

# HARRY SMITH LABELS

On pedestal:

**Andy Warhol**

b. 1928; Pittsburgh, PA

d. 1987; New York, NY

*Screen Test: Harry Smith* [ST314], 1964

16mm film transferred to digital video, black-and-white, silent; 4 min.

The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh

At left:

*Film No. 15 (Untitled animation of Seminole patchwork patterns)*, c. 1965–66

16mm film transferred to digital video, color, silent; 10 min.

Courtesy Anthology Film Archives, New York

Following a trip to Florida in 1964 during which Smith conducted ethnographic research on the Seminole Tribe, he produced *Film No. 15*, an animated film of patchwork quilt details that illustrates his experimentation with abstraction and recalls his early hand-painted, geometric films. Smith collected more than 1,300 Seminole patchwork pieces, which were donated to the Smithsonian Institution in 1974.

The Seminole women's patchwork process consists of doubling, cutting, twisting, and sewing pieces of cloth into long rows that are joined together to produce items of clothing. Recognizing the Seminole textiles' divergence from most American quilting, Smith spotlights this Indigenous community's resistance to US government control in their continued effort to maintain traditions.

**K.S. Brown**

b. 1897; Kansas City, MO

d. 1972; Seattle, WA

Harry Smith recording a Lummi ceremony, c. 1942

Gelatin silver print (facsimile)

Harry Smith Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; gift of the Harry Smith Archives 2013.M.4

**Moran Lee “Dock” Boggs**

b. 1898; Norton, VA

d. 1971; Needmore, VA

*Pretty Polly*, 1927

*Sugar Baby*, 1927

78 rpm records and sleeves

Collection of Greil Marcus

Harry Smith

Ethnographic slide (S-9), c. 1942

Slide (facsimile)

Ethnographic slide (S-17), c. 1942

Slide (facsimile)

Ethnographic slide (S-11), c. 1942

Slide (facsimile)

Ethnographic slide (S-1), c. 1942

Slide (facsimile)

Ethnographic slide (S-31), c. 1942

Slide (facsimile)

Ethnographic slide (S-2), c. 1942

Slide (facsimile)

Harry Smith Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; gift of the Harry Smith Archives 2013.M.4

Musical score: Chief Vincent Jack of Point Grey  
Musquim, “Clean-up Day,” Swinomish reservation  
smokehouse, February 14-15, 1942 (1-A-1, 1-A-2), 1942  
Ink on paper (facsimile)

Harry Smith Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; gift of the Harry Smith Archives 2013.M.4

String figure made by Joe Billy, Swinomish, n.d.  
(printed 1942)

Julius Charles working on Gill net, Lummi, n.d.  
(printed 1942)

Drum owned by Charley Edwards, Swinomish, n.d.  
(printed 1942)  
Gelatin silver prints (facsimiles)

Harry Smith Archives, Los Angeles

Smith's lifelong research, recording, and collecting practices began when he was fifteen years old and living in the Pacific Northwest, where his mother worked on the Lummi (Lhaq'temish) reservation as a teacher. During his teenage years, he frequently visited the Lummi (Lhaq'temish) and Swinomish people, both original inhabitants of what is now Washington State. While there, he documented songs, ceremonies, languages, and artistic traditions through photography, painting, sound recording, and his own form of notation. Presaging his later practice of adapting available technology to suit his needs, Smith wired an acetate-disc recorder with a battery in order to make high-quality recordings.

From a contemporary perspective, understanding even a teenage Smith's time spent with the Lummi (Lhaq'temish) and Swinomish people seems to require us to hold two contradictory visions of it simultaneously. On the one hand, anthropology as a field first took hold near Smith's childhood home—and early on the discipline was fundamentally extractive, driven by claims that it had to salvage Indigenous cultures that it framed as disappearing. In this way, anthropology reinforced the violence of settler colonialism within the United States, and the shadow of this history hangs over Smith's research. On the other hand, it seems that Smith, who was self-taught in his anthropological studies, did not share all of the discipline's assumptions and methods. His early work was the portal to his study of patterns of belief and lexicons of representation. Smith would continue his study of Indigenous people over the course of his life, recording the peyote ritual songs of the Kiowa people and collecting the geometric patchwork patterns of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

Philip Deloria describes Smith's relationship to the discipline of anthropology.

