

• FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE •

Sarah McKenzie
Sanctum

February 7 – March 14, 2020
Opening Reception: Friday, February 7th, 6 - 8 pm
Free and open to the public/ Artist in Attendance

sanctum (noun)

1. A sacred place, especially a shrine within a temple or church.
2. A private place from which most people are excluded.

In *Sanctum*, Sarah McKenzie's third solo exhibition with David B. Smith Gallery, the artist presents the newest works in her ongoing *White Walls* series. Through her paintings of museum and gallery interiors, McKenzie examines the architecture of exhibition space and the role it plays in framing and orienting our experience of art. The rooms and corridors depicted in these works are at once austere and opulent; makeshift and highly controlled; impersonal and sacred. McKenzie celebrates these pristine rooms and the specific works of art they feature, but her paintings also raise issues of access and inclusion, both for artists and for viewers.

While art galleries and museums may offer a sense of sanctuary to some, others may feel marginalized or shut out entirely. Historically, these rooms have been highly exclusive, promoting a narrow, dominant art narrative while omitting alternative perspectives. Although the art world has begun to reconsider that narrative, as demonstrated by the 2019 Hilma af Klint exhibition at the Guggenheim, captured in McKenzie's painting, *Inner Circle*, the sense of exclusivity nonetheless persists. As all the works in *Sanctum* reveal, these spaces have the power to confer status and meaning on the art contained within and the individuals who gain entry.

With an emphasis on geometry, pattern, and surface, McKenzie's paintings hover in a zone between stark realism and abstraction. Playing with the materiality of paint, she works with both oils and acrylics and juxtaposes various painting "styles" on each canvas, deliberately undermining the illusion of depth and the overall unity of the completed image. McKenzie's work often appears photo-realistic when seen in reproduction, but, seen in person, the painted surface asserts itself forcefully, enabling the viewer to discover the process by which the image was constructed.

About Sarah McKenzie

Sarah McKenzie's work has been exhibited at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh, the Yale School of Architecture, the Bemis Center for Contemporary Art in Omaha, the New Mexico Museum of Art in Santa Fe, the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, the Aspen Art Museum, and the Indianapolis Museum of Contemporary Art. In 2012, McKenzie received a Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Grant and in 2019, she was awarded the 10th Alexander Rutsch Award for Painting as well as a Santo Foundation Individual Artist Award. Her paintings have been featured in *Art in America*, *The New York Times*, *The Denver Post*, *The Huffington Post*, *Dwell*, *Art Ltd. Magazine*, and *New American Paintings*. McKenzie holds an MFA in Painting from the University of Michigan and a BA in Film Studies from Yale University. She lives and works in Boulder, Colorado.

About David B. Smith Gallery

David B. Smith Gallery is committed to presenting intelligent and culturally relevant exhibitions in its Denver location, featuring the region's most important emerging talent alongside internationally recognized artists. Through its curatorial program, participation in art fairs, and extensive media coverage in publications such as *Art in America* and *ARTnews*, David B. Smith Gallery has cultivated a strong regional, national and international collector audience. *The New York Times* hailed the gallery as offering "an exciting contrast of cutting edge works" and *The Denver Post* declared that it is the "premiere commercial space" in Denver. The gallery also maintains an active publishing division, which produces exhibition catalogues and editions.

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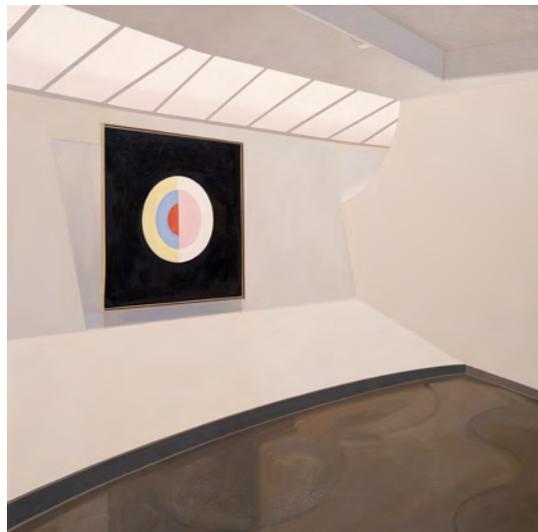


Image: Sarah McKenzie, *Inner Circle* (Guggenheim Museum with Hilma af Klint, 2019), 2019, oil and acrylic on canvas, 30 x 30 in. (76.2 x 76.2 cm)