

WHITNEY

Whitney Museum
of American Art
Press Office

99 Gansevoort Street
New York, NY 10014

pressoffice@whitney.org
(212) 570-3633

PRESS RELEASE

WHITNEY MUSEUM PRESENTS THREE-DAY FESTIVAL CELEBRATING ARTIST HARRY SMITH DECEMBER 8–10



New York, NY, November 16, 2023 — The Whitney Museum of American Art invites visitors of all ages to discover and celebrate artist Harry Smith’s eclectic life and creative pursuits in a three-day festival on Friday, December 8, through Sunday, December 10. [My Harry](#) features talks, screenings, artmaking workshops, performances, and listening sessions that explore Smith’s interests in the spiritual and occult, eccentric collections, folk music, and more.

Hosted in conjunction with Smith’s first solo museum exhibition, [Fragments of a Faith Forgotten: The Art of Harry Smith](#), *My Harry* is a three-day convening of devoted friends, artists, musicians, and writers who have championed Smith since his death in 1991. A crucial countercultural figure in twentieth-century America, Smith was an unclassifiable artist, filmmaker, musicologist, mystic, and collector. His peculiar legacy has long been obscured by the vastness of his endeavors, the scarcity of his surviving work, and his own purposefully laid misdirections.

My Harry delves into Smith’s encyclopedic interests, including the occult, paper airplanes, string figures, animation, field recordings, and so much more. The festivities include contributions from

Carol Bove, Ali Dineen, Bradley Eros, Raymond Foye, Andrew Lampert, April and Lance Ledbetter, James Inoli Murphy, Rani Singh, Peter Stampfel, Charles Stein, Anne Waldman, and others.

The program is organized by Andrew Lampert, independent curator and co-author of *Paper Airplanes: The Collections of Harry Smith Catalogue Raisonné, Volume I* and *String Figures: The Collections of Harry Smith Catalogue Raisonné, Volume II*.

PROGRAM LISTINGS

My Harry: Magick and Mysticism

Friday, December 8, 5:30–9 pm

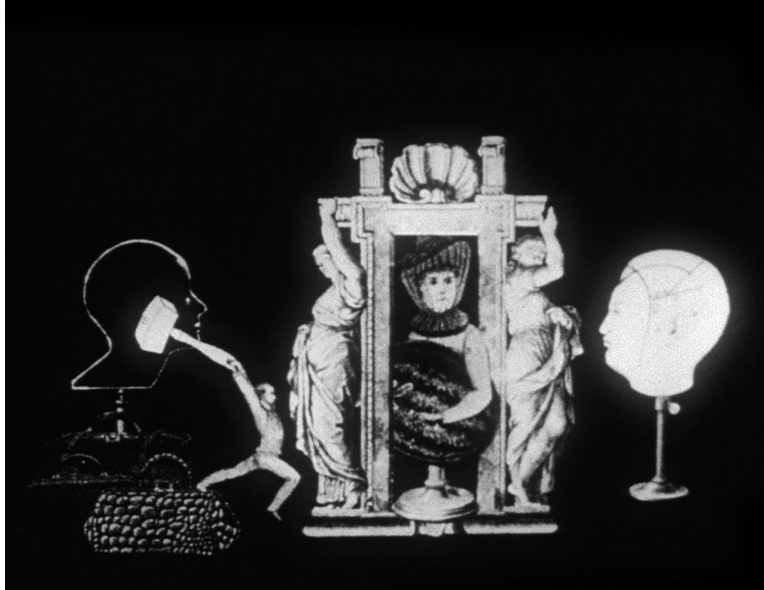
Magick and Mysticism kicks off the three-day gathering. This evening is devoted to talks and conversations about Smith's interest in and explorations of spiritual and occult practices alongside listening sessions and screenings.

Location: Floor 3, Hess Family Theater

Tickets: Tickets are required (\$10 adults; \$8 seniors, students, and visitors with disabilities).

