

# SAN JOSE MUSEUM OF ART

For immediate release

## OLYMPIAN TOMMIE SMITH REVISITS PROTEST LEGACY IN EXHIBITION THIS FALL AT SAN JOSÉ MUSEUM OF ART

*With Drawn Arms*—a multi-part collaboration between Smith and artist Glenn Kaino—explores the continued relevance of the athlete's iconic gesture



**San José, California** (September 4, 2019) – The San José Museum of Art (SJMA) is thrilled to present a major exhibition this fall that revisits the now-iconic moment in sports history when Tommie Smith, a young athlete from San José State College (now San José State University), stood on the center podium at the 1968 Olympic awards ceremony with one gloved hand raised. It was October 16 and Smith had just won the gold medal for the 200-meter dash at the Summer Olympics. Leveraging a rapt, global audience, his gesture issued an unsubtle yet silent call to action against international human rights abuses and expressed solidarity with the civil rights movement in the United States. Over fifty years later, Smith shares his story and its ongoing contemporary relevance through an unlikely partnership with Los Angeles-based artist Glenn Kaino in *With Drawn Arms: Glenn Kaino and Tommie Smith*, which opens at SJMA November 1, 2019 and remains on view through April 5, 2020.

Anchoring SJMA's own 50th anniversary season, *With Drawn Arms* traces the echoes of Smith's gesture through the medium of the message: the photographic news image proliferated endlessly through press

# SAN JOSE MUSEUM OF ART

wires and print, and today through infinitely expanding digital media. The exhibition includes sculpture, prints, and drawings by Kaino, as well as memorabilia from Smith's personal collection.

The exhibition is organized by Lauren Schell Dickens, senior curator at SJMA who has long had an interest in projects that foreground issues of social justice through unlikely means. A Bay Area native born in San José, Dickens understands the local importance of Smith's story as well as the historical relevance of "Speed City," the affectionate nickname San José State's Olympian-breeding track and field program earned in the 1960s. "The force of Tommie's physical speed is rivaled only by the power of his silent protest," asserts Dickens. "What Glenn has done is humanize the person behind this action, allowing our diverse audiences to see themselves as heirs to Tommie's legacy and understand the influence that one individual can wield."

The relationship between Smith and Kaino—a Japanese-American conceptual artist known for provocative and uncanny installations that probe tough questions of identity and politics—began several years ago when a friend noticed a copy of the infamous photo taped to the artist's monitor. Perhaps drawing a connection between Kaino's ongoing interests in social protest, the friend offered an introduction to Smith, whom he had known as a coach from his college days. Kaino was ecstatic to meet the flesh and blood that had produced such a powerful image, immediately homing in on its contemporary relevance and convincing Smith to join him in reexamining its narrative potential.

The centerpiece of *With Drawn Arms* is *Bridge* (2013), a 100-foot-long monumental installation composed of casts of Smith's arm raised in salute on the Olympic podium. *Bridge* mirrors the road of the civil rights movement and subsequent struggles for justice, a path not easy or straight, but rising in victory and descending in defeat along the journey. It serves as a metaphoric bridge connecting activists of the past like Smith with others present and future. Thus, Smith and Kaino liken their collaboration to a metaphorical 'passing of the baton'—a call to younger generations that personal gestures of activism can be vigorous tools in catalyzing action. In amplifying Smith's protest, which resulted in a ban from the Olympic Games, *With Drawn Arms* contends the latent potency of symbolism. Part of their collaboration coalesced around a series of drawing workshops—or drawing rallies—with high schools, where students learned the story of Smith's silent protest by re-drawing scenes from the 1968 Olympics. A selection of these works on paper are featured alongside Kaino's own representations of the race and medal ceremony.

*With Drawn Arms* is as much an invitation to participate as it is an opportunity for historical reflection. Extending the "passing the baton" metaphor, SJMA will present a series of workshop-based public programs, which aim to offer specific tools, resources and actions individuals may take to effect change across a range of relevant issues, from immigrant advocacy to cyber activism.

In a further nod to the inclusiveness of Smith's gesture and in celebration of the Museum's founding by community activists, SJMA will host the opening reception of *With Drawn Arms* on Friday, November 1, which coincides with Facebook First Fridays, a new initiative sponsored by Facebook that offers monthly free admission to all from 5—9pm. "This public opening invites all communities of Silicon Valley to join us in celebrating local history, artistic engagement, and the timely relevance of Smith's protest," says Oshman Executive Director S. Sayre Batton.

# SAN JOSE MUSEUM OF ART

*With Drawn Arms* will also be complemented by *Speed City: From Civil Rights to Black Power*, an archival exhibition organized in 2007 by History San José, which will be on view through the duration of *With Drawn Arms* to provide further contextualization within San José's local history.

## **About Glenn Kaino**

Glenn Kaino (b. 1972, Los Angeles) received his BFA from the University of California, Irvine, in 1993, and his MFA from the University of California, San Diego, in 1996. Kaino draws on his undergraduate education in computer science and formal training as a sculptor to make work that spans a wide range of media and creative activity. He engineers large-scale installations and site- or situation-specific sculptural works that are infused with sociopolitical commentary. In 2012, he was selected by the U.S. Department of State to represent America in the 13th International Cairo Biennale, and was included in the 2004 Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the 12th Lyon Biennial in Lyon, France; and Prospect 3 in New Orleans.

## **About Tommie Smith**

Tommie Smith (b. 1944, Clarksville, Texas) is a sprinter, civil rights activist, author, speaker, and scholar. While attending SJSU on an athletic scholarship, Smith excelled on one of the most competitive teams in collegiate sprinting history and became an icon of the civil rights movement at the 1968 Olympics. Since retiring from sprinting, Smith has taught sociology at Oberlin College and has been an active public speaker. He now lives in Stone Mountain, Georgia.

