

JONES CENTER
700 Congress Ave., Austin, TX 78701

LAGUNA GLORIA
3809 W. 35th St., Austin, TX 78703

The Contemporary Austin and The FLAG Art Foundation Announce the 2026 Recipient of the Suzanne Deal Booth / FLAG Art Foundation Prize

Austin, TX (May 21, 2024) – [The Contemporary Austin](#) is pleased to announce artist **Sable Elyse Smith** as the 2026 recipient of the Suzanne Deal Booth / FLAG Art Foundation Prize, a biennial prize founded in 2016 by The Contemporary Austin trustee Suzanne Deal Booth and administered by The Contemporary Austin. In May 2018, The Contemporary Austin and The FLAG Art Foundation, founded by Glenn Fuhrman, announced the expansion and renaming of the prize to the Suzanne Deal Booth / FLAG Art Foundation Prize.

As the recipient of the prize, Smith will receive a \$200,000 award, a full museum solo exhibition that premieres at The Contemporary Austin in 2026, and travels to The FLAG Art Foundation in New York, an accompanying publication, and related public programming. The exhibition will be co-curated by Alex Klein, Head Curator & Director of Curatorial Affairs, and Julie Le, Assistant Curator, The Contemporary Austin. The presentation at The FLAG Art Foundation, New York will be curated by Jonathan Rider, Director.

The recipient of the prize is selected based on merit of past work, strong record of exhibitions, and the transformational impact the award stands to have on their career and the Austin and New York communities. A rotating independent advisory committee made up of curators and art historians selects each year's recipient. The 2026 jury, led by Alex Klein, Head Curator & Director of Curatorial Affairs, The Contemporary Austin, included Dan Byers, John R. and Barbara Robinson Family Director, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard University; Valerie Cassel Oliver, Sydney and Frances Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy, former Director of the Kunstinstituut Melly; and Christine Y. Kim, Britton Family Curator-at-Large, North American Art, Tate Modern, along with institutional advisor Jonathan Rider, Director of The FLAG Art Foundation. Smith is the fifth artist to receive the award. Past awardees include Rodney McMillian (2018), Nicole Eisenman (2020), Tarek Atoui (2022), and Lubaina Himid (2024). *Lubaina Himid: Make Do and Mend* is on view at The Contemporary Austin through July 21, 2024, and will travel to The FLAG Art Foundation in New York, September 13, 2024 – January 18, 2025.

“Sable is a prescient voice among her generation with a dynamic artistic background, and does not shy away from asking challenging questions. I’m eager to see how she will continue expanding the impact and possibilities of an artistic practice,” says Suzanne Deal Booth. “It’s an honor to play a role in celebrating artists who are at an inflection point in their careers, and to support them with the platform, tools, and resources needed to access different communities and garner well-deserved exposure.”

Sable Elyse Smith (b. 1986, Los Angeles, CA; lives and works in New York, NY) is an interdisciplinary artist, as well as writer and educator. Spanning video, sculpture, photography, works on paper, and text, Smith draws from the legacy of conceptual art and skillfully merges diverse visual cultures and architectural forms to spotlight American systems of inequality. For over a decade, she has explored how power in the carceral state of America consolidates and confines real lives; and how the carceral state permeates all aspects of American life. She utilizes seemingly neutral or banal entities to uncover the inherent violence within them as well as their connection to a larger system of inequality.

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Smith's work was recently presented at Regen Projects in Los Angeles, CA. The gallery's first solo exhibition with the artist included a series of two new sculptures and several "coloring book" paintings analyzing the carceral state and practices of aesthetic subversion and aimed to deepen audiences' understanding of how violence is named, identified, and located. In July 2024, Smith will be featured in the second annual presentation of Studio Sound at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, an ongoing series looking at art history through sound. Smith's work will consist of a new musical composition, and video installation, in the form of an opera. The performance intertwines an unfolding love story between two Black women with the protagonist's journey of self-discovery.

"The Suzanne Deal Booth / FLAG Art Foundation Prize is a signature program for The Contemporary Austin, one that embodies so many of our values and priorities including providing the opportunity for an artist to make new work and try new things, and presenting meaningful projects that spark discourse and joy for our audiences. At The Contemporary Austin, we believe that art holds the potential to transform the lives of artists and the lives of audiences and this is exactly what the Suzanne Deal Booth / FLAG Art Foundation Prize has done since its establishment," says Sharon Maidenberg, Executive Director and CEO of The Contemporary Austin. "I am incredibly grateful that we have the opportunity to bring the work of a brilliant, thought-provoking, and distinct artist like Sable to Austin."

"From its inception, Suzanne Deal Booth and Glenn Fuhrman believed this prize would be a remarkable opportunity to support artists, a sentiment at the very core of The Contemporary Austin's and The FLAG Art Foundation's missions," says Jonathan Rider, Director of The FLAG Art Foundation. "That support is both a collaborative venture and a generous act—between patrons and between institutions—to combine resources and teams in an effort to better champion artistic practice. The prize also represents an unparalleled opportunity for both artist and institution to push each other forward, together. It's an honor to be involved in every facet of the Suzanne Deal Booth / FLAG Art Foundation Prize, and I cannot wait to see how Sable transforms our institutions in this iteration."

