflicted* at Zeitz MOCAA in Cape Town (on view through October 2026). Smith has received grants and awards from Creative Capital, the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, and the Herb Alpert Foundation. Her work is held in major collections worldwide.



Ground Floor

Façade

1

Blue Tag, 2025

Two nylon flags
250 × 150 cm each

2

River, 2025

Two nylon flags
250 × 150 cm each

Cauleen Smith created four flags in two distinct designs for the façade of the Kestner Gesellschaft: *Blue Tag* and *River*, both 2025. Smith's work examines the flag as a medium and the symbolic weight it carries when displayed on a building or during nationalist demonstrations, where it immediately communicates messages and affiliations. Although the artist's flags speak to her background as a US American and to the broader cultural significance of flags, they do not reproduce national hierarchies. Instead, they question the extent to which such emblems shape identity and power.

Developed specifically for the exhibition, the four flags propose an alternative visual language. Their abstract, non-representational compositions resist fixed meaning, inviting viewers to project their own associations and imagine forms of collective identity beyond nationhood.

Foyer

3–4 Ikebana Videos

3

Orange Jumpsuits, 2019

Video
22.51 min

4

Blue Scrubs, Yellow Scrubs, Trustees, All Above, 2019

Video
23.57 min

Displayed throughout the institution's exhibition halls and floors are nine video works showing the artist arranging flowers according to the Japanese art of ikebana, a traditional practice of structured, symbolic floral composition. This meditative custom has been an ongoing series in Smith's work since 2010. While practicing it, she pairs the contemplative act of arranging with specific political and social subjects. Through sound (such as songs, radio noise, or spoken word) and through the deliberate use of certain colors and flowers, each work signals a

precise meaning and social context.

Works such as *Blue Scrubs, Yellow Scrubs, Trustees, All Above* (2019), and *Orange Jumpsuits* (2019) operate on a visual and metaphorical level: Smith reflects on the vulnerability of Black bodies in public spaces when they are not being deployed for labor, profit, or entertainment. The flowers' colors correspond to the clothing worn in the Los Angeles County Jail (yellow and blue) and in state prisons (orange). In a different mode, *Home Girls* (2024) uses spoken word to honor the thirty-four contributors to the Black feminist anthology of the same name.

Other videos, such as *Vermillion for GT* (2022) or Smith's first ikebana work *Black and Blue Over You* (2010), refer more directly to the traditions of flower giving for ceremonial purposes (weddings, funerals, memorials) and to the role of altars as sites of remembrance. Smith uses ikebana as both a catalyst for memory and a means of embodied manifestation.

Hall I

5–8 Reading- and Listening-Room

5

Reading- and Listening-Room, 2024

Found objects on shelves (including books, rocks, curios), couches, rugs, records, turntable and speakers, coffee table, books
Dimensions variable

6

Pandanus Candelabrum, 2023/2025

Custom-made wallpaper
Dimensions variable

Occupying the first exhibition hall on the ground floor of the Kestner Gesellschaft is Cauleen Smith's *Reading- and Listening-Room* (2024). Smith's work investigates the entanglements of geology, capitalist extraction, and societal structures. Here, she opens her artistic research to the public, creating a space devoted to exchange, dialogue, and interaction.

The room includes a new iteration of *Pandanus Candelabrum* (2023/2025), a wallpaper designed by the artist. Its motif is based on her drawings of *Pandanus candelabrum*, also known as the chandelier tree or candelabrum tree. The palm is prized for its distinctive growing sites in tropical regions of Africa, where it flourishes in soil above diamond-bearing kimberlite rock. Because of this, it is used as an indicator for diamond prospecting. Celebrating the endangered tree's natural resilience, the

work also confronts the realities of exploitation and extractivism, themes that reverberate throughout the galleries of Smith's *The Volcano Manifesto*.

