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Gagosian Announces Alexandria Smith's Debut Solo Exhibition in Asia

Stirrings of a Polymorphous Bloom Opens November 16 in Hong Kong



Alexandria Smith, *Heft of the Lumens*, 2023, mixed media on three-dimensional wood assemblage, 60 × 90 inches (152.4 × 228.6 cm) © Alexandria Smith. Photo: Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd

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HONG KONG, November 6, 2023—Gagosian is pleased to announce *Stirrings of a Polymorphous Bloom*, American artist Alexandria Smith's debut solo exhibition in Asia. Opening on November 16 in Hong Kong, the exhibition features new assemblage paintings and collage drawings that explore the protean nature of selfhood and identity.

The works in *Stirrings of a Polymorphous Bloom* envision cosmic environments inhabited by figures in flux. Smith's practice is grounded in her exploratory drawings, represented in Hong Kong by works on paper housed in custom frames. From these, she develops boldly colored assemblage paintings that incorporate shapes made from painted wood and 3D-printed elements that rise from their surfaces and extend beyond their frames.

Smith's new works focus on symbols of genesis, light, and growth, inspired by her interests in autobiography, fiction, and collective memory. Various colored and ambiguously gendered, these hybrid figures emphasize features such as eyes, limbs, nipples, kneecaps, and nails. They stretch, divide, and multiply, embodying Smith's multifaceted allegories of physical, spiritual, and emotional growth.

Spanning fifteen feet over three panels, *Seers like me* (2022) is Smith's largest work to date, conceived in conversation with Akwaeke Emezi's work of flash fiction published in Gagosian Quarterly in response to a painting by Smith. Here, nested shapes that may be read as a single figure or three interconnected ones emerge from the earth, gazing upward at a row of arched portals and beaded curtains that act as theatrical elements to frame the scene. Further developing the artist's polymorphic

themes, *a glorious rapture* (2023) features eyes on an arched frame painted in a green wood-grain pattern. At the composition's center is a flame rendered in relief, witnessed by two floating profiles that Smith calls "ancestor heads."

Painted on an arched support, *The Wayfinders* (2023) represents two nearly identical green and yellow figures in a roughly symmetrical landscape with soil that may appear barren, but which contains deep roots. The pair look at a column of floating disks in the composition's center that contain brightly colored flames. The underwater realm of *Heft of the Lumens* (2023) is inhabited by two armless figures with multiple legs who share a single eye in a sign of shared consciousness and purpose.

The softness of your sweet (2023) features a flower with sculpted petals—a symbol of beauty found in unexpected places—and the profile of a human face that grows from an island; behind it are fiery beams of light that connect other islands with portal-like holes. *Starchile in the wild* (2023) represents a new experimental direction for Smith. Incorporating sand and spray-painting, the painting features a figure walking through a mysterious, primordial environment; oriented by the North Star, they are followed by three ancestor heads, a symbol of individual initiative and collective change.

Stirrings of a Polymorphous Bloom

by Alexandria Smith

They told me I would fold

Into a self unimaginal

Churning

Stirring and a stretching

They told me I would coil

Into something unrecognizable

They told me that I could be nothing
more or less

Stuck

Stumped

Stalled

*I poked and prodded sprouting a
newness*

a oneness

more than me

Alexandria Smith was born in the Bronx, New York, in 1981 and lives and works in New York. Exhibitions include *All the Women in Me...*, Levitt Gallery, University of Iowa, Iowa City (2016); *Try a Little Tenderness*, 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); *Seeds to Harvest*, Davis Museum, Wellesley College, MA (2019–22); and *Memoirs of a Ghost Girlhood: a Black Girl's Window*, Currier Museum of Art, Manchester, NH (2022–23). Smith is assistant professor in painting and printmaking and director of undergraduate studies at the Yale School of Art, New Haven, Connecticut, and from 2017 through 2018 served as co-organizer of the collective Black Women Artists for Black Lives.

#AlexandriaSmith

ALEXANDRIA SMITH

Stirrings of a Polymorphous Bloom

Opening reception: Thursday, November 16, 6–8pm

November 16, 2023–January 13, 2024

7/F Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street, Central, Hong Kong

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