

Petzel

The Viewing Room

Emily Mae Smith

May 3–10, 2025
520 W 25th Street

Petzel is pleased to present the second installment of *The Viewing Room*, a series of presentations and events bringing together artists, curators, and historians in a rare encounter with new and seminal works. This iteration will feature a new painting by New York-based artist Emily Mae Smith, coinciding with the launch of the catalogue *Emily Mae Smith × René Magritte*, published on the occasion of her recent exhibition at the Magritte Museum in Belgium.

On view from May 3 through May 10, 2025, Smith's "Western Painting" extends her visual vocabulary to a playful hometown homage. Abundant with nods to Texas, where Smith was born and raised, the painting features saloon doors and a limestone threshold, with longhorns looming atop the entryway. The latter motif imitates a handlebar mustache, a signature of her earlier works, lending the look of a grinning tycoon. An iconic symbol of the swaggering Old West, the batwing doors, which read "Gentle" and "Men" across each wood-grained shutter, signal an entrance to another realm. The saloon, as the gatekept and male-dominated institution of the American frontier, can be imagined as a parallel to the historically exclusionary Western institution of painting.

The variety of textures and close-to-life size of the passageway, replete with woodgrain, porous stone, and script components, suggest a *trompe-l'œil* sensibility and virtuosic mastery of formal codes. These gestures—such as the rigid lines along her protruding, hard-edged doors—harken to Smith's earlier works, and draw on both the graphic impulses of the Chicago Imagists and the shrewd details of Domenico Gnoli. Incorporating art historical references (in this case, encrypted with masculine associations), Smith situates these modes in a feminist perspective.

Likewise, in her recent exhibition alongside the works of Magritte, Smith engaged a lineage saturated in the male gaze, and a legacy synonymous with Surrealism itself. Here, Smith presents an entryway, a passage through which the viewer may negotiate their own subjectivity.

Coinciding with this presentation, Smith will be joined in conversation with writer and editor Lauren O'Neill-Butler, on Saturday, May 10, 2025, at 4pm. RSVP is required as space is limited; please write to press@petzel.com to reserve your seat.

The Viewing Room series will spotlight specially curated works across media and genre by gallery artists, open to the public for a limited time. The series will continue this spring, with presentations coinciding with programming such as book signings, artist talks, and screenings, featuring artists Stefanie Heinze, James Little, Seth Price, Tschabalala Self, among others, to be announced.

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About the Speakers

Emily Mae Smith was born in 1979 in Austin, Texas. She currently lives and works in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include: Magritte Museum, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (2024); Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin (2023); Pond Society, Shanghai (2023); Petzel, New York (2022); Perrotin, Paris (2021); Rodolphe Janssen, Brussels (2021); Simone Subal Gallery, New York (2020, 2017); SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah (2020); Marion Art Gallery, Rockefeller Arts Center, Fredonia (2020); Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford (2019); Le Consortium Museum, Dijon (2018); among others. Select group exhibitions include: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford (2024); Blanton Museum of Art, Austin (2024); Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas (2023); The Warehouse, Dallas (2023); The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. (2022); The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Los Angeles (2022); among others.

Smith's work is included in collections such as Albertina, Vienna; Blanton Museum of Art, Austin; The Brooklyn Museum, New York; Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus; The Consortium Museum, Dijon, France; Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas; Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge; The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum Brandhorst, Munich; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia; Powerlong Art Museum, Shanghai; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Zuzeum Art Centre, Riga.

Lauren O'Neill-Butler is a New York-based writer and editor. Her books include *The War of Art: A History of Artists' Protest in America* (Verso, 2025) and *Let's Have a Talk: Conversations with Women on Art and Culture* (Karma, 2021). She has written for *Aperture*, *Art Journal*, *Bookforum*, and *The New York Times*, among others, and has contributed essays to many exhibition catalogues. She received a Warhol Foundation Art Writers Grant in 2020 and the Beverley Art Writers Travel Grant in 2023.

Petzel Gallery is located at 520 West 25th Street New York, NY 10001. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 AM–6:00 PM. For press inquiries, please contact Karolina Chojnowska at karolina@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.