

Leslie Smith III



Leslie Smith III is a Madison, Wisconsin-based artist. Smith's interests lie in our conscious effort to alter personal perception. Recent works explore Abstraction's inherent personal and political properties as they relate to broadening notions of Black representation and expression. Leslie Smith III earned a BFA at the Maryland Institute College of Art and an MFA at the Yale School of Art. Smith exhibits nationally and internationally. His work can be found in the permanent collections of the High Museum of Art, Atlanta; the Virginia Museum of Fine Art, Richmond; the Birmingham Museum of Art; the Abrams-Engel Institute for the Visual Arts, Birmingham, AL; and the FRAC Auvergne, France. Smith is currently a Full Professor of Art at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a recent 2022 Joan Mitchell Foundation Fellow.

"I am an artist who creates paintings and works on paper that explore the relationship between abstraction and identity. My art investigates themes such as compatibility, transparency, resentment, and opaqueness, which I see as influences on our interactions with people in our daily lives. Reflecting our complex and multifaceted identities, my paintings are composed of multiple parts, with individual-shaped canvases functioning as excerpts that represent parts of something greater. I am curious about the space beyond the surface of the canvas and seek to invite the viewer to delve deeper into the layers of my work.

My creative process reflects my interest in painting gestures and their allegorical potential in broadening notions of Black expression. Isolated gestures are assembled into rigid structures, reflecting the challenges of deriving meaning from form and color while also taking shape as objects imbued with emotive sensibilities. These works acknowledge the complexities of Black identity as they relate to personal experience.

I paint to archive processes in search of challenging yet familiar aesthetics. Like a collage artist, I reimagine the representation of multiple dimensionalities and the pictorial possibilities of two-dimensional surfaces. The resulting image is a shaped object on a wall that conveys meaning in its physical presence, sparking curiosity and anxiety in those encountering it.

With an interest in confronting art history and its accompanying dogmas, I freely assimilate canonical conversations and create works that collapse the medium's traditional divisions. By doing so, I suggest that contemporary abstract painting can critically engage its rich history while transcending ideological limitations. "

- Leslie Smith III, 2024

Leslie Smith III CV

Education

- 2009 Yale University School of Art, New Haven, CT
M.F.A., Painting and Printmaking
- 2007 Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD
B.F.A., Painting Major, Art History Minor

Solo Exhibitions

- 2025 [title to be announced], CHART Gallery, NY, New York
 - 2023 *Reaching for Something High*, CHART Gallery, NY, New York
L'Art dans les Chapelles, Chapelle Saint-Tugdual, Quistinic, Bretagne, France
 - 2022 *The Depth Of Thoughts*, Galerie Isabelle Gounod, Paris, France
Stranger Days, Maus Contemporary, Birmingham, Alabama
 - 2020 *Strangers: New Abstractions by Leslie Smith III*, Galerie Isabelle Gounod, Paris, France
We Still Play With Blocks: Paintings From 2014 -17, Hawthorne Contemporary, Milwaukee, WI
 - 2017 *Redaction*, 'sindikit project, Baltimore, Maryland
Locus of Control, Maus Contemporary, Birmingham, Alabama
 - 2016 *Time Further Out*, Ponce + Robles Gallery, Madrid, Spain
 - 2015 *Vivir en la tierra plana (Living In The Flat Land)*, Ponce+Robles Gallery, Madrid, Spain
 - 2014 *Vacation*, DeLuce Gallery Northwest Missouri State University Olive, Maryville, Missouri
As I Remembered, Maus Contemporary, Birmingham, Alabama
Opposing Dysfunction, Wriston Art Galleries, Lawrence University, Appleton, Wisconsin
 - 2013 *I Dream Too Much*, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison, Wisconsin
 - 2012 *Leslie Smith III: Representation, Abstraction, Oscillation*, Dean Jensen Gallery, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- Group Exhibitions