ABOUT SABLE ELYSE SMITH

Sable Elyse Smith's work has been featured at MoMA PS1, New Museum, The Studio Museum in Harlem, Guggenheim Museum, ICA Boston, and numerous others. In 2022, she participated in the Whitney Biennial and the 59th Venice Biennale. Smith has received awards from Creative Capital, Fine Arts Work Center, the Queens Museum, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Rema Hort Mann Foundation, the Franklin Furnace Fund, Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation, and Art Matters. Smith is currently Assistant Professor of Visual Art at Columbia University. Publications include *And Blue In A Decade Where It Finally Means Sky* (JTT and Regen Projects, 2022), *Ordinary Violence* (Haggerty Museum, 2018), and *LANDSCAPES & PLAYGROUNDS* (Sming Sming Books, 2017).

ABOUT SUZANNE DEAL BOOTH

Suzanne Deal Booth has long been committed to the recognition and preservation of visual arts and cultural heritage. In 1998, Deal Booth founded the Friends of Heritage Preservation and has since served as director. Deal Booth has a Master of Arts in art history and art conservation from New York University's Institute of Fine Arts. She attended Rice University and graduated cum laude in art history. While at Rice and NYU, she had the opportunity to work directly under the tutelage of art patron and humanist Dominique de Menil. She assisted the artist James Turrell on Skyspace at MoMA PS1 as well as his retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art, and subsequently was the patron for his skyspace *Twilight Epiphany* at Rice University (2012). She has interned and worked at several institutions, including: Les Monuments Historiques, France; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; the Kimbell Art Museum; the Menil Collection; the Metropolitan Museum of Art; and the J. Paul Getty Trust. She currently serves on the boards of the following arts organizations: LACMA, the Menil Collection, Ballroom Marfa, The Contemporary

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Austin, and Atelier Calder. With her young family, she spent a year living in Rome and later established the Suzanne Deal Booth Rome Prize Fellowship for Historic Preservation and Conservation at the American Academy in Rome. Deal Booth's current endeavors include establishing and cultivating Bella Oaks, a certified organic vineyard and olive orchard in Napa Valley, CA, which produces celebrated Cabernet Sauvignon wine and olive oil.

ABOUT GLENN FUHRMAN

Glenn Fuhrman is a co-Founder and co-Managing Partner of Tru Arrow Partners (New York, NY) and is the Founder and CEO of Virtru Investment Partners (New York, NY). Prior to launching Tru Arrow and Virtru, he co-Founded MSD Capital, L.P., the private investment firm for Michael Dell, the Founder and CEO of Dell Technologies, and from 1998 thru 2019 served as its co-Managing Partner. Glenn is a Trustee of New York-Presbyterian Hospital, The Museum of Modern Art, and The TATE Americas Foundation; he is a Board member of The Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, the 92nd Street Y in NY and the Federal Enforcement Homeland Security Foundation. Glenn is also on the board of Gagosian. In 2008, he founded The FLAG Art Foundation, currently celebrating its 15th anniversary year.

ABOUT THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN

As Austin's only museum solely focused on contemporary artists and their work, The Contemporary Austin offers exhibitions, educational opportunities, and events that start conversations and fuel the city's creative spirit. Known for artist-centric exhibitions and collaborations, The Contemporary invites exploration at both its urban and natural settings—downtown at the Jones Center (700 Congress Avenue) and lakeside at the Laguna Gloria campus (3809 West 35th Street), which includes the museum's Betty and Edward Marcus Sculpture Park, with a growing program of commissions, temporary projects, and a permanent collection of outdoor sculptures by artists including Ai Weiwei, Terry Allen, Carol Bove, Sarah Crowner, Tom Friedman, Anya Gallaccio, Ryan Gander, Liam Gillick, Nancy Holt, Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler, Paul McCarthy, Wangechi Mutu, Tom Sachs, Monika Sosnowska, Jessica Stockholder, SUPERFLEX, Marianne Vitale, and Ursula von Rydingsvard. Learn more at thecontemporaryaustin.org.

ABOUT THE FLAG ART FOUNDATION

The FLAG Art Foundation is a non-collecting, nonprofit exhibition space that mounts solo, two-person, and thematic group exhibitions centering on emerging and established artists from around the globe. Organized by a diverse community of curators and thinkers within and beyond the art world, FLAG opened to the public in 2008 and has staged over 100 exhibitions celebrating the work of nearly 1,000 artists. Committed to providing education and resources for its surrounding community, and across New York City, all exhibitions and programs—including artist talks, artist-led workshops, and guided tours for school and museum groups—are free and open to the public.

Media Contacts

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