

MELANIE SMITH (1965, England/*Lives and works in Mexico City*)

“In general, both in painting and film, I am searching for an unstable, undefined ground that creates potentials. ... It is always a question of following various lines of research that for me coincide at my sites of interest and result in these layers of associations and visual encounters.”

Born in Poole, England, Melanie Smith received her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Reading, where she studied painting. In 1989, she moved to Mexico City, joining an international community of artists and writers there. Her work was included in the first exhibition of installation art in Mexico, curated by Guillermo Santamarina at the Museum of the Ex-Convento de los Leones. Since then, the city has played an important role in her work; she has produced installations, videos, films, photographs, and paintings in which she considers Mexico City's density of population and structures, its production of detritus, and its endless entropy and reconstruction. These concerns are balanced by Smith's interest in the legacies of modernism and post-avant-garde movements as they manifest themselves in Latin America.

In her 2002 video, *Spiral City*, Smith filmed one of Mexico City's suburbs from a helicopter as it flew in a widening spiral over the densely gridded urban space. The video takes Robert Smithson's Spiral Jetty as a referent and draws from the unique topography and dramatic immensity of Mexico City. In other projects, she has focused upon the legacies of Surrealism in the Americas. Writing about Smith's work, art historian Dawn Ades describes the artist's relationship to modernity and the present: “There is nothing sentimental about Smith's pursuit of the modern spectacle in Mexico... No reference to history and the weight of the past. This is modernity of a shattered, intimate kind, already old, past its sell-by date, but always still to happen.”

Smith's works are represented in numerous international collections, including the Bruce and Diane Halle Collection, Scottsdale, AZ, USA; Daros Latinamerica Collection, Zürich, Switzerland; Colección Jumex, Mexico City, Mexico; Inhotim Brazil, Brumadinho, Brazil; Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, TX, USA; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, Spain; Museo de Arte de Lima, Peru; Museo de Arte Moderno (MAM), Mexico City, Mexico; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands; The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, NY, USA; and Tate Gallery, London, UK, among others.