

Teacher Guide

Cauleen Smith: We Already Have What We Need

On view | July 16–October 3, 2021



Camera, Pen, or Gun?, 2017, Satin, poly-satin, silk-rayon velvet, indigo-dyed silk rayon velvet, indigo-dyed silk satin, rayon-polyester ribbon, acrylic fabric paint, satin cord, poly-silk tassel, and sequins, 73 x 47 inches
The Mohn Family Trust

CAMH.ORG

@camhouston

#atCAMH

Cauleen Smith: *We Already Have
What We Need*
On view | July 16–October 3, 2021

Exhibition Overview

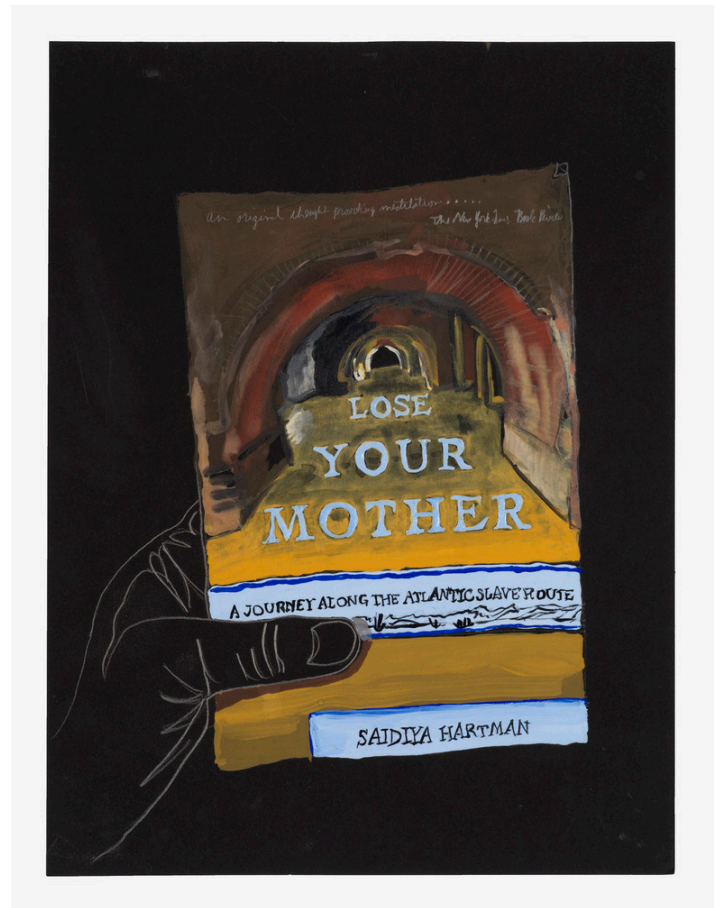
- The artist, Cauleen Smith, describes her work as a reflection on “the everyday possibilities of the imagination.”
- *We Already Have What We Need* is not only part of the title of the exhibition, but it is also the title of the artwork at the center of the exhibition.
- The work, *We Already Have What We Need* (2019), merges projected images of everyday life, natural landscapes, and cosmological events with provocative still-life arrangements. Smith examines varied notions of our basic human needs, from the material to the spiritual, the personal to the universal, while reminding us that caring for the planet can be a lesson in caring for each other.
- The exhibition includes film, video, sculpture, textiles, installation, and drawing.
- Included in the exhibition is several works in her series *BLK FMNNST Loaner Library 1989–2019*. The series includes carefully rendered copies of book covers that represent texts that influence Smith and tackle many of the subjects she engages in her work. Each image is on a black background bringing into question the assumption of “white” as a neutral and go-to color.
- Included in the exhibition are several banners that are part of a series called *In the Wake*. Part protest sign, part flag, part pep rally accessory—these hand-sewn textiles are an important part of Smith’s practice and are usually created for use in her public processions.
- The exhibition weaves together themes of historical erasure, loss, separation from one’s native culture, as well as the redemptive power of art, music, and text.
- Across multiple formats, Smith addresses a range of subjects related to the African Diaspora, the human condition, and the transformative power of art in all forms.



Light Up Your Life (For Sandra Bland)
2019, Neon, Plexiglas, faceted hematite, and aluminum chain
78 x 28 in. (198.1 x 121.9 cm)
Blanton Museum of Art; Commissioned and produced by Artpace San Antonio. Purchase through the generosity of an anonymous donor, 2020

Key Questions

- How do you envision a better world? What do you need to make that world happen?
- What books, music, and films have inspired you to create or think in new ways?
- What statement or phrase would you put on your banner or protest sign?
- How do you feel connected or separate from your ancestors?
- Can you describe a transformative experience you have had with an artwork?
- Has a work of art ever sparked a feeling or changed the way you thought about something?



Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route, 2019, Gouache on paper
11 7/8 x 8 7/8 in. each (unframed)
Pomona College Collection. Walter and Elise Mosher Memorial Fund

Curriculum Connections

Language Arts | Make a list of books that inspire you and you would recommend to your friends and classmates. Think carefully about this list and how the books connect to each other. What story does your list of books tell? Draw the covers together. Think carefully about the background as well.

Visual Arts | Brainstorm a statement or phrase you would put on a banner or protest sign. Make this banner and design an event (protest, parade, pep rally, performance) that would showcase your banner and share your message.