Arranged as a living room with sofas at the center of the exhibition, a thoughtful selection of books and records invites visitors to rest, listen to music, engage in conversation, or explore topics closely connected to Smith's artistic research. The drawings on the wall, *Black Studies < > Earth Studies* (2024, see 7 and 35), are part of the artist's ongoing series of book cover drawings, a core element of her practice. Evoking ancestral galleries or family portraits, they underscore the power inherent in knowledge and representation. Smith considers books to be "weapons for the mind." She imagines the room as a place where everyone is welcome, so long as they respect both the space and others within it. "Many people don't have time to read right now," she notes, "but I'm hoping they get to it." This open space at the heart of *The Volcano Manifesto* will host reading and listening sessions throughout the exhibition in collaboration with various initiatives in Hanover.

7

Black Studies < > Earth Studies, 2024

Gouache on paper
12 of 31 pieces
22.54 × 30.16 cm each

The series *Black Studies < > Earth Studies* (2024) offers a direct view into Cauleen Smith's research processes for her projects. Building on earlier works such as *BLK FEMINIST Loaner Library 1989–2019* (2019) and *Human 3.0 Reading List 2015–2016* (2015), the artist renders the covers of the books she reads while developing new work. Through this visual reading list, she connects historical and contemporary views on the relationship between Blackness and geoscience, invites reflection on shared consciousness, and challenges established canonical structures.

The black paper behind the 31 gouache drawings challenges the unspoken assumption of "white" as the default "neutral ground" in society, while also referencing the velvet paintings that captivated her as a child. The books are drawn instead of photographed as a means of mediating time and its relationship, absorbing information. Smith's distinctive drawing style, evident in each work, adds a personal dimension that makes the book recommendations feel as though they come from a direct conversation with the artist.

8

Vermillion for GT, 2022

Video

16.05 min

Text, see 3–4 Ikebana Videos, p. 5

9–10 Cabinet

9

A Lecture Under the Trees, 2024

Eighty-one 35mm slides, slide projector, pedestal

Dimensions variable

Combining her own photographs taken between 2010 and 2024 with excerpts from *Arrival*, the first book of Robert Nichols's sequence of four novels *Daily Lives in Nghsi-Altai* (1977), the slideshow *A Lecture under the Trees* (2024) addresses ecological collapse on Earth. Alternating between these two bodies of material, Smith links Nichols's utopian world to lived reality while highlighting human-made environmental destruction, including exploitation and extraction. The projection invites viewers to reconsider fixed Western belief systems premised on continual progress, and instead to acknowledge humanity's dependence on ecological systems.

10

Cucoloris for Shadow, 2024

Canvas with drawing, spotlight

Dimensions variable

As Cauleen Smith reflects on Robert Nichols's 1977 novel, she highlights a radical pedagogical vision: learning as a multisensory experience—outdoors, among plants, accompanied by music and layered imagery.

"As an educator, I felt an affinity with this and recognized these principles as tactics deeply embedded in the installations that I make," she writes. In a similar spirit, the *Cucoloris*—a device or stencil placed between a light source and a subject to create patterned or fragmented shadows—transforms light into an immersive, textured experience, shaping how we perceive space and image.

Hall II

11

...we are running..., 2019

Video installation, 3-channel videos, three CCTV cameras, table, mixed media

Dimensions variable

The site-specific multimedia installation *...we are running...* (2024) investigates how

images are constructed and the potential for manipulation embedded in that process. Inspired by Lucille Clifton's poem of the same title, Smith connects the poets' written struggles and hope for a better societal outcome to ongoing misconceptions and bias through the media.

It consists of multiple layers of video presentation: several large screens are positioned throughout Hall II of the Kestner Gesellschaft. The technical apparatus behind the installation remains fully exposed; cords hang from the ceiling and, in some cases, run through the projections. They lead visitors to a small table at the back of the space, where found objects, including sculptures, plastic horses, crystals, flowers, and stones, are arranged in front of three desktop screens showing short clips of urban and rural landscapes, satellite imagery, travel documentaries, and geological elements.

