

## Family Review

*Cauleen Smith: We Already Have What We Need*

On view | July 16–October 3, 2021



*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

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*Cauleen Smith: We Already Have What We Need* presents works by the acclaimed Los Angeles-based artist, and features film, video, sculpture, textiles, installation, and drawing. The exhibition emphasizes acts of caring as antidotes to the injustice and inequities that shape our past and present. For over three decades Smith has harnessed acts of imagination and the power of revolutionary thinking to envision a better world. The title of the exhibition and the expansive installation at its center—suggest that, in fact, “We Already Have What We Need.”

Themes of the exhibition include historical erasure, loss and separation from one’s native culture, as well as the redemptive power of art, music, and text.

Works in the exhibition reference gun violence including a hand-sewn banner that asks the question: *Camera, Pen, or Gun?* (2017) and a neon work titled *Light Up Your Life (For Sandra Bland)* (2019) that alternately blinks “I will light you up” and “I will light up your life.” The work references the menacing words of Texas State Trooper Brian Encinia, whose 2015 traffic stop of twenty-eight year old Sandra Bland, a Black woman, would lead to her death in police custody in Waller County, Texas, little more than fifty miles from CAMH. Smith reclaims Encinia’s threat of violence and weaves it together with the hit 1977 love song “You Light Up My Life,” first sung by Debby Boone and more famously reprised by Aretha Franklin and Whitney Houston.

Smith writes: “I wanted to play with this threat, ‘I will light you up,’ by finding a response that neutralized it. ...And so this flashing neon is a dance off, a sing-a-thon, a battle, a protest, a memento mori that collectivizes Sandra Bland’s resistance, reclaims her sovereignty, and reifies the ways in which Black culture is inextricably woven into national identities and cultures.” These works among others included in the exhibition should provide rich ground for discussion with students.

The exhibition is dimly lit throughout and we advise allowing time for your eyes to adjust upon entry. Please ask at the front desk or look at [camh.org](http://camh.org) for large print labels of wall text available in both English and Spanish.