Michael E Smith
Waldo
July 18 – August 24, 2026
Rockport, Maine
Curated by Tobias Czudej and Robert Snowden

On July 18 Michael E. Smith will open an exhibition at Waldo, an itinerant artspace in mid-coast Maine. The exhibition will take place in a community dancehall selected by the artist. The hall has a skeletal wooden frame like the hull of a ship turned upside down, an unreliable roof, and a slope for a yard. The artist will take the building as it is, and improvise an exhibition on site. Smith has made a name for himself in art for a self-reliant, improvisational way of working. He arrives with only unjoined ideas and injured materials, and makes his way inside a building, forming sculptures, and choreographing as he goes – a diversion off the field, an exhibition made not because it is a necessity but because there is value in improvisation itself. With Smith, what is always compelling about an exhibition, is that you see it only moments after it was made, in the place where it was made, with a persistent feeling that it might soon tumble apart. Turn your head and it might not be there when you swivel back. One could argue that this feeling of perishability is not a defect but instead an ideal for exhibitions. Death is the mother of beauty. Could the same be true of sculpture? In a lecture on Franz Kafka, Vladimir Nabokov said that, "Beauty plus pity—that is the closest we can get to a definition of art. Where there is beauty there is pity for the simple reason that beauty must die: beauty always dies, the manner dies with the matter, the world dies with the individual."

Michael E. Smith was born in 1977 in Detroit, Michigan. His work has been the subject of institutional solo exhibitions at MASS MoCA (2026); Kunstmuseum Winterthur (2024); Henry Moore Institute, Leeds (2023); the Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich (2021); Secession, Vienna (2020); Kunsthalle Basel (2018); MoMA PS1, New York (2017); S.M.A.K., Ghent (2017); and Kunstverein Hannover, Hanover (2015). Smith has participated in international group exhibitions including the Whitney Biennial (2022 and 2012) as well as the 58th Venice Biennale (2019).

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