The setup is completed by three CCTV cameras that record this scene and project it onto the large screens, creating a walk-in kaleidoscope of feedback loops: seeing and seeing oneself being seen. The layered construction Smith employs critiques the distortions of people and cultures perpetuated by media while also inviting visitors to enter the thicket of image-making, opening a path toward understanding how filmmaking works.

The title references a poem by US-American poet, writer, and educator Lucille Clifton (see p. 2).

12

Feed the Flower, 2025

Video

12.36 min

Text, see 3–4 Ikebana Videos, p. 5

13–15 Desert Studies

13

Cauleen Smith and Jayve Montgomery
Desert Study 1, 2024

16mm film transferred to video, music, and sound by Jayve Montgomery

30 sec

14

Desert Study 3, 2025

16mm film transferred to video; sound

30 sec

15

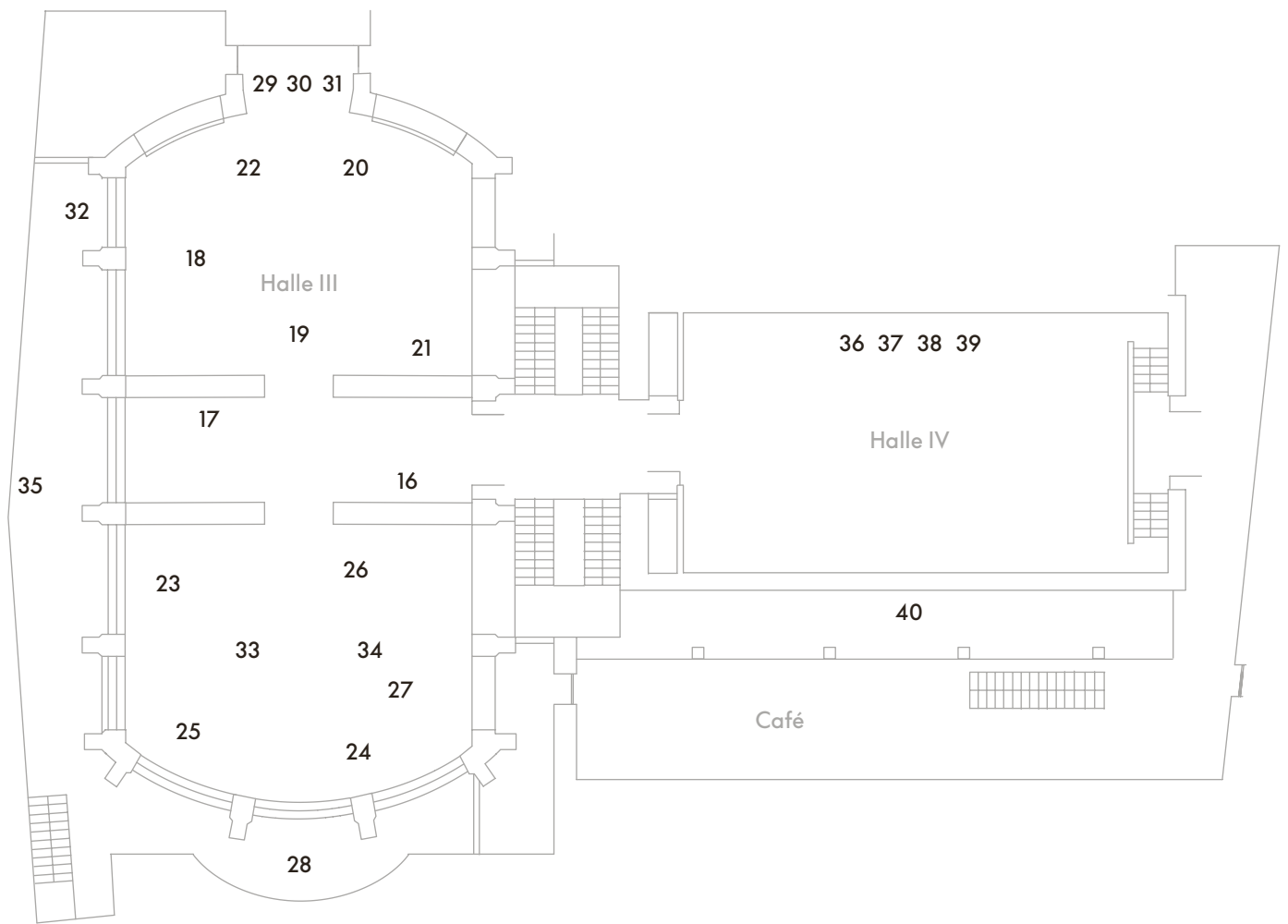
Cauleen Smith and Jayve Montgomery
Desert Study 2, 2024

