

• FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE •

Sarah McKenzie
Displays of Power

March 29 — May 3, 2025

Opening Reception: Saturday, March 29, 5–8 pm

Free and open to the public | Artist in attendance

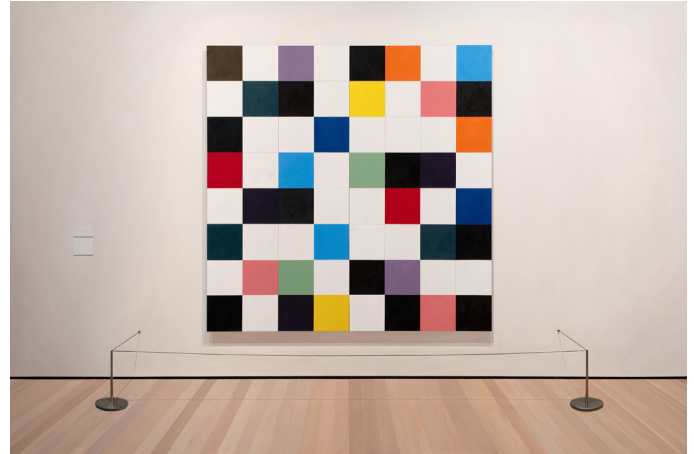
David B. Smith Gallery is proud to present *Displays of Power*, the 5th solo exhibition by Boulder-based artist Sarah McKenzie. McKenzie will present a selection of paintings ranging from 2022 to 2025 that draw visual and practical parallels between the architecture of US prisons and traditional, white-walled art venues including museums and art galleries.

Sarah McKenzie is known for her paintings that analyze the aesthetics of institutions, often esteemed art venues, which offer a lens into the psychology of architecture. Through their design, buildings communicate the values of the society in which they were created. Through myriad elements, architecture reflects social codes and priorities—guiding, restricting, or enabling behavior, and controlling how bodies move through space, gather, or commune. The art gallery or museum’s pristine white walls, meant to be interpreted as neutral or blank, communicate control over space, guiding the viewing experience of visitors.

In 2021, McKenzie was the recipient of the Marion International Fellowship for the Visual and Performing Arts, which brought her into correctional facilities to research prison architecture. In the same year, she became involved with the University of Denver Prison Arts Initiative (DU PAI), where she began teaching visual art to incarcerated individuals. While working in prisons, McKenzie noted similarities between prison and museum architecture.

Since beginning her work in carceral settings, McKenzie has cofounded Impact Arts, a 501c3 volunteer program through which she continues her work teaching art to residents at Sterling Correctional, Colorado’s largest men’s prison. Her work in prisons has become an integral part of her artistic practice, which has led her to create new bodies of work in addition to curating exhibitions of work by incarcerated artists.

In these institutions designed to bend the perception and will of users, over the course of several years, McKenzie’s practice has expanded to include social practice as a vital part of her artistic research. In *Displays of Power*, works created in the prison and art environments she frequents will be presented in conversation, shining a light into places kept dark, exposing the quiet politics embedded into the architecture of prisons and museums alike.



Sarah McKenzie, *Guidelines (Museum of Modern Art with Ellsworth Kelly)*, 2025, oil and acrylic on canvas, 48 x 72 in. (121.9 x 182.9 cm)



Sarah McKenzie, *View From the Second Tier (Alcatraz)*, 2022, oil and acrylic on canvas, 48 x 72 in. (121.9 x 182.9 cm)

About Sarah McKenzie

Sarah McKenzie is a visual artist based in Boulder, Colorado. Her paintings document our built landscape, exploring changes in our architecture (what we build) for evidence of societal, economic, and cultural shifts (why we build). She is particularly interested in the dynamics of institutional space, as manifested in American museums and prisons.

McKenzie has exhibited her paintings nationally, including shows with the Walker Art Center, the Carnegie Museum of Art, the Yale School of Architecture, the New Mexico Museum of Art, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, among other venues. In 2021, she was awarded the Marion International Fellowship for the Visual and Performing Arts to support her research on the architecture of prisons. That same year, she also began teaching art classes inside the Colorado Department of Corrections (CDOC) through the University of Denver Prison Arts Initiative. In 2024, along with Lillian Stannard, McKenzie co-founded Impact Arts to continue her teaching in the CDOC and to create and support exhibition opportunities for artists impacted by the system. Currently, McKenzie is co-curating upcoming shows on incarceration for East Window Gallery in Boulder (June 2025) and RedLine Center for Contemporary Art in Denver (August 2025).

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 *Artforum*, *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." The gallery also maintains an active publishing division, which produces exhibition catalogues and editions.

David B. Smith Gallery is a member of the New Art Dealers Alliance (NADA).

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