

**Lance L. Smith | In the Interest of Action**  
**Center Gallery**  
**Marjorie Barrick Museum of Art, University of Nevada, Las Vegas**

Throughout our lives, we have witnessed the extermination of bodies as if the hierarchical order in which we live were natural and obliged the sacrifice of people for the sake of the modern world. Today, no one is a stranger to the experience of death and extermination, and no one is exempt from the responsibility of taking action. We tend to confuse our experience of reality with history and place, as these have become constitutive narratives with a moral preeminence that disguises domination as the natural order of things; however, history is no other than an ideological distortion of time, as much as place is a warped perception of space, whose purpose is to assert a violent control that situates bodies for occupation and exploitation. Although history and place claim to have permanence, change is constant and the only certainty. As Octavia Butler wrote, "change is the one unavoidable, irresistible, ongoing reality of the universe"; we change everything we touch, and everything we change also changes us.

In the art practice of Lance L. Smith, touch is crucial, signaling friction, movement, and encounter. Touch is a radical action that can challenge the dominant narrative of history and place, and allow us to reclaim our experiences in time and space. Smith acknowledges each encounter through seemingly small touching gestures; however, these can become profound actions as the viewer confronts them, and their work refuses to place the body within the ideological discourse of race, gender, class, and age. The act of touching becomes an atmosphere, a liberatory practice where light and shadow mediate the encounter, and a recognition of the need to preserve the invisibility of the viewer. However, as Emmanuel Levinas explains, invisibility in the encounter is not a simple absence, it is the recognition of its infinitude and thus the impossibility of completely reducing a person to a concept. From the images, to their constantly changing positions in the gallery space, Smith's work indicates a performance in which every viewer is allowed to exist.

Action is a powerful choice that can challenge injustice and extermination, and in that sense, *In the Interest of Action* is an affront to art history and an interruption of the commodification of the body. This exhibition reveals a process of growth and endurance in Smith's work that is invested in provoking change in their viewers, by confronting the past and defying the future through our present. In the words of Levinas, we should prioritize responsibility over freedom, "living for the Other, rather than from the Other."

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