16mm film transferred to video; music and sound by Jayve Montgomery

30 sec

Desert Study 1 (2024) and *Desert Study 2* (2024) are short music videos featuring desert footage shot near Los Angeles, with sound by Jayve Montgomery—a Canadian-American musician, composer, and artist based in Los Angeles who collaborates frequently with Smith. *Desert Study 3* (2025) is grounded in location sound recordings from a weaving workshop in Senegal; here, the mechanical rhythms of the looms structure the acoustic space.

All three films (*Desert Study 1*, *Desert Study 2*, and *Desert Study 3*) belong to an ongoing series in which Smith works with discarded research material: footage generated during other video projects that she found compelling but did not use, and which therefore becomes part of this evolving group of studies.



Hall III

16–17 Obsidian Mirrors

16

All the Stars Approach You, 2025
Slab of polished black volcanic glass
101.5 × 84.7 × 2.9 cm

17

All the Stars are Closer, 2025
Slab of polished black volcanic glass
83 × 93.5 × 2.5 cm

All the Stars Approach You and *All the Stars are Closer* (both 2025) consist of two obsidian mirrors made from slabs of black volcanic glass cut from a boulder sourced in Northern California and polished to a mirror finish. Smith's inspiration for the work comes from an Aztec obsidian mirror in the British Museum, an object historically used to study solar eclipses by allowing viewers to observe the sun without looking at it directly. For Smith, this original function underscores the mirror as an instrument of perception, a material that makes visible something normally beyond human sight. In the exhibition, viewers encounter their own reflections in the imperfect rock: distorted, crystalline, and partial, evoking the experience of looking through a medium that is never fully transparent.

Obsidian itself is technically and visually striking. A form of natural silica, it often appears perfectly black yet contains waves, ripples, or air pockets. The obsidian Smith selected is so old that these cavities have crystallized, producing tiny white flecks that interrupt the reflection with delicate patterns. The material carries deep historical, cultural, and practical significance. Widely traded across North America, obsidian was used for knives, blades, and tools—and is still used in certain surgical instruments today.

Smith's interest in lava and obsidian also extends to the relationship between language and ancient knowledge. Geologists continue to rely on Indigenous terminology for lava types that have no English equivalent. In Hawai'i, for example, the terms *pāhoehoe* (ropey lava) and *'a'ā* (sharp, clinkery lava) remain standard scientific descriptors. Smith is fascinated by such moments: when scientific language reaches its limit, and Indigenous knowledge provides the necessary vocabulary. Both titles refer to the chorus of *All the Stars* by SZA and Kendrick Lamar.

18–22 Venus Banners

18

OYSTER, 2024
Cotton/poly suiting fabric, acrylic paint, paper, polyester velvet, polyester satin, polyester suede, silk, Swarovski crystals, sequins, fringe
211.5 × 137.2 cm
Courtesy Cauleen Smith and Morán Morán, Los Angeles

19

PHIBA, 2024
Cotton/poly suiting fabric, acrylic paint, paper, polyester velvet, polyester satin, polyester suede, silk, Swarovski crystals, faceted agate, acrylic prisms, sequins, gold buttons, wool felt, embroidery thread, tassels
173.4 × 130.2 cm
Courtesy Cauleen Smith and Morán Morán, Los Angeles

