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Mike Smith *Warning Shots*

Texts by Eric Paddock, Diana C. Stoll

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Mike Smith's photographs focus on some harsh truths: the nationalism, racism, misogyny, and homophobia with which America is contending today.

For four decades Mike Smith has photographed people living in the Southern Appalachian region, their lifestyles, and their land. *Warning Shots* is a collection of recent photographs from that region edited during the 2016 presidential election cycle. The selection is a response to Donald Trump's campaign rhetoric and subsequent leadership. The works contend with sexism, homophobia, racism, misogyny, violence against women, gun violence, ignorance, intolerance, and hate.

»I am lost, says the cat—and these days, who isn't? Certainly, Mike Smith is lost. But then, alienation is a condition from which he has benefited artistically throughout much of his career. A Northerner living, teaching, and photographing in eastern Tennessee over the past four decades, he has operated as something of a stranger in a strange land, maintaining an eye that is perpetually new and fascinated by this rural place and its inhabitants. He has brought a fresh, perhaps even genre-making, vision to the buildings, the roadsides, the people, and—most complicatedly—the roughshod landscapes of Appalachia. In all these things, he has held to delicate balances of form and color, humor and sadness, image and symbol.«

— from the essay by Diana C. Stoll

»Helen Levitt, Robert Frank, Larry Clark, Dawoud Bey, and others have challenged prevailing assumptions about America and its people in the decades since Lange set out to photograph the social upheaval of the Great Depression. Like all of them, Mike Smith has devoted himself to prying beyond conventional

thinking to arrive at an unsettling version of truth. Faithful to the facts and willing to let the facts speak for themselves, his photographs invite us, his viewers, to ask questions and to reach a better understanding of ourselves, both as individuals and as citizens of our democracy.«

— from the essay by Eric Paddock

Mike Smith (b.1951 in Heidelberg) earned his BFA from the Massachusetts College of Art and his MFA from Yale University. In 2001, he was awarded a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship and the Tennessee Governor's Award in the Arts. In 2012, he received the United States Artists Lowe Fellowship. His work is in the collections of major museums across America and is represented by Lee Marks Fine Art, Tracey Morgan Gallery, Yancey Richardson Gallery, and Jackson Fine Art. He continues to produce new work in the studio provided to him by East Tennessee State University, where he taught photography for 37 years. www.mikesmithphotographs.com

Eric Paddock has been Curator of Photography at the Denver Art Museum since 2008.

Diana C. Stoll is an independent arts writer, editor, and curator based in Asheville, North Carolina.

Exhibition

More Than A Selfie, Lee Marcks Fine Art, Shelbyville, IN, USA, 01.12.2019 – 31.01.2020

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