*Film No. 9* [depicts the visual plan of a sequence of what is now known as *Film No. 7*], c. 1950–51  
Projection of six sequential slides (monitor display)

Estate of Jordan Belson

Untitled, c. 1950–51  
Casein and paint on board

Harry Smith Archives, Los Angeles

Stereo Card Drawings, c. 1949–50  
Gelatin silver prints mounted on cardboard

Estate of Jordan Belson

Untitled [1048], 1951

Ink and watercolor on notebook paper

Estate of Jordan Belson

*Aleph*, c. 1953

Ink on paper

Private collection

Untitled, c. 1951

Watercolor on paper

Untitled [1052], c. 1951

Ink and watercolor on notebook paper

Estate of Jordan Belson

Untitled, 1951

Ink, watercolor, and tempera on paper

Collection of Raymond Foye

Abstract film studies (two slides projected alternately),  
1951

Frame enlargements from 16mm film

Estate of Jordan Belson

*Film No. 1: A Strange Dream*, c. 1946–48  
16mm film transferred to digital video, color, silent; 3 min.

Courtesy Anthology Film Archives, New York

Please use the stereoscope to view these works.

Please use the 3D glasses to view these works.



Harry Smith for Qor Corporation  
Prototype tiles, c. 1960  
Cell vinyl on board in modular pieces

Lionel Ziprin Archive, New York

Untitled [Demonic self-portrait], c. 1952  
India ink on cardstock

Lionel Ziprin Archive, New York

Harry Smith (editor)  
*Anthology of American Folk Music, Volume One Ballads*  
(Folkways Records, 1952)  
Album cover for two-LP set

Booklet for *Anthology of American Folk Music* (Folkways  
Records, 1952)

Estate of Jordan Belson

Harry Smith for Inkweed Studios  
Untitled 3D Greeting Card ["are you looking for the third  
dimension?"], 1953  
India ink on cardstock

Untitled 3D Greeting Card ["An Old Fashioned Merry  
Christmas"], 1953  
India ink on cardstock

Estate of Jordan Belson

Untitled, c. 1952  
Watercolor and ink on paper

Lionel Ziprin Archive, New York

*Film No. 11: Mirror Animations*, c. 1957  
16mm film transferred to digital video, color, sound;  
3:35 min.  
Sound from The Thelonious Monk Quartet, B-side of  
*Misterioso* (Blue Note, 1949), 78 rpm  
Performed by the Thelonious Monk Quintet  
(Courtesy Blue Note under license from Universal  
Music Enterprises)

Courtesy Anthology Film Archives, New York

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*The Tree of Life in the Four Worlds, 1953*

Collotype with screen print

Harry Smith Archives, Los Angeles

Untitled, c. 1951

Watercolor, graphite pencil, ink, and gouache on paper  
with paper cutout

Collection of John Zorn

**Rabbi Naftali Zvi Margolies Abulafia**

b. 1878; Safed, Israel

d. 1955; New York, NY

*Prayers and Chants sung by Rabbi Naftuli Zvi Margolies*  
(Folkways Records, 1954)

33 $\frac{1}{3}$  rpm LP

Recorded by Harry Smith

Lionel Ziprin Archive, New York

Harry Smith for Inkweed Studios

Untitled [Study for Inkweed Studios greeting card],  
c. 1952

India ink on cardstock

Private collection

Untitled [Zodiacal hexagram scratchboard], c. 1952

India ink on cardstock

Lionel Ziprin Archive, New York

*Film No. 10, 1956*

Frame enlargements from 16mm film

Courtesy Anthology Film Archives, New York

Harry Smith for Qor Corporation  
Design for Qor Corporation, c. 1960  
Acrylic with vinyl on board

Lionel Ziprin Archive, New York

String figures, 1960  
String and glue on poster board

Collection of Rufus Cohen

*Film No. 14: Late Superimpositions*, 1964  
16mm film, restored to 35mm, transferred to digital  
video, color, sound; 31 min.

