

Parrasch Heijnen is pleased to announce the gallery's first exhibition of work by Los Angeles artist Alexis Smith. With a long history of mixed media assemblage, public art and performance pieces, this survey features artwork from throughout Smith's expansive career, encapsulating themes of gender, politics, wordplay, and popular culture.

Smith combines and carefully juxtaposes media with an intuitive understanding of words and images by recontextualizing objects. Merging the every day with the fabricated fantasy of advertising, the artist crafts stories of reality through the lens of fiction. In manipulating the viewer's visual literacy, she communicates her sensibility in a language entirely of her own. The earliest piece on display, *The Einstein Piece*, 1973, spans 25 sheets of paper, and was originally shown that same year at Riko Mizuno Gallery for Smith's first solo exhibition. The sheets alternate from yellow to white, from script to collage, loosely leafing together Einstein's theory of relativity in a visual play that reexamines accepted truths.

Smith presents images without judgment, using humorous and ironic human qualities to expand or subvert associated imagery and mythology with a tendency to add inscription or muse with aphorisms. Appropriating quotes from numerous iconic 20th century authors such as Gertrude Stein and Henry David Thoreau, she arranges (and sometimes rearranges) their words on nature and spirituality to precise effect. These writers relate the environment to hues of human emotion, relaying its importance to understanding the depth of life. Their personal introspection presented westward expansion and the spiritual voyage as key for exercising consciousness, an idea that Smith has embraced. Her materials, much like her words, are dependent on chance encounters that are then paired with ornate custom-made frames creating a cohesive "found" object. This process of collection and discovery leads to the actual creation of her meticulously collaged work. The assemblages serve as anthropological exploration, revolving around the artist's own sense of self and the psychological understanding of people around her.

Born in Los Angeles in 1949, Alexis Smith attended the University of California, Irvine where she graduated with a B.A. in 1970. Smith has exhibited extensively throughout her career. Following her first solo exhibition with Riko Mizuno Gallery (Los Angeles, 1974), she was subsequently represented by Nicholas Wilder Gallery, and Margo Leavin Gallery, among others. The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York held a career retrospective for Smith in 1991 which traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles in 1992. Smith's work has also been featured in numerous landmark museum exhibitions, including: *American Narrative: 1967–1977* (1977, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, TX); *Making Their Mark: Women Artists Move Into the Mainstream, 1970–1985* (1989, Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, OH); *Image World: Art and*

*Media Culture* (1989, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York); *Sunshine & Noir: Art in L.A., 1960–1997* (1997, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark); *Made in California: Art, Image, and Identity* (2000, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles); *Los Angeles: Birth of an Art Capital* (2006, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris) and *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* (2007, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles). A career retrospective is scheduled for 2021 at the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego.

Smith's work resides in the permanent collections of numerous institutions including the Hammer Museum, University of California, Los Angeles; the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

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