Event Link: whitney.org/events/magick-and-mysticism

- **5:30 pm: *Listening Session: Harry Smith's Field Recordings***
- **6:30 pm: *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten: A Presentation by Carol Bove***, followed by a conversation with Andrew Lampert. Carol Bove is an American artist based in Brooklyn, New York, and co-curator and designer of [Fragments of a Faith Forgotten: The Art of Harry Smith](#).
- **7:30 pm *Screening of Harry Smith's Film No. 14: Late Superimpositions***
- **8 pm: *Harry Smith and the Future of Magick: A Presentation by Charles Stein***, followed by a conversation between Stein and Raymond Foye. Stein is an artist, translator, and poet whose work comprises a complexly integrated field of poems, philosophy, art theory, mathematics, translations from ancient Greek, drawings, photographs, lectures, conversations, and music performances.



My Harry: Stories, Songs, and Strings
Saturday, December 9, 11 am–6 pm

Museum visitors of all ages are invited to a day of musical performances, games, interactive workshops, and storytelling. Events on Saturday include activities for families with kids.

Location: Floor 3, Education Center and Hess Family Theater

Tickets: Free with Museum admission. Seating available on a first come, first served basis.

Event Link: whitney.org/events/stories-songs-strings

- **11 am–3 pm: *Stop Motion Animation Studio and Paper Airplane Workshop.*** Get inspired by Harry Smith’s innovative films and turn your own collage into a stop motion animation! Design and make your own paper airplane, one of the art forms that Harry Smith loved to collect, in a workshop hosted by artist **Bradley Eros**.
- **11 am: *Singing Circle with Ali Dineen.*** Join folk singer and educator Ali Dineen for an intergenerational singing circle. Raise your voice in song as Dineen leads us through pieces from the *Anthology of American Folk Music* as well as familiar tunes by songwriters influenced by Smith’s collection.
- **12 pm: *Peter Stampfel and The Atomic Meta-Pagan Posse.*** Listen to fiddles, mandolins, and stories from folk music legend and Harry Smith friend Peter Stampfel who appears with his band The Atomic Meta-Pagan Posse, featuring Eli Smith, Zoe Stampfel, Eli Hetko, Steve Espinola, Paul Nowinski, Sam Werbalowsky, Heather Wagner, and Dok Gregory.
- **2 pm: *Paper Airplane Contest with Bradley Eros.*** Come one, come all and enter the first ever Whitney Museum Paper Airplane contest! Artist and paper airplane aficionado Bradley Eros awards prizes in a variety of innovative categories including biggest plane, smallest plane, longest flight, strangest design, and more.

- **3 pm: *String Figure Workshop with James Inoli Murphy*.** Harry Smith was fascinated by string figures from cultures around the world, collecting and studying them throughout his life. String figures are made by weaving a loop of string into geometric shapes and patterns with hands and fingers. In this workshop, James Inoli Murphy, who knew Smith, demonstrates the art of string figures and teaches participants how to start learning with string.
- **5 pm: *On Mahagonny: A Presentation by Rani Singh*.** Rani Singh, Director of the Harry Smith Archives and co-curator of [Fragments of a Faith Forgotten: The Art of Harry Smith](#), shares the story of how Smith's epic film *Mahagonny* was made and then restored after his death.



My Harry: Affinities

Sunday, December 10, 11 am–5 pm

Affinities concludes *My Harry* with a series of talks, conversations, listening sessions, and screenings.

Location: Floor 3, Hess Family Theater

Tickets: Free with Museum admission. Seating available on a first come, first served basis.

Event Link: whitney.org/events/affinities

- **11 am: *Listening Session: Harry Smith's Field Recordings***
- **12 pm: *On Harry's Trail: A Presentation by Dust-to-Digital*.** Lance and April Ledbetter of Dust-to-Digital describe their journey to archives and studios in an attempt to piece together the life of Harry Smith.
- **1 pm: *Screening: A selection of films and videos featuring Harry Smith by a variety of the artist's friends and associates***
- **3 pm: *Friendly Rivals: The Art of Jordan Belson, A Presentation by Raymond Foye*.** From 1948–1951 Harry Smith and Jordan Belson were close friends and artistic cohorts, first in Berkeley and later in San Francisco. They developed many of their ideas

together and at the same time, in film and visual art. Writer, curator, editor, and publisher Raymond Foye, who knew and worked with both artists, presents a program of some of Belson's lesser-known films.

