

ARTFORUM

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From A to T & Back Again: Openings, Part Two

By Theo Belci

RATHER THAN WILLINGLY offer myself as cannon fodder to the first volley of New York gallery openings this September, I decided to decamp. A few days before Labor Day, I escaped to the desert for “Sophisticated Boom Boom,” Joseph Geagan and DeSe Escobar’s show at Lomex’s Las Vegas retreat. The dual exhibition paired Geagan’s painted portraits of showgirls and scenesters and Escobar’s overpainted heat transfer runway images of Egyptian-inspired fashion collections printed on calfskin panels, with each of the two artists capturing a different aspect of the city’s special breed of eccentrics. Much like the pink-suit-and-wig-wearing locals at the opening, the artists’ subjects—models and malcontents—are self-possessed and chic, bubbly and idiosyncratic. Perhaps primed by these works, I lingered in the carefully managed eternal twilight of the casinos for a dangerous amount of time, before my body gave up, fell ill, and forced me to ship myself back to the East Coast wrapped like an infant in an airline blanket.

Back in New York, I met up with fellow *Artforum* editor Alex Jovanovich at the opening of Maxwell Graham’s inaugural show in its new space, an installation by Michael E. Smith. We arrived to find a hot, dark room, in which blankets of varying opacity blocked natural light from the windows. A single industrial LED strip hung from a beam beneath an obstructed skylight, illuminating a twenty-foot-wide patch of the floor in a pale-blue wash.

Unlike Smith’s recent shows of discrete objects and assemblages at Andrew Kreps, this installation offered a fluid and variable viewing experience. When Alex and I arrived in the space, visitors were grouped together near the windows, avoiding the artificial glow to soak in the lingering daylight. Come nightfall, the crowd had almost entirely moved into the shimmer of the LED strip to continue their conversations like moths under a lantern. Stragglers buzzed around the Bluetooth speakers hidden in the corners of the space, standing as close as possible to the humming bass, corralled into small pockets where the sound was perceptible.



View of “Michael E. Smith” 2026.