20

CAVITY SEARCH (your discipline un-did me.), 2024
Cotton/poly suiting fabric, acrylic paint, paper, polyester velvet, polyester satin, polyester suede, silk, Swarovski crystals, faceted agate, sequins, wool felt, embroidery thread, fringe, 180.3 × 137.2 cm
Courtesy Cauleen Smith and Morán Morán, Los Angeles

21

VENUS, 2024
Cotton/poly suiting fabric, acrylic paint, paper, polyester velvet, polyester satin, polyester suede, silk, Swarovski crystals, sequins, door knocker earrings, gold buttons, embroidery thread, fringe
180.3 × 137.2 cm
Courtesy Cauleen Smith and Morán Morán, Los Angeles

22

BLACK PEARL, 2024
Cotton/poly suiting fabric, acrylic paint, paper, polyester velvet, polyester satin, polyester suede, silk, Swarovski crystals, sequins, coral, silver-plated chain, embroidery thread, fringe,
180.3 × 137.2 cm
Courtesy Cauleen Smith and Morán Morán, Los Angeles

Banners have been a consistent part of Cauleen Smith's practice for many years. Known for her work across film, installation, and performance, she began using them in

the 2010s as a key mode of political expression. They became a means to fuse art, activism, and storytelling, reflecting her sustained engagement with Black feminist thought, collective memory, systemic oppression, and resistance. The banners on view at the Kestner Gesellschaft belong to two distinct bodies of work: the *Venus Banners* and the *Volcano Banners*.

Smith's *Venus Banners* foreground the names of individuals at the center of medical and scientific racism. Anarcha, Betsy, and Lucy were women subjected to experimentation by J. Marion Sims (1813–1883), an American physician celebrated as the “father of modern gynecology” for developing surgical techniques to repair vesicovaginal fistula, a severe complication of obstructed childbirth. Sims's reputation is now deeply contested; he performed torturous, non-consensual surgeries on captive Black women without anesthesia, prompting ongoing reassessments of his legacy.

In the 1850s, Renty, Jack, and their daughters Delia and Drana were photographed in a series commissioned by Harvard professor Louis Agassiz (1807–1873), who used the images to promote biological racism and racial hierarchy. Taken without consent, the photographs entered Harvard's collection and later served to reinforce racist ideologies. Today, Renty's descendants are fighting for control over the images, which stem from a dehumanizing practice. The legal dispute centers on whether Harvard has the right to use the photographs in research or exhibitions, and who should determine their circulation given their traumatic origins. Other banners in the series speak across time, naming these histories and their legacies while summoning a community committed to recovery as an act of defiance.

23–27 Nonconformity Candle Sculptures

23

Pyroclastic unconformity (blue onion), 2022
Coconut soy wax, paraffin wax, gel wax, candle, pigment, yellow ochre, graphite, charcoal
115.3 × 121.9 × 61 cm

24

Pyroclastic unconformity (red libr), 2022
Coconut soy wax, paraffin wax, gel wax, candle, pigment, yellow ochre, graphite, charcoal
115.3 × 121.9 × 61 cm

25**NONCONFORMITY, 2022**

Coconut soy wax, paraffin wax, gel wax, candle, pigment, yellow ochre, graphite, charcoal
124 × 63 × 40 cm

The candle sculptures in the *NONCONFORMITY* (2024) series are composed of layered, colored wax with wicks that will be lit at set times—activating and destroying the work simultaneously. Smith’s wax forms map an abstract topography of the earth, evoking volcanic terrain as well as geological strata.

This process of slow, inevitable destruction alludes to the concept of geological, or “deep,” time—a framework used to describe the vast temporal scale of the universe and the Earth’s evolutionary history. The works underscore the role of time in processes of transformation, both social and existential.