- 2024 *Dyani White Hawk & Leslie Smith III*, Bockley Gallery, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Moreover: 50 Paintings, Green Gallery, Milwaukee, WI, curated by Michelle Grabner
- 2023 *DRAWING NOW Paris*, Featured Artist with Galerie Isabelle Gounod, Paris, France
- 2022 *OFFSIGHT*, James Fuentes Gallery, New York, NY
Anyone Can Move a Mountain, Maus Contemporary, Birmingham, AL
7-5 Exhibition, Grand Marais Art Colony, Grand Marais, MN
Positions Berlin Art Fair, Maus Contemporary Gallery, Berlin, Germany
- 2021 *Darker Than Blue*, Maus Contemporary, Birmingham, AL
- 2020 *Night in America*, Maus Contemporary, Birmingham, AL
- 2019 *Expo Chicago's EXPOSURE*, Curated by Naima Keith, Chicago, IL
Positions Berlin Art Fair, Maus Contemporary Gallery, Berlin, Germany
Paper Position Frankfurt, Galerie Heike Strelow, Frankfurt Germany
tel un geste captivant la lumière, Galerie Isabelle Gounod, Paris, France
Aftereffect: O'Keeffe and Contemporary Art, Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, Denver, CO, curated by Alissa Auther,
Paper Selections, Galerie Heike Strelow, Frankfurt, Germany
DRAWING NOW Paris, Galerie Isabelle Gounod, Paris, France
- 2018 *Change Agent*, Patrick Mikhail Gallery, Montreal, Canada
FOCUS III: I'll see it When I believe it, Abroms-Engel Institute for the Visual Arts, AEIVA, Birmingham, AL
Pulse Contemporary Art Fair Miami Beach, Maus Contemporary Gallery, Miami, FL
- 2017 *Pulse Contemporary Art Fair Miami Beach*, Maus Contemporary Gallery, Miami, FL
Minimal Gestures, Galerie Heike Strelow, Frankfurt, Germany
Paper Positions Munich, Maus Contemporary Gallery, Munich, Germany
Echo Spectrum, Trestle Contemporary Art Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
DRAWING NOW Paris, Maus Contemporary Gallery, Paris, France
- 2016 *Black Paintings*, Heike Strelow, Frankfurt, Germany
Volta NY International Art Fair, Maus Contemporary, New York, NY
ARCO Madrid, Ponce+Robles Gallery, Madrid, Spain
Losing my Edge: New Perspectives in Abstract Figurative Painting, Bloch Hall Gallery, University of Montevallo, Birmingham, AL

- 2014 *Volta 10 Art Fair*, Maus Contemporary, Basel, Switzerland
Pulse New York Contemporary Art Fair, Maus Contemporary, New York, NY
Monochromatic, Triumph & Disaster, Montgomery, AL
Parallax Futured: Transtemporal Subjectivities, Skirball Museum, Cincinnati, OH
Black In The Abstract, Part II: Hard Edges/Soft Curves, with curatorial contributions by Valerie Cassel Oliver | Contemporary Art Museum Houston, Houston, TX
- 2013 *Big Bangs/Small Bucks Redux*, Dean Jensen Gallery, Milwaukee, WI
Texas Contemporary Art Fair, Maus Contemporary, Houston, TX
Wisconsin 30, Milwaukee Museum of Art, Milwaukee, WI
Pulp 3 works on paper - works with paper, Maus Contemporary,, Birmingham, AL
ArtPadSF, Maus Contemporary, San Francisco, CA
- 2012 *25 for 25*, Dean Jensen Gallery, Milwaukee, WI
Voices of Home, Jenkins Johnson Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Voices of Home, Jenkins Johnson Gallery, New York, NY
- 2011 *Intersecting Cultures/Virtual Worlds*, Underground Gallery at the Betsy, Miami, FL
Two Men 2011: Tim Roseborough & Leslie Smith III , Strivers Gardens Gallery, New York, NY
- 2010 *Balls*, Obsidian Arts, Minneapolis, MN
In/Ex, Gallery M, New York, NY
Joel Dean, Fabienne Lasserre, Leslie Smith III, Jolie Laide Gallery, Philadelphia, PA
- 2009 *Emerge CT: 2009 MFA Graduates from UConn*, Western Connecticut State and Yale, Stamford, CT
M.F.A. Thesis Show, Yale University School of Art, New Haven, CT
- 2008 *Verge*, Galapagos Art Space, New York, NY
- 2007 *Visions of Conflict: Rendering Dissent*, Gormley gallery, College of Notre Dame, Baltimore, MD
MAEF Juried Exhibition, Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD
B.F.A. Thesis Show, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD
- 2006 *Taylor Companies Retrospective Show*, Taylor Companies, Washington, DC

