

## here:now Artwork Discussion – Community: In This Together (2)

<https://youtu.be/DV4QyAZNKnw>

Thank you for joining us for a virtual here:now Artwork Discussion with the Frye Art Museum. My name is Caroline, and I am the Education Coordinator here at the Frye. I will be facilitating today's digital discussion. While we cannot be together in the galleries, we hope you will still enjoy the opportunity to slow down, look closely, and spend some time with a work from the Frye Collection.

It's always fun to look at art by yourself or invite a friend or family member to join you in this discussion. You might also choose to write down your observations or make a drawing in response. If this is the case, please gather your materials now.

We will begin each artwork discussion by taking a quiet moment to simply look at the work of art and observe. Remember there are no right or wrong answers—it's about what you notice or experience when looking. After you have taken a moment to observe on your own, I will ask some questions to guide your looking and provide information about the artwork before we end.

You can expand or minimize the video on your screen for the discussion. You can also access closed captioning through the settings tool. Take a moment to see what works best for your viewing.

Today's theme is **Community: In This Together**. Described often as a fellowship, individuals of a community share commonalities, whether in attitudes, interests, or goals. As we discuss today's work of art, I encourage you to consider the role community plays in your life.

This is the artwork we will be looking at today. We will take pauses in between each set of questions to give you time to look closely at the artwork and think about your

responses. Remember: you may pause this video at any time to spend more time on one of the slides.

To start our discussion, please take 30 seconds to look quietly at this piece. You might start at the top corner of the canvas, moving across and down. You may move close to the screen to see details or step back for a new perspective. Your cursor is a great tool to trace and track details within the artwork.

Thank you for your quiet observation.

We will now move into our guided questions. If you are looking with a friend or family member, we hope you will share your observations, or consider writing down or sketching your answers.

1. What kinds of shapes do you see? Symbols? Textures?
2. The artist uses her artwork to envision the possibilities of a community. Based on the symbols and phrase included in this work of art, what kind of community might the artist envision?
3. These artworks are meant to be banners. Why do you think the artist chose to create banners specifically? How are banners usually used? Where might you hang these banners?
4. One of the banners has text that reads "Give it or Leave it." What does this phrase mean to you? How can you connect this phrase to values of community?

Thank you for taking the time to share and reflect on your observations. I would now like to share some information on this piece.

Cauleen Smith (American, b. 1967)

*Give It or Leave It (Taiwo)*, 2018

Satin, poly-satin, quilted pleather, upholstery, wool felt, wool velvet, poly filling  
48 x 48 in.

Courtesy of the artist; Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago; and Kate Werble Gallery, New York

Installation view, Frye Art Museum, 2019. Photo: Jueqian Fang

This artwork was made by artist Cauleen Smith, a multidisciplinary artist based in Los Angeles. Smith's work envisions a world that is black, feminist, spiritual, and unabashedly alive.

The title of this artwork is *Give It or Leave It (Taiwo)* and it was first featured at the Frye Art Museum in 2019, as part of Smith's solo exhibition by the same name. The subtitle, *Taiwo*, is a reference to sacred religious belief belonging to the West-African Yoruba people.

This work is made in the form of two banners, a reference to formal processions. Smith is interested in disruptive but lively public processions focused on grassroots community action—such as protests or celebrations. The incorporation of metallic, glittered, and satin elements heighten an affirmative, empowering set of beliefs and celebratory atmosphere.

On one banner, we see the symbol of a heart in an open palm. Smith adopts this icon from Shaker tradition to give a loving welcome to all. The phrase across the second banner *Give It Or Leave It* turns the traditional coercive threat “take it or leave it” on its head. Instead of an ultimatum, “give it or leave it” encourages you to create something, offer it, and gift it freely—an act of radical generosity.

Cauleen Smith's work has been featured in shows at Studio Museum in Harlem, Art Institute of Chicago, and the 2017 Whitney Biennial, to name a few. In addition to her own practice, Smith teaches in the School of Art at California Institute of Arts.

Cauleen Smith's banners seek to bring communities together. For me, this brings to mind the current Black Lives Matter movement. I'd like to share a photograph of a Dallas protest from early June. Just as you did with Smith's artwork, I encourage you to look slowly at this image and begin to interpret the symbols, gestures, and messages of grief, anger, or change.

Once you have taken time with this photograph, I'd like you to consider a question. During this fraught time in our lives, as we wade through illness, pain, and disconnection, what role can community play to lift us up?

Thank you for joining us for a here:now artwork discussion and for being part of the Frye community. We value your support and can't wait to welcome you back to the Museum again soon.