Courtesy Anthology Film Archives, New York. Restored by Anthology Film  
Archives and the Film Foundation with funding provided by the Hobson/Lucas  
Family Foundation

*Film No. 14: Late Superimpositions* is presented in part under license from the  
Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc. *Aufstieg und fall der Stadt Mahagonny*  
Opera in three acts by Kurt Weill. Text by Bertolt Brecht in collaboration with  
Kurt Weill, Elisabeth Hauptmann, and Caspar Neher

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String figures, illustrations, and notes, c. 1970  
Ink on paper (facsimile)

Harry Smith Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; gift of the Harry  
Smith Archives 2013.M.4

*Film No. 16: Oz: The Tin Woodman's Dream, c. 1967*  
35mm film transferred to digital video, color, silent;  
15 min.

Courtesy Anthology Film Archives, New York. Restored by Anthology Film Archives and the Film Foundation with funding provided by the Hobson/Lucas Family Foundation

Untitled Zodiac, c. 1974  
Acrylic, gouache, ink, and colored pencil on paper

Untitled Zodiac, c. 1974  
Acrylic, watercolor, and crayon on paper

Untitled Zodiac, c. 1974  
Acrylic, gouache, ink, and colored pencil on paper

Untitled Zodiac, c. 1974  
Acrylic and colored pencil on paper

Anthology Film Archives, New York

Pysanky batiked egg, 1950s

Typewriter drawing [no. 24 on verso], c. 1975  
Typewriter drawing, c. 1970–72  
Ink on paper

Harry Smith Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; gift of the Harry Smith Archives 2013.M.4, 2013.M.4.2

Folded paper airplane: Hotel Albert stationery, 1967  
Graphite, printed ink, and tape on paper

Folded paper airplane: Emergency Broadway Theater Directory, 1978  
Graphite and printed ink on paper

Folded paper airplane: Electronic pocket calculator photography, 1978  
Graphite on black-and-white photographic print

Folded paper airplane: Many Smokes and Spring Seasonings, 1967  
Graphite and printed ink on paper

Folded paper airplane, 1967  
Graphite and printed ink on paper

Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; gift of Anthology Film Archives 2013.M.4.37, 2013.M.4.35, 2013.M.4.36, 2013.M.4.34, 2013.M.4.14

Enochian Tablet, c. 1979

Watercolor, gouache, ink, acrylic, and enamel on board

Anthology Film Archives, New York

Untitled [Handprint], c. 1977

Gouache and ink on paper

Harry Smith Archives, Los Angeles

*Algo Bueno* [Jazz Painting], c. 1948–49  
Lightbox projection from 35mm slide of lost painting  
Illustration of Dizzy Gillespie and His Orchestra, *Algo Bueno/Ool-Ya-Koo*, B-side (RCA Victor 20-3186, 1948),  
78 rpm

Estate of Jordan Belson

Please feel free to strum this monochord;  
the bridge can be adjusted to create different notes.

*Ko-Ko* [Jazz Painting], c. 1949–51  
Lightbox projection from 35mm slide of lost painting  
Illustration of Charlie Parker's Ri Bop Boys, B-side  
Savoy Records 597, 1946), 78 rpm  
Performed by Charlie Parker (Courtesy Craft  
Recordings, a Division of Concord)

Estate of Jordan Belson

*Manteca* [Jazz Painting], c. 1948–49

Lightbox projection from 35mm slide of lost painting  
Illustration of Dizzy Gillespie and His Orchestra,  
*Manteca/Cool Breeze* (RCA Victor 20-3023, 1948),  
78 rpm

Estate of Jordan Belson

Lured to Berkeley in late 1945 in the hope of continuing his anthropological studies, Smith was quickly drawn into the vibrant Bohemian scene of the Bay Area. Within a few years he had relocated to San Francisco's Fillmore District, which had emerged as a center of African American life and culture following the removal and incarceration of its Japanese population during the Second World War.

