

*Pilgrim, 2017*

Digital video and 16mm film transferred to digital video, color, sound; 7:41 min.

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Film and Video Committee T.2019.413

This work traces the artist's pilgrimage to three sites: Alice Coltrane's Turiyasangitananda Vedantic Center in Agoura, California; Watts Towers in Los Angeles; and the Black spiritual activist Rebecca Cox Jackson's Watervliet Shaker community in upstate New York. Smith vividly evokes the creative atmosphere of each place, allowing the camera to slowly explore the ashram's interior and Coltrane's musical instruments, and using the soft grain and subtle color of 16mm film to infuse Watts Towers and the flowers in the Shaker garden with an emotional intimacy. Jackson's advocacy of racial and gender equality, her fight against the patriarchy of organized religion, and her awareness of the African roots of her faith resonate with Coltrane's own hybrid, transnational spiritual and musical language. Both women's challenges to accepted authority are, like the enduring independent spirit of Watts Towers, grounded in a sense of place, community, and generosity that are also hallmarks of Smith's own transformative work.



550 Access

*Sojourner*, 2018

Digital video and 16mm film transferred to digital video, color, sound; 22:41 min.

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Film and Video Committee T.2019.414

In *Sojourner*, a group of women walk in procession through sites including Dockweiler State Beach and Watts Towers in Los Angeles. The women carry translucent orange banners, each emblazoned with part of a text by the jazz composer and spiritual leader Alice Coltrane. Watts Towers, a cluster of seventeen sculptural spires designed and built by Italian American ironworker Simon Rodia in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles between 1921 and 1954, is prominently featured in *Sojourner*. The towers served as a symbol of hope and regeneration after surviving the 1965 Watts Rebellion unscathed. Smith locates a similar spirit in assemblage artist Noah Purifoy's Outdoor Desert Art Museum in Joshua Tree, California. The women end their procession there, listening to readings of the Black feminist Combahee River Collective, Sojourner Truth, and Alice Coltrane. Their collective voices, echoed in contemporary footage of the Chicago-based activist coalition R3 (Resist. Reimagine. Rebuild.), fuse spirituality and activism into a potent articulation of self-realization and resistance.



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*SPACE STATION: CHARMED AND STRANGE*, 2019  
Shag carpet, turntable, mirror balls, mirror-ball motor,  
and platform

Collection of the artist

*Halimufack (chasing after Zora)*, 2019  
Lighting gels (#017 and #511) and adhesive

Collection of the artist