

Los Angeles County Museum of Art opens Shinique Smith exhibition at elementary school

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*Shinique Smith, Swaying Beauty, 2007.
Clothing, foam, rope, and twine, 60 x 22 x 22 in.*

LOS ANGELES, CA.- The Los Angeles County Museum of Art presents Shinique Smith: Firsthand at Charles White Elementary School as part of its ongoing engagement with the museum's surrounding community. Drawing upon Smith's upbringing in the urban grit of Baltimore and her early exposure to the vibrant realm of fashion design, *Shinique Smith: Firsthand* combines objects the artist selected from LACMA's Costume and Textiles collection, new work based on her experience within the school and community, and art produced by Charles White Elementary School students. Smith's capacity to view childhood memories and her daily environment differently—through the lens of an artist—motivated the students to consider the effects of their surroundings and identify sources of inspiration in their own lives.

"I find magic in the relationships of objects and the people that surround me," says Smith. "The show has three parts: my work, the kids' work, and the work of fabulous designers from LACMA's Costume and Textiles collection. Seemingly these components have little in common, but I see the connection within the threads of inspiration from everyday life we have all culled. There were so many pieces in the collection to explore. I narrowed things down to processes and forms that I felt drawn to aesthetically, especially garments that explore volume, collage, and pattern. Also, I chose a few designers that I was exposed to and inspired by as a child, like Geoffrey Beene and Bill Blass. The new work that I'm making for the show was influenced by the color of an Yves Saint Laurent costume and the energy I absorbed discovering MacArthur Park and the fabric district."

LACMA's Associate Vice President of Education Sarah Jesse remarks, "As this project takes place within the context of an elementary school, it commands a different degree of engagement from the artist than a traditional exhibition. Smith understands the initiative's dual aim to operate at a high level from both curatorial and educational perspectives. The show is the result of Smith's investigation of a rarely-seen area of LACMA's collection and the time students at Charles White Elementary School spent exploring her work and process. We anticipate that the quality of the artwork, the diverse influences that bred it, and involvement of the children will resonate for many audiences."

The museum has a longstanding relationship with schools and community organizations throughout Southern California as part of Art Programs with the Community: LACMA On-Site, an ambitious multiyear partnership that has provided art programs and materials to schools, libraries, and community organizations throughout LAUSD Local Districts 4 and 7 since 2006. A variety of education programs provide hands-on activities and discussions about art in classrooms, libraries, and public exhibition spaces throughout the region. *Shinique Smith: Firsthand* is the fifth LACMA-organized exhibition at Charles White Elementary School, which opened in 2004 on the former campus of Otis College of Art and Design. The school is named after the artist Charles White (1918–1979), who lived in the area and who taught at Otis for many years. Prior exhibitions at the school include the group exhibition *A is for Zebra; L.A. Icons: Urban Light and Watts Towers* (Pato Hebert and Ball-Nogues Studio); *Journeys | Recorridos* (Marysa Dowling); and *SWAP* (Mark Bradford and Ruben Ochoa).

New York-based Shinique Smith is inspired by the nature of objects that society consumes and discards. The graffiti of her youth, Japanese calligraphy and Abstract Expressionism are influences from which she extracts "the graceful and spiritual qualities" in written word and the everyday.

Smith was raised in Baltimore and was introduced to fashion design by her mother, a designer and style magazine editor. Early encounters with wellknown designers, visits to fabric stores, and travels abroad provoked a dual influence of urban culture and high fashion that shapes her practice. Seemingly commonplace things—a chocolate-stained wrapper, socks on a clothesline, a reflection in an oil spill—can stir up ideas for artwork.

Smith's work has been exhibited at the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison, WI; Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, Boulder, CO; Studio Museum, Harlem, NY; National Portrait Gallery, Washington DC; The New Museum, New York, NY; Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin; PS1/MoMA, New York, NY; Rubell Family Collection, Miami, FL; Margulies Collection, Miami, FL; and the Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO. She has received awards and fellowships from The Joan Mitchell Foundation, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. Smith earned her MFA from Maryland Institute College of Art. Smith currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.