Collections

High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia

Paul R. Jones Museum, Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, Alabama

Abroms-Engel Institute for the Visual Arts, AEIVA, Birmingham, Alabama

Virginia Museum of Fine Art, Richmond, Virginia

FRAC Auvergne, Clermont-Ferrand, France

Honors & Awards

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| 2022 | Joan Mitchell Foundation Fellow |
| 2021 | Vilas Early-Career Investigator Award |
| 2020 | Sustainable Arts Foundation Awardee
Emily Mead Baldwin Award in the Creative Arts |
| 2014 | Nellie McKay Fellowship |
| 2009 | American Academy in Rome, Al Held Affiliate Fellowship, Rome Italy |
| 2007 | Best in show, Maryland Artist Equity Foundation Juried Exhibition, Baltimore Museum of Art |
| 2006-07 | Freda Eichelberger Scholarship |
| 2003-07 | Thailheimer Scholarship
ARTS Scholarship, MICA |
| 2003 | National Foundation for the Advancement in the Arts Finalist
and Scholarship Recipient |

Selected Bibliography and Press

Salas, Rafael Fransisco "Abstracting Lived Experiences: A review of Leslie Smith III at Hawthorn Contemporary" *New City Art: Visual Art Culture of Chicago and Beyond*, January, 2021

<https://art.newcity.com/2021/01/08/abstractinglived-experience-a-review-of-leslie-smith-iii-at-hawthorn-contemporary/>

McAdams, Shane "Leslie Smith III at Hawthorn Contemporary: Painting or Sculpture?" *Shepherd Express*, October 2020

<https://shepherdexpress.com/arts-and-entertainment/visual-art/leslie-smith-iii-at-hawthorn-contemporarypaintings-or-sculp/>

Angie Kordic "At EXPO Chicago 2019, An Abstract Dialog Hosted by Maus Contemporary That Shouldn't Be Missed"

Widewalls Accessed September, 2019. <https://www.widewalls.ch/maus-contemporary-expo-chicago-2019-lesliesmith-iii-interview/>

"FOCUS III: I'll see it when I believe it," Exhibition Catalog, Abroms-Engel Institute for the Visual Arts Museum, June 2018. pp. 70-72

"Echo Spectrum," Exhibition Catalog, Trestle Contemporary Art, March 2017, pp. 43 - 47

"Leslie Smith III. Left to Think Alone," Artist Monograph, Maus Contemporary, June 2017

Gleeson, Bridget "Talking With American Painter Leslie Smith III About Abstraction, Anguish, and Architecture," *Artsy* Accessed January, 2017

<https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-talking-american-painter-leslie-smith-iii-abstraction-anguish-architecture>

Gonzalez Panizo, Javier "Pintura y Tiempo: Abstracción Post-Pictórica" *Zona Crítica* Accessed October 2016

<http://exit-express.com/pintura-y-tiempo-abstraccion-post-pictorica/>

Butler, Sharron "Interview: Leslie Smith III in Madison, Wisconsin" *Two coats of Paint* Accessed February, 2016

<http://www.twocoatsofpaint.com/2016/02/interview-leslie-smith-iii-in-madison.html>

"Living in The Flat Land" *Revista de Arte Contemporaneo Madrid Art Process* Accessed February 2015

<http://www.madridartprocess.com/agenda-cultural-madrid/item/1582-living-in-the-flat-land.html>

Gonzalez Panizo, Javier "Leslie Smith III: Paint on The Surface" *Blogearte – Critica De Arte* Accessed February 2015

<http://www.blogearte.com/2015/02/leslie-smith-iii-pintura-en-la.html>

“What’s in an art Gallery? I dare to ask.” INVESTIGART Accessed January, 2015
<https://investigart.wordpress.com/2015/01/29/artistas-en-el-escaparate-nos-vamos-de-galerias/>