26**Love in Outer Space, 2024**

Candle-wax pigments
32 × 32 × 110 cm

27**We Travel the Space Ways, 2024**

Candle-wax pigments
32 × 32 × 110 cm

28**Home Girls, 2024**

Video
17.44 min

29

Top:
Black and Blue Over You, 2010

Video
8.48 min

30

Middle:
Stelitzia Satellite Meditation, 2012

Video
3.42 min

31

Bottom:
Cotton Plant 187?, 2017

Video
6.44 min

32**Dead Ranunculus, 2024**

Video
2.15 min

28–32:

Text, see **3–4 Ikebana Videos**, p. 5

33–34 Volcano Banners

33**Parrots and Ravens, 2025**

Muslin, cotton broadcloth, velour, velvet, polyester rope, cotton rope, sequins, silk satin, sequin fabric, polyester satin
330 × 140 cm

34**Volcano Cycle, 2025**

Cotton broadcloth, velour, velvet, polyester rope, polyester satin, sequins, iridescent organza, gold lamé, upholstery fabric, glitter Lycra, sequin fabric, plastic shell
330 × 140 cm

The two large works *Parrots and Ravens* and *Volcano Cycle* (both 2025) form part of the artist’s *Volcano Banners* series. Here, the volcano becomes a metaphor for crisis, a vessel for intense emotion, and a symbol of planetary force. It also evokes the regenerative power of eruptions—in particular, their ability to create new land free from the burdens of human history.

Each of Cauleen Smith’s hand-sewn banners pairs text with visual cues. Some phrases and images remain cryptic, others are more literal, and still others take a more poetic form.

35**Black Studies < > Earth Studies, 2024**

Gouache on paper
19 of 31 pieces
22.54 × 30.16 cm each

Text, see **7**

Black Studies < > Earth Studies, p. 5

Hall IV

36–38 The Volcano Manifesto

36**The Deep West Assembly, 2024**

Single-channel video projection with sound
30 min

The Deep West Assembly (2024) examines the concepts of geological time and Blackness as camouflaged in image, song, and

word by Black and Brown creators (after thinkers such as Suzanne Césaire and Ryan C. Clarke). Incorporating images of geological formations such as lava caves, calderas, and salt domes, as well as human-made landforms like ancient Choctaw burial mounds, *The Deep West Assembly* presents a view of the American South as a horizontal “Deep West” (a term borrowed from poet Wanda Coleman). Smith situates this cultural Deep West as pushing past the Mississippi River Delta, suggesting that her nation’s disavowal of slavery, by relegating it to one time period and one region of the United States, actually obscures the use of violence in America’s expansive imperialist enterprise. Actor Dionne Audain embodies multiple voices—guides—reading, among other texts, Smith’s recent *Volcano Manifesto* (F Books, 2022) for the camera.

37**My Caldera, 2022**

Single-channel, digitized 35mm film and sound
19.53 min

My Caldera (2022), one of the three video works that make up *The Volcano Manifesto* trilogy, examines the relationship between time, culture, catastrophe, and beginnings. Images depicting different phases of volcanic eruption reveal the raw potential contained within the volcano’s force. By juxtaposing flowing magma with an inert mountain and with unnaturally saturated colors, Smith creates an abstract, chaotic visual language.

The scratchy texture of TikTok video stills—first transferred onto 35mm film and then rendered in 4K—combines with a buzzing, doomsday-inflected metal soundtrack to produce a heightened sense of volatility. Smith uses nature’s violent imagery not only to contemplate disaster but to gesture beyond it, toward the possibility of creation that follows rupture. In doing so, she points not only to our relationship to the environment but also to parallel dynamics within social and cultural life.

38**Mines to Caves, 2023**

Single-channel video projection with sound
9.47 min

Part of *The Volcano Manifesto* trilogy, *Mines to Caves* (2023) traces the artist’s research into land exploitation in the United States. The film weaves together images of wildlife with footage of mineral sites and the names of various crystals and minerals. By showing how entrenched capitalist logics—such as extractivism and overconsumption—produce a loss of connection among people and between humans and the environment, Smith

introduces the idea of transformation: turning mines into caves, and imagining these spaces as collective sites of survival rather than extraction.

