

# GAGOSIAN

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**Gagosian New York to Present New Work by Alexandria Smith in Her First Solo Exhibition with the Gallery**

*Pretend Gravitas and Dream Aborted Givens* Opens April 28, 2022

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Alexandria Smith, *Libations for soul wares*, 2022, mixed media on three-dimensional wood assemblage, 60 × 48 inches (152.4 × 121.9 cm) © Alexandria Smith

*My characters embody multiple states of being as manifestations of hybridity and duality that simultaneously challenge heteronormative gender roles, allude to a divided self, and underscore the complex realities of humanity.*

—Alexandria Smith

**NEW YORK, April 4, 2022**—Gagosian is pleased to present *Pretend Gravitas and Dream Aborted Givens*, an exhibition of new works by Alexandria Smith at its Park & 75 location. Organized by Antwaun Sargent, this is Smith's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

In *Pretend Gravitas and Dream Aborted Givens*, Smith continues her investigation of selfhood alongside the confidences, contradictions, and uncertainties of the queer Black femme body through allegorical assemblage paintings and collage drawings housed in the artist's custom frames.

Smith's mixed-media works begin with drawings, which she develops intuitively within an ever-evolving personal cosmology. Atop colorful arrangements of bold shapes, she layers sculpted elements of painted wood and polymer clay that emerge beyond the picture plane, inspired by the pioneering assemblage artist Betye Saar, Black womanist literature, science fiction, and album art of the 1960s and '70s.

Theatrical and metaphysical, the paintings and drawings incorporate forces of creation, destruction, and transmutation across interconnected planes of existence. Doors and windows link proscenium arches, paneled walls, columns, and other architectural components with primordial and celestial landscapes composed of vibrant pigments, glitter, and three-dimensional forms that begin to extend out into the viewer's space. Dueling elemental forces occupy these scenes in the forms of billowing clouds, growing tendrils, erupting volcanoes, and cleansing waves. Smith's hybrid figures are also in constant flux as polymorphic amalgams of body parts; ambiguously gendered, they stretch, divide, and redouble within the compositions. Flanking the margins of these utopian spaces and melding with them, her protagonists bear witness and take action, embodying transformation and growth.

Smith explains: "This work is a display of futurist thinking, imagining other worlds not tethered to the past or present, in which magic, tenderness, and liberation happen. Since we don't feel in a linear fashion, why can't that concept manifest in another world, translating real-life experiences into an imagined landscape that welcomes hybridity and difference? What might it look like to conjure a dream within this painted realm?"

The title *Pretend Gravititas and Dream Aborted Givens* is inspired by a 2011 essay by Smith's mentor, the late writer Greg Tate, and is intended as a tribute to him. In this essay, Tate wrote that Smith's characters seem to "identify totally with the need for all ghosts, freaks, and spooks to make peace with the everyday realms of the mundane and the quotidian. The unmagic realism of it all. The ghost world of grownfolks with its dull grey-areas, pretend gravitas, and dream-aborting givens."

Smith will create an immersive multimedia environment entitled *Memoirs of a Ghost Girlhood: a Black Girl's Window* at the Currier Museum of Art in Manchester, New Hampshire, opening on June 30, 2022.

**Alexandria Smith** was born in the Bronx, New York, in 1981 and lives and works in New York and London. Exhibitions include *All the Women in Me...*, Levitt Gallery, University of Iowa, Iowa City (2016); *Try a Little Tenderness*, The Union for Contemporary Art, Omaha, NE (2017); *A Litany for Survival*, Boston University (2018); *Of Water and Spirit*, Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, Buffalo, NY (2019); *Monuments to an Effigy*, Queens Museum, New York (2019); and *Seeds to Harvest*, Davis Museum, Wellesley College, MA (2019–22). Smith is head of the painting program at the Royal College of Art, London, and from 2017 through 2018 she served as co-organizer of the collective Black Women Artists for Black Lives.

#AlexandriaSmith

## **ALEXANDRIA SMITH**

*Pretend Gravititas and Dream Aborted Givens*

Opening reception: Thursday, April 28, 6–8pm

April 28–June 4, 2022

Park & 75, 821 Park Avenue, New York

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