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston: Valerie Cassel Oliver, "Reverb" Out Side The Lines exhibition catalogue, December 2014 pp. 143-147 Images 172-173

Callaloo Art & Culture in The African Diaspora, October 2014, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press. Issue 4 Vol.37, pp. 867-869

Caroline Taylor “Monochromatic” Made, Issue 12, (April 2014): 8

Walter Lewellyn "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood," Weld For Birmingham, Accessed March 13, 2014
<http://weldbham.com/blog/2014/03/13/dont-let-me-be-misunderstood/>

Steinhoff, Jessica “Leslie Smith III’s Paintings Explore Trauma Through Abstraction at MMoCA,” Isthmus The Daily Page, Accessed June, 2013
<http://www.thedailypage.com/daily/article.php?article=40122>

Leah Kolb " Paintings in Conflict Leslie Smith's Contemporary Abstractions," I Dream Too Much exhibition catalogue, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art June 7, 2013

Katherine Murrell "Representation, Abstraction, Oscillation" Exhibition catalogue, Dean Jensen Gallery July 27, 2012

Erica Agyeman "The Medium of The Message" International Review of African American Art, Issue 23.4 (December 2011): 35-38

Glen McNatt "Saying Their Piece About Fighters, War" Baltimore Sun, Accessed July, 2007
http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2007-07-25/features/0707250164_1_dame-of-maryland-college-of-notre-dame

Published Text

Smith III, Leslie “Surface & Medium, The Quiet Part Out Load,” *Thornton Dial: I, Too, Am Alabama*, edited by Paul Barrett and Rebecca Dobrinski, University of Alabama at Birmingham Press, 2022, p.87-89

Professional Affiliations

2023-present	Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison, WI, Vice President, Board of Trustees
2016-2020	Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison, WI, Vice President, Board of Trustees
2014-2016	Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison, WI Board of Trustees Member
2023-present	Chart Gallery, NY, New York, NY
2019-present	Galerie Isabelle Gounod, Paris, France
2018-2022	Patrick Mikhail Gallery, Montreal, Canada
2016-2022 2014-2016	Galerie Heike Strelow, Frankfurt, Germany Gallery Ponce + Robles, Madrid, Spain
2013-present	Maus Contemporary, Birmingham, AL

Appointments

2022-present	University Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI Full Professor of Art
2017-2022	University Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI Associate Professor of Art
2011-2017	University Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI Assistant Professor of Art
2010-2011	University Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI Senior Lecturer
2009-2010	University of Hartford, Hartford, CT Adjunct Professor

Lectures and Visits

- 2024 The University of California Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, CA
- 2022 Sanford University, Birmingham, AL
Ohio State University, Columbus, OH
- 2019 Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Boston, MA
Visiting Artist: Lecture and Studio Visits
Peninsula School of Art, Fish Creek, WI
Contemporary Themes in Abstraction Presentation and Workshop
- 2018 Peninsula School of Art, Fish Creek, WI
Contemporary Themes in Abstraction Presentation and Workshop
- 2017 The Look of THINGS, Curators Office, Washington, DC
Panelist
- 2016 American University Department of Art, Washington DC
Kinetic: Conversations in Contemporary Arts
Featuring Leslie Smith III and Rushern Baker IV
- 2014 Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, MO
Visiting Artist: Lecture and Studio Visits
UW Milwaukee Peck School of Art, Milwaukee, WI
Visiting Artist: Lecture and Studio Visits
University of Iowa School of Art & Art History, Iowa City, IA
Visiting Artist: Lecture
- 2013 I Dream Too Much Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison, WI
Gallery talks and Docent talk
Marie Walsh Sharp Art Foundation Summer Session III, Colorado Spring, CO
Lecture & Painting Seminar instructor
- 2012 Voices of Home Panel Discussion, Jenkins Johnson Gallery, New York, NY
Panel Discussion moderated by former MoCODA curator Kalia Brooks
- 2011 Strivers Gardens Gallery, New York, NY
Gallery Talk & Panel Discussion Contemporary African American Art
Dreyfoos School of the Arts, West Palm Beach, FL
Visiting Artist: Lecture and painting, printmaking workshop
- 2010 Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD
Visiting Artist: Lecture and Undergraduate Thesis Studio Visits