

PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY

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**On View**

**Photographer Ming Smith's Dreamlike Portraits of Everyday Life From Harlem to Ethiopia Are the Subject of a Tender New Online Show—See Them Here**

As galleries and art institutions around the world begin to reopen, we are spotlighting individual shows—online and IRL—that are worth your attention.

**Caroline Goldstein**, July 7, 2020



Ming Smith, *David Murray in the Wings, Padova, Italy* (1978). Image courtesy the artist and Pippy Houldsworth Gallery.

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### **“Painting With Light: The Photography of Ming Smith”** **Online at Pippy Houldsworth Gallery** **Through July 25**

**What the gallery says:** “Containing works from the start of the 1970s to the present day, including a number of never-before-seen archival prints, the exhibition explores the painterly quality of Ming Smith’s photographic work. From photographs taken in the New York neighborhoods of Coney Island and Harlem, to the cities of Abidjan, Ivory Coast, and Gambela, Ethiopia, the exhibition reflects the diversity of Smith’s personal experience, the openness of her perspective and her embrace of subjectivity as a fundamental conceptual choice...”

The works presented affirm the tenderness, respect, and wonder with which Smith approaches each of her subjects, whether mourners at the funeral of dancer Alvin Ailey, or young families enjoying a fun fair. *Jump* (1976) captures a young man enjoying the sheer exhilaration of movement, whilst in *Flower Lady* (1996), a woman wears a decadent hat and matching corsage of colorful handmade paper flowers. A rare self-portrait of the artist nursing her baby son articulates the intimacy that gently permeates her work. Community and family, with a particular focus on Black family life, is at the heart of Smith’s practice that celebrates its beauty and complexity.”

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**Why it's worth a look:** When most people think of how a photographer works, they likely imagine a simple process of point, shoot, and print. But that's far from the practice of Ming Smith, who uses her camera as a starting point for her works, which are the result of a painterly approach made up of blurring techniques, overpainting, double exposure, manipulated shutter speeds, hand-tinting, and collage.

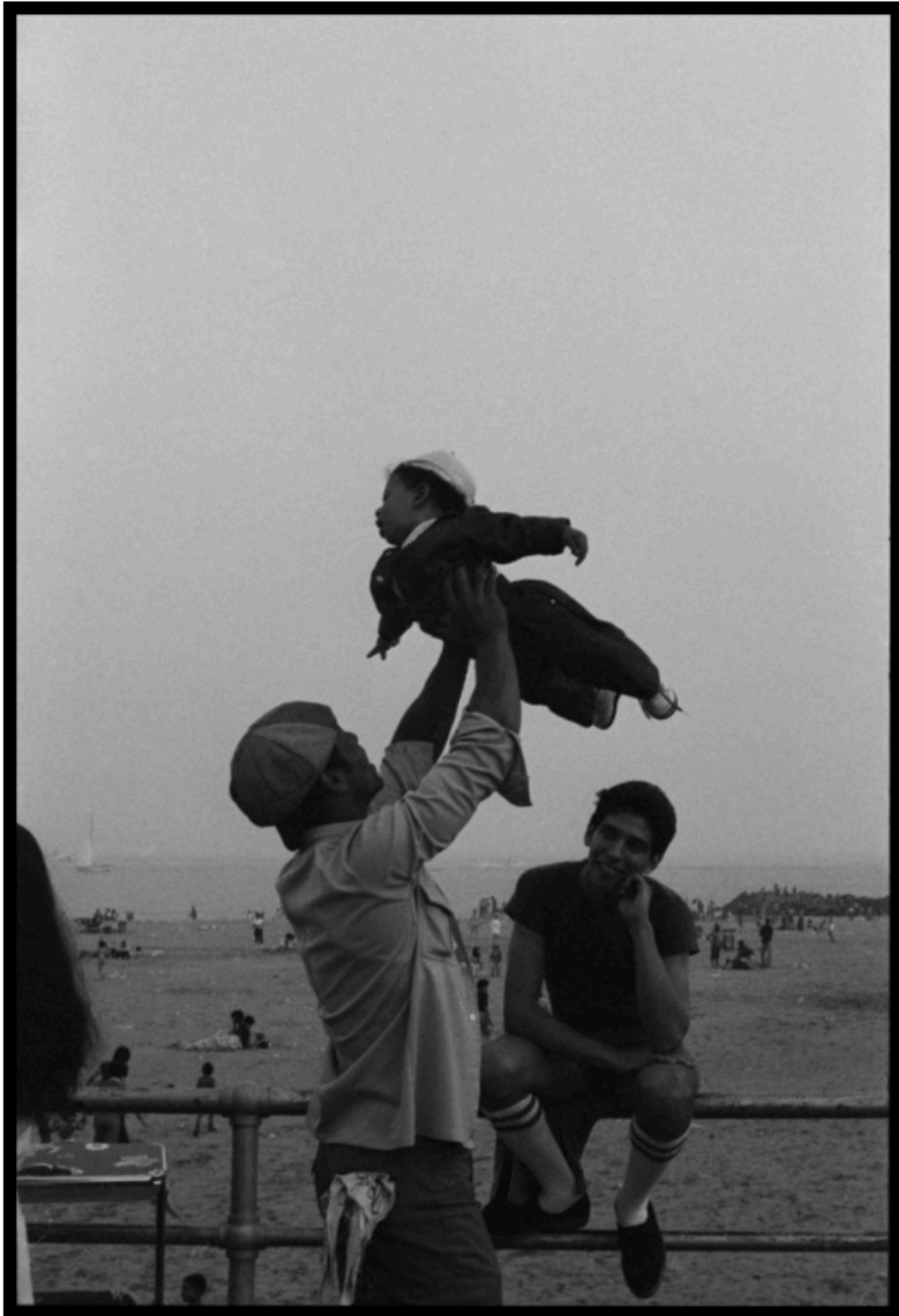
While some of the portraits she captures are straightforward and have little obvious manipulation, they still retain a dream-like quality. Traveling through the African continent and around the world, Smith documents communities and individuals in the midst of everyday activities, and each image has the gravitas of an indelible moment.

**What it looks like:**



Ming Smith, *Ethiopian Crew* (1973). Courtesy the artist and Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London.

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Ming Smith, *Flying High, Coney Island* (1976). Courtesy the artist and Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London.