

# The Museum of Modern Art

## MoMA TO OPEN THE SECOND ANNUAL PRESENTATION OF STUDIO SOUND SERIES WITH NEW OPERA BY ARTIST SABLE ELYSE SMITH

### **Studio Sound: Sable Elyse Smith**

July 3–14, 2024

The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Studio

**NEW YORK, May 16, 2024**— MoMA presents *Studio Sound: Sable Elyse Smith* in the Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Studio from July 3 through 14, 2024. Studio Sound is an annual performance series that champions artists and musicians whose work engages new possibilities for sound and music. The second presentation of Studio Sound features a new opera titled *If you unfolded us* by interdisciplinary artist and writer Sable Elyse Smith, in collaboration with composer David Dominique and vocalist Freddie June. Serving as the first part of a larger ongoing project, the performance intertwines an unfolding love story between two Black women with the protagonist's journey of self-discovery, staged within the intimate scale of the Kravis Studio. *Studio Sound: Sable Elyse Smith* is organized by Martha Joseph, The Phyllis Ann and Walter Borten Assistant Curator of Media and Performance, with May Makki, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Media and Performance.

Taking the musical potential of text as her starting point, Smith explores voice as artistic material in this immersive multimedia performance. The work, an opera for two voices and eight-piece chamber ensemble, is structured in two parts, each consisting of a series of songs that weave together a narrative of desire, rejection, self-discovery, and resilience. Smith shares, “Narratively, I’m interested in elevating a story of vulnerability—the stuff of everyday life—to something remarkable, fashioning a new kind of epic tale within the formal and aesthetic space of opera, and pushing its conceptual potential.” Smith wrote the libretto and has created video for the performance. Through a cinematic approach, she combines found footage with imagery from the performers’ interior worlds. In addition to the live events, during the Museum hours listed below, the Studio transforms into a multimedia installation, featuring film and sound from the performance.

Dominique’s score fuses traditional and popular musical forms, with influences ranging from R&B and jazz to musique concrète and contemporary chamber music. Set against the backdrop of a developing storm, the performance explores the political, collective, and dramatic potential of the voice, as well as the ways in which language dissolves through sonic expression.

Over the past decade, Smith’s work has drawn from the legacy of Conceptual art to confront the mundane and pervasive impacts of systemic oppression. Notable recent works included in *The Milk of Dreams*, 59th Venice Biennale (2022), *Whitney Biennial 2022: Quiet as It’s Kept*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2022), and *Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration*, MoMA PS1, Queens (2020) addressed the architectural, psychological, and material aspects of the prison as a site. Working in video, sculpture, photography, text, and now sound, Smith’s approach extends our understanding of the

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carceral beyond prison walls and into the systems that determine everyday inequities within a culture of anti-Blackness.

To coincide with Smith's performance, work from her *Coloring Book* series will be on view in MoMA's collection display Gallery 415: *Divided States of America*, emphasizing the artist's deep conceptual investments across media, from drawing to video and live art.

### **Performance schedule**

Wednesday July 10, 8:00 p.m.

Thursday July 11, 8:00 p.m.

Saturday July 13, 3:00 p.m.

Saturday July 13, 8:00 p.m.

Sunday July 14, 3:00 p.m.

Run time: 45 minutes with no intermission

The matinee performance on Sunday, July 14, will be followed by a conversation between the artists and Martha Joseph, The Phyllis Ann and Walter Borten Assistant Curator of Media and Performance.

### **Video viewing schedule**

Wednesday, July 3–Sunday, July 7, 10:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, July 10–Friday, July 12, 10:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Saturday, July 13, 10:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Sunday, July 14, 10:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

### **Artist's Creative and Production Team**

Concept and libretto: Sable Elyse Smith

Composer: David Dominique

Vocalist (Main): Shala Miller (a.k.a. Freddie June)

Lighting Design: Kelley Shih

Editorial support and dramaturgy: Ica Sadagat

### **Performance Credits:**

Concept and Libretto: Sable Elyse Smith

Composer: David Dominique

Vocal Arrangement: Danielle Bowler, Freddie June (Shala Miller)

Lighting Design: Kelley Shih

Dramaturgy: Ica Sadagat

Stage Managers: Stacy-Jo Marine, Philip Trevino

Main: Freddie June (Shala Miller)

Lover: S T A R R Busby  
Harp: Caroline Bryan  
Guitar: Ryan Ferreira  
Violin: Josh Henderson  
Viola: Jay Julio  
Contrabass: Cameron Ralston  
Cello: Wayne Smith  
Keyboard: Curt Sydnor  
Conducting and Electronics: David Dominique

**Film Credits:**

Co-Director: Sable Elyse Smith  
Co-Director and Producer: Jessie Levandov  
Producer: Nina Reyes Rosenberg  
Still Photography and Creative Director:  
Naima Green  
Director of Photography: Pierce Robinson  
1st AC: Collin Morris  
2nd AC: Afiya Yearwood  
Gaffer: Stephen Taylor  
Grip: Auden Barbour  
Makeup Artist: Kaya Coleman  
Colorist: Aaron Burns  
Production Assistants: Auston Bjorkman,  
Esai Velasquez  
Main: Sana Azim  
Lover: Nedjra Manning  
Voiceover: Naima Green  
Partygoers: Renae Wilson, J Wortham,  
Suhaly Carolina Bautista, Naiema Carolina,  
Rachell Morillo  
Sound Design: Jessie Levandov and  
Sable Elyse Smith  
Music: Weather Report  
Composed, Arranged, Produced, and Conducted  
by David Dominique  
Executive Produced by Sable Elyse Smith  
Lyrics by Sable Elyse Smith  
Vocals Performed and Arranged by Freddie June  
(Shala Miller)  
Cello: Stephanie Barrett  
Harp: Caroline Bryan  
Guitar: Alan Parker  
Contrabass: Cameron Ralston  
Keyboard: Curt Sydnor

Violin: Tressa Gold  
Viola: Kimberly Ryan  
Recorded and Mixed by Alex De Jong  
Mastered by Christopher Colbert  
Recorded at Spacebomb Studio in Richmond,  
Virginia, June 2024

## **SPONSORSHIP**

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## **PRESS CONTACTS:**

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