- **4 pm: Anne Waldman.** Poet Anne Waldman was a friend and colleague of Harry Smith at Naropa University. To conclude *My Harry*, Waldman pays tribute to Smith's unique cultural legacy.

About the Artist

Harry Smith (b. 1923, Portland, Oregon; d. 1991, New York, New York) was an artist who delved into multiple disciplines in a quest to understand the structure and essence of what he considered universal patterns, and whose activities and interests put him at the center of the mid-twentieth-century American avant-garde. Although best known as a filmmaker and musicologist, he frequently described himself as a painter. Smith had a lifelong interest in the occult and esoteric fields of knowledge, leading him to speak of his art in alchemical and cosmological terms. His broad spectrum of interests and voracious appetite for information resulted in a number of remarkable collections of objects, ranging from records and Seminole textiles to string figures and Ukrainian Easter eggs, as well as the largest known paper airplane collection in the world.

PRESS CONTACT

For press materials and image requests, please visit whitney.org/press or contact:

Emma LeHocky, Senior Publicist

Whitney Museum of American Art

(212) 671-1844

emma_lehocky@whitney.org

Whitney Press Office

whitney.org/press

(212) 570-3633

pressoffice@whitney.org

ABOUT THE WHITNEY

The Whitney Museum of American Art, founded in 1930 by the artist and philanthropist Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1875–1942), houses the foremost collection of American art from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Mrs. Whitney, an early and ardent supporter of modern American art, nurtured groundbreaking artists when audiences were still largely preoccupied with the Old Masters. From her vision arose the Whitney Museum of American Art, which has been championing the most innovative art of the United States for ninety years. The core of the Whitney's mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit American art of our time and serve a wide variety of audiences in celebration of the complexity and diversity of art and culture

in the United States. Through this mission and a steadfast commitment to artists, the Whitney has long been a powerful force in support of modern and contemporary art and continues to help define what is innovative and influential in American art today.

Whitney Museum Land Acknowledgment

The Whitney is located in Lenapehoking, the ancestral homeland of the Lenape. The name Manhattan comes from their word Mannahatta, meaning “island of many hills.” The Museum’s current site is close to land that was a Lenape fishing and planting site called Saponckanikan (“tobacco field”). The Whitney acknowledges the displacement of this region’s original inhabitants and the Lenape diaspora that exists today.

As a museum of American art in a city with vital and diverse communities of Indigenous people, the Whitney recognizes the historical exclusion of Indigenous artists from its collection and program. The Museum is committed to addressing these erasures and honoring the perspectives of Indigenous artists and communities as we work for a more equitable future. To read more about the Museum’s Land Acknowledgment, [visit the Museum’s website](#).

VISITOR INFORMATION

The Whitney Museum of American Art is located at 99 Gansevoort Street between Washington and West Streets, New York City. Public hours are Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 10:30 am–6 pm; Friday, 10:30 am–10 pm; and Saturday and Sunday, 10:30 am–6 pm. Closed Tuesday. Visitors eighteen years and under and Whitney members: FREE. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 7–10 pm. COVID-19 vaccination and face coverings are not required but strongly recommended. We encourage all visitors to wear face coverings that cover the nose and mouth throughout their visit.

Image captions:

Photographer unknown, Harry Smith at Naropa Institute, Boulder, CO, 1990. Gelatin silver print, 10 × 8 in. (25.4 × 20.3 cm). Harry Smith Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; gift of the Harry Smith Archives

Harry Smith, still from *Film No. 12: Heaven and Earth Magic Feature*, c. 1957–62. 16mm film transferred to digital video, black and white, sound; 1 hr. 6 min. Courtesy of Anthology Film Archives, New York

Harry Smith, Abstract film studies (two slides projected alternately), 1951. Film stills (lightbox), 21 7/8 × 33 1/2 (55.6 × 85.1 cm). Estate of Jordan Belson

###