

**NICOLA
VASSELL**

Opening May 2, 6–8 pm
May 2 — June 15, 2024



MING SMITH:

On the Road

Gallery Hours

Tuesday–Saturday, 10 am–6 pm

138 10th Ave. New York, NY 10011

Press

For press inquiries, please reach out to the team at [ALMA](#).

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Nicola Vassell is pleased to present *Ming Smith: On the Road*, a selection of photographs from the artist's archive that encapsulates the arc of her exploratory impulses as she sought and probed new subject matter and formal innovation from 1970 through 1993. Encompassing never-before-seen vintage and contemporary prints of images captured during her travels around the world, *On the Road* embodies the spirit of adventure and curiosity that advanced Smith's singular entry into, and scrutiny of, the provinces of urban existence, nature's quietude, family intimacy, popular culture, military life, and jazz milieus.

In the 1970s in New York, Smith's practice was propelled by inquiry—both through her immersion in the Kamoinge Workshop and her preoccupation with the ideas of prominent twentieth-century American and European photographers. Cultivating her own radical sensibility in early experiments, she alluded to the virtuosity of Brassai, Roy DeCarava, Diane Arbus, and Robert Frank. These artists set a tempo upon which Smith developed her own dexterity in portraiture, landscape, and street photography—highly attuned to the textures, geometries, and thrums pulsing through every spectrum of life. She recognized the haunting allure of an oil-slicked roadside and the liquid lightning of brass instruments in musicians' animated hands.

Smith listens through her camera, sensitive to the harmony and dissonance that enliven her subjects and surroundings. At times, it is easy to forget that she works in a static medium, since each photograph transports its viewer into the energetic nucleus of the moment she captures. Through paint application, double exposure, and low shutter speed, Smith pushes photography's form to the point of its brim and break. Like harnessing a memory, Smith underlines the evanescent—at once vivid and obscure.

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About Ming Smith

Ming Smith (b. 1947, Detroit, Michigan) is an artist living and working in Harlem, New York. She became a photographer when she was given a camera at a young age. She was the first female member to join Kamoinge, a collective of Black photographers in New York in the 1960s who documented Black life. In 2023, MoMA presented *Projects: Ming Smith*, a survey of the artist's photography from the 1970s through her most recent work. Smith was included in *Going Dark: The Contemporary Figure at the Edge of Visibility* at the Guggenheim Museum, and *Soul of a Nation* at Tate Modern in collaboration with Brooklyn Museum, Crystal Bridges and The Broad. She was also featured in Brooklyn Museum's *We Wanted A Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965-85*. Her work was exhibited in conjunction with Arthur Jafa's *A Series of Utterly Improbable, Yet Extraordinary Renditions* at Serpentine Galleries, London; Julia Stoschek Collection, Berlin; Galerie Rudolfinum, Prague and Moderna Museet, Stockholm. Smith's work is in the collections of MoMA, the Whitney Museum of Art, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Detroit Institute of Arts, Virginia Museum of Fine Art, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and the National Museum of African-American History and Culture. She was included in MoMA's 2010 seminal exhibition, *Pictures by Women: A History of Modern Photography*.

About Nicola Vassell Gallery

Nicola Vassell is a contemporary art gallery committed to discourse that widens the lens of the history and future of art. Its focus is on developing an inter-generational, cross-disciplinary program of international artists and thinkers.

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