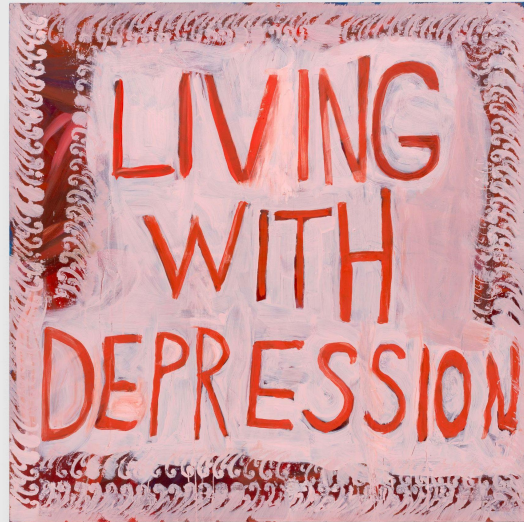


## Josh Smith *Living with Depression*

2 September–7 October, 2023  
108, rue Vieille du Temple, 75003 Paris



Josh Smith, *Living with Depression*, 2023  
© Josh Smith  
Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by Josh Smith at the gallery's Paris location. Marking Smith's first solo exhibition in the French capital since 2009, the presentation follows on the artist's two previous solo shows with David Zwirner: *Spectre* (2020), held concurrently at the gallery's locations in London and East 69th Street, New York; and *Emo Jungle* (2019), which spanned all three of the gallery's 19th Street spaces in New York. Smith also staged *High as Fuck*, an offsite exhibition in collaboration with the gallery, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In Spring 2023, Smith launched *Studio News 2* on David Zwirner Online, featuring new hand-painted monotypes that build upon the artist's signature paintings of sunsets and palm trees in generic tropical locales.

*Living with Depression* reflects Smith's desire to push himself and his work into new territories. While the majority of the artist's past exhibitions have focused on specific visuals—such as grim reapers, palm trees, turtles, or his own name—the presentation in Paris will be more pictorially dynamic and less serialized, including both abstract and representational paintings as well as hybrid works that mix these visual modes. Recognizing that successful paintings emerge from the structures and restrictions imposed on or by the artist, Smith challenged himself by relying less on the color contrasts and the high-tone palettes he has used in many of his past works, instead choosing to explore the nuances of red, which unites the works in the exhibition. As Smith notes, "While still being seductive, these paintings switch pop prettiness for a more

subversive delivery. You have to come in the back door as opposed to the front door with these.”<sup>1</sup>

Red has long been recognized as a complicated yet enticing color for modern and contemporary artists. In exploring it in these new works, Smith nods to great modern painters such as Josef Albers, Philip Guston, Barnett Newman, Robert Rauschenberg, Ad Reinhardt, and Mark Rothko, all of whom created red monochromes or groups of paintings done predominantly in red. Albers famously noted that he considered red to be the most difficult color to work with, a challenge that led Rauschenberg to create his seminal red paintings in the middle of the 1950s.

Aware of the color red’s lineage and historical significance, Smith resolves each of these new canvases on its own terms—responding to the forms and surfaces in such a way that every brushstroke and mark or swath of color is intricately connected with every other formal element. Paintings depicting New York’s built environment—which recall the cityscapes Smith debuted in *Spectre*—take on new visual qualities and connotations when cast in scarlet, crimson, cherry, or mahogany tones. While self-contained, these paintings inevitably also conjure associations with the real world. Whereas the empty streets in the earlier works were inspired by the artist’s neighborhood and surroundings during COVID-19 lockdowns, the skies and red-tinted buildings in these new works read like a timely meditation on climate change and natural disasters—such as the smoke from Canadian wildfires that recently brought the worst air quality in the world to New York and cast the entire city in an orangish-red glow.

Smith’s focus on palette in these new works also heightens the tension between figure and ground. Though he applies his paint evenly across the surface of his paintings, in some works, animals or abstract forms stand out against their backdrop, while in others, their coloration and contours melt or phase into the background. Figures, shapes, and forms may appear like innocuous carriers of color and line, yet their coloring can at times bring to mind bodily viscera. At the same time, the works remain resolutely painterly rather than abject—a clear reflection of Smith’s sensitivity to and facility with his medium.

Josh Smith was born in 1976 in Okinawa, Japan. Smith’s father was in the US Army, and his family moved frequently, eventually settling in East Tennessee, where the artist mostly grew up. His work has been presented in numerous solo exhibitions at museums and arts institutions in the United States and abroad, including at the Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn, Germany (2016); Museo d’Arte Contemporanea di Roma, Rome (2015); Zabłudowicz Collection, London (2013); The Brant Foundation Art Study Center, Greenwich, Connecticut (2011); Centre d’Art Contemporain Genève, Geneva (2009); De Hallen Haarlem, The Netherlands (2009–2010); Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna (2008); and SculptureCenter, New York (2004).

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<sup>1</sup> Josh Smith in conversation with the gallery, June 2023.

Smith's work has also been included in important group exhibitions, such as *Before Tomorrow – Astrup Fearnley Museet 30 Years*, Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo (2023); *Forever Young – 10 Years Museum Brandhorst*, Museum Brandhorst, Munich (2019–2020); *Trouble in Paradise: Collection Rattan Chadha*, Kunsthal Rotterdam (2019); *Publishing as an Artistic Toolbox: 1989–2017*, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (2017–2018); *Painting 2.0: Expression in the Information Age*, Museum Brandhorst, Munich (2015–2016), and Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna (2016); *The Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2014–2015); *The Painting Factory: Abstraction after Warhol*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2012); *ILLUMInations*, 54th Venice Biennale (2011); and *The Generational: Younger Than Jesus*, New Museum, New York (2009).

Smith's work is held in numerous international public collections including The Broad, Los Angeles; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Smith has lived and worked in New York since 1998.

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