"There was a time when we knew how to navigate the terrain, much like the animals you see elegantly and efficiently navigating the land today," Smith says. "I want viewers to imagine a world where we don't view caves as places of extraction, but rather as places of shelter."

Mines to Caves emerged from Smith's residency at the Aspen Art Museum and was partially filmed in the Smuggler Mine, located near the museum.

39

Jérôme Havre, Cauleen Smith,
and Camille Turner
Triangle Trade, 2017

HD video
14.31 min

Triangle Trade (2017) is a collaborative work by artists Jérôme Havre, Cauleen Smith, and Camille Turner that brings together their respective artistic approaches—puppetry, film, performance, and sculpture—to explore the multiplicity of Black diasporic experience. Developed over a year of cross-border dialogue about their specific relationships to land, belonging, and identity, the work unfolds as a 14-minute film inhabited by three handmade puppet avatars representing the artists themselves.

"[B]lackness is infinitely varied. From São Paolo to Port-au-Prince to Houston to Halifax, a multiplicity of histories have formed in response to local environments, even while being shaped by modernity's foundational antiblackness. *Triangle Trade* is an attempt to look elsewhere, to imagine other worlds in which we might exist," notes Cauleen Smith. Each artist created a distinct world for their puppet: environments that function simultaneously as landscapes, allegories, and states of being. Smith's puppet navigates a volcanic terrain, invoking resistance and self-possession in the face of colonial extraction. Turner conjures an entirely new world composed of magic words. Havre's island-like space evokes drifting, dislocation, and the search for anchorage. Ultimately, the three avatars encounter one another in another new terrain, suggesting possibilities for community, solidarity, and connection across distance and difference. This meeting point, shaped collectively, gestures toward alternative futures in which Blackness is understood not as a fixed category but as an ongoing state of becoming, extending into many histories and emerging worlds at once.

Café Tender Buttons

40

Sunshine (for Brayla, Merci, Shakiie, Draya, Tatiana, and Bree, Riah, Dominique,...),

2020, neon, MDF, paint, gold-plated chain link, edition of 3, 152.4 × 114.3 cm

Courtesy Cauleen Smith and Morán Morán, Los Angeles

Sunshine (for Brayla, Merci, Shakiie, Draya, Tatiana, and Bree, Riah, Dominique,...) is part of Cauleen Smith's series of neon works that reappropriate well-known pop-song titles to confront state-sanctioned anti-Black violence. Borrowing its title from Roy Ayers's 1976 classic "Everybody Loves the Sunshine"—a song strongly associated with warmth, ease, and communal joy—the work turns a familiar lyric into pointed irony, transforming it into a luminous critique of the ongoing harms facing Black communities.

The work is dedicated to Elijah McClain, whose death at the hands of police in 2019 became emblematic of the pervasive vulnerability to state violence that Black people face in daily life. The names listed in the subtitle extend this dedication, honoring others killed by police.

Smith's use of pop-song titles involves more than a play on their optimistic tone. It also taps into a long tradition in African American music where joy and grief are entwined rather than opposed, and where collective trauma is often transformed through acts of celebration. From the Delta blues onward, the foundation of much of American popular music, artists have blended trouble and pleasure, lament and groove, making beauty out of sorrow. Her neon works extend this lineage, making cultural memory visible while underscoring the conditions that still compel resistance.

All works are courtesy Cauleen Smith unless otherwise noted.

Exhibition Program

Opening

Cauleen Smith

The Volcano Manifesto

with Guided Exhibition Tour, DJ-Set by Erik

D. Clark, drinks by Lieblingsbar

Thu, 11.12.2025, 7 pm

The Artist is present.