In the Fillmore, Smith forged close connections with musicians and frequented jazz clubs, including San Francisco's important nightclub Jimbo's Bop City, where he painted large abstract murals on the walls. At the same time, he applied his notational genius, combined with inspiration from psychedelic drugs, to the execution of a series of deliriously intense, quasi-abstract paintings intended to represent new recordings by Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. These paintings' elaborate and sinuous forms directly correspond to each phrase and note of the music. Now lost, the paintings can only be seen on color slides.

Harry Smith (editor)

*Anthology of American Folk Music, Volume Two Social Music* (Folkways Records, 1952)

Portfolio format album cover for two-LP set

*Anthology of American Folk Music, Volume Three Songs* (Folkways Records, 1952)

Portfolio format album cover for two-LP set

Estate of Jordan Belson



**Scott A. Feero**

b. 1955; Hendersonville, NC

Harry Smith with charts, Hotel Breslin, New York,

c. 1980

Gelatin silver print (facsimile)

Harry Smith Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; gift of the Harry Smith Archives 2013.M.4

**Harry Smith**

*Film No. 18: Mahagonny*, 1970–80 (restored 2002)

16mm film, restored to 35mm film, transferred to digital video, color, sound; 2:21 min.

Harry Smith Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; gift of the Harry Smith Archives 2013.M.4. Courtesy Anthology Film Archives and Harry Smith Archives

*Film No. 18: Mahagonny* is presented in part under license from the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc. *Aufstieg und fall der Stadt Mahagonny* Opera in three acts by Kurt Weill. Text by Bertolt Brecht in collaboration with Kurt Weill, Elisabeth Hauptmann, and Caspar Neher

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*Film No. 18: Mahagonny, 1970–80 (restored 2002)*  
16mm film, restored to 35mm film, transferred to digital  
video, color, sound; 2:21 min.

Harry Smith Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; gift of the Harry  
Smith Archives 2013.M.4. Courtesy Anthology Film Archives and Harry Smith  
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**Scott A. Feero**

b. 1955; Hendersonville, NC

Harry Smith with charts, Hotel Breslin, New York,

c. 1980

Gelatin silver print (facsimile)

Harry Smith Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; gift of the Harry  
Smith Archives 2013.M.4

*Film No. 12: Heaven and Earth Magic Feature*, c. 1957–62  
16mm film transferred to digital video, black-and-white,  
sound; 66 min.

Courtesy Anthology Film Archives, New York

*Film No. 12: Heaven and Earth Magic Feature* animates cutouts from nineteenth-century books and department store catalogs—Victoriana that carried an air of nostalgia not only for Smith but also for Surrealists like Max Ernst. He relied on stop motion animation to activate these cutouts, resulting in a new and experimental approach to imagery and storytelling that was dreamlike and spiritual. The film depicts a woman's dental procedure, her subsequent ascension to heaven, and finally her return to earth. By combining disparate influences—the Kabbalah and his own epilepsy research at the Montreal Neurological Institute—Smith portrays the kingdom of heaven as a mix of Israel and Montreal.

Smith realized *Film No. 12* only in part; he intended the sixty-six minutes on view here to constitute the opening sequences of a substantially longer work. At times, Smith modified the film when it was projected by adding framing slides and colored projection gels. Smith's use of a Rubin's vase—a vase with negative spaces that form the illusion of two facing profiles—in *Film No. 12* was the inspiration for the architectural form near the center of the exhibition.

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Color match to BM Graytint 1611 (aka white-ish)

Harry Smith (editor)

Audio from *Anthology of American Folk Music* (Folkways Records 1952; reissued Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 1997)

Two-LP set with eighty-four tracks, 4:12:30 min.

Booklet for *Anthology of American Folk Music* (Folkways Records, 1952)

Smithsonian Folkways, Washington, DC

Podcast Minisode: Greil Marcus on the cultural importance of the *Anthology of American Folk Music*



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**Live captions**

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**Carol Bove**

b. 1971; Geneva, Switzerland

**Philip Smith**

b. 1967; San Diego, CA

*Coelacanth; Materials Toward a Study of Harry Smith*, 2023

Clamshell binder with photocopies in plastic sleeves

Courtesy Carol Bove and Philip Smith

**Rani Singh**

b. New York, NY

*Harry Smith: A Reader*, 2023

Binder with laser prints in plastic sleeves

Courtesy Rani Singh