

Through films, objects, and installation, *Give It or Leave It* offers an emotional axis by which to navigate four distinct universes: Alice Coltrane and her ashram, a 1966 photo shoot by Bill Ray at Simon Rodia's Watts Towers, Noah Purifoy and his desert assemblages, and black spiritualist Rebecca Cox Jackson and her Shaker community. These locations, while not technically utopian societies, embody sites of historical speculation and radical generosity between artist and community. In reimagining a future through this mix, Smith casts a world that is black, feminist, spiritual, and unabashedly alive.

The attempts referenced by Smith do not turn their backs on the here and now. Each effort, in its own way, embedded gestures of self-realization in current events and social publics. Building upon this, each exploration served as antidote to a pervasive hopelessness perceived in American society. This defiantly aspirational energy drives the exhibition. As an idiom, "give it or leave it," mutates the coercive attitude behind, "take it or leave it." Smith's recast proposes a liberating rule for a better world—creating, offering, and gifting, regardless of a gesture's recognition, acceptance, or rejection. In this refusal to summon a reaction, one surrenders to possibilities of generosity, hospitality, and a collective destiny. *Give It or Leave It* calls to the self, refusing to issue an ultimatum that demands another's response.

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CAULEEN SMITH (b. Riverside, California, 1967) is an interdisciplinary artist, whose work reflects upon the everyday possibilities of the imagination. Operating in multiple materials and arenas, Smith roots her work firmly within the discourse of mid-twentieth-century experimental film. Drawing from structuralism, Third World Cinema, and science fiction, she makes things that deploy the tactics of these disciplines, while offering a phenomenological experience for spectators and participants. Her films, objects, and installations have been featured in numerous group exhibitions, including those at the Studio Museum in Harlem; the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston; the Yerba Buena Center for Art, San Francisco; the 2017 *Whitney Biennial*; *Prospect.4*, New Orleans; the New Museum, New York; D21, Leipzig; and Decad, Berlin. Smith has had solo shows of films and installations at The Kitchen, New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; the Art Institute of Chicago; and Threewalls, Chicago. Smith is the recipient of several grants and awards, including the Rockefeller Media Arts Award, a Creative Capital Moving Image Grant, the Chicago 3Arts Grant, the Foundation for Contemporary Arts Grants to Artists award

(2014), Expo Chicago's Artadia Award, and a Rauschenberg Residency. Smith was born in Riverside, California, and grew up in Sacramento. She earned her BA in creative arts from San Francisco State University and her MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles's School of Theater, Film, and Television. Smith teaches in the School of Art at CalArts.

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