## **RELATED EVENTS AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

### **Opening Reception**

*Facebook First Fridays*

Friday, Nov. 1 | 5–9pm

Free admission; RSVP essential.

Celebrate the opening of *With Drawn Arms: Glenn Kaino and Tommie Smith*.

### ***Speed City: From Civil Rights to Black Power***

Nov. 1, 2019—Apr. 5, 2020

Organized by History San José and presented in partnership with SJMA

This archival exhibition, originally curated by Urla Hill in 2007, examines the broader history of athletics at San José State University beyond Tommie Smith and within the historical framework of the civil rights movement in the late 1960s. Featuring memorabilia, ephemera, photographs and archival documents, *Speed City* reveals the unique cross-section of sports and activism fostered at SJSU from the late 1940s through 1969.

### **Passing the Baton**

Through a special series of advocacy workshops, the Museum explores how Smith's gesture today is a figurative passing of the baton—an invitation to inspire future generations. Each program arms individuals with tools and resources to support causes important in their communities.

# SAN JOSE MUSEUM OF ART

## **Black Athletes and the ‘Speed City’ Era at San José State College**

Lunchtime Lecture

Wednesday, Nov. 6 | 12–1pm

Free with Museum admission.

Join former San José State sprinters Ray Norton and Bob Poynter as they share their personal experiences with Urla Hill, curator of the 2007 History San José exhibition *Speed City: From Civil Rights to Black Power*. The panel will explore the long-held cultural perceptions and stereotypes of black athletes during the late 1950s, as well as what it was like to be world-class athletes in Lloyd “Bud” Winter’s famous track and field program.

## **Immigrant Advocacy: Rapid Response Training**

Saturday, Nov. 9 | 11am–1pm

Free; limited spots, registration required.

Rapid Response Training workshops offer participants concrete ways to stand in solidarity with the undocumented community members in the region. The Rapid Response network is a comprehensive community defense project that consists of a 24/7 emergency hotline that anyone can call when they see Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity anywhere in Santa Clara County.

## **Digital Activism**

Lunchtime Lecture

Wednesday, Dec. 4 | 12–1pm

Free with Museum admission.

Join Silicon Valley De-Bug cofounder Elizabeth Gonzalez and hear how the organization uses multimedia storytelling as a platform for Silicon Valley’s diverse communities to impact the political, cultural, and social landscape of the region.

## **Gallery Talk on *With Drawn Arms***

Curator Tour

Thursday, Jan. 23 | 12:30pm

Free with Museum admission.

Tour the exhibition with Lauren Schell Dickens, senior curator.

## **LGBTQ+ Ally-ship Advocacy**

Lunchtime Lecture

Wednesday, Feb. 5 | 12–1pm

Free with Museum admission.

Join Gabrielle Antolovich, Board President for the Billy DeFrank LGBTQ+ Community Center in San José to learn how to be an advocate and ally to your LGBTQ+ community.

## **Female Athlete Global Game-changers**

Lunchtime Lecture

Wednesday, Mar. 4 | 12–1pm

# SAN JOSE MUSEUM OF ART

Free with Museum admission.

Celebrate Women's History Month with a special lecture led by leader and advocate, Marlene Bjornsrud; whose work in sports has been recognized by her peers, the White House and the International Olympic Committee. Bjornsrud will highlight female athletes who have used their sports platform and pioneered against gender discrimination in the playing field and learn ways one can support female athletes and improve the world around.

## **Protest Signs and Printmaking with Kathy Aoki**

Art 101

Saturday, Mar. 7 | 12–4pm

\$50 (\$30 for SJMA members)

Artist Kathy Aoki hosts a printmaking workshop surrounding the theme of personal activism. This ART 101 workshop is presented as part of the *For Freedoms 50 State Initiative*, a non-partisan, nationwide campaign to use art as a means of inspiring broad civic participation.

## **Creative Minds: Tommie Smith and Glenn Kaino**

Tuesday, Feb. 25 | 7pm, Hammer Theater Center

101 Paseo De San Antonio, San José, CA 95113

\$20 (\$10 for SJMA members)

Join us for a special conversation between conceptual artist Glenn Kaino and Olympian Tommie Smith which will be followed with a special presentation of excerpts from *With Drawn Arms*. This feature-length documentary film focuses on Tommie Smith's legacy and is directed by Kaino and award-winning photographer Afshin Shahidi.

## **Reading List**

In partnership between the San José Museum of Art and the San José Public Library, compiled by librarian *Tiffany E. Garcia*, three reading lists—for adults, teens, and children—related to themes/topics explored in *With Drawn Arms* will be available for extended reading. Selections of the books will be available for browsing at SJMA. **All books can be borrowed from San José Public Library.**

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SJMA is located at 110 South Market Street in downtown San José, California. The Museum is open Tuesday through Sunday, 11am to 5pm and until 8pm or later on the third Thursday of each month. As of Friday, February 1, 2019, SJMA is also free to all on the first Friday of each month from 5–9pm. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors, and free to members, college students, youth and children ages 17 and under, and school teachers (with valid ID). For more information, call 408.271.6840 or visit [SanJoseMuseumofArt.org](http://SanJoseMuseumofArt.org).

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# SAN JOSE MUSEUM OF ART

Image Credit: American track and field athletes Tommie Smith (C) and John Carlos (R), first and third place winners in the 200 meter race, protest with the Black Power salute as they stand on the winner's podium at the Summer Olympic Games, Mexico City, Mexico, October 19, 1968. Australian silver medalist Peter Norman stands by. (Photo by John Dominis/The LIFE Picture Collection via Getty Images)