Artist Talk

with Cauleen Smith

Fri, 12.12.2025, 5 pm

English

Free admission

Public Guided Tours on Sundays at 4 pm

with Gundi Doppelhammer, Gabriele Sand,

Kristina Tieke

Admission + 3 Euro, members free

Public Guided Tours on Thursdays at 6 pm

with the Team of Kestner Gesellschaft

Admission + 3 Euro, members free

18.12.2025 in Turkish with

Curatorial Intern Elif Muhi

8.1.2026 with Art Mediator Gabriele Sand

15.1.2026 with Director Eva Birkenstock

22.1.2026 with Curator Alexander Wilmschen

29.1. & 5.2.2026 with Art Mediator Gabriele

Sand and Head of Production Karsten Bartz

12.2.2026 with Art Mediating Intern

Siri Brandis

19.2.2026 with Curator Alexander Wilmschen

26.2. & 5.3.2026 with Art Mediator Gabriele

Sand

12.3.2026 with Curator Alexander Wilmschen

19.3.2026 with Director Eva Birkenstock

New Years Konzert à la Valentin

Thu, 1.1.2026, 11.30 am

with Das Neue Ensemble

Further events will be communicated in
due course on our website:

www.kestnergesellschaft.de/en

Art Mediation Program for Children and Families

Kids' Vernissage

Caves, Banners & Volcanoes

for art-loving kids aged 3 and up

Thu, 11.12.2025, 3–5 pm

kestnerkids machen Kunst

Pennant Decorations & Christmas Flowers!

for Christmas-loving kids aged 5–12

Sat, 20.12.2025, 3–5 pm

kestnerbanden

Family Banners

for cool flag designers aged 3 and up

Sun, 11.1.2026, 11 am–12.30 pm

kestnerkids machen Kunst –

Goes International

Surprise-Surprise!

Art for kids in English, ages 5–12

Sat, 17.1.2026, 11 am–12.30 pm

Open Studio

The Volcano Lab: Open Studio

for Cauleen Smith's Exhibition

For everyone. All ages. No registration.

Free of charge.

Fri, 23.1.2026, 2–5 pm

kestnerkids machen Kunstaussflug

to the KREOFANTEN Workshop

Soapstone Volcanoes

for volcano-enthusiastic kids aged 6–12

Sat, 31.1. & Sun, 1.2.2026, each 3–5 pm

kestnerkids machen Kunst –

Goes International

Surprise-Surprise!

Art for kids in English, ages 5–12

Sat, 7.2.2026, 11 am–12.30 pm

kestnerbanden

Flower Magic for Valentine's Day

for I-love-you enthusiasts aged 3 and up

Fri, 13.2.2026, 3–4.30 pm

Open Studio

For a More Just and Loving World!

For everyone. All ages. No registration. Free
of charge.

Fri, 27.2.2026, 2–5 pm

kestnerkids machen Kunstaussflug to the

Visitor Mine Barsinghausen

A Journey into the Klosterstollen

for young adventurers aged 6–12

Sat, 28.2.2026 & Sun, 1.3.2026, each 3–5 pm

kestnerkids machen Kunst –

Goes International

Surprise-Surprise!

Art for kids in English, ages 5–12

Sat, 7.3.2026, 11 am–12.30 pm

kestnerkids machen Kunstaussflug to the

School Biology Center Hannover

Big Rocks & Sparkles

for 'rock-solid' kids aged 6–12

Sat, 14.3. & Sun, 15.3.2026, each 3–5 pm

Open Studio

Beautiful Book, Beautiful Title!

For everyone. All ages. No registration.

Free of charge.

Fri, 20.3.2026, 2–5 pm

kestnerbanden

Dream-Cave Landscapes

for inventive kids aged 3 and up

Sun, 22.3.2026, 11 am–12.30 pm

Registration & Information

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Art Mediation

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Opening Hours
Closed on Mondays
Tue–Sun, 11 am–6 pm
Thu, 11 am–8 pm

Holiday Opening Hours
Wed, 24.12. & Thu, 25.12.2025, closed
Fri, 26.12.2025, 11 am–6 pm
Wed, 31.12.2025, closed
Thu, 1.1.2026, 11 am–6 pm

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Oslo

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