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COLLECTIVE

Press Release

Cauleen Smith
H-E-L-L-O



image Credit:
Cauleen Smith, H-E-L-L-O, 2014 (video still),
Digital video, with
sound, 11:06 minutes.
Courtesy of the
artist and Corbett vs.
Dempsey, Chicago

Collective's 2022 programme opens with a new exhibition of Los Angeles-based artist Cauleen Smith's film H-E-L-L-O. This will be Cauleen Smith's first solo exhibition in Scotland and the film explores a search for connection during a time of uncertainty and unrest. The exhibition takes place from 22 January to 1 May 2022.

Smith's work reflects upon the everyday possibilities of the imagination. For over three decades she has employed radical thinking to envision a better world through film, video, sculpture, textiles, installations and drawings. Bringing together themes of historic erasure, presence and loss, Smith believes in the redemptive and transformative power of art, music and text. Drawing from the language of Third World Cinema, science fiction and Structuralist film, Smith explores themes relating to the African diaspora, environment and the human condition.

H-E-L-L-O, made in 2014, signals a search for connection in a time of uncertainty and unrest. H-E-L-L-O translates the famous five-note musical motif from Stephen Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the*

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Third Kind into a greeting for sites around post-hurricane Katrina New Orleans loaded with the histories of music and procession. At each site, musicians from the city play the sequence on a series of instruments, from trumpet, to cello and bass saxophone. Their interpretations of the sequence, originally written by film composer John Williams as a coded extra-terrestrial hello, speak mournfully of New Orleans' enduring spirit despite a troubled recent past and uncertain future.

Presented in Collective's City Dome space, H-E-L-L-O sits alongside the rich history of the site as a place of astrological study and observation, monument, time and communication, themes at the heart of Smith's work. Although situated in the geography of New Orleans, the film allows us to contemplate Edinburgh's relationship to its own landscape, inhabitants and history in a time of turbulence and change. The architecture of the site brings together Smith's deep-rooted interest in science fiction, Afrofuturism and public space. When the need for connection is increasingly imperative, Smith's faith in the importance of culture and trust in transformation is not only essential, it's how we might begin to heal.

"I'm really excited to be exhibiting H-E-L-L-O at Collective. It is of great interest to me that the film can be a way of opening up thinking about presence, absence, waters and erasure in Scotland."

Cauleen Smith, artist

"It is a great pleasure and a privilege to bring Cauleen's work to the City Dome in Edinburgh. The skilful way she weaves together past and future, grief and optimism is complex, deeply felt and heartbreakingly human. In a time of great turmoil worldwide, I feel Cauleen's work invites us to sit inside difficulty, feel the beauty of listening and ground us in the power of community"

Emmie McLuskey, Associate Producer

An online screener will be available on request from 17th - 23rd January.

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About the Artist

Cauleen Smith received a BA in Creative Arts from San Francisco State University, and an MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles, School of Theater Film and Television. Her films, objects, and installations have been featured in group exhibitions at the Studio Museum of Harlem, New York, New York; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, California; the New Museum, New York; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Illinois. She has had solo shows for her films and installations at Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2020); The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2020); The Frye Museum, Seattle, Washington (2019); Institute

for Contemporary Art at VCU, Richmond, Virginia (2019) Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (2018); Art Institute of Chicago (2017); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2012); and The Kitchen, New York (2011), among others.

Smith is the recipient of multiple awards and fellowships including the prestigious inaugural Ellsworth Kelly Award of the Foundation for Contemporary Arts and the Herb Alpert Award in the Arts. She has received a Creative Capital grant, a Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Artist-In-Residence; Black Metropolis Research Consortium Research Fellowship; and the Director's Grant at the University of California Institute for Research in the Arts in Santa Barbara, California. Smith was previously included in two group exhibitions at Contemporary Arts Museum Houston—*Nexus Texas* (2007), which featured new works by artists living and working in the state and was on view during Smith's time living and teaching in Austin, and 2008's *Cinema Remixed & Reloaded: Black Women Artists and The Moving Image since 1970*. She currently teaches in the School of Art at CalArts in Santa Clarita, California.

About Collective

Collective brings people together to look at, think about and produce contemporary art in a new kind of City Observatory. Collective was established in 1984 and opened its new home on the redeveloped City Observatory site on Calton Hill in 2018. Collective's mission is to bring people together around new art.

Exhibition runs from 22 January to 1 May 2022, open every Thurs-Sun, 10am-4pm (Tues-Sun, 10am-5pm from April 2022)

Pre-booking is not required to visit Collective, though our indoor spaces may require a short wait if we're busy as [social distancing measures](#) are still in place.